

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

AUTHOR:

SRISTY TRIPATHI, Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar

1. Introduction:

Gender justice is a fundamental concept that underlines the need for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for individuals of all genders¹. It seeks to eliminate discrimination based on gender and promote a society where every individual, regardless of their gender, can enjoy the same privileges and opportunities. In the context of India, gender justice is a crucial aspect of the legal framework, and various laws have been enacted to address issues related to gender-based discrimination and violence. One of the key areas of concern within the realm of gender justice is gender-based violence². Gender-based violence refers to any form of violence that is directed against an individual based on their gender, disproportionately affecting women and girls. In India, several acts and laws have been put in place to address and combat gender-based violence, recognizing it as a violation of basic human rights.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, is a landmark legislation in India that specifically addresses domestic violence against women³. This act provides a comprehensive legal framework to protect women from physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse within the confines of the home. It emphasizes the need for a safe and secure environment for women and offers

legal recourse for victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, aims to create a safe working environment for women by preventing and addressing sexual harassment at workplaces. The act mandates the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) in organizations to investigate complaints and take appropriate action against perpetrators. In addition to these specific acts, several sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) now Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 address various forms of gender-based violence. For instance, Section 375 now Section 63 of BNS defines and criminalizes rape, while Section 498A deals with cruelty against married women by their husbands or relatives. Which is now bifurcated into Section 85 and Section 86 of BNS. These legal provisions collectively contribute to overall framework of gender justice in India.

Despite the existence of these laws, challenges persist in the effective implementation and enforcement of gender justice⁴. Awareness campaigns, education, and continued efforts to address societal attitudes are essential to creating a society that upholds the principles of gender justice and works towards eradicating gender-based violence. In this paper, we will delve deeper into the nuances of gender justice, exploring the legal landscape and the challenges in achieving gender equality in the Indian context. Gender justice stands as a cornerstone for fostering inclusive societies that respect and value the inherent dignity of individuals, regardless of their gender identity. In India, the pursuit

- 1 Hemelsoet, E. 2012. A Right to Education for All: The Meaning of Equal Educational Opportunities. *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 20: 523–540.
- 2 Nentwich, J.C. 2006. Changing Gender: The Discursive Construction of Equal Opportunities. *Gender, Work & Organization* 13: 499–521.
- 3 Panchal, T.J., Thusoo, S., Inamdar, V. and Balaji, A. 2023. Domestic Violence and the Law: A Study of Complaints Under the Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in Maharashtra, India. *Violence Against Women* 29: 2617–2638.

- 4 Davies, R. and Bartels, L. 2020. Challenges of Effective Communication in the Criminal Justice Process: Findings from Interviews with Victims of Sexual Offences in Australia. *Laws* 9: 31.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

of gender justice is entrenched in the constitutional ethos, with the Constitution of India guaranteeing equality before the law and prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex. However, the realization of gender justice requires a multifaceted approach, involving legal frameworks, societal attitudes, and systemic changes.

The prevalence of gender-based violence remains a significant impediment to achieving gender justice⁵. Acts of violence, often rooted in patriarchal norms, pose a pervasive threat to the well-being and safety of individuals, especially women. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, brought about crucial amendments to the Indian Penal Code in response to the Nirbhaya case, strengthening provisions related to sexual offenses⁶. Despite these legal strides, the fight against gender-based violence necessitates continual vigilance and a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. The legal landscape in India reflects an evolving commitment to addressing gender disparities. The Maternity Benefit Act, of 1961, ensures maternity benefits for women in the workforce, recognizing the significance of supporting women during pregnancy and motherhood. Moreover, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, seeks to protect the rights of transgender individuals, emphasizing the need for a more inclusive and tolerant society⁷. As we embark on a deeper exploration of gender justice and gender-based violence, this paper aims to critically analyze the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks, identify gaps in implementation, and propose holistic strategies for achieving enduring gender justice in India. By examining the interplay of laws, societal norms, and emerging challenges, we strive to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding gender equality and justice.

2. Conceptual Framework for Understanding Gender, Justice, and Violence

Gender justice is a critical aspect of any society striving for equality and inclusivity. This conceptual framework aims to analyze the legal landscape surrounding gender-based violence in India, exploring the relevant acts, laws, and sections that contribute to or hinder the pursuit of gender justice⁸. With a focus on empowering and protecting individuals from gender-based violence, this paper delves into the nuanced legal mechanisms in India. To comprehend the current state of gender justice in India, it is imperative to recognize the historical context that has shaped the legal framework. The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, lays the foundation for equality and non-discrimination under Articles 14, 15, and 21. However, the struggle for gender justice gained momentum in subsequent years, leading to the enactment of specific legislation to address gender-based violence. The Indian legal system has witnessed significant advancements in addressing gender-based violence. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, stands as a landmark legislation, offering civil remedies for victims of domestic violence⁹. Additionally, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, brought about amendments to the Indian Penal Code, expanding the definition of sexual offenses and strengthening penalties.

2.1 Empowerment through Education and Awareness:

Education and awareness are integral components in the pursuit of gender justice, constituting the bedrock of societal transformation. The Right to Education Act, enacted in 2009, is a crucial step towards ensuring universal access to

5 Tyagi, N. 2020. Gender Violence, Gender Justice and Gender-Based Laws: An Analysis of Pattern and Policies in India and Indonesia. *Brawijaya Law Journal* 7: 141–162.

6 Prinz, J.L. 2008. The Phenomenon of Cybersuicide: An Examination of Australia's Solution, the Criminal Code Amendment (Suicide Related Material Offenses) Act 2005 and the Difficulty of International Implementation. *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 18: 477–510.

7 Farooq, M. 2023. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 Misgiving and Clarification. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

8 Right to equality and gender justice with special reference to legal education in India. 2023. *neuroquantology* 20.

9 Panchal, T.J., Thusoo, S., Inamdar, V. and Balaji, A. 2023. Domestic Violence and the Law: A Study of Complaints Under the Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in Maharashtra, India. *Violence Against Women* 29: 2617–2638.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

education¹⁰; however, its implementation frequently falters in effectively addressing persistent gender disparities within educational systems. To bridge this gap, there is a pressing need to integrate comprehensive sex education into school curricula. Such an initiative serves a dual purpose¹¹: firstly, it equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate relationships, consent, and respect, fostering a culture of mutual understanding. Secondly, it provides a platform to discuss and challenge prevailing gender norms, dismantling stereotypes that perpetuate gender-based violence. Simultaneously, awareness campaigns play a pivotal role in shaping societal attitudes towards gender issues. These campaigns, when strategically designed and widely disseminated, empower individuals to recognize, resist, and report instances of gender-based violence¹². By promoting an understanding of the nuances surrounding consent, coercion, and respectful relationships, society can collectively contribute to dismantling the structures that perpetuate gender-based violence. In the larger context, the synergy of legal measures and educational initiatives is imperative¹³. A socially conscious society, driven by an informed citizenry, is better positioned to demand and enforce

stringent legal frameworks against gender-based violence. It is through this intersection of education, awareness, and legal advocacy that a society can pave the way for lasting gender justice, breaking free from the shackles of ingrained inequalities¹⁴.

2.2 Intersectionality and Inclusivity:

A nuanced approach to gender justice necessitates a profound understanding of

intersectionality, recognizing the intricate interplay between various social categorizations, including gender, race, class, and ethnicity. The realization that individuals may experience multiple layers of discrimination and oppression based on these intersecting identities underscores the need for a comprehensive legal framework. Existing legislation, such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, represents crucial steps toward addressing the specific challenges faced by marginalized communities. However, the multifaceted nature of gender-based violence requires a more holistic and integrated approach. While the aforementioned act protects against atrocities, an intersectional lens demands an examination of how these acts intersect with gender-based discrimination and violence¹⁵. A truly inclusive legal framework must go beyond isolated provisions and consider the unique vulnerabilities faced by individuals at the crossroads of different social identities. This entails crafting laws that acknowledge and account for the distinct forms of discrimination and violence experienced by, for instance, Dalit women or tribal LGBTQ+ individuals. In the pursuit of justice, legislation must evolve to reflect the diverse realities of marginalized groups, ensuring that legal protections are not only accessible but also tailored to address the intersectional aspects of gender-based violence. By adopting a more comprehensive and integrated approach, the legal system can contribute significantly to dismantling the layers of oppression that marginalized individuals face, fostering a society where gender justice is truly inclusive and intersectional.

2.3 Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code and Section 85 and Section 86 of BNS:

Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code stands as a pivotal legal provision aimed at addressing cruelty against married women. Which is now bifurcated into Section 85 and Section 86 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS). This section criminalizes actions perpetrated by the husband or his relatives that result in physical or mental harm

10 Tuckett, A. 2015. Adult Education, Social Transformation and the Pursuit of Social Justice. *European Journal of Education* 50: 245–249.

11 Stulhofer, A. 2016. Is there a need for a European-wide initiative on comprehensive sexuality education? *Reflections from Croatia. Sex Education* 16: 432–438.

12 Afe, T. and Ogunsemi, O. 2017. Social Distancing of College Students Toward Individuals Who Experienced Sexual Violence. *Violence and Gender* 4: 17–24.

13 Habuda, A.S. and Isakova, V.R. 2019. The system of compulsory measures of educational character needs improvement. *Legal Novels* 9: 140–145.

14 Villa Lever, L. 2018. University spaces, gender and position of social origin: intersection of inequalities. *Gender and Education* 32: 518–536.

15 Snaefrioar- Gunnarsdottir, H., Traustadottir, R., Einarsdottir, T. and Rice, J.G. 2023. Through an Intersectional Lens: Prevalence of Violence Against Disabled Women in Iceland. *Violence Against Women*.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

to the wife¹⁶. While it intends to protect women from domestic violence, concerns have arisen regarding the potential misuse of this provision. Critics argue that false accusations and the threat of legal action have led to instances of harassment against innocent parties. Consequently, this has sparked crucial discussions about the necessity for reform within the legal framework. Balancing the need to prevent genuine instances of domestic violence with safeguarding against false accusations poses a complex challenge¹⁷. Ongoing dialogues emphasize the importance of refining Section 498A to ensure its application aligns with the original intention of protecting victims, thereby striking a delicate balance between preserving legal provisions and mitigating the risk of misuse.

2.4 Section 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 63 and Section 64 of BNS:

Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 63 and Section 64 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) crucially address offenses related to rape, forming a cornerstone of the legal framework for combating sexual violence¹⁸. The landscape witnessed a transformative shift with the enactment of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013. This amendment expanded the definition of rape to encompass a broader range of acts, ensuring a more inclusive and victim-centric approach. Moreover, the amended act increased penalties for sexual offenses, reflecting a commitment to deterrence and justice. Despite these legislative strides, challenges endure. The need for a more comprehensive understanding of consent remains a focal point. Ambiguities in defining and interpreting consent contribute to complexities in legal proceedings. Additionally, the societal stigma surrounding reporting acts as a significant barrier, discouraging survivors from coming forward. Addressing these challenges necessitates ongoing efforts to refine legal definitions, enhance awareness,

and create supportive environments that empower survivors to seek justice without fear of judgment or reprisal.

2.5 The Vishakha Guidelines and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013¹⁹:

In recognition of the imperative to ensure a safe and equitable working environment, the Supreme Court of India promulgated the Vishakha Guidelines, a landmark initiative in response to incidents of workplace sexual harassment. Subsequently, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act was enacted, formalizing and institutionalizing mechanisms for the prevention and redressal of workplace harassment. These legal tools constitute a significant stride towards fostering gender justice in professional spheres by mandating the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) within organizations. The guidelines and the Act delineate clear procedures for reporting, inquiry, and resolution, thereby creating a framework that empowers women in the workplace. By acknowledging the importance of addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment, these legal instruments contribute substantially to cultivating a work environment where individuals can thrive free from the specter of gender-based violence and discrimination.

The conceptual framework outlined emphasizes the dynamic interconnection between legal frameworks and the ongoing quest for gender justice in India. Despite considerable advancements, persistent challenges underscore the need for ongoing evaluation and reform. The efficacy of addressing gender-based violence lies in the synergistic collaboration between legal instruments, societal awareness, and institutional mechanisms.

16 R, S.S. 2023. Efficacy of Section 498A of The Indian Penal Code. SSRN Electronic Journal.

17 Coker, D. 2016. Domestic Violence and Social Justice. *Violence Against Women* 22: 1426–1437.

18 Kumar, R. 2012. SEXUAL HARASSMENT: SECTION 354 OF INDIAN PENAL CODE, 1860. *Global Journal For Research Analysis* 3: 87–88.

19 Banoo, S. 2020. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013- Legislative Commentary. SSRN Electronic Journal.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

3. Legal and Policy Landscape: International and National Dimensions of Gender Justice and Addressing Gender-Based Violence

The legal and policy landscape concerning gender justice and the prevention of gender-based violence is a critical and evolving aspect of the socio-legal framework both internationally and within the national context of India. At the global level, several international instruments play a pivotal role in shaping the discourse on gender justice. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1967 is a fundamental treaty that outlines the rights of women and sets the agenda for addressing gender-based discrimination²⁰. India, as a signatory to CEDAW, has made significant strides in aligning its legislative framework with the principles enshrined in the convention. One of the key challenges in achieving gender justice and combating gender-based violence lies in the intersectionality of discrimination²¹. Marginalized communities, including Dalit women, tribal women, and those belonging to minority groups, often face compounded forms of discrimination. In response to this, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, aim to protect the rights of these marginalized groups. However, the intersectional nature of discrimination necessitates a more nuanced and comprehensive approach to ensure that legal protections effectively reach all segments of society.

Additionally, the evolving understanding of gender identities and sexual orientations calls for legal frameworks that are inclusive and responsive to the diverse experiences of individuals. While the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, represents a step towards recognizing and protecting the rights of transgender individuals, there remains a need for continued dialogue and refinement of legal provisions to address the unique challenges

faced by the LGBTQ+ community²². The role of the judiciary is pivotal in shaping the legal landscape and ensuring the effective implementation of laws related to gender justice. Landmark judgments, such as the Vishakha case, have led to the establishment of guidelines for preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. The Supreme Court's proactive stance in interpreting laws in a manner that upholds gender justice principles sets important precedents, influencing both legislative amendments and societal attitudes. Despite these advancements, gaps persist in the legal and policy framework. There is a need for ongoing review and revision of existing laws to adapt to changing social norms and emerging challenges²³. Moreover, capacity-building measures for law enforcement agencies, judiciary, and legal practitioners are crucial to enhance the effectiveness of these laws.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is a crucial legislation that recognizes the multifaceted nature of violence within domestic spheres and provides a comprehensive legal framework for addressing such issues²⁴. Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code deals specifically with cruelty towards women by their husbands or relatives, while Section 375 and its subsequent amendments address sexual offenses, emphasizing the need for consent and stringent punishment for perpetrators. Furthermore, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, was a landmark development in response to the heinous gang rape incident in Delhi. This amendment expanded the definition of sexual offenses, increased penalties, and introduced new offenses such as acid attacks. The legislative landscape, however, is not without its challenges.

20 Merry, S.E. 2011. Gender Justice and CEDAW: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. *Hawwa* 9: 49–75.

21 Kaur, P. 2018. Role of Media in Combating Gender Discrimination and Violence : A Study on LGBT Community in India. *Contemporary Social Sciences* 27: 91–104.

22 Bhattacharya, S., Ghosh, D. and Purkayastha, B. 2022. 'Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act' of India: An Analysis of Substantive Access to Rights of a Transgender Community. *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 14: 676–697.

23 Wilson, G. 2004. Book Review: Gender, Pensions and the Life Course: How Pensions Need to Adapt to Changing Family Forms. *Journal of European Social Policy* 14: 442–443.

24 Panchal, T.J., Thusoo, S., Inamdar, V. and Balaji, A. 2023. Domestic Violence and the Law: A Study of Complaints Under the Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in Maharashtra, India. *Violence Against Women* 29: 2617–2638.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

The implementation and enforcement of these laws, along with societal attitudes and patriarchal norms, continue to pose obstacles to achieving gender justice. Internationally, initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on gender equality, provide a global framework for promoting gender justice. India, as a participant in the SDGs, has committed to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The National Policy for Women, formulated in 2016, serves as a comprehensive document outlining the government's commitment to addressing gender-based discrimination and violence²⁵. The legal and policy landscape concerning gender justice and the prevention of gender-based violence involves a complex interplay of international commitments and national legislative frameworks. While India has made significant strides in enacting laws and policies to address these issues, there is an ongoing need for effective implementation, awareness campaigns, and a societal shift towards gender equality to ensure a truly just and safe environment for all.

4. The Far-Reaching Ramifications of Gender-Based Violence

Gender justice and the eradication of gender-based violence are critical issues that demand comprehensive examination within the Indian legal framework²⁶. India has made significant strides in recognizing and addressing these concerns through a myriad of legislative measures, thereby shaping the legal landscape to foster a more equitable society. The Constitution of India, a cornerstone of the nation's legal framework, provides a robust foundation for gender justice. Article 14 guarantees the right to equality, ensuring that all individuals are treated equally before the law²⁷. In the pursuit of gender justice, this constitutional provision becomes

paramount, compelling the state to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities for all, irrespective of gender. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, of 2005, is a landmark legislation designed to address the pervasive issue of domestic violence. Enshrined within this Act is the recognition of various forms of abuse, including physical, verbal, emotional, and economic, signalling a holistic approach to combating gender-based violence within the domestic sphere. Section 3 of the Act defines domestic violence, providing a comprehensive framework for legal intervention and protection. To further strengthen the legal safeguards against gender-based violence, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, was enacted in response to the heinous Nirbhaya case. This amendment brought about significant changes to the Indian Penal Code, introducing new offenses such as acid attacks and stalking. Section 354 of the IPC now explicitly criminalizes assault or criminal force on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty, emphasizing the commitment of the legal system to address gender-specific crimes²⁸.

In the pursuit of gender justice, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, stands as a testament to India's commitment to creating safer work environments. This legislation mandates the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) in workplaces and outlines procedures for the redressal of complaints. Section 3 of the Act defines sexual harassment, providing a comprehensive framework for addressing this pervasive issue. While legislative measures are crucial, the effective implementation of these laws is equally vital. The judiciary plays a pivotal role in interpreting and upholding the spirit of gender justice²⁹. Landmark judgments, such as *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, have contributed to the evolution of jurisprudence surrounding sexual harassment at workplaces, emphasizing the duty of employers to provide a safe and conducive work environment for women. The far-reaching ramifications of gender justice and the

25 Baker, C. and Stein, N. 2016. Obscuring Gender-Based Violence: Marriage Promotion and Teen Dating Violence Research. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 37: 87–109.

26 Richardson, K. and Speed, A. 2019. Promoting Gender Justice within the Clinical Curriculum: Evaluating Student Participation in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign. *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education* 26: 87–131.

27 Right to equality and gender justice with special reference to legal education in India. 2023. *neuroquantology* 20.

28 Nurullaiev, I.S. ohly. 2023. Specific issues of criminal responsibility for commitment of war crimes in the international criminal court. *Legal position*: 162–166.

29 Urvashi, A. 2021. Gender Justice and Indian Labour (Legislative and Judiciary Approach). *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

battle against gender-based violence in India extend beyond the mere enactment of laws. It involves the active implementation of legislative measures, the evolution of judicial precedents, and a collective societal commitment to fostering an environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, can live free from the shackles of violence and discrimination. The legal framework in India, with its diverse statutes and sections, serves as a powerful tool in this ongoing struggle for a more just and equitable society.

5. Navigating Complexities: Intersectionality, Gender-Based Violence, and Vulnerable Populations

Navigating complexities within the context of intersectionality, gender-based violence, and vulnerable populations is a critical endeavour that demands a comprehensive understanding of the legal landscape in India³⁰. Addressing these issues requires an exploration of relevant acts, laws, and sections that safeguard the rights of marginalized communities. In the Indian legal framework, the Constitution provides the overarching framework for ensuring equality and justice. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, forming the basis for a multitude of legislation aimed at protecting vulnerable populations³¹. The intersectionality lens necessitates an examination of various facets of identity, acknowledging that individuals may face compounded vulnerabilities based on their gender, caste, religion, or other social markers. One key area of focus is gender-based violence, which has prompted legislative measures such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, of 2005. This Act recognizes the intersectional nature of violence, protecting women facing abuse within familial or domestic settings. Additionally, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, introduced amendments to the Indian Penal Code, addressing concerns related to sexual offenses and enhancing the punishment

for crimes against women. To comprehensively understand and address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations, it is essential to consider laws specific to various marginalized groups. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, for instance, protects against atrocities committed against individuals belonging to these communities. Similarly, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, of 2016, aims to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, recognizing the intersectional impact of disability and gender-based violence.

In the realm of intersectionality, where identities intersect and compound vulnerabilities, it becomes imperative to scrutinize legal provisions with a nuanced perspective. The judiciary, through its interpretative role, plays a crucial role in shaping the application of laws in diverse situations. Landmark judgments, such as those recognizing the rights of transgender individuals or affirming the autonomy of women in choices related to marriage and sexuality, contribute to the evolving legal discourse on intersectionality. However, the effectiveness of these legal provisions depends on their implementation and the accessibility of justice to vulnerable populations. Challenges persist, including systemic barriers, social stigma, and gaps in legal literacy.

6. Empowerment Strategies for Comprehensive Change

Gender justice and the elimination of gender-based violence are essential prerequisites for building a society that is both equitable and inclusive³². This paper delves into empowerment strategies within the context of Indian laws and acts, with a primary focus on driving substantial change in addressing gender justice and combating gender-based violence. The legal framework in India provides a foundation for such transformation, with acts like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, of 2005, emphasizing a holistic approach. Leveraging legislation, this paper advocates for empowering individuals through legal education, ensuring easier access to justice, and

30 Nainar, V. 2022. Understanding the rise of sexual violence in India. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence* 6: 9–27.

31 SPINU, O. 2021. The functionality of the principle of non-discrimination on grounds of gender, race, religion and sexual orientation in the postmodern society. *Postmodern Openings* 12.

32 SG, R. 2023. Gender Equality a Fundamental Human Right: Basis for Gender Inclusive Society. *Annals of Bioethics & Clinical Applications* 6.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

promoting institutional reforms. By exploring key acts such as the Right to Education Act, of 2009, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, of 2013, the paper outlines a comprehensive strategy to foster a society where gender justice prevails and gender-based violence is effectively addressed.

6.1 Empowerment through Legal Education:

A fundamental strategy in the pursuit of gender justice involves empowering individuals with knowledge of their legal rights. The Right to Education Act, of 2009, emerges as a pivotal tool in this endeavour by underscoring the significance of education for all, irrespective of gender³³. Through this legislation, India commits to providing accessible and inclusive education, laying a foundation for informed citizenry. To operationalize this commitment, the promotion of legal literacy programs becomes imperative. Specifically tailored to accentuate gender rights, these programs enable individuals to navigate the legal landscape effectively³⁴. Equipping people with the understanding of their rights not only fosters a sense of empowerment but also serves as a proactive measure against gender-based violence. By leveraging the provisions of the Right to Education Act, India can cultivate a society where individuals, armed with legal knowledge, contribute significantly to dismantling systemic barriers and advancing gender justice.

6.2 Enhancing Access to Justice:

Empowering survivors of gender-based violence hinges on facilitating swift and accessible justice. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, stands as a pivotal milestone in fortifying legal measures against sexual offenses in India³⁵. Through this legislation, crucial amendments

were introduced to address the pressing need for expeditious justice. The establishment of specialized courts and implementation of fast-track procedures, key components of the Act, play a crucial role in expediting the legal process for cases related to gender-based violence. These specialized courts are equipped to handle such cases with sensitivity and efficiency, ensuring that survivors receive timely redress. Moreover, the expeditious resolution of cases serves as a powerful deterrent, sending a clear message that perpetrators will be swiftly held accountable. The Act thus acts as a beacon of hope for survivors, signaling a commitment to a legal system that prioritizes their rights and well-being.

6.3 Institutional Reforms:

Institutional reforms are indispensable for challenging patriarchal norms and fostering gender justice. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, stands as a pivotal instrument in this endeavour³⁶. This legislation mandates the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees in workplaces, creating a structured mechanism to address and rectify instances of harassment. By providing a platform for victims to voice their concerns, this act contributes to cultivating work environments where women can operate free from the spectre of harassment. To fortify the impact of this legal provision, comprehensive training programs for both employees and employers are imperative. Such initiatives not only enhance awareness of the nuances of sexual harassment but also serve to instill a culture of gender justice within organizations. Training sessions can sensitize the workforce, encourage respectful behavior, and empower individuals to recognize and counteract discriminatory practices, ultimately contributing to a workplace that upholds the principles of equality and respect.

6.4 Community Engagement:

Effective change in addressing the pervasive issue of child marriages necessitates robust community involvement. The Prohibition of Child

33 Nandekar, U.P. 2012. Right to Education and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. SSRN Electronic Journal.

34 Potip, M.M. 2022. Contractual relationships during use computer programs in landscape. *Legal position* 37: 90–97.

35 Khumaeroh, I.N. and Wahyuningsih, S.E. 2020. Criminal Law Policy Against the Development of Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence Aims to Create Gender Justice. *Law Development Journal* 2: 346.

36 Banoo, S. 2020. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013- Legislative Commentary. SSRN Electronic Journal.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Marriage Act, of 2006, serves as a crucial tool in eradicating this harmful practice. Community-based programs, strategically leveraging the provisions of this act, play a pivotal role in raising awareness about the severe consequences associated with child marriages³⁷. Through targeted initiatives, communities can be empowered with the knowledge to recognize early signs of potential child marriages and understand the legal implications involved. These programs should aim not only to inform but also to foster a sense of collective responsibility within communities. By engaging with local leaders, educators, and grassroots organizations, a collaborative effort can be initiated to prevent and report instances of child marriages. Empowering community members to act as advocates against this violation of children's rights ensures that the prohibitions outlined in the act are not merely legal guidelines but actively shape societal norms. Through community-driven awareness campaigns and education, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act becomes a catalyst for tangible change, breaking the cycle of this harmful practice.

A comprehensive change in gender justice and the elimination of gender-based violence demand a multi-faceted approach, blending legal provisions with empowerment strategies³⁸. By leveraging existing Indian acts and laws, such as those mentioned above, and implementing education, access to justice, institutional reforms, and community engagement, we can strive towards a society where gender justice is a lived reality for all. This paper underscores the importance of continued efforts in shaping a legal landscape that empowers individuals and fosters a culture of respect and equality.

7. Role of Institutions and Stakeholders in Sustainable Development

The sustainable development of gender justice and the eradication of gender-based violence require

a multi-faceted approach, with institutions and stakeholders playing pivotal roles³⁹. In the Indian context, several acts, laws, and sections have been enacted to address these issues, reflecting the commitment of the legal system to promoting gender equality and protecting individuals from violence based on their gender. Institutions such as the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India serve as crucial bodies in advocating for gender justice. The NCW plays a key role in reviewing and monitoring the implementation of laws and policies related to women's rights, making recommendations for their effective enforcement. Additionally, the institution actively engages with stakeholders to raise awareness about gender-based violence, promoting a culture of gender sensitivity and inclusivity. Legal frameworks such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, of 2005, represent significant strides in addressing gender-based violence in India⁴⁰. This legislation acknowledges various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, economic, and sexual, providing a comprehensive legal recourse for victims. Sections 498A and 375 of the Indian Penal Code further criminalize offenses such as cruelty towards women and rape, reinforcing the commitment to combating gender-based violence. Stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), play a crucial role in complementing the efforts of institutions and contributing to sustainable development in the realm of gender justice. NGOs often function as intermediaries between the government and the community, implementing programs that raise awareness, provide support services, and empower individuals to combat gender-based violence. The collaborative efforts of institutions and NGOs are essential in fostering a comprehensive and inclusive approach towards sustainable gender justice.

In recent years, the movement has become

37 Development, P. for L. in. 2020. Grassroots Experiences of Using the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 Number 2 Adolescent Sexuality and Early Marriage Series. SSRN Electronic Journal.

38 Kabeer, N. 2011. Between Affiliation and Autonomy: Navigating Pathways of Women's Empowerment and Gender Justice in Rural. *Development and Change* 42: 499–528.

39 Gonzalez, O.M. 2016. Refugees and 'host communities' facing gender-based violence: developing an area-based approach to gender-based violence around Mbera Camp, Mauritania. *Gender & Development* 24: 375–390.

40 Panchal, T.J., Thusoo, S., Inamdar, V. and Balaji, A. 2023. Domestic Violence and the Law: A Study of Complaints Under the Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in Maharashtra, India. *Violence Against Women* 29: 2617–2638.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

a powerful force in highlighting and challenging gender-based violence across various sectors in India⁴¹. This movement, fueled by the collective voices of survivors, has led to increased awareness and scrutiny of workplace harassment, emphasizing the need for systemic change. Institutions, such as Internal Complaints Committees mandated by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013⁴², have been instrumental in addressing workplace harassment, ensuring a safer and more equitable environment for employees. However, challenges persist in the effective implementation of gender justice measures, and it is crucial for institutions and stakeholders to continually collaborate, innovate, and adapt strategies. Regular training programs for law enforcement agencies, judicial personnel, and other relevant stakeholders can enhance the understanding and application of gender-sensitive laws. Furthermore, ongoing research and data collection are essential for assessing the impact of existing policies and identifying areas for improvement in the pursuit of sustainable development in gender justice and the elimination of gender-based violence in India. The sustainable development of gender justice and the prevention of gender-based violence require a concerted effort from institutions, stakeholders, and society at large. The legal frameworks in place, coupled with the active involvement of institutions such as the NCW, and the collective advocacy of NGOs and movements, form a foundation for progress. By fostering collaboration, awareness, and continuous improvement⁴³, India can move closer to achieving sustainable gender justice and eliminating gender-based violence.

8. Challenges in Achieving Gender Justice

Gender justice and the prevention of gender-based violence pose significant challenges in India, reflecting a complex interplay of socio-cultural norms, legal frameworks, and institutional structures. One of the foremost obstacles lies in the deeply entrenched patriarchal mindset prevalent in society, perpetuating gender inequalities. Despite legislative advancements, such as the Constitution of India guaranteeing equality under Article 14, achieving gender justice remains a formidable task. The Indian legal system has made strides in addressing gender-based violence through various enactments. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, was a landmark legislation that amended the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act to strengthen laws against sexual offenses. However, implementation gaps and a slow judicial process often undermine the efficacy of these laws. Delays in trials, insensitive handling of cases, and societal stigma deter survivors from reporting incidents of gender-based violence.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, of 2005, is another crucial legislation aimed at safeguarding women's rights within the domestic sphere. However, its effective implementation faces hurdles due to a lack of awareness, inadequate training of law enforcement personnel, and societal normalization of domestic violence. Empowering women with knowledge about their legal rights and ensuring a responsive support system are integral to addressing these challenges. In addition to legislative measures, achieving gender justice necessitates a paradigm shift in societal attitudes. Discriminatory practices and harmful stereotypes persist, perpetuating a culture that normalizes gender-based violence. Sensitizing communities through educational programs and awareness campaigns is imperative to challenge ingrained prejudices and foster an environment conducive to gender equality. Furthermore, economic empowerment plays a pivotal role in mitigating gender-based violence⁴⁴. Unequal

41 Siwal, B.R. 2007. Gender Mainstreaming: Gender Auditing of Various Sectors in India. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

42 Banoo, S. 2020. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013- Legislative Commentary. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

43 Javidan, A., Raveendran, L., Rai, Y., Tackett, S., Kulasegaram, K.M., Whitehead, C., Rosenfield, J. and Houston, P. 2020. Fostering trust, collaboration, and a culture of continuous quality improvement: A call for transparency in medical school accreditation. *Canadian Education Journal*.

44 Rapinyana, M.O. and Baratedi, D.W.M. 2023. Gender Based Violence: Psychosocial, Economic and Physical Impacts and Proposed Mitigating Measures. *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied* 1: 538–546.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

access to resources and economic opportunities can exacerbate vulnerabilities, making individuals, especially women, more susceptible to abuse. Policies that promote economic inclusivity, equal pay, and entrepreneurship for women are essential components in the larger framework of achieving gender justice.

The recent amendments to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, reflect a positive step towards creating safer work environments. However, the challenges lie in enforcing these provisions across diverse workplaces, especially in informal sectors where awareness about the law is often lacking. Achieving gender justice and eliminating gender-based violence in India requires a multi-faceted approach encompassing legal reforms, societal transformation, economic empowerment, and educational initiatives. While legislative frameworks provide a foundation, their effectiveness hinges on overcoming implementation hurdles, fostering awareness, and challenging deep-seated cultural norms. A concerted effort from government bodies, civil society, and the public is indispensable to surmount these challenges and pave the way for a more just and equitable society.

9. Future Directions and Recommendations in Gender Justice

In the realm of gender justice and the prevention of gender-based violence in India, it is imperative to consider both existing legislative frameworks and potential future directions to strengthen the legal apparatus⁴⁵. The current legal landscape in India incorporates several key acts and sections aimed at addressing gender-based violence, yet there remains room for improvement. One significant legislative instrument is the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, of 2005. This act provides a comprehensive framework to safeguard women from various forms of domestic abuse. However, it is recommended that amendments be introduced to broaden the scope of protection, encompassing diverse forms of gender-based violence beyond the

traditional understanding of domestic violence.

Additionally, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, brought about critical amendments in response to the heinous Nirbhaya gang rape incident. While commendable, continuous evaluation and refinement are essential. Proposals for amendments could include defining and penalizing new forms of gender-based violence that have emerged in the digital realm, such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and non-consensual sharing of intimate images. To enhance the effectiveness of legal remedies, there is a need for stringent implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Establishing fast-track courts dedicated to hearing gender-based violence cases could expedite justice delivery. Adequate training for law enforcement personnel and judicial officers in handling such cases sensitively is equally crucial to ensuring fair and just proceedings. Furthermore, future directions should explore the incorporation of intersectionality within the legal framework⁴⁶. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQ+ individuals and persons with disabilities, will contribute to a more inclusive and equitable approach to gender justice. In light of the evolving nature of gender dynamics, revisiting and revising outdated laws is recommended. Periodic reviews and amendments can ensure that the legal framework remains relevant and responsive to the changing needs of society. This could involve collaboration with civil society organizations, experts, and survivors to gather diverse perspectives and insights. The pursuit of gender justice and the eradication of gender-based violence require a multifaceted approach that combines legal reforms, effective implementation, and societal awareness. By critically examining existing laws, incorporating intersectionality, and staying attuned to emerging challenges, India can progress toward a more just and inclusive society for all genders.

10. Conclusion

The pursuit of gender justice is imperative in any society aiming for true equality and social harmony.

45 Tyagi, N. 2020. Gender Violence, Gender Justice and Gender-Based Laws: An Analysis of Pattern and Policies in India and Indonesia. *Brawijaya Law Journal* 7: 141–162.

46 Shakya, S., Silva, S. and Cary, M. 2021. Applying Intersectionality Framework to Explore the Development of Frailty in Older Adults. *Innovation in Aging* 5: 992–992.

BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue globally, and India is no exception. The Indian legal framework has made significant strides in addressing gender-based violence, seeking to protect and empower individuals regardless of their gender. The commitment to gender justice is evident in various legislative measures and acts that have been enacted to eradicate gender-based violence. One pivotal piece of legislation is the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, of 2005, which recognizes the multifaceted nature of violence against women within the domestic sphere. This act provides a comprehensive legal apparatus to safeguard the rights of women facing domestic abuse and offers recourse through civil remedies. Similarly, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, of 2013, brought about crucial amendments to the Indian Penal Code, expanding the definition of sexual offenses and prescribing stringent penalties for perpetrators. These legal provisions demonstrate a concerted effort to address the deeply rooted issue of gender-based violence. Furthermore, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, serves as a landmark legislation aimed at creating a safe and conducive

work environment for women. By mandating the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees in workplaces and emphasizing preventive measures, this act contributes significantly to the broader goal of gender justice. While these legislative measures represent commendable steps forward, the effective implementation and enforcement of these laws remain challenging. It is crucial for stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, judicial bodies, and civil society, to collaborate in ensuring the proper execution of these legal provisions. Additionally, creating awareness and fostering a cultural shift that rejects gender-based violence is vital to supplement the legal framework. The fight against gender-based violence necessitates a multifaceted approach, combining legal measures with societal awareness and education. The existing Indian acts and laws provide a foundation for the pursuit of gender justice, but sustained efforts are required to bridge the gap between legislation and its effective implementation. Only through a comprehensive and collaborative effort can society aspire to eliminate gender-based violence and establish a more equitable and just environment for all.

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BATTLE AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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