

Social Dimensions of Developing India: Domestic Violence Against Men and Challenges of Gender Balance

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Abstract

The vision of a developed India by 2047 encompasses not only economic growth and technological advancement but also the creation of a socially inclusive and just society. While gender-based violence is widely acknowledged as a significant barrier to social development, domestic violence against men remains an underexplored and socially neglected issue. Traditional narratives of masculinity, societal expectations, and patriarchal norms often silence male victims, leaving them without adequate legal protection, social recognition, or support systems. Ignoring this dimension poses a subtle yet substantial challenge to achieving gender balance and inclusive growth, which are critical pillars of a developed nation. This study explores the social dimensions of development in India through the lens of male victimhood, arguing that sustainable development must integrate the well-being and protection of all genders. By examining the causes, manifestations, and impacts of domestic violence against men, the research highlights the gaps in policy, awareness, and social support structures. It further emphasizes the role of legal frameworks, mental health services, and educational interventions in creating an equitable society. Addressing male victimization is not merely a question of justice but also a strategic necessity for fostering gender balance, reducing social tensions, and enhancing community resilience. Through a combination of sociological analysis and policy evaluation, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on inclusive development, emphasizing that achieving the goal of Viksit Bharat @2047 requires acknowledging and mitigating all forms of domestic violence. Integrating male victimhood into gender justice policies will strengthen the social fabric and ensure that developmental strategies do not inadvertently perpetuate inequalities or overlook marginalized voices.

Keywords: *Social Justice; India Knowledge System; Development; Indian Culture; Education*

1. Introduction

The concept of a developed India, or Viksit Bharat, by 2047 envisions not only robust economic growth, technological advancement, and global competitiveness but also a socially inclusive framework that ensures justice, equality, and well-being for all its citizens. While significant attention has been given to gender inequality and violence against women, a critical yet underexplored dimension of gender-based violence is domestic violence against men. Traditional societal constructs of masculinity, reinforced through cultural norms and patriarchal structures, often inhibit men from expressing vulnerability or seeking help, thereby rendering their victimhood invisible. Male victims of domestic violence face unique challenges, including social stigma, lack of awareness about their rights, minimal support systems, and inadequate legal recognition, all of which contribute to their marginalization. The neglect of male victimization has implications not only for individual well-being but also for social cohesion and inclusive development, as the persistence of hidden suffering undermines efforts to achieve a balanced and equitable society.

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Addressing domestic violence against men, therefore, becomes an essential aspect of achieving the holistic development goals envisioned for India by 2047. From a sociological perspective, male victimization challenges the conventional understanding of gender roles and highlights the necessity of redefining masculinity in ways that accommodate emotional vulnerability, equitable power dynamics, and reciprocal responsibilities in domestic spaces. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of policy intervention, awareness campaigns, and community-based support mechanisms that recognize men as legitimate victims of violence. By integrating male victimhood into broader gender justice frameworks, India can strengthen its social fabric, foster trust in legal and support systems, and promote inclusive development that aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This study aims to examine the prevalence, causes, and consequences of domestic violence against men while exploring the social, cultural, and policy-related factors that hinder gender balance. By highlighting the intersection between male victimization and societal development, it seeks to inform strategies that ensure equitable growth, social justice, and the realization of a truly inclusive and developed India by 2047.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the prevalence, patterns, and social determinants of domestic violence against men in India.
- To analyse the challenges of achieving gender balance in the context of male victimization.
- To evaluate existing legal, social, and policy frameworks addressing domestic violence against men.
- To propose strategies for integrating male victimhood into the broader agenda of inclusive development and social justice for Viksit Bharat @2047.

3. Social Dimensions of Developing India & Domestic Violence against Men.

The vision of a developed India by 2047 extends beyond economic growth to include social justice and gender equity. While domestic violence against women is widely acknowledged, male victimization remains largely invisible due to societal norms, stereotypes of masculinity, and inadequate legal recognition. Ignoring this dimension undermines gender balance and inclusive development, as male victims often face stigma, limited support, and psychological distress. Addressing domestic violence against men is crucial for fostering equitable social structures, strengthening legal and support frameworks, and promoting holistic well-being. Integrating male victimhood into policy and awareness initiatives is essential for a truly inclusive Viksit Bharat.

3.1. Prevalence, patterns, and social determinants of domestic violence against men in India.

Domestic violence against men, though less visible than violence against women, is a critical social issue in India that has largely remained underreported due to cultural norms, stereotypes of masculinity, and societal stigma. The prevalence of such violence varies across regions, socio-economic strata, and marital or familial settings, often occurring in the form of physical abuse, emotional manipulation, economic control, or neglect. Patterns of male victimization reveal that married men, men in joint family systems, and those experiencing financial stress are particularly vulnerable. Social determinants, including patriarchal expectations, rigid gender roles, and societal perceptions that men must be dominant and resilient, often prevent them from acknowledging abuse or seeking help. Psychological impacts are profound, with male victims experiencing depression, anxiety, and social isolation, which may also affect family dynamics and work-life balance. The lack of empirical studies and official statistics further obscures the true scale of the problem, creating barriers for policy formulation and effective intervention. Moreover, cultural norms discourage disclosure, as men fear ridicule, loss of social status, or disbelief from authorities and peers. Understanding the prevalence and patterns of domestic violence against men requires comprehensive research that incorporates sociological, psychological, and demographic factors to identify vulnerable groups, the nature of abuse, and contextual triggers. Examining these social determinants not only highlights the hidden challenges faced by male victims but also underscores the necessity for interventions that address societal perceptions, improve awareness, and facilitate accessible support systems. Recognizing and documenting male victimization is an essential step in creating

evidence-based strategies for inclusive development, ensuring that gender justice encompasses all victims irrespective of gender, and strengthening the social fabric required for a balanced and equitable society in India.

3.2. Challenges of achieving gender balance in the context of male victimization.

Achieving gender balance in India entails not only addressing historical disadvantages faced by women but also recognizing the often overlooked vulnerabilities of men, particularly in the context of domestic violence. Male victimization presents unique challenges to the pursuit of equitable gender relations because societal frameworks, policies, and cultural norms are predominantly designed with women as the primary victims of abuse. Men who face domestic violence frequently encounter disbelief, social stigma, and ridicule, which discourages disclosure and reduces their participation in support and intervention programs. This invisibility of male victimhood can skew perceptions of gender justice and policy priorities, resulting in an unbalanced approach that neglects the experiences of a significant portion of the population. Furthermore, rigid constructions of masculinity emphasize emotional restraint, physical strength, and authority within family and social hierarchies, making it difficult for men to report abuse or seek help without fear of being labelled weak or unmanly. Legal and social frameworks often lack gender-neutral provisions or tailored interventions for male victims, creating systemic barriers to achieving true gender balance. These challenges are compounded by a lack of awareness among policymakers, law enforcement, and the general public regarding male victimization, which perpetuates underreporting and marginalization. Additionally, the psychological impact of domestic violence on men—such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal—can affect family relationships, workforce participation, and broader societal engagement, indirectly influencing the country's social development goals. Addressing these challenges requires an expansion of the gender discourse to include men as legitimate victims, promoting equitable policies, awareness campaigns, and social support mechanisms that validate male experiences. Only by confronting these structural, cultural, and perceptual obstacles can India move towards a truly inclusive and balanced approach to gender justice, which is essential for fostering social cohesion and achieving the broader vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

3.3. Evaluate existing legal, social, and policy frameworks addressing domestic violence against men.

The legal, social, and policy frameworks addressing domestic violence in India have historically prioritized women, resulting in limited provisions and recognition for male victims. Current legislation, such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, primarily focuses on safeguarding women, leaving men with minimal legal recourse when they experience abuse. Although Indian Penal Code sections related to assault, cruelty, and harassment can be invoked by men, these laws are often gender-neutral in wording but biased in societal and institutional interpretation, leading to challenges in reporting and prosecution. Social support structures, including counseling centers, helplines, and shelters, are overwhelmingly designed for female victims, which leaves men without accessible avenues for immediate protection or psychological rehabilitation. Policy initiatives have similarly lacked a targeted approach toward male victimization, with minimal research, awareness campaigns, or training programs for law enforcement and judiciary to recognize and respond effectively to male victims. In addition, societal perceptions of masculinity, family honor, and male resilience often influence the implementation of laws, creating barriers for men seeking justice. While some NGOs and advocacy groups have begun addressing male domestic violence, their scale remains limited, and integration with governmental policies is minimal. Evaluating these frameworks reveals systemic gaps in recognition, accessibility, and enforcement, highlighting the urgent need for gender-inclusive policies that consider both male and female victimization. A comprehensive evaluation also points to the necessity of data-driven research, targeted interventions, and awareness programs to sensitize society and institutions about male domestic violence. Strengthening the legal, social, and policy architecture in this regard is essential not only for protecting individual rights but also for promoting equitable gender relations and inclusive social development, which are critical for achieving the broader objectives of Viksit Bharat @2047.

3.4. Strategies for integrating male victimhood into the broader agenda of inclusive development and social justice for Viksit Bharat @2047.

Integrating male victimhood into India's development agenda is vital for ensuring gender justice, social equity, and inclusive progress as the nation moves toward the goal of Viksit Bharat @2047. Strategic measures should begin with legal reform, including amendments to existing domestic violence laws to explicitly recognize men as potential victims and provide gender-neutral protections, ensuring access to restraining orders, legal aid, and rehabilitation services. Awareness campaigns at community, regional, and national levels are essential to challenge stereotypes of masculinity that discourage men from reporting abuse, normalize help-seeking behaviors, and sensitize society to the prevalence and impact of male victimization. Establishing specialized support mechanisms, such as helplines, counseling centers, and safe shelters for men, would address psychological, social, and economic needs, thereby mitigating the negative consequences of abuse. Training programs for law enforcement, judicial officers, and social workers must incorporate modules on male domestic violence to improve sensitivity, response, and enforcement, reducing institutional bias and improving reporting rates. Policy measures should also include research and data collection initiatives to systematically document the prevalence, patterns, and social determinants of male victimization, which would provide an evidence base for future interventions. Integrating male-focused strategies with broader gender justice and development policies ensures that social programs are equitable, comprehensive, and inclusive, supporting both men and women as stakeholders in India's progress. Additionally, promoting public discourse on emotional vulnerability, healthy family dynamics, and gender equality will help reshape societal attitudes and create a more supportive environment for male victims. By addressing male domestic violence through multi-dimensional legal, social, and policy interventions, India can strengthen its social fabric, enhance equitable development, and foster a society that aligns with the holistic vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, where gender justice is truly inclusive and all citizens are empowered to participate fully in social, economic, and civic life.

4. Conclusion & Suggestions

Domestic violence against men represents a hidden yet significant challenge in India's journey toward a socially inclusive and developed nation. As India strives to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, acknowledging male victimhood becomes imperative for ensuring gender balance and equitable social progress. The persistence of patriarchal norms and rigid masculinity constructs often silences male victims, denying them access to justice, support, and recognition. Ignoring this dimension not only perpetuates social injustice but also undermines the holistic development of society by leaving a substantial portion of the population vulnerable and marginalized. Addressing domestic violence against men, therefore, requires a multifaceted approach encompassing legal reform, social awareness, psychological support, and policy-level interventions. Recognizing men as victims is not a challenge to women's rights; rather, it is a critical step toward achieving inclusive development that respects and protects the rights and dignity of all individuals. By incorporating male victimization into gender justice frameworks, India can foster a more equitable society where both men and women can participate fully in social, economic, and political life, thus reinforcing the broader objectives of sustainable growth and social cohesion essential for the realization of Viksit Bharat @2047.

5. Suggestions

To address domestic violence against men and promote gender balance in India's path to development, several strategic measures are recommended. Firstly, legal frameworks should be reviewed and strengthened to explicitly recognize men as potential victims of domestic violence, ensuring access to protection, legal recourse, and rehabilitation services. Secondly, awareness campaigns at national and community levels must challenge stereotypes of masculinity that prevent men from reporting abuse and seeking help, while educating society about the prevalence and impact of male victimization. Thirdly, specialized support systems, including counselling services, helplines, and safe shelters for men, should be established to provide psychological, social, and legal assistance. Fourthly, training programs for law enforcement, judiciary, and social workers must include modules on male domestic violence to

improve sensitivity, response, and intervention mechanisms. Additionally, research and data collection should be enhanced to understand patterns, causes, and social consequences of male victimization, thereby informing evidence-based policies. Integrating male-focused interventions into broader gender justice initiatives will help achieve a more balanced approach, fostering inclusive development, equitable social structures, and a resilient society. These measures, implemented in tandem with ongoing efforts to address women's issues, can ensure that India's development trajectory toward Viksit Bharat @2047 remains truly inclusive and socially just for all genders.

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