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Crimes Against Women in India: How do Socio-economic Factors Influence Reports?

Rimpa Ghosh
Department of Economics & Politics, Visva Bharati University, India

Abstract
This study proposes to examine the patterns and determinants of crime against women in India. We focus on the demographic, social and economic factors behind the quantum of officially reported crimes across states. Our data relates to crime in 29 states and 7 union territories across India from 1995 to the current available period (2018). We will also compare actual, unreported and reported crime against women. Various relationship-tables, rank-charts, maps, and diagrams are considered together with different regression models to study the interrelationship between those determinants and crime against women. We may find a positive relationship between socio-economic development and crime-reporting which implies an inverse relationship between socio-economic development and unreported-crime. As a result, a declining trend in reporting gaps between actual and official reported crimes, i.e., a decrease in unreported-crimes may occur.

Key Word: *Reported crime, Unreported crime, Crime against women, Socio-economic factors.*

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I. Introduction

Crime against women is a serious problem in every part of society, at every stage of life. In developing countries like India, it is considered to be one of the major obstacles to the attainment of equality and overall economic, social, political and cultural development because it carries multiple negative impacts on physical, human and social capital directly or indirectly. From ancient times, India has been a male-dominated country where women have been suffering in various ways. They face different types of physical and psychological violence and the fear of violence, although there has been substantial progress in women's education and empowerment, growth in social awareness, along with economic growth and development, technological progress and so on. This paper can be inserted in the literature on socio-economic and political economic aspects of crime and development. Even at the international level, there are not a wide range of studies on the issue of crime against women. Some studies confirm the positive impact of law and order, while others have observed the negative effect of the law on crime reporting. The mandatory arrest laws for domestic crime create higher non-reporting of crime incidents, which leads to a higher number of homicides (Iyengar et al, 2009). Stevenson and Wolfers et al. (2006) show that divorce laws prevent domestic violence against women. Clots and Figueras (2011), however, show that politicians invest heavily in education and health biasedly on the basis of their own gender and social position. Actually, this paper argues that female legislators prefer or insist on more women-friendly laws than others. The impact of women's relative wages on domestic violence was studied by Aizer (2010). Other important papers that mention similar issues inAtray (1988); Devi Prasad(1994);Fafchamps&Minten (2006)Drèze&Khera(2000);Prasad (2013). In the case of India's specific literature, only a few empirical studies have been conducted to identify the socioeconomic factors that lead to increased crime against women and some of the studies are descriptive and qualitative in nature. In one of the earlier papers, Mukherjee, Rustagi and Krishnaji (2001) analysed official NCRB data and tried to find a pattern of the nature of crime against women in India. Most other studies focus on the link between criminalization of politics and crime against women. Powley (2007) and Iyer, mani, Mishra (2012) argue that Women's Political Representation and decreased crime against women in India. From a different perspective, Kumari and Alwis (1996) argue that 'crime against women has roots in the male dominated socio-economic, political and legal order'. Although serious research on family violence can be dated back to the early 1980s, yet there are few studies which have been published on domestic violence against women. Kumagai and Straus (1983) showed a positive correlation between wife-beating and lower socio-economic conditions. Prescott and Letko (1977) suggested that "Violence is a product of socially structured stress resulting from unemployment, social class, economic deprivation, unfulfilled expectations, pregnancy, and the like, and violence is used in such contexts if it is an accepted response to stress". Banerjee (2018) shows an interesting thing that having a women chief minister has no impact on actual and reported crime against women in India. Economic progress leads to decline

crime against women. In my research, the new thing is a comparison analysis of reported and unreported number of crimes against women on the basis of demographic, social and economic factors behind the quantum of officially reported crimes across states and to find out the reasons behind the gap between actual and reported crimes.

The purpose of our study is to focus on the demographic, social and economic factors behind the quantum of officially reported crimes across states. The present study seeks to examine the causality between 'Socio-economic factors' and 'crime reporting' and their impact on the gap between the actual & official reports of crime in the case of 29 states and 7 union territories individually across India.

II. Material And Methods

In this research, the present study has been conducted mainly on the basis of secondary data collected from official NCRB reports and other government reports or official sources like: Ministry of Home Affairs, National Commission for Women etc. Socioeconomic explanatory variables have been taken from various sources, namely the census data, the RBI website and the indiastat.com website. Here, we developed a state and country level time series data set and a panel data set with information on crimes against women, especially dowry-death, cruelty by husband and his relatives, rape, kidnapping and abduction, women insult related crimes over the available period. We have considered all 29 states and 7 union territories in our study. Our dependent variable of interest is reported crime against women. There are several variables through which we can measure reported crime against women. We standardise all variables as a measure of the per lakh (hundred thousand) population. Therefore, the dependent variables:

(a) We take the total number of crimes against women reported per lakh (hundred thousand) population.

(b) Rape cases reported: We take rape cases reported per lakh (hundred thousand) population.

(c) Kidnapping and abduction of girls reported: Kidnapping and abduction cases reported per lakh (hundred thousand) population.

(d) Dowry-deaths reported: Dowry death cases reported per lakh (hundred thousand) population.

(e) Cruelty by husband and relatives: Torture by husband and relatives is reported per lakh (hundred thousand) population.

(f) Women insult related cases reported: Molestation cases reported per lakh (hundred thousand) population.

NCRB data gives the number of reported crime against women. Often crime against women go unreported. Therefore, finding out the true relationship between crime against women and different explanatory variables is difficult and challenging. The important explanatory variables that we have taken are:

a) Male-female ratio measured in terms of females per thousand males for each state.

b) Per-capita net state domestic product

c) Growth rate of per-capita net state domestic product

d) Gross enrolment ratio measured by category wise number of students enrolled per thousand population.

e) Male literacy rate measured as percentage of literate males.

f) Female literacy rate measured as percentage of literate females.

g) Unemployment rate measured by percentage of unemployed per thousand population.

h) Cast measured by different categories.

i) Religion measured by different categories.

j) Number of police stations per lakh (hundred thousand) population for each state.

k) Female labour force participation measured in terms of percentage of females engaged in the labour force within the age group 18-65.

l) Degree of urbanization measured in terms of percentage of population residing in urban areas for each state.

In addition, the study will have other state specific factors (state specific cultural and other inherent factors) which will be included in regression. Various relationship tables, rank charts, maps and diagrams are considered together with the regression model to study the interrelationship between those determinants and crime against women.

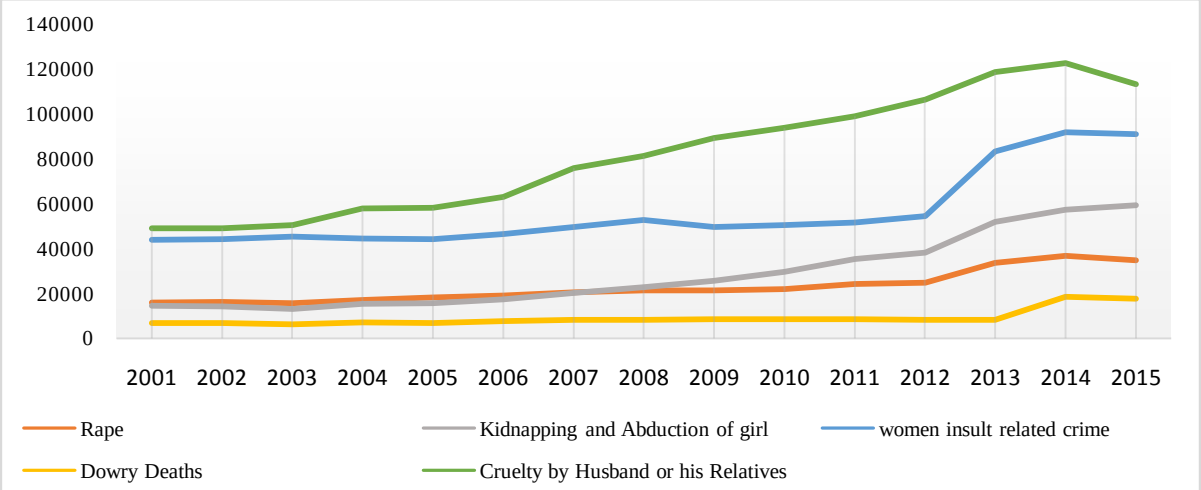

Figure 1: Reported number of crimes against women in India
Source: National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB)

In a complex and pluralistic socio-economic environment like that of India, it is highly challenging and important to identify various determinants of crime. In particular, the economic motivation behind committing a crime might differ depending on its nature. A pertinent question is to distinguish the explanatory factors behind crime against women. It is generally hypothesised that a progressive and liberal economic environment leads to a reduction in the crime rate. Quite paradoxically, in the Indian context both the crime rate in general and the crime rate against females have increased instead of falling down. Within these, the crime rate against women has shown a rising trend above the overall crime rate (from NCRB Data Record). The reasons underlining this observation need to be investigated. Another paradox is that, in spite of various measures to empower women, which are expected to bring down the crime rate against them, inside the home and outside the home, cruelty against women through various criminal activities is rising. What could be the reasons behind these rising trends individually in the case of crime against women? This constitutes another issue to be investigated. It will be interesting to examine how the state wise behavioural patterns and socio-economic factors of crime may vary in the case of crime against women. If criminal decisions are considered to be a component of rational behaviour and choice theory, the question of how much relative risk aversion influences the decision to commit short- and long-term crimes against women in terms of cost-benefit model analysis arises.

III. **Determinants of Crime Against Women**:

Table-I shows that the percentage of the population residing in urban areas, the percentage of literate males and females, the number of educational institutes per lakh population and gross enrolment ratio at upper primary level are positively related to the number of reported crime against women. An increase or decrease in any one of these independent variables will result in an increase or decrease in the number of reported crime against women. On the other hand, gross state domestic product at constant price, percentage growth-rate of per capita net state domestic product government social sector expenditures, percentage of people below poverty line and number of jails per lakh population are negatively related to the reported crime against women, which means there is an inverse relationship and an increase in any one of these variables will result in a decrease in reported crime against women in India and vice-versa. The percentage of females engaged in the labour force within the age group of 18 to 65, the unemployment rate and the government's social sector expenditure & govt. external crime-related laws are positively related to the number of reported crime against women. An increase or decrease in any one of these independent variables will result in an increase or decrease in the number of reported crime against women. So, we can say the percentage growth-rate of per capita net state domestic product is negatively related to reported crime against women. The overall period (2001 to 2018) shows that the sex ratio (number of females per thousand males), male-female literacy rate, number of educational institutes per lakh population and gross enrolment ratio at upper primary level are positively related to the reported crime against women. On the other hand, gross state domestic product at constant price, below poverty line people, rate of unemployed people, number of jails and percentage growth rate of per capita net state domestic products are inversely related to the reported crime against women.

Table I: Reported Crime against Women and Determinants (28 states, Panel Regression): 2001-18									
Dependant Variable: Reported Crime against Women (per lakh population)									
	Rape			Kidnapping & Abduction			Women Insult Related Crime		
Explanatory variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Urban Population (%)	0.525**		0.145	-0.207		-0.26	0.258		-0.052
	(0.161)		(0.184)	(0.296)		(0.28)	(0.169)		(0.196)
Sex Ratio	0.00414		0.00321	0.00199		0.00296	0.0101***		0.0102***
	(0.00245)		(0.00255)	(0.00296)		(0.00261)	(0.00253)		(0.00271)
Female Work Force Participation Rate	-0.00127		-0.000363	-0.0187		0.0192**	0.00301		0.0057
	(0.00866)		(0.00842)	(0.0146)		(0.0128)	(0.00934)		(0.00904)
Female Literacy Rate	0.0213***			0.0124			0.0252***		
	(0.00474)			(0.0138)			(0.00487)		
Educational Institute	0.143***		0.145***	0.297		0.239	0.0760**		0.0756*
	(0.0223)		(0.0241)	(0.207)		(0.198)	(0.027)		(0.0293)
Boy Dropout Ratio	0.00124			0.00252			0.000371		
	(0.00126)			(0.00513)			(0.00137)		
Gross State Domestic Product	-0.227***			0.128			-0.175*		
	(0.0664)			(0.0892)			(0.0841)		
Poverty Rate	-0.0115***		-0.0120***	-0.00446		-0.00159	-0.0144***		-0.0175***
	(0.00291)		(0.00271)	(0.0117)		(0.0103)	(0.00344)		(0.00326)
Unemployment Rate	-0.00539		-0.0127	0.206*		0.170*	-0.0323		0.0466*
	(0.0172)		(0.0176)	(0.0841)		(0.0815)	(0.0223)		(0.0228)
Jail (Per Lakh Population)	-0.975***			0.608			-1.253***		
	(0.261)			(0.897)			(0.345)		
Male Literacy Rate		0.0487***	0.0371***		-0.0605	0.0149		0.0209**	0.0319***
		(0.00829)	(0.00799)		(0.0564)	(0.02)		(0.00713)	(0.00813)
Gross Enrolment Ratio		0.00310**			0.00239			0.00618***	
		(0.001)			(0.00389)			(0.00101)	
Girl Dropout Ratio		0.000375	-1.64E-05		-0.00443	-0.0018		-0.00125	0.000346
		(0.0011)	(0.00117)		(0.00786)	(0.00444)		(0.00115)	(0.00134)
Growth Rate Of Per Capita NSDP		-0.00402***			-0.0296**			-0.00686***	
		(0.00118)			(0.00947)			(0.00147)	
Social Sector Expenditure		-0.0317	-0.0721*		0.614**	0.236*		0.0542	-0.0249
		(0.0277)	(0.0288)		(0.216)	(0.0976)		(0.0287)	(0.0366)
Police (Per Lakh Population)		-0.0257	0.026		0.0289	0.27		0.0503	0.0334
		(0.0625)	(0.0608)		(0.27)	(0.17)		(0.065)	(0.076)
_cons	-1.695	-1.697**	-4.273*	-3.55	1.654	-5.660*	-6.984***	-0.671	-9.795***
	(2.028)	(0.62)	(2.066)	(3.186)	(3.923)	(2.801)	(2.07)	(0.595)	(2.14)
Number of observations	336	336	336	112	112	112	420	420	420
R^2	0.535	0.426	0.512	0.54	0.473	0.51	0.57	0.529	0.546
Prob > F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Standard errors in parentheses
*p < 0.05, **p <0.01, ***p < 0.001

Table-II shows that the percentage of the population residing in urban areas, the male-female literacy rate, the number of educational institutes per lakh population and gross enrolment ratio at upper primary level are directly related, and on the contrary, gross state domestic product at constant price and the growth rate of per capita net state domestic product are inversely related to the reported total crime against women. Sex ratio (number of females per thousand males), male-female literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, and girls' drop-out ratio within the age group of 6 to 16 are positively related and the percentage of the population residing in urban areas is negatively related to the reported total crime against women. The overall scenario is that the male-female literacy rate, the number of educational institutes, and gross enrolment ratio at upper primary level have a positive impact on the reported number of total crime against women. Inversely, gross state domestic product, growth rate of per capita net state domestic product, and government social sector expenditure have a negative impact on the reported number of total crimes against women.

Table II: Reported Crime against Women and Determinants (28 states, Panel Regression): 2001-18

Dependant Variable: Reported Crime against Women (per lakh population)

Explanatory variables	Dowry Death			Cruelty by Husband & his Relatives			Total Crime Against Women		
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Urban Population (%)	0.882*		0.407	-4.498***		-6.920***	0.0368		-0.555
	(0.364)		(0.408)	(1.144)		(1.239)	(0.262)		(0.297)
Sex Ratio	-0.00364		-0.00485	0.0405*		0.0386*	0.00601		0.00592
	(0.0052)		(0.00529)	(0.0181)		(0.017)	(0.00374)		(0.00387)
Female work force participation rate	-0.0402		-0.0329	-0.0024		0.0758	-0.0185		-0.00424
	(0.0198)		(0.0189)	(0.0747)		(0.0635)	(0.0148)		(0.0138)
Female literacy rate	0.0565***			0.117**			0.0635***		
	(0.0101)			(0.0367)			(0.00721)		
Educational Institute	0.268***		0.289***	0.361		0.232	0.219***		0.237***
	(0.0475)		(0.05)	(0.242)		(0.241)	(0.0401)		(0.0419)
Boy Dropout Ratio	-0.00229			0.0166			0.00031		
	(0.00267)			(0.0106)			(0.00202)		
Gross State Domestic Product	-0.459**			-1.378			-0.333*		
	(0.144)			(1.039)			(0.129)		
Poverty Rate	-0.00706		-0.00929	-0.0048		-0.0105	0.00184		-0.00479
	(0.00709)		(0.0064)	(0.0357)		(0.0311)	(0.0058)		(0.00528)
Unemployment Rate	-0.00642		-0.00775	0.0369		0.00084	0.00622		-0.00417
	(0.0361)		(0.0362)	(0.088)		(0.0822)	(0.0332)		(0.0327)
Jail (per lakh population)	-0.459			1.961			-0.26		
	(0.555)			(1.218)			(0.516)		
Male literacy rate		0.0898***	0.0830***		-0.0442	0.163**		0.0793***	0.0912***
		(0.0174)	(0.0167)		(0.064)	(0.0507)		(0.0124)	(0.0117)
Gross Enrolment Ratio		0.00729***			0.00932*			0.00613***	
		(0.00198)			(0.00425)			(0.00155)	
Girl Dropout Ratio		0.00252	0.000181		0.00286	0.0189*		0.000203	0.00149
		(0.00215)	(0.00241)		(0.0086)	(0.00813)		(0.00173)	(0.00192)
Growth Rate of Per Capita NSDP		-0.00980***			-0.00533			-0.00696**	
		(0.00232)			(0.0103)			(0.00216)	
Social Sector Expenditure		-0.120*	-0.105		0.206	0.103		-0.0942*	-0.0512
		(0.0535)	(0.0617)		(0.239)	(0.259)		(0.0446)	(0.054)
Police (per Lakh population)		0.119	0.236		-0.189	-0.101		0.168	0.271*
		(0.13)	(0.134)		(0.295)	(0.257)		(0.112)	(0.113)

_cons	5.61	-6.171***	-2.645	-11.3	3.32	-30.21*	-4.089	-5.624***	-11.82***
	(4.545)	(1.364)	(4.427)	(14.92)	(4.4)	(13.73)	(3.223)	(1.022)	(3.111)
Number of observations	325	325	325	111	111	111	409	409	409
R^2	0.385	0.367	0.383	0.392	0.305	0.408	0.464	0.439	0.473
Prob > F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Standard errors in parentheses
*p < 0.05, **p <0.01, ***p < 0.001

A multi-collinearity test was performed and collinearity was found between female literacy-rate & male literacy-rate; between number of police per lakh population & percentage of population residing in urban areas; and between social sector expenditure & sex ratio. The value of R in table-I indicates the relationship between the combination of explanatory variables and the dependent variable. On an average, the value of R2 lies between 0.42 to 0.57, which shows that 42% to 57% of the dependent variable, i.e., the reported number of individual crime against women can be explained by independent variables where P = 0.000, which is highly significant, indicates that it is a good fit and the overall regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variables. In table-II, the value of R2 lies between 0.30 to 0.47, which means 30% to 47% of the dependent variable, i.e., the reported number of total crime against women can be explained by the independent variables. Here the P value is 0.000, which is also a good fit.

IV. Discussion and Analysis

If we consider that the number of unreported crimes has decreased and some previous years' unreported crime have been reported, then we need to find out what the justifications are behind it.

In our study (Table-I & II), the number of police has no significant impact on determining the reported crime against women. Although in our society, the number of police plays an important role in crime control and reducing unreported crimes. The number of jails per lakh population has an inverse impact on crime against women. That means, if the number of jails increases, then the number of crimes outside the home decreases. That's why reported crime may decrease and vice-versa. As a result, we can say the gap between recorded or unrecorded crime will decrease if the number of jails per population increases. It is a very important determinant to represent the reported number of crime and to detect unrecorded crime. Now we will focus on the relationship between socio-economic factors and reported crime against women. In the case of crime against women, the urban population is not a significant determinant in interpreting the increase in reported crime. That means if the percentage of the population residing in urban areas increases, then reporting of crime also increases, and vice-versa. In the case of total crime against women, the urban population has a mirror image impact on the whole period. We find that the urban population and the reported number of total crimes against women have a positive relationship in the overall period. Reporting of crime inside the home is increasing, but it may be that actual crime is decreasing because of urbanization. As a result, the gap between the actual and reported number of crimes is decreasing. The increased sex ratio does have a significant positive reporting effect on crime against women. If females per thousand-males increases, then reporting of crime against women also increases and if decreases then reporting of crime also decreases. Higher number of females per thousand-males (sex ratio) in a society may lead to a greater number of reporting of crime because of the diminishing gender gap. Increasing female unity or majority, and female-voice can also decrease the reporting gap of crime against women (Table-I, II). There is no significant role of female work force participation (percentage of females engaged in the labour force within the age group of 18-65) in reported incidents of crime. But, higher percentage of females engaged in the labour force in a society lead a strong financial independency of female. Because of that reason, reporting of crime should be increased, mainly in cases of outside the home related crimes such as sextual harassment, rape, molestation, kidnapping, and so on. On the other hand, inside the home they are an important part of their family because of their income as well as their financial contribution to the family, so not only does reporting of crime increase, but actual crime may also decrease inside the home. The male-female literacy rate is an important variable that may help in determining the reporting of crime. It is expected that as the literacy rate in a society increases, fewer crimes will be committed or a greater number of crimes will be reported. Through the overall period, we also find a positive relationship between the male-female literacy rate and the reporting of crime against women inside and outside the home. Because, proper education can change the mindset of a society with a good vibe. It can also increase social awareness of people and teach them how to protest wrong-doing and support proper justice. We find a positive relationship between male-female literacy rate and reporting of crime against women inside and outside the home. The increasing number of educational institutes per-lakh people may increase the opportunity for education as well as the reported number of crimes. Increased gross enrolment ratio does have a significant positive impact on the reporting of crime against women. In our

society, education is the main source of human capital, so it has an important role in controlling crime and decreasing the un-reporting of crime. Only in the case of total crime, we find a positive impact of the girl dropout ratio on reported total crime against women. That means the dropout rate of girls may increase, which may lead to a greater number of domestic violence and crime inside the home. The interesting fact is that, we did not get any type of relationship between the girl-boy dropout ratio and crime against women outside the home. We find an inverse relationship between poverty-line (the percentage of people below the poverty line) and the reporting of outside-the-home crime. That means if the percentage of people below poverty line decreases, then reporting of crimes increase because of the improvement in financial condition. Unfortunately, we did not get any significant results in the case of total crime against women. If the unemployment rate increases, then kidnapping & abduction, and women's insult-related crimes will increase in our society. In both ways, gross state domestic product is one of the factors which can affect the reported of crime in both ways. We would expect the crime rate to go down if the GSDP was greater, i.e., if the state is rich enough. On the other hand, it can have a negative relationship too, as criminals will have more chances to commit crimes, because in a developed society, criminals may be rich and backed up by someone and women are frequently going outside for work or any reason. Because GSDP doesn't incorporate educational & moral value directly or immediately and we know that the meaning of growth & development is always different. In our study, we find very interesting results in the case of total crime against women. GSDP has a negative impact on reported crime. That means if GSDP increases, then inside and outside the home, actual-crime against women may decrease, but reporting of crime is increasing because of the rich and developed condition of society. On the other way when GSDP is decreasing, then actual crime may increase because of the poor financial condition of society, but reporting is decreasing. Here the same logic is followed as in GSDP. The growth rate of per capita net state domestic product GRPCNSDP has a negative impact on individual reported crime. If GRPCNSDP increases, then inside and outside the home, actual-crime against women may decrease, but reporting of crime is increasing. Higher the social sector expenditure leads to greater development and growth in a society. As a result, SSE has a negative impact on crime against women over the whole period. That means, if SSE increases, then crime may decrease that's why reporting is less and vice-versa. Which means, because of social awareness and development, an increase in SSE may lead to a higher number of reports as well as a lower number of crimes against women and vice-versa.

The problem is that reported crime may not follow an actual crime in most cases. Since actual crime data is not available in nature, it is very difficult to determine the gap between actual and reported crime against women.

V. Conclusions

The declining trend of reporting-gap between actual and official reported crime may lead to a decrease in unreported crime. But the fact is, socio-economic development alone is not sufficient to prevent crime and to reduce unreported crime. It would be more fruitful if socio-economic, women's-safety-centric, as well as crime-prevention-related development policies worked simultaneously. In terms of policy prescriptions, to prevent crime against women, society needs state, area and sector-wise separate resource allocation and policy implementation by the govt. where actually needed. To make it successful, adequate government intervention, monitoring, as well as public awareness programmes are also needed so that women can explore their full potential fearlessly and contribute themselves to building the nation.

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