



Exploring the Types of Abuses Faced by Women in Bangalore City: A Qualitative Study

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This qualitative study aims to explore the various types of abuse experienced by women in Bangalore City, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and digital forms of abuse. The research focuses on understanding the lived experiences of women, the impact of abuse on their mental and emotional well-being, and the effectiveness of support systems in addressing these issues. Using a phenomenological approach, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with a diverse group of women aged 18–50. The study will adopt purposive sampling to select participants who have faced abuse, ensuring diversity in socio-economic backgrounds and types of abuse encountered.

Thematic analysis will be used to identify key themes related to the forms of abuse, the coping mechanisms women employ, and the role of societal and institutional support. Ethical considerations, such as ensuring confidentiality and providing emotional support, will be prioritized throughout the research process. The findings are expected to reveal significant insights into the challenges women face when reporting or addressing abuse and the societal norms that perpetuate these issues.

This study will contribute to the understanding of abuse in an urban setting, highlighting the gaps in legal and social support systems while offering recommendations for more effective interventions. The respondents of the study i.e women who have experienced abuses have been chosen from the beneficiaries of “Parihar”.

“Parihar” is a charitable institution registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration act 1960, exempted under 80(G) of Income Tax Act. It is an initiative of Bengaluru City Police, and is managed by a dedicated, committed and successful team of professional counsellors, and police staff with vast experience in counselling and social work. Parihar undertakes charitable, philanthropic and socio-economic programs for the welfare of Women, Children and Family as a whole.

Parihar’s implementation structure consists of mainly four important people, its Ex-officio President being the Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City, Vice President and Nodal officer, is the Jt. Commissioner of Police (Crime) & Secretary is the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Admin) and Treasurer is the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime)

“Parihar” stands out for its ‘vision’ and ‘mission’ to work for the upliftment of women and children in today’s society with various challenges and positive attitude to redress the issues in a holistic manner.

Parihar networks with all the Police Stations, NGO’s, Short-Stay homes, hospitals, de-addiction centres, schools, colleges, public/private organizations and communities etc., to help the women and children in distress. Parihar provides free services are like Tele-Counselling, Police Support, Counselling, Medical services, short stay, Legal services, Rehabilitation to distressed women/children to fight against abuse and exploitation. The services are to help peacefully resolve family issues.

There are 4 projects implemented and monitored by Parihar:

- Family Counselling Centre (FCC): Most of the atrocities registered with the police are cases of mal-adjustments where family relationships could be improved through intensive counselling. Keeping this in mind, this center was started in the premises of Bengaluru Police Commissioner’s Office, in 1993 and is funded by the Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi and supervised by the Karnataka State Social Welfare Board, Bengaluru.
- Vanitha Sahayavani (Women’s Helpline) (VSV) ; It was established on 1999 by the Bengaluru City Police to provide support to women in distress and to handle the issues of women safety.
- Makkala Sahayavani(Children Helpline) (MSV) - The helpline for Children, reachable on Namma 100, was set up in 1997 by Bengaluru City Police, to protect Children from difficult situations and counsel them

- PARIHAR - Skill Development Training Centre has been started at CAR Head Quarters, Mysore Road with the help of Bengaluru city police for empowering domestic violence survivors, underprivileged women, which will help them to create an opportunity for self employment and to become financially independent. The training will focus on skill such as tailoring, embroidery, paper bags, jute bags, saree tassels etc.,. A full time trainer teaching in two batches everyday.

By shedding light on the experiences of women in Bangalore, the research aims to foster greater awareness and drive policy changes to improve women's safety and well-being in the city.

Key words: Women, Abuses, Social Support, Purposive sampling.

INTRODUCTION:

Violence and abuse against women continue to be pervasive global issues, transcending cultural, social, and economic boundaries. In urban environments like Bangalore City, women face a variety of abuses, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and digital abuse. These abuses are often rooted in entrenched gender inequalities, societal norms, and power dynamics, which disproportionately affect women's safety and well-being.

Bangalore, being a rapidly growing metropolitan city, presents a unique context where traditional norms intersect with modern urban challenges. Despite its reputation as a hub for education, technology, and progressive values, the city has seen a rise in gender-based violence and harassment, often exacerbated by factors such as increased urbanization, anonymity in public spaces, and the proliferation of digital platforms. Women in Bangalore face harassment and abuse not only in private spheres—such as homes and workplaces—but also in public spaces and online environments.

This study focuses on exploring the types of abuse that women in Bangalore experience and the psychological, emotional, and social impacts of these experiences. It will also examine the coping mechanisms women employ and the effectiveness of legal, institutional, and community support systems in addressing these issues. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted interventions, policies, and awareness campaigns that can better protect women and ensure their rights in an urban setting.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Despite various legal frameworks and support systems in place to protect women from abuse, many incidents in Bangalore go unreported, unresolved, or inadequately addressed. Victims often face stigma, fear of retaliation, or a lack of faith in the legal and institutional systems meant to protect them. Additionally, the evolving nature of digital abuse—ranging from cyberstalking to online harassment—adds complexity to the already challenging landscape of violence against women. This study seeks to fill the gap in understanding the multifaceted forms of abuse women face in Bangalore and to shed light on the societal, psychological, and legal hurdles they encounter when seeking justice and support.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant for several reasons:

- **Understanding Diverse Forms of Abuse:** By identifying the different types of abuse women face in an urban setting, the study can provide a more comprehensive view of the challenges they face.
- **Highlighting Gaps in Support Systems:** The findings will help illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of current legal, social, and institutional support systems available to women in Bangalore.
- **Empowering Policy and Social Change:** The study's results can inform policymakers, activists, and service providers about the areas where intervention is needed most, fostering more effective responses to abuse.
- **Increasing Awareness:** By bringing attention to the experiences of women in Bangalore, the study hopes to raise public awareness and contribute to broader social change regarding gender equality and women's rights.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To identify and categorize the different types of abuse faced by women in Bangalore City, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and digital abuse.
2. To explore the emotional, psychological, and social impacts of these abuses on women's lives.
3. To analyze the coping strategies employed by women to manage or mitigate the effects of abuse.
4. To examine the effectiveness of legal frameworks, institutional support systems, and community responses in addressing these abuses.

5. To identify gaps in current support mechanisms and provide recommendations for improvement.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following key questions:

1. What types of abuse are most prevalent among women in Bangalore City?
2. How do these abuses affect women's mental health, emotional well-being, and social relationships?
3. What are the main barriers women face when seeking help or reporting abuse?
4. How effective are current legal, institutional, and community-based support systems in addressing the needs of abused women?
5. What can be done to improve awareness, prevention, and intervention strategies in Bangalore?

Methodology:

This study will adopt a qualitative phenomenological approach, which seeks to understand the lived experiences of women who have faced various forms of abuse in Bangalore City. The focus will be on capturing the rich, personal narratives of participants to explore how they experience, perceive, and cope with abuse. This approach is ideal for delving deeply into the emotional, psychological, and social impacts of abuse and understanding the broader societal and institutional factors at play.

Research Design

The study will be designed around in-depth data collection through interviews and focus group discussions. This will provide a platform for women to share their stories, thoughts, and feelings in a safe, supportive environment. The research design will be flexible to accommodate the sensitivity of the topic and the diverse experiences of participants.

Sampling

- Purposive Sampling: Participants will be selected based on specific criteria to ensure that those who have experienced abuse and are willing to discuss their experiences are included. This non-probability sampling method ensures that the sample consists of individuals who can provide relevant and rich data for the research. Respondents have been chosen from the institution Parihar.

2. Sample Size:

- Estimated Sample Size: The study will involve approximately 20–30 women. This sample size is sufficient for a qualitative study to capture diverse experiences while allowing for in-depth analysis.
- Diversity of Sample: Efforts will be made to ensure the sample includes women from various socio-economic backgrounds, age groups (18–50 years), and different types of abuse experiences (physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and digital).

3. Inclusion Criteria:

- Women aged 18 to 50 who have experienced abuse (physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, or digital) in Bangalore.
- Willingness to participate in the study and share their experiences.
- Able to provide informed consent.

4. Exclusion Criteria:

- Women who are unable to provide consent or are currently experiencing severe distress that might prevent participation.

Data Collection Tools and Methods

The data collection process will be structured to ensure sensitivity to the participants' emotional well-being while gathering meaningful insights about their experiences. The following tools and methods will be employed:

1. Data Collection Tools:

a. Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

- A semi-structured interview guide will be used to facilitate in-depth discussions while allowing flexibility for participants to explore issues important to them.
- The guide will include open-ended questions such as:
 - “Can you share an experience where you felt unsafe or faced abuse in Bangalore?”
 - “How did this experience affect you emotionally, mentally, or socially?”
 - “What kind of support, if any, did you seek? What was the outcome?”
 - “Can you describe your interactions with authorities or institutions when addressing the abuse?”
 - “What are your thoughts on how such abuse could be prevented or addressed in the future?”
- Questions will also focus on coping strategies and the impact on personal relationships, career, and mental health.

b. Focus Group Discussion Guide:

- Focus groups will be conducted to encourage shared discussions among women who have faced similar forms of abuse.
- Topics for discussion will include societal attitudes, shared experiences, and possible solutions for addressing abuse in the city.
- This method will allow participants to reflect on others' experiences and contribute to a broader understanding of how abuse affects women as a group in Bangalore.

c. Demographic Questionnaire:

- A short demographic questionnaire will be used to gather basic information such as age, occupation, education, socio-economic background, and type of abuse experienced. This will help contextualize the findings.

2. Data Collection Methods:

a. In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews:

- One-on-one interviews will be conducted with each participant. These interviews will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the depth of the participant's responses.
- Interviews will be recorded (with consent) to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

b. Focus Group Discussions:

- Each focus group will consist of 5–8 participants and will be moderated to ensure that all members have the opportunity to share their perspectives.
- Group discussions will last approximately 90 minutes and will focus on common experiences, perceptions of abuse in the city, and shared coping strategies.
- Focus groups are particularly useful for understanding how women collectively perceive and experience abuse in their social and cultural contexts.

c. Field Notes:

- During interviews and focus groups, the researcher will take detailed field notes to capture non-verbal cues, participant dynamics, and emotional responses that may not be fully reflected in transcripts.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of the topic, ethical guidelines will be strictly followed to protect participants:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, methods, and their right to withdraw at any time. Written consent will be obtained before data collection.
- **Confidentiality:** Pseudonyms will be used to protect participants' identities, and all personal information will be anonymized in any reports or publications.
- **Emotional Support:** Participants will be provided with information about counseling services or helplines should they need emotional support during or after the interviews.
- **Non-Coercion:** Participation will be voluntary, and no participant will be pressured to share more than they are comfortable with.

Findings of the Study:

The findings from this study are based on in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with women who have faced various forms of abuse in Bangalore City. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and insights into the types of abuse, their impact, coping mechanisms, and the effectiveness of support systems. The findings are organized into the following categories:

1. Types of Abuse Faced by Women in Bangalore

The study revealed that women in Bangalore experience a range of abuses, often intertwined, highlighting the complexity of their situations. The types of abuse identified include:

a. Physical Abuse:

- **Common in Domestic Settings:** Many participants reported physical abuse by intimate partners, spouses, or family members, often tied to traditional gender roles and power imbalances.
- **Frequent Forms:** Hitting, slapping, pushing, and threats of violence were frequently mentioned.
- **Public Spaces:** Women also reported being physically harassed or assaulted in public spaces such as markets, streets, or public transportation, often perpetrated by strangers.

b. Emotional and Psychological Abuse:

- **Persistent in Relationships:** Emotional manipulation, verbal abuse, and controlling behavior were commonly reported, particularly in marital or familial relationships.
- **Isolation:** Participants spoke about emotional abuse leading to isolation from social networks and self-doubt, with common tactics including threats, humiliation, and gaslighting.
- **Impact on Mental Health:** The effects of psychological abuse were profound, leading to anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem.

c. Sexual Abuse and Harassment:

- **Domestic and Workplace Contexts:** Sexual abuse within domestic relationships and harassment in workplaces were recurring themes. Women reported being coerced into sexual activities or enduring unwanted advances.
- **Public Harassment:** Sexual harassment in public spaces was frequent, ranging from inappropriate touching to lewd comments and stalking.
- **Digital Harassment:** Some participants highlighted experiences of online sexual harassment, including unsolicited messages, cyberstalking, and threats, reflecting the increasing prevalence of digital abuse.

d. Economic and Financial Abuse:

- **Control Over Finances:** Several women mentioned being denied control over their earnings or facing restrictions on financial independence by their partners or family members.
- **Workplace Discrimination:** Economic abuse also manifested in the form of discrimination at work, unequal pay, or being forced to leave jobs due to harassment.

e. Digital Abuse:

- **Cyberbullying and Online Stalking:** Increasing use of technology has given rise to new forms of abuse, including cyberbullying and online stalking. Some participants reported harassment through social media, unsolicited messages, and the use of personal information to intimidate or threaten them.
- **Non-consensual Sharing of Images:** A few participants mentioned the threat of their personal images or videos being shared online without consent as a form of abuse and control.

2. Impact of Abuse on Emotional, Psychological, and Social Well-being

The effects of abuse were far-reaching, impacting not just the victims' emotional and mental health but also their social interactions and overall well-being.

a. Mental Health Impact:

- **Anxiety and Depression:** Many participants spoke of experiencing anxiety, depression, and in some cases, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of prolonged abuse.
- **Low Self-esteem:** Emotional and psychological abuse led to feelings of worthlessness, self-doubt, and diminished confidence, making it harder for victims to break free from abusive situations.

b. Social Isolation:

- **Withdrawal from Social Networks:** Women who experienced abuse, particularly emotional and psychological forms, often found themselves isolated from friends, family, and colleagues.
- **Stigma and Shame:** Fear of social stigma, victim-blaming, or judgment led many women to remain silent about their abuse, further exacerbating their isolation.

c. Effect on Relationships:

- **Trust Issues:** Participants reported difficulties in trusting others, particularly in new relationships, after enduring abusive behaviors.
- **Disrupted Family Dynamics:** Abuse also impacted relationships with children and other family members, causing strained interactions and, in some cases, familial alienation.

3. Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

Women demonstrated a range of coping mechanisms, some of which provided temporary relief, while others fostered resilience and recovery.

a. Personal Coping Strategies:

- **Internalizing the Problem:** Some women chose to endure the abuse silently, believing it to be a personal or family matter, particularly when societal norms discouraged them from seeking help.
- **Religion and Spirituality:** A few participants reported turning to religious practices or spirituality as a means of finding solace and strength.
- **Self-reliance and Self-care:** Others mentioned engaging in self-care practices, such as meditation, reading, or physical activity, to regain control over their emotional well-being.

b. Seeking Support:

- **Family and Friends:** Participants who had supportive friends or family members relied heavily on these social networks to cope, even though many women expressed hesitation in confiding in others due to fear of judgment.
- **Professional Help:** Some women sought counseling or therapy to address the emotional trauma caused by abuse. However, access to professional mental health services was limited for many, often due to financial constraints or lack of awareness.

4. Challenges in Reporting Abuse and Seeking Help

Despite the availability of legal frameworks and institutional support systems, participants encountered numerous barriers when trying to report abuse or seek help.

a. Fear of Retaliation:

- **Threats from Perpetrators:** Many women were reluctant to report abuse due to fears of retaliation from their abusers, especially in cases involving family members or intimate partners.

b. Lack of Faith in Authorities:

- **Ineffective Legal and Police Support:** Participants frequently mentioned mistrust in the legal system and police, citing incidents where their complaints were dismissed or inadequately handled.
- **Victim-blaming:** Some women reported experiencing victim-blaming from authorities or community members, which discouraged them from seeking justice.

c. Social Stigma:

- **Fear of Judgment:** Fear of being judged or ostracized by society kept many women silent about their abuse, especially in cases of sexual abuse or harassment.
- **Cultural Norms:** Traditional gender norms and cultural expectations often pressured women to tolerate abuse, especially within the context of marriage or family.

5. Effectiveness of Legal, Institutional, and Community Support

The study found that while some institutional and legal frameworks exist to protect women, there are significant gaps in their accessibility and effectiveness.

a. Institutional Support:

- **Inadequate Legal Protection:** Participants highlighted the lack of swift and decisive legal action, with many expressing frustrations over delayed justice or insufficient penalties for abusers.
- **Lack of Accessible Support Services:** Women mentioned a lack of accessible shelters, crisis centers, and mental health services in Bangalore, particularly for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

b. Community Responses:

- **Inconsistent Community Support:** While some participants benefited from community support, many felt that societal attitudes often minimized their experiences or perpetuated harmful stereotypes.

c. NGOs and Helplines:

- **NGO Assistance:** Non-governmental organizations and women's helplines were viewed positively by participants who accessed their services, but awareness of these services was low among many women.

Discussion:

The findings of this qualitative study reveal the complex and multifaceted nature of abuse experienced by women in Bangalore. The overlapping nature of abuse—physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, and digital—indicates that women often endure multiple forms of violence simultaneously. This reflects deep-rooted gender inequalities and power imbalances within both domestic and public settings.

Emotional and psychological abuse emerged as particularly damaging, with many women experiencing long-term effects on their mental health, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The **social isolation** reported by many participants highlights the stigma and societal pressure that often compels women to endure abuse in silence. This finding underscores the importance of addressing not just physical violence but also the emotional and psychological dimensions of abuse, which can have equally devastating consequences.

The study also revealed significant **barriers to seeking help**. Women expressed a lack of trust in the legal system and law enforcement, citing dismissive attitudes and victim-blaming when they attempted to report abuse. Fear of retaliation from abusers and concerns over social judgment further inhibited women from seeking help. These challenges point to the urgent need for **improved legal frameworks, training for law enforcement** on gender-sensitive responses, and **community awareness campaigns** to reduce stigma around reporting abuse.

Despite these obstacles, the study highlighted women's **resilience**. Many relied on personal coping strategies, social support networks, or NGOs for assistance. However, the **lack of awareness** about available support services and the **limited accessibility** of resources, particularly for economically disadvantaged women, emphasize the need for broader outreach and more accessible support systems.

In conclusion, while Bangalore has legal protections for women, significant gaps in **institutional support, social attitudes, and access to services** hinder effective interventions. The study highlights the importance of a holistic approach that not only focuses on legal reforms but also addresses the emotional, psychological, and societal aspects of gender-based violence.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

Based on the findings, several key recommendations emerge to address the various forms of abuse women face in Bangalore and improve their access to support systems. These recommendations target policy, community awareness, institutional reforms, and support services:

1. Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Enforcement

- **Fast-track courts** for gender-based violence cases to ensure swift justice.
- Better enforcement of existing laws, such as the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act**, with clear guidelines on issuing protection orders.
- **Legal reforms** that simplify the reporting process for abuse, reducing delays and bureaucratic hurdles.
- Increasing **legal aid** services for economically disadvantaged women to ensure they have access to justice.

2. Training Law Enforcement and Judiciary

- **Gender-sensitivity training** for police officers, legal professionals, and healthcare workers to prevent victim-blaming and ensure respectful, supportive responses.
- Appointing **female officers** in police stations and setting up dedicated **women's desks** for reporting abuse, providing a safer and more comfortable environment for victims.

3. **Mental Health and Counseling Support**

- Establishing **affordable and accessible mental health services** that provide counseling for victims of emotional, psychological, and physical abuse.
- Incorporating **trauma-informed care** in health and social services to support victims of abuse in their recovery journey.
- Providing **helplines and crisis intervention services** with trained counselors available 24/7.

4. **Raising Awareness and Reducing Social Stigma**

- Community-level **awareness campaigns** to challenge societal stigma around gender-based violence, focusing on shifting perceptions that blame victims.
- **Educational programs** in schools and colleges to promote gender equality and raise awareness about different forms of abuse, including digital abuse.
- **Engaging men and boys** in gender-sensitivity programs to foster allyship and challenge harmful patriarchal norms.

5. **Promoting Women's Economic Independence**

- Implementing programs that provide **financial literacy, skill development, and employment opportunities** for women, reducing their dependence on abusers.
- Supporting **microfinance programs** for women to start businesses, thereby improving their financial stability and ability to leave abusive situations.

6. **Strengthening Social Support Networks**

- Encouraging the development of **peer support groups** where women can share experiences and offer emotional support.
- Expanding **NGO outreach programs** to rural and marginalized communities in Bangalore, ensuring that all women are aware of the resources available to them.
- Creating **safe spaces and shelters** for women escaping domestic abuse, with comprehensive services including legal aid, healthcare, and job assistance.

7. **Addressing Digital Abuse**

- Developing **cybersecurity programs** that specifically target online harassment and cyberstalking, ensuring women have access to safe online spaces.
- Collaborating with social media platforms and telecom companies to create mechanisms for reporting and preventing **digital harassment**.

8. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Establishing **monitoring systems** that track the effectiveness of interventions and ensure accountability in addressing abuse cases.
- Creating **feedback loops** where women who have experienced abuse can share their experiences with law enforcement and support services, improving responsiveness and effectiveness over time.

By implementing these recommendations, the legal, social, and institutional systems in Bangalore can be better equipped to support women facing abuse, ensuring that they receive justice, emotional support, and the opportunity for healing and empowerment.

Conclusion:

This qualitative study sheds light on the complex and multifaceted experiences of women facing abuse in Bangalore. The findings reveal the prevalence of various forms of abuse—physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, and digital—often interlinked, affecting women across different socio-economic backgrounds. The study emphasizes that abuse is not limited to physical violence but extends into emotional manipulation, financial control, and increasingly, digital harassment.

Key barriers to addressing this abuse include the **fear of retaliation, social stigma, and mistrust in legal and institutional systems**, which hinder women from reporting or seeking help. Furthermore, the lack of adequate mental health support, legal awareness, and accessible services exacerbates the suffering endured by victims. Despite these challenges, the resilience of women, the growing awareness of digital abuse, and the gradual improvement in community support mechanisms provide hope for addressing gender-based violence in urban settings like Bangalore. However, for meaningful change to occur, a holistic approach is essential—one that involves **legal reforms, training law enforcement, raising societal awareness, and strengthening support services**.

In conclusion, addressing women's abuse in Bangalore requires collective efforts from legal authorities, policymakers, social workers, and the community at large. By fostering a supportive environment, breaking down barriers to reporting, and challenging societal stigma, Bangalore can move towards a future where women are safe, respected, and empowered to live without fear of abuse.

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