INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG MARRIED MEN IN INDIA: EXPERIENCES AND BARRIERS TO REPORTING

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Criminology
with specialization in Forensic Psychology

Submitted by

Siddhi Nair

240109005006

Under the guidance of

Dr. Swikar Lama

Associate Professor

School of Behavioral Forensics
NFSU, Gandhinagar

SCHOOL OF BEHAVIORAL FORENSICS

NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

Gandhinagar, Gujarat

MAY 2026

NFSU

विद्यया अमृतं अश्नुते

CERTIFICATE

It is certified that Siddhi Nair is a bona fide student in the School of Behavioral Forensics, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, and has undergone training in M.A. Criminology with specialisation in Forensic Psychology, National Forensic Sciences University for the academic year 2024-2026.

The dissertation titled 'Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Men in India: Experiences and Barriers to Reporting' has been submitted by the student as a dissertation in partial fulfilment of requirement of M.A Criminology with specialisation in Forensic Psychology degree of the National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, under the guidance of Dr Swikar Lama, Associate Professor, School of Behavioral Forensics.

It has not formed the basis for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other institute/university by the student. This work is a record of the student's personal effort.

NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCES UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BEHAVIOURAL FORENSICS GANDHINAGAR

Asha Srivastava

DEAN
School of Behavioral Forensics
NFSU, Gandhinagar

CERTIFICATE BY THE GUIDE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled 'Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Men in India: Experiences and Barriers to Reporting' is a research work carried by Siddhi Nair in the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Master of Arts in Criminology with specialisation in Forensic Psychology at the School of Behavioral Forensics, National Forensic Sciences University under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Swikar Lama, Associate Professor, School of Behavioral Forensics as per the given Certificate/Documents by the candidate.

Dr. Swikar Lama
Associate Professor
School of Behavioral Forensics
NFSU, Gandhinagar

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Dissertation entitled 'Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Men in India: Experiences and Barriers to Reporting' is a bona fide research work done by me, and no part of this Dissertation has been presented earlier for any degree, diploma or similar title at any other university.

Siddhi Nair
240109005006
MAY 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation is the product of many months of research, reflection, and perseverance — and it would not have taken the shape it has without the support, trust, and generosity of the people who walked this journey alongside me.

To my guide, **Dr Swikar Lama** — thank you for being present when it mattered most. Your input at critical stages of this research brought structure to my thinking and clarity to my arguments. Every time I needed direction, you provided it with patience and precision, and the final form of this work reflects your guidance in ways I am deeply grateful for.

To **Ms Deepika Narayan Bhardwaj** of the Ekam Nyaay Foundation and **Mr Saurabh Singh** of the Men Welfare Trust — I cannot overstate what your collaboration meant to this study. You opened your networks with generosity and trust, connected me with people who would otherwise have been impossible to reach, and reminded me throughout this process why this research matters. The work you do every day — advocating for men who have been told their suffering does not count — is extraordinary, and I am honoured to have had the opportunity to work alongside you, even briefly.

To the **participants** of this study, this dissertation is, at its heart, yours. You came forward at a time when coming forward is not easy. You trusted a researcher you did not know with experiences that were deeply personal, often painful, and in many cases still unresolved. You did not have to do that. The courage it takes to speak about something that the world has largely chosen not to hear is not something I take lightly, and I hope that in reading this work, you feel that your trust was honoured. I carried your stories with care, and I will continue to.

To my **parents**, you gave me the space to pursue something unconventional, the patience to let me struggle when struggling was part of the process, and the kind of quiet, steady belief that never asked for anything in return. On the days when the work felt too heavy or too far from finished, it was your faith in me that kept me going. This is as much yours as it is mine.

And finally, to **myself**, this research was close to my heart in a way that surprised me as I went deeper into it. What began as an academic pursuit became something far more personal — a process of listening, of sitting with stories that stayed with me long after the interviews ended, and of trying to do justice to experiences that the world has not always made space for. Writing this paper was as

much a reflective journey as it was a scholarly one, and I am genuinely, deeply happy to have done it. Of all the questions I could have chosen to spend this time with, I am glad it was this one.

Siddhi Nair

School of Behavioral Forensics

CERTIFICATE OF PLAGIARISM

Name of the Student	**Siddhi Nair**
Course of Study	**MA Criminology with specialisation in Forensic Psychology**
Title of the Study	**Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Men in India: Experiences and Barriers to Reporting**
Name of the Supervisor	**Dr. Swikar Lama**
Similarity in per cent	**6%**
Acceptable maximum limit	**10%**
Software used	**Turnitin**
Date of verification	**30- 04- 2026**

Name of the Guide: Dr Swikar Lama

ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a globally recognised public health and human rights issue, yet its manifestation among married men in India remains significantly understudied. Existing legal frameworks, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 and Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, extend protection exclusively to women, leaving male victims without legal recognition, institutional support, or formal recourse. This study examines the lived experiences of married male IPV victims in India and the individual, relational, institutional, and structural factors that prevent them from seeking help or reporting abuse.

An exploratory qualitative research design grounded in an interpretivist framework was employed. Eleven male participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling in collaboration with the Ekam Nyaay Foundation and Men Welfare Trust. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews conducted on Google Meet, audio-recorded and verbatim transcribed. Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis.

Five master themes were identified across all eleven accounts: multi-dimensional and escalating abuse; psychological entrapment and survival strategies; social stigma, masculinity norms, and silencing; systemic and legal barriers to justice; and collateral damage to family and professional life. Findings reveal that male IPV victimization in India is systematically produced through the intersection of cultural constructions of masculinity, gender-asymmetric legal architecture, institutional disbelief, and epistemological gaps in existing research. The study makes original contributions in documenting pre-marital coercive control, extended family coordination in abuse, and cross-jurisdictional vulnerability among non-resident Indian victims.

This study calls for gender-neutral domestic violence legislation, an anonymous practitioner-led psychosocial support infrastructure, reformed police complaint protocols, and population-based gender-inclusive IPV research in India.

Keywords: intimate partner violence, male victimisation, hegemonic masculinity, help-seeking barriers, thematic analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

On a busy street, a married man flinches when his wife shouts at him. Neighbors ignore the outburst as if it didn't happen. Society sees him as the protector, the one who cannot be harmed. Yet, inside, he struggles with unspoken fear, going against the idea of the strong "Asli Mard," which represents traditional Indian manhood. Instead of comfort, he faces disbelief and mockery. His feelings go unnoticed, even at home. Indian law does not recognize him as a victim. His culture sees his silence as honorable, and his family believes he should endure. When he tries to talk to a policeman, counselor, neighbor, or friend, he often finds disbelief instead of help. This gap between what he expects and what he experiences hides the reality of male victimization and reinforces the pressure to remain stoic. To a married male victim of intimate partner violence in India, the lack of protection is not merely a police policy failure at work, but rather the logical conclusion of a society, a legal framework, and a tradition of research that is yet to construct the instruments of visibility with which to look at him. Globally, intimate partner violence (IPV) is among the most widespread violations of human rights, as well as one of the most pressing issues of our day in the field of human health. The World Health Organisation estimates that one in three women worldwide have been physically or sexually assaulted by a partner at some point in their lives - a number that has prompted decades of studying feminism, reforming the law, and responding to it (WHO, 2021). The existing discourse has traditionally positioned women as the most prolific victims of this type of abuse, justified by the consistent records that demonstrate the vulnerability of women and the quantifiable nature of the harm inflicted on certain groups such as women in the Scheduled Castes in India who report a higher rate of violence against women than the proportion of their total population (Chowdhury et al., 2022).

However, concentrating on female victimization solely, may lead to misconception of the truth about male victims whose situations, though less often debated, still prevail in international and local settings. The ever-increasing body of evidence that has been growing since the seminal work of Straus and Gelles (1986) has, since then, documented that it is not only women who perpetrate or experience IPV, as it is observed that since then, men have been mentioned to be perpetrators or victims of IPV in all of its forms (physical, sexual, psychological, and economic) in an ever-increasing body Nationwide statistics released in the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey conducted by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention showed that about one out of nine males in America report severe physical IPV by an intimate partner, which invalidates any theoretical system that views male victimization as an extreme or unrealistic (Black et al., 2011). The case of population-based survey research in India shows a significant spatial difference in IPV, even though the main point of

interest is women in the context of these indicators, these records prove the existence of suffering among men as well (Srivastava et al., 2023). The fact that these trends represent a persistent pattern regardless of context gives credence to a broader-based problem that is not completely mitigated until the voices of male victims can be invoked.

The underrepresentation of cases of male victimization in intimate partner violence literature is not due to a true lack but rather to centuries of barriers to research in systems of methods and social norms. Research and questionnaires often are based on terms and constructs that match the prevailing understandings of abuse and so men may not identify or express their experiences where the words do not match their lived experience (Walker et al., 2020). Moreover, the atmosphere of masculine stoicism makes men avoid revealing that they are being abused since the shame and fear of being labeled as a disbeliever dictate the predominance of male silence (Taylor et al., 2021). These epistemological restrictions are further reinforced by the institutional reactions that tend to ignore or even scorn male disclosures, thus deteriorating proper data gathering and thorough examination (Walker et al., 2020). This non-existence of data, so to speak, is not the testament of non-existence, but of the way the research has been set up, and of which anguish it has made itself a constructed witness.

Nowhere are these dynamics more acute, or more consequential, than in India. India has one of the largest numbers of married people globally with a population of 1.4 billion and a even a conservative estimate of male IPV prevalence will place millions of people whose experiences are not at all subject to law, policy, and research. The Indian context is especially compelling in the study of male victimization due to unique dynamics. The legal frameworks in India, however, are still largely blind to the situation of the male victims, even though the most recent statistics, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-21) the most comprehensive household health data in India, shows an increasing number of men as victims (Kaur and Gulati, 2024). The Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act (2005), the main law of the domestic violence of the intended women, only extends protection to women. The Indian Penal Code, under 498A, criminalises cruelty towards a wife by either a husband or by his kinsmen and omits to provide any such information in the opposite. The law is not just ineffective in safeguarding male victims, it simply obliterates the very notion that a man can be a victim. The discourse on abuse is usually one created by men where the abuse is perpetrated, with the lack of institutional infrastructure, including support services, shelter homes, or known legal avenues to help men and a lack of such avenues enhancing isolation and underreporting (Kaur and Gulati, 2024). A fast social transformation including urbanisation, switch in gender roles,

economic pressure and breakdown of joint families and the relations between couples is further changing the dynamics of intimate relations at a pace, which current studies have failed to keep pace with.

In India, the invisibility of married male victims of IPV is not accidental but rather a creation and perpetuation of four forces at once. The former is cultural: the notion of masculinity based on notions of izzat (family honour), mardangi (manliness), and the role of a husband as provider and protector has generated strong internal taboos on the recognition of vulnerability as cultural norms celebrate stoicism and deride male weakness (Deshpande, 2019). The second factor is legal: Indian laws are overwhelmingly focused on viewing men as perpetrators, which can be observed in the gender bias patterns wherein women do not have any legal recourse and men are suspects in the very relationship they are being victimised (Deshpande, 2019; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). The third is institutional: both official support systems like law enforcement and counselling services often neglect or deny violence against men or the importance of marital stability over survivor safety, thus discouraging help-seeking among male survivors (Shah et al., 2024). The fourth is epistemological: research designs and discourses are habituated to the size of male narratives, and even the instruments of measuring IPV, the Conflict Tactics Scale and the NFHS survey instrument are of female victimization design where men suffering is underrepresented in discourses of policy and scholarship (Straus, 2004; Dutton, 2012). The four forces together do not just represent a lack, but actually create one.

The consequences of this compounded invisibility are not abstract. Unseen male victims of IPV treated without assistance have greatly high levels of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts, and dependence on substances (Hines and Douglas, 2011). Their kids are raised in families where violence is normalised and unaddressed, and there are reported intergenerational effects (Kitzmann et al., 2003). And the men themselves — caught between the violence occurring within their marriage and the disbelief waiting outside it — are left without a viable path to safety, without legal recognition, and without the institutional structures that might otherwise intervene. When addressing male victimization as a subset of intimate partner violence it is directly relevant to confront the problem of feminist critique that cautions of not wasting the positive investment in women and the danger of moving attention to the widespread victimization of women. The objections, however, do not require an oppositional framing but instead demand a gender and rights-inclusive approach in which all victims are recognized as valid.

This paper is not challenging the overwhelming body of knowledge that women are subjected to IPV much more often with much more severity and that the occurrence of IPV is organized into structural inequality systems that are at the core of defining that experience. The recognition of male victimization does not imply a claim of equivalence but rather demand that a rights-based framework be uniform. The decision to keep male victimization out of the analytical frame, as Kimmel (2002) and Dutton and Corvo (2006) both have asserted, is not a scientific neutrality — it is a theoretical allegiance that has practical human repercussions. This sensitivity in approaching the politics of intimate partner violence helps create a discussion that can support the rights and protection of all survivors, irrespective of their gender. Suffering that is real does not become less real because it disrupts a dominant narrative. The fact that married men victims of IPV in India remain invisible is not the result of an absence, but rather an indicator of a society, a justice system and a research tradition that is yet to develop the instruments to detect it.

Although the international body of scholarship on male victimization has expanded, there is limited research on the topic of male victimization in India, which is India specific. Studies that capture lived experiences of married men who are victims of IPV are still needed in India. Research that could provide a systematic mapping of the cultural, legal, psychological, and institutional obstacles that do not allow Indian men to seek help or report abuse. The complication of caste, class, religion and masculinity as forces determining both the act of victimization and the choice of silence has never been discussed. Quantitative tools at hand, such as the NFHS data, cannot describe experience, meaning, or shame, and the decision-making process by which a man will or will not talk about the thing that is being done to him. It is not a loophole in a literature otherwise sufficient in its pertinence- a gap at the base in an area that asserts to be addressing the full breadth of intimate partner violence. This is where the current study comes in.

The study aims at capturing the lived lives of married men faced by intimate partner violence in India, and to analyze the barriers that have been peculiar to this group of men which may not allow them to seek help or report the violence. It is informed by the following questions: How is intimate partner violence among married men in India experienced, and how do they make sense of this in their cultural and social background? What are the individual, relational, institutional, and structural factors that do not help married men in India to seek help or report intimate partner violence? How do masculinity, family honour, and legal exclusion constructions interrelate to perpetuate the silence of male victimization in India? In answering these questions, the study has adopted a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews with married men who have experienced IPV, which are analysed using

thematic analysis to reveal patterns of experience, meaning, and constraint. Its conclusions have implications for legal reform, to the structure of support services, to the training of police and mental health workers and most fundamentally, to the men who already have no language to describe what is going on with them and no institution at hand to assist.

Chapter 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has emerged as a significant public health concern over the past four decades, attracting attention from psychologists, scholars, human rights activists, and policymakers (Ishengoma, 2023). However, the conceptualisation and definition of IPV have been contested terrain, particularly regarding the extent to which violence is gendered and whether definitions adequately capture the experiences of all victims. Although women across the world disproportionately experience the issue of IPV (Laughon et al., 2013), there is an increasing literature that specifically questions the claim that IPV is a male-on-female issue (Carmo et al., 2011; Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Knowledge on the definition of IPV is a prerequisite to the realisation of the entire problem, involving the hitherto overlooked male victims.

2.1. The WHO Definition of Intimate Partner Violence

The World Health Organization (WHO) provides the most widely cited and authoritative definition of intimate partner violence. According to the WHO, IPV refers to:

"any behavior within an intimate relationship (past or current) that causes or has the potential to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors, including financial abuse" (Scott-Storey et al., 2022).

This definition is deliberately wide and gender-neutral in its development, incorporating those behaviors that inflict harm in various spheres and also specifically covers financial abuse, as well as physical, sexual, and psychological aspects. The WHO frames IPV in a system of public health with an focus on its prevention and health outcomes (Ellison, 2025; Laughon et al., 2013). Notably, the definition is applicable in intimate relationships irrespective of whether they are marriage or cohabitation or sexual orientation and thus includes dating people, married people, former partners, and same sex couples (Laughon et al., 2013).

Although it is used gender-neutrally, gendered interpretations have been used to filter its usage in research and policy. According to Venäläinen (2021), the WHO used to include IPV as a subset of violence against women (VAW) and considers it as a worldwide issue, a form of gender violence often underestimated as a significant threat to the well-being and human rights of women. Although it represents epidemiological fact, this framing has helped to give the impression that IPV is a gendered phenomenon that is most often experienced by women, thus masking male victimization.

2.2. Evolution of IPV Definitions: From Gendered to Gender-Inclusive Frameworks

IPV has experienced a lot of evolution in terms of conceptualisation. The use of early terminology, such as wife-beating, spousal abuse, and domestic violence, reflected a limited view of violence as committed within the domestic realm perpetrated by husbands against their wives (Ellison, 2025; Laughon et al., 2013). Its transition to intimate partner violence added to the understanding to encompass dating relationships, former partners, or same sex couples and removed the view of violence as an issue within the family (Rioli et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the process of changing gendered to **gender-inclusive frameworks** has been disproportional. It was initiated by feminist scholarship starting in the 1970s, which helped to put violence against women on the agenda. Dobash and Dobash are the scholars who came up with the concept of the gender paradigm in which they translated IPV to be the most predominant form of violence that denotes homicide of women by men, based on patriarchal dominance, and which is seldom considered internal but rather collective through the oppression of individual women (Williston, 2017).

Conversely, the **paradigm of family violence**, which is attributed to Murray Straus and the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), is based on the idea that IPV is a family conflict committed by either partner (Carthy et al., 2019; Dutton et al., 2005). When administering the CTS, gender symmetry in physical aggressive rates continued to be reported over time, as women were found to report committing violence the same as men (Buttell et al., 2013; Venäläinen, 2021). The critics respond the CTS does not include context, severity, consequences, and coercive control (Dobash et al., 2004).

According to Buttell et al. (2013), **the gender paradigm** generates a mutually exclusive aggressor-victim dichotomy that makes women perpetrators and male victims invisible. More recently, researchers have proposed **gender-inclusive models** that consider both the gendered quality of a significant portion of IPV and the fact that males also become victims (Carthy et al., 2019; Scott-Storey et al., 2022), which acknowledge that most conventional measures of IPV have been created by looking at how it is conceptualized by female victims.

2.3. The Four Types of Intimate Partner Violence

2.3.1 Physical Violence

Physical violence includes physical acts of aggression that result in or can result in bodily harm, such as pushing and slapping, choking, use of weapons, and severe harm (Lysova et al., 2023). It is the most obvious and easily identified type of IPV, but not necessarily the most common one (Laughon et al., 2013). The accounts of male victims report physical abuse with female partners, such as slapping, biting, punching, kicking, and use of objects, frequently instigated by the partner's jealousy or anger (Lysova et al., 2023).

2.3.2 Sexual Violence

Sexual violence includes "sexual coercion" and encompasses any sexual act obtained through coercion, force, or when the victim is unable to consent (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Male victimization has been a subject of little research on sexual violence. Nguyen et al. (2019) note that it has traditionally been an area of interest in terms of male perpetration and female victimization. Bates et al. (2020) highlight that male victims' experiences — including **"forced-to-penetrate" (FTP)** experiences — have been excluded from traditional definitions and measurement instruments, reflecting gendered assumptions that men cannot be sexually victimised by women.

2.3.3 Psychological/Emotional Violence

Psychological violence involves verbal abuse, humiliation, intimidation, threats, isolation, and monitoring among other forms of control (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). The WHO definition expressly encompasses psychological abuse and controlling behaviors as essential components (DeHart, 2017). Perhaps the most common type of IPV, it may produce enduring and significant mental health effects (Williston, 2017). Male victims complain of verbal abuse, gaslighting, inciting a fight, and false allegations (Lysova et al., 2023). The idea of coercive control by Evan Stark has played a part in understanding psychological violence as a form of domination and not an isolated event (Bates et al., 2020).

2.3.4 Economic/Financial Violence

Economic violence is about having control over the access of a partner to financial means, employment, education, or property, such as denying the ability to work, dominating all finances, or misusing resources (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Being expressly identified as an aspect of IPV by the

Istanbul Convention (2011) (Rioli et al., 2017), it has been relatively understudied in the past. Cited among male victims is financial domination by women partners, which comprises control of money sent and control of decisions (Lysova et al., 2023).

2.4. Feminist Scholarship and the Definitional Marginalisation of Male Victims

A main criticism in the literature is that the fundamental IPV definitions, which are based on feminist scholarship, have been a factor in marginalisation of male victims. Although the field of feminist scholarship has helped to legitimize IPV as a social issue, its historical emphasis on the female victimization has played out unintentionally. Carthy et al. (2019) argue that the gendered paradigm resulted in policies and practices which mainly favor female victims, marginalizing both male victims and other populations. The dominant narrative, positioning IPV as "a reflection of female oppression and patriarchal power," insists that male victimization is trivial — causing only minor injury and lacking the fear and lasting negative effects experienced by female victims (In their own words, 2022).

According to Venäläinen (2021), the notion of IPV being a gender-based phenomenon has been challenged, especially by proponents of gender-neutral interventions, who state that the traditional conceptions overlook male victimization, creating a lack of awareness and discrimination of male victims in society. Measurement tools have also been largely criticized. Scott-Storey et al. (2022) argue that traditional measures, developed for women, fail to capture men's conceptualisations of IPV, minimising male victimization and producing an incomplete picture of violence prevalence. Finneran et al. (2013) observe that none of the standardised and validated IPV definitions exist in relation to the specific populations, including men who have sex with men (MSM) because historically the definitions of IPV were based on women-related literature.

As Ishengoma (2023) argues, the perception of IPV as a "gender-cockeyed social issue" with men as offenders and women as victims has led to the overlooking of male victims in therapeutic processes, academic research, and legislation. The critique does not refute that women have the heaviest global burden of IPV or that a significant portion of IPV has its basis in gender inequality (Laughon et al., 2013). Instead, it points to the impacts of the choices in definition taken on which the victims are recognised, quantified, and assisted. Scott-Storey et al. (2022) support gender-inclusive structures and interventions covering the full spectrum of IPV outcomes, whereas Carthy et al. (2019) urge to ensure inclusivity in research addressing gender and age matters.

2.5. Theoretical Models and Frameworks

2.5.1 Duluth Model (Power and Control Wheel)

The major framework that guides IPV intervention and policy throughout the world is the Duluth Model, which was developed in the 1980s. It bases its conceptualisation of IPV on the feminist theory and argues that IPV represents an organized system of power and control that men have over women in patriarchal societies (Kelly, 2003). The Power and Control Wheel demonstrates how methods of physical violence, emotional abuse, economic control, isolation, and intimidation can be used by male perpetrators to ensure that they stay on top of female victims (Powney et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the model has been heavily criticized because of ideological inflexibility. Dutton and Corvo (2006) claim it is ideologically motivated as opposed to empirical and rejects considerable data of female-initiated violence and two-way aggression. Its gender-essentialist imperative makes the male victimization conceptually unseen, conceptualising men as the only perpetrators. This has far-reaching practical implications: male victims report a lack of belief by the authorities and dismissal of services (Douglas et al., 2011). Failure to consider female violence in the Duluth Model, critics argue, compromises scientific validity and fair service delivery (Bates et al., 2022).

2.5.2 Feminist Theory

Feminist approaches have contributed vital information on the role of patriarchal systems, gender disparity, and power imbalances in facilitating IPV (Hines et al., 2010). They have played a key role in institutionalizing IPV as a social health and human rights concern, victim-blaming, and legal change (Westmarland et al., 2023). However, there are evident limitations of feminist theory to the application on male victimization. Its premise, which is that IPV is an attempt to assert male dominance over women, does not sufficiently describe female-perpetrated violence, bidirectional violence, and same-sex IPV (Douglas et al., 2011). Studies have repeatedly indicated that women are equally perpetrators of IPV in some situations, which is not congruent with the patriarchal causation frameworks (Dutton et al., 2005). This does not disregard the structural contributions of feminist theory, but an acknowledgement of its biasedness: it sheds light on vital aspects of gendered violence and does not offer a complete explanation of all forms of IPV (Scott-Storey et al., 2022).

2.5.3 Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory by Bandura is of the view that violent behavior is acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. When applied to IPV, it highlights

intergenerational transmission: children who observe or are exposed to violence in the family of origin have high chances of perpetrating or experiencing IPV as adults (Hewitt, n.d.). This works by normalizing aggression and internalizing relational scripts equating intimacy with violence (Brooks et al., 2020).

Most importantly, Social Learning Theory applies to both male and female victims, and does not rely on the assumptions of gender essentialism. The male victims who either observed maternal aggression or suffered abuse in childhood might develop tolerance to victimization or an inability to identify abusive behavior (Hewitt, n.d.). It is gender-neutral and thus especially useful in learning about male IPV victimization, where the causation in learned behavior instead of gender traits can be found.

2.5.4 Ecological Model

The conceptualisation of IPV proposed by Heise based on the concept of the Ecological Model developed by Bronfenbrenner views it as the result of the interaction of influences at four levels: individual (personal history, biology), relationship (intimate partner dynamics), community (social networks, institutions), and societal (cultural norms, legal systems, economic structures) (Simmons, 2015; Rowlands, 2024).

This model can be especially useful in the Indian context. The norms of patriarchal society delegitimise the male victimhood. The caste hierarchies, religious institutions and neighbourhood attitudes at the community level determine whether the male victims are believed or stigmatised. At the relationship level, male victims of abusive relationships can be caught by economic dependency, which is becoming increasingly crucial with the increasing level of women's participation in the workforce. At the individual level, these outer layers are interacting with previous trauma and mental health (Simmons, 2015).

The strength of the Ecological Model is that it can combine structural inequalities (caste, class, religion) with interpersonal and individual dynamics, showing how various systems at the same time facilitate abuse and disclosure among male victims in India.

2.5.5 Hegemonic Masculinity / Masculine Identity Theory

The Hegemonic Masculinity Theory by Connell studies how cultural values of dominance, such as stoicism, physical power, self-sufficiency, emotional control, and invulnerability, are organised to form the identity of men (Stewart et al., 2025). The norms establish a masculinity hierarchy, which marginalises men who do not conform to the hegemonic ideals (Javaid, 2017). In the

case of male victims of IPV, hegemonic masculinity serves as a deep source of obstacle to noticing and seeking assistance. Confessing victimization goes against the basic scripts of masculinity, undermining the male gender identity and social status (Tsui et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2020).

Male victims complain of high levels of shame and fear of humiliation and the fear of being viewed as weak (Haselschwerdt, 2023). Such internalised norms do not allow men to recognise their experiences as abuse, share it with others, or receive services (Widh et al., 2014). The theory itself describes the extensive underreporting of male IPV: not only is the victimization stigmatised but simply incompatible with hegemonic masculine identity (Stewart et al., 2025). These barriers are multiplied in India, where the norms of masculinity are supported by the family honour system and community, which makes male victims almost invisible in both research and practice.

2.6. Global Prevalence and International Context

Intimate partner violence (IPV) in men is a significant but underrepresented issue in the public health of both the Western and non-Western settings. In the United States, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) data show that about 1 out of every 9 men has experienced severe intimate partner physical violence at some point in their lifetime, 27.5% of men have lifetime physical violence, and 4.8% of men have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months (Breiding et al., 2014). These statistics are consistent with larger trends recorded in numerous NISVS surveys, which have reliably indicated that men constitute about 46.9% of all IPV victims in the United States with 47.3% of men reporting lifetime IPV victimization (Hines, 2025). Initial studies by Barber (2008) provided groundwork on male victimization prevalence and Hines et al (2007) reported that men who perpetrate partner violence exhibit clinically significant posttraumatic stress symptoms, proving that male victimization has severe psychological effects, equivalent to those caused by female victimization. Similar patterns of prevalence occur in other Western countries. Canada has 2.9% of men in current relationships who are victims of IPV and New Zealand has 29.9% lifetime male IPV prevalence (Hines, 2025). Australia and the United Kingdom record that it is estimated that a third of the victims of IPV are men, with France and Portugal recording that one-quarter to one-third of official IPV incidents involve male victims (Hines, 2025). Systematic review and meta-analysis of 30 studies (n=58,357) by Rehman et al. (2023) found that pooled prevalence of physical IPV (20%), psychological IPV (44%), and sexual IPV (7) against men at all recall periods. These statistics prove that the victimization of males is not some statistical

insignificance or some geographical phenomenon, but a certain trend in high-income Western democracies.

Underreporting is a global obstacle to any proper estimation of prevalence, but the extent and mechanism of underreporting is highly diverse across cultures. Male victims are also subject to high levels of stigma, institutional distrust, and structural obstacles in Western contexts, which are based on gender-biased systems that view men as solely perpetrators and women as victims (Hines, 2015). Machado et al. (2020) reported that the help-seeking process of male victims of IPV in the United States is complicated and dissimilar, and tends to have adverse outcomes because of structural, cultural, social, and organisational factors that do not legitimise male victimization. Walker et al. (2020) also discovered that male victims in Australia were facing shame-based help-seeking obstacles that were aligned with the norms of hegemonic masculinity, whereas the norms of masculinity that emphasize self-reliance and forbid displaying vulnerability deter help-seeking in Western settings (Hines, 2022).

The issue of underreporting is magnified in collectivist cultures that overlap with cultural masculinity expectations, honour-shame dynamics and community surveillance systems. In sub-Saharan Africa, male victims conceal IPV because of fear of ridicule and shame which is compounded by cultural proverbs that do not allow people to express their emotions publicly, like the Sepedi proverb "Monna ke nku o llela teng" (a man is a sheep, he cries internally), which makes reporting culturally sinful (Kgatle et al., 2021). Threatened masculinities based on the negative ideals of communal normativity define definitions of emotional violence in Tanzania, and the current changes in economic dynamics challenge household power and pose further obstacles to reporting (Mshana et al., 2022). According to Kweka (2025), more than half of the respondents at Arusha City Council in Tanzania were unaware of IPV against men, and stigma and ridicule were prevalent and institutional negligence to address the issue were widespread. Fear of shame, emasculation, and the necessity to portray masculinity as invulnerable by societal norms of masculinity lead to decreased readiness to seek help in Uganda, where 44% of ever-married men reported lifetime IPV (Kadengye et al., 2023). Waila et al. (2025) reported that in Kenya, fear of embarrassment, deprivation of property, and legal violation keep men in abusive marriages, and society demands exaggerated masculinity that makes help-seeking a taboo. The same patterns can be observed in southeast Asian contexts. In Vietnam, a third (36.6) of all married men self-reported ever perpetrating psychological, physical, or sexual IPV, which is probably under-reported because cultural norms view IPV as a family issue (Yount et al., 2016; Willie et al., 2022). The UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific

revealed cross-national data indicating that almost 37% of men fell into an IPV perpetration category with sexual IPV prevalence reported among women in low- and middle-income countries with a range of 6-59%, implying high levels of bidirectional violence that goes underreported (Willie et al., 2022).

India is not an exception but a subset of this broader recorded global trend of male victimization of IPV multiplied by cultural silencing mechanisms. The overlapping of social institutions of patriarchy, the culture of honor, and the institutional order, tending specifically to female victims, results in a situation whereby male victimization is systematically invisible despite non-trivial prevalence rates reported in national surveys.

2.7. IPV Against Men in the Indian Context

2.7.1 The Patriarchy Paradox

India's male-dominated social structure has been examined in numerous studies. Feminist scholars consistently draw attention to how gender, caste, and class work together to control female sexuality and preserve the established production order (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2022). Statistics provided by the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5, 2019-21) underscore this reality: Around 30% of married women report domestic violence, and a staggering 44% of men openly justify wife-beating, highlighting the profound embedding of the patriarchal mindset (Pradhan et al., 2024; Das, 2024). Yet within this same patriarchal context, NFHS-5 data reveal a non-trivial percentage of married men reporting physical violence by wives, creating a paradox that challenges unidirectional models of IPV.

According to Chattopadhyay et al.'s (2023) analysis of NFHS-4 data, physical spousal violence against men rose over time in most Indian states, with alcoholism and marital control acting as major risk factors. Changes in women's economic power can reverse conventional power relations inside marriages, as seen by the higher rates of violence committed by working women with mobile access and cash earnings in specific countries. The study emphasised that socioeconomic differences do not have a unidirectional effect on violence experienced by husbands across regions, with regionally contrasting social and economic risk factors supporting the argument that violence is space- and culture-specific (Chattopadhyay et al., 2023). Wagman et al. (2025) found that 28.2% of respondents in NFHS rounds 4 and 5 experienced IPV victimization, including 2.6% bidirectional IPV, even though the study focused on husbands' alcohol consumption rather than male victimization patterns.

A significant methodological limitation compromises the reliability of male victimization prevalence estimates in NFHS-5. The survey utilizes gender-framed questions aimed primarily at documenting female victimization, with the Domestic Violence Module interviewing one woman per household and structuring inquiries around women's experiences of violence from their husbands (Chandra et al., 2023). This methodological design inherently inhibits male disclosure due to the absence of comparable measurement frameworks for male victimization. The lack of direct, parallel inquiries regarding men's experiences of violence from wives suggests that reported male victimization rates probably constitute significant underestimations of actual prevalence. Chaturvedi et al. (2025) emphasised the stigma associated with male victimhood and the invisibility surrounding male victimization, observing that such victimization varies considerably between rural and urban settings yet remains systematically underreported due to cultural norms and institutional obstacles. The paradox is not only that male victimization exists within patriarchal structures, but that these very frameworks—integrated into survey design, institutional responses, and cultural narratives—actively minimize the phenomenon despite its measurable prevalence.

2.7.2 Sociocultural Factors

Male IPV victimization in India is influenced by intersecting sociocultural factors that function variably across caste, religious, regional, and economic contexts. Caste hierarchy creates different ways to keep people quiet. For example, upper-caste men are under more pressure to protect their family's honor (izzat) and social standing, so telling someone about being a victim is a direct threat to their caste-based status claims. Lower-caste men, on the other hand, are more vulnerable and don't have access to institutional resources that could help them (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2022). Women from higher castes who are not poor are less likely to say they feel humiliated even after experiencing spousal physical violence than women from lower castes or other social groups. This suggests that class and caste affect how violence is perceived, identified, and discussed about (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2022).

For male victims, the same dynamics function inversely: the silence of upper-caste men is compelled by concerns of honor, whereas the silence of lower-caste men signifies the structure of exclusion from support systems.

Religious community norms have unique consequences for male victimization. Chandra et al. (2023) discovered a significant correlation between intimate partner violence (IPV) and men's religion and caste; however, the precise mechanisms by which various religious communities influence male

victimization disclosure have yet to be thoroughly examined in the literature. In contexts where marriage is viewed as a sacred institution and men are primarily responsible for family stability, male victims may internalize abuse as personal failure instead of acknowledging it as victimization that necessitates intervention (Vinayak et al., 2015).

Dowry practices, typically perceived as financial coercion of brides' families, can function in reverse scenarios where wives or their families possess economic dominance. Chattopadhyay et al. (2023) reported that working women who earned cash and had mobile access committed more violence in certain regions. This indicates that shifts in economic power can lead to violence committed by women that is not accounted for by traditional IPV frameworks that focus on dowry as a risk factor for female victimization. Chauhan et al. (2023) observed an increasing incidence of men experiencing physical and psychological abuse from their wives, with dowry-related harassment becoming more prevalent among men, although this issue remains underreported due to feelings of shame and humiliation.

Rural and urban factors also contribute to vulnerability and disclosures. The urban man is more familiar with the IPV phenomenon and may be able to access some support services, but is often stigmatized by professionals and the social world, and the disclosure of it is difficult and highly stigmatizing (Chaturvedi et al., 2025). For the rural man, the local community has placed a spotlight on his private victimization and does not provide him with assistance when he seeks help (Chaturvedi et al., 2025). Rural men in rural Haryana, for instance, are stigmatised by the community, including the adoption of gender norms, that position male victimization as impossible or shameful (Jamuna et al., 2025).

2.7.3 The Silence Around Male Victimization

The silence around male IPV victimization in India isn’t just an empty absence; it constitutes a forced, ongoing silence, shaped by specific cultural ideas that act as powerful psychological barriers against speaking out. Three tightly linked concepts—izzat (family and personal honor), mardangi (manliness and virility), and log kya kahenge (what will people say)—work as enforcers that stop men from naming their experiences as abuse or reaching out for help.

Izzat covers both family honor and personal reputation, building a double layer of accountability. When a man suffers abuse, talking about it threatens the whole family’s standing, not just his own. If a man admits his wife abused him, it’s seen as proof he failed to keep control at home, which doesn’t just hurt him—it tarnishes the family’s izzat and points back to parents, siblings, and

extended relatives. In joint families, where several generations live under one roof and reputation is maintained collectively, a man's victimization isn't just his problem—it becomes a crisis for everyone, making the pressure to keep quiet even more intense (Vinayak et al., 2015).

Mardangi, or the cultural idea of manliness and virility, expects men to show strength, emotional restraint, sexual prowess, and authority at home. When a man is victimized, he's seen as failing in all these ways: he looks weak instead of strong, loses emotional control, is sexually humiliated or coerced, and becomes powerless at home. Chauhan et al. (2023) found that the shame and humiliation of the abuse becoming public often forces men into deeper silence—shame that comes straight from breaking the expectations of mardangi. Men who admit they're victims risk being seen as "not real men," a form of social death that sometimes hurts more than the abuse itself.

Log kya kahenge—constant worry about what the community thinks—serves as social surveillance that goes well beyond family. Neighbours, colleagues, distant relatives, everyone is included. For men, speaking up becomes a calculation: the social risks and fear of community judgment outweigh any hope for help. This phrase captures how much power collective opinion has, creating an inner censor. Often, men keep their silence even if the community never actually finds out.

These concepts are not merely cultural background but active silencing mechanisms. They shape how men see their own experiences, leaving many to doubt their masculinity, blame themselves for "letting" the abuse happen, or see what's happening as personal failure, not as abuse that needs outside help (Vinayak et al., 2015). Chaturvedi et al. (2025) showed that cultural pressures and the hurdles to reporting keep male victimization invisible, with stigma bearing down in both cities and villages. The effect is a dual form of invisibility: institutions don't see male victims, and victims themselves stay hidden, forced to silence even when their suffering is profound.

2.8. Masculinity, Gender Norms, and Identity

Hegemonic masculinity, described by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), means the culturally dominant version of masculinity that keeps men in power and justifies the subordination of women and other forms of masculinity that don't fit the norm. When men disclose that they're victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), they break the script that says men must be strong, never vulnerable, always in control, and able to protect themselves and others. This breach causes a major identity crisis and is one of the main reasons men don't come forward or ask for help, no matter where they live. The mechanisms by which hegemonic masculinity silences male victims don't really change

across Western and non-Western contexts. The details vary by culture, but the pattern stays the same. Corbally (2011) showed that when men admit IPV victimization, they violate expectations of strength and invulnerability, which leads to feelings of powerlessness and shame.

Men's stoicism—a respected male attribute—only delays help-seeking. Cebreros (2023) found that the ideals of strength and self-reliance hold men back from seeking support for sexual violence and abuse. They end up internalizing the norm, feeling emasculated, ashamed, and scared that others will see them as "less of a man" if they admit being a victim. Bates (2019) argued that the male gender role demands strength, self-reliance, and stoicism; reaching out for help clashes with these values. For men, experiencing IPV is seen as a weakness, leading to shame and embarrassment for not living up to the gender role. In India, the expectations and institutional structures amplify hegemonic masculinity even more. The idea that a husband must be protector and provider isn't just a personal identity claim, it's woven into family structures, caste systems, and religious traditions. If a man becomes a victim, the role flips: the one meant to protect now needs protection, the provider turns into someone who depends on others, the authority figure becomes subordinate.

Vinayak et al. (2015) pointed out that marriage is sacred in India, men have more responsibility, and this shapes how they handle stress. Men often don't report emotional abuse from their partners because they fear ridicule, indicating the social expectation that men can't be abused by women. Fear of emasculation is even stronger in joint family systems. Victimization isn't private; parents, siblings, in-laws, and extended family may witness or know about it. Isangha et al. (2025) showed that male IPV victims in Nigeria suffered negative emotional effects regardless of family support. Men were reluctant to seek help and often turned to informal networks, not formal resources.

In India, where families are tight-knit and joint households common, having family members witness victimization compounds shame and makes disclosure feel embarrassing and humiliating, not supportive. Internalized shame and self-blame are perhaps the most damaging consequences of hegemonic masculinity. Instead of naming their abusers and recognizing abuse as wrong, male victims question their own masculinity. They wonder what they did to "allow" the abuse or how they failed to hold authority in their homes. Woodyard (2019) found that male IPV victims felt judged as "weak" and that emotional and verbal abuse wasn't taken seriously.

Hispanic participants highlighted how strict gender roles made talking about abuse even harder. Rowlands (2024) showed that survivors felt emasculated, internalized shame, and that societal expectations of dominance and strength made it even more difficult for men to talk about depressive symptoms. Male stoicism is a valued trait across caste and religious lines in India—it's at the heart of

masculinity. Emotional expression is coded as weakness. Cultural sayings and social norms reinforce the idea that men should suffer silently. Nakalyowa-Luggya et al. (2025) showed that these stoic masculinity ideals explained men's experiences of physical IPV from wives in Uganda and helped interpret why most male survivors underreport or don't disclose abuse.

Haselschwerdt (2023) noted that Black men faced common help-seeking barriers like wanting to solve problems alone; this overlaps with hegemonic masculinity and distrust of formal systems, meaning masculinity norms combine with institutional distrust to make men even less likely to seek help. These masculinity norms lead to severe psychological consequences. Male IPV victims suffer from PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts at clinically significant levels. Hines et al. (2007) documented posttraumatic stress symptoms among male survivors of partner violence in a multi-country university study. Bates et al. (2020) reported anxiety, depression, and PTSD among male IPV victims, with some men thinking about suicide and knowing others who took their own lives. Rowlands (2024) found that male IPV survivors often struggle with mental health problems like PTSD, depression, and anxiety, sometimes contemplating suicide, and frequently grappling with shame, fear, and isolation.

Vinayak et al. (2015) noted that emotionally abused men experienced PTSD, depression, and psychological distress.

Unmarried men reported higher PTSD symptoms and emotional abuse than married men. Despite all of these consequences, men are much less likely to seek mental health support than women. Taylor et al. (2021) found male victims of IPV are less likely to ask for help than female victims. Barriers include stigma, concerns about credibility, status, and issues with health and well-being. Cebreros (2023) reported that men reach out for mental health support less often than women, facing extra obstacles like shame, stigma, fear, pride, and lack of information about available services. This delay in seeking help leads to long-term negative mental health outcomes like depression and anxiety. Perryman et al. (2016) found men disclosed psychological abuse less often than women, experiencing embarrassment, denial, minimisation, and self-blame, all of which deter them from help-seeking. The result is a double burden. Abuse causes psychological harm, and enforced silence piles more damage on top. Male victims experience not only the immediate effects of violence, but also the trauma of being unable to name their pain, reach out for support, or access mental health services without risking social death through emasculation.

When hegemonic masculinity collides with cultural ideas like "izzat", "mardangi", and "log kya kahenge" in India, the double burden is even heavier—individual psychological suffering grows

bigger because of family shame, community scrutiny, and lack of institutional recognition or support. This leaves male IPV victims systematically invisible, deeply harmed psychologically, and blocked from the pathways that female victims use to seek help.

2.9. The Legal Framework: A Structural Barrier

The legal architecture governing intimate partner violence in India does not merely fail to accommodate male victims—it structurally disqualifies them before they can articulate their experiences.

2.9.1 The Indian Context

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA, 2005) and Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code stand as the main laws tackling domestic violence in India, but both center only on female victims—there's nothing equivalent for men (Kamal, 2024). Section 498A makes cruelty by a husband or his relatives toward a married woman a criminal offense. Meanwhile, the PWDVA offers civil remedies just for women facing domestic violence. Right from the start, the legislation assumes men are the perpetrators: when a man goes to the police or court, the system sees him as likely to be an abuser, not a victim (Sousa, 2022). This status of "perpetrator by default" isn't just an accident—it's built into these laws. Male victims don't even exist legally before anyone looks at the facts of a specific case.

The debate around misuse of Section 498A has drawn a lot of attention in Indian courts. In Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014), The Supreme Court of India openly recognized that the provision gets abused often, saying it had become "a weapon rather than a shield," and laid down that arrests under Section 498A shouldn't happen automatically (Kamal, 2024). Still, this acknowledgment of misuse doesn't take away from the law's purpose—protecting women who really do face serious and well-documented abuse in Indian marriages.

Instead, it points to a bigger problem: laws created to combat rampant violence against women don't have a male equivalent, leaving male victims stranded with no legal protection and at the same time open to false accusations (Sousa, 2022). So, India's legal system traps male victims in a tough spot—they get neither protection nor relief, yet they remain at risk from laws designed for their presumed guilt.

2.9.2 International Divergence

International comparisons show that India's gender-specific legal approach isn't found everywhere. Take the United Kingdom: its Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is clearly gender-neutral, covering "any person aged 16 or over," and includes economic abuse and coercive control as statutory offenses (Barber, 2023). This law doesn't assume who the victim or perpetrator is, it looks at behavior patterns and power dynamics. Of course, there are issues with implementation—especially when it comes to police training and how services are provided—but the law itself doesn't shut out male victims (Barber, 2023). Australia follows a similar path. Most state-level domestic violence laws emphasize gender neutrality. Victoria's Family Violence Protection Act 2008 is a prime example: it defines family violence without specifying victim or perpetrator gender and makes civil protection orders available to all family members (Pantaliienko, 2025).

Canada doesn't have a single federal domestic violence law, but its criminal laws apply in a gender-neutral way, and several provinces have civil protection order rules that don't distinguish by gender (Pantaliienko, 2025). India's legal framework stands in stark contrast. It acts as a formal, institutional hurdle that shapes every step male victims take in seeking justice. When a man in India reports intimate partner violence, he doesn't get a neutral system that weighs his case. Instead, he faces a structure that defines him as the very problem it was created to fix. This isn't an implementation slip—it's part of the core design. The law shuts out male victims before they even speak, leaving their experiences legally invisible (Shrivastava et al., 2022).

2.10. Institutional Response and Infrastructure

2.10.1 Law Enforcement and Police Response

International research consistently shows a disturbing pattern: when men report intimate partner violence, authorities often dismiss them, don't believe them, or even arrest them as if they're the abuser. Douglas and Hines (2011) found that 25.4% of male victims in the U.S. who reached out to police said the police did absolutely nothing. Some men were mocked or even arrested as the primary aggressor, despite being the ones who asked for help. This "dual arrest" phenomenon—where police arrest both people, or just the male victim instead of the female perpetrator—shows how deeply gendered assumptions run in police training and how they respond (Douglas & Hines, 2011).

Lysova et al. (2020) noticed the same pattern in four English-speaking countries: male victims kept describing negative encounters with the justice system—expecting ridicule, disbelief, and fearing

arrest. In India, the law's gender bias almost guarantees this outcome. If a man reports intimate partner violence to police, he risks being treated as the accused under Section 498A or the PWDVA, instead of as a victim (Sousa, 2022). The legal system sets him up as the default perpetrator, and police—working within these boundaries—have no legal ground to treat his complaint as valid. Hope et al. (2021) in the UK saw that domestic homicide reviews often ignored women's abuse of men, arrested male victims more often than their female partners, and half the reviews found authorities lacked proper guidance for handling male IPV cases.

If this is happening in countries with gender-neutral laws, India's situation—where men aren't recognized by the law at all—is clearly more dire. India's lack of police training for handling male IPV complaints isn't just a mistake, it's built into the system. When the law only sees domestic violence as something men do to women, there's no reason to train officers to recognize men as victims. This sets up a vicious cycle: legal invisibility leads to zero training, which leads straight to dismissing male victims, which makes it seem as if men aren't victims in the first place (Machado et al., 2022).

2.10.2 Support Infrastructure: Shelters and Helplines

India barely has any shelters or helplines dedicated to male victims, and honestly, it's a striking contrast compared to other places. In the UK, the ManKind Initiative runs a national helpline specifically for men. They record thousands of calls every year, which shows just how much unmet need is out there (Bates et al., 2020). Australia's One in Three Campaign takes on both advocacy and referral work, raising public awareness and connecting men to the right services (Walker et al., 2020). These groups work within legal systems that actually acknowledge male victimization—so they can get funding, build institutional legitimacy, and become part of broader domestic violence support networks.

India's national helpline (181) and its One Stop Centres only serve women, and that's enforced by law—men don't have any comparable way in (Shikhila et al., 2023). This isn't just a matter of insufficient resources or boosting ongoing projects. The legal obligations as such exclude men. Focusing on England and Wales, Vernon (2017) found there were 60 shelters for men but 7,500 for women, which highlights both longstanding victimization patterns and continuing disputes about resource allocation. In India, though, there are practically zero shelters for men—and not because of money, but because the law doesn't recognise male victims as needing help from official institutions.

This lack of support creates widespread impact. When men face severe violence, and there's nowhere to go, no shelter means no way out. No helpline, so no safe or confidential place to talk about abuse or get information about their few existing options. Without any way to access formal support, men remain invisible and cut off from basic services like counselling or legal advice (Wright, 2016).

2.10.3 The NGO Landscape in India

A few Indian NGOs, like the Save Indian Family Foundation, work to address male victimization, but they operate in a context that's fundamentally different from what their international peers face. These groups lack institutional legitimacy, government recognition, and funding. They exist outside the formal support ecosystem (Shikhila et al., 2023). The bigger problem is that people often dismiss them as anti-feminist, rather than seeing them as organizations that support victims. This framing points to a zero-sum logic baked into India's domestic violence discourse—advocating for male victims is seen as opposing women's protection, not as broadening justice. This marginalization has practical consequences. Without support from the government, these NGOs can't get public funding, take part in policy discussions, or link their services into formal referral networks.

Lacking institutional legitimacy means that their insights about male victimization get written off as ideological, not empirical. Their clients end up stigmatized as men dodging accountability instead of as victims seeking help (Valgardson, 2014). The NGO landscape ends up mirroring the judicial framework: male victims get structurally excluded from the official system, pushed into a marginalized and delegitimized space where they can't get enough support.

2.11. Clinical and Mental Health Barriers

The lack of trauma-informed care for male victims of intimate partner violence in Indian clinical settings reflects a larger pattern of institutional invisibility. Therapists and clinicians themselves move within gender norms making male victimization challenging to recognize or treat seriously—a problem Morgan et al. (2014) call the "socialized masculinity" lens. When male patients show up with symptoms of trauma, depression, or anxiety, clinicians may never think to ask about intimate partner violence because it doesn't match their idea of what victimization looks like. Even if men do talk about being abused, clinicians might play it down, reframe it as mutual conflict, or focus on the man's behavior rather than his experience as a victim (Douglas & Hines, 2011).

The absence of gender-sensitive protocols for male victims in India's mental health policy just aggravates the problem. Without clear guidelines on how to assess and treat male IPV victims, practitioners end up relying on their own instincts—which are shaped by the same gender ideas that cause men not to speak up in the first place. Lysova et al. (2020) found that, internationally, mental health professionals offer constructive assistance for male victims, but that only works if men can access mental health care and if those services actually recognize IPV as a clinical issue. In India, both points are still uncertain. The stigma around mental health, combined with the invisibility of male victimization, creates a double hurdle that very few men manage to get past (Sousa, 2022).

2.12. Psycho-Social Barriers

The psycho-social barriers to disclosure are not independent of structural barriers but are produced by the same hegemonic masculinity norms and institutional failures.

2.12.1 Intrapersonal Barriers: Shame, Denial, and Minimisation

Male IPV victims often wrestle with deep shame, denial, downplaying the abuse, and blaming themselves. Machado et al. (2017) observed that men often reframe abuse as simple conflict, brush off its severity, or even see themselves as responsible for "provoking" their partners. These are ways men avoid seeing themselves as "victims," a label that challenges their masculine identity. Widh et al. (2014) found that men described feeling "wimpy" or "emasculated" by what happened to them, which drove them to hide the abuse rather than reach out for help. Bates (2019) noted that men take in the social message that they're supposed to "handle" abuse themselves. If they are unable to, the humiliation runs deep. These internal barriers aren't just private shortcomings—they come straight from the norms of hegemonic masculinity. When society defines masculinity as toughness, self-control, and never being vulnerable, men who get abused wind up in an identity crisis. To admit the abuse out loud is to admit that they've missed the mark for what it means to be "a real man" (Scott-Storey et al., 2022).

This is more than a simple cognitive mistake a counselor can correct—this is a rational response in a society that reprimands men for displaying vulnerability. This shame is justified. Male victims are right to expect repercussions if they speak up (Brooks et al., 2020). Denial and minimizing the abuse actually protect men in this environment. If a man can't get help—if the legal system ignores him, if institutions brush him aside, if his community mocks him—admitting how bad the abuse just makes things worse. Minimizing helps him hold onto some control in a scenario where he is helpless

(Lewis, 2022). Self-blame, similarly, preserves the belief that he could change the situation if he behaved differently, a belief that is psychologically preferable to the alternative: that he is trapped in an abusive relationship with no institutional recourse and no social support (Bates, 2020).

2.12.2 Interpersonal and Community Pressure

The fear of social ridicule and family pressure to "maintain the marriage" weighs especially heavily in India, where divorce still carries stigma and family honor belongs to the whole group. Satapathy et al. (2025) showed that social norms stop men from seeking help—mainly because they're afraid of being laughed at, creating a significant social obstacle. Kgatle et al. (2021) described how men meet not just ridicule but also judgment from their families and feel pressured to keep the marriage together; worries about children and custody keep them from speaking out. The "community judgment" idea—what people call "log kya kahenge" (what will people say)—operates not just as background pressure but as an active deterrent, with community members actively discouraging disclosure to protect family reputation (Aborisade, 2023).

Children have a specific and powerful impact on why male victims stay in abusive relationships. These men often stick with an abusive marriage so they won't lose access to their children. Indian family courts have almost always favored mothers when it comes to custody (Machado et al., 2023). Dim et al. (2021) found that male victims worried about legal or administrative abuse from female partners—things like false accusations or manipulating custody. Perryman et al. (2016) reported that child involvement, particularly fears of injury or losing contact, influenced men's help-seeking behavior. This is not simply an emotional attachment but a rational calculation: leaving an abusive relationship may mean losing one's children, a cost many men are unwilling to pay (Bates, 2019). These interpersonal barriers aren't separate from deeper, structural ones.

Men fear ridicule because they see, probably correctly, that their communities—steeped in the gender norms behind legal and institutional practices—either won't believe them or will blame them for being victims. They fear losing their children because they know the courts, operating under laws that assume men are always the perpetrator, almost certainly won't give them custody. Interpersonal and organisationalbarriers operate collectively, confining men with barely any means of escape (Waila et al., 2026).

2.13. The Core Gap: The Indian Research Deficit

While international research offers a starting point for understanding male IPV victimization, academic literature barely includes qualitative data from Indian male survivors. Kimmel (2002) showed that intimate partner violence is not solely perpetrated by men—he documented significant rates of female-perpetrated violence in Western countries. Still, whether that evidence fits India's context remains doubtful, due to the substantial differences in legal systems, family arrangements, gender roles, and institutional approaches.

Men cannot report to police because the legal framework positions them as perpetrators. They cannot access services because no services exist for them. They cannot disclose to family or community because social norms punish male vulnerability. They cannot participate in research because researchers cannot recruit participants who have not disclosed their victimization. The combination of legal barriers and institutional failures is precisely why this data gap exists (Sousa, 2022). The circular logic is self-perpetuating: men cannot report, therefore they cannot be studied, therefore the absence of data is used to argue the problem does not exist, therefore no legal or institutional reforms are implemented, therefore men continue to be unable to report. Until the legal and institutional barriers are addressed, the research gap will persist, and the silence of male victims will continue to be misinterpreted as evidence that they do not exist (Wang et al., 2024).

2.14. Critical Analysis of Research Methodologies

2.14.1 Measurement Tools: CTS and CTS2

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) and its updated version (CTS2) are the most popular tools for measuring intimate partner violence, but they come with major methodological flaws that undermine their construct validity. CTS defines violence as individual behaviors—hitting, pushing, threatening—while ignoring the relational context surrounding these actions (Dobash et al., 1992; Saunders, 2002). By doing this, CTS fails to separate self-defense from aggression, doesn't account for fear or injuries, and treats every act the same, regardless of how severe, frequent, or coercive it is (Lehrner et al., 2014). CTS2 added injury and sexual coercion subscales, trying to fix some psychometric gaps, but still sticks to an act-based logic that hides important details like meaning, motivation, and effect (Archer, 1999; Straus, 2012).

This problem becomes especially significant in male victimization studies: acts of female aggression used for self-defense get counted the same as ongoing coercive abuse, leading to an overestimation of female perpetration rates while masking gendered power dynamics (Dutton et al.,

2005; Hamby, 2014). Ackerman (2017) found that 22.1% of CTS responses were actually overreports—accidents or minor incidents wrongly categorized as violence—and males were more likely to overreport being victimized by female partners, skewing prevalence data on both sides.

2.14.2 Sampling Bias

Most research on male IPV victimization leans heavily on convenience samples—college students, patients in psychiatric or substance use treatment, and shelter residents. These groups don't represent wider populations (Saunders, 2002). College samples, for example, capture mostly young, educated, urban men, and their relationships don't map onto what happens with married couples facing IPV (Bell et al., 2007). Clinical samples bring in people already struggling with psychiatric conditions, slanting the data. Shelter residents represent only the most extreme cases, and they leave out the vast majority who never seek formal help (Ackerman, 2017).

This problem becomes even sharper in India. Studies here just reflect an unrepresentative and narrow demographic sample—with limited relevance to married men from all walks of life, especially in rural, lower-caste, or economically marginalized communities. These groups deal with IPV shaped by unique forces like caste-based matchmaking, dowry disputes, joint family structures, and economic pressure from farming (Kanougiya et al., 2021). Because there aren't any population-based, random samples, the estimates we have for prevalence and investigation into risk factors don't have a solid evidence base. That fragile base means it's virtually unattainable to draw strong causal conclusions or design effective policy.

2.14.3 Gendered Framing of Survey Instruments

The NFHS is India's key national data source on domestic violence, but its Domestic Violence Module was built to examine female victimization. This design choice leaves male victimization statistically invisible. The survey interviews one woman per household, asks only about violence from husbands, and leaves out any equivalent questions for men about violence from wives (Kanougiya et al., 2021). Moreover, men respond to fewer and differently phrased questions, and the survey methodology simply can't produce valid estimates of prevalence for male victims. This isn't just missing data—it's a deliberate design, shaped by gendered assumptions integrated into the survey: women as victims, men as perpetrators from the beginning (Hamby, 2014). That leaves NFHS data not just incomplete but actively suppresses any representation of male victimization, preventing national estimates, trends, or any policymaking founded on evidence. The same logic holds in the

WHO's Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, which completely leaves out male victimization, establishing a global framework in which the complete narrative of IPV is never included in the data (Dutton et al., 2005).

2.14.4 Recall and Social Desirability Bias

Retrospective self-report surveys — the dominant methodology in IPV research — are subject to **recall bias**: respondents may not accurately remember events, particularly for less severe or chronic abuse that becomes normalised over time (Saunders, 2002). Men face an extra hurdle: social desirability bias. Social pressure means men underreport abuse out of shame or fear of ridicule, or because they feel the need to look unaffected (Bell et al., 2007). Bell et al. (2007) found that social desirability lessens partner abuse reporting, and it operates differently between men and women.

For men, providing truthful responses requires breaking masculine norms—particularly in home-based surveys, in situations where others may overhear or learn of participation (Ackerman, 2017). Even if a survey is gender-neutral and asks about male victimization, strong underreporting is almost inevitable. The process of measurement is altered under the influence of the same cultural dynamics that silence men in daily life. The magnitude of this bias remains unknown, as validation studies comparing self-reports to objective indicators are virtually absent for male victimization.

2.15. Qualitative Research Gaps in India

Qualitative methods—like in-depth interviews, narrative inquiry, and phenomenological approaches—work especially well for capturing the lived experience of men facing IPV, and for uncovering the meaning they attach to abuse, as well as the cultural contexts that shape how they respond (Donovan et al., 2020). Almost no qualitative studies focus on male IPV survivors in India. Swethashri et al. (2026) did conduct narrative interviews with young Badaga men who'd been exposed to intimate partner violence as children, showing how patriarchal traditions and masculinity norms silence these experiences. But studies like this are rare. The few that do exist work with tiny samples and run into major access challenges: men often refuse to participate—ashamed, afraid of being identified, or distrustful of researchers (Shah et al., 2024). Men who are unable to share their experiences with the police, family, or community are also unlikely to reveal this information to researchers. This creates a methodological challenge: the populations that need to be studied the most are often the hardest to reach. Consequently, we end up with qualitative evidence that lacks the depth necessary to effectively support theory development, intervention design, or policy advocacy.

2.16. Ethical Challenges

Research involving IPV survivors demands strict ethical standards: IRB approval, informed consent, risk-of-harm assessments, and clear referral pathways for participants in distress (Babu et al., 2023). When it comes to male IPV survivors in India, the ethical framework becomes further complicated. Standard frameworks fall short here. First, asking male survivors to recount their experiences in detail carries a higher risk of retraumatization, especially for those who've never disclosed their abuse and don't have access to trauma-informed support (Swethashri et al., 2026). Next, confidentiality cannot easily be assured when interviews happen in joint family homes—other relatives are often present, or at minimum are aware that someone is involved, and these environments simply lack privacy, particularly in rural areas (Shah et al., 2024). On top of that, if a man discloses abuse, he faces the risk of provoking retaliatory lawsuits under Section 498A IPC, that criminally punishes husbands for cruelty yet lacks a corresponding provision for cruelty by wives; instead of securing protection, a man might end up accused (Babu et al., 2023).

These ethical limitations are significant obstacles to knowledge generation rather than just procedural ones. Male victimization is understudied not only because of lack of interest but also because of unresolved ethical dilemmas that the current research infrastructure needs to be equipped with to address. An ethical research design that sufficiently protects male participants in Indian contexts requires resources, institutional support, and methodological innovation that the field must aim to develop.

Chapter 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Aim

- To explore and understand the lived experiences of married men who have faced IPV in India.
- To examine the social, cultural, and legal aspects of reporting IPV.
- To understand the role of stigma and social expectations in shaping men's help-seeking behavior.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopts an exploratory qualitative research design. This design is chosen because male victimization in India is a marginalised phenomenon. A qualitative approach thus allows for depth and nuance in learning about the unique differences in individual experiences of such victims.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Non-probability purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilised.

- **NGO Collaboration:** The researcher collaborated with specialised organisations, specifically the Ekam Nyaay Foundation and Men Welfare Trust, to reach the specific demographic of survivors.
- **Digital Outreach:** A Google Form consisting of a document with information about the dissertation study and a section for providing consent was circulated through these NGOs' official communication channels and support networks. Potential participants could refer to the document and understand the nature and requirements of the study, and if they felt comfortable, could return to the Google form to proceed to the next section, providing their consent and contact details for the researcher to reach out to them.

  This was done to maintain transparency about the study and to explicitly state the participant's role in the study so that there is no misinformation or filtering done in the communication of the aims of the study or in the manner of data collection.

- **Chain Referral:** NGO representatives also facilitated the researcher with direct contacts of survivors who had previously sought help, thus ensuring a sample with direct experience in the help-seeking process.

3.4 Sample Characteristics

Sample size: 11

Inclusion Criteria

- Male survivors aged above 21 years.
- Have been married for at least 4 months and experienced IPV and are currently separated or involved in legal proceedings (to provide insight into reporting and institutional barriers).

Exclusion Criteria

- Female survivors (to maintain the study's focus).
- Minors (under 21).

3.5 Research Procedure

- **Outreach:** The researcher contacted the heads of the **Ekam Nyaay Foundation and Men Welfare Trust** to explain the study's purpose and obtain permission to float the recruitment link. The organisation heads circulated the Google Form through their official support and social media networks. This form functioned as a self-screening tool where participants could read the study details and provide digital consent before leaving their contact information. In several instances, organisation heads acted as intermediaries. They personally contacted survivors within their network to introduce the study and gauge their interest. Only after these individuals gave their **explicit consent** to the NGO heads was their contact information shared with the researcher for a follow-up.
- **Interview Setting:** Once contact was established—either through the Google Form or the mediated referral—the researcher reached out to each participant to clarify the interview process and answer any preliminary questions. Interviews were then scheduled at a time that prioritised the participant's privacy and convenience.
- **Interview Execution:** The researcher conducted **semi-structured interviews**. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts freely, with the researcher using a pre-prepared interview guide that was adjusted based on the flow of the conversation. At the start of each session, the researcher reconfirmed consent and reiterated the participant's right to skip questions or withdraw, ensuring a safe and non-pressured environment for the duration of the dialogue.
- **Recording:** With explicit permission, conversations were audio-recorded for the purpose of creating verbatim transcriptions.

3.6 Data Protection and Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines and received formal approval from the **University Ethics Board**. To ensure the safety and rights of the participants, the following protocols were implemented:

- **Digital Informed Consent:** Recruitment was facilitated through a Google Form that served as the primary gateway for participation. This form included a comprehensive **Participant Information Sheet** detailing the study's aims, the voluntary nature of the research, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Participants were required to read and affirmatively click their consent before the researcher initiated any further contact.

- **Participant Autonomy and Comfort:** At the commencement of each interview, the researcher explicitly informed the participants that they held full control over the dialogue. It was clearly stated that if any question caused discomfort or if they simply did not wish to share specific details, they could **skip that particular question**. The researcher maintained a strict policy of **no further probing** regarding skipped topics to respect the participant's boundaries and emotional well-being.

- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** To protect the identities of the survivors, all raw data was immediately **anonymised**. Transcripts utilised pseudonyms, and any specific identifying markers (such as names of spouses, specific employers, or exact locations) were redacted.

3.7 Data Analysis Method

The data gathered through the interviews has been analysed using **Thematic Analysis**, following the six-phase framework established by **Braun and Clarke (2006)**. This systematic approach allows for a rigorous identification of recurring patterns across the diverse experiences of male survivors. The analysis followed the following sequential phases:

- **Transcription and Familiarisation:** As interviews are completed, they are transcribed verbatim. The researcher engaged in an iterative process of reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain an immersive understanding of the narratives and to identify early patterns in the participants' accounts.

- **Initial Coding:** The researcher then systematically identified and labelled segments of the text that relate to the research objectives. This process involves assigning codes to specific experiences, such as *"institutional dismissiveness," "socialised silence,"* or *"legal struggle."*
- **Theme Development:** Following the initial coding phase, the researcher collated related codes into broader, candidate themes. This stage moves the analysis from descriptive keywords to more interpretive categories that capture the structural and social realities of the survivors.
- **Reviewing and Refining:** Candidate themes were then continuously reviewed against the raw data to ensure they accurately represent the survivors' voices. This phase ensures that the themes are distinct, coherent, and grounded in the participants lived experiences.
- **Defining and Naming:** Each final theme was then clearly defined and named to articulate the specific barriers and coping mechanisms identified during the study.
- **Final Synthesis and Reporting:** The analysis concluded with a final interpretation and explanation as part of the results that weaves together the developed themes with illustrative extracts from the participants, providing a comprehensive view of male victimization within the Indian context.

Chapter 4
RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of a reflexive thematic analysis conducted in accordance with the six-phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Five master themes were identified through iterative engagement with the full dataset. These themes were consistent across all eleven participants, though their manifestation varied in form, intensity, and contextual framing. Participant profiles are summarised in the demographic table below. All participants are identified by coded initials solely for this overview. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, no identifying information related to the participants has been included in any other parts of this chapter. All direct quotations that are included in this chapter have been randomly assigned to the database as anonymous excerpts (not attributable to any one participant) to demonstrate the pattern of themes across the entire dataset.

ID	Age	Marriage Type	Duration	Location	Legal Status
GS	48	Arranged (portal)	~10 yrs	Dubai (prev. India)	Divorced (2024)
AS	N/S	Arranged	~3 yrs	Noida, NCR	Divorced (2025)
HC	37	Arranged (portal)	12 yrs	Mumbai	Separated; proceedings ongoing
RM	N/S	Arranged	~6 yrs	Near Bangalore	Divorced (recent)
HY	N/S	Arranged	~5 mths	Lucknow	Separated; proceedings ongoing
IB	27	Special Marriage Act	~1 yr	Pahalgam, Kashmir	Divorce ongoing
RM	34	Arranged (portal)	~6 yrs	Mumbai (prev. Delhi)	Divorce ongoing
RB	43	Arranged (portal)	4 mths cohabitation	Dubai (prev. Delhi)	Divorced; remarried

ID	Age	Marriage Type	Duration	Location	Legal Status
SR	35	Arranged	~3 yrs	Karnataka	Separation; multiple cases ongoing
SCV	39	Arranged (portal)	11 yrs	California, USA (prev. India)	Still married; ongoing conflict
WA	52	Arranged (marriage bureau)	~1.5 yrs	Delhi NCR	Divorced (2011–12); works in a men's welfare NGO

Note: N/S = Not Specified.

Five master themes emerged from the analysis of the entire dataset and were roughly equivalent across the eleven participants; however, the themes expressed themselves differently in terms of form, intensity, and contextual framing. The themes are: (1) Multi-Dimensional and Escalating Abuse; (2) Psychological Entrapment and Survival Strategies; (3) Social Stigma, Masculinity Norms, and Silencing; (4) Systemic and Legal Barriers to Justice; and (5) Collateral Damage — Impact on Family and Professional Life. Each theme is discussed in depth below, substantiated by direct quotations drawn from across the dataset.

4.1. Thematic Map

The table below provides a visual overview of the five master themes and their principal sub-themes as derived from the full data.

	Master Theme	Sub-themes
1	Multi-Dimensional and Escalating Abuse	Routine emotional and/or verbal abuse, witnessed/followed by physical violence; destruction of property; exploitation and/or control of finances; involvement of in-laws and extended family members; accumulation of abuse over time; suspected of having or known to have

	Master Theme	Sub-themes
		a partner with a mental health condition; coerced marriage could also potentially provide some context to abusive behaviours.
2	Psychological Entrapment and Survival Strategies	Experiencing hyper-vigilance and living constantly under impending threat; development of depression and suicidal thoughts; erosion of sense of who someone is as a person and egocentric behaviour by not being able to pull internalised vs external behaviours apart; disengagement and compartmentalising; maintaining a profession as an anchor; gathering of strategic evidence; forced compliance through coercion.
3	Social Stigma, Masculinity Norms, and Silencing	Expectations of hegemonic masculinity; social stigma of male victims of domestic violence/living in an abusive relationship; fear of being ridiculed and/or mocked; delayed and/or no disclosures; social increase in status potentially increases abuse suffered; there is gradual but insufficient progression of social awareness about men in domestic violence relationships.
4	Systemic and Legal Barriers to Justice	Gender-asymmetrical legal system or framework; threat (real or perceived) of counter-allegation through domestic violence (498A/DV Act) when making a report to police; police indifference; and/or hostile treatment from authorities; weaponizing of legal system; evidence required to obtain justice; a lack of established or supportive resources for men experiencing domestic violence; cross-jurisdictional complexities for non-resident Indians; and pre-emptive navigation through legal avenues provides a strategic advantage to those at risk of domestic violence.
5	Collateral Damage — Impact on Family and Professional Life	Physical and neurological deterioration from physical abuse; psychological deterioration from using substances to numb feelings or pain; disruptive career and out-of-home (homelessness) living; trauma

	Master Theme	Sub-themes
		to extended family and children; depletion of social networks; financial losses due to domestic violence and extortion of financial settlements.

4.2. Theme 1: Multi-Dimensional and Escalating Abuse

The first and most foundational theme discusses the nature of IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) as it occurred with respect to the characteristics of the participants within the 11 accounts of this dataset. The patterns of abuse that were reported fell into two primary categories: 1) they were not the product of any one type of abuse occurring only once, but rather an integrated system of inter-related and mutually-reinforcing components composed of verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse, and social abuse; and 2) each of the 11 participants reported various sub-themes within their respective accounts that were consistent with other reports, such as 1) triggers that were completely unpredictable; 2) the partner's extended family network, which was included as part of the abusive dynamic; and 3) most participants indicated that their partner has a mental health diagnosis or was suspected of having a mental health issue.

4.2.1 Verbal and Emotional Abuse

Every one of the 11 individuals interviewed reported emotional and verbal abuse as the defining characteristic of their domestic life. This included daily criticism, continual nagging, public humiliation, degrading language, and psychological undermining of the participants. The cumulative impact of this abuse was seen as more harmful than isolated physical incidents due to its pervasive nature. Additionally, the abuse was described as intentionally modulated, occurring privately but occasionally displayed publicly, indicating a deliberate intent by the perpetrator rather than a loss of control.

> *"The kind of verbal abuse and filth language — it was an everyday thing. Mental abuse, a few times a week, was for sure. It would go from zero to 100 without any provocation, without any reason."*

> *"Her habit was that there would be things set in her mind and she would just constantly, all the time, complain — 'you don't do this, you don't do that.' It never stopped."*
>
> *"She didn't talk respectfully. Just shouting and insulting me in front of my staff. I told her: if you have a problem with me, we can sit in a room and discuss it peacefully. Being disrespected in front of my staff as a civil servant was not right."*
>
> *"You start getting yelled at with all kinds of unparliamentary language. Being accused of not being honest. Having the same said about your mother and sister. These are the things that really affected me."*

4.2.2 Physical Violence and Property Destruction

Reports of physical violence across the eleven accounts consistently highlighted various methods, including pushing, slapping, scratching, and biting. Some instances involved the use of objects as weapons, property destruction against the victim's body, and resulted in fractures that required medical intervention, such as CT scans and treatment from an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist. Several respondents indicated that they were left with permanent scars or needed ongoing medical attention due to the trauma they experienced from these assaults. Many respondents described property damage as a deliberate act intended to intimidate, showcasing the perpetrator's capacity for violence and establishing a dynamic of dominance and submission within the domestic relationship. There were reports of entire households being destroyed on multiple occasions. Additionally, violence against respondents often occurred in the presence of children, elderly parents, and domestic employees, suggesting that the perpetrator aimed to increase humiliation and social shame for the victim by utilising public settings.

> *"200 things in the house would get broken. There would be glass pieces across. So many times I have gone with a scratched face to my office."*
>
> *"Physical violence is completely off the charts — being hit, slapped, kicked continuously. Things being thrown at me to the level that when it hit me in the head, I had to get a CT scan."*

> *"She tore my clothes. She bit me all over my body. The marks were very nasty. I still have them."*
>
> *"Her mother broke my glasses completely, attacked my face, scratched both my eyes — right in front of my home guard, on my son's first birthday."*
>
> *"She had a hairclip and she came at me with it. There is a permanent scar. In six years of marriage, I have had about 100 slaps from my wife."*

4.2.3 Escalation and Unpredictability of Triggers

A key characteristic that emerged from the entire data set was the escalating nature of the abuse. Many participants began by rationalising or minimising their early experiences of abuse, but over time, they encountered severe bouts of abuse due to the increasing frequency and brutality of the incidents. All participants described initially attempting to manage the abuse in secrecy. However, there came a breaking point for each individual, where they could no longer contain or cope with the abuse without taking action.

Another important element highlighted was the lack of consistent patterns in the circumstances that triggered incidents of abuse. Almost any event could provoke an incident. Examples of triggers included a delayed phone call, an innocuous social visit, questions about finances, religious practices, compliments given to coworkers, and the presence of the participant's family in their marital home. This unpredictability constituted a form of constant psychological violence, depriving participants of any sense of safety or power within their homes.

> *"It would immediately go from zero to 100, without any provocation. The triggers were so small you couldn't even imagine. It couldn't be explained."*
>
> *"She came barging in and started accusing me and hitting me. I asked, what happened? She said: 'Two years back, your mom told someone about me and that is making me angry. I just want to hit you.'"*
>
> *"Even something as small as being late from the office, or if I wanted to meet a friend — that became a reason. It was very random. I don't know what was going on in her mind."*

4.2.4 Financial Exploitation and Control

Financial abuse was evident in all 11 accounts, but it manifested in various ways. This included direct and explicit financial demands, such as having property transferred to the partner's name or requesting large sums of money to be given to the partner's family. There were also requests related to investments or purchases that the participants had not agreed to, as well as less direct means of financial manipulation. For example, some partners did not contribute to household expenses while spending recklessly, making their partners feel financially inadequate despite their own generous spending. Financial pressure was often used as a method of control or to compel compliance with their demands.

A common theme among several accounts was the use of financial demands as leverage during the separation process. In these cases, threats were made regarding creating unreasonable settlement amounts before proceeding with a divorce. Additional instances of financial abuse included the misappropriation of joint account funds, the removal of jewellery, and the covert transfer of property to a partner's family.

> *"She would be living in a five-bedroom house but always trying to put me down — 'you are a beggar, what have you given me?' Nothing was ever enough, even though she had the best of everything."*
>
> *"They settled for 50 lakhs, plus all the jewelry and everything else. I basically bought my freedom back. But there are a lot of people who cannot afford this."*
>
> *"She kept saying your financial condition is not good. But she spent everything, controlled everything. Even if I gave my parents 10,000 rupees, she had a problem with that."*
>
> *"She moved all the money into a separate account, took the jewellery to her parents' locker. There was a complete mistrust in terms of finances."*

4.2.5 In-Law and Extended Family Involvement

The issues outlined below illustrate how the partner's extended family contributed to the abusive dynamics in shared experiences. In 9 out of 11 cases, family members played a significant role in perpetuating the abuse by initiating conflicts, making financial demands, physically assaulting participants, and mistreating their parents. They also condoned the partner's infidelity, supported legal counterclaims, and launched social media campaigns against participants, using their connections to exert intimidation.

The family relationships appeared systemic, with partners acting more as extensions of a coordinated family agenda than as independent individuals. A painful theme emerged where participants learned post-marriage about their partner's problematic history, which the family had deliberately withheld.

> *"Her family members were always involved. They would call and start abusing me. All the other husbands in her family had the same situation. The entire family would gang up."*
>
> *"Her parents were so supportive of her conduct that when her boyfriend came to the flat, her parents left the house and stood by the car 200 to 300 meters away."*
>
> *"Her sister had warned me before the marriage that she is a pathological liar and I should not trust her. But I had already agreed to marry."*
>
> *"Even my sister's marriage was used as leverage against me. They said: 'Your sister's hand is in my brother's hand. If you do this, we will destroy her marriage too.'"*

4.2.6 Suspected or Identified Mental Health Conditions in the Partner

Eight of the eleven accounts consistently highlighted a recurring sub-theme: that the partner has an underlying, undisclosed mental health issue that has remained untreated throughout the relationship. Participants identified several mental disorders, including Narcissistic Personality Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, and Multiple Personality Disorder. There were numerous instances where participants began formal psychiatric evaluations, but these processes were interrupted by the partner's family, the partner's decision to discontinue the evaluations, or the use of these evaluations against the participant in legal proceedings. The partner often obstructed counselling efforts by denying the allegations during sessions and claiming that the counsellor was

biased toward one partner or the other. Overall, participants described these mental health issues not as mitigating factors for the abuse, but rather as background context for their experiences. This helped them reconcile their experiences of being abused by their partner, but it did not lessen the impact of the abuse itself.

> *"She later really understood that she has an undiagnosed condition — Borderline Personality Disorder. She never agreed to that. There is no cure. You just have to manage the condition. And she was not willing to manage it."*
>
> *"I took her to a psychiatrist. She was showing NPD symptoms. Her mother, who has a PhD in Psychology, said not to go to a psychiatrist because they would prove her as mad."*
>
> *"She was diagnosed with multiple personality disorder and bipolar disorder. Whenever she had those episodes, she would take it all out on me."*

4.3. Theme 2: Psychological Entrapment and Survival Strategies

The second theme looks at how participants feel inside—especially the sense of being trapped in a harmful situation with few ways to find safety. It also explores the coping and survival strategies they developed to deal with this situation. This theme highlights both vulnerability and resilience. It discusses the psychological pain that comes from experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) and the ways participants managed to keep going and eventually break free from that cycle. Overall, the data shows a complex and often painful picture of how people endure extreme stress over a long time.

4.3.1 Depression, Suicidal Ideation, and Psychological Crisis

There is a high degree of psychological distress experienced by each of the eleven participants. In addition to chronic conditions (e.g., chronic depression, weight loss, appetite loss, inability to concentrate, unexplained crying), several participants indicated they had reached a point of contemplating suicide — as a logical response to the impossibility of escaping their situation and the constant nature of their circumstances. For many participants who reported experiences of suicidal ideation, it was described as the culmination of many years of a gradual deterioration of their identity, autonomy and hope. In several accounts, participants did not act on their thoughts because they focused on their work, family duties, and personal values. They did not rely on outside help or intervention.

> *"I would have contemplated suicide a number of times. But you still have to keep going. It's surprising that a person like me — who has been a towering leader — could be reduced to literally living on burning coals every day."*
>
> *"Those four or five days were very bad. My colleagues kept me under their observation so that I don't die or try to commit suicide."*
>
> *"I was very done with life. It wasn't just once that this thought came. It came many times. But somehow I managed to fight those thoughts."*
>
> *"I started crying when building blocks with my nephew. Whatever I used to enjoy was now making me cry. My psychologist said you are experiencing an enormous amount of depression."*

> *"Once I went to the bathroom, took a shampoo bottle, and thought — enough is enough. I was tempted to do something. But I didn't."*

4.3.2 Hypervigilance and the Experience of Chronic Threat

The unpredictable nature of the abuse created a constant state of hyper-vigilance among all informants. This means they were always "on alert" for potential triggers, leaving them with no real sense of safety or rest, even in their own homes. The informants described their condition using vivid images, showing not just discomfort but also a strong sense of danger and feeling under siege. They consistently reported that this constant state of alertness built up over time. It was not just the fear of specific incidents, but the ongoing awareness that any normal situation at home could suddenly become violent. Many informants particularly dreaded evenings, weekends, and holidays, believing that more time spent at home meant longer exposure to the abusive behaviour.

> *"It was walking on fire. On burning coals, not even eggshells. It was a battle for survival every day — for your sanity, for your life, for everything."*
>
> *"I used to be actually afraid of weekends, because weekends we had to stay together and spend time together more. And we had a lot of fights."*
>
> *"At night, I was afraid to even go home from the office. Better to be outside. At home it was the same — like a mourning atmosphere, sadness, and no one to talk to."*
>
> *"My blood pressure was becoming 180 to 190. Health was getting completely deteriorated. I was also having sleep disorders, suddenly screaming in my sleep."*

4.3.3 Withdrawal, Compartmentalisation, and Coping

All participants in this study faced difficult situations that they could not solve logically or confront directly. They created various coping and resilience strategies to manage their emotions, leave the situation, and separate their work life from their home life.

The most common immediate response to domestic violence was to leave the scene. Participants described walking away, moving to another room, going to a friend's house, or getting a hotel to wait and see if the situation would get better. This choice to leave was seen as a way to cope actively—an approach to prevent the situation from getting worse and to protect themselves and others.

For those in senior positions or jobs that involved public interaction, it was crucial to mentally separate work from home life. Participants noted that they often had to compartmentalise their feelings after experiencing violence from their partners. Despite their trauma, they returned to work to give presentations, manage large teams, or represent the government at public events, which added to their stress and mental exhaustion.

> *"What I would do is just leave the situation and go, because you can't talk to her or reason out with her. I would wait for her to calm down. That was the only option."*
>
> *"It's like you're going after seeing your entire house broken, and after all of this, going and giving a lecture to 1000 people to motivate them. I never allowed it to impact my work. I don't know how I was able to manage."*
>
> *"I could always compartmentalise things — this should remain here, that should remain there. But yes, at that time, work had become quite zero for me. It just became a formality."*

4.3.4 Strategic Evidence Gathering as Self-Protection

Participants shared that a key way to survive was by intentionally collecting evidence for self-protection. As male complainants, they felt legally vulnerable and faced challenges when their claims were dismissed by support institutions. To counter this, they started taking active steps. They recorded audio and video of the violence they experienced, documented financial transactions, saved threatening messages, and submitted written statements to high-ranking law enforcement officials. In some cases, they even conducted surveillance to gather strong evidence.

This shift from simply enduring to actively documenting marked an important change for many participants. They moved from being passive survivors to becoming assertive advocates for themselves. Collecting this evidence was crucial in court cases that might otherwise have been lost.

> *"Whenever any sort of fight broke out, I would record it on WhatsApp and send it to myself. I had around 500 to 600 recordings of her ranting. Eventually those recordings were very useful."*
>
> *"I had 92 videos and 237 photographs of her adultery. Even bills of hotels, overnight stays — all those things I collected and presented in court."*
>
> *"God bless the person who told me to take the videos when she was breaking everything. Without that, if she had said I broke the house — everybody would have believed the man did it."*

4.3.5 Forced Compliance and Coercive Control

There are many different examples of a type of pressure experienced by participants; specifically, the experience of being pressured into compliance by way of entering into a marriage, staying married or being forced to resolve financial issues with threats that were too serious to ignore. The threats that would be made against them, their family, and significant others, leading to the pressure of compliance, included threats of suicide; making false criminal complaints against the participant's family; threatening to expose them and/or their family to the public; using physical violence or intimidation; and exploiting their weakness if they were elderly parents or young siblings. Many of the participants reported these types of tactics had pushed them into making decisions that they had not wanted or had not wanted to make. In many cases, the pressure to comply with marriage began before marriage and led to being married against their will due to being threatened with criminal charges, which greatly impacted the relationship dynamic following the marriage.

> *"She would use a scarf hanging from the fan to threaten me that she would hang herself if I tried to leave. Either you marry me or I will file a gang rape case against your entire family. That was her threat, every single time."*
>
> *"My grandfather said people should get a second chance. I said okay, however you say. I paid 50 lakhs. I basically bought my freedom back. There was no point arguing. I just wanted to not live with her anymore."*

4.4. Theme 3: Social Stigma, Masculinity Norms, and Silencing

The third theme looks at the strong social and cultural influences that affect how willing participants are to share their experiences and ask for help. In all eleven accounts, societal expectations for men, often called hegemonic masculinity, create major barriers to sharing feelings and seeking support. These expectations encourage men to appear strong, self-sufficient, and invulnerable. Participants express that these norms are not just ideals; they affect how men perceive others will react when they share their experiences, often leading to fears of ridicule, dismissal, or social judgment. Although men's social and professional status can make these barriers worse, there has been a small but noticeable shift in recent years towards greater awareness of these challenges in society.

4.4.1 The Social Unacceptability of Male Victimhood

Across all eleven accounts, each participant shared their thoughts on how they are seen in Indian society. Participants reported that men are often not recognised as victims of female romantic partners. When this happens, people generally react with disbelief, humour, or blame the man completely. Many believe that the man must have contributed to the situation, that a woman cannot harm a man, or that a man who lets himself be victimised by a woman lacks masculinity and confidence. Participants described their views on this reality without anger, showing a tired but clear understanding. This perception shaped how they experienced violence and influenced their choices to disclose their situations and seek help.

> *"Can a man go to his friend and say his wife is beating him? They will be laughing at his situation. How can a man who is very respected come and say that he tolerates abuses from his wife?"*
>
> *"If he says his wife is hitting him, the first reaction from people is laughter. They say things like — 'What did you do to deserve it?' As if the man must have provoked it. Society just dismisses it."*
>
> *"In my whole village of 130 families, 125 were supporting her, not me. Even though things were done to me. Society was with her because she is female."*
>
> *"I went to a forum once, discussing this generally. Two or three people commented: how can a man be a victim of domestic violence? That was their reaction."*

4.4.2 Delayed Disclosure and Selective Sharing

The stigma around male victimhood caused delays in sharing experiences for all eleven cases studied. Many participants waited years before telling anyone, even their closest family members, about what was happening at home. When they did share their experiences, it was often done carefully and with only a few trusted people. Some talked to a close friend, a supportive manager, boss or colleagues at work, or family, only when they could no longer hide the problems.

For most, sharing their story did not bring relief. Instead, they often felt forced to do it because of practical reasons. This included needing legal advice, facing a counter-complaint, or when their situation became visible to others due to their partner's actions. Several participants also described how they managed their situation. They deleted call histories, avoided family contact when their partner was around, and created a false public image of happiness on social media, often feeling pressured to do so.

> *"No, I couldn't tell anybody. My parents got to know very late that this woman was abusing me every day. What does the world understand about this?"*
>
> *"I would only talk to my family when I went to the office. And then I used to delete my call history — as a precaution. Sometimes she would ask me to show my phone."*
>
> *"She would sit with me and say — 'open your Facebook, post this photograph, put this caption.' So for my friends, after all of this, it was almost impossible to understand that I was saying I was unhappy."*

4.4.3 The Amplifying Effect of Social Status and Professional Identity

A key finding from several accounts is that having professional success, authority, and public visibility can make it harder for people to seek help or disclose their situations. For participants in senior, state-facing, or high-profile roles, the potential consequences of their situation becoming publicly known were considerably higher than for less prominent individuals. They worry about losing their reputation, organisational standing, authority, and respect from peers. Many participants talked about the heavy psychological burden of appearing strong and in control while suffering privately. In some cases, partners or family members took advantage of this vulnerability by running social media

campaigns, contacting employers, reaching out to the media, or filing complaints to increase public awareness.

> *"The more you are successful, the more difficult it is. You have the family honour to protect and your own reputation to protect. And at the end of it, more people will eventually talk about it — which you don't want."*
>
> *"All national media, everywhere, the news circulated that an [occupation removed for anonymity] has been booked for dowry. The public should have known the truth. But they don't know what is true and what is false."*
>
> *"People at work used to know. The biggest problem is she started posting everything on Facebook and tagging my office. I had to resign — I was such a senior leader."*

4.4.4 Changing Social Awareness and Its Limitations

All eleven participants acknowledged that awareness of male intimate partner violence (IPV) is slowly growing in Indian society, especially in recent years. This increase mainly comes from social media visibility and high-profile cases. However, participants emphasised that changing social attitudes alone is not enough. We need deeper structural changes in laws, institutions, and resources to really improve the experiences of male victims. Participants described the social shift as being gradual, fragile, and unevenly distributed by the education level of the population and among different generations; participants believe the social shift is not sufficient to address the systemic barriers they previously experienced.

> *"Of late, especially in the last one or two years, because of social media, these things are coming out in the open. Before that, they would never agree. But society acknowledging it and the law changing — those are two very different things."*
>
> *"The construct of respect in our society, I find it absolutely stupid. For the sake of respect, you do not speak out. Nothing is more important than your own life. Nothing is more important than your mental peace."*

4.5. Theme 4: Systemic and Legal Barriers to Justice

This theme focuses on the experiences of men dealing with intimate partner violence (IPV) within the legal and institutional system, as shared by participants in this study. All eleven participants faced many obstacles when trying to seek legal help. They shared strong criticisms based on their experiences with a legal system that they found to be unbalanced and, in some cases, harmful.

The data show that the "barriers to accessing the legal system" are not just one big problem but rather a series of smaller, cumulative challenges. These start with laws that treat genders unequally, then include the negative attitude of the police, delays in court procedures, costs related to mediation, and finally, a lack of specific resources for men who need support.

What makes this theme stand out is that participants did not talk about the legal system in vague terms; instead, every one of them had personally interacted with the justice system. Many shared experiences over several years and numerous cases, allowing them to give detailed accounts of their situations.

4.5.1 The Gender-Asymmetric Legal Framework: Section 498A, the DV Act, and the Chilling Effect

All eleven participants identified one main legal barrier that limits access to justice: the unequal rules under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. They all knew about these laws, and many had faced their consequences when trying to navigate the legal system.

The law is unfair because a woman can make a verbal complaint without evidence, leading to a non-bailable arrest of her husband and his family. On the other hand, men must gather documents, undergo an investigation, and provide evidence before anything happens with their complaint.

This unfairness is not just a theory; all eleven participants experienced it firsthand. Many had counter-complaints filed against them soon after they sought help, reported abuse, started separation, or tried to recover their financial assets. This knowledge, whether they fully realised it or not, acted as a powerful tool for control. It kept them quiet, discouraged them from seeking help, and made the cost of pursuing justice seem greater than dealing with the abuse.

> *"You go to the cops, the next day she will file a 498A. Then what are you going to do? The police will immediately take her FIR, and she will file it against the whole family. What do*

> *you do then? A man never does this because, obviously, the laws are in support of the woman. You go and seek support, and she goes and files ten cases."*
>
> *"The moment you have an FIR filed under 498A or the dowry law, it is a non-bailable offence. Police can come and arrest you very easily. I was just lucky that day I was not in the office when they came."*
>
> *"Even when the FIR happens, no sort of investigation is ever done first. The first thing they do is arrest you like a criminal and put you in jail, and then they say let's see what happens. That is why I did all of this as a preventive measure."*

Several participants described situations where they or their family members were falsely named in FIRs (First Information Reports). This included siblings who had never lived in the marital home, parents who hadn't contacted the partner, and friends who had no connection to the marriage at all. In one case, a participant's entire family, including a sibling living in another city, was named in the FIR. In another case, a participant's parents were threatened with arrest, forcing him to quickly secure anticipatory bail for them. The law intended to protect vulnerable women from dowry harassment was, in these reports, used as a tool for financial pressure and revenge. Participants recognised the law's original purpose while clearly explaining how its complaint-first, investigation-second approach allowed for misuse.

> *"She filed a 44-page false complaint claiming that I took dowry, demanded dowry, harassed them, beat them. And then my parents, my brother, and two of my friends who have nothing to do with them — they were all allegedly involved in beating them. After that, it came to all national media that an [occupation redacted for anonymity] has been booked for dowry."*
>
> *"My parents were also harassed by the police. They said they would be arresting them. My sister, who lives in Madurai — she had possibly never even visited the house where we lived — was mentioned in the FIR. It was just a girl's word. No investigation. Just her word."*

> *"The cases against me were: 498A on me, my mother, and my two brothers. One of them had never even stayed with me. For a four-month marriage. Three cases, then more in the High Court. There was absolutely no basis for any of it."*

Participants pointed out an important issue with the Dowry Prohibition Act, which makes giving and receiving dowry illegal. This law is often enforced only against the husband's family, while the wife's family, which gives the dowry willingly, is never prosecuted. This situation highlights a bigger problem: the way marriage laws in India were designed assumes that men are always guilty. This assumption ignores the real power dynamics and victim experiences that don't fit this expected pattern.

> *"The Dowry Prohibition Act was made against the system of dowry, not against individual men. The one receiving dowry as well as the one giving should both face action. But normally what happens? The boy's father is giving a statement that yes, I was given so much, and giving itself is an offence. But normally this is not recorded as a charge. If giving was also punished, neither side would do it. Both should be at fault."*

4.5.2 Police Indifference, Active Hostility, and Physical Violence Against Male Complainants

The second important aspect of this theme is the real experiences of police involvement reported in the dataset, and it highlights a serious issue. Respondents described different types of encounters with police. Some were simply ignored, with no questions asked or complaints accepted. Others faced direct use of force to stop them from pursuing legal claims or were physically harmed at the police station. No one said their experiences of male intimate partner violence (IPV) were investigated with the same urgency, care, or thoroughness as those of female IPV complainants.

Respondents viewed this issue as a pattern within the system rather than isolated cases of individual misconduct. They explained that this systematic response happens for several reasons. Police officers are evaluated and promoted based on how well they handle female complaints. There are financial rewards for registering complaints against male offenders, but not for those against

female offenders. The training, culture, and structure of the Indian law enforcement system lead police officers to see men as perpetrators and women as victims, regardless of the details of each case.

> *"When you go to the police and say your wife is hitting you, they are indifferent. Like, what do you want me to do? That is the attitude. But when a woman says she has experienced violence, it is: 'Oh my god, you have been through violence. Sit down, do you want to file a case?' The enthusiasm is completely different. And obviously there is a lot of corruption in that — when a man gets hit, the police can't make any money out of it. But when a woman says she has been through violence, that is an income opportunity for cops."*
>
> *"I went to the police station and said I want to file an FIR against my wife. The SHO and the DSP laughed at me. They said — how come you, a man, got beaten by your wife? And they did not take the application."*
>
> *"They threw my application. They laughed and said, 'You cannot even handle your wife.' They denied the application. That is exactly how society treats men who talk about their abuse. That is also how the police treat them."*

In one extreme case, a man shared that he was taken to a police station after his wife falsely accused him of assaulting her. While officers beat him throughout the day, his wife sat nearby and laughed. Despite having medical evidence of his injuries, no complaint was made on his behalf. In another account, a man who went to a counselling session at the SSP office said he was beaten during each visit for a month, with the insistence that he should reconcile with his wife.

> *"The police beat me for the whole day. She was sitting beside me and laughing. While leaving, she was calling someone and saying — yes, he has come to his senses today. He got beaten pretty badly."*
>
> *"It wasn't just normal counselling. They used to physically harass me as well. Whether it was local police or the police from the SSP office. The so-called counselling was: you should take her back. That was the message. And they beat me to deliver it."*

> *"They refused to file an FIR on the following day as well, and the third day. So we were forced to upload it again on IGRS. Then the police called us and started saying, in a way to intimidate us — 'If you get it written, it will backfire against you all.' This is how it unfolded.*

Even participants with insider institutional knowledge described encountering the same structural bias. His experience illustrates how the problem is not merely one of untrained officers, but of a system in which institutional pressure, political connections, and media dynamics can be mobilised against a male victim regardless of his own seniority or the quality of evidence he holds.

> *"They pressurised — and I don't want to comment on that — they pressurised, and they got their FIR registered. Noida Police, and I am also an [occupation redacted for anonymity]. They feverishly started applying pressure on Twitter and everywhere, which forced Noida Police to file the FIR. After that, every detail came to all national media."*

4.5.3 Court Delays, Mediation as Financial Extraction, and the Punishing Pace of Proceedings

Participants who went through the court system described their experience as long and frustrating. They faced delays, mediation focused on money, and complex rules that made it harder to get through the process. Everyone who had dealt with the courts said that the length of the proceedings was one of the worst parts. It was not just inconvenient; it significantly impacted their lives, taking away years of their best working time, draining their finances, and affecting their mental well-being.

> *"The judicial process itself is a death sentence because it is so long. In any case, it takes like five or ten years to process. People have lost their jobs fighting these legal battles because court dates are so backlogged. You might have to travel to different cities and they never get resolved. On paper there is some protection but practically, how it turns out is a disaster. It removes ten to fifteen years of your life and in the end, no one wins."*
>
> *"Courts are least interested in handling the case in a fair and just manner. Their only purpose is: somehow settle this case and finish it. They don't want to pursue the case on its merits. Every time it is: let's send you to mediation."*

> *"These people drag these cases for eternity. You know why? Because they don't want to give judgment in these cases. They know the law is wrong. So they want to avoid it. They will extend the case so much that the person in the middle gets tired and settles. That is how they end it."*

The mediation process, described by participants as a second type of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), provides an impartial venue for resolving disputes. However, multiple participants in this study consistently reported that it often served to extract money from male participants while benefiting female participants.

In recounting their mediation experiences, several participants mentioned that mediators tended to avoid the substantive issues of the disputes. Instead, they focused on determining a monetary amount that would encourage the male participant to settle his claim and withdraw from pursuing his case in court.

One participant noted that the mediator seemed primarily concerned with calculating a settlement value for the male participant's ex-wife. The mediator used a pencil and paper to write out the financial calculations, concentrating solely on how the male participant could borrow money to fulfil the ex-wife's settlement demand. Another participant shared that during each mediation session, the female participant consistently presented different settlement demands and faced no consequences for these inconsistencies.

> *"The mediator sits directly and starts explaining the financial equation to me with a pen and paper, saying assume 3 lakh and 5 lakh, you can do it like this, take a loan from here or there. This is exactly what happens in mediation — how to extract money from the husband and get it paid to the wife. That is the entire mechanism."*
>
> *"She wanted 20 lakhs from me. When we went for mediation, she would say, 'Give me 20 lakhs.' The mediator would ask me, 'Okay, how much will you agree to?' I refused. I said I won't give anything. I was harassed. You pay me."*

Participants often criticized the system where lawyers are motivated by financial interests. Many shared experiences of attorneys who chose to prolong cases instead of helping clients reach

quick resolutions. This happens because ongoing lawsuits bring in continuous fees for lawyers, which can clash with a client's wish for a fast outcome. One participant pointed out that the lawyer's need for money directly opposed the client's desire for a speedy resolution. Another participant explained that, regardless of how senior the attorneys were, all of his experiences were the same: the lawyers were not very engaged and encouraged delays to raise their fees.

> *"Lawyers are trying to exploit me financially. They want to keep the cases going because they get fees and appearance fees for every single case individually. Every single lawyer has tried to exploit me. They don't care. For them, I am just another case. They have never once asked me how I feel or whether I miss my daughter."*
>
> *"Don't you think it is a conflict of interest? If the case gets over in one year, the lawyer stops getting fees. So it is a loss for him. If the case drags on for ten years, there are lots of fees. If I win or lose, it does not change much for the lawyer. He just has to collect his charges."*

The cost of ongoing legal battles was very high and, in some cases, devastating. Participants shared stories of having to sell family land, use their savings, and take long breaks from work to go to court in faraway cities. One participant mentioned having to pay a settlement of about 70 lakh rupees, which he honestly described as buying his freedom.

> *"I paid 50 lakhs plus all the jewelry and everything else. The total amount came to around 70 lakhs. I basically bought my freedom back. At that time I truly felt there was no point arguing. In any manner possible I just wanted to not live with her anymore. Money does not have that much value for me as much as I value their health and well-being."*
>
> *"Even after my court order came and everything was in my favour, she kept pressuring me saying she needed money. Give me money, give money. I started paying 10,000 per month. She used to work. But she used to lie to me saying she was not working anywhere. I did this for ten years."*

4.5.4 Evidence as the Structural Price of Justice

In the eleven cases examined, documentary evidence was essential in determining whether men's complaints would be taken seriously. While women received initial support based on their statements, men had to provide specific documentation to substantiate their claims. Without irrefutable evidence — video recordings, medical reports, witness testimonies, surveillance footage, RTI filings, financial records — male complainants were invariably disbelieved or dismissed.

This created an imbalance, placing the burden solely on men to anticipate and collect necessary documentation while coping with the trauma of victimization. As a result, justice for men depended on their ability to foresee the evidence they might need, requiring foresight, technical skills, emotional strength, and often financial resources. Some participants described the process of gathering evidence as a key psychological turning point, transitioning from victimhood to self-protection, though they noted that many men lacked adequate guidance.

> *"The only reason I got support was because I had unlimited and infinite evidence. Otherwise, nobody would have bothered. Like when I went to the DCP and shared, he immediately said lodge an FIR. But if a man does not have evidence, nobody is going to believe him. God bless the person who told me to take the videos when she was breaking everything. Without that evidence, everybody would have believed that the man did it."*
>
> *"Even the counsellor could not know whether I was speaking the truth or she was. So I started recording everything whenever any fight broke out. There was no motive at first. But eventually those recordings were very useful."*
>
> *"In my case, thank God I had some videos through which I could actually show people that she is like this. That tilted the balance in my favour. If I did not have any videos or anything, or if I just told people — I don't think anybody would have believed me. Literally, I don't think they would have believed me at all."*
>
> *"I presented the judge with watertight evidence. So the judge had no option. But if there was even a slight loophole, I would have lost that case. The evidence must be watertight. If there is even a little doubt, it is not easy to get a judgment in your favour, even if you are on the right side."*

Some participants went to extreme lengths to build their evidentiary records. One hired a surveillance operative to gather 92 videos, 237 photographs, and receipts to prove adultery for custody proceedings. Another filed RTI applications to verify his wife's residence against a false jurisdictional claim in a maintenance case. A third proactively documented concerns with police across multiple cities to prevent counter-complaints. These strategies require significant education, professional networks, financial resources, and psychological resilience.

> *"I had 92 videos and 237 photographs of her adultery. Even bills of hotels, overnight stays — all those things I collected and presented in court. To prove adultery, you have to have solid evidence. For many months, many years, my guy was behind her 24 hours a day."*
>
> *"She had filed the case in Pune, claiming she lived there. I filed an RTI on the ration card. The RTI officials went to her house and said she does not live here. They gave me that report. I submitted it. I also filed an RTI on the school where she was working in Delhi. Her name appeared in the teacher list. The judge had no other option."*

4.5.5 Absence of Male-Specific Support Infrastructure

All eleven participants noted that there is very little formal support for male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) in India. This includes a lack of male-specific support organisations, legal help, counselling, or any official systems to assist male survivors. Many participants mentioned that they looked for these resources but found none. They compared this situation to the support available for female IPV victims, such as women's cells in police stations, NCW hotlines, government-sponsored legal aid, and services offered under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

Some participants who interacted with men's NGOs felt they received helpful support and resources from these groups. However, they believed these organisations do not meet the actual need. They often operate without proper backing and do not provide the necessary government-funded support that can help male IPV survivors succeed in legal matters.

> *"What support organisations are there? There are no support organisations for men. The cops also — what do you go and tell them? What kind of support can you get? I think it's*

> *very important for a safe space where men can talk or get that support. Because there is no such forum."*
>
> *"There should be something for men as well, whether from the legal side or the law enforcement side. When you go to the police station and they laugh at you, you feel like — who even is there for you?"*
>
> *"Just like we operate helpline services as an NGO — the government should have an official body. It is very important that there is a National Commission for Men. So that the grievances men have, what they are going through, should go somewhere. And they should have some resolution for them. That is the main support that is required."*

The recommendations provided by participants were clear, consistent, and relevant to policy discussions. They include the establishment of professional counselling centres located in police stations that are accessible anonymously to individuals of any gender and staffed by trained psychologists rather than police officers. Other suggestions include creating a National Commission for Men, developing a gender-neutral formulation of domestic violence laws, providing dedicated legal resources that explain men's existing rights in plain language, establishing shared parenting provisions in child custody laws, and implementing enforceable consequences for individuals who file demonstrably false complaints.

> *"If every police station had a Parivar Paramarsh Kendra staffed not by police officers but by professional counsellors — where anyone could go anonymously and get legal and psychological support — things could be very different. There should be a legal plus a counselling side. So maybe we could prevent a lot of these situations."*
>
> *"You cannot file under the domestic violence law. Only women can file a domestic violence case. A National Commission for Men should be established with centres everywhere. Because right now, there is no avenue for justice seeking for men at all."*
>
> *"Make the judiciary more favourable in the sense that you don't harm somebody's professional life completely. And there should be more counselling support for men. There is a women's cell. There should be men's counselling as well. And these false intimidation*

> *tactics — whoever is doing them must be punished. We are heading into a stage where a man who is genuinely going through a problem is not going to get any support."*

4.5.6 Cross-Jurisdictional Complexity for NRI Participants

A common issue for participants living outside India during marital disputes is the added legal vulnerability they face when dealing with different countries' laws. Two participants—one in the United States and the other in Dubai—shared their experiences. They felt the Indian legal system's unfairness was made worse by confusion over which laws applied to them. They worried about the risk of arrest if they returned to India, the complications of legal cases in both countries, and the difficulty of attending court hearings from far away.

The participant in the United States faced two main risks due to the different legal systems: the fear that Indian cases would stop him from going back to his home country and that the U.S. legal system would not help him. For example, when his wife called the police on him in California, they supported her. When he called the police on her that same night, they still sided with her.

> *"If I come back to India, they might actually hold me hostage. I don't know if I'll ever get bail to go back to the US. So all these — a lot of emotional kind of violence. Sometimes it feels like, should I just let her go back with the child? Because if I lose the child, and if they put these cases on me — I don't know what will happen."*
>
> *"People think that Indian laws are pretty torturous, but actually they're not as much as some things that I hear in the US. In the US, domestic violence arrests — men versus women — it's 18% times that women were arrested and 82% times men were arrested. That was a big shocker to me. So even in the US, that is the same situation."*
>
> *"The problem is much worse if you are an NRI. We don't know whether we should come to India or not come to India. If we come to India, will we get arrested? All of that is not clear. Even an NRI is an Indian. More guidance should be available for them."*

4.5.7 Proactive Legal Navigation as Exceptional Rather Than Typical

Some participants had attained extraordinary legal outcomes, such as an impressive record against former powerful maternal relatives in custody cases, successfully defending against fabricated 498A cases in lower courts, and gaining visitation rights via High Court orders. These were notable and earned results. The analysis of how such results came about demonstrates that they were the result of multiple personal resources (financial capital, higher educational status, professional networks, legal knowledge, psychological resilience, and access to senior police and judicial officials), which few men in their circumstances enjoy. Thus, current access to justice for male victims in India is based on extraordinary individual effort rather than systematic design. Amongst the sample, one participant who has defended 80 cases for six years by independently studying law, retraining his sister as an advocate, and persuading 47 witnesses to testify is not an example of how justice occurs, but rather an example of how atypical it is for anyone without comparable resources to achieve such an outcome.

> *"I fought my case in the High Court after studying law extensively for months. A lawyer once told me — 'To see heaven, you have to die by yourself.' So we decided we must fight by ourselves. We cannot win cases by trusting lawyers. We can only keep getting dates."*
>
> *"I proactively went with all my evidence and wrote to the Commissioner and DCP everywhere, got it stamped, that I have this fear she is going to lodge a counter case. So it got difficult for her. But I know my case was a bit different. Not many people can do what I did."*
>
> *"It is often this difficult and not everybody is able to do it — to go to the police every day and get your thing done. I was blessed because I have good people with me. 47 people gave their testimony. As you know, in this time, you can't even get two people. Nobody wants to go through court proceedings and police."*

In conclusion, the sub-themes in Theme 4 show that the legal system is not just lacking support for male victims; it is built mainly to help women facing domestic violence. Male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) cannot expect much help from the legal system or agencies. This leaves them with difficult choices: they can suffer in silence, pay money to get out of their situation, or spend years and significant personal resources in a legal system that might only work fairly in rare cases. To find

justice, male victims often need to be strong, have enough resources, and be lucky to navigate these challenges.

4.6. Theme 5: Collateral Damage — Impact on Family and Professional Life

The fifth and last theme identifies the impacts of ongoing partner abuse, and the effects continue to reverberate outside of the marriage. The physical and mental health, working life, extended family, children, and social network of all eleven participants were all impacted by continued IPV. The data generated a picture of IPV affecting multiple lives, across generations, and the extent of this damage highlights the need to view dynamics of IPV against men through a systems lens as opposed to a simply dyadic perspective.

4.6.1 Physical and Psychological Health Consequences

All the participants in this study identified their physical and mental health declining significantly, as a result of the stress created by their ongoing abuse. The participants listed many physical problems they associated with their abusive partner's ongoing abuse, which included neurologic issues (i.e., stuttering), sleep issues (e.g., screaming while sleeping), hypertensive episodes with blood pressure readings at 180–190 mmHg, significant and sudden weight loss, loss of both appetite and libido, fatigue, injuries sustained through physical assault, and exacerbation of previous health problems. Participants reported that professionals would likely have diagnosed them with significant depression due to their ongoing experiences of partner abuse. They described feelings of emotional numbness, loss of pleasure, and recurring memories of the trauma they endured. Many participants noted that the physical health effects from the abuse had caused lasting damage that they were still coping with during the interviews. One participant mentioned being prescribed antidepressants but had to stop taking them due to adverse side effects.

> *"I started stammering. I almost thought I was going through a stroke. The top neurologists of the country couldn't detect why I was getting this. But I knew it was because of this immense pressure."*
>
> *"I lost a lot of appetite, a lot of weight. All these are typical symptoms and unless you correct the underlying factor, this will only become worse."*

> *"My nasal septum broke. There was internal clotting, bone fracture, and injury to my eardrums. For a moment, I thought they wanted to kill me."*
>
> *"I put on 20 to 25 kilograms due to this entire physical stress and mental disturbance. I would be talking to myself sometimes, shouting in anger."*

4.6.2 Career Disruption and Geographic Displacement

The dataset showed that intimate partner violence (IPV) had significant and unfair effects on people's work lives. Some participants reported that they had to leave their senior management jobs either temporarily or permanently. They left their jobs because of their partner's behaviour or the psychological impact of the violence. Some individuals had to move to different places, even internationally, while others stayed in their jobs under severe stress or left due to legal issues.

Participants experienced professional challenges in several ways, such as their partner tagging their employer on social media, not being able to give notice before resigning, needing to take long leaves for legal matters or because of their mental health, and facing organized efforts to harm their professional relationships. One participant even dealt with a fake 44-page complaint sent to various officials to damage their careers. Overall, the professional impacts reported show that these effects were intentional and not just accidental.

> *"I came to Dubai because I had to leave the country because of this. She started posting our court cases on Facebook and tagging my office. I had to resign — I was such a senior leader."*
>
> *"She approached the CM, Human Rights, Women's Commission, and everyone — sent copies of a 44-page complaint everywhere so that my insult would spread. She wanted to take my job."*
>
> *"I can do much better than this if I could focus on my career. But these things are holding me back — constantly required to handle emotional trauma as well as legal complications."*

4.6.3 Impact on Extended Family: Parents and Siblings

The effects on extended family members, especially elderly parents, were a significant emotional issue in many accounts. Participants described their parents being verbally and physically attacked, named in police complaints, forced to travel long distances to give statements, and threatened with mental institutions. This stress led to serious health problems for many parents. One participant shared that their sister had a miscarriage after traveling to court hearings during her first trimester. The harm done to participants' families was not seen as a coincidence but rather as a deliberate tactic to make the participant feel more vulnerable and deter them from resisting. The feeling of not being able to protect one's parents from this treatment was one of the most painful aspects mentioned throughout the accounts.

> *"She literally assaulted my mother at that time. My father had chest pain. I rushed him to the hospital. You can take it for yourself, but how do you take it for parents who raised you?"*
>
> *"In the midst of all this travelling for court hearings, she [sister] suffered a miscarriage recently, about two months ago."*
>
> *"My father's BP kept going high. My uncle contracted heart problems. Because of all this nonsense, they went through so much health deterioration."*

4.6.4 Impact on Children

When children are involved in a marriage, their well-being causes a lot of distress. Participants reported that children were used in harmful ways—witnessing violence during the marriage and being used as leverage in custody battles afterward. Some accounts included children watching their home being destroyed, being told by their mother to sit and observe the chaos, facing alienation and brainwashing, and being intimidated by their mother's family. In one case, a child was introduced to their father as 'uncle' after a year and a half apart. Many described the pain of being denied access to their own child as one of the most devastating experiences. Those who went through custody battles called the process long and damaging. In contrast, people without children said not having kids made it easier to leave their relationship, highlighting how children can act as a trap.

> *"She told them — 'Sit there. Sit there and keep watching.' She would make them witnesses to all of this. The High Court gave me custody because they were not safe with their mother."*
>
> *"My son used to keep calling me on video call saying — 'Papa, take me away from here, these people hit me. When will you come?' He was only three years old."*
>
> *"I always had this wish to be a father. The childhood phase, the age I could spend with my child — that is already gone. My child has suffered. I have suffered. Nobody is getting anything."*

4.6.5 Social Network Erosion, Financial Loss, and Isolation

The decline of social networks was a common outcome in all eleven accounts, though it looked different depending on the type of abuse. Some participants completely withdrew from social life because their partner's behavior at gatherings made it too difficult to attend. Others faced reputational harm from the partner's public actions, making it hard to keep friendships.

In some cases, the partner contacted friends, colleagues, and even bosses—sometimes hundreds of times—to spread false accusations or apply social pressure. One participant reported that a partner took all the phone numbers from their phone and called each contact to share damaging stories.

Participants also reported financial problems. These included the high costs of lengthy multi-city legal battles and large settlement payments required for divorce. Overall, these effects—on health, careers, families, social lives, and finances—show the widespread and lasting damage caused by ongoing male intimate partner violence (IPV).

> *"She saved all numbers from my phone book — friends, relatives, everyone — and kept calling them all. She tried her best to ruin all my relationships."*
>
> *"Socially, professionally, in every way — I had to stay away from everybody. To safeguard whatever reputation remained, there was no other option."*

> *"The lawyers also interfere. They present it as a package — out of your total settlement, a certain percentage will be theirs. So they keep pressurizing. Nobody gets anything out of this. It is a complete waste of time and life."*

4.7. Tabular Representation of Final Theme Development

Initial Codes / Groups	Candidate Theme	Analytical Note	Final Master Theme & Sub-themes
Verbal/emotional abuse as baseline Physical violence (multiple forms) Property destruction Financial exploitation In-law involvement Escalation and unpredictability Partner mental health Coerced/deceptive marriage initiation	Overlapping and multi-form abuse as a system of harm	All separate codes combined into one master theme after review confirmed that all 11 accounts described abuse as co-occurring, mutually reinforcing, and escalating rather than as isolated incidents. The 'system of harm' framing was added at candidate stage to capture this interlocking quality.	**Theme 1: Multi-Dimensional and Escalating Abuse Sub-themes: verbal/emotional abuse; physical violence and property destruction; financial exploitation; in-law/extended family involvement; escalation and unpredictability; suspected/identified partner mental health; coerced marriage as precursor**
Suicidal ideation; clinical depression Hypervigilance; dread of home Withdrawal; compartmentalisation Strategic evidence	Being trapped and finding ways to survive	The decision to retain vulnerability and agency in one theme was deliberate. The data showed these as inseparable — survival strategies are	**Theme 2: Psychological Entrapment and Survival Strategies Sub-themes: depression and suicidal ideation; hypervigilance and chronic threat; withdrawal and compartmentalisation;**

Initial Codes / Groups	Candidate Theme	Analytical Note	Final Master Theme & Sub-themes
gathering Forced compliance; coercion Call history deletion; isolation tactics		constituted by the nature of the entrapment. Splitting would have misrepresented the participants' experience.	**strategic evidence gathering; forced compliance and coercion**
Male victimhood socially incredible Default blame on man Years of non-disclosure Status amplifying barriers Forced public performance Internalised stoicism Growing but limited social awareness	Masculine identity, social stigma, and the production of silence	'Silencing' was added to the final theme name to foreground the active, consequential outcome of these forces — the data showed not merely the presence of norms but their function in producing a specific and damaging state of enforced concealment.	**Theme 3: Social Stigma, Masculinity Norms, and Silencing Sub-themes: social unacceptability of male victimhood; delayed/absent disclosure; amplifying effect of social status; internalised masculine norms; shifting but insufficient social awareness**
498A threat as deterrent Non-bailable arrest vulnerability Police non-registration and dismissal Police physical violence Absence of male	A legal and institutional system not designed to protect male victims	'Systemic' was foregrounded in the final name to signal structural rather than individual causation. The NRI sub-theme was newly developed during this analysis —	**Theme 4: Systemic and Legal Barriers to Justice Sub-themes: gender-asymmetric legal framework (498A/DV Act); police indifference and hostility; absence of male support infrastructure; evidence as the price of justice;**

Initial Codes / Groups	Candidate Theme	Analytical Note	Final Master Theme & Sub-themes
support organisations Evidence burden on male complainant Lengthy judicial process as punishment Delay tactics as legal weapon NRI cross-jurisdictional vulnerability Self-representation and proactive navigation		not present in comparable research — and warranted explicit status. 'Proactive navigation as privileged strategy' sub-theme was added in Phase 4 review to capture equity implications.	**weaponisation of legal processes; cross-jurisdictional complexity for NRIs; proactive legal navigation as privileged strategy**
Neurological symptoms; physical injuries Hypertensive crisis; permanent scars Career disruption; forced resignation Fabricated employment-targeting complaints Parents assaulted; parents' health deterioration Sister's miscarriage; sibling's marriage broken Children as witnesses and leverage Parental	The radiating reach of IPV harm beyond the immediate dyad	'Collateral Damage' retained in final name as analytically resonant with how participants themselves framed these harms — as deliberately engineered extensions of the abusive strategy, not merely incidental consequences.	**Theme 5: Collateral Damage — Impact on Family and Professional Life Sub-themes: physical and neurological health deterioration; career disruption and forced displacement; trauma to extended family; impact on children; social network erosion; financial loss and extortion**

Initial Codes / Groups	Candidate Theme	Analytical Note	Final Master Theme & Sub-themes
alienation Social isolation and network sabotage Financial losses			

Chapter 5
DISCUSSION

This study explored the lived experiences of eleven married men in India who faced intimate partner violence (IPV), examining the social, cultural, legal, and institutional barriers to help-seeking and reporting. The analysis yielded five master themes. This discussion contextualizes these findings with reference to academic literature, identifies where the findings confirm or nuance previous studies, and elaborates on the potential impact of these discoveries on policy and practice. A framing note: although Scott-Storey et al. (2022) and Carthy et al. (2019) affirm that women bear a disproportionately high burden of IPV, this study approaches the data from a rights-based framework; thus, all victims must be recognized by institutions as victims. The data indicate that this recognition has not yet been achieved in India.

5.1 The Nature of Abuse

All participants described abuse as a system of interconnected harms that include verbal, emotional, physical, financial, and social abuse. These types of abuse often happen together and reinforce each other. This finding supports what Lysova et al. (2023) state and agrees with earlier critiques by Dobash et al. (1992) and Hamby (2014). They argue that tools like the Conflict Tactics Scale do not adequately capture the context or coercive nature of abuse. This study highlights two important new findings about intimate partner violence (IPV) in India.

The first finding shows that the partner's extended family plays a significant role in IPV. This includes financial demands, physical attacks on the participant's parents, and coordinated legal actions against the participants. In nine out of eleven cases, the partner's family was directly involved. This challenges the common view of IPV as just a couple's issue. Previous research by Mukhopadhyay et al. (2022) has shown that family honor affects how families enforce control, but this study reveals a new level of coordination within the family when they abuse the participant.

The second finding introduces a clinical perspective that has not been explored before in Indian IPV literature. Eight accounts showed signs of suspected or diagnosed personality disorders, and the partner's family often blocked psychiatric evaluations.

5.2 Psychological Consequences and Survival

This paper discusses the psychological effects of abuse, which include severe depression, suicidal thoughts, heightened alertness, and physical symptoms like tongue-ties and hypertension. These effects are similar to those found in studies by Hines et al. (2007), Bates et al. (2020), and

Rowlands (2024). The Indian men in this paper share these experiences with men from many other countries who have also faced psychological harm from abuse. The main finding of this study is that these men have not only suffered greatly but also shown strong efforts to cope. They collected evidence of their partner's abuse, managed their work lives to keep their jobs separate from their abuse, and prepared important documents to support their legal cases. This shows that they are not just passive victims; they actively work to survive.

Another important finding is that the literature does not fully explore the coercive threats that happened before marriage. Four respondents said they were forced into unwanted marriages through threats like possible criminal charges or self-harm. One respondent reported a threat that gang-rape charges would be filed against his whole family if he did not agree to marry. This complicates how we understand these abusive relationships. There was already a coercive relationship before the abuse started. Most models for addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) assume that abuse begins after the relationship is established. The evidence of pre-marital coercion in this study adds new insight to the understanding of IPV in India, as it has not been studied in detail before.

5.3 Hegemonic Masculinity and the Indian-Specific Mechanisms of Silence

The connection between hegemonic masculinity and male non-disclosure has been recognized in previous research. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) proposed this link, while Corbally (2011) illustrated it through men’s narrative strategies. Bates (2019) further established that the male gender role views help-seeking as a violation of expected behavior. This study supports these findings within an Indian context and makes a unique contribution by identifying the cultural mechanisms that institutionalize hegemonic masculinity. Concepts such as **izzat** (family honor), **mardangi** (manhood), and **log kya kahenge** (what will the community think) do not just represent masculine norms; they also reshape victimization as a personal failure and a dishonor to the family, allowing for silence even in extreme situations (Vinayak et al., 2015; Chauhan et al., 2023).

A notable finding of the study was the compounding effect of professional status. Senior workers reported that their partners often targeted them through their employers, filing complaints that were publicly accessible and conducting social media campaigns, as they believed these men were professionally vulnerable. This dynamic, where resources that could offer an exit strategy are used as tools of control, has not been extensively recorded in the literature, representing an

innovative contribution of this study. Participants indicated a gradual increase in social awareness, primarily through social media, but they all agreed that changes in attitude do not equate to structural change. This sentiment echoes Hines (2022), highlighting the gap between growing acknowledgement of issues and the lack of meaningful reform.

5.4 Legal and Institutional Barriers

All eleven people in the study said they experienced Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) as tools of control rather than as protections. The Supreme Court of India stated in the case of *Arnesh Kumar v. The State of Bihar* (2014) that Section 498A has become a weapon instead of a shield (Kamal, 2024). Despite this, no changes have been made to this section of the IPC. In contrast, the Domestic Abuse Act (United Kingdom) 2021 and Victoria's Family Violence Protection Act (Australia) 2008 use gender-neutral approaches. These laws look at both victims and perpetrators based on behavior and power dynamics, without assuming their genders (Barber, 2023; Pantaliienko, 2025). The police responses varied widely. Sometimes, they did not register complaints, while in other cases, they mocked male complainants or even used physical violence against them. This matches findings from Douglas & Hines (2011), which showed that over 25% of male victims in the United States received no response from the police. Similarly, Machado et al. (2022) found that factors like culture and organization create negative outcomes for male victims, rather than individual misconduct. Many participants said that police get financial incentives to take women’s complaints seriously but often ignore men’s complaints. They also mentioned that police are trained to see men only as perpetrators. These issues show a systemic problem, not just individual ones.

This study found that achieving a legal outcome often depends on having special personal resources. Every participant who succeeded had strengths such as financial resources, knowledge of the legal system, support from professionals, or inner strength. One participant gathered 92 videos and 237 photos; another studied law on his own and represented himself in the High Court; and a third had his sister become a lawyer. These examples show how rare it is for someone to achieve justice, rather than how justice usually works. The issue of having access to justice based on individual strengths hasn’t been covered in studies about Indian men facing intimate partner violence (IPV). Two Non-Resident Indian (NRI) participants pointed out an important issue: uncertainties related to crossing borders, the fear of arrest when returning to India, and facing legal

issues in two countries increase the challenges men face. This topic has received little attention from researchers and needs further study.

Participants noted a lack of support specifically for men, such as helplines, shelters, and legal aid. For example, the ManKind Initiative in the UK runs a national helpline that provides support without focusing on gender. In Australia, the One in Three Campaign helps men by offering referrals and advocacy. In India, the legal system often does not serve men (Shikhila et al., 2023). Participants suggested practical solutions, including counselling at police stations with mental health professionals, creating a National Commission for Men, and implementing gender-neutral domestic violence laws. These ideas must draw attention from policymakers.

5.5 Collateral Damage

All five aspects of Theme 5—physical and mental health, job disruption, harm to extended family, impact on children, and social and financial losses—show that ongoing intimate partner violence (IPV) affects more than just the couple involved. Parents were attacked, named in police reports, and hospitalised. One sister had a miscarriage while travelling for court. Siblings' marriages were used as leverage, leading to their breakdown. This multi-generational impact is consistent with Kitzmann et al.'s research on how such violence affects families and highlights the need for a family-focused approach in both studies and interventions. Additionally, disruptions in work—like forced resignations, moving to a different location, and false complaints made to employers—were not random but used to assert control, which has not been widely discussed in studies about male IPV.

5.6 Theoretical and Methodological Reflections

This study's findings directly challenge the applicability of the Duluth Model as a universal framework for intimate partner violence (IPV). Its gender-essentialist structure renders male victimization conceptually invisible and leads to institutional consequences—such as police training and service design—that participants experienced firsthand (Dutton and Corvo, 2006). Conversely, the Ecological Model is relevant to the results of this study since it includes four levels of IPV: (1) Psychological impacts on the individual; (2) Coercive relational dynamics; (3) Honour-based community-level mechanisms; (4) Asymmetry in law enforcement at a societal-level; these four areas intersectively influence how IPV occurs and how victims are dealt with in Indian culture.

Regarding methodology, the NGO-facilitated recruitment approach employed here, which utilised a digital consent form circulated through the Ekam Nyaay Foundation and Men Welfare Trust, supplemented by chain referral, successfully reached a population that is almost impossible to engage through conventional methods, as noted in the literature review. The demographic diversity of the resulting sample (ages 27–52, with occupations ranging from government officer to tour driver, and locations spanning India)strengthens the cross-contextual validity of the themes identified. Thematic saturation was deemed to be achieved when no new codes emerged from the final two interviews, which boosts confidence that the core thematic structure adequately represents this sample.

5.7 Limitations

This study's limitations are inherent to purposive qualitative sampling. Participants had already sought some form of NGO support, which likely skews the sample towards men who are more resourced, urban, and legally engaged than the broader population of male IPV victims. This may mean that the barriers documented in this study represent a conservative estimate rather than an overstatement. Additionally, accounts are self-reported without triangulation, and the sample of eleven does not allow for prevalence claims. The non-resident Indian (NRI) sub-theme, based on two participants, should be regarded as a preliminary observation that warrants dedicated follow-up research rather than a fully substantiated finding. This study's contribution is both descriptive and theoretical, generating grounded findings and hypotheses for larger-scale investigation.

Chapter 6
CONCLUSION

This qualitative research focused upon exploring lived experiences of married males' IPV experiences in India. The full exploration of the lived experience was the purpose of developing this study. In addition to this, the study also examined the barriers men face in seeking help or reporting IPV, which includes social, cultural, legal and institutional barriers. Three research questions directed this study and included: 1) How is the experience of male IPV understood in the context of Indian culture? 2) What are the individual, relational, and structural barriers for males to seek help? and 3) How do masculinity, family honour, and legal exclusion; maintain the silence about male IPV? The analysis of interviews revealed five themes: 1) abuse is multi-dimensional and escalates; 2) psychological entrapment and survival mechanisms; 3) social stigma and silence; 4) system and legal barriers to justice; and 5) collateral damage to family and professional life, each of which answer the research questions, both independently and in combination to one another.

The overall outcome of the study is that men suffer from violence in India and there is more than one way in which this occurs. Male violence occurrence, like the occurrence of domestic violence, is therefore systematic and created and maintained by a variety of interconnected forces at every level. These forces work together to create a systemic lack of recognition or reporting of the violence that men have suffered for many years through no fault of their own despite men experiencing various forms of abuse and violence.

The study also supports other reported occurrences of abuse of men from other countries, including that men do not report abuse for various reasons, including the presence of at least two different forms of abuse at any one time; many of these men have or do suffer psychological symptoms due to their experience with domestic violence, including, but not limited to, depression, thoughts of suicide, and PTSD-like symptoms; hegemonic masculinity plays a role in preventing men from disclosing their domestic violence; and men experience challenges when they do report their domestic violence. Thus, these patterns are not limited to Western contexts and operate with particular force in India, where the cultural, legal, and institutional dimensions are combined by the specific mechanisms of honour culture and a legal framework that is yet to recognise male victimhood.

The implications of this study on policy, research and institutional practice are profound. Findings from this study indicate a clear need for legislative change in India regarding domestic

violence definitions in order create a gender neutral definition of domestic violence that allows for male victimization to be legally recognised without removing existing legal protections for female victims; additionally changes to Section 498A are necessary to prevent misuse of the law (e.g., demonstrably false complaints, pre-arrest investigations), thus allowing the law to provide protection rather than act as an instrument of coercion (as noted by the Supreme Court of India in Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014)). Furthermore, shared parenting provisions within custody laws and formal institutional recognition of male victimhood as qualifying for legal aid would assist in reducing the existing resource dependence which limits access to justice for male victims.

From an institutional perspective, the consistent lack of male support systems across all eleven sites requires an infrastructural answer. This has been accompanied by (i) the consistent recommendation of establishing professional gender-neutral mental health and support at the police station level that are anonymously accessible provision of such support; staffed by professionally qualified psychologists not police officers; and equipped to provide both mental and legal conflict resolution. There exists agreement within all datasets that there should be developed the equivalent of the National Commission for Women, a National Commission for Men, to give a formalised independent institutional mechanism to receive and process grievances of male IPV victims. Police training (officer training) must be comprehensively reformed to correct existing documented, embedded, institutional biases within the police. This institutional bias against male complainants has resulted from structural incentives and system-wide training procedures and practices, and an overall policing culture that are focused toward female complainants and away from male ones.

5This study clarifies the clinical need for routine screening of male patients presenting with depression, unexplained anxiety, somatic symptoms, neurological complaints, and sleep difficulties to assess whether the individual is a victim of IPV. Mental health professionals in India, especially in the urban private practice settings identified by study participants, should possess the knowledge to utilise gender-inclusive screening tools and establish an environment where their male patients feel secure to disclose any IPV victimization experiences.

At the research level, this study identifies several priority areas for additional research. First, population-based prevalence studies using validated instruments such as those designed by Chandra et al. (2023) need to be conducted to determine the actual magnitude of male IPV victimization in

India, correcting for the methodological bias contained within surveys such as NFHS-5, which are structurally designed to demonstrate female victimization instead of male. Second, longitudinal qualitative studies assessing how victims of IPV make the decision to disclose their victimization will provide insight into the process of deciding whether to disclose IPV victimization to their mutual friends or family. This insight will help enhance understanding of the process described in this study but cannot be demonstrated because of the study's prospective cross-sectional design. Third, studies examining how caste, class, religion, and rurality intersect with gender norms to shape male victimization in India are urgently needed; the present sample, while demographically varied, is disproportionately urban, educated, and already engaged with NGO support networks. Fourth, the NRI dimension and the phenomenon of pre-marital coercive control each warrant dedicated research designs capable of providing the depth of analysis they deserve.

This study does not equate male and female victimization nor does it want to ignore the structural reality of gender-based violence against women, which is one of the largest global public health and human rights issues we face today. However, this research states that the rights-based approach for understanding and responding to intimate partner violence must necessarily be able to identify suffering wherever it exists - irrespective of whether the victim is male or female or whether the perpetrator is male or female. As Dutton and Corvo (2006) said, "the choice to exclude from the analysis of victimization of males from the analytical heuristic is not a position of scientific neutrality; rather, it is a choice that has both theoretical and political implications that ultimately have real implications for persons." This research has attempted to highlight these implications.

REFERENCES

Archer, J. (2000). Sex differences in aggression between heterosexual partners: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 126(5), 651–680. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.126.5.651

Black, M. C., Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., Smith, S. G., Walters, M. L., Merrick, M. T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M. R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 summary report. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Chowdhury, S., Dey, S., & Mondal, R. (2022). Intimate partner violence against Scheduled Caste women in India: Evidence from NFHS-4. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 37(15–16), NP13201–NP13226. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211002429

Deshpande, S. (2019). Masculinity, shame, and the silence of male domestic abuse victims in India. Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 26(3), 311–329. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521519868472

Dutton, D. G. (2012). The case against the role of gender in intimate partner violence. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 17(1), 99–104. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2011.09.002

Hines, D. A., Brown, J., & Dunning, E. (2007a). Characteristics of callers to the domestic abuse helpline for men. Journal of Family Violence, 22(2), 63–72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-006-9052-0

Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2011). Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder in men who sustain intimate partner violence: A study of helpseeking and community samples. Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 12(2), 112–127. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021324

International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). (2021). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21: India report. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Kaur, R., & Gulati, S. (2024). Legal exclusions and male victims of domestic violence in India: A critical analysis. Asian Journal of Law and Society, 11(1), 45–67. https://doi.org/10.1017/als.2023.18

Kitzmann, K. M., Gaylord, N. K., Holt, A. R., & Kenny, E. D. (2003). Child witnesses to domestic violence: A meta-analytic review. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71(2), 339–352. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.71.2.339

Shah, R., Mehta, P., & Joshi, A. (2024). Institutional responses to male victims of intimate partner violence in urban India. Social Policy & Administration, 58(2), 210–228. https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12934

Sharma, P. (2022). Asli Mard: Constructions of hegemonic masculinity and the erasure of male vulnerability in contemporary India. Men and Masculinities, 25(4), 512–530. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X221078341

Srivastava, A., Singh, B., & Patel, R. (2023). Spatial variation in intimate partner violence across Indian states: Evidence from NFHS-5. Population, Space and Place, 29(3), e2641. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2641

Straus, M. A. (1979). Measuring intrafamily conflict and violence: The Conflict Tactics (CT) Scales. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *41*(1), 75–88. https://doi.org/10.2307/351733

Straus, M. A. (2004). Prevalence of violence against dating partners by male and female university students worldwide. Violence Against Women, 10(7), 790–811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801204265552

Straus, M. A., & Gelles, R. J. (1986). Societal change and change in family violence from 1975 to 1985 as revealed by two national surveys. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48(3), 465–479. https://doi.org/10.2307/352034

Taylor, R., Hughes, M., & Fahey, M. (2021). Masculine norms and help-seeking among male victims of intimate partner violence: A systematic review. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 22(4), 891–906. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019881732

Walker, A., Lyall, K., Silva, D., Craigie, G., Mayshak, R., Costa, B., Hyder, S., & Bentley, A. (2020). Male victims of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence, help-seeking, and reporting behaviors: A qualitative study. Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 21(2), 213–223. https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000222

World Health Organisation. (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: Global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women. WHO Press.

Aborisade, R. A. (2023). Report and risk being called a weakling? Perspectives of male victims on sociocultural barriers to reporting domestic abuse in Nigeria. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, *32*(6), 847–866. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2023.2194252

Ackerman, J. M. (2017). Assessing Conflict Tactics Scale validity by examining intimate partner violence overreporting. *Psychology of Violence*, *7*(2), 224–235. https://doi.org/10.1037/VIO0000112

Archer, J. (1999). Assessment of the reliability of the Conflict Tactics Scales: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *14*(12), 1263–1289. https://doi.org/10.1177/088626099014012003

Babu, B. V., Swain, B. K., & Mishra, S. (2023). Disclosure of intimate partner violence while studying positive mental health in wheelchair users: Ethical dilemmas. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, *8*(3), 234–237. https://doi.org/10.20529/ijme.2023.056

Barber, C. F. (2008). Domestic violence against men. *Nursing Standard*, *22*(51), 35–39.

Barber, P. (2023). Providing the right support and care for male victims of domestic abuse. *British Journal of Nursing*, *32*(1), 20–24. https://doi.org/10.12968/bjon.2023.32.1.20

Bates, E. A. (2019). "No one would ever believe me": An exploration of the impact of intimate partner violence victimization on men. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *21*(4), 497–507. https://doi.org/10.1037/MEN0000206

Bates, E. A., Kaye, L. K., Pennington, C. R., & Hamlin, I. (2020b). "She convinced me I had Alzheimer's": Experiences of intimate partner violence in older men. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *21*(4), 497–507. https://doi.org/10.1037/MEN0000280

Bates, E. A., Weare, S., & Trinder, H. (2020a). Sexual violence as a form of abuse in men's experiences of female perpetrated intimate partner violence. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *36*(4), 582–602. https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986220936115

Bates, E. A., et al. (2022). *Domestic violence against men and boys*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003089612

Bell, K. M., Naugle, A. E., & Follingstad, D. R. (2007). Effects of social desirability on students' self-reporting of partner abuse perpetration and victimization. *Violence & Victims*, *22*(2), 243–256. https://doi.org/10.1891/088667007780477348

Breiding, M. J., Smith, S. G., Basile, K. C., Walters, M. L., Chen, J., & Merrick, M. T. (2014). *Prevalence and characteristics of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence victimization—National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Brooks, M., Lowe, M., Graham-Kevan, N., & Robinson, S. (2020). "How many silences are there?" Men's experience of victimization in intimate partner relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *36*(13–14), 6867–6890. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517719905

Buttell, F., Muldoon, J., & Carney, M. (2013). Lifting the veil: Foundations for a gender-inclusive paradigm of intimate partner violence. In *Handbook of domestic violence* (pp. 135–152). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5871-5_8

Carmo, R., Grams, A., & Magalhães, T. (2011). Men as victims of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, *18*(8), 355–359. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JFLM.2011.07.006

Carthy, N., Nearchou, F., & McHugh, L. (2019). Promoting inclusivity in intimate partner abuse research: Exploring gender and age. *Partner Abuse*, *10*(3), 359–385. https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.10.3.359

Cebreros, J. (2023). *"It makes you less of a man": The help-seeking experiences of emerging adult men who have experienced sexual violence and abuse by women* [Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington]. https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.23904225

Chandra, P. S., Kommu, J. V. S., & Rudhran, V. (2023). Locating perpetrators of violence against women in India: An analysis of married men's characteristics associated with intimate partner violence. *PLOS ONE*, *18*(7), e0289596. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0289596

Chattopadhyay, A., Nanda, P., & Dasgupta, A. (2023). Prevalence and risk factors of physical violence against husbands: Evidence from India. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, *55*(6), 1087–1105. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021932023000196

Chaturvedi, S., Kumar, A., & Singh, R. (2025). *The silent crisis: Regional divergences, economic abuse, and the case for gender-neutral laws in India* [Unpublished manuscript].

Chauhan, R., Sharma, P., & Verma, S. (2023). Domestic violence against men in India. *Zenodo*. https://doi.org/10.53555/zenodo.7641965

Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, *19*(6), 829–859.

Corbally, M. (2011). *Making sense of the unbelievable: A biographical narrative study of men's stories of female abuse* [Doctoral dissertation, University College Dublin].

Das, S. (2024). Women against women: Unpacking the justification of wife-beating in India. *International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, *14*(2), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.47722/imrj.2001.29

DeHart, D. (2017). Intimate partner violence screening. In *Encyclopedia of social work*. Oxford University Press.

Dim, E. E. (2021a). Experiences of physical and psychological violence against male victims in Canada: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *65*(4), 375–394. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X20911898

Dim, E. E., Elabor-Idemudia, P., & Lysova, A. (2021b). Male victims' experiences with and perceptions of the criminal justice response to intimate partner abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *36*(21–22), 10444–10469. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211001476

Dobash, R. P., Dobash, R. E., Wilson, M., & Daly, M. (1992). The myth of sexual symmetry in marital violence. *Social Problems*, *39*(1), 71–91. https://doi.org/10.1525/SP.1992.39.1.03X0064L

Dobash, R. P., Dobash, R. E., Wilson, M., & Daly, M. (2004). Women's violence to men in intimate relationships: Working on a puzzle. *British Journal of Criminology*, *44*(3), 324–349. https://doi.org/10.1093/BJC/AZH026

Donovan, C., Barnes, R., & Nixon, C. (2020). Producing stories about intimate partner violence and abuse: The Coral Project methodology. In *Researching Gender, Violence and Abuse* (pp. 21–42). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35403-9_2

Douglas, E. M., & Hines, D. A. (2011). The helpseeking experiences of men who sustain intimate partner violence: An overlooked population and implications for practice. *Journal of Family Violence*, *26*(6), 473–485. https://doi.org/10.1007/S10896-011-9382-4

Dutton, D. G., & Corvo, K. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—The conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *10*(6), 680–714. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.AVB.2005.02.001

Dutton, D. G., & Corvo, K. (2006). Transforming a flawed policy: A call to revive psychology and science in domestic violence research and practice. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *11*(5), 457–483.

Dutton, D. G., Nicholls, T. L., & Spidel, A. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—The conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *10*(6), 680–714. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.AVB.2005.02.001

Ellison, K. (2025). Unsafe at home: The misery of intimate partner violence. *Knowable Magazine*. https://doi.org/10.1146/knowable-082725-2

Finneran, C., & Stephenson, R. (2013). Intimate partner violence among men who have sex with men: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *14*(2), 168–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838012470034

Hamby, S. (2014). Intimate partner and sexual violence research: Scientific progress, scientific challenges, and gender. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *15*(3), 149–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838014520723

Haselschwerdt, M. L. (2023). Black men's intimate partner violence victimization, help-seeking, and barriers to help-seeking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *38*(11–12), 7234–7259. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605231159632

Hewitt, [Initial]. (n.d.). *Male victims of domestic abuse or intimate partner violence: The causation surrounding why men have low rates of reporting—from a societal perspective* [Unpublished manuscript].

Hines, D. A. (2015). *Overlooked victims of domestic violence: Men* [Unpublished manuscript].

Hines, D. A. (2022). Men's experiences of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence. In L. M. Orchowski & C. A. Gidycz (Eds.), *Sexual assault risk reduction and resistance: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 45–68). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003089612-3

Hines, D. A. (2025). Male victims of intimate partner violence: Insights from twenty years of research. *Open Access Government*, *47*, 120–150. https://doi.org/10.56367/oag-047-12050

Hines, D. A., Brown, J., & Dunning, E. (2007b). Posttraumatic stress symptoms among men who sustain partner violence: An international multisite study of university students. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *8*(4), 225–239. https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.8.4.225

Hines, D. A., Douglas, E. M., & Berger, J. L. (2010). Intimate terrorism by women towards men: Does it exist? *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, *2*(3), 36–56. https://doi.org/10.5042/jacpr.2010.0335

Hope, K., Milroy, A., & Bates, E. A. (2021). What can we learn from domestic homicide reviews with male victims? *Partner Abuse*, *12*(4), 451–475. https://doi.org/10.1891/pa-2021-0011

In their own words. (2022). In *Male victims of intimate partner violence* (pp. 89–112). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003089612-6

Isangha, S. O., Adebayo, A. M., & Ogunleye, A. J. (2025). Intimate partner violence: A qualitative study of male victims' experiences with their natal and in-law families. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, *106*(2), 234–248. https://doi.org/10.1177/10443894251322846

Ishengoma, F. R. (2023). Even a scorpion sting hurts just as much: A sobering look at men as victims of intimate partner abuse and violence. *Tanzania Journal of Sociology*, *9*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.56279/tajoso.v9i1.121

Jamuna, D., Sharma, R., & Kaur, M. (2025). *Invisible trauma: Domestic violence experiences of married men across age groups and occupation* [Unpublished manuscript].

Javaid, A. (2017). The unknown victims: Hegemonic masculinity, masculinities, and male sexual victimization. *Sociological Research Online*, *22*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.4155

Kadengye, D. T., Mayega, R. W., Makumbi, F. E., & Kasirye, R. (2023). Effect of justification of wife-beating on experiences of intimate partner violence among men and women in Uganda: A propensity-score matched analysis of the 2016 Demographic Health Survey data. *PLOS ONE*, *18*(4), e0276025. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0276025

Kamal, S. (2024). 498A IPC—A shield to defend women or a weapon? *Zenodo*. https://doi.org/10.17613/g3x2r-a9v71

Kanougiya, S., Jain, A., Sahu, D., Mishra, A. K., & Singh, A. (2021). Predictors of spousal coercive control and its association with intimate partner violence: Evidence from National Family Health Survey-4 (2015–2016) India. *BMC Public Health*, *21*(1), Article 2232. https://doi.org/10.1186/S12889-021-12232-3

Kelly, L. (2003). Disabusing the definition of domestic violence: How women batter men and the role of the feminist state. *Florida State University Law Review*, *30*, 791–855.

Kgatle, M. M., Mabunda, J. T., & Makhado, L. (2021). Hidden trauma: Men's non-disclosure of female perpetrated partner violence in selected communities of Limpopo Province. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *9*(5), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.18510/HSSR.2021.9511

Kimmel, M. S. (2002). "Gender symmetry" in domestic violence: A substantive and methodological research review. *Violence Against Women*, *8*(11), 1332–1363.

Kweka, E. J. (2025). Community perceptions of intimate partner violence against married men in urban Tanzania: A case of Arusha City Council. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, *8*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.37284/ijar.8.1.3597

Laughon, K., Renker, P., Glass, N., & Parker, B. (2013). Intimate partner violence. In *Family violence across the lifespan* (3rd ed., pp. 105–138). SAGE Publications.

Lehrner, A., Allen, N. E., & Javdani, S. (2014). Construct validity of the Conflict Tactics Scales: A mixed-method investigation of women's intimate partner violence. *Psychology of Violence*, *4*(4), 477–490. https://doi.org/10.1037/A0037404

Lewis, N. V. (2022). *Exploring men's experiences of the maintenance of their abusive intimate relationships: What keeps men stuck?* [Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington]. https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.20280153

Lysova, A., Dim, E. E., & Dutton, D. (2020a). A qualitative study of the male victims' experiences with the criminal justice response to intimate partner abuse in four English-speaking countries. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *47*(10), 1264–1281. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854820927442

Lysova, A., Dim, E. E., & Dutton, D. (2020b). Severity of victimization and formal help seeking among men who experienced intimate partner violence in their ongoing relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *35*(11–12), 2359–2382. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520922352

Lysova, A., Dim, E. E., & Dutton, D. (2023). 'She ended up controlling every aspect of my life': Male victims' narratives of intimate partner abuse perpetrated by women. In *Male victims of intimate partner violence* (pp. 89–112). Emerald Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80382-255-620231013

Machado, A., Santos, A., Graham-Kevan, N., & Matos, M. (2017). Exploring help seeking experiences of male victims of female perpetrators of IPV. *Journal of Family Violence*, *32*(5), 513–523.

Machado, A., Santos, A., Graham-Kevan, N., & Matos, M. (2020). Male victims of female-perpetrated partner violence: A qualitative analysis of men's experiences, the impact of violence, and perceptions of their worth. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *21*(4), 612–621. https://doi.org/10.1037/MEN0000285

Machado, A., Santos, A., Graham-Kevan, N., & Matos, M. (2022). Brief report on a systematic review of the experiences of male victims of intimate partner violence as help-seekers. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, *31*(8), 1039–1056. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2022.2112336

Machado, A., Sousa, C., & Cunha, O. (2023). Men's perceptions of why they stay in intimate partner violent heterosexual relationships: A systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *73*, 101876. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2023.101876

Morgan, W., Wells, M., Androff, D., & Begay, M. (2014). Asking men about domestic violence and abuse in a family medicine context: Help seeking and views on the general practitioner role. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *19*(6), 637–642. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.AVB.2014.09.008

Mshana, G., Wamoyi, J., Busza, J., Zaba, B., Changalucha, J., Kaluvya, S., & Urassa, M. (2022). Masculinity, power and structural constraints: Men's conceptualization of emotional abuse in Mwanza, Tanzania. *Social Science & Medicine, 294*, 114606. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114606

Mukhopadhyay, S., Pal, S., & Chakraborty, S. (2022). Abused but "not insulted": Understanding intersectionality in symbolic violence in India. *Indian Journal of Human Development*, *16*(2), 234–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/09737030221101100

Nakalyowa-Luggya, R., Kaye, D. K., & Musisi, S. (2025). *"It is such a shameful experience…" Barriers to help-seeking among male survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Uganda* [Unpublished manuscript].

Nguyen, D., & Naugle, A. E. (2019). Intimate partner sexual violence and gender asymmetry. In *The Wiley handbook on the psychology of violence* (pp. 1039–1058). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23645-8_48

Pantaliienko, M. (2025). Domestic violence against men: Legal invisibility or reality? *Naukovij Vìsnik Užgorods'kogo Nacìonal'nogo Unìversitetu*, *89*(3), 40–45. https://doi.org/10.24144/2307-3322.2025.89.3.40

Perryman, S. M., & Appleton, J. V. (2016). Male victims of domestic abuse: Implications for health visiting practice. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *21*(5–6), 386–414. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987116653785

Powney, L., et al. (2019). Male victims of intimate partner violence: A challenge to the gendered paradigm. In [*Book title*] (pp. [page range]). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04384-1_7

Pradhan, M. R., Patel, S. K., & Singh, R. K. (2024). Men's attitude towards wife-beating: Understanding the pattern and trend in India. *BMC Public Health*, *24*(1), 1782. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-17782-w

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. (2005). Act No. 43 of 2005. Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India.

Rehman, S., Ali, P. A., & Fatima, A. (2023). Pooled prevalence of violence against men: A systematic review and meta-analysis of a silent crisis. *Violence and Gender*, *10*(2), 89–98. https://doi.org/10.1089/vio.2022.0060

Rioli, G., Nobile, M., Pezzoli, A., & Bellino, S. (2017). An update on intimate partner violence and mental health. *Minerva Psichiatrica*, *58*(4), 203–217. https://doi.org/10.23736/S0391-1772.17.01943-4

Rowlands, J. (2024). Intimate partner violence and its psychosocial correlates among male survivors: The socio-ecological implications. *Environment & Social Psychology*, *9*(7), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.59429/esp.v9i7.6286

Satapathy, S., Pattnaik, J. I., Jena, D., & Rath, S. (2025). Intimate partner violence: A qualitative exploration of lived experiences of men. *Journal of Comprehensive Health*, *13*(1), 35–42. https://doi.org/10.25259/jch_35_2024

Saunders, D. G. (2002). Are physical assaults by wives and girlfriends a major social problem? A review of the literature. *Violence Against Women*, *8*(12), 1424–1448. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780102237964

Scott-Storey, K., Wuest, J., & Ford-Gilboe, M. (2022). What about the men? A critical review of men's experiences of intimate partner violence. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *23*(4), 1262–1280. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211043827

Shah, S., Pillai, A., Cardoza, P., Patel, V., & Velleman, R. (2024). Coping strategies and help-seeking behaviors among survivors of intimate partner violence: A qualitative study of spouses of men with heavy drinking in India. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, *2024*, Article 6839787. https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/6839787

Shikhila, M., Shetty, A. P., & Shetty, S. (2023). Intimate partner violence among married couples in India: A systematic review. *The Open Psychology Journal*, *16*(1), e187435012708842. https://doi.org/10.2174/0118743501270484230926094430

Shrivastava, A., Shrivastava, A., & Shrivastava, A. (2022). Domestic violence against men by women. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, *4*(4), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2022.v04i04.008

Simmons, M. (2015). *Toward an integrated approach in research on interpersonal violence: Conceptual and methodological challenges* [Doctoral dissertation, Linköping University]. https://doi.org/10.3384/diss.diva-114605

Sousa, C. A. (2022). Domestic violence against men: A lesser explored phenomenon. *Annals of Indian Psychiatry*, *6*(1), 16–20. https://doi.org/10.4103/aip.aip_48_22

Stewart, J. M., et al. (2025). Black men's intimate partner violence victimization and help-seeking experiences: Integrating and applying intersectionality and hegemonic masculinity. *Journal of Family Theory and Review, 17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12619

Straus, M. A. (2012). Blaming the messenger for the bad news about partner violence by women: The methodological, theoretical, and value basis of the purported invalidity of the Conflict Tactics Scales. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law, 30*(5), 538–556. https://doi.org/10.1002/BSL.2023

Swethashri, R., Pillai, A., & Patel, V. (2026). "Growing up, my home never felt like a place of comfort": A narrative exploration of childhood exposure to intimate partner violence among young Badaga men. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 159*, Article 107970. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2026.107970

Taylor, E., Hester, M., & Mott, H. (2021). Barriers to men's help seeking for intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 36*(23–24), NP12892–NP12915. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211035870

Tsui, V., et al. (2012). Male victims in heterosexual intimate partner violence: A framework explaining help-seeking reluctance. *Journal of Psychology Research, 2*(3), 168–178.

Valgardson, B. A. (2014). *Intimate partner violence: Domestic violence service providers' perceptions of male victims* [Master's thesis, Minnesota State University]. https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds/318/

Venäläinen, S. (2021). Gendering and degendering: The problem of men's victimization in intimate partner relations in social and crisis workers' talk. *Social Problems, 69*(4), 1078–1095. https://doi.org/10.1093/SOCPRO/SPAB029

Vernon, P. (2017). *Has society created social injustice for male victims of domestic violence?* [Doctoral dissertation, Edith Cowan University]. https://doi.org/10.26076/B01A-4B65

Vinayak, S., Kaur, D., & Kaur, H. (2015). Intimate partner emotional abuse and post traumatic stress disorder among males. *Journal of Social Sciences, 4*(3), 877–885. https://doi.org/10.25255/JSS.2015.4.3.877.885

Wagman, J. A., Challa, S., Brennan, J., Silverman, J. G., Narasimhan, S., & Raj, A. (2025). Alcohol use, prohibition policies, and bidirectional intimate partner violence in India. *Alcohol and Alcoholism, 60*(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agaf045

Waila, J., Kabiru, C. W., Maina, B. W., & Izugbara, C. (2025). "Learning to stay silent": Coping, help-seeking and mitigation strategies for intimate partner violence against men in Kenya. *Social Science & Medicine, 367*, 118694. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2025.118694

Walker, A., Lyons, J., Ullman, S. E., & Butters, R. P. (2020). Male victims of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence, help-seeking, and reporting behaviors: A qualitative study. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *21*(2), 213–223. https://doi.org/10.1037/MEN0000222

Wang, Y., Chan, K. L., & Zhang, H. (2024). Breaking the silence: A preliminary study on the experiences of Chinese men as victims of intimate partner violence and masculinity. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *39*(23–24), 5089–5113. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605241301788

Westmarland, N., et al. (2023). 'I'm a red-blooded male': Understanding men's experiences of domestic abuse through a feminist lens. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, *23*(4), 612–629. https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958231210985

Widh, J., Hellström, Å., & Krantz, G. (2014). *A qualitative study on the experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) from the perspective of male victims* [Master's thesis, University of Gothenburg].

Willie, T. C., Kershaw, T., Campbell, J. C., & Alexander, K. A. (2022). Latent classes of men's intimate partner violence perpetration and attitudes towards gender norms: A UN multi-country, cross-sectional study in Asia and the Pacific. *medRxiv*. https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.02.07.22270580

Williston, C. J. (2017). *Do they know what I need? Social reactions to intimate partner violence help seeking* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Guelph].

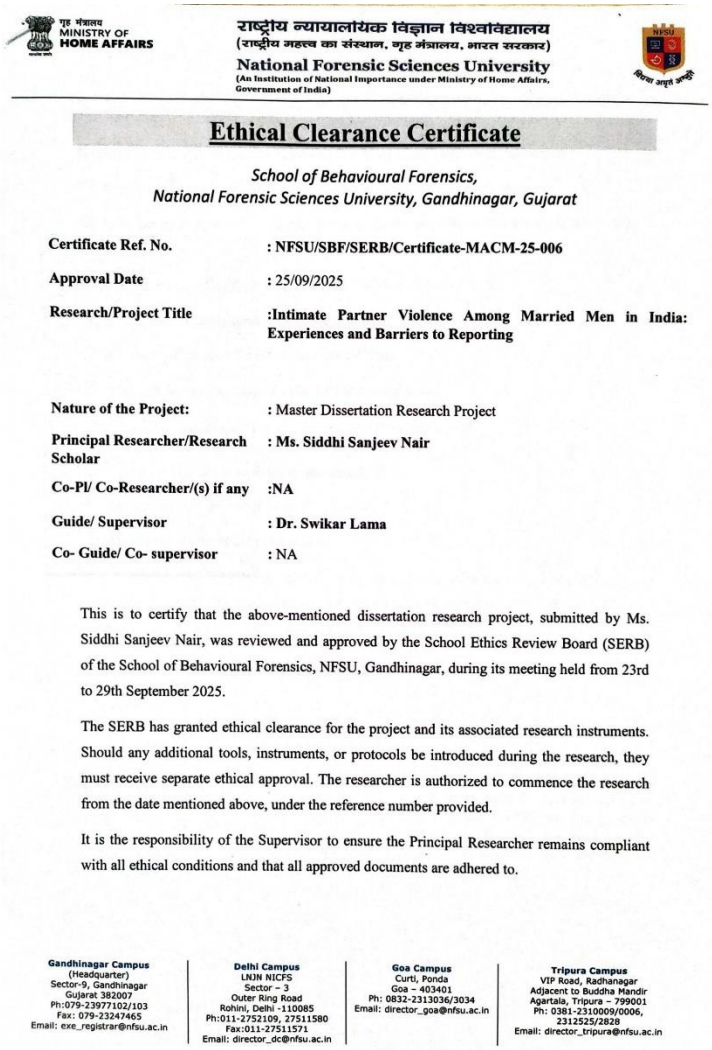
Woodyard, C. D. (2019). *The lived experiences of male victims of intimate partner violence* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University].

Wright, E. M. (2016). *The absent voice of male domestic abuse victims: The marginalisation of men in a system originally designed for women* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Central Lancashire].

Yount, K. M., James-Hawkins, L., Cheong, Y. F., & Naved, R. T. (2016). Men's perpetration of intimate partner violence in Vietnam: Gendered social learning and the challenges of masculinity. *Men and Masculinities*, *21*(1), 64–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X15572896

ANNEXURES

I. ETHICAL CERTIFICATE



गृह मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

राष्ट्रीय न्यायालयिक विज्ञान विश्वविद्यालय
(राष्ट्रीय महत्त्व का संस्थान, गृह मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार)
National Forensic Sciences University
(An Institution of National Importance under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Ethical Clearance Certificate

School of Behavioural Forensics,
National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

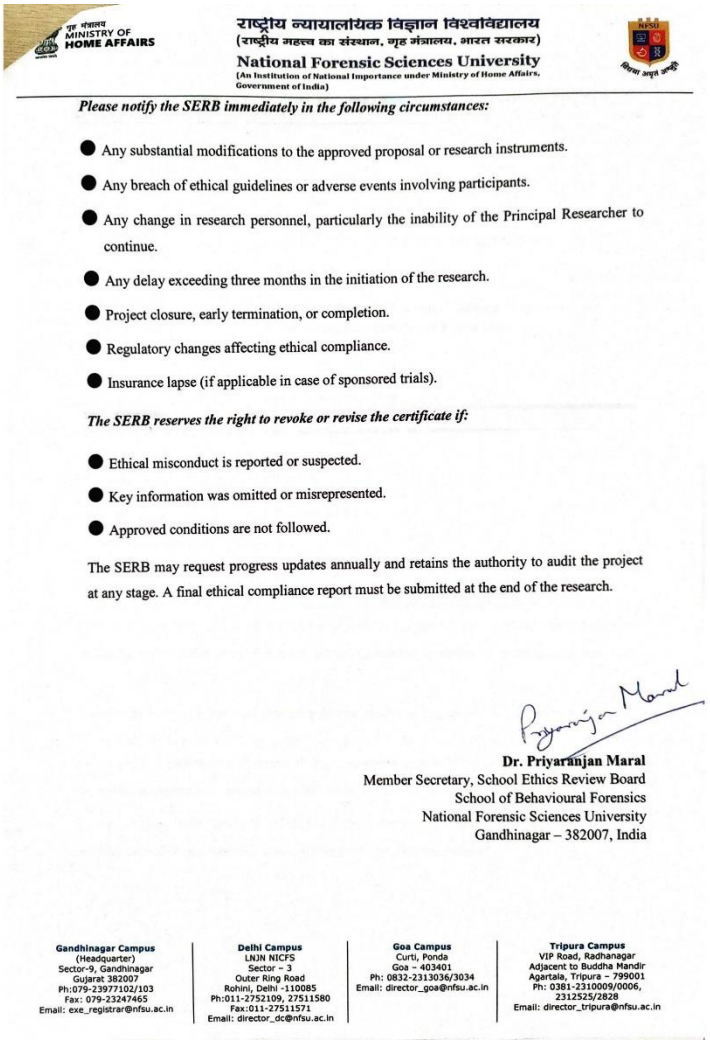
Certificate Ref. No.	**: NFSU/SBF/SERB/Certificate-MACM-25-006**
Approval Date	: 25/09/2025
Research/Project Title	**:Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Men in India: Experiences and Barriers to Reporting**
Nature of the Project:	: Master Dissertation Research Project
Principal Researcher/Research Scholar	**: Ms. Siddhi Sanjeev Nair**
Co-PI/ Co-Researcher/(s) if any	**:NA**
Guide/ Supervisor	**: Dr. Swikar Lama**
Co- Guide/ Co- supervisor	: NA

This is to certify that the above-mentioned dissertation research project, submitted by Ms. Siddhi Sanjeev Nair, was reviewed and approved by the School Ethics Review Board (SERB) of the School of Behavioural Forensics, NFSU, Gandhinagar, during its meeting held from 23rd to 29th September 2025.

The SERB has granted ethical clearance for the project and its associated research instruments. Should any additional tools, instruments, or protocols be introduced during the research, they must receive separate ethical approval. The researcher is authorized to commence the research from the date mentioned above, under the reference number provided.

It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to ensure the Principal Researcher remains compliant with all ethical conditions and that all approved documents are adhered to.

Gandhinagar Campus (Headquarter) Sector-9, Gandhinagar Gujarat 382007 Ph:079-23977102/103 Fax: 079-23247465 Email: exe_registrar@nfsu.ac.in
Delhi Campus LNJN NICFS Sector – 3 Outer Ring Road Rohini, Delhi -110085 Ph:011-2752109, 27511580 Fax:011-27511571 Email: director_dc@nfsu.ac.in
Goa Campus Curti, Ponda Goa – 403401 Ph: 0832-2313036/3034 Email: director_goa@nfsu.ac.in
Tripura Campus VIP Road, Radhanagar Adjacent to Buddha Mandir Agartala, Tripura – 799001 Ph: 0381-2310009/0006, 2312525/2828 Email: director_tripura@nfsu.ac.in



गृह मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

राष्ट्रीय न्यायालयिक विज्ञान विश्वविद्यालय
(राष्ट्रीय महत्त्व का संस्थान, गृह मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार)
National Forensic Sciences University
(An Institution of National Importance under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Please notify the SERB immediately in the following circumstances:

- Any substantial modifications to the approved proposal or research instruments.
- Any breach of ethical guidelines or adverse events involving participants.
- Any change in research personnel, particularly the inability of the Principal Researcher to continue.
- Any delay exceeding three months in the initiation of the research.
- Project closure, early termination, or completion.
- Regulatory changes affecting ethical compliance.
- Insurance lapse (if applicable in case of sponsored trials).

The SERB reserves the right to revoke or revise the certificate if:

- Ethical misconduct is reported or suspected.
- Key information was omitted or misrepresented.
- Approved conditions are not followed.

The SERB may request progress updates annually and retains the authority to audit the project at any stage. A final ethical compliance report must be submitted at the end of the research.

Priyaranjan Maral

Dr. Priyaranjan Maral
Member Secretary, School Ethics Review Board
School of Behavioural Forensics
National Forensic Sciences University
Gandhinagar – 382007, India

Gandhinagar Campus (Headquarter) Sector-9, Gandhinagar Gujarat 382007 Ph:079-23977102/103 Fax: 079-23247465 Email: exe_registrar@nfsu.ac.in
Delhi Campus LNJN NICFS Sector – 3 Outer Ring Road Rohini, Delhi -110085 Ph:011-2752109, 27511580 Fax:011-27511571 Email: director_dc@nfsu.ac.in
Goa Campus Curti, Ponda Goa – 403401 Ph: 0832-2313036/3034 Email: director_goa@nfsu.ac.in
Tripura Campus VIP Road, Radhanagar Adjacent to Buddha Mandir Agartala, Tripura – 799001 Ph: 0381-2310009/0006, 2312525/2828 Email: director_tripura@nfsu.ac.in

II. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM [part of the google form circulated to potential participants]

SECTION 1[provided as a Google document for participants to refer before they moved onto the consent section]

Participant Information Document of Research Study

Study Title: Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Men in India: Experiences and Barriers to Reporting

You are invited to participate in an important research study that aims to better understand and address the experiences of men facing intimate partner violence in India. Your perspective and experiences could make a meaningful contribution to this under-researched area. Before deciding whether to participate, please take time to read and understand the information provided in this document. It describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, and your rights as a participant, including your right to withdraw at any time. If you have any questions after reading this document, please feel free to reach out for clarification.
Contact information is available at the end of this document. Should you choose to participate, please return to the Google form and fill the consent form given further. Thank you.

---

1. What is the purpose of this study?
This study is being conducted as part of my Master's dissertation at National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The purpose is to:

- Understand the lived experiences of married men who have encountered intimate partner violence (IPV) in India
- Examine the social, cultural, and legal barriers to reporting IPV
- Explore how stigma and social expectations influence help-seeking behaviour among male victims

This research addresses a significant gap in understanding IPV in India. By sharing your story, you would be helping to create knowledge that could shape better support systems, inform policy changes, and contribute to breaking the silence around this important issue.

---

2. Why have I been chosen to participate?
You have been invited because your experience as a married man who has faced intimate partner violence represents a perspective that is rarely heard in research. Men's voices on this issue have been largely absent from academic study and policy discussions in India. Your willingness to share your story could help change that.

---

3. Do I have to take part in the study?
No. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to:

- Decline to participate without giving any reason
- Withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences
- Refuse to answer any question you are uncomfortable with
- End the interview at any point without penalty

Your decision will not affect your legal rights or access to any services.

---

4. What will happen to me if I take part?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

Participate in one online interview via [Zoom/Google Meet] lasting approximately **60-90 minutes** at a date and time convenient for you.

The interview will cover:

- Your personal experiences of intimate partner violence
- Challenges you faced in reporting or seeking help
- Social and cultural factors that influenced your decisions
- Your interactions with support systems (if any)

Interview format:

- The interview will be conducted online from anywhere in India where you feel comfortable and have privacy
- With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded for accurate transcription
- You may decline recording; in that case, detailed notes will be taken
- You can take breaks at any time or skip questions you're uncomfortable answering

After the interview:

- You will receive a copy of this signed consent form via email
- The recording will be transcribed, and all identifying information will be removed

---

5. What are my responsibilities as a participant in the study?

Your responsibilities are minimal:

- Please ensure you are in a **private, safe location** during the online interview where you can speak freely without being overheard
- Please be as honest and open as you feel comfortable being about your experiences
- Please inform the researcher if you experience any distress during the interview
- Please inform the researcher if you wish to withdraw from the study

---

6. What are your benefits because of your participation in the study?

Direct benefits to you:

- Many participants find value in having their experiences heard and validated in a safe, confidential space
- You will be contributing to research that could help others in similar situations
- Your story becomes part of creating change in how society understands and responds to male victims of IPV

Broader impact:

- This research fills a critical gap in understanding IPV in India, where most studies focus exclusively on female victims
- Your insights could directly inform the development of better support services and more inclusive policies
- The findings may help reduce stigma and challenge societal misconceptions about male victimization
- Your participation helps ensure that counsellors, legal practitioners, and policymakers have accurate information to support all IPV victims

---

7. Will my information be kept confidential?

Yes. Your confidentiality will be strictly protected:

Anonymity:

- Your name and identifying information will **NOT** be used in the dissertation or any publications
- You will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name) or participant code (e.g., "Participant 1")
- Any identifying details (city, workplace, family details, etc.) will be removed or changed in all reports

Data Storage and Access:

- All audio recordings and transcripts will be stored securely on password-protected devices
- Only the student researcher and their respective guide will have access to identifiable data
- Anonymised transcripts will be stored for the duration of the dissertation data collection and analysis and then permanently deleted

Online Security:

- No unauthorised persons will be admitted to the meeting
- Cloud recording features will NOT be used; only local recording on secure devices
- Data will not be transferred or stored on third-party servers

---

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research will be:

- Used in the student researcher's master’s dissertation at National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat
- Potentially published in academic journals (with your continued anonymity)
- Potentially presented at academic conferences or seminars (with your continued anonymity)

You will NOT be identified in any publication or presentation. All results will be presented in aggregate form or with pseudonyms to protect your identity.

---

9. What use will be made of data collected from this study?

The data collected will be used for:

Primary use:

- Analysis for the master's dissertation on IPV experiences among married men in India
- Identification of themes, patterns, and barriers in reporting IPV

Secondary use:

- Academic publications to raise awareness about male IPV victimization
- Potential use in future related research (always in anonymised form)

You have the right to:

- Request that your data be withdrawn from the study at any time before final analysis
- Not restrict the use of anonymised data or results that arise from this study for research and educational purposes

---

10. Contact for further information

Name of Principal Investigator (Student Researcher):

Siddhi Sanjeev Nair

Contact details:

Email: siddhinair1234@gmail.com

Mobile No.: 9969949500

GUIDE: Dr. Swikar Lama, Associate Professor, School of Behavioural Forensics, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Section 2- Consent Form

Informed Consent to participate in the study

If you wish to participate in the study, please provide your consent for the same below.

Name initials and Phone number

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information document for the above study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
- I understand that authorized persons from National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat may review my anonymized data for quality assurance purposes, even if I withdraw from the study. However, I understand that my identity will not be revealed in any information released to third parties or published.

- I agree to participate in an online interview that will be audio-recorded, or notes will be taken if I decline recording.
- I confirm that I will be in a private, safe location during the online interview where I can speak freely.
- I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Digital Signature of Participant (Please provide an informal signature that is not used on an official basis.)

III. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE [used while conducting semi-structured interviews, by the researcher]

Interview Guide
Intimate Partner Violence Among Married Men in India: Experiences and Barriers to Reporting

---

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Duration: 60-90 minutes
Format: Online (Zoom/Google Meet/WhatsApp Video)
Approach: Trauma-informed, participant-centred

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT
Purpose: Build rapport and understand participant's context
1. Could you tell me a bit about yourself—your age, occupation, where you live, and how long you've been married?
2. What does a typical day look like for you, both at home and at work?
Transition: *"Thank you for sharing that. I'd like to now talk about some challenges that can occur in relationships. Remember, you can share as much or as little as you're comfortable with, and you can skip any question."*

SECTION 2: EXPERIENCES OF IPV
Purpose: Explore specific lived experiences across different types of IPV
3. Can you walk me through the types of difficult or hurtful experiences you've had in your marriage?

- *Probe:* These could be emotional, verbal, physical, financial, sexual, or any other form. Take your time.

4. Focusing on emotional and psychological experiences—have you faced situations involving insults, humiliation, threats, isolation from family/friends, or constant criticism?

- *Follow-up:* Can you describe specific incidents? How did these make you feel?

5. Have you experienced any physical aggression from your partner—such as pushing, slapping, hitting, or objects being thrown at you?

- *If yes:* Can you tell me about when this first happened? How often does it occur? Have you been injured?

6. Regarding finances—does your partner control household money, your salary, or prevent you from working? Have there been demands for money from you or your family?

- *Follow-up:* How has this affected your financial independence?

7. Have you experienced any sexual coercion or situations where you felt pressured into sexual activity against your will?

- *Note:* You can choose not to answer this. It's completely okay.

8. Has your partner involved their family members (in-laws) in conflicts or mistreatment toward you? What role have they played?

9. Of all the experiences you've described, which has been the most difficult for you to cope with, and why?

10. Are there specific triggers or patterns you've noticed—like financial stress, alcohol, family visits—that lead to these incidents?

11. How often do these experiences occur overall? Has the frequency or intensity changed over the course of your marriage?

12. How have these experiences impacted your physical health, mental well-being, work performance, and relationships with others?

Safety check: ***"We've covered some difficult topics. How are you feeling? Would you like to take a break?"***

SECTION 3: HELP-SEEKING AND DISCLOSURE

Purpose: Understand disclosure patterns, responses, and barriers

13. Have you told anyone about your experiences—family, friends, colleagues, or professionals?

- *If yes:* Who did you tell, and how did they react?
- *If no:* What has prevented you from sharing?

14. When you first thought about disclosing your situation, what concerns or fears went through your mind?

15. Have you sought or considered seeking help from professionals like counsellors, lawyers, police, or support organisations?

- *If yes:* What was that experience like? Did you feel supported?
- *If no:* What barriers stopped you from seeking professional help?

16. What would need to exist or change to make it easier for you to seek help or talk about your experiences?

SECTION 4: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

Purpose: Explore stigma, masculinity norms, and societal expectations

17. How do you think Indian society generally views men who experience violence or abuse from their wives?

18. Have cultural values, family expectations, or ideas about masculinity influenced how you've dealt with your situation?

- *Probe:* For example, expectations about how men should behave in marriages, or concerns about family honor?

19. Have you experienced comments, jokes, or reactions from others that dismissed or trivialized your experiences?

- *Follow-up:* How did that affect you?

20. Do you think your experience would be different if you were a woman in the same situation? How so?

SECTION 5: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

Purpose: Understand awareness of and interaction with legal systems

21. Are you aware of any laws or legal protections in India for men experiencing IPV? What are your thoughts on the current legal framework?

22. Have you considered or pursued legal action—such as filing a complaint or seeking a divorce?

- *If yes:* What was your experience with police, lawyers, or courts?
- *If no:* What prevented you from considering this option?

SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING

Purpose: Gather insights for support systems and policy recommendations

23. Based on your experience, what kind of support services or resources do you think would be most helpful for men facing IPV in India?

24. If you could change one thing about how society, the legal system, or support services handle IPV against men, what would it be?

25. Is there anything important about your experience that we haven't covered and you'd like to share?

Closing: ***"How are you feeling after sharing your story today? Do you have any questions for me?"***

POST-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL [for the investigator]

Immediate:

Thank the participant sincerely for their time and courage

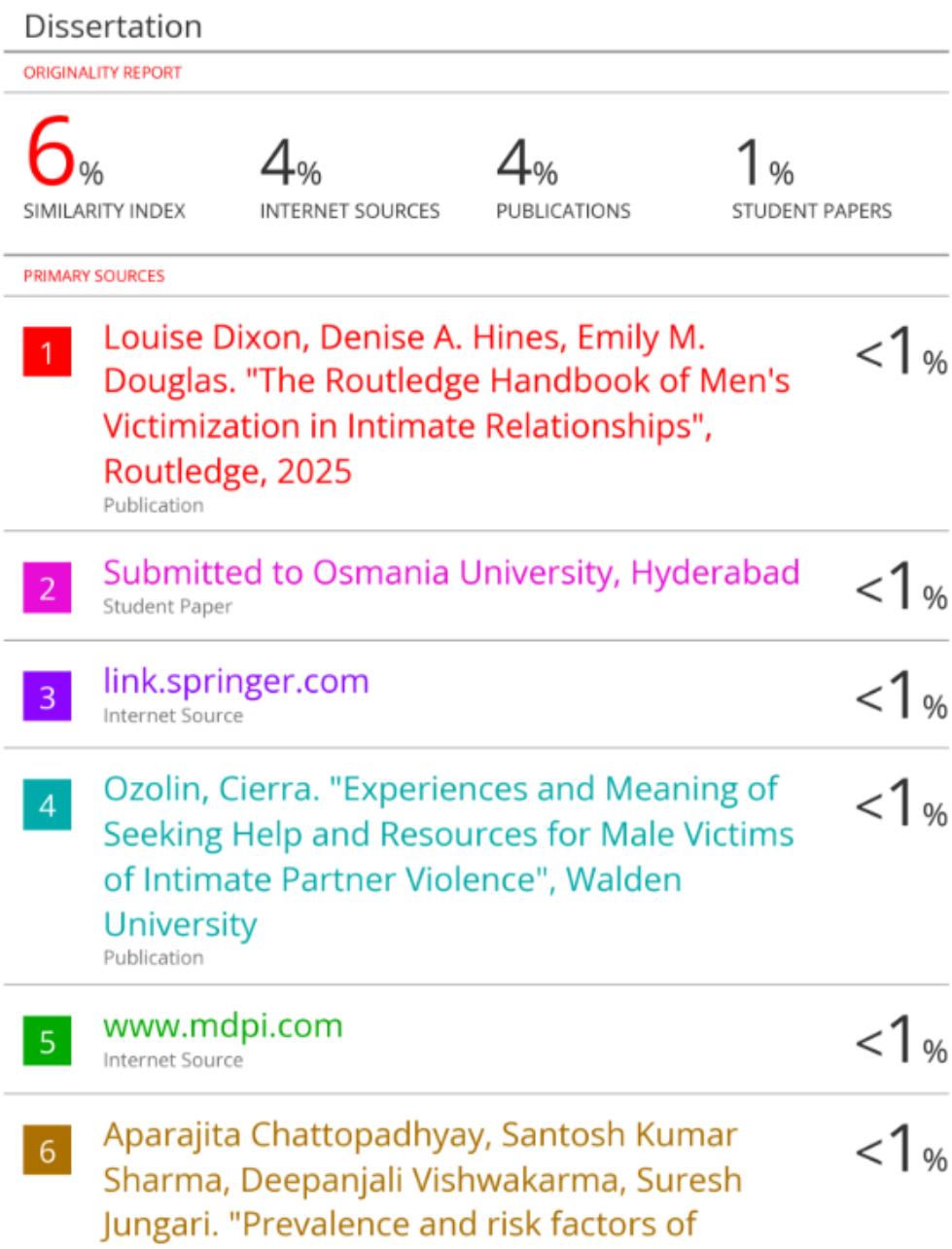
Remind them of confidentiality protections

Check emotional state before ending the call

Offer an option to follow up if they remember something later

Follow the participant's narrative flow naturally. Not all questions need to be asked if information emerges organically. Prioritise participant comfort and emotional safety throughout.

IV. PLAGIARISM REPORT



Dissertation

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6%	4%	4%	1%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Louise Dixon, Denise A. Hines, Emily M. Douglas. "The Routledge Handbook of Men's Victimization in Intimate Relationships", Routledge, 2025 Publication	<1%
2	Submitted to Osmania University, Hyderabad Student Paper	<1%
3	link.springer.com Internet Source	<1%
4	Ozolin, Cierra. "Experiences and Meaning of Seeking Help and Resources for Male Victims of Intimate Partner Violence", Walden University Publication	<1%
5	www.mdpi.com Internet Source	<1%
6	Aparajita Chattopadhyay, Santosh Kumar Sharma, Deepanjali Vishwakarma, Suresh Jungari. "Prevalence and risk factors of	<1%