

Changing Gender Roles and Domestic Violence Against Men: A Sociological Analysis

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Abstract

Domestic violence has traditionally been perceived as a problem affecting women; however, recent social changes have highlighted the growing issue of domestic violence against men. With changing gender roles, economic participation of women, and evolving family dynamics, the traditional power structure within households is undergoing transformation. In some cases, these shifts have led to conflicts that may result in violence against male partners. This study explores the sociological dimensions of domestic violence against men in the context of changing gender roles. It examines the social, psychological, and cultural factors that contribute to the victimization of men within domestic relationships. The research also discusses how societal stereotypes, stigma, and lack of legal recognition often prevent male victims from reporting abuse or seeking help. Using secondary sources such as academic studies, reports, and legal literature published between 2015 and 2025, the paper analyzes patterns of male victimization and the challenges faced by male victims in accessing justice and support systems. The study argues that domestic violence should be viewed as a gender-neutral issue that requires balanced legal and social responses. Addressing this issue through awareness, policy reforms, and inclusive support mechanisms is essential for promoting equality, justice, and healthy family relationships.

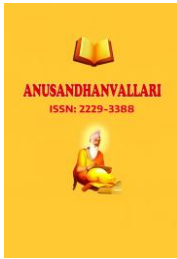
Keywords: Domestic Violence, Gender Roles, Male Victims, Family Conflict, Sociological Analysis

1. Introduction

Domestic violence is widely recognized as a serious social problem that affects individuals, families, and society as a whole. Traditionally, domestic violence has been understood primarily as violence perpetrated by men against women due to patriarchal social structures and gender inequalities. While violence against women remains a significant issue worldwide, increasing attention has recently been given to the experiences of male victims of domestic violence. Changing gender roles, social expectations, and family dynamics have contributed to a more complex understanding of domestic violence in contemporary societies.

Over the past few decades, social transformations such as increased female participation in education and employment, economic independence, and the promotion of gender equality have altered traditional family structures. These developments have challenged conventional notions of masculinity and femininity and reshaped the power dynamics within households. As gender roles evolve, conflicts may arise within relationships when individuals struggle to adapt to new expectations and responsibilities. In certain situations, these conflicts may lead to psychological, emotional, or physical abuse directed at men.

Despite growing recognition of male victimization, domestic violence against men remains underreported and understudied. Many men hesitate to report abuse due to social stigma, fear of ridicule, and the perception that men should be strong and capable of defending themselves. Cultural norms often discourage men from expressing vulnerability or seeking help, which further contributes to the invisibility of the problem. Additionally, legal frameworks in several countries have historically focused primarily on protecting women, sometimes overlooking the needs of male victims.



From a sociological perspective, domestic violence against men must be examined within the broader context of changing gender relations, power dynamics, and social expectations. Understanding the experiences of male victims does not diminish the importance of addressing violence against women; rather, it highlights the need for a more inclusive and balanced approach to tackling domestic violence.

This paper aims to analyze domestic violence against men in the context of changing gender roles. By reviewing existing literature, examining sociological factors, and analyzing secondary data, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of male victimization within domestic settings and emphasize the need for gender-neutral policies and support systems.

2. Review of Literature

Recent studies have increasingly explored the issue of domestic violence against men and the impact of changing gender roles on family dynamics. Hines and Douglas (2016) examined male victims of partner violence and found that many men experience psychological abuse, coercive control, and physical violence but rarely report it due to fear of stigma and lack of institutional support.

Morgan and Wells (2016) highlighted that male victims often face barriers in accessing support services, as most domestic violence shelters and programs are designed primarily for women. Similarly, Bates (2020) emphasized that societal stereotypes about masculinity discourage men from seeking help, leading to underreporting and limited awareness of the issue.

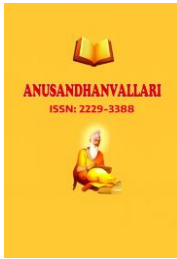
In the Indian context, Kumar (2018) noted that legal provisions addressing domestic violence largely focus on protecting women, which sometimes leaves male victims without adequate legal remedies. Malik and Singh (2021) argued that the changing economic roles of women and shifting household power relations have contributed to new forms of domestic conflict.

More recently, Sharma (2023) observed that psychological and emotional abuse against men is increasingly reported in urban settings where gender roles are rapidly evolving. Overall, existing literature indicates that domestic violence against men is a complex issue shaped by social norms, cultural expectations, and institutional frameworks.

3. Objective of Study

- a) **To examine** the issue of domestic violence against men in the context of changing gender roles and evolving family dynamics.
- b) **To analyze** how social transformations, such as women's increasing economic participation and shifting power relations within households, influence patterns of domestic conflict.
- c) **To identify** the sociological factors that contribute to the victimization of men within domestic and intimate relationships.
- d) **To understand** the barriers that prevent male victims from reporting abuse or seeking help, including social stigma, cultural expectations, and lack of institutional support.
- e) **To review** existing literature and secondary data in order to identify trends and emphasize the need for gender-sensitive and inclusive policies addressing domestic violence.

4. Research Methodology



This study is based on a qualitative research approach using secondary data sources. The research relies on existing literature, including academic books, journal articles, government reports, and publications from international organizations related to domestic violence and gender roles.

The study particularly focuses on research conducted between 2015 and 2025 to analyze recent developments and emerging perspectives on domestic violence against men. Relevant legal documents, sociological studies, and statistical reports have also been reviewed to understand the nature and extent of the problem.

The collected data has been analyzed through a descriptive and analytical method to identify patterns, themes, and sociological factors associated with male victimization in domestic settings. By examining secondary sources, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue while highlighting gaps in existing policies and support systems.

5. Significance of Study

This study is significant because it highlights an often overlooked dimension of domestic violence—violence against men. While much attention has rightly been given to protecting women from abuse, the experiences of male victims have received relatively little academic and policy attention.

By examining domestic violence against men from a sociological perspective, the study contributes to a broader and more inclusive understanding of domestic violence. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing that abuse can occur in any relationship regardless of gender.

The findings of this research may help policymakers, researchers, and social organizations better understand the challenges faced by male victims and develop more inclusive support systems. The study also encourages further research on the topic and promotes awareness about the need for gender-neutral approaches in addressing domestic violence.

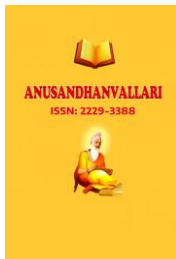
6. Domestic Violence against men

Domestic violence against men refers to physical, emotional, psychological, or economic abuse experienced by men within intimate or family relationships. Although often overlooked, men may face various forms of abuse such as verbal humiliation, threats, coercion, and physical assault. Social expectations about masculinity often prevent male victims from reporting such incidents or seeking help. Many men fear social ridicule, disbelief, or legal consequences if they speak about their experiences. As a result, domestic violence against men remains largely hidden. Recognizing and addressing this issue is essential for ensuring that all victims of domestic violence receive equal protection, support, and access to justice.

6.1 Examine domestic violence against men in changing gender roles.

Domestic violence has long been understood primarily as violence against women due to historical gender inequalities and patriarchal social structures. However, contemporary social changes have revealed that men can also become victims of domestic abuse within intimate and family relationships. Examining domestic violence against men has therefore become important for developing a more comprehensive understanding of family violence in modern societies.

In recent decades, gender roles have undergone significant transformation. Traditional family structures, where men were primarily viewed as breadwinners and women as homemakers, are gradually changing. Women today have greater access to education, employment opportunities, and financial independence. These developments have contributed to increased gender equality but have also reshaped the balance of power within households. As



roles and expectations shift, some families may experience tension, misunderstanding, or conflict when individuals struggle to adapt to these changes.

Domestic violence against men can take various forms, including physical abuse, emotional manipulation, verbal humiliation, psychological pressure, and economic control. In many cases, such abuse remains hidden because society often assumes that men are always the perpetrators rather than victims. Cultural expectations that men should be strong, dominant, and emotionally resilient discourage them from acknowledging victimization or seeking help.

Examining this issue within the context of changing gender roles allows researchers to understand how evolving family dynamics influence interpersonal relationships. It also helps highlight the importance of recognizing that domestic violence is not limited to one gender. By analyzing domestic violence against men through a sociological perspective, the study aims to broaden the discourse surrounding domestic violence and emphasize the need for inclusive policies and support systems that protect all victims.

6.2 Analyze the impact of women's economic participation and shifting power relations on domestic conflict.

Social transformations have significantly altered the structure and functioning of families across the world. One of the most notable changes in recent decades has been the increasing participation of women in education, employment, and public life. As women gain financial independence and professional opportunities, traditional gender roles within households are gradually being redefined. These shifts have brought many positive outcomes, including greater gender equality, improved economic stability, and enhanced decision-making power for women.

However, these social changes may also influence patterns of domestic relationships and conflicts. In traditional societies, men often held dominant authority in family decision-making due to their role as primary earners. When women begin to share or even surpass this economic role, the traditional balance of power within households may shift. Such changes may sometimes lead to tension, particularly when individuals struggle to adjust to new expectations regarding authority, responsibility, and gender identity.

The transformation of gender roles can create situations where couples must renegotiate household responsibilities, financial management, and emotional expectations. While many families successfully adapt to these changes, others may experience misunderstandings, resentment, or conflict. In certain cases, such conflicts may escalate into emotional, psychological, or physical forms of domestic violence.

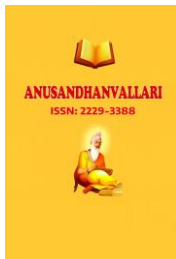
From a sociological perspective, it is important to analyze how these evolving power relations influence domestic interactions. Understanding the connection between social transformation and domestic conflict can help researchers identify patterns that contribute to violence within relationships. Such analysis also highlights the importance of promoting mutual respect, communication, and equality within families.

By examining the influence of social transformation on domestic relationships, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how modern societal changes shape family dynamics and conflict patterns.

6.3 Identify sociological factors contributing to male victimization in relationships.

Domestic violence against men is influenced by various sociological factors that shape individual behavior, social norms, and relationship dynamics. Understanding these factors is essential for analyzing how and why men may become victims of abuse within intimate relationships.

One important sociological factor is the persistence of traditional gender norms and expectations. In many societies, masculinity is associated with strength, dominance, and emotional control. Men are often expected to be protectors and providers who are capable of handling difficult situations without showing vulnerability. These expectations may prevent men from recognizing or acknowledging abusive behavior within their relationships.



Another factor is the imbalance of power that may arise within certain relationships. While power imbalances have historically disadvantaged women, changing social dynamics may also create situations where men experience emotional or psychological pressure. For example, manipulation, threats, humiliation, or controlling behavior can create an environment where men feel powerless or trapped within their relationships.

Family background and socialization also play an important role in shaping attitudes toward conflict and violence. Individuals who grow up in environments where violence is normalized may be more likely to engage in abusive behavior or tolerate abusive relationships. Additionally, factors such as alcohol abuse, financial stress, and relationship instability can contribute to the escalation of domestic conflicts.

Another sociological factor is the lack of social recognition of male victimization. Society often perceives men primarily as perpetrators rather than victims of domestic violence. This perception can discourage open discussion and prevent men from seeking assistance.

By identifying these sociological factors, researchers can better understand the circumstances that contribute to domestic violence against men. Such understanding is crucial for developing policies, educational programs, and support systems that address the needs of all victims

6.4 Understand barriers preventing male victims from reporting abuse.

One of the major challenges in addressing domestic violence against men is the difficulty male victims face in reporting abuse or seeking assistance. Several social and cultural barriers contribute to the underreporting of such cases, making it difficult to accurately assess the extent of the problem. Social stigma is one of the most significant barriers. Many societies hold strong beliefs about masculinity, which emphasize strength, independence, and emotional resilience. Men who experience domestic violence may fear being perceived as weak, incapable, or unmanly if they disclose their victimization. This fear of social judgment often discourages men from speaking openly about their experiences.

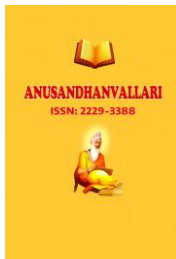
Cultural expectations also play a crucial role. In many cultures, domestic violence is commonly viewed as an issue that primarily affects women. As a result, male victims may feel that their experiences will not be taken seriously by family members, friends, or authorities. They may also fear that their complaints will be dismissed or ridiculed. Another important barrier is the limited availability of institutional support for male victims. Many support services, such as shelters, counseling programs, and helplines, have historically been designed to assist female victims of domestic violence. While these services are essential, the lack of similar support structures for men can leave male victims without safe and accessible options for seeking help.

Legal frameworks may also contribute to this challenge. In some countries, domestic violence laws are gender-specific, which may make it difficult for men to pursue legal remedies. Understanding these barriers is essential for creating effective support systems and ensuring that all victims of domestic violence receive equal protection and assistance.

6.5 Review literature and data to highlight the need for gender-inclusive domestic violence policies.

Reviewing existing literature and secondary data is an essential part of understanding the broader context of domestic violence against men. Academic studies, research reports, and statistical data provide valuable insights into the patterns, causes, and consequences of domestic violence within different societies. Over the past decade, scholars have increasingly recognized that domestic violence is not limited to a single gender. Research conducted in various countries has shown that men may also experience different forms of abuse, including psychological manipulation, emotional humiliation, economic control, and physical violence. By reviewing existing literature, researchers can identify emerging trends and patterns related to male victimization.

Secondary data sources such as government reports, international organization publications, and academic journals help provide a broader perspective on the issue. These sources allow researchers to compare findings



across different cultural, social, and legal contexts. They also help highlight gaps in existing research and policy frameworks.

One important finding emerging from recent literature is that male victims often remain invisible in discussions of domestic violence. Many policies and legal frameworks focus primarily on protecting women, which, although necessary, may unintentionally overlook the experiences of male victims. By reviewing available literature and data, this study aims to highlight the importance of developing gender-sensitive and inclusive policies that address the needs of all victims. Such policies should promote equal access to legal protection, counseling services, and support systems. Ultimately, a comprehensive review of existing research helps create a more balanced understanding of domestic violence and supports the development of effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

7. How Masculine Norms Create Barriers to Help-Seeking for Male Victims

- 7.1 Expectation of Strength and Emotional Control:** Traditional masculine norms often emphasize that men should be strong, independent, and emotionally resilient. Because of these expectations, many men feel that admitting they are victims of abuse contradicts the socially accepted image of masculinity. As a result, male victims may suppress their experiences and avoid seeking help in order to maintain the perception of strength and control.
- 7.2 Fear of Social Stigma and Ridicule:** Male victims of domestic violence often fear being ridiculed or not taken seriously by society. Cultural stereotypes frequently portray men as perpetrators rather than victims of violence. This perception can lead to embarrassment, shame, and fear of negative judgment from family members, friends, or colleagues, discouraging men from reporting abuse.
- 7.3 Pressure to Maintain Dominance in Relationships:** Masculine norms often promote the idea that men should hold authority and control within relationships. When men experience abuse from their partners, they may feel that acknowledging victimization threatens their social identity as dominant or protective figures. This internal conflict can prevent them from disclosing their situation or seeking assistance.
- 7.4 Limited Emotional Expression:** Society often discourages men from openly expressing emotions such as fear, sadness, or vulnerability. Because seeking help typically requires discussing personal experiences and emotional distress, many men struggle to communicate their problems. This limited emotional expression can make it difficult for male victims to approach counselors, support services, or law enforcement.
- 7.5 Lack of Recognition as Victims:** Masculine norms contribute to the belief that men are physically stronger and therefore unlikely to be victims of domestic violence. This stereotype can cause others, including authorities and support organizations, to dismiss or minimize the experiences of male victims. As a result, men may believe that seeking help will be ineffective.
- 7.6 Internalized Shame and Self-Blame:** Male victims may internalize societal expectations and blame themselves for their victimization. They may feel ashamed for not being able to “handle” the situation or protect themselves. This self-blame further discourages them from reaching out for support or reporting abuse.

8. Compare male and female IPV perpetration rates in India 2015-2025

Indian surveys like NFHS predominantly measure women's reports of victimization, revealing high male perpetration rates but limited data on female perpetration due to underreporting and male non-disclosure. From 2015-2025, NFHS-4 (2015-16) to NFHS-5 (2019-21) show consistent trends of women experiencing IPV at 29-32%, with scant direct male victimization data; indirect estimates suggest bidirectional violence but male rates obscured by stigma.



8.1 Perpetration Rates Comparison in India (2015-2025)

| Survey/Period | Male Perpetration (Women Victimized) | Female Perpetration (Men Victimized) | Notes/Sources |
|------------------|---|---|--|
| NFHS-4 (2015-16) | 29.0% any IPV; 26.6% physical | Not directly measured; est. <5% reported | Focus on women; emotional abuse ~13%. |
| NFHS-5 (2019-21) | 31.2% any DV; 28.5% physical, 5.7% sexual | Indirect: ~0.6% physical (small studies); emotional ~50% [prior] | Karnataka/Bihar highest (40-47%); men under-asked. |
| 2024 Estimates | ~18-27% lifetime physical/sexual (women) | Limited; in-law involvement inflates female-perpetrated cases to ~3cr total est. [prior] | OECD: India high regionally; male data gaps persist. |

Male perpetration dominates reported data (e.g., 60% physical among victims), linked to alcohol, low education. Female perpetration appears lower in physical/sexual forms but higher in emotional (~9-13%), often with family; legal biases and norms suppress male reports. No comprehensive male surveys exist, hindering symmetry claims.

8.2 State-wise variation in IPV perpetration rates India

NFHS-5 (2019-21) data primarily captures women's reports of IPV victimization by male partners, showing state-wise variations with higher rates in Bihar and Karnataka. National averages include 27% physical, 12.5% emotional, and 5.5% sexual violence against women.

State-wise IPV Rates (NFHS-5, Women Victimized)

| State/UT | Physical Violence (%) | Emotional Violence (%) | Sexual Violence (%) | Notes |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Bihar | 42 | 18 | 8 | Highest physical; declining from NFHS-4. |
| Karnataka | 44 | 26 | 11 | Sharp rise (20%→44% physical since 2005). |
| Tamil Nadu/Puducherry | 41 | 12 | 11 | High physical prevalence. |
| Telangana | 38 | 10 | 10 | Elevated rates. |
| Uttar Pradesh | 35 | 14 | 7 | Persistent high levels. |
| Manipur | 50 (any IPV est.) | | 14 | Peak in earlier NFHS-4. |
| Lakshadweep | 2 | - | - | Lowest physical. |
| Mizoram | 8 | - | - | Low end. |



| | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|------|-----|--------------------------------|
| Sikkim | 1 (NFHS-4 baseline) | - | 0 | Minimal reported. |
| Tripura | 20 | 12 | 6 | Consistent decline. |
| National Average | 27 | 12.5 | 5.5 | Slight drop from NFHS-4 (28%). |

Southern states like Karnataka show rising trends linked to migration stress, while northeastern states (e.g., Tripura, Sikkim) report declines. Rural-urban gaps persist, with socioeconomic factors like poverty amplifying rates in Bihar/UP. Male perpetration data dominates; female rates remain understudied.

9. Policies Addressing Domestic Violence against Men in India

Domestic violence laws and policies in India have traditionally focused on protecting women because they were historically considered the most vulnerable victims of family violence. However, recent discussions among scholars, policymakers, and social organizations have highlighted that men can also experience domestic abuse. Despite this growing recognition, India does not currently have a specific law exclusively addressing domestic violence against men. Instead, male victims must rely on general criminal laws and other legal mechanisms for protection and justice.

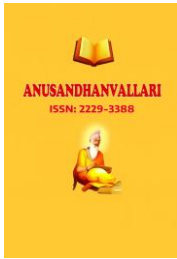
One of the most significant laws dealing with domestic violence in India is the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA). This legislation was enacted to provide civil remedies and protection to women who face abuse within domestic relationships. The Act recognizes various forms of violence, including physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic abuse. However, the Act defines the victim specifically as a woman, which means that men cannot directly seek protection under this legislation. As a result, male victims are excluded from its remedies such as protection orders, residence orders, and monetary relief.

In situations where men experience abuse, they may rely on provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which historically criminalized acts such as assault, criminal intimidation, harassment, and causing hurt. Many of these provisions are gender-neutral and therefore allow male victims to file complaints if they face violence within domestic relationships. More recently, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 replaced several IPC provisions and continues to criminalize similar offenses. However, these laws primarily address criminal acts and do not provide specialized civil remedies specifically designed for domestic violence situations.

Another important support mechanism is the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, which ensures free legal aid to economically weaker or disadvantaged individuals through Legal Services Authorities operating across India. Programs such as the Tele-Law Programme allow citizens to obtain legal advice through digital platforms and community service centers, helping individuals—including male victims—seek guidance in family disputes and violence-related cases.

In addition to legal provisions, institutional support systems also exist. Family courts, counseling centers, and various non-governmental organizations provide mediation, psychological counseling, and legal awareness programs to address domestic conflicts. Some organizations have begun offering helplines and support services specifically for male victims of domestic abuse.

Despite these mechanisms, significant gaps remain. Laws such as the Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, which addresses cruelty by a husband or his relatives, are designed primarily to protect women and do not



recognize male victims. Critics argue that the absence of gender-neutral legislation may leave men without effective civil remedies, shelters, or structured support services.

Consequently, many legal scholars and advocacy groups have called for reforms. Suggestions include amending existing laws to make them gender-neutral, establishing shelters and counseling services for male victims, increasing public awareness, and training law enforcement officials to handle such cases sensitively. Such reforms could help ensure that domestic violence policies address the needs of all victims while continuing to protect vulnerable groups.

In conclusion, although India lacks a dedicated policy specifically addressing domestic violence against men, existing criminal laws, legal aid programs, and support institutions provide limited protection. Growing awareness and policy debates indicate an increasing need for more inclusive and gender-neutral approaches to domestic violence in India.

10. Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion: Domestic violence is a complex social problem that affects individuals across different genders, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds. While the issue has traditionally been associated with violence against women, growing evidence suggests that men can also be victims of domestic abuse. The changing dynamics of gender roles and family structures have contributed to new forms of domestic conflict, making it important to examine domestic violence from a broader and more inclusive perspective.

This study highlights that domestic violence against men is often underreported due to social stigma, cultural expectations, and the absence of adequate legal and institutional support. Many societies continue to view men primarily as perpetrators rather than potential victims of violence. As a result, male victims frequently face difficulties in seeking help or receiving recognition for their experiences.

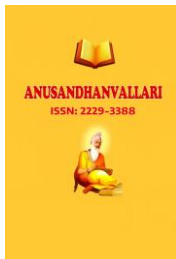
The analysis also indicates that changing gender roles, including women's increased participation in education and employment, have altered traditional power relationships within households. While these changes are essential for achieving gender equality, they may also create tensions when individuals struggle to adapt to evolving expectations.

However, acknowledging domestic violence against men does not diminish the importance of addressing violence against women. Instead, it emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that recognizes all forms of domestic abuse. A comprehensive understanding of domestic violence requires considering the experiences of all victims and addressing the social and cultural factors that contribute to violence within families.

Ultimately, promoting healthy relationships, mutual respect, and gender equality is essential for reducing domestic violence. Legal frameworks, social policies, and support systems must evolve to address the needs of all victims and ensure justice and protection for everyone affected by domestic abuse.

Suggestions: Addressing domestic violence against men requires a multidimensional approach involving legal reforms, social awareness, and institutional support. One important suggestion is the development of gender-neutral domestic violence laws that recognize the experiences of all victims regardless of gender. Legal frameworks should ensure that men, women, and other individuals have equal access to protection, justice, and support services.

Another important step is increasing public awareness about the existence of male victims of domestic violence. Educational campaigns, media programs, and community discussions can help challenge stereotypes that discourage men from reporting abuse. Changing societal perceptions about masculinity and vulnerability is essential for creating an environment where victims feel safe seeking help.



Support services such as counseling centers, helplines, and shelters should also be made accessible to male victims. Many existing domestic violence support systems primarily focus on assisting women, which can leave male victims without adequate assistance. Expanding these services to include men will help ensure that all victims receive appropriate care and protection.

Furthermore, researchers and policymakers should encourage more academic studies on domestic violence against men. Reliable data and research findings are necessary for understanding the extent of the problem and developing effective policies.

Training programs for police officers, legal professionals, and social workers can also play a crucial role in addressing this issue. Sensitization programs can help these professionals respond more effectively to cases involving male victims and ensure fair treatment.

Finally, promoting healthy communication, conflict resolution, and mutual respect within families can help prevent domestic violence in the first place. Strengthening family counseling services and relationship education programs may contribute to building healthier and more balanced domestic relationships.

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