

LmunA 2022

Research report

Forum: Commission on the Status of Women
Issue: Protecting women against sexual violence
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Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Sexual violence as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object, attempted rape, unwanted sexual touching and other non-contact forms”.

Keeping this definition in mind, the WHO states that 1 in 3 women have been subjected to sexual/physical violence at least once in their lifetime. These statistics are the simplest form of understanding the extent to which women are targeted and harmed both physically, mentally as well as emotionally. This research report goes into more depth on the specificities of the issue and can be used as a basis for your preparation.

Definitions of key terms

Sexual Violence

Any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, act to traffic a person, or act directed against a person's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Femicide

the killing of a woman or girl, in particular by a man and on account of her gender.

General overview

When looking at this issue, it is vital to note that most acts of sexual violence against women are committed by a current or former husband/ intimate partner, meaning that it is difficult to address on a governmental let alone UN level. However, the most plausible thing to achieve here is the tackling of this issue at its root: societal views of women imposed on people from a very young age. ¹UN Women reports that 26% of women aged 15 and older have been subject to sexual violence by an intimate partner. This is a global statistic meaning that there is a range of statistics varying per country with higher rates of violence against women occurring in countries of lower income, however, this is not to say that these acts do not take place in high income countries and is therefore a worldwide issue.

This situation has worsened during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Since the corona outbreak, data shows (refer to appendix 1) that all types of violence against females, old and young, has intensified, however, the urgency has shifted away from women’s safety to immediate COVID

¹ UN Women – Headquarters. “Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women,” 2022. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

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relief. Although needed, this diversion has occurred at a time when this safety and reassurance was needed most since there has been an increase in the amount of calls to domestic violence hotlines. Without the proper means of getting help, victims' suffering has been amplified leading to worsened mental health and a greater risk of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which was already prevalent after being exposed to such acts.

When looking at sexual violence there are two key forms which must be discussed, the first one being female genital mutilation (FGM). ²FGM involves the removal of external female genitalia or other harm to the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. This usually involves the partial or total removal of the clitoral glands or the narrowing of the vaginal opening. This practice is supposedly supported by a variety of cultural and social reasons but ultimately always causes harm to the female and under no circumstances has it benefited someone. This practice is usually done to young girls between infancy and 15 years of age making it not only an act of violence against women but also specifically minors. This practice mostly takes place in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Secondly, another type of sexual violence is femicide. Femicide refers to the intentional murder of women simply because they are women. ³According to the WHO most cases of femicide, like other forms of sexual violence, "are committed by partners or ex-partners and involve ongoing abuse in the home, threats or intimidation, sexual violence or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner." Some femicides occur due to "honor" killings, the killing of a woman for allegedly bringing shame to her family because of their race or sexuality.

² World. "Female Genital Mutilation." *Who.int*, World Health Organization: WHO, 21 Jan. 2022, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation. Accessed 29 July 2022.

³World Health Organization. *Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women Femicide*. 2012.

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Major parties involved

United states of America

The US is the only western country in the top 10 countries with highest statistics of violence against women. Although progress has been made regarding protocols against sexual violence against women, as a high income country they could be doing much better. This includes how the after effects of sexual violence are dealt with such as the laws surrounding abortion.

South Africa

South Africa is rated one of the most dangerous countries for women and warns women to behave conservatively by avoiding walking, hiking or driving alone.

Iraq and Yemen

High amounts of female genital mutilation present due to societal ideas surrounding females, religion, as well as the favouring of male sexual pleasure over females.

Timeline of Key Events

1979	General Assemble adopts convention on the elimination of discrimination against women
1993	UN declaration on the elimination of Violence Against Women, turning point in the issue being taken more seriously
1995	Beijing Declaration and platform for action; discusses equality between men and women
2010	UN Women established

Previous attempts to solve the issue

As mentioned above, this issue is one which is difficult to tackle on a governmental scale due to the sheer fact that in many cases it goes unreported. However , the UN has made efforts to reduce this gender based violence. Examples of resolutions listed below;

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/176 (2015)

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/443/50/PDF/N1544350.pdf?OpenElement>

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UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/67/146 (2012)

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/746164?ln=en>

These both look at the investigation of these acts after being committed as well as the prevention there of, however, this issue is clearly still very much active and appears to be worsening so the efforts made by the UN were not completely successful.

Possible solutions

Since this issue is one which happens so frequently, yet in most cases on a more personal level, it is difficult to come up with a general solution which takes into account the needs of all victims. The goal here however is of course to minimize the number of women who have to call themselves victims.

This issue can be tackled in two ways. Firstly and arguably most importantly, tackling the issue at the root of the problem can minimize its occurrence and eliminate the need for further discussion on the prosecution of perpetrators but by no means completely eradicates the problem. This can on the other hand be a good start to the minimizing of future instances. This can be done by educating society on the value of women and eliminating the demeaning and objectification of females. Next to this, spreading awareness on the topic and reducing the stigma thereof is also a good way to achieve this. Something which should be taken into account here are the societal stereotypes surrounding masculinity and the efforts which should be made to combat them.

Secondly, coming up with the correct ways to prosecute perpetrators in a way which is not only the right method of punishment but also instills the right rehabilitation and education on basic human rights and once again the degrading and objectification of women.

Further reading

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/30/world/femicide-explainer-as-equals-intl-cmd/index.html>

Appendices

appendix 1:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1w28pmDt-IOIcI9cvaUdAMVVDzftOi1-/edit#gid=269101278>

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