



# REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631(UIF)

VOLUME - 12 | ISSUE - 12 | SEPTEMBER - 2023



---

---

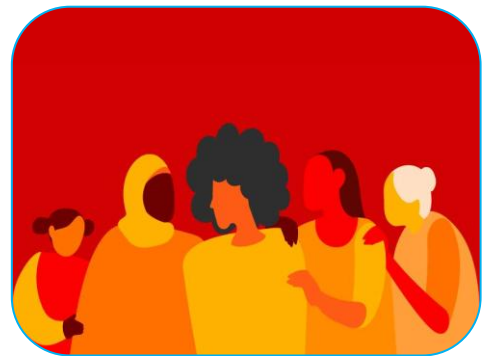
## RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Dr. Ashraf Islam Laskar**

**Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science,  
Krishnagar Govt. College, Nadia, West Bengal.**

### ABSTRACT

*Violence against women is one of the most pervasive of human rights violations which denies women equality, security, dignity, self-worth, and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms. As a violation of human rights, violence against women causes women to be deprived of their right to fully take part in social and economic life. Moreover, it underpins many physical and mental health problems, and in some instances causes loss of life. The impact of violence is not only visible on the health and lives among women who experience violence, but also on their children, families and society as a whole. It not only restricts itself to the physical torture but at the same time psychological, sexual and economic violence too. Theories are important tools to approach the research topic. They do not only provide a certain kind of perspective but they also give the researcher the chance to systematically analyse the research question. In the present study, an attempt has been made to study various theories related to violence against women.*



**KEYWORDS:** *Violence against Women, Domestic Violence, Theories, Gender-based Violence etc.*

### INTRODUCTION

Violence is a form of aggressive behaviour with significant detrimental effects on the individual's personality and the way he/she adapt psychologically and socially. No wonder, then, that this behaviour has been the subject of many theories in an attempt to understand the causes, symptoms and effects of violence. Violence against women has been the subject of study by women's studies, feminists and gender studies scholars coming from different disciplines, viz., psychology, sociology and social work etc.. Theories are important tools to approach the research topic. They do not only provide a certain kind of perspective but they also give the researcher the chance to systematically analyse the research question. Some of the theories related to violence against women are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

**Feminist Theory:** Giving much stress to gender and power, the theory states that violence reflects the unequal power of men and women in the society and which is reflected in the personal relationships. The patriarchal structure of the society plays a dominant role in all most al the social institutions including the family.

**Psycho-Pathological Theory-**The psycho-pathological theory focuses on the personality characteristics of offenders and victims as chief determinants of violence. This model includes analysis

that links mental illness (i.e., a small number of mentally ill persons are violent), alcohol (i.e., what one does under the influence of alcohol and other drugs) and other intra-individual phenomena to acts of violence. This theory gives two different explanations. According to one, the causes of violence against women arise from the offender's psychological problems (like depressive impulsiveness, uncontrolled emotions, etc.). According to the other, violence against women arises out of psychological problem of victims.<sup>1</sup>

**Socio-Psychological Theories-** The socio-psychological theory assumes that violence can best be understood by careful examination of the external environmental factors that exercise impact on an individual offender. This theory also examines the types of everyday interactions (say, stressful situations or family interactional patterns) which are precursors of violence. Theories such as the Frustration- Aggression Theory, the Perversion Theory and the Self-Attitude Theory approach violence against women from a socio-psychological level of analysis.<sup>2</sup> These theories are discussed below-

**Frustration- Aggression Theory-** This theory first stated in 1939 by John Dollard. It explains the process by which the aggression is directed to the source of frustration. The aggressive drive is an innate drive. It helps explain individual violence because the individual is the focus of high personal involvement and of high frustration in the family. Whenever something interferes with an individual's attempt to reach some goal or end, he/she feels frustrated and frustration in turn leads to some form of aggression. After taking various criticisms into account, this theory was modified. Today it is recognized that an actual display of aggression may be inhibited by either internalized norms or external controls, even though the impulse for aggression may be strong following some frustrating experience. It is also recognized that frustration can be cumulative and they can remain active over a long period of time and aggressive actions are not an automatic consequence of frustration, and their occurrence depends upon numerous factors.<sup>3</sup>

**Perversion Theory-**The psychoanalysts explain violence on the basis of the Theory of Perversion and the Theory of symptom Formation. They don't regard perverts as constitutionally inferior people but maintain that perversion develops from instincts. According to this theory, perversion essentially means persistence in the adult of infantile instincts and behaviour at the expense of adult behaviour. In the pervert, infantile traits fail to undergo the normal process of integration during puberty but are not converted into neurotic symptoms. Violence can be the product of strong inborn drives or of pathological experiences in infancy or early childhood. In the latter cases, childhood conceptions of the relations between the sexes as being aggressive and sadistic and the idea of pleasure as a negative process, essentially achieved by relief from a state of "unpleasure" are carried into adulthood.<sup>4</sup>

**Self Attitude Theory-**This theory maintains that in a society, a culture, or a group that values violence, persons of low self-esteem may seek to bolster their image in the eyes of others and themselves by carrying out violence acts. It explains the propensity to violence of those for whom society makes it difficult to achieve an adequate level of self-esteem.<sup>5</sup>

**Socio- Cultural Theories-** These theories highlight macro level analyses of violence perpetrated against the household members in a family. These theories state domestic violence in terms of socially structured inequality, socio-cultural attitudes and norms regarding anti-social behaviour and

---

<sup>1</sup> Misra, P. (2007). *Domestic violence against women*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd, pp.234-235.

<sup>2</sup> Ahuja, R. (1998). *Violence against women*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, p.201.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.203.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.205.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.206.

interpersonal relations. It includes various sub theories like: Structural–Functional Theory, Resource Theory, Patriarchal Theory, Social Learning Theory and Exchange theory. These theories are discussed below-

**Structural–Functional Theory-**According to this theory, social groups differ in respect to their typical levels of stress, deprivation and frustration and in the resources at their disposal to deal with these stresses. It explains that those individuals would be more violent who combine high stress with low resources. This theory thus explains an individual's action in terms of the way it is shaped or determined by social forces of one kind or other.<sup>6</sup>

**Resource Theory-** The Resource Theory of violence assumes that all social systems (including the family) rest to some degree on force or the threat of force. The more resources—social, personal, and economic—a person can command, the more force that individual can muster. However, according to William Goode (1971), the more resources a person actually has, the less that person will actually use force in an open manner. Thus, a husband who wants to be the dominant person in the family, but has little education, has a job low in prestige and income, and lacks interpersonal skills may choose to use violence to maintain the dominant position.

**Patriarchal Theory-** Patriarchy Theory developed in 1979 by Dobash and Dobash argues that patriarchy leads to subordination of women and contributes to a historical pattern of systematic violence directed against them. Feminists also establish a link between patriarchy as a social system and violence against women. The brutalization of an individual woman (particularly in the family) by an individual man is not an individual and family problem but the manifestation of the historically and cross culturally existing male domination on women. Social sanction of wife abuse is a reflection of patriarchal norms, which support male dominance in marriage. Men are predisposed for earning livelihood for the family and held centres of power, resources, property etc., whereas women being busy with bearing and nursing children became dependent on men. This resulted in unequal distribution of power relation in the family. So aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination are cherished in society, said Dobash and Dobash.<sup>7</sup>

**Social Learning Theory-** Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn how to behave through both the experience of and exposure to violence. This theory holds that those who witness violence between parents or who themselves experience abuse as children are likely to resort to violence in adulthood.

**Exchange theory-** The key assumption of Exchange Theory of violence is that human interaction is guided by the pursuit of rewards and the avoidance of punishment and costs. Simply stated, individuals will use force and violence in their relationships with intimates and family members if they believe that the rewards of force and violence outweigh the costs of such behaviour.

From the above analysis of the various scientific theories related to violence against women, it is clear that no single theory can fully explain the causes for perpetration of violence against women. Rather than a single factor theory, a multifactor theoretical approach or an integrated approach would explain causes of all types of violence against women.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp.207-208.

<sup>7</sup> Aggarwal, A. (2005). "Feel good" women? Domestic violence perspective. In K. Uma Devi (Ed.), *Violence against women: Human rights perspective*. New Delhi: Serial Publications, p.153.