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Economic Reforms and Increasing Violence against Women

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ABSTRACT: Violence against women (VAW), also known as gender-based violence^{[1][2]} and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV),^[3] are violent acts primarily or exclusively committed by men or boys against women or girls. Such violence is often considered a form of hate crime,^[4] committed against women or girls specifically because they are female, and can take many forms.

VAW has a very long history, though the incidents and intensity of such violence have varied over time and even today vary between societies. Such violence is often seen as a mechanism for the subjugation of women, whether in society in general or in an interpersonal relationship. Such violence may arise from a sense of entitlement, superiority, misogyny or similar attitudes in the perpetrator or his violent nature, especially against women.

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women states, "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men."^[5]

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, declared in a 2006 report posted on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) website:

Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime with the abuser usually someone known to her.^[6]

KEYWORDS: violence, women, economic, reforms, increase

I. INTRODUCTION

A number of international instruments that aim to eliminate violence against women and domestic violence have been enacted by various international bodies. These generally start with a definition of what such violence is, with a view to combating such practices. The Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) of the Council of Europe describes VAW "as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women" and defines VAW as "all acts of gender-based violence that result in or are likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".^[7]

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of the United Nations General Assembly makes recommendations relating to VAW,^[8] and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action mentions VAW.^[9] However, the 1993 United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was the first international instrument to explicitly define VAW and elaborate on the subject.^[10] Other definitions of VAW are set out in the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women^[11] and by the 2003 Maputo Protocol.^[12]

In addition, the term gender-based violence refers to "any acts or threats of acts intended to hurt or make women suffer physically, sexually, or psychologically, and which affect women because they are women or affect women disproportionately".^[13] Gender-based violence is often used interchangeably with violence against women,^[1] and some

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articles on VAW reiterate these conceptions by stating that men are the main perpetrators of this violence.^[14] Moreover, the definition stated by the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women also supported the notion that violence is rooted in the inequality between men and women when the term violence is used together with the term gender-based.^[1]

In Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence, the Council of Europe stipulated that VAW "includes, but is not limited to, the following":^[15]

- a. violence occurring in the family or domestic unit, including, inter alia, physical and mental aggression, emotional and psychological abuse, rape and sexual abuse, incest, rape between spouses, regular or occasional partners and cohabitants, crimes committed in the name of honour, female genital and sexual mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women such as forced marriages;
- b. violence occurring within the general community including, inter alia, rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in institutions or elsewhere trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation, and economic exploitation and sex tourism;
- c. violence perpetrated or condoned by the state or its officials;
- d. violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in particular the taking of hostages, forced displacement, systematic rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and economic exploitation.

These definitions of VAW as being gender-based are seen by some to be unsatisfactory and problematic. These definitions are conceptualized in an understanding of society as patriarchal, signifying unequal relations between men and women.^[16] Opponents of such definitions argue that the definitions disregard violence against men and that the term gender, as used in gender based violence, only refers to women. Other critics argue that employing the term gender in this particular way may introduce notions of inferiority and subordination for femininity and superiority for masculinity.^{[17][18]} There is no widely accepted current definition that covers all the dimensions of gender-based violence rather than the one for women that tends to reproduce the concept of binary oppositions: masculinity versus femininity.^[19]

Sexual harassment can be used to refer to any unwelcome range of actions with sexual overtones, including verbal transgressions.^[25] Sexual violence refers to the use of violence to obtain a sexual act, including, for example, trafficking.^{[26][27]} Sexual assault is forcing a physical sexual act on someone against their will,^[28] and when this involves sexual penetration or sexual intercourse it is referred to as rape.

Women are most often the victims of rape, which is usually perpetrated by men known to them.^[29] The rate of reporting, prosecution and convictions for rape varies considerably in different jurisdictions, and reflects to some extent the society's attitudes to such crimes. It is considered the most underreported violent crime.^{[30][31]} Following a rape, a victim may face violence or threats of violence from the rapist, and, in many cultures, from the victim's own family and relatives. Violence or intimidation of the victim may be perpetrated by the rapist or by friends and relatives of the rapist, as a way of preventing the victims from reporting the rape, of punishing them for reporting it, or of forcing them to withdraw the complaint; or it may be perpetrated by the relatives of the victim as a punishment for "bringing shame" to the family. Internationally, the incidence of rapes recorded by police during 2008 varied between 0.1 per 100,000 people in Egypt and 91.6 per 100,000 people in Lesotho with 4.9 per 100,000 people in Lithuania as the median.^[32] In some countries, rape is not reported or properly recorded by police because of the consequences on the victim and the stigma attached to it.

Militarism produces special environments that allow for increased violence against women. War rapes have accompanied warfare in virtually every known historical era.^[42] Rape in the course of war is mentioned multiple times in the Bible: "For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped..." Zechariah 14:2 "Their little children will be dashed to death before their eyes. Their homes will be sacked, and their wives will be raped." Isaiah 13:16

War rapes are rapes committed by soldiers, other combatants or civilians during armed conflict or war, or during military occupation, distinguished from sexual assaults and rape committed amongst troops in military service. It also

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covers the situation where women are forced into prostitution or sexual slavery by an occupying power. During World War II the Japanese military established brothels filled with "comfort women", girls and women who were forced into sexual slavery for soldiers, exploiting women for the purpose of creating access and entitlement for men.^{[43][44]} People rarely tried to explain why rape happens in wars. One explanation that was floated around was that men in war have "urges".^[45]

Another example of violence against women incited by militarism during war took place in the Kovno Ghetto. Jewish male prisoners had access to (and used) Jewish women forced into camp brothels by the Nazis, who also used them.^[46]

Rape during the Bangladesh Liberation War by members of the Pakistani military and the militias that supported them led to 200,000 women raped over a period of nine months. Rape during the Bosnian War was used as a highly systematized instrument of war by Serb armed forces predominantly targeting women and girls of the Bosniak ethnic group for physical and moral destruction. Estimates of the number of women raped during the war range from 50,000 to 60,000; as of 2010 only 12 cases have been prosecuted.^[47]

The 1998 International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda recognized rape in the Rwandan Genocide as a war crime. Presiding judge Navanethem Pillay said in a statement after the verdict: "From time immemorial, rape has been regarded as spoils of war. Now it will be considered a war crime. We want to send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of war."^[48]

According to one report, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's capture of Iraqi cities in June 2013 was accompanied by an upsurge in crimes against women, including kidnap and rape.^[49] The Guardian reported that ISIL's extremist agenda extended to women's bodies and that women living under their control were being captured and raped.^[50] Fighters are told that they are free to have sex and rape non-Muslim captive women.^[51] Yazidi girls in Iraq allegedly raped by ISIL fighters committed suicide by jumping to their death from Mount Sinjar, as described in a witness statement.^[52] Haleh Esfandiari from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars has highlighted the abuse of local women by ISIL militants after they have captured an area. "They usually take the older women to a makeshift slave market and try to sell them. The younger girls ... are raped or married off to fighters", she said, adding, "It's based on temporary marriages, and once these fighters have had sex with these young girls, they just pass them on to other fighters."^[53] Describing the Yazidi women captured by ISIS, Nazand Begikhani said "[t]hese women have been treated like cattle... They have been subjected to physical and sexual violence, including systematic rape and sex slavery. They've been exposed in markets in Mosul and in Raqqa, Syria, carrying price tags."^[54] In December 2013 the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights announced that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant had killed over 150 women and girls in Fallujah who refused to participate in sexual jihad.^[55]

During the Rohingya genocide (2012–present) the Armed Forces of Myanmar, along with the Myanmar Border Guard Police and Buddhist militias of Rakhine, committed widespread gang rapes and other forms of sexual violence against the Rohingya Muslim women and girls. A January 2011 study estimated that the military and local Rakhine Buddhists perpetrated gang rapes and other forms of sexual violence against 18,000 Rohingya Muslim women and girls.^[56] The Human Rights Watch stated that the gang rapes and sexual violence were committed as part of the military's ethnic cleansing campaign while the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten said that the Rohingya women and girls were made the "systematic" target of rapes and sexual violence because of their ethnic identity and religion. Other forms of sexual violence included sexual slavery in military captivity, forced public nudity, and humiliation.^[57] Some women and girls were raped to death while others were found traumatised with raw wounds after they had arrived in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Human Rights Watch reported of a 15-year-old girl who was ruthlessly dragged on the ground for over 50 feet and then was raped by 10 Burmese soldiers.^{[58][59]}

II. DISCUSSION

Single women and women who are economically independent have been vilified by certain groups of men. In Hassi Messaoud in Algeria in 2001, mobs targeted single women, attacking 95 and killing at least six^{[64][65]} and, in 2011, similar attacks happened again throughout Algeria.^{[66][67]}

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Stalking is unwanted or obsessive attention by an individual or group toward another person, often manifested through persistent harassment, intimidation, or following/monitoring of the victim. Stalking is often understood as "course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear".^[68] Although stalkers are frequently portrayed as being strangers, they are most often known people, such as former or current partners, friends, colleagues or acquaintances. In the U.S., a survey by NVAW found that only 23% of female victims were stalked by strangers.^[69] Stalking by partners can be very dangerous, as sometimes it can escalate into severe violence, including murder.^[69] Police statistics from the 1990s in Australia indicated that 87.7% of stalking offenders were male and 82.4% of stalking victims were female.^[70]



Women are the overwhelming majority of victims of acid attacks and it is often motivated by rejection and jealousy.

An acid attack is the act of throwing acid onto someone with the intention of injuring or disfiguring them. Women and girls are the victims in 75-80% of cases,^[71] and are often connected to domestic disputes, including dowry disputes, and refusal of a proposal of marriage, or of sexual advances.^[72] The acid is usually thrown at the faces, burning the tissue, often exposing and sometimes dissolving the bones.^[73] The long term consequences of these attacks include blindness and permanent scarring of the face and body.^{[74][75]} Such attacks are common in South Asia, in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, India; and in Southeast Asia, especially in Cambodia.^[76] The custom of dowry, which is common in South Asia, especially in India, is the trigger of many forms of violence against women. Bride burning is a form of violence against women in which a bride is killed at home by her husband or husband's family due to his dissatisfaction over the dowry provided by her family. Dowry death refers to the phenomenon of women and girls being killed or committing suicide due to disputes regarding dowry. Dowry violence is common in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. In India, in 2011 alone, the National Crime Records Bureau reported 8,618 dowry deaths, while unofficial figures suggest the numbers to be at least three times higher.^[82]

The relation between violence against women and marriage laws, regulations and traditions has also been discussed.^{[83][84]} Roman law gave men the right to chastise their wives, even to the point of death.^[85] The US and English law subscribed until the 20th century to the system of coverture, that is, a legal doctrine under which, upon marriage, a woman's legal rights were subsumed by those of her husband.^[86] Common-law in the United States and in the UK allowed for domestic violence^[87] and in the UK, before 1891, the husband had the right to inflict moderate corporal punishment on his wife to keep her "within the bounds of duty".^{[88][89]} Today, outside the West, many countries severely restrict the rights of married women: for example, in Yemen, marriage regulations state that a wife must obey her husband and must not leave home without his permission.^[90] In Iraq husbands have a legal right to "punish" their wives. The criminal code states at Paragraph 41 that there is no crime if an act is committed while exercising a legal right; examples of legal rights include: "The punishment of a wife by her husband, the disciplining by parents and teachers of children under their authority within certain limits prescribed by law or by custom".^[91] In the West, married women faced discrimination until just a few decades ago: for instance, in France, married women received the right to work without their husband's permission in 1965.^[92] In Spain, during the Franco era, a married woman required her husband's consent (permiso marital) for nearly all economic activities, including employment, ownership of property and traveling away from home; the permiso marital was abolished in 1975.^[93] Concerns exist about violence related to marriage – both inside marriage (physical abuse, sexual violence, restriction of liberty) and in

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relation to marriage customs (dowry, bride price, forced marriage, child marriage, marriage by abduction, violence related to female premarital virginity). Claudia Card, professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, writes:^[94]

The legal rights of access that married partners have to each other's persons, property, and lives makes it all but impossible for a spouse to defend herself (or himself), or to be protected against torture, rape, battery, stalking, mayhem, or murder by the other spouse... Legal marriage thus enlists state support for conditions conducive to murder and mayhem.

Physical



Qui aime bien châtie bien.

An illustration from JJ Grandville's *Cent Proverbes* (1845) captioned "Qui aime bien châtie bien" (Who loves well, punishes well). A man beating a woman is shown in the back.

Women are more likely to be victimized by someone that they are intimate with, commonly called "intimate partner violence" (IPV). Instances of IPV tend not to be reported to police and thus many experts find it hard to estimate the true magnitude of the problem.^[95] Though this form of violence is often considered as an issue within the context of heterosexual relationships, it also occurs in lesbian relationships,^[96] daughter-mother relationships, roommate relationships and other domestic relationships involving two women. Violence against women in lesbian relationships is about as common as violence against women in heterosexual relationships.^[97]

Women are much more likely than men to be murdered by an intimate partner. In the United States, in 2005, 1181 women were killed by their intimate partners, compared to 329 men.^{[98][99]} It is estimated that 30% or more of the women who are emitted to the ER could be victims of domestic violence

^[100] In England and Wales about 100 women are killed by partners or former partners each year while 21 men were killed in 2010.^[101] In 2008, in France, 156 women were killed by their intimate partner, compared to 27 men.^[102] According to the WHO, globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner.^[103] A UN report compiled from a number of different studies conducted in at least 71 countries found domestic violence against women to be most prevalent in Ethiopia.^[104] A study by Pan American Health Organization conducted in 12 Latin American countries found the highest prevalence of domestic violence against women to be in Bolivia.^[105] In Western Europe, a country that has received major international criticism for the way it has dealt legally with the issue of violence against women is Finland; with authors pointing out that a high level of equality for women in the public sphere (as in Finland) should never be equated with equality in all other aspects of women's lives.^{[106][107][108]}

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The American Psychiatric Association planning and research committees for the forthcoming DSM-5 (2013) have canvassed a series of new Relational disorders, which include Marital Conflict Disorder Without Violence or Marital Abuse Disorder (Marital Conflict Disorder With Violence).^{[109]:164,166} Couples with marital disorders sometimes come to clinical attention because the couple recognize long-standing dissatisfaction with their marriage and come to the clinician on their own initiative or are referred by an astute health care professional. Secondly, there is serious violence in the marriage that is "usually the husband battering the wife".^{[109]:163} In these cases the emergency room or a legal authority often is the first to notify the clinician. Most importantly, marital violence "is a major risk factor for serious injury and even death and women in violent marriages are at much greater risk of being seriously injured or killed (National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women 2000)".^{[109]:166} The authors of this study add, "There is current considerable controversy over whether male-to-female marital violence is best regarded as a reflection of male psychopathology and control or whether there is an empirical base and clinical utility for conceptualizing these patterns as relational."^{[109]:166}

Recommendations for clinicians making a diagnosis of Marital Relational Disorder should include the assessment of actual or "potential" male violence as regularly as they assess the potential for suicide in depressed patients. Further, "clinicians should not relax their vigilance after a battered wife leaves her husband, because some data suggest that the period immediately following a marital separation is the period of greatest risk for the women. Many men will stalk and batter their wives in an effort to get them to return or punish them for leaving. Initial assessments of the potential for violence in a marriage can be supplemented by standardized interviews and questionnaires, which have been reliable and valid aids in exploring marital violence more systematically."^{[109]:166}

The authors conclude with what they call "very recent information"^{[109]:167,168} on the course of violent marriages, which suggests that "over time a husband's battering may abate somewhat, but perhaps because he has successfully intimidated his wife. The risk of violence remains strong in a marriage in which it has been a feature in the past. Thus, treatment is essential here; the clinician cannot just wait and watch."^{[109]:167,168} The most urgent clinical priority is the protection of the wife because she is the one most frequently at risk, and clinicians must be aware that supporting assertiveness by a battered wife may lead to more beatings or even death.

III. RESULTS

Marital or spousal rape was once widely condoned or ignored by law, and is now widely considered an unacceptable violence against women and repudiated by international conventions and increasingly criminalized. Still, in many countries, spousal rape either remains legal, or is illegal but widely tolerated and accepted as a husband's prerogative. The criminalization of spousal rape is recent, having occurred during the past few decades. Traditional understanding and views of marriage, rape, sexuality, gender roles and self determination have started to be challenged in most Western countries during the 1960s and 1970s, which has led to the subsequent criminalization of marital rape during the following decades. With a few notable exceptions, it was during the past 30 years that most laws against marital rape have been enacted. Some countries in Scandinavia and in the former Communist Bloc of Europe made spousal rape illegal before 1970, but most Western countries criminalized it only in the 1980s and 1990s. In many parts of the world the laws against marital rape are very new, having been enacted in the 2000s.

In Canada, marital rape was made illegal in 1983, when several legal changes were made, including changing the rape statute to sexual assault, and making the laws gender neutral.^{[110][111][112]} In Ireland, spousal rape was outlawed in 1990.^[113] In the US, the criminalization of marital rape started in the mid-1970s and in 1993 North Carolina became the last state to make marital rape illegal.^[114] In England and Wales, marital rape was made illegal in 1991. The views of Sir Matthew Hale, a 17th-century jurist, published in *The History of the Pleas of the Crown* (1736), stated that a husband cannot be guilty of the rape of his wife because the wife "hath given up herself in this kind to her husband, which she cannot retract"; in England and Wales this would remain law for more than 250 years, until it was abolished by the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords, in the case of *R v R* in 1991.^[115] In the Netherlands marital rape was also made illegal in 1991.^[116] One of the last Western countries to criminalize marital rape was Germany, in 1997.^[117]

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The relation between some religions (Christianity and Islam) and marital rape is controversial. The Bible at 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 explains that one has a "conjugal duty" to have sexual relations with one's spouse (in sharp opposition to sex outside marriage, which is considered a sin) and states, "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another..."^[118] Some conservative religious figures interpret this as rejecting to possibility of marital rape.^[119] Islam makes reference to sexual relations in marriage too, notably: "Allah's Apostle said, 'If a husband calls his wife to his bed (i.e. to have sexual relation) and she refuses and causes him to sleep in anger, the angels will curse her till morning';"^[120] and several comments on the issue of marital rape made by Muslim religious leaders have been criticized.^{[121][122]}

Dating abuse or dating violence is the perpetration of coercion, intimidation or assault in the context of dating or courtship. It is also when one partner tries to maintain abusive power and control. Dating violence is defined by the CDC as "the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence within a dating relationship, including stalking".^[123]

Widowhood related violence



Sati (a Hindu practice whereby a widow immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her husband)

Ceremony



A 1533 account of the execution of a witch charged with burning the German town of Schiltach in 1531

Widows have been subjected to forced remarriage called widow inheritance, where she is forced to marry a male relative of her late husband.^[124] Another practice is banned remarriage of widows, such as was legal in India^[125] and Korea.^[126] A more extreme version is the ritual killing of widows as was seen in India and Fiji. Sati is the burning of

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widows and although sati in India is today an almost defunct practice, isolated incidents have occurred in recent years, such as the 1987 sati of Roop Kanwar, as well as several incidents in rural areas in 2002,^[127] and 2006.^[128] A traditional idea upheld in some places in Africa is that an unmarried widow is unholy and “disturbed” if she is unmarried and abstains from sex for some period of time. This fuels the practice of widow cleansing where the unmarried widow is required to have sexual intercourse as a form of ritual purification and is commenced with a ceremony for the neighborhood to witness that she is now purified.^[129]

Unmarried widows are most likely to be accused and killed as witches.^{[130][131]} Witch trials in the early modern period (between the 15th and 18th centuries) were common in Europe and in the European colonies in North America. Today, there remain regions of the world (such as parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, rural North India, and Papua New Guinea) where belief in witchcraft is held by many people, and women accused of being witches are subjected to serious violence.^[132]

Honor killings are a common form of violence against women in certain parts of the world. Honor killings are perpetrated by family members (usually husbands, fathers, uncles or brothers) against women in the family who are believed to have placed dishonor to the family. The death of the dishonorable woman is believed to restore honor.^[152] These killings are a traditional practice, believed to have originated from tribal customs where an allegation against a woman can be enough to defile a family's reputation.^{[153][154]} Women are killed for reasons such as refusing to enter an arranged marriage, being in a relationship that is disapproved by their relatives, attempting to leave a marriage, having sex outside marriage, becoming the victim of rape, and dressing in ways that are deemed inappropriate, among others.^{[153][155]} In cultures where female virginity is highly valued and considered mandatory before marriage; in extreme cases, rape victims are killed in honor killings. Victims may also be forced by their families to marry the rapist in order to restore the family's "honor".^[156] In Lebanon, the Campaign Against Lebanese Rape Law - Article 522 was launched in December 2012 to abolish the article that permitted a rapist to escape prison by marrying his victim. In Italy, before 1981, the Criminal Code provided for mitigating circumstances in case of a killing of a woman or her sexual partner for reasons related to honor, providing for a reduced sentence.^{[157][158]}

Honor killings are common in countries such as Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Yemen.^{[155][159][160][161][162]} Honor killings also occur in immigrant communities in Europe, the United States and Canada. Although honor killings are most often associated with the Middle East and South Asia, they occur in other parts of the world too.^{[153][163]} In India, honor killings occur in the northern regions of the country, especially in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.^{[164][165]} In Turkey, honor killings are a serious problem in Southeastern Anatolia.^{[166][167]}

IV. CONCLUSION

Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) is the act or threat of physical, emotional or psychological violence against female politicians on the basis of their gender, most often with the intent of discouraging the victims and other female politicians from participating in the political process. VAWP has been growing in significance among the fields of gendered political science and feminist political theory studies. The main intent behind creating a separate category that is distinct from Violence Against Women, is to highlight the barriers faced by women who work in politics, or wish to pursue a career in the political realm. VAWP is unique from Violence Against Women in three important ways: victims are targeted because of their gender; the violence itself can be gendered (i.e., sexism, sexual violence); the primary goal is to deter women from participating in politics (including but not limited to voting, running for office, campaigning, etc.).^[214] It is also important to distinguish VAWP from political violence, which is defined by the use or threats of force to reach political ends, and can be experienced by all politicians.^[215] It is also important to distinguish VAWP from political violence, which is defined by the use or threats of force to reach political ends, and can be experienced by all politicians.^[215] While women's participation in national parliaments has been increasing, rising from 11% in 1995 to 25% in 2011, there is still a large disparity between male and female representation in governmental politics.^[216] Expanding women's participation in government is a crucial goal for many countries, as female politicians have proven invaluable with respect to bringing certain issues to the forefront, such as elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws, electoral reform, and providing fresh perspectives on numerous policy areas that have typically remained a male-dominated realm.^[216] In order to increase

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women's participation in an effective manner, the importance of recognizing the issues related to VAWP and making every effort to provide the necessary resources to victims and condemn any and all hostile behaviour in political institutions cannot be understated. Experiencing VAWP can dissuade women from remaining in politics (and lead to an early exit from their career or from aspiring higher political office. Witnessing women in politics experience VAWP can serve as one of many deterrents for aspirants to run for office and for candidates to continue campaigning.^[215] Acts of violence or harassment are often not deemed to be gendered when they are reported, if they are reported at all. VAWP is often dismissed as "the cost of doing politics" and reporting can be seen as "political suicide," which contributes to the normalization of VAWP.^[215] This ambiguity results in a lack of information regarding attacks and makes the issue appear to be relatively commonplace. While it is reported that women in politics are more often targeted by violence than their male counterparts,^[217] the specific cause is often not reported as a gendered crime. This makes it more difficult to pinpoint where the links between gender-specific violence and political violence really are. In many countries, the practice of electoral politics is traditionally considered to be a masculine domain.^[218] The history of male dominated politics has allowed some male politicians to believe they have a right to participate in politics while women should not, since women's participation is a threat to the social order. Male politicians sometimes feel threatened by the prospect of a female politician occupying their position, which can cause them to lash out, and weak men do not want to feel as though women could be above them causing them to harass and threaten women in power. 48% of electoral violence against women is against supporters, this is most likely the largest percentage as it has the largest amount of the public participating. 9% of electoral violence against women is targeting candidates, while 22% targets female voters. This means that women who are directly acting in politics are likely to face some form of violence, whether physical or emotional.^[219] Regarding violence against female politicians, younger women and those with intersecting identities, particularly racial and ethnic minorities, are more likely to be targets. Female politicians who outwardly express and act from feminist perspectives are also more likely to be victimized.

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