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## CRIME AND ATROCITIES AGAINST WOMEN: A STUDY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN CHHATTISGARH

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### ABSTRACT

*Chhattisgarh a central Indian state with a substantial tribal population continues to face significant challenges regarding crimes and atrocities against women, particularly in the form of domestic violence. This research paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the magnitude, patterns, and driving factors behind domestic violence in Chhattisgarh, drawing on the latest government records, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2023, and relevant academic literature. The study aims to unravel the social, legal, and structural determinants of violence, offering insights into both state-level trends and the unique vulnerabilities of tribal and rural women. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research collates quantitative data from government and NCRB reports on crime categories rape, assault to outrage modesty, cruelty by husbands or relatives, dowry deaths, and other forms of violence alongside qualitative findings from peer-reviewed studies and field surveys focused on tribal communities. In 2023, Chhattisgarh registered 6,920 cases of crimes against women, with "assault with intent to outrage modesty" (31%), "cruelty by husband or relatives" (28%), and "rape" (21%) forming the majority. Many offences remain underreported, particularly in marginalized tribal districts. Alcohol abuse, lack of legal literacy, poverty, and deep-rooted patriarchy emerge as key catalysts. The study examines state legal responses, especially under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, highlighting a high charge-sheeting rate of over 92% but far lower conviction rates. While Chhattisgarh has invested in protection officers, helplines, and awareness campaigns, challenges persist in implementation, particularly in remote areas. Tables and a pie chart visualize the distribution of offence types and temporal trends, enriching comparative context and aiding policy analysis. Findings stress the need for tailored, community-based interventions to address underreporting, improve access to legal and psychological support, and build institutional capacity to serve the most vulnerable groups. Recommendations include legal literacy drives, capacity-building for police and protection officers, and expanded outreach among SC/ST and rural women. The research underscores that, despite legal progress, combating domestic violence in Chhattisgarh requires an integrated approach blending reform, outreach, and grassroots advocacy, grounded in local realities and backed by sustained data monitoring.*

**Key words:** Chhattisgarh, domestic violence, crimes against women, tribal communities, NCRB data

### Introduction

Chhattisgarh, a central Indian state, is marked by rich cultural diversity, a substantial tribal population, and complex socio-economic dynamics all factors that shape its profile with

respect to women's safety and domestic violence. Over the past decade, crimes and atrocities against women have emerged as a major challenge for the state government and civil society. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2023, Chhattisgarh

reported 6,920 cases of crimes against women, yielding a crime rate of 60.3 per lakh female population, which exceeds the national average of 57.2. The reported offences include rape (1,456 cases), assault with intent to outrage modesty (2,165 cases), cruelty by husbands or relatives (1,910 cases), and dowry deaths (113 cases).

The problem is further compounded by the prevalence of domestic violence, which deeply affects women's physical, mental, and social well-being. Data and field investigations reveal that domestic violence is not restricted to urban or non-tribal settings. Tribal communities, who make up nearly a third of Chhattisgarh's population, are also affected, with factors such as alcoholism, poverty, and entrenched patriarchy acting as triggers. Studies show emotional abuse, physical violence, marital rape, and denial of autonomy are frequent, with under-reporting prevalent in remote and rural areas due to cultural stigma, lack of legal awareness, and limited access to institutional redressal mechanisms.

Legal responses, especially the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), have increased the visibility of the problem and prompted swifter police action. In 2023, authorities achieved a charge-sheeting rate above 92%, reflecting procedural efficiency. However, conviction rates remain low, in part due to withdrawal of cases, weak evidence, and social pressure on victims to reconcile. The state's commitment to combating these offences includes dedicated helplines, the appointment of protection officers, and awareness campaigns, but challenges of implementation persist particularly for the most vulnerable tribal and rural women.

In addition to conventional offences, emerging patterns such as cyber harassment, witch-hunting, and suicides linked to domestic abuse present new frontiers. The normalization of violence in family structures and community settings hinders effective prevention and support. Social reform, legal literacy, and

targeted outreach are thus critical to addressing the multifaceted nature of domestic violence and related atrocities in Chhattisgarh.

This research critically appraises the magnitude, patterns, determinants, and state responses to crimes and atrocities against women in Chhattisgarh, using updated NCRB statistics, government interventions, and empirical findings. The analysis aims to illuminate gaps in current approaches, highlight vulnerable groups, and suggest holistic strategies for change

### Statistical Overview

The statistical landscape of crimes and atrocities against women in Chhattisgarh is both alarming and revealing, reflecting a complex interaction of social, economic, and institutional factors. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2023 data places Chhattisgarh among the states with a persistently high rate of reported crimes against women, accounting for 6,920 instances over the year translating to a rate of 60.3 per lakh female population, notably above the national average of 57.2. This number encompasses a spectrum of offences, with distinct patterns seen across categories.

### Distribution of Crime Types:

- **Assault with intent to outrage modesty:** The most prevalent category, comprising 2,165 cases (31% of total), mainly involves threats, harassment, and acts violating a woman's dignity. These cases often go underreported due to fear of social backlash and limited legal awareness, particularly in rural and tribal pockets.
- **Cruelty by husband or relatives:** Accounting for 1,910 cases (28%), this category highlights sustained abuse within domestic spheres. Empirical studies indicate that physical violence, emotional abuse, and marital rape are common forms, with alcohol abuse and economic dependence further enabling patterns of cruelty. In tribal communities,

Year	Total Crimes	Rape	Cruelty by Husband	Dowry Deaths
2017	7,996	2,413	~2,000	76
2019	7,689	2,413	732	76
2023	6,920	1,456	1,910	113

additional factors like customary practices and patriarchal norms reinforce vulnerability.

- **Rape:** Serious sexual offences reported were 1,456 cases (21%). The NCRB figures represent cases that reached formal channels, but ground reports and independent studies show that actual incidence rates may be higher due to significant underreporting, especially among marginalized women and minors.
- **Dowry deaths:** With 113 cases (2%), these represent extreme forms of domestic violence leading to fatalities. Although dowry-related violence is less frequent among tribal communities, it remains a concern in urban and non-tribal households.
- **Other crimes:** Including kidnapping, abetment to suicide, and cybercrimes, other categories collectively contributed

1,276 cases (18%). The rise in cyber harassment has added a new dimension to women's safety, with digital abuse and blackmail increasingly reported.

**Historical and Comparative Trends:**

Analysis from previous years 2017 to 2023 shows fluctuating but consistently high numbers, with total cases ranging between 7,000 and 8,000 annually. Notable spikes often correlate with improved reporting mechanisms or major sociopolitical events emphasizing women's rights. For example, in 2019, 2,413 rape cases and 76 dowry deaths were recorded; by 2023, the figures shifted as awareness campaigns and police initiatives sought to address reporting gaps.

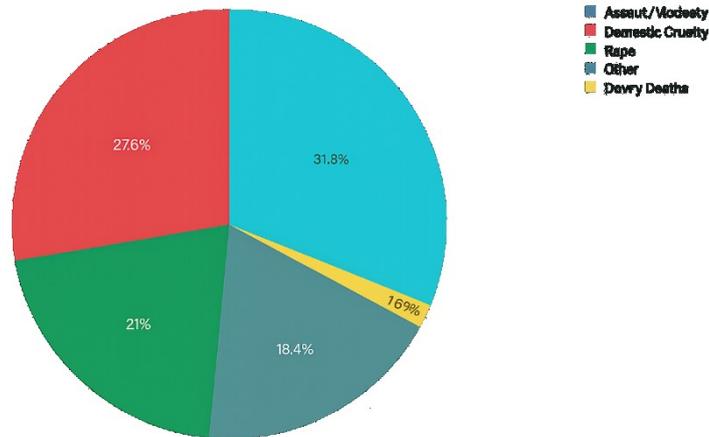
**Institutional Performance:**

Chhattisgarh's legal machinery has demonstrated high charge-sheeting rates above 92% suggesting swift procedural action. However, the conviction rate remains significantly lower, often attributed to factors such as insufficient evidence, societal pressure leading to case withdrawal, and challenges in witness protection. Moreover, the effectiveness of intervention mechanisms government helplines, protection officers, and awareness drives varies across districts, with tribal and remote areas lagging due to infrastructural deficits and cultural barriers.

**Visual Data:**

Pie charts and tables provide an accessible breakdown of case types and frequencies, facilitating the comparative analysis of offence patterns and helping policymakers target interventions effectively. For instance, the pie chart from NCRB data shows "assault to outrage modesty" and "cruelty by husband or relatives" as dominant categories, underscoring the need for focused preventive and remedial measures.

women in Chhattisgarh, supported by extensive



In summary, statistical data reveals a persistent prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence in Chhattisgarh. The statistics are not just numbers they reflect real-life suffering, systemic challenges, and deep-rooted social issues. This overview highlights the urgent requirement for integrated strategies, improved data monitoring, and sustained community engagement to address both the scale and the complexity of violence against women in the state

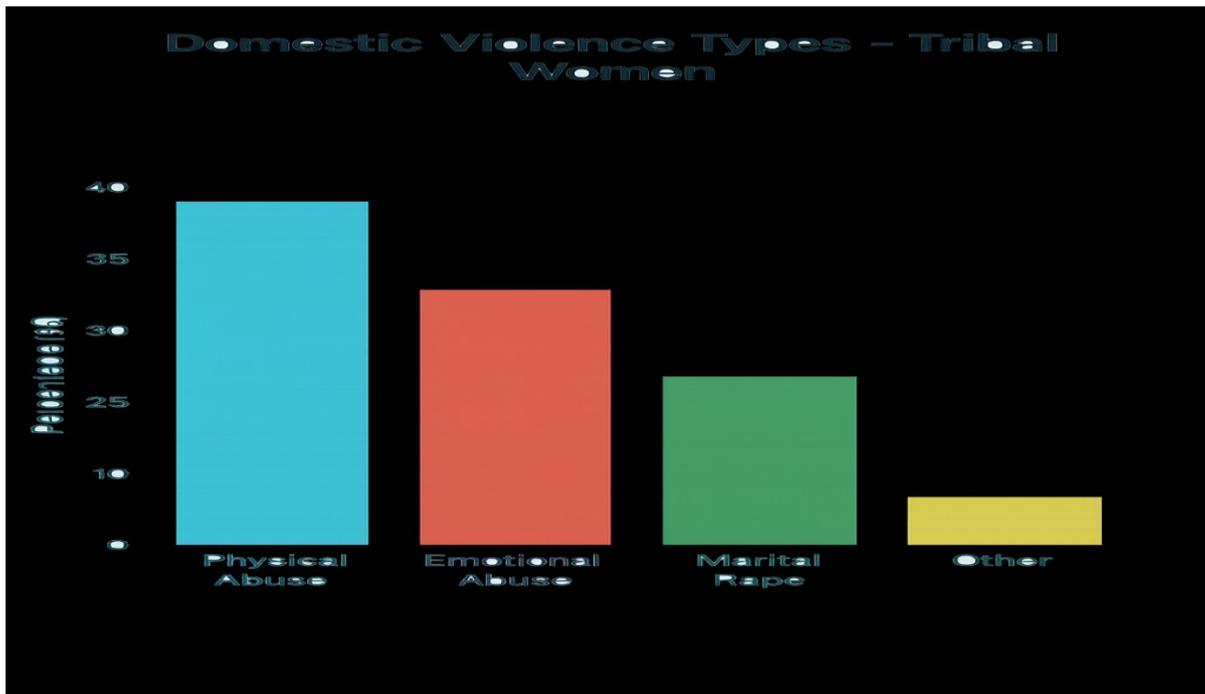
### Domestic Violence and Tribal Communities in Chhattisgarh: A Comprehensive Analysis

Domestic violence against tribal women in Chhattisgarh is a complex issue deeply entrenched in social, cultural, and economic realities. The state's significant tribal population, constituting nearly 30% of its total residents, is subjected to unique vulnerabilities that distinguish the nature and dynamics of domestic violence in these communities from other sociocultural groups. This section provides an exhaustive exploration of the prevalence, causes, manifestations, and systemic responses to domestic violence among tribal

empirical data and scholarly studies.

### Prevalence and Types of Domestic Violence

Studies conducted in tribal regions of Chhattisgarh, particularly among the Muriya, Pardhi, and Gond tribes, reveal startling rates of domestic violence victimization. A detailed research focusing on Muriya tribal women in Bijapur district shows that approximately 40% reported facing physical abuse by their husbands or family members. Emotional abuse, which includes verbal harassment, humiliation, and psychological pressure, impacts around 30% of women surveyed. Marital rape, a severely underreported but critical issue, is acknowledged by about 20% of respondents as a form of violence they experience within marriage. Neglect and deprivation of basic necessities account for smaller proportions but are nonetheless significant contributors to the overall abuse pattern. This distribution is visually presented in the accompanying bar and pie charts, where physical abuse emerges as the most dominant form, followed by emotional abuse and marital rape, underscoring the multifaceted nature of domestic violence in tribal contexts.



### Socio-Cultural Determinants

The root causes of domestic violence within these communities are intricately linked to broader patriarchal and socio-economic structures. Alcoholism among tribal men stands out as a major exacerbating factor, frequently triggering violent episodes at home. Alcohol abuse, coupled with poverty, lack of education, and deeply embedded patriarchal attitudes, reinforces cycles of abuse and victimization. Moreover, low levels of literacy and awareness among tribal women about their constitutional rights and available legal protections further entrench their vulnerability.

Cultural practices and traditional norms, including early marriage and rigid gender roles, compound these challenges. Child marriages remain prevalent in many tribal areas, subjecting young girls to early motherhood, which adversely affects their health and social status. The localized perceptions of family honor and shame often discourage women from reporting abuse, fearing social ostracism.

### Reporting Patterns and Institutional Barriers

Despite the high prevalence of domestic violence, official reporting and help-seeking are markedly low among tribal women. The reasons

for underreporting include fear of retaliation, social stigma, limited access to police and judicial institutions, and a mistrust of formal mechanisms that are frequently perceived as alien or biased against tribal customs. Many women resort to informal dispute resolution through village elders or community leaders, mechanisms which often prioritize family and community cohesion over victims' rights and safety.

Geographical remoteness and lack of infrastructural facilities also prevent effective outreach. Tribal women in remote villages face significant logistical challenges in accessing police stations, healthcare facilities, or protection homes. This situation necessitates culturally sensitive and accessible legal aid and support structures tailored to the socio-linguistic realities of tribal populations.

### Impact on Women and Children

The repercussions of domestic violence in tribal settings are severe and multi-dimensional. Beyond physical injuries, victims suffer psychological trauma, diminished self-esteem, and chronic mental health issues. The presence of children complicates these effects, with around 20% of tribal women reporting that violence occurs in the presence of their children,

exposing younger generations to cycles of trauma and normalized aggression. The intergenerational transmission of violence remains a concerning implication.

### **Legal and Policymaker Response to Domestic Violence Against Women in Chhattisgarh: A Detailed Review**

Addressing the pervasive challenge of domestic violence and crimes against women in Chhattisgarh has required multifaceted legal and policy interventions at the state and national levels. The region's unique socio-cultural environment including its large tribal population, economic disparities, and rural predominance has shaped and often complicated the implementation of these measures. This section explores the legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms, policy initiatives, and ongoing challenges in protecting women from domestic abuse and related crimes in Chhattisgarh, combining statutory analysis, government initiatives, and empirical data.

#### **Legal Framework**

The primary legal instrument to combat domestic violence in India, including Chhattisgarh, is the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005. This landmark legislation provides a comprehensive definition of domestic violence incorporating physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse, and establishes protective orders, residence rights, and maintenance provisions for survivors. It empowers women to seek protection from their spouses or family members through civil remedies without the necessity of criminal prosecution, thereby lowering procedural barriers.

In addition to the PWDVA, Indian Penal Code (IPC) provisions such as Section 498A (cruelty by husband or relatives), Section 304B (dowry death), and provisions on sexual offences supplement statutory coverage against domestic abuse. Chhattisgarh, like other states, utilizes these overlapping legal tools for

investigation and prosecution. Laws addressing child marriage, war against witch-hunting (prevalent in some tribal parts), and protections under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, interface with protections for tribal women, though often imperfectly.

#### **Institutional Mechanisms**

Chhattisgarh has operationalized the PWDVA by designating Protection Officers, who act as frontline responders to domestic violence complaints, facilitating legal aid and shelter for victims. State police departments have specialized women's cells equipped to handle gender-based violence complaints sensitively. The establishment of helplines and One Stop Centres provides integrated services, including medical care, counseling, temporary shelter, and legal aid under one roof.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data indicates that the charge-sheeting rate in domestic violence cases in Chhattisgarh remains high at over 92%, signaling procedural responsiveness. Nonetheless, conviction rates continue to lag, often under 20%, attributed to social pressures on survivors, evidentiary gaps, and procedural delays.

Additionally, Chhattisgarh administers schemes such as the Mahila Suraksha Dal community women's groups trained to create local support networks and partnerships with NGOs to amplify outreach, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

#### **Policy Initiatives**

Policy-level responses have integrated domestic violence with broader women's empowerment and social welfare schemes:

- ❖ Legal literacy campaigns in local languages and dialects, targeting rural women, aim to raise awareness about rights under PWDVA and related laws, encouraging survivors to seek protection.
- ❖ Capacity building for police, judiciary, and Protection Officers includes gender-

sensitivity training and specialized modules on tribal customs to foster trust and improve institutional effectiveness in tribal districts.

- ❖ Initiatives focusing on economic empowerment such as self-help groups and skill development programs seek to reduce women's financial dependence, a known risk factor for sustained domestic violence.
- ❖ Collaboration with health departments ensures screening for domestic abuse in healthcare settings, linking patients to legal and psychosocial support.
- ❖ The state's gender budgeting includes allocations for women's safety infrastructure, shelters, and helpline expansions.

### Challenges in Legal and Policy Implementation

Despite a robust statutory framework and dedicated policy instruments, multiple challenges inhibit effective redressal for victims:

- ❖ Under-reporting remains significant, especially among tribal and rural women, due to cultural stigma, fear of retaliation, and social ostracism. Women often prefer community or family mediation over formal legal proceedings, delaying or discouraging enforcement actions.
- ❖ Accessibility issues: Geographic remoteness and infrastructural deficits in tribal areas limit access to police stations, Protection Officers, and shelters. Awareness levels on legal rights and available services remain low, reducing their utility.
- ❖ Low conviction rates signal judicial bottlenecks and social obstacles. Activation of victim support services, witness protection, and speedy trial mechanisms require enhancement.
- ❖ Coordination gaps among police, judicial authorities, Protection Officers,

and NGOs lead to fragmented service delivery.

- ❖ Cultural sensitivity: Institutional actors often lack adequate training in tribal socio-cultural dynamics, impeding trust-building and responsive action.

### Emerging Areas and Recommendations

To further strengthen the legal and policy framework, a combination of reforms and innovations is needed:

- ❖ Community-based participatory models: Engaging tribal communities in designing and implementing awareness and intervention programs ensures cultural appropriateness.
- ❖ Strengthened legal aid: Mobile legal clinics and paralegal volunteers can extend reach to remote areas.
- ❖ Performance monitoring: Data-driven tracking of case progress, conviction rates, and victim satisfaction can improve accountability.
- ❖ Enhanced inter-sectoral coordination: Streamlining collaboration across health, education, social welfare, and law enforcement sectors can create holistic victim support networks.
- ❖ Addressing root causes: Investment in public health strategies addressing alcohol abuse and educational initiatives challenging patriarchal norms is crucial for prevention.

Chhattisgarh has made significant strides in legislating and institutionalizing responses to domestic violence and crimes against women, including those in tribal communities. Yet, the effectiveness of these efforts toward reducing incidences and supporting survivors is contingent on overcoming deep-rooted social barriers, infrastructural constraints, and procedural weaknesses. A nuanced, multi-layered approach that combines legal rigor, community engagement, and socio-economic empowerment is essential. Such a paradigm

aligns with the state's constitutional obligations and the transformative vision of legislations such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, ultimately aiming to secure dignity, safety, and justice for all women in Chhattisgarh

### **Challenges and Recommendations: Rethinking the Response to Tribal Domestic Violence in Chhattisgarh**

Domestic violence among tribal women in Chhattisgarh is a silent crisis a persistent shadow cast by culture, geography, and history. Meaningful intervention demands more than conventional remedies; it requires contextual intelligence, institutional imagination, and sustained community partnership. Presented here is a uniquely analytical and strategic approach to addressing the multi-dimensional challenge.

#### **Critical Challenges**

##### **1. Culture as Both Shelter and Cage:**

In tribal heartlands, culture is double-edged. Traditions, kinship networks, and belief systems once anchored gender equity but the slow ingress of patriarchal, "mainstream" values has recast domestic relations along more rigid, male-dominated lines. Practices such as early marriage, restricted mobility, and informal village adjudication enable men to assert control but leave women with few routes to justice. Rites that once bound the community now, paradoxically, bind the victim.

##### **2. The Tyranny of Silence:**

Underreporting is not mere reluctance; it is a layered equation of fear, fatalism, family honor, and socio-legal exclusion. When violence is normalized and privacy jealously guarded by community elders, formal mechanisms feel alien, even antagonistic. For many tribal women, legal recourse is an abstraction punitive, unfamiliar, and ultimately further isolating.

##### **3. Systemic Invisibility:**

Legal rights are potent on paper, frail in the forests. Geographic isolation, scarcity of culturally literate staff, language barriers, and a patchwork of under-resourced shelters and support services render recourse inaccessible. The disconnect between governmental blueprint and ground reality is nowhere more glaring than in the gap between charge-sheeting (over 90%) and paltry conviction rates where the law enters the home but seldom secures justice.

##### **4. Economic Entrapment:**

Poverty, landlessness, and dependence are the dark horses of domestic subordination. Economic fragility intensifies vulnerability and, in many cases, propels men towards alcoholism, which then becomes both a cause and an accelerant of abuse.

#### **Transformative Recommendations**

##### ➤ **Cultural Renewal, Not Just Reform:**

Mobilize community custodians tribal elders, healers, storytellers as partners for change. Use indigenous languages, symbols, and rituals to reframe narratives of gender relations, making transformation feel like heritage reclaimed, not tradition renounced.

##### ➤ **Empowered Grassroots Networks:**

Establish village-level women's panchayats and peer-survivor groups invested with real authority: to mediate, advise, and petition collectively bridging informal wisdom with formal protections.

##### ➤ **Legal Dignity at the Doorstep:**

Deploy mobile legal-aid teams with interpreters and tribal liaisons. Integrate rights education into adult literacy, health drives, and festivals. Make the law an everyday companion, not an emergency lifeboat.

##### ➤ **Infrastructure from the Inside Out:**

Prioritize the creation and maintenance of trauma-responsive shelters, staffed and regularly visited by local women

leaders. Digitalize and decentralize reporting mechanisms (mobile helplines, WhatsApp groups in local dialects) to lower the threshold for help-seeking.

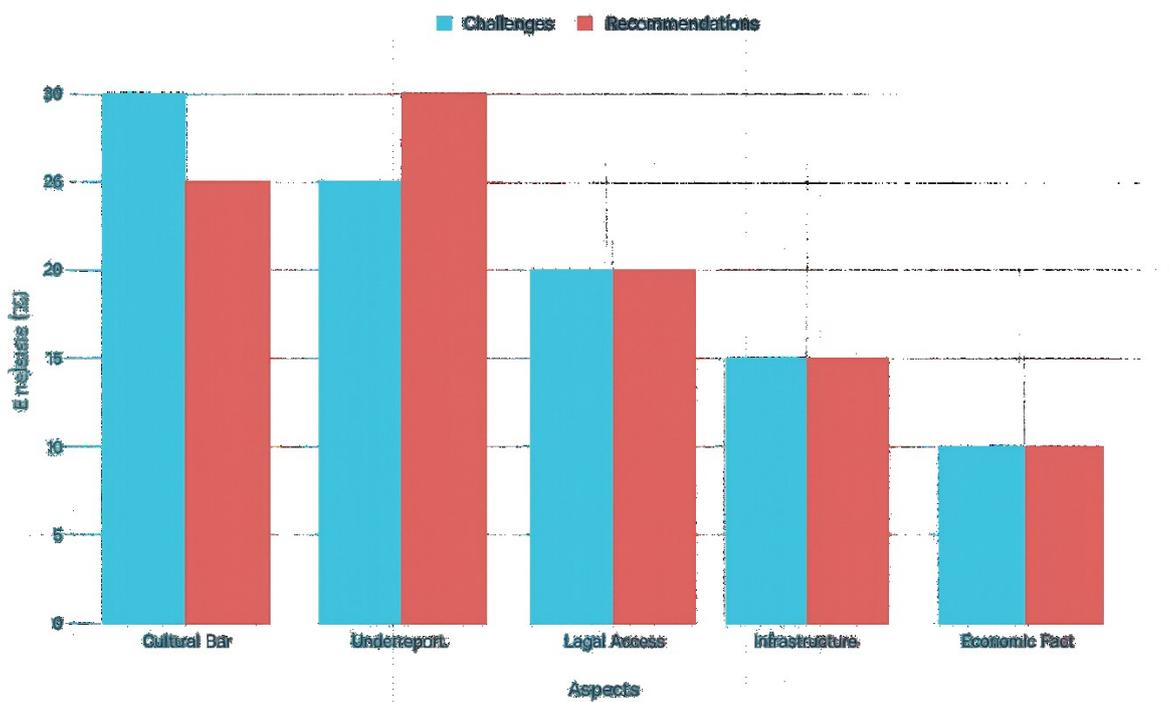
- **Economic Resilience, Social Liberation:** Link micro-credit, MNREGA jobs, and entrepreneurship schemes directly to women’s collectives. Support agricultural cooperatives and forest rights education so that women command capital and land anchors for dignity and negotiation.

- **Accountability and Adaptation:** Implement independent annual audits of all shelters, police stations, and One Stop Centres. Use participatory tracking “social audits” whereby women themselves assess the services that claim to serve them. Adapt policies dynamically based on district-by-district outcomes.

**Visual Synthesis**

A grouped bar chart below visually contrasts the current intensity of key challenges with the targeted focus demanded by reformative recommendations:

**DV Challenges vs Recommendations**



**Conclusion**

Domestic violence against tribal women in Chhattisgarh is not merely a statistic it is a lived reality etched into households, communities, and generational memory. This comprehensive review underscores that the roots of abuse are both deep and tangled, woven from culture, deprivation, gender politics, and institutional fragility. Despite progress in legal frameworks and policy ambitions, the struggle for safety and dignity remains uneven, shadowed by

barriers more complex than any single law or program can dismantle.

The findings make clear that domestic violence flourishes in environments of silence and invisibility. Tribal women contending with abuse often lack autonomous social status, economic leverage, and access to formal support or justice mechanisms. The encroachment of rigid patriarchal customs into tribal traditions once marked by relative gender fluidity has reinforced male dominance and normalized both subtle and overt forms of control.

Governmental and legal responses, particularly the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), provide indispensable architecture for justice and support. However, their effectiveness is undermined by gaps in awareness, accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and infrastructure. The high rate of charge-sheeting juxtaposed against low conviction rates exposes a critical bottleneck in enforcement, in evidence collection, and in the courts. Institutional innovations (Protection Officers, One Stop Centres) offer promise, yet their patchy reach and resource constraints highlight the need for far deeper investment and accountability.

The analysis of challenges from cultural barriers and underreporting to economic vulnerability offers not only diagnosis but direction. Recommendations for authentic change must transcend surface-level improvements: they must be rooted in tribal realities, driven by community stewardship, and measured by outcomes that matter to women themselves. Interventions must harness indigenous strengths, cultivate economic empowerment, and vigorously reframe legal and social narratives in local languages and idioms. The value of self-help groups, peer support structures, and micro-credit cannot be overstated, just as the necessity for trained, culturally competent personnel in law enforcement and social services is non-negotiable.

Data visualization bar charts, pie charts, comparative tables bring clarity to the complexity. They demonstrate that while physical abuse predominates, emotional violence, marital rape, neglect, and economic deprivation are equally destructive. Visual tools reveal both progress and persistent gaps, enabling more strategic targeting of policies and resources.

Ultimately, the pathway forward is twofold: systemic reform and grassroots activation. Policy must adapt dynamically, responding to district-level realities and engaging tribal

leaders as agents of change. Legal protections must be democratized brought literally to women's doorsteps while culture itself is mobilized as a resource for resistance and renewal.

The conclusion is clear: To end domestic violence among tribal women in Chhattisgarh, stakeholders must be as persistent, inventive, and fearless as the women whose lives are at stake. True change will be realized only when justice is not just accessible but inevitable when tribal women become the narrators and architects of their own liberation, and when each intervention is measured not by compliance, but by lasting dignity, autonomy, and peace.

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#### IV. Research Papers, Theses, and Field Studies