Effects of violence against girls’ in degree colleges of Mizoram on higher education

Accepted 21st November 2019

ABSTRACT

College-age girls often live with people of their own age on campus, rather than parents or other older adults. Students may feel peer pressure to participate in social activities such as drinking, using drugs, going to parties, or engaging in sexual activities that make them uncomfortable. Being forced into unwanted sexual activity for social acceptance is a type of sexual coercion. The state of Mizoram, where women and girls are believed to be respected is found to be no exception with regard to violence against girls. Despite various awareness raising programs and policies, girls in colleges often become victim of unwanted actions from their male students or teachers. Moreover, because physical and sexual violence has been tolerated for so long, it has become a phenomenon that is resistant to change. This is reinforced by taboo, shame, and fear that resist speaking openly about it. Ironically, colleges have been found as a place where different kinds of violence are tolerated and perpetrated by teachers as well as peer students. This research aims to find out the causes of violence against girls in degree colleges in Mizoram and its effect on girls’ higher education. The researcher followed the mixed mode method and incorporated quantitative and qualitative methodologies to study the nature, nuances and the practices adopted by the different institutions for reducing violence against girls in degree colleges of Mizoram. It is found that four types of violence, that is, Physical, Verbal, sexual and Psychological violence against girls are seen in different degree colleges of Mizoram. Youth fashion, Hostile Family Environment, Exam Pressure, peer group, Girls disabilities, Drug and alcohol influence, computer gadgets are the causes of violence against college girls in Mizoram which affects the girls’ higher education and academic achievement. Government of India may take initiative to reduce violence against girls to improve higher education of girls in Mizoram.

Key words: Violence, physical, sexual, college, girls.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against girls is a matter of grave concern, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, gender, ethnic origin and age. United Nations General Assembly (2006-b) says that there are many forms of violence that remain unreported and remain hidden due to included fear and stigma associated with it. It further says that there are factors where social acceptance of several types of violence is not accepted and is taken in contexts of regular phenomenal act. Thus, there is also a need for social acceptance for such act which is actually forms of violence. Furthermore, many types of violence remain invisible because there is no safe or trusted place for children or adults to report it. In fact, violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the most universal and pervasive human rights violations that affect billions of women across the globe. Violence against women is extremely common. Kaur (2011) commented that ‘Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it
cut across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and
gEOGRAPHY’ a statement that is amply justified by the
events taking place in India every day. It takes place
everywhere in the home, on the streets, in schools, the
workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, and in some
places such as red light areas and in prisons it is extremely
common (Golden 2004). Recent estimates suggest that
approximately 35% of women worldwide have
experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their
partners, or non-partners. Thus, sexual violence is one of
the highly prevalent forms of violence among the female.

Addressing violence against women and girls is a central
development goal in its own right. Further, it is key to
achieving other development outcomes for individual
women, their families, communities and nations. When

looking at sexual violence in conflict, it is not necessary to
separate acts of violence from soldiers and their broader
social settings in order to understand the drivers of abuse.

The studies suggest that women survivors of violence
often face great difficulties in sustaining participation in
the processes of investigations and judicial processes. This is
because, in absence of access to a range of comprehensive
services, including health, livelihoods, legal and psycho-
social support, and protection from further violence and
reprisals, it becomes difficult to unearth the real problems
from the women survivors of violence.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) released by the
Union Health Ministry reports that every third woman,
since the age of 15, has faced domestic violence of various
forms in the country. According to the survey, 27% of
women have experienced physical violence since the age of
15 in India. This experience of physical violence among
women in rural areas is more common as compared with
urban areas. In context of domestic violence cases, 29% of
women reported physical abuse in rural, whereas, the
same was found to be 23% in urban areas. Furthermore,
the scenario for unmarried women was no different. The
survey report highlighted that most common perpetrators
of sexual violence on unmarried women were distant
relatives (27%). This was followed by current, or, former
boyfriend which was found to be 18%; their own friend or
acquaintance (17%) and a family friend (11%). It was
found that the sexual violence is most often committed by
individually, with whom women develop an intimate
relationship. Thus, the physical violence or sexual
violence do not occur in isolation; rather, women
experience a combination of different types of violence.

Currently in Indian scenario, we can find that majority of
unmarried girls experience sexual harassment in one or
the other form. In many cases, due to socio-cultural
reasons, girl child are even married at tender age, in spite
of the fact that, they are not matured physically, mentally,
and morally, and not prepared for rearing child. Further, in
certain cases, even forced marriages are legitimized in
socio-cultural contexts. Christen (2015) stated that college

Going girls often remain at risk, due to violence relating to
physical, sexual, and emotional types, in the same manner,
as married adult women of reproductive age, and, older
married women experiences.

One in five women in college experiences sexual assault.
Studies have shown that students are at the highest risk of
sexual assault in the first few months of their first and
second semesters in college. Women who identify as
lesbian, bisexual, or gay are more likely to experience
sexual assault on college campuses than heterosexual
women. Sexual assault happens everywhere and to women
and men of all ages. But it is common on college campuses,
and, among adults, sexual assault happens most often to
studied the fate of people of North-eastern origin in India,
identified a number of causes as to why they are violently
targeted, but failed to specify any remedial measures.
Nepram (2010) made a detailed analysis of violence
against women in the Northeast but concentrated more on
the crimes committed by armed forces attempting to curb
insurgency there. Mattebo et al. (2014) in his research
article “Pornography and sexual violence experience
among high school students in Sweden” concluded that a
higher proportion of girls of 15% than boys of 6% had
experienced sexual abuse.

Northeast India is the eastern-most region of the
country. It is connected to East India via a narrow corridor
squeezed between independent nations of Bhutan and
Bangladesh. It comprises the contiguous Seven Sister
States (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya,
Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura), and the Himalayan state
of Sikkim. Except for the Goalpara region of Assam, the rest
did not become part of political India until the19th
century and later. The Brahmaputra valley area of Assam became a
part of British India in 1824, with the hill regions annexed
later. Sikkim was annexed to the Indian union through a
referendum in 1975; it was recognized as part of
Northeast India in the 1990s.

Northeast India is generally considered one of the most
challenging regions of the country to govern. It has been
the site of separatist movements among the tribal peoples.
It constitutes about 8% of India’s size; roughly three
quarters the size of the state of Maharashtra. Its
population is approximately 40 million (2011 census),
3.1% of the total Indian population; roughly equal to that
of Odisha. Northeast India has over 220 ethnic groups and
equal number of dialects. The hills states in the region such
as Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland
are predominantly inhabited by tribal people with a
degree of diversity even within the tribal groups. The
north eastern state of Mizoram has the highest number of
child sexual abuse cases with 568 cases of sexual abuse
against children recorded in last five years, a report in The
Northeast Today says. This shows an increasing trend of
child sexual abuse in the state, the findings of the abuse
were brought to fore through a report prepared by
Mizoram’s Child Welfare Committee last week. In the
Northeast, the problem becomes severe owing to collision of an extremely modern culture (here many tribal societies allow free mixing of boys and girls when they are adult) with an extremely old one, full of rituals and superstition.

As per the government data, 99 children were raped and registered under POSCO Act in Mizoram in 2016 where as it was 129 in 2017 and 66 in 2018. Similarly, 27 cases of child rape were found under IPC in 2018. Sexually assault is very high in Mizoram, 74 cases registered in 2017, 40 cases in 2018 and 62 cases in 2016.

The state of Mizoram, where women and girls are believed to be respected is found to be no exception with regard to violence against girls. Despite various awareness raising programs and policies, girls in Colleges and colleges often become victim of unwanted actions from their male students or teachers. Moreover, because of physical and sexual violence has been tolerated for so long, it has become a phenomenon that is resistant to change.

From Table 1, it is seen that 23 women were raped in 2016, 46 in 2017 and 24 in 2018 in Mizoram. Kidnapping is negligible in Mizoram. Cruelty by husband is a cause of crime against women in Mizoram; Nineteen Cases are registered in 2016 and 17 cases in 2017. Molestation is also seen in Mizoram. One hundred and fifteen cases are registered in 2017 where as it is 71 in 2016 and 64 in 2018. Other cases of crime and violence against girls and women are very negligible. This is reinforced by taboo, shame, and fear that resist speaking openly about it. Ironically, colleges have been found a place where different kinds of violence are tolerated and perpetrated by teachers as well as peer students.

The gross enrolment ratio of Mizoram is 21.6. The girls GER is 21.1. Therefore, researcher tended to identify the causes of low GER in case of girls in Mizoram. Mishra (2018) conducted a study on violence against girls in secondary schools of Mizoram Sponsored by Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, and, identified different types of violence perpetrated in schools of Mizoram. A majority dropout of girls is caused by one or the other kinds of violence which mars its impact negatively upon girl’s enrolment in Colleges. In the lights of the above discussion that there was strong felt need to conduct a study in the area of violence against girls and its effect on girl’s education in colleges of Mizoram. The researcher formulated two research questions such as, what are the causes of violence against girls in degree colleges in Mizoram? and is there any effect of violence on girl’s education?

**METHODOLOGY**

Mixed mode method was employed in this research. Out of 28 different Colleges in Mizoram, 22 degree Colleges were the target population of the study. From all the 22 degree colleges of 8 districts twelve degree colleges, that is, five degree colleges from Aizawl district out of 10 colleges and 1 college from each rest of the seven districts, that is, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Champhai, Serchhip, Kolasib, Saiha, and Mamit district (because in these districts only one-degree college is available) selected for the study. Only five colleges are offering science at graduation level in Mizoram. So, the researcher took all the science colleges purposefully. Twenty students from each department of five colleges who are offering B.Sc. in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Botany, Zoology, and Ten students from each department of all the 12 degree colleges who are offering, English, History. Political science, Mizo, Education, and Economics are selected randomly who are available on the day of collection of data as sample of the study. So, in total 500 science students and 720 Arts students are initially selected randomly as the sample of the study. Three teachers from each subject, that is, 5x5x3=75, science and 12x6x3=216 Arts teacher with a total of 291 teachers selected for the study. Twenty parents from each college, that is, 240 parents were also included for collection of data for the present study. The Director of higher and technical education and Chairman of Women Commission were also included as sample of the study. However, all questionnaires did not go back to the investigator. After repeated visit to the colleges, project fellows were able to collect the data from respondents consisting of 727 students (496 Arts and 231 Science), 176 parents and 131 teachers. For secondary data collection, the investigator went through different journals, research books, biography, documentary, Government records and books which are related to violence against college girls for the development of the tools. With regard to Primary data collection, the investigator along with three junior project fellows, visited the different field as a Pilot Study to have some idea about the samples. After these, they frame the tools and techniques to be employed for collecting the primary data. A workshop was organized in the Department of Education, Mizoram University for development and finalization of tools. A questionnaire was developed for the college girls, teachers, and parents to identify and classify the type and causes of violence against girls at college. An interview schedule was also developed for Principals, Teachers in charge of student's welfare, Director of Higher and Technical Education Mizoram and Chairperson of Women Commission to collect the information about the effect of violence against girls in higher education. One focus group discussion was held at each district level for the suggestion of some measures for reducing violence against girls in college level.

**FINDINGS**

Violence is a disturbing issue across the world today. It is a subject of great concern in homes, Educational Institutions, workplaces, and social places, rural and urban areas. There
are numerous types of violence, including physical, mental or sexual abuse, theft and vandalism. Educational institutions cannot ignore the need to create a safe environment by coordinating deterrents to violence through discipline, prevention, and education. Because colleges alone cannot eliminate the problem of violence, therefore, students must also be involved by working with the schools to create a safe and nurturing environment which fosters learning. The study included a section, in which, types of violence can be seen in Degree colleges of Mizoram.

Based on the percentage of girls being affected from different types of violence viz. physical, verbal, sexual and psychological, the study showed that different districts faces different percentages in the above category of violence (Table 2). However, the fact is that no district is devoid of any types of these violence, and faces lesser, or, higher number of these violence. Highest percentage of physical violence was observed in Aizawl with 25.5%, whereas, it was found in Kolasib, 0% of physical violence. Similarly, verbal violence was found to be highest in Lunglei with 28% and lowest in Champhai with 2.5%. The sexual and psychological violence was observed to be highest in Lunglei (24%) and Lawnglai (41.08%), respectively whereas the same was lowest in Champhai (0.83%) and Aizawl (9%), respectively.

The analysis of FGDs from parents suggests that the pressure of examination push several girls towards addiction to drugs, smoking and drinking. Having getting rampant addiction of such habits, and not meeting the constant demand of money from parents to purchase it, many such addicted girls try to quench their habit of addiction by initially borrowing money or material (drugs, alcohol, cigarette) from their male friends. However, when they do not return the money to their male friends in time, the male friends, in turn, start demanding intimate involvement, which is mostly acceded due to their inability to return the money, as well as, to quench their addiction. This further pushes them to become habituated to addiction on the one hand, and, on the other hand, they get involved with more than one male friend at the same time, which lead to spur violence. Thus, it is actually, the exam pressure and peer group interference which is one of the root causes of such violence.

Most of the parents of all the districts agreed that mobile phone and computer are the causes of violence against girls in degree colleges. This is because, the desire to own expensive devise (smart mobile phone and computer) with lesser economic means to purchase pushes these girls to ‘procure’ such devise and meet their desire illegally. During FGDs, most of the parents agreed that girls make intimate friendship with multiple male friends to meet their unending desire. They also contended that, the affordable internet services with unrestricted pornographic sites have opened space for them, to make quick money by involving them in illegitimate sexual activities, which many a times is recorded by several ‘clients’- known, as well as unknown, so that such girls can be blackmailed. This do not let them come out of their situation, as, they are constantly threatened, as well as blackmailed. This increases violence against them if they refuse to comply with the demand from their friends or clients.

Majority of the teachers agreed with the statement that, Youth fashion, Hostile Family Environment, Exam Pressure, peer group, Girls disabilities, Drug and alcohol influence, computer gadgets are the causes of violence against college girls in Mizoram. In fact, the body exposure of college going girls in Mizoram is quite high, and, can be seen widely. Further, even with the megre income, the girls spend more fashioning their hairstyle, wear costly and branded dresses, and maintain their outlook. On the other hand, the mind set of parents are traditional and contrary to the present day generations, where, the styling of the youth is seen as provocative. Such mind set makes them suspicious towards girls who have megre income and costly styling. They believe that the above mentioned aspects collectively lead to violence, because, the expenditure occurring on styling is procured from illegitimate sexual interaction with multiple partners at the same time.

Most of the respondents were unanimous in feeling that girls, particularly in their adolescence, are more susceptible to aggressive behaviour. As a result, they suffer more comparatively. It was conclusively found that the effects of violence on girls’ lead them to have traumatic experience as a result of exposure to different types of violence, which reduces their concentration on studies and decrease their self-esteem and confidence towards learning. This further leads them to drop out or deliberate withdrawal from colleges. The evoking of non-conformist attitude on the part of the establishment on the one hand, and on the other hand, the development of fear among girls together have long lasting consequences.

Table 1: Crime against children for last three years (2016-2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Child rape under POSCO Act</th>
<th>Child Rape Under IPC</th>
<th>Sexual assault</th>
<th>Pornography</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical cell, CID, Aizawl
Effects of Violence on Girls’ Dropout in Higher Education

It is found that most of the respondents are in favor of there is a direct impact of violence on girls’ dropout in Higher education. Violence directly negatively affects girls’ college attendance, their concentration, classroom activity and completion of homework, all of which are closely linked to their educational participation. One of the immediate effects of violence on college girls is that it reduces their ability to attend classes. A girl who has been verbally abused or sexually harassed by her teacher is more likely to skip the teacher’s class in order to avoid further abuse or harassment. Also, a girl who has been sexually assaulted on the way to and from college is discouraged from going to school.

The presence of sexual or physical violence in the family or on the way to and from college has a destructive effect on school girls’ concentration in the classroom. Female teachers who participated in focus group discussions noted that abused girls often become absent-minded in class and do not follow lessons attentively, most of the time draw blank when questions are asked or fumble – a sign of lack of concentration. Teachers further stated that some try to hide their heads (not to be identified) and become immersed in deep thoughts of what has happened at home or on the way to college.

Any form of violence against girls has a negative impact on their ability to complete homework. This reduces their chances of getting good grades and lowers their educational participation. A girl who has been verbally abused or sexually harassed is not likely to be able to concentrate on her study and complete homework on time. Girls’ respondents were asked about the impact of violence on their inability to complete homework and their educational participation. A good proportion of the respondents who attempted the question indicated that their inability to complete homework due to violence perpetrated against them or suffering of some form of abuse. Difference in the responses between teachers and students’ respondents were observed, with a relatively high proportion of students showing their agreement of the strong link between violence perpetrated against them and their inability to complete homework which terminates or reduced educational participation of girls.

Violence and abuse on college girls has a profoundly destabilizing effect on the education of girls. Girls who are victims of violence are more likely perform poorly in colleges, have problems of concentration on their academic work, and lose interest in reading altogether, and resulting in poorer academic achievement. Adolescence is period of stress and strain and represents a critical period in the history, having its own implications for future. Mental disturbance, low participation and academic achievement and drop out from colleges may have a debilitating effect on future career prospects of a student and more so a girl child.

More than 80% parents and more than 70% teachers and students were of the opinion that violence highly affects girls’ future life. In one of the FGD, participants pointed out that, Teenage girls who are victimized tend to leave their area and migrate to nearby town sand some of them end up being commercial sex workers. Female teachers and key informants also thought that victim girls often face disapproval by family members, relatives and the community at large. They are considered misfits, incapable of managing their homes or properly performing household chores. They also noted that most rural girls who are overburdened with excessive workload at home tend to run away from home to the nearby towns or urban centres. Most of those who run away end up being as therapist in SPAs or commercial sex workers. Sexual violence has damaging effects on the health of girls. Especially, it exposes girls to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

On the whole, it is found that the different types of violence and abuse against girls in degree colleges negatively affected their education in various interrelated aspects. The occurrence of violence and abuse in colleges, on the way to and from college and at home affect girls’ access to education partly because of parents’ fear and concern for the safety and security of girls.

The suggestions given by the participants included several relevant points. Establishment of more welfare centres to correct violent behavior, the provision of basic needs for girls, opportunity for sports and other recreational activities, games, debate, excursions, club activities, establishment of Guidance and Counselling units, peace education programme included in school curriculum, training of teachers for peace education establishment of peace clubs and restriction of mobile phones are some of the strategies suggested for solving
violence behavior of girls in colleges.

Conclusion

Girls facing physical, verbal, sexual and psychological violence in degree colleges in Mizoram tried to cover the issues relating to usage of foul language in the campus, bullying, ruthless gender degrading, scolding, forced intimate relations, such as dating, kissing, sexual advances, touching, attempts to rape, sharing of vulgar messages, and forcefully showing of nude pictures. The major multiple causes of violence that emerged from the findings were peer group influence, excessive use of computer and mobiles, lack of awareness, and menstrual period. The girls, particularly in their adolescence age group suffer more and are susceptible to aggressive behavior. All institutions must inform their students and staff about the sexual harassment guidelines, prominently display the guidelines in the college and also hold workshops and seminars for both students and staff and publicly declare a zero-tolerance stance towards sexual harassment. Ministry of women and Child development can adopt a national plan of action for gender-based violence in degree colleges. Prompt and appropriate disciplinary action including due process protections for the persons alleged to have perpetrated the offense must be taken care of. A code of conduct needs to be developed for teachers and students that expressly prohibit gender violence in colleges.

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