

The Efforts of United Nations Women in Addressing The Issue of Dowry Death in India 2019-2022

Gulia Ichikaya Mitzy, Dennise Maheswari

Department of International Relations, Universitas Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: guliaichikayamitzy@civitas.unas.ac.id

Email: maheswaridennise@gmail.com

Abstract

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The dowry traditions has been in existence for a long time and is difficult to eradicate, serving as a symbol for the bride who will become a member of her husband's family. Over time, the basic essence and amount of dowry have changed. If the groom's family is not satisfied with the dowry given, it can lead to violence or even murder. The research method used is qualitative. This study aims to find out the problem of dowry death in India and the collaboration of UN Women and the Government of India in dealing with the problem of dowry death. The Indian government has also begun to think step by step that dealing with this case is still difficult to overcome, because the patriarchal culture is still strong. This study analyzes UN Women's cooperation with NGOs to deal with the dowry death problem. In 2019-2022, dowry death cases in India have started to decrease significantly. Although there are still many women who are not brave enough to report dowry violence.

Keywords: **Dowry, Government of India, UN Women, Dowry Death, Anti-Dowry Program**

1. INTRODUCTION

One of India's most notable institutions is the caste system, where an individual's social class is determined by ancestry and occupation. The caste system is believed to have originated with the arrival of the Aryans in India (Ruksin, 2018). The awareness of caste arose as the Aryans perceived themselves to be superior to the indigenous people of India, particularly in terms of physical attributes and abilities. The original system comprises four castes. The first is the Brahmin caste, the highest caste consisting of religious leaders or priests. Next is the Kshatriya caste, made up of government leaders and soldiers, the Vaishya caste, which includes merchants and farmers, and the Shudra caste, consisting of laborers and artisans. Additionally, there is a fifth group known as the Dalits, meaning "the oppressed." Compared to the four main castes, this group is considered the most vulnerable (Ruksin, 2018). Because they fall outside the primary caste system and are regarded as outcasts, they are referred to as "untouchables". Hindu religious traditions in India are deeply rooted and reflect the country's rich cultural diversity throughout history. However,

not all traditions carry beneficial values for society; some have contributed to social inequality. In Hindu traditions in India, there is the practice of giving a dowry, which is a gift from the bride's family to the groom. This dowry practice is not only prevalent in India but is also observed in other countries, such as Pakistan.

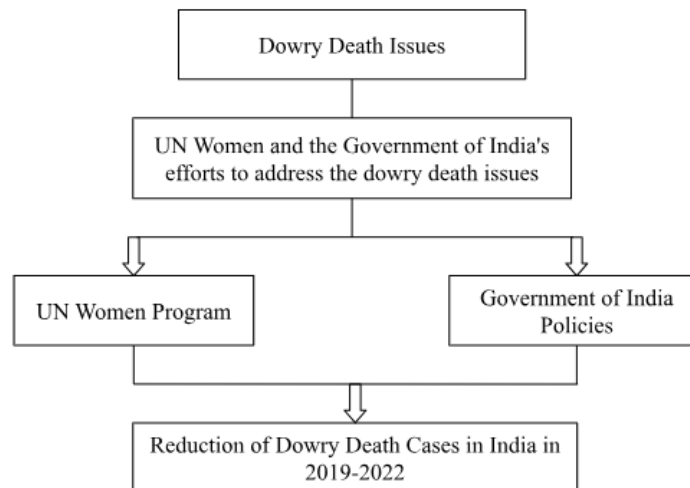
Dowry symbolizes that the bride will become part of her husband's family. The dowry system involves the transfer of valuable and durable goods, cash, and movable or immovable property from the bride's family to the groom's family as a condition of marriage (Pertiwi, Hidayat, and Rizki, 2021). The primary purpose of the dowry is to serve as financial security or savings for the bride in case of emergencies or to meet the needs of her future children. However, what was initially intended as a provision for the bride's future has now become the property of the groom and his family. Dowry is also given to the groom as a gesture of respect.

Economic factors disadvantage women, as only male children are entitled to inherit property. This situation forces women to depend on their husbands and in-laws, who receive dowries during marriage. Before 1956, daughters were not entitled to inherit their family's wealth, even during the British Raj era. Eventually, India enacted the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, granting equal legal rights to women and men within Hindu, Sikh, and Jain families in India. Although this law was implemented, dowry remained a means for parents to transfer property to their daughters at the time of marriage. Dowry has added a financial burden on families due to demands from the groom and the possibility of these demands increasing over time (Puspham, 2022).

According to data from Statista, dowry death cases in India have decreased significantly from 2019 to 2022. However, the number of cases still reaches approximately 6,000, which remains alarmingly high and is considered a major and serious issue. Uttar Pradesh, as the most populous state in India, often draws attention to various social issues, including dowry-related cases. Dowry deaths in this state reflect the harsh reality that, despite being legally prohibited, the practice of dowry persists. Unmet dowry demands frequently lead to violence against women, including murder or coercion to commit suicide. Therefore, more stringent measures and continuous community education are crucial to addressing this issue. The aim of this study is to explore the efforts undertaken by UN Women in collaboration with NGOs and the Indian Government to addressing dowry death cases.

2. ANALITICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the main factors leading to the lack of effectiveness is the low awareness of the dangers of the dowry tradition. Many people still see dowry as an integral part of marriage, without realizing its negative impact on women. Government efforts, such as laws banning the practice of dowry, have not been fully successful in changing people's views and behavior. Public education and awareness campaigns are needed to address the root of this problem. In addition, stricter law enforcement and protection for dowry victims, as well as the efforts that UN Women can make in addressing this issue, are important in reducing the number of cases and providing justice for the victims. Overall, the problem of dowry death in India reflects deep gender inequalities, necessitating a more comprehensive and sustained effort by the government and international organizations such as UN Women. Community involvement in addressing this case is also needed. So based on the explanation above, the author finds a problem that can be identified, namely "How are United Nations Women's efforts in addressing with dowry death cases in India in 2019-2022?"



3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach to understand UN Women's efforts in addressing the issues of dowry death from 2019 to 2022. The qualitative approach involves a literature-based study by reading, referencing, and analyzing regulations related to the issue under investigation. This approach allows the researcher to thoroughly and descriptively explore and analyze the behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions of the research subjects. The literature review serves as the primary foundation by gathering secondary data from various sources, such as books, journals, articles, news reports, and relevant websites. John W. Creswell defines the qualitative approach as research aimed at studying and understanding the meaning of events experienced by individuals or groups, which are considered social or humanitarian issues. (Book Chapter Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif, 2022). Here are some characteristics of good qualitative research according to Creswell (Book Chapter Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif, 2022) :

- a. The researcher applies precise procedures to obtain data.
- b. The researcher confines the study to the assumptions and characteristics of qualitative research.
- c. The researcher adopts a qualitative approach in their study.
- d. The researcher begins the study with a clear focus.
- e. The research includes detailed methods, an appropriate approach to data collection, data analysis, and report writing.
- f. The researcher analyzes data by dividing the analysis into several levels
- g. The researcher writes in a persuasive manner, enabling readers to share the same experience.

Based on the definition above, this study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing qualitative data and presenting it descriptively. This approach is used to analyze the efforts of UN Women in addressing the issues of dowry death in India during 2019-2022. In this research, the author seeks to explain the dowry tradition in India, the problems arising from this tradition, the efforts of UN Women in collaboration with the Indian government to tackle dowry deaths from 2019 to 2022, and to evaluate whether these efforts have been effective in India. Qualitative research encompasses several approaches, such as descriptive studies, case studies, biographies, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and others. (Bahan Ajar Pendekatan dalam Penelitian Kualitatif, 2017).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

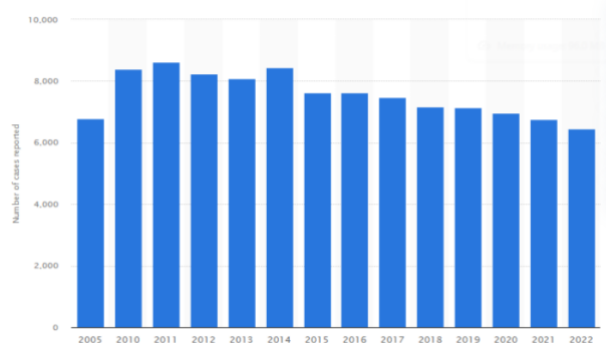
4.1. Dowry Death Issue in India 2019-2022

Dowry death or violence related to dowry is a widespread phenomenon across India. The country faces a troubling issue with dowry-related deaths, with 20 women dying every

day due to dowry-related abuse, either being killed or driven to suicide. According to the NCRB report, on average, one woman dies every hour from dowry-related deaths in India, with the annual total exceeding 7,000 cases (Chaudhary, 2015). Additionally, if a woman is unable to meet the dowry demands of the groom's family, the marriage can be canceled. One of the essential conditions for a marriage to proceed is for the woman to fulfill the dowry requirements set by the groom's family.

The practice of dowry, which is legally prohibited but still occurs, can cause very bad problems, including death and suicide. Traditional practices such as these, which continue without serious efforts to change them, show how difficult it is for lower middle class and poor families to shed a huge financial burden while still maintaining deeply rooted traditions and social demands. The author has included a graph to show the number of dowry death cases in 2019-2022.

Graph of dowry death cases in India 2019-2022



Source : Statista Research Department

The graph above shows that dowry death cases in India reached 7,141 in 2019, 6,966 in 2020, 6,753 in 2021, and 6,450 in 2022 (Statista Research Department, Total number of reported dowry death cases in India from 2005 to 2022). According to data from Statista, the number of reported dowry death cases in India has gradually decreased from previous years, although many cases remain unreported (Sharma and Christ, 2022). This graph indicates broader efforts to address the issue of dowry deaths in India. The data highlights collective efforts in tackling the challenges related to dowry and shows progress towards creating a more just and safe environment for women in India. Below are some examples of cases resulting from dowry practices in India:

1. **The Teacher Case in New Delhi (2019).** A teacher spent her savings, and her mother sold land to cover the wedding expenses. However, the marriage was canceled because the groom's family demanded a car, which the bride's family could not afford. This case reflects the social pressure related to dowry that causes many poor families in India to face serious economic and social risks (Daily News Indonesia, Dowry: Beban Berat dalam Pernikahan Keluarga Miskin India).
2. **NCRB Data (2020).** A total of 6,966 dowry-related deaths were reported, with 19 women losing their lives every day. One such case involved a man in Kerala who killed his wife with a cobra due to dissatisfaction with the dowry (CNBCTV18, 19 women were killed for dowry every day in 2020: NCRB).
3. **Incident in Kerala (2021).** A woman was found dead after her family failed to meet the demands for a luxury car by her husband and his family. Kerala is known for having the highest dowry inflation in India (Sood, 2021).
4. **Case of Beating to Death (2022).** A woman was allegedly beaten to death by her in-laws over additional dowry demands, including a Toyota Fortuner. After receiving a report from the victim's brother, the police filed an FIR (First Information Report) under several sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Dowry Prohibition Act. The victim's husband and father-in-law were arrested, prosecuted, and placed in judicial custody (PTI, 2024).

In 2022, the northern state of Uttar Pradesh in India reported the highest number of dowry-related deaths to the authorities (Rathore, 2024). Although dowry deaths in India have significantly decreased from 2019 to 2022, the number of cases still reaches around 6,000, which remains a substantial figure and continues to be a serious and pressing issue. Uttar Pradesh, being the most populous state in India, often draws attention for various social issues, including dowry-related cases. The deaths due to dowry in the state reflect the harsh reality that, despite being legally banned, the dowry practice continues. Unmet dowry demands frequently lead to violence against women, including murder or coercion into suicide.

4.2. UN Women's Efforts to Address Dowry Death Cases in India

In a global context, the traditions of a country can also influence violence against women due to gender inequality. One example is India, which has the second-highest population density in the world but also experiences a continuously increasing rate of crimes against women. One of the contributing factors is the strong patriarchal traditions and culture in India. This patriarchal system governs men and women with different rules, leading to crimes against women. One such tradition that can be harmful to women in India is the practice of dowry.

The program run by UN Women, the Anti-Dowry Program, which started in 2016, collaborates with the government to achieve gender equality and eliminate the abuse of dowry. The program aims to raise awareness about the negative impacts of dowry, educate the community about women's rights, and encourage active participation of women in decision-making processes related to dowry practices. This Anti-Dowry movement developed as a response to the injustices and oppression experienced by women. It emphasizes the importance of gender equality and opposes the dowry practice that harms the lives of many women, while also working to raise awareness and involve men in understanding the dangers of this tradition. Over time, the anti-dowry movement has expanded and involved various segments of society, including non-governmental organizations, women's activists, academics, and even the government. In this regard, UN Women provides education about the importance of gender equality and the injustices faced by women. The hope is that changes, beginning with men, can improve the social structure concerning dowry abuse.

One of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) collaborating with UN Women in the implementation of the Anti-Dowry movement to advocate for women's rights is CARE (Cooperative and Assistance for Relief Everywhere). Through partnerships with international NGOs focusing on women's issues, UN Women launched the anti-dowry program to eradicate the dowry phenomenon in India, with the goal of reducing dowry deaths. This initiative is supported by several programs (Oktaviani, 2017) :

4.2.1. Advocacy Program

In advocacy efforts, the involvement of various parties is crucial, including advocates or spokespeople, funding providers, and those responsible for mobilizing the masses. CARE, an NGO actively addressing women's issues in India, shows its support for women by advocating throughout society. CARE raises awareness about the lack of policy support for women. This advocacy is expected to influence various segments of society, both domestically and internationally, and address the injustices caused by gender issues and dowry practices.

4.2.2. Economic Program

- **The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS) program** is a global initiative that provides guidelines for businesses to support gender equality in the workplace, marketplace, and community. WEPS emphasizes seven key principles, including leadership that supports gender equality, fair treatment of all genders in the workplace, and ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of all workers. This program focuses on women who experience the impacts of gender imbalance and aims to create gender justice and equality without discrimination. By implementing

these principles, the goal is to foster a more inclusive work environment and society, where women have equal opportunities to grow and contribute.

- **Women Leadership in Small Medium Enterprises (WLSME) program** was established to enhance women's leadership skills in the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector. This program provides training, education, and support to women to build confidence and leadership abilities. WLSME aims to elevate the position of women in the business world so that they can play a key role in decision-making and business management. By encouraging women to become effective leaders, the program seeks to boost women's economic independence and strengthen their contribution to economic growth. SMEs led by women are expected to achieve greater success in terms of profitability and innovation, which in turn will transform societal perceptions and values regarding women in business.
- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) program** was established in 2006 with the primary goal of empowering women in India and protecting children from discrimination. One of the main initiatives under this program is the Swadhar Greh Scheme, a counseling service program that provides psychological and social support for women facing difficulties. To assist women in need, this program collaborates with NGOs to provide temporary shelters, counseling, skill training, and rehabilitation assistance. Additionally, the Ministry of Women and Child Development strives to raise public awareness about the importance of gender equality, promote women's rights, and reduce gender discrimination in various aspects of life. The aim of these programs is to create a society where men and women have equal rights and opportunities, free from all forms of discrimination.

4.2.3. Education Program

- **The Early Childhood Development (ECD) program**, implemented by CARE in collaboration with the Indian government, aims to provide educational services for preschool children, including healthcare and immunization services. Early childhood education is crucial during this phase of development, as it equips children with essential knowledge to differentiate between right and wrong in the future. This program ensures that children are given the best possible start in life, which can positively impact their overall growth, well-being, and ability to thrive in their education and beyond.
- **The Adolescent Girls Learning Centre (AGLC) program**, initiated by the NGO CARE, aims to ensure that girls who have not had access to formal education can receive essential education, particularly in the Kutch region of Gujarat. This program teaches basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as other intellectual skills. It is expected that girls who acquire these skills will become more confident and able to compete in the workforce, enabling them to earn their own income without depending on others. By providing these opportunities, AGLC contributes to the empowerment of young girls, giving them the tools to shape their own futures.

4.2.4. Health Program

- **The Mother Child Health (MCH) program** is an initiative launched by CARE in collaboration with international partners in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh, two regions in India with high levels of poverty and significant health challenges for mothers and children. These areas also face serious issues related to high infant mortality rates. The program aims to improve community well-being and reduce infant mortality by providing health services, education, and support to mothers and children. Through MCH, CARE works to enhance prenatal and postnatal care, ensure access to essential health services, and improve the overall health conditions for both mothers and their children, ultimately striving for healthier communities.
- **The Reproductive and Child Health Nutrition and Awareness program** is focused on improving the health of women of reproductive age in the Rajasthan region, which faces serious reproductive health issues, pregnancy-related complications, and

postnatal health challenges. This program is designed to educate and raise awareness about the importance of maintaining the health of women's vital organs, as well as providing information on proper nutrition and healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth. The ultimate goal of the program is to enhance the life expectancy of women and ensure better health outcomes for both mothers and children in Rajasthan.

In its efforts, the Anti-Dowry program emerged from the awareness of several women's activist groups about the importance of gender equality, as the dowry practice has been torturing women in India. This program collaborates with various stakeholder groups, successfully raising public awareness about the importance of gender equality by eliminating the discriminatory practices that cause it. The program is expected to create a safer and more conducive social environment for protecting women within marriage. Although the program can be considered successful, its results are still not satisfying. The decrease in dowry death cases in India takes a considerable amount of time. However, at least this decline gradually shows an improvement in the welfare of women in India. Therefore, this program must continue to be implemented sustainably so that its impact can persist in the long term (Octaviani and Azizah, 2023).

4.3. The Indian Government's Efforts to Address Dowry Death Cases

In an effort to address the numerous cases of violence against women in India, the Indian government signed the CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) on July 30, 1980, and ratified it on July 9, 1993. CEDAW is an international human rights treaty that obligates countries to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas and promote equal rights between men and women. This convention was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and is often referred to as the international bill of rights for women (UN Women Asia and the Pacific, CEDAW).

The preamble of CEDAW states that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality and respects the dignity of women as human beings. This discrimination has led to violence, particularly domestic violence. The primary goal of CEDAW is to protect and promote the rights of women at the international level. This has been addressed by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), a body established in 1947 by the UN to provide advice and formulate policies aimed at improving the quality of life and the status of women (Cikita, Nizmi, and Olyvia, 2023). India's focus in ratifying this convention was to tackle violence against women in the country, address discriminatory provisions in domestic law, and implement laws that protect women's rights.

According to India's periodic report to the CEDAW Committee in 2012, the central government has made efforts to address violence against women by launching various programs to eliminate gender discrimination. One of these efforts is to eliminate gender-related stereotypes or perceptions through media involvement and education in schools. Practices such as child marriage, sati, sex-selective abortion, and schemes like sumangali or child labor have been prohibited by law and supported by programs and community engagement. Additionally, the government also encourages women to actively participate in various fields, such as the legislative and military sectors (Pertiwi, Hidayat, and Rizky, 2021).

In addressing the issues of dowry death, India's ratification of CEDAW has not fully changed dowry practices, as they continue, especially in rural areas of India. However, India continues to make efforts by amending and creating new legal regulations that align with the principles of CEDAW. Despite these efforts, the number of dowry death cases remains high and continues to be a serious concern.

The Indian government has recognized the severity of the issues caused by the dowry tradition, which has resulted in many cases of dowry death. In response, the government has taken various measures to address this issue. One significant step was through

legislative policy. In 1961, India enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act, aimed at banning the practice of giving or demanding dowry in any form. This law was an important initial effort to curb this harmful practice. However, despite being in place for several decades, its implementation has not always been successful, and various cases of dowry deaths continue to occur. This is due to several factors, including weak law enforcement, lack of public awareness, and the victims' inability to report violations.

The government continues to work on strengthening penalties for those involved in the dowry practice. Measures taken include increasing prison sentences for those participating in dowry practices and tightening legal processes to ensure that perpetrators face appropriate punishment. In addition, the government is also focusing on raising public awareness about this law. Awareness campaigns are conducted through various media, including television, radio, and digital platforms, to ensure that the general public understands the negative impact of dowry and the importance of complying with the law.

In addition to legislative policies, the government of India is also striving to improve women's access to education and employment opportunities. Education and economic independence play a crucial role in reducing dowry deaths. By providing better education to women, they not only acquire knowledge and skills but also become more aware of their rights. Education helps women understand that they do not have to submit to dowry demands, equipping them with the tools to reject such practices.

Moreover, access to employment is equally important. When women have jobs and income of their own, they become more economically independent and no longer rely on dowry as a means to secure financial stability. The Indian government has launched various training and entrepreneurship programs specifically for women, designed to enhance their skills and provide opportunities for them to start their own businesses. These programs not only help women become financially independent but also boost their confidence and ability to resist excessive dowry demands.

Overall, the government of India recognizes that addressing the issue of dowry deaths requires a comprehensive approach. In addition to stricter law enforcement and increased awareness, empowering women through education and economic opportunities is a key step toward creating long-term change. With the implementation of these policies, it is hoped that the number of dowry deaths will be significantly reduced in the future.

4.4. Legal Basis for Address Dowry Death Cases in India

After India's independence, a number of laws were implemented to protect women, issued by the Indian government long before India ratified CEDAW. These laws address dowry-related violence, including abuse and murder of brides. Here are some of the laws and amendments made by the Indian government to prohibit dowry or dowry-related practices :

- 1. Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961** strengthens various anti-dowry laws already enacted in several states. This law establishes sanctions in Section 3 for anyone who gives, receives, or assists in giving or receiving dowry. The punishment can be a minimum of five years in prison and a fine of over 15,000 or the equivalent of the dowry received (Puspham, 2022). In this law, dowry is defined as valuable property or security given or agreed to be given in connection with a marriage. The punishment for giving or receiving dowry does not apply to gifts given at the time of marriage without any request. This law also prescribes punishment for those who directly or indirectly demand dowry, with a minimum prison sentence of six months, extendable up to two years, and a fine of 10,000. If the dowry is received by someone other than the bride, it must be transferred to the bride. Based on its authority to frame regulations to achieve the goals of this law, the Indian government established the "Maintenance of Lists of Gifts for Brides and Grooms" regulations in 1985. Additionally, there have been several amendments to the Dowry Prohibition Act at the state level (Puspham, 2022).
- 2. The Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act 1984** was amended in 1984, 1985, and 1986. These amendments provided a legal framework to penalize those who give or

receive dowry in large amounts. In the event of a divorce, the dowry must be returned. For those involved in dowry-related deaths, Section 304B of the 1986 amendment mandates a minimum prison sentence of 7 years if it is proven that the wife was killed due to dowry issues. Overall, the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act of 1984 reaffirms the Indian government's commitment to protecting women's rights and ensuring justice for those who fall victim to unethical and potentially harmful dowry practices.

3. **The Criminal Law Act of 1983** is a criminal law enacted in India in 1983. This law specifically defines cruelty, which includes violations under Section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code. Section 498-A specifically addresses cases where a wife or other family members, such as a sister-in-law, are subjected to cruelty related to dowry demands. Examples of such cruelty include coercion to provide dowry or assets to the husband or his family, discriminatory treatment or oppression related to dowry issues, or even threats or acts of physical or mental violence against family members connected to dowry demands. The purpose of this law is to protect women, who are often the victims in dowry-related matters. By defining cruelty as an offense punishable under the law, the act provides a solid legal basis for taking firm action against perpetrators of violence or oppression related to dowry demands. With the enactment of the Criminal Law Act of 1983, particularly Section 498-A, the Indian government demonstrates its commitment to protecting women's rights and delivering justice to those who are victims of cruelty related to dowry issues. This law is also part of a broader effort to combat practices that harm women and to promote the principles of equality and justice within the Indian legal system (Cikita, Nizmi, and Olyvia, 2023).
4. **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005** was passed by the Indian Parliament on September 13, 2005, and came into effect on October 26, 2006, to provide a civil legal remedy for protecting women from domestic violence in India (Cikita, Nizmi, and Olyvia, 2023). The Domestic Violence Act covers all forms of physical, verbal, emotional, economic, and sexual violence, and is part of anti-dowry laws. Section 3 of the Domestic Violence Act specifically addresses any form of harassment, injury, or harm caused to force a woman to meet unlawful dowry demands. Some general protective measures included in the Domestic Violence Act are (Puspham, 2022) :
 - Protection orders, which prohibit someone from committing domestic violence.
 - Residence orders, which evict someone from a shared household.
 - Custody orders, granting custody of a child.
 - Compensation orders, directing compensation payments.

The primary purpose of this law is to protect women from domestic violence committed by their husbands. The law emphasizes that the main issue behind violence against women in India is dowry. Therefore, the law is expected to be an effective tool for addressing dowry-related deaths. The CEDAW Committee itself acknowledges that the formation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act is a crucial step for India in advocating for and securing the rights of women in the country (Cikita, Nizmi, and Olyvia, 2023). In its efforts, the Indian government has also implemented public policies, including regulations, laws, and initiatives to raise awareness through education and other means.

4.5. **Factors Decreasing Dowry Death Cases in India 2019-2022**

As time has progressed, the number of dowry death cases in India has continued to rise each year, with an increasing number of incidents involving violence, murder, and other threats faced by wives from their husbands and their husbands' families. However, based on the graph presented in the previous sub-chapter, it shows that between 2019 and 2022, dowry death cases in India have significantly decreased. Therefore, in this sub-chapter, the author will discuss the factors that have contributed to the reduction of dowry death cases in India from 2019 to 2022.

In addressing the issue of the dowry tradition and improving the status of women in India, the government plays a significant role. One important policy that needs to be implemented is related to selective gender-based abortion, the killing of female infants, and the violence and murders of brides that arise from the dowry tradition. The practice of giving and receiving dowry leads to the perception of male children as assets, while female children are often seen as burdens. This results in discrimination against girls even before they are born.

The Indian government has implemented various policies, both directly related to dowry and otherwise. They have banned the practice of dowry through several regulations, such as the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Indian Penal Code, and The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. Additionally, the government has amended customary laws, including Hindu laws that were considered harmful and discriminatory toward women. For example, women in India now have the right to file for divorce and inherit property. Dowry has been declared illegal, and both the giver and receiver of dowry can face imprisonment and fines. If someone is found guilty of killing their wife due to dowry demands, the perpetrator can be sentenced to a minimum of seven years in prison (Oktaviani, 2017).

The government is also working to address discrimination against women by implementing various programs in the areas of education and healthcare. It aims to prohibit practices such as selective abortion, the sumangali scheme, child labor, and child marriage. State governments also play a role in implementing policies aimed at protecting women and improving their quality of life. Some policies enforced by state governments include banning ultrasounds to prevent selective abortion, prohibiting abortion and the killing of female infants, providing incentives for girls, incorporating awareness of dowry in school curricula, and implementing the Cradle Baby program (Oktaviani, 2017).

India has implemented nearly all public policy instruments, including regulations, sanctions, punishments, as well as raising awareness through education, and more. However, the government's policies to address the issue of dowry deaths have not been fully effective, as the number of victims remains high year after year. Some regulations that have been introduced include allowing gifts as a substitute for dowry and imposing penalties on those who give or receive dowry (Oktaviani, 2017). The efforts of the Indian government are also supported by international organizations and women's rights activists in India, based on a feminist perspective. They work to protect women's rights and uphold the belief that women should be protected and have equality with men. One such international organization working with India is United Nations Women. The presence of UN Women in India is a response to the cases of violence against women in the country. UN Women, in collaboration with the Indian government, implements programs to reduce cases of violence against women, such as women's empowerment and training for the police and female military personnel (Oktaviani, 2017).

The Indian government, together with UN Women, has made significant efforts to address this issue through various policies, programs, education, training, and campaigns aimed at changing social paradigms and raising public awareness. As a result, more women now have better economic skills, leading to positive changes within their communities. Through close collaboration, they have been able to reach more people and strengthen efforts for prevention and protection for victims of dowry deaths. Although there is still much work to be done, these steps provide hope that in the future, dowry practices can be reduced, and women in India can live in greater safety and dignity (Ridha, 2023).

In this context, UN Women plays a crucial role as a movement for change in efforts to combat the dowry practice in India. The Anti-Dowry movement in India has significantly developed and involves various sectors of society. Non-governmental organizations, women's activists, academics, and the government all play key roles in this endeavor. The movement has successfully raised public awareness about the dangers of dowry practices and has pushed for stronger laws to protect women's rights. Several regions in India have adopted stricter Anti-Dowry laws to eradicate the dowry practice. Social media campaigns and public demonstrations have also been integral to this movement. Through social media platforms, messages about gender equality and the dangers of dowry can be spread widely

and rapidly. Demonstrations and public protests help draw attention from the media and the public, as well as apply additional pressure on the government and policymakers to take firmer action (Ridha, 2023).

These programs help raise public awareness and change societal attitudes regarding gender equality. As a result, there has been an increase in social support for women who reject dowry and greater social pressure on those who continue to practice it. This social support is important as it empowers women to reject dowry practices without fear of social stigma or violence. On the other hand, the social pressure on those who still practice dowry helps reduce the number of such cases and encourages a shift in societal attitudes. Overall, the success of these efforts shows how collaboration between various groups in society can create significant social change. By continuing to strengthen laws, raise awareness, and change social norms, the anti-dowry movement in India can continue to progress towards the elimination of dowry practices and the achievement of greater gender equality.

4.6. Collaboration between UN Women and the Government of India

The Indian government has been working to improve its legal regulations to reduce the rise in dowry cases. Some of the policies implemented include increasing women's participation in the military, legislature, and other sectors. Additionally, the government has banned the practice of dowry and amended traditional laws that still support this custom. However, these legal changes involve complex procedures, which require significant time and money. This is one of the reasons why dowry cases and female feticide continue to rise. Furthermore, the judicial system and law enforcement in India are considered ineffective in enforcing existing laws and are seen as not fully supporting women as victims (Sajid, 2023). UN Women, as a UN agency focused on gender equality and women's empowerment, has been working to enhance women's leadership roles and their participation in maintaining security and peace.

UN Women's presence in India to address violence related to dowry death is carried out through collaboration with the Indian government, civil society, local partners, and various other organizations (Sajid, 2023). This effort aims to develop specialized programs focused on eliminating discrimination against women. Despite these efforts, there are still challenges because most people continue to follow the long-standing tradition of giving dowry and still uphold the patriarchal system. However, the collaboration between the Indian government and UN Women has strengthened efforts to tackle dowry death in India. By working together in a coordinated and strategic manner, the government and UN Women have been able to reach more individuals and engage various stakeholders in preventing and addressing dowry death cases.

The implementation of the anti-dowry program has shown positive progress, including increased public awareness of the dangers of dowry practices and their negative impact on women. Additionally, there has been a rise in police reports related to dowry cases and violence against women, as well as greater female participation in the economy, decision-making, and leadership in India. This indicates that the anti-dowry program has indirectly contributed to improving the well-being of women in India (Octaviani and Azizah, 2023). UN Women, as an international organization, shares the same goals as CEDAW, which are to eliminate discrimination against women and advocate for women's human rights at a global level. UN Women plays a crucial role in India by promoting gender-responsive planning and budgeting. The Gender-Responsive Budgeting program has led to various advocacy initiatives with government stakeholders, including the Ministry of Finance. UN Women has supported all initiatives of the Ministry of Women and Child Development to achieve gender equality, particularly in reducing discrimination against women in India. Additionally, UN Women organized three workshops across India in 2009 on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in collaboration with relevant ministries and civil society (Pertiwi, Hidayat, and Rizky, 2021).

Additionally, UN Women collaborates with elected female representatives and helps educate them about their rights so they can influence justice and public services (Pertiwi, Hidayat, and Rizky, 2021). Together with the NGO CARE, UN Women also supports the

Indian government by developing programs in advocacy, economics, education, and healthcare to help address the issue of dowry and violence against women in India in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Another example of this collaboration is the training program provided by UN Women for legal officers and law enforcement personnel in India (Ridha, 2023). This initiative has increased the government's awareness of violence against women and improved their ability to handle dowry death cases more effectively. Dowry death in India is a serious issue that requires urgent attention and decisive action. The Indian government, together with UN Women, has been working hard to address this problem through various policies, programs, and campaigns aimed at shifting social perceptions and raising public awareness. Through close cooperation, they have been able to reach more individuals and strengthen efforts in prevention and protection for victims of dowry death (Ridha, 2023).

Based on the number of dowry death cases in India from 2019 to 2022, there has been a decline, indicating that public awareness of the dangers of dowry-related violence has significantly increased. However, the Indian government still needs to strengthen its efforts and policies to ensure that violence and deaths caused by dowry can be addressed more quickly. The efforts made by UN Women, together with NGOs and the Indian government, have brought new hope in addressing violence against women, particularly those related to dowry practices. This collaboration highlights the importance of cooperation between various stakeholders in tackling complex social issues. One positive impact of these efforts is the growing awareness among men about the challenges and conditions faced by women. Many of them have started to change their attitudes and perspectives toward women. This shift is significant, as it shows that men also play a crucial role in the fight for women's empowerment (Ridha, 2023).

Although the number of cases remains high, with around 6,000 reported cases, this decline represents significant progress compared to previous years. However, many cases still go unreported, especially among women in rural areas who are unaware of their legal rights. Most rural women do not fully acknowledge the issues they face and often feel that their self-worth is too low to claim their rights. As a result, they frequently ignore opportunities to file complaints in court (Sharma and Christ, 2022). Therefore, increased awareness and changing attitudes within society will make a real impact in reducing violence against women. However, these efforts are far from over. The still high number of cases indicates that the fight to eliminate gender-based violence and achieve full freedom for women must continue and be strengthened. Therefore, it is essential to continue promoting and strengthening these efforts.

5. CONCLUSION

UN Women, in collaboration with other UN agencies, has taken active steps to address dowry death through various initiatives, including the Anti-Dowry program aimed at eliminating the practice of dowry. Between 2019 and 2022, cases of dowry death significantly decreased, reflecting growing public awareness of the negative impacts of dowry practices. The Indian government has implemented policies such as the Dowry Prohibition Act and ratified CEDAW to safeguard women's rights. Alongside organizations like CARE, UN Women has executed programs in advocacy, economics, education, and health to empower women. Although there has been a decline, dowry death cases still amount to over 6,000 annually, making it a critical issue. Many cases go unreported, especially in rural areas where women are less aware of their legal rights. Despite the practice of dowry being declared illegal in 1961 due to its devastating consequences, it remains deeply entrenched in Indian culture and persists in modern times. Implementing existing policies and programs often faces challenges due to cultural and social resistance.

Opportunities exist to enhance awareness of gender equality through public education and campaigns. The Indian government has worked to increase women's access to education and employment, as education and economic independence are key factors in reducing dowry deaths. Education can help women realize that they are not obligated to comply with dowry demands. Male involvement is also crucial in ending the oppression of

women and advocating for their emancipation to achieve equality. Strengthening the enforcement of dowry prohibition laws and protecting women's rights remains essential. The deeply rooted dowry culture, which has persisted for thousands of years, poses a significant challenge to eradicating this practice. The struggle for lower-caste rights continues to impact the effectiveness of empowerment programs. Women in rural areas often face greater barriers to accessing their rights, including the right to report violence or dowry-related oppression. Additionally, societal resistance to the social and cultural changes needed to abolish dowry deaths remains a persistent obstacle.

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