

## Uncovering the Drivers of Women Criminal Victimization: A study from Horana Police Division Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

This study investigated the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors contributing to the criminal victimization of women within the Horana Police Division, Sri Lanka from 2019-2023. Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a significant issue in this area with a notable prevalence that highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions. Despite existing research on GBV in Sri Lanka, there is a critical gap in understanding the specific socio-cultural and institutional dynamics within smaller, less urbanized regions like the Horana Police Division. This study addressed this gap by providing a focused examination of these factors in a rural setting, underrepresented in previous studies. This mixed-method study combined quantitative methods such as surveys and statistical data analysis with qualitative methods such as interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This approach enabled the exploration of complex issues by capturing both numerical trends and detailed descriptive insights. The findings reveal that entrenched socio-cultural norms are a predominant factor in driving women's victimization. These norms often normalise abusive behavior and reinforce male dominance creating a hostile environment where women are systematically disempowered. Economic dependency further exacerbates this vulnerability as many women reported a lack of financial independence and control over household finances. This financial reliance limits their ability to leave abusive relationships, perpetuating the cycle of violence. The study also highlights the inadequacy of institutional responses to GBV. Respondents indicated that law enforcement responses were ineffective, citing limited legal awareness and insufficient support services as major obstacles. The absence of accessible healthcare and support systems further undermines women's ability to seek help. In conclusion, GBV in the Horana Police Division is sustained by deeply rooted socio-cultural norms, economic dependency, and inadequate institutional responses. Addressing this issue requires socio-cultural reforms, economic empowerment initiatives, and strengthening institutional frameworks to provide effective support.

**Keywords:** *criminal victimization of women, drivers of women victimization, gender based violence*