

# **Intimate Partner Violence and Navigating the Social, Institutional and Justice Systems in Sri Lanka**

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**Background:** Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) has been a prevalent topic in Sri Lanka over the past few decades. Although Sri Lanka has implemented formal institutional systems to combat IPV, survivors remain hesitant to seek out help. The purpose of this study is to find out the reasons why victims don't seek help, what are the gaps in the current system and what changes can be implemented to reduce and prevent IPV.

**Method:** A qualitative study using feminist methodology was conducted interviewing professionals who work either directly or indirectly with victims and survivors of intimate partner violence. These interviews were then transcribed, coded line by line, and analyzed.

**Results:** Survivors of violence do not seek out formal institutional help due to the stigma attached with IPV, lack of resources and faith in the system, as well as opting to get informal institutional support instead. Survivors do not seek formal support due to the gaps within the formal system which are: the lack of training received by the stakeholders, lack of victim services available, laws that lack depth in protecting victims, uncoordinated stakeholders and the lack of education around IPV.

**Conclusion:** Even though there are systems in place to combat IPV, there are not enough resources to combat all forms of IPV. In order to address this gap, Sri Lanka needs to improve its victim support services, reform the legal system to implement tougher punishments to include all forms of IPV, increase sensitization and training of all stakeholders, and enhance collaboration among stakeholders.

**Key words:** Intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, formal systems, informal systems.