



## Significance Of Studying The Low Conviction Rate And Its Implications In Increasing Rate Of Dowry Deaths In India

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### 1. Brief overview of dowry system in India

Marriage is a religious rite and a legally recognized partnership between a man and a woman. But are all marriages protected by the rule of law? Most weddings are forbidden since they lead to dowry and complicate the relationship. A small group can get a lot done "under the table, behind the eyes of the law" at times. It was impossible for anyone to even acquire a small taste. Thus, legal authorities have no effect.

However, we are well into the twenty-first century, and dowry practices do not appear to have decreased or been eliminated altogether. Many individuals are aware of the seriousness of the crime of dowry exchange. And yet, they persist in repeating the same error. But if you keep trying, it's no longer an accident; it's a serious crime for which you'll likely face severe consequences. The dowry system in India refers to the practice where the bride's family is expected to provide significant financial or material gifts to the groom's family at the time of marriage. While dowry has historical and cultural roots, it has evolved into a system of demands and expectations that can lead to various forms of exploitation and abuse.<sup>i</sup> Dowry-related crimes in India encompass a range of offenses, including dowry harassment, dowry deaths, and domestic violence. Dowry harassment involves the mistreatment or harassment of the bride by her husband or in-laws for not meeting dowry demands. Dowry deaths, also known as "bride burning" or "dowry murders," occur when a woman is killed or driven to suicide by her husband or in-laws due to their dissatisfaction with the dowry.

Dowry-related crimes in India are a significant social issue that has been prevalent for many years. Dowry is a traditional practice in which the bride's family provides gifts, goods, or money to the groom's family as a condition of marriage. However, in many cases, this practice has taken an exploitative turn, leading to various forms of abuse, violence, and even death of women.

#### 1.1. Dowry: An Evil System in India

Dowry refers to the transfer of gifts, property, or money from the bride's family to the groom's family as a customary practice in certain cultures and societies. It is often a condition or expectation set by the groom's family as part of marriage arrangements. The purpose of dowry varies across different regions and communities, but it is generally intended to provide financial support or security for the newly married couple.

The evil system of dowry is rooted deep in Indian society. However, it has taken a totally different form from which it started. It basically started as a system of customary present giving with love and affection to the daughter. In olden days, it was customary to give some presents to the bride and bridegroom and his family at the time of marriage as *Var dakshina*. The money or other gifts were given by the parents of the bride and their relations out of affection and specially with a view to provide the couple with something to fall back upon in case of need.

Moving from the simple concept of *Var Dakshina* and putting an economic interpretation to this custom, it can be said that behind it was the existence of an agricultural economy and the practice of saving the fragmentation of land as the girl would leave her family and join the husband's family and therefore should not be given a share in the agricultural property in the form of land.

The daughter then was not entitled to co-share in the joint family properties when she had a brother. Hence, the father out of affection or other consideration used to give some cash or kind to his daughter at the time of marriage. "The right of the father to give a small portion of the family properties to be given to the daughter at the time of marriage was recognized. But unfortunately, over the years a new practice developed. The boy and his family members started demanding dowry as a matter of right. The demand often continued even after the marriage".

Dowry can include various items such as cash, jewellery<sup>ii</sup>, household goods, land, or other assets. The value and contents of the dowry can vary depending on the social and economic status of the families involved, as well as cultural traditions.

In some cases, the dowry is given voluntarily by the bride's family as a gesture of goodwill, while in other instances, it may be demanded or expected by the groom's family.

It is important to note that while dowry practices have historical and cultural roots, they can also lead to various social issues and abuses. In many instances, dowry expectations can become a source of financial burden, exploitation, and gender-based violence, such as dowry harassment or dowry-related crimes. Several countries, including India, have enacted laws to prohibit dowry and dowry-related offenses in order to address these issues and protect the rights of women.

## 1.2. Dowry Death

In Indian law, dowry death is defined under Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Dowry death refers to the death of a woman within seven years of marriage where it is shown that soon before her death, she has faced cruelty or harassment by her husband or his relatives in connection with dowry demands.

According to the law, for an act to be considered a dowry death, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

- **The death of a woman:** It refers to the unnatural or suspicious death of a married woman, including cases of suicide or homicide.
- **Within seven years of marriage:** The death must occur within seven years from the date of the woman's marriage.
- **Cruelty or harassment:** It must be proved that the woman faced cruelty or harassment by her husband or his relatives. Cruelty refers to any willful conduct that is likely to drive the woman to commit suicide or cause grave injury or danger to her life, limb, or health. Harassment can include both physical and mental abuse.
- **Dowry demands:** It must be established that the cruelty or harassment was related to demands for dowry. Dowry demands can include requests for money, property, gifts, or any other valuable assets made by the husband or his family to the woman or her family.

Dowry death is a serious offense in India and carries severe penalties. If a person is found guilty of causing a dowry death, they can be punished with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years, which may extend to life imprisonment. Additionally, the law allows for the prosecution of other relatives who are involved in the offense.

It is important to note that dowry death is a distinct offense under the law and carries its own legal provisions. It is different from other offenses related to cruelty against married women, such as cruelty under Section 498A of the IPC, which encompasses a broader range of acts and does not require the death of the woman.

The most recent statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) states that there were 6,753 dowry-related crimes reported in 2021. Uttar Pradesh had the most cases (2,222), followed by Bihar (1,000). While statistics present a grim picture, victims of dowry harassment seldom find hope in the occasional verdict in a case involving a dowry-related fatality.<sup>iii</sup>

## 2. Dowry-related crimes: Socio-Legal Consequences and Challenges

### 2.1. Dowry-related violence

Despite the existence of laws prohibiting dowry and dowry-related violence, cases of dowry harassment, dowry deaths, and domestic violence related to dowry demands continue to occur. These acts of violence are often fuelled by the groom's family's greed for more dowry or dissatisfaction with the amount received.

### 2.2. Consequences for women

Women who are unable to meet dowry demands or whose families cannot fulfil dowry expectations may face severe consequences. This can include physical and emotional abuse, marital discord, isolation, threats, and even murder. Dowry deaths, also known as dowry murders or bride burning, occur when a woman is killed or dies under suspicious circumstances due to dowry-related disputes.

### 2.3. Legal framework

India has enacted several laws to address dowry-related crimes. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, prohibits the giving or receiving of dowry. Additionally, Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code criminalizes cruelty against a woman by her husband or his relatives, which includes dowry harassment. These legal provisions aim to deter and punish those involved in dowry-related offenses.

### 2.4. Challenges in enforcement

Despite the legal framework, dowry-related crimes persist due to various challenges in their enforcement. Factors such as societal norms, economic dependence of women, weak law enforcement, corruption, and social pressures often hinder effective implementation of the laws. Victims may also face obstacles in reporting such crimes due to fear, stigma, and lack of support.

## 2.5. Awareness and prevention efforts

Efforts are being made to raise awareness about dowry-related crimes and promote prevention. Various non-governmental organizations, women's rights activists, and community groups work towards educating women, families, and society about the illegality and harmful consequences of dowry practices. These initiatives aim to empower women, challenge traditional beliefs, and advocate for gender equality.

## 2.6. Need for holistic approach

Addressing dowry-related crimes requires a holistic approach that combines legal reforms, awareness campaigns, support services for victims, and community mobilization. This includes improving law enforcement, providing safe spaces and counselling for victims, promoting gender equality, and empowering women through education and economic opportunities.

It is important to note that dowry-related crimes are not representative of all marriages in India, and many couples reject dowry practices. However, persistent cases of dowry-related violence underscore the need for continued efforts to eliminate this harmful practice and ensure the safety and well-being of women in India.

These crimes are driven by various factors, including gender inequality, patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and social pressures. Despite legal provisions against dowry and dowry-related offenses, such as the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 and subsequent amendments, these practices persist in many parts of the country.

Dowry-related crimes have severe consequences for women, leading to physical and psychological trauma, loss of life, and perpetuating a cycle of violence and discrimination. Efforts to address dowry-related crimes in India involve legislative measures, awareness campaigns, women empowerment programs, and improved law enforcement and judicial processes. However, challenges remain in changing deep-rooted societal attitudes and achieving justice for the victims.

## 3. Importance of studying the low conviction rate and its implications

Studying the low conviction rate in dowry and related death cases in India is of utmost importance due to its significant implications for multiple stakeholders, including the victims, their families, the justice system, and society as a whole. The following are some key reasons highlighting the importance of this study:

### 3.1. Ensuring Justice

The primary goal of any justice system is to ensure justice for the victims and hold the perpetrators accountable. Understanding the reasons behind the low conviction rate helps identify the gaps and shortcomings in the investigative and judicial processes. By addressing these issues, the justice system can strive to provide timely and fair justice to the victims and their families.

Studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is crucial for ensuring justice within a legal system. The conviction rate refers to the percentage of cases where the accused is found guilty or convicted. A low conviction rate implies that a significant number of individuals who have committed crimes are not being held accountable for their actions. Here are some key reasons why studying the low conviction rate is important:

**a) Identifying defects in the justice system:** Examining the low conviction rate helps in identifying flaws or weaknesses within the justice system. It allows policymakers, legal professionals, and researchers to understand the factors contributing to low conviction rates, such as inadequate investigation techniques, evidentiary challenges, procedural inefficiencies, or systemic biases. By identifying these issues, necessary reforms can be implemented to improve the overall effectiveness of the justice system.

**b) Addressing the root causes of low conviction rates:** Low conviction rates can stem from various factors, including lack of resources, inefficient processes, corruption, or bias. By studying these causes, authorities can develop strategies to address them effectively. For example, if the low conviction rate is due to insufficient resources for investigations, allocating more funds to law enforcement agencies or improving forensic capabilities can help enhance the likelihood of successful prosecutions.

**c) Enhancing public trust and confidence:** A justice system with a low conviction rate can erode public trust and confidence. When individuals perceive that criminals are not being held accountable for their actions, it undermines their faith in the legal system. Studying and addressing the reasons behind low conviction rates can help restore public trust by demonstrating a commitment to fairness, accountability, and the pursuit of justice.

**d) Ensuring deterrence and public safety:** A low conviction rate can diminish the deterrent effect of the legal system. If criminals believe that they are unlikely to face consequences for their actions, it can encourage further criminal behavior. By studying the low conviction rate, authorities can make necessary changes to increase the likelihood of successful prosecutions, which in turn acts as a deterrent and contributes to public safety.

**e) Safeguarding the rights of victims:** Victims of crimes deserve justice and closure. When the conviction rate is low, it can lead to a sense of injustice and frustration among victims. By studying the low conviction rate, policymakers can develop victim-centric reforms, including better victim support services, improvements in witness protection, or changes to legal procedures to ensure that victims' rights are respected and justice is served.

In summary, studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is essential for ensuring justice within a legal system. By identifying the underlying causes, appropriate reforms can be implemented to address systemic issues, enhance public trust, deter crime, and safeguard the rights of victims. Ultimately, a robust and effective justice system with a reasonable conviction rate is vital for maintaining a just and safe society.

### 3.2. Deterrence and Prevention

A low conviction rate sends a message that perpetrators can commit dowry-related crimes with impunity. This lack of accountability perpetuates the cycle of violence and encourages others to engage in similar acts. By studying the low conviction rate, strategies can be developed to improve deterrence and prevention efforts, creating a safer environment for potential victims.

Studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is crucial for the purposes of deterrence and prevention of future crimes. The conviction rate refers to the percentage of cases where the accused is found guilty or convicted. When the conviction rate is low, it can have significant implications for deterring criminal behavior and preventing future crimes. Here are some key reasons why studying the low conviction rate is important in terms of deterrence and prevention:

**a) Sending a strong message:** A high conviction rate sends a clear message to potential offenders that their actions will be met with consequences. When individuals see that the legal system effectively prosecutes and convicts criminals, it acts as a deterrent by making them think twice before engaging in illegal activities. Conversely, a low conviction rate can undermine this deterrent effect, potentially emboldening individuals to commit crimes with reduced fear of punishment. Studying the low conviction rate helps identify factors that weaken deterrence and enables the development of strategies to strengthen it.

**b) Identifying gaps in law enforcement and investigation:** Low conviction rates may be indicative of gaps or deficiencies in law enforcement and investigation processes. By studying these rates, policymakers and law enforcement agencies can identify areas that need improvement, such as inadequate training, resource allocation, or outdated investigative techniques. Addressing these gaps can enhance the ability to gather evidence, build strong cases, and increase the chances of successful prosecutions, thereby deterring potential offenders.

**c) Targeting high-risk areas and crimes:** Analyzing the low conviction rate can help identify specific areas or types of crimes where convictions are particularly low. This information can guide law enforcement agencies in prioritizing resources and efforts in these high-risk areas. By focusing on improving conviction rates in these areas, authorities can send a strong message to potential offenders that they will face serious consequences for their actions, leading to a greater deterrence effect.

**d) Enhancing public perception of justice:** The perception of an effective and fair justice system is essential for deterrence. When the public has confidence that criminals will be convicted and punished, it acts as a deterrent for potential offenders. However, a low conviction rate can erode public trust in the justice system, leading to diminished deterrence. By studying the low conviction rate and implementing necessary reforms, authorities can restore public faith in the justice system and strengthen its ability to prevent crimes.

**e) Promoting proactive crime prevention measures:** A low conviction rate should not only be seen as a reflection of failures in the justice system but also as an opportunity to adopt proactive crime prevention measures. By analyzing the factors contributing to low conviction rates, policymakers can develop strategies to address the root causes of criminal behavior. These strategies may include initiatives such as community outreach programs, education, social support systems, and rehabilitation efforts. By focusing on prevention and addressing the underlying causes of crime, the reliance on the justice system for convictions can be reduced, leading to a higher overall conviction rate.

In summary, studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is important for deterrence and prevention of future crimes. By identifying gaps in law enforcement, targeting high-risk areas, enhancing public perception of justice, and promoting proactive crime prevention measures, authorities can work towards increasing the conviction rate and creating a safer society. A higher conviction rate serves as a powerful deterrent, reinforcing the notion that criminal actions will not go unpunished and ultimately contributing to the prevention of future crimes.

### 3.3. Trust in the Justice System

A low conviction rate erodes public trust in the justice system. When people perceive that perpetrators can escape punishment, they may lose faith in seeking legal recourse. This study can help identify factors contributing to low conviction rates, and by addressing these factors, the justice system can regain public trust and confidence.

Studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is crucial for maintaining and restoring trust in the justice system. Trust in the justice system is essential for a functioning society, as it ensures that individuals have confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of legal processes. Here are some key reasons why studying the low conviction rate is important in terms of trust in the justice system:

**f) Transparency and accountability:** Studying the low conviction rate helps shed light on the performance of the justice system. It allows for an assessment of whether the system is functioning effectively and holding individuals accountable for their actions. By examining the factors contributing to low conviction rates, policymakers and stakeholders can identify areas that require improvement, ensuring transparency and accountability within the justice system. This process helps maintain trust by demonstrating a commitment to addressing shortcomings and delivering justice.

**g) Perception of fairness and impartiality:** A low conviction rate can raise concerns about the fairness and impartiality of the justice system. If individuals perceive that certain groups or individuals are disproportionately benefiting from lenient convictions or that systemic biases exist, it can erode trust in the system. By studying the low conviction rate, authorities can identify any biases or disparities in the application of the law. This knowledge can then be used to implement measures that promote fairness, equity, and equal treatment under the law, ultimately bolstering trust.

**h) Restoring public confidence:** When the conviction rate is low, it can lead to public skepticism and disillusionment with the justice system. This lack of confidence can have wide-ranging implications, including reduced cooperation with law enforcement, increased likelihood of vigilantism, and a diminished willingness to report crimes. Studying the low conviction rate and working towards improving it helps restore public confidence in the justice system. When individuals see that the system is actively addressing its shortcomings and striving for higher conviction rates, it fosters a sense of trust and encourages cooperation with law enforcement.

**i) Ensuring access to justice:** Low conviction rates can impact access to justice, particularly for marginalized communities or vulnerable individuals. If certain groups consistently face barriers in obtaining justice or have lower conviction rates compared to others, it can create a perception of an unjust system. By studying the low conviction rate, policymakers can identify any disparities in access to justice and work towards eliminating systemic barriers. This ensures that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal access to a fair and effective justice system, thereby enhancing trust.

**j) Strengthening legitimacy:** Trust is a fundamental pillar of the legitimacy of the justice system. When individuals have trust in the system, they are more likely to comply with laws, cooperate with investigations, and respect the outcomes of legal processes. Studying the low conviction rate and its implications allows for targeted reforms that can strengthen the legitimacy of the justice system. This, in turn, encourages public compliance and fosters a sense of justice being served, reinforcing trust in the system.

In summary, studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is crucial for maintaining and restoring trust in the justice system. By promoting transparency, fairness, and equal access to justice, addressing biases, and working towards higher conviction rates, authorities can bolster trust in the system. Trust in the justice system is vital for societal cohesion, cooperation with law enforcement, and the overall functioning of a just and equitable society.

### 3.4. Policy and Legal Reforms

Understanding the reasons behind the low conviction rate can inform policy and legal reforms. By identifying gaps in existing laws, procedures, and enforcement mechanisms, policymakers can develop targeted interventions to address these issues effectively. This can lead to the strengthening of legal provisions, improving investigative techniques, and streamlining the judicial process.

Studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is of great importance for informing policy and legal reforms. When the conviction rate is low, it indicates a significant gap between reported crimes and successful prosecutions. Examining this issue provides valuable insights that can drive necessary changes in policies, laws, and procedures. Here are key reasons why studying the low conviction rate is important for policy and legal reforms:

**a) Identifying systemic issues:** A low conviction rate may indicate underlying systemic issues within the justice system. By studying the factors contributing to low convictions, policymakers and legal experts can identify systemic flaws, such as inadequate legislation, procedural inefficiencies, or resource limitations. Understanding these issues helps in designing targeted reforms to address the root causes and improve the effectiveness of the legal system.

**b) Strengthening investigative processes:** Low conviction rates may stem from deficiencies in investigative processes. Studying these rates can help identify areas where investigations are falling short, such as evidence collection, forensic analysis, or witness testimony. By examining these weaknesses, authorities can implement reforms to enhance investigative techniques, improve evidence preservation, and strengthen the overall investigative process. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of successful prosecutions and higher conviction rates.

**c) Ensuring a fair and equitable legal system:** Studying the low conviction rate allows policymakers to assess the fairness and equity of the legal system. It helps in identifying potential biases or disparities in the application of laws, such as racial or socio-economic disparities. By analyzing these issues, policymakers can develop reforms that promote equal treatment under the law, eliminate systemic biases, and ensure a more equitable justice system.

**d) Legislative reforms:** Low conviction rates may indicate the need for legislative reforms. By studying the types of crimes with low conviction rates, policymakers can assess whether existing laws are effectively addressing emerging or evolving criminal activities. This knowledge can guide the development of new legislation or the amendment of existing laws to better align with societal needs and improve the chances of successful prosecutions.

**e) Allocating resources effectively:** Low conviction rates can also highlight resource constraints within the justice system. By studying these rates, policymakers can determine where additional resources, such as funding, personnel, or training, are needed to strengthen the prosecution process. This information helps in making informed decisions about resource allocation, ensuring that the justice system has the necessary tools and capabilities to increase conviction rates and deliver justice effectively.

**f) Evaluating the effectiveness of reforms:** Studying the low conviction rate allows policymakers to assess the impact of previous reforms and initiatives. By analyzing trends over time, policymakers can evaluate the effectiveness of implemented changes and determine whether further adjustments or new approaches are needed. This iterative process of studying and evaluating conviction rates helps in refining policies and legal reforms to achieve better outcomes.

In summary, studying the low conviction rate and its implications is essential for driving policy and legal reforms. By identifying systemic issues, improving investigative processes, ensuring fairness and equity, enacting legislative reforms, allocating resources effectively, and evaluating the impact of reforms, authorities can work towards improving conviction rates and strengthening the overall justice system. Through evidence-based reforms, policymakers can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the legal system, ensuring that justice is served and society is better protected.<sup>iv</sup>

### 3.5. Victim Support and Rehabilitation

Victims of dowry-related crimes often face numerous challenges, including trauma, social stigma, and financial difficulties. A low conviction rate further adds to their struggles, as they may feel discouraged and unsupported. By studying the low conviction rate, appropriate victim support mechanisms can be developed, including counseling services, financial assistance, and rehabilitation programs.

Studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is important for victim support and rehabilitation efforts. When the conviction rate is low, it can have significant implications for the experiences and needs of crime victims. Here are key reasons why studying the low conviction rate is important in terms of victim support and rehabilitation:

**a) Addressing the needs of victims:** Low conviction rates can impact the experiences and well-being of crime victims. When cases do not result in convictions, victims may feel a lack of justice and closure, which can have long-lasting emotional and psychological effects. By studying the low conviction rate, policymakers and support organizations can identify areas where improvements are needed in victim support services. This includes providing counseling, legal guidance, and other resources to help victims navigate the criminal justice process and cope with the aftermath of the crime.

**b) Enhancing victim participation:** Victims play a crucial role in the criminal justice process, and their participation can contribute to successful prosecutions. However, low conviction rates may discourage victims from reporting crimes or actively participating in investigations and trials. By studying the low conviction rate, authorities can identify barriers that hinder victim participation, such as fear of retribution, lack of trust in the system, or inadequate support services. Addressing these barriers through targeted reforms can empower victims, encourage their participation, and increase the likelihood of convictions.

**c) Improving investigative techniques:** Low conviction rates may indicate challenges in collecting and presenting evidence effectively. Studying the factors contributing to low convictions helps in identifying weaknesses in investigative techniques that may impact victim-centered prosecutions. By understanding these challenges, law enforcement agencies

can improve their methods for gathering evidence, working collaboratively with victims, and ensuring that their rights and needs are prioritized throughout the investigative process.

**d) Tailoring rehabilitation efforts:** Studying the low conviction rate provides insights into the types of cases and offenders that are less likely to result in convictions. This information can guide efforts to tailor rehabilitation programs for offenders who are not convicted or receive lenient sentences. By understanding the underlying reasons for low conviction rates, policymakers and rehabilitation services can develop targeted interventions to address the root causes of criminal behavior and reduce recidivism, ultimately promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders back into society.

**e) Strengthening legal protections:** Low conviction rates may highlight gaps in legal protections for victims. By studying these rates, policymakers can identify areas where legal reforms are needed to provide stronger protections for victims and witnesses. This can include measures such as enhancing victim rights, improving witness protection programs, or implementing specialized courts or procedures to address specific types of crimes. Strengthening legal protections not only supports victims but also contributes to creating a more conducive environment for successful prosecutions and higher conviction rates.

### 3.6. Societal Awareness and Change

Research on the low conviction rate in dowry and related death cases can contribute to raising public awareness about the persistence and severity of these crimes. It can help challenge societal attitudes, norms, and stereotypes that perpetuate dowry-related violence. Through education and awareness campaigns, society can be sensitized to the issue, fostering a collective effort to eliminate dowry-related crimes.

Studying the low conviction rate and understanding its implications is crucial for raising societal awareness and driving change. When the conviction rate is low, it signifies potential shortcomings within the justice system and highlights the need for societal reflection and action. Here are key reasons why studying the low conviction rate is important in terms of societal awareness and change:

**a) Fostering public discourse:** Examining the low conviction rate encourages public discussion and engagement on issues related to the justice system, crime, and societal values. It brings attention to the challenges faced by the legal system and prompts dialogue on the reasons behind low convictions, including systemic biases, resource limitations, or gaps in legislation. This public discourse helps raise awareness, promotes understanding, and mobilizes support for necessary reforms.

**b) Challenging societal norms and biases:** A low conviction rate may reveal underlying societal norms and biases that hinder the fair and equitable functioning of the justice system. By studying the factors contributing to low convictions, policymakers and communities can confront and address systemic biases, including those based on race, gender, socio-economic status, or other factors. This process helps foster societal change by challenging discriminatory attitudes and promoting a more inclusive and just society.

**c) Empowering marginalized communities:** Low conviction rates can disproportionately affect marginalized communities, leading to a sense of injustice and alienation. By studying the low conviction rate, policymakers and activists can shed light on disparities and inequalities within the justice system that impact these communities. This awareness can lead to targeted initiatives, reforms, and resources aimed at empowering marginalized communities, improving access to justice, and combating systemic barriers they face.

**d) Driving reform movements:** The study of low conviction rates can provide a catalyst for reform movements advocating for changes in policies, laws, and practices. When the public becomes aware of the shortcomings and implications of low convictions, it can mobilize pressure for systemic changes. Reform movements may emerge to advocate for criminal justice reforms, increased resources for law enforcement and legal aid, improvements in victim support services, or changes in sentencing practices. The study of low conviction rates helps fuel these movements and drives momentum for meaningful change.

**e) Promoting accountability and transparency:** Low conviction rates can undermine accountability within the justice system and erode public trust. By studying these rates and their implications, authorities and institutions can identify areas where accountability and transparency need to be strengthened. This can involve implementing mechanisms for oversight, increasing transparency in legal proceedings, or establishing independent review bodies. Promoting accountability and transparency not only improves the functioning of the justice system but also instills public confidence and promotes positive change.

#### 4. Conclusion

It's tragic that this cruel dowry practice persists despite thousands of protests and educated individuals in society. Although anti-dowry legislation has been passed, its impact on the incarcerated has been minimal at best. In many cultures, a dowry is required before a couple can get married. Because of how long it lasts, dowry-related arguments can escalate into acts of violence against women.

Dowry ensures that men will remain superior to women and that women will remain easy prey for oppression. This is introducing a great deal of disorder and discouragement into modern culture. And for low-income families, it's become a living hell. Infanticide seems to be on the rise. These unfortunate parents had no choice but to put an end to their daughter's life before she is born. Lacking a voice of protest, dowry-related killings of thousands of women in recent years go unabated. Between 2005 and 2012, dowry-related occurrences resulted in the deaths of 63,171 women, or about 7,896 deaths per year, 658 per month, and 22 per day. In India, dowry-related violence claimed the lives of about one woman every hour.<sup>v</sup>

In summary, studying the low conviction rate and its implications is important for victim support and rehabilitation efforts. By addressing the needs of victims, enhancing victim participation, improving investigative techniques, tailoring rehabilitation programs, and strengthening legal protections, authorities can work towards ensuring that victims are supported, their rights are respected, and they have confidence in the justice system. These efforts not only contribute to individual healing and well-being but also increase the chances of successful prosecutions and promote a more just and inclusive society.

In conclusion, studying the low conviction rate in dowry and related death cases in India is crucial for addressing the systemic challenges, ensuring justice, and bringing about meaningful change. By understanding the implications of the low conviction rate, stakeholders can work to improve the effectiveness of the justice system, protect the rights of victims, and create a society free from dowry-related violence.

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<sup>i</sup> Dowry, A Social Evil, Article published on Legal Services India website online available at <https://www.legalservicesindia.com/law/article/2103/15/DOWRY-A-Social-Evil-> dated 10/06/2023

<sup>ii</sup> Ish Kumar Magoo, An Eagle Eye on Dowry Demand Cruelty and Dowry death - An In-depth Study Of laws relating to Dowry, Capital Law House, Delhi (2004) page. 1-2

<sup>iii</sup> Dowry deaths: The institutionalisation of the practice of dowry in India, Article published on The Probe Online Newsletter available at <https://theprobe.in/stories/ncrb-data-reveals-glaring-details-on-dowry-deaths> dated 11/06/2023

<sup>iv</sup> Dowry and Dowry Death, Article by Surbhi Chaudhary published on Time of India Readers Blog, online available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/politiclaw/dowry-and-dowry-death-42574/>

<sup>v</sup> Dowry Death Cases In India, Article by Aastha Priya published on Legal Service India E-Journal online available at <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-9448-dowry-death-cases-in-india.html> dated 18/06/2023