

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIAN CONTEXT: CAUSES AND IMPACT ON FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women is not a new phenomenon; it is a primitive practice that has always been treated as a part and participle of socio cultural milieu and domestic violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon in different forms such as physical, emotional, religious, economic and mostly sexual abuse. According to the United Nations Declaration (1993), violence against women includes “any act of gender – based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

Domestic violence negatively affects victim’s physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health and may increase vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The impact of domestic violence against women on family may include child maltreatment, harmful use of alcohol, attitudes accepting of violence and gender inequality and also It may lead to socio – economic difficulties such as – a limited ability to take care of themselves or their children, an inability to work and to sustain wages and isolation due to domestic violence, which leads to a lack of participation in social and regular activities.

KEYWORDS: Abuse, Child Maltreatment, Gender Inequality, Isolation, Phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

Irrespective of class, race, and age we can see domestic violence against women all over the world, even it crossed religious and national boundaries. According to UNICEF INNOCENTI DIGEST (2000) – domestic violence has been defined as “ Violence which includes, violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and manifested through; Physical abuse such as beating and also includes traditional practices harmful to women such wife inheritance; Sexual abuse such as compel sex through threats, intimidation or physical force; Psychological abuse such as threats of abandonment, confinement to the home, verbal aggression and constant humiliation; Economic abuse which includes denial of money, refusal to financial contribution and control the access to health care employment etc.”

The most common type of violence against woman worldwide is “domestic violence” or the physical, emotional and /or sexual abuse of women by their intimate partners or ex-partners. Dowry harassment and wife inheritance are the other forms of violence, which are linked to traditional or customary practices and are limited to specific regions and communities.

If we look into the history, since ages women have been experiencing domestic violence and discrimination. Unequal power relations between men and women might have led to violence against women. It has been used as a social mechanism to force women to a subordinate position in the society when compared to men.

Domestic violence existed in all cultures, ethnicities, faiths, age groups, education levels, income levels, and sexual orientations. It can occur between mostly all kinds of couples i.e. married or unmarried; couples belong to rural and urban areas, between living together couples and between same sex couples (male and female).

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that globally 29% to 62% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their life time.

FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There is a wide range of coercive and abusive behaviors which is used by the batterers against their victims. Abusive behaviors used by batterers may result in physical injuries. While emotionally abusive behaviors may cause psychological damage to their victim. Different types of abusive behaviors will be adopted at different times by batterers. Even one incident of physical violence or the threat of such violence is enough to establish power and control over a partner. This power and control is then reinforced and strengthened by non-physical abusive and coercive behaviors.

Types of domestic violence include physical violence, sexual violence, economic control, psychological assault (including threats of violence and physical harm, attacks against property or pets and other acts of intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, and use of the children as a means of control), and emotional abuse.

Physical Violence

It is the most recognizable form of domestic violence. It involves the use of force against the victim which causes injury, whether minor or major. Pushing, throwing, kicking, grabbing, hitting, punching, beating, battering, slapping, pinching, biting, breaking bones, burning, assault with a weapon such as a knife or gun, shaking and murder etc. are the examples of this violence.

Psychological Violence

Psychological violence can be verbal or nonverbal. It is somehow more powerful abusive behavior than physical abuse. Sometimes psychological violence affects the victim very badly. It includes intimidation, threats of harm, and isolation. Examples include instilling fear in the victim and so on. Sometimes it causes damage to property and even death too.

Emotional Abuse

It is one of the worst forms of abuse. Batterers target their victims to create inferiority, fear, and low self-esteem in the minds of the victims. Even they insult, humiliate the victims to get control over them. Even some times emotional abuse may lead to other types of violence (such as physical, financial, sexual or psychological)

Sexual Abuse

It is a common form of domestic violence. Sexual assault, rape and harassment come under this type of violence. It includes sexual assault; sexual harassment and sexual exploitation are the different stages in this type of domestic violence. Sexual abuse is sometimes linked to physical abuse before or after the sexual activity.

Economic Abuse

It involves making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent on the abuser. Examples of economic abuse include preventing or forbidding an intimate partner from working or gaining an education, controlling the financial

resources, and withholding access to economic resources.

Spiritual Abuse

It is also one form of psychological abuse. Spiritual or religious beliefs will be misused to get control over their intimate partner, to fulfill their needs.

CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There are several factors to domestic violence. These factors differ in different communities and cultures. According to Murthy et.al. (2004) posited in their empirical study that numbers of family members, type of marriage and husband's education besides menstrual problem have significant influence on domestic violence. Many research studies have resulted that marriage at a younger age makes women vulnerable to domestic violence (Mishra, 2000).

The causes for domestic violence are varies from rural to urban areas. In the rural areas, dissatisfaction with the dowry and infertility in female, desire for male child and alcoholism are the major causes for domestic violence against women. These may leads to exploitation women in several ways.

In urban areas, these are different. working women are supposed to earn more than her partner and social, economic background, her absence in the house till late night, abusing her relatives etc. are some the causes for domestic violence against women in the urban areas. Even some of the traditional beliefs also one the main cause for domestic violence against women

The causes of domestic violence against women broadly categorized into the following

Psychological

Personality traits and mental characteristics of the offender come under this category. Personal traits include sudden bursts of anger, poor impulse control, and poor self-esteem and personality disorders etc. Dutton & Gallant (1995) suggested a psychological profile of men who abuse their wives, arguing that they have borderline personalities that are developed early in life.

Jealousy

Very often jealousy between the spouses leads to domestic violence against women. This will take place when men attempts to control female reproduction and ensure sexual exclusivity for him through violence. Women may think to leave the relationship with her partner.

Social Stress

Stress may not be the main cause for domestic violence against women. Bur sometimes social environment in which they live may leads to increase of social stress on the couples. Finally it leads to conflicts between the couples. Even economic stress also causes to domestic violence against women.

Social Learning

It is also one of the important causes for domestic against women. In order to get control over his spouse and to fulfill his social needs, men try to get unhealthy knowledge and apply it on the women. Finally it leads to violence between

the couples.

Power and Control

This is the very common cause for domestic violence against women. In the process of establishing power and getting control over the women, abuser try to abuses his partner emotionally and physically.

WHY WOMEN BEAR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

In domestic violence cases where women have been subjected to physical torture, they have been assaulted, tortured, exploited and even raped in their own houses. But still many women prefer to stay back rather than fight back against the abuser.

Following are some of the major reasons behind women's calmness against domestic violence.

Children

They Children are utmost important to the parents. Most of the domestic violence cases, women do not report outside because of their children. This is the main reason behind women's calmness against domestic violence.

No Support from Family

After getting married women will be slowly neglected by her parents. This forces her to stay with her husband even if he is torturing her. She desperately needs her parents support or other family members support. So, in order to survive and lead her life she cannot leave her husband even if she is going through domestic violence.

Responsibilities

Even though women are not self-sufficient, supportive and not economically independent, she has some responsibilities to fulfill. After leaving her husband, how will a woman manage her expenses? Often non – working women are faced with such grave questions. She is not interested to be a burden on her own family and wants to live independently. Due to the fear of unable to take up her own responsibility she chooses to stay back with her husband in silence.

Society

In our society, failed marriages and divorces are not treated well by the society. To avoid gossips and rumors victimized women stay in silence and rather than going against the social rules.

Safety Reasons

Safety is one of the important factors which play a great role in making a victim of domestic violence mum. After breaking the relationship or filing a case against due to domestic violence the fear of safety leads a woman bear domestic violence.

IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON FAMILY

“Domestic violence is a burden on numerous sectors of the social system and quietly, yet dramatically, affects the development of a nation... batterers cost nations fortunes in terms of law enforcement, health care, lost labor and general progress in development. These costs do not only affect the present generation; what begins as an assault by one person on another reverberates through the family and the community into the future”. (Zimmerman)

In Indian context the family is more important than the individual and the individual is nothing unless he or she is part of a family. Family is the most important institution in Indian context that has survived through the ages. India is a collectivist society that emphasizes family integrity, family loyalty, and family unity like most other less industrialized, traditional, eastern societies. In Indian family system women plays a vital role in a family, as a mother, as a wife and many more. She is the key person in maintaining the bondages among the family members. She has her own unique role in strengthening the family in social, economical and cultural aspects. But still she is considered as second grade citizen in the family.

The impact of domestic violence against women has dark shadow on her entire life and it may lead to psychological set back and trauma because of domestic violence affects women’s productivity in all forms of life.

Domestic violence affects the following aspects of victimized women –

Effect on Children

Domestic violence has severe effects on the children of victimized women. Children who are exposed to domestic violence while growing up can suffer from a range of emotional disturbances and behavioural problems, which can lead to perpetrating or being victims of violence later in life.

There is a chance that the witnessed or victimized children may believe that violence is a reasonable way to resolve conflict between people and also boys who learn that women are not to be valued or respected and who witnessed violence against women are more likely to abuse women when they grow up.

Psychological Effect

Victims of domestic violence, who are still living with their perpetrators, commonly reported high scores of fear, stress, and anxiety and also depression is a common symptom. Due to continuous criticism victims feel guilty and feel less confident. Researches proved that 60% of victims meet the diagnostic criteria for depression, either during or after termination of the relationship, and have a greatly increased risk of suicidal tendency.

Physical Effect

Sever domestic violence may lead to chronic health issues like arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome. Women who experience domestic violence during pregnancy period may experience the risk of miscarriage, pre-term labour, and injury to or death of the fetus.

Financial Effect

After breaking up relationship with perpetrator, victims realize their loss of autonomy and economic crisis. Economic abuse and isolation may lead to social helplessness and financial crisis of victims along with these victims often

lack specialized skills and training to gain employment, education. Feeding children is the major problem for the victims after separation from the perpetrator.

Long-Term Effect

Along with the above said problems victim has to experience homelessness and poverty in result of long term domestic violence and also it may lead to long term psychological and physical health problems.

CONCLUSIONS

India has various statutes governing the rights of women; Rights of Women are secured under the Constitution of India – mainly equality and freedom from discrimination. But still violence against women has no end. Domestic violence may have a wider and deeper impact in life of the victims and also the children belong to that family. A proper societal – legal environment has to be built to make the houses safe and secure for women. A nation or a society cannot prosper by keeping half of its population under distress.

Domestic violence against women is nothing but violation of basic human rights. This evil must be eliminated through political will, and by legal and civil action in all sectors of our society. The causes of domestic violence against women must be scientifically analyzed and more genuine researches have to be done to find out solution to make our society prosper with gender equality.

Violence against women is not an answer. It is a problem, one that is increasingly on the rise. Just because it isn't happening to you doesn't mean it isn't happening to someone else – and she is somebody's mother, sister, daughter, wife, girlfriend, or friend. So let's spread the word and do something about it.

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