

Domestic Violence and Women – Indian Perspective

Abstract

Domestic violence is actually a definite behavior in any relationship, whatsoever, where one member of a family has a control over another member of that same family. It is of an abusive type, and can be of several types. It is a common problem affecting a large population of women. It mostly goes undetected. Research is very much needed in today's society to detect the extent of domestic violence. It affects all women of all cultures, worldwide. It is a silent disease and is hooded by certain cultural norms. It leads to various psychological, physical and health problems, as a consequence. It is also a human rights violation. Studies reveal that in Indian culture, from ancient times, women have been found to be very submissive to their male counterpart, in all respects. The family structure is dominant in character where the head of the family, in most cases, the father, dominates the family. Domestic violence include maltreatment, harassment, cruelty, assault, and many other negative attitudes.

Keywords: Domestic, Violence, Legislation, Society, Perpetrators, Culture, Family.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a global issue, that reaches across all national boundaries. It also covers all socio-economic, racial, cultural classes. Its incidence is widespread, and has in fact, become an accepted behavior. Women from varied backgrounds fall victim to it. It is typically an abuse or attack from near and dear ones. Domestic violence against women has become a public health issue in today's society. Several studies state that rural women with low educational and social status are more prone to domestic violence. Domestic violence (DV) is basically an incident or a typical pattern of controlling, threatening, coercive violence or abuse. It can happen regardless of gender, though. DV affects every class, caste, gender, wealthiness, age, race, etc. But, it is mostly aggressive in nature, and that which is intentional.

This sort of violence is towards someone with whom we are in a relationship. One of the contributing factors could be the desire to exploit someone for personal benefit. It is very prevalent due to the orthodox characteristics of the society, where the mindset itself is that women are physically and emotionally weaker than their male partner.

Many believe that DV occurs because the victim provokes the abuser towards violent behavior. Others believe the abuser is simply not able to manage his anger. Apart from all this, substance abuse, psychopathology, poverty, cultural factors, stress, anger, depression, are some of the major manifestations of violence against women.

Need of the Study

It is of great concern to address the importance of integrating efforts to prevent violence against women. It may be noted that violence against women and violence against child are related in numerous ways. These two often co- occur. It is important to understand that, the development of intimate partner violence perpetration is absolutely linked to the individual, family and peers. It also includes the beliefs and attitudes that contribute to both perpetration of violence against women and toleration towards it.

Hence, there is the need to frame general strategies to mitigate the impact of violence. Various intervention needs to be done and identification of the victims is also very much needed. Again, there is a dire need to change the gender norms, which actually contribute to the severity of the problem. There is the need for a systematic and thorough record keeping in the Indian Court system, along with the need for more clarity in the legislation.



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Objective of the Study

Main objective of the study is to assess and address the prevalence of DV against women, and identify the causes. Emphasis should be given on female education so as to make them a lot more self-reliant, through skill developments. There should be efforts through community participation along with social welfare activities, to bring about a better sustainable solution to these problems. Various studies on DV can be used to develop national policies on prevention of DV, thereby educating the public on gender rights.

The study thereby is intended to find the prevalence and different forms of domestic violence against women, especially those who are married, though it needs to be a cross – sectional one. The principal activity should aim at the reduction of this behaviour in the typical violent families. For this, there needs to be dissemination of information to the affected women throughout the country.

Review of Literature

According to National Family Health Survey 4, which has been released by the Union Health Ministry, every third woman, since the age of 15 years face domestic violence. Most of the time, the husbands have been found to be the perpetrators. The survey also observed that 31% of married women experience physical or emotional violence by the husbands.

Economic abuse is very much rampant in India and leads to serious kind of helplessness among women victims. In India, DV can now be resolved out of court, with the help of various NGOs, police and counselors.

Again, there are guidelines, which states that a victim must be informed of her right to choose her future course of action, and she may be guided by the Protection of Women from DV Act. The National Commission for Women (NCW) in Delhi can be contacted by victims for help.

The AKS foundations in Pune have helpline numbers, a legal advice cell, as well as the provision for psychological counseling.

There are various women's organizations in Delhi like – the Shakti Shalini, SAARTHAK, JAGORI, and many others.

There is an All-India email helpline which is an apex national level organization of India, which tries to protect and promote the interest of women.

There is a landmark study on DV conducted by WHO on 24th November, 2005. This was the first ever study on DV, where it was noted that the healthy and well-being of women around the world is still largely hidden. It also said that women are more at risk from violence at home than outside home. The study interviewed more than 24000 women from both rural and urban areas in 10 countries.

WHO also reported that this sort of violence included low educational qualification, exposure to violence between parents, childhood abuse, and gender inequality.

Findings

There are several major factors of DV against women, especially in rural areas. As our

culture shows, the greed for dowry, desires for a male child, alcoholism of the spouse, are some of the causes. DV has been addressed from the 1990s onwards, before which there was hardly any protection against it. Originally, most legal systems considered DV to be outside the law. In later times, there has been increased attention given to specific forms of DV, like honor killing, forced marriages, dowry deaths. India specially has put forward a great effort to lessen dowry deaths. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (PWDV) was enacted in 2005 to diminish the issue itself. Besides, it may be noted that all DV is not equivalent – it differs in frequency, purpose, severity and outcome.

Among the many forms of DV, the physical abuse is to control the victim. It can be the culmination of other abusive reactions, such as- threats. limitation of personal freedom, isolation of the victim, sleep deprivation, depriving of medical care, forced drug use, etc. One of the most lethal forms of DV is strangulation, which is still often a hidden problem. Homicide is another result of DV. Again, acid attacks are an extreme form of DV, resulting in extreme long term damage.

Emotional abuse may also be a kind of psychological abuse. It mainly includes public humiliation, constant criticism, stalking, disempowering, and resulting in depression, eating disorders, suicide. Next in discussion, comes the economic or financial abuse. Here there is total control over the victim's self supportive capacity, thereby increasing their dependence on the perpetrator. In India typically, the women may be facing reduced access to education, career advancement, employment, and the likes. Sometimes the wife may be forced to sign documents, sell personal assets, against her wish. At times, disagreement about money spent may result in retaliation with physical abuse.

The UN Population Fund has found that violence against women as well as girls, is one of the most practical human rights violation. According to one study, the percentage of women reporting abuse vary from 69% to 10% , depending on the country.

There is another factor contributing to domestic violence. It is the social influence –like, cultural views. DV differs from culture to culture. In many places the status of men and women is not considered as one among equals. Whenever there is the occurrence of violence, the wife is taken to be at fault. Another social influence is religion. There is a controversy in connection with the influence of religion on DV. For example, Judaism, Islam, Christianity have supported male dominated society.

Interestingly though, actions intended for controlling violence are highly related to the educational status of women. The lower the educational qualification of women, the higher the vulnerability to domestic violence. As a result, women victims can be trapped in violent situations through isolation, traumatic bonding to the perpetrator, cultural acceptance, lack of financial power, fear, public shame, or just to protect their children. This goes on to create a lot of post – traumatic disorder. At times,

due to DV, children who live in a household with a lot of violence, often show psychological problems, which may ultimately contribute towards vicarious traumatization. Question of power as well as control are an integral part of domestic violence.

In the urban areas, factors like – more income of a working woman than her spouse, maybe her absence at home till late night, neglecting the in – laws. Being more socially forward, - are basically the beginning of DV. Violence against widow is also rampant in many parts of India, where she is held to be responsible for their husband's death. Female foeticide and female infanticide is rising and is of great concern. Many forms of physical abuse against women include slapping, burdening them with heavy work, public humiliation and neglect of her health problems. Besides these, psychological torture goes hand in hand, like – rights curtailment, disallow self – expression, curbing her association with friends and family.

It has been observed that, effected women have a tendency to keep quiet, though emotionally disturbed after the occurrence of the torment. This sort of trauma affects women's productivity in all spheres of life. Several suicide cases have been seen of such victimized women. At times, a working woman drop out from their work place, simply because of ill - treatment at home or office, and for which she loses her efficiency at work. She may also lose her good health along with her mental health. As against this, it happens sometimes, that the affected women leave their home immediately after the violence and try her best to become self-dependant. But in this case, it sometimes becomes difficult for them to meet their daily demands. As a result, many of them are found to forcefully involve in pornography, women trafficking, etc. Many such victims are rescued by Welfare Associations of India (WWAI), Woman's Emancipation and Development Trust (WEDT).

Conclusion

For prevention of domestic violence, the society needs to be awakened. It has to tackle inequalities, empowerment of the affected, health service, etc. For policy makers regarding Domestic violence, the greatest challenge is that , the issue itself is hidden. At least 20% of women reporting physical violence, had never told anyone .Despite health consequences, very few report to seek help for medical help and legal services.

The physical violence is the most common type of domestic violence, the main cause being financial or may be consumption of alcohol by the male partner. DV is among the most unreported crimes worldwide for both women as well as men. But women are more likely to under report their plight. Familial and financial dependence, self blaming attitude, compromise, are found to reduce the likelihood of self reporting victimization in women. However, because domestic violence is so deeply rooted in many women's' lives and because it is not just a physical abuse but also psychological, economic, and emotional, it is important to consider complementary interventions in their life situations.

Women in domestic violence situations lack the strength to say anything in their homes as well as their social and neighboring communities. In India, for example, about 40% of general married people think that wife – beating is absolutely justifiable, 63% of women have no say whatsoever in everyday household decisions, including daily household chores and visits to family or relatives. As these women have been kept aside from having any sort of power in their everyday lives, when violence becomes physical they have no way to escape the abuse.

Various survey results conclude that the need of effective policies and several mechanisms of gender inequality and hence combating DV. It is an established fact that violence against women is a social problem and has serious consequences, not only on the woman herself, but to the children, family and society as a whole. Women are held prisoners under the weird condition set by the immedial social setting. This practice of violence against women is a constant variable, which deviates depending on societal factors, such as the social and economic development of the respective country.

All the more, domestic violence primarily occurs when the abuser herself believes that any sort of abuses is acceptable, justified, or may be unlikely to be reported. Many women victims do not recognize themselves as being abused, as most of the time, they consider their experiences as more or less, a family conflict. This sort of violence can begin at any stage of the relationship and might even continue after the relationship has ended.

In India, separate intervention in social service, health and law enforcement have been brought about. They constitute a huge range of institutional services that will focus on the identification, treatment and prevention at the early stage, and deterrence of domestic and family violence against women. Different types of programs and services are actually associated with each intervention, represented by a valuable body of expertise and experienced workers. Several complexities now characterize family violence intervention and thereby challenge the development of scientific evaluation. The policy makers are to develop frameworks to carry on critical analyses of the situation, and address cross-cutting issues. Though, many interventions could not be fully implemented due to lack of funds, and therefore is not as yet to throw its full impact. So, huge measures should be taken so as to include women in all societal activities and participation. Combating gender – based violence is important to build a democratic society, based appropriately on the principles of human rights.

Finally, it may be noted that this is a very complex population, composed of different types of individuals and varied patterns of behaviour. The current status of domestic violence intervention against women is a loosely entangled network of programs and services that are highly reactive in nature. It is a tough job, especially in a country like India, where DV is widely prevalent due to many

reasons, and which demand its solution at the earliest and in an effective way.

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