
Domestic Violence: A curse for women

¹Dr. Sunita Tripathi

¹Assistant Professor Dept. of Home Science K.R.Girls (PG) College Mathura U.P.

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. This problem is not only widely dispersed geographically, but its incidence is also extensive, making it a typical and accepted behavior. Domestic violence is wide spread, deeply ingrained and has serious impacts on women's health and well-being. Domestic violence is perpetrated by, and on, both men and women. However, most commonly, the victims are women, especially in our country. Even in the United States, it has been reported that 85% of all violent crime experienced by women are cases of intimate partner violence, compared to 3% of violent crimes experienced by men. Thus, domestic violence in Indian context mostly refers to domestic violence against women. The World Health Organization reports that the proportion of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner ranged from 15% to 71%, with the majority between 29% and 62%. Economic dependence has been found to be the central reason. Without the ability to sustain them economically, women are forced to stay in abusive relationships and are not able to be free from violence. *The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005* is not sufficient against domestic violence so it is very necessary women should aware about their right and take strong steps against domestic violence.

Key words – a global issue, domestic violence, women and serious impacts.

Introduction

Domestic violence against women is an age old phenomenon. Women were always considered weak, vulnerable and in a position to be exploited. Violence has long been accepted as something that happens to women. Cultural mores, religious practices, economic and political conditions may set the precedence for initiating and perpetuating domestic violence, but ultimately committing an act of violence is a choice that the individual makes out of a range of options. The gender imbalance in domestic violence is partly related to differences in physical strength and size. Moreover, women are socialized into their gender roles in different societies throughout the world. In societies with a patriarchal power structure and with rigid gender roles, women are often poorly equipped to protect themselves if their partners become violent. However, much of the disparity relates to how men-dependence and fearfulness amount to a cultural disarmament. Husbands who batter wives typically feel that they are exercising a right, maintaining good order in the family and punishing their wives' delinquency - especially the wives' failure to keep their proper place.

Economic dependence has been found to be the central reason. Without the ability to sustain them economically, women are forced to stay in abusive relationships and are not able to be free from violence. Due to deep-rooted values and culture, women do not prefer to adopt the option of separation or divorce. They also fear the consequences of reporting violence and declare an unwillingness to subject themselves to the shame of being identified as battered women. Lack of information about

alternatives also forces women to suffer silently within the four walls of their homes. Some women may believe that they deserve the beatings because of some wrong action on their part. Other women refrain from speaking about the abuse because they fear that their partner will further harm them in reprisal for revealing family secrets, or they may be ashamed of their situation. Violence against women is a violation of basic human rights. It is shameful for the states that fail to prevent it and societies that tolerate and in fact perpetuate it. It must be eliminated through political will, and by legal and civil action in all sectors of society.

The World Health Organization reports that the proportion of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner ranged from 15% to 71%, with the majority between 29% and 62%. India's National Family Health Survey-III, carried out in 29 states during 2005-06, has found that a substantial proportion of married women have been physically or sexually abused by their husbands at some time in their lives. The survey indicated that, nationwide, 37.2% of women "experienced violence" after marriage. Bihar was found to be the most violent, with the abuse rate against married women being as high as 59%. Strangely, 63% of these incidents were reported from urban families rather than the state's most backward villages. It was followed by Madhya Pradesh (45.8%), Rajasthan (46.3%), Manipur (43.9%), Uttar Pradesh (42.4%), Tamil Nadu (41.9%) and West Bengal (40.3%).

A recent United Nation Population Fund report also revealed that around two-thirds of married women in India were victims of domestic violence. Violence in India kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 years as cancer and its toll on women's health surpasses that of traffic accidents and malaria combined. Even these alarming figures are likely to be significantly underestimated given that violence within families continues to be a taboo subject in both industrialized and industrializing countries.

Domestic violence and its implication- Violence not only causes physical injury, it also undermines the social, economic, psychological, spiritual and emotional well being of the victim, the perpetrator and the society as a whole. Domestic violence is a major contributor to the ill health of women. It has serious consequences on women's mental and physical health, including their reproductive and sexual health. These include injuries, gynecological problems, temporary or permanent disabilities, depression and suicide, amongst others. These physical and mental health outcomes have social and emotional sequel for the individual, the family, the community and the society at large. Over both the short term and long term, women's physical injuries and mental trouble either interrupts, or ends, their educational and career paths leading to poverty and economic dependence. Family life gets disrupted which has a significant effect on children, including poverty (if divorce or separation occurs) and a loss of faith and trust in the institution of the family. These sequels not only affect the quality of life of individuals and communities, but also have long-term effects on social order and cohesion. Children who witness domestic violence may develop serious emotional, behavioral, developmental or academic problems. As they develop, children and teens those grow up with domestic violence in the household are:

- more likely to use violence at school or community in response to perceived threats
- more likely to attempt suicide
- more likely to use drugs
- more likely to commit crimes, especially sexual assault

- more likely to use violence to enhance their reputation and self esteem

India implemented its first law aimed at tackling domestic violence (*The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*) to protect the rights of women who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It also defines repeated insults, ridiculing or name-calling, and demonstrations of obsessive possessiveness and jealousy of a partner as domestic violence. The big challenge in front now is to enforce it in true sense. Apart from that programs are required which intend to address battered women's needs, including those that focus on building self-efficacy and livelihood skills. The significance of informal and local community networks should be acknowledged in this regard. The survivors of domestic violence can be involved in program planning and implementation in order to ensure accessibility and effectiveness. Rather than spotlighting women as victims in non negotiable situations, they should be portrayed as agents capable of changing their own lives. The public health experts have a vital role to play in networking with NGOs and voluntary organizations and creation of social support networks.

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