

## **Risk factors involved in domestic violence: an intervention to help in positive integration of the family**

Dr. J.Swapna Jaidupally<sup>1\*</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

Domestic violence is a common problem that may affect more than a quarter of women. It is a complex area in which to undertake research. Studies often focus on selected populations and exhibit a diversity of design, making comparison difficult. This review focuses on physical and emotional abuse by men against women partners or ex-partner. Domestic violence frequently goes undetected. Women may not reveal that they are experiencing violence; Women experience a range of health and social problems in association with domestic violence, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse and pregnancy complications. Research is needed to establish the prevalence of domestic violence in women. Investigate how the problem is currently being addressed. If progress is to be made in tackling domestic violence, risk factors causing domestic violence needed to be addressed and fundamental change in the aggression attitudes of men which is causing violence towards women is required. The prevalence of domestic abuse against women has been estimated as high as one in four. The risk is particularly high for women who are younger, economically dependent, unemployed and with children. Research about the factors that maintain situations of abuse has generally focused separately on the coping strategies of women, barriers to leaving the relationship and the perpetrators' means of abuse.

*Keywords: Domestic Violence, Social Problems, Women*

**D**omestic abuse is a pattern of coercive, controlling behavior that is a pervasive life-threatening crime affecting people in all our communities regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, social standing and immigration status. Domestic violence is violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation.

It may be termed intimate partner violence when committed by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner, and can take place in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, or between former spouses or partners. Domestic violence can also involve violence against children, parents, or the elderly. It takes a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, and sexual abuse,

<sup>1</sup> Post Doc Fallow- ICSSR, Department of Psychology, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India  
*\*Responding Author*

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which can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape and to violent physical abuse such as choking, beating, female genital mutilation, and acid throwing that results in disfigurement or death. Domestic murders include stoning, bride burning, honor killings, and dowry deaths.

Globally, the victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. They are also likelier than men to use intimate partner violence in self-defense. In some countries, domestic violence is often seen as justified, particularly in cases of actual or suspected infidelity on the part of the woman, and is legally permitted.

Domestic violence often occurs when the abuser believes that abuse is an entitlement, acceptable, justified, or unlikely to be reported. It may produce an intergenerational cycle of abuse in children and other family members, who may feel that such violence is acceptable or condoned. Many people do not recognize themselves as abusers or victims because they may consider their experiences as family conflicts that got out of control. Awareness, perception, definition and documentation of domestic violence differs widely from country to country. Domestic violence often happens in the context of forced or child marriage. Abuse is not love. It is one person in a relationship having power and control over the other person. When a woman is constantly abused and put down she may start to think of herself as worthless. Many women feel powerless. Many women stay in abusive relationships because they are too afraid to leave. If a Woman does decide to separate, it is not unusual for her to return to her abusive partner, particularly when appropriate support and assistance is not available. Domestic violence can have long-term effects on a Woman. There may be emotional problems such as difficulty in trusting others. She may also suffer long-term effects on her health from physical injuries. Not all the long-term effects are negative. Often a Woman dealing with domestic violence has developed incredible strengths in order to survive. To come out and move in to a new life living through years of violence is usually an extremely positive experience. Women often believe it's impossible to escape the violence and abuse. They are often threatened with death if they leave. In some cases, violence, harassment and intimidation can escalate during separation and can result in serious injury and sometimes death. Women also often believe they and their children will be destined to a life of poverty if they leave. Obtaining suitable accommodation for themselves and their children is often difficult, particularly in regional and remote areas. The private nature of domestic violence has resulted in its remaining a hidden problem. However, it is one which has damaging effects on many victims each year.

Domestic violence takes many forms: physical; emotional; economic; stalking and harassment; and sexual.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE**

#### *Physical Abuse*

Physical abuse does not always leave marks or cause permanent damage:

- Scratching, biting, grabbing or spitting.
- Shoving and pushing.
- Slapping and punching.
- Throwing objects to hurt or intimidate you.
- Destroying possessions or treasured objects.
- Hurting or threatening to hurt your children and/or pets.

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- Disrupting your sleeping patterns to make you feel exhausted.
- Burning.
- Strangling.
- Attacking or threatening to attack with a weapon.
- Any threats or actual attempts to kill you.

### ***Emotional/Psychological Abuse***

Emotional/psychological abuse is a behavior your partner uses to control you or damage your emotional well-being. It can be verbal or non-verbal:

- Name-calling, mocking, intimidation and making humiliating remarks or gestures.
- Yelling in your face or standing in a menacing way.
- Manipulating your children.
- Telling you what to do or where you can and cannot go.
- Placing little value on what you say.
- Interrupting, changing topics, not listening or responding, and twisting your words.
- Putting you down in front of other people.
- Saying negative things about your friends and family.
- Preventing or making it difficult for you to see friends or relatives
- Cheating or being overly jealous.
- Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior by blaming others or saying you caused it.
- Monitoring your phone calls, texts, car and computer use.

### ***Economic/Financial Abuse***

Economic/financial abuse happens when the abuser makes a victim entirely financially dependent on the abuser, with no power or says in the relationship:

- Forbidding the victim to work or attend school.
- Sabotaging employment opportunities by giving the victim a black eye or other visible injury prior to an important meeting.
- Jeopardizing employment by stalking or harassing the victim at the workplace.
- Denying access to a vehicle or damaging the vehicle so that the victim cannot get to work.
- Sabotaging educational opportunities by destroying class assignments.
- Withholding money or giving an allowance.
- Denying access to bank accounts.
- Hiding family assets.
- Running up debt in the victim's name.
- Stalking and Harassment
- Stalking and harassment can happen between strangers or in relationships, where the abusive partner or ex demands your time even after you make it clear you do not want contact:
- Making unwanted visits or sending you unwanted messages (voicemails, text messages, emails, etc.).
- Following you, including installing GPS tracking software on your car or cell phone without your knowledge or consent.
- Checking up on you constantly.
- Embarrassing you in public.
- Refusing to leave when asked.

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### ***Sexual Abuse***

Sexual abuse does occur in committed relationships and marriages. Any forced or unwanted sexual contact/activity, Humiliation can often play a part in sexual abuse

- Pressured to have sex when you didn't want to.
- Forcing to have sex or to do sexual acts you do not want or like.
- Raping.

### **Organized by levels of a dynamic developmental systems perspective, risk factors included:**

- (a) Contextual characteristics of partners (demographic, neighborhood, community and school factors),
- (b) Developmental characteristics and behaviors of the partners (e.g., family, peer, psychological/behavioral, and cognitive factors), and
- (c) Relationship influences and interactional patterns.

### **Risk Factors**

#### ***Individual Risk Factors***

- Low self-esteem
- Low income
- Low academic achievement
- Young age
- Aggressive or delinquent behavior as a youth
- Heavy alcohol and drug use
- Depression
- Anger and hostility
- Antisocial personality traits
- Borderline personality traits
- Prior history of being physically abusive
- Having few friends and being isolated from other people
- Unemployment
- Emotional dependence and insecurity
- Belief in strict gender roles (e.g., male dominance and aggression in relationships)
- Desire for power and control in relationships
- Perpetrating psychological aggression
- Being a victim of physical or psychological abuse (consistently one of the strongest predictors of perpetration)
- History of experiencing poor parenting as a child
- History of experiencing physical discipline as a child

#### ***Relationship Factors***

- Marital conflict-fights, tension, and other struggles
- Marital instability-divorces or separations
- Dominance and control of the relationship by one partner over the other
- Economic stress
- Unhealthy family relationships and interactions
- Community Factors
- Poverty and associated factors (e.g., overcrowding)
- Low social capital-lack of institutions, relationships, and norms that shape a community's social interactions

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- Weak community sanctions against IPV (e.g., unwillingness of neighbors to intervene in situations where they witness violence)

### ***Societal Factors***

Traditional gender norms (e.g., women should stay at home, not enter workforce, and be submissive; men support the family and make the decisions)

### **High Risk Factors**

- Victim's perception of risk of harm: victims of domestic abuse often tend to underestimate their risk of harm from perpetrators of domestic violence. However, if they say they fear further harm to themselves, their child(ren) or someone else this should be taken seriously when assessing future risk of harm.
- Separation (child contact): victims who attempt to end a violent relationship are strongly linked to intimate partner homicide. Many incidents happen as a result of child contact or disputes over custody.
- Pregnancy/New Birth (Under 18 months old): domestic abuse can start or get worse in pregnancy. Victims who are assaulted while pregnant, when they have recently given birth or who have young children should be considered as high risk. This is in terms of future harm to them and to the unborn/young child.
- Escalation: repeat victimization and escalation must be identified. Domestic abuse victims are more likely to become repeat victims than any other type of crime; as violence is repeated it gets more serious.
- Community Issues/Isolation: needs may differ amongst ethnic minority victims, newly arrived communities, asylum seekers, older people, people with disabilities, as well as travelling or gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people. This might be in terms of perceived racism, language, culture, insecure immigration status and/or accessing relevant support services. Be aware of forced marriage and honour based violence where family/community try to restore their mistaken sense of honour and respect. Victims may be particularly isolated and/or vulnerable. Take their concerns seriously.
- Stalking: Persistent and consistent calling, texting, sending letters, following. Stalking and physical assault, are significantly associated with murder and attempted murder. This is not just about physical violence but also coercive control and jealous surveillance. Consider the perpetrator's behaviour and whether victim believes it is being done to deliberately intimidate. Stalking is about fixation and obsession. We now know through research that 1 in 2 of domestic stalkers, if they make a threat will act on it.
- Sexual Assault: those who are sexually assaulted are subjected to more serious injury. Those who report a domestic sexual assault tend to have a history of domestic abuse whether or not it has been reported previously. Many domestic sexual offenders are high risk and potentially dangerous offenders. Be aware of the link between domestic and stranger rape.
- Strangulation (choking/suffocation/drowning): Escalating violence, including the use of weapons and attempts at strangulation must be recorded when identifying and assessing risk. This includes all attempts at blocking someone's airway.
- Credible Threats to Kill: A credible threat of violent death can very effectively control people and some may carry out this threat.
- Use of Weapons: Abusers who have used a weapon, or have threatened to use a weapon, are at increased risk of violent recidivism.

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- Coercively Control and/or Excessive Jealous Behaviour: complete control of the victim's activities and extreme jealousy are associated with serious violence and homicide. Consider honour based violence – the victim may not have the freedom of choice. Examples may include fear of or actual forced marriage, controlling sexual activity, domestic abuse, child abuse, rape, kidnapping, false imprisonment, threats to kill, assault, harassment, forced abortion. The perpetrator may well try and control professionals as well.
- Child Abuse: Evidence shows that both DA and child abuse can occur in the same family. Child abuse can act as an indicator of DA in the family and vice versa – please note if the child(ren) witness or hear the abuse.
- Animal/Pets Abuse: there is a link between cruelty to animals, child abuse and domestic abuse. The use or threat of abuse against pets is often used to control others in the family. Abuse of animals may also indicate a risk of future harm.
- Alcohol/Drugs/Mental Health: the abuser's use of drugs and alcohol are not the cause of the abuse, but as with all violent crime they might be a risk of further harm. Physical and mental ill health does appear to increase the risk of domestic abuse.
- Suicide-Homicide: Threats from an offender to commit suicide have been highlighted as a factor in domestic homicide. A person who is suicidal should also be considered homicidal.

### **Intervention (Positive Outcome for the Family)**

- ❖ Re integration of family as a unit.
- ❖ To help in establishing cordial relationship between couples so that the family can live with peacefully.
- ❖ Children would have a positive and congenial atmosphere so that they can carry on their academic and other activities effectively, this would help in their development as healthy citizens of the country.
- ❖ A Happy Home Can Be Reflection Of Happy Community With The Psychological Well Being.

### **Suggestions for Positive Integration**

- ❖ The whole spectrum of domestic violence should be dealt with, not necessarily in a criminal way but more deterrent manner.
- ❖ The government could be involved in informational campaigns to deliberately change certain culture specific perspective on what is regarded as domestic.
- ❖ More and more awareness campaigns should be held to spread the causes, implications and where to seek help when caught in the domestic violence cycle.
- ❖ Stiffer penalties on domestically violent perpetrators should be enforced, thus the government need to intervene to reduce the occurrence or rate of domestic violence as can be deduced from the police statistics on figures that domestic violent is on increase annually
- ❖ Professionals like social workers, psychologists, counsellors, be part of court officials who assist the magistrate elaborate on the type of abuse the victims might be going through.

## **CONCLUSION**

The act of domestic violence towards women is a human rights violation as well as an illegal act under Indian law. It is therefore widely considered a threat to women's agency through any lens, and there is a growing recognition in many Indian regions that the nation can reach

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a higher potential through obtaining greater social and economic capital than by reducing women's participation in society. Domestic violence is one of the most significant determinants of this denial. Greater gender equality through greater women's agency cannot be achieved if basic health needs are not being met and if cultural biases that allow for domestic violence in India persist.

Government has also made and enforced domestic violence act. The rules and regulations have been introduced in section 498-A of Indian Penal Code. Law gives an effective shelter and deals strictly with the culprits. But making a law is not sufficient. People will have to awake and arise. They have to be told about their rights and duties. Every human being deserves the basic honour and respect. No one is entitled to take law in his hands. Besides, the law enforcement, domestic violence have deeper roots. It is the mentality of the society that covets an overhauling. Society is in-turn nothing but the constitution of individuals. Every individual should make the necessary amendments and the society will change. It is the high time to raise voice against the injustice happening to self and others. Domestic violence has no place in the modern society and should be strongly dealt with.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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