

## Risk Management Framework for Educational Institutions in Tackling Veiled Relationship Violence among Students

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### ABSTRACT

Relationship violence or Intimate partner violence is considered a strong human rights violation and public health issue round the globe. Numerous studies and research surveys have demonstrated that relationship violence is a harsh reality and touches the lives of nearly every adolescent and early adult. The violence could be emotional, physical or economical. There are several studies on dating violence victimization, mental health, relationship satisfaction etc. in various socio-cultural and geographical settings especially western world. The present study is targeting to explore the physical as well as emotional violence among youths (aged 18 to 24 years) in Indian couples. The purpose of this research was to examine the quality of relationship among youths, nature of relationship, involvement of both the partners in the relationship. For this a formal questionnaire was prepared consisting 20 questions, the questionnaire was sent to the 650 participants in Google form to those who had given their consent to participate on social media to the researchers. Total 304 questionnaires were received in the given time. 65 subjects were identified as outliers and these were excluded from the analysis. 239 questionnaires were analysed and result reveals that 61.5% of males were involved in some form of violence in their relationship and 38.5% of females have reported to be a violent partner in their relationship. The study also aims to meet its stated objective of recommending some preventive and mitigating measures as part of risk management framework to the educational institutions for better tackling of such cases.

**Keywords:** Relationship Violence, Intimate partner, Emotional abuse, Victimization, Youth

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Relationship violence is “any violence that occurs between two people sharing an intimate relationship”. Intimate partner violence is considered a strong human rights violation and public health issue all over the world (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006). Adolescents have been found guilty of physical violence in their dating relationship (Swart, et. al., 2002). The severity of violence is ranged from verbalized threats to actual use of weapons (O’Keeffe, Brockopp, & Chew, 1986). It is a behaviour that scares, instigates, intimidates, humiliates, isolates or controls another person in the same relationship. A study conducted in USA explored that 52% male and 70% female victims of physical dating violence received injuries in their relationships (Foshee, 1996). Such type of violence is also common in LGBT couples and victims can be male or female or both (Turell, 2000). Often, people in any relationship are being abused physically and emotionally, but they do not realize it. Romantic relationship violence has also been reported among High School students too where more boys have accepted their aggression (Feiring, Candice, et al., 2002).

Numerous studies have been conducted which reveals that both men and women could be abusers or victims of relationship or dating violence. Most of the time, people in any relationship are being abused physically and mentally both, but they do not realize because in mental abuse there is no violence involved and in the case of physical abuse, they think this is the part and parcel of relationship sustenance. Females are more engaged in verbal aggression while the males are observed to be aggressive in a physical manner (Muñoz-Rivas, Marina J., et al., 2006). A person may not realize that he/she is in an abusive relationship not even if the person himself/ herself is the abuser. Abuse is not always related to physical attacks, hitting or giving pain to the partner, but it may also include a pattern of controlling behaviour, mental torture or any other kind of mental abuse which may not give physical injury anyway but deteriorates partner’s mental and psychological health in every way. Abuse can happen to anyone, anywhere. In physical abuse, the abuser may hit, grab hair, shove, force the partner to consume or provide drugs or alcohol or may deny for any medical care and may also include any kind of negligence in the relationship. Whereas, in the emotional type of abuse the aim of the abuser is mainly to lower the sense of self-worth and also to chip away the independence of their partner. The abuser may yell at the person, blame or shame the person, constantly criticizing, try to damage relationships with others which in turn may lead to the isolation of the victim and may further be a threat to the safety of the victim themselves or others. There are other types of abuses like sexual abuse and economic abuse which includes forced sexual activity when the person is not in the mood and keeps the partner financially dependent by controlling the money or the abuser may also not allow their partner to have a job or attend any educational institutions. Those who are victimized financially may be restricted to use their own money or stolen by the abuser (Gordon, 2020). Beliefs about physical violence in an abusive relationship differ for both males and females. For male experiencing dating violence is associated with the belief that physical aggression is a part of dating relation and female belief that a partner’s act of physical aggression is just a way of showing love (Swart, et. al., 2002). Female students have reported that most often during their adolescence, they were forced to have sexual intercourse (Brener, McMohan, Waren, & Douglas, 1999). Out of all the abuses mentioned above emotional abuse is most dangerous because physical injury will heal but mental injury will not heal easily. It is a kind of long-lasting injury and may take few months, years and sometimes even the whole life to heal off.

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The youth involved in intimate violence is found to have exposure in their early childhood to family violence (Calvete, Fernández-González, Orue, & Little, 2018). Risk factors related to both inflicting and sustaining intimate violence that have been identified in the research literatures are prior exposure to violence, attitudes that violence is acceptable, peer influence, and the presence of other problem behaviours such as drug use and engagement in risky sexual behaviours. This persistent violent and abusive behaviour may have harmful effects on psychosocial development and adjustment across the life-course (Exner-Cortens et al., 2013). Reorganization of this problem instigates numerous organizations to declare adolescent dating abuse a public health and human rights imperative (Garcia-Moreno, & Watts, 2011). Also, with the changing era the type of victimization has also altered from just being of a physical nature to digital nature too. For instance, the inclusion of cyber dating in relationship, has led to crimes related to the same (Zweig, J. M. et al., 2013). To understand these trends of abuse we may need to identify ways of technology employed in dating violence and look for the extent of the same (Draucker, C. B., & Martsof, D. S., 2010).

India is one of the fastest growing countries and its education system is now comparable to the best in the world with lot of institutions and super-specialized universities imparting education and ecosystem of global standards. The boys and girls both are getting plentiful opportunities to stay away from their homes and study in some of these elite institutions. In other words, they enter into a different phase of life, where in, most of them get into intimate relationships and come to face the harsher realities associated with such relationships in the aforesaid age bracket.

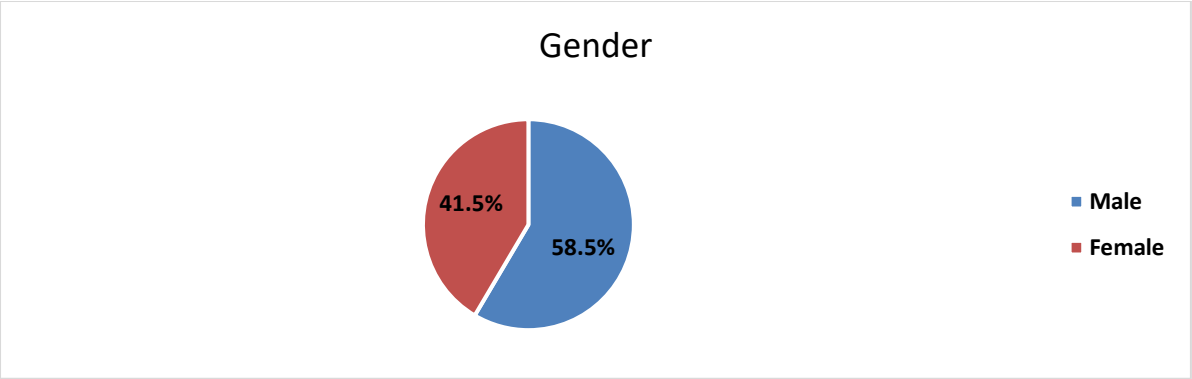
### **METHODOLOGY**

The present study was a survey study targeting male and female students of Gujarat state who are staying in hostels. A questionnaire was formed consisting 20 questions. Total 650 students both male and female between the age of 18 to 24 years were contacted through social media and aim of the study was explained to them after their confirmation to participate they all were sent a soft copy of questionnaire in Google form. Questionnaire was based on basic demographic information in the form of multiple-choice questions including participant's age, qualification and whether he/she has been involved in any type of romantic relationship. Other questions were like which type of abuse they faced and according to the abuse faced by them. Only 304 subjects responded to the survey. However, prior to conducting analysis, 65 subjects were identified as outliers. All the outliers were excluded from the study, and 239 subjects were selected for the analysis.

### **RESULTS**

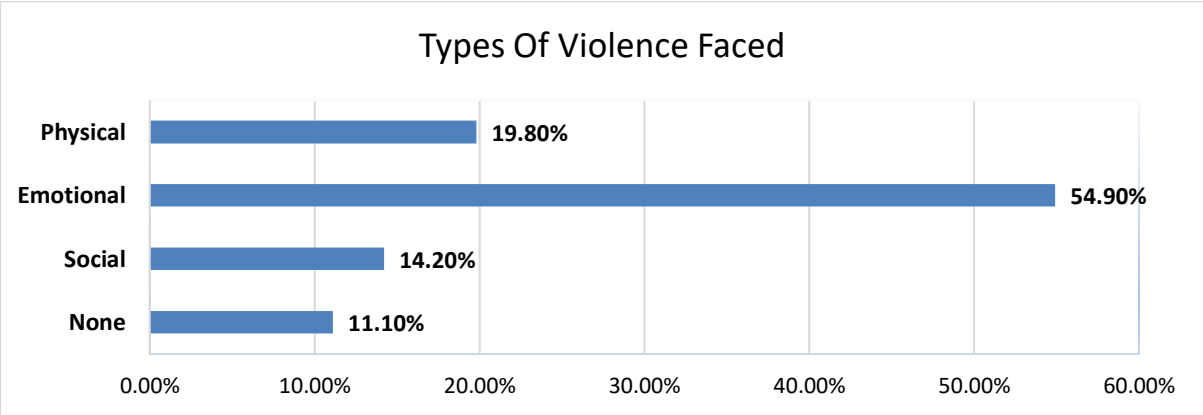
Among the important findings of the study, it was found that both male and female did not differ in context of facing any kind of abuse in their relationship. After a close scrutiny of the data acquired it was found that 58.5% of the males and 41.5 % of the females reported to have experienced violence in their relationship as is evident from Figure 1. The results strongly contradict the common notion of females being the likely victims in most cases.

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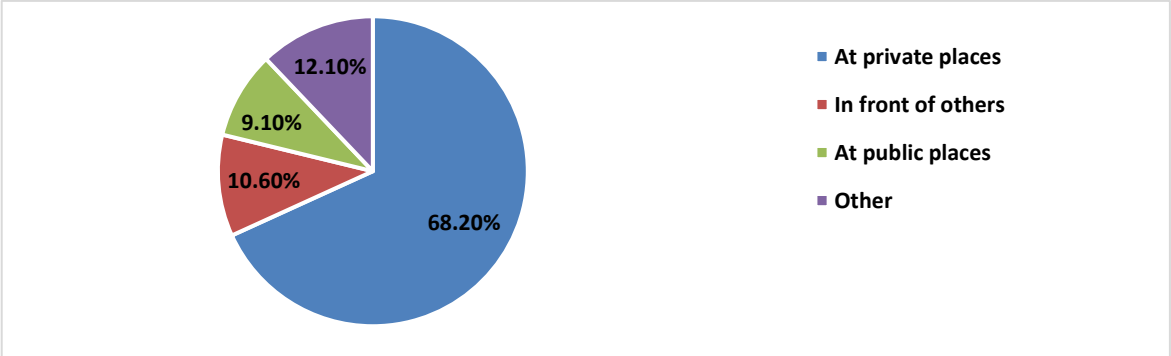
**Fig-1 – Gender distribution of victims of relationship violence.**

When examining the type of violence faced by the victims, responses for the survey indicated that emotional abuse was more commonly faced by the respondents more than the physical abuse in their dating relationship followed by social violence. Out of all 11.10% respondents faced no kind of violence in their relationship as can be seen in Fig 2.



**Fig- 2 – Percentage distribution of different types of violence faced by the respondents.**

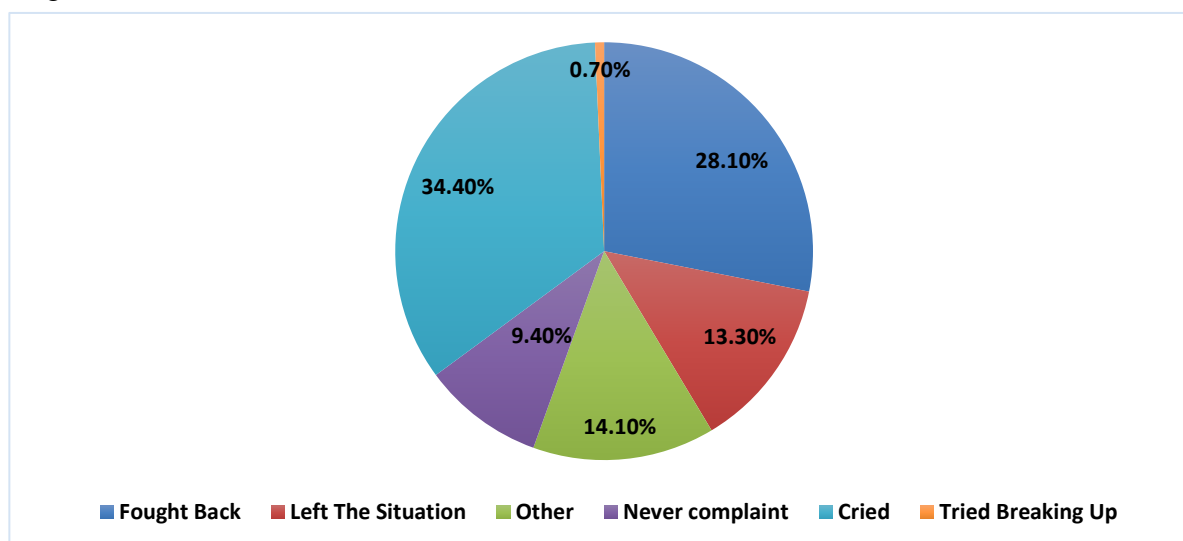
The survey also revealed that most of the violence happened in private places. Understandably, the occurrence of such relationship violence is more in front of others than in public places. Fig 3 shows the percentage distribution of different places where the violence has taken place.



**Fig- 3- Percentage distribution of different places where violence had occurred.**

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Those respondents involved in any previous or current relationships were asked to indicate their perception about the violence. It was found that when acting as abuser most frequently they interpreted their violence as a sign of confusion followed by anger. But on the other hand, when as a victim they faced any kind of violence in their relationship they perceived that violence as scary or as a matter of love or care. Very few believed that the violent behaviours signified “hate”. Respondents were also asked to indicate their reaction to the abuse. The respondents were permitted to identify more than one reaction also. As a victim, it was found that when faced violence, around 34.4% of respondents cried, 28.1% of respondents fought back, 13.3% of respondents left the situation as it is and only a very minimal percentage of people around 0.7% tried breaking up with that person as depicted in Fig. 4.



*Fig-4 – Percentage distribution of reaction of respondents to violence.*

It is also found that majority of these respondents had never reported these kinds of violence to anyone. Very few of them shared with their friends or teachers. Perhaps for a large number of violent behaviors are viewed so negatively that they prefer not to confide to anyone. Also, shockingly none of the respondents reported the abuse to law enforcement agencies. Many victims do not report as suggested by a study too in the expectation of change and love for their partners (Merrill, G. S., & Wolfe, V. A., 2000).

### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that both males and females face the almost same amount of violence/abuse in a relationship, but very few opt for breaking up with that person and move on. Very few victims approach the right person or authority for help because of the fear of defamation or losing the relationship. Proper education about individual rights should be given at an early stage to all the youngsters. In fact, there is a scarcity of counseling centre among the educational institutions thus, leading to complete overlooking of dynamics of relationship through psychological intervention as and when required. The borderline of a devoted individual in a relationship converting to victim is many a times neglected by youngsters. This may lead to serious health concerns or having repercussion on the quality of relationships established in later stages too. We must have better policies and intervention on hand for such issues (Wubs, Annegreet G., et al., 2009). These programs can be designed for different adolescent age group to young group of people as the psychology behind it also

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has a developmental aspect attached to it (Wekerle, C., & Wolfe, D. A., 1999). There is inevitable requirement of dedicated cells along with trained and skilled manpower to deal with the issues regarding such relationship violence.

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

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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