

Domestic Violence

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a major area of concern when it comes to issues of women. Domestic violence is a form of violence by a person to hurt one's spouse or partner either physically, psychologically or sexually. Though its outcomes are primarily related to physical health, but its causes and secondary outcomes are psychological as well as sociological. This review paper focuses on psychological causes and outcomes of domestic violence underlined in previous studies. Need for power and control, low self esteem, personality traits, gender role stereotypes, patriarchal beliefs, gap in spousal education and employment, marital maladjustment, alcohol consumption by husband, unemployment, attitudes towards women are some of the socio-psychological factors leading to domestic violence. Outcomes of domestic violence are equally harmful for women and their children. It has been noted that women who face domestic violence are at greater risk for mental health disorders. Education and higher socio-economic status of husband and wife are protective factors against domestic violence to some extent. Some recent research has also focused on domestic violence against men and domestic violence in same gender relationships, but there are a very few studies emphasizing on these two issues in India. It can be concluded that domestic violence is led by many interlinked psychological and sociological factors and its outcomes are dangerous for the victims.

Keywords: *Domestic violence, Causes, Outcomes*

Home is a place where everybody feels comfortable and safe but for some people it is not true. They face a regime of terror and violence where they should feel relaxed and loved. This category includes women who face domestic violence from their close relationships, mainly by their husbands and in-laws. Those victimized suffer physically and psychologically. They do not have any rights and decision making choice. There are many women who are facing such kind of inhumanities in this world. Violence against women is present across the world cutting across

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boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age. When looking at the problems faced by women in 21st century, domestic violence comes among top. Domestic violence is not a new concept; it has prevailed in our societies from a long time and is still prevailing. This century brought with it the concept of women empowerment, and it also helped women come forward in society. But crimes against women did not come to an end with this empowering. This issue is still unresolved.

Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviors by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, or cohabitation (Chhikara et. al., 2012). In National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), domestic violence is defined to include violence by spouses as well as by other household members. Domestic violence includes harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault - intimidation. It includes physical injury, as well as “willfully or knowingly placing or attempting to place a spouse in fear of injury and compelling the spouse by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the spouse has a right to abstain” (NFHS-3, 2006).

There are certain rights guaranteed to women under article 14, 15 and 21 of Indian Constitution based on which an act was introduced entitled “*Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*”. According to this act Domestic violence means any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute violence if it, a) harms or injures or endangers the healthy safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical of aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or b) harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or c) has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or d) otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to be aggrieved person.

Violence against women is a serious problem in India. According to NFHS-3, one-third of women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence and about 1 in 10 has experienced sexual violence. In total, 35 percent have experienced physical or sexual violence. This accounts for millions of women who have suffered, and continue to suffer, at the hands of their husbands and other family members also. Nearly two in five (37 percent) married women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their husband. One in four married women has experienced physical or sexual violence by their husband in the 12 months preceding the survey (NFHS-3, 2005-2006). According to United Nation Population Fund Report, around two-third of married Indian women are victims of domestic violence and as many as 70 per cent of married women in India between the age of 15 and 49 are victims of beating, rape or forced sex. In India,

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more than 55 percent of the women suffer from domestic violence, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P., M.P. and other northern states.

TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence has many forms, like physical aggression; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling; intimidation; stalking; passive/covert abuse and economic deprivation. All forms of domestic abuse have one purpose that is to gain and maintain control over the victim.

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse means contact to cause feelings of threat, injury, pain, or bodily harm. It includes hitting, choking, slapping, punching, pushing, burning etc. It may also include neglect of medical care in such case. It can also include causing physical injury to other targets, such as children or pets, to cause psychological harm to the victim.

2. Sexual Abuse and Marital Rape

Sexual abuse is any situation in where perpetrator force or threat the victim to obtain participation in unwanted sexual activity. Coercing a person to engage in sexual activity against their will, even if she is a spouse or intimate partner with whom consensual sex has occurred earlier, is an act of sexual violence.

3. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse also known as psychological abuse or mental abuse, include humiliating a person in private or public, controlling what that person can and cannot do, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel inferior or embarrassed, isolating the victim from their friends and family or denying the victim access to money or other basic resources and necessities. The basic aim is to degrade the self esteem by denying their existence.

4. Economic Abuse:

Economic abuse means when one partner has control over the other partner's access to economic resources. Economic abuse may involve preventing a person from resource acquisition, limiting the amount of resources used by them, or by exploiting economic resources of the person. The aim is to make the partner dependent on themselves so that they don't have any option other than to live with them.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Many psychologists and sociologists have given various theories regarding domestic violence. These include psychological theories which focus on mental health and personality of the husbands and sociological theories which focus on external factors such as family structures, education, employment etc. Table 1 gives various factors that lead to domestic violence. As we say about various aspects of domestic violence that no one factor can predict all, same is the case with domestic violence. Murthy et al. (2004) found in their empirical study that number of family members, type of marriage and husband's education have significant influence on domestic violence. Each country has unique factors that contribute to domestic violence in that

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particular area (Walker, 1999). Social factors such as acceptance of domestic violence, , oppressive political structures, low social status of women, oppressive fundamental religious beliefs that devalue women, civil conflicts, contribute to the existing prevalence rates of domestic violence in many countries (Walker, 1999).

Education is a very important factor that determines development of any country. It seems to play a major role in predicting the risk of domestic violence. A negative correlation was found between magnitude of domestic violence and men and women having 10+ years of education (Kavitha, 2012). Rapp et. Al. (2012) found that wives with higher education status than their husbands were less likely to experience severe domestic violence as compared to equally low educated wives. Equally high educated couples were least likely to experience domestic violence (Rapp et. Al., 2012).

Socioeconomic status also impact occurrence of domestic violence. Kavitha (2012) found that household who falls in the category of richer and richest has low incidences of domestic violence

Table 1 - Factors That Perpetuate Domestic Violence

Cultural

- Gender-specific socialization
- Cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles
- Expectations of roles within relationships
- Belief in the inherent superiority of males
- Values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls
- Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control
- Customs of marriage (bride price/dowry)
- Acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict

Economic

- Women's economic dependence on men
- Limited access to cash and credit
- Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands, and maintenance after divorce or widowhood
- Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors
- Limited access to education and training for women

Legal

- Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice
- Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance
- Legal definitions of rape and domestic abuse
- Low levels of legal literacy among women
- Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary

Political

- Under-representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legal and medical professions
- Domestic violence not taken seriously
- Notions of family being private and beyond control of the state
- Risk of challenge to status quo/religious laws
- Limited organization of women as a political force
- Limited participation of women in organized political system

(Source: Heise. 1994)

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(Kavitha, 2012). Higher SES has been linked to protective factors against domestic violence (Jeeyaselan et. al., 2007). Other than these educational and employment incompatibility between husband and wife is significantly associated with domestic violence (Anderson, 2015). Other variables like exposure to mass media (Kavitha, 2012), younger age at marriage (Mishra, 2000), living in rural areas, low education and low occupational status (Hindin, 2003) were associated with domestic violence.

Marital adjustment is studied as a major factor responsible for domestic violence. Husbands and wives who are less satisfied with their marriage seems to indulge more in domestic violence. Poor marital adjustment is one of the most frequently examined associate of domestic violence (Stith et al. 2008). Stith and colleagues reviewed numerous relevant works, and concluded a significant negative relationship between domestic violence and marital adjustment. That means when there are lower levels of marital adjustment, levels of domestic violence increases. But it is not possible to know if low marital satisfaction leads to domestic violence, or low satisfaction results from domestic violence. But anyhow decreased marital satisfaction and increased marital conflict are positively linked with domestic violence.

Indian society is a male dominant society and this feature contributes to domestic violence the most. In a study it was found that women who agree with male privilege were 5 times more likely to experience domestic violence than women who don't agree to male privilege (Alvi et. Al., 2005). Feminists view domestic violence as men's active attempts to repress women to maintain his dominance, control and power on her (Anderson, 2015). Need for power is also associated with domestic violence (Sugihara and Warner, 2002). Gender role attitudes are the best overall predictor of domestic violence beliefs in many studies. Men who believe in traditional gender roles are more prone to resort to domestic violence (Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner, 2004).

Decision making power in families also helps in predicting domestic violence. Women with greater power in decision making are less likely to experience domestic violence than women who have little rights in decision making. Women who participate along with their husbands in decision making are less prone to domestic violence (Hindin, 2013).

Alcohol addiction, poverty, son preference, dowry conflict and extra marital affair of husband with other women are also found to play role in domestic violence (Mitra 2006, Jeeyaselan et. al., 2007).

The pattern of domestic violence in society doesn't seem to come to an end mainly because it's not viewed as a crime by men and women and by society also. Over half of all women in Zimbabwe (53%) believed that wife beating was justified in one of the five situations. Women

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were most likely to find wife beating by husband justified if a wife argued with her spouse (36%), neglected her children (33%), or went out without telling her husband (30%) (Hindin, 2003). Haj-Yahia (1998) also reports that a substantial number of Palestinian women report that wife beating is justified under certain conditions, including sexual infidelity and perceived female challenge of manhood. Sahoo & Pradhan found in a study conducted upon 90,303 ever married women, a widespread prevalence of domestic violence (21 percent, since age 15) in India and the acceptance of majority of women (57 percent) to at least 1 reason for justifying a husband beating his wife (Sahoo & Pradhan, 2007).

OUTCOMES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence creates many negative impressions on the lives of victims in terms of emotional, social and economical aspects. Indian society being a male dominant society blames women herself for her miser conditions, which add up to her sufferings. Such victim blaming created a non-supportive environment for her. It has been found that a good social support acts as a protective factor against domestic violence (Jeeyaselan et. Al, 2015). Without any social support many of the victimized women continues to live with their abusive marriage.

Outcomes of domestic violence are not just physical but psychological also. Women who face domestic violence are at greater risks of mental disorders. Golding (1999) in a review found that prevalence of mental health disorders among battered women was 47.6% in 18 studies of depression, 17.9% in 13 studies of suicidality, 63.8% in 11 studies of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 18.5% in 10 studies of alcohol abuse, and 8.9% in four studies of drug abuse (Golding, 1999). Other researchers also found that women who experience partner abuse are likely to develop depression (Mechanic, Weaver & Resick 2008; Romito & Grassi 2007), post-traumatic stress and anxiety disorders (Bennice J et al., 2003; Dutton et al., 2006; Robertiello 2007; Temple et al., 2007) and other stress-related syndromes (Cole, Logan & Shannon 2005). Studies also indicate that women who are affected by domestic violence by their husbands are likely to have alcohol problems, smoking (Loxton et al., 2006) and to use non-prescribed drugs (Quinlivan & Evans 2001).

Affect of domestic violence is not restricted to women alone but it extends to her children also. Children who witness domestic violence in family are likely to develop family role stereotypes. Positive associations are found among physical and emotional abuse reported by the mother and family role stereotyping in the child (Graham-Bermann and Brescol, 2000).

CONCLUSION

This review of literature on domestic violence gives insight into the problem of domestic violence. There are many socio-psychological factors which affect domestic violence. Factors like illiteracy, low SES, alcoholism in husband, poverty, aggressiveness in husband, need to control, need for power, type of attachment, gender role attitudes and male dominance affect the

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occurrence of domestic violence. Its affects are negative in all the cases but this problem is till prevailing in society. Women who face this situation at their homes are affected psychologically and emotionally. Their risk for mental health disorders is very high. Their ability to rear their child effectively also diminishes. Children raised in battered homes are also affected by this violence. If society wants to get rid of this problem education of women is must. When women will be aware about their rights such crimes against them can be brought under control. Mental set of males as well as females should be modified by creating awareness regarding gender equality. The monster of domestic violence can be killed only when the structure of our thinking will change. As a study revealed that more economic opportunities, more rights to privacy and more legal protection gave women in the United States more ability to demand violence free marital relationships (Hirsch, 1999). Thus giving more rights and opportunities to women may cause some decrease in incidents of domestic violence.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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