



MEN: THE FORGOTTEN GENDER

Vasundhara S Nair

Junior Research Fellow, Department of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS

ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a reality in many parts of the world. However, domestic violence is mostly seen as synonymous with violence against women. Women only, are often perceived to be the victims of domestic violence, and men as the perpetrators, while most men victims continued to suffer in silence from their intimate partners. This paper tries to study the phenomenon of domestic violence against men, with the women as the perpetrators or aggressors, with a view towards gender balancing.

KEYWORDS : Domestic violence, Intimate partners, Women as perpetrators, Gender balancing

WHO defines Domestic Violence as "any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship" (World Health Organization, 2005). About two in five of all victims of domestic violence are men, contradicting the widespread impression that it is almost always women who are left battered and bruised (The Guardian, 2010). A generalized understanding makes us realize as to how much we forget that this form of violence is very much applicable and prevalent among men as women.

Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse, and intimate partner violence (IPV), is a pattern of behaviour which involves the abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family. Domestic violence can take many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects, battery), or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive / covert abuse and economic deprivation (Siemienuk, Krentz, Gish, & Gill, 2014).

According to findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 22% of women and 14% of men experience, at some point in their lifetimes severe physical violence by an intimate partner (NISVS, 2010). Domestic Violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights (UNICEF, 2000). Domestic violence against men is a term describing violence that is committed against men by the man's intimate partner (Sugg, Thompson, Thompson, Majuro, & Rivara, 1999). Even though there have been so much hues and cries about domestic violence against women across the globe, domestic violence against men is a reality. It occurs virtually in every society in varying degrees. The problem in conducting studies that seek to describe violence in terms of gender is the amount of silence, fear and shame that results from abuse within families and relationships, which is why domestic violence against men remains largely unreported (Chan, 2011).

An example of female brutality against men is a case of reported in NIMHANS. A 42-year-old commercial bank manager presented with his wife wherein he was accused of inflicting physical violence on his wife. Over the two sessions, the therapist always found the wife crying and accusing while the husband was neither rejecting or defending himself. In these sessions, the husband's face was always dull, blank and quiet caught the attention of the therapist. On the third session the therapist called the husband alone and asked "How are you?", to which he smiled but didn't give any answer. No matter what questions were asked there was no response. On the tenth session, the husband finally revealed about the unnecessarily aggressive and domineering behaviour of the wife wherein it was understood that the wife had been irrationally demanding for money which he did not have and hence the wife did not wish the

marriage to continue and hence had made false claims on the husband. The general examination revealed bruises on the face, neck and bruises on his shoulder. This is just one example of the various cases that have been reported. An abused man faces a shortage of resources, scepticism from the police and other major legal obstacles especially when it comes to gaining custody of his children from an abusive mother (Adeyeri, 2013).

One of the famous case studies of female brutality against men is the sorry tale of Eddie Kidd, a brain-damaged former motorbike stuntman, who revealed how he was severely battered constantly by his wife. He told The Sun on Sunday: 'She had started drinking heavily and would just not change. She would slap me in the face and punch me in the chest and arms, strangle me and say horrible things. As a man, to be beaten by your wife is desperately humiliating and, in a way, shameful. I ended up blaming myself - thinking she had taken too much - or, that it was my fault. I took on so much when I was riding. Then after all the stunts, all the fanfare, I am sat in a chair being beaten by my wife and there is nothing I can do.' Mrs. Kidd was arrested for domestic violence last December after her husband's family reported her to police days after the couple split up. She was jailed for five months for four assaults last month (Adebayo, 2014).

It is very important to hold violence as a top priority to protest against but one needs to always understand that in these cases Gender Neutrality is very important because just as a woman is vulnerable to violence so is a man. And more importantly for women there are laws that protect them, but for men there are none. At the same time, there are also cases where women misuse these laws and use it as a weapon against men. Male victims also should be allowed to ventilate and speak out their situations. Men should start by telling someone about the abuse, whether it's a friend, relative, health care provider or other close contact. At first, it might be difficult due to the male ego, but in the end, it is likely to bring about relief and the much-needed support (Adebayo, 2014).

Fighting for gender rights must involve a power balance such that the abuse does not happen on either ends and neither of the Gender should use power to oppress the other. These experiences explain about the importance to have effective legislations to curb the violence against men and to also accept husband battering as a reality. As if these forms of violence against men is not taken seriously or is being taken as a trivial matter in domestic context, then men will soon be the oppressed and the forgotten gender.

Reference

1. World Health Organization. (2005). Understanding and addressing violence against women.
2. The Guardian. (2010, Sep 5). More than 40% of domestic violence victims are male.
3. Siemienuk, R., Krentz, H., Gish, J., & Gill, M. (2014). Domestic Violence Screening: Prevalence and Outcomes in a Canadian HIV Population. *American Journal of Sociological Research*, 4(1), 14-19.
4. NISVS. (2010). National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Summary.
5. Adebayo, A. A. (2014). Domestic Violence against Men: Balancing the Gender Issues in Nigeria. *American Journal of Sociological Research*, 4(1), 14-19.
6. UNICEF. (2000).
7. Sugg, N., Thompson, R., Thompson, D., Majuro, R., & Rivara, F. (1999). Domestic

- violence and primary care attitudes, practices, and beliefs. *Archives of Family Medicine*, 8, 301-306.
8. Chan, K. L. (2011). Gender Differences in Self-Reports of Intimate Partner Violence: A Review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 16 (2), 167-175.
 9. Adeyeri. (2013).