



Domestic Violence Against Women In India: A Family Menace

KEYWORDS

Domestic Violence, Women, Wife battering, Physical, Psychological damage.

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women in India is an issue rooted in societal norms and economic dependence. Female feticide, domestic violence, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence constitute the reality of most girls' and women's lives in India. Wife battering affects the physical and psychological wellbeing of the abused women and even that of their children. Although female participation in public life is increasing and laws have been amended, India still has a long way to go to make Indian women equal citizens in their own country. In our society, many women are violently treated by their intimate partners while they suffer in silence. In some cases, domestic violence leads to the death of these women. It is on this premise that this paper discusses the meaning, causes, types of domestic violence and after-effects of these types of violence on abused women. In addition, the paper discusses the management of this threat against women as well as examines the role to be played by the social workers, professionals and other voluntary organizations in providing intervention to the affected individuals. In conclusion recommendations were made to eradicate this menace from the society.

'Women are the only exploited group in history to have been idealized into powerlessness' - Karl Marx

INTRODUCTION

"Bride tortured to death for dowry", "School going kid succumbs to his injuries after beaten by father", "A seventy year old man killed over property dispute", "Harassment of men in Chandigarh..."

The present paper deals with the various forms of domestic violence prevalent in India. Their causes and variation in the intensity of the forms have also been addressed. The aftereffects of different kinds of domestic violence and the possible remedies have been highlighted. Finally, a conclusion has been drawn after the complete analysis of the topic with the juxtaposition of facts and figures at hand.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN INDIA

UNICEF Reports on Progress of Nations released jointly by Government of India and UNICEF says that more than 60 million women, who should have been alive today, are missing. Responsible factors are from feticide to domestic violence to dowry deaths to physical assaults. Discrimination starts even before women are born and continue till they die. It exists in the form of:

Feticide – Some new forms of violence have appeared with technological advances as is evident in case of female feticide, reflecting in adverse sex-ratio. Social bias in favor of a male-child lead to abortions (out of 8000 cases of abortions following sex-determination tests, 7999 are female fetus, according to a Survey) Sex-ratio is continuously declining all over India except for Kerala. Inefficient and ineffective performance of political, administrative and economic structures and mechanisms failed to stop it.

Infanticide – Thousands of newly born baby-girls die with overdoses of opium. They are abandoned or thrown in rivers or dust bins to die. Out of abandoned children 90% are girls.

Health hazards - According to official figures, there is 10% higher mortality rate for girls than boys due to mal-nutrition in infancy and childhood. Health Statistics are equally alarming with 80% of them being anemic.

Physical assaults/Rapes/gang-rapes/molestations – According to a Report, there are reported cases of one rape every 54 minutes, a molestation every 26 minutes; and an act of

cruelty every 33 minutes. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistic says – every 20 minutes, a woman is raped somewhere in India, not to mention the countless number of cases of molestations or rapes going unreported. Child rape cases have increased by 336% in the last 10 years. Government data shows crimes by juveniles – especially rape and abduction of women – has seen exponential rise in the past decade – from 48.7% in 2002 to 66.5 in 2012.

Dowry deaths – Number of dowry-deaths is quite alarming in the country – a dowry death every one hour forty two minutes. Dowry-related violence is also in increase. Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are the states with maximum number of reported cases. Many cases remain unreported.

Victims of materialistic-culture - Consumerist culture has triggered off increased atrocities, domestic violence and physical assaults on women. Millions of girls live under threat of physical abuse.

Female literacy rate – Male-female literacy-rate is 82.14% to 65.46% according to 2011 census. Employment ratio in organized and unorganized sectors also points out discrimination against women in job-market.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is a widespread problem, with appalling physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic consequences for girls and women (Gill & Rehman, 2004). It affects women of every age, in every society and in every socio-economic group. "Violence against women refers to any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to the following:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within

the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. This is important so that policy makers have a full understanding of the issues involved in violence against women; otherwise the laws and policies that are formulated are likely to be ineffective.

CONSEQUENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There are varied consequences of domestic violence depending on the victim, the age group, the intensity of the violence and frequency of the torment they are subjected to. The consequences of the domestic violence in detail can be broadly categorized under – the Effect on the victim and the family, Effect on the society and the Effect on nation's growth and productivity.

Effect on the victim and the family

Physical Effect - Bruises, broken bones, head injuries, lacerations and internal bleeding are some of the acute effects of a domestic violence incident that require medical attention and hospitalization (Jones, 1997). Some chronic health conditions that have been linked to victims of domestic violence are arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome (Berrios,1991).Victims who are pregnant during a domestic violence relationship experience greater risk of miscarriage, pre-term labor and injury to or death of fetus .

Psychological Effect – Among victims who are still living with their perpetrators, high amounts of stress, fear and anxiety are commonly reported. Depression is also common, as victims are made to feel guilty for 'provoking' the abuse and are frequently subjected to intense criticism .it is reported that 60% of the victims meet the diagnostic criteria for depression, either during or after termination of the relationship, and have a greatly increased risk of suicidability (Barnett,2001). The most commonly referenced psychological effect of domestic violence is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).According to Vitanza, Vogel and Marshall (1995), PTSD is characterized by flashbacks, intrusive images, exaggerated startle response, nightmares and avoidance of triggers that are associated with the abuse. These symptoms are generally experienced for a long span of time after the victim has left the dangerous situation.

Effect on Children: There has been increase in acknowledgement that a child who is exposed to domestic abuse during his upbringing will suffer in his development and psychological welfare (Dodd, 2009). Some emotional and behavioral problems that can result due to domestic violence include increased aggressiveness, anxiety, and changes in how a child socializes with friends, family and authorities. Problems with attitude and cognition in schools can start developing, along with a lack of skills such as problem-solving. Correlation has been found between the experience of abuse and neglect in childhood and perpetrating domestic violence and sexual abuse in adulthood (Sadler, 1994). Additionally in some cases the abuser will purposely abuse the mother in front of the child to cause a ripple effect, hurting two victims simultaneously

FIGHTING THE 'DOMESTIC VIOLENCE' EVIL

Intervention and action at multiple levels

Efforts done so far on gender issue defy basic and simple solutions. Elimination of all kinds of violence against women requires channelizing simultaneously the attention and efforts of all the concerned people and work together. This sensitive issue needs intervention and action at multiple levels – state,

society and individuals in public and private capacities.

At government level

· Amongst immediate steps, the most important task of government is to arrest continuously deteriorating law and order situation. There should be vigilant policing round the clock both in cities and suburban areas and more women police officers in all police stations.

·Speedy and time-bound justice is needed urgently. Delayed justice emboldens the spirits of criminal-minded elements in society, who take advantage of loopholes in law, and which enables them to escape. Many culprits go off scot-free even after committing a heinous crime.

·Reforming the structure and systems of governmental institutions engaged in the law-making and enforcement tasks are highly desirable, but it may take a longer time.

Role of Non Governmental Institutions/Organizations

·Non-governmental organizations and institutions should conduct series of seminars, workshops meetings at different places on various aspects of violence/oppression against women. They should discuss in depth the gravity, enormity and dangers of continuously deteriorating law and order position, deteriorating human values, self-centered attitude of individuals and alarming rise in bestial acts against women, which makes it very unsafe for women to move freely outside their homes and try to find out remedy for it..

Media

·Media should bring women issues to public domain in a forceful manner. They can play an important role in spreading awareness. They can provide a platform to speakers and panelists from different fields, eminent personalities responsible for decision-making to share their views and conduct an in-depth study on various gender issues, and view it holistically touching various aspects of the problem. Views of some of the victims of atrocities should also be taken to understand their unpleasant experiences and the manner in which they came over the agonies they suffered because of inhuman acts.

At family's level

·Family is the first and foremost institution, where children learn first lesson of humanity and social relationships. Family is the best place to inculcate positive values – like honesty, simplicity, modesty, sense of responsibility and respect for elders – amongst children and youth of both the sexes.

·Childhood is the most formative, educative and impressionable time in a human's life and most appropriate time for inculcation of such values, as it remains permanently and firmly embedded in their delicate psyche throughout their life.

·Training for gender sensitization should be imparted within the family. Right from the beginning, all the children should be treated equally, without any gender-bias.

On women' part

·Instead of silently bearing all the atrocities perpetrated against them, women should raise their voice against injustice; create awareness amongst women about their rights and channelize their efforts by writing articles, organizing seminars, workshops etc.

· Irrespective of their social status in society, they should join hands, and work in a spirit of unity. They should raise their voice boldly against social evils like dowry, bride-burning, female infanticide, etc.

Women should exercise utmost vigilance both at the mental and physical level to ensure their safety and security, so that no one could exploit them when placed under adverse circumstances in life. They must always be prepared for self- defense by getting training in Karate etc.

ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Social workers should provide myriad services to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Direct services to victims of domestic violence include counseling and support through shelter programs across the country, individual counseling through private practice settings, court advocacy through county victim service agencies, and social justice community organizing efforts to prevent domestic violence from occurring in the first place.

Direct Service Providers (Women's Advocate, Shelter Program). Social workers should provide services to victims of domestic violence through shelter programs across the country. The context in which services are provided is empowerment and advocacy oriented.

Community Education Coordinator. Many shelters across the country have a Community Education Coordinator on staff who may be a social worker. This person should be accountable for managing all types of community education from professional development and training to providing speakers for civic or social groups.

Social workers should provide therapy to victims of domestic violence while they are in a shelter or living in their community. Social workers should also serve as executive directors of domestic violence organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Comprehensive and extensive premarital counseling should be given to intending couples on how to manage their marital relationship.
- There should be public enlightenment through the mass media on the negative effects of domestic violence against women, especially wife battering.
- Religious leaders too should vigorously teach against marital violence in their places of worship.
- Youths should be encouraged and taught to detest and not imitate brutish treatment of wives around them.
- Medical professionals, after physical treatment should refer the victims to counselors and psychotherapists.
- Punishment given to grievously offending husbands should be publicized, so that it can serve as deterrence to others.

CONCLUSION

Having looked at a sensitive topic of "Domestic Violence in India", we can sense the importance of discussion of such a topic. The varying causes which can spark the violence within the four walls of homes need to be analyzed carefully and a wise study of the factors causing the violence may prevent a family to suffer from the menace of domestic violence. The domestic violence may have a far wider and deeper impact in real life than what has been covered in this essay. What is required is to see closely the association of the factors provoking a particular form of domestic violence. If these factors can be controlled then more than one form of violence can be prevented from harming an individual or our society and India would be a much better place to live in.

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