

Are Women Responsible for Domestic Violence?

Julie Zothanpuui Khawlhring

Ph.D Research Scholar, Presidency College (Autonomous), Chennai – 600005, India

Abstract: *Domestic Violence is a serious problem that occurs in every culture and social group. It has devastating physical, emotional, financial and social effects on women, children, families and communities around the world. Domestic Violence is defined as violence or mistreatment an individual may experience at the hands of a marital, common-law, former or same sex partner. The abuse may happen during a relationship or after it has ended. Women in most cases are seen to allow the domestic violence to happen. This can happen due to various reasons, fear of loss of relationship with husband and others, fear of society, fear of being isolated etc. While we talk about equality of gender it is very important that both men and women understand their human rights. The lack of awareness of human rights and the challenges in the political and legal systems are a big reason for the promotion of domestic violence. Human are known as social animals and therefore it is important that while they have close bonding between their family members, they also have a good social circle. This is possible only when both men and women are treated equally. While men understand the important role of women in the evolution of this world and women parallelly stand tall against such cases of domestic violence and become a role model for others. It is always said that prevention is better than cure. It is therefore very important that the government is taking enough steps to educate the masses and become more approachable for women so that they can easily take necessary actions.*

Keywords: Physical violence, Psychological violence, Emotional violence, Culturall violence and Political violence.

1.Introduction

The family is often equated with sanctuary—a place where individuals seek love, safety, security, and shelter. But the evidence shows that it is also a place that imperils lives, and breeds some of the most drastic forms of violence perpetuated by males who are, or who have been, in position of trust and intimacy and power – husbands, boyfriends, fathers, fathers-in-law, step fathers, brothers, uncles, sons, or other relatives. Domestic violence is in most cases violence perpetuated by men against women. Women can also be violent, but their actions account for a small percentage of domestic violence. So the question is who is responsible for this.?

Domestic Violence is a serious problem that occurs in every culture and social group. It has devastating physical, emotional, financial and social effects on women, children, families and communities around the world. Domestic Violence is defined as violence or mistreatment an individual may experience at the hands of a marital, common-law, former or same sex partner. The abuse may happen during a relationship or after it has ended.

Violence against women is often known as ‘gender-based’ violence because it partly stems from women subordinate status in society. While other forms of violence within the family are also serious. Women are the victims of domestic violence in approximately 95% of the cases violence against women jeopardizes women’s lives, bodies, psychological integrity and freedom and has been called “the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world.” So why do the women let this happen. Is this situation prevailing in all parts of the world or is it something that is seen only in India and other similar growing economies.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948 claims that ‘All Human beings are born free and equal in dignity of men and women before law and equality of opportunity.

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948 emphasizes that ‘recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

2.Domestic Violence: Definition

Domestic violence is more known as spouse abuse, dating violence, matrimonial or marital violence, and intimate partner violence. The Criminal Justice System is included mainly in the Indian Penal Code, 1860. The IPC is addling-on by special laws, which describe and punish particular crimes. Under the IPC and special laws, ‘culpable homicide’, ‘dowry death’ are defined as causing death by doing and act; a) with the intension of causing death, b) with the intention of causing such bodily injury as is likely to cause death, and c) with the knowledge that it is likely to cause death. Domestic Violence is coming under the definition of violence against women.

“Violence against women means 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 or such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. [The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women adopted by G.A. of the U.N. on 20th December 1993].

According to Black Law Dictionary, “domestic violence means violence between members of a household, usually spouses, an assault or other violent act committed by one member of a household against another.”

The United Nations defines violence against women as ‘any act of gender-based violence that result in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, Whether occurring in public or in private life’.

Violence is an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person (Gelles and Straus, 1979).

The “**pattern of abusive behavior is any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.**”-USA

3. Forms of Domestic Violence

3.1 Physical violence

- Pushing, beating, kicking, hair pulling, twisting arms, legs and fingers, or make burning marks on her body
- Physical attack with a weapon
- Holding, tying down or restraining her
- Forced or coerced sexual acts or behavior (unwanted intercourse, or sexual jokes and insults);
- Threats (threatening to hit, harm or use a weapon);
- Refusing to assist when she is unwell or wounded and
- Apprehending her in a unsafe place

3.2 Psychological or emotional violence

- Threatening to hit and harm or take away children
- Attacking on self-esteem
- Attempts to control or limit another person’s behavior
- Criticizing, insulting and belittling the victim
- Making frequent phone calls or leaving written communication
- Ignoring, dismissing or ridiculing the victim’s needs
- Intense jealousy and possessiveness
- Degradation and humiliation
- False accusations, blaming the victim for everything
- Deprivation and Intimidation.

Domestic violence there is No age, socio-economic, religious, racially, gender or educational barriers

4. Causes of Domestic Violence

4.1 Cultural

- Gender-specific socialization
- Cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles
- Expectations of roles within relationship
- Belief in the inherent superiority of males
- Values that gives 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 of resolve conflict
- 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

4.2 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 level of legal literacy among women
- Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary

4.3 Political

- Under-representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legal and medical professions
- Domestic violence not taken seriously
- Notion 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

5. Impact of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can have psychological effects like- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), suicide, depression, anxiety, fear, nightmares, sleeplessness and illness, etc. Victims may also feel anxious, ashamed, angry, helpless, and afraid and may experience panic attacks. Depression, anxiety, fear, helpless is greater among people who have experienced domestic violence compared to those who have not.

Wife battering is the commonest form of abuse worldwide irrespective of class, religion and community. Studies have correlated childhood abuse, alcoholism, unemployment and poverty with the growth of this malaise.

6. Suggestions

Awareness is very important for everyone especially for the victims, we should educate them that domestic violence is unacceptable behavior. Every human have the right to live free from violence, abuse and intimidation. No one ever deserves to be abused no matter what is said or done.

Most of the victims are women, in that situation women also have responsible for domestic violence. Women should know her Rights and should know how to control and find out solution and find a way to be safe without fear.

Women in most cases are seen to allow the domestic violence to happen. This can happen due to various reasons, fear of loss of relationship with husband and others, fear of society, fear of being isolated etc. While we talk about equality of gender it is very important that both men and women understand their human rights. The lack of awareness of human rights and the challenges in the political and legal systems are a big reason for the promotion of domestic violence. In this case Women should be strong and should exercise their right with full energy and confidence.

The legal system of India allows the women to approach the court of law against such issues of domestic violence and these cases are being treated very strictly as criminal offense. However only a very small percentage of women actually take this route. So, we should encourage and give them full freedom to take necessary step to exercise their Rights without fear.

The law in this case is women centric in India and therefore many women are also misusing the law against men. Therefore the court also has been very careful in handling these kind of cases. Special counseling cells are being created where the men and women have to be counseled in presence of experienced counselor to avoid the relation to be exposed in the court and thereby get into a situation of mistrust and conflict.

7. Conclusion

Human are known as social animals and therefore it is important that while they have close bonding between their family members, they also have a good social circle. This is possible only when both men and women are treated equally. While men understand the important role of women in the evolution of this world and women paralelly stand tall against such cases of domestic violence and become a role model for others. While there is a small portion of women exercising their right, there is a huge percentage of women who either are not even aware of this right or are not willing to take this route. It is always said that prevention is better than cure. It is therefore very important that the government is taking enough steps to educate the masses and become more approachable for women so that they can easily take necessary actions.

References

- [1] Ashine Roy : *Violence Against Women*
- [2] Batria, P. (2007), *Sex and Crime in India*. New Delhi. Uppal Publishing House.
- [3] Chandrababu, B.S. (2002). *Battered Women of Madras*. Chennai, Emerald Publishers.
- [4] Lyn Shipway, (2004), *Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Health Care Professionals, Family and Relationship*.
- [5] National Commission for Women.
- [6] Tamara L. Roleff (2000), *Domestic Violence: Opposing View Points, Family and Relationships*.