



Causes of domestic violence on women

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ABSTRACT

Present study was designed to identify the causes of domestic violence on woman. Women in many societies face violence at home due to various reasons ranging from social and cultural norms or their own failure at empowering themselves. The report includes an opinion on different causes of domestic violence and discusses each using the methodology of survey sampling and literature retrieved on the subject. In the end of the report is a discussion on the most agreed upon cause of the violence faced by women to create awareness for the reader on the subject and to fulfill the purpose of the report in highlighting the basic cause leading to violence.

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Introduction

Domestic violence has been defined as 'any act of gender based violence that results 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' (The United Nations Commission on the 'Status of Women'). It could include shouting, physically hitting, or even verbal abuse. Domestic violence is an issue that requires immediate intervention by the government, especially in lesser developed countries like Pakistan, in our case. In developing countries like Pakistan, domestic violence tends to be ignored and warded off as a personal household matter, to be resolved within the couple. It is not considered respectful for a woman to go public about matters of her home. Hence, such incidents do not get reported. Without reports, the graveness of this issue is not evident and hence no steps are taken to put an end to it. What is still unclear to most of us is the reason why such heartless behavior is shown towards women, at all. Hence, our research paper is focused on the causes behind domestic violence, what triggers it, and what can be done to counter these causes. In today's modern world, why is there still room for such violence? What are the reasons that men still think that they have enough rights over their wives to put them through this torture? Why are women taken to be the property of their husband, to be handled in any way the husband likes? There's not a single answer to these questions, and a number of factors contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence, and that is what we set out to research for our paper.

Domestic violence can also defined as 'any act of gender based violence that results 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' (The United Nations Commission on the 'Status of Women'). It could include shouting, physically hitting, or even verbal abuse. Battering is an occurrence in every country, culture and age group. People from all socioeconomic, religious and educational backgrounds are affected. In most societies, women are considered vulnerable

and are at a greater risk of violence and a lifetime of abuse. Factors which may increase women's vulnerability to some types of violence include age, disability, and poverty. Across all forms of violence and abuse, women are most at risk from men they know. Those victimized suffer both physically and psychologically. They are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves and their children for fear of further consequences. They are denied human rights and their lives are taken from them by the ever-present threat of violence. In developing countries, domestic violence tends to be ignored and warded off as a personal household matter, to be resolved within the couple. It is not considered respectful for a woman to go public about matters of her home. Hence, such incidents do not get reported. Without reports, the graveness of this issue is not evident and hence no steps are taken to put an end to it. In today's modern world, why is there still room for such violence? What are the reasons that men still think that they have enough rights over their wives to put them through this torture? Why are women taken to be the property of their husband, to be handled in any way the husband likes? There's not a single answer to these questions, and a number of factors contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence. These factors tend to vary from household to household but some common factors include interfamilial conflicts, lack of education, and family size. In my opinion, however, the prevalence of extremely high levels of domestic abuse is due to the lack of a proper judicial system that can offer protection to these abused women. These women have no one to turn to, and have no law to protect them from the torture they are put through. The men abusing these women have no fear of the law. Hence, there has been no improvement in this problem over time. Quite a substantial amount of work has been done on this problem. Different researches have provided different reasons for the prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan. More than 30% of Pakistani women are victims of domestic abuse. The most common types of physical abuse identified were beating, slapping, or kicking (95%) and pulling hair (62%). (Fikree, Jafarey, Korejo, Khan, and Durocher, 2004) One study

attempted to study the relationship between domestic violence and pregnancy. A strong association was found between interfamilial conflicts and domestic abuse. If other family, such as mother-in-laws, were actively involved in family matters and had significant control over the husband, it greatly increased the chances for familial conflicts and hence domestic abuse. It was also seen that as the size of the family increased, and more children were added, the chances of domestic abuse also increased, especially during pregnancy as the child added to the burden upon the family's already-low resources and created stress for the husband. Research also showed that there was an association between domestic abuse by husbands during pregnancy and the exposure to abuse of their own mothers. This shows that abusive behavior is learned from childhood experiences. A positive association was found between tobacco use by husbands and domestic abuse, as it added to the financial burden on the family's income. (Farid, Saleem, Karim, and Hatcher 2008).

Another study further stressed the importance of interfamilial conflicts in domestic violence and showed that financial constraints (60.0%) and presence of in-laws (15.3%) were the most frequently reported reasons for marital conflict in society. Other issues included children, drugs, absence of male child, and dowry issues. (Fikree, and Bhatti, 1999).

Fikree et.al (2005) studied the attitude of men towards domestic violence highlighted the role of socio-economic status and lack of formal education as factors contributing to domestic violence. This study had aimed to highlight the attitudes of men towards domestic violence and it had been found that nearly all men (94.9%) reported practicing some type of verbal abuse during their marital life, using abusive language being the most common (90%). Among physical abuse, slapping, hitting or punching, were most often reported (47.7%). It further highlighted that the common factors that triggered physical or verbal violence were issues related to children (71.6%), money (71.0%), wife's attitude, i.e. obeying/listening to husband's wishes, being disrespectful to mother-in-law/father-in-law, going out to visit natal family or friends without permission etc., (41.5%) and in-laws (36.4%). 55% of the men had been abused themselves during their childhood, and 65% had, as a child, observed their mother being abused.

Another study has also established similar consequences of domestic abuse. These include injuries due to trauma, low birth weight, gynecological disorder, depression and suicide, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. For many women the psychological effects are more debilitating than the physical affects. Fear, anxiety, fatigue, posttraumatic stress disorder, sleeping and eating disturbances are more common long-term reactions to violence and abuse. Moreover, abused women frequently become isolated and withdrawn as they try to hide the evidence of violence from others, as they consider it to be shameful for them to speak up about their suffering (Fikree, and Bhatti, 1999).

Women who have limited support from friends, family, or their communities may find it more difficult to leave abusive relationships (Sullivan, 1994). Women who have received help and support from family and friends report it as being very important in allowing them to leave their abusers (Bowker, 1983). Family and friends can assist in abusive situations and provide emotional help that might help to reduce the risk of psychological trauma. In our culture context women is considered nothing without her husband once she is married.

They would rather bear with the torment their husbands put them through than put up with the society's unforgiving behavior if she were to fight for her rights. These women are not educated or exposed enough to be aware of their rights. For them, the violence is a nature of married life and accepts it as their fate. Some women are raised to believe that their husbands or male partners are in charge, and so are hesitant to report abuse (Weiss, 2000; Matthews, 2004).

A woman's abuser may also be her main source of affection when he is not being abusive, which is particularly dangerous when she is socially isolated (Salber & Taliaferro, 1995). Many women mention growing up in a household where divorce was not only frowned upon, it was absolutely not an option. These particular women tended to be the ones who mentioned the belief that they were the ones at fault for their partners' abuse, believing that if they were better wives to them, the abuse would stop. Sometime abusive husbands may also use their children to coerce wife into staying in the relationship, moreover they may threaten to harm kids, take them away, or hurt the children in front of their mother in order to maintain power (Salber & Taliaferro, 1995).

This is fact that woman who stays in a disturbed situations will have her own reasons to do so. There is no answer for why women stay in abusive relationships. Present study is designed to investigate the phenomena of domestic violence; it intends to highlight the major contributors of domestic violence.

Methodology

The methodology we used to conduct this research was an online questionnaire. With the advent of technology this is not only convenient but is free of cost and can take a larger sample size of respondents. also, an online questionnaire helps avoid the bias which the presence of any interviewer can cause. It brings about the answers that were meant and thought upon taking as much time as one wants and discloses information anonymously. Since the identity remains confidential, sensitive topics can be questioned upon such as the topic at hand: violence on women. Due to the nature of the topic being such, questions were qualitative. The questionnaire consisted of 5 questions, only one being open ended. The total responses were 72 in number and 68 of which were females. This helped to show the interest that the gender discussed by topic was taking in the issue. The first question which was the gender of the interviewee, this question is important because we need to know either one gender thinks the opposite is better off and its type is what faces violence, this helps determine gender mindset and bias. So to correctly identify exactly what percentage of men think they are the victims or what percent of women think they are the victims this question was necessary.

Next question was the age of the respondents to see the level of understanding as domestic violence is a topic which demands a level of maturity before anyone can comment on it and any responses from an age below ten were not entertained as children do not understand the terms and topic.

The third question was „do you think domestic violence exists"? this was to show if the respondent is even aware of the issue to check his validity on the other questions and also, to study the general attitude and concern over the issue.

The fourth question discusses the causes of domestic violence on females. Through this, one can find out what percent of people believe which is the main cause.

The last question which was an open ended one. The respondent was asked to tell what could solve such a sensitive

issue as violence on women. This way the respondents' personal experiences and suggestions came freely and varied drastically. This helped to bring diversity to the research and to explore upon the solutions to the topic under consideration.

Results

The results of the survey conducted showed that out of a sample size of 72, 68 were female respondents. This brings into light the interest debate, the topic was perhaps more interest arousing to females since it discussed their issue. This magnifies the sensitivity of the problem and shows that females were more concerned about it. To the most focal debate on who is the object of violence, 94% responses were positive for the females. This results in a clear conclusion that female gender faces more violence since only 6% of the respondents chose men to be the victims.

An absolute success of the report is the topic statement. All the respondents gave a 100% yes to the statement that domestic violence does exist. No one denied the statement and hence the topic brought light to a problem common to masses to which no gender, age or person could deny.

35% of the responses agreed on male domination due to the socio-culture framework being the cause of the stigma, while 26% chose lack of education and non-empowerment to be the reason women face undermining and violence. Only 3% reasoned financial constraints to be the factor causing violence on females while 19% chose religion as the reason, to avoid the religious debate, the question was a closed question but what requires further research is the fact that 17% responses were for 'other' causes.

Summing up, male domination and lack of empowerment of women made 61% of the causes and the report must deduce that female violence results from an amalgamation of all the above mentioned causes, but male mindset remains the biggest.

Discussion

Majority of our respondents were females, which indicated that women were more concerned about this issue and wanted to bring about a change. Our respondents were aged between 19 and 35, so we covered a wide range of population, age wise. Every respondent gave a positive response to the question "Do you think domestic violence exists?" which means that the general population is well aware of the prevalence of this problem. People are not ignorant about the fact that this is one of the very serious social problems that exist in Pakistan today.

Once again, majority of the population believed that females were the main victims of domestic violence, with a very small minority believing it to be males. Even the male respondents believed females to be victimized by domestic violence which shows that in societies all over the world, violence on females is not only more prevalent, but also, there is more awareness about it. In general, our cultural values are believed to be the major cause of domestic violence on women. In our culture, we take males to be the dominant figure and women are placed at a level where they do not have a strong enough social standing and they are considered to be a property of the males, to be treated by them however they please. In such a society, where women are treated like slaves, the rate of domestic violence is bound to be high and women are bound to be subjected to ill treatment.

The second largest cause of domestic violence was believed to be the lack of education and employment opportunities for women. When women do not get educated properly, they are not aware of their rights and hence, they are not strong enough to

fight back. They do not think that there is any way out of this labyrinth; therefore, they have accepted their fate as being a property to the males of their households. With proper education comes knowledge and exposure, and this will make them strong enough to stand up against the injustice being done to them and make sure they are not being ill-treated in any manner by their spouses. People in Pakistan have also exploited the message of religion to exploit women to their own benefit. Religious messages have been distorted to convey that a woman's rightful duty is to serve her husband as a slave, to be bound within the four walls of her home, to be a property and to be inferior, and to be dependent on males completely.

Financial dependence on males is another cause of domestic violence, which is quite strongly linked to the lack of education for women. Women are completely dependent on their male counterparts to provide them with finances for even the smallest of activities. The males realize the position of power that they hold, and they use it to exploit the females. In a country severely stricken by poverty, money determines everything and hence, every household issue revolves around money, or the lack thereof. Coming to fighting this issue and bringing it to an end, educations seemed to be the most suggested answer.

Majority of the population believes that no educated woman would allow a male to subjugate her or treat her in an unacceptable manner. However, education has to be increased not only for the women but also for the men, so that their mentalities change and their personalities develop in a positive manner. When they get educated, they will learn to accept women as equal counterparts, and they will stop treating them as a property. Education for both men and women would increase employment opportunities and finish financial problems. With fewer financial troubles, there would be fewer tensions in the households and hence, a decreased level of domestic violence. Moreover, laws have to be devised so that men who engage in domestic violence realize that there are consequences to their actions and women realize that they have the support from the law, should they decide to stand up and fight for their rights.

As we can see, domestic violence is not a problem that can be ignored, and although people in our social class are aware of the problem, there is still severe lack of awareness in the lower class, and women are still being made victims. Increased education for men and women can counter all the causes of domestic violence, from changing the culture of male domination, to decreasing financial troubles of household. Women are human beings, not properties, who can be treated in any way they like, by whomever they like. Hence, severe action needs to be taken against it. For the short run, strong laws against domestic violence have to be created and punishments have to be given to those who violate the laws. For the long run, the level of literacy has to be increased. Only after such actions can we see a change in the treatment of women and their status in the society.

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