



Domestic Violence against Women in Tinsukia District of Assam, India

Baruah Banashree

Department of Home Science, Digboi Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Digboi, Assam, INDIA

Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 22nd April 2015, revised 27th May 2015, accepted 5th June 2015

Abstract

Domestic violence is one of the major crimes against women which affects their position in the society. Domestic violence is recognized as the significant barrier of women empowerment as it affects physical and mental health of women. This present study has been carried out with the objectives to find out the causes of domestic violence against women and to study the impact of domestic violence on the abused women, their children and their intra-family relations. A sample of 100 families belonging to different socio-economic conditions from rural areas of Tinsukia District was randomly selected. Data were collected from the women respondents through an interview schedule and informal discussion with family members, neighbours and members of women organizations. From the present study consumption of alcohol by the husband was found to be a major cause of domestic violence particularly among the rural victims. But the data revealed that in all cases domestic violence was caused not because of a single reason. In large number of cases a mix of different causes was observed. The domestic violence also affected the physical and mental health of victim in different ways. Domestic violence has long term impact on the life of victims, the life of their children and their intra-family relations.

Keywords: Matrimonial, mental health, intra-family relations, socio-economic condition.

Introduction

In India, domestic violence against women has emerged as an important social evil. According to Heise et al., “Internationally, one in every three women have been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in their lifetime by a member of her own family¹”. Women in India have never experienced equal rights and freedom compared to their male counterparts. The concept of ‘Ardhangini’ [half of the body] seems to be restricted only in literatures and have never implemented in practical life.

Violence against women may be psychological or physical. According to Jain et.al. 2004 “Physical violence is defined as the use of physical force against another person that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm and includes beating, kicking, slapping, pushing, biting, pinching etc. Psychological violence is defined as the intentional use of power, including threat of physical force that can results harm to family life, livelihood, physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development and includes verbal abuse, bullying/mobbing, harassment, intimidation and threats²”.

In view of the prevalence of domestic violence, many researchers have tried to find out the possible causes of domestic violence and its impact on women and on the society. According to Murthy et al. “numbers of family members, type of marriage and husband’s education besides menstrual problems have significant influence on domestic violence³. Lifestyle of men such as smoking, alcoholism and drugs promote men to commit domestic violence⁴. Another study conducted by Gerstein in Uttar Pradesh found “low educational

level and poverty are important reasons for domestic violence⁵”. Further, according to Hindin, “marriage at a younger age makes women vulnerable to domestic violence⁶”. Besides this, “sex of the children, ownership of property, dowry, working status of the person can’t be ignored⁷”.

Many researchers found that violence caused by intimate partner negatively affects women’s reproductive and sexual health. According to UNICEF, 2000 “violence has significant harmful effects like unwanted pregnancy, gynecological disorders and physical injuries to private parts besides large-scale mental health impacts⁸”.

In view of the above discussion the present study have been carried out with the objectives to find out the causes of domestic violence against women and to find out its impact on the abused victim, their children and their intra-family relations.

Methodology

Sample: A sample of 100 families belonging to different socio-economic conditions from rural areas of Tinsukia District was randomly selected. In this study, women from families with monthly income <Rs.4000/- were classified as low income group and those with income between Rs.4000/- to Rs.10,000/- were considered as middle income group. The age of the subjects ranged between 15-60 years. Educational level up to class IV was considered as primary level education and class V to class X was classified as secondary level education.

Tool: An interview schedule was constructed for collection of data. Data were also collected from an informal discussion with

family members, neighbours and women organizations.

Analysis of data: Data collected were tabulated and statistically analyzed by working out frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion

For convenience of discussion the results are presented under the following heads:

Background information: Personal data of the subjects is presented in table-1. It was observed that most of the samples (96.0%) were from Hindu religion and rest (4.0%) were from Muslim religion. 77.0 percent of the families belonged to Assamese community while 23.0 percent belonged to Bengali community. It was found that majority (68.0%) of women had up to secondary level education, 20.0 percent had up to primary level education and rest 12.0% were illiterate. It was also found that 88.0 percent respondents belonged to low income group and rest 12.0 percent belonged to middle income group. 74.0 percent of the families belonged to nuclear families while 26.0 percent belonged to joint families.

Table-1
Background details of the subjects

Criteria	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Religion	Hindu	96	96
	Muslim	4	4
Community	Assamese	77	77
	Bengali	23	23
Family type	Nuclear	74	74
	Joint	26	26
Educational level	Illiterate	12	12
	Primary school level	68	68
	Secondary school level	20	20
Family income (monthly)	< Rs. 4000/-	88	88
	Rs.4000/- to Rs.10,000/-	12	12

Table-2
Causes of Domestic violence

Causes of Domestic violence	Frequency	Percentage
Dowry	21	21
Alcoholism	69	69
Suspected love affairs before marriage	15	15
Extra marital affairs	11	11
Unemployment of husband	9	9
Medically unfit for conception	4	4
Female child delivered every time	29	29

Causes of Domestic violence: There are various causes which may lead to domestic violence. Some of the causes of violence

are dowry, delivery of female child again and again, difference of opinion between husband and wife etc. It is difficult to decide the exact cause for violence against women. The respondents from the rural areas reported variety of reasons for domestic violence.

The analysis of data presented in table-2 shows that domestic violence caused to them is not because of a single reason. It was found from the table that alcoholism (69.0%) was the major cause of domestic violence among the respondents. Bhatt in 1998 found, “the lifestyle of men such as smoking, alcoholism and drugs promote men to commit domestic violence”. But many researchers said, “alcoholism isn't the underlying cause of domestic violence. Abusers who use alcohol or drugs may use this as an excuse for their behaviour saying “I was drunk” or “I don't remember”. The causes of domestic violence are far more deep rooted than simply being an effect of alcohol/drug dependency”. The rest of the respondents reported many other causes of domestic violence like female child delivered every time (29.0%), dowry (21.0%), suspected love affairs before marriage (15.0%), extra marital affair (11.0%) and unemployment of husband (9.0%). Only 4.0% respondents said that medically unfit for conception was the cause of domestic violence. Thus it was clear from the table-2 that domestic violence against women in Tinsukia district is caused due to a many reasons.

Impact of domestic violence: Domestic violence victims demonstrate a wide range of effects from domestic violence. Violence can cause many health problems and physical injuries. Victims may require medical attention for immediate injuries and hospitalization for severe assaults. The domestic violence has both short term and long term impact on the life of the victims, their children and their intra-family relations.

Impact of domestic violence on women's physical and mental health: The direct physical effects of violence can range from minor scratches to fractured bones or sexually transmitted diseases resulting from forced sexual activity and other practices. The indirect physical effects can range from recurring headaches or stomach aches to severe health problems due to withheld medical attention or medications. Due to domestic violence victims may also face many problems like stress, sleep disturbances, anxiety, physical fatigue, chronic head-ache, depression etc.

Table-3
Impact of domestic violence on women's physical and mental health

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Depression	17	17
Sleeping disorder	43	43
Mental stress	15	15
Chronic headache	20	20
Body pain	48	48
No problem	10	10

It was observed from table-3 that majority of respondents (48.0%) had body pain due to domestic violence. They were facing many problems like sleeping disorder (43.0%), chronic headache (20.0%), depression (17.0%) and mental stress (15.0%). Only 10.0% said that they did not face any problem due to domestic violence.

Many victims frequently visit to their physicians for health problems and for domestic violence-related injuries. But they do not want to disclose about the violence caused to them by their husbands or any other family members.

Impact of domestic violence on children: The domestic violence against the mother affected the children's life in any form. The violence against their mother may lead to loss of respect towards their parents. The children may also learn the same from their parents. Moreover, the children cannot get adequate love and care from the abused mother which may negatively affect their personality development. They remain under tension and their studies may be hampered.

Table-4
Impact of domestic violence on children

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Remain under tension	14	14
Lack of concentration on studies	58	58
Less social contacts	13	13
No respect towards parents	25	25

Table-4 indicates that majority 58.0% children were lacking concentration on studies. It was also found that the children of these families also have no respect towards parents (25.0%), remain under tension (14.0%) and have less social contacts (13.0%)

Impact of domestic violence on intra-family relations: The domestic violence against women affects the intra-family relationship between husband and wife and also among the family members.

Table-5
Impact of domestic violence on intra-family relations

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Quarrel take place frequently on minor issues	69	69
Loss of mutual trust	34	34
Communication gap between husband and wife	45	45

From table-5 it was found that in majority (69.0%) families quarrel take place frequently on minor issues. 45.0% families had communication gap between husband and wife and 34.0% families had loss of mutual trust.

Conclusion

Domestic violence against women has emerged as an important social evil in India. In this present study alcoholism of husband was found to be the major cause of violence among rural victims and among the families from low income group. Victims from middle class families reported dowry, suspected love affairs before marriage, suspected extra-marital affairs and unemployment of husband as the major causes of domestic violence against women. The examination of data revealed that in all cases domestic violence was caused not because of a single reason. In large number of cases a mix of causes was observed. Violence causes a long-term impact on the life of the victims as well as the life of their children and intra family relations. The data revealed that due to domestic violence mental and physical health of victims was affected in different ways. They face different problems like head ache, sleep disorders, mental stress, physical fatigue, depression etc.

Women from rural areas are often unaware of the laws and their rights in crime cases and also those of domestic dispute. Those who had some knowledge regarding the rights and relief measures were not satisfied with the benefits. Some women from rural areas still have traditional mind-set. They worry about the family and the social implications of making a complaint. They do not understand the possible consequences if the torture continues women from rural areas do not often come forward to lodge their complaints, especially if they are of domestic violence or concerning the family. Women still fear to stand up against the family. This happens even if there is enough evidence of the woman having faced harassment.

After the enactment of Domestic Violence Act in October 26, 2006, it was hoped that violence against women would decline in India. But in practice, it has not resulted much. It may be due to illiteracy, traditional mind-set of women and ignorance about the law among the women in India. Efforts need to be made to create awareness among women about their rights and the legal remedies available for them.

References

1. Heise L., Ellsberg M and Gottemoeller M., Ending Violence Against Women. Population Reports, Series L, No. 11. Baltimore, John Hopkins University School of Public Health, *Population Information Program*, December (1999)
2. Jain DS, Sanon L., Sadowski and Hunter W., Violence Against Women in India: evidence from rural Maharashtra, India, *Rural and Remote Health, The International Electronic Journal of Rural and Remote Health Research, Education, practice and Policy*, 4(304), (2004)
3. Murthy MSR, Ganesh P., Srivirajarani J. and Madhusudan R., Proximate Determinants of Domestic

- Violence: An Exploratory Study on Role of Menstrual Problems and Life Style of Men, *Demography India*, **33(1)**, 85-105 (2004)
4. Rao V., Wife- beating in Rural South India: A Qualitative and Econometric Analysis, *Social Science and Medicine*, **44(8)**, 69-80 (1997)
 5. Gerstein L., In India, Poverty and Lack of Education are Associated with Men's Physical and Sexual abuse of their Wives, *International Family Planning Perspectives*, **26(1)**, 44-50 (2000)
 6. Hindin J.M., Who is at risk?, Factors Associated with Intimate Partner Violence in the Philippines, *Social Science and Medicine*, **55**, 85-99 (2002)
 7. Sahu B, Contextualizing Domestic Violence from Women's Perspective: A Study in a Slum Community in Orissa, IIPS, M. Phil dissertation (Unpublished), (2003)
 8. United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), Domestic Violence against Women and Girls, Innocenti Digest Number 6. Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy (2000)
 9. Bhatt R.V., Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse, *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics.*, **63(Suppl.1)**, 25-31 (1998)