



## Domestic Violence against Women in India

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**Abstract:** *After ages of silence, domestic violence is gradually becoming a topic of media and academic scrutiny. Although it is not an issue which can only be limited to some geographical boundaries, it's a global matter of concern but due to presence of some cultural traditions like dowry, sati etc. Indian society is majorly perceived as male dominant and in such a situation domestic violence cannot be a matter of least concern. Women in India are exposed to not only domestic violence but also family violence. Actions like physical, mental and sexual abuse, eve-teasing, dowry harassment, control over reproductive choices etc. affect a woman's mental and physical health and hence become obstacle in social development process of the country. Section I of the paper introduces the issue of domestic violence then section II explains forms of domestic violence, section III describes its causes then section IV elaborates its impacts and effects then finally section V deals with the strategies to prevent and abolish domestic violence.*

**Key words:** *Domestic violence, media, academic.*

### 1. Introduction

Domestic violence refers to the violent behavior of current or former intimate partner – typically when he/she tries to exert power and control over the other, by developing fear. Domestic violence victims are present everywhere cutting the boundaries of geography, culture, religion, age, income, ethnicity etc. Domestic violence is one of the most pervasive human rights violations, denying a woman's or girl's dignity, self-worth, equality and her right to enjoy fundamental freedoms. The recent stats over this issue are alarming.

An article, present on a government department website\*, reads about a study done in India, on about 10000 women, shows 26 percent women experienced physical violence from spouses during their lifetime. The prevalence could be as high as 45 percent indicated by the statistics from Uttar Pradesh. Data from National Crime Bureau shows that every six hours a young married woman is beaten to death, burnt or driven to suicide in India. It is appalling to learn that 28.4 percent pregnant women became victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a social issue which inculcates dismay and fright among women by forcing them to question "Are they safe in their home, among their family members?" and the answer they get is "NO!".

### 2. Forms of Domestic Violence

Despite of being a very serious matter, domestic violence is often unreported, partly due to the unawareness of victim about the type of domestic violence. There can be a lot many types of domestic violence happening into the society but five majorly experienced and reported types are as follows:

#### **Physical abuse:**

Physical violence is the most observable form of domestic violence. The victim suffers injury because the assailant assaults her by use of force (a kick, punch, stabbing, pulling hair, shooting, slapping, choking, burning, strangling, forcing her to take drugs, etc.). The prior mentioned actions may or may not cause severe injury but one should not neglect these tortures, as once neglected can motivate the assailant's such behavior.

#### **Emotional abuse:**

It involves the destruction of self-worth of the victim by repetitive criticism, humiliation or insult. Though it may appear less severe than physical abuse, but it can damage victim's mental health and personality very harshly and the damage may not be treatable. It's difficult for some people to understand emotional abuse as on the surface it appears quite common in unhealthy relationships. Isolating the person from relatives and friends and making her feel left alone is also a sign of emotional abuse.

#### **Sexual abuse:**



This is also a common form of domestic violence. This includes sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment (disrespectful behaviour or unwelcomed touching etc.). Abusers who are sexually violent generally assault physically the victim. Forcing for not using contraception or having an abortion can also be cases under sexual assault.

#### **Financial abuse:**

The least evident of domestic violence types is perhaps the financial abuse. Financial abuse can be seen in many forms, like husband stopping his wife from doing job outside or preventing her from obtaining education. Financial abuse also occurs when there is no or little family support to help. Although it is less obvious but it is another form to control over the partner.

Generally, in India, wives are dependent on their husbands for money. With no access to money except through the abusive husband, wife becomes completely at the mercy of the abuser and in this situation, husband can financially assault her.

#### **Psychological abuse:**

Threatening, intimidating or fear-causing behaviour of one partner towards another which infuses threat in the other partner is called psychological abuse. This will affect the victim's mental condition. This behaviour has to be persistent and significant then only one can report this as domestic violence. A large variety of behaviours fall under the umbrella of psychological abuse such as:

- Capturing the victim into the house
- Preventing her from talking to people unless she has permission
- Emotional blackmailing her to do something which she doesn't wish to.

### **3. Causes of Domestic Violence**

There are a bunch of factors for perpetration of domestic violence against women. They can be represented under heads like individual, community, societal and relationship factors.

**Individual factors:** unemployment or poverty, heavy alcohol or/and drug use, rage and hostility, seclusion and loneliness, strict gender roles differentiation, abusive past etc, low self-esteem, depression or other major health issues, lack of behavioural control or impulsiveness, insecure behaviour, addictions or obsession, etc.

**Community factors:** lack of social capital, poverty and related issues like overcrowding or rising unemployment rates, no neighbourhood bonds or relations, low awareness about domestic violence legalities in society, high number of alcohol vendors etc.

**Societal factors:** gender biasedness, rigid gender roles partition, male-dominance in society, lack of education, underrated status of women in society, weak health and social policies and laws, traditional and cultural norms against women like dowry, sati or views like men only have decision control. Such views promote gender inequality and harassments based on gender discrimination.

**Relationship factors:** Marital life stress (struggles to keep up with the partner, fights over small issues etc.), economic tensions, unhealthy family relationships and interactions, dominance of one over other, possessiveness or jealousy for intimate relationship, instability in relationship with partner, negative parental influence, aggressive peer group etc.

### **4. Impact and Effects of Domestic Violence**

The instant reaction to violence may be a temporary phase but violence causes a long-term effect on the lifetime of the victims. It also affects the life of their children. The family also gets affected in many forms. It was therefore, proposed to study the long-term impact of domestic violence against women. Violence causes stress, anxiety, depression, disturbed sleep, palpitations, physical fatigue, chronic head-ache, psychogenic pain etc. to women. A single victim may suffer from one or more ailments at a time. There can also be a change from one ailment to another. In some cases, old ailments disappear giving place to new which can be more severe. They could even suffer from any or more of the following disorders- Mental Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Disturbed Sleep, Palpitation, Physical Fatigue, Chronic head-ache, Psycho Somatic Pain.

### **5. Strategies for preventing and controlling Domestic Violence**

- Call the police if you see or hear evidence of domestic violence.
- Encouraging public speaking about domestic violence.
- Should take action on your behalf if some friend or relative, neighbor, colleague is being victimized by such crimes or abused.



- Encourage neighborhood associations to reach out to the victims of crimes like domestic violence and offer their support.
- Reach out to the one whom you believe is a victim of domestic violence and confront a person you believe is being abusive.
- Spread awareness by inviting speakers/ motivators to social places, professional organization, civic group, or workplace.
- Promote domestic violence counseling programs and shelters.
- Family support greatly helps in this situation.

Although it is difficult to handle or support a victim of domestic violence but the above-mentioned steps can be helpful to her. This is the need of the hour to take such vicious crimes seriously and to take action as needed.

## 6. Conclusion

Having looked at a sensitive topic of “Domestic Violence against Women in India” The domestic violence against women is a common phenomenon the world over. However, no official data are available on the various aspects of domestic violence against women in most of the countries. These studies indicate that violence against women is quite widespread. We can sense the importance of study and discussion on such a subject. The different causes which may perpetuate the violence within the four walls of homes must be observed and analyzed carefully and a deep study of the factors causing the violence may prevent a family to suffer from the peril of violence. What is required is to observe closely the association of the factors provoking a specific type of domestic violence. If these factors are often controlled then one sort of violence can be prevented from harming a person or our society and India would be a way better place to live in.

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