

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

MADDIBOINA. NIHARIKA SRI

Malla Reddy University (Masters of Business Administration-MBA)

ABSTRACT

Violence against women is a social construction based on a societal consensus about the roles and rights of men and women. Two prevalent forms of violence against women are physical and Mental Violence by an intimate partner, and sexual victimization outside intimate relationships. The purpose of this publication is to highlight the issue of gender in responding to and analysing violence against women.

INTRODUCTION

Violence is "the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy". Other definitions are also used, such as the World Health Organization's definition of violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women in India refers to physical & Mental violence committed against a woman, typically by a man. Common forms of violence against women include acts such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, and murder. In order to be considered violence against women, the act must be committed solely because the victim is female. Most typically, these acts are committed by men as a result of the long-standing gender inequalities present in the country. It is actually more present than it may appear at first glance, as many expressions of violence are not considered crimes, or may otherwise go unreported or undocumented due to certain Indian cultural values and beliefs. Many women agree that their husband beating them is justified. India's Gender Gap Index rating was 0.629 in 2022 with 135 ranks out of 146 countries. any act of gender-based violence, which 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. What are the different forms of Violence Against Women This includes, violence occurring in the family or domestic unit physical and mental aggression, emotional and psychological abuse, rape and sexual abuse, incest, rape between spouses, regular or occasional partners and cohabitants, crimes committed in the name of honour, female genital and sexual mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, such as forced marriages".

Domestic violence is highlighted as affecting women disproportionately. The structural nature of violence, which is both a cause and a consequence of unequal power relations which limits the advancement of women.

WHY GENDER DIFFERENCE

Sexual and domestic violence is a cause and consequence of gender discrimination and it needs to be located within a gender equality framework. There is a misconception among government agencies that gender equality means that women-only services cannot be provided or that anything provided for women must also be made available for men. This undermines the specialist services needed for women who are victims of violence. Gender refers to women's and men's social roles and behaviour that are socially and culturally constructed. By being aware of how gender creates different roles for women and men, and by taking account of unequal power relations between women and men, service will be able to address different vulnerabilities experienced by different groups of women and men.

THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Domestic violence is where one person tries to control and assert power over their partner in an intimate relationship. It can be physical, emotional, financial or sexual abuse. These often overlap. Any woman can be affected and it can happen in any home. 25% of all violent crimes reported involve a man assaulting his wife or partner.

The main types of abuse perpetrated against women experiencing domestic violence are

PHYSICAL ABUSE

This is perhaps the most recognisable form of abuse. It can result in physical injury, and in some cases, it can be life threatening or fatal. Examples of this type of abuse are when women are punched, slapped, stabbed, beaten and raped, and even thrown down stairs while pregnant.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

This is a means of establishing a power imbalance within a relationship and can be as harmful as physical violence. It often involves threats of physical or sexual abuse, being put down, constantly criticised, controlled and monitored.

FINANCIAL ABUSE

It is a form of domestic violence in which the abuser uses money as a means of controlling his partner. It is designed to isolate a woman into a state of complete financial dependence. It includes controlling the family finances and not being allowed to have independent income. It can also involve destruction of property including passport or other important documents.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

There is a dynamic of control and abuse in an intimate relationship. It is difficult for women who are being abused by their partner to negotiate a free and equal sexual relationship with that partner. Women experience being repeatedly raped and beaten, being told that it is their duty to have sex with their partner and being raped in front of the children. Sexual degradation also includes the enforced use of graphic and hardcore pornography

2.RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

if a woman is forced to participate in a sexual act without her consent. This may take the form of threats, coercion, or physical violence. Rape and sexual assault are particularly distressing crimes for the victim and the effects can last for a long time. Women who have been raped are severely traumatised and, in most cases, suffer from acute stress, anxiety and intense emotions. In fact, rape and sexual assault are among the most common causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in women. In addition to psychological harm resulting from the act, rape may cause physical injury, or have additional effects on the victim, such as acquiring a sexually transmitted infection or becoming pregnant.

Myths and misconceptions about sexual assault and rape contribute to the fear which women experience causing them to hesitate in reporting attacks. Often, they feel stigmatised, can find the intimate facts of the experience difficult to talk about, are afraid they will not be believed or will be blamed for provoking the attack. Often, incidences of rape are treated as taboo and are shrouded in silence. Rape is considered to be the most underreported violent crime and research at European level indicates that only between 2% and 10% of rapes are reported to the authorities.

The statistics for that year also show that where sexual assaults took place, 90% of perpetrators were known to the survivor. While women, men and children can be victims of rape and sexual assault, the perpetrators are predominantly men. There are clear differences in female and male vulnerability to sexual violence. Where male vulnerability to sexual violence decreases as they age, female vulnerability does not decrease to the same extent. One in five women and one in ten men have experienced sexual assault in adulthood. Rape is a physical violation of the individual and research shows that the motivation in rape and sexual assault is not the meeting of sexual needs necessarily but the need for power, control and domination. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that one of the principal factors that lead to the perpetration of sexual violence, including rape, is a belief in ideologies of male sexual entitlement.

3.PROSTITUTION AND TRAFFICKING INVOLVEMENT

Most women Involved in prostitution have backgrounds of poverty, abuse and low self-esteem which limit a woman's capacity to identify alternative income generation opportunities. As well as the physical harm caused by prostitution with mortality rates as much as twelve times the national average^{15a}, there is emotional and psychological harm which is the result of being sexually objectified.

Being in prostitution erodes self-esteem and self-confidence and is a serious cause of depression. Women in prostitution experience terrifying and degrading treatment and extremely high levels of violence such as beatings, rape and sexual assault. They face constant subjection to humiliations of all kinds as well as the serious health risks from very frequent, rough sex and at times the requirement to have unprotected sex. Prostitution, and the social and cultural attitudes which sustain it, are deeply rooted in gender inequality and social marginalisation. As well as the harm to each individual, there is the social and cultural impact the damage to the social position and perception of women both nationally and globally, the proliferation of sex tourism and trafficking and the normalisation of all forms of violence against women. The sexual exploitation of prostitution is harmful to all women.

Human trafficking is the trade of people as commodities for various purposes including forced labour, trafficking for begging, criminal activities and sex slavery. Trafficking is a contemporary form of slavery with a distinctly gendered bias. Women are most likely to be used for prostitution, domestic labour and forced marriages, most victims of trafficking are women, from impoverished backgrounds who are sometimes abducted, but more usually duped into exploitation. It is not necessary to cross a border to be trafficked.

4.FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

It involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia of a girl for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. It is common practice in at least 28 countries, in Africa, Middle East and Asia. FGM is considered an act of violence against women and children because it can cause irreparable harm to female genitalia and reproductive organs. A huge number of women die needlessly throughout the world both as a direct result of FGM, and from related infections and complications. FGM leaves psychological and emotional scars too. Up to 140 million girls and women around the world have undergone genital mutilation, it is widely documented that women can suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of FGM which can result in traumatic flashbacks to the event.

It is estimated that 3,780 women living in Ireland have undergone FGM although the actual number may be higher. The Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 2012 has made it a criminal offence for someone in Ireland to perform Female Genital Mutilation.

5.FORCED MARRIAGES

Child marriage is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. Forced marriage is a marriage in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union. A child marriage is considered to be a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent.

6.SEXUAL HARRASHMENT

when unwanted conduct has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. It can take the form of actions, gestures, spoken or written words, pictures etc. It can involve text messages, email, phone calls or other electronic or social media communication. Sexual harassment can also include offering preferential treatment in exchange for sexual favours.

Harassment directed against women, reinforces the subordination of women to men in society, violates women's dignity and creates a health and safety hazard. Critical to efforts to combat sexual harassment has been the growing recognition of sexual harassment as a form of violence against women which violates women's human rights. A 2005 report by the International Labour Organization²⁴ indicates that sexual harassment is more prevalent against women who are more vulnerable, such as young women, separated, widowed or divorced women, women employed in "non-traditional" or male-dominated professions, women working in informal sectors of the economy, or migrant workers. 16.2% of women experienced some form of sexual harassment at least once during the last 12 months.

7.THE COST OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women has serious costs and consequences not just for the individual woman but for the community and society as a whole. The effects of violence have larger ranging social costs that cannot be measured. These include the fear all women may face as a result of knowing that other women suffer from gender-based violence, the undermining of societal values and the guilt non-violent men feel for the actions of the perpetrators. Studies of the prevalence of violence against women world-wide indicate that violence is an issue that permeates every corner of society, is widespread and costly. Violence leads to serious health damage, physically and emotionally. Apart from physical injuries, it causes fear, distress and loss of self-confidence.

8.THE BARRIERS

Violence against women is often a hidden crime and much of it goes unreported. Some factors have been shown to make women less likely to seek help from voluntary organisations, medical professionals or the Gardai. Nine factors that stop women getting help

1. In cases of sexual and domestic violence, self-blame and guilt is often experienced by the woman. The woman may agonise over what it was she did to provoke the attack, regardless of the fact that it was not her fault.
2. Fear on the part of the woman that she will not be believed.
3. The lack of effective sanctions for men who have perpetrated violence is a deterrent for women reporting this crime.
4. Crimes of sexual and domestic violence are often tolerated, minimized or dismissed by society. Perpetrators know this so any social or legal sanctions are not effective or dissuasive
5. A woman experiencing violence may not recognise it as a crime against her.
6. Migrant women with dependent residency status are afraid to report abusive partners out of fear of losing their legal rights. A woman may become destitute or homeless or may fear deportation or other sanctions on the part of the State
7. By controlling the woman's access to financial resources and property the abuser ensures that she will be forced to choose between further abuse or facing extreme poverty.

9.REPORTING ISSUE

Less than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort. In the majority of countries with available data on this issue, among women who do seek help, most look to family and friends and very few look to formal institutions, such as police and health services. Less than 10 per cent of those seeking help appealed to the police.

10.CONCLUSION

One in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation, and the immediate and long-term physical, sexual, and mental consequences for women and girls can be devastating, including death. Violence negatively affects women's general well-being and prevents women from fully participating in society. It impacts their families, their community, and the country at large. It has tremendous costs, from greater strains on health care to legal expenses and losses in productivity. At least 155 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, and 140 have legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace. But challenges remain in enforcing these laws, limiting women and girls' access to safety and justice. Not enough is done to prevent violence, and when it does occur, it often goes unpunished.

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