



WWJMRD 2018; 4(3): 299-303

www.wwjmr.com

International Journal

Peer Reviewed Journal

Refereed Journal

Indexed Journal

UGC Approved Journal

Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25

E-ISSN: 2454-6615

Zeba Ashraf

M.Sc. Economics, University
of Leeds, United Kingdom

Spousal Violence Faced: An Analysis of Its Causes

Zeba Ashraf

Abstract

This paper deals with the determinants/Causes of Spousal violence and how this violence affects women's autonomy/Freedom. It presents a plain theoretical study on spousal violence and its causes. There are two types of onlookers on the issue of spousal violence the Feminist and the evolutionist. Both the feminist and the evolutionist agree that one of the major part of gender relations is the need for men to control the sexuality of the women. The Feminist believe that patriarchal set up of the society is the root cause of the spousal and domestic violence, where males do whatever is needed to exercise their control over women and keep them under their control in order that women accept all what is ordered by the men. On the other hand the Evolutionist has it that the spousal and the domestic violence ultimately erupts from paternity uncertainty among the men. Spousal violence, in this view, erupts from the insecurity and jealousy that males feel when their partners are exposed to the possibility of sexual encounters with other males that is when they go out interact with the outside world outside their family for day to day life purpose. So in this paper we will come across the various types of the spousal violence inflicted on women and what are its various causes.

Keywords: Spousal Violence, Domestic Violence, Women, Gender.

Introduction

All over the world women face a lot of discrimination as part of specific caste, class or ethnic or social-cultural group apart from experiencing gendered vulnerabilities that exist in every path of their life. Women have low status as compared to men in Indian society which is seen from history. They have a very little control on the economic resources and on making important decisions related to their lives and also the family they belong to. In India, early marriage and childbearing practices at early ages greatly affects women's health in negative manner. About 28 per cent of girls in India get married below the legal age specified by law and experience pregnancy also at early ages (Reproductive and Child Health – District level Household Survey 2002-04, August 2006). These have serious negative impact on the health of women. Women face spousal violence and it has a greater adverse impact on their health. During childhood and growing years a girl child faces various forms of violence like infanticide, neglect of nutrition needs, education and healthcare. As adults and grownups also they face violence due to unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence, sexual abuse at the workplace and sexual violence including marital rape and honor killings which also include spousal violence. The experience of such violence and its negative impact on their health varies according to the women's caste, class and ethnic identity.

Caste also generates inequality among gender. Among the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes the most affected are the women, children, aged people, those having HIV/AIDS, mental illness and disability. These people face severe forms of discrimination that doesn't allow them avail treatment and prevents them from achieving a better health and nutritional benefits. Gender based violence and spousal violence is high among women in general in India. Girl child and women from the neglected groups are more susceptible to violence. The dropouts from school and illiteracy rates among them are very high. Early marriage, trafficking of females, forced to prostitution and other forms of exploitation and violence are also reportedly very high among them. In cases of caste conflict, women from marginalized groups face sexual violence from men of upper caste in the forms of rape and other types of mental torture and humiliation which is not acceptable.

Correspondence:

Zeba Ashraf

M.Sc. Economics, University
of Leeds, United Kingdom

Literature Review:

Domestic violence is the result or the outcome that is derived out from the weak autonomy or empowerment or freedom and bargaining power of women. This also means that women who have more autonomy would experience less spousal violence than women with less power, freedom and autonomy. Spousal Violence against women continues to be a universal fact which is all over especially in developing countries that kills, tortures, and disfigures women physically, psychologically, sexually and economically. It is one of the worst scenarios of human rights violations, denying women and girls' equality, security, dignity, self-worth and justice along with social security. Violence against women is present in every country, throughout across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity, society and age (UNICEF, 2000). Spousal violence is one of the most common and widespread human rights abuses in the world. It is directed against a woman and her autonomy, and affects women greatly. Such gender-based violence against women is a form of discrimination which is deeply rooted in power imbalances and structural relationships of inequality between women and men of world. It has many adverse effects on the social structure also as it harms families, weakens communities and reinforces other forms of inequality and violence throughout societies (United Nations, 2007). In addition to causing injury to women, spousal violence increases women's long-term risk of a number of other health issues, including persistent pain on parts hit or beaten, physical disability, drug and alcoholic abuse, and depression leading to psychological disorders (Ellsberg, 2005; Srinivasan, 2011). Gender relations that assume men to be superior to women and have given the women secondary status become a cause of spousal violence against women. Patriarchal set up of the society is considered as main reason of spousal violence against women (Khan et al., 2011). Much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social allowance in the social set up where men enjoy the upper hand and is also overlooked by the people around taking it to be very normal if a man violates his rights to abuse women and especially when they are spouses. Show of spousal violence includes physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns which could be through cigarettes, attempted hanging, sexual abuse, choking and rape, psychological violence through insults among friends and family members or insults in public area, embarrassment, intimidation, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions of the women. In extreme, but not unknown cases, death is the result of such spousal violence (Saravanan, 2016). Violence is a means to obtaining the upper hand in bargaining situations by men. In developing countries, there is hardly any legal foothold to control the unreported domestic violence; even when the laws are on the books they will not be enforced if society is quite, which actually could be clearly visible that society usually remains quite in such cases of spousal violence and henceforth such violence is culturally and socially acceptable. In the developed countries, where the laws are enforced, the enforcers are affected by the fact that charges of domestic violence are often dropped by the victims due to threat of life to them or other sorts of indirect pressure on them.

In their work on the domestic and spousal violence, Tauchen, Witte, and Long (1991) they assume that spousal violence is used to control behavior of women and is also a source of abuser to enjoy supremacy over women. They give argument that an increase in the income of the abuser increases his violence and his own welfare, rendering no benefit to the victim who faces the abuse. On contrary Increase in the victim's income generally increases her welfare and also protects her from spousal violence as she gets empowered. In high income families with women being the supplier of most of the income, they suggest that an increase in the victim's income may increase spousal violence on her. Farmer and Tiefenthaler (1996) have argued that the putting of charges in domestic and spousal violence cases may be a signaling device that is by this they want to communicate to their abusers that they have access to outside support and that they will leave should the violence continue. Farmer and Tiefenthaler (1996) focus on the point that in their view, the placing of charges is a signaling device that curtails abuse or bring down the level of spousal violence on the women. The authors propose that the reason why women often drop the charges they brought against their abusers are the societies and cultural pressure and the peer pressure that they undergo. Goode (1971) was one of the early proponent of the view that, in the absence of other factors such as education or income that may give power and status within a relationship, people may resort to violence as a substitute to achieve their ends and means. Using data from three villages in a southern Indian state, Rao (1998) showed that women who faced greater domestic and spousal violence had less control over economic resources within the household. This, quantitatively establish a connection between spousal violence and decision making power within the social structure or framework. Focusing to the problem of dowry-related spousal violence in India, Bloch and Rao (2002) propose a view of asymmetric information within a household bargaining framework. The husband uses violence to signal to his in-laws the degree of his satisfaction with his marriage and uses violence as a weapon of exploitation of his wife. The paper shows that women coming from rich and wealthy families are more likely to be beaten in order to extract greater dowry and materialistic transfers from their parents and kins.

In 1991, for the first time the issue of violence against women was registered at the international level in actual sense. Women from all the levels from all over the world came together and started an international campaign to make rights against violence against women in order to protect them from spousal violence and all sorts of domestic violence that they face in house. In 1993, UN conference of human rights at Vienna, recognized spousal violence as a human rights violation. In 1993, women demanded for the UN declaration on the removal of spousal violence against women. Within six month general assembly passed the United Nations Declaration on Elimination of spousal Violence against Women (Coomeraswamy, 2005). Spousal Violence Against women is now greatly recognized worldwide as a serious human rights abuse as increasingly as an important public health problem with worst consequences for women's physical, mental, sexual, psychological and reproductive health (Moreno et al., 2006; Kyu et al., 2005). UN Beijing World Conference on Women especially recognizes that violence

against women is great obstacle on the way to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development, and peace at the national and international level and also violates the human rights of women at the individual level. Spousal violence is based on the unequal power relationship between men and women, which is because of the patriarchal social structure that is created, reinforced and placed by socio-political and cultural institutions and by men and which thereby ensure that men, by means of their gender, have power and control over women and children (UN, 2000). American Medical Association defined intimate spousal violence as a type of physical, sexual or psychological abuse by a person with whom the victim has an intimate relationship. According to WHO spousal violence is an act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result into, physical, sexual or mental harassment or suffering on females, it also includes threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (Ali et al., 2007). Spousal violence is one of the most major forms of violence against women, and it imposes a massive threat on women throughout the world. It can be physical, psychological and sexual but it is torturous. It occurs everywhere and goes down to all social, economic, religious, and cultural groups (Kyu et al., 2005). Domestic and spousal violence, wife abuse, spouse abuse, and intimate partner violence, are terms often used for one and the same thing. The word spousal identifies an intimate relationship that exists between two individuals, whether they are married or living together (Mahapatra, 2008). UN Fourth World Conference on Women, section 113-114 defines spousal violence as that physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family and peer group, including dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices which are harmful to women and her dignity as well as autonomy. Spousal violence against women also include forced sterilization and forced abortion, forced use of contraceptives, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection (Allen, 2008). Physical abuse, psychological abuse for example controlling behavior of women in all activities, economic abuse, social isolation, and sexual abuse are included in the forms of spousal violence. Spousal violence can often result into many physical injuries and may lead to severe health conditions, while emotional abuse can have severe long lasting effect in the mind of the women (UNICEF, 2000). According to UNICEF(2000), In spousal abuse slapping, beating, arm twisting, assault, burning, choking, shouting, threatening with an object or weapon, and murder and harmful traditional practices on women such as female genital mutilation are also included is widely reported. In sexual abuse forced sex through threats, terrorization or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others are included. Psychological abuse includes activities that are done to intimidate the women and pursue her for what is the wish of the male partner, and takes the form of threats of leaving or abusing, confinement to the home, threats to take away custody of the children, snatching of the valuable objects, isolation, verbal harassment and constant embarrassment in public and economic abuse includes acts such as the rejection of economic support, rejecting to contribute financially, non-provision of basic needs and food, and not providing health care facilities and

control over access to employment, etc. to women (UNICEF, 2000).

Analysis:

In my view, which is almost similar to those of the other papers that are reviewed above, spousal violence is a means for enhancing and strengthening bargaining power by male partners on their female partners. While dowry-related spousal violence is a peculiarity, spousal abuse is a universal phenomenon seen worldwide and is present in most societies, culture, tradition and economies and especially in the developing countries. So we explain it, in particular, that spousal violence is a means to ensure that the victim remains more in line of control of the men or the abuser or the inflictor of the violence, brings economic resources to her partner and acts according to his preferences and choices or else face the abuse is the option for her. This is in line with the views of evolutionists and psychologists, who argue that spousal violence is a means that men use to ensure that women behave in their interests and act as their slaves; dominating female through violence helps them in the transmission of the requirements of violent men's demand to their wives. The important and more general issue is that violence generates power and economic resources for it's the person who inflicts violence. Women's autonomy/ freedom is based on the extent to which she can implement her choices in household economic resources utilization, the amount of freedom she has in household decision making and is also determined among other things by the amount of spousal abuse she endures. This Paper shows that an improvement in the wife's threat would increase her autonomy but this may be accompanied by an increase of the spousal violence she experiences by her intimate partner. Thus increases in women's education levels, outside help options, and the support groups available to help them may generate more spousal violence. This Paper also shows that an increase in the husband's threat may, lower the amount of spousal violence he enforces on his wife. Enough support for the above mentioned claims has been provided in the National Family Health Survey data of India. It shows wide variety of socioeconomic information on a nation-wide group of women that whether they were beaten by their husbands or by any family members and, if so, how frequently. It also gives some explanatory information at the individual and household level as well. It is noticed that the working women are seen to face greater spousal violence and those working away from home even more. Spousal violence may in turn affect female autonomy and freedom. Spousal violence also undermines women's autonomy and is a prop used by males to enhance their bargaining power and supremacy over females.

Some forms of spousal violence lead to a particular cycle, such as female feticide through sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, and female genital cutting, other forms of violence falls across all ages. Spousal Violence can be in the type of physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, verbal abuse, and specific acts of violence during pregnancy. Women are also exploited by restricting their access to food and medical care, dowry deaths and honor killings, and pressurizing them to have sex through rape and or sexual harassment are what they face in spousal violence. Men who hurt women can be their intimate partners, family members, or other men. The

violence by intimate partners is usually referred to as spousal violence, although the term is not always defined in similar manner. Spousal violence term is used for the people who are bonded through law, blood or personal relationship of any kind. It is defined as an extremely violent behavior in any relationship by one or both partners to keep power and control over another and to abuse the other partner. It is also known as domestic abuse, child abuse, and intimate partner violence. The various examples of spousal violence include physical aggression like hitting, biting, restraining etc., or threats like sexual abuse, controlling or authority, emotional abuse, stalking or neglecting. It may or may not form a crime, depending on the level of rigorousness and extent of specific violent acts inflicted on the women who is receiving the abuse or violence.

Spousal violence are violence related to exploitation; physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Other acts of violence against women are violation of the human rights of women in conditions of conflict, in murder, rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy. Women are considered as personal properties of men and men control every part and parcel of the lives of women including their behavior and livelihood. Men have the right to make decisions on the behalf of women, and women have to follow their decisions in family, tribe, community and society, rather everywhere without questioning the men.

Conclusion:

Spousal violence against women has been seen and heard worldwide as a violation of basic human rights. An increased study has thrown light on the health burdens, intergenerational effects, and demographic consequences of such spousal violence on the women, society and culture and also economies. Spousal violence is defined by the United Nations "as any act of violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, girls, men, and boys, as well as threats of such acts, coercion, or the arbitrary deprivation of their liberty". Spousal Violence against Women has become a global concern because this specific factor affects the life of women adversely and also is pulling down the levels of equality and human development in nations. Spousal violence is most common form of Violence against Women. It is a severe violation of human rights. Many demographic, economic, psychological factors may be responsible for the spousal violence but social factors contain prime importance in this regard.

The above study shows that women face serious physical and psychological violence from their intimate partners. They are also deprived of certain rights such as right to economic participation and economic independence and also right to decision making. However, there are numerous social factors which give rise to all sorts of spousal violence.

In conclusion, we can say that the results of this study prove that women in society are facing serious Spousal

violence within private sphere. Only women are not suffering with Spousal violence but it also has serious repercussions for other family members. Research findings supported the argument that economic dependence is leading cause of Spousal violence. The findings were not so surprising because women have been traditionally deprived in society worldwide.

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