

A STUDY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; UNVEILING THE SCARS OF THE VICTIM WOMEN

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Abstract

The purpose of this report is to build an understanding about domestic violence against women as it is one of the taboos of our society. The report talks about status of women in Islam and the domestic violence protection and prevention bill recently passed in the Sindh Assembly. The report tries to reach to the victim women and to give them chance to speak to the world. These victims were approached and interviewed through a questionnaire. They are passing the days of their lives in Edhi Centre Karachi. Their ordeals and grievances are not easy to pen down but a little effort was made to give them a supportive hand to share their catastrophic stories while explaining them the questionnaire. The unseen scars of their soul were revealed by elaborating the kind of trauma they have gone through before coming to the foster home. To balance the research, sample of educated men's opinion about the domestic violence faced by women was also included. The report explains the due rights given to women in Islam and provides guidelines by how to follow these teachings and avoid this endemic domestic violence.

Key words: Domestic Violence, Pakistani women, Domestic Violence Protection and Prevention Bill, Edhi Centre

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to build an understanding about domestic violence against women as it is one of the taboos of our society. The report talks about status of women in Islam and the domestic violence protection and prevention bill recently passed in the Sindh Assembly. The report tries to reach to the victim women and to give them chance to speak to the world. These victims were approached and interviewed through a questionnaire. Their ordeals and grievances are not easy to pen down but a little effort was made to give them a supportive hand to share their catastrophic stories while explaining them the questionnaire. The unseen scars of their soul were revealed by elaborating the kind of trauma they have gone through before coming to the foster home. To balance the research, sample of educated men's opinion about the domestic violence faced by women was also included. The report explains the due rights given to women in Islam and provides guidelines by how to follow these teachings and avoid this endemic domestic violence.

Domestic Violence is a serious issue which is happening in every corner of the world. This is more like an evil that has existed for so long and has rooted deep down and now we are actually helpless to uproot it from our society. It occurs every second somewhere so we can not negate the fact that this issue needs to be catered with due attention.

The purpose to write this report is to state some statistics of violence against women which have crossed the alarming heights and need to be solved.

It is actually more like a taboo and people become afraid to discuss on account of keeping their privacy or superiority.

The thing to notice here is that the women of our society are well adjusted with this authority of their men and do not take it as a bar rather they kind of like and feel secure with this attitude that the men have to decide their fate and other life options.

The concept of "sir ka saeen" means a man is your lord and you have to obey his orders and remain faithful in every situation is more likely to be adopted by mostly women.

This research paper is written when Pakistan became "the third most dangerous country for women" and as per the statistics provided by Human Rights Commission Pakistan, "90 percent of the women in Pakistan" face domestic violence.

The distressing figures provided by the "Aurat Foundation" helped in jotting down the final draft of this report.

Secondly as an unbiased person this responsibility was felt to highlight this issue and to educate the coming generations so they may avoid practicing it.

Research statement

Domestic violence is a major dilemma faced by the women belonging to almost all strata of our society. It not only takes away their self-respect and dignity but leaves behind some ugly, painful and invisible scars on the souls of the victims.

These victims could be termed as any woman who is behind the unseen bars yet managing a smiling face superficially.

It also includes those with noticeable bruises and marks who are passing the days of life in the foster homes where their own family has dropped them and kind of disposed them off their houses as a useless material. This ostracism from the family is really throbbing to undergo but these women face it each day.

The problems of victims of domestic violence are grave in nature and this research paper has tried to reach and highlight some of them.

Purpose of the study:

The general purpose of the study is to establish the understanding to the term domestic violence with a significant clarity and to build up an absolute opinion about the acts which are being covered under the term “violence.”

The specific purpose is to understand and reach to the problems faced by Pakistani women against this domestic violence. What Islam says about this and how far we have tried to implement the protection laws?

This endemic problem occurs at all levels and it is of human interest as well.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised in the report.

- To seek the answer for the question that is it only a matter of stereotypes in our society or an eternal fate of the daughter of Eve to be treated like this?
- To state the laws regarding this violence against women and what preventive measures could be taken to avoid it.
- What do the victim women have to say to the world?
- What do our Pakistani men think about it?

Literature Review

After reading the already done work by other researches, it came to know that domestic violence against women does not occur in Pakistan only, it is widespread and of worldly status.

We need to understand first that what is violence and what are its several types.

It includes severe physical tortures, acid attacks, the rape rates but this paper would try to focus more on the spousal beatings and physical punishments only.

Everywhere around the corner you may find women as vulnerable entities facing and striving for their existence.

This discriminatory behavior is not new for women here as in some parts of the world the female infanticide is a very common practice till date.

Domestic violence is actually the abusive behavior of a person in your near surroundings. It does not matter to which class and race you belong, if you are a female, it is meant to be your fate. It includes the emotional, physical, psychological, economical violence and social isolation.

The alarming statistics provided by Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences state that almost 90 percent of women after marriage suffer from domestic violence ranging from abusive language to being sexually abused on small issues. It is really difficult for them to satisfy husbands and remain safe of this evil.

While researching for factors of domestic violence and to whom it affects more, it can be said that as per a report issued by Pakistan Human Rights Commission in 2008, women belonging to rural areas are more likely to face violence in their marital life than residents of urban areas. Here the literacy rate and poverty ratio play a significant role in this regard. 50 percent population of married women from urban areas reported to have faced violence as compared to 80 percent rural women who face it each day.

This domestic violence is of worldly importance and sees no geographical boundaries. No matter which race, religion, culture, society or color they belong to, the fate of a woman is not so different.

The statistics provided around the world tell a very sad fact that one out of three women face violence in some part of her life by intimate partner. In every 15 seconds more than three women are murdered by intimate partners in the United States of America.

In Pakistan it has been reported as per a research report that more than 70 to 90 percent of women have had faced domestic violence. The kind of violence may vary depending on the socio

economic status of the women, some receive physical, some get affected by psychological and some meet extreme violence. The marital rape is also considered as a form of violence being subjected to women in Pakistan. The abuse by the spouse lacks the attention in general and it is not considered as a crime at all, rather this is more like an undisclosed act and is usually being avoided in public. It only becomes a crime when a murder or attempt to murder is committed.

As per a report by United Nations those boys who have had witnessed violence in childhood by fathers are ten times more likely to be violent with their spouses in married life. . (United Nations regional information centre for Western Europe Key statistics on violence against women and girls)

Around 4585 cases of violence against women were reported from January 2012 till June 2012. There was a rise of 7 percent in the violence comparing the cases registered in first six months of 2011. (Myra Imran “The News international”)

Domestic Violence Bill

Domestic violence as per in the bill passed in Sindh assembly is an emotional, psychological and verbal abuse towards the victim. This abuse includes several types of violence women undergo in a family or after marriage which includes an attack on the liberty and privacy of the victim, humiliation and degrading behavior and causing physical pain, putting wrong blames of impunity on the spouse, putting wrong allegation, doing character assassination of the victim by the spouse, having intention to remarry and giving divorce threats.

This violence also includes economic abuse which is termed as prohibition of financial resources, restriction on attaining the right to food or any basic economical needs possess by a woman as a right to be filled from her husband in a marriage. We may see many cases in our society where a wife or daughter-in-law is not given the required financial resources and these types of cases also come under domestic violence bill.

Under this law not only the “abuse” and "violence by the spouse” is highlighted but the humiliation and attacks on the dignity of the victim by the in-laws of the victims are also counted. The verbal harassment and humiliation by the in-laws or sexual abuse by any other member of in-laws also come under the bill of domestic violence.

According to the bill, the constitution has planned punishment for those who tend to offend the sections of domestic violence highlighted above. The punishment for those who blame their spouse for immorality should be punished with minimum six months of imprisonment or should pay compensation which should not be less than ten thousand rupees.

Same as whosoever stalks his partner with confronting her forcefully and so on is punishable for imprisonment not less than compensation of twenty thousand to the aggrieved party.

Moreover, the offender of any kind of sexual abuse or related issues like compelling the victim to cohabit with any other person or degrading the victim in that case the husband is punishable of imprisonment not less than two years with compensation of fifty thousand rupees or both. These are the main punishments for the domestic violence and there are some more small punishments also.

Data Analysis

Several Edhi homes in Karachi which are providing shelter to the women affected by the domestic violence were visited for this research paper.

Most of the cases they receive each day constitute of the violence against women, may it be domestic violence of lower, medium or extreme forms or cases in which girls have fled from the homes for various reasons.

The victim women were interviewed in person. Following are the findings of the interview.

The first question was meant to find the nature of the violence faced by these victims that whether it was carried openly or the husbands had some fear of the public.

Almost all of them told that their husbands were dauntless in this regard and never took it shameful to raise hand on the wives in front of other people.

The second and third questions were meant to conclude whether their childhood was also full of violence incidents or they faced it only after marriage.

Women had teary eyes while recalling the pleasant memories of their childhood that they described as the best part of lives. The question fourth was tailored to find out the gender of the abuser that was mainly men.

This shows that right after marriage, all the pleasant events turned into evil. They had a cheerful early life where they claimed to never have thought about such dreadful violence. The purpose to know about the gender of the abuser was to get an idea whether the mothers-in-law were also a

part of it or not. Mostly women claimed that it was the husband who did not respect his wife and abused her physically on small issues.

As the fifth question indicated the literacy rate of these victims which is alarmingly low as expected. Had they been educated enough then their life scenario would have been different. Almost 14 percent of them had never attended any school so how could they ever get to know their worth?

Very negligible strength of these women had gone to school till primary or secondary level and above than that. Out of so many women only two were graduates who showed lesser signs of domestic violence by their intimate partners.

It was not only the questionnaire but other detailed personal interview with these victims that has helped in reaching to the root cause of the violence faced by them.

The findings of the sixth question show the time period of their living in this foster home. Many were new but a significant quantity of women was living there for many years. They are comfortable because three time food is served plus clothes to cover the body and a shelter above. What else they would want after all the violence occurred in the past?

They described that after they disclosed the abusive relationship with the spouse, their families showed less concern and asked to bear it. When the violence reached to extreme forms, they dropped them here and never returned.

The thing to notice here is, it was not the in-laws or anybody else but their immediate family who had asked to start living in the foster home, reasons could be several for instance, the parents has passed away, brothers were not capable of taking care and their wives never wanted to keep them.

After ostracizing these victims of domestic violence from the families, they hardly turn back to see in what condition they are living in.

These affected women's eyes are always at the doorsteps to listen to the footsteps of their family members. Their agony could only be felt and can never be expressed in words.

They are still hopeful about the future and have not lost the hope completely. They want to go out and start a new life with their children but the question they can not answer is; how are they going to support children with less education and no skill at their part?

This foster home is providing them with basic needs but the need of companionship is obviously out of its reach and this is what these affected women long for. Who would not want to go back to home that is called one's kingdom?

These women have never heard about the domestic violence protection and prevention bill passed in Sindh Assembly. They do not know that our society has started breaking the ice on this issue; it is no longer a private matter between a husband and wife.

There are certain laws made to punish the abusers and now they can reach to the justified penalty. The purpose to ask this question was to have information about the ratio of women being acquainted to the laws against the undeserved behaviors towards them.

These less educated women had no knowledge about this law as expected. The point of attention here is; when asked about this law; many educated women were also unable to answer it.

It seems like everybody in the society takes it as a taboo and is highly reluctant to talk about it. The time has come to talk openly about it, it would not increase the divorce or separation rates (as per the fear of some religious scholars) but it would aware the masses. This law would not only empower our women but it would bring harmony in marital lives of many as the fear of accountability is above than every fear. The chief reason of this question was to brief them about the law and its advantages. Although, these women had faced domestic violence in the past life but to avoid it in future they must know about the law and that is how they would spread awareness among their surroundings.

The nature of violence varied from respondent to respondent but on the whole they all could easily be termed as traumatized. Some described that the husband used to beat till he become out of breath, some husbands used to slap, shove towards the wall or door, some used to break the utensils, some used to terrorize the victims by giving psychological threats, some showed physical marks of the bruises over the body, the common method was to catch the hair of the wives. The abusive language and cursing was not considered as domestic violence in their eyes.

This wife beating is very common and acceptable for them to some extend until it reaches to the limit when the husband throws her out of his home.

The reaction of the spouse is visible as very few reported to have had experienced lesser violence afterwards. This question is asked to know whether these victims ever raised the voice or not and after detailed discussion with them, this conclusion was derived that they did so. Some told that

they tried to tolerate till the violence was of mild nature but once it increased and became intolerable then they tried to stop it.

When we read about such incidents then it is different but in reality talking to people who have suffered through those evils is totally different. These respondents reported that even after trying to stop their men, they found no betterment.

The respondents described that it was their fate to have faced this violence because of illiteracy and poverty both.

Male's Perspective

The purpose to ask the question that did they ever shout on women of their families was to reach to the fact that whether our educated men also practice violence in daily lives or not. The results show that they rarely shout on their women.

The educated men consider that they should be dominant towards their women. They do not find any harm and rather kind of like to be on the dominant side.

Even the educated ones have hardly seen the copy of the domestic violence protection and prevention bill or have any knowledge about it.

The respondents think that women who are educated and less dependent on men are at less risk of becoming a victim of domestic violence.

The respondents who are all educated men think that women in our society have not received the exact status given by Islam.

The moments spent with these victim women were heartbreaking as otherwise it was not possible to imagine that this life could be that cruel to anybody. These women have lost their hopes behind the unseen bars; the scars of their souls were unveiled only when you make an eye contact with them.

The research work for this topic was going on for many months and several reports were also read and discussed with the people around but this personal visit was something to be penned down and shared with the world.

Life seems to be so easy and luxurious because we have never tried to come out of our comfort zones to see what other people on planet are going through, this visit could be termed as a life changing moment as the real pain, agony, distress and suffering was witnessed clearly.

These women take you as some sort of “Maseeha” (the one who heals the pain) and start telling their agonizing stories.

The reasons found for this violence were several but common in nature as some husbands wanted to have sons and not daughters, some were drug addicts and did not want to support the families, some wanted to remain as free souls and disliked the slightest idea of being questioned upon any issue, some were under the influence of bad company, some had negligible knowledge of the religion and not accepted to be taught any good lesson by the wife.

Conclusion

After the in-depth analysis of the given topic, it can easily be derived that domestic violence has become the contagious fire engulfing the rights and souls of women in our society. It is the dilemmas faced by 90 percent of Pakistani women (as per the recent statistics)

The purpose of this study was to locate the real factors behind the violence faced by women in their immediate premises that is called “home”.

It is said that the place where you feel secure and happy is called your home but what would we call to a place where your basic rights are being violated by people you love the most?

Would it be justified to live there anymore? Would it be fine for women to live behind the unseen bars? The scars of their soul would not be seen through simple eyes but one has to have an insight to watch over it.

The search for the causes and factors of domestic violence due to rising statistics is quite painful. After the discussions with the victim women of domestic violence, it is concluded that their dignity and ego is shattered every time the man raises his voice, temper or hand over a woman.

This trauma can just be felt and not easy to pen down. This emotional abuse which they face becomes very little in front of the physical scars which these women carry after every dispute with the husband.

The question to wonder here is why on Earth a man would raise his hand over a woman? Is it a matter of showing strength or the real cowardice that he can not enslave a woman through love so tries to capture her mind by shattering the self-esteem?

When the research started in the beginning, it seemed like most people in the society take it as a taboo and are highly reluctant to talk about it. They want to conceal it by claiming to be private matter but the statistics have shown the real horrific picture of the society that is moving towards being violent against women.

The time has come to talk openly about it and it would not increase the divorce or separation rates (as per the fear of some religious scholars) but it would aware the masses. The domestic violence protection and prevention bill would not only empower our women but it would bring harmony in marital lives of many as the apprehension of accountability is above than every fear. The learning of the Islamic teachings has helped in concluding the fact that this is not the fate of daughter of evil to be treated like this as she has a high rank in Islam. She is ought to be loved, cared and given due respect in the light of teachings of the Prophet (PBUH).

Recommendations

Since domestic violence prevails in homes and has different forms and colors but background of this etiology is always the same, therefore, few recommendations are being forwarded to eradicate this evil practice from our society.

Media should provide ample coverage to the cases so as to create awareness among the masses. Those who are practicing would refrain from such activities once the ultimate consequences come to their knowledge.

The mothers of today must have to have a sense of responsibility that they must give the best nation and teach their sons to be respectful towards all women, regardless of the relationship. Only this way rate of violence against women would be decreased. As this evil practice only brings devastation and bad name to the family, so it should be buried at the nick of its origin; therefore, implementation of the law against domestic violence should be made easy and timely. The society should depict the positive picture where every common girl would have an access to justice. Laws are made to teach the discipline and to keep the harmony among the society but only when they are implemented. Strict and prompt punishments should be announced for the accused in one particular case and compensations to be given to the victims.

This relief could be a temporary camouflage for the victims but can help save their lives at last if not the least.

Local bodies should be made and such organizations must be set up on governmental and non-governmental basis that can take prompt action against any reported incidence and can provide relief to the victims.

Complete and value education of children rights in the beginning of their lives is somehow very necessary so that they emerge into the responsible citizens of the society and can easily understand their duties towards their spouse as well as their rights.

More support groups should be made to lend hands to the victims.

The acceptability towards the victim women is ought to be developed rather blaming them for breakage of the wedlock.

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