



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract: *The study aims to examine domestic violence that takes place within the four walls of lower and lower middle class Indian families and targeted particularly against women; different forms of these violence and abuses perpetrated by offenders on the victims. The study investigates to find out the nature of abusers' behavior. It tries to ascertain the causes and factors that lead to and perpetuate domestic violence and other forms of abuses against women.*

The research is based on both the primary data as well as secondary data. The lower stratum respondents were personally contacted and informally interviewed to find out the nature of violence the suffered, factors responsible for the abuse and their consequences. The secondary data were collected from literature, magazines, journals, reports and Net-surfing. Women being physically weaker and given secondary treatment in our society they always have to depend on men folk in their family and outside. This attitude has to go now. Government, social organizations, and NGOs should join hands together to ensure gender equality in the society and a just treatment to fairer sex. The paper shows that proper counseling of abusers as also of victims will be of great significance in rehabilitating the victims of domestic violence.

Keywords: *Domestic violence, Spousal rape, Physical abuse, Counseling, offenders, Sexual violence, abuser.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The domestic abuses that are perpetrated within the four walls of the poor families of the lower stratum of our society are targeted particularly against women as they are physically weaker and are treated as a second class citizen in the society.

Domestic Violence is defined as socially unacceptable and abusive behavior by one or other or both the members in a close and intimate relationship like marriage, live-in, dating or a family. Other terms used to denote domestic violence are Domestic Abuse and Family Violence. Domestic Violence has many forms which have been explained below...

Intimate Terrorism: It is an approach of gaining control by one of the members over the other by way of creating terror. It is one of the commonest forms of couple violence having possibility of escalating over time and involving physical injuries.

Physical Abuse: In this form of domestic violence a physical contact is involved to cause injury, pain or other bodily harm and suffering ^{[1][2]}. Physical abuse may be inflicted in many ways such as hitting, slapping, punching, pushing and other form of physical contact resulting in bodily sufferings to the victim.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when one of the partners is made to participate in unwanted sexual activity by force or threat. Threatening a person or using force to obtain participation in sex, against her/his will, even if she/he is spouse, is an act of aggression and violence.

The sexual abuse can be of following two types...

1. Compelling a person by physical force to engage in an activity of sex against one's will;
2. When the perpetrator of a sexual abuse engages or tries to engage in a sexual act, by force, a person who is not in a position to make out the nature of the act, or is unable to express his/her unwillingness to participate in the sexual act for reasons such as immaturity, sickness, disability, drunkenness or the undue influence of the perpetrator.

Sexual assault: It is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient ^[3]. Under the definition of sexual assault the activities included are forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, and attempted rape.

(Source: National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) 1-877-739-3895)



Marital rape: When one of the spouses engages the other in a sexual activity without the consent of that other spouse it is the case of a marital rape. It is a sexual act by one of the spouses on the other, without the consent of that of the other ^[4]. It is asexual abuse and a domestic violence also known as **spousal rape**.

Emotional abuse: The emotional abuse or psychological abuse occurs when the victim is subjected to humiliation by perpetrator privately or in public. The perpetrator exercises control over the victim's freedom and access to informations ^[5]. The victim is subjected to harassment and isolation from the family and friends. In the isolated cases when the victim expresses happiness the perpetrator even resorts to harming others who are closer to the victim. In other cases of emotional abuse the victim is deprived of money and other basic necessities of life by the perpetrator.

Verbal abuse: The abuse wherein the abuser uses language and words of mouth to cause humiliation, disrespect or to criticize the victim is called the verbal abuse. Verbal threat to cause physical harm to the victim, name-calling humiliation and blaming are some other forms of verbal abuse. There can be some mild ways of verbal abuse such as false accusation, humiliation, misleading to submit to undesirable behavior and the isolation of the victim.

Economic abuse: Domestic violence that prevents victims attaining economic self sufficiency by restricting his/her access to economic resources is called economic abuse. The abuser controls victims' finances to prevent him/her from gaining and maintaining a control of earnings to achieve self-sufficiency or gain financial independence ^[6]. Economic dependence is most commonly cited reason by the victims for staying in abusive relationships.

"Exhibit 1: BANGALORE'S FALAK FIGHTS A GRIM BATTLE:

Baby on life support, monster dad arrested

Bangalore: Three-month-old-baby Hina (name changed), battered and smothered by her father, is fighting a grim battle for life on day 4 in a city hospital. The doctors at Vani Vilas Hospital have put her on a ventilator and said her chances of survival appeared slim. The baby was admitted to hospital on Friday night after her father allegedly tried to smother her as he did not want a girl child. Doctors said she has suffered brain hemorrhage, possibly



because her father shook her up violently. Hina's father Umar Farooq was arrested on Monday. Police said he has confessed to making attempts to kill his daughter."

(Source: The Times of India, Bangalore, April 10, 2012)

"Exhibit 2: Baby Hina gives up after a 5-day battle for life

Three-month-old Hina (name changed), battered and smothered by her father for being a girl child, paid the price for her gender with her life. After battling for five days, Hina succumbed to the injuries inflicted by her father around 10.40am on Wednesday at Vani Vilas Hospital."

(Source: The Times of India, Lucknow, April 12, 2012)

Cycle of Abuse

Domestic violence consists of three basic phases:

1. **Tension building phase**—this phase starts with the beginning of building tension over small domestic issues like money, children or jobs. It all starts with verbal abuse. The victim pleases the abuser in order to control the situation, by avoiding the abuse. But the violence does not stop. Consequently the physical abuse begins.
2. **Acute battering episode**—the mounting tension ultimately results in igniting the physical violence. The violence occurs not because of victim's behavior, but because of an external event or because of the emotional state of the abuser. Therefore the violence is a highly unpredictable episode and is beyond the control of victim.
3. **The honeymoon phase**— the abuser expresses sorrow on his abusive behavior. He begs excuse, shows concern and tries to minimize the abuse and can even go to the extent of blaming it on the partner. The abuser may then show loving and caring attitude, shower generosity followed by generosity and helpfulness. A genuine effort is then made by the abuser to convince the victim that no such thing will occur in future. This caring approach strengthens the bond between them and will probably convince the victim, once again, that leaving the relationship is not necessary.

(Source:<http://www.domesticviolenceroundtable.org/abuse-victims-stay.html>)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Women in India

The social structure in India has been traditionally a male dominated one. Women are considered not only as fairer sex but also as weaker sex. They always have to depend on



men folk in their family and outside, throughout their life. They are treated as secondary in the family and their role is reduced to mere carriers of order of men in the family.

But the traditional set up is now changing in the modern era. And the women are now a-days getting more and more educated. Sometimes they even outperform their male counterparts. They are now shoulder to shoulder with men in almost all walks of life. Consequently quality of their life is improving. Although the gap in the ideology and practice of the women's empowerment policy in India still causes social, economic and educational backwardness of womenfolk.

Domestic Violence against Women

History of domestic violence dates back to the pre-historic period. Traditionally the women were viewed as property. Domestic violence against women is the most common of all forms of domestic violence. One of the most important reasons for this is the traditional and centuries old mind set of the people that fairer sex is physically and emotionally weaker than the men (Penelope Harvey & Peter Gow 1994).

Spouse disparity in educational attainment level or marital age, lack of autonomy within the home, dowry pressure, child hood abuse, alcoholism and poverty are all linked to high rates of domestic violence in India (Jejeeboy 1998, Ahuja 1987, Mahajan and Madhurima 1995).

The role of dowry in the abuse of women adds to the complexity of domestic violence in India. Despite the dowry prohibition Act of 1961, research indicates there was a 169.7 percent increase in dowry related deaths from the year 1987 to 1991 and a 37.5 percent increase in acts of cruelty by husband and relatives (National Crimes Record Bureau 1995).

Women in India are also subjected to hitting or beating because of their suspicion about the husband's extra marital relationships with other women ^[7] ^[8], eg. the Tandoor Murder Case of Naina Sahni in New Delhi in the year 1995.

Additionally there are many more factors which lead to differences in the beginning and later take the shape of domestic violence. These include – more income of a working woman than her partner, her absence in the house till late night, abusing and neglecting in-laws, being more forward socially etc. Working women are quite often subjected to assaults and forced sex by employees of the organization. At times, it could be voluntary for a better pay and designation in the office.



Violence against young widows has also been on a rise in India. Most often they are cursed for their husband's death and are deprived of proper food and clothing. They are not allowed or encouraged for remarriage in most of the homes, especially in rural areas. There have been cases of molestation and rape attempts of women by other family members in nuclear families or someone in the neighborhood.

Forced prostitution or a kind of commercial exploitation by male partners or parents is another form of violence against women and children reported worldwide ^[9]. Destitute families, unable to support their children, often hire out or sell their children, who may then be forced into prostitution. Very often the young girl is sent as a domestic worker, wherein she may be physically and sexually exploited by her employers. A practice in southern India where young women and girls are "donated" to serve a temple; and very often end up being prostituted are called "devadasis".

(Source: <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest6e.pdf>)

Table 1: Violence against Women through their Life Cycle

Phase	Types of violence
Pre-birth	Sex-selective abortion; effects of battering during pregnancy on birth outcomes.
Infancy	Female infanticide; physical, sexual and psychological abuse.
Girlhood	Child marriage, female genital mutilation, physical, psychological sexual abuse, incest, child prostitution and pornography.
Adolescence and Adulthood	Dating and courtship violence (e.g. acid throwing and date rape) economically coerced sex (e.g. school girls having sex with "sugar daddies" in return for school fees); incest; sexual abuse in the workplace; rape; sexual harassment; forced prostitution and pornography; trafficking in women; partner violence; marital rape; dowry abuse and murders; partner homicide; psychological abuse; abuse of women with disabilities; forced pregnancy.
Elderly	Forced "suicide" or homicide of widows for economic reasons; sexual, physical and psychological abuse.

(Source: "Violence against Women", WHO, FRH/WHD/97.8)

Violence against girls



The other vulnerable class and easy target of domestic violence is teenaged girls and children in our society. In terms of number of reported cases of domestic violence against them they are second only to the 'violence against women'. Domestic violence against girls is in fact more severe at homes^{[10][11]}. There is a lot of variation in the form of its occurrence in urban and rural areas and in upper/middle class and lower class families in India. In urban regions, it is more private and concealed within the four walls of homes. The possible reasons could be disobeying parental advises and orders or poor performance in academics. In rural areas the reasons could be harassment for child labor, physical abuse for not following family traditions, forcing them to stay at home and not allowing them to go to school etc.

“Exhibit 3: Probe confirms rape in children’s home

Allahabad: Probe report into rape and sexual harassment of two minor girls of Rajkiya Bal Grih (children’s home) by a peon has confirmed the incident. Officers have submitted the six-page report to district magistrate Anil Kumar.

The report not only confirmed the sexual harassment of two minor girls by the peon, but also exposed the callous attitude of employees of the Rajkiya Bal Grih as they did not take any care of children staying in the home. Meanwhile, suspension orders of nine more employees of the home were received here on Monday. In all, 10 employees, including superintendent of the home, have been placed under suspension. Medical report had already confirmed the rape of two girls and the accused peon was sent to jail.”

(Source: The Times of India, Lucknow, April 10, 2012)

Violence against Old Women

The most sensitive and disturbing trend is the vulnerability of ageing women to domestic violence in various forms perpetrated by their children and other family members. The common behavior of discrimination against female in the society puts the old women into a greater risk than men of becoming victims of material exploitation, financial deprivation, and property grabbing, abandonment, and verbal humiliation, emotional and psychological torture^[12]. They are cut off from the society they are living in, ignored, abused, cursed, and considered as bad women. And the perpetrators of this form of domestic violence include sons, daughter-in-laws, daughters and their husbands.



Factors that perpetuate Domestic Violence

Cultural

- Gender-specific socialization
- Definitions of appropriate sex roles
- Expectations of roles within relationships
- Belief in the inherent superiority of males
- Values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls
- Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control
- Customs of marriage (bride price/dowry)
- Acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict

Economic

- Women's economic dependence on men
- Limited access to cash and credit
- Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands, and maintenance after divorce or widowhood
- Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors
- Limited access to education and training for women

Legal

- Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice
- Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance
- Legal definitions of rape and domestic abuse
- Low levels of legal literacy among women
- Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary

Political

- Under-representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legal and medical professions
- Domestic violence not taken seriously
- Notions of family being private and beyond control of the state
- Risk of challenge to status quo/religious laws
- Limited organization of women as a political force



- Limited participation of women in organized political system

Social Stresses

Families and couples in poverty are more likely to experience domestic violence, due to increased pressure of financial and other resources necessary for life and conflicts resulting there-from. Poverty may hinder a man's ability to live up to his idea of "successful manhood", thus he fears losing honor and respect. When a man fails to economically support his family and have control over the spouse, he may turn to substance abuse, and violence to express masculinity.

Power and control

Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over you. An abuser doesn't play fair. Abusers use fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear you down and keep you under his or her thumb. Your abuser may also threaten you, hurt you, or hurt those around you.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is a research of exploratory nature. The study uses both Primary data as well as secondary data. The primary data were gathered by personal contact with respondents of lower and lower middle class. They were interviewed informally for finding out if they were ever subjected to any domestic violence by male members of their family. In case they did face domestic abuse then what type of abuses they were subjected to. Also they were asked to express causes of those abuses taking place in their family set up and the consequences thereof.

The secondary data were collected from magazines, journals reports and internet for analytical study of nature and cycle of abusive behavior. An analysis of warning signs of domestic violence and domestic abuse was undertaken for the purpose of taking preventive action in advance to avoid the occurrence of domestic violence.

The role of Government, Social organizations and NGOs has been emphasized to propagate gender equality in the society. The role of counseling has also been highlighted particularly in the rehabilitation of victims as well as offenders of domestic violence.



4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. Violent episode

The sample size of thirty women was chose for collecting primary data. Most of these women were married and all of them belong to lower class and lower middle class of the society. They were all unemployed. They were informally interviewed to find out if they were abused domestically. And what types of domestic abuse they were subjected to. Their responses have been presented in the tabular form here-under in Table 2, followed by a graphical presentation of the percentages of their responses in the Figure 1, below.

Table 2: Violent Acts Perpetrated

Violent acts	Sample Size (30)	
	N	%
Disrespected/Criticized	13	43
Slapped or threatened to	15	50
Kicked her, dragged or beat her up	8	27
Punched her with fist	5	17
Twisted her arm or pulled hair	15	50
Forced to perform a sexual act against her will	3	10
Tried to choke her or burn her	1	3
Pushed her/threw something at her	4	13

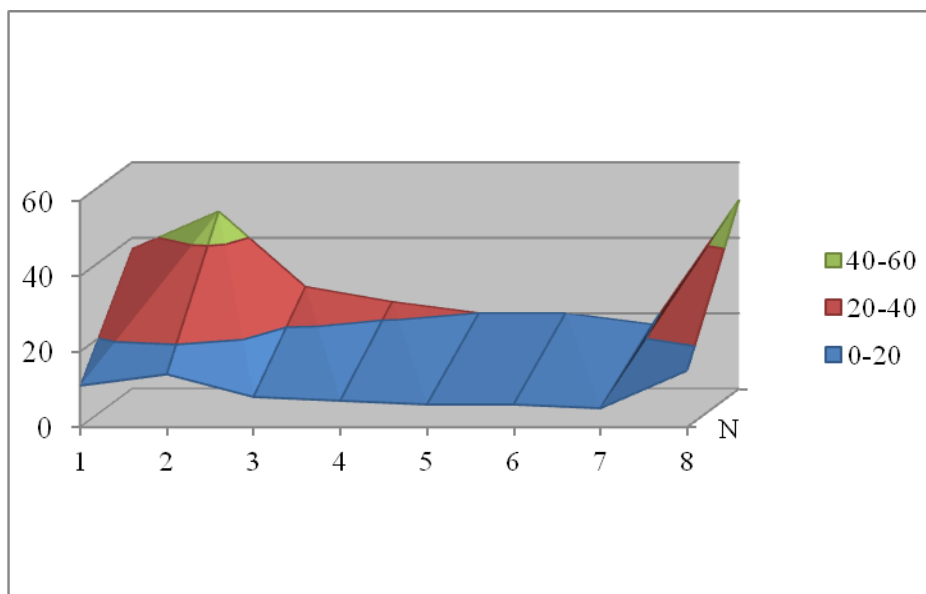


Fig 1: Violent acts % age



Discussion: Based on the analysis and discussion of the data presented in the table 2 and the percentages depicted graphically in fig 1, following inferences are drawn---

- 43% of the women reported that they were either disrespected or criticized openly and some times even publically.
- A good number of them (50%) complained that they were slapped or threatened to by their intimate partner.
- 27% of them told that they were kicked, dragged or beat up for more than once by male members of the family.
- Punched with fist was admitted by 17% of the women interviewed.
- 50% of them accepted that they were subjected to arms twisting or pulling their hair.
- 10% of the women told that they were forced to perform a sexual act against their will.
- 3% of the women told that their partner tried to choke or burn them.
- 13% complained that they were either pushed or some thing was thrown at them.

The sequence of violence in domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is not an outcome of a sudden happening but it occurs in a common pattern, or cycle of violence as given hereunder:

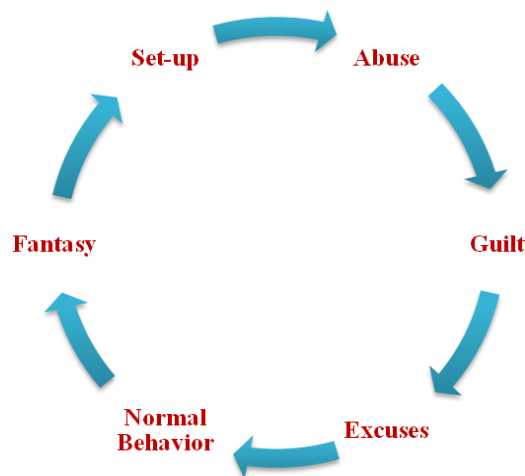


Fig 2: The sequence of violence

(Source:http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_types_signs_causes_effects.htm)



- **Abuse** –The perpetrator of abuse shows aggressive behavior by violent act, threat and disrespect to make victim feel belittle and depressed.
- **Guilt** – After committing the violence the perpetrator realizes his guilt but not for the consequence of his act on the victim. He is rather afraid of being caught and the related consequences
- **Excuses** – The abuser hereby tries to escape from the abusive act or guilt by either justifying his/her act or putting the blame on the victim for his / her sufferings.
- **"Normal" behavior** – here in this phase the perpetrator tries to do everything possible to get back to the earlier position of control and maintaining the relationship with the victim. This peaceful phase may induce a positive hope in the victim that the things have changed for the better this time.
- **Fantasy and planning** – A repeat of the abusive behavior by the abuser starts taking shape again. He starts collecting inputs in terms of wrong doings of victim and manipulating them in his favor. He then prepares a plan to execute at an appropriate time against the victim.
- **Set-up** – the abuser in this phase gets ready with his plan and creates an environment conducive for putting the plan in action to abuse the victim with justification.

B. Causes of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence as a social evil has been embedded in our society since times immemorial. And the roots of this menace lie in the human beings' desire to have control over another family member, to exploit someone for personal gains and the attitude to be in a dominating position.

Table 3: Causes of violence

Causes	Sample Size (30)	
	N	%
Psychological	11	37
Social Stress	14	47
Power and control	8	27
Mental illness	7	23
Jealousy	6	20
Dowry	6	20
Infertility/greed for male child	5	17
Economic dependence and illiteracy	15	50

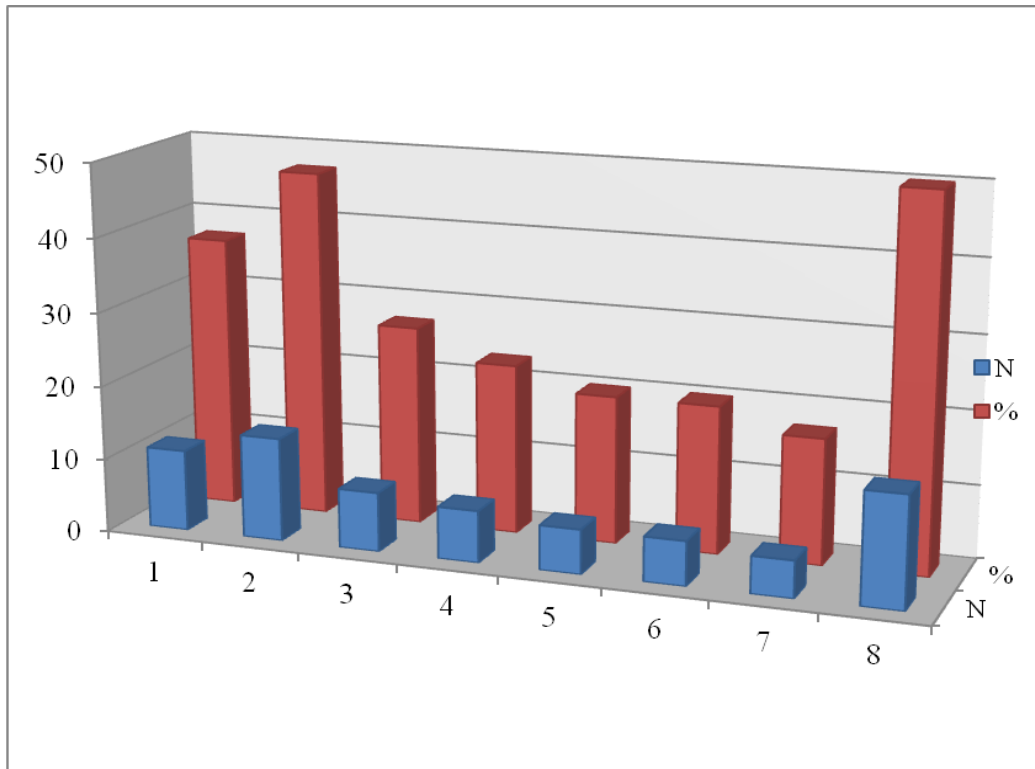


Fig 3: Causes of violence % age

Discussion: Based on the analysis and discussion of the data presented in the table 3 and the percentages depicted graphically in fig 3, following inferences regarding basic cases of abusive behavior of offenders of domestic violence can be easily drawn---

- 37% of the women reported cause of domestic violence against them as being psychological i.e. sudden outburst of anger or poor impulse control.
- 47% of them accepted social stress as reason of domestic violence against them by male members of the family.
- Power and control was accepted as cause of violence against them by 27% of women.
- Mental illness as cause of domestic violence was expressed by 23% of the women.
- Jealousy for being unfaithful was also expressed as one of the reasons of violence by 20%.
- 20% of the women complained dowry as cause of domestic violence.
- Infertility/greed for male child was another reason of violence against women (17%).
- Economic dependence and illiteracy was the most important cause of domestic violence against women as told by 50% of the respondents.



Consequences of Domestic Violence

The consequences of domestic violence vary depending upon the victim, the age of victim, the intensity and frequency of the occurrence of violence.

Against Women

Women victims of violence generally remain quiet, depressed and emotionally disturbed after the occurrence of the violence. The trauma of domestic violence has a negative and disturbing impact on women's productivity in all shades of her life ^[13]. The suicide tendency in such victimized women is also a deadly consequence and the number of which is on the rise.

A working woman victim of domestic violence, perpetrated at home or at work place faces, a situation whereby she may not be able to continue with her job and therefore may drop out from work place. She may lose her efficiency in work. Health is another area of concern if the victim is not well physically and mentally. In some cases women victims part ways with their family in the early stages of little abusive aggression on them in search of becoming self-dependent ^{[14][15]}. Their survival becomes difficult and painful when they have to work hard for earning two meals a day. Some of them who leave their homes are forcefully involved in women trafficking and pornography.

Against children

If the children during their tender age of upbringing witness domestic violence they will suffer in their developmental and psychological welfare. The environment in which the child is being brought up does have an impact on his social, mental, behavioral and emotional development. Some emotional and behavioral problems that can emanate from environment of domestic violence are aggressiveness, anxiety, and the pattern of socialization.

As Nature's predicament it is mother who gives birth to a child and she is a woman. Thus it is, therefore, natural that the child is closer to and has greater attachment towards the mother. Therefore the most severe consequence of domestic violence against women is its effect on her children. When the child comes to know of the grief and suffering of his mother the child may become upset about the happening deeply. If the violence against the woman occurs in front of a child openly it may have a dangerous impact on his mindset ^[16].



They get used to such happenings at home, and have a tendency to reciprocate the same in their lives.

Against Olds

The elderly abuse is one of the most unfortunate happening for the elderly class in their lives. Looking at their age and associated poor health in old age they need special care ^[17]. But actually they are neglected lot. They are treated like servants and exploited socially. Some of them are even ousted from their home by their own children. They are isolated, cut off from society and their health problems are neglected.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Violence against women is the fastest-growing crime in India. According to a latest report prepared by India's National Crime Records Bureau a crime has been recorded against women in every three minutes in the country. Every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. Every six hours, a young married woman is found beaten to death, burnt or driven to suicide (National Crimes Record Bureau 1995).

The State of India took the menace of domestic violence very seriously which is evident from the combined effort of law enforcement agencies, social service organizations, and the justice deliver system and corrections/probation departments. The collaborative effort of these bodies has started yielding results also. Many public, private and governmental agencies are seen making huge efforts to control it.

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

The non-governmental organizations are very efficient means to disseminate the informations pertaining to the legal and constitutional rights of the people suffering from this menace which can go a long way in controlling of domestic violence against women and curbing its worst consequences ^[18]. They are instrumental in motivating more and more people to report the case of domestic violence so that the perpetrators can be brought to the books punished accordingly.

Counseling for persons affected

One of the remedial measures to counter the bad effects of domestic violence on its victims is counseling of persons affected by the expert counselors. Looking at its occurrence and frequency 'it is highly advisable that the counselor should conduct the enquiry of every individual victim privately. This will enhance the victim's sense of safety and boost



confidence in disclosing the domestic violence in the relationship ^[19]. An appropriate care should be taken and a distinction made, by the counselor between, a single, isolated incident and an ongoing pattern of control by the abuser.

“Exhibit 4: Rape victims need intensive counseling

TNN Apr 10, 2012, 10.44PM IST

ALLAHABAD: While the heat generated over the recent incident of rape of three minor inmates of Government Children Home for girls, refuses to die down even though the district authorities cracked the whip against erring officials and employees, there has been no word yet on the steps being taken to enable the victims of the gruesome incident to come out of this trauma.”

(Source: The Times of India, Lucknow, April 11, 2012)

Counseling for offenders

One of the other important courses of containing the chances of occurrence of domestic violence in future is to minimize the offender’s risk of future domestic violence by an appropriate treatment program of counseling for offenders. The treatment is administered in gender specific groups and the thrust of the program is on minimizing risk to the victim.

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