

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN- A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence can be described as the power misused by one adult in a relationship to control another. It is the establishment of control and fear in a relationship through violence and other forms of abuse. Domestic violence is perpetrated by, and on, both men and women. However, most commonly, the victims are women, especially in our country. Even in the United States, it has been reported that 85% of all violent crime experienced by women are cases of intimate partner violence, compared to 3% of violent crimes experienced by men. Even if your child isn't abused, simply witnessing domestic violence can be harmful. Children who grow up in abusive homes are more likely to be abused and have behavioral problems than are other children. As adults, they're more likely to become abusers or think abuse is a normal part of relationships. We might worry that telling the truth will further endanger you, your child or other family members and that it might break up your family but seeking help is the best way to protect your children and yourself. **If we're an immigrant**, you may be hesitant to seek help out of fear that you will be deported. Language barriers, lack of economic dependence and limited social support can increase your isolation and your ability to access resources. Laws in the India guarantee protection from domestic abuse, regardless of your immigrant status. Free or low-cost resources are available, including lawyers, shelter and medical care for you and your children. Many women who have experienced violence cope with this trauma by using drugs, drinking alcohol, smoking, or overeating. Research shows that about 90% of women with substance use problems had experienced physical or sexual violence. Substance use may make you feel better in the moment, but it ends up making you feel worse in the long-term. Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or overeating will not help you forget or overcome the experience. Get help if you're thinking about or have been using alcohol or drugs to cope.

KEYWORDS- Domestic violence, drinking alcohol, smoking, Arthritis, Asthma, Chronic pain, Digestive problems, stomach ulcers, Heart problems.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a serious threat for many women. Know the signs of an abusive relationship and how to leave a dangerous situation.

Our partner apologizes and says the hurtful behavior won't happen again but you fear it will. At times you wonder whether you're imagining the abuse, yet the emotional or physical pain you feel is real. If this sounds familiar, you might be experiencing domestic violence.

Domestic violence can be described as the power misused by one adult in a relationship to control another. It is the establishment of control and fear in a relationship through violence and other forms of abuse.

This violence can take the form of physical assault, psychological abuse, social abuse, financial abuse, or sexual assault. The frequency of the violence can be on and off, occasional or chronic.

“Domestic violence is not simply an argument. It is a pattern of coercive control that one person exercises over another.

Abusers use physical and sexual violence, threats, emotional insults and economic deprivation as a way to dominate their victims and get their way”.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 says that any act, conduct, omission or commission that harms or injures or has the potential to harm or injure will be considered domestic violence by the law.

Even a single act of omission or commission may constitute domestic violence - in other words, women do not have to suffer a prolonged period of abuse before taking recourse to law. The law covers children also.

Domestic violence is perpetrated by, and on, both men and women. However, most commonly, the victims are women, especially in our country. Even in the United States, it has been reported that 85% of all violent crime

experienced by women are cases of intimate partner violence, compared to 3% of violent crimes experienced by men.

Thus, domestic violence in Indian context mostly refers to domestic violence against women.

Recognize domestic violence

Domestic violence also called intimate partner violence occurs between people in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence can take many forms, including emotional, sexual and physical abuse and threats of abuse. Domestic violence can happen in heterosexual or same-sex relationships.

Abusive relationships always involve an imbalance of power and control. An abuser uses intimidating, hurtful words and behaviors to control his or her partner.

It might not be easy to identify domestic violence at first. While some relationships are clearly abusive from the outset, abuse often starts subtly and gets worse over time. You might be experiencing domestic violence if you're in a relationship with someone who:

- Calls you names, insults you or puts you down
 - Prevents or discourages you from going to work or school or seeing family members or friends
 - Tries to control how you spend money, where you go, what medicines you take or what you wear
 - Acts jealous or possessive or constantly accuses you of being unfaithful
 - Gets angry when drinking alcohol or using drugs
 - Tries to control whether you can see a health care provider
 - Threatens you with violence or a weapon
 - Hits, kicks, shoves, slaps, chokes or otherwise hurts you, your children or your pets
 - Forces you to have sex or engage in sexual acts against your will
 - Blames you for his or her violent behavior or tells you that you deserve it
 - Threatens to tell friends, family, colleagues or community members your sexual orientation or gender identity
- If you're lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you might also be experiencing domestic violence if you're in a relationship with someone who:

- Tells you that authorities won't help a lesbian, bisexual or transgender person
- Tells you that leaving the relationship means you're admitting that lesbian, bisexual or transgender relationships are deviant
- Says women can't be violent
- Justifies abuse by telling you that you're not "really" lesbian, bisexual or transgender

Don't take the blame

We may not be ready to seek help because you believe you're at least partially to blame for the abuse in the relationship. Reasons may include:

- **Your partner blames you** for the violence in your relationship. Abusive partners rarely take responsibility for their actions.
- **Your partner only exhibits abusive behavior with you.** Abusers are often concerned with outward appearances, and may appear charming and stable to those outside of your relationship. This may cause you to believe that his or her actions can only be explained by something you've done.
- **Therapists and doctors who see you alone or with your partner haven't detected a problem.** If you haven't told your doctor or other health care providers about the abuse, they may only take note of unhealthy patterns in your thinking or behavior, which can lead to a misdiagnosis.
- For example, survivors of intimate partner violence may develop symptoms that resemble personality disorders. Exposure to intimate partner violence also increases your risk of mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.
- If health care providers focus on your symptoms, this may worsen your fear that you are responsible for the abuse in your relationship.
- **You have acted out verbally or physically against your abuser**, yelling, pushing, or hitting him or her during conflicts.
- You may worry that you are abusive, but it's much more likely that you acted in self-defense or intense emotional distress.
- Your abuser may use such incidents to manipulate you, describing them as proof that you are the abusive partner.

If you're having trouble identifying what's happening, take a step back and look at larger patterns in your relationship.

Then, review the signs of domestic violence. In an abusive relationship, the person who routinely uses these behaviors is the abuser. The person on the receiving end is being abused.

Pregnancy, children and abuse

Sometimes domestic violence begins or increases during pregnancy, putting your health and the baby's health at risk. The danger continues after the baby is born.

Even if your child isn't abused, simply witnessing domestic violence can be harmful. Children who grow up in abusive homes are more likely to be abused and have behavioral problems than are other children. As adults, they're more likely to become abusers or think abuse is a normal part of relationships.

We might worry that telling the truth will further endanger you, your child or other family members and that it might break up your family but seeking help is the best way to protect your children and yourself.

Break the cycle

If you're in an abusive situation, you might recognize this pattern:

- We abuser threatens violence.
- We abuser strikes.
- We abuser apologizes, promises to change and offers gifts.
- The cycle repeats itself.

Typically the violence becomes more frequent and severe over time.

The longer you stay in an abusive relationship, the greater the physical and emotional toll. We might become depressed and anxious, or begin to doubt we ability to take care of yourself. We might feel helpless or paralyzed.

Unique challenges

- **If we're an immigrant**, you may be hesitant to seek help out of fear that you will be deported. Language barriers, lack of economic dependence and limited social support can increase your isolation and your ability to access resources.
- Laws in the India guarantee protection from domestic abuse, regardless of your immigrant status. Free or low-cost resources are available, including lawyers, shelter and medical care for you and your children.
- We may also be eligible for legal protections that allow immigrants who experience domestic violence to stay in the United States.
- Call a national domestic violence hotline for guidance. These services are free and protect your privacy.
- **If you're an older woman**, you may face challenges related to your age and the length of your relationship. You may have grown up in a time when domestic violence was simply not discussed. You or your partner may have health problems that increase your dependency or sense of responsibility.
- **If you're in a same-sex relationship**, you might be less likely to seek help after an assault if you don't want to disclose your sexual orientation. If you've been sexually assaulted by another woman, you might also fear that you won't be believed.

The only way to break the cycle of domestic violence is to take action. Start by telling someone about the abuse, whether it's a friend, loved one, health care provider or other close contact. We can also call a national domestic violence hotline.

At first, you might find it hard to talk about the abuse. But understand that you are not alone and there are people who can help you. You'll also likely feel relief and receive much-needed support.

Create a safety plan

Leaving an abuser can be dangerous. Consider taking these precautions:

- Call a women's shelter or domestic violence hotline for advice. Make the call at a safe time when the abuser isn't around — or from a friend's house or other safe location.
- Pack an emergency bag that includes items you'll need when you leave, such as extra clothes and keys. Leave the bag in a safe place. Keep important personal papers, money and prescription medications handy so that you can take them with you on short notice.
- Know exactly where you'll go and how you'll get there.

Protect your communication and location

An abuser can use technology to monitor your telephone and online communication and to track your location. If you're concerned for your safety, seek help. To maintain your privacy:

- **Use phones cautiously.** Your abuser might intercept calls and listen to your conversations. He or she might use caller ID, check your cell phone or search your phone billing records to see your call and texting history.
- **Use your home computer cautiously.** Your abuser might use spyware to monitor your emails and the websites you visit. Consider using a computer at work, the library or at a friend's house to seek help.
- **Remove GPS devices from your vehicle.** Your abuser might use a GPS device to pinpoint your location.
- **Frequently change your email password.** Choose passwords that would be impossible for your abuser to guess.

- **Clear your viewing history.** Follow your browser's instructions to clear any record of websites or graphics you've viewed.

Violence against women, including sexual or physical violence, is linked to many long-term health problems. These can include.

- ❖ Arthritis
- ❖ Asthma
- ❖ Chronic pain
- ❖ Digestive problems such as stomach ulcers
- ❖ Heart problems
- ❖ Irritable bowel syndrome
- ❖ Nightmares and problems sleeping
- ❖ Migraine headaches
- ❖ Sexual problems such as pain during sex
- ❖ Stress
- ❖ Problems with the immune system

Many women also have **mental health problems after violence**. To cope with the effects of the violence, some women start misusing alcohol or drugs or engage in risky behaviors, such as having unprotected sex.

Sexual violence can also affect someone's perception of their own bodies, leading to unhealthy eating patterns or eating disorders. If we are experiencing these problems, know that you are not alone. There are resources that can help you cope with these challenges.

A serious risk of physical abuse is concussion and **TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)** from being hit on the head or falling and hitting your head. TBI can cause.

- Headache or a feeling of pressure
- Loss of consciousness
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Memory loss
- Trouble concentrating
- Sleep loss

Some symptoms of TBI may take a few days to show up. Over a longer time, TBI can cause depression and anxiety. TBI can also cause problems with your thoughts, including the ability to make a plan and carry it out.

This can make it more difficult for a woman in an abusive relationship to leave. Even if you think you are OK after hitting your head, talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms. Treatment for TBI can help.

If we have experienced a physical or sexual assault, you may feel many emotions fear, confusion, anger, or even being numb and not feeling much of anything.

We may feel guilt or shame over being assaulted. Some people try to minimize the abuse or hide it by covering bruises and making excuses for the abuser.

If we've been physically or sexually assaulted or abused, know that it is not your fault. Getting help for assault or abuse can help prevent long-term mental health effects and other health problems.

Long-term mental health effects of violence against women can include.

- **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD).** This can be a result of experiencing trauma or having a shocking or scary experience, such as sexual assault or physical abuse.
- We may be easily startled, feel tense or on edge, have difficulty sleeping, or have angry outbursts.
- We may also have trouble remembering things or have negative thoughts about yourself or others. If you think you have PTSD, talk to a mental health professional.
- **Depression.** Depression is a serious illness, but you can get help to feel better. If you are feeling depressed, talk to a mental health professional.
- **Anxiety.** This can be general anxiety about everything, or it can be a sudden attack of intense fear. Anxiety can get worse over time and interfere with your daily life. If you are experiencing anxiety, you can get help from a mental health professional.

Other effects can include shutting people out, not wanting to do things you once enjoyed, not being able to trust others, and having low-esteem.

Many women who have experienced violence cope with this trauma by using drugs, drinking alcohol, smoking, or overeating. Research shows that about 90% of women with substance use problems had experienced physical or sexual violence.

Substance use may make you feel better in the moment, but it ends up making you feel worse in the long-term. Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or overeating will not help you forget or overcome the experience. Get help if you're thinking about or have been using alcohol or drugs to cope.

Where to seek help

In an emergency, call **911** or your local emergency number or law enforcement agency. The following resources also can help:

- **Someone you trust.** Turn to a friend, loved one, neighbor, co-worker, or religious or spiritual adviser for support.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (800-799-7233).** Call the hotline for crisis intervention and referrals to resources, such as women's shelters.
- **Your health care provider.** Doctors and nurses will treat injuries and can refer you to safe housing and other local resources.
- **A local women's shelter or crisis center.** Shelters and crisis centers typically provide 24-hour emergency shelter, as well as advice on legal matters and advocacy and support services.
- **A counseling or mental health center.** Counseling and support groups for women in abusive relationships are available in most communities.
- **A local court.** Your district court can help you obtain a restraining order that legally mandates the abuser to stay away from you or face arrest. Local advocates might be available to help guide you through the process.

It can be hard to recognize or admit that you're in an abusive relationship but help is available. Remember, no one deserves to be abused

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence against women was relatively high in different parts of Ethiopia. Domestic violence has direct relationship with socio demographic characteristics of the victim as well as perpetrator.

Therefore, appropriate health promotion information activities needed to tackle associated factors of domestic violence against women or to prevent and control the problem to save women from being victim.

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