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DR POOJA PRASHANT NARWADKAR

Principal, Bharati Vidyapeeth, New Law College, Sangli, Affiliated to Shivaji University,
Kolhapur, Maharashtra-416004, India.

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Associate Professor

PG and Research Department of Thamizh
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Mobile: 94434 17242 Email: ms_batcha@yahoo.co.in

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Part - 2

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE: A CHALLENGE.

Dr POOJA PRASHANT NARWADKAR

Principal, Bharati Vidyapeeth's New Law College, Sangli, Affiliated to Shivaji University,
Kolhapur, Maharashtra 416004, India.

Abstract:

Domestic violence, a human right violation of every woman in India is continued in increasing trend day by day. Irrespective of stringent legal provisions, separate law for the elimination of violence within four walls and relentless work of the NGOs, media, public officials, investigation and preventive machinery of police, and judiciary everyone is trying to curb the menace of violence, but still the efforts fall short to achieve the desired target of making her life violence free.

The problem of domestic violence in our country beyond the legislative framework and just calling them as human right issue. We need to sensitize the masses about the human values and must focus on it as a prime solution, rather it can be a remedy not only for domestic violence issues, but can support the promotion and protection of human rights of all members of society as well. The educative role of social legislations can only promote the desired effect if the human values are centre of education process.

Keywords - domestic violence, value education, perception

Introduction

Domestic violence, a human right violation of every woman in India is continued in increasing trend day by day. Irrespective of stringent legal provisions, separate law for the elimination of violence within four walls and relentless work of the NGOs, media, public officials, investigation

and preventive machinery of police, and judiciary everyone is trying to make the life of women violence free. But still the efforts fall short to achieve the desired target.

During the period of lockdown due to the health emergency caused by COVID- 19, the members of family were tied by the legal bondage to stay within four walls against their wishes, every so called routine life was stopped during this period. First few days were enjoyed by family as new lifestyle. But gradually the routine became monotonous and along with this the electronic media partners and forwarded messages were increasing the stress 24x 7 due to alarming situation due to increasing cases of CORONA. The situation caused was completely new for everyone and with the bombarding from every corner of life, the advices, messages 'how to take precautions to save a family? How to utilise the time? How to engage self and others in family? And such other unending questions enrolled empty minds, and confusion added another new question How to react then? It's simply a question of confusion for all the families but for the families who were in financial crisis, where domestic abuse was a common phenomenon, situation become seriously bad.

Actually the four walls of our home are our 'Family Fortress' It is the first institution in the life of every civilised human being. It plays a pivotal role in the personality development of everyone. It nurtures, and shapes our personality. We look at the family as a 'place of our social

economic, emotional security. But when the place of affinity, care, concerns, are taken by violent acts caused by strong masculinity against a weak feminity, these four walls turns in to prison. The fortress of family becomes a hell to live in.

The lockdown caused various restraints on mobility, scarcity of regular needful objects, and a pause on every material pleasures of recreation etc. The regular roles expectations suddenly changed. In fact, the change was expected to cause change among every member of family. But the impact on woman in some cases was an issue of concern. The situations become worse in families where, it claimed extra dedication of women as 'all in one' entity to provide every comfort to family. Her regular work of caring and raring doubled with or without support. This was a new challenge for the women who were left alone to do all household with no maids. Women who were already having experiences of violence in this or that form, suffered heavily during this period, the restrictions on mobility, work pressures, absence or distancing from friends, for men become threatening situation for women and in many cases the restrictions on access of alcohol, resultant withdrawal symptoms and aggressions in family hampered the security of women, As no visitors were allowed at home, this added the miseries and psychological stress for women. This problem of domestic violence was not restricted to age, class or caste despite its gender bias. Even the incidences shared by Psychologist¹ shared a story of client belonging to middle class and rich socio-economic strata facing violence at home. Resultantly the effects were on children also. Looking at the nature of domestic violence during lockdown few cases from media were shocking, a case from Karnataka, Bangluru stating incidence of compulsion of forcible sex by husband without her wishes and that too when he

is in unhygienic health status², the physical violence against women, aggression caused by non-consumption of liquor-these published and many unpublished, unreported incidents of domestic violence become rampant everywhere in global and national scenario. The reasons for unreported, unpublished stories vary from case to case as they fear the husband getting arrested, the in-laws may harass additionally, their parents staying in another town and in case of escaping or reporting she may have no option to take shelter etc.

It was also observed through electronic media (as for few days' print media was banned)- increasing incidences of domestic violence cases. International scenario witnessed a huge number of cases as compared with our country. Basically the percentage of domestic violence cases reported constitutes of one third of all reported crimes against women³ The unreported or under-reported would definitely be double than that. National Commission of Women also at the beginning of March and April it received 310 grievances and 885 complaints which were domestic in nature. Domestic violence actually in normal times also, is under-reported and during lockdown due to fear of retaliation by husband, having no chance for escaping have caused her life a hell where she was confined with abuser. It was irony of that our Criminal justice system does not allow a first offender in company of hardened criminal but the fate of woman in this situation was terrible as they were legally bound to stay with the abuser. The women working as maid servant, who were trying to survive with her little work were also compelled to stay at home, uncertainty of work, financial insecurity caused her heavily to meet basic needs. Their addicted partners abused physically which finally worsen their life. This added vulnerability caused to embolden the perpetrators.

How the state and Civil Society respond in such situations?

In this period of lockdown, the literature available on media showed the concerns of government, civil society, NGOs in different forms which included suggestions such as members of community must be sensitized of the increased risks to women's health and life in lockdown days, and they must develop the ethos to condemn violence and shoulder the responsibility of offering all possible assistance to give them sense of security. Also the proactive approach to a very limited extent was observed through few instances of Tamil Nadu government seen in allowing the movements of Protection Officers during lockdown, rescuing women and taking them to shelter homes, city Pune witnessed exclusive helpline no for helping the victims and institutionalising erring partners. Women and Child Development introduced a common *whats app* no and helpline number 181 to report cases, starting helpline App for women victims of domestic violence, such were only few examples to show concern of Government towards the victim of domestic violence.

The suggestions also came to address the domestic violence cases on priority, also it express the need for nationwide campaign to promote awareness about domestic violence, and highlight various modes through which complaints can be filed, use of radio, channels, social media platform to be used strategically to help the victim. It was even suggested, reaching out to people facing domestic violence and in distress to be classified as an 'essential service' by the government, the neighbours to banging on the door or ringing the bell. These all suggestions and solutions may give a temporary relief from violence but cannot make her life violence free.

To make a life of woman in India- violence free is a distant dream, considering the socio-cultural context and the inbuilt patriarehal set up. The present approaches of looking at domestic violence as a violation of legal norms, need a paradigm shift. Though the PWDV Act 2005 also begin with the note that domestic violence is a serious human right violation, and it has provided all civil remedies to victim woman, also threaten the prosecution of the respondent, still since the passing of legislation it has not brought any impact on the behavioural change in wrongdoer. It needs a time to bring the attitudinal change through behavioural change; shift in thinking process of every human being. To make the life of woman - violence free needs different approaches than only speaking in terms of penal consequences and making the punishments stringent. It needs a different approach to look at domestic violence.

The behavioural change is possible through education, training, upright and gender sensitive upbringing of children, scope for inculcating human values in education process, timely counselling, trying to have intellectual discourse on socio-legal concerns and supported by effective law implementations can bring desired change.

The violence of any kind is a human right violation. But domestic violence is much more than that, as it takes place in the 'Family Fortress'. To evaluate and examine the possibilities of putting an end to domestic violence through behavioural change, what are the challenges ahead? -was a research question wherein a small attempt was made with the help of survey of "Public Perception of domestic violence and behavioural change- A challenge" understanding the public perception of violence is the actual commencement of the process of drafting the strategic movement against violence. Hence the

researcher used media as means to investigate in to basic root causes and understanding public perception of violence against women. During lockdown the movie *Thappad* was released, depicting a story of women victimisation at all levels of socio-economic strata and the reaction given by a victim facing violence was used to investigate the public perception towards domestic violence. The respondents included the college students, their parents, grandparents also some victimised women who were working in unorganised sector as maid servants. The questionnaire consist of inquires in to the personal opinions based upon their experience, knowledge and information. The responses were taken thorough the google form mode and also the interaction with those respondents who don't have the gmail id and other facilities of internet etc. Then open discussion was offered coupled with the counselling by experts in the field to reshape and mould their opinions, and also to reform their perceptions regarding the phenomenon of violence. The questions in the questionnaire consist of an appeal to respondents to give the genuine answers to the best of their knowledge.

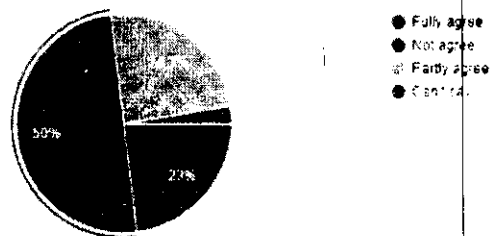
Questions wise analysis of findings

First and foremost, issue of domestic violence in Indian scenario is it is perceived yet as the part of her life and so there are remote chances of making her life violence -free. Hence the question was framed as **Domestic violence is the part and parcel of life system of women and it is not possible to make her life violence free.** After the efforts were made though expert talk to mould their opinions only a 4% change was brought where in the first instance 60% more than half of respondents said it is false, now the changed perception was 64.9% believed the statement false. But still 20.3% still believed it partly true and 10.8% accept that yes violence free life is not

possible and still 4% were unable to understand and cannot say exactly about it.



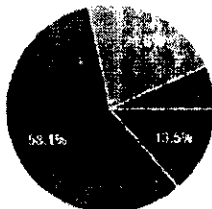
The Justification for the incidents of violence cases is always favouring the male counterpart in our society, when women are subjected to violence, it is justifiable in the name of the husband being frustrated with work-pressure, or he being under the influence of alcohol or so. Hence the question posed by researcher was framed as 'In this movie , 'Thappad' (slapping) given by husband (Vikram) is not actually a sort of violence but the reaction of frustration or an outcome of his heavy work pressure.



In almost 50% respondents disbelieve and hold him responsible for the act of violence committed by Vikram, same percentage in opposite column shows that 23 and 24.3% believe that yes it's not violence and only a 'reaction of frustration' due to his heavy work pressure, this is the root cause why violence is still perceived to be a common reaction and is taken for granted in case of male behavioural part. But can it be also possible that if a woman who is overburdened with work pressures at workplace and home becoming violent in relations, can it be tolerated? Of course

not but about men still it is considered as socially acceptable and justified act.

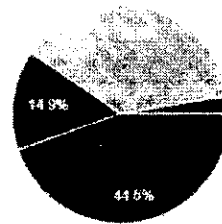
Indian society takes it granted in case of women that they are supposed to be silent sufferers and they are destined to be by birth to suffer without raising voice against injustice. She is trained during the role socialisation process to do all sorts of adjustments to maintain the family intact and if she walks out of the box which is made for her she her, she is held responsible of provoking the counterpart to be violent and consequently is responsible to make an end to her marital life, she is expected to give priority to the family and her self-esteem and career is subsidiary as only she is to keep the 'Fortress' of family strong. The author put the question to the respondents as **The wife (Amrita) has unnecessarily stretched the incident and put an end to her happy marital life because of her 'ego'**



- Agree
- Totally disagree
- Partially agree
- Can't say

Prior to the efforts been taken to mould the opinion of the masses the 50% believe in disagreement with the statement. It means nearly half of the respondents believe that Amruta was has unnecessarily stretched the issue, but after the efforts only 8% can be added in the group of those who totally disagree. Still significantly more population believe that she is responsible in stretching the matter ahead. It is a group of considerable strength i.e 40% which agree with the statement positively is still a challenge ahead.

Women are blamed to abuse the process of justice or sometimes misuse the beneficial protections available to her at the hands of legislature. She is coloured as taking disadvantage of the legislative support and filling the number of cases in court to satisfy her ego or so. But is it true? Are they knocking the door of justice to satisfy their selfish motives or something else? In order to know this the question was framed in questionnaire as **-In this movie 'Slapping' was the reason which made the wife (Amrita) to knock the doors of Justice.**

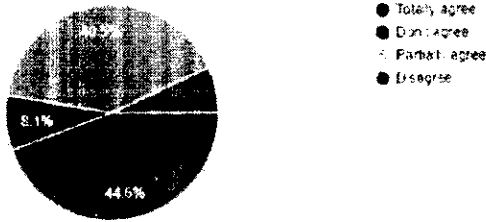


- True
- False
- Partially true
- Can't say

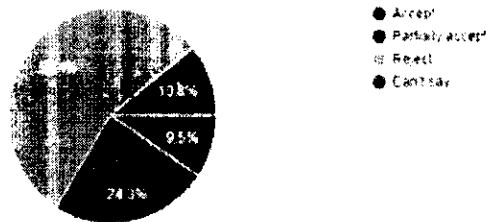
The analysis is 44.6% find it true and 37.8% were also believing that it is partially true, only 14.9 were understanding the real misery the victim was facing, when she has given every minute of her life for the sake of family and still was taken for granted for being abused, it's very strange but true that even efforts to mould the opinion of the respondents was not fruitful as this percentage did not change after the informative session. This shows a real challenge in domestic violence cases, why even stringent penal provisions are not making desired change in the victim's fate.

In our social system children are brought up, socialise in patriarchy prevalent in such a way, that it lays an impact on them for life time and makes themselves the victims of their own perceptions. The author asked in questionnaire as **Violence is exerted by men against women because of wrong conception of 'masculinity'** here the researcher found that efforts are required

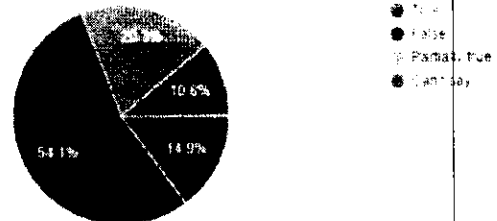
to be taken to make them gender sensitized because the respondents by majority attributed the wrong conception of masculinity leads to violent acts, they accepted that there is need to change the perception of masculinity, femininity and it can bring some desirable changes in the society.



44.6% believe totally and 40.5 % believe partially that its wrong conception of masculinity is responsible to cause women victimisation. Also various researches have taken place to show the relationship in women victimization and their economic status, the present case study also reflects on the issue while analysing results to the question-**Wife (Amrita) undergoes this situation because of her financial dependence**



Still 44.6% respondents are not accepting financial dependence as the cause of victimization, it may lead to victimisations, but not the sole contributing factor. Once the woman is subjected to victimisation in family it is as per the radical feminist approach not a fit place to live in, and she has no option than to leave the erring/ fighting partner. To check the view a question was asked to respondents to comment for statement-**To bring the behavioural change in fighting partner is impossible.**



Nearly 46% respondents, its near to half of them believe that this seems impossible, but still 54.1 are in favour of behavioural change in fighting partner. This shows the challenge for change in perception is tough.

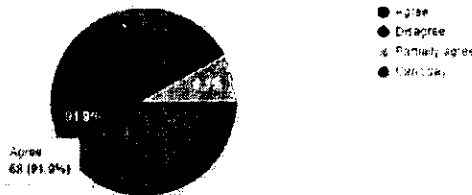
It always a saying that family is the significant institution which needs to preserved at the cost of come what may have happened ...women should compromise and give second chance to erring husband to realise and this way family safe. When husband accept his fault the woman should not stretch it too far, and to save the family she should step back. In the context of this movie a question was posed to the respondents to respond on statement as -**To Stop violence within family -Wife(Amrita) in this movie should have given second chance to husband (Vikram) to save her family.**



Considerable part of the group of respondents nearly 68.9% believe that the victim must give the second chance to save her family form being break up. This is the clear picture of our male dominant family structure that shows the perceptions that making and nurturing family relation is the sole responsibility of women, and men are scot free to behave the way they like. This is the real challenge for the change makers in

society. To bring accountability to men in keeping the family intact is the need of the day.

The dream of making women's life violence free is not overnight journey. It cannot be only due to heavy penal policies that can bring change. It's not the effective implementation of law that can go to the root cause of the problem but only possible to bring change within family values if human values are considered as the bottom up approach to curb the social evils in society. c. To see the respondent's views on this, note the comment was expected on the statement -Respect for human values can ultimately stop violence within family



Above 90% expressed the need for the respect for the human values is the ultimate solution to make the family violence free. The life of every human being should be violence free as it's the basic human right. But as the issue of the domestic violence is multi-faceted, so also the strategies to combat can be multi-dimensional, hence the respondents were asked to give preferences in suggestions put in the questionnaire, as the options for preferences like -The Laws must be stringent, Role of parents in upbringing the 'boy' and 'girl' must be improved, Women must be financially independent, Marital counselling can save the woman from violence, Media can work as platform for initiating a social discourse on issue of violence, Respect for human values must be a core subject in education process, Women should not suffer any incidence of violence, etc was given to the respondents.

The findings show that most favoured suggestion of respect for human values must be a core subject in education process find first place. Role of upbringing the 'boy' and 'girl' must be improved has been second preference and third preference was for marital counselling can save the women from violence and then came the preference for laws must be stringent. The analysis and finding itself shows the need to view the problem of domestic violence in our country beyond the legislative framework and just calling them as human right issue. We need to sensitize the masses about the human values and must focus on it as a prime solution, rather it can be a remedy not only for domestic violence issues, but can support the, promotion and protection of human rights of all members of society as well.

Conclusion

Regardless of class, caste, region or religion women in India do not enjoy complete legal equality with men despite Constitutional guarantees. Rule of law, effective implementation of human rights, and special care model for the protection in general of the vulnerable sections of society and specifically the women and children is constantly debated in conferences, seminars, workshops etc. It also met with various reactions from law enforcement agencies, judiciary etc. still the desired change is not up to the mark. Plethora of social legislations to protect human rights of women has been enacted since independence, but too often the laws are not honoured and women are rampantly subjected to human rights violations. The public perception of violence and specially the domestic violence is also an issue of concern, as considering issues of violence a family matter out of public domain and also holding a woman herself responsible for the victimization must be taken a serious threat to universal human values.

Endnotes

- ¹ Radhika Bapat' from Nirandhi Gowthaman ref- <https://yourstory.com/2020/4/women-domestic-violence-lockdownn-coronavirus>.
- ² <http://smartkolhapur.com/Bengaluru-woman-seeks-help-as-her-hubby-stops-bathing-and-demands-sex-frequently/> 20 April 2020
- ³ National Crime Record Bureau (2018) nearly 103272 women reported cruelty by husband or his relatives. Every 4.4 minutes a case of domestic violence

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