

Domestic Violence against Women: A Study of Nalbari District in Assam

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Abstract--- Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another partner. Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, caste, religion or gender. It is a Pattern of behaviour characterised by the misuse of power and promise by one person against another who generally happens to be in an intimate or blood relationship. Domestic violence may be of different kinds like physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, economic deprivation and stalking. Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force for causing injury, harm, disability or death to the victims. Physical violence is the easiest to recognise and understand than any other types of domestic violence. Hitting, shoving, beating, restraining, kicking, scratching, pushing, slapping, punching or uses of a weapon are the few examples of physical violence.

Keywords--- Domestic Violence, A Study of Nalbari, Physical Violence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse generally refers to the use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will. Emotional abuse (also called psychological or mental abuse) can include humiliating the victim privately or publicly or doing something to make the victim feel socially or psychologically maligned or embarrassed using degrading language, criticism, screaming, refusing to talk and so on. Money becomes a tool by which the abuser can further control the victim. Economic abuse refers to depriving a person from his/her own money or to which he/she is entitled. Stalking generally refers to repeated misbehaviour with the intention of inducing fear in the mind of the victim. Although emotional and financial abuses are not directly defined as criminal acts, but indirectly they may cause harms which may amount to criminal acts.

The Effects of Domestic Violence:

The victims demonstrate a wide range of effects from various kinds of domestic violence. The victims may suffer from severe and chronic mental and health problems. The effects of physical violence can range from minor scratches to fractured bones to chronic disabilities such as partial or total loss of hearing or vision and so on. In the

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worst cases, it may result in the death of the victims also. While the impact of physical abuse may be more 'visible', the effects of psychological abuses like repeated humiliation and insults, forced isolation, limitations on social mobility, constant threats of violence and injury are as detrimental as physical ones.

What is important to note is that the effects of domestic violence may not remain confined to the victims only. The other members of the family may also suffer from physical, emotional and psychological stress as result of sustained domestic violence. The repeated occurrence of domestic violence in a family has detrimental effects on the lives of the children, friends and other family members

Prevalence of Domestic Violence:

Violence against women within the family is a global phenomenon. It occurs irrespective of socio-economic status of women. No society can claim to be free of such violence. According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund of America (FVPPF), one in every three women in the world experiences sexual, physical, emotional or other abuse in her lifetime. In 1997, the report of the World Health Organization (WHO) on reproductive health reveals that 10-69 percent of women have been physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. According to the annual report of the UNICEF, a quarter and one half of women of the world suffer violence at the hands of an intimate partner. As per the report of the U.S. Department of Justice in 2000, in the United States approximately 22.1 percent of women had experienced some form of assault by a family member. The report also revealed that each year 4.5 million physical assaults were committed against women throughout the world.

In India, crime against women in the domestic sphere is a very common incident. Poverty, illiteracy, traditional gender bias and social customs provide a very congenial situation for the commitment of such crimes against women. The Deccan Herald's survey on 13th August, 2003 reported that 80 percent of husbands in India use force against their wives over petty family disputes. A United Nations Report released on 13th October, 2005 shows that two-thirds of married women in India are the victims of domestic violence and as many as 70 per cent of Indian women between the age of 15 and 49 are the victims of beating, rape and coerced sex. As per the Report of India's National Crime Records Bureau, more than 195856 crimes had been committed against women in the year 2008. Of these, 81344 cases were in the nature of domestic violence. Again in 2011, more than 228650 crimes had been committed against women and out of these, 99135 cases were in the nature of domestic violence. As per the information of the Bureau in every nine minutes, a case of cruelty is committed against a woman in our country and most of these cruel acts occur within the four walls of home. The report of Third National Family Health Survey of 2005-2006 in India reveals that one-third of women between the ages of 15-49 have experienced physical violence and about 1 in 10 has experienced sexual violence in their private sphere of life. In total, 35 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence. The same report also reveals that the degree of physical or sexual violence is 6 percent in Himachal Pradesh, 13 percent in Jammu and Kashmir and Meghalaya, 46 percent in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and 59 percent in Bihar. Other states with 40 percent or higher prevalence of spousal physical or sexual violence include Tripura, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Assam. The National Crime Records Bureau recorded 8122 cases of violence against women in Assam during the year 2008, out of which 3478

were cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives. Again in 2011, the bureau recorded, 11503 crimes had been committed against women and out of these, 5246 cases were in the nature of domestic violence.

Nalbari is one of the backward districts in Assam. The total area of the district is 1009.57sq.Km. The total population of the district (2011census) is approximately 7, 69,919 with male population is 395804 and female population is 374115. The Nalbari district consists of 65 Gaon Panchayats, 13 Zila Parishad, 7 Anchalik Panchayats and 7 development blocks. Some of the development blocks in the district are almost not having any communication, health or education facility. Nalbari being one of the backward districts of Assam has a situation where the conditions for the development of women are very poor. The incidence of domestic violence is so high in the district that it already attracted the attention of the government and various NGOs. In a study conducted by the Law Research Institute of Guwahati in 2007, it is found that out of 3746 cases of domestic violence that have occurred in the last two years, 586 cases took place in Nalbari district alone.

Relevance of the Study:

Thus, a study of the plight of women in the domestic sphere in the district of Nalbari may throw important light to understand the nature and causes that may reduce the incidents of domestic violence in our society. Solving the problem of domestic violence is an imminent necessity not only to end gender discrimination but also to achieve the goal of human rights in our society. A study of the domestic violence against women in Nalbari district of Assam may help to find solution to this burning problem of the society.

Objective:

The objective of the present study is-

- I. To find out the nature, causes, consequences of domestic violence in Nalbari district of Assam.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Area

The study is conducted at Nalbari district of Assam. The total area of Nalbari District is now 1009.57 sq.km consisting of 1(one) Civil Sub-Division, 7 (seven) Revenue Circle, 7(seven) Community Development Blocks, 5 (five) Police Stations, 7 (seven) Anchalik Panchayats and 65 (sixty five) Gaon Panchayats covering 471 villages. The total population of the district (2011census) is approximately 7, 69,919 with male population of 395804 and female population of 374115. Out of these 7 blocks, 6 blocks (Pub-Nalbari, Pachim Nalbari, Barigog Banbhag, Tihu, Barama (part) and Banekuchi) are selected for the present study by simple random sampling technique.

Sample

In order to collect primary data, cases for a period of 10 years (since 2001-2010) have been studied. A total of 1825 cases of domestic violence had been registered under Nalbari Zilla Mahila Samiti since 2001. The total number of cases studied was 180. Most of the cases studied were of marital discord resulting from perpetual incidences of domestic physical violence. However, a few cases of ill-treatment and mental cruelty were also studied. Again the victims who had registered cases were also identified through Nalbari Zilla Mahila Samiti, the lone voluntary social

organization of the district that renders counseling and legal aid to its clients. Thus, out of 1825 cases, 180 (approximately 10 percent) cases were studied and also the respondents were interviewed. Thus, a total of 180 respondents were selected by the technique of purposive sampling.

Technique of Data Collection:

For collecting primary data two sets of interview schedules were used which served as the principal instruments of data collection. In consonance with the objectives, close ended questions were formulated in the interview schedule. The interview schedules had different sections to elicit information from the respondents. In addition to socio-economic and demographic background of the respondents, information was also sought about the nature, incidence of domestic violence and the impact of domestic violence on the victims. In addition to the interview schedule for the victims, another schedule was used for the members of Women organizations. A number of social activists, protection officer (POs) and the police personnel were also contacted and interviewed as they are competent to throw light on the matter.

Analyses and interpretation

As discussed, violence against women within the four walls of home is a common phenomenon. It is prevalent not only in our society but throughout the world. With time, the nature of violence is changing and so also the laws to deal with it. At one point of time, mental cruelty did not constitute a part of domestic violence. But today it is an important aspect of Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005. Marital Rape was not a punishable offence till the other day if the bride was not minor. But today, there is heated debate going on to criminalize marital rape. Thus, in this section an attempt is being made to understand the nature and extent of domestic violence inflicted on women. To understand the same, domestic violence is divided into four categories viz. i) physical violence, ii) psychological violence, iii) economic abuse and iv) sexual violence. To have an assessment about the nature of domestic violence, respondents were asked few questions.

Physical Violence

Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force against women for causing injury, harm, disability or death. The most common and frequently used forms of physical violence against women are – (i) slaps, (ii) beating, (iii) pushing, (iv) kicking, (v) throwing objects and (vi) shoving or grabbing. As physical violence is the most common form of domestic violence that women face in our society, respondents were asked to narrate their experience about it. They were asked if their partner has ever used force on them for any reason.

Table: 1.01 Distribution of Respondents' on the basis of their Reply

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	142	78.89%
No	38	21.11%
Total	180	(100%)

Data reveal that among the respondents who were victims (Table: 1.01), an overwhelming majority of 142 (78.89 percent) out of 180 were found to be physically abused in one form or other. Thus, it can be said that domestic violence in the form of physical attack is a common feature for an overwhelming majority of women under the study.

Nature

As already stated there are different forms of physical violence used by perpetrators against the victims like slapping, beating, pushing, kicking and throwing objects, beating with rod or cane and so on. The response of the respondents in this regard is showing in the following table.

Table: 1.02 Distribution of Respondents' on the basis of their Experience of Physical Violence

Nature	No of Respondents	Percentage
Beating, slapping and kicking	72	50.70%
Pushing, shoving, grabbing in hair	37	26.05%
Threatened with knife, stick, rod and gun	22	15.49%
Damaging personnel property or valuable things	11	7.76%
Total	142	100%

Regarding the nature of physical violence (Table: 1.02), it was found that out of 142 respondents 72 (50.70percent) were found to be victims of beating, slapping and kicking, 37(26.05percent) were victims of pushing, shoving, grabbing in hair, 22 (15.49 percent) were threatened with knife, stick, rod and gun, while 11 (7.76percent) reported physical violence in the form of damaging personnel property or valuable things. This shows that physical torture inflicted by either the husbands or in-laws take different forms and majority of the respondents were found to be victims of beating, slapping, pushing and kicking.

Psychological Violence

Psychological abuse against women is a common phenomenon in domestic violence. This kind of violence always placed women in a state of mind that would cause a person to suffer substantial emotional distress. The psychological violence is more unbearable in comparison to physical violence because the injuries arising out of physical violence may remain for the time being but the harmful effects of psychological violence last longer, sometimes lifelong. Thus, a question was posed to assess the prevalence and nature of psychological violence against women. Data reveal (Table: 1.03) that a majority of 70 percent (126 out of 180) had experienced mental strain in one form or the other due to domestic violence. This affirms that use of psychological torture is day-to-day affair against women in our society.

Table: 1.03Distribution of Respondents' on the basis of their Reply

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	126	70%
No	54	30%
Total	180	100%

When enquired about the nature of psychological violence that is usually inflicted on women, different women responded differently. The types of violence the respondents referred to are broadly categorized as below.

Type I: Using derogatory language, negative body language and indifference

Type II: Withdrawal of talking terms and treating the victim as outcaste

Type III: Ignoring in every aspect of family matter

Type IV: Insult in presence of their children, relatives and outsiders

Type V: Others

Table: 1.04Distribution of Respondents' on the basis of their experience of Psychological Violence

Psychological violence (Type)	No of Respondents	Percentage
I	35	27.78%
II	33	26.19%
III	19	15.07%
IV	14	11.11%
V	25	19.84%
Total	180	100%

As shown above (Table: 1.04) that out of 126 respondents who had suffered psychological trauma at the domestic front, 35 (27.78 percent) were found to be victims of derogatory language, negative body language and indifference, while 33(26.19 percent) suffered due to the withdrawal of talking terms and isolation. 25 (19.84 percent) were victims of other types of psychological violence i.e. frequent blaming as an incompetent home maker, demeaning family background, criticizing for poor intelligence and threatening to desert. In case of 19 respondents (15.07 percent), they were reported to have faced indifference in family matters. Their voice was hardly heard in any familial decision and 14 (11.11 percent) were reported of repeated insult in presence of their children, relatives and outsiders.

Besides, a constant fear of being beaten up is also a grave type of mental torture. But women in our society have to face such a threat every now and then. Thus, it was pertinent to ask that how frequently women face fear of hurt physically.

Table: 1.05 Distribution of Respondents' on the basis of their Reply

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	152	84.44%
No	28	15.55%
Total	180	100%

Out of 180 respondents (Table: 1.05), a majority of 152 constituting 84.44 percent were found to be threatened physically, while only 28 did not respond. This shows that majority of women had to suffer mental strain from their intimate partners or from in-laws. It is also found that majority of women have to suffer the fear of physical violence every now and then. It sometimes turns women into serious mental patient and also turn them suicidal sometime.

Economic Abuse

Economic abuse is another important form of domestic violence which does not have any apparent manifestation. Women generally have a subordinate position in the society due to their financial dependence and lack of access to resources. Subordination is still aggravated when their share or right over the resources of husband is denied. Thus, question was posed to understand the degree of economic suppression of women. As shown in the table (Table: 4.10) below that out of 180 respondents, 81 (45 per cent) were victims of economic abuse in one form or the other.

Table: 1.06 Distribution of Respondents' on the Basis of their Experience of Economic Abuse

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	81	45.00%
No	99	55.00%
Total	180	100.00%

A number of types of economic pressure are inflicted on women. These are broadly classified as

Type I: Recovering full amount of the salary of employed women

Type II: Forcing to leave the existing job

Type III: Preventing from taking a job

Type IV: Prohibiting from making personal purchases

As shown in the table (Table: 1.06) below that out of 81 respondents, 32 (39.50percent) reported that their entire salary was forcefully recovered every month by their husbands, 27(33.33percent) were being forced to leave their existing job, 15 (18.53percent) were not allowed to take any outdoor job for earning, while 7(8.64percent) were prohibited from making purchases of their choice. Thus it was found that a sizable number of women are being abused economically also in our family set up.

Table: 1.07 Distribution of Respondents' according to the reasons behind their experience of Economic Violence

Reasons of Economic violence (Type)	No of respondents	Total
I	32	39.50%
II	27	33.33%
III	15	18.53%
IV	7	8.64%
Total	81	100%

Sexual violence

Sexual abuse is another kind of domestic violence. It is as dangerous as the other types of domestic violence. The effects of this kind of violence can range from minor to severe sexually transmitted diseases or HIV/AIDS. It also leads to the demeaning of the rights and dignity of a woman. At this backdrop, an attempt was made to understand the nature of sexual abuse that women have to suffer in a marital relationship.

As shown (Table: 1.08) below that out of 180 respondents, 86 (47.78percent) were found to be victims of sexual abuse in the form of forced sex, prevention from safe sex or using contraception and forceful compliance to intercourse.

Table: 1.08 Distribution of Respondents' on the basis of their experience of Sexual Violence

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	86	47.78%
No	94	52.22%
Total	180	100%

In order to find out the influence of drug or alcohol in sexual abuse of women the respondents were asked to state the response. It was found that (Table: 1.09) 66 respondents (76.75 percent) were victims of sexual abuse while their husbands were under influence of drug or alcohol. Thus, alcoholism is an important factor that triggers sexual abuse of women.

Table: 1.09 Distribution of Respondents' according to their experience of Sexual Violence

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	66	76.75%
No	20	23.25%
Total	86	100

Extent of violence

Violence against women assumes the form of a social problem when it is a repeated action in the family. Domestic violence is not typically a singular event rather; it is a repeated act of behaviour of the perpetrator who seeks power and control over his wife. Thus, question is asked about the extent of occurrence of domestic violence in their daily life.

Regarding the opinion about the extent of violence, it is (Table: 1.10) found that out of 180 respondents, 35 (19.44 percent) had to suffer violence daily, while 45(25.00 percent), 25(13.89percent) and 47 (26.11percent) were found to suffer violence once or twice in a week, fortnightly and monthly respectively. However 28 respondents (15.56percent) could not remember their frequency of violence. This shows that frequency of violence is not uniform in all cases, although it is a regular feature in the lives of majority of women.

Table: 1.10 Distribution of Respondents' opinion regarding their Extent of Violence

Extent of violence	No of Respondents	Percentage
Every day	35	19.44%
Once or twice a week	45	25.00%
Fortnight	25	13.89%
Once or twice in a month	47	26.11%
Can't remember	28	15.56%
Total	180	100

Causes of Domestic Violence

The causes of domestic violence ranges from the minor to major, as just anything can serve as an excuse to severely beat up a woman. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this section to identify the causes of domestic violence against women.

Type I: Extra marital affairs

Type II: Use of Alcohol & Drug

Type III: Absence of economic independence among women

Type IV: Dowry

Type V: Patriarchal social outlook

Type VI: Any other

Table: 1.11 Distribution of Respondents' according to the Causes of Domestic Violence

Causes (Types)	No of Respondents	Percentage
I	51	28.33%
II	56	31.11%
III	17	9.45%
IV	22	12.22%
V	9	5.00%
VI	25	13.89%
Total	180	100%

Regarding the causes of domestic violence (Table: 1.11), it was found that out of 180 respondents 56(31.11percent) had faced violence due to extra marital affair of the husbands, 51(28.33 percent) reported to have faced violence due to the alcoholic nature of the husband, 25(13.89 percent) respondents were victimized due to marital maladjustment, problem at the work place of husband, difference in the social status of the partners, property dispute, mental disorders and children related issues. Again 22 (12.22percent), 17(9.45percent) and 9 (5percent) were found to be victims of violence because of dowry, absence of economic independence and patriarchal social outlook respectively. So, it may be said that nature and causes of violence vary significantly in case of women. However, it is the physical violence of various types that are often inflicted on women.

Suggestions:

In the course of conducting the study it is realized that some measures are required to be taken to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic violence against women. Some of them may be

1. Sensitization of women about legal remedial measures is required to be undertaken by concerned NGOs.
2. Women organizations need to expand their services to include women in rural areas.
3. Establishment of Family Court in each district is mandatory.
4. All-women police station is also required to be established in districts.
5. Education for girl children should be made mandatory.
6. Counseling centers with professionally qualified counselors should be set up in every district.

III. CONCLUSION

To conclude we can say that the prevention of violence against women is a matter relating to maintaining the dignity of women in the family, whether as daughters, as sisters, as wives, as mothers and as in intimate relationships. In respect of eliminating domestic violence in our society, the laws have failed to achieve its objective to the extent it was desired. The government's initiative is mostly confined to the making of laws, while the implementation of it is not being taken adequate care. Thus, a holistic approach involving the government and

various other stakeholders of the civil society is required to be evolved to combat the evil of domestic violence in India.

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