



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY IN CHIRANG DISTRICT, ASSAM

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Abstract: The paper discusses the need to empower women to prevent domestic violence against them. Domestic violence against women should not occur anywhere at any cause but most of the time it is ignored. Considering the age we are living it's easy to say but such violence is truly unfortunate and a privilege to the women living in remote and rural villages. However, the author sticks to the point that domestic violence against women is a matter where women living in urban or rural villages may be abused and undergo darkness to their prospects of life. The violence against women includes sexual, physical or emotional abuse by an intimate partner, physical or sexual abuse by family members or others, sexual harassment and abuse by authority figures, trafficking for forced labour or sex, traditional practices such as forced child marriages, dowry-related violence and honour killings, where women are murdered in the name of family honour. Systematic sexual abuse in conflict situations is another form of violence against women. However, life becomes almost a war against survival for such women. The paper emphasizes empowering women through education, employment and awareness of women rights to avoid domestic violence against them. A case study conducted on domestic violence against women in the Bodo community in Chirang District of Assam found that 60% of the women in the region are affected by violent acts due to several causes. Statistic-based studies reveal that the prime cause of domestic violence is of having an alcoholic husband and gender discrimination. The paper discusses about women's empowerment to control domestic violence in the particular study area.

Index Terms: Violence, Awareness, Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment is a process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, individually take action and control work. Through this process, women acquire the power of thinking, decision-making regarding their household affairs, sexuality and fertility, freedom of movement, control over the property, their experience of domestic violence and their educations. The individual woman cannot access to empowerment process without education. So, education is a means of empowerment of women. However due to the lack of education, many women have been subjected to discriminating processes resulting in their exclusion from decision making and they become the victim of domestic violence. Domestic violence against women is a part of the disempowering process against women which impacts women's self-respect, their capabilities and their ability to enjoy their life in their way as their human rights.

Domestic violence is variously known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, child abuse or spousal partner violence (SPV). It can be broadly defined as a pattern of abusive behaviors by one or both partners in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, friends or cohabitation. Domestic violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that results in psychological, sexual or physical harm or suffering inflicted on women. It includes threats of deprivation of liberty and may take place in public or private life.

The United States Department of Justice defines domestic violence-

“ As a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that

influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.” [1]

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UN Resolution 48/104 of 19 December 1993 defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life [2]. Violence has multi-dimensional forms starting from verbal abuse to the trafficking of women including sexual, physical or emotional abuse by a partner, sexual abuse by family members or others, sexual abuse by authority figures, forced to child marriages, dowry related violence etc.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The issue of domestic violence remains hidden as a private affair due to the so-called social structure of Assam. The victim goes on suffering to the worst point till she resists due to embarrassment by highlighting her name in the public sphere. Previous studies conducted by Das (2012) and Kalita (2014) found that the cause of domestic violence is gender discrimination which could be minimized by using women empowerment as one of the tools. Saikia (2011) discussed the need for women's empowerment in Assam to eliminate gender discrimination from society. Gupta (2014) studied that although theoretically men and women are equal by the constitution, it is the opposite in real situations and violence against women still occurs hidden across all cultures, religions, classes and ethnicities due to social construction between public life and private life. Borah et al. (2014) provided suggestions regarding awareness of the legislation and women's rights against domestic violence. Narayan (2012) concluded that the status of Assamese women is still in pathetic condition even after the formation of several women's rights and acts within Assam state. However, increasing violations of these rights resulted to many women's movements which itself found minimal to tackle such violence against women. Therefore a statistical-based study is carried out on the various causes of domestic violence against women, which would conversely help to measure such violence.

3. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of our study are:-

- (i) To analyze statistically the domestic violence in the study area
- (ii) To study the various causes of the violence.
- (iii) To analyze the policy implications for empowerment against violence.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this paper, an attempt was made to discuss women empowerment and domestic violence against women of the Bodo community in the Chirang District of Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD), Assam, India. Chirang district with a population of 4,81,818 (Indian census, 2011) rich in flora and fauna bearing home of Manas National Park. However, the district is very acquainted with different types of violence both outdoors and indoors. The present study termed domestic violence as indoor, which is often kept hidden as private life by women. The survey was carried out by asking questions to 60 nos. of married and unmarried women belonging to the Chirang district. The married woman included in the survey is either a victim or has an alcoholic husband but is not a victim. Unmarried women were mostly housewives suffered by their owners. Reasons for domestic violence consist of alcoholism, extramarital affairs and feminism. ALL Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF), the Local Organizations cooperated in the study by providing 40 nos. domestic violence that occurred previously in the Chirang district as secondary data [9-11]. The set of data was then brought to analysis statically to figure out the cause of violence and its measures to control such violence. The data analysis is presented in the following section.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.1 shows that 62 women out of 100 have alcoholic husbands who are also victims of domestic violence. A few women also suffered in households due to either the presence of extramarital relationships or feminism (gender inequality). No. of such women are found nearly equal. However, it is observed from the survey data that women suffer from domestic violence not only because of their alcoholic husbands but also the presence of the husband’s extramarital affairs and feminism. Some husbands do not react roughly to their spouse even if he is an alcoholic or possesses extramarital affairs. Therefore analysis of data by fig. 5.1 does not depict the real scenario of the cause of domestic violence .

Table 1.1: Causes of domestic violence and Nos. of women

Causes	Nos. of women
Alcohol	62
Extramarital affairs	32
Feminism	34
Victim of Domestic Violence	62

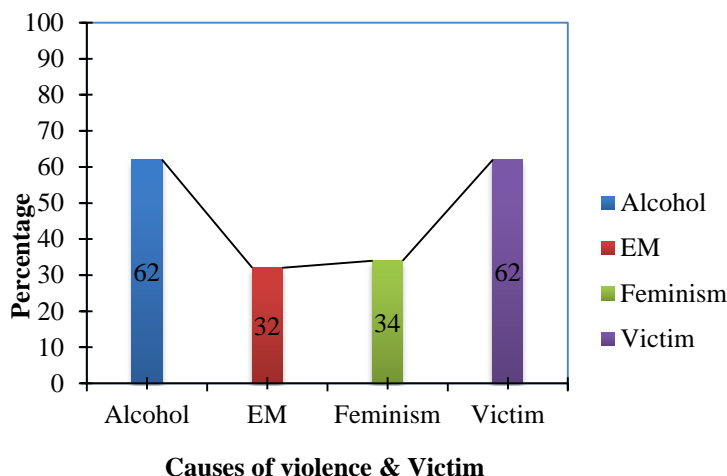


Fig 1.1: Showing Causes of domestic violence against nos. of women

Further analysis of the collected data was carried out using the logistic regression model. The model was prepared to know the following information

1. Since logistic regression model provides results in the form of odds ratio i.e. determines the probability of happening over the probability of not happening an event, the ratio of occurring domestic violence over not occurring domestic violence in the study area will be come to know.
2. The relationship between the domestic violence and its causes. It is well known that domestic violence is influenced by alcoholic husbands, extramarital affairs and feminism. However, it is important to know the most significant cause for which the violence is going on.

In the model, domestic violence was taken as a dependent variable (Y) and its causes as independent variables (X). The 2 digits 1 and 0 were used to represent ‘yes’ and ‘No’ respectively in both the types of variables. For example, if there is the occurrence of domestic violence, then Y becomes 1 and if not, then 0. Similarly, the values of dependent variables are also used in the model. The outcomes of the model are presented as follows

Table 1.2: Overall Model Fit

Likelihood ratio (LR) chi-square = 83.7272	p-value=0.000
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Table 1.3: Coefficients and Standard Errors

Dependent Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	p
Alcoholic Husband (AH)	-3.085	0.7827	0.0001
Extramarital affairs (EA)	-0.8243	0.7069	0.2436
Feminism (F)	2.5876	0.6814	0.0001
Intercept	2.2301		

Table 1.4: Odds Ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals

Dependent Variable	Odd Ratio	Low	High
Alcoholic Husband (AH)	0.0457	0.0099	0.2121
Extramarital affairs (EA)	0.4385	0.1097	1.7528
Feminism (F)	13.2982	3.4978	50.5575

From the value of likelihood ratio (LR) chi-square and p-value given in table 1.2, it is observed that the model is statistically significant. The coefficients given in table 1.3 are used to predict the dependent variable (Y) from the independent variable (X) using logistic regression equation. The logistic regression equation is

$$\log \frac{Y}{1-Y} = 2.23009 - 3.08497 \times AH - 0.8243 \times EA + 2.587625 \times F$$

Where Y is the probability of occurring domestic violence

In general, a coefficient needs to be at least twice the size of its standard error to be statistically significant. This is in contrast in case of extramarital affairs. This also reflects in the following observation of p-value. With a 2-tailed test and significance level of 0.05, coefficients of AH and F is significantly different from 0. The p-value of AH and F is very less than 0.05. However, coefficient of EA is not significantly different from 0. It is also evident from lower and upper limit of 95% confidence interval for EA, where the coefficient becomes 0 at some instant. Hence it is observed that alcoholic husband and feminism is statistically significant while an extramarital affair is not so statically significant in causing domestic violence in the study area as per collected data and model analysis. Table 1.4 shows the odd ratios of the independent variables with their 95% confidence intervals. Statistical significance of odd ratio may also be observed from inspection of the 95% confidence intervals. If a value of 1 is not included within the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval, then the odds ratios are significant at least at the 0.05 level. A value of 1 included within these bounds indicates that the odds ratio is not significantly different from 0. In such case odds ratio for EA does not seem significant. While odds ratio of AH and F is significant.

6. Policy Implications

The study was carried out on the Bodo community, the largest tribal of Assam state that needs Jou (alcohol) in all rituals. People in this community have been using alcohol from an early age and it has become a part of their life. However, the rituals are aside and not telling society to become violent after drinking. Many of the males (husbands) used to drink often uncontrolled as informed by the local welfare organizations and is more nowadays due to its easy accessibility even in remote villages. Either homemade or company-manufactured, alcohol is harming society. However, the whole scenario of alcohol in the study area may be seen as a system and is the responsibility of each of the members. Homemade alcohol is necessary for marriage or dead cremation in this community. But many

households are also run by alcohol as income. Women carried alcohol to the marketplace for earning. While this looks those poor women are the real culprit of domestic violence. So, before that, one should give them an alternate source of income to run the family which can be done through providing empowerment. Women's empowerment could be achieved by the following points-

- (i) Providing training and professional development on handloom-Textile, Weaving, and Sericulture.
- (ii) Active participation in small savings financial co-operative societies, Self Help Groups.
- (iii) Active participation in MGNREGA, NREGA, AGREGS.
- (iv) Through awareness regarding Women's Rights, Women's Reservations , the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 etc.
- (v) Active participation at public platform
- (vi) Active participation in the issues of society.

The above programs are for poor woman, who is either victim of domestic violence or selling alcohol as a source of income. However, more awareness is needed from the male section, who took alcohol excessively and committed domestic violence. There are also sections of a husband who is neither alcoholic nor has any extramarital affairs but commits domestic violence to establish his influence. Feminism is the cause of domestic violence committed not only by the husband but also by other family members. The paper considered this cause is generated in the minds of offenders due to a lack of awareness against gender discrimination. Local welfare organizations like ABSU and ABWWF have been carrying movement on such issues. Their movement includes rallies, conferences, awareness programs, and seminars both for male and female sections of villages. The effort is admirable by itself. However, a mile is to go to achieve success. The state administration has provided a nos. of employment generation schemes Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Assam Government Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (AGREGS) to empower women in the study area. Adult education to women through SSA (Sarba Sikhsa Abhijan) is a great effort to empower women. A further contribution from the government to resisting domestic violence is sought. Strict law and punishment for the offender of domestic violence is needed. It is also necessary to give reorganization to all types of domestic violence (Physical, mental and sexual) as a crime.

7. CONCLUSION

The present study carried out on causes of domestic violence by collecting data from 100 nos. of women both married and unmarried. The study took three causes primarily for committing domestic violence. It includes alcoholic husbands, extramarital affairs and feminism. From the data, it was clear that domestic violence is not dependent fully on the causes that the study considered. Some women have alcoholic husbands who suffer from domestic violence while others only due to their husband's extramarital affairs but not due to alcohol consumption. The logistic regression model depicts that domestic violence is immensely influenced by the husband's alcohol consumption and lack of gender discrimination by the family members. A few quality policies may be implemented to reduce domestic violence through women's empowerment. However, a nos. of responsibility falls on every section of society from household members, and local welfare groups to the government sector.

8. REFERENCE

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