

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a major unrecognized problem. In India, as many others countries, child protection continues to remain largely unaddressed. India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children. It has also the largest number of working children. Physical abuse especially corporal punishment, in the name of disciplining, continues unabated. There is no legal definition for "child abuse" in any national legislation; people have difficulties in acknowledging and recognizing existing different forms of violence against children who are powerless, vulnerable at home itself. Due to absence of a legal provision to deal with neglect, abuse and violence against children at home, many such forms of violence do not get ever enumerated. Children suffer both direct and indirect violence and abuse at home as gendered power relation, the caste subjugation, witnessing parent violence and so on. The present study is reflection of various set of qualitative and quantitative secondary data sources to facilitate the in-depth analysis of different domestic violence; causes, effects of domestic violence and witnessing on the life of the children, which can raise awareness about the issue, give suggestions, views to reduce domestic violence.

KEY WORDS: Children, Domestic violence, Powerless, Vulnerable, witnessing domestic violence.

A. INTRODUCTION:-

Children's development is expected to unfold within a secure and nurturing environment. Where the environment is infected by violence and fear, all the normal tasks of growing up are likely to be adversely affected. Domestic Violence and neglect among children have become major problems throughout the world. The study found that children's perceptions were affected in differing degrees depending on the nature of the violence. Domestic Violence¹ has deleterious effects on the self-image of individuals and often blocks healthy physical and psychological development. One who experience abused in the early stage of the life will have its bad physical, economical, psychological effects throughout the life cycle. Thus it is a major health and human rights concern. An extensive survey of the research evidence has shown how strongly the experience of violence is associated with adverse outcomes for children's development. It was significantly associated with externalizing and internalizing behaviors and social, attention and thought problems.

Witnessing domestic violence in a home where one of their parents is abusing the other parent plays a tremendous role on the well-being and developmental growth of children witnessing the violence; they are more likely to experience the symptoms of depression and anxiety, engagement in unhealthy behaviors, such as tobacco and drug use, and alcohol, involvement in antisocial behaviors, thoughts about suicide etc. Children who witnessed domestic violence were

also found to demonstrate more anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and anger problems than children who did not witness violence in the family. These results of a study by Somer&Braunstein(1999) have triggered a debate about whether all children who are exposed to domestic violence (witness) should be considered 'abused' and thus subject to child protection intervention. There are those who maintain that all witnessing of domestic violence is a form of psychological child² abuse.

B. FORMS, PATTERNS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG CHILDREN:-

Researchers and professionals working in the field of domestic violence against children have reported that the forms of domestic violence differ nation to nation. Throughout the world there are some usual forms or patterns of domestic abuse/violence classified into four major types' viz. Physical violence, Psychological violence, Emotional violence, Sexual violence and Neglect have great effects on children. Child physical violence refers to the infliction or endangerment of physical injury due to beating, kicking, hitting, burning or otherwise harming a child. The child sexual domestic violence involves fondling a child's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, forcing to exhibits private parts, and photograph in nude, forced kissing, exhibition of pornography etc. Child neglects are characterized by inability of caregivers to provide children's basic physical, educational or emotional needs. Neglects can be classified by Physical neglect, Educational neglect, Emotional neglect.

SOME INDICATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG CHILDREN:

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE	PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE	SEXUAL VIOLENCE	NEGLECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Beating with stave/stick ❖ Slapping/ kicking ❖ Pushing ❖ Shaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Scolding ❖ Differentiating ❖ Blaming ❖ Restrictions ❖ Comparing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sexual assault ❖ Forcing to be nude and taking picture, ❖ Touching private parts ❖ kissing forcedly, ❖ Making the child exhibit private body parts ❖ Exhibiting private body parts to a child, ❖ Children forced to view pornographic materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of attention, ❖ Less food, basic needs ❖ Lack of attention to child's education, ❖ Involving child to domestic work, ❖ Involving child to part time work

C. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN:

To deal with peoples' own insecurities and inadequacies, psychologists assert that people abuse and control the lives of others within safe precincts of domestic walls. The stresses, created from living in a family situation engender domestic violence. Family pressures can create a pressure cooker situation for some individuals causing them to burst. Tensions can be induced by various socio-economic circumstances which can result in violence. Past history of trauma increases the risk of psychological ailments-manifesting into a negative world view and negative self- image.

Different research study has clearly indicated that domestic violence has adverse impact on children; it can be both complex and multifaceted. Children react in different way with the relation of violence and conflict. A range of personal contextual factors have a great influence on the impact(Kelly 1996).These 'mediating variables' have been referred to as 'protective' or 'vulnerability' factors , as those variables can improve or accentuate the child's response to the violence (Moore et. al 1990).The variables can be -Age -Race -Socio-economic status-Gender-Culture-Religion-Emotional and physical development of the child-Issues concerning disability-Issues concerning sexuality-Child's role and position in the family-Child's relationship with parents'-Child's relationship with siblings-Child's relationship outside the immediate family , including with peers, other adults , and other family members-Degree of maternal stress-Frequency and forms of violence-Length of exposure to violence and so on.

Due to different social constraints people are afraid to come out the continuous cycle of domestic violence. Many victims and women's organizations feel that despite the existence of supposedly stringent laws, most victims fail to receive necessary relief. Due to the unsympathetic attitude of the police and lawyers, magnified by their propensity to protect the wrong doers, they are adequately bribed.

Age has influence how the victims will react. Generally, it has been found that , pre-school children are more likely to have physical symptoms to express their anxiety , depression such as stomach aches, bedwetting , sleep disturbances while primary school children are able to present their fears behaviorally, emotionally i.e. a boarder ways . Adolescents get addiction to drugs, early marriage, leaving from home or involvement to criminal activity to gain relief from emotional disorder.

Andocentric mentality, construction of social power relations, dependency make children vulnerable, involved in abusive domestic situation .The social context, with different levels of public awareness and options for support changing over time' may differ the effects on children's reaction and strategies, so that there can't be limit to learn about the ways in which such factors might influence the way children react to living with domestic violence.

D. A BRIEF SCENARIO OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG CHILDREN:

The reflections in this paper are based on various set of qualitative and quantitative data sources.

EFFECTS OF CHILD DOMESTIC ABUSES:

Nineteen percent of the world's children live in India. According to the 2001 Census, some 440 million people in the country today are aged below eighteen years and constitute 42 percent of India's total population i.e., four out of every ten persons. The National Policy for Children, 1974, declared children to be a 'supreme national asset'. It pledged measures to secure and safeguard all their needs, declaring that this could be done by making wise use of available national resources. However, the incidence of child abuse is increasing day by day and has achieved an alarming threshold in India. But the exact number is always unknown due to the reporting biases. Corporal punishment in the name of make disciplined has become so usual that it is easy to use on children to show parent's own controlling power.

Shalini,S. Phansalkar,Joshi.(2009) discussed in the Research paper “**child sexual abuse: A violation of human rights?**” how widespread child sexual abuse is. Although in traditional country like India, child sexual abuse is not readily believable. Research is showing that the sexual abuse of child occurs everywhere from mansion to slums, cutting across all the barriers of social, economic and educational status and reduces it to a ‘sameness’. Every family, parents are supposed and expected to protect of their children. But, the fact is that in 70 to 80 percent of the reported cases, the assault is committed on the child, either in their own house or in the house of perpetrator. Statistics support that the home is the worst place where such assaults took places most often by their closed relatives only. The author also found that the age of victims or offender is also no decisive factor. At any age a female is susceptible to high risk of being sexually abused. It is ashamed for us that a child at the age of 2 or 3 years is also not spared from such sexual attack. Sometimes the persons basically men not being able to control their impulse, lust over powering the person, select the children as they are easy prey , the most vulnerable , not in a position to protests and disclose and therefore easily pliable.

A Study on Child Abuse By Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India (2007) with the selected 26 districts from six zones of India and Children (5-18 years), Young Adults (18-24 years) and Stakeholders respondents following five categories of children:(a) Children in family environment, not attending school (b) Children in schools(c) Children in institutional care (d) Working children (e) Street children found some remarkable facts. Those children physically abused in family situations, 88.6% were physically abused by parents.53.22% children reported having faced one of more forms of sexual abuse. Every second child reported facing emotional domestic abuse. Every second child reported facing emotional abuse. In 83% of the cases parents were the abusers.48.4% of girls wished they were boys.53.22% children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse.50% abuses are persons known to the child or in a position of trust and responsibility.

Researchers also found that children's perceptions were affected in differing degrees depending on the nature of the abuse. Physically abused children, for example, accepted the blame for mild abuse but not for severe abuse. Also, verbal and sexual abuse seemed to have a larger negative influence on children's perceptions of themselves and the world than did physical

abuse. Abused children tend to blame themselves, but the extent of blame is mediated by the type and extent of abuse.

EFFECTS OF WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Children who were exposed to one type of violence, both within the past year and over their lifetimes, were at far greater risk of experiencing other types of violence. For example, a child who was physically assaulted in the past year would be five times as likely to also have been sexually victimized and more than four times as likely also to have been maltreated during that period. Similarly, a child who was physically assaulted during his or her lifetime would be more than six times as likely to have been sexually victimized and more than five times as likely to have been maltreated during his or her lifetime. It was found that Child witnesses were less likely to use direct problem solving and more likely to use aggression to cope with conflict.

Domestic violence causes Teens' quality of peer relationships, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, and self-destructive tendencies. Combined effects of being abused and witnessing violence on a teen's wellbeing were greater than either abuse or witnessed violence showed greater problems compared to those who were not exposed to violence.

Abused and abused-witnessed groups had more negative perceptions of their abusive fathers. Children in the three violence-exposure groups assigned more negative items to their abusive mothers than children in the comparison group. When fathers were sole perpetrators the discrepancy between number of negative items assigned to fathers and non-perpetrating mothers was much greater than the discrepancies in the comparison group.

Violence exposure was strongly related to symptoms of psychological distress. Children who were highly monitored tended to be expected less to violence and commit fewer acts of violence. Recent victim or witness of violence at home was a significant factor in predicting use of violent behaviors. It was found that for girls, exposure to knife attack, being a victim of violence at school was significantly associated with use of violent behaviors. Being a victim or witness of violence at home was not a predictor of violent behavior for boys.

The outcomes of the study was that the children moved through five phases in their experiences of adult domestic violence:(a) living with ordinary fights,(b) witnessing violent events, (c) challenged by mother's public confrontation of the violence, (d) adjusting to new realities in the long-term aftermath of violence, and (e) when violence becomes history. The impact of parent-child violence and of witnessing violence on a child's adjustment was inversely related. As parent-child violence increased, the effects of witnessing violence became negligible. As parent-child violence decreased, the effect of witnessing violence increased.

It was found that violence appeared to directly influence children's mental health. Families in which mothers were abused were less supportive and when support occur it appear to fail to buffer the child. Children witnessing violence were significantly different in terms of behavior problems, social competence, and the tendency to choose aggressive response when compared to children from non-violent families.

E. CONCLUSION:-

Domestic violence continues to be a massive problem with enormous individual and societal consequences. The scope and consequences of domestic violence are often misunderstood and rarely addressed in the evangelical church, resulting in abuse victims and perpetrators not receiving essential ministry. The fact is that male violence against women is far more damaging; generally occurs in a far different context (aggressive dominance versus self-defense); and typically has a more pernicious meaning (establishment of control) than does female violence. Feminist analysis thus states that a patriarchal society is a direct cause of domestic violence against women which have consequences to child abuses. Gloria Steinem has asserted that "The patriarchy requires violence or the subliminal threat of violence in order to maintain itself. The most dangerous situation for a woman is not an unknown man in the street, or even the enemy in wartime, but a husband or lover in the isolation of their own home." Witnessing domestic violence to their mothers can have a detrimental impact on children, tantamount. Battered women have more tendencies to be abusive towards children. Men who abuse wife also be aggressive to the children. All those domestic violence can be learned behavior and flow generation to generation.

Abusers choose to behave violently to get what they want and gain control. Their behavior often originates from a sense of entitlement which is often supported by sexist, racist, homophobic and other discriminatory attitudes. Male privilege operates on an individual and societal level to maintain a situation of male dominance, where men have power over women and children. In this way, domestic violence by men can be seen as a consequence of the male dominated power relation, rooted in Patriarchal traditions that encourage men to believe that they are entitled to power and control over. According to radical feminists patriarchy is the basis for all abuse and is the ultimate source of most of the world's evil.

Family court advisers have indicated that domestic violence is a regular feature in contested contact cases. Domestic violence is an important indicator of risk of harm to children. A wide range of studies have indicated that children are likely to be at risk of actual physical, sexual and emotional abuse from perpetrators of domestic violence. Domestic violence is often a significant and consistent feature, feature regardless of the form of abuse (physical, sexual, psychological or emotional) a child is deemed to have suffered. Domestic violence continues to be a hideous global social problem. Secular feminists and many egalitarians assert that patriarchy, power relation is the ultimate cause of all violence. Deep-seated feelings of powerlessness make victims helplessness. According to liberal feminists, exercising individual independent capability in education, employment, politics, and legal rights can give freedom from power over. Marxist feminists believe that exploitation by power would come to end only with abolition of private property, class based society. Radical feminists emphasized the patriarchy, ambiguity of male power, sexuality are the root of oppression. Postmodern feminists emphasize the need to explore the intricate relationship between language, sexuality and power and to develop 'non-phallogocentric' ways of thinking.

But, not all domestic violence occurs within a context of traditional power relations/patriarchy. Ultimately, responsibility for the violence must lie with the perpetrator of that violence, despite any societal influences that we may draw on in order to understand the context of the behavior. Domestic violence is learned intentional behavior rather than the

consequence of stress, individual pathology, substance use or a 'dysfunctional' relationship. Perpetrators of domestic violence frequently avoid taking responsibility for their behavior, by blaming their violence on someone or something else, denying it took place at all or minimizing their behavior. As wife and child beating is justified in the society; husband has the right to corporal punishment to wife and children that is justified by religion also. Society blame to batter women and child themselves for being abused and asked to be more liable, adjustable, obeyed, fellow of their lord of earth i.e. husband, father.

However, as domestic violence has long term effects on one's life cycle, there is a need of the best approach to prevent the domestic abuse. It is necessary to stop such violence before happening. Prevention of such abuse can be achieved mainly through awareness raising. As the domestic violence considered as silence crime, only awareness can break this silence. While the Constitution of India guarantees many fundamental rights to the children, the approach to ensure the fulfillment of these rights was more needs based rather than rights based. The transition to the rights based approach in the Government and civil society is still evolving.

A Multi-disciplinary approach can create a system of investigation and prosecution that causes the least possible trauma to the child/adolescents and families. If medical doctors, nurses, hospital social workers, law enforcement officials, prosecution authorities, victims advocates (invariably NGOs and Other civil society organizations) mental health professionals, child advocacy centers all work in unity with well clarified roles and responsibilities, it can be multi-disciplinary approach , which can lead a more developed interventions. Well laid-down guidelines developed by multi-disciplinary approach can well explain how the agencies should work together to investigate, prosecute and provide support to the child victims. This type of working together approach may go a long way in saving time, reducing the trauma, duplication of effort and omission of necessary evaluations. Ultimately, being dedicated, accountable, and answerable to our children with sustained efforts we can protect our future.

NOTES:-

Child: Article 1 defines the holder of rights under the Child Rights Commission (CRC) as 'every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child'.

Domestic violence: Article 3 (b) provides a definition of domestic violence that covers acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence between members of the family or domestic unit, irrespective of biological or legal family ties.

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