

Psychological Impact of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) on Working Women

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Abstract

Intimate partner Violence(IPV) in India has been known to cause distress among women. Patriarchal system is seen in most of the households where the man is seen as the bread winner and as history suggests, he can dominate the women in many ways. But with proper strategies in place, we can see women are progressing in each and every field, they are well educated and working in different sectors. Women are managing the home front as well as the work front, when we talk about IPV it is seen that it has a grave impact on working women. Studies have found that working women were more likely to be abused by their husbands than their non- working peers. Urban women were more exposed to emotional and less severe physical violence while rural women were more exposed to sexual violence. This article investigates the psychological impact of IPV on working women. Based on the published documents, reports and news commentaries, this article provides a critical analysis and reflection on the challenges faced by a woman due to IPV and the strategies to cope with it and have a better work- life balance and have a good quality of life. The findings indicate that IPV has had serious impact on working women and brings our attention to the need of sensitizing women about it and ensure their good health and safety. A discussion of the psychological impact and strategies to manage it is provided in the final section of the article.

Key Words: Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Psychological Distress, Women safety

Background

Intimate partner violence(IPV) is found to be one of the most common forms of domestic violence which includes any physical, psychological, sexual or economical form of abuse in an intimate relationship.

IPV takes place over different age group, genders, sexual orientations, economic or social status. As estimated by World Health Organisation (WHO) one-third of women who have been in a relationship have experienced IPV. There are many women survivors who have started working after experiencing IPV (survivors), and there are also women who are experiencing IPV (Victims) at home and with all the distress attending regular

office. Studies have found clear links between victimization experiences and negative work outcomes. Mental and physical health symptoms represent important mediators explaining these links. So basically the level of stress is unimaginable, they are suffering at home as well as in the office since they are not able to get a positive result. When we talk about a country like India, IPV is hardly reported, that also because of lack of awareness and. Historically speaking our society is under the impression that men are supposed to control the life of the women and in doing so, any kind of violence is given.

Therefore there is a need of strategies that support and provide safety nets to the victims and the survivors. It must also encourage the development of community

norms that assist victims and survivors in accessing such supports.

Introduction

Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner. IPV refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Examples of types of behaviour are listed below. Acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating. Sexual violence, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion. Emotional (psychological) abuse, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children. Controlling behaviours, including isolating a person from family and friends; monitoring their movements; and restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care.

As per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) round 4, the prevalence of IPV ranges between 3 - 43% in different states of India. Marital violence acceptability is amongst the highest in the world (52% women, and 42% men) findings indicate that at least 86 million women in India have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their husband. This violence is reinforced by pervasive attitudes of acceptance and justification of IPV in the country as well as limited availability of local support services for victims.

The profundity of IPV is often misjudged as many studies indicate the difficulty of obtaining clear figures about prevalence of

IPV in general population. This is because of the under reporting which can be attributed to the fear of retaliation by the spouse/partner, economic dependence on the spouse, a hope that one day the violence will stop, shame, loss of social standing, and the feeling of severe house arrest. Studies have found that approximately nine out of ten of victims of IPV don't disclose such mis-happenings and suffer all alone.

There are societal issues that act as perpetrators of IPV like dowry, inequities in education, and decision making powers. Spousal factors like alcohol, and other substance abuse, unemployment, challenges to masculinity norms are significant factors. At individual levels, IPV is more pronounced among less educated and poor women. High level of IPV and its acceptability in society corroborates with other factors that point towards gender discrimination and other social inequalities. All these factors depicts the link between sex- discrimination and IPV at the household level, where females are regularly downplayed.

Studies have also found that IPV may act an causal agent to a plethora of acute and chronic physical, mental, and sexual health problems. Victims commonly suffer from chronic gynaecological problems, including chronic pelvic pain, sexually-transmitted diseases and vaginal bleeding, and present very frequently to healthcare services and require a wide range of medical services.

Experiences of IPV can impact many aspects of women's well-being, including social cohesion and connectedness, economic security, physical and mental health, and political aspirations.

Proportion of exposure to severe physical violence for working women was more

than double in urban India than non-working women. The probable reason might lie with the urban husband's elevated attitude of physically hurting his wife due to his superiority complex. According to societal norms in India, the husband was the bread-winner of the family and women worked only in the household. Women now work for economic benefit and this is likely to go against the long-nurtured societal beliefs of the husband and the notion of a husband's empowerment in the family, thereby inducing domestic violence against women. As the wives who earn more than their husband are more likely to be abused, the actual reasons for IPV victimization of women in India might be explained through complex phenomena including socioeconomic inequality in power and rights, familial hierarchy, and marriage related norms. Despite of IPV becoming a prevalent public health problem in India, little is known about risk factors for severe abuse.

This study aims at identifying the risk factors and the strategies to deal with the psychological stress caused by IPV and to answer these following questions:

Research Questions:

- RQ1: What are the possible risk factors of IPV in working women?
- RQ2: How does IPV effects working women?
- RQ3: What strategies could be curated to reduce the negative impact of IPV on working women?
- RQ4: What could be the challenges in implying new strategies?

Aims and objectives of the research:

- 1. To identify the risk factors of IPV in survivor & victims women who are working.

- 2. To analyse the effect of IPV on working women.
- 3. To identify the strategies to lessen the negative impact of IPV on working women through extensive literature review.
- 4. To list out the challenges in implementation of the strategies.

The research study aims at identifying the effects of IPV on working women. With increasing opportunities many women are working in various sectors, IPV being one of the most common form of violence in domestic household it is crucial to weigh the kind of impact it has on working women. The study further aims to curate strategies to deal with the aftermath of IPV ensuring women's health and safety at work place.

Statement of the problem

Around the world, considerable attention is being given to IPV. In India, IPV has been recognized since 1983 as a criminal offense under Section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code, and is comprehensively defined in the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) 2005, which came into effect in 2006. Even after the enactment of the Act, over the last decade, the rate of decline in IPV prevalence has remained profoundly low in India. It is becoming crucial to study its impact on working women as well. This article is an attempt to examine the repercussions of IPV in working women and offer some strategies to combat the challenges faced in implementing the strategies.

Significance of the study

Significantly this theoretical study will lead the way for women and also for companies who are hiring women, one to understand the prevalence of IPV and

second how it is impacting working women. It will also enable the women and work authorities to get a better insight of how to deal with the psychological aftermath of IPV and provide women a refuge while they are working.

Literature Review:

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which is the collection of data related to the object of research in the form of literature or examining and deepening the literature books, reports and scientific journals, research results and other sources that are related to the problems involved researched.

IPV is a multifaceted phenomenon resulting from the interaction between the individual and their environment (Heise, 1998; Krug et al., 2002; Stith et al., 2004), and is a product of factors at individual, microsystem (relationship), exosystem (community), and macrosystem (societal) levels (Heise, 1998; WHO/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010).

Studies have found that IPV experience was associated with anxiety, pain, depression, somatic symptoms as well as lower levels of social health and self-esteem. Women who experience IPV suffer from a wide range of health problems.

Studies also demonstrated a better understanding of IPV experience and perceived physical and mental health among women utilizing community health services in India. Women in India are at risk of IPV. Women with IPV experience are more likely to report poorer physical and mental health.

Studies found that women's employment was positively related to them reporting severe physical violence and researchers who have focused on samples from India have reported similar findings (Dalal,

2011; Kamat et al., 2010; Krishnan et al., 2010).

It is also found that the working status of women in India is not a protective factor for violence against women. Results demonstrated the elevated IPV exposures for working women. Economic empowerment by means of earning is not the only protective factor for IPV, at least in the Indian context. Results also demonstrated that working women were more likely to be abused by their husbands than their non-working peers. Poverty or patriarchy, alcohol or aggression; the causes of intimate partner violence have been contested by social scientists for decades.

Methodology

This study being a theoretical review it relied on review of secondary data material to discuss the aftermath of IPV on working women. Information is collected from various authentic websites, some journals and e-contents relating to impact of IPV among women. Based on the analysis of secondary sources/data and published news commentaries, the article reviews the national situation and reflects on the effect of IPV among working women.

Strategies to manage the distress caused by IPV among working women

- Creating a safe space where women can come and talk about it, taking help of mental health professionals is suggested.
- As coming to a work place is often a hideout from the abusive environment back at home, the environment of the office should be open and healthy.
- Sensitising men & women about IPV and how they can seek help; it

can be done by organizing workshop once in a month.

- Women helpline number can be displayed at important places, so that if somebody needs help, they can call.
- Maintain confidentiality if somebody opens up about their IPV experience.
- Support groups in the office or elsewhere, where victims and survivors can go and open up about their experiences.
- Since IPV can cause physical & mental disorders, the insurance policy should cover the charges.

Conclusion

Violence against women is a prevalent problem in India and worldwide. And there is a huge gap since most of the cases are not reported. Hence it is very crucial

for us as a society to understand the gravity of the situation and take necessary actions. In 21st century where we are moving forward in all aspects of life, such issues tie us with a rope and withhold our progress. It is always said that the future generation will only be benefited if we as a society work on our present. Domestic violence has a long history and Intimate partner violence is not given enough cognizance. Gone are the days when man used to go for hunt and woman used to take care of the household, now a days women are excelling in all areas, and violence against women is just one of the ways to thwart their progress. If we as society make everyone aware of it, and strategies which can help them empower women in their houses, we can make this world a better place for women, where their physical and mental safety will be taken care of.

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