

# Spousal abuse research paper sample

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Most often, one of the reasons people marry is to be with someone they trust and love. They enter the relationship with the expectation of being cared for, gain security, and have positive experiences together. However, for many couples, the dream of the “ happy ever after” does not become real. The realities of life set in, and the abuses happen. This can be perpetuated by either a male or a female spouse. In the succeeding sections, the topic on spousal abuse is further explored. The definition of the concept begins the discussion, and this is followed by a description about the male victim, then the female experience. The factors that contribute and perpetuate spousal abuse are explained, and the conclusion synthesizes the paper.\n

## **Definition of spousal abuse**

\nAbuse is defined as “ physical abuse or threat of physical abuse; using violence or carrying out violent acts” (Cook, 2009, p. 2). Abuse can take on many forms; it can be physical, verbal, or emotional. Verbal abuse, most often, is perceived to be followed by physical act; thus the threat is present. Spousal abuse is defined as “ any intentional act or a series of acts that cause injury to a spouse” (Wallace, 1999 as cited in Sigal & Nally, 2004, p. 33). Spousal abuse is widespread and perpetuating. It occurs between couples regardless of their status, religion, age, and ethnicity. Spousal abuse is only one kind of violence in the homes. The other types of domestic violence include marital rape, child abuse, incest, elder abuse, and homicide (Cho, 2007). Both men and women can be perpetrators of domestic violence although reported cases have shown that most often, women are the victims. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCAD), in the course of her life, “ one in every four women will experience

domestic violence” (NCAD, n. d., para 2). Spousal abuse can have devastating and long-term effects, even for those who are able to get out of the situation. For those who cannot, the cycle of abuse can continue with their children, and the women may even die from the abusive acts of the perpetrators.\n

## **Male victims of the abuse**

\nAccording to NCAD (n. d), the majority (85%) of the abused in cases of domestic violence are women. This illustrates that women can also become perpetrators. Cook (2009) showed evidence on this in his work *Abused Men*. The important points he mentioned in his book are (a) there are also male victims of spousal abuse, (b) both spouses can engage in a mutual abusive relationship, and (c) most male victims do not report spousal abuse.

Evidence for the first point (item a) were derived from police reports and hospital records. The numbers showed a huge difference between the cases reported by men and women. For example, in the period 2000-2005 the average number of cases yearly was “ 511, 000 women” victimized by their intimate partner in contrast to the “ 105, 000 men” victims of their partners (p. 3). About those arrested for domestic violence, females arrested comprise only 20 percent of the total arrest. These figures prove that although there are fewer studies about abused men, cases of men as victims of spousal abuse do exist. Cook’s research also showed interviews with women in shelters who relayed that prior to leaving their spouses, they have also been manifesting violent behaviors. Thus, both partners mutually inflict physical harm to each other. The third point, of male victims not reporting their experiences, has a lot to do with their self-image and expected gender

role. Males are stereotyped as the physically stronger partner, thus they would be embarrassed to report that their spouse abused them.\n

### **Effects of spousal abuse on female victims**

\nStudies about spousal abuse and domestic violence are mostly about the women victims. The preceding paragraph was intended to show that there are male victims too. However, there has been a long history of women being the victims. The reason, in part, is the women’s role in society and how their partners view them.\nWomen who experience abuse and even those who are able to get out of an abusive relationship are scarred for life. They experience trauma, and their recovery is a long process. Their emotional and psychological conditions have been deeply affected that healing takes a long time. They experience low self-esteem, undergo depression, manifest post traumatic stress disorder, and would even have suicidal tendencies (Cho, 2007). They may feel betrayed because the person that is hurting them is someone they trust, someone who has even professed to love and care for them. Even just a single instance of physical harm carried out by one’s spouse has a big effect on the relationship. The woman’s perception about her partner changes because she witnesses the evil side of the person she values. The realization that her partner is capable of hurting her, even killing her is devastating to the women. This results in the disappearance of the sense of security that she gets from her marriage. The low self-esteem results from a periodic physical harm, even threats of physical harm. Verbal abuse, when constantly carried out, convinces the woman that the words of her spouse are true. She is demeaned, and she begins to feel worthless. Her sense of self and her positive view of herself become eroded.\nPhysically, a

woman who is abused can die at the hands of her spouse. Since the attacks can be triggered by anything, the woman's body undergoes torture at various times. In many cases, broken body parts get broken even before these are fully healed. The pain and suffering that women experience within their abode varies in intensity, but the effect is similar. They are violated, used, harassed, and treated as objects.

The effects of spousal abuse extend beyond the partners. When there are children in the family, the young ones also undergo a traumatic experience. They do not have a stable and secure environment and would experience fear and hatred. Children who have witnessed their parents in an abusive relationship tend to experience domestic violence also in their adulthood. Roberts et al. (2010) find “ a strong association between witnessing intimate partner violence and adulthood perpetration” (p. 809). This happens because children who grow up in such situation would have a distorted perception of what is acceptable and what are not. The abuses became normal in the eyes of the child and these become acceptable forms of behavior. The children's health and other aspects may also suffer since the primary caregiver has to deal with the physical and emotional effects of abuse. Children may lack parental involvement in their education and health.

At the macro-level, spousal abuse negatively affects the economy. According to NCAD (n, d.), the nation loses billions of money to address issues related to intimate partner violence. The funds cover medical costs of victims. The state also spends money in the arrests and imprisonment of perpetrators. On the part of the victims, their situation results in loss of days of paid work that also translates into overall productivity.

## **Reasons for the perpetuation of spousal abuse**

\nSigal and Nally (2004) identify differences of how men and women perceive their roles in society as a contributing factor to spousal abuse. These differences are influenced by culture, particularly the culture of honor. They cited different societies where the patriarchal culture is still dominant. In these societies, spousal abuse is regarded as a way to control the woman, thus it is tolerated. In the US, communities with a dominant immigrant population would illustrate the different cultural perceptions that contribute to the continuation of spousal abuse. Immigrants who come from countries that do not have or do not favor divorce would tend to stay in a relationship because they have grown up with the perspective that women should be submissive and stick to their husbands, no matter what. Family members and relatives would advise the woman to understand her husband, forgive him, and give the husband another opportunity, because, for them, a broken family is a disgrace.\nAnother reason for not leaving is a woman's dependence on her husband in the economic aspect. This economic reason becomes more understandable when there are children involved. When a woman is the primary caregiver, this may mean that she has no income on her own as she had to attend to the family's needs and thus could not go to work. Economic dependence most often results in accepting everything from her husband (abuses included) for the sake of her children's food and shelter.\n

## **Conclusions**

\nSpousal abuse is prevalent in modern societies. The culture of honor and patriarchal values contribute to the continuation of this practice. Abuses

involve not just physical harm, but also the threat of physical harm. Spousal harm is the act or harming or intending to you're your spouse. Since a person enters a marriage with the hope of having that " happy ever after," the experience of spousal abuse becomes a devastating wake-up call to the realities of an abusive relationship. Both men and women can become perpetrators and victims. Perceptions of gender roles contribute to the lesser number of complaints from men than women. However, the difference between the number of male and female cases is huge. In the US, 85 percent of reported cases involve women victims. The effects of the spousal abuse are long-term and traumatic. Women lose their self-esteem, become depressed, and become bruised physically and emotionally. Their children also suffer. The economic effects of this issue are in billions of dollars that are spent for medical bills, arrests, and rehabilitation. Spousal abuse can continue its cycle when there is no intervention. In societies, like the US, there are legal mechanisms that women victims can avail of to be able to escape from spousal abuse. The police, shelters, and health departments are prepared to address this problem. In addition to the state's interventions, there is also a need for a change in perspective, especially with the views about gender roles. When this happens, spousal abuse may still be curtailed.\n

## **References**

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