

# Why ethnic minority women stay in abusive relationships sociology essay



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The problem of abusive relationships has attracted national attention in England and Wales. Historically Domestic violence has a strongly entrenched patriarchal system, which gives men proprietary rights over women.

Traditional and cultural values as means of resolving conflict are critical in shaping and perpetuating violence of men toward women. A woman's social status is believed to be derived by her relative position to a man that is as a daughter, wife, girlfriend or mother of his children. One solution to ending the abuse and leading violence free lives would be to leave the relationship. While this is a possible solution it should be noted that in order for women to leave it requires enormous restructuring of material, physical and social relations strategies. What makes the ethnic minority women stay in abusive relationships?

A qualitative feminist research methodology was used with a convenience sample of 8 women who agreed to participate in the study. In depth interviews were conducted with the participants to explore the perceptions and experiences of ethnic minority women in abusive relationships. A number of themes that emerged from the study suggested clearly women's perceptions and experiences to remain in their abusive relationships. These themes relate to commitment, staying because of children, cultural beliefs, economic dependence and lack of social support.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Domestic violence is a social phenomenon that is universal and perverts society at all levels, Hague (1998). Domestic violence is one of the most

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common crimes and is present throughout society, usually hidden but there none-the-less. Violence towards women by intimate partners is a social problem of enormous proportion. The impact of domestic violence is broad and substantial with serious consequences not only for the women who are victimised but also for their children and society at large.

According to the United Nations Domestic Violence is an act of gender based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts of cohesion, arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. The United Kingdom government adopted a gender neutral definition, any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partner or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Activists working in the area of domestic violence reiterated that, if domestic violence is so common and the abuse that bad, why do these women stay with the perpetrator. The answer is perplexing and thought provoking and without being judgemental, can be painfully obvious. Professionals, including social workers who work directly with victims of domestic violence often find themselves scratching their heads at the decisions women make when they are victims of domestic violence and why they remain in those abusive relationships.

The study aims to explore why ethnic minority women in England and Wales remain in abusive marital relationships despite the risks of being hurt, both physically and psychologically during the abusive episodes as well as the

coping mechanism they employ to cope with the violence. This study emerged from a great interest that developed from an inspirational work with victims of Domestic Violence in a women's Refuge during my Second Year Placement in 2011. I had the opportunity to deliver a domestic violence awareness programme to the women in the refuge. The victims were mainly from the ethnic minority community. The women shared vital information regarding their experiences with the abuser. It is this indebtedness that has provoked an eagerness, to explore subject further.

Aims of the study:

To explore the lived experiences of ethnic minority women who remain in abusive relationships

To explore the reasons why they remain in abusive relationships

To explore their coping strategies in abusive marital relationships

To discuss the theoretical perspective as to why ethnic minority stay in abusive relationships

To identify the legislation regarding Domestic Violence in England and Wales

To identify and discuss the implication to Social Work Practice

To design a methodology

Objectives:

To determine the type of abuse that ethnic minority women in abusive marital relationship endure

To explore how women construct their stay and the coping strategies employed to survive.

To ascertain whether abused women in abusive marital relationships have access to support

Chapter 2 : P

The researcher will review the literature

Chapter 3:

This chapter focuses on the research design and methods that the researcher used in the study

Chapter 4:

This chapter will cover data collection analysis and interpretation

Chapter 5:

This chapter will cover discussion of the results and findings , the wider question of the research and the conclusion. It will further make recommendations for future studies

Literature Review

Historical overview of domestic violence

History reflects the enormous magnitude of the problem of violence against women. For centuries patriarchal norms dominated and women were considered to be the property of their husbands. Some postulate that woman abuse has its roots in Roman law, which permitted a husband to kill his wife if she committed a variety of offences (Stacey, Hazelwood & Shupe, 1994). English Common law gave husbands the right to beat their wives with any 'reasonable instrument'. These laws were maintained throughout Europe and America until the late 1800's when a few states rescinded this 'right'. Domestic assaults continued and were termed 'domestic disputes'. They were considered to be nuisance behaviour, not criminal. As a result they were not seriously in the criminal justice system until the past ten years when a variety of statutes were developed which specifically protect people from domestic abuse.

### Domestic violence and Patriarchy

Dobash & Dobash (2002) states that there are several legal and political ideologies supporting the idea that husbands have authority over their wives. The legal right of a man to use physical force against his wife is no longer explicitly recognised in England and Wales, however the legacy of the patriarchy continues to generate the conditions and relationships that lead to a husband's use of force against his wife (Dobash & Dobash 2002).

Patriarchal dominance is still supported by moral order which reinforce the marital hierarchy, making it difficult for women to struggle against the dominance. As a result women's struggles are therefore considered as wrong, immoral and a validation of the respect and loyalty a wife is support to give to her husband. The fact that Domestic violence is seen as a form of <https://assignbuster.com/why-ethnic-minority-women-stay-in-abusive-relationships-sociology-essay/>

patriarchal dominance is irrefutable in light of historical evidence. The historical, legal and religious writings all contribute to the understanding of the status of women regarding domestic violence. This status encompasses the explanation why women remain in abusive relationships.

### Culture , religion and Patriarchy

Domestic violence take on different forms within the BME communities (Richards 2004). Various tactics are employed by their partners to destroy self-esteem and prevent complaining or escape as echoed by Dasgupta (2000). Choudry(1996) noted that culturally specific abuse, includes threats to ruin a woman's reputation among relatives, accusing women of instigating the abuse. Although domestic abuse tends to focus on intimate partner violence, However as Minhas 2002, Gill 2002 andGangoli 2004) observed that other members of the abuser's family are cited as being involved in the violence. Violence connected to dowry can often underpin the extended family's involvement in the abuse (Dasgupta and Warriar, 1996). Cultural, social and religious norms may deter women from seeking help or exposing the problem through a prosecution, as they may fear censure from within their families or communities, or fail to receive the necessary validation to name their experience as victimisation (Hart 1996, Viano 1996, Erez 2000, Erez 2002, Raj & Silverman 2002, Nicholson et al 2003).

In BME communities, women face dishonour and rejection if they leave their partners, even if they do so as a result of domestic violence (Choudry 1996). A study in the Western Isles of Scotland (MacNeil et al 2004) demonstrates how some tight-knit communities can have strong cultural and religious

norms which stress family privacy and non-interference, and attach considerable social shame to domestic violence, perceiving it to arise through victims 'failing' in exercising family responsibilities. These factors can affect women's exposure to violence, and their ability to acknowledge its occurrence and seek or obtain community support.

Domestic violence has been legitimised in law, religion, and in cultural ideologies of male dominance and women's inferiority (Gill 2004). In contrast, Hearn (1998) argues that although there have been some legal changes, cultural discourses of masculinity continue to inform men's justification for violence. In male-dominant cultures, the notion that women are responsible for upholding family honour remains a major force influencing law, religion and cultural values and shaping the nature of and responses to domestic violence (MacNeil 2004) For this reason it can be argued that in such cultures it may be difficult for women to leave or seek help to escape domestic violence because to do so would bring shame on the whole family and could result in community ostracisation.