

A violation of womens' human rights



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Violence against women commonly known as gender-based violence refers to violent acts committed against women with the victims gender as a primary motive. Violence against women is very common especially in developing third world countries and even in countries with over suppressed societies for example in many regions of the Middle East. Even in developed and modern nations still today gender- based violence is not totally eliminated and still exists though comparatively the rate is lower than the underdeveloped and/ or developing countries.

It is like a plague that has engulfed and destroyed many homes and families and a situation that needs to be addressed with complete focus as a healthy society produces healthy generations which in turn results in healthy and prosperous nations. For years the problem has never been addressed seriously and so far has ruined families and disturbed the society at large majorly due to lack of awareness among the individuals.

The ever increasing day to day mechanical lives and expensive living cost is causing more stress and depression in individuals, the matter instead of being curtailed by various relevant law enforcing agencies, NGO's and concerned state organizations the occurrences of violence incidents against women is on high increase. There is a dire need to find ways to stop this as crises intervention cannot only address and simplify the situation rather more serious steps are needed to curtail the devastating effects that it has on children and families.

Every year millions of women are affected world over and majority of cases do not come on record nor handed lawfully and this ignorance results in

gradual increase in such unacceptable acts against women. We will all agree here that such violence against women leads to physical and psychological harm both, and at times the psychological scars are impossible to treat thus damaging the personality of the subject woman for life time.

If a woman suffers such physical and emotional harm the whole society suffers and the final impact is the suffering of the entire society. Thus this raises serious health concerns and requires immediate action and prevention from violence from those who are the policy makers and various agencies responsible for stopping this violence.

The affected suffers from loss of trust, loss of dignity and a deeply compromised self – esteem that needs to be addressed along with factors like housing, economic support, social welfare and legal issues being an integral part of the health promotion strategy. The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner, with women beaten, forced into sex or otherwise abused. In a study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) it was found that between 15% and 70% of women experience physical and/ or sexual violence by a partner.

According to a United Nations report at least one out of every three women around the world has been abused some way or the other in her lifetime and that too by someone known to her. According to a WHO report the impact of this gender- based violence on the society is deep and directly burdens the health care services as women suffer serious physical injuries, death, sexually transmitted diseases, miscarriages, acute depression and many

other psychological health issues resulting in weak and low physical health. And the states have to bear heavy economical costs in billions per year.

A 2003 report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the costs of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceed US\$5.8 billion per year: US\$4.1 billion are for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly US\$1.8 billion. We can have an idea of existence of this gender-based violence in various parts of the world from the figures collected by the WHO while carrying out a study in 11 countries and according to this study;

The percentage of women who had been subjected to sexual violence by an intimate partner ranged from 6 per cent in Japan to 59 per cent in Ethiopia. Several global surveys suggest that half of all women who die from homicide are killed by their current or former husbands or partners. In Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States, 40 to 70 per cent of female murder victims were killed by their partners, according to the World Health Organization.

In Colombia, every sixth day one woman is reportedly killed by her partner or former partner. Psychological or emotional violence by intimate partners is also widespread. Up to 70 per cent of women experience violence in their lifetime, according to country data available. Women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, car accidents, war and malaria, according to World Bank data.

Female genital mutilation (FGM), defined by WHO as the partial or total removal of the external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs

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WHO estimates that between 100 to 140 million girls and women have undergone some type of FGM. Most of those affected live in 28 countries in Africa, although there are some in the Middle East and it also happens among immigrant communities in some countries in Western Europe.

Rape and dowry related violations are also very common resulting in harassment of brides and also dowry related deaths, particularly in certain parts of India and other southern Asian countries. This violence is exercised not only by the husband but also by the husbands' close relatives (mother, brothers, and sisters).

Acid throwing in some Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, the disfiguring of women by throwing acid or burning them are forms of violence rooted in gender inequality, but the immediate reason for this is often disputes concerning marriage and dowry. While this is not one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women, its consequences are dire for those women subjected to it.

" Honor" killings this is the murder of a woman, usually by a brother, father, or other male family member, because she has allegedly brought shame to her family. This phenomenon is rooted in the notion of male honor and female chastity that prevails in many countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region. It means a man's honor is linked to the perceived sexual purity of the women in his family. If a woman engages in sex outside marriage or even if she is raped, she is thought to disgrace the family honor. In some societies, the only way to cleanse the family honor is by killing the woman/girl.

This kind of violence against women and girls is exercised also in western European countries within immigrant families. It is generally referred to as "honor" killings-a rather misleading term as the connection with honor is difficult to understand in most cultures. The term "murder in the name of honor" has been suggested.

There was this case of honor killing of 3 daughters and their mother who was murdered in Canada and bodies dumped under a bridge by their own father with the help of his second wife who were immigrants there and belonged to an Asian country.

In Saudi Arabia where I used to visit frequently almost every year as my spouse was working in Jeddah I witnessed many cases where in men when going for work locked their wives from outside till the time they were back home in the evenings the reason being lack of trust on their spouse and during one such incidence the house caught fire due to short circuit and the wife, maid and an infant child were rescued by the neighbors through apartment windows as the door to the house was locked from outside by the husband who had left for work. I left the site wondering how much black smoke these three must have inhaled especially the infant child and what effect it would have had on their lungs?

With the passage of time and increasing awareness especially in girls / women due increasing literacy rates among women such violation is now getting well recognized as a public health problem and human rights violation of worldwide.

The states and working organizations for prevention and betterment of societies are now realizing how this relates directly to the public health sector.

More and more need have arise to take appropriate measures and proper trained health workers are being placed close to the victims of such violation who are also well acquainted with the community they work for and its inhabitants.

The local health services and communities need to play their role and create awareness among the public to prevent such incidents.

The Central and Federal government bodies need not only to make strict laws for the prevention of gender-based violence but ensure effective implementation as well.

The most effective way to reduce tolerance towards violence against women is to openly debate the subject as still there is limited knowledge regarding most workable interventions for the prevention of gender- based violations.

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