

Impact of cultural background on domestic violence



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Domestic violence is an issue which occurs across all cultures, religions, ages, genders and in all countries. It affects many individuals and occurs in many various forms including physical, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse. Domestic violence has a range of definitions and there is no official globally agreed upon official definition to explain it, however in terms of the UK a commonly accepted definition of domestic violence provided by The Association of Chief Police Officers' (ACPO) and The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) defines domestic violence as “ Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (Psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality (family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws, or step-family)” (ACPO, 2008a: 7).

This research project will investigate and explore the different aspects of a victim's cultural background which may offer knowledge and insight as to why women in a domestically abusive relationship choose to not leave or seek any help or advice. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative approach was carried out, using open ended interviews with former victims of domestic abuse as a method to gather and analyse data. By conducting open ended interviews, direct access was gained into the experiences and perspectives of the individuals whom were interviewed. It provided further use by assisting in understanding the topic and collectively gathering an in-depth exploration and depiction (Silverman, 2010). This particular topic is explored and researched since it has been a much neglected area of

research within academic literature for a long time and has not been explored in much depth in relation to a cultural view and perspective. Literature on the cultural context of domestic violence has been limited until recently (Kulwicki, 2002). Furthermore, this area is quite under researched and is hence a topic which needs broadening and developing upon in several ways and thus it may offer insight into the issues needed to be addressed and the implications this has for policy makers and practitioners. Rather than exploring other commonly researched aspects relating to domestic abuse, instead a different focus is researched into the exploration of the obstacles that prevent victims' inaction and how cultural pressures affect this process. Factors such as religious beliefs, cultural traditions and attitudes, social networks, and help-seeking behaviours all affect how a victim will take action against domestic abuse (Shiu-Thornton, Senturia, & Sullivan, 2005). In particular, the religious backgrounds in South Asian culture have been quite neglected and under researched, often overlooking Sikh and Hindu communities. The research relating to religious backgrounds of victims of domestic abuse is quite limited, therefore more insight will be provided to address this issue and to shed some light on this focus.

Although there has been much previous research carried out on domestic violence in the past, the work that has been carried out based on a cultural perspective is quite limited. In relation to research on domestic violence and South Asian culture, there has not been a lot of exploration or depth in this area, and the research that has been done in regards to this specific topic is mainly based on US context and on immigrant women of South Asian background. Therefore this is not as relevant to the UK and British Asian

women, thus this research study will address this topic and expand upon the current literature and research. Furthermore, there are also no studies of domestic violence in UK South Asian communities that provide statistics of the occurrence of domestic violence within this community, which is a major limitation that needs to be addressed. Statistics and data on this area would be highly beneficial and would show what problems or issues need to be addressed and what the main concerns are so that policy makers and practitioners can do their best to solve any current issues. Also, there have been no current literature or studies that have been conducted in this topic to keep it updated in general. Most of the work that has been done is from a few years back and the statistics provided from studies in America on domestic violence in South Asian culture is from a decade ago or more which shows that statistics and data on this type of abuse in South Asian communities needs to be updated and kept current to contemporary times. Thus, this research study will provide a more contemporary exploration and analysis of domestic abuse in South Asian communities, which will be based on UK context.

The research that has been carried out in this study is important as it will contribute to its field of research and expand and develop upon a more specific area of domestic abuse. It will better and improve upon the topic of domestic abuse in more depth relating to a cultural perspective, including religious aspects and perspectives as well. This research is thus important to the topic of domestic abuse since it engages in a more focused and specific view of the topic of domestic abuse. This research will show the perspectives of South Asian culture and the religions within this culture on the status and

role of women and its views on domestic abuse. Furthermore, it will show how this culture may present obstacles to those in domestically abuse relationships to seek help or leave their violent situation.

The research focus that has been conducted is interesting as it studies and delves into the cultural aspects of victims of domestic abuse and how this may prevent them from leaving or hesitating to seek help; hence this study will fill in the gaps of academic literature and research by exploring this specific approach and will offer more understanding and knowledge to its field of research. In this research study, religion in South Asian culture is also explored to see if it has any effect on women who are in domestically abusive relationships or to see if it plays a contributory role for women to take action in domestically abuse relationships. This research study includes qualitative data in the form of interviews which were mostly conducted at South Asian refuges for victims of domestic abuse, and by which access was successfully granted. These interviews were based on the experiences of three women of South Asian cultural background who were former victims of domestic abuse. The three women who were interviewed were of Sikh and Hindu religious backgrounds; two of the women were Sikh, whilst the other was Hindu. All three women voluntary consented to be a part of this study and thus provided details and a background of their individual experiences of their former situations and the barriers they faced when deciding to take action. They also provided an account of their cultural traditions and attitudes which may have played a contributing role in their situations and their experiences.

This research study will include and provide a literature review of the topic of domestic abuse, focusing on South Asian cultural views and perspectives of the status of women and its perception of domestic violence. This will also encompass religious stances of domestic violence as well, focusing on both Sikh and Hindu religion. Next, it will provide information on the methodology that was carried out and adopted in this research study. This section will also include and discuss the advantages, weaknesses and limitations of the approach used and the research method that was implemented. Then, it will provide a summary and detail of the findings and analysis of the data, using thematic analysis to establish the common themes which have arisen in the interviews. Finally, there will be a conclusion to finish with, which will provide an overall summary of the findings of the research study. It will also discuss the implications of the findings and how this relates to policy makers and practitioners.