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A case study of emotional abuse in domestic front

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Abstract

Emotional abuse is any nonphysical behavior or attitude that controls, intimidates, subjugates, demeans, punishes or isolates another person's by using degradation, humiliation or fear. According to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, emotional abuse includes insult in front of others, name calling, accusation of character or conduct etc. The present study deals with the case of emotional abuse on a total group of 200 working women of Sambalpur town. It takes different profession, educational and income categories to study the impact of these factors on psychological torture inflicted on them. The primary data for this purpose is collected by the questionnaire method. It is found that emotional abuse is inversely related to the level of education and income of women. Further, the abuse is more pronounced by the husband under the joint family than the nuclear family system.

Keywords: emotional harassment, women, domestic profession, education, income

1. Introduction

During the Vedic period women in India were enjoying equal status with their counter parts. Women were undergoing the Upanayana Sanskar. They were learning vedas and different scriptures. Vedic literature unveils women were expert in using arms and horse riding. Sawayambara Bibaha or marriage by their own choice exhibits girls were getting married after they were fully matured and there was no restriction upon them in the process of mate selections. They were active in politics also. The great epics like the Mohabharata and the Ramayana display a higher status of women. The status of women started deteriorating during smriti era and was in its worst condition at the medieval period.

Gradually with the support of many social reformers the status of women refashioned in the post independent era. All the parameters related to the empowerment of women are exhibiting an increasing order. Women literacy rate, women employment have considerably escalated: But at the sametime crime against women have also increased.

Throughout written history, violence has been considered a part of the girls and women's live experience yet there was not a single agreed definition of violence against women. Till mid-seventies a number of concepts were used for violence against women according to different culture and class. After mid-seventies number of pro-women social activists, authors and researchers have started focusing on gender violence at local, national and international level which led the United Nation to adopt CEDAN in 1979 [1] The global summit of 900 women organizations was decided that gender violence is the fundamental violence of human rights.

In 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights; gender violence was defined as violence which jeopardise fundamental, individual freedom and women's integrity. It has defined domestic violence which includes physical, sexual, and psychological violence. All types of violence against women occurring in the family, community and society were also included in this declaration [2].

Webster's dictionary describes "Harassment is a trouble caused by repeated attacks, incursions etc to disturb personality torment as with trouble's cares etc or bother continually and violence – rough or injuries, physical injuries, force action or treatment, unwanted exertion of treatment against laws or rights, rough or immoderate vehemence of feelings or language."

The protection of women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, defines domestic violence as—"harms or injuries or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal, emotional abuse and economic abuse." [3]

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According to this law emotional abuse includes insulting the women, name-calling, accusing the character or conduct of the women insulting for not having a male child, preventing the women for a child in her custody from attending, preventing a women from taking of a job, forcing to leave the job, preventing the women for meeting any person in the normal course of event, forcing the girl to marry somebody or preventing a girl from marrying a person of her choice and any other form of emotional abuse.

There are many forms of emotional abuse. One may feel emotionally hurt when scolded in a loud voice in front of others, by using filthy languages, physical abuse or harassment will also produce emotional setback. So emotional harassment is many a time a secondary manifestation of other abuse or by primarily when one's freedom, fame and self respect are hurt.

It is a very subtle topic to be studied. No measures can be used to know about the degree of emotional abuse as people who are physically abused get sympathy easily as damages or scars are visible to others but the scars created by emotional abuse is not visible to the surface. Women also do not feel comfortable to discuss about their personal issues.

Methodology

Data Collection, Scoring and Statistical Analysis

This study was based on primary data collected using questionnaire consisting of 200 women of different professions selected by Purposive Random Sampling from Sambalpur Town, Odisha, India. The level of emotional harassment was collected either by asking direct or indirect questions. Different parameters like professions, education and income have been taken into consideration. Statistical analysis like percentage of is applied to reach a conclusion.

Representation questionnaire

Findings – Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Profession and Harassment

Profession	Total No of women	No of victim	Percentage
College Teachers	50	06	12%
School Teachers	70	20	28%
Clerks	30	11	36%
Sweepreses	50	28	56%

The study shows that women for all professions are emotionally harassed by their husbands but women in better professions are less harassed than women in less proficient professions.

Table 2: Education and Harassment

Education	Total No of women	No of victim	Percentage
Post Graduation and above	60	06	10%
Graduate	60	18	30%
Above matriculation but less than Graduate	30	13	43%
Less than matriculation	50	28	56%

In case of emotional harassment also educational level plays an important role. The report shows the more the educational qualification the less the emotional harassment by the husband.

Table 3: Income and Harassment

Income	Total No of women	No of victim	Percentage
Less than 5000	50	28	56%
5000-10000	30	11	36%
10000-15000	70	20	20%
15000 and above	80	6	12%

Emotional harassment by husbands prevail in some extent in all income groups, however it is more present in lower income group, 36% of women of lower income group and 12% percent of women from higher income group are being emotionally harassed by their husbands.

Analysis and Discussion

The study exhibits husbands as the main cause for the emotional harassment of wives. The victims expressed that husbands are very critical about them. The husbands find fault with everything like housekeeping, cooking, dressing etc which is very depressing for a lady. Secondly the husbands are very critical regarding mixing of wives with other persons. (friends or relatives) whom they do not like.

In some cases the husbands show their dominating and conservative attitude by controlling the dressing up of wives. This is supported by the findings of Mahapatra, S (2006) ^[4] and Visaria L (2005) ^[5]

The study shows women from better profession silently tolerate and cried when the husbands psychologically harassed them. But women from lower income group shows wives quietly accept the subordination of women and the dominance of husband which is not unique to India but is seen in many nations.

Women from all profession share the emotional harassment torture with their intimate friends. They do not prefer to inform other family members and outsiders. The study done by Cohen S *et al.* (1985), ^[6] Lepore *et al.* (1991) ^[7], Visaria L (2005) ^[8] supported the finding. In their studies they pointed out even education do not empower women to enter the public area for supports. Better education women or those belonging to better off families who experience violence are least likely to share their experience or seek support from others. This to be understood in the context of culture of violence and try not to disclose what happens in home environment.

Researchers have started giving more importance to emotional or psychological abuse of women; a major reason for this focus is the realization that psychological abuse may be just as detrimental, or more detrimental, than physical abuse. In one study 72% of the battered women reported that emotional abuse have a more severe impact than physical abuse ^[9].

Quantifying emotional abuse is extremely difficult and very few studies have been conducted to establish prevalence rate of this type of violence. Qualitative studies that have been undertaken concluded that it is just as damaging to one's health to be continuously psychologically abuse as it is to be physically abused ^[10].

Sackett L A *et al.* (1999) ^[11] have studied the types of emotional abuses like criticizing, ridiculing and ignoring women in different way. Among these traits ridiculing is the most severe.

Female are emotionally harassed by tactics of isolation and property damage. The effect of it is as detrimental as the effect of physical abuse ^[12].

Conclusion

At the heart of an emotionally abusive husband is his need to ultimately be in control. In many cases, but not all, an emotionally abusive husband can be manipulative and heavy-handed in keeping his wife “under his thumb”. The abusive husband is “self-referenced”, which means he only sees and considers things from his point of view; he deliberately refuses to or is incapable of looking at things from another’s perspective. An emotionally abused wife looks to her husband’s acceptance of her as the measure of her worth. Her rights and responsibilities are not defined by her, but by her counterpart. He controls not only the body, but also the mind and the spirit, the very essence of womanhood. Here the abuse is not always as obvious as being hit or shoved, but can very well be underhanded or subtle. It can be withholding affection, or never saying a kind word. It can be a situation of keeping oneself busy without respecting the others’ emotions. Or can be a situation of finding fault with her all times. Nothing is more damaging to one’s confidence and self-esteem than being in a emotionally abusive relationship. Unlike physical abuse which rears its ugly head in dramatic outbursts, emotional abuse can be more insidious and elusive. It can take various forms of violence like control, humiliation, jealousy, intimidation, and denial. Thus emotional abuse is more harmful than physical abuse and the stress eventually shows its symptoms in the form of illness, emotional trauma, depression, anxiety and destroyed self-esteem.

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