

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN BHUTAN

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List of Acronyms

BBS	Bhutan Broadcasting Service
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against Women
DV	Domestic Violence
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
NCWC	National Commission for Women and Children
NDHS	Nepal Demographic Health Survey
NHS	National Health Survey
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NSB	National Statistics Bureau
NWAB	National Women Association of Bhutan
PHCB	Population and Housing Census of Bhutan
RENEW	Respect Educate Nurture Empower Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
WHO	World Health Organization

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Abstract

Discrimination against women persists around the globe hampering development and Bhutan is of no different. The universal discrimination against women and the unequal power relationship between men and women are the main driver towards violence against women (United Nations 2010). According to United Nations, domestic violence against women is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (World Health Organization, Violence against Women 2017). Therefore, domestic violence against women refers to vicious or violent within home, classically involving the behaviour that causes physical, emotional or sexual violence to the women in a relationship. Domestic violence against women is categorized into different types: physical violence; sexual violence; emotional violence; psychological violence; and economic violence.

Every shape of violence threatens all the female and limits their ability to make alternatives about their own lives.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Background

Violence against women (VAW) is a global concern. Domestic violence is considered as the most dominant form of violence against women (Sapkota, et al. 2016) where one-third of women older than the age of 15 are affected mostly (Strand and Storey 2019). According to Strand and Storey, Domestic violence can lead to short- and long-term consequences as it is a contributor to serious problems related to the mental and physical health of victims. Moreover, DV is endemic in communities and countries around the world, cutting across class, race, age, ethnicity, religious and national boundaries. Although prevalent around the globe, there is a variation of the rates of DV within the countries. For instance, the lowest rates of DV is found in East Asia (16.3%) and the highest in Central Sub-Saharan Africa (65.6%) according to Strand and Storey (Strand and Storey 2019). Furthermore, the prevalence of DV can also vary within the country that is in rural and in urban areas. It is thought that the rates of violence to be higher in rural areas than the urban areas based on population density.

Bhutan is a tiny Himalayan kingdom sandwiched in South-East Asia by two giant countries, China in the north and India in the south, east and west. It is primarily an agrarian county with 69.1% of its total population living in rural areas (Ministry of Health 2012). Violence against women in Bhutan also has far-reaching consequences. The National Health Survey (NHS) in 2012 showed that there were 6.1% of married women aged 15-75 years who experienced intimate partner physical violence. 6.5% of women in the rural area are more likely to experience DV as compared to the urban areas (4.7%) (National Health Survey (NHS) 2012). The number of domestic violence cases is on the rise as shown in the records of RENEW (RENEW, Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women 2019). The number of physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse is subjected to rise to 385 from 243 cases in 2009. According to the records, 3.1% of women among those experiencing sexual violence are between the ages 15-19 years and 80% were abused more than once (Kuensel 2017). Domestic violence has existed but was hidden because the society was not much informed about the social, political and economic rights of women purely in the modern context. Since traditional belief was resolving such matter within the families and the communities, domestic violence against women did not feature as a serious social problem, like what is happening today.

Woman feared to reveal because of the inevitable circumstances faced by them like being economically dependent, love for the child, and fear of losing one's dignity and lack of love from the closed ones.

The prevalence of DV was higher among women whose partner drank daily (National Health Survey (NHS) 2012). The adverse effects of wife assault and the battery can be very long-lasting. Women who have been abused by a spouse or intimate partner accomplice often suffer from depression, anxiousness attacks, low self-esteem, lack of trust in others, feeling of abandonment, anger, sensitivity to rejection, chronic health problems, drowsing problems, incapacity to work, bad relationships and substance abuse (RENEW, Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women 2019). Conducting research on violence against women has often been difficult as the women who had been the victims were reluctant to disclose their matter. Understanding the context of DV and social constructs, which support the perpetuation of DV, is crucial to dispose of domestic violence. The empirical data on the prevalence of DV and its determinants in Bhutan is very limited. Therefore, it needs urgent attention. The significance has to be placed on violence against women in rural areas mostly because they are the vulnerable lot with terrible educational and economic background (Sarkar 2010).

1.2. Research Aims

The aim of this research project is to critically analyse and identify the successful measures adopted by organizations around the world. The various sub-aims that will help in achieving the main goal are to:

- Explain what DV mean, examine the forms of domestic violence, the prevalence of DV in global and the Bhutanese context.
- Determine factors affecting domestic violence reported against women.
- Identify possible solutions to the issue of domestic violence against women and suggest/recommend solutions.

1.3. Research Approach

The methodology of this research is based on a qualitative approach aiming to provide a description of the factors affecting DV in the rural communities and recommend possible ways to curb the issue/problem. The research is literature based and the information available from published studies and papers will also be used. I reviewed the existing research, studies and statistics obtained from different organizations/government agencies such as NCWC (National Commission for Women and Children), NGOs (Non-Government Organizations) like RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women) and NWAB (National Women Association of Bhutan). The peer-reviewed academic journal articles based on DV in rural areas in different countries.

However, the major challenge is the lack of data on DV which poses challenges to evidence-based research (UN n.d.).

1.4. Research Structure

The structure of this project is structured into 5 chapters including Introduction. The following are the remaining chapters which comprises of:

Chapter 2: The meaning of Domestic violence and its forms. The prevalence of Domestic Violence globally and in Bhutanese context will also be discussed, backed up by evidence from the reports from different organizations in Bhutan, different countries' case studies and reports.

Chapter 3: The causes or the factors affecting the prevalence of DV will be investigated, with the help of case studies and researches done previously by other countries.

Chapter 4: Discussion of the impacts of domestic violence in the lives of women and their children by reviewing and analyzing previous researches.

Chapter 5: The research will be summarized by identifying the key findings and successful strategies adopted by different countries to curb the problem. The limitations of the research will also be highlighted followed by recommendations for the betterment of the future.

Chapter 2: Meaning and forms of Domestic Violence

2.1. Introduction

Domestic violence against women is a serious social subject not only in Bhutan but also around the globe. It leads to serious consequences in the lives of the victims, their children and relatives. Many organizations have been set up to solve this problematic of violence against women. To address the issue, it becomes vital to first understand the meaning and forms of DV. Therefore, this chapter aims at laying out the meaning of DV and its forms. The literature review in global and the Bhutanese context is also included in this chapter.

2.2. Meaning of Domestic Violence

A design of offensive behaviour in any relationship that is used by accomplice to attain or hold power and have switch over the different is said to be a violent act in the direction of one's partner. The UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women defines VAW as “any act of gender-based violence (GBV) that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (NCWC 2012).

According to United Nations, domestic violence against women is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (World Health Organization, Violence against Women 2017).

Therefore, domestic violence against women is described as an act of violence that causes physical, sexual or psychological damage to women (Bervian, et al. 2019).

2.3. Forms of domestic violence

A general categorization of domestic violence are as follows (Odion and Eboigbe 2018):

1. **Physical abuse:** It is the most shared form of domestic violence. There is an involvement of power against the victim, usually causing physical injury to the victim. Such an act includes a kick, slap, blow, stabbing, choking, forced sexual abuse, molestation, etc.
2. **Sexual violence:** This form of violence includes forcing into sex against someone's will (rape), defilement, forcing into prostitution, sexual harassment or sexual abuse; it also includes behaviors that make one to limit generative rights such as forcing abortion and not using contraception.
3. **Psychological abuse:** This form of violence includes threats of harm, isolation, and intimidation; instilling fear through threatening behavior; damaging properties; control over the victims' activities and who they can talk to and not; and threatening to harm the victims in their sleep.
4. **Emotional violence:** This form of violence includes the undermining of the victim's value. For example, criticizing, harassing, insulting, complaining constantly about the person's conduct, forced imprisonment, etc.
5. **Economic violence:** This form of violence consists of the involvement of making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent. For example, retaining total control over the financial resources including the income or resources earned by the victim as well; not allowing access to finance, forbidding attendance at any of the functions, asking for bank account and justifications of spending money.

2.4. Literature Review

2.4.1. Global Context

With the adoption of the first worldwide treaty, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations in the direction of Women (CEDAW), international focus was once granted to women's human rights aka Women's Convention in 1973 (CEDAW n.d.). A regulatory framework has been provided by the CEDAW to address issues concerning to women's human rights and make sure equality between men and women. The governments are held accountable for structural and systematic discrimination in opposition to ladies and the States are imposed with responsibilities to dispose of all varieties of discrimination towards women in both spheres of life (public and private). In 1993, the United Nations adopted the first international definition of violence against women.

The pervasive discrimination against women and the unequal power relationship between men and women are the primary driver towards VAW according to the study. The roles of men and women in the household are described by the common patriarchal norms and it is a frequent belief or mentality that a women/wife should obey men/husband. Women are controlled by men for their pleasure. Women feel disempowered and hopeless due to discrimination. The study discovered that these ladies who had skilled or are experiencing, are at higher chance of negative physical, reproductive and intellectual health. It not only affects the women but also their children who when witnesses domestic violence tend to be affected emotionally and mentally and turns out to be aggressive, fearful and have delinquent behavior. WHO (World Health Organization) conducted the Multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women by intimate partners (WHO 2012). It further confirms that VAW demands public health response and it is widespread. Across 10 countries, data has been collected on IPV from more than 24,000 women from diverse cultural, geographical and urban/rural Women's health was affected by violence, such as injury caused by physical violence and the general health of women was found significantly poorer compared to those not subjected to violence.

2.4.2. The Bhutanese Context

The VAW is truly a global phenomenon taking place in all sections of the society in different forms. In Bhutan, the gender-based problem is not a big issue like some of our neighboring countries. Women can participate in every aspect of development and can enjoy a high degree of freedom and rights. But the existence of domestic violence against women in Bhutan cannot be denied. The existing social structures of the centuries gives rise to VAW. Every sub- culture in the world virtually contains forms of VAW that stay invisible as they are normal/acceptable (Priyadarshini 2014). Most women in Bhutan along with their families are less likely to report rape, domestic abuse or any other violence in a "culture of silence." As a culture of silence, most women in Bhutan think whatever happens to them are due to their fate. Many thinks that domestic violence against woman is a definition of manhood and masculinity. It is believed in our society that men are superior, and it is natural for them to beat their wife and bring them to act to their will. However, it is a crime.

NCWC undertook the first population-based survey on VAW covering population in the rural and urban locations bearing in mind the increasing need to have baseline information and mounting concern of VAW. The study highlights the incidence of exceptional types of violence against women aged 15-49 with the assessment of situations and characteristics associated with violence (NCWC 2012). According to the study, about 3 in 10 women in the year range of 15-49 has experienced at least one form of a specific type of IPV in their lifetime. Emotional and physical violence are the main forms of IPV. Further, about 6 in 10 ever-partnered women aged 15-40 are subjected to financial abuse by their intimate partner. It also indicates that rural women are more probably to ride violence than urban women. Moreover, in accordance to the Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey 2010, an alarming rate of 68% of the women in Bhutan accepted violence against them (BBS 2013).

With rapid urbanization in Bhutan, it has greatly weakened the relationship between the family members as most of them are office goers or do private business for their living. Moreover, the migration from rural regions to urban areas has created population pressures and ultimately increase in the number of school leavers. In this regard, most of the women without income or permanent employment are particularly vulnerable to all forms of exploitation and violence.

2.5. Summary

It is evident that DV against women is not only occurring in Bhutan but also is prevalent around the globe. Violence against women is harsh, regular and widely tolerated. There cannot be happiness and development if women remain depressed and exploited. Emotional and physical violence are the main forms of IPV. Further, approximately 6 in 10 ever-partnered women aged 15-40 are subjected to economic abuse by their intimate partner. It also suggests that rural women are greater probably to trip violence than urban women. Moreover, according to the Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey 2010, an alarming rate of 68% of the women in Bhutan accepted violence against them (BBS 2013).

Chapter 3 - Prevalence of Domestic Violence against women in Bhutan

Bhutan has total estimated households of 164,011, out of which 36% are in urban areas and 64% in rural areas (National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan 2017). About 66% of the total estimated population resides in rural areas. A 2007 survey found that 32.9% respondents have experienced IPV/DV in their lifetime, while a subsequent a couple of indicator survey achieved through NSB in 2010 discovered that 14.5% of women reported that at least one type of physical violence skilled from their intimate partner. However, each research agrees that age, extend in poverty, and rural living correlates to higher rates of violence, as the factors influencing women's vulnerability to DV. The prevalence rate of IPV/DV in rural areas (40.4%) used to be almost double of that of the rate in urban areas (25.2%) (NSB, Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women, Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey 2010, NSB, RGOB 2011).

In 2007, RENEW made its first strive on a study about precise to violence against women (RENEW, Violence Against Women 2007). However, the rural and urban areas of Thimphu were taken into consideration. A excessive rate of 77% of physical abuse and emotional violence at 54% have been stated whilst forced sex stood at 23%. According to RENEW, the most common form of domestic violence in Bhutan is physical abuse or battery (BBS 2013). A nationwide find out about carried out in 2010, Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey Report showed 68% of women between the age of 15-49 years accepted violence (NSB 2011). This is an indication that this age group was once at chance of violence.

Almost half (47.7%) of the total population of Bhutan are women as per the 2017 Population and Housing Census of Bhutan (PHCB). In 2005 PHCB, two thirds (65.6%) of women are illiterate. Now, according latest population survey of 2017, the literacy rate of women stands at 63.9%. the literacy rate is substantially higher in urban areas with 84.1% than in rural areas with 63.6% (PHCB 2018). Educated people are better acquainted with the rights of women and their position in the family than people who are illiterate. Studies exhibit that high educational attainment of men and women result in decreased violence against wives/women. One of the important factors of violence towards women is low educational attainment in men (Jahromi, et al. 2016).

3.1. Factors affecting the prevalence of DV

Domestic violence against women is prompted through a lot of factors. Factors such as the level of education, cultural factors, addiction to substance abuse, and age contributes to the prevalence of domestic violence towards women. In Bhutan, the principal motive of incidence of domestic violence in opposition to women is the abuse of alcohol with the aid of men and the schooling stage of the women which makes them ignorant about the human and social rights.

One of the factors affecting the prevalence of DV is the level of education. According to Wang (2016), respondents with lower educational attainment tend to accept violence and individuals with higher education do not condone it (Wang 2016). This in turn leads to a higher rate of domestic violence prevailing in a community. According to a survey, it is revealed that higher education decreases acceptance of violence by enhancing liberal norms as a method of resolving conflicts. Women are often quiet about being the victims of violence as they feel ashamed, filled with fear or end up blaming themselves. Another most widespread thing preventing the identification of violence towards women are the cultural elements and set up values. Values such as being patient in their family matters to avoid indignity, trying to keep away from similar combat and having guard unity in the family. According to Taheri (2013), it is found out that women with excessive academic achievement to be greater successful at coping with conflicts in relationship that are intimate and ride less violence (Taheri 2013). The study suggests a statistical relationship between educational attainment and violence. Women are ignorant of their social rights due to low educational attainment and consequently experiences violence from their husbands. It is verified that women are less likely to be tormented by their husbands if their educational attainment is high. Well educated women are familiar with their social rights and can use coping strategies to fight against violence. They, thus, possess skills to identify and quit violent behaviours. Furthermore, low educational attainment in men is another important factor in their violence against women. Illiterate or low educational attainment in men tend to have an attitude of acceptance of violence against women. They are additionally not aware of the social rights of women and thus tend to be the perpetrator of violence against women.

Studies have found out that violence is more common in families where men are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Alcohol consumption is another major contributor to the occurrence of IPV. Alcohol and drug abuse encourage violent behaviours. Most of the cases of violence against women were brought about by alcoholic drinks and drug abuse. It is also found that women

who are addicted to either alcohol or drugs like their partners are more likely to experience violence than women whose husbands only are addicted. Therefore, addiction contributes to the prevalence of violence (Jahromi, et al. 2016). In Bhutan, alcohol is easily accessible and affordable, and alcohol consumption is widely acceptable among the Bhutanese according to the NSB study (2012). Most drinkers were among the rural population, and men tend to drink more than women. They tend to become disruptive socially, as its evident form the occurrence of violence against women and economic suffering from scarce cash resources due to increase in the alcohol expenditure (NCWC 2012). An effective means of reducing alcohol related violence is by increasing the price of alcohol (World Health Organization, Alcohol + Violence: Intimate Partner Violence and Alcohol n.d.).

Age is another factor influencing domestic violence against women. Young women experiences violence against them due to their inexperience and unfamiliarity with life skills and ways to cope with family problems. Women are less likely to be the victim of domestic violence when they age. Marriage at young age can lead to domestic violence especially in the case of men, according to a study conducted by Ghahari (2008). Domestic violence occurs when a woman becomes a young mother having no experience, poor coping strategies, and intellectual and social immaturity (Ghahari 2008).

A history of abuse of individuals' (husbands') mothers by their fathers is another factor associated with violence of husbands towards their wives (Rapp, et al. 2012). It has been found that the perpetrator of violence are mostly the individuals who have a history of violence in their family.

3.2. Summary

Increase in poverty and rural living correlates to higher rates of violence, as the factors influencing women's vulnerability to DV. The prevalence rate of IPV/DV in rural areas (40.4%) was almost double that of the rate in urban areas (25.2%). Educated people are better acquainted with the rights of women and their position in the family than people who are illiterate. Studies show that high educational attainment of men and women result in reduced violence against wives/women. One of the important factors of violence against women is low educational attainment in men (Jahromi, et al. 2016).

Chapter 4 - Impacts of Domestic Violence

4.1. Introduction

The impacts of domestic violence against women are wide-ranging. Women who experienced violence have health effects which included physical injury, emotional problems which led to suicide and attempt to suicide, depression, and resorted to abuse of alcohol and drugs to cope with the problems. When the perpetrator has consumed alcohol, the violence is more likely to result in more severe physical injury. Domestic violence against women also affected the relationship of women with their family, friends and community and their ability to work in their workplace. Furthermore, children, when exposed to violence between their parents, are more probably to have violent conduct during childhood. They additionally tend to adapt to heavy drinking practices and turn out to be dependent on alcohol later in life, which increases the risk of becoming perpetrators of violence in future (World Health Organization, Intimate Partner Violence, and Alcohol n.d.)

Domestic Violence against women has a lot of impact on the lives of the women who are the victims of the violence. The health of women is highly impacted because of DV against women. According to the study conducted in Bhutan by NCWC in 2012, it was found that 64.5% of the women's (aged 15-49) health were affected by their partner's violence towards them (NCWC 2012). There had been a greater percentage of women who reported that their health deteriorated having experienced violence from their partners. Women who were not subjected to violence reported good health condition. Health problems, emotional distress, and thoughts of suicide were associated with experiences associated to IPV.

Moreover, women even resorted to consuming alcohol, that affected not only their health but also their social and domestic lives. It is evident that there should be a provision of quality services which includes medical care and psychological support, housing, police, and legal services to the women who are experiencing or are at risk of violence. Health-care services are used mostly by women who are experiencing or have experienced violence (Bonomi, et al. 2009). WHO report (2009) on women and health, claimed that DV against women has serious public health implications across the experiences of other countries as well (WHO, Women and Health: Today's Evidence, Tomorrow's Agenda 2009).

Chapter 5 – Recommendations

1. This research has provided insightful statistics on domestic violence against women in Bhutan. This information can be now used to deliver about coverage modifications and appropriate interventions can be designed so that the issues associated to DV against women are effectively addressed. This chapter, therefore, recommends preventive interventions to eliminate DV against women in Bhutan primarily based on protective factors identified in the research.
2. Strengthen attention of gender-based violence against women by incorporating the effects of DV on the health of the women and human rights related content to formal institutes and non-formal centers including public places ensuring wide coverage across the nation. This suggestion is based on the high prevalence of controlling the behavior of men experienced by women and culturally influenced the acceptance of violence against them. Educating the mass through developing attention about the ill effects of violence against women can be adopted as an approach to changing people's cultural beliefs that influence violence against women since education is found to protect women against violence. Media and advocacy campaigns can be undertaken to elevate awareness to have wide coverage.
3. There is a need to research gender-related issues in greater depth and maintain authentic resources in the national data system for research and monitoring purposes.
4. Educate community people through programs to provide support services to the women in the family in need of services related to violence-related issues. This can be carried out by incorporated with the parenting programs by the Education Sectors to the parents of school children. Training also need to be provided to the health workers and volunteers to render a helping hand to the women who need such services.
5. Setting up of cellular police stations, training the police on gender issues, and initiatives to be taken with the aid of civil society, such as opening a crisis and rehabilitation. Center for women victims of such violence. The police stations and service carrier company gagets ought to be placed as close to as feasible to the community for easy and timely access to the victims to avoid delay in reporting.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

The most important intention of this research is to understand and recognize what domestic violence against women skill consider the elements with the prevalence of violence against women in Bhutan. Domestic violence against women is the violent behavior in opposition to women by their intimate companions which cause physical and emotional harm to the victim. Domestic violence against women occurs in all settings and across all socioeconomic, religious and cultural groups. This global issue is borne mostly by women. Most women in Bhutan along with their families are less likely to report rape, domestic violence or any other type of violence as there is a 'culture of silence'. It is believed that men are superior, and it is normal for them to act violently towards their wife and have control over them. According to a study conducted by NCWC in 2012, it suggests that rural women are greater likely to journey violence than urban women. The violence against women in Bhutan pretty depended on the attitude of the women in the country about the motions towards them. There were 68% of the women in Bhutan who prevalent mistreatment against them. It was additionally found out that acceptance was once higher among these women residing in rural areas (Social Institution & Gender Index n.d.). There were excessive rates of 77% of physical abuse and emotional violence at 54% had been stated while forced intercourse stood at 23%. According to RENEW, the most frequent structure of domestic violence in Bhutan is physical abuse or battery (BBS 2013). The essential thing which motives DV against women is the level of education in both men and women. Educated people are better acquainted with the rights of women and their position in the family than people who are illiterate. studies show that high educational attainment of men and women result in reduced violence against women. One of the important factors of violence against women is low educational attainment in men (Jahromi, et al. 2016). Another element for the incidence of DV against women is the alcohol and drug abuse which encourages violent behaviours. Moreover, the age factor is every other determinant of DV against women. Young women experience violence against them due to their inexperience and unfamiliarity with life skills and ways to cope with family problems. A history of abuse of individuals' (husbands') mothers by their fathers is another factor issue associated with violence of husbands towards their wives (Rapp, et al. 2012). It has been determined that the perpetrator of violence is basically the folks who have a history of violence in their family.

Furthermore, an increase in poverty and rural dwellings correlates to greater rates of violence, as the factors influencing women's vulnerability to DV. The prevalence rate of IPV/DV in rural areas (40.4%) was almost double that of the rate in urban areas (25.2%). Educated people are better acquainted with the rights of women and their position in the family than people who are illiterate. Studies exhibit that high educational attainment of men and women result in reduced violence against wives/women. One of the important factors of violence against women is low educational attainment in men (Jahromi, et al. 2016).

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