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**CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE. A
CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

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ABSTRACT

This article assesses the causes and effects of gender-based violence. Gender-Based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. Gender-based violence can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take many forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called 'honour crimes'. The consequences of gender-based violence are devastating and can have life-long repercussions for survivors. It can even lead to death. The methodological approach for these articles is based on qualitative research methods of previous articles. The learned helplessness theory and the social learning theory were used to expound more on the gender-based violence. Ten articles were reviewed using the content analysis method. The results revealed that lack of physical security, poverty, discriminatory social, cultural laws, norms and practices are some of the major causes of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence has effects such as homicide and suicide, injury and shock, disability and sleeping disorders, reproduction problems, emotional and psychological problems and social and economic problems such as increased gender inequalities. The study recommends the government should create facilities that help women experiencing Gender Based Violence such as counselling centers, funds that will help victims get rehabilitated. Government should invest in institutions like Police and the judiciary so that victims are assisted. The community should also establish community social structures such as community groups of both men and women provide a sensitization platform for people to share experiences related GBV and remedies so as to solicit support from fellow community members.

Key words: *Gender-based violence, women, men violence.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender-Based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening health and protection issue. It is estimated that one in three women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. During displacement and times of crisis, the threat of GBV significantly increases for women and girls (The Dole Whip Press, 2014). Gender-based violence is preventable and many organizations are committed to promoting gender equality and human rights and to protecting refugees and other persons of concern from GBV. Gender-based violence can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take many forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female

genital mutilation and so-called ‘honour crimes. The consequences of gender-based violence are devastating and can have life-long repercussions for survivors. It can even lead to death.

Gender-based violence occurs in different sites. Family is one of the primary sites of gender violence. It prepares its members for social life, forms gender stereotypes and perceptions of division of labor between the sexes. This is the arena where physical abuses (spousal battering, sexual assault, sexual abuse) and/or psychological abuses occur. (Domestic violence can also take such forms as confinement, forced marriage of woman arranged by her family without her consent, threats, insults and neglect; overt control of a woman’s sexuality through either forced pregnancy or forced abortion.) This is because violence within the family and household takes place in the home, it is often seen as a ‘private’ issue and information about it is lacking. Community/Society refers to a group sharing common social, cultural, religious or ethnic belonging, it perpetuates existing family structure and power inequalities in family and society. Some communities justify the behavior of male abusers aimed at establishing control over women in the family, and supports harmful traditional practices such as battering and corporal punishment. Workplace can also be a site of violence. Either in governmental service or in a business company, women are vulnerable to sexual aggression (harassment, intimidation) and commercialized violence (trafficking for sexual exploitation). However, some states legitimize power inequalities in family and society and perpetuates gender-based violence through enactment of discriminatory laws and policies or through the discriminatory application of the law. The State is responsible for tolerance of gender violence on an unofficial level (i.e. in the family and in the community). The extent that it is the State’s recognized role to sanction certain norms that protect individual life and dignity and maintain collective peace, it is the State’s obligation to develop and implement measures that redress gender violence.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to assess the causes and effects of gender-based violence

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review

The feminist theories and the feminist movements have vehemently demonstrated that knowledge cannot be considered neutral or objective. Traditionally, researchers have engendered knowledge on the basis of the dominant perspective and behaviour in society, which was the male one (androcentrism). As a consequence, knowledge has been blind to the specific historical, political, social and personal conditions on which it was reported, making invisible gender differences. Feminist epistemologies have claimed that knowledge is dynamic, relative and variable and that it cannot be considered an aim itself but a process. Taking into account this idea, the theoretical and methodological proposal of this project is based on the gender inequalities and the promotion of women’s rights, interests and issues, are the common basis of the feminist studies and their epistemological concerns, despite the

fact that there are multiple meanings of gender and the concept of gender itself has been criticised (e.g., Butler, 2000; Breines, Connell and Eide, 2000). It is also based on violence against women “constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms” (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, UN, General Assembly Resolution 48/1004 of 20 December 2003). It is also based on many expressions of violence against women and new ones can appear according to the development of the social changes and the social dynamics.

1. Social learning theory

This is one of the most popular explanatory perspectives in the marital violence literature. Often conceptualized as the “cycle of violence” or “intergenerational transmission theory” when applied to the family, the theory states that people model behavior that they have been exposed to as children. Violence is learned through role models provided by the family (parents, siblings, relatives, and boyfriends/girlfriends), either directly or indirectly (i.e., witnessing violence), is reinforced in childhood, and continues in adulthood as a coping response to stress or as a method of conflict resolution (Bandura 1973). Additionally, The social learning theory suggests that violence is a learned behavior and can be triggered by stress, alcohol abuse, and money. We learn behavior starting at an early age in life from our parents. In fact, our parents and guardians have the greatest impact on our behavior, attitude, and relationships. The learned behavior carries with us into our adulthood. “One hypothesized mode of intergenerational transmission is modeling. There is evidence that witnessing and/or experiencing violence are related to different patterns of abusive behavior.” (Murrell, Christoff, & Henning, 2007)

“Sociologists state that men batter because they learned violence in their families as children and that women seek out abusive men because they see their mothers being abused.” (McCue 2008) I interviewed Sharon Mullen, who was abused in her home as a child. She describes a home with lots of fighting. Mullen states that her father was never violent, but his words were very demeaning and hurtful. “I remember my father would call me stupid and would get very angry with me for spilling something or burning dinner. My father verbally abused me and I learned that it was okay for men to speak to women in that manner. As an adult I unknowingly sought out relationships in which my partner spoke down to me and with each relationship the abuse got more intense. Overtime, I went from dating a man that verbally abused me to a more physically abusive relationship. Studies show this to be a pattern in women that witnessed some form of abuse as a child between her parents or was victimized as a child. Children are very observant and even when you think they are not paying attention they are absorbing everything in. Little eyes and little ears don’t miss much, soaking in sights and sounds (Criminal Justice, 2015). Children that witness violence and abuse are overwhelmed by intense feelings and replay consciously the turn of events. Children that see repeated behavior become numb to the violence and abuse and see it is as normal and accepted behavior. When a man is abusive to a child’s mother, it’s more than bad role modeling. It’s bad parenting. Let’s face it, as parents we act as role models. We teach our children by word and action.

Children can be confused and not sure of what is right and what is wrong and will start to repeat the behavior they see. Children that live in homes with repeat violence will act out by hitting, biting, and pushing friends, siblings, and classmates. “Social learning theory suggests that a child learns not only how to commit violence but also learns positive attitudes about violence when he (or she) sees it rewarded. This suggests that children who have witnessed violence, or have been abused, learn destructive conflict resolution and communication patterns. Sternberg et al. (1997) suggest that Bandura’s social learning theory would predict that both observers and victims can be affected, with children from more violent environments being more likely to acquire aggressive modes of behavior.” (Murrell, Christoff, and Henning, 2007) The violent behavior will then escalate into personal relationships as they get older. Think about the concept of the social learning theory; humans learn from observation from the people and environment around them. When children witness violent behavior in the home they are learning more than it’s acceptable and practice the same when they become adults.

2. Learned helplessness Theory

Another theory that was advanced was the “learned helplessness” theory. Lenore Walker, a psychologist in the United States, studied the behavior of women who stay in violent relationships. Walker hypothesized that women stay in abusive relationships because constant abuse strips them of the will to leave.

The learned helplessness theory, however, did not account for the fact that there are many social, economic and cultural reasons a woman might chose to stay in an abusive relationship. Women often have very rational reasons for staying—they may fear retaliation against themselves or their children, or they may not be able to financially support themselves or their children. They may be ostracized by their family and community if they leave.

Further, the learned helplessness theory is inconsistent with the fact that women surviving in abusive relationships attempt to leave many times and routinely act in very conscious ways to try to minimize the abuse directed at them and to protect their children. As Dobash and Dobash explain, “[w]omen are usually persistent and often tenacious in their attempts to seek help, but pursue such help through channels that prove to be most useful and reject those that have been found to be unhelpful or condemning.” Battered women do not live their lives in a state of “learned helplessness.” On the contrary, they often engage in a process of “staying, leaving and returning.” During this process,

women make active and conscious decisions based on their changing circumstances: they leave for short periods in order to escape the violence and to emphasize their disaffection in the hope that this will stop the violence. In the beginning, they are generally not attempting to end the relationship, but are negotiating to reestablish the relationship on a non-violent basis.

In addition, the learned helplessness theory was based on perceived characteristics ostensibly shared by battered women, such as low self-esteem, a tendency to withdraw, or perceptions of loss of control. Those who espoused the theory, however, rarely took into account the fact that these “characteristics” might be, in fact, the physical and psychological effects of the abuse.

Finally, the static model of “learned helplessness” is contradicted by the fact that the violence, and the woman’s reaction to the violence, often changes over time. The first episode of violence is generally minor; victims may be surprised and shocked, and may not anticipate that it will occur again. Rather, as Dobash and Dobash explain, “they believe, as anyone might, in the potential for reform and are still committed to the relationship.”

METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW

The methodological approach for these articles is based on qualitative research methods of previous articles. Ten articles were reviewed using the content analysis method. In this sense, the research techniques aimed to capture the subjective experiences of women who have suffered GV and, in particular, the effects that GV has had on women themselves and their lives. The focus of our research, therefore, is the multidimensional effects of GV for women’s lives. On the basis of the encountered effects, will build indicators to measure them. As mentioned earlier, this approach is based on the perspective of Women’s Studies, which aims to challenge the dominant forms of research, which are endocentric, biased and blind to gender differences and, therefore, are unable to understand social reality as a whole²⁹. Thus, the use of qualitative and participative methodologies will allow us to re-construct concepts and pay attention to new ones not attended so far, with a view to move forward on the analysis of a phenomenon that has its roots in gender relations and roles. Qualitative and participative methodologies will allow us to recover the voice of the real actors of the phenomenon studied, women who have suffered GV. Thus, women’s experiences will alert about the limits in the existing concepts and indicators and provide information on the factors that we need to consider in order to design Gender Violence effects indicators.

Empirical review

Jewkes et al. (2001) in a study of 1306 women in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and the Northern Province found domestic violence to be associated with violence in the respondent’s childhood, the respondent having no further education, liberal ideas of women’s roles, drinking alcohol, having another partner in the year, having a confidant[e], partner’s boy child preference, conflict over partner’s drinking, either partner supporting the home, frequent conflict generally, and living outside the Northern Province. These results were found to suggest that violence against women is strongly related to the status of women in society and to the normative use of violence in conflict situations, or as part of the exercise of power.

A report on a cross-sectional survey done in the early 1990’s in KwaZulu Natal by Abdool-Karim (2001) revealed that 62% of women thought their male partners had a right to multiple partners. Almost half (49%) did not believe they had a right to refuse sex with their partners, and just over half (51%) reported that their partners would get angry if they were asked to use condoms, while 30% of respondents reported they feared their partners would leave them. It was reported by over a quarter (28%) of the respondents that their partners would threaten violence. Both violence against women and HIV infection are fuelled by gender inequality and addressing these would be critical in addressing these two public health problems facing South Africans (Outwater et al., 2005).

A study conducted in Masuliita Sub County assessed the causes and effects of Gender Based Violence on women at household level. This was achieved by examining the major causes, effects and coping mechanisms of women experiencing gender-based violence. An exploratory study design was adopted where both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were applied. Results indicated and it was concluded that the causes of Gender Based Violence against women were social cultural, economic and civic in nature. However, cultural beliefs among husbands were cited as dominant causes of Gender Based Violence against women (Namwese, 2014). The cases of gender-based violence against women at household that affected them physically and psychologically were more social, and economic in nature. Physical effects included loss of lives. Owing to that victim of GBV adopted several coping mechanisms. However, many women do not disclose Gender based violence cases not until they get physically injured and report the cases to police or local council authorities for help.

Findings

Different documents were identified through the search strategy and are included in the literature review. The complete list of documents is provided in the References section. The studies and government documents within the reviewed literature examined various forms of GBV. Notably, some documents addressed multiple forms of GBV where they were counted under all categories addressed. Women's experience of violence—that is, experiences by adult and young women, both within and outside an intimate partnership—were the most commonly studied forms of GBV. The literature also contained a significant number of studies and policies that focused on GBV among children, both girls and boys, but especially girls. Fewer documents looked at men's experience of GBV.

The analysis showed that both Male and female IPV perpetrated from similar motives – primarily to get back at a partner for emotionally hurting them, because of stress or jealousy, to express anger and other feelings that they could not put into words or communicate, and to get their partner's attention (Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2007). Eight studies directly compared men and women in the power/control motive and subjected their findings to statistical analyses. Three reported no significant gender differences and one had mixed findings. One paper found that women were more motivated to perpetrate violence as a result of power/control than were men, and three found that men were more motivated; however, gender differences were weak.

More analysis also showed that lack of physical security owing to break-down of law and order, presence of armed forces/groups, collapse of law enforcement, justice institutions and family, social or community structures were other causes of gender-based violence. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable when leaving their communities in search of work, food, water and/or firewood. Additionally, poverty, lack of education and livelihood opportunities, and inadequate access to shelter, food, water, fuel, and income generation can increase exposure to GBV, including forced prostitution or survival sex. Other causes of gender-based violence were discriminatory social, cultural or religious laws, norms and practices that marginalize women and girls and fail to respect their rights (Council of Europe, 2021). Collapse of family, social and communal structures and disrupted roles within the family

often expose women and girls to risk and limit coping mechanisms and avenues for protection and redress. Lack of confidence and/or trust in social or public institutions, including law enforcement and justice institutions that discourage victims/survivors from seeking redress.

Further, lack of access to justice institutions and mechanisms, resulting in culture of impunity for violence and abuse Lack of adequate and affordable legal advice and representation. Lack of adequate victim/survivor and witness protection mechanisms. Inadequate legal framework, including national, traditional, customary and religious law, that discriminate against women and girls, fails to guarantee their rights, or exposes them to further harm and abuse. In some cases, national law also criminalizes the victim (e.g., rape defined as adultery) or criminalizes acts that allegedly are primarily associated with women (e.g. witchcraft or sorcery). In some cases, the victim/survivor faces harassment, intimidation and/or severe punishment. Other articles revealed that threat or fear of stigma, isolation and social exclusion caused gender-based violence (Hesperian Health Guides, 2020). Exposure to further violence at the hands of the perpetrator, the community or the authorities, including arrest, detention, ill-treatment and punishment. Lack of information about human rights and on how and where to seek remedies makes the victims to continually suffer at the hands of the perpetrators.

The articles showed that gender based had several consequences such as homicide suicide maternal mortality, Infant mortality and infections with diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Other injuries include fistulas, Shock, disease and infection. Further, other effects of gender-based violence are disability, chronic pain or infections gastrointestinal problems eating or sleeping disorders and alcohol/drug abuse. Gender-based violence may cause the victims to face effects which are related to reproduction such as miscarriages, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, menstrual disorders, pregnancy complications, gynaecological disorders and sexual disorders (National Research Council, 1996).

Some of the articles stated that other effects of gender-based violence are related to emotions and psychological behaviour which include post-traumatic stress depression anger, anxiety and fear shame, self-hate and self-blame mental illness suicidal thoughts and behaviour. The articles showed that the victims also faced social and economic effects such as, blaming of the victim/survivor, loss of role or functions in society social stigma, rejection and isolation. Further, feminization of poverty, increased gender inequalities loss of livelihood and economic dependency arrest, detention and/or punishment

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

In conclusion, Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in discriminatory cultural beliefs and attitudes that perpetuate inequality and powerlessness, in particular of women and girls. Various other factors, such as poverty, lack of education and livelihood opportunities, and impunity for crime and abuse, also tend to contribute to and reinforce a culture of violence and discrimination based on gender. Such factors are frequently aggravated in times of conflict and displacement as the rule of law is eroded and families and societies are torn apart. The result is often an increase in both the frequency and brutality of gender-based

violence. In its worst form, gender-based violence has become a weapon of war, intentionally directed against and aimed at terrorizing, displacing and destroying certain communities or ethnic group.

This study has shown that lack of physical security, poverty, discriminatory social, cultural laws, norms and practices are some of the major causes of gender-based violence. Judicial barriers also contribute to Gender-based violence because of lack of a system that punishes the wrongdoers. Gender based violence has many consequences such as homicide and suicide, injury and shock, disability and sleeping disorders, reproduction problems, emotional and psychological problems and social and economic problems such as increased gender inequalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government and private organizations should initiate processes that help in the Identification and registration of people with communication disabilities, including improved use of the UNHCR databases, to register people with disabilities. A rights-based, ‘twin-track approach’ to inclusion (disability mainstreaming in services, coupled with specific, targeted responses for people with disabilities), ensuring specialised communication needs are met. Coordinated, multi-agency collaboration with ongoing technical expertise and support on communication disability.

The Police and the Local Councils should put facilities in place to help women experiencing Gender Based Violence in the communities. Such facilities should include; counselling centers, funds that will help victims get rehabilitated, and Government should invest in institutions like Police and the judiciary so that victims are assisted. The community should also establish community social structures such as community groups of both men and women provide a sensitization platform for people to share experiences related GBV and remedies so as to solicit support from fellow community members.

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