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Domestic Violence against Women—A Study

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Abstract

Women have been the vulnerable section of the society and constitute a sizeable segment of the population of India. It comprises nearly half of the national population of India. But since civilization of our society women have always been treated differently, whereas men have claimed all rights they have denied them to women. They have been vulnerable to violence and exploitation such as harassment, taunts, abuses, battering, molestation, rape, dowry deaths, sati, mental and physical torture. In many countries, women are dehumanized, forcibly married, sold off and subject to all kinds of humiliation.

Domestic violence is an extreme manifestation of the low social value placed on women and also an extreme form of violation of women's human rights. Women lack of understanding of rights and therefore did not recognize violence expect when severe. Also there knowledge about law was very limited. Besides these, women received threats from their husbands if they reported violence to the collective.

The present paper has been prepared with a view to discuss the various issues related to the domestic violence against Women. This study tries to find out the various causes, impact and measures of domestic violence against women of Gobardhana Development Block of Barpeta District of Assam.

Key Words: Women, Domestic Violence, Causes, Barpeta District, Assam etc.

Introduction

Any English-language dictionary defines “violence” as the exercise or an instance of physical force, usually causing or intended to cause injury or destruction. What is notable in this definition is that the emphasis is put on physical force aiming to inflict visible damage, such as injuries or destruction, and nothing is said about the types of violence that are not so visible, yet extremely dangerous, such as emotional or psychological violence. Presumably, the dictionary definition reflects the most common perception of violence and latently refers to the fact that people often don't see or perceive violence until it becomes visible. Therefore, often it is not only the witnesses of violence who do not understand it is happening in front of their eyes in fact, those experiencing the violence themselves do not realize they are victims. Consequently, neither society nor the victims of violence take the necessary steps to combat it.

Violence of any nature or form is inhuman. As domestic violence undermines the value of a woman as an individual, it is a serious human right violation. Domestic violence most of the times is

equated to physical abuse like beating, hurling of objects or abusing. Though it is most common and most visible variety of domestic violence, domestic violence is much more than just that. Other forms of it like psychological and sexual violence which are generally hidden from the social purview have equal or more implications. These violence need to be given high priority as they deeply impact a women's psyche and linger on for a longer period of time than most physical scars and pain. If the inflictor of violence is unaware about the serious implication associated with his action, there is a higher chance that he may resort to physical violence. It has also been observed that among educated couples incidence of physical violence is comparatively low but, they tend to resort to psychological and sexual violence to overcome their frustrations and limitations.

Domestic violence has gradually emerged as a global problem. It is present in all countries irrespective of the nation's social, economic and political status. Policy makers and social scientists worldwide have started taking serious note of it and therefore, various legislations and acts are being formulated to counter domestic violence. Surveys have frequently conveyed that many women who undergo this suffering don't bring it to the notice of the state agencies like police or women commissions mainly because of fear, ignorance of law and lack of confidence in these agencies. Therefore, most of the cases related to domestic violence go unreported.

Review of Literature

In many cases after marriage extreme torture of women by their husbands or by in-laws takes place which is termed as domestic violence. Her marital home becomes a den of torture and fear. Her life partner and family members become the perpetrators of all forms of violence against her. There are a number of studies narrating the domestic violence and its causes and impacts.

Mishra (2002) explains that violence against women in the family occurs in developed and developing countries alike. It has long been considered a private matter by bystanders including neighbours, the community and government. But such private matters, now, have a tendency to become public tragedies.

Veer (2005) states that living in a society which is largely patriarchal though centred around the wife, the family has its share of marital violence in which the woman bears the brunt in spite of being the pillar of the home. To maintain his dominant position in the home, a man inflicts some or other kind of violence on woman and harasses her throughout her life. A common name given to domestic violence is silent crime.

Devi (2005) states that domestic violence against women is a global phenomenon. The domestic violence may take the form of wife battering, demand for more dowry, divorce, bride burning, psychological torture, wordy quarrels, uncared and so on. The increased economic insecurity, unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, lack of mutually satisfying relationship and lack of a sense of belonging are the reasons for the increased domestic violence.

Devi and Prema (2006) explain that the main cause of domestic violence against women are unequal power relations, gender discrimination, patriarchy, economic dependence of women, dowry, low moral values, negative portrayal of women's images in media, no participation in decision-making, gender stereotypes and a negative mindset. There are various manifestations of violence, which includes beating, mental torture, forced pregnancy, female infanticide, rape, denial of basic necessities and battering. The worst form of violence is dowry murder.

Luthra (2007) asserts that the law on domestic violence seems more effective. After the recently enacted Domestic Violence Act 2005 in Delhi alone on an average, 137 cases under 304-B IPC

(deaths due to dowry) and 1,728 cases under 406 IPC & 498-A IPC (demand of dowry and violence for dowry) are registered in 2006. The new law can make a difference, if used effectively.

Research Methodology

Area of the Study

The present paper has been prepared with a view to discuss the various issues related to the domestic violence against Women. This study tries to find out the various causes, impact and measures of domestic violence against women of Gobardhana Development Block of Barpeta District of Assam. The Barpeta district comprises eleven development block. Viz., Mandia Development Block, Ruposhi Development Block, Gumafulbari Development Block, Gobardhana Development Block, Bajali Development Block, Barpeta Development Block, Bhawanipur Development Block, Chakchaka Development Block, Chenga Development Block, Paka Betbari Development Block and Sarukhetri Development Block. The data were collected from five villages viz; Khairabari, Nechuka, Halapakuri, Barbarijhar, and Bahbari of Gobardhana Development Block of Barpeta District.

Objective of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study:

- ❖ To study the various issues relating to the domestic violence against Women.
- ❖ To find out the various causes, impact and measures of domestic violence against women.

Sample Design

The samples for the study are taken from the Gobardhana Development Block area. A total of 200 samples have been collected randomly from 5 villages of Gobardhana Development Block. Out of the 200 samples 40 each have collected from Khairabari, Nechuka, Halapakuri, Barbarijhar, and Bahbari villages respectively. The targeted groups for the study were the Married Women of these areas.

Sources of Data

The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was collected through well-structured questionnaire and schedule. The secondary data are collected from newspapers, books, magazines, seminar papers, journals and websites etc. The collected data are analyzed by classifying and tabulating. The percentage tool is used to examine the data collected through field survey.

Limitations of the Study

Every research study has some limitation. Efforts are however be made to minimize them to make study more effective. The scope and limitation of the study are-

- ❖ The study is limited to five villages (Khairabari, Nechuka, Halapakuri, Barbarijhar, and Bahbari) of Gobardhana Development Block of Barpeta District of Assam.
- ❖ The period of the study was also limited from January 2015 to July 2015.
- ❖ Resources constraints are also a limitation for the study.

Data Analysis and Discussion**Demographic Profile of Women**

The demographic profiles of the interviewed women are presented below:

AGE		
<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 18	76	38%
18 – 25	51	25.50%
25 – 35	43	21.50%
35 – 45	19	9.50%
45 & above	11	5.50%
Total	200	100%
MARITAL STATUS		
<i>Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Single	--	--
Married	178	89%
Divorced	5	2.50%
Widowed	17	8.50%
Total	200	100%
EDUCATION		
<i>Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Illiterate	109	54.50%
Primary	61	30.50%
Secondary	23	11.50%
Graduate	7	3.50%
Total	200	100%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
<i>Status</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Status</i>
Housewife	148	74%
Service	3	1.50%
Self employed	49	24.50%
Total	200	100%

Sources: Field Survey

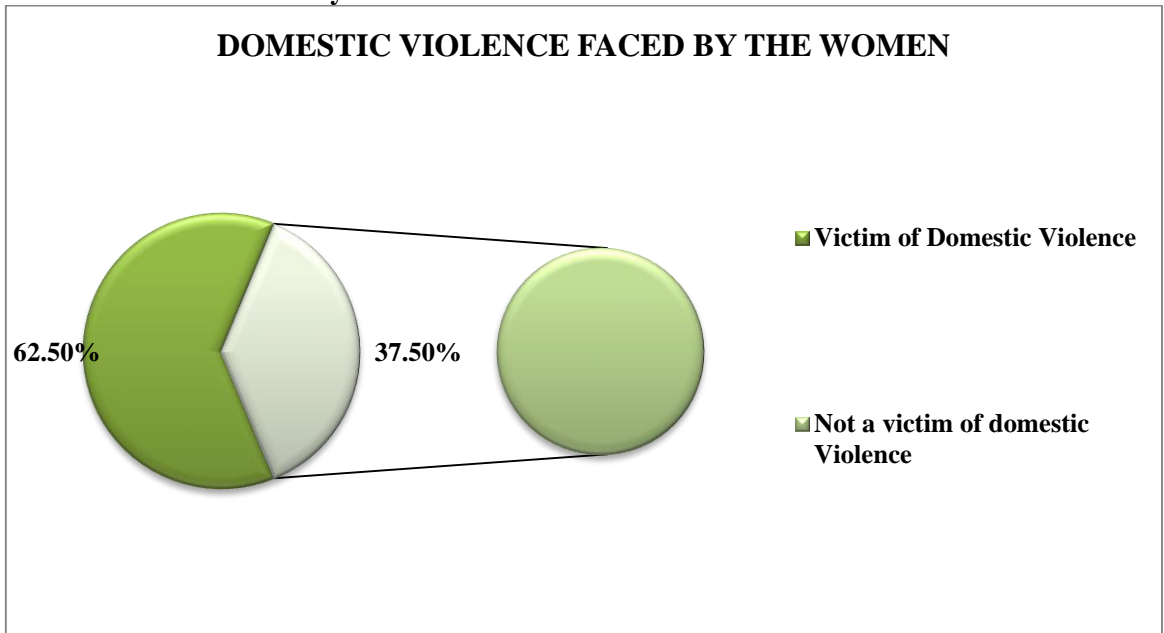
In the above table, it clearly shows that, the maximum respondents are from the age group of below 18 and 18-25. 38% respondents are from the age group of below 18; 25.50% respondents are from the age group of 18-25; 21.50% respondents are from the age group of 25-35; 9.50% respondents are from the age group of 35-45 and 5.50% respondents are from the age group of 45 & above. The maximum respondents are young because they belong to the rural areas of Barpeta district and most of the people from these areas get married at their early age.

In the above analysis, it shows that, the maximum respondents are married i.e; 89%, only 8.50% and 2.50% were widowed and divorced respectively. There was no respondent who was single, as the targeted groups were mainly married women.

As the study was conducted in rural area, so, the respondents were educationally backward. The maximum respondents i.e; 54.50% were illiterate and only 3.50% were graduate. There were 30.50% respondents who had only primary level of education and only 11.50% had secondary level of education.

Most of the respondents were housewife, as the education level of the respondents were very low only 1.50% were in service and 24.50% respondents were self-employed. They are engaged in various types of professional works such as sewing, running small grocery shop, pickle making business, etc.

Domestic Violence Faced by the Women

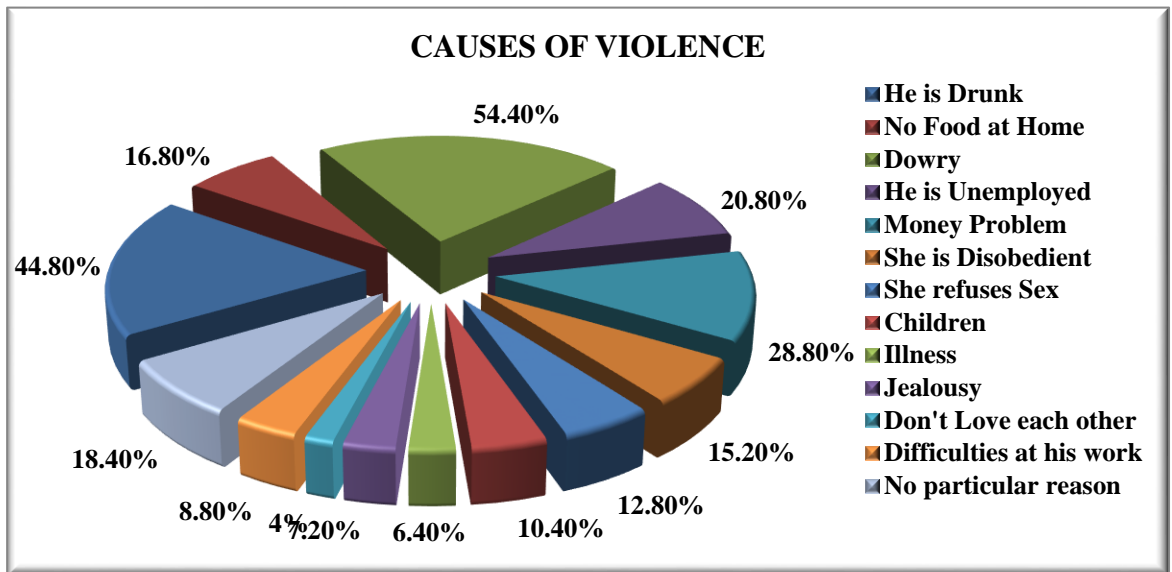


Sources: Field Survey

In this study, the primary data was collected through well-structured questionnaire and schedule. With the help of questionnaire and schedule 200 women have been interviewed, out of 200 women 62.50% i. e; 125 women were victim of domestic violence and these 125 women has been analyzed to understand the position of women who face the domestic violence.

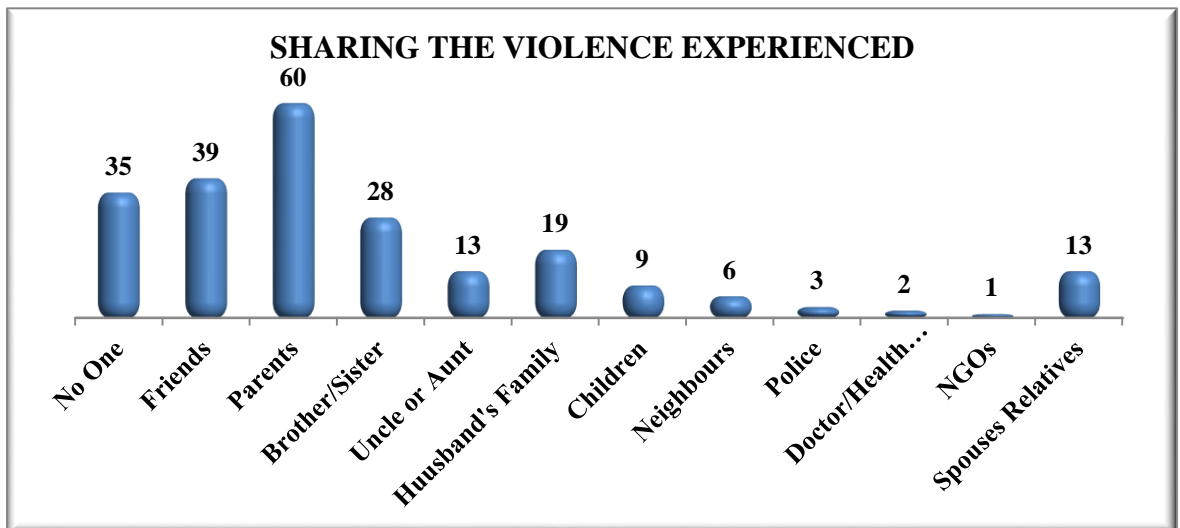
Causes of Violence

Causes of violence from women’s perspective Women who have reported physical violence from their husband or partner were asked about the causes of domestic violence in society as a whole. The most common cause they cited was “Dowry” (54.40%) and the second most common reason is “he is drunk” (44.80%). The other problems listed by the abused women are as follows – “money problem” (28.80%), “he is unemployed” (20.80%), “no particular reason” (18.40%), “no food at home” (16.80%), “she is disobedient” (15.20%) and “she refuses sex” (12.80%). The following responses received less than 10% each: difficulties at his work, illness, jealousy, don’t love each other. The detailed results are presented below in diagram:



Sharing the Violence Experienced

In the survey women were asked with whom they share their experiences of violence from their social network, and close and broad social institutions. Women most frequently choose their close social network - parents (48%), friends (31.2%), sister or brother (22.4%), husband’s family (15.2%) to speak about domestic violence. The percentage of women who have shared their experience with no-one is 28%. This means almost one third of women have to deal with the problem alone as they hide the violence from everyone. There is very low percentage of those who seek help and share their experience outside of close social networks and the rate of reporting violence to official institutions follows– police (2.4%), doctor/Health worker (1.6%), women’s NGO (0.8%). The detailed results are presented below in diagram:

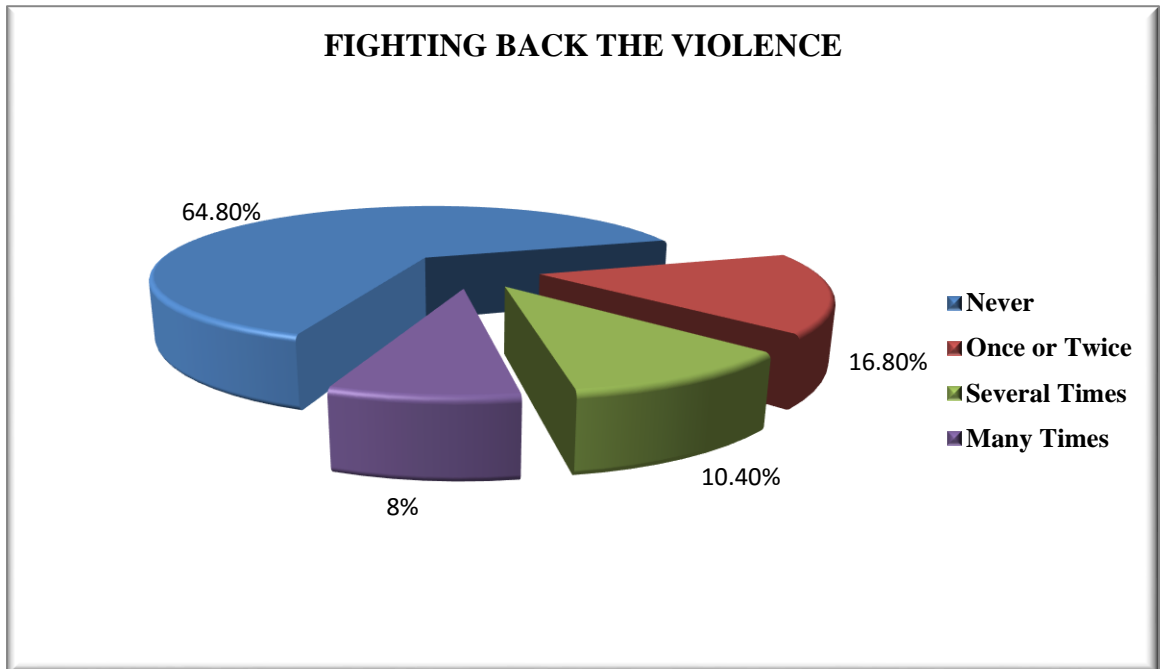


Sources: Field Survey

From the data it is obvious that official institutions are not the place where women seek support. They share their violent experiences with their close social network of loved ones and are more likely to tell their friends, parents and blood relatives than relatives from their husband’s side. These results indicate the dimension of traditional society that keeps the secrets within a family, as well as the insecurity of women in relation to the husband’s family (only 15.2% of women victims of physical violence share this with husband’s family).

Fighting Back the Violence

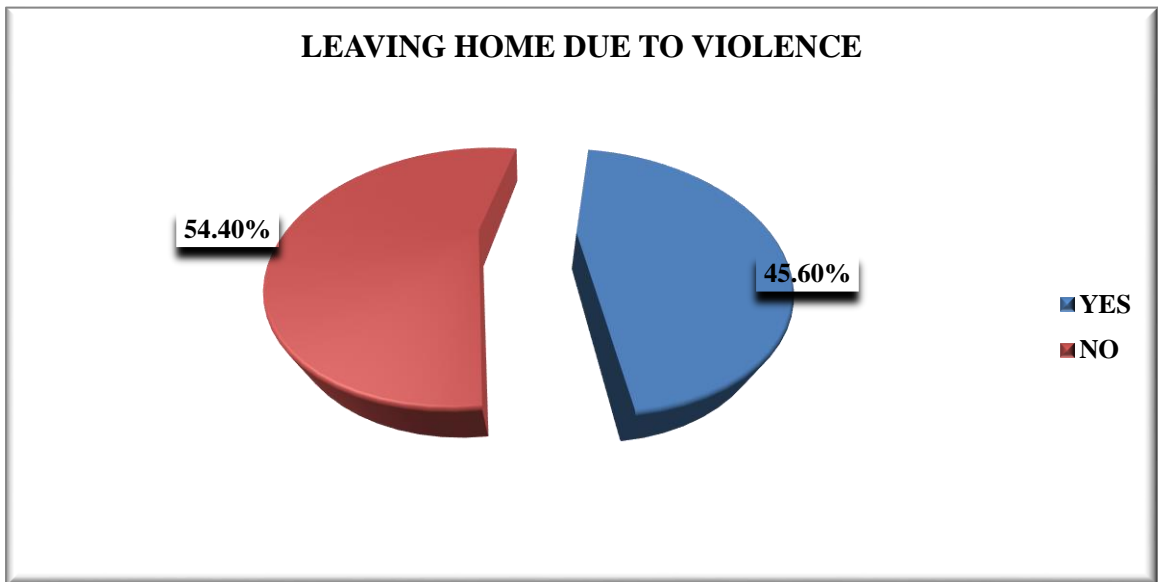
The study showed that few women fight back when they are subject to domestic violence. 64.8% of women who have experienced physical abuse say they have never fought back; 16.8% said that they had done it at once; 10.4% fought back several times and only 8% frequently fight back due to physical violence. The detailed results are presented below in diagram:



Sources: Field Survey

Leaving Home Due to Violence

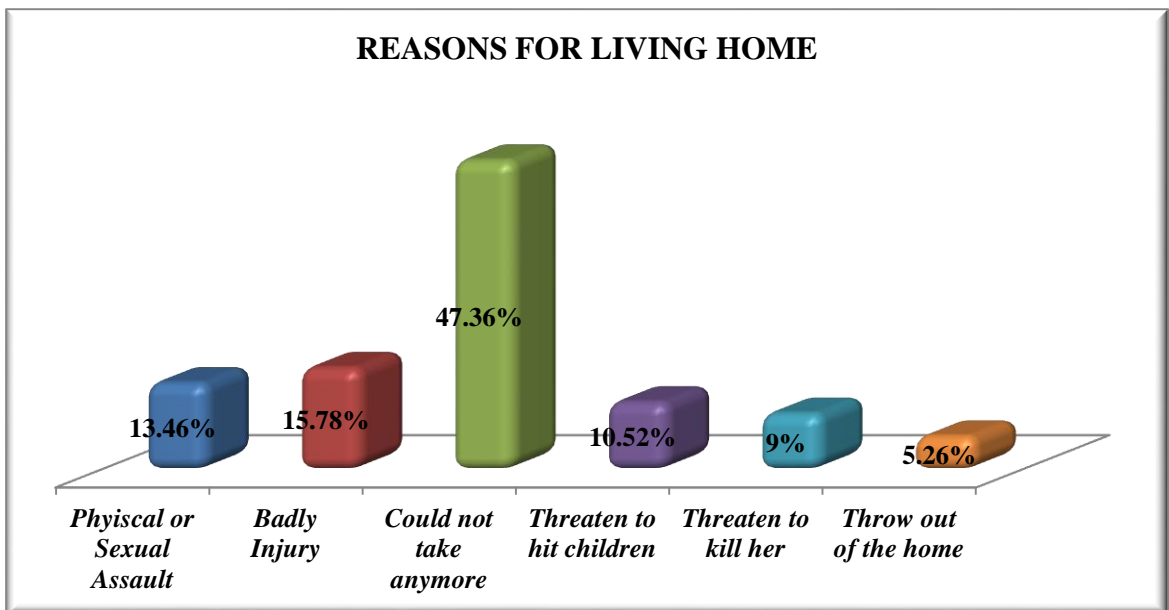
Most of the women don’t leave home even after facing the domestic violence from her partner. Only 45.60% i.e; 57 women leave home due to physical violence, and other 54.40% i.e; 68 women want to live at their husbands home and fight back to normalize the situation. The detailed results are presented below in diagram:



Sources: Field Survey

Reasons for Leaving Home Due to Violence

There were some women who frequently leave home due to physical violence, the diagram below shows the data on percentage distribution of number of times women leave their homes due to partners’ violent behaviour. The detailed results are presented below in diagram:



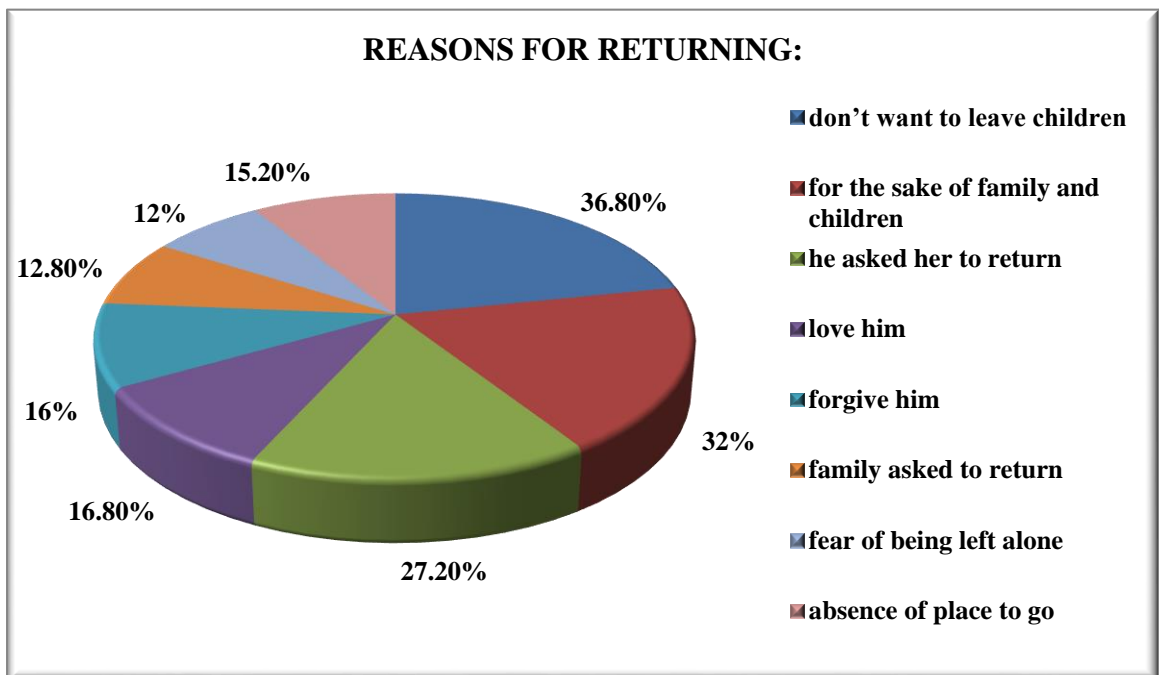
Sources: Field Survey

The result clearly shows that women who have faced physical violence most commonly have left their house 2-5 times. The most commonly cited reasons for women leaving home after domestic violence are:

violence were “could not take it anymore” (47.36%) and severe injures (15.78%). 9% said they left home because their partner threatened to kill them; 10.52% because of a threat to hit children and 5.26% said they left home because they were thrown out. The result shows that women leave home only in extreme cases.

Reasons for Returning

The most commonly reported reasons are – “don’t want to leave children” (36.8%); for the sake of family and children (32%); he asked her to return (27.2%); love him (16.8%); and forgive him (16%); family asked to return (12.8%); fear of being left alone (12%); and the absence of place to go (15.2%).



Sources: Field Survey

After facing violence, physical torture the women still want to return back to their husband’s home, 54.40% of these women do not want leave home and preserve the family and remain the victims of domestic violence. Among them who leave their husband’s home due to the violence they also return back despite of the husband’s behavior. We frequently come across some factors as family and children, reasons connected with the spouse; in addition we face the reasons of fear of being left alone and the absence of place to go.

Findings

By analyzing the data collected from field survey, the following key points have been extracted:

- ❖ It is observed from the study that most of the women of the studied area are facing domestic violence.
- ❖ In most of the cases the reason behind the violence are dowry system, husbands are addicted to alcohol followed by other reasons such as money problem, jealousy, unemployment, etc.

- ❖ From the data it is observed that official institutions are not the place where women seek support. They don't share the matter with police, health worker and NGOs. They share their violent experiences with their close social network of loved ones and are more likely to tell their friends, parents and blood relatives than relatives from their husband's side.
- ❖ Most of the women who face domestic violence do not fight back against the violence, as they think that the husband has the right to beat his wife.
- ❖ Most of the women don't leave home even after facing domestic violence from her partner. Because the society set their mind to believe that *“dulhan ki doli uthti hai uski maike se or arthi uthti hai uski sasural se”*.
- ❖ The reason behind leaving home are, they are frustrated of domestic violence and can't take the violence any more. Sometimes they are badly injured.
- ❖ It is also found that the women after leaving their husbands home, they return back again, as they don't want to leave their children and family. They also feared of being left alone. Sometimes the husband asked her to return back.

Suggestions

In Assam there is no common platform where problems of women, especially those of violence-domestic violence as well as ethnic violence are addressed. So, in view of the above problems, it is necessary to adopt some measures to mitigate problems faced by women. Following suggestion have been made for controlling the domestic violence against of women of Gobardhana Development Block of Barpeta district of Assam:

- ❖ There is a need to involve the bureaucracy in the sensitization process and to facilitate political will to look at the problem of violence.
- ❖ Women's rights based agendas have to be integrated in the political process.
- ❖ Strategies have to be developed to raise awareness of the extent and impact of violence perpetrated against women.
- ❖ Information broadcasting on legal safeguards, rights, support services, health and accommodation.
- ❖ Women's groups should also inform other women about the available support services in the area and towns.
- ❖ Education of the youth is important. This is the time to develop healthy and respectful relationships.
- ❖ Schools can work with local communities to deliver anti-violence education.
- ❖ There is a need for societal responsibility, especially male responsibility, to alleviate violence against women.

Conclusion

It is clear from the above discussion that the main factors perpetuating domestic violence at Barpeta district are traditional views and lack of awareness among the population. The respondents' ideas confirm that these factors are the ones that are responsible for women's inactivity or passive tolerance of domestic violence at Barpeta district. Thus, if one asks a question about what women usually do against gender-based violence, the most probable answer would be in the majority of cases they do nothing but put up with it.

The in-depth interviews and discussions with women of the different villages of Barpeta district that in case of gender-based domestic violence they remain mostly passive, holding traditional views based on which the male-female division is viewed in the light of a dominant-subordinate

dichotomy. Therefore, it is not surprising that they consider their husbands as their “first and not second halves,” who have the right to dictate to their wives what to do, including where to go or what to wear, and who can occasionally physically mistreat their wives. In addition, divorce is perceived as a “shameful” or even “disastrous” event and the female respondents themselves state that a woman should not think of divorce unless the violence against her becomes intolerable. Moreover, even a victim living in a shelter who is abused by her husband both verbally and physically on a daily basis for six years stated that if her husband had not beaten her so much, they would be living together to this day.

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