

# CRITICALITY

**A Peer Reviewed Journal**

*Special Issue on Domestic Violence*



**ACTIVISM FOUNDATION  
KOLKATA, INDIA**

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# Criticality

Volume 3 Number 2 December 2025

*Special Issue on Domestic Violence*

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## **From the Desk of the Editor**

It is my immense pleasure to announce this issue of *Criticality* as a Special Issue devoted to the theme of domestic violence.

Domestic violence unfolds within the ordinary, everyday setting of the home, where one family member, or someone closely tied to the family, inflicts harm on another through physical force, as well as mental, sexual, or emotional abuse. It is most often encountered within relationships of marriage, intimate partnership, and cohabitation, where proximity and dependence can allow violence to remain hidden and prolonged. This sort of violence is not developed in a vacuum. It is based on patriarchal family systems, traditional and cultural practices, alcoholism, sexual discrimination, limited legal protection mechanisms, fear and humiliation with which survivors are burdened, low policy mandates, and a perennial lack of economic independence for women.

The problem is a massive one. Nearly 1 in 3 women are subjected to violence at some time during their life, according to the World Health Organization. In this context the Activism Foundation for Social Research & Action initiated a Research Programme on Domestic Violence & Intolerance in the Maniktala slum of Kolkata, 2023–2025. The programme involved surveys, systematic data collection, and careful analysis, supported by focused group discussions. A distinctive element of this initiative was the organisation of Public Conversations. Unlike conventional research practices, these conversations sought not only to present findings before the community, but also to generate awareness among victims and, where possible, encourage them to consider research-based and context-specific ways of responding to their situations.

Given the importance of this engagement, the Editorial Board decided to bring out a Special Volume on Domestic Violence. In response to the Call for Papers, we received several thoughtful contributions from executives of the Activism Foundation who were directly involved in the research, along with submissions from other scholars. Sumana Goswami, Project Coordinator of the programme, offers a broad and integrated overview of the research in her of responsibility that moves beyond policy and legal frameworks. Eshany Bala, another Executive Researcher, examines children's education both as a factor contributing to domestic violence and as an area deeply

affected by it. Subhranil Ghosh, Executive Researcher, investigates the economic correlates of intimate partner violence in a brief research note.

In addition to these articles, this issue contains pieces that complement the emphasis on domestic violence. Chandrima Biswas's four case studies underscore the fact that violence within families has been experienced by the survivors, though they are often invisible to us. Titasha Sinha critically analyses women's agency and personal space in the backdrop of suffering from adversities in marriage. A commentary by Anindya Bhattacharya contributes significantly to the debate. The issue also includes a book review on domestic violence by Tanay Dutta.

I would like to thank Dr. Sourish Jha, Chairman, Activism Foundation for Social Research & Action for his guidance and insightful comment during the course of research programme.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Sumana Goswami, *Managing Editor* of Criticality for her constant support and untiring efforts in bringing out the issue in time. I thank the Deputy Editors also, Dr. Amlan Lahiri, Dr. Nibedita Raha, Dr. Eshita Sur, Dr. Titasha Sinha, Dr. Chandrima Biswas, Dr. Pinky Isha and Dr. Ananya Chatterjee for their help during all stages of publication.

I am grateful to all the peer reviewers who, despite their busy schedules, shared their comments within the stipulated time. I also acknowledge Sri Tanay Dutta, Deputy Chief, Technical and Logistic, Activism Foundation, for his tireless work in handling the digital aspects of the journal's publication. Finally, I thank the Board of Trustees, Activism Foundation, for their constant support and encouragement.

I alone remain responsible for any inadvertent omissions or typographical errors.

Dr. Prantosh Sen  
Executive Editor

## **Activism's Case Study on Domestic Violence and Intolerance at Maniktala Slum, Kolkata: A Brief Overview**

**Sumana Goswami<sup>1</sup>**

Domestic violence is a pervasive social issue having deep impact on different sections of people. Considering the importance of the problem Activism Foundation for Social Research and Action has carried out a research project on Domestic Violence and Intolerance at the slum area of Maniktala, Kolkata during 2023-2025. The purpose of the study is to explore the main causes of domestic violence and its impact on different family members of in a slum area. Survey research has been done on a sample of 90 people, including 45 males and 45 females. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected from the respondents by structured interview schedule. Besides survey research, focus group discussions were also conducted in order to make an in-depth study. The study revealed that the slum dwellers have their own perspectives regarding domestic violence, whereby domestic violence in the form of verbal abuse, beating, slapping, forcing to do anything have been considered normal and legitimised by a large section of the respondents. The root cause of the problem found to lie not exclusively in economic problems, alcoholism or child issues, but in the patriarchal values of power relations held by people. At the final stage. The results of the study and a probable way out were discussed in a public conversation.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, intimate partner violence, patriarchal values, public conversation

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Domestic violence is a worldwide menace even for the contemporary modern society. World Health Organisation defines domestic violence as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner....this includes any behaviours that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. (WHO) Of late, this problem has intensified, more so due to Corona pandemic and subsequent period of complete and partial lockdown during 2020 to 2022. Studies show that home, which is supposed to provide safety and security, became the most vulnerable place for many. Report of National Crime Records Bureau, 2023 shows that domestic violence tops crimes against women. A total of 4,48,211 cases of crime against women were registered during 2023, Majority of cases under crime against women under IPC were registered under 'Cruelty by Husband or Relatives' (1,33,676 cases, 29.8%). Now, such violence definitely affects lives of a large number of women. For this reason, it is often a tendency to equate domestic violence (DV) with intimate partner violence (IPV) and most of the studies on domestic violence focus on the women victims in the domestic sphere.

To counter the problem of domestic violence Domestic Violence Act was introduced in 2005. However, the law is never sufficient to end such violence. Kimuna, S.R et al. (2013) observed that gender role conditioning and cultural norms both are the contributing factors to domestic violence. They, Therefore, realises that solutions should be found beyond institutional and legal levels and should include cultural capital to address partner and relationship issues.

In this backdrop Activism Scholars' Forum, along with Activism Social Science Club, the two units of the Activism Foundation for social Research and Action, conducted a research project on 'Domestic Violence and Intolerance' at Maniktala Slum area in Kolkata during 2023-2025. The main objectives of the study are:

- i. to understand the perception of the slum dwellers about domestic violence;
- ii. to explore the factors of domestic violence in the slum area;
- iii. to know who are the sufferers and perpetrators of domestic violence; and
- iv. to develop a structure of solutions appropriate for the people of the area.

## **Methodology**

The study has been conducted at no. 1 and 2 Basti of Maniktala Slum, Kolkata. Total Population of the area under study is 1050, sample size calculated as 90, where margin

of error- 10%, confidence level- 95% and response Distribution- 50%.<sup>1</sup>

The method of sampling is quota sampling and the total sample has been divided as 45 males and 45 females, with respondents aged between 25 and 65. The study incorporated respondents of different gender, age, marital status, caste categories etc. In fact, the objective of the study was to explore whether the impact of violence is seen on other members than only wives in the family. So, married, unmarried, divorcee or widow/ widowers were also taken into consideration. The study has been conducted through face-to-face interview method, using structured interview schedule.

The data has been collected by the research executives of Activism Foundation in 2023. Afterwards, two phases of Focus group discussion (FGD) were conducted, where two groups of males and two groups of females of 7-8 people each have participated. The FGD were conducted to discuss the main issues of domestic violence as according to the participants. Entry into the field was possible due to the help of local councillor, who gave permission for the study and also helped with volunteers from the area itself. Data were collected from the respondents with prior oral consent and with a guaranty of anonymity.

The final phase of the study was Public Conversation, which was held at Harinath Dey Road Baroari Puja Mandap in the slum area on 19th January 2025. Around 40 inhabitants of the slum area participated in the interactive discussion. The session ended with the presentation of a drama "Grihajuddha" by the students of the Department of Drama, Rabindra Bharati university, Kolkata to make people understand in a more attractive way.

### **Findings and Discussion**

No 1 and 2 basti of Maniktala slum has total population of 1050. People of different education, occupations, income group, caste live here. Though mainly Bengali Hindu live here, a few from Bihar, who work in Kolkata also live in this slum. Majority of males are engaged in informal or private sector jobs, a few work as government employee. Some also have small business, having small shops in the locality. A few are also unemployed. Some females are house-wife but a good number of females work as cook or maid servant in nearby locality. Few females, who are educated like, higher secondary or graduate level also work in formal sector like bank etc. Following table describes the demographic pattenen of the respondents.

**Table 1: Socio - Demographic Profile of the Population**

Status		Male	Female	Total
Age	Below 30	10(11.11%)	12(13.33%)	22
	31-40	10(11.11%)	13(14.44%)	23
	41-50	11(12.22%)	9(10%)	20
	51-60	9(10%)	9(10%)	18
	Above 60	5(5.56%)	2(2.22%)	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>90</b>
Marital Status	Married	32(35.56%)	32(35.56%)	64
	Unmarried	11(12.22%)	5(5.56%)	16
	Widower/Widow	1(1.11%)	7(7.78%)	8
	Divorcee	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>90</b>
Caste	Gen	28 (31.11%)	33(73.3%)	61
	SC	13(14.44%)	8(8.89%)	21
	ST	0	1 (1.11%)	1
	OBC-A	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	4
	OBC-B	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>90</b>
Education	Illiterate	5(5.56%)	8(8.89%)	13
	Primary	10(11.11%)	19(21.11%)	29
	Upper Primary	11(12.22%)	6(6.67%)	17
	Secondary	7(7.78%)	7(7.78%)	14
	Higher Secondary	8(8.89%)	4(4.44%)	12
	Graduate	4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>90</b>
Income	Below 5000	4(4.44%)	6(6.66%)	10
	5000 -10000	13(14.44%)	17(18.88%)	30
	10000-15000	7(7.78%)	10(11.11%)	17
	15000-20000	6(6.67%)	6(6.67%)	12
	20000-30000	10(11.11%)	2(2.22%)	12
	Above 30000	5(5.56%)	4(4.44%)	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>90</b>
Number of Families living in the same household	1	34(37.78%)	32(35.56%)	66
	2	3(3.33%)	3(3.33%)	6
	More than 2	8(8.89%)	10(11.11%)	18
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>90</b>
Economic Status	Earner	39(43.33%)	24(26.67%)	63
	Dependent	6(6.67%)	21(23.33%)	27
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>90</b>

Source: Field Study by Activism

### I. Domestic Violence – As perceived by the slum dwellers

The study revealed that the slum dwellers have their own perspective regarding domestic violence. Though the viewpoints vary on the basis of gender, education, marital status etc, a substantial number of the respondents do not consider verbal abuse, laying hands,

beating, forcing to do something like sex, destroying goods etc. as domestic violence. Many of them describe such behaviour as normal events in every family.

**Table 2: Perceiving Particular Actions as Domestic violence**

Actions	Gender	Do you consider this Action Domestic Violence?			
		Yes	Not Decided	No	Grand Total
Verbal Abuse	Male	23(25.56)	6(6.67)	16(17.78)	45 (50%)
	Female	25(27.78)	7(7.78)	13(14.44)	45 (50%)
Total		48(53.33)	13(14.44)	29(32.22%)	90 (100%)
Laying Hand	Male	35(38.88)	6(6.67)	4(4.44)	45 (50%)
	Female	30(33.33)	9(10)	6(6.67)	45 (50%)
Total		65(72.22)	15(16.67)	10(11.11)	90 (100%)
Beating	Male	34(37.77)	6(6.67)	5(5.56)	45 (50%)
	Female	28(31.11)	11(12.22)	5(5.56)	45 (50%)
Total		62(68.89)	17(18.89)	10(11.11)	90 (100%)
Forcing to do something like sex	Male	28(31.11)	8(8.89)	9(10)	45 (50%)
	Female	27(30)	13(14.44)	5(5.56)	45 (50%)
Total		55(61.11)	21(23.33)	14(15.56)	90 (100%)
Destroying things	Male	24(26.67)	7(7.78)	14(15.55)	45 (50%)
	Female	27(30)	10(11.11)	8(8.89)	45 (50%)
Total		51(56.67)	17(18.89)	22(22.44)	90 (100%)
Outside interference in familial matters	Male	26(28.89)	9(10)	10(11.11)	45 (50%)
	Female	26(28.88)	12(13.33)	7(7.78)	45 (50%)
Total		52(57.78)	21(23.33)	17(18.89)	90 (100%)

Source: Field Study by Activism

The table indicates that when many respondents accept the actions which is abusive of others, exert power to harm others as violence, some of them refuse to do so. Now, let us analyse this tendency in more detail.

## Verbal abuse

We find that, out of 50% male respondents 25.56% considers verbal abuse as violence, but 17.78% does not consider verbal abuse as violence. On the other, out of 50% female respondents 27.78% considers verbal abuse as violence, but 14.44% does not consider verbal abuse as violence. Thus, significantly enough, total 32.22% of the respondents think that verbal abuse cannot be considered as domestic violence.

## Laying Hands

Out of 50% male respondents 38.88% considers laying hands as violence, but 4.44% does not consider laying hands as violence. Out of 50% female respondents 33.33% considers laying hands as violence, but 6.67% does not consider laying hands as violence.

## Beating

Out of 50% male respondents 37.77% considers beating as violence, but 5.56% does not consider beating as violence. Out of 50% female respondents 31.11% considers beating as violence, but 5.56% does not consider beating as violence. Interestingly, 3.33% married females and 5.56% married males refuse to consider beating as domestic violence.

**Table 3: Relationship of Gender and Marital Status with Perception of Violence**

Gender	Marital Status	Respondents	Do you think 'Beating' is Domestic Violence?			
			No	Not Decided	Yes	Grand Total
Male 45	Unmarried	11(12.22%)		2(2.22%)	9(10%)	11(12.22%)
	Married	32(35.56%)	5(5.56%)	4(4.44%)	23(25.56%)	32(35.56%)
	Widower	1(1.11%)			1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)
	Divorcee	1(1.11%)			1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>34(37.77%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
Female 45	Unmarried	5(5.56)	1(1.11%)		4(4.44%)	5(5.56)
	Married	32(35.56%)	3(3.33%)	9(10%)	20(22.22%)	32(35.56%)
	Widow	7(7.78%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	4(4.44%)	7(7.78%)
	Divorcee	1(1.11%)		1(1.11%)		1(1.11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>12(13.33%)</b>	<b>28(31.11%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>90 (100%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b>	<b>62(68.89%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>

Source: Field Study by Activism

From the table no 2 it is significantly seen that, while out of 35.56% married male respondents, 25.56% considers beating as violence, out of 35.56% married female respondents, only 22.22% considers beating as violence, 13.33% does not consider it violence or undecided about it. It means more women particularly married women than men try to view even beating as normal activity, not violence.

### Forcing to do something

31.11% out of 50% male respondents considers forcing to do something like sex as violence, but 10% does not consider forcing to do something like sex as violence. Out of 50% female respondents 30% considers forcing to do something like sex as violence, but 5.56% does not consider forcing to do something like sex as violence. Again, here too, whereas 3.33% married females do not consider such act as domestic violence, more married males, i.e. 8.89% does so.

**Table 4: Relationship of Gender and Education with the Perception of Violence**

GENDER	EDUCATION	RESPONDENT	Do you think Forcing to Do Something Like Sex is Domestic Violence?			
			No	Not Decided	Yes	Grand Total
MALE 45	Illiterate	5(5.56%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	3(3.33%)	5(5.56%)
	Primary	10(11.11%)	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	6(6.67%)	10(11.11%)
	Upper Primary	11(12.22%)	2(2.22%)	3(3.33%)	6(6.67%)	11(12.22%)
	Secondary	7(7.78%)	1(1.11%)		6(6.67%)	7(7.78%)
	Higher Secondary	8(8.89%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	6(6.67%)	8(8.89%)
	Graduate	4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	4(4.44%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>9 (10%)</b>	<b>8 (8.89%)</b>	<b>28 (31.11%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
FEMALE 45	Illiterate	8(8.89%)	2(2.22%)	4(4.44%)	2(2.22%)	8(8.89%)
	Primary	19(21.11%)	1(1.11%)	7(7.78%)	11(12.22%)	19(21.11%)
	Upper Primary	6(6.67%)		1(1.11%)	5(5.56%)	6(6.67%)
	Secondary	7(7.78%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	5(5.56%)	7(7.78%)
	Higher Secondary	4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)		3(3.33%)	4(4.44%)
	Graduate	1(1.11%)			1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>5 (5.56%)</b>	<b>13 (14.44%)</b>	<b>27 (30%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	<b>14(15.55%)</b>	<b>21(23.33%)</b>	<b>55(61.11%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

Source: Field Study by Activism

It is seen from the table that more male respondents (10%) than females (5.56%), irrespective of their education believe that forcing to do something like sex is not domestic violence. A significant percentage of females (14.44%), of which 12.22% is either illiterate or have primary education, is undecided about whether such action can be considered as domestic violence, whereas, 8.89% males are undecided about it. The table also reveals the tendency that less percentage of females with upper primary education to higher levels, consider such action not as domestic violence.

### **Destroying Things**

Out of 50% male respondents 26.67% considers destroying things as violence, but 15.55% does not consider destroying things as violence. Out of 50% female respondents 30% considers destroying things as violence, but 8.89% does not consider destroying things as violence. When 5.56% married females do not consider destroying things as domestic violence, 14.44% married males do so. It seems when actions become more severe females do take it as violence, but males still take such actions as normal.

### **Outside Interference**

Out of 50% male respondents 28.89% considers outside interference in familial matters as violence, but 11.11% does not consider outside interference in familial matters as violence and 10% is undecided about the issue. Out of 50% female respondents 28.89% considers outside interference in familial matters as violence, but 7.78% does not consider outside interference in familial matters as violence and 13.33% is undecided about the issue. Moreover, it has been found that out of 50% male respondents 18.89% does not consider Verbal Abuse, 16.66% does not consider slapping 13.33% does not consider beating as violence if received in return of respondent's committing any extreme wrong/unjust so. On the other, out of 50% female respondents 20% does not consider verbal abuse, 17.78% does not consider slapping, 14.44% does not consider beating as violence if received in return of respondent's committing any extreme wrong/unjust.

## II. Normalizing violence?

So, it is a big question – whether or to what extent the respondents normalize the violent behaviour in their everyday life. If we analyse their viewpoints on the basis of their education we find some important tendencies.

**Table 5: Relationship of education and Perceiving Violence as Normal**

GENDER	EDUCATION	RESPONDENT	Q. Do you think that the incidence of intolerance and violence in the family is not at all a big deal and albeit a normal thing?		
			Yes	No	Grand Total
MALE 45	Illiterate	5(5.56%)	2(2.22%)	3(3.33%)	5(5.56%)
	Primary	10(11.11%)	5(5.56%)	5(5.56%)	10(11.11%)
	Upper Primary	11(12.22%)	6(6.67%)	5(5.56%)	11(12.22%)
	Secondary	7(7.78%)	6(6.67%)	1(1.11%)	7(7.78%)
	Higher Secondary	8(8.89%)	7(7.78%)	1(1.11%)	8(8.89%)
	Graduate	4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)	3(3.33%)	4(4.44%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>27 (30%)</b>	<b>18 (20%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
FEMALE 45	Illiterate	8(8.89%)	1(1.11%)	7(7.78%)	8(8.89%)
	Primary	19(21.11%)	13(14.44%)	6(6.67%)	19(21.11%)
	Upper Primary	6(6.67%)	5(5.56%)	1(1.11%)	6(6.67%)
	Secondary	7(7.78%)	3(3.33%)	4(4.44%)	7(7.78%)
	Higher Secondary	4(4.44%)	2(2.22%)	2(2.22%)	4(4.44%)
	Graduate	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)		1(1.11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>25 (27.78%)</b>	<b>20 (22.22%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	<b>52(57.78%)</b>	<b>38(42.22%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

30% out of 50% male respondents express that whatever violent behaviour take place at home is normal, not at all a big deal, whereas among 50% female respondents 27.78% thinks so. Therefore having 57.78% believing everyday occurrences of violence as normal, it definitely implies that such tendency leads to a more exploitation of the near and dear ones at home. However, a smaller number of the respondents, 42.22% in total does not consider such violence at home as normal – indicating the existence of some good senses among people in this slum. It is found that at least 3.33% out of 4.44% graduate males does not perceive violent behaviour at home as normal.

## III. Causes of conflict

A lot of reasons for conflicts at home are cited by the respondents. Of course, most of the respondents mention more than one reasons for conflict at their home.

**Table 6: Causes of Conflict in families at the Maniktala Slum**

Sl. No.	Causes of Conflict	Male	Female	Total
1.	Alcoholism	9 (10%)	10 (11.11%)	19 (21.11%)
2.	Economic problems	20 (22.22%)	27 (30%)	47 (52.22%)
3.	Unable to Repay Loan	0	3 (3.33%)	3 (3.33%)
4.	Difference of Opinion	23 (25.56%)	28 (31.11%)	51 (56.57%)
5.	Interference of Outsiders	14 (15.56%)	14 (15.56%)	28 (31.11%)
6.	Issues related to Children	6 (6.67%)	15 (16.67%)	21 (23.33%)

Source: Field Study by Activism

Table 6 shows different causes of conflicts in families at the slum. Among these 56.57% stress on the difference of opinion and 52.22% on emphasizes economic problems, interference of outsiders is mentioned by 31.11%, and issues related to children by 23.33% and alcoholism by 21.11%. Females, who actually run the family, talks more about economic problems. It is also observed from the table that the females are more concerned about children's issues and are often engaged in conflict because of children's matters, particularly, their education. They mention about children's tendency of not attending school, not studying properly etc. and also one respondent mentions that conflict take place when son disobeys and is engaged in violence with mother over pocket money. While the male members talk about excessive demands by the young boys and girls of goods and money as they feel jealous of their friends, conflict among young siblings, children returning home late and chatting outside for hours etc. children disobeying parents, daughter not doing household work etc. They also mention about problem of alcoholism by matured sons.

#### **Other issues or reasons for conflict**

When asked about the other causes of conflict male members mention i) exposing family secrets to outsiders by others in the family, ii) conflict among brothers on the issue of property selling, iii) childlessness and illness of wife, iv) issues of household work, if meal is made late or wife is busy with mobile phone, as wife gets irritated by

excessive household work, v) mental or physical health problems, e.g., obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) etc. On the other females refer i) cooking issues, like if food is not liked by the other members, particularly husband, ii) family politics, jealousy etc, iii) habits of bidi smoking, iv) extra marital affairs of husband or suspecting of having such relationships as factors of everyday conflict. Outsiders sometimes also create problem, for example, one respondent said that her sister-in-law (nanad) tries to exercise power over the family leading to violence within the family. Ego problems also become issues of conflict, like the issues of disagreement between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, jealousy of mother-in-law. Some of them also mentioned the problems of common washroom and tap water in the slum as influencing factor for conflict at home.

Thus, it is found from the study that though both male and female respondents agree that alcoholism, economic problems, issues related to children and mostly difference of opinion are factors of domestic violence, when asked more detailed causes of conflict they come up with all everyday issues of egoism, power relations, jealousy, family politics, household work etc. All these issues leading to violent behaviour are definitely not results of alcoholism or economic problems. So, the factors of alcoholism or economic problems may be regarded as initial triggers, but they may not be the exclusive cause of violence within home.

NFHS (4) report of 2015-16 shows that among males who committed physical violence 44.1% consumed alcohol but 55.9% did not consumed alcohol. NFHS (5) report of 2019-21 shows that, in Goa, 59% consume alcohol, but level of domestic violence is as less as 8.3%. Therefore, alcoholism can never be directly correlated with domestic violence. Similarly, we can see domestic violence in well off families beyond slum area on the everyday issues mentioned by the respondents here. Likewise, different studies also indicate that children's issues are not original cause of domestic violence, they may some excuses only to initiate violence. (Walker, 1979) Therefore, it cannot be the problem of alcoholism, economic condition, children's issue that are the actual

cause of domestic violence, but it is the problem of values, particularly the patriarchal values of power relations that are exercised by the people.

#### IV. Who are involved in conflict?

7.78% male respondents out of 50% and 6.67% out of 50% female respondents say that they themselves are engaged in violence. Spouse are responsible for conflict – said by 8.89% male and 6.67% female respondents. Others are involved in the violence according to 17.78% male and 17.78% females. So, it is really great that respondents accepted that they themselves are perpetrators. The ‘others’ include relatives like uncles, aunts, brothers as mentioned by male respondents and sister-in-law (nanad) and her husband, mother-in-law as mentioned by the female respondents. Many respondents say that, many relatives who are outsiders still interfere with the family matters and become a source of conflict within home.

#### V. Impact of Domestic Violence on family

The respondents report that when acts of violence like verbal abuse, beating, forcing to do something, comparing with others, rude behaviour etc. take place on them they feel insulted. This means, though such behaviour is regular and mostly normalized are definitely not desired by the inhabitants of the slum area. The respondents do admit that domestic violence in any form from verbal abuse to physical assault hamper the daily routine of the family, destroy properties, lead to mental instability.

**Table – 7: Types of Damage Resulting from Domestic Violence**

Damage Caused	Male	Female	Total
Waste of working hours	28 (31.11%)	21 (23.33%)	49 (54.44%)
Physical illness	21 (23.33%)	18 (20%)	39 (43.33%)
Mental stress	18 (20%)	25 (27.78%)	43 (47.78%)
Children's education harmed	6 (6.67%)	11 (12.22%)	17 (18.89%)
Goods damaged	3 (3.33%)	7 (7.78%)	10 (11.11%)

Economic loss and disturbance	2 (2.22%)	0	2 (2.22%)
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Source: Field Study by Activism

Most of the respondents report more than one impact of domestic violence. From the above table it is found that more males report about waste of working hours and physical illness as major consequences of violence. On the other females experience the mental stress and they are more concerned about children's education and goods damaged during the physical violence.

### VI. Who becomes the Sufferers and how they response

Among the 50% male respondents 21.11% reports that they themselves suffer as consequence of violence and 13.33% says others in the family suffer. On the other, 27.78% out of 50% female respondents suffer themselves and 11.11% says others in the family suffer. For others, the respondents refer to either whole family or aged people like parents or children or sometimes spouse. Therefore, from the study it is revealed that not only women but anybody can be the victim of domestic violence. As domestic violence is often equated with intimate partner violence and victims mostly being women, the present study is a kind of eye opener, which exposes the true nature of domestic violence.

Table 8: Sufferers and their response to the situation of conflict

Gender	Who in the family suffers most of the violence?		6. What is your response to the situations of conflicts created by others?											
			Remain Silent			Quarrel with others		Try to make others understand			Went outside home			
			M/O/S	N/NA	Total	M/O/S	N/NA	Total	M/O/S	N/NA	Total	M/O/S	N/NA	Total
Male 45 (50%)	Self-sufferer	19 (21.11%)	14 (15.56%)	5 (5.56%)	19 (21.11%)	6 (6.67%)	13 (14.44%)	19 (21.11%)	13 (14.44%)	6 (6.67%)	19 (21.11%)	15 (16.67%)	4 (4.44%)	19 (21.11%)
	not Self-sufferer	12 (13.33%)	4 (4.44%)	8 (8.89%)	12 (13.33%)	1 (1.11%)	11 (12.22%)	12 (13.33%)	10 (11.11%)	2 (2.22%)	12 (13.33%)	7 (7.78%)	5 (5.56%)	12 (13.33%)
	NA	14 (15.56%)	6 (6.67%)	8 (8.89%)	14 (15.56%)	2 (2.22%)	12 (13.33%)	14 (15.56%)	5 (5.56%)	9 (10%)	14 (15.56%)	4 (4.44%)	10 (11.11%)	14 (15.56%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	24 (26.67%)	21	<b>45 (50%)</b>	9 (10%)	36 (40%)	<b>45 (50%)</b>	28 (31.11%)	17 (18.89%)	<b>45 (50%)</b>	26 (28.89%)	19 (21.11%)	<b>45 (50%)</b>

Female 45 (50%)	Self-sufferer	25 (27.78%)	15 (16.67%)	10 (11.11%)	25 (27.78%)	12 (13.33%)	13 (14.44%)	25 (27.78%)	17 (18.89%)	8 (8.89%)	25 (27.78%)	8 (8.89%)	17 (18.89%)	25 (27.78%)
	not Self-sufferer	10 (11.11%)	8 (8.89%)	2 (2.22%)	10 (11.11%)	4 (4.44%)	6 (6.67%)	10 (11.11%)	8 (8.89%)	2 (2.22%)	10 (11.11%)	3 (3.33%)	7 (7.78%)	10 (11.11%)
	NA	10 (11.11%)	4 (4.44%)	6 (6.67%)	10 (11.11%)	2 (2.22%)	8 (8.89%)	10 (11.11%)	5 (5.56%)	5 (5.56%)	10 (11.11%)	1 (1.11%)	9 (10%)	10 (11.11%)
<b>Total</b>		45 (50%)	27 (30%)	18 (20%)	45 (50%)	18 (20%)	27 (30%)	45 (50%)	30 (33.33%)	15 (16.67%)	45 (50%)	12 (13.33%)	33 (36.67%)	45 (50%)
<b>Grand Total</b>		90 (100%)	51 (56.67%)	39 (43.33%)	90 (100%)	27 (30%)	63 (70%)	90 (100%)	58 (64.44%)	32 (35.56%)	90 (100%)	38 (42.22%)	52 (57.78%)	90 (100%)

Source – Field study by Activism M- Mostly, O- Often, S- Seldom, N- Never, NA- Not Applicable

Now, if we analyse the responses of the sufferers to the situation of violence, we see that 26.67% out of 50 % male respondents remain silent when he himself or any other suffer, whereas 30% out of 50% female respondents remain silent when she herself or any other suffer in violence. When only 10% male respondent quarrel in such situation, 20% of female respondents quarrel in defence of the violence. 28.89% of male respondents went outside home in such situation, but quite expectedly only 13.33% of female respondents leave home to avoid violence. However, at least 30% of both males and females try to make others understand and stop violence. From another point of view, we see that among the earners, 14.44% of male respondents out of 43.33% and 13.33% of female respondents out of 26.67%, in total 28.89% report to be the sufferers. On the other, 2.22% out of 6.67% male dependents and 10% out of 23.33% female dependents, in total 12.22% report to be the sufferers. This implies that though male earners suffer bit less, females suffer more even if they earn money.

## VII. Strategies and techniques to skip or to resist conflict & violence in everyday life

The study explored that the respondents adopt different strategies to avoid or resist violence. As we have already discussed, many of them remain silent, many try to fight back by arguing, many leave the place of occurrence, or try to make others understand and stop violence. Of course, the strategies of these people change over time, as one of the female respondents point out that during initial days of her

marriage, she used to chew raw rice to keep herself silent against violent behaviour of her husband (*age mukh bondho rakhar jonyo chal chebatam*), but later she gathered courage and complained to the local political leader and also to the police. When males try to avoid violence by getting busy in their work, talk to friends over phone/ listening to music on phone / watch television and sometimes leave home temporarily, females Keep herself busy- in own work / talk to friends over phone/ reads Gita etc. While some males and females even engage in violence, destroying goods, some females report to suffer within their own selves. However, very small number of respondents report the incidents of violence on them to the police or other administrative officials - 4.44% of males and 5.56% of female respondents have gone to the police. They think it is family matter, should not to be made public (*paribarik byapar*), matter of shame. One female respondent says that it would defame her husband (*Swamir nam kharap hobe*). Some even feel that the police itself are very complex entity. Whereas 17.78% of male and 21.11% of female respondents believe that their strategy to avoid violence is totally successful, 5.56% of male respondents accept that their strategy is totally unsuccessful. It has been also found that the respondents having regular interaction with neighbours have higher tendencies of having their strategies totally successful.

### **VIII. Issues of Intolerance and Intolerance leading to Violence**

Male respondents mention several issues that cannot be tolerated, these are- 1) alcoholism 2) problems related to children including inattentiveness of children regarding studies, excessive demands by young son. 3) Economic matters including economic problems, Private property issue, 4) Ego problem/ self-respect, issue of disagreement, among the family members, parents not obeying the respondent, problems due to household work and issues of daily cooking, illness of members of family, 5) Interference of outsiders in family and suggesting negative things, 6) Community problems- issues of washrooms and tap-water, jealousy of community people if others get richer.

On the other, four females mention the issue of 1) alcoholism 2) Problems related to children's issues, particularly, sons' /children's education, daughter teased by neighbours, daughter in law's dress, unemployment and bachelorhood of son, conflict over money between son and daughter in law. 3) Economic matters including financial crisis, private property issues, household issues, space problem, selling household items and consuming alcohol. 4) Ego problem/ self-respect including conflict over disagreement, father-in-law and husband's scoldings over food 5) Problem with spouse including husband's late coming home, extramarital relation, habit of playing cards, habit of beating as intolerable issues. 6) Community problems- issues of washrooms and tap-water.

**Table 9: Intolerance Leading to violent behaviour**

Actions	Gender	Do you think intolerance lead to this violent action?			
		Yes	No	Not Applicable	Grand Total
Verbal Abuse	Male	18 (20%)	19 (21.22%)	8 (8.89%)	45 (50%)
	Female	17 (18.89%)	14 (15.56%)	14 (15.56%)	45 (50%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>35 (38.89%)</b>	<b>33 (36.67%)</b>	<b>22 (24.44%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>
Laying Hand	Male	8 (8.89%)	27 (30%)	10 (11.11%)	45 (50%)
	Female	12 (13.33%)	20 (22.22%)	13 (14.44%)	45 (50%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>20 (22.22%)</b>	<b>47 (52.22%)</b>	<b>23 (25.56%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>
Fighting	Male	5 (5.56%)	30 (33.33%)	10 (11.11%)	45 (50%)
	Female	7 (7.78%)	24 (26.67%)	14 (15.56%)	45 (50%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>12 (13.33%)</b>	<b>54 (60%)</b>	<b>24 (26.67%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>
Destroying things	Male	7 (7.78%)	29 (32.22%)	9 (10%)	45 (50%)
	Female	6 (6.67%)	24 (26.67%)	15 (16.67%)	45 (50%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>13 (14.44%)</b>	<b>53 (58.89%)</b>	<b>24 (26.67%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

The table indicates a clear tendency that intolerance may lead to lower level of violence like verbal abuse, but, according to the respondents it is less likely to lead to physical violence.

### **IX. Public Conversation – a way out to the problem of domestic violence**

Activism foundation in its last phase of research performed the most important part- the public conversation. Unlike any other research project Activism Foundation do not stop suggesting or recommending policies only, but returns to the field with

all analyses and suggestions. In the present research project also, the public conversation was held, where the main research findings were shared with the respondents, the problems were discussed and finally the suggestions to overcome the problem were shared. The whole process was conducted in an interactive way. In fact, it has been found in the study that like any other problem, the problem of domestic violence is also countered by the victims naturally, as they try to manage the situation according to their own understanding. However, though few of them say that they could manage to adjust the situation and are successful in their strategy to avoid violence, they could not able to stop it for ever or many could not handle the situation successfully. The research work by Activism Foundation tried to give some probable solutions for those conditions. Domestic violence affects a large section of population of this slum area. The study discovered that almost 76% of the respondents directly suffered or experienced others to suffer such violence. Thus, understanding the gravity of the problem, we needed some concrete and appropriate remedies for the people. It is also understood that besides in extreme cases people do hesitate to take help of the police and administration, rather people do not even move out of their home to seek help from the outsiders in the fear of defamation and being labelled. In this context, psychological models and feminist theories show some avenues. The concept of Responsibility has been referred to in such situations. Saunders (1996) shows developing a sense of responsibility for one's own action make him/her more accountable and definitely reduce violence. Besides personal responsibility, relational responsibility emphasizes mutual care, respect and non-violence (Held, 2006). In similar way Rosenbaum et. al. (2001) has shown the importance of empathy training on men to reduce intimate partner violence (IPV) and explored that after empathy training, they realize the impact of his violent activities on their partners and as a result become responsible, which restraint them from further violent tendencies. At the societal level, De Beauvoir (1948) proclaimed that social movements and educational programmes promoting relational care and shared responsibility challenge the patriarchal norms at the basis of domestic violence, thus producing cultural change. Now, professional psychological

programmes such as empathy training, accountability programme etc. need people to reach out of home to some external agencies, which again is difficult for many in the slum area. Therefore, the Activism foundation suggested a model which can be followed by the victims and his/her family to overcome the problem of domestic violence. Following the feminist political theorist Iris Marion Young (2011), the Forward-Looking Model of Responsibility was recommended for them. According to this model, individuals should not look backward and blame others for any violent situation. Rather the victim should look forward and understand his/her responsibility as also try to make the perpetrator responsible through a systematic process. This would definitely help the victims to reduce domestic violence on them.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that the very concept of domestic violence is interpreted according to the understanding of the people, whereby significant amount of people does not consider acts of verbal abuse, laying hands, beating, forcing to do something like sex, destroying goods etc. by the family members like husband or wife, parents etc. Again, if such acts carried out in response to the respondent's wrong doings, then it is not considered violence by a large percentage of the respondents. The issues which were initially understood by the respondents as key factors of violence, like alcoholism, economic problem, children's issues etc., were found to be only influencing factors of domestic violence. The main factors being the patriarchal value of power relation within home and sometimes even from outside home cause domestic violence in everyday life of domesticity. Moreover, by such violence, not only women or wives become victims, others like husbands, aged parents, young children, unmarried girls and boys too suffer in many households. So, an all-encompassing process of solution is to be required to reduce the sufferings of a diverse population, who suffers every day. The study does have challenges and limitations. In fact, the issue of domestic violence is very sensitive, people do hesitate to share such personal information with outsiders. However, the interview schedule did have questions in such a manner that information given in one part could be crosschecked in another. Moreover, the field

investigators tried to build a good rapport with most of the respondents, so that reliable data could be collected as much as possible. Further information collected through survey were also validated through the focus group discussion. However, with limited monetary resources and man power the large-scale study could not be conducted, which would definitely provide more extensive data.

Above all, it cannot be denied that the study on domestic violence by Activism Foundation has been a unique experience not only for the researchers of the organization but also for the people for whom the research was carried out, because for the first time perhaps the researcher and the people researched on met together to discuss the solutions of the problem. The forward- looking model of responsibility addressed the needs of all the respondents who suffer and Activism foundation do hope that the model and strategies would help them in dealing with the problem with more confidence and power.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> The sample size has been calculated by using Raosoft, Inc. sample size calculator. For a population of 1050, margin of error 10%, confidence level 95%, response distribution 50%, the recommended sample size is 89. Retrieved from <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>

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## **Normalization of Domestic Violence: A Gramscian Analysis of Normalization in the Maniktala Slum Area, Kolkata**

**Tias Roy**<sup>1</sup>

Domestic violence remains an extensive yet often normalized form of gender-based oppression in all over the world, as well as in India. This article examines how this kind of violence becomes “normal” in everyday family life using Antonio Gramsci’s concept of normalization under cultural hegemony. based on both quantitative and qualitative data from 90 respondents (45 male and 45 female) in the Maniktala slum area of Kolkata, the study examines how individuals interpret and involve in the acts of domestic violence in their family. Using survey and focus group discussion methods, the findings reveal that 57.78% of respondents consider domestic violence and intolerance in the family as “not a big deal” or a normal or a private matter. Both male and female participants normalize violence and rationalize it as a product of economic vulnerabilities, alcoholism, emotional tension, and cultural expectations of endurance and privacy. The study argues that the normalization as an expression of hegemonic ideology that sustain domestic violence through social consent rather than oppression. The findings highlighted the need for some critical interventions to challenge this hegemonic “common sense” and promote alternative narratives of equality and non-violence.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, normalization, Gramsci, hegemony, cultural consent, gender ideology.

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The problem of domestic violence in India remains an endless and complex social issue which challenges gender equality and justice across the class, cast etc. though some legal framework like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) exists in India, the practice of domestic violence continues and even normalized within familial and community settings. According to National family Health Survey-5 (2019-21), 32% married women aged 18 to 45 experience physical, sexual or emotional violence from their spouse in India. 29% of ever married women experienced spousal physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. One fourth of these women suffered from physical injuries like burn or broken bones. Though this trend has been decreased from NFHS-4, but this scenario is still in the alarming situation. Shockingly only 14% of women who experienced domestic violence they sought help either from family or police or other institutions, but 77% of suffered women never told anybody about their experience. This reflects the situation across India. NFHS-5 also provided data on domestic violence particularly in West Bengal. This report shows that 29.7% of married women experienced any kind of spousal emotional, sexual or physical violence in West Bengal. It means 3 of 10 married women in West Bengal experienced spousal violence. Another report published by WHO (2021) on the prevalence of violence against women shows that India's national lifetime prevalence is approximately 30% to 33%. In past 12 months the prevalence is approximately 20% among ever married women aged 15 to 49 years. It means, 1 in 3 women in India experienced physical or sexual or emotional violence from their husbands or intimate partners.

All the reports are repeatedly showing that the condition of married women in India is not always good due to the dreadfulness of the domestic violence. Though there are several sources of protection of women against domestic violence exist in India, reports showed that only few women seek help from these sources or share their horrible experiences of domestic violence. One of the main causes of this non-sharing is the process of normalization of domestic violence. Some cultural beliefs and values which prioritize family unity over individual rights, along with economic

dependency, lack of education and social stigma, contribute to the tolerance of violence in the familial sphere. The report of NFHS-5 (2019-21) stated that many men and women in India still believe a husband is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances. This is a clear indication of normalization of violence. Almost 45% of women and 44% of men agreed that husband's beating to his wife is justified for some reasons, such as: if she goes out without him, if she neglects her children, if she argues or refuses to sex or if she fails to cook food properly etc. According to them, these are the fault of women and in these situations, beating is a very normal and justified.

To find the actual scenario of domestic violence in slum areas of Kolkata, a study on the Domestic Violence was held in Maniktala slum area of Kolkata by activism Foundation. The result shows that here also domestic violence often appears as an imminent part of everyday life. sometimes perceptions like "family matters should remain private" strengthen the patriarchal hegemony and discourage any kind of external or institutional intervention.

This study examines how domestic violence particularly in Maniktala Slum area of Kolkata becomes normalized through cultural and ideological processes on the basis of Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The research explores how men and women accept dominant patriarchal values, converting constrain into consent, and how these beliefs shape their everyday understanding of domestic violence and intolerance.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Many research on domestic violence in India identified that it is not only an individual act of aggression, it is a structural and cultural manifestation of patriarchy. Dobash and Dobash (1992) argue that domestic violence is not entirely an interpersonal aggression, it is an institutionalized form of gendered control, which is legitimised by social norms. They also argue that violence against women is deeply rooted in

patriarchal social structures which sustain male dominance and control over women within families and intimate relationships. According to them domestic violence is not an individual or psychological problem, it is a systematic issue related to gender inequality and traditional norms of male authority. According to Connell (1987) gender is not a simple individual trait or biological difference, it is constructed through social practice on the basis of three major dimensions: Power relation, Production system and Emotional relation. In the South Asian context, Niaz (2003) argues that violence against women is a widespread and multifaceted problem, which is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms, economic dependency, and discriminatory practices. She analysed violence against women in several categories including domestic violence. she also explored how cultural beliefs often justify or normalize such violence, showing that it as a private or family matter rather than a criminal or human rights issue. This justification resulted mental health impact on the victims. She also criticised the legal and institutional responses to violence against women in her article. Kumar (2012) showed how violence exists in the name of family privacy and male authority. She also stated that how contemporary women's movements triggered by issues like dowry deaths, rape, domestic violence, and workplace discrimination. These movements challenged state institutions and patriarchal norms. Recent studies by Sen and Dasgupta (2018) explore how domestic violence in India becomes normalized and culturally justified, rather than being considered as a violation of rights or a form of abuse. They showed that patriarchal values, social expectations, and cultural scripts construct violence as a legitimate or even necessary part of maintaining marital and familial order. This cultural normalization of violence means that abuse is often dismissed as a "private matter," a form of discipline, or an expression of love and care. They highlighted that both men and women participate to justify this logic through everyday language, rituals, and community norms. Bhattacharyya (2019), in her paper showed that Indian society often portrays women facing domestic abuse solely as victims, which overlooks their agency, resilience, and everyday strategies of survival. Bhattacharyya stresses that women are not always passive sufferers—they often negotiate, resist, and adapt within patriarchal and socio-economic constraints.

she also argued about the limitation of legal approaches. According to the author many women either cannot access legal remedies or choose not to, due to social stigma, economic dependency, or family pressures. For these reasons she calls for a reframing of domestic violence which will move beyond legal framework and generate a new perspective that includes agency, intersectionality, and social context. Shrimoyee, Roychowdhury and Dhamija (2025) analysed women's attitude towards physical intimate partner violence on the basis of several rounds of National family Health Survey data and found that over the years fewer women accepted physical violence by their intimate partner in any circumstances, which means women are gradually declining the acceptance of physical violence. Despite the decline, a considerable proportion of women still believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife for certain reasons like, neglecting children, arguing, refusing sex, or going out without permission. These studies also showed that how cultural beliefs and moral virtues transform violence into an accepted aspect of marital life.

From a theoretical aspect, Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony provides critical understanding of normalization. According to Gramsci, hegemony works when dominant values are accepted as "common sense," producing consent rather than resistance. In patriarchal systems, through this consent, gender inequality and the domestic violence become morally justified and socially accepted. This empirical research examines how hegemonic ideology shapes interpretations of domestic violence in the Maniktala slum area of Kolkata. Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony provides a critical understanding to interpret the normalization of domestic violence. Gramsci (1971) argued that domination is maintained not only through coercive force but through the acceptance of dominant ideologies, which society considers as "natural" or "moral."

To build on this theoretical foundation, Yang's (2025) article Antonio Gramsci's Political Philosophy on Culture argues that hegemonic power is produced and reproduced through cultural institutions like family, religion, education, and media. Yang's analysis backs up this study's observation that domestic violence in the

Maniktala slum is often seen as normal due to shared cultural beliefs, where patriarchal norms become accepted as common sense. Mayo (2020) works through socialization and learning instead of coercion. Mayo's work illustrates how daily experiences and informal education influence how people accept dominant ideologies. This view fits with the study's finding that lower education levels are linked to higher acceptance of domestic violence. Respondents may not have the awareness needed to question dominant norms. Leśniak (2012) highlights how dominant ideology changes structural control into moral legitimacy. Leśniak's analysis shows why both men and women may help maintain patriarchal norms that portray domestic violence as acceptable or natural. This supports the study's argument that dominant consent, rather than direct force, drives the acceptance of violence.

Within patriarchal structures, this manifests as the belief that assailant's aggression is legitimate and the silence of victim is normal, because domestic violence is absolutely a private matter and a routine matter of everyday life. It reflects the success of Gramsci's hegemonic ideology: where any kind of force becomes unnecessary because according to the victim, domestic violence is an inevitable part of everyday life and for that reason, is very "common" and "normal".

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted by the Activism Foundation in the Maniktala slum area of Kolkata, characterized by dense population, limited economic opportunities, poor infrastructure and established patriarchal family systems, which contribute gender inequality, violence and intolerance. To explore every dimension of the domestic violence in their everyday life, a mixed-method approach was applied in this study. For in-depth understanding, both the quantitative and qualitative methods were used to capture participant's understandings and the process of normalization of violence within family relationships. A total of 90 respondents (45 male and 45 female) were selected by quota sampling. Participants represented from various educational, marital, and caste backgrounds, including married, unmarried, widowed, and divorced individuals. The quota sampling for data collection was selected because through a

pilot survey we noticed that both male and female are victimised by domestic violence. On the other hand, both the genders are playing active role to initiate domestic violence in that particular area. Activism tried to find the actual trend and the strategies to combat their everyday sufferings from domestic violence in Maniktala slum area, Kolkata through their study.

The data were collected by two different tools:

- **Survey:** Semi structured questionnaires were used to explore participant's understanding of domestic violence, personal experiences, everyday sufferings, playing active or passive role to initiate or combat domestic violence and views on domestic violence whether it is acceptable or "normal".
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Separate discussions with men and women were conducted explored their understandings, perceptions, everyday experiences, justifications, and responses to the domestic violence.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to identify major trends in perception and behaviour of domestic violence, and qualitative data were thematically analysed to explore their responses to domestic violence and common ideological patterns of normalization.

### **Quantitative Findings**

57.78% of respondents considered domestic violence as "not a big deal" or "normal" part of family life. It indicates how domestic violence deeply being normalized within the community. Men (30%) were slightly more likely than women (27.78%) accepted violence as normal. It indicates that normalization is not only imposed by men, it shared across genders. Normalization became the part of cultural norms and social values. Verbal abuse (32.22%) and physical acts such as laying hands (11.12%), beating (11.11%) were most normalized, on the other hand, forced sex (16%) and social isolation were less recognized as violence. Illiterate and primary-educated respondents showed the highest levels of acceptance towards domestic violence. It identifies the

strong correlation between literacy and resistance to the violence. Normalization was highest among married participants (39%) than unmarried or separated participants, it reflects the tendency to follow the patriarchal social norms among the people live in the Maniktala Slum Area of Kolkata.

The findings show that economic hardship and alcoholism significantly influence the acceptance of domestic violence in the Maniktala slum area. The data indicates that financial issues are a primary source of family conflict. Nearly 51.11% of respondents said their families often experience conflicts related to money problems. Alcoholism complicates this issue. While most respondents, about 67.78%, said conflicts due to alcoholism never happen, a notable proportion, around 22.22%, reported that these conflicts occur frequently, occasionally, or mostly within their families.

The way that alcoholism and economic hardship contribute to the normalization of domestic violence in the Maniktala slum area is greatly influenced by education. Respondents with lower levels of education—especially men and women with only a primary education and illiteracy—report higher rates of conflict pertaining to both economic issues and alcoholism. Alcohol-related disputes are more likely to be viewed by illiterate and primary-educated respondents as commonplace disruptions rather than severe forms of abuse, and financial stress is commonly mentioned as a justifiable cause of rage and aggression. Higher secondary and graduate-level educated respondents, on the other hand, overwhelmingly state that such conflicts "never" occur, indicating a greater ability to critically assess and oppose the normalization of violence.

### **Qualitative Insights**

Some qualitative data revealed the understanding and responses to domestic violence of participants. Both men and women have accepted their everyday experience of domestic violence. But a major number of respondents justify or normalized such violences with some statements like "When many people live together, conflict is natural", or "Violence happens in every family; it's not serious."

Not only that, a number of female respondents answered that the tendency of alcohol consumption of the male members of the family is too high, this is one of the major causes of conflict and violence within the family and this tendency is very common at their place. Some of them also said that violence occurs due to the financial crisis and this is a valid reason for anger and conflict among members and finally it resulted violence within the family. Some other responses we got which established that violence is normal and justified. Some of the female respondents said that verbal abuse and physical violence both are accepted if they failed to fulfil their familial duty properly (e.g., if they do not cook properly, if they neglect their children etc.). we also get some responses from both the male and female respondents like conflict or violence within the family is absolutely a private matter and maintaining privacy is a virtue, for that reason many victims of that area did not share or sought help from anybody or institution. These statements reflect not only the normalization of violence but also the justification of sustaining the patriarchal structure in the family as well as in that particular community. both men and women rationalize violence as functional, response to stress or poverty or the means of family harmony, rather than the abuse of power.

Yes, this is right that a major section of respondents accepted and justified domestic violences in several ways, but still few respondents, both male and female aged 30-39 refused to normalize domestic violence in any manner. Though they declined normalization, but still no data shows where they raised their voice against such violences. Most of the time they remain silent or try to cope up with the situation to avoid conflict within family and also they opposed any external intervention in family affairs, reflecting how hegemonic norms shape commonsense beliefs, rooted in Gramsci's notion of Cultural Hegemony that domestic violence constitutes a private matter rather than a social concern.

## **Discussion**

The study's findings proved that how domestic violence is being normalized through hegemonic ideology. In Gramsci's words, the moral and cultural order of patriarchy

operates as a form of consensual domination—violence exists, because it is accepted as common sense.

In the context of Maniktala slum area high acceptance among married respondents illustrates how marital ideology hardens 'common sense' (hegemony), even when harm is recognized. On the other hand, assailant's aggression is justified as stress related matter or anger issues or impact of economical vulnerability or the result of alcohol consumption or the lack of facilities in the slum area. Both perspectives indicate the function of cultural consent, where gender inequality power relation is sustained through moral reasoning rather than compulsion. With the help of Gramsci's idea, it can be said that hegemony is persist through everyday practices and beliefs. Domestic violence thus becomes a cultural discipline or norm rather than an act perceived as force or oppression. This process of normalization discourages any kind of resistance and external intervention. The previously mentioned studies also demonstrated how this kind of hegemonic norms and beliefs justify and normalize domestic violence as a private familial issue rather than a broader social threat, thereby reinforcing a commonsense understanding of marital values that marginalizes structural power relations. In slum areas like Maniktala slum area characterized by lack of access to education, insufficient facilities and economic vulnerabilities, these hegemonic ideologies can more easily rationalize ambiguous marital values as moral virtues, thereby reinforcing unequal power relations within the household.

Though marital values and moral virtues play a crucial role to normalize the domestic violence, other "common sense" regarding domestic violence also influence the normalization process- like, alcoholism and economic problems in Maniktala slum area. This pattern is especially noticeable among married men and women, indicating that household tensions are exacerbated by marital responsibilities, unstable income, unemployment, and everyday survival pressures. However, these conflicts are frequently morally justified and normalized rather than seen as a structural issue with roots in poverty and inequality. Economic stress-related violence is often

interpreted by both male and female respondents as a "natural" emotional reaction, which turns structural vulnerability into personal guilt and justifies family violence. It is commonly acknowledged that consumption of alcohol can lead to violence, but it is also accepted as a justification for abusive conduct. Alcohol-related violence is frequently written off as temporary, unintentional, or immoral, further ingraining it into "common sense." According to Gramscian theory, this illustrates how cultural hegemony operates, with alcoholism and financial hardship serving as hegemonic justifications that transform coercion into consent. By normalizing violence as an inevitable result of poverty, stress, and male frustration rather than opposing it, these explanations uphold patriarchal power relations through moral reasoning as opposed to coercion.

In Maniktala Slum area education is playing a crucial role to promote this hegemonic common sense. Because lower educational attainment restricts access to critical awareness, dominant patriarchal ideologies are able to portray violence resulting from poverty or alcohol consumption as normal, inevitable, or morally acceptable. Alcoholism and economic stress serve as hegemonic justifications in these situations, transforming structural injustices into personalized explanations and maintaining consent to violence. However, by encouraging a greater understanding of violence as unacceptable rather than inevitable, higher education seems to undermine this hegemonic logic. As a result, education becomes more than just a sociodemographic factor; it also becomes a crucial site of ideological conflict that affects whether domestic violence is viewed as a social injustice or accepted as normal family behavior..

To counter these hegemonic ideologies, the commonsense understanding of domestic violence must be disrupted through counter hegemony. Drawing on Gramsci's notion of "good sense", a more critical and reflective understanding of domestic violence should emerge through heightened social consciousness, enabling individuals and communities to challenge the dominant ideology that normalizes such violence.

## **Conclusion**

The study in Maniktala slum area powerfully demonstrates that how the cultural hegemony works through the normalization of violence. This study experienced that both men and women participate to sustain the patriarchal system through their cultural norms, social values and reproducing the belief that domestic violence is a normal part of family life, which is a clear example of the success of cultural hegemony, where domination persists through consent.

To counter this, only the legal interventions or legal protection are not sufficient. Though these interventions are essential but through the transformation of consciousness and culture this process of normalization can be changed. Only through the appropriate education, the belief of “private matter” or “familial matter” can be challenged. Gramsci’s notion of “good sense” can play a positive role to challenge these vague patriarchal values and develop a critical understanding of domestic violence. Once “common sense” regarding domestic violence changes by the “good sense”, the beliefs and conceptions that normalize it will automatically change as well and it will definitely be considered as a broader social threat.

In conclusion, the normalization of domestic violence in the Maniktala slum area of Kolkata reflects a complex interplay of socio-economic challenges, gender inequality and systemic barriers that silence victims and allow abusive behavior to persist. While this study contributes many important observations, it is limited by a relatively small sample size, time constraints, and the use of self-reported narratives that may be influenced by fear, stigma, or social desirability. Additionally, the findings represent only one urban slum community and may not fully observed the varied realities of other marginalized neighbourhoods across Kolkata or West Bengal. Future research should focus on ethnographic follow-ups that enable deeper, long-term immersion within the community. Such continuous interaction can help capture significant shifts in gender dynamics, power relations, and community responses to violence over time. Further investigation into preventive interventions and the role of local support networks can also offer valuable pathways toward sustainable social

transformation. Ultimately, dismantling the normalization of domestic violence in informal settlements demands ongoing scholarly attention, empathetic community collaboration, and strengthened institutional efforts to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of all individuals.

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## **Contributing Factors in Curbing Domestic Violence: Evidence from a Field Study in Maniktala Slum, Kolkata**

**Poulami Ghosh**<sup>1</sup>

Domestic violence remains a profoundly distressing global issue, shaped by patriarchal norms, gendered inequalities, power relations, and structural disparities, and is widely examined across disciplines such as law and jurisprudence, policy studies, psychology, mental health education and frameworks and social research. Despite extensive scholarly and policy attention, the lived experiences of victims continue to reveal persistent forms of distress. In this backdrop, the Activism Foundation for Social Research and Action undertook a field-based study in Maniktala slum, Kolkata to deeply examine how the residents confront and practically engage themselves with domestic violence and how their everyday negotiations facilitate themselves to pave their way to sustain. Study reveals structural and interpersonal triggers exist there—including economic insecurity, child related issues, disagreements among the family members, substance abuse, and relational conflict etc. The coping strategies adopted by sufferers help to escape immediate harms temporarily however fail to serve in long run. This study works with the idea of ethics of care and forward-looking responsibility to create potential strategies that victims themselves can develop to prevent or curb domestic abuse beyond formal policy frameworks. Study concludes with public conversation addressing responsibility mapping dialogues, setting boundary, forum-theatre, and framing strategic actions.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, coping strategies, relational responsibilities, boundary setting, social-learning, community engagements.

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Domestic violence (DV) is a multifaceted global concern encompassing a range of abusive behaviours that occurs within intimate or domestic relationships. It has increasingly been recognized not only as a major public health issue but also as a violation of fundamental human rights. Although a universally standardized definition of domestic violence remains elusive due to cultural, national, and contextual variations, international agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have provided critical frameworks for understanding its scope and manifestations.

WHO defines domestic violence as psychological or emotional, physical, and sexual violence, or threats of such violence, inflicted by a family member or intimate partner (World Health Organization [WHO], 2010). This kind of abuse may be perpetrated by an intimate or marital partner, cohabiting partner, parent, sibling, or another individual closely associated within the domestic sphere, and frequently occurs within the premise of home. Similarly, Human Rights Watch (1995) defines domestic violence as a pattern of behaviours—physical, sexual, economic, verbal, and emotional abuse—used singly or in combination to establish and maintain power and control over another family member.

Furthermore, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (United Nations [U.N.], 1993, Article 2) defines violence against women as physical, sexual, or psychological violence occurring within the family, within the community, or through acts condoned by the state. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (U.N., 1948) laid the groundwork for subsequent international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (U.N., 1978). Together, these covenants affirm that human rights apply equally to men and women, even in a domestic sphere.

## **Global Context of Domestic Violence**

WHO indicates that, one in the three women, approximately 30% worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partner or non-partner during their lifetime at the global level (WHO, 2018). The World Health Organization's Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women (2005) also revealed that intimate partner violence (IPV) is not a 'private' issue rather it's a pervasive global issue, with lifetime prevalence rates of physical and/or sexual partner violence among ever-partnered women varying significantly—from approximately 15% in regions like Ethiopia to as high as 71% in some sites in Japan. These figures highlight IPV not only as a grave human rights violation but also as a critical public health crisis worldwide. IPV affects millions of women regardless of socioeconomic status or geography, contributing to adverse physical, mental, and reproductive health outcomes, and imposing substantial societal and economic costs. "Violence against women is one of humanity's oldest and most pervasive injustices, yet still one of the least acted upon," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "No society can call itself fair, safe or healthy while half its population lives in fear. Ending this violence is not only a matter of policy; it is a matter of dignity, equality and human rights. Behind every statistic is a woman or girl whose life has been forever altered. Empowering women and girls is not optional, it's a prerequisite for peace, development and health. A safer world for women is a better world for everyone." (World Health Organization, 2025).

## **National Context of Domestic Violence**

In India Domestic Violence remains as a pervasive crisis, with official NCRB data showing 133,676 cases of cruelty by husband or relatives in 2023 alone, the largest share of 4.48 lakh total crimes against women, yet this captures only a fraction due to widespread underreporting (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). Much grimmer reality has been revealed by the surveys like NFHS-5— around 31% of ever-married women aged 18-49 experienced spousal violence in the year before the survey,

including 28.5% physical, 13.1% emotional, and 5.7% sexual forms, far exceeding police records (International Institute for Population Sciences & MOHFW, 2021). Though, researchers have consistently emphasized the limitations in these official statistics concerning the underreporting and data quality. Subsequently, the actual incidence of domestic violence in India is likely to be considerably much higher than the numbers preserved by national crime data (Dalal & Lindqvist, 2012; Dandona et al., 2022).

WHO (2018) reports that, almost 26% of ever-married or partnered women aged 15 years and above had experienced IPV, with a higher prevalence of 35% in South Asian region, that includes India. Self-reported experiences of domestic violence among ever-married Indian women range between 33% and 41%, primarily involving intimate partners. Alarming, the suicide rate among women in India has been reported to be twice the global average (Dandona et al., 2022). In 2019, over 400,000 cases of crimes against women were registered, with nearly one-third categorized as “cruelty by husband or his relatives” according to NCRB reports. Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), added in 1983, aims to shield married women from cruelty by their husbands or in-laws—think relentless dowry demands or daily harassment that breaks spirits and bodies (India Code: Indian Penal Code, 1860). The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) of 2005 built on this with broader safeguards, covering emotional, economic, and sexual abuse, plus remedies like protection orders and residence rights for countless women trapped in toxic homes (India Code: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005). Yet, despite these laws, NCRB data logged over 133,000 such cases in 2023, signalling that legal tools alone can't dismantle deep-seated cultural norms or weak enforcement, leaving many silently enduring abuses.

Furthermore, National Family Health Survey (NFHS) which relies on self-reported experiences reveals far higher prevalence of domestic violence cases than the official police records portraying a hidden suffering which has been unnoticed, ignored and sometimes hidden behind the dark wall of normalisation. NFHS-3 (2005-2006) reports uncovered another severe concerning percentage of woman, nearly 31%, had

endured physical violence and 8.3% of women had faced sexual violence from the intimate partners. The same documentation presents 14% women face emotional abuse and violation, 12% women suffer from less severe physical abuses and 14% women suffer from severe physical violence and 6% of women confront themselves with sexual violence across 29 states (Dalal & Lindqvist, 2012). Collectively, these findings highlight the entrenched and complex nature of domestic violence, both globally and within India, revealing its intersection with gender norms, cultural practices, and systemic inequities. Despite comprehensive legal provisions and international commitments, domestic violence remains a persistent challenge requiring sustained research, policy attention, and community-based interventions grounded in human rights and public health frameworks.

### **Research context and Methodology**

This article stems from the two-years (2023-2025) community-based research project organized by Activism Foundation for Social Research and Action, examining the everyday integration and routinisation of violence within the domestic sphere of the residents of Maniktala slum, precisely 1 and 2 No. Basty, located in Central Kolkata. The objective of this aggregate level case study is not only to interpret or conceptualize violence in inter-personal relation or domestic violence conventionally from policy-centric or legal framework rather exploring practical ways to restore justice by critically intervening into the everyday functioning of an agency. For this purpose, data were gathered through multiple field visits involving face-to-face open interactions in Bengali with community members aged 25 to 65. The study site comprises an estimated population of 1,050 residents and 45 men and 45 women have been interviewed, using a 10% margin of error, a 95% confidence level, and a 50% assumed response -distribution. The sampling method was quota based, being presented in terms of gender and age. With the aid of an online standard sample size calculator, a total of ~90 (of 1,050 residents) community members (45 women and 45 men) were included. The sampling technique has been employed to ensure adequate representation across demographic categories. Structured interviews and gender

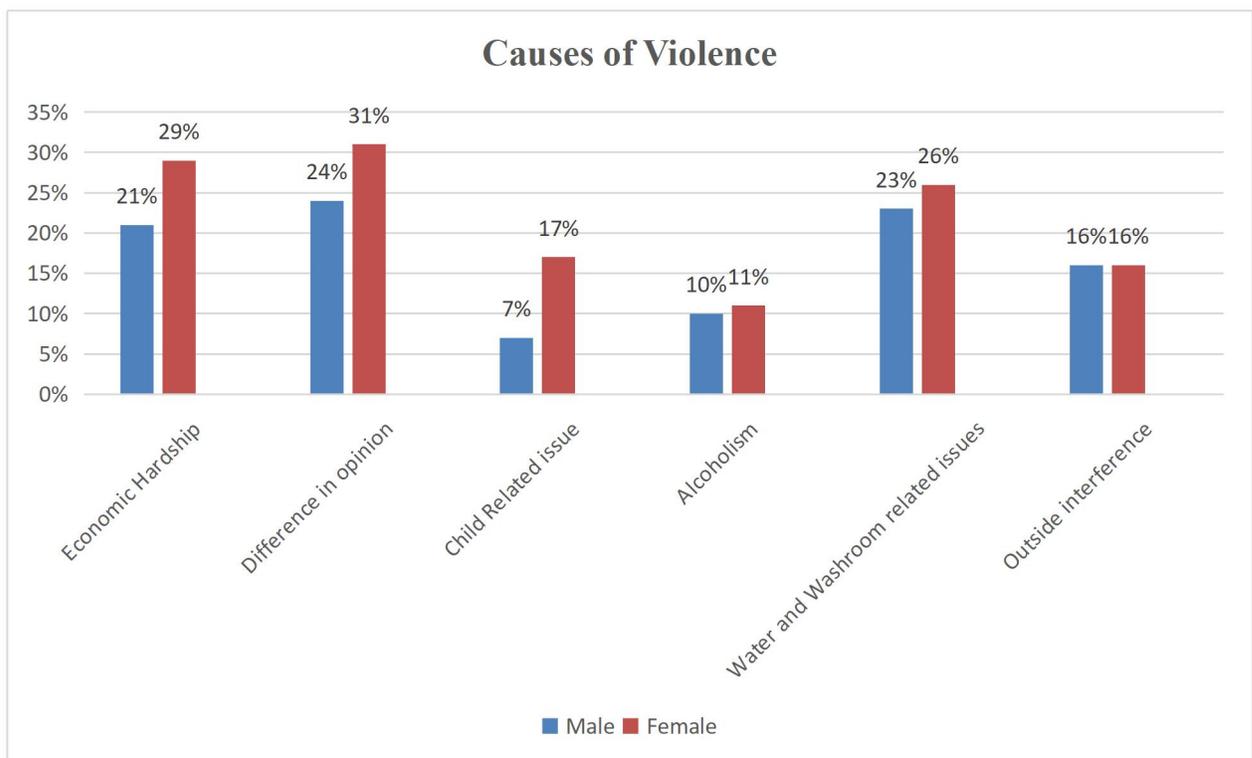
segregated Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) served as the primary data collection tools, enabling the documentation of both individual experiences and collective perspectives. Community entry was enabled by local contacts and permission from the local councillor of Kolkata Corporation considering their careful ethical engagement. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and no incentives were offered to keep the study voluntary and community-based. The identities of the participants are anonymized to maintain confidentiality and privacy. Participants' perspectives actively shaped subsequent phases; for instance, survey findings were shared back with them. The quota-based sample (equal numbers of men and women) also reflected a feminist commitment to inclusivity and to countering gender bias in domestic-violence research that often privileges only women's voices; involving men as respondents and discussants treated gender transformation as a collective responsibility and made men's attitudes analytically necessary alongside women's experiences. These data were subsequently examined through mixed qualitative and quantitative analytical approaches, with field surveys forming the central method of data collection and contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the socio-relational dynamics underpinning domestic violence in the community.

The study revealed that 71.1% of participants are experiencing various forms of conflicts within family, driven by alcoholism, financial precarity, extra-marital affairs, water accessibility, child rearing and sometimes outsider's interference. However, the respondents are intended to justify these conflicts as "common incidents in slum areas", "temporary outburst" or "crises driven aggressiveness". Although, 58% respondents acknowledged the conflict is not merely a part of life which could be normalized. They added, verbal abuse, sudden outburst, physical harm, emotional abuse, property damage prevalently causes them exhaustion and suffering. The conventional policy frameworks or legal jurisprudence may not always be able to intervene in the domestic sphere; however, despite the existence of normalising patterns, structural disparities, gendered differences, and complex community dynamics, the question remains of how the agency could adopt a forward-looking

approach to emancipate the state of her/his living. Albeit, the findings and analysis derived from a specific community cannot affirm the appropriateness universally.

### Findings: Structural Stressors as Common Justifications

The rigorous field visit at Maniktala and open interaction revealed- Violence is the outcome of frustration caused by financial disparity, addiction, extra marital affairs, child rearing issues, water inaccessibility and merely disagreements among family members. The offenders use some common excuses which can also be combined with justifications because it is the victim who are viewed as triggering the 'explosion of violence' and therefore it is victim who is to blame. These accounts underscore the structural vulnerabilities that shape patterns of domestic strife in urban slums.



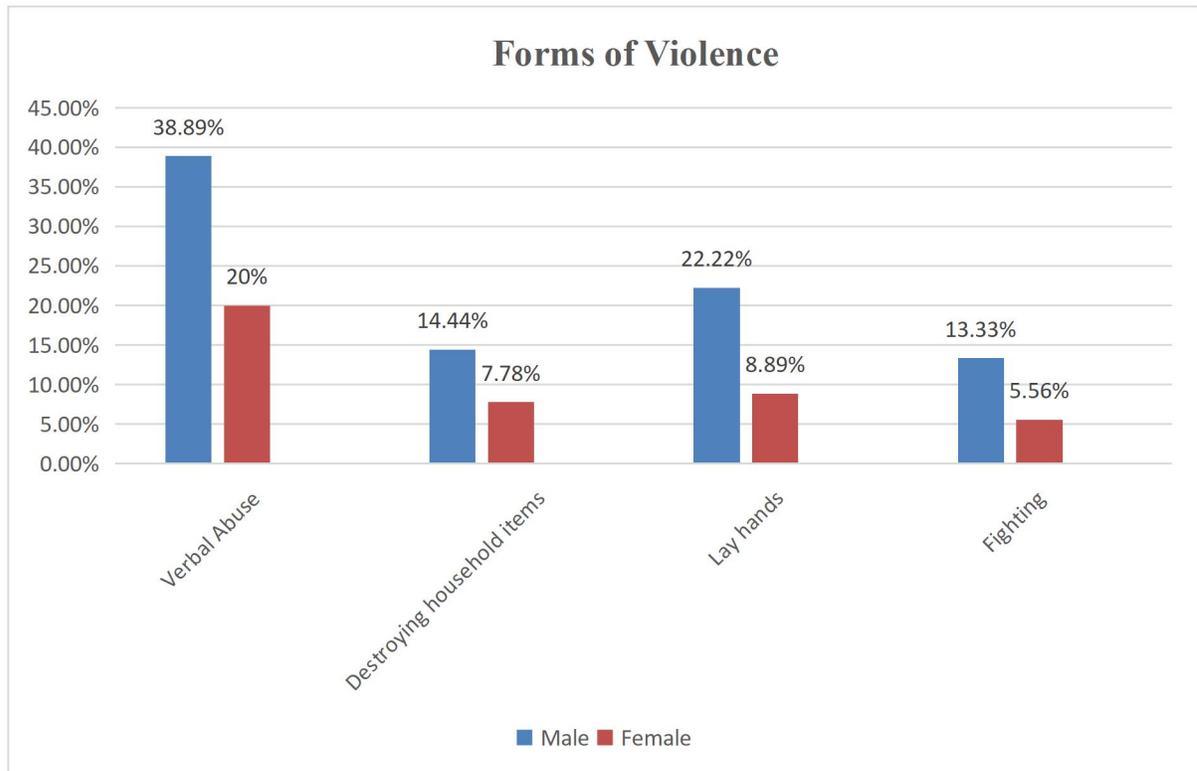
Source: Field Study by Activism

The above figure shows how the research participants identify the causes of violence based on their gender. Report shows, the most common justifications behind the violence, is the idea of 'nagging' partner or a partner who rants a lot. As reported by offenders, partner's constant nagging regarding financial problems is seen as

triggers causing anger burst, verbal and physical abuse. The above figure portrays that 21% male respondents and 29% female respondents considered financial hardships as the major driver for violence at their home. To respondents, this financial precarity often exacerbates misunderstandings between partners, creating a contentious environment, resulting aggressive behaviour by offenders. Data shows, 24% male respondents and 31% female respondents agreed over the fact that disagreements cause violence within their family. Child-related issues are reported by men at roughly 7%, while women report them at about 17%. The gap implies that women experience or interpret conflicts over childcare, discipline, education, and resource allocation for children as important triggers of domestic violence, whereas men tend to understate or normalise these tensions. Nearly 10% male participants and 11% female participants recognized that alcohol has a facilitating or aggravating role in violence. For water and washroom-related issues, men report about 23%, and women around 26%. These relatively high values highlight how inadequate infrastructure and daily struggles over access to basic services escalate household stress and can become flashpoints for violence, again slightly more emphasised by women. Outside interference is cited as an important factor to trigger violence for 16% male and 16% female respondents which represents that both genders are considering their presence as disturbance but give slightly less important.

### **Findings: Forms of Violence**

Another key finding concerns the role of intolerance in precipitating verbal abuse, physical harm and conflicts among the families in Maniktala. Economic hardships, water inaccessibility, poor shelter and fragile infrastructure have already been the crucial facilitators of the everyday life's challenges of the residents. However, apart from the class-based injustices, victims remain voiceless while confronting the direct violence inside the locked doors. The figure given below is a comparative illustration of the ways in which men and women confront and contribute to the acts of violence.



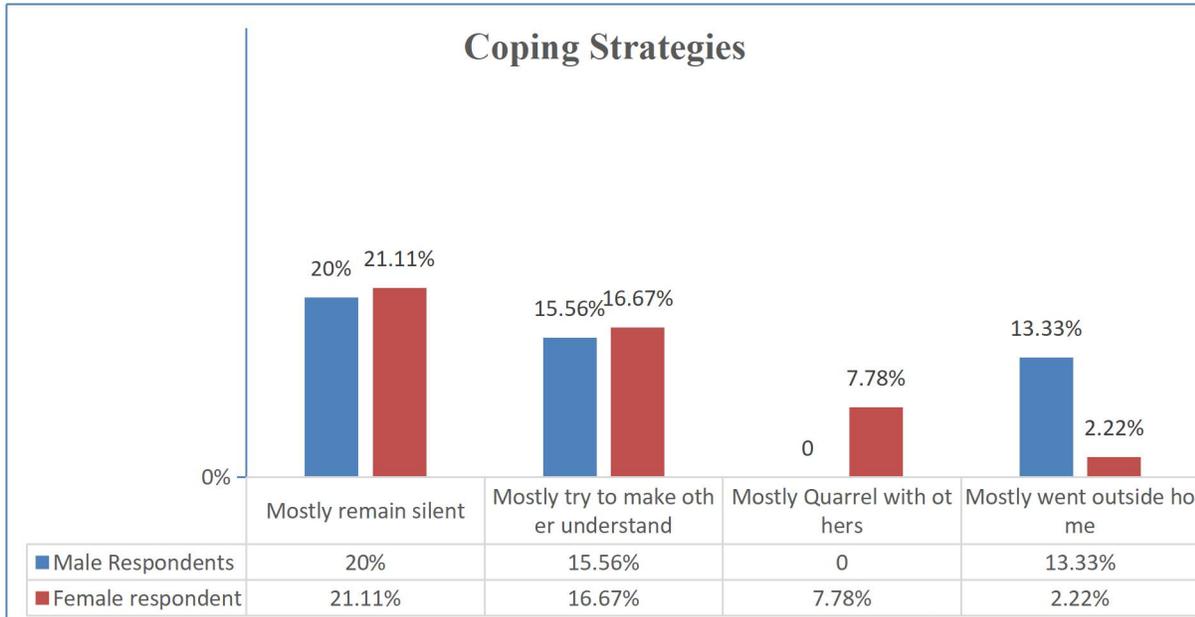
Source: Field Study by Activism

It shows how men are disproportionately represented across all reported forms of violence, particularly in verbal abuse 38.89 percent for men compared to 20 percent for women. Additionally, 14.44% Men are reported that they more often engage themselves in destroying the household objects compared to 7.78% women. 22.22% men are more intend in physically laying hands on the family members including wife, children and others. The figure further shows that 13.33% men are more often involved in direct physical confrontation like fighting compared to 5.56% women. This pattern clearly indicates that violent responses to intolerance are more commonly enacted by men, either through verbal abuse or through physical forms of aggression.

### Findings: Coping Strategies Employed by Victims

Another key finding from the field shows that to alleviate despair and the monotony of repetitive abuse and violence individuals often adopt various coping strategies include—maintaining silence, temporarily withdrawing from the environment, engaging in conflicts with others, and occasionally attempting to communicate with

their partners to seek understanding. The figure given below illustrates how men and women adopt some coping strategies to avoid, sometimes escape from violent situation as suffering prevails there immensely.



Source: Field Study by Activism

The figure indicates that male and female both develop non-confrontational coping strategy to escape violence however, women appear somewhat more inclined toward silent endurance, whereas men show a greater tendency to temporarily remove themselves from the domestic space. Most respondents in both groups indicate that they “mostly remain silent,” during any conflict situation as its exhaustion affects their everyday routines, sleep and work altogether. Figure indicates slightly higher proportion of women nearly 21.11% mostly inclined to absorb the violence compared to 20% men when violence takes place. None of the male respondents reported “mostly quarrelling with others,” whereas 7.78% of women did so, implying that a small but notable fraction of women engage in verbal resistance or open confrontation when exposed to violence. In contrast, 13.33% of male respondents and only 2.22% of female respondents reported that they “mostly went outside home,” indicating that men are more likely to use spatial withdrawal—leaving the household—as a coping mechanism, which may be influenced by their greater mobility and social freedom in

the slum context. Albeit, a considerable percentage of men (15.56%) and women (16.67%) report that they “mostly try to make the other understand,” during violent situation or when their partners lost control over themselves and act abusively. Additionally, report says 11% respondents, male and female opined the strategies adopted by them remain unsuccessful as these strategies lacked adequate knowledge-based action.

### **Analysing Whether Existing Conditions are Sufficient Causes to Trigger Violence**

In this backdrop, the remaining part seeks to explore the intersecting dimensions, emphasizing the dual role of structural constraints and interpersonal understanding in shaping experiences of domestic violence. Despite the major contributing factors, empirical insights from Maniktala slum community leave some critical questions unresolved— Are these existing structural conditions sufficient enough to trigger violent behaviour on the part of the offender? Albeit present, their mere existence does not necessarily indicate that they will operate as the sole causes or fundamental causes behind any violence. Subsequently, further question persists: whether individuals as active agency, meaningfully shape the outcomes in this regard? Although respondents reported developing strategies to counter domestic violence and intimate partner violence—often mitigating escalation but sometimes failing to resolve it. For instance, field data shows a familiar type of excuse is to blame alcohol for causing the violence. But again, it is not substantiated by research, which indicates that the majority of the offenders are not intoxicated when they use violence, alcohol can act to make the violence far worse (Finney, 2004) but not solely responsible. As Hearn (1998) has noted excuses are particularly hard to work with on perpetrator programmes because they allow offenders to evade responsibility for their violence and are often supported by popular psychological and medical discourses. Hence the popular research argue alcoholism could be leading cause behind the trigger of the perpetrator however, it is not fundamentally responsible for violence.

## **Analysing the Coping Strategies Adopted by Victims**

suggesting that victims develop a survival strategy to cope up with aggression and abuse that is deeply rooted in the desire to mitigate harm, preserve their safety and avoid escalation. Data reveals a notable number of respondents remain silent while their partners start to behave aggressively. Women are marginally more likely to internalise conflict and adopt passive strategies that may reflect gendered constraints on boundary-setting. This survival-oriented adaption could be understood as protection mechanisms- reinforces the belief system among the sufferers that resistance is futile and that survival depends on minimising visibility and avoiding provocation. Seligman (1975) suggests when a person experienced uncontrollable events in one setting, he became passive and listless in that setting (e.g., MacDonald, 1946). But such a phenomenon was readily explained in terms of environmentalist theories: particular stimuli in that setting became associated with lack of contingent reward, and as these continued to be encountered, the person stopped responding as a result of mundane extinction. His "Learned Helplessness" concept conceptualizes the reasons behind silence, passivity, non-confrontation and disengagement by fostering the belief that actions have no effect on altering outcomes. This withdrawal dysfunctionality may motivate the victims to commit inappropriate functions, ultimately worsening the situations. Strikingly, a female respondent from Maniktala admitted that this passive behaviour and prolonged withdrawal led her to attempt suicide by consuming finial which later resulted humiliation of her family within the community.

### **Does Communication Work?**

Gender differences become more pronounced in the more overt forms of response. Taken together, the graph suggests a gendered coping pattern in which women disproportionately absorb and negotiate violence within the domestic sphere, while men more often cope by physically distancing themselves from the site of conflict. However, conflict driven home leaving ultimately lasts as a failed strategy where

sufferers often get relief from escalation temporarily, ends up with the problems, unresolved. It indicates that a constructive, dialogue-oriented approach and appropriate planning to take control over violent situation present for both genders but remains less common than silent acquiescence. It has been agreed by few respondents that partners who communicate with each other, share emotional understanding and discuss their problems by addressing it are tend to have less conflicts in domestic space. Hence, the existing structural constrains and relational distress make their lives unbearable. Participants confirmed that violence and intolerance take place behind the locked doors that ripple far beyond private arguments- affecting everyday life tasks, emotional stability, financial planning of a household by dismantling the wellbeing of the other family members. Individuals living in the shadow of infidelity often find that ordinary tasks become haunted by mistrust and pain, and the emotional distress can lead partners to feel abandoned and despairing.

### **Recommendations**

Conflict resolution strategies employed by the respondents exhibit varied number of effectiveness and limitations. While a small percentage of respondents acknowledged the inadequacy of their coping mechanisms to address and resolve violence, significant numbers of respondents considered verbal abuse as “common in slums” and another large number perceived physical harm is justified correcting measures for any misconduct within a family. It indicates either the lack of inadequacy in addressing the problems or insufficiency of existing strategies to effectively resolve these issues. Against this backdrop, the following section discusses on the potential scopes of interventions aimed at enhancing the capacity of affected sufferers to mitigate violence.

### **Scopes of Intervention to curb Domestic Violence: Discussion**

To address domestic violence and to identify the reasonable conditions behind it we need a practical and critical approach to understand the immediate triggers, which is

a crucial starting point for intervention strategies. While individual responsibility is often considered, it is essential to frame interventions within a broader, research-based understanding that acknowledges the complex interplay of factors contributing to domestic violence. This perspective moves beyond placing sole onus on the victim and instead emphasizes systemic and relational dynamics.

### **Relational Responsibilities and Boundary setting**

Individuals within a family or in a interpersonal relationships, confronting violence, aggression and abuse, bear the “foremost responsibility” to take appropriate action in this regard by meticulously fulfilling assigned household duties and family responsibilities to establish boundaries, impenetrable to the perpetrators. This argument could be analysed more critically within the setting of Maniktala. While the concept of relational responsibility emphasizes mutual care, respect and non-violence, Virginia Held’s (2006) Ethics of Care perfectly attributes people prioritize care, they will “never commit acts of violence or brutality”. Diemut Bubeck (1955) offers one of the most precise definitions of care where she writes, “Caring for is the meeting of the needs of one person by another person, where face-to-face interaction between carer and cared-for is a crucial element of the overall activity and where the need is of such a nature that it cannot possibly be met by the person in need herself.’ Albeit, Bubeck rejects the particularistic aspects of the ethics of care, the very idea and objective of “meeting the needs” could be contextualized in this framework. To Held, “caring promoted by the ethics of care is quite far from compassion. Even though the carer may perform tasks for the benefit of the cared-for that the cared-for cannot reciprocate, the persons in a caring relation are not competitors for benefits, hence altruism is not what is called for. Caring is a relation in which carer and cared-for share an interest in their mutual wellbeing.” Although, it could be interpreted within the context of ethical philosophical framework, it provides a direct action-oriented strategic insights to the victims. For instance, a research participant, Mitali Das (name changed), resident of Maniktala was suffering from a neurological disorder, undergoing medical treatments. According to her account, her

family struggled to afford the monthly cost of the medicines. When she missed her medicines for an extended period, she experienced heightened anxiety, lost control over her emotions, became aggressive and occasionally violent verbally and physically toward her husband and seventeen-year-old daughter. Her husband acknowledged that he too reacted violently when she became uncontrollably aggressive—admitting that he slapped her in an attempt to calm her down. Ethics of Care provides a strategic insight in the case of Mitali's family and many others who are confronting violence in different forms. Despite the persistence of economic challenges, identified as systematic stressors that can exacerbate domestic conflict and violence, care ethics combined with the idea of responsibility claims—clarifying priorities in economic challenges while setting the boundary is emancipatory. As stated by Mitali, her husband expressed a sense of responsibility for managing the treatment cost by consciously reducing his expenditure on alcohol in order to save money. During his late working hours, Mitali managed all the household chores and took care of their daughter, maintaining the domestic routine despite her own health challenges. Interestingly, their seventeen-year-old daughter, though not a direct respondent in this study, shared that her father usually takes her mother to the hospital the following day after a relapse, tries to arrange the treatment expenses, and often seeks help from community members. Eventually the family reportedly reconciles after such incidents.

### **Self-efficiency approach within a relational or family Dynamics**

Individuals characterized by high self-efficacy are more likely to possess a stronger and firm conviction in their entitlement to establish and uphold personal boundaries which confronts and encompasses the challenges of unreasonable demands from their partners. However, a self-efficacious individual is capable in asserting their need for personal space, or limiting harmful interactions with greater clarity and persistence. Notwithstanding the undue requests and controlling that individuals can empower themselves to communicate boundaries more effectively and consistently with the perpetrators. For instance, a victim with high efficacy is more prone to

explicitly denounce unacceptable conduct and act through with appropriate actions when the boundaries are penetrated and repeatedly violated. Cognitive-relational stress theory (Lazarus, 1991) and the transactional theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987) give an insight that individuals' psychological adaptation to new or stressful circumstances is affected by some contextual factors including personal resources or vulnerabilities, as well as environmental resources or constraints. While encountering with stressors, vulnerabilities, structural or any systematic constraints, individual is collectively affected psychologically, leading to stress appraisals. The persistence of stress and vulnerability significantly influence coping strategies and subjective wellbeing. Within the context of stressful life transitions, general beliefs of self-efficacy may function as either personal resources or vulnerability factors. Individuals with a strong sense of perceived efficacy tend to trust their capabilities to manage diverse environmental demands effectively. Consequently, they are more likely to interpret challenges and problems as opportunities for mastery rather than as threats or uncontrollable events. Within a stressful transitional adaptation to the new societal living conditions, self-efficacy can function as a personal resource protecting against deleterious experiences, negative emotions, and health impairment. Perceived efficacy itself can undergo changes as a result of cumulative experiences in coping with complex demands in the new environment (Bandura, 1995). A heightened sense of perceived efficacy enables individuals to face stressful demands with confidence, to experience physiological arousal as motivating rather than debilitating, and to attribute positive outcomes to their own efforts while perceiving negative outcomes as primarily due to external circumstances. Therefore, Bandura's self-efficiency approach provides a strategic insight in the context of domestic violence where it can be expected that as the sufferer becomes more competent and efficient in managing everyday tasks and responsibilities, he or she may be better equipped to transform a stressful living condition into one that is more controllable and adaptive.

For instance, the sufferer must acquire the skills necessary to perform tasks that were previously unmanageable. Drawing on the work of Kanfer and Hulin (1985) and van Ryn and Vinokur (1992), it can be argued that while general efficiency may not resolve structural crises or eliminate problems embedded within social systems, personal self-efficacy can enable victims to confront challenges and threats more effectively. For example, if a victim is dependent on a partner for financial transactions, developing the ability to independently manage such tasks—such as withdrawing money from a bank, child rearing, cooking (etc.)—reflects an important aspect of self-efficacy. Through enhanced self-efficacy, victims are better positioned to address immediate problems and respond to them with greater confidence and autonomy.

### **Social Learning Theory as a Pathway to Curb Domestic Violence**

The Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura provides a valuable insight into understanding of aggressive or impulsive behaviours which could be critically addressed and examined within intimate relationships. In this theoretical framework Bandura suggests that the way human agency behaves is motivated or learned through observation, imitation, and modelling as the behavioural patterns are always inherent trait (Bandura, 1973; Miller & Dollard, 1941). Individual agencies learn these aggressive behaviours by paying attention to certain similar behaviours, retaining what they observe, reproducing these actions, and staying motivated to continue or replace them. This process highlights that if individuals as functional agency, motivated by appropriate action can consciously unlearn destructive patterns and adopt more positive ones when exposed to constructive social environments.

In the context of domestic violence, Social Learning Theory suggests that perpetrators can work toward change by engaging with social and learning groups that model empathy, accountability, responsibility and nonviolent communication. Through regular exposure to positive behavioural models, individuals can internalize emotional responsibility and reshape how they respond to conflict. Three key systems

are identified by Bandura (1973) that regulate behaviour: antecedent inducements, response feedback, and cognitive functions. These systems demonstrate how environmental cues, reinforcement, and personal thought processes interact to influence behaviour. For instance, when a person receives positive feedback for non-aggressive or non-violent behaviour—such as appreciation or understanding from their partner or children—they are more likely to repeat those actions in the future. Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism further explains how personal cognition, behaviour, and the surrounding environment continuously influence one another. This dynamic relationship means that behavioural change is possible when individuals are placed in contexts that encourage healthy relational practices. By observing and imitating emotionally responsible behaviours, perpetrators can gradually replace aggression with understanding and empathy. This framework challenges the earlier assumption that aggression is innate, instead proposing that violent behaviour is learned—and therefore can be unlearned—through conscious social engagement and positive modelling (Bandura, 1973; Burger, 2000; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994). In this sense, Social Learning Theory not only deepens our understanding of violent behaviour but also provides a hopeful pathway for transformation through social connection and reflective practice. For instance, a respondent from Maniktala Bina Mondal (name changed), shared her encounter with marital and familial adjustment experiences following her marriage. Initially, Bina reported, facing verbal abuse and emotional distress persistently from her mother-in-law and extended family members from her in-laws, who deliberately interfered in the couple's personal concerns very often, resulting in recurrent quarrels, conflict, misunderstanding and a tense household environment that affected their children. According to Bina, the interference caused severe harm on her financial planning. Over the years, however, Bina gradually assumed greater responsibility within the family, both in managing domestic affairs and contributing financially as a household worker as she considered her mother-in-law is old and Bina is the only member within the family who could be responsible to taking of her.

This response was marked by increased sense of responsibility and economic participation appeared to shift family dynamics. Bina noted that her mother-in-law's behaviour gradually transformed, becoming more understanding and emotionally supportive. Social learning perfectly attributes the strategical insight in analysing the participant's social and economic settings where a victim who is accountable to her family is well equipped to draw the boundary proactively. The consistent demonstration of emotionally responsible behaviour seemed to influence change within the household and Bina achieved the position to influence financial decision making without any interference. Observing Bina's resilience and accountability, her mother-in-law appeared to replace prior patterns of aggression with empathy and cooperation. This case illustrates how individual agency and modelling of adaptive emotional responses can contribute to relational transformation, even in the absence of formal intervention.

### **Community Engagement and Prevention of Domestic Violence**

From popular writers to politicians, prevention is the new buzzword. Prevention is most often defined as education—a belief that if people can learn to think about an issue differently, they will act differently. This belief in education takes the form of training for personnel in agencies as well as more formal education. Many agencies and programmes stop with education as their only prevention effort (Gullotta, 1994). Although education and training are critical components for any prevention effort, training alone does not necessarily produce lasting change. Gullotta (1994) pointed out that other prevention tools are as important as education but are less used as prevention practices. These other tools include competency promotion, community organization/systems intervention, and the development of natural caregiving. Competency promotion is defined as activities that “promote belonging to a group, being valued as a member by that group, and being able to make a meaningful contribution to the existence and continuation of that group” (p. 11). The outcome of competency promotion is a greater connectedness to and investment in society.

Another primary prevention tool involves changes in community organization and systems intervention. Because there are forces beyond the control of an individual's ability to act with efficacy, changes in institutions and communitywide organizations must occur for primary prevention efforts to be successful. There are three ways that these changes occur: modification or removal of institutional practice barriers; community resource development; and legislative or judicial action. Gullotta (1994) stated that this is the most powerful prevention tool, but it is rarely discussed by mental health professionals. Another tool in primary prevention is natural caregiving that involves the ability of members of the community to provide care and comfort to others. At the community level, the neighbours, relatives, friends to navigate with violence. Another way to understand primary prevention is to examine the levels at which change in practice can occur. At each level, there is the possibility for prevention strategies. Bloom (1996b) outlined five levels at which prevention strategies may be used: the person, primary groups, secondary groups, sociocultural groups, and the physical environment (p. 7). The primary group level includes family, peer groups, close associates at work and other interactions that are face-to-face and personal (Bloom, 1996b, p. 7). Bloom (1996b) described the secondary group level as large-scale organizations in which there are specific roles. This level describes social services and criminal justice systems globally but also describes specific departments. The sociocultural group level is defined as "collectivities sharing systems of symbols that supply meaning to life, such as laws, social mores, ethnic heritage, language, subcultural lifestyle and spirituality" (Bloom, 1996b, p. 7). As with Gullotta's (1994) more structural level, this dimension describes change that occurs on a systemic level, rather than on individual or even institutional levels. Not surprisingly, changes in laws and social mores directly affect the other levels.

Bloom (1996) described the final level as the physical environment, which includes the natural environment and the built environment. The natural environment consists of the land, water, and air whereas the built environment includes buildings, roads, planned open spaces, and playgrounds. The built environment always plays an

important part in protecting battered women. The environment sets the context for service prevention and law enforcement activities. Within this context of prevention, domestic violence advocates have recommended best practices for a variety of agencies, including law enforcement. Best practices include the following:

- a) development of leadership of agency executives about domestic violence;
- b) analysis of crime-specific activities including pro and mandatory arrest;
- c) agency policies about domestic violent incidents;
- d) protocols and training for dealing with domestic violence incidents;
- e) proactive and aggressive intervention techniques and sensitive and timely victim assistance;
- f) outreach to victims from underserved populations;
- g) interagency agreements and partnerships; and
- h) a community-oriented approach to violent crimes against women (Shaw 1996, pp. 38–39).

A fundamental barrier to address personal troubles and injustices as broader social issues is the reluctance of violence survivors to disclose their experiences publicly due to fear or shame. Survivors mostly tend to keep the injustices inside the locked doors in order to maintain family impression in community, relatives, neighbours. Hence, the silence perpetuates the perseverance of those silent injustices, ultimately leaving them unacknowledged and unresolved. Against this backdrop, community engagement persists as the crucial platform for the survivors where private troubles could be understood as public issues to facilitate meaningful intervention (Mills, 1959). It implies, personal hardships are often rooted in a large social-structures which could be effectively addressed to break the cycle of invisibility and neglect.

## **Conclusion**

The study on Maniktala Slum contributes extensively into the understanding of Domestic Violence by providing ground evidence from urban marginalized setting. In this context, the findings from the Maniktala slum research highlight such critical implications for addressing domestic violence at both community and personal level. The research-based intervention offers an insight on how violence is not only suffered, rather negotiated and resisted within a system. Structural constraints facilitate violence where sufferers adopt strategies to cope with it.

Methodologically the research did not remain detached from the participants, an open-air public conversation where almost 40 participants (women, men, and elders) joined. Instead of presenting conclusions in academic jargon, the team shared findings through simple stories and role-play based on composite cases from the data. The study provided advance strategic insights for the victims to prevent violence by focusing on the development of individual agency amid of structural constraints. The emancipation of human agency is the utmost necessary contributing factor to navigate violence behind the locked door. Although, recognizing the coping strategies developed by affected individuals calls for policies that amplify survivor agency and provide tailored, accessible resources. In the context of Maniktala, respondents who affirmed that they are involved in community networks like meetings, programmes, sports, festivals are more likely to develop more effective mechanisms to set boundary within inter-personal relationship. Hence, the residents are also suggested to connect themselves with more social networking groups with the hope that community as a whole can contribute in prevention of violence. Because, courage is the primary weapon for a victim to stand against any injustice takes place whether in private or public sphere. According to the respondents, participating in local programmes, festivals, sports activities helps them to achieve greater confidence by crossing the inter-personal boundaries as such neighbourhood meetings provide a platform where the victims share their experiences, access information and develop more dialogue-oriented coping strategies. From these accounts the policy relevant

programmers could be identified. First, initiating programmes that deliberately embed anti-violence messaging, legal literacy, and referral pathways within existing community forums could reach survivors in culturally familiar and low-threshold settings rather relying on formal institutions. Second, initiating programmes that could intervene into the community settings to build the appropriate action-oriented training such as examining emotional regulations, boundary setting, communication skills so that individuals can negotiate violent situations without further harm. Finally, increasing people to people connection beyond their own community, seeking support from trusted neighbours, participating in women's groups, engaging in community events which could help them to design policies that amplify survivor agency, thereby positioning community networks as central facilitating actors in mitigating domestic violence in Maniktala.

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## **Broken Nest, Broken Childhoods: Domestic Violence and Children in Maniktala Slum**

**Eshany Bala**<sup>1</sup>

Domestic violence is a pervasive form of human rights violation that extends beyond intimate partners to deeply affect children who witness or experience violence within the household. Globally, children exposed to domestic violence face long-term psychological, behavioral, and developmental risks, as highlighted by international organizations such as WHO and UNICEF. In India, domestic violence is rooted in patriarchal norms, economic dependency, and social acceptance of family violence, with children often remaining invisible victims. The impact is particularly severe in urban slum areas, where poverty, overcrowding, substance abuse, and limited access to support services intensify children's vulnerability. This article examines the impact of domestic violence on children through a recent empirical study conducted by Activism Foundation in the slum area of Maniktala, Kolkata, a densely populated urban slum. Based on primary field data, the study explores children's emotional well-being, behavior, and educational experiences in violent households. This study also highlights the fact that apart from being the victim of domestic violence, children also sometimes become the cause of domestic violence. The study calls for community-based interventions and child-centered policy responses in urban slum contexts.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, urban slum area, psychological impacts, social impacts.

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Domestic violence or domestic abuse or intimate partner violence is considered a social curse affecting individuals irrespective of their age, gender, class, caste, religion, culture and nationality across the world. It takes place when one member or more members of a family use coercive, controlling and violent behavior against one member or more members of the same family. Its main objective is to gain power, dominance and control in the family. According to Johnson (2008), domestic violence consists of different patterns of violent behavior – situational couple violence, intimate terrorism, violence resistance and mutual violent control – rooted in power imbalance. Later Johnson (1995) defined domestic violence as a pattern of assaultive behaviors that include physical, sexual and psychological attacks used to establish control over an intimate partner. Another famous thinker Evan Stark (2007) introduces the concept of "Coercive control", defining domestic violence as "a pattern of domination that includes isolation, intimidation and control where Violence is only one of the tactics." According to, Walker, Lenore E.A. (1979), domestic violence is not a single incident, rather it is a cycle of incidents that unfolds in phases and intensifies day by day. Thus, it creates a sense of terror among the abused member or members of the family destroying the natural family setting and domestic peace.

This pushes children in the womb of darkness where they are severely affected from different aspects irrespective of place— India or in global scale. According to Ram Ahuja (1997), they are hit by chronic fear and insecurity, emotional trauma and stress disorders, low self-esteem and guilt, depression and withdrawal feeling specially from parents. He points out the cycle of violence makes them aggressive and get habituated with violent tendencies. Apart from these psychological impacts, domestic violence also puts severe social impacts on children. Such as learning dominance submission fear and silence instead of co-operation, losing concentration in studies, lack of trust in others, viewing domestic violence as a legitimate part of family life etc.

According to United Nations General Assembly -1993- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women) Globally, it is recognized not only as a private family issue but as a Universal Human Rights violation and structural problem rooted in

gender inequality, stereotypical cultural norms and rituals and power imbalance. According to the World Report on Violence and Health (2002), any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm is considered as domestic violence. The impact of domestic violence is felt in all regions across the world – Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas – although it varies due to cultural norms, reporting and legal systems. In Indian context, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) – 2005 defines domestic violence as actual abuse or threat of abuse, whether physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic. Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands to the women victim or her relatives would also be covered under this law. Although, men and children can also be victims, in India domestic violence is broadly shaped by gender norms (men as superior and women as inferior), patriarchy, caste, class and socio-economic factors. Domestic violence in India has a unique picture because it includes dowry- based violence, honor killing and violence, caste-based violence, social and economic dependency of women on their male counterparts etc.

The Government of India has already taken several initiatives in the form of acts and policies to get rid of the ghost of domestic violence. For instance, , which provides protection orders, residence orders, monetary relief, custody orders and compensation orders to married women, live- in- partners and female family members against domestic violence. This act also introduced Protection Officers, Shelter Homes, Medical facilities and Counselling. Another important initiative Criminal Law: Section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1983 deals with cruelty by husband or in-law members. This act ensures up-to 3 years of imprisonment and fine to the abuser. It is recognized as one of the earliest legal safe-guard for marital violence. Apart from these acts, the Indian Govt. has also started National Domestic Violence Helpline 181 to contact victims to police, medical facilities, shelter homes and counselling. One Stop Centers (OSCs) -2015, also known as Sakhi Centers, works immensely against domestic violence and sexual abuse. While women in the family are often the primary victims, children living in such households are silent yet severe

victims. Experiencing verbal abuse, physical assault on other member or members of the family or becoming a direct victim of the hatefulness, all the children of all strata of our society are highly affected by this. According to the UNICEF report (2006), every year as many as 275 million children worldwide get caught in the crossfire of domestic violence and suffer the full consequences of a turbulent home life. Globally, domestic violence against children is omnipresent but still remains under-reported and under-researched. In under-developed and developing countries, domestic violence is considered as a private matter of family, preventing it to be reported. These also happen even in some developed countries. However, there is no doubt that domestic violence pushes children in the womb of darkness where they are severely affected from different aspects irrespective of place— India or in global scale. They are hit by immense trauma and anxiety dismantling their healthy psychological growth. In most of the cases, these victim children start thinking that the violence is caused by them or they have no value. This affects their self-esteem and confidence-level. After experiencing continuous violence, they become aggressive, rebellion and sometimes anti-socials, showing their apathy towards any relationship-familial or social. Apart from these all, this situation also damages their educational growth, making them a complete in-human. Although domestic violence takes place in almost every corner of the world, it is extremely prevalent in low-socioeconomic, poverty affected urban slum areas. According to Kalim, Derakh, Hamadani and others (2017) intimate partner violence is extremely common in the slum communities studied and that it is significantly associated with behavioral difficulties in young children. Emotional and physical violence by fathers was linked to higher emotional and conduct problems in children. The findings underscore the need for targeted policy and intervention efforts to address IPV and protect children's development. Now, if seen from a different aspect, sometimes children may also become a factor or cause of domestic violence. However, thoughtful study on this part of domestic violence is truly scant. Thus, how far children form issues of violence in homes may be an important research question.

So, the objectives of the present paper are:

- i. to find whether and how children issues like children's education become cause of domestic violence.
- ii. to analyse the impact of domestic violence on children.

### **Domestic Violence: A Theoretical Appraisal**

There are so many reports, articles, journals and books which describe how children are affected by domestic violence. Researchers Hester, Pearson and Harwin acknowledged that domestic violence and the children abuse frequently co-occur. This harms children in their emotional or behavioral well-being, schooling and overall growth. According to Houghton, Children encounter domestic violence in diverse ways from hearing, seeing to directly being abused, living in fear - each way affects them differently. This experience affects severely on their emotional, behavioral, academic development and social relationship. He highlights that policies and systems often cannot treat children as "Direct Victims" of domestic violence. Lancet Global - Burden Study (2024) showed a truly horrifying data that 30.8% of Indian women report having experienced sexual violence before the age of 18. And the most shocking revelation is that many of these sexual abuses have been done by their own family members showing how the "Home" or "Family" can be unsafe for many children. According to WHO fact sheet on Violence Against Children (2017), Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence) is one of the major contexts in which children are exposed to vulnerability. This report indicates that ill-treatment like physical or emotional, harassment, negligence etc. commonly takes place at most of the homes resulting long term damage like serious mental health issues, chances of re-victimization and the flow of the tradition of violence from one generation to the next. Now, different reports of international level show bitter pictures of children being the victims of domestic violence. Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children (WHO/UNICEF - 2020) highlighted that children are at risk from a variety of violence including intimate partner violence (domestic violence) and that

prevention responses are not sufficient across the world. According to the report of Violence Against Children in South Asia (UNICEF ROSA, University of Edinburgh - 2020), the pace of domestic violence increased significantly in home during the early phase of the COVID 19 pandemic, making children more exposed to abuse, causing their mental health deterioration. Children as indirect victims of domestic violence do suffer from social and psychological consequences. Jaffe, Baker and Cunningham indicated that both short term and long- term psychological damages of children due to domestic violence are very common including trauma symptoms, issues of detachment and emotional instability like mood swing. Purl, Navya and Shammi (2019) in an empirical study also shows that children who experience father's abusive behaviour towards their mother are more likely to have greater behavioural and emotional problems.

Now studies also indicate that the children who become victims of domestic violence, either directly or indirectly, become the perpetrators in later days. Jaffe, Baker and Cunningham pointed out that the children who experience domestic violence often copy the behavior they experience; boys mostly externalize (becoming aggressive) whereas girls internalize (fear, sadness, depression). Bandura too opined that children learn behaviors by observing and imitating adults. He also said that when they witness domestic violence, they may internalize violence as a normal way to resolve conflict. Mary A. Straus and Cathy Widom in their International Transmission of Violence theory also expressed that children exposed to violence are more likely to repeat violence patterns in adulthood. According to Michael Koenig (2010), those mothers who experience two or more episodes of domestic violence, have the significantly 68% higher rate of infant mortality comparing with the mothers who do not face domestic violence. This study suggests the cases of domestic violence should be addressed when discussing about child survival programs. The article "Gender - based disparities in infant and child mortality based on maternal experience of intimate partner violence" by LG. Silverman et.al; (2011) also showed the same danger of child death due to domestic violence.

According to Dobash & Dobash, domestic violence is rooted in patriarchal power structures. Children learn gender roles through exposure. However sometimes children do act in a positive and more matured way, as Geffner, Igeman and Zellner held that children understand domestic violence far better than adults assume. They frequently take on adult responsibilities like caring for other siblings, comforting the abused parent etc. They are conscious of emotional tension even when the violence is hidden. From a different perspective Holt and Retford (2013) consider child to parent violence a valid form of domestic violence mainly for three reasons:

- It takes place within the family.
- It involves violence of different types and manipulations.
- It harms the parents physically and psychologically.

However, very little academic work could be found on how children become the primary cause of domestic violence. This paper tries to bridge this gap of study and therefore, attempts to explore whether and how children cause domestic violence, and also to explain the patterns of domestic violence experienced directly or indirectly by children and analyse its social, emotional or mental, physical and educational consequences on them.

### **Research Methodology**

The present paper is based on a recent research work on domestic violence at Maniktala Slum area (1& 2, Harinath Dey Road, Maniktala, Kolkata- 700009) by Activism Foundation, Kolkata. This study has been done by using a mixed method; both qualitative and quantitative data have been analysed to reach conclusion. The primary data have been collected by using structured questionnaires in Maniktala Slum area by Activism Foundation, where the present author has been one of the field investigators. Secondary data have been collected by the present author from different reports, articles of national and international journals and books on this topic. Total population in the area of study is 1050. Uncontrolled Quota Sampling has

been followed while sampling. The sample size is 90 including 45 male respondents and 45 female respondents. The margin of error is 10% , confidence level is 95% and response distribution is 50%.<sup>1</sup> Field survey is used for collecting data and structured interview as tool of data collection. The survey research took place during 2023 - 2025. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods are applied while analyzing data.

### Data Analysis And Discussion

The data collected from the field survey done in Maniktala slum area are analyzed here.

**Table 1: Relation of Child issue leading to domestic violence with gender and number of families living in the same household**

GENDER	Number of families living in the same household	RESPONDENT	Q. Do Problems relating to child/child education often lead to conflict in your family?					Grand Total
			Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Mostly	Not Applicable	
MALE	1	34(37.78%)	19(21.11%)	3(3.33%)		2(2.22%)	10(11.11%)	34(37.78%)
	2	3(3.33%)					3(3.33%)	3(3.33%)
	More than 2	8(8.89%)	4(4.44%)		1(1.11%)		3(3.33%)	8(8.89%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	23(25.56%)	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	16(17.78%)	<b>45 (50%)</b>
FEMALE	1	32(35.55%)	20(22.22%)	6(6.67%)	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	32(35.55%)
	2	3(3.33%)	3(3.33%)					3(3.33%)
	More than 2	10(11.11%)	5(5.56%)		4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)		10(11.11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (50%)</b>	28(31.11%)	6(6.67%)	7 (7.78%)	2(2.22%)	2(2.22%)	<b>45 (50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	51(56.67%)	9(10%)	8(8.89%)	4(4.44%)	18(20%)	<b>90(100%)</b>

Source: Field Study by Activism

Table 1 shows how family conflicts are caused by children or child education, analyzed on the basis of gender of the respondents and number of families living in the same household. It was found during the field survey that more than one family lived in most of the households in this slum area. Among the total of 90 respondents

8.89% respondents including 7% female and 1% male said that they witnessed conflicts because of children frequently, 4.4% respondents (2% female and 2% male) witnessed such conflicts mostly and 10% respondents of which 6.67% female and 3.33% male pointed out that they have faced it occasionally. Therefore, the statistics show that while most families do not face regular conflict over child or child education-related issues, such conflicts do take place within families and are reported slightly more by women than men from households with 1 family only.

**Table 2: Relation of Child issue leading to domestic violence with Gender and Marital**

Gender	Status	Respondent	Q. Do Problems relating to child/child education often lead to conflict in your family?					Total
			Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Mostly	NA	
Male	Married	32(35.56%)	15(16.67%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	12(13.33%)	32(35.56%)
	Unmarried	11(12.22%)	6(6.67%)	1(1.11%)			4(4.44%)	11(12.22%)
	Widower	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)					1(1.11%)
	Divorcee	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)					1(1.11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>23(25.56%)</b>	<b>3(3.33%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>16(17.78%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
Female	Married	32(35.56%)	18(20%)	5(5.56%)	6(6.67%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	32(35.56%)
	Unmarried	5(5.56%)	5(5.56%)					5(5.56%)
	Widow	7(7.78%)	4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)		1(1.11%)	7(7.78%)
	Divorcee	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)					1(1.11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>28(31.11%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>7(7.78%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>90 (100%)</b>	<b>51(56.67%)</b>	<b>9(10%)</b>	<b>8(8.89%)</b>	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

Table 2 explains the relationship between gender and marital status in relation to family conflicts over child/child education. When it is obvious that married people are facing such issue of conflict, it is seen that 15.56% married and 1.11% widow, total 16.67% female respondents report such conflict whereas 5.56% married and 1.11% unmarried, total 6.67% male respondents report conflict over child issues.

**Table 3: Relation of Child issue leading to domestic violence with Gender and Monthly Income**

GENDER	MONTHLY INCOME	RESPONDENT	Q. Do Problems relating to child/child education often lead to conflict in your family?					
			Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Mostly	NA	Grand total
MALE 45 (50%)	Below 5000	4(4.44%)	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	0	4(4.44%)
	5000-10000	13(14.44%)	7(7.78%)	0	0	1(1.11%)	5(5.55%)	13(14.44%)
	10000-15000	7(7.77%)	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	3(3.33%)	7(7.78%)
	15000-20000	6(6.66%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	0	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	6(6.66%)
	20000-30000	10(11.11%)	4(4.44%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	0	3(3.33%)	10(11.11%)
	Above 30000	5(5.55%)	2(2.22%)	0	0	0	3(3.33%)	5(5.55%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>23(25.56%)</b>	<b>3(3.33%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>16(17.78%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
FEMALE 45 (50%)	Below 5000	6(6.66%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	3(3.33%)	0	0	6(6.66%)
	5000-10000	17(18.88%)	11(12.22%)	2(2.22%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	17(18.88%)
	10000-15000	10(11.11%)	7(7.77%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	0	0	10(11.11%)
	15000-20000	6(6.66%)	4(4.44%)	2(2.22%)	0	0	0	6(6.66%)
	20000-30000	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	0	0	0	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)
	Above 30000	4(4.44%)	3(3.33%)	0	0	1(1.11%)	0	4(4.44%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>28(31.11%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>7(7.78%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	<b>51(56.67%)</b>	<b>9(10%)</b>	<b>8(8.89%)</b>	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

Table 3 shows the views of respondents on how often family conflicts take place due to children or children's education, on the basis of gender and monthly income. Overall, most respondents (both male and female) report that such conflicts never occur in their families. Out of 90 total respondents, 56.67%, across all the income categories, stated 'never', suggesting that children or children's education related family conflicts are not extremely common in majority of families. Still 23.33%, a significant portion of respondents, reported conflicts occurring Occasionally (10%), frequently (8.89%) and mostly (4.44%). Apart from that, among male respondents, conflict related to children or children's education is generally low across all income groups. Most of them reported 'never'. Female respondents especially from the lower

income categories report of such conflict. Higher income groups mostly reported 'no conflict'.

**Table 4: Relation of Child issue leading to Domestic Violence with Gender and Education**

GENDER	EDUCATION	RESPONDENT	Q. Do Problems relating to child/child education often lead to conflict in your family?					Grand Total
			Never	Occasionall y	Frequently	Mostly	Not Applicable	
MALE	Illiterate	5 (5.55%)	3(3.33%)	0	0	0	2 (2.22%)	5 (5.55%)
	Primary	10 (11.11%)	7(7.78 %)	0	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	10 (11.11%)
	Upper Primary	11 (12.22%)	3 (3.33%)	2 (2.22%)	0	1 (1.11%)	5 (5.56%)	11 (12.22%)
	Secondary	7 (7.78%)	4 (4.44%)	0	0	0	3 (3.33%)	07 (7.78%)
	Higher Secondary	8 (8.88%)	4 (4.44%)	1(1.11%)	0	0	3(3.33%)	08 (8.89%)
	Graduate	4 (4.44%)	2 (2.22%)	0	0	0	2 (2.22%)	04 (4.44%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>23(25.56%)</b>	<b>3 (3.33%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>2 (2.22%)</b>	<b>16(17.78%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
FEMALE	Illiterate	8 (8.88%)	6	0	1(1.11%)	0	1(1.11%)	08 (8.89%)
	Primary	19 (21.11%)	9	4 (4.44%)	4 (4.44%)	2 (2.22%)	0	19 (21.11%)
	Upper Primary	6 (6.66%)	4 (4.44%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	0	0	06 (6.67%)
	Secondary	7 (7.77%)	4 (4.44%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	0	1(1.11%)	07 (7.78%)
	Higher Secondary	4 (4.44%)	4 (4.44%)	0	0	0	0	04 (4.44%)
	Graduate	1 (1.11%)	1(1.11 %)	0	0	0	0	01 (1.11%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>28(31.11%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>7(7.78%)</b>	<b>2 (2.22%)</b>	<b>2 (2.22%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	<b>51(56.67 %)</b>	<b>9(10%)</b>	<b>8(8.89%)</b>	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

Source: Field Study by Activism

The table explains the relationship of gender and level of education with family conflict arising from problems related to child's education. Overall, the table shows that educational issues definitely put on great impact on the family conflicts, which varies on the basis of gender and education level of the respondents. Among the male respondents, conflicts are more common at lower and middle Levels of

education, indicating greater stress to handling children's education. In Contrast, males with higher education mostly reported 'never', suggesting that parental education may help them to better handle children's educational challenges. The same trend can be seen in the female categories. Thus, the table clearly shows that family conflict related to children's education significantly decreases as parents' education level increases.

**Table – 5: Relation of Child issue leading to domestic violence with Earner-Dependent**

Gender	Earner-Dependent	Respondents	Q. Do Problems relating to child/child education often lead to conflict in your family?					Total
			Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Mostly	NA	
Male 45	Earner	39(43.33%)	19(21.11%)	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	14(15.56%)	39(43.33%)
	Dependent	6(6.67%)	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	2(2.22%)	6(6.67%)
Total		45 (50%)	23(25.55%)	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	16(17.77%)	45 (50%)
Female 45	Earner	24(26.67%)	14(15.56%)	5(5.55%)	4(4.44%)	0	1(1.11%)	24(26.67%)
	Dependent	21(23.33%)	15(16.66%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	21(23.33%)
Total		45 (50%)	28(31.11%)	6(6.67%)	7(7.78%)	2(2.22%)	2(2.22%)	45 (50%)
Grand Total		90 (100%)	51(56.67%)	9(10%)	8(8.89%)	4(4.44%)	18(20%)	90(100%)

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

Table 5 presents gender and economic -status wise responses on the frequency of family conflicts related to children and children's education. Among the male respondents, 6.67% male earners reported conflicts over child issues, whereas most of the male dependent respondents reported 'no conflict' over this issue. Among the female respondents, 10% earners and 5.56% dependents reported such conflicts. It is reflected from the table that the earners, either male or female experience this issue of conflict more than the dependents.

Thus, although the table indicates that conflicts related to children and children's education are not so regular phenomenon across families, regardless of gender and economic roles, child issues are a crucial force behind the family instability, chaos in the house-hold and finally domestic violence. Both male and female respondents pointed out child issues as one of the reasons of domestic violence. The respondents when asked other causes of conflict many of them mentioned child related issues. Few male respondents complain of demanding nature of their children, which even creates situations leading to domestic violence. Some of the male respondents pointed out that when their children see other children of their age (their play or school-mates) are using any attractive product (device, toy, dress etc.), they often get attracted to it and demand to get this from their parents without considering their economic condition. And when these excessive demands are not met, the conflicts erupt within family leading domestic violence. Most of the female respondents pointed out that the stability of the family breaks down when the children do not concentrate on their studies. Although the parents are concerned about their children academic performance, that children sometimes are not that much serious about their studies. This surges a feeling of insecurity in the parents leading to conflict and instability in the family. Apart from this, according to some respondents, children's unexpected misbehavior, engaging with boyfriends, money pressure creates hostile situation in the family. And this condition not only affect the adults but also other children of the family. Thus, it leads to the down-fall of academic performance, the rise of emotional issues and behavioral change of these children. Respondents also mention issues related to older children- like unemployment and laziness of the adult children creates tensions leading to conflicts in family. Many respondents pointed out that their children disobey them, do not want to abide by their advices or directions and often are heavily influenced by their unruly friends, getting bad habits and harmful addiction at a very early age, getting quarrelsome etc. This in turn make them detached from their familial - bond. Therefore, these behavioral changes push their parents in the hollow of anxiety. They started suspecting their children and gradually lose trust on them. This condition acts as fruitful farming ground for domestic

violence. Some respondents also mentioned the physical and mental illness of their children cause domestic violence in their family. The domestic violence caused by children, has great impact specially on mothers of these households. Even sometimes fathers abuse mothers physically for the inattentiveness of their children. Many respondents argued that due to domestic violence the academic performance and the cognitive development of the children have significantly fallen. They lose attentiveness, interest in school and overall study. In course of time, they lose interest in doing or learning anything, not only study.

The finding of the study in Maniktala Slum area by Activism Foundation shows that the impact of domestic violence is far more severe in slum areas due to overcrowding, extreme poverty, low literacy rate, lack of awareness, poor housing system, lack of privacy and limited access to support services, where 76% of the respondents directly or indirectly experienced violence in the domestic sphere. Children in slum areas experience domestic violence more frequently and have fewer opportunities for having protective measures which increases the severity of the emotional, social and physical consequences of domestic violence on them. Violence is totally unavoidable for them as they witness violence not only at home, but also in their community outside their home in the form of fights, alcoholism, gang conflicts quite every-day. Less NGOs support and unwillingness of police to intervene, poor school counselling system and lack of protected spaces for children worsen their situation, make them hopeless and after sometime push them to be a part of this violence. Thus, the Children in slum areas face double danger: the impact of domestic violence inside their home and the exposure to community violence outside their home. The study reveals a potential triadic relationship among domestic violence, children and slum area, influencing each other. The slum areas often act as the fertile ground for domestic violence due to overcrowding, poor living condition, lack of privacy, poverty, unemployment, uncontrolled consumption of alcohol and drug, unconsciousness and less fear of punishment. These conditions encourage domestic violence to be a regular occurrence. This ever- increasing domestic violence affects the children of

these household directly or indirectly causing their psychological, emotional, physical, social and cognitive damage. These affected children can never go out of the realm of domestic violence. At one point of time, they often stop protesting against it, and start accepting it as reality. At first, they get habituated with it then they become a part of it, they drop out school, start copying violent behavior of the abusive member of the family or community, many become manual labors at an early age and stuck in low wage, unstable and disrespectful jobs. Thus, they reinforce the same slum condition and continue the cycle of violence.

Now, let's discuss the other aspect of the study where we analyse the impacts of domestic violence on children.

**Table – 6: Types of Damage Resulting from Domestic Violence**

Damage Caused	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total Percentage
Waste of working hours	28	31.11	21	23.33	54.44
Physical illness	21	23.33	18	20	43.33
Mental stress	18	20	25	27.78	47.78
Children's education harmed	6	6.67	11	12.22	18.89
Goods damaged	3	3.33	7	7.78	11.11
Economic loss and disturbance	2	2.22	0	0	2.22

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

The respondents when asked what kind of damage does domestic violence make within the family a significant number of respondents highlight that children's studies is definitely harmed as a consequence of domestic violence. 6.67% male and 12.22% female, total 18.89% respondents pointed out that due to violence in family situation children's education is hampered. Domestic violence leads to their severe behavioural change and psychological damage. They start disobeying their parents,

becoming unnecessary aggressive, lose self-confidence etc. They become more violent and aggressive day by day. They do not feel connected with their family and society as a whole and get easily addicted with bad habits. Thus, domestic violence often damages their behavioral development.

### **Conclusion**

So, we can see that domestic violence has an immense impact on children, causing their emotional, physical, psychological, social and cognitive damages. On the other side, sometimes domestic violence takes place and the peace of the family breaks down not due to the parents but the unruly children. It also affects these children negatively from disturbing education, increasing their fear, insecurity, depression and low esteem to severe health issues, social detachment and most importantly transforming them from innocent children to the abusive flag - bearer of this hateful tradition to the next generations, It has truly destabilized the base of childhood. We have also seen it is not merely a problem of underdeveloped or developing countries but developed nations are also facing great challenge for this - making it a global issue. Gender and cultural norms, patriarchy, class and caste relationship, and some socio - economic factors make domestic violence and its impact on children unique in India. The study has also highlighted the condition of slum areas which acts as the breeding ground of continuous and ever- increasing domestic violence, worsening the condition of these victim children. There is also a strong triadic relationship among domestic violence, children and slum area that keeps the cycle of violence continue. Therefore, taking concrete steps against these traditions is a crying need of the day. They should be encouraged for open conversation at school and home; they should be taught about good touch and bad touch. Government and NGOs must focus on effective awareness programs and many more. Only then we can gift a beautiful childhood to these future citizens of nations.

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## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> The sample size has been calculated by using Raosoft, Inc. sample size calculator. For a population of 1050, margin of error 10%, confidence level 95%, response distribution 50%, the recommended sample size is 89. Retrieved from <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>

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## **Violence Within The Domestic Space And Depression Among The Youth**

**Chandrima Biswas**<sup>1</sup>

Domestic violence, far from being a single dimensional issue, often represents troubled family dynamics among its members. Very often, it is synonymously viewed as physical abuse of the victim, though reality is far from it. The victim, while admitting the occurrence of physical violence, often reports the incident as a resultant manifestation of ongoing trouble at the domestic sphere. This trouble involves not only physical torture, but also abuse in every possible front, including emotional and verbal. The present paper, aims to analyse the problem of domestic violence holistically, and not as a problem causing only physical damage to the victim. At the same time, it tried to bring into the fore the dysfunctional relationships existing in the family sphere causing violence.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, troubled family dynamics, youth depression, inter generational abuse

Domestic violence is abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one or multiple members of the household to assert power and control over another member of the same household. Domestic violence can be of various types— it can be physical, sexual, economic, psychological, emotional or technological actions or threats of actions or other types of forceful behaviour taking place within the, domestic sphere.

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This type of behaviour is usually done with one or many purposes— to intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone. Although a number of other terms have been used to describe the phenomenon of domestic violence, the underlying theme of power dynamics is always reflected in the description (Sagar and Hans; 2018).

Domestic violence is an important human right and public health problem which can have adverse effects both on physical and mental level (Sagar and Hans; 2018). Although the term domestic violence is often synonymously used as intimate partner violence i.e. spouse, it should be remembered that extremely abusive behaviour often starts early in life in one's family of origin, and thereby going beyond the common notion of partner violence. In the study by Carolin and Xavier (2020) it is discussed that children who are exposed to violence in their families are prone to suffer from serious long term physical and mental health problems (OWH – Office of women's health). It is also observed that the biggest victims of domestic violence are the smallest. According to UNICEF (2006), as many as 275 million children worldwide are exposed to violence in their own families. Children can be exploited and abused in different forms since they are a vulnerable group. It is also a quite shocking finding that they can be abused within their own home environment by a close relative of theirs. It is also believed that children raised in an abusive home learn that violence is an effective way to solve conflict and problems. They may replicate the violence they witnessed as children in their teen and adult relationship (Margolin, 1998). In order to protect women from becoming the victim of domestic violence, Government of India has taken legal measures. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to fulfil this purpose. On 26 October 2006, the law was implemented (<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>).

### **Types of Domestic Violence**

Slabbert and Green (2014) observed four different types of domestic violence in their study. All four types are discussed below:

### **Physical abuse**

First, physical abuse consists of physical assaults causing various types of injuries—for example broken bones, cracked ribs, burning, bruising, stabbing and scalding. Now such assaults can be impulsive or controlled. Physical abuse also includes many other activities such as throwing things, kicking, slapping hitting, pushing, shoving, grabbing, choking, strangling and inflicting head injuries, to name but a few.

### **Emotional abuse**

The emotional abuse was often described by the victim as worse than the physical abuse as it destroys the self-esteem and self-worth of the victim. By nature it is corrosive and persistent .Emotional abuse can be verbal or non-verbal including activities such as, the use of ridicule, accusations, infidelity, insults even ignoring one's partner. Authors such as Browne and Herbert (1997:83), Romito (2008:17) and Sanderson (2008:23) are of the opinion that emotional abuse is more frequent than physical abuse and more difficult to detect. These two types of violence are equally destructive. Emotional abuse varied between insults, shouting, name calling, and belittling in front of other people.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse refers to sexual activity without someone's consent. The victim can be person from any gender, at any age. According to Laird (2001:286), sexual abuse is often reinforced by an unspoken code of silence. Some women are just not in a position to talk about their sexual abuse and they live with the fear that their families might disintegrate and they keep silent about their victimhood due to shame and guilt. Views by Bollen et al. (1999:25) support this code of silence, stating that, of all four types of abuse, sexual abuse is the least reported, the reason for this code of silence being the social stigma attached to sexual abuse. It is observed everywhere that instead of the perpetrator, the victim is blamed and shamed in this type of abuse. It should also be noted that any form of forceful sexual liaison is considered as rape, even when a man does this with his wife.

## **Economic abuse**

This type of abuse takes usually two forms, either it is keeping tight control over the family's economic resources such as money and transport or it implies the withholding of economic support. As a result, victims could not buy what they wanted to buy or could not spend money on things they want to spend money on.

## **Methodology**

The data used here was collected as part of the doctoral research work by the author in 2015. The said research work was done with the title "Depression among young students: A sociological Analysis". In the course of that work, Undergraduate and Postgraduate students of Jadavpur University were taken as sample. Sample was collected using Snowball sampling method. The instrument for data collection was in depth face to face interview. A semi structured interview schedule was constructed using both close ended and open-ended questions. Responses were recorded with prior consent from respondents. A small part of those previously collected data is used in this present paper focusing on the problem of domestic violence and analysed in the context of the troubled family relationship related to it.

In order to measure depression among students Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) has been used. The Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (CES-D) was originally published by L. S. Radloff in 1977. This is a self-report depression scale, a 20-item measure that asks participants to rate how often over the past week they experienced symptoms associated with depression, such as restless sleep, poor appetite, and feeling lonely etc. Response options range from 0 to 3 for each item (0 = Rarely or None of the Time, 1 = Some or Little of the Time, 2 = Moderately or Much of the time, 3 = Most or Almost All the Time). Scores range from 0 to 60, with high scores indicating greater depressive symptoms. The cut-off score for clinical depression is 16. Following this logic, students with score of 16 or higher have been considered as depressed. The CES-D has been used successfully across wide age ranges. In this study, respondents were given printed version of this scale and asked to fill it up.

## Discussion

This paper presents four case-studies where each respondent experienced severe form of violence in their family-of origin. All names have been changed to protect identity. At the same time it aims to focus on troubled family dynamics in the context of which domestic violence took place. Domestic violence is the expression and outcome of the problem already exists in the household. Therefore instead of being viewed as a single incident it should be analysed as a result of ongoing troublesome family dynamics. Therefore each case has been discussed here from a holistic angle.

Case study 1 is about Amita a female respondent who lives with her parent in the south suburban area near Kolkata. Her father is a graduate and works in a private agency. Her mother could not finish college due to early marriage. Amita's family's monthly income is around Twenty thousand rupees.

Amita's problem involves her mother, elder sister and her brother-in-law. Amita is often described as a shameless, demanding person by her mother. She used to get beaten up by her mother till her elder sister got married. In her words "Since childhood I have been experiencing unequal treatment. Mother behaves softly with my didi, but I always got harsh words. Didi and I both went to the same school of our locality. Didi is six years older. Still Ma always escorted her to school and picked her up, but I used to go to school alone after class 4." Her mother used to take her sister to movies and hide it from her. But Amita came to know about it from the tickets. She often wondered the reason behind such unfair treatment and then came to know her mother wanted a boy as her second child.

At the beginning of adolescence Amita was sexually abused by someone residing at her neighbourhood. Her father took action against the offender, sent him to jail, but her mother blamed the girl for the whole incident. In her words, "When everyone came to know about the incident, I realized something around me, especially behaviour of male members, changed. In the guise of showing sympathy they started touching me. All of them knew I did not get much support from my mother. I think they tried to take advantage of it. Kakimas (Aunts) from our neighbourhood wanted to hear the detail of the incident, for example, which body parts that old man touched, whether I was still a

virgin etc. Ma became very upset and told me that was the reason why she never wanted another girl. Listening to this Baba became furious and scolded ma for telling me such a bad thing. But ma became more upset and cursed me saying I would never be happy in my life." Her mother also held her responsible for the incident of sexual abuse that the incumbent faced during her pre-teen years. Harsh words, such as, "Had I known my daughter would give me such shame, I would have killed her the day she was born—came out of her mouth causing deep bruises in the child's mind.

Amita described her elder sister as "Hitler" who always created problems for her. Although her sister did not perform well in examination much, her allegiance made her a good daughter in her mother's eyes. Amita always received negative response from elder sister if ever problems are shared with her. Rather Amita's Didi tortured her in every possible way, to the extent of hitting her in front of other people.

Amita's brother-in-law started abusing her sexually when she was a teenager. When she told her mother and sister about this, she was labelled as 'mental patient' who wanted to steal her sister's husband. Her sister went further and explained that the first abusive incident destabilized her mental condition. Amita helplessly said "Whenever I complained about my Jamaibabu (elder sister's husband), Didi slapped me. I did not get any support from my mother either. I knew I had no other option but to accept it (getting abused by Jamaibabu)." This abuse went to such an extent that he raped her. When the girl told her mother, she said "What can I do? I cannot destroy my elder daughter's home for protecting the younger one." Ma also told her to hide the incident from her father as he suffers from high blood pressure. Rather the girl was advised to take emergency contraceptive pill. The girl tried to run away from home twice and attempted suicide thrice. She also has a habit of hurting herself when she is upset which is evident from several cuts on her wrist. She says, "I try to hurt myself till the moment physical pain surpasses mental pain. Once it happens, I feel calm."

Case study 2 is about Arun, a male respondent, who lives with his family in southern part of the city. His father is a retired government employee and mother is a homemaker. Arun's father's pension, which is a little above thirty thousand rupees per month is the sole income of his family.

Arun experienced severe form of physical punishment while growing up. His father used to beat him with leather belt. Barun feels that his father never realized that the way he was brought up by his parents is not applicable any more. "Using cuss words, severe physical torture might be common to mode of parenting then", he argues, "But how many educated family apply this method to their children now?" His father fails to understand that. The boy tries to find justification for his father's behaviour when he says, "My grandfather was an alcoholic. He used to beat my father every day. So that is the only form of treating one's child known to him. Moreover, when I was growing up, my father was a junior employee who used to handle huge workload. He could not protest but used to release his anger on us." Arun further adds that his father harshly criticizes him for being impractical and irrational. The boy was forced to study mathematics at undergraduate level though he wanted to study literature. It was due his father pressure Arun he could not follow his own wish. His father made it clear that since he was paying for Arun's study, only he could take the decision. Studying a discipline against wish produced depressive symptom in him. Before the final examination he had a nervous breakdown. Then the boy started taking counselling for two months. In his words, "I expressed the desire to take counselling. Otherwise, no one would have taken me there. Although now I realize counselling does not help much. At least in my case it did not. The counsellor never asked the questions that mattered." The boy changed his course of study afterwards and left Mathematics for studying Comparative Literature. At the end of the interview the boy admitted that he could feel the return of depressive symptoms which troubled him few years back. But this time he was unwilling to visit a professional counsellor and decided to combat the disorder on his own.

Case study 3 is about Namita, a female respondent who is originally from a suburban area of North 24 Parganas. She presently stays as paying guest at Kolkata. Her father is a Bank Manager and Mother is a homemaker. Both parents are graduate. Her father earns around Eighty thousand rupees per month.

In spite of staying far from home, Namita never missed her home. When she was asked about the reason behind this, she shared an unfortunate incident. The girl at the last year of her school was being treated for polycystic ovarian syndrome and profuse

bleeding caused by the disease. While the treatment was on, the girl was asked by her doctor whether she had sexual intercourse followed by an unwanted pregnancy and abortion. Namita was shocked hearing such a question and informed her that such incident never took place. The doctor did not believe her and called her parents to tell him that her heavy bleeding was caused by abortion. Instead of believing their daughter, they believed the doctor. From then on, Namita's every movement was being monitored. Her parents escorted her everywhere. She could not meet her friends, even was not allowed to use phone. When she got admitted to the university, she was given the exact amount of money that was needed to pay the fare. She travelled by local train and continued to do so until she got molested by a co-passenger. After that she started living as a paying guest near university.

Namita still gets beaten up by her parents whenever she disobeys them. Recently she wanted to wear a sari for an occasion but her mother did not let her wear it saying it would make her look ugly as she was too thin to wear this traditional attire. When Namita did not listen to her mother and tried to wear the sari, she was beaten up. She further added, "My mother thinks I starve myself, but I never do that. Still, she does not believe me." Namita also informed that her mother suffers from psychological problems, even attempted suicide a year back.

Although Namita told she never missed her home and family, family problem affects her a lot. It was evident when she confessed that fight between parents made her depressed. In her own words, "I become hysterical and start crying when my parents fight."

Case study 4 is about Barun, a male respondent who has originally come from a district in North Bengal but now shifted to Kolkata with his family. Barun's mother is a school-teacher and father is an accountant, both of them having graduate level education. Earning of his family is somewhere between Rs. 20000-40000 per month.

Since childhood he hardly shared his experiences with his parents. In his words, "Both of them are really orthodox in their mindset, I hate the way they think." Being asked on the reason behind this hatred, Barun cited the discriminatory attitude his parents hold toward girls. "My mother believes a girl's skin should be covered and she should not

have much choice on clothes..” The boy, a staunch supporter of gender equality, hates the idea of women being treated as a commodity everywhere, even in the sphere of matchmaking. He holds that established women, like his mother who is a teacher should raise their voice against this system. For this reason, he feels disappointed and angry when he sees otherwise. Barun does not share a good rapport with his father either. If he gets low marks in examination, at first his father does not show any negative reaction and accepts it without saying much word. But afterwards, as the boy says, “he pinches every now and then. Sometimes he blames it on television watching, sometimes on something else. He always compares me with his colleagues’ children. His point is, why do I get a low score even if he spends the same amount of money that their fathers spend for them? He has made it clear that if I cannot make my own career I cannot stay at home. He won’t care even if I start begging.” When the boy felt too much pressure was given on him, he ran away from home twice.

Barun who criticises his father on so many points also labels him as a “stressed person” and explains the reason for being so stressed. “My father lost his father in childhood. He started selling milk pouches, paan (beetle leaf), worked as a newspaper vendor in order to make a living. At the same time, he continued study. After such struggle he got a decent job.” He understands that struggle for survival has made his father an anxious person. Every night his father takes medicine to combat that anxiety.

Barun also adds that he has seen two sides of his father’s personality. In front of his colleagues, he has a very pleasing personality. But whenever he comes to the house, he takes the role of an abusive father. In the words of the respondent, “I am a big foodie. My father says, he loses prestige everywhere due to this habit of mine. In all family gathering, be it a birthday party or wedding, he shouts at me in front of everyone so that I do not take much food. I feel so humiliated. They say I am irresponsible. They believe that one becomes a good parent if they misbehave with their children all time. I do not believe this and I will never do it with my own child.” Barun recollects memory of a family trip. “We were at the sea beach with two other families from my dad’s friend circle. Everybody was having fun. I walked towards the sea to touch the waves and probably went a bit deeper. My dad slapped me in front of everyone. Even my mother did not utter a single word against him.” These incidents of receiving negative treatment had hurt the boy so much that he could not control his

tears. Barun still gets beaten up by her father. He says, "I would not forgive my parents ever."

This lack of parental love and affection has led the boy to trust no one. Even in the time of crisis, Barun likes to manage things single-handedly rather than taking help from anyone. He sees college as an escape from home. He also claims to find joy in breaking rules or doing something prohibited.

Barun started having mental disorder since he was 13 years old. In his words, "I started doing weird things. This moment I was calm. At the next I started screaming and throwing things at other. In those moments I felt unbearable headache. I could not see a thing properly. The whole world seemed hazy. Doctors said that I had bi-polar disorder." Barun was diagnosed with convulsion and epilepsy and started taking medicine since then. He also visits counsellor twice or thrice a year.

The above case describes a situation where the child is being controlled and criticised at every step by both parents, directly by father and indirectly by mother. Barun, who is an adult, cannot accept such parental control anymore. He labelled both of the as 'strict and authoritarian'. Although he realizes some of the reasons behind his father's over reactive nature, continuous negative treatment has deterred him to form any bonding with him. The boy has not received emotional protection from his mother either. Thus Barun became detached from his whole parental unit and tries to find pleasure by doing things he is not allowed to do.

## **Findings**

The problem of domestic violence is multidimensional and layered. It is impossible to focus on domestic violence without discussing the problematic family dynamics and /or the troubled behavioural pattern of its members. Therefore, careful observation was made on this aspect.

- I. It is noticed in all cases that one or both parents did not trust their child. They trusted other family member, even outsider more. This lack of trust damaged the self-esteem of the respondent in each case. It is also noticed that their disadvantageous position in the family was perceived by outsiders who took advantage of the situation and created more trouble.

- II. The parents did not have much high regard for the child at the first place. Regardless of their performance at school, the parents find one reason or another to label their child as not someone up to the standard.
- III. An interesting aspect of domestic violence is the process of normalising the abuse is always very active. If the victim protests or complaints, either it is said that the victim is overreacting as it is the ideal way of treating children. Or it is said that victim has done something terribly wrong to deserve the violent behaviour as the fitting punishment. Often shame and guilt are used as two powerful weapons to prevent the victim from complaining further.
- IV. It is also noticed that the violent behaviour is not an outcome of any direct action caused by the victim, rather the expression of frustration of the abuser, as reported by the respondent. An in-depth study of the life of the wrong doer might have revealed the factors causing such frustration.
- V. It is also observed that in domestic sphere, people face multiple types of abuse at the same time—physical, emotional, verbal, even economic—all were reported together by the victim.
- VI. In all cases, victims of the abuse perceived at least one parent as mentally unstable— suffering from mental health problem. Two respondents reported that their parents take medicine to cope with mental issues.
- VII. All of the victims were reported to have scores above 16, i.e. clinical depression, according to Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

To conclude, the problem of domestic violence is difficult to address in the sense that more often than not the wrong doer and the receiver are not aware of the fact that any offensive behaviour is taking place. Even if the victim protests, s/he hardly gets any support in the home unit, or worse, outside it, on the ground of this violent behaviour being perceived as something normal. Such cases happen, especially when there is strong difference between the world-views of the parental generation and those held by their wards. The present paper focused on the aspect that this violence of indicates existence of problematic relationship in the family dynamics. However, more insights could have been developed on the said topic if the wrong-doer or any other family member of the victim had been interviewed.

In order to prevent the occurrence of such incidents, awareness programmes should be conducted at each level of academic institutions— schools, colleges, universities. At the same time, help for victims should be made available through formation of psychological counselling cell where students can go if they experience any adverse situations.

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## **Women, Residence Rights and Domestic Violence : Exploring The Dynamics of Compromised 'Space' within The 'Household'**

**Titasha Sinha**<sup>1</sup>

Even though domestic violence is not a new phenomenon causing social disorganization but the intrusion of technological advancement has widened its scope to include other forms of violence having life-long psycho-social impact on the victim. The overarching patriarchal values and structure of the Indian Society not only socializes individuals to make violence invisible but it also thereby directly and indirectly empowers men to exercise aggression and power on the socially perceived 'weaker sex', i.e. women. The major problem with women is that they do not have a space of her own, she is socio-culturally made to learn and accept the space to be male-centric. The problem arises when in intimate relationships she faces violence. This study through qualitative methodology and through the use of certain secondary data sources is critically evaluating the scope of women's space in the faces of adverse marital encounters. Even though constitutional and legal provisions entitle them to residence rights and rights to shared households but the lack of education, legal knowledge, financial support and familial support deters her access to a space where she can lead a life with dignity. Often these factors coupled with the socially imposed stigmas make her live with violence.

**Keywords:** residence rights, domestic violence, space, shared household, domestic relationship.

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There is no novelty in the concept of domestic violence. The Indian society has specifically witnessed it long since its social organization and family life. The structural orientation of the Indian society, norms, values and ideals in general and patriarchy in particular can be associated with violence against women. The vulnerability of the victim becomes manifold when this exposure of women to violence occurs within the confines of the home. Not only that makes the violence invisible because of its covert peripheries but as for the Indian women she is socialized to fit into the home of either of her father, brother or husband so the absence of her own 'space' coupled with the values, ideologies, ethos puts her in the predicament to compromise, adjust and come to terms with violence mostly all by herself.

The term 'Violence Against Women' refers 'to many types of harmful behaviour that women face because of their sex' (ICRW, 2024). However domestic violence is narrower to refer to acts of violence that occur within the domestic settings. It may occur between two people who are in an intimate relationship or may be channelized against any one of the marital partners who turns out to be the victim and the family of the spouse unites to be the perpetrator. Domestic Violence or abuse specifically against women can be varied it is identifiable to assume the forms like: Coercive Control, Emotional or Mental abuse, Physical Violence, verbal abuse, social abuse, Spiritual or cultural abuse, Legal abuse, Technological abuse, (it may include harassment and stalking), Gaslighting or even financial abuse.

Another important concept in the paradigm of violence is Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). It is also a form of domestic violence but it is narrower in the sense that it occurs only within the spouses who are in an intimate relationship. IPV is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour by one partner against another in an intimate relationship, such as marriage, dating, family or cohabitation (Chhikara, et. al., 2012). Domestic Violence is often treated as a pattern to abuse to gain control over the women in the household. But IPV is more individual-centric and is the expression of the aggression of the male partner over the female. Women face both of domestic

violence or violence initiated by her intimate partner. IPV against women is generally considered much beyond a unidimensional category to include factors like, personal, socio-cultural or even situational (Rivera, 2024). The problem lies in separating both these categories of violence into water-tight compartments under the patriarchal power structure because what appears as initiated by an intimate partner is often intertwined with not only individual values but structurally includes the family's roles and values in initiating the violence. So, delineating a single provenance of violence within the domesticity is often a challenging task.

Coming to recent statistics in the Indian Context, it brings forth both persistence and evolution of the problem of violence against women. As highlighted in the conceptual framework, the nature of violence has attained some sort of dynamism owing to the intervention of a number of social, psychological, economic or even political factors. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB, 2022) reported 4,45,256 cases of crime against women in India, a 4% increase than the previous year, averaging to 51 complaints every hour. The shifts across the crime categories are quite indicative. The NCRB notes that kidnapping and abduction of women has increased along with assault on women to outrage her modesty, Rape cases have been consistent in the scale, however cyber-crimes have sharply increased. Even though there are regional disparities in the cases of complaints but an increase itself in the reported rates of crime might not simply imply that crimes itself are increasing but it might indicate that women are making the crimes visible by reporting and taking aid of women's helpdesks, digital complaint systems and increasing helplines. The response of institutions also plays a pivotal role in registering complaints and making adaptations towards changes in the forms of crime or the process of victimization itself. Going by the statistics we find how the sphere of crime has expanded from domestic, public to the digital spheres. The policy trajectory of the past and the emerging ones must come in a healthy consensus to examine violence as a lived experience at the backdrop of data and structural prejudices and how the nature and form of victimization is being regularly evolving.

Now, Gender-based Violence against women are the violences that specifically affects women often because the peripheries of patriarchy positions women in those particular foci. These violences cause physical, sexual or psychological harm against women and can have impact in both her public or private life. Physical violence against women is often analyzed as not only greater physical strength of the men over women but it is viewed as an adjunct of a wider cultural climate generally and in particular patriarchy that supports not only male domination but also systematic subjugation of the women as the 'weaker sex' of the society. This paper examines how the intimate 'space', i.e. the shared domesticity itself becomes a problematic lacuna accommodating violence among those who share intimate relationships. The spectrum of domestic violence is not only wide but is also complex and complicated as the patriarchal structure intervenes with the concept of violence making it highly fragmented and 'space-oriented'. Thus, not only is violence gendered but also it is viewed, encountered and most importantly reciprocated differently when encountered at both public and private spaces. Socialization creates an array of stereotypical gender-based responses which make violence a multi-layered and problematic category to combat with a lineal measure. As women, especially in India lack a 'personal', 'own' space, so the magnitude of violence and its responses are often garnered by the mere absence of rightful residence designated for women. Thus, initiation of violence by 'men' and responses towards it are often structured by the absence of own 'residence'. Thus how, Domestic Violence, its initiation, responses and exposure to wards it take place at the backdrop of 'space' is probed into.

### **Methodology**

The study is a qualitative study based on the critical research methods which has been employed to analyze meanings, causes and social contexts of domestic violence. The purpose of employing critical research is to examine the nature of power dynamics that is inherent in the relationships between men and women. This paper thus tries to analyze the various interactions that violence might have within the ambit of the Indian society. Such analysis becomes important as despite much

advancement of the society violence also has assumed different forms to successfully accommodate within the newer societal framework. Certain secondary data sources have been used in the study for accessing legal provisions towards violence and residence rights. The contextualizing of violence is essential in not only critically analyzing violence but also to seek a critical evaluation of the social sphere that shapes and structures violence. This is a broad-based study that tries to analyze and interpret the latent societal forces that are pivotal in shaping and making violence ever accommodative.

### **Domestic Violence and Abuse: The Cycle of Domestic Violence**

Violence following Gelles (1979), has been described as an act of striking a person with the intent of harming or causing injury but actually not causing it. Stauss (1980) described it as a violent act that has potential of causing injury to others. Domenach (1981) puts forth violence as an act that seeks to encroach upon the freedom of another. Megargee (1982) argues that it might lead to injury or destruction of a person or their reputation. Thus, violence can range between both covert and overt ways leading to not only physical harm or injury of the victim but also might lead to the psychological distress or loss of social repute of the victim. Thus, violence is an all-encompassing word having social, psychological, physical or other distinct impacts. Violence against women are often directed towards certain motives which may include: money-oriented violence, power seeking or controlling over the weak, pleasure-seeking violence, violence which is a result of the perpetrator's pathology, it might also be a result of stressful family situations or it might be victim-precipitated (Ram Ahuja, 2009).

Following Gerda Lerner, mechanisms through which the patriarchal values and hierarchical structures are reinforced are the similar ways through which the concept of violence; its initiation, exposure and reciprocity dictating the norms of the 'good' and the 'bad' is unknowingly infused into the value-system of both men and women. Sylvia Walby in her book "Theorizing Patriarchy" highlighted that how

patriarchy is to be treated as a 'social structure' that structurally delineates women and places her in a position of inequality and discrimination. She assigns violence by men an important pillar built by the all-pervasive notion of patriarchy. Abrupt domestic violence may appear but underlying structures can be underlined following the unpredictable eruption of violence. Certain stages of domestic violence can be underlined. Even though violence often starts with harassment within the household which may include unwelcoming behaviour, humiliation, intimidation often creating a hostile environment within the household. It also often takes the form of abuse which might be initiated to control the behaviour of the victim through fear, guilt or shame while violence involves the use of force causing pain or suffering. So, the entire paradigm of domestic violence is intertwined within the compartments of harassment, abuse and violence. Walker in her Cycle of Violence Theory in her seminal book "The Battered Woman" (1979) distinguishes three stages of violence. These include: the Tension-Building Phase, the Acute Battering Phase and the Honeymoon Phase. The Cyclical nature of these subsequent phases also contributes towards the invisibility of the domestic violence. Often the tension-building phase is ignored or pacified by the women by altering her ways not to increase his anger. If the coping techniques of the wife fail and the perpetrator's behaviour remains unchanged it leads the possible intensification leading to a violent phase of acute battering. This stage is short-lived but is aggressive, torrential and injurious for the women. The psycho-social impact of such a violent phase as is often readily followed by the Honeymoon phase, it built in an air of hope among the victimized women that the perpetrator would not repeat such an action in future so she tries to cope within the confines of domesticity and hopes that tied with hopes that their normal marital relationship would resume. This phase also witnesses rationalization of the acts of violence to make it appear as justified. But this phase of reconciliation and calmness in latent ways bears the message to the perpetrator that his actions as has become invisible so clears his potentials for future violence. Thus, it is evident that the cycle of violence is an adjunct of all the marital discomforts that ranges from harassment to abuse to violence.

## **Socialization, Gender Performativity, Women and Violence**

Even though violence is caused by victimizers having depressions, ego, inferiority complex, low self-esteem, psychopaths or have personality disorders, often they lack resources, skills, talents or are often raised in socio-pathic environments or they might be possessive, suspicious and of dominating nature. They might also be under the frequent abuse of alcohols or drugs or they might have been victims of violence themselves in childhood (Ram Ahuja, 2009). But along with it the societal milieu also creates an environment where violence is not just perpetrated but is also passively initiated. The patriarchal nature of the Indian society perfectly weaves an atmosphere that not only initiates but sustains domestic violence through the systemic domination of women by men. The socialization of both men and women from early childhood by various societal institutions create a situation whereby through violence the male domination over the female is sustained. The early childhood delineation of gender-roles to be submissive, passive, patient and on the contrary the men are made to learn to be aggressive and in superior and controlling positions lead to identification of gender differences and in compliance to that the patriarchal society diverges between male and female roles and in turn justifies the subordinate role of women. Women unknowingly often become the victim while they keep on performing or adhering to the gender-prescribed roles. The 'gender-performativity' dimension often blurs the peripheries of gender-roles, societal- norms, intrusion and violence. The glorified importance of the role of women in keeping the family members together often leads women to accept violence or abuse. The glorification of the role of men as bread-winner seeks to disempower women from early childhood to envision her primary role as that of a wage earner. So, for her and her child/ren's sustenance post marriage she has to bear with violence in absence of her adequate support from her parental house. Matrimonial alliance shifts her space rapidly to her in-law's house. Even for the empowered women who are economically independent they also stand in a situation to bear violence often because of the societal stigma association with the marginalized-gender. The societal structure permeates an environment that not only

generates violence by men but also goes on to sustain it pertaining to the normative patriarchal standards. These societal standards and expectations make and expect women learn not only to cope with violence and male domination. Women who stand up to fight for themselves face with psychological, social, physical and cultural obstacles.

### **Domestic Violence and Social Norms: A Strata-Based Overview**

Even Though violence against women pervades across all societal layers but its impact, response and report vary across socio-economic layers of the Indian Society. Given the overall paradigm of societal norms as men are considered superior than women so some amount of domestic violence is socially constructed as “normal”. Often violence is normalized when it is taken in context of a ‘reference group’, be it for men or for women. The reiterated approach towards men being perpetrators of abuse and women as victims play a major role in accepting and approaching violence. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2010) locate that stress caused by social inequalities on family members cause domestic violence. This ‘stress’ may be economic as much as it can be ‘social’ and might be operative at both inter and intra familial levels. The nature of domestic violence, its intensity, response and reporting are complex and are interwoven with cultural norms, societal factors like caste, religion etc. and economic factors. Certain protective factors are identified that can somehow act to protect women from the risk of domestic violence. These include; higher socio-economic status, women’s economic independence, quality of marital relationships. However, the widespread prevalence of the domestic violence across all strata manifests that identifying such a lineal relationship is not easy as women who are well educated, belong to higher socio-economic group also face violences of many forms. Thus, the pervasiveness of violence across the demography cuts across with certain facts among which education or economic conditions may be a few but it is evident that they cannot be identified as the determining causes of violence under any circumstances. Exposure to the culture of violence, social norms at the societal level; family and neighborhood at the level of community and anxiety, stress,

exposure to alcoholism or other addiction at the personal level coupled with a lack of family's role in playing a protective role might all act together to the extent, intensity or even prevalence of violence at the domestic front. Putting these all together Salvatore. J Giorgianni (2001) puts all these risk factors related to violence in the form of concentric circle. In which the outermost circle starts with culture moving inward to the circles of community, neighborhood, school, family and ultimately to the individual. Here the risk factors that might increase or decrease the occurrence of violence are majorly family (as it is where the culture of violence is learned or not) and culture.

### **Women and 'Space': An Overview of Household and Domestic Relationships**

The basic point of contention lies with the idea embedded in our societal structure is with women being treated as a 'displaced' category. The patriarchal society plays a dual game. On one hand it gives men a superior position in society on the other hand the lack of women into an anchored space makes women stand in a dually vulnerable position. The entire problem lies in the fact that women are born like men in their 'family of orientation' but she from the very beginning is socialized to acquire skills and attributes 'to fit in' her 'family of reproduction'. Post marriage her paternal space is something she socio-culturally learns to disown as she is displaced from that space along with a simultaneous acceptance of the space of her husband's as her own takes place. The Materialistic View of Domestic Violence, especially Marxist Feminist, focus on the economic and material factors such as inequalities in income and housing that focuses on how some groups are more vulnerable to violence than others. After having discussed much about the concept of space and shared household, the women's position of not having 'own' space originates from the Indian women's consideration of being in the custody of her father at childhood, then in the husband's custody after marriage and finally in the son's custody at old age. This not only socializes men to attain a gender identity based on the asymmetrical power position with women but also appendages a dynamic and mobile nature to the space of women. Spatial dislodgment is something that women are socialized into right

from the time of their birth. But inherent in this dynamic nature of space of women is marked by her absence of 'own' space. She is always co-residing and sharing space within relationships. The patriarchal societal structure post-marriage relocates the Indian women in her husband's home. She co-resides and shares space in her family. This family re-orientates her to a different set of values and norms and being someone who enters family late and through conjugal vows often finds it difficult to accommodate under the patriarchal normative paradigm. It also sometimes becomes the 'site' or 'space' of violence, but her reciprocation to violence often is intertwined with her socio-cultural responses that compels her to accommodate violence within the domestic confines. Also, the absence of her own space plays a very crucial role in her response to violence as patriarchal values question her sanctity to come out of the domestic space that is initiating violence. Along with her economic handicap her absence of her own space makes her vulnerable to more violence. She becomes the victim as she rethinks about her own 'space' where she can accommodate rightfully. Familial obligations towards values restrict her from going back to her father's house, so the dominant societal values coupled with the absence of her own space makes her learn to live with violence. The other side of the coin, i.e. their male counter-parts derive dual purposes of violence. On one hand it empowers men to exercise aggression on women; the weaker 'gender', on the other hand the 'absence' of space of the women endows him the courage of continuing with violence thinking that she would not be having a place to go back to. The lack of 'exclusive space' for women directly or indirectly pre-disposes her to violence. The problem with invisibility of violence is deeply entrenched to the notion of 'residence' or 'space' that contributes to both men and women's attitude towards violence and its visibility.

### **Women and Residence Rights: The Indian Context**

The Right to Residence under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWADVA) often regarded as a progressive piece of legislation grants women rights to live in a shared household when she faces abuse within domestic relationships. This Act not only identifies the broad arena of violence but also aims to

provide maintenance and shared household rights even without she holding the titles or rights in the property. The right is free from ownership criteria for the women, also seeks to include women in domestic relationship (both married and in live-in relationships) and also it includes joint family property, rented accommodations or even ancestral homes. This also includes both tenanted and owned properties and claims that it cannot either evict women from her matrimonial home or can bar her or her relatives from entering any part of the house. These kinds of Acts along with certain sections and other laws entitle women to maintenance from her husband and ensure that they are not forcibly evicted or threatened to do so from their matrimonial home. Another important feature of this act is that it grants women post-relationship rights to residence to women.

Coming to the concept of “shared household”, it is a household where post-marriage the woman has shared domestic life with her husband or has resided to a household belonging to her husband or a joint family of her in-laws. A shared household is a residence where two or more people live in a domestic relationship. One thing must be clearly defined at this on-set of discussion that the matrimonial home is essentially different from a shared household. A matrimonial home is a place where jointly the man and the wife reside after marriage, they raise their children and live a conjugal life primarily. However, a shared household is a broad term and includes legal connotations as it talks about the shared domesticity after any point of marriage. It includes matrimonial home but extends further to other properties owned by the husband. Thus, it brings into it the pillar of ownership and technical and legal entitlements of the women as her rights when she faces violence or fights with a distressed marriage. Thus, the term “matrimonial home” intertwines some kind of positive emotional values while the concept of “shared household” arises through legislative interventions of affirming rights to women facing domestic violence. So, the latter concept lacks positive emotional weightages.

So, the ‘rhetoric of space’ keeps women in a position marked by absence of her own space. The matrimonial home socio-culturally and ideally covers up her need of one.

But when she faces violence and she decides to make it visible, overcoming socio-cultural barriers she has to seek legal interventions to fight for a space where she can live. The battle, barriers and the time that are invested in acquiring the rights are far beyond simple and instant. The psycho-social trauma and the cultural disjunctions that she faces makes her experiences of the scars of bearing domestic violence life-long.

### **Conclusion**

Even though it was perceived that certain socio-economic interventions prevail that goes onto to generally typify domestic violence specific to certain groups in society. But with newer forms of violences having been recognized it is observed that hardly such strata-centric linkages of violences are not possible. The increased visibility of violence coupled with its varied and dynamic nature has made it more encompassing across classes. In a society where multiple discourses including mythology, family, societal structure and socio-economic factors emphasize upon gender as not only an asymmetrical category but also defines gender-roles in terms of contradictory behaviour, the challenge lies in the complexity of the intimate domesticity which becomes the 'site' of violence. The problem lies in dealing with the concept of violence in such a way that on one hand violence is often brutal in nature but as it is embedded within intimate relationships so the challenge remains on how to combat it. Non-physical forms of violences being access-laden is barrier-free as it goes on to impact the well-being of victim at multiple-levels.

'The dialectics of privacy' is major determinant towards the invisibility of violence. As the socially learned values dominate to make the private space away from the public gaze so women tend to tolerate violence assuming that reporting it to the public might stand in collision with her socially learned role of being an 'ideal' wife. But again, this provision often gives men the power to misappropriate his 'socially learned' unequal power relations over the so-called 'weaker sex'.

Despite legal initiatives the power relations within the family makes domestic violence invisible. The invisibility of domestic violence is so much entrenched in societal values that not only men, often the perpetrator wants to make it invisible by making it a normal, extension of socially learned 'masculine' values but what makes it alarming that the victim, often the women, mostly makes it invisible by adhering to socially learned values of submission, acceptance and being docile. To overcome the barriers of making violence visible open communication is very essential. Coupled with it lack of restricted legal knowledge, education and restricted financial support are all essential. Family-centric and community-centric becomes essential for her to stand against not only violence itself but also the subsidiary socio-cultural bearings that such a n encounter entail. It needs to be understood that violence against women is becoming an all-pervasive phenomenon and is related to the social position of women and is related further to other forms of crimes that are perpetrated against women in India. The vulnerabilities both at individual and societal levels led by major discourses initiate trauma and stigmatization makes it difficult for the victim to initiate visibility of violence. Community-based support becomes important to identify, validate and fight with the 'real' victims of violence. Thus, as the concept of violence in itself is multifarious and multi-layered so to combat it and its associated effects a holistic multi-layered approach is required which would address the existent forms of violence along with incorporating the newer and emergent forms of domestic violence.

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## *Commentary*

### **Symbolic Violence, (Wo) men and Everyday Domestic Life**

**Anindya Bhattacharya<sup>1</sup>** 

Violence within the domestic sphere is not a new subject of study in the context of Indian society. The legal provision also corroborates the fact that there are offenders who commit violence within domesticity is now recognised. But women and men go through symbolic violence in everyday life within the domestic sphere almost regularly. Symbolic violence, which is subtle and veiled, does not appear to be aggressive, but it actually hurts. Such sufferings are often not acknowledged or minimized in everyday social interactions. Taking from Pierre Bourdieu and Slavoj Zizek, this article shall look into gendered domestic life and how women's and men's upbringing and socialization create ruptures of violence in mass media, which also resonates violence within the domestic sphere. The construction of violence is thus understated, delicate, and requires understanding to recognize and minimize it. The paper presents examples from real life and illustrates how symbolic violence operates within the domestic sphere.

**Keywords:** symbolic violence, gender and symbolic violence, domestic violence and symbolic violence, domesticity and symbolic violence.

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It was a rainy evening in North Kolkata. An old-fashioned home of a school friend was the place we had met after many years. Speaking about yesteryears, about friends, family, and near ones whom we both knew, my friend started to talk about his younger sister, who was married off in the years we had not met. She was married some years back by her parents. Now, she is still facing problems at her new home. Her parents have clearly stated that she will not be welcomed at her natal home if she decides to leave her husband and his family. Speaking about the day of her marriage, my friend described the rituals and how painstakingly the parents had arranged for her marriage. A second day to her marriage, called the bashi biye (a stale marriage day! it is generally celebrated by Bengalis from East Bengal and is the second and important day of the marriage rituals), is the usual day when the girl is ceremonially given to the groom, though the kanyadan (giving off the girl) has been performed on an earlier day by the father (guardian). It is on the second day of a marriage that the girl is put vermillion on her forehead by the new husband, and she completely becomes a member of the family of procreation. My friend said as she was pronounced the wife of the new groom, her new surname struck him so loud and hard that it seemed unbelievable to him. It was a habit of knowing the girl, identifying her as someone, that changed suddenly. She was to be known to all by now by a different surname altogether. The gathering cheered for the new name the bride received. It was not the opposite, i.e., the groom's name did not change. My friend muttered that if a completely new surname was granted to both but not, it was the woman who had to change not only her wishes but also her identity under pressure to perform a 'good' daughter, girl, or wife. It was called tradition, custom, and therefore necessary and unquestionable.

The girl's changed look after marriage had haunted him for a while. The sindoor (vermillion) spread over her forehead till the back of her head, and her hands were now full. She had worn a shankha (conch shell made bangle) and pola (a bangle made of coral) on both hands with a noya (a bangle made out of iron) on her left wrist as a mark of her marriage, for the well-being of her husband. All these are symbolic. The

groom had only worn a red thread on his right wrist as a mark of his marriage. He was supposed to wear this for eight days after marriage, while the girl had to wear this for her lifetime, only to be discarded if her husband died.

The example of the conversation stated above depicted too many things. One is space, the other is habitus. The girl had to adjust herself in a different space, far away from her natal home (exogamous marriage), under the glare of people she had not known (gotra exogamy) in her life (usually an arranged marriage by parents and relatives) so far. She was uprooted from her home, her relatives, and her cultural, social, and economic space, pushing her to a new form of domesticity where she is supposed to utilize her earned social capital (virtues of looking after and managing the household responsibilities) for the benefit of her new home. If she failed, it was her fault; if she succeeded, it was for her in-laws, who were cooperative and welcoming, and also for her husband, who cared but was never under any pressure to perform. So, any deviation from the standard meant negative sanction for the girl, not only from the members of her new family but also from her natal home. She was clearly told she would not be welcomed. It was not her home any longer. She may come, but for a vacation. She may not find her room as hers any longer; her belongings shall vanish, and anything she held dear to her heart may not be found in her vicinity any longer. Her natal life shall not exist for her.

Some processes, some strategies, some symbolic interaction, attitudes, and behaviour are structured that we practice every day. These practices become our habit, our custom that becomes refined day by day and helps to sustain inequality. At the same time, in deciphering personal relationships, too, these practices and strategies take an important role. Pierre Bourdieu has called this strategising principle 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1990, 2000, and 2002). The main argument of this article centres on the concept of 'symbolic violence'. The reason for this is that violence sustained as practice against women is placed within domesticity. Therefore, the deceptive and unseen character of 'symbolic violence' initiates a pattern of domination over women. This violence is most often unuttered, unrecognized, and

unknown. The concept of 'habitus' as developed by Bourdieu helps us to understand the concept of 'gendered violence' rooted in social structure (Bourdieu, 1977). It facilitates to construct a practical way that could render a clear understanding and challenge the operation of structures that are not apparently visible. The experiences of such violence by women are not restricted to any particular form. Many times, we see such violence crystallize to form a whole where it is difficult to discern which form was inflicted upon women. We come to know of such violence through women's narratives that suggest that these forms of violence are inflicted on them every day, in daily interactions, and are considered a natural progression necessary for adjustments to a new home. Therefore, it is not adequate to understand domestic violence only as violence that is factual, seen, and can be reported. Feminist research shows evidences of feminist resistance has addressed gender based violence and depicted how it is practiced and how we comprehend it. They suggest that there is a gap between the way we comprehend the symbolic violence and construct rationality for it. A feminist lens, therefore, helps to bridge the gap to understand symbolic violence. The example above has shown that symbolic violence is not limited to the family of procreation. It is also an important feature of the natal life. It is through anticipatory socialization that women are inducted into a 'choiceless' situation of dos and don'ts. In anticipation of a future household to be filled with happiness and peace, the natal family initiates certain domination, subtle and invisible, where the girl is forced to comply to prove that she is growing up to be a 'good' girl. The space that she could call her own, where she dreamt, where she experienced her childhood and her puberty is not to be 'hers' forever. She is initiated into a kind of forced detachment and a longing for a space that she could call hers, and for which she makes every effort not only after marriage, but is initiated into the process much earlier. This symbolic violence is based on domesticity but is not recognized under the legal definition of domestic violence. This is precisely why women suffer but cannot prove and succumb to such violent measures that curb their choices, freedom of choice, and therefore cannot dismantle the huge edifice of expectation from others.

Conventional theorising in sociology analysed social cohesion and conflict, but paid much less attention to the specificities of violence at interpersonal level, violence within the domestic sphere, or violence within partners in intimate relationships (McKie, 2006; Ray, 2000: 145; Ray 2011). The canon of mainstream sociology came to the conclusion that violence is a resolute feature of social life, excluding a few cases. The statement probably overstates the case in terms of violence generally as a central concern that sociology largely ignores, but is much more reasonable when we see it as relative neglect of the idea of domestic violence (s) in intimate relationships between partners. With Weber as an exception the classical sociologists, were generally not in consensus with stating interpersonal violence against both men and women. Durkheim and other classical sociological theorists, including Marx, paid much attention to either explain legitimate forms of social control, harmony and solidity or sources of dissection, elimination and disagreement (McKie, 2006). Like, as class domination was an overriding concern for Marx and Engels they accepted it in the origins of class oppression, domestic violence as an idea was not a major topic in their work. In the twentieth-century sociological traditions, grand theorists like Parsons, symbolic interactionists or the Frankfurt School theorists, have theorized violence, but generally had limited contribution to violence within domestic space. The focus mostly laid on institutional, collective and revolutionary violence rather on interpersonal violence.

The most powerful theorisation among contemporary sociologists who have analysed power and domination in an interpersonal context was Z. Bauman, U. Beck, P. Bourdieu, and A. Giddens (Outhwaite, 2009). In analysing the contributions of the above stated theorists, like Bourdieu (2001; see Chambers, 2005) has given a firm thought to men's violence against women and its structural causes. Following immense research on an international scene and resulting activism, there has been comparative trivialization of the concept of domestic violence in sociology. Added to it, feminist sociologists and associated researchers have internationally proclaimed against domestic violence (Hagermann-White et al, 2008; Hanmer and Itzin, 2000;

Hanmer and Saunders, 1984; Skinner et al, 2005). Regarding the issue of domestic violence the writings of the feminists are diverse and are embryonic rapidly. Though there are major dissimilarities within recent feminist literature on gendered violence, it has all through pointed to the sexual nature of violence as 'men's domestic violence', including mental violence levelled against women within the sphere of domesticity. The women's movement on the other has addressed intersectionality and explained violence from gendered visions regarding various dimensions like race, class, nationality, sexuality, age, and disability for many years (Crenshaw, 1989).

Bourdieu articulates his ideas on symbolic violence by focusing on the relationships between culture, social structure, and action. Bourdieu states that all cultural symbols and practices, from creative preferences to elegant clothing, science, philosophy, and even language, embody interests and reinforce dissimilarities that are based in society. Therefore, to gain a broad perspective, it is necessary to understand that the presence of power among individuals, groups, and institutions is necessary. In this context, Bourdieu argues that there is no separate field of study for power; instead, it permeates all aspects of social life. Each society has its own internal logic and value system. In this context, the sociologically determining factor in any action is the strategy and rules of the game being played. Bourdieu argues that social structure is not a reality separate from people but is understood through the analysis of various aspects of their interactions (Bourdieu, 1984). According to Bourdieu, sociology aims to understand the social structure behind human activities, efforts, and judgments and to explain the reasons for events in the social world. Bourdieu's works present various arguments to read social structures from a different perspective (Grenfell, 2012). Language plays a pivotal role in symbolic violence within family life and domesticity.

Social interaction in everyday life, within domesticity, plays an important role and is a context in which power, inequality, domination, and differentiation are expressed. These differentiations inflict scars that do not heal and are often dumped as 'normal ways of living' or as mental abuse in recent times. Calling someone by a non-human

identity or specifying that a woman is less intelligent (*boka, kyabla*) and inefficient (*dhharosh*, lady's finger) is such mental abuse that is more incapacitating than physical abuse. Young boys have often experienced boxing of their ears when they faltered and heard that they were *gadhha* (donkey), *goru* (cow), or *chhagol* (goat). Girls were showered with the feminine versions of the above. After all, physical abuse can be noticed. It is comparatively easy to disguise psychological abuse as simply being in a state of depression by the abuser (or *matha kharap hoye gechchhe*, she has gone mad). This verbal abuse occurs as a normal way of parenting skills where elders shower these phrases in front of others. If the man in the example above could be sensitive to his sister's change in life situation, it is quite imaginable for others to think about how the girl in question, and for that matter any girl, might go through. But no reports of such changes are abusive. The question is why?

First, because many women do not at first recognize that it is a form of abuse, because they are taught to think of it as 'normal', and therefore remain submissive to it. Second, women have recognized violence as an act whose effects can be visualized. Third, understanding of male behaviour and its different forms shades into one another. Fourth, we have an understanding of abuse settled analytically in a hierarchy rather than on the focus on various types of violence. As Liz Kelly (1988) argues, the continuum from a lesser to a higher form of abuse does imply that a straight line cannot be drawn between various life-incidents and forms of violence. Moreover, this understanding takes us beyond concentrating on acute forms of violence which are more common experience in the lives of women such as threats of violence, sexual harassment at work place, forceful sex with intimate partners and sexual assaults (Kelly, 1988: 78). Every little interaction in life can then act as a context of feelings of shock and revulsion, which may exaggerate under the condition of what is called 'normal and the organization of everyday life.' This can often make symbolic violence often remain unseen.

The everyday interactions display power dynamics and affect interpersonal relationships through acts, language, and communication. By way of keeping in control, policing through interactions is also an important way to rule. Understanding the unseen nature of violence and its different forms helps us understand why and how violence against women continues. Therefore, in analysing the operation of such invisible violence Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' helps us with a particularly constructive instrument for recognizing the elusive process (Thompson, 1984). It is enacted under the mask of 'an enchanted relationship' because if it is exposed, it may provoke a violent response from its victims (Thompson, 1984: 56). Such may be the power of the relationship between the abuser and the victim that 'symbolic violence' becomes more effective and an efficient mode of domination as it impersonates the true nature of the relationship. Bourdieu (2002) argues that 'symbolic violence' can only be performed by those who implement it and is tolerated by those in a form resulting in its recognition of the act as a legitimate process (Bourdieu, 2002: 140). The fear of deviating from the norm and the impending threat to perform the way the system wants comes in the form of safety advice to women. It not only subjects women to control but also, under the guise of common sense, creates an unspoken splitting up between women: the ones who comply with the advice and those who do not. So, the women feel fearful of, or are threatened by, any impending deviance. The performance of conformation necessitates an implicit and handy belief made possible through training that arises from preparation of the body (Bourdieu, 2000: 172). This includes convincing women they comply with the instruction. Stanko (1990) points out that the advice seems necessary to follow because the advice is more likely to increase the fear in women of failing. It is a defensive strategy that normalizes women's concerns and keeps the burden on the individual women's shoulders, blaming women for not taking precautions (179). Women are at the disposal of the social order that forces on them the norm to conform via symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 2000: 171).

In Bengal, it is a tradition to ask elders before leaving home. So, when a groom leaves his home for marriage, he takes his mother. The mother asks him the purpose of his journey, to which he replies that he is going out to bring a maid servant for the mother. The groom, with the permission from his mother, leaves the home to bring a maid for his mom. It is a myth popular in Bengal where Lord Ganesha, before leaving his home for marriage, came to say goodbye to his mother Parvati. He saw that his mom, a Goddess herself, was hurriedly finishing off her meal with all her ten hands (Parvati is a form of Durga who has ten hands and therefore is Dasabhuja). To his amazement, Ganesha asked the reason for it. She replied that as the wife of Ganesha, after reaching her in-laws' home, she shall not offer food to her mother-in-law, Parvati, who is speedily completing her meal. Both examples are of men who are taught to look at women from a different perspective. They are not considered equal, nor are they considered a member of the family. She is either a service provider or an enemy (stranger) in the household. She is not welcomed yet necessary. It is also customary to tell men from their early childhood how their future wife would be and how they should treat her to maintain the balance in the household. For example, the son is often told not to be a straino (hen pecked) or go under the (anchaal) sari pleats of his wife. He has to be a male, strong enough to make a decision like Ganesha, who did not marry to keep his mother Parvati happy. It seems that masculinity is important only if it is exercised before the wife. A patriarchal perspective sees men as rational and normal in contrast to women, who are seen as irrational (emotional) and deviant. Surprisingly, the academics have taken a long time to understand that masculinity is also socially constructed and to view men as gendered. The study of men through a gender lens and masculinity refers to the position of men in the gender order. The ideal of masculinity and manhood, which are emphasized in family life in India, reinforce manhood as the coveted standard of behaviour. Here, language plays an important role. A young boy, if effeminate in some ways, is subjected to physical and verbal abuse. Moreover, a standard image of a man, tall and sturdy, also evokes pressures on young boys who are not well-built and are short in height. These young boys are subjected to pressure to be men. For Whitehead and Barrett (2004)

masculinities are situated within a specific cultural and social location and are expressed through those behaviours, languages, and practices specific to a particular cultural location. Such 'violent' actions are commonly linked with men and as a result are culturally defined as not the 'other' (feminine) (Whitehead and Barrett, 2004). The culture that speaks of clear ideas and advocate equality between men and women also does not believe in binary opposite cultural traits and will hardly have a concept of masculinity in the sense it has in modern culture. In a global platform, almost all societies support a model of masculinity that is universal, dominant, and patriarchal that is accepted as a norm. Though the construction of the concept of masculinity has followed different courses (Connell and Connell, 2005), nowadays it is associated with a series of social rules widely generalised: avoiding femininity; limited expression of emotions; rushing for actions and achieving status; cutting off intimacy from sex; performing violence, etc. Manhood, as an identity, is socially constructed essentially on a relational basis. That is, in relation to women men are considered aggressive, achievers and are always trapped within the opposite values attributed to the identity of womanhood. In this binary logic, the male value is always placed in anterior and holds a confident position, conferring a negative value to its female opposite: strong and weak, brave and cowardly, rational and emotional, social and natural, productive and reproductive, public-versus private, active versus passive, dominant versus passive, abuser and sufferer, etc. Masculinities in such cultures are considered conventional dominant cultural norms and adhere to physical aggression, reasserting and defending a manly position. Both men and women internalize and tacitly accept the limits imposed by the patriarchal system, contributing to their own subjugation. Symbolic violence implicates psychological suffering, humiliation, anxiety, shame, and guilt. By accepting these limits, individuals become agents in their own domination and help to reproduce the patriarchal social order. Masculinity is arguably concerned with both positive and negative qualities. The negative qualities are hardness, violence, unnecessary risk-taking, and 'emotional illiteracy', alongside 'positive' attributes like potency, covetousness, determination, and bravery; and features of more debatable value like individuality, spiritedness, consistency, and a practical

orientation form the basis what is masculinity and how it is defined in society. These attributes come into play in many ways both in micro and macro level. It would be too naive, however, to suggest that such 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1987) is the result of the acts of individual men. Rather, masculinity operates as an ideology of gender that decides both relationships between men and women and between men and other men.

In a feminist encounter with activism, Farah Naqvi (2010) shows how in spite of the existence of a broad legal framework criminalizing domestic violence – the Indian women's movement has changed direction toward a more understanding perspective. Since long legal battles often fail to give justice to victims (women) within an understanding period of time the non- government organisations providing legal direction and support to victims of domestic violence now suggest settlements outside the court. Thus, the movement has faced the impasse of choosing between long-term ethical struggles for "legal justice" versus immediate relief for victims. Feminists in India have initiated and organized movements against gender violence (Chakraborty, 2023). But, opposing against acute forms of sexual and gendered violence does not imply that more softer structural forms of violence were placed low in the hierarchy of priorities. To emphasize, this is not to undervalue overtly violent crimes; however, the discussion surrounding 'gendered violence' often results in movements against the everyday structures of control. There is evidence of a slow shift now taking place in terms of forms of mobilization and protest against not only visible violence but also structural obstructions to opportunities and pleasure (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade2011).The question that immediately comes to mind is how to understand the 'normalization' of such barriers.

As a rational conclusion to the discussion above it can be said that domination that stems from symbolic violence is where less direct force is applied. It is assumed that it occurs and is more a product of when those who are dominated stop questioning the order of things. When women dissuade from questioning existing power relations as they perceive the world and consider it as 'natural', 'a given', and thus

unchangeable, it makes things difficult. Yet, at the same time, individuals do not question their own role in the construction and reproduction of domination and subordination (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Symbolic violence over individuals often are a form of domination which is practiced as everyday social habits. Symbolic violence can occur through the ordinary processes and practices of everyday life. Both the parties, the dominated and the dominant, can share the same understandings of the world. It aggravates miserable feelings that are so difficult for its victims to point out, and yet it is an element of what makes their lives so critical. Women who feel being loved by their abusers initially fail to recognize these acts as acts of violence. It appears to us that they perceive their relationship as 'delightful', at least in the first place. Domesticity is also covered by mass media called television, and now on the internet space, in contemporary times, violence is neatly and routinely portrayed. Viewers experience a subjective understanding of violence. It is connected to symbolic violence because symbolic violence is an intentional type of violence that happens through language. While intentional or objective violence is seen in the backdrop of the 'normal' that helps in keeping the status quo, this, symbolic violence operates at another level where it is a form of expression and demonstration of the world of relationships of power and dominance, the production of which is under the control of the society (Zizek, 2008). Social media has given us a space for the duplication of all sorts of discourses: relationships from work, family, and friends that occupy different social and virtual spaces. The context of the visible and invisible audience collapses and creates hostility and aggressiveness in social networks. Domesticity, domestic violence, therefore, should be treated from a different perspective to understand how and what kind of symbolic violence permeates our daily life. Understanding of such invisible and visible violence is essential to perceive what and how we shall define domestic violence.

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## *Research Note*

### **Unveiling the Pathologies of Domestic Violence: Exploring the Correlation between Economic Determinants and Intimate Partner Violence**

Subhranil Ghosh <sup>1</sup> 

The pursuit of justice constitutes a noble and exalted exercise, and is the cornerstone of human dignity and social harmony. An urge to help a suffering victim and address social problems forms a significant moral axiom upon which the human beings premise their existence and activities in relation to one another as well as the broader externality. Conversely, overwhelming desires to be and perform charity can actually lead to an uncertain appraisal of an intensely complex problem. What can be stated unequivocally is that social problems and issues are by nature extremely complex and multifaceted. The issue of Domestic Violence has caused untold trauma to victims and has in equal measure, vexed Policymakers. Reflexivity in finding redressal mechanisms have only resulted in further complexities, and even deepening of the crisis. This Intellectual-cum-Praxeological Project undertaken under the leadership of Activism Foundation for Social Research and Action sought to desegregate cause and action, and holistically understand the problem of domestic violence affecting the residents of Maniktala Slum Area. Through the study conducted, radical insights were generated which shed light on how knee-jerk reactions to a problem such as Domestic Violence fail to truly uphold justice on an everyday basis.

**Keywords :** intimate partner violence, economic determinism, policy reductionism, everyday violence

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The phenomenon of domestic violence, as a malaise in society, generally involves acts of physical altercation directed individual towards his or her intimate partner. At first glance, the issue is a fairly common occurrence, ubiquitous enough to constitute a formidable sample size that compels decision-makers and policy apparatchiks to recognise its validity and adopt measures to redress its damage. Conversely, exploring the genealogy of the problem devolves into a self-replicating loop where facets of space, caste and class intersect with gender, creating a very complex reality for the victims. This reality also has a distinctive 'everydayness' to it, manifesting most perniciously within the domestic sphere, often termed as Intimate Partner Violence with no point of origination and conclusion. Additionally, while the lived experiences of victims are indicative of the fungible nature of the crisis, most governments attempt to remedy this issue as an isolated problem, almost akin to a disease. Enduring commitments to this disease prevention appear laudable, but are in substance little more than ostentatious and virtue-signaling exercises. This, however, is not because of intent or lack thereof; in any case, political intent is difficult to pontificate and act upon in the first place. It is more of a function of how domestic violence is configured and categorised, as a gestaltian subject or as a separate condition that can be 'medicated', how the interplay of antecedent variables and intervening variables determines the quantum of Intimate Partner Violence, and how socio-cultural representations involve the perpetrator and victims. The role of gender, caste and class in understanding domestic violence in its total pathology has often been understated and overlooked by decision-makers in the pursuit of prompt solutions. Reductionist understandings of Intimate Partner Violence often attempt to establish correlational, if not directly causal, relationships between the act of violence as well as what are considered its causes. Issues like alcoholism and economic distress have long been highlighted as the causative agents driving violence and/or abuse against women. In the context of India, the association between alcohol and intimate partner violence has morphed into a political football. For example, the state of Bihar has long grappled with the twin problems of alcohol abuse and crimes against women. The government of Bihar implemented a total ban

on alcohol, which covers its manufacture, sale and consumption in 2016 (Reddy, 2019). Ostensibly, the policy was aimed at striking one of the 'root causes' of domestic violence. Auxiliary goals included restricting the misuse of earnings by men on alcohol and intoxicants, which were attributed to a decline in household income and adversely affecting women's health. At the outset, the stated purpose of this policy seemed noble and unquestionable. The underlying logic was also fairly easy to discern. A simple cause-and-effect relationship had been established between alcohol use and domestic violence, whereby alcohol was identified as an independent variable while domestic violence was conceptualised as the dependent variable. The simplicity of understanding was intoxicating, especially to Policy Makers who were eager to 'solve' the problem of domestic violence. However, consequent reports have only pointed to marginal declines in the number of registered 498A cases (Reddy, 2019), but a concomitant increase in dowry-related violence among Bihar's women. Multiple conclusions, and in this case, all equally valid, can be drawn from this. Firstly, policy has second-order and third-order effects on the populace. A knee-jerk reaction to a social evil can augur unintended consequences, leading to a completely new set of problems. The issue of establishing correlation or causation is fraught with intellectual blind spots and the recurrent tendency to manipulate facts to suit narratives. Economic privation has often been associated with domestic violence, with many attributing economic pressure on a household as the main factor behind the prevalence of domestic violence. The association in this case is pointed to the redirection of stress caused by poverty and unemployment into domestic violence perpetrated on the intimate partner. The sociological underpinnings of this stress are quite complex and need to be aggregately incorporated into a coherent causal inference model which can sufficiently establish the relationship between economic stress and domestic violence.

The literature on Research methodology pertaining to the social sciences points to the influence of antecedent and intervening variables along with dependent and independent variables. This effectively contextualizes the issue of cause and effect

within a broader framework of socially embedded actors and contingencies, and as Chomsky states (Chomsky, 1981), the linguistic configurations that are employed in order to explain and expound upon social phenomena are not fixed structures. Language, or how it is constitutively displayed, allows for multiplicity of meaning (Gottdiener, 1993) and unveiling of hitherto untapped complexities. This foregrounds the basis of the research project undertaken at Maniktala Slums, with the ultimate goal to probe a given premise of whether economic distress leads to domestic violence.

### **The Rationale behind the Space and the Methodological Thrust**

The objective for choosing Maniktala has the place for conducting this research, which has to do with the confluence of structural inequalities and spatial compression (Gottdiener, 1993), which considerably influences intimate partner violence. Causalities are often so deeply intertwined with one another that it becomes almost impossible to separate the victim from the agent within this setting. It is precisely this challenge that the Activism Foundation for Social Research and Action sought to address while collecting data and coming up with a socially embedded research project. The activism foundation extensively deployed its human resources to first survey the space and the co-constitutive relation (Westlund, 1999) that space enjoyed in relation to the people inhabiting that space. Following the survey, the process of data collection was decided upon, with a specific focus on using questionnaires for the slum members who would record their experiences. The key factor here is localising the violence within a proper social context. An almost reflexive (ill-informed) response to domestic violence is Why do the victims choose to stay in abusive relationships. Extensive research conducted on this topic conducted by Lenore Walker has revealed the phenomenon of battered women (Walker, 1979), where it had been argued that almost half the number of women in any given social setting (Murray, 1988) were victims of violence. The Maniktala slum area also featured a high incidence of poverty. Additionally, the domesticity of domestic violence affects a large proportion of unmarried women. The objective behind collecting data from

unmarried women was specifically served by this exercise. As foregrounded theoretically, the nature of domestic violence is proliferative and affects women irrespective of their marital position and/or status.

Though mainly Bengali Hindu live here, a few from Bihar, who work in Kolkata also live in this slum. Majority of males are engaged in informal or private sector jobs, a few work as government employee. Some also have small business, having small shops in the locality. A few are also unemployed. Some females are house-wife but a good number of females work as cook or maid servant in nearby locality. Few females, who are educated like, higher secondary or graduate level also work in formal sector like bank etc.

The responses from the members are presented in the form of a table below-

**Table 1. Relation between economic problems and conflict within family on the basis of marital status**

Gender	Status	Respondents	Q. On which issues conflict often take place in your family? [Economic problems]					Total
			Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Mostly	NA	
Male	Married	32(35.56%)	11(12.22%)	8(8.89%)	4(4.44%)	5(5.56%)	4(4.44%)	32(35.56%)
	Unmarried	11(12.22%)	10(11.11%)		1(1.11%)			11(12.22%)
	Widower	1(1.11%)				1(1.11%)		1(1.11%)
	Divorcee	1(1.11%)		1(1.11%)				1(1.11%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>21(23.33%)</b>	<b>9(10%)</b>	<b>5(5.56%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
Female	Married	32(35.56%)	12(13.33%)	9(10%)	2(2.22%)	9(10%)		32(35.56%)
	Unmarried	5(5.56%)	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)			5(5.56%)
	Widow	7(7.78%)	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)		1(1.11%)	7(7.78%)
	Divorcee	1(1.11%)				1(1.11%)		1(1.11%)

	<b>Total</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b> <b>)</b>	<b>11(12.22%)</b>	<b>5(5.56%)</b>	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>	<b>39(43.33%)</b>	<b>20(22.22%)</b>	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	<b>16(17.78%)</b>	<b>5(5.56%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

The respondents particularly the married males and females focused on the economic aspect for conflict within family.

**Table 2. Relation between inability to repay loans and conflict within family on the basis of monthly income**

GENDER	MONTHLY INCOME	RESPONDENT	Q. On which issues conflict often take place in your family? (for unable to repay loan)					
			Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Mostly	NA	Grand total
<b>MALE</b> <b>45</b> <b>(50%)</b>	Below 5000	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	0	<b>4(4.44%)</b>
	5000 -10000	<b>13(14.44%)</b>	8(8.88%)	0	0	0	5(5.55%)	<b>13(14.44%)</b>
	10000-15000	<b>7(7.77%)</b>	5(5.55%)	0	0	0	2(2.22%)	<b>7(7.77%)</b>
	15000-20000	<b>6(6.66%)</b>	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	2(2.22%)	<b>6(6.66%)</b>
	20000-30000	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	7(7.77%)	0	0	0	3(3.33%)	<b>10(11.11%)</b>
	Above 30000	<b>5(5.55%)</b>	3(3.33%)	0	0	0	2(2.22%)	<b>5(5.55%)</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>31(34.44%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14(15.56%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
<b>FEMALE</b> <b>45</b> <b>(50%)</b>	Below 5000	<b>6(6.66%)</b>	3(3.33%)	0	0	0	3(3.33%)	<b>6(6.66%)</b>
	5000-10000	<b>17(18.88%)</b>	12(13.33%)	2(2.22%)	0	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	<b>17(18.88%)</b>
	10000-15000	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	9(10%)	0	0	1(1.11%)	0	<b>10(11.11%)</b>
	15000-20000	<b>6(6.66%)</b>	6(6.66%)	0	0	0	0	<b>6(6.66%)</b>

	20000-30000	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	2(2.22%)	0	0	0	0	<b>2(2.22%)</b>
	Above 30000	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	0	<b>4(4.44%)</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>36(40%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>5(5.56%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	<b>67(74.44%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>19(21.11%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

**Table 3. Relation between economic problems and conflict within family on the basis of income**

GENDER	MONTHLY INCOME	RESPONDENT	Q. On which issues conflict often take place in your family? (economic problem)					
			Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Mostly	NA	Grand total
<b>MALE</b> <b>45</b> <b>(50%)</b>	Below 5000	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	3(3.33%)	0	1(1.11%)	0	0	<b>4(4.44%)</b>
	5000-10000	<b>13(14.44%)</b>	5(5.55%)	2(2.22%)	4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	<b>13(14.44%)</b>
	10000-15000	<b>7(7.77%)</b>	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	3(3.33%)	0	<b>7(7.78%)</b>
	15000-20000	<b>6(6.66%)</b>	2(2.22%)	2(2.22%)	1(1.11%)	0	1(1.11%)	<b>6(6.67%)</b>
	20000-30000	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	7(7.77%)	0	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	0	<b>10(11.11%)</b>
	Above 30000	<b>5(5.55%)</b>	3(3.33%)	0	0	0	2(2.22%)	<b>5(5.55%)</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>22(24.44%)</b>	<b>5(5.56%)</b>	<b>8(8.89%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
<b>FEMALE</b> <b>45</b> <b>(50%)</b>	Below 5000	<b>6(6.66%)</b>	2(2.22%)	0	2(2.22%)	2(2.22%)	0	<b>6(6.67%)</b>
	5000-10000	<b>17(18.88%)</b>	6(6.66%)	4(4.44%)	2(2.22%)	4(4.44%)	1(1.11%)	<b>17(18.89%)</b>
	10000-15000	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	3(3.33%)	3(3.33%)	0	<b>10(11.11%)</b>
	15000-20000	<b>6(6.66%)</b>	2(2.22%)	0	3(3.33%)	1(1.11%)	0	<b>6(6.66%)</b>
	20000-30000	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	0	0	0	<b>2(2.22%)</b>

	Above 30000	4(4.44%)	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	0	4(4.44%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL=</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	<b>40(44.44%)</b>	<b>11(12.22%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b>	<b>16(17.78%)</b>	<b>5(5.56%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

A majority of participants responded that the economic problems did not lead to conflict.

**Table 4. Relation between economic problems and conflict within family on the basis of economic status**

Gender	Earner-Dependent	Respondents	Q. On which issues conflict often take place in your family? [Economic problems].					Total
			Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Mostly	NA	
Male 45	Earner	39(43.33%)	17(18.89%)	9(10%)	5(5.55%)	6(6.67%)	2(2.22%)	39(43.33%)
	Dependent	6(6.67%)	4(4.44%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(2.22%)	6(6.67%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>	<b>21(33.33%)</b>	<b>9(10%)</b>	<b>5(5.55%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>4(4.44%)</b>	<b>45(50%)</b>
Female 45	Earner	24(26.67%)	7(7.78%)	6(6.67%)	3(3.33%)	7(7.78%)	1(1.11%)	24(26.67%)
	Dependent	21(23.33%)	11(12.22%)	4(4.44%)	3(3.33%)	3(3.33%)	0(0%)	21(23.33%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>18(20%)</b>	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	<b>6(6.67%)</b>	<b>10(11.11%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total -90(100%)</b>			<b>39(43.3%)</b>	<b>19(21.1%)</b>	<b>11(12.2%)</b>	<b>16(17.8%)</b>	<b>5(5.6%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

Here again a majority of participants responded stating that economic distress did not cause conflict. Please find it in the Table 5 below :

**Table 5. Relation between inability to repay loans and conflict within family on the basis of economic status**

Gender	Earner-Dependent	Respondents	Q. On which issues conflict often take place in your family? [Unable to repay loan]					Total
			Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Mostly	NA	
Male 45	Earner	39(43.33%)	27(30%)	0	0	0	12(13.33%)	39(43.33%)
	Dependent	6(6.67%)	4(4.44%)	0	0	0	2(2.22%)	6(6.67%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>31(34.44%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14(15.56%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
Female 45	Earner	24(26.67%)	19(21.11%)	1(1.11%)	0	1(1.11%)	3(3.33%)	24(26.67%)
	Dependent	21(23.33%)	17(18.89%)	0	1(1.11%)	1(1.11%)	2(2.22%)	21(23.33%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>	<b>36 (40%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>5(5.56%)</b>	<b>45 (50%)</b>
<b>Grand Total - 90(100%)</b>		<b>90(100%)</b>	<b>67(74.4%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>1(1.11%)</b>	<b>2(2.22%)</b>	<b>19(21.11%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

**Source: Field Study by Activism**

An overwhelming number of participants stated that inability to repay loans did not lead to conflict.

### **Discussion of the findings**

The findings clearly indicate that there is no direct correlation between economic distress and domestic violence. Conversely, sufficient literature (Hassan, 2021) that using economic development as the sole yardstick for addressing domestic violence (Matjasko, 2012) could actually lead to an increase in domestic violence. To conclude, the tool of economic development is best suited to be utilized as a part of a larger, more comprehensive mechanism (Roy, 2024), not as a sole preventer.

### **Conclusion**

The ontological effects of trivializing the consequences of domestic violence can have larger effects on society, affecting family systems, social cohesion and bonding. The study conducted by Activism sought to avoid the extremes of theorization and reductionist generalization. In spite of the rigour attempted in and through the project,

the respondents may not have been able to provide a holistic account of their experiences. Due to the resulting gap in objectivity, further, more detailed studies have to be conducted in order to overcome research gaps and arrive at the nuanced truth. Solutions emerge from the redefinition of the relationship between the self and the larger processes within which the self is embedded. Short-term empathy is attractive, but it is fundamentally unviable in addressing the full range of challenges faced on a daily basis by victims. Hence, a more integrative, non-reductionist and self-oriented approach is key to navigating the challenge.

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## **Book Review : Counseling Women: Kinship Against Violence in India**

Tanay Dutta<sup>1</sup> 

**Kowalski, Julia .2022. Counseling Women: Kinship Against Violence in India. University of Pennsylvania Press . pp. 208 pages. E-book ISBN 9781512822830. Price .Rs. 2835.74.**

Julia Kowalski's "Counseling Women: Kinship against Violence in India" critically examines domestic violence in India. This challenges typical Western views on women's rights and independence. Through her fieldwork in Jaipur, Rajasthan, she examines how family counselors support women facing violence and domestic issues. Kowalski said that only an individual rights approach ignores the important role of family and kinship networks in shaping experiences of gendered violence and potential solutions. In societies where family ties are central to social interactions, agency often arises from these relationships rather than from the Western notion of independence. By exploring the counselors' methods that emphasize these connections, Kowalski shows that for many women, empowerment may not fit traditional ideas of autonomy. It presents a substantial alternative to traditional perspectives on women's rights and domestic violence in various cultural contexts.

**Keywords :** empowerment, domestic violence, women's rights, kinship.

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This work, meticulously researched with an empathetic understanding, ventures beyond the dominant ethnographic lens to illuminate the often ignored how family counselors in India utilize kinship networks to assist women in confronting and overcoming violence. The theme of the book revolves around the argument that the comprehensive perspective on the cultural challenges and opportunities related to domestic violence in the particular region. While the emphasis on kinship as a supportive resource is important, some critics argue that this focus might overlook the impact of patriarchal power dynamics in these networks, which contribute to domestic violence. A thorough critique should explore whether improving interdependence unintentionally reinforces harmful norms or pressures women to remain in unsafe relationships. It also notes that counselors often avoid labeling situations as "violence," opting instead to concentrate on improving relationships. Although this strategy can be beneficial in certain contexts, it may also obscure the seriousness of abuse and blur the distinction between marital discord and violence. After critical examination could raise concerns about the implications of this approach for acknowledging severe abuse and whether it undermines a woman's agency in defining her experiences. While the findings are rooted in research from a specific region in North India, the broader message regarding culturally sensitive practices may not be universally applicable, as the particular strategies related to kinship may not translate well to other cultural settings or regions. Additionally, while the review touches on evolving legal and familial structures, a more in-depth analysis could investigate the relationship between kinship-based interventions, legal systems, and external support mechanisms such as shelters and women's rights organizations. The interplay of various elements in supporting women and addressing domestic violence raises important questions, particularly regarding the limitations of kinship-focused approaches, especially in contexts where kinship may perpetuate severe abuse. "Counseling Women" makes a notable contribution to the discourse on domestic violence by advocating for a culturally sensitive framework and highlighting the role of interdependence in kinship-based societies. However, a thorough critique necessitates careful examination of its implications, particularly the risk of

overshadowing structural inequalities or underestimating the gravity of violence. By considering these complexities, scholars and practitioners can enhance their understanding of how to ethically and effectively assist women facing domestic violence across diverse cultural contexts. It provides a compelling and insightful analysis of domestic violence and counseling methodologies in India, with a chapter-wise review that facilitates a more profound exploration of the book's arguments and contributions.

The book is structured around five chapters. The opening chapter of the book sets the stage by contrasting the individual rights-based frameworks often employed by the state in addressing domestic violence with the relational methodologies favored by family counselors. These counselors, positioned as "neutral experts," handle the challenging pattern of behavior between familial expectations and legal obligations. While the chapter underscores their impartial role, it raises critical questions about the feasibility of true neutrality, especially in the presence of power imbalances within families that counselors may recognize either overtly or subtly in their practices. This focus on neutrality may overlook the systemic biases and constraints that can shape counselors' interventions, warranting a more nuanced critique of their role.

The next chapter explores the specific counseling strategies utilized by family counselors, highlighting their emphasis on communication, reconciliation, and fostering interdependence among family members. The author illustrates how counselors assist women and families in "adjusting and explaining" their circumstances to one another, aiming to resolve conflicts and enhance relationships rather than merely pursuing legal or punitive actions against the offenders. However, this focus on adjustment may inadvertently place an excessive burden on women to navigate challenging situations and assume responsibility for mending relationships that may be fundamentally compromised by abuse. Critics may question whether this approach sufficiently addresses the underlying causes of violence and whether prioritizing reconciliation is always aligned with the victim's best interests, particularly regarding their safety and autonomy.

The third chapter explores the relationship between counseling practices and existing domestic violence laws in India. This underscores the potential conflicts that arise when the legal framework, often shaped by an individualistic rights perspective, contrasts with counselors' focus on relational and family-oriented approaches. This chapter investigates the complexities that emerge when legal options are available but may not be prioritized in counseling settings, particularly in cases of severe violence. It raises critical questions about whether the counselors' culturally rooted methods effectively facilitate women's access to justice and legal protection, especially when family reconciliation is emphasized over legal remedies.

In the fourth chapter, the author The core ideas of *seva* (i.e. Care givers) and careful speech combine to create a solid foundation for personal growth and social harmony in counseling practice. This chapter illustrates how counselors, through their commitment to *seva*, assist clients in employing communication techniques that aim to reduce conflict, articulate needs, and foster understanding within familial relationships. While recognizing the benefits of these approaches, it is essential to critically evaluate whether focusing on careful speech might inadvertently obscure or diminish the seriousness of situations involving verbal abuse or psychological manipulation. This analysis prompts a necessary inquiry into whether "careful speech" genuinely empowers women or risks rationalizing or trivializing the effects of abusive behavior.

The fifth chapter highlights the central thesis of the book: counselors prioritize "ordering interdependence" rather than categorizing situations as "violence." By emphasizing the reconfiguration of relationships and the cultivation of healthy interdependence, counselors can present a culturally relevant and effective strategy for many women in India. However, this approach raises concerns about the potential normalization of violence and the challenges it may pose for women seeking to escape abusive circumstances in the future. This chapter invites readers to critically assess the cultural significance of "ordering interdependence" in light of its implications for

recognizing the severity of abuse. It concludes by synthesizing the book's arguments and illustrating how counselors assist women in reshaping their futures within kinship by leveraging their familial and social networks.

This study employs a multifaceted approach, drawing on that this relational framework, while distinct from Western empowerment models, can genuinely enhance women's agency and well-being within their cultural contexts. Nonetheless, a critical examination is warranted to determine whether this approach is universally applicable or may inadvertently limit options for women in oppressive kinship structures, where separation may be the only path to safety. Additionally, the chapter could benefit from a deeper exploration of the long-term effectiveness of these interventions and the risk of reverting to violence if entrenched patriarchal dynamics within families remain unchallenged.

In the women's point of view, majority of the coping strategies were based on problem focused approaches where the central cause of stress was the abusive partner or relation. By resolving various peripheral possible causes of conflict, the women used to deal with the stressor. A shift is being seen as the husband spends more time to reflect and retrospect with the woman, which leads to resolution of minute differences and decreases the risk of violence. When the husband spends even a little bit of time listening to the women's problems and matters of the home that they want to discuss with them, the women feel a sense of relation. This is supplemented by the gross reduction in alcohol consumption. Alcohol is a recurrent theme that largely contributes to violence due to the alterations in behavior that it causes. The results suggest that the government should take the initiative to ensure their safety and well-being. This may be achieved by means of awareness campaigns and of dissemination of coping and stress management techniques to combat boredom, activation of social networks, and emotional help and counseling through telecommunication. Economic independence can help women break free from abuse, women's employment was the most frequently reported factor that was associated with women's experiences in the

quantitative literature. Since we could not establish cause and effect due to cross-sectional nature of the studies reviewed, it is possible that it may have caused some women to secure employment as a means of financial support. For employment to serve a protective role, there is need for awareness and modified cultural norms against rigid gender roles. We also noticed that partner's addiction (e.g., substance abuse), controlling behaviors and having more children in the family such as the effective enforcement of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, economic empowerment for women, comprehensive community support systems, and widespread social awareness and education initiatives that are necessary to fundamentally challenge deeply embedded patriarchal norms that perpetuate abuse. By prioritizing the nuanced, localized success of kinship-based counseling, the book may not fully discuss the systemic changes required to tackle the problem on a societal scale.

In conclusion, in an era where caste and race-based discrimination continues to persist, this remain a global concern; this research focuses a culturally nuanced exploration of domestic violence counseling within the Indian context. A thorough scholarly critique of its chapters would require an in-depth analysis of the implications of its arguments, especially concerning the delicate balance between maintaining family unity and safeguarding the safety and autonomy of women facing abuse. Beyond the immediate context of repatriation, the book offers critical insights into this important work what role in the broader global conversation surrounding domestic violence and women's rights. The authors highlight the enduring repercussions of such injustices on the gender based communities. This nuanced perspective not only enhances our understanding of women's rights. But also contributes to global discussions on equal rights of all human being and the quest for justice for the Female gender.

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