



## **The impact of domestic violence on the Sri Lankan woman**

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### **ABSTRACT**

One way to define domestic violence is when one adult in a relationship abuses their position to manipulate the other. It involves using violence and other abusive methods to instill dominance and terror in a relationship. Physical assault, psychological abuse, social abuse, financial abuse, or sexual assault are all examples of this violence. The frequency of the violence can be intermittent, sporadic, or ongoing. "Domestic violence is more than just a disagreement. It is a pattern of one individual exerting coercive control over another. Abusers control their victims and force their will by using economic hardship, threats, mental abuse, and physical and sexual violence. Both men and women commit and are the victims of domestic abuse. Unfortunately, especially in our nation, women are the most frequent victims. According to reports, even in the United States, intimate partner violence accounts for 85% of all violent crimes suffered by women, compared to 3% of violent crimes experienced by men (Caur & Garg, 2008). What behavioral and psychological changes occur in women who experience domestic violence is the research's main problem. The study's primary goal is to examine the psychosocial effects of domestic abuse on women. Lihiniyawa West Grama Niladhari Domain of Valallavita Divisional Secretariat in Western Province of Sri Lanka has been selected as the study area for this research on domestic violence. In 71 households, or 20% of the total 355 families, 71 women over the age of 18 were used in this study. For this, the simple random sample was employed. Informal interviews and the questionnaire method were utilized in the study to collect data, and SPSS software was used to analyze the data. The research found that women in rural areas of Sri Lanka are more likely to suffer from

domestic violence, including various forms of domestic abuse and violence. It includes various forms such as physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, psychological etc. As a solution to this problem, suggestions such as increasing the legal literacy of women, implementing fair punishments and implementing attitude development programs for men and women, young and child communities have been presented in this research paper.

***Key words: Domestic Violence, Women, Domestic abuse and Psychosocial Impact***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Violence against women and girls has become a universal problem today. One out of every three women in the world will be assaulted, sexually or otherwise abused in her lifetime (Violence Against Women, 2022). Accordingly, the present day Sri Lankan women also have to face economic exploitation, sexual abuse, political exclusion and legal discrimination in the social system.

The United Nations defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (World Health Organization, 1993).

Formal definitions of violence against women and gender-based violence are defined by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as follows: , based on gender equality, human rights and the ability to recognize, enjoy or exercise fundamental freedoms in political-economic-social-cultural-civil or any other field, committed on the basis of sex, with the purpose or intention of impairing or abolishing any difference, exclusion or restriction” (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 2018, pp. 1-15).

Global data on violence against women

- One in three women is a victim of gender-based violence.
- Out of 203 countries in the world, rape during marriage is recognized as a crime in only 52 countries.
- 4.5 million people have been victims of sexual exploitation. 98% of them are women and girls.

- 700 million women living today were married before the age of 18.
- Poor girls are 2.5 times more likely to be married as children than girls from wealthier family backgrounds.
- Today, 133 million women and girls are victims of female genital mutilation.
- One out of every two women murdered in 2012 was killed by a partner or family member: (<https://srilanka.unfpa.org>, 2022).

According to the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 of 2005, domestic violence includes sexual violence, exploitation, physical torture, assault, criminal use of force, adultery, coercion, abortion, illegal detention, attempted murder, intimidation, and other offenses under the Penal Code. Doing actions. Another aspect of domestic violence is emotional abuse. This means cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment resulting from a personal relationship between the aggrieved person and another person, inside or outside the home.

Domestic Violence is a form of misconduct in any relationship that a spouse uses to benefit or retain others, regardless of race, age, caste, religion, or gender. It is partner of actions. That abuse the influence of one person and usually make promises against someone who is in a premarital relationship or blood relationship (Karunarathne & Sirikumara, 2021).

When an abuser thinks they are entitled to it, or that it is appropriate, justifiable, or unlikely to be reported, domestic violence frequently occurs. Children and other family members who believe such abuse is appropriate or encouraged may perpetuate a cycle of violence across generations as a result. Many people mistakenly think of their experiences as out-of-control family conflicts, which prevents them from realizing they are abusers or victims. Domestic abuse awareness, perception, definition, and documentation vary greatly from nation to nation. Moreover, forced or child marriages frequently result in domestic violence.

Domestic abuse in the face of domestic violence is as follows.

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physical Abuse      | Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair pulling, etc. are types of physical abuse. This type of abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use upon him or her.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Sexual Abuse        | Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to, marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Emotional Abuse     | Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem is abusive. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationship with his or her children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Economic Abuse:     | Controlling or restraining a person's ability to acquire, use, or maintain economic resources to which they are entitled. This includes using coercion, fraud, or manipulation to restrict a person's access to money, assets, credit, or financial information; unfairly using a person's personal economic resources, including money, assets, and credit, or exerting undue influence over a person's financial and economic behavior or decisions, including forcing default on joint or other financial obligations, exploiting powers of attorney, guardianship, or conservatorship, or failing or neglecting to act in the best interests of a person to whom one has a fiduciary duty. |
| Psychological Abuse | Elements of psychological abuse include - but are not limited to - causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Technological       | An act or pattern of behavior that is intended to harm, threaten, control, stalk, harass, impersonate, exploit, extort,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Abuse | or monitor another person that occurs using any form of technology, including but not limited to: internet enabled devices, online spaces and platforms, computers, mobile devices, cameras and imaging programs, apps, location tracking devices, or communication technologies, or any other emerging tech |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

(U.S. Department of Justice, 2022)

## Literature Review

**Agumasie Semahegn** and **Bezatu Mengistie** published an article titled "**Domestic violence against women and associated factors in Ethiopia**" in the European Journal of Epidemiological Research in **2015**. In this research paper, studies in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia have been systematically reviewed and a group of 15-19 years of age has been used for the study. For this research, 13 peer review papers and two Ethiopian Demographic and Health Surveys (2005 and 2011) were included in the systematic review. As a result of this research, it has been indicated that 78% of lifetime domestic violence against women is perpetrated by the husband or intimate partner. It is also stated that 76.5% of them are physically abused. It has been stated that sexual violence is 59% and emotional violence is 59%. This research has revealed that domestic violence against women is relatively high in different regions of Ethiopia. As domestic violence is directly related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the victim as well as the perpetrator, there is a need to address factors related to domestic violence against women or prevent the problem and save women from victimization. This research suggests that appropriate health promotion information activities are needed to control the problem(Semahegan & Mengistie, 2015).

**Udeshini Panadare, Aruna Jayathilake & Thisari Medagama** published their study in **2021**. under the title **Domestic Violence and its Impact on Women in Sri Lanka with Special Reference to Gampola, Kandy**. This study was published in an online journal on SSRN Electronic Journal. Based on the Gampola Mithuru Piyasa Counseling Center, the cases related to domestic violence received in 2017, 2018, 2019 have been used for the purpose of this latest research. This has been done to find out the basic reasons for the victims of domestic violence to request the assistance of the counseling service. According to the study, violence is triggered by the generalization of

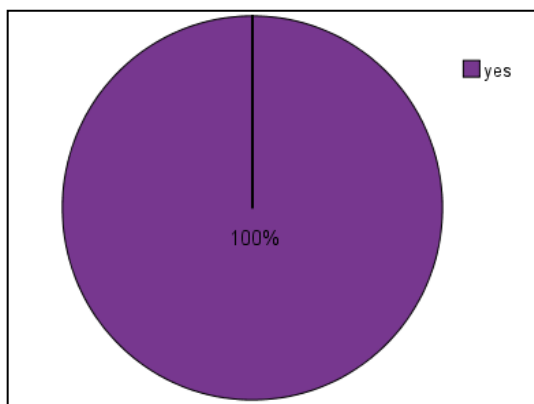
the problem, which increases public knowledge of the problem and the number of episodes. According to research, the majority of those seeking counseling at Mithuru Piyasa are heroin addicts and the rest are victims of domestic violence. The prevalence of domestic violence against women in the region is significant, with physical violence being the most violent form in Gampola. This study revealed that counseling was the primary and most popular strategy and it has presented that there is a need to integrate the mechanisms between the counseling service and various legal agencies and raise social awareness as a strategy to prevent domestic violence(Panadare, Jayathilake & Medagama, 2021).

**Seth Christopher Appian**, has conducted a study in **2013** on the **Domestic Violence and Its Effect on women**. This research has attempted to evaluate and examine the issue of domestic violence. It was conducted in Ashanti region of Ghana. Under the study of the impact of domestic violence on women, this research focuses on the nature and mechanism of domestic violence abuse, its causes and remedies. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. His study found that the respondents' best mechanism for conflict resolution was to let each partner work through it and allow the natural time sequence when they got together. Money issues continue to be a major source of conflict in marriages/relationships as more people in relationships/marriages are forced to do things beyond their will. Research report shows that challenges face by women include constant rejection and fear of marriage or the breakdown of intimate relationships. Recommendations include the need for the police force's DOVVSU unit, as well as telephone services and specialist support that can help women when they are abused. This research has led to a request from the Ministry of Education to include the study of domestic violence in the curriculum from primary to secondary schools to teach children respect for human dignity and tolerance (Appian, 2013).

| Research Methodology   |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Research Area          | The research area of Lihiniyawa West Grama Niladhari Domain of Walallavita Divisional Secretary Kottasa in Western Province of Sri Lanka.                                        |
| Sample & Sampling      | This research was conducted using 71 women over 18 years of age from 71 families representing 20% of a total of 355 families.                                                    |
| Data collection method | Questionnaire method and informal interview method were used as primary data collection methods and research papers and internet were used as secondary data collection methods. |
| Data analysis method   | The SPSS software was used to analyze the data                                                                                                                                   |

## DISCUSSION

Experience of the any type of domestic violence faced in life one or more



(Source: Field Research, 2023)

All data contributors who participated in the study had experienced some form of domestic violence in their lifetime. It represents 100 percent. This data shows that domestic violence in rural societies is still very high today.

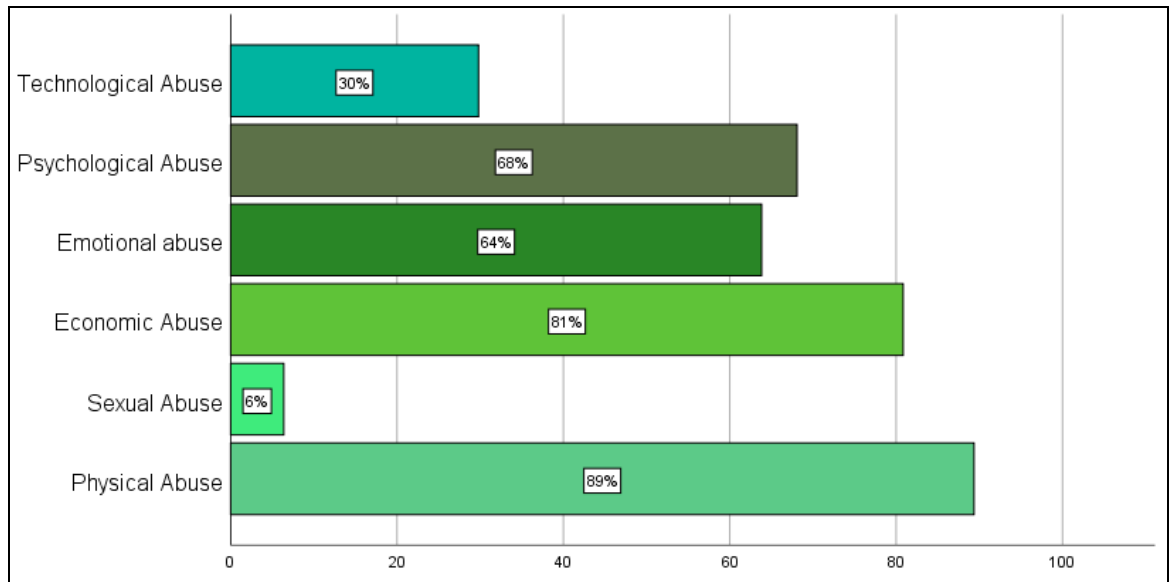
### Education level of partners of domestically abused women

| Level of Education ..... |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Never went to school     | 5%  |
| Up to grade 5            | 28% |
| Up to O/L                | 49% |
| Passed O/L               | 6%  |
| Up to A/L                | 6%  |
| Passed A/L               | 5%  |
| Higher Education         | 1%  |

(Source: Field Research, 2023)

The above table shows that the majority of the partners of the women who are subjected to domestic violence are those who do not have a proper level of education. A group of 49% have only received schooling from 1st grade to 11th grade. It also revealed that the partners of most of the women who experienced emotional violence as well as sexual abuse and economic constraints were those who had never attended school and were in the lower education category having attended school up to 5th grade.

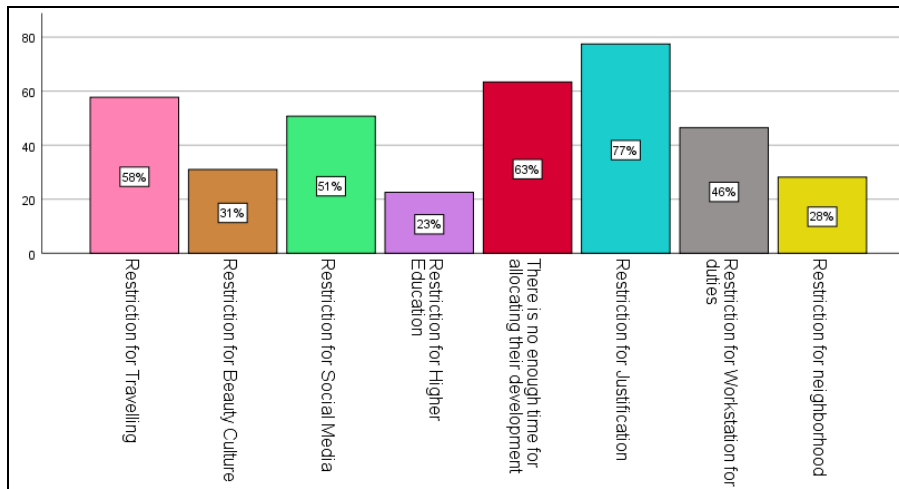
## Domestic abuse in the face of domestic violence.



(Source: Field Research, 2023)

This graph makes it clear that domestic violence takes place based on the above mentioned abuses and violence and women face physical abuses such as scratching, pushing, beating etc. Especially in this study area, which is a rural area, because drinking alcohol is considered a taboo, asking for money from the wife is common. Apart from this, it is found that 81% of economic abuses such as not giving money for household needs, giving money less than the required amount, not maintaining the wife and children as usual, etc. The mental and emotional stress from all forms of violence is high. It was found from the informal interviews that the low percentage of reported sexual abuse is due to their reluctance to provide information about it. Also, these women seem to experience technical oppression of not being allowed to use phones, checking passwords, banning and restricting the use of social media.

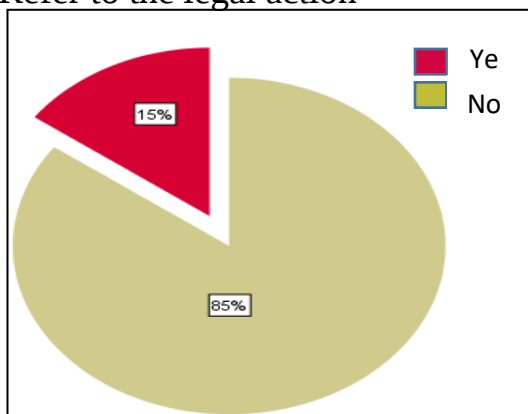
## Restrictions on women in the face of domestic violence



(Source: Field Research, 2023)

When asked about domestic violence, it appears that every woman has experienced more than one domestic abuse. It restricts them and changes their behavior and mind. As high as 77% are those who limit themselves to justifying themselves and making excuses when faced with a problem. Also, limits have been applied to the ability to set aside time for oneself and for one's own development. Travel restrictions for personal purposes also represent a percentage of 58%, while social media bans and related restrictions represent a figure of 51%. In addition, 46% of women are restricted by their partner, for example restrictions related to working at the workplace, such as participating in outings. Moreover, as victims of domestic violence, these women experience more or less groom collection, restrictions on further education, neighborhood relationships, etc.

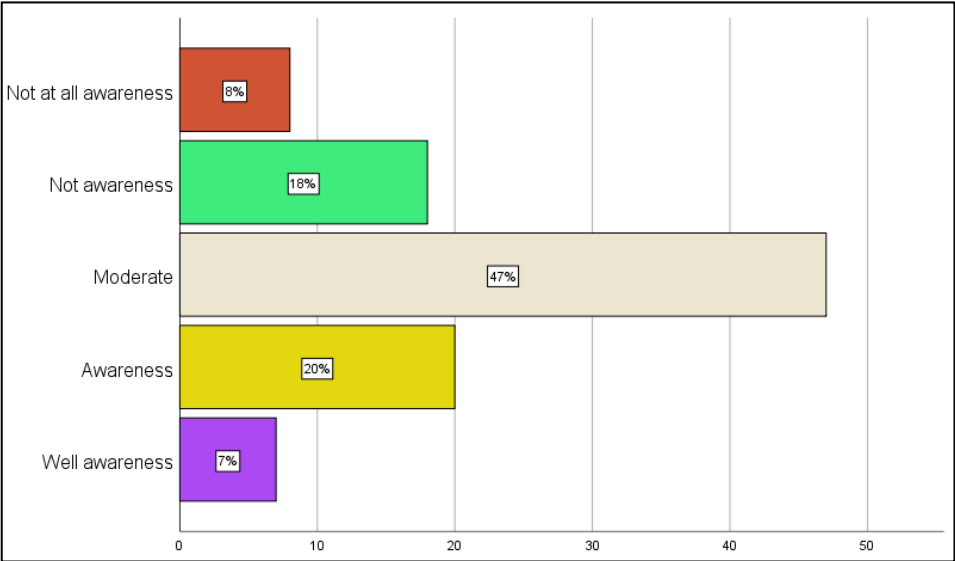
## Refer to the legal action



(Source: Field Research, 2023)

Although all the data contributors used in the research had experienced some form of domestic violence, only 15 percent had taken legal action in relation to it. The data contributors gave reasons for not taking legal action, such as not knowing about the legal action to be taken, protecting the family's reputation, and not getting the expected results from the legal institutions.

Awareness of the legal remedies available for domestic violence



(Source: Field Research, 2023)

In examining the legal awareness of women regarding domestic violence, it was found that a higher percentage of 47% do not have proper understanding about it. 27 percent have no awareness regarding the legal measures that exist and should be taken regarding domestic violence. A small percentage like 8 percent have a proper understanding in this regard.

## Behavioural and psychological changes & impact due to domestic violence

| Behavioural Changes              |     | Psychological Changes                 |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Loss of care for husband         | 48% | Increased stress                      | 80% |
| Neglect of children's activities | 30% | Loss of self-esteem                   | 32% |
| Social distancing                | 50% | The frustration of being born a woman | 50% |
| Minimize outdoor activities      | 64% | Lack of mental concentration          | 68% |

(Source: Field Research, 2023)

As mentioned in the table above, the changes in the lives of women can be identified due to domestic violence. It turns out that what affects them the most is their state of mind. The stress level of these women seems to be high. It is a high percentage like 80%. Also, loss of self-esteem, frustration about being born as a woman and reduced mental concentration seem to be significant psychological discomforts. Behavioural changes have also taken place compared to before and the inability and reluctance to associate with social groups is also high in distance and the inability to engage in outside activities such as hobbies.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research conducted on domestic violence against women revealed that domestic violence continues to operate in rural areas. It was found that often the rural women's community lacks proper understanding of domestic violence. It is only after understanding what domestic violence is that some people realize that they are being subjected to some form of domestic violence related domestic abuse.

Physical abuse like beating, pushing, and scratching and verbal abuse like scolding, verbal abuse, economic abuse like, withholding money to pay for items, stealing one's own money by force and fraud, and denying the chance to

work are examples of domestic abuse that is related to domestic violence. With all of this, it is clear that women are experiencing mental abuse. It seems that by preventing women from achieving economic independence, even the most fundamental rights of women are being infringed. Also, it became clear during the interviews with the data contributors that their intimate partners who forbid women from engaging in beauty activities nonetheless have casual relationships with women who have a strong propensity for doing so. Here, one's intimate partner is frequently the target of sexual jealousy.

Few of the total sample have taken legal action regarding their domestic violence. Here it was seen that the rural women are reluctant to take legal action regarding the offenses committed against them. It seems that there are various reasons behind it. Especially after taking legal action, the woman should live to be reunited with her family. They are reluctant to divorce or live apart from their husbands. Because of this, they are not interested in seeking legal assistance while being concerned about the parental needs of their children. It can be concluded here that women tolerate injustice and pain due to their collective sense of family. This condition can be a cause of negative effects on the mental condition of the woman.

Since power is distributed rather than employed cooperatively in the patriarchal household system, women are emotionally impacted in all forms of violence. Due to their unhappiness in their marriages and being stigmatized as women, negative attitudes are constantly provoked and happiness is constantly snatched away from them. These directly affect how youngsters socialize as well, and it can lead to feelings of self-disappointment and irritation when a person is not treated with the respect and value they are due.

Majority of the perpetrators of domestic violence against women are illiterate men, drug addicts and daily wage earners. The factor that can be deduced from this is the value of equality and freedom provided in proper education. It is a tragedy that a woman has to bear the economic, physical and psychological pressure of a man's alcoholism.

Women who experience domestic violence suffer psychological effects and change in behavior as a result. This study found that domestic violence is a social issue that has to be resolved since it has a negative impact on women's mental health and behavior.

## **Suggestions**

The first task to be done is to make the youth and children community understand the value of equality and fairness. In the school curriculum, the seriousness of female genital mutilation in foreign countries and the suffering women suffer through it are made to be understood through emotions. In the same way in Sri Lanka, the oppression and injustice faced by women in domestic violence should be understood in their brains as well as in their hearts. For this, the university curriculum, school curriculum and awareness programs can be used

Apart from this, the legal literacy of women should be improved. It is possible to conduct awareness programs at the village level and thereby identify their problems and implement solutions related to them. Also distribution of pamphlets can give them some awareness. By being aware of the actions to be taken against the violence against them, they will be able to make decisions about what kind of solutions should be made towards their partner.

Not only women but also men who head the household should get an understanding in this regard and men should be informed about the damage to their family and the impact on their children due to domestic violence. Also, they should be made to understand about the role of women and her responsibility in the home and the benefits to the family in living with understanding.

The system of institutions dealing with domestic violence should be made efficient and the law should be implemented impartially to protect the confidence of women. These institutions should always take the initiative to settle family disputes and punish the guilty.

It is the responsibility of the woman as well as the man to create the necessary environment to maintain autonomy without external interference and social contribution can be made by directing them to get counseling for problem solving.

Protecting women who are most exposed to and at risk of domestic violence is an urgent task. Implementation of programs to improve their mental levels and the government can implement a program for women who need legal advice.

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