

EVIDENCE ON FORMAL SUPPORT SOUGHT BY WOMEN FACING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM DILAASA CASE RECORDS

Domestic violence in India is considered as a peculiar public health problem as there is a huge difference between those who are actually suffering and those who reported that they are suffering. There is lack of reliable data on prevalence of domestic violence and whatever data is available it varies widely owing to the differences in research methodologies.

The estimates from community based studies vary from 18% to 70% while NFHS-3 (2005- 06) indicated a lifetime prevalence rate of domestic violence to be 37% among ever married women of reproductive age. According to NFHS-3 data, 24% of women experienced physical or sexual violence in last 12 months preceding the survey. Among those women who reported physical violence by their husbands, 36% of them experienced injuries in form of cuts, bruises or aches while 18% suffered from severe injuries in form of sprains, dislocations, broken bones and severe burns.

The evidence on silence of women facing domestic violence can be drawn from a hospital based crisis center called “Dilaasa”, established by CEHAT at K.B Bhabha Hospital, Bandra in 2001. Dilaasa meaning reassurance was established with the motive of providing social and psychological support to women survivors of domestic violence along with sensitization of public health system response. Women are referred to Dilaasa not only from hospitals but also from community, ex-clients and other organizations. A total of 2545 women got registered with Dilaasa from 2001 to 2012. As section 498A is concerned with violence against women in matrimonial homes, a total of 1991 married women were considered for the purpose of this analysis.

Only 45% of these married women sought police support against violence while 55% never visited police station for help. Those who sought help from police, 2% of them filed FIR while remaining filed NC or did diary entry.

The profile of those women who didn't seek police support shows that a large number of women continue to face severe form of violence with health consequences for years without seeking any formal support. About 60% of these married women reported experiencing violence during pregnancy while 27% of them ever attempted suicide. Among those who did not seek police support, 80% of women reported facing any form of physical violence while 45% of women faced sexual violence from husband. About 39% of these women experienced physical violence in form of pulling hair and banging head while 26% were abused by punching into chest, face and abdomen. About 54% of these women reported a health complaint due to violence and were referred to Dilaasa by healthcare providers.

Evidence from Dilaasa

- Total number of married women who got registered with Dilaasa from 2001 to 2012 are 1991.
- About 45% of these women (less than half) visited police station to seek support in the form of filing FIR, NC or diary entry. So, 55% of women facing domestic violence never sought any police help.
- Those who visited police station, only 2% of them filed an FIR while others filed NC or made diary entry.
- About 60% of the women who didn't seek help from police reported facing violence during pregnancy and more than one-fourth (27%) reported attempting suicide.
- Nearly 80% of women, who didn't seek police support, faced any form of physical violence.
- The severe form of physical violence in the form of pulling hair and banging head was reported by 39% of women while 26% reported punching face, chest and abdomen.
- The sexual violence within the marital relationship was reported by 45% of these women.
- More than half (54%) of these women reported any health complaint due to violence.

The stark difference in number of women who face violence and those who seek police support is also evident in NCRB data. NCRB provides data on four crimes indicating some sort of violence against women in matrimonial homes. These crimes include cases registered under dowry deaths, cruelty by husband and relatives (498A), Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and PWDVA act, 2005. As per NCRB data, a total of 1, 31,392 cases were registered under these crimes in 2015. However, the estimate derived from NFHS-3 data is showing a different picture as more than twice the number of women (3, 30,000) responded that they sought police help in last 12 months as compared to NCRB data. This shows that a large number of women reached to police for support but their case was not registered.

Violence faced by women of reproductive age (15-49 yrs) in 2015	Estimates for last 12 months
Prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence	24% (69 million)
Of above, sought some form of help	24% (16.5 million)
Of above, sought help from police	2% (0.33 million or 3,30,000)

* Percentage estimates has been taken from NFHS -3 (2005-06) while denominator for total number of women of reproductive age has been taken from world population statistics 2015.