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### Insecurity In the Most Secured Environment

The problem of domestic violence is not getting enough attention in any country. Do you remember your mother asking you to come back home early in the evening? She might still be saying that. I agree that mothers say that for our safety, but is home really the safest place for women? According to National Coalition Against Domestic Violence statistics, on average nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States (NCADV). Domestic violence forces women to feel suffocated in their own houses. According to Google dictionary, domestic violence is an aggressive behavior within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner (Google). The global problem of domestic violence against women of all ages is not getting enough attention in society because of the ignorance and lack of knowledge about this topic which could be eradicated through education and awareness.

The physical abuse faced by women disturbs their mental health. In a survey conducted by me on domestic violence, I asked the participants to describe different types of domestic violence in their own words. While answering this question for mental abuse, one of the participants explained this point by describing the incident of two monkeys being trained, where one was beaten when did a mistake and another appreciated/encouraged when got something right. The second one learnt fast. And for sure we can imagine the positive mental state the

second one would be in throughout the learning experience and life. According to the national domestic violence hotline, someone is mentally/verbally abusing you when he/she calls you names, humiliates you, criticizes you, etc. There are many ways a person could mentally abuse you by directly or indirectly threatening you. For most of the people, domestic violence is limited to physical and mental abuse. But sexual, reproductive, financial, and digital are also different types of domestic violence. In the domestic violence survey, 71.4% of participants were not familiar with financial abuse. Some participants were also ignorant to digital abuse.

According to definition by thehotline.org, financial or economic abuse occurs when an abusive partner extends their power and control into your financial situation. The scholar article, “Breaking the Chains of Financial ABUSE” by Tisdale Stacey discusses ways to avoid being a victim of financial abuse and achieve empowerment. It gives all the information by first narrating the story of Jane, a victim of financial abuse which eventually turned into physical and verbal abuse. She narrates how after divorce; Jane rebuilds her financial life and also shares general information about it. The article describes ways of identifying the signs of financial abuse and ways of fighting against it. It also talks about government programs that help victims of financial abuse to restart and stabilize their life. One of my survey participants explains financial abuse in simple terms by describing her own observation as, “Financial abuse is common in some sections like vegetable sellers, maids etc. I have heard this many times from such people that their earnings are many times forcefully taken and used by their partners in alcohol and gambling and also, they are restricted to use money up to certain extent even when it is earned by them.” All these activities described by my survey participant can eventually lead to physical & verbal abuse and makes that person mentally depressed. Making transactions through

a partner's finances like credit card, bank account or online transfer, without their permission is also a type of financial abuse.

To solve this problem, the first step we can take in general is to educate our daughters, mothers and women regarding finances and involve them in the family's financial decisions from childhood itself. A woman has the right to participate in all the financial decisions of a family whether she financially contributes to the family or not. Lack of liberty in taking financial decisions during childhood makes women incapable of taking firm decisions during family crises like health emergencies. Chances of getting cheated in a family business is higher if either of the partners is ignorant about the financial standing and procedure of it. The second step would be to teach women to be financially independent by supporting their efforts towards their career and by not forcing them to expand their family. The schools should give real life financial knowledge to students from an early age. Advocating them about the tax filing process, bank account operations, insurance policies, etc are important.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of their popularity or financial status. This can happen to anyone from famous celebrities like Christina Aguilera to some unknown village women. The news media and social media plays a major role in informing the people about these issues. Many actresses and celebrities were able to express their sufferings through the #MeToo movement. The #MeToo movement helped to show survivors of sexual abuse that they are not alone. It also helped to improve awareness about sexual violence, showing just how widespread sexual harassment and assault really are. Though being a boon for the celebrities, the MeToo moment was not so beneficial to common women who are not celebrities. In the USA TODAY, the article "Some say one false report could cripple the #MeToo movement. Is progress

that fragile?" talks about the effect of fake reports in the MeToo movement. Stephanie Coontz, a historian and author of several books on marriage and gender said, "A false accusation could certainly give a weapon to people who don't believe women, or who want to discredit the movement,"(Coontz). The fake reports filed by some of the celebrities were also discouraging for other women who were victims of this crime.

According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, "Domestic violence doesn't discriminate. People of any race, age, gender, sexuality, religion, education level, or economic status can be a victim — or perpetrator — of domestic violence." Whether the victims are uneducated or ambitious, they all hesitate to speak out about their experiences of domestic violence in their families, romantic relationships, or professional lives. One of my teachers in high school used to tell us how she has been facing domestic violence at home. She, being an educated, financially independent high school teacher never raised her voice against the abuse she was facing. Domestic violence is not prevalent just because of people who exercise it but also because of people who continuously find them as a victim of it as they don't report it due to some or the other reason. It unknowingly promotes the crime. There are many factors that refrain a person from talking or complaining about domestic violence. This has adverse effects not only on the women who are victims but also on the children of the house which makes those children to think the same way and not report the crime. This also affects the mental condition of the women and their family members, eventually abusing them emotionally.

Women are emotionally abused when they have to face the taboos and gender-based stereotypes, Menstruation taboo is one of them. The article "Menstruation Pollution Taboos and Gender Based Violence in Western Nepal" by Dr. Prakash Upadhyay describes the condition of

women and the ill treatment given to them during menstruation and how that affects their mental health. He narrates how Chaupadi is a menstrual pollution taboo practiced by menstruating women in western Nepal in which they are “banished from home, restricted to eat nutritious food, treated as untouchables to partake in social activities under the constant fear of disasters in the family if this tradition is breached. (Upadhyay)” He connects these with Hindu religion’s cultural and orthodox beliefs. He identifies how menstruation is more of a social, cultural thing than a biological process in many societies. “Proper adherence of menstrual taboos is purity which is allied with wholeness and morality, and disorder associated to violation of menstruation norms is allied with pollution, incompleteness, and immorality.”, Dr. Upadhyay concludes. This kind of misbehavior and ill treatment to women makes them feel like untouchables. I myself have experienced this feeling. In my maternal house, when a woman is on her periods then she is asked to stay in one corner of the house and is not allowed to touch anyone or anything. They must sit, eat and sleep on the floor without any mattress and have to clean their utensils by themselves using a separate sink outside the house. They are considered impure during that time and are not allowed to participate in any religious or social ceremony.

There are two ways to eradicate this emotional trauma faced by women. One way is to change the mindset of people regarding menstruation being a taboo and the other way is to make the experience of women comfier during that time. As changing someone’s mind is a tough option, many non-profit organizations are using the second way. Navya Naveli Nanda’s project Naveli started a “Period Positive Home” in India’s Gadchiroli village. According to homegrown’s article “These Period Positive Homes Are Changing The Cultural Dialogue On Menstruation In Rural Maharashtra” by Niharika Ghosh, “In the tribal areas of Gadchiroli,

Maharashtra, women to this date are banished to small, isolated period huts when they are menstruating.” The period positive homes provide all kinds of hygienic facilities and sanitary products for those women, where they could live during their time of banishment. The government should come into action and do this kind of project. The root cause of this problem is the patriarchal thinking of people, which is sometimes based on their religious beliefs, so this would be only solved when people change their mindset by themselves. The pandemic gave some time to people to think about this but their mindset didn’t change.

Along with locking people, covid locked the mouths of women. Throughout the start of lockdown, women have suffered a lot in every country. They were expected to work from home plus fulfill all the requirements of their family. Their families were expecting them to be there for them for the whole day as they stayed at home. The employing companies also didn’t take any step to reduce the burden of their workers, rather they implied a lot of work burden on them and men used women to release this frustration. The cases of domestic violence have dramatically increased during the lockdown period. Thus, covid made the condition of the victims of domestic violence worse.

According to my survey 85.7% of participants think that the problem of domestic violence is neglected in our society. Education and advocacy are the two main ways to eradicate this problem. According to The Conversation’s article “Why don’t we speak up when we see signs of domestic violence?”, “The home is usually considered a space of love, safety, and togetherness. So, we often find it uncomfortable to talk about the home as a site of painful, unpleasant and distressing problems such as abuse and violence.” We should normalize talk about domestic violence and other sensitive topics. Women shouldn’t be bound by their duties

towards their family. They shouldn't have to choose between family and career. Conclusively, we as individuals should encourage the women of our house to get educated and provide them with information about emergency helplines and safety resources to eradicate this global problem of domestic violence.

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