

A Study on Domestic Violence in Manipur

Dr Konika Khuraijam^{1*}

^{1*}Associate Professor, DM College of Teacher Education, Manipur University, konikhur@hotmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Policies and programmes fail to take into account the interconnected dangers and effects married women face in their lives, even as cases of domestic violence are on the rise. Since September of last year, the Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW) has registered 59 cases of crimes against women in the state plagued by ethnic violence. Of those cases, five have been turned over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for additional investigation. This study seeks to establish the connection between women's domestic abuse by husbands and other family members and their relation to socio-political scenarios in rural and urban areas. It brings to light intervention areas and connects the issue with the larger ongoing patriarchal trend

Keywords: domestic violence; family abuse; childhood trauma; upliftment; development; rural nexus

INTRODUCTION:

Manipur state is home to a foundational strong feminine population that embodies a rich heritage and ethnically unique setting. Over the years, the geospatial space has experienced high levels of patriarchal developments, and continuously strives towards equality even though conflicts and tensions overpower the state's development regime. The phenomenon of equality goes against this backdrop, and violence against women is one of the leading causes of behavioural actions by alcoholic men. For several women, the aspect of domestic violence is an ongoing contributor to their physical and mental malaise (Baite, 2024), and is mostly found in home environments, including physical and also psychological violence perpetrated by the related family members.

Inquiries based on this pervasive prejudice and violence are prevalent mostly in rural areas, while mainstream narratives have found evidence of domestic violence to be from alcoholic husbands (Baite, & Kaur, 2010). Haobijam et al (2022), further elucidate the prevalence of domestic violence in the form of physical violence, and emotional and/ or sexual abuse of women by their intimate partners. The collective influence of family members inciting domestic violence and physical, verbal and emotional forms of abuse create severe tensions in the state's population of women. While the legal reforms in Manipur's jurisdictions have been progressive, they have also been hindered by perceived cultural constraints and an inadequate appreciation of the gendered nature of domestic violence.

For women of Manipur, urban and rural settings contrast with the level of abuse being faced by them. Several factors such as financial instability, societal pressure, social stigma and cultural beliefs have contributed towards domestic violence of women by their family members (Baite, 2024). Ravneet Kaur and Garg (2010) have connected Manipur's regional inquiries based on WHO reports, India's National Family Health Survey III, in which, 37.2/% of women 'experienced violence' after marriage. Inheritance of these records is fundamental towards understanding a universal recognition of domestic violence issues.

Towards a more political aspect, domestic violence against women is often heightened with the ongoing conditions of the political affairs, prevalent in the state. For Cross Riddle K (2017), the issue of women's agency within the armed conflicted state brings to light the intersectional studies, in which ethnic and religious hierarchies disrupt women's peace-building agency.

Therefore, for urban areas, women facing domestic abuse by family members is contradicting to the urban developments that take place. In rural areas, the scenario of upliftment is alienated due to prevalent norms and traditions of suppression.

An important factor to take into account in Manipur is that it has been witnessing ethnic violence between the Kuki and Meitei communities since the first week of May. Due to this, several domestic violence cases against women are rising. Currently, important information related to women's issues is being recorded in the relief camps, an environment of state neglect must be counteracted with relevant inquiries underlining the root cause of domestic and supported forms of violence towards women.

Although important social laws like The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (the bill against domestic violence in India) guarantee that women do not have to suffer a prolonged period of abuse before taking recourse to the law. In response to the justice systems prevalent in Manipur state, Cross Riddle (2017), brings to light the struggle of addressing the structures that act violently upon women and other marginalized groups. Backed by state ignorance, the domestic violence cases prevalent in Manipur suffer from a large gap of systematic failure of justice. Within these structures, psychological effects created through prolonged domestic violence effectively become determinants of surrounding childhood trauma. Therefore, effective intervention in less accessible areas will create increased recognition of the harmful effects of domestic violence abuse and expand a rights-based response for those affected.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

According to Amirthalingam (2005), domestic violence is viewed as a 'private' matter within family, cultural or religious spheres, which tends to prevail over the interests of the women. However, Amirthalingam (2005) proposes that by defining family violence both as a gender issue and a human rights issue, the locus of domestic violence can be shifted from the private domain to the public, a crucial step in Manipur's context. Advocacy for reform has argued that domestic violence should be viewed as a women's rights issue and not a family issue, calling for its criminalisation.

Domestic Violence suffered by women in the state of Manipur is 51.80%, emotional violence is 14.10%, sexual violence is 13.80%, and severe violence is 7.56% according to studies conducted by Haobijam, et al (2022). Moreover, the violence associated with this scheme majorly relates to family influence, in which alcohol consumption by the husband is a major contributor. While lower risks of domestic violence are associated with higher levels of socio-economic condition, education plays a key role in differentiating the culture of decreased violence against the population.

Further, Haobijam et al. (2022) have demonstrated that the main perpetrator in a domestic violent scenario goes beyond the husband, and inclines towards other family members such as the in-laws and persons connected to the women through marriage. The web-creating areas of domestic violence by women's surrounding members have created an inescapable position, creating violent atmospheres at every corner of women's livelihoods.

Baite (2024), in his rigorous studies, has found evidence in his study that the chosen females suffering from domestic abuse by their family members chose to remain silent despite experiencing abuse and were determined not to leave their abusive relationships due to socio-economic issues such as financial instability, societal pressure, social stigma cultural beliefs and for the sake of their children's lives. Turning towards further resolutions towards new forms of advocacy laws, some of the key defects of legal reforms in India include:

1. Narrow definition of domestic violence
2. Limitation towards constraints on obtaining protection orders
3. Discrimination against the victim concerning residential rights
4. Failing to extend protection beyond marital relationships
5. Failing to recognise marital rape as an offence

In India, the legal frameworks covering the issue of domestic violence against women consist of various national and local laws as well as international agreements. Some of these important legal provisions include the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence of 2005, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013, and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, of 2015. While these legal frameworks ensure measures to protect and women from domestic violence traditions, the systematically embedded patriarchal traditions, socio-economic inequalities contribute significantly toward the ineffectiveness of the legal measures. The conflict and militant active state, have further created a culture of impunity where women are being subject to atrocious gender-based violence and abuse.

Political-ethnic conflicts, where women become the worst sufferers of domestic violence, create an environment of abuse for people of outside communities to commit atrocities outside of family spheres. Ongoing ethnic conflicts for the past months in the state of Manipur include the killings, rapes, and rioting in the state since May 2023. Such atrocities can be correlated with the weaponisation of women's bodies, and women have been used as instruments to exact revenge on the other community, removing the barriers of modern society. Having been in the middle of insurgency for decades, the gruesome violence taking place in the past few months is increasingly unprecedented in terms of scale and ghastliness. While majoritarian communities usually gain the upper hand in these situations, minority groups must be protected committed by the atrocities of the state.

Bhasin (2007), draws comparisons of social justice levels with the status of women in a society. These, important factors like women's level of income, education, health and employment are key determinants in the social elevation of women's lives. Therefore, in the case of Manipur, significant amounts of domestic violence and abuse have been occurring in rural areas (Baite, 2024) than urban areas, where women's status in terms of the above parameters are considerably higher.

Studies conducted by Das (2022) in Manipur state analysed medical records of deaths caused by domestic violence cases, out of which, 61 deaths out of 3000 domestic violence cases in years 2004-2013. The majority of the death cases pertained to married women, and a major proportion of victims had rural preponderance, as for the classification of socioeconomic status, the majority belonged to the lower class. While this important concluded evidence of fatalities conducted majorly in joint-type families, it went beyond the focus of intimate partner violence. The study further recorded that land and property disputes, sudden provocation and alcoholism were causes that occurred due to a lack of development and urbanisation process. By this, the authors emphasise the need to bring about an increase in awareness drives among women, and strict implementation of legislation at the government level relating to domestic violence crimes. Further, the dynamics of domestic violence cases in the Manipur region were highly varied in terms of intervention schemes, therefore, the necessary counselling strategies related to validating the domestic violence victim's disclosure, assessing the current threats, education on abuse dynamics, formulation of effective safety plans, and accessibility to resources.

Jasobanta (2024), mentions the social and economic impact of domestic violence on the women of Manipur, and the lack of economic opportunities, and social instability contribute to women's vulnerability, making them vulnerable to traffickers (Jasobanta, 2024). Within the geospatial location of Manipur's embodiment, issues like the absence of border control, and enforcement mechanisms further exacerbate the problem of violence in Manipur. From an array of psychological and physical problems, the humiliation and isolation effects on the women's social and personal surroundings contribute towards their detrimental status. Moreover, such long-term psychological, physical and emotional abuse has reduced women's participation in education, work and social life, which further devalues the state, and undermines gender equality and Sustainable Development Goals.

The imperative goal of the literature provided is to analyse the situation of domestic violence abuse conducted throughout the state of Manipur and bring to light the current issues women face. Therefore, the best form of domestic violence identity is the recognition of the state's women's

METHODOLOGY:

The population of the study were the married women of Manipur. Altogether 200 samples, 100 from urban areas and 100 women from rural areas of Manipur were taken up as samples through the random sampling procedures. The descriptive survey method was used in the research. A questionnaire containing 25 questions was used as a tool for the research.

Table 1- level of domestic violence faced by married women in rural and urban areas of Manipur.

CATEGORY	N	Total Score	Score obtained	Percentage of Score
URBAN	100	5000	3200	69%
RURAL	100	5000	4009	80.08%

ANALYSIS:

The study revealed that both urban and rural women were facing domestic violence with women in Rural areas facing more violence. Table 1 depicts the rate at which domestic violence occurs in both Urban and Rural areas of Manipur. With a score of 80.08%, the married women of rural areas face domestic violence on a much larger

scale. The prevalence of violence against women, by their intimate partners and family members lead to violence-driven injuries demonstrates that rural women who experienced violence were more likely due to low income, low socioeconomic status and absence of political rights and human rights agencies.

A majority of injuries suffered by rural women were cuts, bruises or aches, followed by severe burns, eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or burns, deep wounds, broken bones, broken teeth, or other serious injuries. Empirical studies on the rural-urban diaspora reported a similar prevalence of domestic violence-related injuries in India (Sabri et al., 2014) and among other countries (Yoshihama et al., 2007; Wong et al., 2014). Such studies bring evidence that violence-induced injuries hurt women's physical and mental health. This problem further exacerbates women's issues in terms of low self-esteem and it affects the overall quality of life (Alsaker et al., 2006; Kelly, 2010).

There hasn't been much discussion of injuries caused by violence. To learn more about the patterns and severity of injuries caused by violence, as well as how it impacts women's overall quality of life and suffering, further study is required in these areas. Future research on the behaviour of people seeking medical attention for injuries caused by violence and the costs associated with such care may prove beneficial. To support community-based solutions, research on injuries connected to violence should be conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Despite being predictable and often avoidable, domestic violence injuries have long been overlooked by national and international health agendas. Evidence now available indicates that coordinated efforts involving the health sector, among others, might be used to implement interventions aimed at preventing injuries connected to violence.

A higher incidence of violence-related injuries implies the overall health and well-being of women, particularly women in the reproductive age group. Because of their married status, the reproductive age group of women are at significant risk indicating high chances of reproductive issues for their future. Further, domestic violence cases hinder their overall growth and development and for women in rural areas, such barriers create areas of confinement and misery.

Our study reported women's age, low education, poor households and having alcoholic husbands and abusive family members as risk factors. Research from the past in both rich and developing nations revealed comparable risk factors for injuries caused by violence (Mahapatro et al., 2012; Sabri et al., 2014), however, our study also highlights that equal to males, family members are responsible for encouraging violent behaviours in their household spheres. Normalisation of husbands' alcoholic consumption has been reported as one of the major risk factors leading to higher violence and injuries (Sabri et al., 2014).

Regarding family influence and the effects of domestic violence, interventions must specifically target alcoholic husbands, and take into account those family members who have equally encouraged the normalisation of abuse. One of the main areas of intervention required to prevent further traumatic experiences of violence and injuries is the reaction of healthcare practitioners to injuries connected to violence. The need of the hour is to include children who have witnessed domestic violence and to provide ample therapy for them to deviate from the toxic environment created in front of them.

It is widely known that because violence is accepted and victims of abuse are stigmatised, women are not seeking official legal assistance for abuse by their spouses or medical attention for their wounds. The negligence of medical, psychological and emotional support creates long-term development issues in their overall growth and well-being.

For rural-urban women nexus, the lines of domestic abuse have been blurred through the ongoing political conflict. While physical abuse was confined to husbands and family members, an increase in physical violence can be seen in outside communal spheres, and the agency of dishonouring women in the name of community has rampantly affected women's livelihoods. Since September of last year, 59 incidents of rape, sexual assault, and domestic abuse have been reported to Manipur State Commission for Women. Of these, investigations are ongoing in 19 cases, while 36 cases were resolved, and four cases were placed on hold.

CONCLUSION:

The survey displayed that a sizeable number of women had been victims of violence and injuries caused by it. Women's lack of education, having several children, having alcoholic husbands, unsupportive families and having a low socioeconomic level in the home were all considered risk factors. One of the most important public health issues that need immediate attention is violence-related injury. Preventative measures must be taken strategically, such as effective self-help groups (SHGs) at rural district levels.

Recently, ongoing conflicts and ethnic violence in the state of Manipur have brought to the forefront the abuse of women members in the family being abused in the name of conflict. Women in rural areas require special focus in terms of education, healthcare, job facilities, and income upliftment. The compliance of central and state-level authorities must provide increased attention to the prepared draft gender policy which would be submitted to the government. State gender policy must aim at addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and ensuring that women and girls have equal rights and opportunities. In these conflicted times, it is essential to take into account the established inquiries about women's issues and bring effective action policies that further aim towards delineating their deprived status.

Taking a wider view, issues of domestic violence generated by family members in rural and urban areas are different, the comparison and parallels between urban and rural socially and economically deprived remained the same. This means that, in a holistic sense, the socio-economic conditions of women must be uplifted through educational facilities, job opportunities, credit waivers, healthcare accessibility and increased political representation.

In both urban and rural spaces, violence cases were reported majorly in joint family settings, indicating the increased influence of family members in a collective setting. It is important to take into account that stringent measures must be taken to protect women, and family members must be equally held accountable for their compliance and abetment.

Lastly, domestic violence stems from an increasing root cause of socio-economic depravity and patriarchal interconnectedness. To fight this problem, the prevalence of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence, 2005 with focus towards women who face domestic violence continues to exist, a neglect of personal and social support system, generated from patriarchal worldview of society, makes women hesitant towards reporting domestic violence cases. Social stigma and fear of further violence, create spaces of fear and creates a limited sense of solution for the victims. This structure of increased patriarchal norms can be eliminated with structural changes and shifts that can be taken up by effective implementation of laws, which goes beyond serving justice, and seeks permanent solutions and rehabilitation programs. Therefore, elimination of this evil will eventually take place through procedural and effective structural changes, and collective action must strive towards eradicating physical abuse for the larger betterment of its women.

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