

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter review on numerous studies that have been conducted on violence against women particularly “battered women”. Past studies provides the definition, types of injury, reasons to batter a woman and why they continue to stay.

2.1 Introduction

The United Nation (UN) defines violence against women as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (UN, 1992). This includes physical, sexual and psychological violence such as wife beating, burning and acid throwing, sexual abuse including rape and incest by family members, female genital mutilation, female feticide and infanticide, and emotional abuse such as coercion and abusive language.

Past studies indicate that between 16% to 52% of women world-wide are physically assaulted by an intimate partner at least once in their lives (WHO, 1994). Women aged 15 to 44 years record violence accounts for more death and disability compared to cancer, malaria, traffic injuries or war put together. Studies

1994). Women aged 15 to 44 years record violence accounts for more death and disability compared to cancer, malaria, traffic injuries or war put together. Studies in India, Bangladesh, Fiji, USA, Papua New Guinea and Peru show a high correlation between domestic violence and suicide rates. Women who are victims of domestic violence are 12 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who do not experience such violence (WHO, 1997).

The Inter- American Development Bank's Special Report on Domestic Violence states that gender violence results in the direct loss of millions of dollars in health care, police and court costs and productivity. In Canada, this cost averages \$1.6 billion annually and between \$10 to \$67 billion in U.S. In Chile, gender violence results in \$1.56 billion in loss of battered women's wages. Abuse women are less likely to seek pre-natal care and more likely to give birth to low-weight babies (Heise,1994). Violence has been identified as a contributory factor to maternal mortality. It is estimated that rape and domestic violence account for 5% of the healthy years of life lost to women of reproductive age in demographically developing countries (World Bank,1993).

Statistics published in 1997 by Neft and Levine revealed that, according to 40 studies conducted in 24 countries on four continents, between 20% to 60% of the women interviewed reported that they suffered physical abuse from their male partners. The percentage of abused women of the 24 countries is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Percentage of Abused Women of 24 Countries

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE(%)
CHILE	60
SRI LANKA	60
TANZANIA	60
ECUADOR	60
GUATEMALA	49
UGANDA	46
KENYA	42
ZAMBIA	40
MALAYSIA	39
CANADA	36
UNITED STATES	28
NORWAY	25
NETHERLANDS	21

Source: Neft and Levine (1997); Where Women Stand: An International Report.

2.2 Battered Women

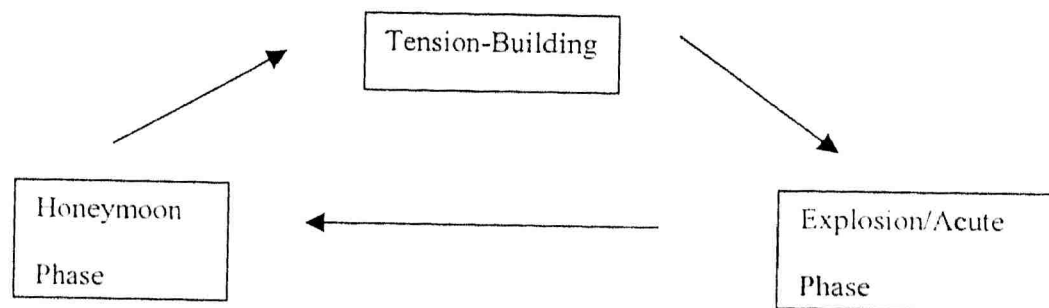
Jacobson and Gottman (1998) defined battering as physical aggression with a purpose: that purpose is to control, intimate, and subjugate another human being. Battering is always accompanied by emotional abuse, is often accompanied by injury, and is virtually always associated with fear and even terror on the part

being. Battering is always accompanied by emotional abuse, is often accompanied by injury, and is virtually always associated with fear and even terror on the part of the battered woman. Miller (1995) noted that emotional battering, then, runs gamut from a steady grinding down of a woman to emotional trauma. While her bones are never broken, her flesh never bruised, her blood never spilled, she is wounded nonetheless. With self-confidence and self-respect gone, she lives, empty, with no self to assert. She cedes control of her life to her abuser. She is helpless.

Researchers like Campbell (1992) have found that across cultures, wife battering is linked to male dominance and cultural norms that tolerate domestic violence. Walker (1984) defined a battered woman as a woman, 18 years of age or over, who is or has been in an intimate relationship with a man who repeatedly subjects or subjected her to forceful physical or psychological abuse.

How someone becomes a "battered woman"? According to Dr. Lenore E. Walker (1984), a woman must experience at least two complete battering cycles before she can be labeled a "battered woman". The cycle has three distinct phases. Figure 2.1 shows that the first is the tension-building phase, followed by the explosion or acute battering incident, culminating in a calm, loving respite- often referred to as the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1979).

Figure 2.1: Cycle of Battered Women



Phase 1: Tension Building

This phase consists primarily of verbal abuse and emotional isolation. Women have a variety of ways of handling this phase. They frequently learn to recognize its incipience by the set to the jaw, or the rigidity of his body as he comes in the door. Some women become more nurturing, compliant and solicitous, trying to anticipate his every whim to prevent his anger from exploding. Many attempt to manipulate other family members, especially children, ushering them into another room, keeping them quiet, in order to control his environment for him and keep him from becoming irritated. All these maneuvers are likely to reinforce his belief that it is up to her to keep his anger from escalating and he feels justified in directing abusiveness towards her. Sometimes a woman will try to stay out of his way. He may see this as rejection and becomes infuriated.

Denial is an important defense mechanism for the abused woman. She minimizes the physical damage and rationalizes the event itself, either blaming herself or blaming his drinking or his job-related stress. She will frequently cover up the violence out of shame and embarrassment and also because she's afraid if she lets others know, he will increase the violence. This cover up behaviour often drives friends and family and increases her isolation. Walker (1979) believes the batterer is spurred on by her passiveness and therefore does not try to control himself. He may realize, at some level, that his behaviour is inappropriate, and he is afraid she will leave him. Paradoxically, he escalates in order to keep her captive. As the tension mounts in this first phase, she finds it harder to restore equilibrium after each minor incident. Less able to defend herself against the pain and more and more exhausted, her anger may begin to show through the complacent mask she has learned to wear. She is likely to begin to withdraw more and more fearing he will recognize the anger and this will set off the explosion that she knows is there. The tension approaches an unbearable level.

Phase II: Acute Battering Incident

Walker (1979) identifies three characteristics of the violence that were mentioned in many interviews, out of control, "teach her a lesson", and overkill. The batterer does not seem to understand what happened. He stops when he thinks he's taught her the lesson, but by then he has inflicted serious injury. In order to justify the behaviour, he will recite the petty annoyances and grievances he has

against her and will frequently blame drinking or overwork for the explosion. We often hear that the woman “brings it on herself,” and it is true that sometimes the women provoke the battering incident. As the tension mounts, she cannot tolerate the terror, anger and anxiety any longer. By provoking the incident she maintains some sense of control and she knows from experience that the phase following this one is idyllic by comparison.

The battering incident, according to Walker (1979) can last up to 24 hours. The trigger for explosion can be anything and is probably a combination of annoying external events and the internal state of the perpetrator. Generally, he is the only one who can end this phase. The battering has nothing to do with the woman’s behaviour, although he claims it does. Sometimes the batterer awakens his wife to begin the assault. Beginning with a verbal barrage, he is infuriated if she answers back in kind and even more infuriated if she stays silent.

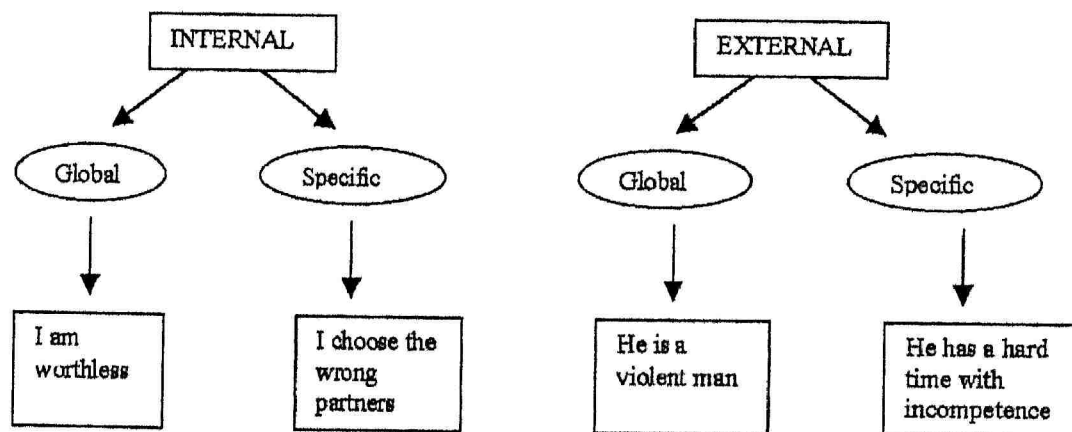
Phase III: Honeymoon/ Loving Behaviour

This phase completes the victimization because she is convinced this is the real person. All of the tension of the first two phases is gone. He believes she won’t do it again, that he has taught her the lesson. He may arrive with flowers, candy and gifts. If she resists his approaches, he enlists his family to help and soon the two are together again. A symbiotic bonding takes place. They think

won't do it again, that he has taught her the lesson. He may arrive with flowers, candy and gifts. If she resists his approaches, he enlists his family to help and soon the two are together again. A symbiotic bonding takes place. They think together they can conquer the world. The sense of over dependence and over-reliance on each other is obvious in each stage, but the bonding aspects are cemented here. Intervention must occur before this stage begins, preferably as tension mounts in phase I.

Seligman (1975) developed a theory of Learned Helplessness which offers an elegant explanation for the difficult to understand phenomenon of the woman who stays and stays in the battering situation. Peterson (1984) noted that a woman believes in her global incompetence will have a difficult time accepting that she can make it on her own. Figure 2 shows the battered woman's attributions for her abuse.

Figure 2.2: Attributions of a Battered Woman



The Court in *People v. Aris*, 215 Cal App 3d 1194, 264 Cal Rptr 167(1989) stated that battered women tend to stay in abusive relationships for a number of reasons.

- ◆ Women are still positively reinforced during the honeymoon phase.
- ◆ Women tend to be the peacemakers in relationships.
- ◆ Women feel they are responsible to make the marriage work.
- ◆ It is more dangerous to leave than to stay; prior threats by batterer to kill self or children.
- ◆ Women do not have psychological energy to leave; resulting in a learned helplessness or psychological paralysis.

People v. Romeo, 13 Cal Rptr 2d 332, 336 (1992) noted that there are four characteristics of a battered woman:

- i. The woman believes that violence as her fault.
- ii. The woman has an inability to place the responsibility for the violence elsewhere.
- iii. The woman fears for her life and her children's lives.
- iv. The woman has an irrational belief that the abuser is omnipresent and omniscient.

According to Andrews (1987), women reported more severe beatings when they pregnant and twice as likely to experience miscarriage or stillbirth than women who were not beaten. Heise (1994) confirms that pregnant women are prime targets for abuse. Dobash and Dobash (1989) in their research found that violence entered the relationship early. Half of the women were assaulted in the first year of marriage or cohabitation, and there were very few cases in which violence began after the first three years. Smith (1989) noted that battered women are more likely to suffer stress, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, suicide attempts, and post trauma stress reaction which results in helplessness and low self-esteem.

2.2.1 Types of injuries

WAO Case Record Survey, 1990 found that most common injuries battered women had sustained were bruises and swelling (50%), whereas a smaller proportion experienced cuts (8%), buns (5%), fractures (3%) and miscarriage (3%). Zaman Khan, (1993) noted that out of 1,357 reported cases of wife-battering between 1990 and 1992 in Malaysia, 7% were classified as 'grievous hurt' or 'causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means of which could include injuries with outcomes such as loss of sight, hearing or a limb, permanent disfigurement, bona fracture or severe bodily pin'.

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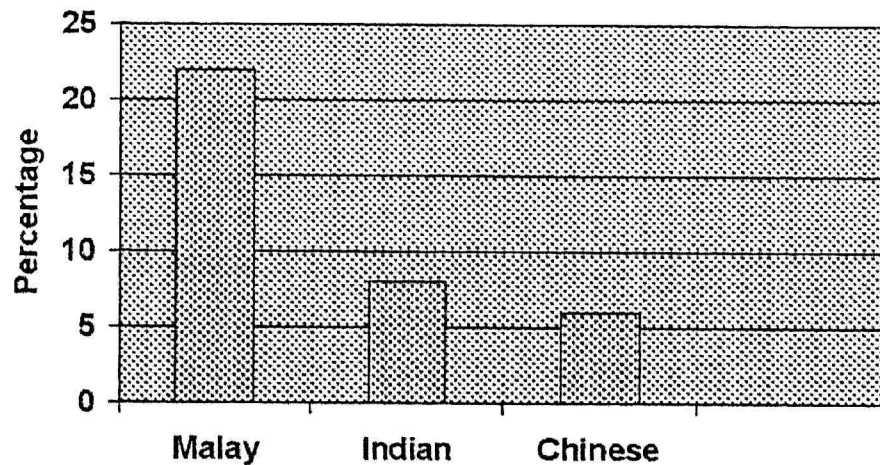
Chopyak and Abdullah (1986) noted that there are women suffering from repeated assault, some for more than ten years. These women had been punched, kicked, bitten, and beaten with a cane, belt, iron chain or iron bar. Several had been threatened with a knife or gun, women who had boiling water thrown and even tied up and forced to drink pesticide. There were cases women being kicked in the abdomen when pregnant and several had miscarriages as an outcome.

According to UN (1992), the physical injuries of Malaysian women who are battered and the nature of the violence are the same as reported in other countries such as the United States, Kuwait, Kenya and Chile.

2.2.2 Reasons To Batter A Woman

Why are women being battered? Survey conducted by Survey Research Malaysia (SRM,1990) found that 15% of Malaysians, both men and women believe and openly admit that physical abuse of woman is acceptable. Figure 2.3 shows that 22% of Malays hold this view compared to 8% of Indians and 6% of Chinese.

Figure 2.3: Histogram showing the Percentage of Malaysian on Battered Women



Source: Survey Research Malaysia Survey, 1990

According to the SRM Survey (1990), the public who believed it is right to abuse a woman under circumstances such as :

- ◆ When the woman is not faithful
- ◆ When she does not obey the husband
- ◆ When she refuses him sex
- ◆ When she does not follow the religious tenets
- ◆ When she does not perform household chores
- ◆ When she leaves home without husband's knowledge
- ◆ When she overspends
- ◆ When she dominates the husband

These circumstances were common responses from all ethnic groups. Table 2.2 shows the percentage of these circumstances from three major ethnic groups, Malays, Chinese and Indians. Abdullah (1986) noted that people who believe a woman must obey her husband do not believe in the equality of men and women and the mutuality of their roles in the marriage and family, but expect men to be the dominant gender. When women do not subordinate themselves to the authority of men or play the expected role, it is then believed that men have the right to beat them in order to control them or compel them to act in specific ways.

Table 2. 2: Percentage of Selected Acceptable Circumstances for Physical Abuse from Ethnic Groups

Types of Circumstances	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Not faithful	77	55	33
Does not obey husband	63	26	55
Does not perform household duties	1	-	40
Beats children	-	-	10
Leaves home without husband's knowledge	-	10	-
Refuses sex	5	-	-

Source: SRM Survey (1990)

2.2.3 Factors Causes Men to Batter

Zaman Khan (1993) gave two explanations. First, the misconception of men that in certain religions (presumably Islam), have the right to beat their wives if they think their wives have done something wrong. Secondly, the misconception of women that they are subservient to men and should play a passive role in the home. Senior police officers (Bukit Aman 1991), expressed an understanding of the causes of battering focused on gender roles and relationships rather than individual psychology and social environmental stress.

The fact that 22 percent of the Malays in the SRM (1990) survey were found to believe that physical abuse of a woman by a man is acceptable, seems to show that a large number of Muslims may believe that Islam condones wife abuse. Whereas in The Islamic Law Act(1984),cruelty by a husband to a wife, including physical abuse, is a punishable offence in its own right as well as ground for divorce in most states. There are, however many views on what constitutes cruelty and battering and a Malaysian women's organisation has interpreted the relevant verses in the Qu'ran to mean that a man is not permitted to hit his wife (Sisters in Islam,1990).

Hoon and Yusuf (1987), Chin et al (1988), and Abdullah (1990) came up with similar immediate reasons or “triggering” factors of violence, including the use of alcohol, jealousy, extra-marital relationships, financial problems and the husband’s personality. Chopyak and Abdullah (1990) study also included the structure of the marital relationships, the attitude of men that they have the authority to control their wives and the hierarchical structure of men and women in the family and society, with men having more power.

Psychological factors

Gayford (1975) noted that men in U.K. who abused their partners were pathologically jealous, and badly brought up. Storr (1974) reported that nagging, aggressive women are often unconsciously seeking what they fear most. Gelles (1979) cited that the use of alcohol is associated with wife-battering. Kantor and Straus (1987) argue that there is no simple cause and effect relationship in the use of alcohol and that excessive alcohol consumption may be used more as an excuse for violence rather than a cause.

Socio-structural factors

Cornell (1985) studies found that men who hit their wives do not have particularly high incidence of psychological problems. Straus (1987) emphasises socio-structural factors which include the acceptance of men's domination and the role of men as the head of the household, and the expectation of women to be good wives and mothers. Gelles (1979) theory is that inequality in the family is brought about by the acceptance of this power structure as a norm in society. It is reinforced by the lack of societal control over family relationships which thus limits the costs of violence in relation to its 'rewards' for men. Gelles argues that when these social factors combine with the man's individual motivation factors, then wife-battering occurs.

Gender factors

Dobash and Dobash (1979) reported that generally violence is a reflection of unequal power relationships and that wife-battering therefore reflects the unequal power of men and women in society and their personal relationships. They explained that women's subordinate status with reference to the institution of patriarchy which has two components. Societal institutions which define and maintain women's subordinate position and thus prevent them from influencing the social order and

ideology and the values and attitudes in the socialisation process which ensures acceptance of that order. Levinson's (1989) cross-cultural study of family violence in 90 societies provides important insight into significant factors. The factors that predict low or no family violence are monogamous marriage, economic equality between the sexes, equal access to divorce by men and women, frequent intervention by neighbours and kin in domestic disputes and norms encouraging the non-violent settlement of disputes outside the home. In this study, wife-battering was correlated with male domestic and economic authority. This evidence supports the gender inequality theory of domestic violence and the idea that some societies develop a culture of violence.