

The Response of Police in Preventing Domestic Violence in the Sammanthurai Police Area, Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The domestic violence is more crucial issue in many societies nationally and globally. Women and children were highly victimized and more vulnerable by this domestic violence. Therefore, this study examines the key types of domestic violence experiencing in the research area, and to realize the response of police in preventing domestic violence in the Sammanthurai police area in Ampara district, Sri Lanka. Data for this research have gathered from primary and secondary sources. Even though the response of police has perpetually operated as a key measure in controlling domestic violence in the study area, the domestic violence is occurring continuously due to many social, cultural, economical and political aspects.

Keywords: abuse, domestic violence, sexual harassment, legislation.

Introduction

Today's world, there are number of social issues prevailing in most of the societies. Among all social issues, the domestic violence is discoursing by many scholars, academics and researchers. The term 'domestic violence' is known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering and intimate partner violence. Most people consider domestic violence as a family problem.

But, the domestic violence can take many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects, battery), or threats, there of; sexual abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation, stalking and economic deprivation (Shipway Lynn, 2004).

Awareness, perception, definition and documentation of domestic violence differ from widely from country to country and society to society. The social acceptability of domestic violence also differs by country. While in most developed countries domestic violence is considered unacceptable by most people, in many region of the world the views are different. According to a UNICEF survey, the percentage of women aged 15-49 who think that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances is, for example: 90% in Jordan, 85.6% in Guinea, 85.4% in Zambia, 85% in Sierra Leone, 81.2% in Laos, and 81% in Ethiopia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_violence)

The domestic violence in many places in Sri Lanka, particularly in Sammanthurai police area, is normally happening without considering any legality, law or legislation. The total numbers of domestic violence cases were reported in Sammanthurai police area as 744 from 2010 to 2012 consequently (women and child bureau, Sammanthurai Police, 2012). So, the domestic violence is on the rise in Sri Lanka although only a few cases are reported since most victims are reluctant to come forward with their tales due to social and cultural reasons (Ishara Mudugamuwa, Daily News, 2011.11.24). Therefore, this study basically focuses on what kinds of domestic violence prevailing in the Sammanthurai police division, and how police play its vital role to prevent people, especially children and women from this trauma of domestic violence in the area of research.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify the types of domestic violence experiencing by the people in the Sammanthurai Police area and to emphasize the response and the role played by the polices in controlling domestic violence in the study area.

Methodology

This paper deals with several data by using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Data have gathered from primary as well as secondary data collection schemes. As the secondary sources, data have gathered from the record of Sammanthurai police station. Primary data were collected mainly through structured interview with key informants including Police, lawyers and other judicial people in the research area. And data have also been analyzed manually as well as by using computer software MS Excel.

Finding and Discussion

This research basically focuses on various types of domestic violence experienced by the people in Sammanthurai police area. There are twelve divisions or villages coming under Sammanthurai Police area such as Mavadipalli, Maligaikadu, Karaitivu, Addapallam, Nintavur, Veeramunai, Sammanthurai, Sorikkalmunai, Malwatta, Walaththapitty, Nainakaadu, Chennai gramam, Malayadi gramam and Veeracholai. Based on the secondary data, it can be identified the major types of domestic violence in the study area. The following table shows the data of domestic violence.

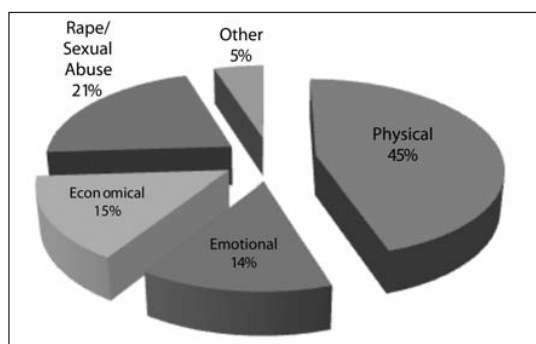
Table 1:
Domestic Violence Record in
Sammanthura Police Area (2009 - 2010)

Domestic Violence	2009	2010
Rape and sexual Abuse	09	10
Kidnappings	06	02
Homicide	10	05
Drug and Weapon Related Crime	03	03
Assault	24	25
Arson Crime	75	93

Source: Women and Child Bureau, Police Station, Sammanthurai, 2012.

The domestic violence recorded in various types in the Sammanthurai police division. According to the above data, the rape and sexual abuse are also identified as major crimes of domestic violence happening in the study area. The below chart illustrates the different types of domestic violence generally happening in the Sammanthurai police division.

Chart 1:
Types of Domestic Violence in
Sammanthurai Police area



(Source: Secondary data analysis, 2012)

The above chart highlights the fact that the physical violence was reported as 45%, while rape or sexual abuse cases were reported as 21% respectively. And the economical or financial related violence experiencing in the ratio of 15%, and emotional violence recorded as 14% in the study area, while the other types of violence recorded in 5%. So, it is not a healthy condition for the people in the study area, even though the legal arrangements have been implemented by the police and other judicial authority.

The all types of domestic violence are invisible, because all victims do not ready to come forward in order to open-up their problems, wound or any other injury and affects of domestic violence. Therefore, the police can not take legal action against the criminals of domestic violence without any evidence in terms of complain or entry. But, if any people reported their violence to the police in the research area, the complains will be handled by the particular police officer or in-charges to make solution mechanism in order to protect the victimized people from the tragedy of domestic violence. In the Sammanthurai area, the response of police has been an important part to control domestic violence.

M. Riswan and M.B.M. Sufyan

The Response of Police in Preventing Domestic Violence in the Sammanthurai Police Area, Sri Lanka

At the interview with Zacky Ismail, Attorney-at-Law has said that; “The purpose of domestic violence is to protect the people from domestic violence which created not inside the house eg; between husband and wife, but it created by others in various level. The role of police is very important to handle this issue in proper way and legal arrangement. But most of the situation, police directed the reported domestic violence cases to the court as criminal matter. Because polices do not have enough awareness on the purpose of domestic violence. In some circumstances, the women and children should be inquired in their women desk or in the children desk available in the police station with the participation of counselor, but this counselor system is not efficiently following in all the times in the police station, especially in the developing countries like Sri Lanka. So, to reduce the domestic violence, the counselor system has to be implemented and the proper awareness program on domestic violence should be conducted for the polices”

The response of police is not an easy task to solve the domestic violence issues. They have more responsible to identify the types of domestic violence and to know the real arrangement of domestic violence law and legislation. A few percentages of victims are reporting to the police about their injury, wounds, and physical and sexual attainment of domestic violence. So, these reported cases should be handled by the police in proper legal and legislature structure. This kind of obligation carried out by the police in the Sammanthurai police area as it shows in the table 1 below.

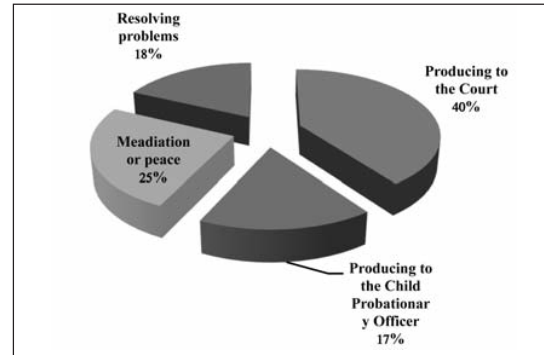
**Table 1:
Response of Police in Solving Domestic Violence**

Detail of domestic violence cases from 2010-2012	2010	2011	2012
Reported domestic violence cases	295	204	245
Cases solved	118	94	102
Cases withdraw	106	75	65
Cases produced to the court	20	23	38
Pending cases	47	32	39

Source: Women and Child Bureau, Police Station, Sammanthurai, 2012.

The police have played an essential role to handle the reported cases in various spectacles. The following chart describes the response of police to mitigate the domestic violence in Sammanthurai police division.

**Chart 3:
Response of Police in Preventing Domestic Violence**



(Source: Secondary data analysis, 2012)

The Sammanthurai police have operated their obligation to prevent victims of domestic violence by using aforementioned four strategies. Police tries to solve the problems between victims and the violence-maker. Meantime, the mediation mechanism have used by the police for solving problems between both parties. If the case is relevant to the child abuse, the matter will be handled by the child probationary officer coming under Sammanthurai police. But, the unsolved or serious domestic violence or major crimes can be produced to the court, and the court will be the responsible for inquiring the issue and providing judgment to the victims.

Police have the power and authority to protect the people from domestic violence. Even though the legal actions or legislature systems are available in the Sammanthurai police area, the domestic violence continuously prevailing among villagers due to the cultural, political, economical and legal factors.

Factors that contribute to legitimate violence

Culture

Gender specific socialization
Cultural definition of appropriate sex roles
Expectation of roles within relationships
Belief in the inherent superiority of males
Values that gives men proprietary right over women and girls
Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control
Customs of marriage such as dowry
Acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict

Political

Domestic violence not taken seriously
Notion of family being private and beyond the control of the state
Risk of challenges to status religious laws
Limited participation and representation of women in organized political systems

Economical

Women's economic dependence on men/men's hostility to women's economic independence
Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors
Limited access to cash and credit
Limited access to education and training for women

Legal

Discrimination against women, resulting in lower legal status of women in written law and/or procedures connected to investigation eg: laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance.
Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary in law enforcement
Legal definition of rap, domestic violence and sexual abuse
Lower levels of legal literacy among women

Conclusion

Domestic violence and abuse is not limited to obvious physical violence. Domestic violence can also means endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment and stalking. In Sri Lanka the most prevalent types of violence against women are domestic violence, rape, sexual violence, forced prostitution, incest and trafficking. In many cases these violations are hidden, this is especially true of domestic violence and incest. Domestic violence is the most highly reported type of violence according to the police bureau for the prevention of abuse of the women and children. In the Sammanthurai police area, many cases were reported in various types such as rape and sexual abuse, kidnapping, homicide, drug and weapon related crimes, assault and arson crime, and other physical and sexual related domestic violence.

The domestic violence is not the case in many developing countries. But in Sri Lanka, especially in the Sammanthurai police area, the legal actions were taken for many reported cases relevant to the domestic violence. And few reported cases are pending due to the legislature purposes for the final solution. Even though the police have been responding to the domestic violence in the Sammanthurai police division, the trend of domestic violence is progressively continuing and most of the cases purely hiding by the victims due to many social, cultural, economical as well as political factors. So, it is necessary to raise awareness of the public about the domestic violence prevention Act and encourage women to speak for themselves against all forms of violence against women and children in the domestic level. And the awareness programs on the purpose of domestic violence Act should be conducted to the police and others who related with law and legislature in order to diminish the domestic violence from the society successfully.

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Interview

Majeed, M.A.M., Inspector of Police, Miscellaneous Complain Branch, Police Station, Sammanthurai.

Ranga Nayagi, T., WPC, Women & Children Bureau, Police Station, Sammanthurai.

Zacky Ismail, Attorney-at-Law