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Domestic Violence Among Asian Indian Immigrant Women in the United States

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG ASIAN INDIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN THE
UNITED STATES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN WOMEN'S STUDIES AND GENDER STUDIES

BY

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CHICAGO, IL

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how domestic violence is conceptualized by the research studies on Asian Indian immigrant communities in the United States through different periods of time, and how sociocultural factors are associated with domestic violence. Using the meta-synthesis descriptive method, I analyzed and interpreted the findings of four research studies conducted between 1995-2016 that included in-depth interviews with Asian Indian immigrant women who experienced domestic violence. The analysis focus on changes of the patterns of abuse, helpseeking behavior, and leaving the abusive marriage as option. The changes in U.S. domestic violence legislation and policy regarding immigration and domestic violence have had an impact on Asian Indian women's behavior toward the DV to some extent, but stigma associated with divorce, fear of being ostracized by the family and the Asian Indian community in the US as well in India have had more impact on women's behavior.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Domestic Violence (DV) is a cross-cultural phenomenon that appears in different forms. In some cultures, such as in South Asia, some acts of violence are embedded in cultural context and are permitted and considered acceptable by structures and ideologies of culture (Fontes & McCloskey, 2011).

Based on the statistics provided by the National Coalition against Domestic Violence (NCADV), in the United States on average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner; estimating around 10 million women and men experience violence per year. Findings of the survey Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey with 42,000 women across 28 European Union (EU) member states conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2014 estimated that 13 million women in the EU have experienced physical violence in the course of 12 months before the survey interviews. Since the late 1960s, there has been high interest in understanding the DV phenomena that are affecting the lives of women, as well as men, and that are threatening women in the world both physically and mentally (Korkmaz, 2012, p.1). Still, there is limited research done on experiences of DV and IPV among immigrant women. While the violence against women is a global issue, its manifestation is different depending on the cultural values and social norms of a place. DV may look the same; it though is not perceived in the same way everywhere. Culture, defined as shared

beliefs, values, customs, norms, roles, and self- definition among a set of people (Triandis, 1996) cannot be ignored when discussing the DV. In cases of DV among the immigrant community, besides the socio-cultural norms of the host country, the socio-cultural factors in the home country also influence how immigrants perceive and respond to domestic violence (Yoshihama, 2001). Because the DV phenomenon is manifested in a variety of forms, such as physical, mental, emotional, and economical abuse and it can involve parents, spouses, in-laws, and relatives; and the means and forms of handling the issue efficiently should be sensitive to the cultural and social context. This is particularly relevant when dealing with immigrant groups in a host country. Many immigrants who live in community in their countries of origin not only transition into a new country, but must also adjust to a smaller family unit composed of only husband, wife and children. For this reason, this study focuses on manifestations of violence between these intimate partners who have migrated from South Asia to the US.

Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Definition

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the term Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. The National Coalition against Domestic Violence (NCADV) describes domestic violence as "the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse" (NCADV, 2015, p.1). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, real or a threat, against

herself/himself, by another person, group, or community that may lead to injury, death, psychological damage, underdevelopment or deprivation” (WHO, 2002, p.4).

Domestic violence can be present in a number of intimate relationships, such as marriage partners, partners living together, dating relationship, even former spouses, former partners, and former boyfriends or girlfriends (Summers & Hoffman, 2001), still the most common words are Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). There are various forms of the abuse, such as physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and coercive control.

There is a lack of agreement about the notions of domestic violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). In a broader view, domestic violence can be experienced across the lifespan. For the purpose of this research, I will focus on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) between heterosexual intimate partners among Asian Indian immigrants in the United States. In this study, the terms domestic violence and intimate partner violence are used interchangeably; the study only examined the domestic violence involving married heterosexual couples.

Significance of the Study

Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the US have been a focus of research using a variety of lens, such as feminist, gender, legal, social, anthropological, and cultural studies, but research addressing the DV and IPV among the immigrant communities in the US is done sporadically. Though there is an amount of research related to DV and IPV in immigrant communities, often the findings are not coherent, mainly due to small sampling, aggregation of the immigrants based on regions, South Asia, Latin America, Europe, or ethnicities, religion, Hindu, Hispanic, Asian, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, etcetera. Hence, it is

hard to grasp the overall picture of the issue and provide reliable results to be used in practice and policy decisions.

Studying how citizens understand and conceptualize DV is crucial for developing social policies and better services for women with domestic violence experiences, influencing immigrant women to seek help and to provide culturally appropriate services to the victims of the domestic abuse (Yoshihama, 2001). Previous studies show that understanding how citizens perceive and conceptualize domestic violence can help to manage and prevent domestic violence and to provide better services to the victims of the domestic abuse (Farnsworth, Qosaj-Mustafa, Banjaska, Berisha, & Morina, 2015), especially for the multi-cultural societies. Cultural and social contexts impact the understanding of DV. When immigrating to another country, people are exposed to a different socio-cultural environment. The change of the cultural context can lead to acculturation and a change of the perception of a phenomenon, in this case, DV. Anecdotally, immigration is understood as an opportunity rather than oppression for women, as they are free of the traditional cultural (beliefs and practices held by a community) and social context of the patriarchal¹ society of the home country. Though the studies used for this research show that immigration can intensify violence against women (Erez, Adelman, & Gregory, 2009; Raj & Silverman, 2007; Dasgupta, 2000), and it puts women in the vulnerable position to deal and manage domestic violence issues.

Initially, my assumptions were that for women who immigrated from developing countries to the Western countries address the abusive relationships more easily because of more

¹ Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. "Understanding Patriarchy" bell hooks

effective Rule of Law in the developed countries and less social pressure to obey the traditional cultural norms of the home country. Findings from the previous research on prevalence and severity of the IPV among immigrant women in Latino, South Asian, and Korean communities show that abuse rate range from 30% to 50% compared to a lifetime prevalence of IPV in the US in the general population that is estimated at 22.1% (Ammar, Orloff, Dutton, & Hass, 2012). Despite the more effective rule of law and better resource availability, often services provided are designed for westernized community and not adequate to accommodate the needs of the immigrant communities, putting immigrant women in the vulnerable position to deal and manage IPV issues.

Hence, this study examining how perceptions of domestic violence among Asian Indian immigrants is presented in the research over time. The aim is to consider how the focus of the research changes over time due to social, political, and economical changes in the host country as well as in the home country of the immigrants. DV phenomena occurrence is dynamic and depends on various variables, among other cultural and societal factors that tend to change over time and place. Also, it can help with researching other communities sharing similar patriarchal systems.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are: 1) How has the perception of domestic violence changed in the research studies of the Asian Indian women in the US from 1995-2016? 2) What are the help-seeking behaviors of the Asian Indian immigrant women, and 3) What prevents them to leave the abusive relationship/marriage?

Research Method and Design

"Qualitative research is intended to understand, describe, and explain the social phenomena out there in the world by analyzing and understanding the experiences of the individuals or groups; interactions and communications in the making; and analyzing documents or similar traces of experiences or interactions" (Flick, 2007, pp. ix).

Qualitative research enables the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of how individual perceive, understand, and make meaning of their social world with the social phenomena in the world around them (Sharlene Hesse-Biber, 2010). It is important to bring feminist perspectives to understand the lived experiences of women and using the qualitative approach to analyze previous research articles tackling the issue of the Domestic Violence/ Intimate Partner Violence in Asian Indian immigrant community in the United States.

To answer the research questions, I have chosen to conduct a literature review using descriptive meta-synthesis analysis. According to Schreiber, Crooks, and Sterns (1997), Meta-Synthesis analysis aims to bring together and break down the findings, analyze and interpret the findings across multiple qualitative research reports (Finfgeld, 2003, p. 894). The descriptive form of the meta-synthesis analysis provides a broad description of the research phenomenon. It is used to examine many different interpretations of the phenomena to discover similarities and differences, and building new interpretation of the topic of interest. Studies used for meta synthesis analysis need to be conducted using qualitative methods and should appear well supported by raw data (e.g., participant quotes). Sample size can vary depending on the breadth of the topic, among the studies reviewed by Finfgeld (2003) reported sample size from 3 to 292 studies.

For this research, I have selected four (4) qualitative research studies on domestic violence among Asian-Indian population in the US, published between 1990-2016; and all the studies are supported by participant's quotes. The articles utilized were found using the academic search engines such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, WorldCat, and Jstore search engine. The key words used for the search-engine are: 'domestic violence', 'Intimate Partners Violence', 'immigrant', 'women', 'United States', 'Asian Indian', 'socio-cultural factors'. I narrowed down my criteria for inclusion of the studies to in-depth interviews with population of the Asian-Indian women in the US on the perception of the domestic violence.

Through analyzing the case studies from the previous research, I seek to identify the socio-cultural factors such as customs, lifestyle, and gender roles that impact the experiences of immigrant women in domestic violence situations; if the social-cultural factors affect their experience, and how these factors have changed in different historical periods, considering that there were changing in the US laws that impacted the immigrants. Breaking down the research articles in the time periods enabled me to analyze the data for a synthesized picture DV among the Asian Indian immigrant community.

Limitations

Domestic violence among immigrant population has not been priority of the academia until recent years. Apart from the scarce research on this topic, another limitation that I encountered during this research is aggregation of cases under the umbrellas of South Asia and socio-cultural factors are generalized for the region rather than specific group. Republic of India itself is comprised of twenty-nine states and each state is unique in terms of castes, food, music,

industry, religious beliefs, and the role of the family, i.e. has its own culture, religion, language and economic development (Ramesh Rathor, 2011).

Another limitation I encountered during this study is the limited number of the qualitative research that involve in-depth interviews with the Asian Indian women who experienced abuse by their intimate partner in the United States. The Meta-Synthesis analysis requires studies using qualitative methods and incorporate raw data, so for this study I have used four research studies conducted between 1996-2016.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks and Domestic Violence

Theories must enable us to understand "why individual man is violent and why women as a class are so often their target" (Heise, 1998, p.2). When analyzing violence, Heise (1998) states that it is relevant to acknowledge the importance of the culturally constructed messages about gender roles and expected behaviors. The theories that focus only on certain factors, are not necessarily wrong or correct, but to understand the factors that cause and maintain domestic violence, it is important to consider that these factors operate at many levels (Carlson, 1984). Useful frameworks conceptualize the phenomenon of domestic violence integrating the factors that cause domestic violence and capturing the complexity of this problem, such as Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development "that allows for the causal and maintaining factors on different levels that can operate simultaneously, either independently or interactively" (Carlson, 1984, p. 570). These factors fall under four levels: individual, family, social structural, and sociocultural.

At the individual level, there are personal and biological factors that influence becoming a victim or abuser as child maltreatment, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and history of violent behavior. At a family level (personal relationship) factors consider how family, friends, intimate partners' influence violence. Some of the factors are poor

parenting practices, marital discord, and low socioeconomic household status, as well as friends and family who encourage violence. Social structural (community) level considers how the social relationship occurrences influence gender violence, for example, poverty, high rate crime neighborhoods, unemployment, and law enforcement practices. And, Sociocultural (Societal) level factors include economic and social policies and social and cultural norms accepting the male dominance over women and endorsing violence as a form of resolving conflicts. Though there may be factors that are not included due to the little or incomplete research, the ecological model explains DV through recognizing various factors that influence DV, how these factors interact over time or at given point of time, as well as differentiating the factors that initially cause violence, and those that may impact in the future (Carlson, 1984).

Power and Control Wheel

Violence, physical and nonphysical is often used to control partner's actions. The Duluth Model¹, Power and Control Wheel shows nonphysical abusive behaviors exhibited by abusers. While the physical abuse may be infrequent, the other controlling tactics may be constant (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

The Duluth Model, the power and control wheel has been used and adapted to show the nonphysical abuse experienced by immigrant women. As presented in the article Power and Control Tactics Used against Immigrant Women (2011), nonphysical violence patterns exhibited by immigrant men who batter are: Emotional Abuse, Economic Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Using

¹ The Duluth Model or Domestic Abuse Intervention Project is a program developed by Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar with the aim to reduce domestic violence against women. It is named after Duluth, Minnesota, the city where it was developed.

Coercion and Threats, Using Children, Using Citizenship or Residency Privilege, Intimidation, Isolation, Minimizing, Denying, Blaming.

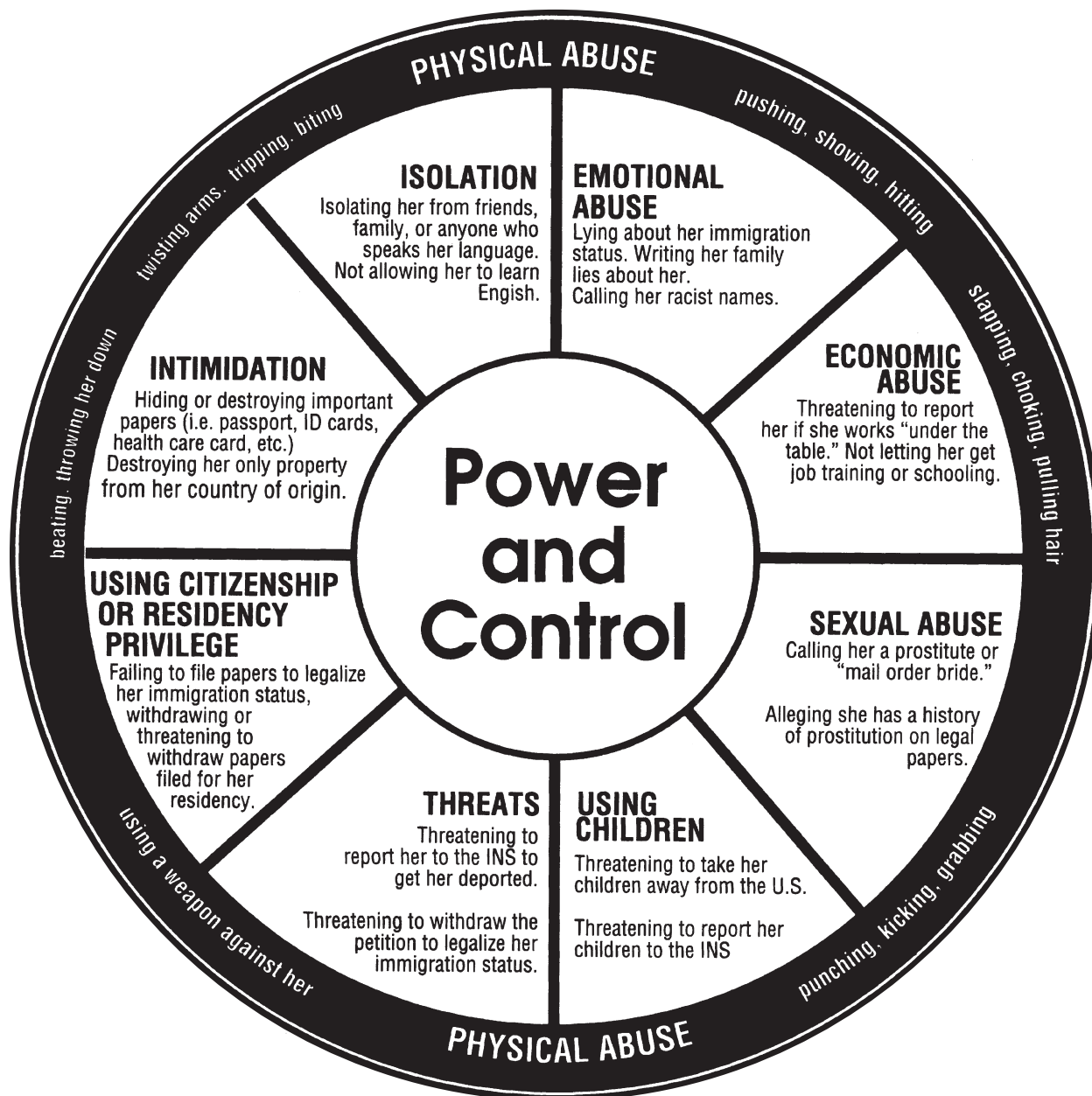


Fig.1. Power and Control Wheel, Duluth Model. Forms of Domestic Violence that Immigrant Women Experience. Adapted by Futures without Violence.

Sociocultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors are societal norms, cultural values, and belief systems that affect all of us and that differentiate one societal group from another. The cultural setting as family, community, social class, language, education, religion play a role in how an individual perceives, understands and responds toward certain phenomena. Every culture and sub-culture have its way of lifestyle, language, cuisine, traditions, norms, and values. Culture influences how a community perceives the social world as such, it shapes their acceptable and unacceptable behavior toward schooling, occupation, marriage, social and gender roles, the standard of living, etcetera (Rutherford & Ahlgren, 1990).

Socio--cultural factors such as beliefs, norms, values, taboos, community, expectations and rules, law and policies, economic and physical resources, technological and ethical factors influence an individual's attitudes and behaviors in relationships and marriage (Otufale Gbolahan, 2013). Socio-cultural norms play an important part in risk of perpetrating the domestic violence, as well as how this phenomenon is perceived by the community. At the societal level, norms granting men control over female behavior, acceptance of the violence as a way to resolve conflict, the idea that masculinity is linked to dominance, honor, or aggression, and mass media, and culture including films, music, advertising images all contribute to perpetuating an environment that allows for the violence against women. (Lockhart & Danis, 2010, p. 38)

There are four factors at the socio-cultural level that contribute to the causation of domestic violence. They are sexism, sex-roles stereotyping, general acceptance of violence, and norms about the family, marriage, and divorce in general. For example, in the case of sexism, it

can be examined in the upbringing of the male child to be independent and aggressive, and the female child to be dependent and passive. Sex-role stereotyping refers to widely accepting the socially constructed gender roles and modes of behaviors. The general acceptance of violence presented daily in institutions such as the media, sports, or schools impacts how tolerant and accepting people can be of violence in intimate situations. And norms about the family, which are rooted in the ancient times when women and children were considered the property of the husband and when wife beating was acceptable, still contribute to the occurrence of domestic violence (Carlson, 1984). Though these factors may not always cause the domestic violence directly, they shape how the domestic violence is manifested (Liao, 2006). The socio-cultural factors are the most influential and pervasive factors contributing to domestic violence, yet it is hard to explain the connection directly.

While the interest in examining immigrants' experiences with social problems has increased gradually, the experiences around domestic violence among the immigrant communities are less examined. Due to challenges with methodological issues, examination of the manifestations of domestic violence among immigrants is done using standardized measures, focusing on aggregated groups, thus neglecting the values from the home country of the immigrants and lacking attention to the socio-cultural context (Yoshihama, 2001). Socio-cultural factors influence how the domestic violence is manifested; in addition to revealing the partner's violent behavior, it also shows women's perceptions, cognitions, and behavioral responses to violent acts of their partner. Manifestations and perceptions of domestic violence are influenced by the home country's cultural values and norms (Yoshihama, 2001).

Role of Marriage and Divorce in Domestic Violence

To have a better understanding of the perception of the domestic violence among Asian-Indian immigrants in the United States and why women stay in the abusive marriages, it is crucial to know the concept of marriage and divorce in India. “A nonethnocentric definition of marriage is a culturally sanctioned union between two or more people that establishes certain rights and obligations between the people, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws” (Haviland, Prins, McBride, & Walrath, 2010, p.473).

In a broader context, marriage is a legal, religious, and socially-recognized union between spouses, but marriage concepts vary from place to place, as well as throughout time. Marriage is not perceived in the same way in the US as in India, and consequently, neither is divorce. While the Asian Indians prioritize family and tradition, the Western norms value individuality and choice (Ramesh Rathor, 2011).

In India, marriage is imposed; every Indian girl is expected to get married. Remaining single cannot even be considered as an option. Moreover, families with unmarried daughters experience extreme shame and reputation of the family is harmed, consequently impacting the marriage of other children of the family (Ramesh Rathor, 2011). Marriage in India is a major component of the society that affects the class, caste, social, and economic status of the families. Throughout the history to the present day, India is known for the arranged marriages, i.e. parents take responsibility to find a life partner for their daughter by negotiating for the best deal. After the father finds a suitable partner, the engagement takes part following expected rituals. Women have no or little say about whom they marry; they have limited autonomy in the married life.

According to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)² in 2004-05 and then in 2011-12, only 18 per cent of the sample knew their husbands before marriage; 10 per cent of women agreed that they do not need their husband's approval to buy large items; less than 20 percent are the co-owner of the property; 81 percent needed permission to visit a doctor; around 60 percent of women, both Hindu and Muslim women, practiced some form of "purdah"³; and, more than 50 percent of the interviewed women agreed that it was common and acceptable to beat women if they went out without permission.

A woman is trained right from her childhood that the man she is going to marry will be her "pati pameshwar" (God husband) and if she wishes to have salvation – her "Gati" can only be through subservience to him and total abeyance, irrespective of whether he is good or bad. This determination of the unquestioned power structure in favor of husband is called the "marriage gradient" by sociologists. (Umar, 1998, p.40).

Just like the marriage in India is not a unity between two people, husband and wife, nor is the divorce. In India, divorce is more a matter of the culture and religion, than a matter of the law. Divorce is related with the cultural factor of saving face and being divorced affect one's reputation, thus it carries a strong stigma. Traditionally in Hindu society, divorce is not known

² The India Human Development Survey-II (IHDS-II), 2011-12 is a nationally representative, multi-topic survey of 42,152 households in 1,503 villages and 971 urban neighborhoods across India. These data are mostly re-interviews of households interviewed for IHDS-I (ICPSR 22626) in 2004-05. Two one-hour interviews in each household covered topics concerning health, education, employment, economic status, marriage, fertility, gender relations, social capital, village infrastructure, wage levels, and panchayat composition. <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/DSDR/studies/36151>

³ Purdah, also spelled Pardah, Hindi Parda ("screen," or "veil"), practice that was inaugurated by Muslims and later adopted by various Hindus, especially in India, and that involves the seclusion of women from public observation by means of concealing clothing (including the veil) and using high-walled enclosures, screens, and curtains within the home. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/purdah>

as a concept. Women were expected to undergo any difficulty to save the marriage. In case of divorce, women as well as her family felt more the consequences of marriage (Pothen, 1986).

According to Geetha Ravindra's article *Impact of Religion and Culture on Divorce in Indian Marriages* (2013), the concept of divorce is still considered a taboo and it is reinforced more by mothers, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers who advise women to obey their husband's wishes and expectations. Though, today, empowered Asian Indian women in the US are more open to divorce rather than silently bearing lifelong abuses.

Domestic Violence among Immigrants in the United States

The Immigration Policy Center, the American Immigration Council (2012) acknowledges that immigrant women and girls in the United States are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Due to lack of language competencies and being away from their family and friends, many of the abused immigrant women do not report violence, and in most of the cases, they do not know their rights and how to proceed to report the abuse. Hence, they continue to stay in abusive relationships. But often they decide to remain in an abusive relationship due to the traditional cultural and social norms and do not report it because of differences of what DV means to them.

Immigrant families in Western Countries are affected by domestic violence (Salcido & Menjivar, 2002). The process of immigration itself puts people in awkward positions and situations as they undergo the settlement and adjustment process. The South Asian people, for example, carry their national and religious heritage with them (Sheehan, Javier, & Thanjan, p. 167-171). In many cases, the families struggle with retaining traditional cultural norms when exposed to different cultural, and societal standards of the host country. For example, in Pakistan, people are accustomed to living in a patriarchal family system where family structures

are based on traditional gender roles where the gender roles are based upon structures of oppression. When they migrate to another country, they tend to keep their home country values and norms and put effort to minimize the influence of the host country social norms in their family (Zakar, Zakar, Faist, & Kraemer, 2012). Also, Vietnamese who immigrate to the United States are torn between maintaining the traditional culture and norms that are different from the ones in the US, and embracing the western culture. Although Vietnamese American women are aware of the illegality of wife beating in the US, they still feel reluctant in letting the law authorities implicate in family issues, and in a case of being undocumented, they do not want to jeopardize their husband's visa status by reporting them. Moreover, the traditional views on family and gender female roles keep them in abusive relationships (Bui & Morash, 1999).

Research has documented that various factors cause DV and some research speculates that some of the factors and variations that influence the opinions on domestic violence are deeply grounded in ethnical, cultural beliefs about the gender roles, family responsibilities, and racism (Klein, Campbell, Soler, & Ghez, 1997, as cited by Carlson & Worden, 2005). Social and political beliefs formed by personal experiences and backgrounds shape the attitudes about domestic violence (Carlson & Worden, 2005, p. 1223). In the immigrant's context, they carry the ethnical and cultural beliefs from their home countries and are exposed to the cultural beliefs of the host country. Thus, their opinions are influenced by both cultural beliefs. Per Yoshihama (2001), the immigrant who resides in the United States are continuously influenced by the cultural norms of the home country, and that domestic violence perception is shaped by an "ongoing interplay between their current socio-cultural context and that of the country of the origin (Japan)" (Yoshihama, 2001, p. 315). Furthermore, a socio-cultural aspect not only

influences the immigrant's perception of domestic violence, but also how they handle it and their help-seeking behaviors. Acts and behaviors that are considered as a form of domestic violence in the host country may not be recognized as such in the home country, for example, if the divorce is not an option in the home country (due to cultural norms and behaviors, or law policies) most likely it will be ruled out as an option in the host country, even in cases when a woman experiences domestic violence (Yoshihana, 2001).

Based on the research aiming to identify common experiences among immigrant women facing domestic violence in the host countries, “Immigrant Women and Domestic violence: Common Experiences in Different Countries” (2002) conducted by Menjivar and Salcido aimed to identify common experiences among immigrant women facing domestic violence in the host countries. Their research showed that DV occurs both among the native and immigrant populations, but their experiences and challenges are different. Due to the limited language skills, lack of access to dignified jobs, and their legal status, and due to their experiences in their home countries, immigrant women experiencing domestic violence tend to stay with the abuser.

Domestic violence among Asian Indian Population in the United States

Asian Indians started to immigrate to the United States as early as 1820. Initially, small in number, the quantity of the Asian Indian immigrants was increasing fast. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and the Immigration Act of 1990 contributed to the rapid increase of the skilled Indian immigrant population in the US. Asian Indians citizens’ who were holders of H-1B visas could also bring immediate family members to the US under the H-4 visa category as dependents. H-4 visa holders’ immigration status depends on the holder of H-1B visa, and as of 2015, in addition to be allowed to attend school, apply for driving license, and open a bank

account, H-4 visa holders can work in the US. Moreover, in case the H-4 via holder suffers domestic violence, they are able to self-petition for a green card under a provision of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA). As of 2013, they accounted 4.7 percent of the 41.3 million foreign-born population in the United States and compared to the overall foreign- and native-born populations, they are more likely to obtain higher education and get high-paid jobs (Zong & Batalova, 2015).

Asian Indian immigrants demonstrate commitment to retain the cultural identity of the home country and present it as immaculate. Hence, the issues of social problems, mental illness, homelessness, and domestic violence are kept in private and denied in public. Culturally, women are expected to maintain the idea of the good wives that obey their husbands' demands. Even though Asian Indians are more likely to integrate into the US society, and succeed in the economic sphere, in the private sphere they tend to maintain the strong Indian traditional and cultural family values. Research has shown that that the maintenance of traditions and identity are responsibility of Asian Indian women. The rigid dichotomy of the gender roles is supported more by the first-generation immigrants. The second-generation are taught to maintain the culture and heritage in the U.S and protect it against Americanization.

Domestic Violence in Asian Indian society is an issue that falls in the realm of the private sphere, domestic violence is kept within the family and it is not a matter that is discussed with others. As such, there is the lack of the research and official reports on this issue, and not only among the immigrants in the United States, but also there is a lack of research and statistical data on DV in India as well. And to understand the issue of the DV among the Asian Indian families in the US, it is crucial to understand the sociocultural aspects of DV in India.

With the economic and political development in India, women's role in the society is changing. Today, gender equality is guaranteed by Constitutions of India. Moreover, the laws have adopted special provisions to safeguard their interest, among which is also The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. Nonetheless, there is a tendency to move away from the dominant male culture, the gender discrimination is still visible in the Indian society, both rural and urban. The constitutional and legal changes that guarantee women's well-being stand weak where patriarchal traditions prevail ("Legal Services in India," 2017).

The patriarchy and gender stereotypes are embedded in the culture, giving the traditional norms and values space to prevail over the country laws on issues related to women's rights. The Dowry system, where the bride's family gives the groom's family money and/or gifts, is banned as of 1961 in India. However, in practice the dowry system still is applicable. The Dowry practice not only prevents women to become economically stable, but it has produced a materialistic culture. Hence, daughters are regarded as a liability and as such they are subordinate to men and are a burden on their family of origin. Dowry practice is related to gender bias as well as domestic and other gender-related violence. In many ways, it is a direct cause of infanticides and feticides, physical and psychological domestic violence, arranged child marriages, and induced suicide (Condorelli, 2015). Regardless of the effort to improve the women's role in society by promoting equal gender rights, many Indian women face discrimination throughout all stages of their lives, before the birth, during the childhood, womanhood, marriage, and widowhood. The patriarchal norms and custom in India have established a social structure that reflect and promote male superiority and female subordination, and inferior social status for women, compared to men.

CHAPTER THREE

FOUR RESEARCH STUDIES ANALYSIS

Description of the Samples

To answer the questions of this research, four research studies on domestic violence among Asian Indian women are analyzed. The selected studies used in-depth interviews to explore the perception and behavior of Asian Indian women in the US toward domestic violence. In 1996 Shamitta Das Dagaputa and Sujata Warriar from Manavi, a pioneering center in the US to address the needs of South Asian women in the US affected by violence conducted interviews with 12 Asian Indian women who were victims of the domestic violence and sought help from Manavi. All the interviewees came from middle and upper-class Indian families from different religious backgrounds. All but one of the participants were professionals employed in well-paid jobs (dentistry, engineering, medicine, management, and self-employed businesswoman) and their husbands had professional degrees as well. All these women sought help from Manavi at some point in time; most of them while still living with the abuser. The study showed that higher educated women married to well-educated men also experience domestic violence. Though their education is supported by their parents, they expressed concerns that education may be a threat to the good marriage. Anupama, a 31-year-old respondent, holding a master's degree in business administration said that she was raised with the idea that a good marriage comes before one's career. The narratives of the respondents show that since their childhood they were taught to be submissive and obedient toward their husbands and to be willing to make all the adjustments in

the marriage. At some point of their marriages, all 12 women had sought assistance from Manavi, due to experiencing various forms of violence and abuse by their spouses.

The second research study used was by Mehrotra (1999), who conducted research on DV experiences of Asian Indian women in the US by interviewing 30 responders. The in-depth interviews were carried out with women who experienced abuse and sought help; counselors and volunteers at the support groups; and a small number of married Asian Indian women living in the US. The interviewees were from different regions of India and belonging to various religious groups. The sample, consisting of housewives, teachers, students, managers, doctors, engineers, and professors were foreign-born legal immigrants in the US holding permanent residency visa, the US citizenship, or H-4 visa.

For example, Mona, who had high -paid job but no access to any financial funding, as the salary went directly to her husband's account said that she could not figure out what why her husband was such an ice-cold man who would not communicate with her. In the participant's words:

He never stood around me... He never wanted to see me. He never wanted to talk to me. It was just unbelievable... Everything was just small, one-word answer. No discussion, nothing. No sharing.... I don't have a real marriage. (Mehrotra, 1999, p. 633)

A third research study was by Anita Raj and Jay Silverman (2002). They published their study entitled, "Domestic Violence Help-Seeking Behaviors of South Asian Battered Women Residing in the United States". This study was conducted in two phases; the first involved a quantitative survey assessment with 210 South Asian women at the time of the interview in a heterosexual relationship, where 44 of the participants reported to have experienced violence in their relationship. The second part involved in-depth interviews with 23 South Asian women

within an abusive relationship, and those who had separated from the abuser to examine how abused women addressed the domestic violence issue, and if and where they sought help. One account described by a participant stated:

He doesn't want me to work, thinking like... I might take steps to contact people and try to seek help from people... I mean he did not let me talk with my mom after I came to the US... I had no friends or relatives in the country to explain my problems. (Raj & Silverman, 2007, p. 154).

The final research study included in this analysis was by Andrea Jordan and Shreya Bhandari (2016). Their research, "Lived Experiences of South Asian Women Facing Domestic Violence in the United States" conducted in-depth interviews with 20 South Asian women who experienced domestic violence and have sought assistance from the South Asian women's organizations in the US. Out of 20 participants, 13 were from India, and the rest were from Pakistan, Bangladesh, United Kingdom, and Canada holding a green card, U.S. citizenship, and work permit visa. The participants belonged to a variety of religions. Eighteen of them had college degrees, including bachelors and masters. In the words of a participant:

He never beat me or anything. He just stopped talking to me. Then when he come home, he never took me with him, if we had to go out. He never gave me a single penny. If we went to the mall and I liked a T-shirt, I have to show it to him and ask him if I can buy it. After he decides then I can buy it. I cannot go out with friends. No credit card for me. He decides what I have to wear. I cannot do it myself. At that time, he never opened a bank account for me. No joint account also. I cannot take out the mail from the mailbox. He will just stop talking to me. At that time, we had only one computer at home. He will just change the password, whenever he wanted so that I cannot use it. (Jordan& Bandari, 2016, p. 236).

The four selected studies discussed above indicate physical and psychological abuse experienced by Asian Indian immigrant women in the US. Often, it is presumed that domestic violence is a phenomenon more widespread among poor and less educated people, and it is

related to unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness; consequently, DV occurrence is eliminated among immigrants who are both well-educated and financially stable. Nevertheless, the presented stories of immigrant Asian Indian women in the United States show a different reality.

Domestic Violence in the Research Studies of the Asian Indian Women in the US

Patterns of abuse identified by women participating in the research studies analyzed for this study are various, all of which fall under the Power and Control wheel for immigrants that show the dynamics of an abusive relationship among immigrants (see Figure 1). Usually, there is never just one form of abuse, but a combination of violent actions.

The immigrant women mentioned experiencing various form of abuse, such as, sexual violence; being beaten for not cooking well; having limited mobility; not having access to financial means, sometimes not even to their salaries; being humiliated in public, not allowed to communicate with the family and friends, being threatened regarding the visa status, shaming her and her family, and divorcing her; taking children away from her; taking important documents from her. The pattern of abuse experienced by immigrant women can be the same as the ones that non-immigrant women in the US experience. But, for immigrant women the additional disadvantage is that they depend on the perpetrator regarding the immigration status; they may not speak the English language, and they may have no one to talk to about what they are experiencing.

Physical violence is mentioned as a form of abuse in all four studies used for this research. While all interviewed women in Dasgupta & Warrier's (1996) research declared, they were beaten by their husbands, some reported that physical abuse increased when they were

pregnant. In the later research (Mehrotra, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Jordan & Bhandari, 2016) very few women reported having experienced physical abuse.

In all included studies, women reported experiencing emotional and psychological violence. The differences in non-physical abuse reported was the different forms of showing controlling behaviors of the husband.

As shown in the Power Control Wheel (see Fig.1. p. 11) the interviewed women experienced financial abuse as well. The interviewed women depended financially fully upon their husbands; they had no access to family finances; were not allowed to work; even in cases where they were employed, the interviewees reported that they had to give the paycheck to their husband and report every expense made.

For the abused women, experiences of emotional and psychological abuse included intimidation, threats, coercion, lack of contact, isolation, physical abandonment of the woman, lack of autonomy, keeping the important documents from her, not filing the documentation to legalize her immigration status, sexual abuse, shaming her and her family, threats of taking the children away and deporting her to India. Of these forms of abuse, the most difficult to endure and overcome were taking away the children and threats of deportation back to India.

Regarding forms of violence, the four pieces of research conducted in different periods of time show that the types of abuse presented in the Power Control Wheel were applied. But while the physical abuse was more prevalent among women interviewed for the research published in 1996, the later studies emphasized more the emotional and psychological abuse, while sexual abuse is discussed more in the study published in 2016. Physical abuse is easily recognized by the Asian Indian women, but the sexual violence is not. Due to oppressive gender roles in India

and lack of sexual knowledge among Asian Indian women, South Asian women believe that in marriage, they [women] do not have any right to sexual control (Dasgupta, 2000) and are reluctant to identify coercive and forceful sexual aggression as a sexual abuse (Jordan & Bhandar, 2016).

Help-seeking Behaviors of the Asian Indian Immigrant Women in the US

Following the socio-cultural aspects of beating, Asian Indian women who migrated to the United States with their abusive spouses on the dependent visa endure the abuse in silence. It takes decades for abused women to break the silence and seek assistance. As the issue of domestic violence among Asian Indian population in the US is kept in the family and behind the doors, consequently women are reluctant to seek help and talk about the domestic violence in their marriages.

One of the primary barriers to seeking help that abused women experience is isolation. The interviewed women expressed that their husbands isolated them from friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, as well as from the community in the US. Hence, it was unlikely for them to be acquainted with the US Law on Domestic Violence and Immigration procedures, so they kept suffering in silence. Isolation plays a significant role in addressing the issue of violence. The research studies have shown that lack of language ability and isolation from friends, family, community, and family in the home country hinder immigrant women to seek assistance, or to share their issues with someone.

Interviewees from the study in 1996 appear to be more reluctant to seek informal or formal help or even talk about it with someone because they believed that the community would blame them for not being able to accept the abuse and keep up with their culture, or even accuse

them of shaming the community. Following the shame attached to the help-seeking behavior, women remain silent about the domestic violence in their marriages, though they do not necessarily stay passive toward it within their household. Just like they are taught by the senior women to be submissive to their spouses, they are also taught some forms of resistance of the abused husband to express their dissatisfaction. Women most often refused to cook the meal for them, spit on their meal, taking money from his wallet, calling the family in India from calling cards, ignored him, not sleeping with him, nagged, etcetera.

The studies show that the help-seeking behavior has evolved with time. The studies conducted in 2007 and 2016 show that the interviewees despite the isolation and stigma related to DV tend to be more open to talking about their experience with a friend, family, medical services, including mental and physical health services, social worker, and DV counselors/advocates. The data of the research studies show that the victims of domestic violence tend to seek help more often from the South Asian community-based organizations than from formal domestic violence services.

Leaving the Abusive Relationship

The very common question is why one decides to stay in the abusive marriage, and this is where it gets complicated. There is gray zone between identifying the abuse and addressing it. Advice as “Why don’t you leave him?” or “You should get a divorce!” are very common in discussions about domestic violence, but not appropriate in most of the cases, due to multi-dimensional aspects of the domestic violence. Leaving the abuser and the abusive relationship behavior relates to the help-seeking barriers Asian- Indian women experience.

As presented in the Warriar and Das Dasgupta (1996) research, since early childhood, girls in India are brought up to learn and get ready for marriage. Though the concept of marriage in India has changed from being the union between families to a relationship between two people, most of the marriages are arranged by the parents. The marriage is an agreement where families negotiate and take into consideration the caste, religious beliefs, women's purity, izzat¹, education, skills to maintain a household, social etiquette, dowry, and family's honor and reputation. Related to the latter, shame is something that families bear forever and has consequences in one's marriage and family. Moreover, it is passed from parents to children. Hence, daughters, wives, and mothers need to behave by socio- cultural norms and not to defile the honor of the father's and husband's household, as they are the repositories of the honor (Welchman & Hossain, 2013).

In India as well as in Asian Indian immigrant communities in western countries, family honor is linked to women's sexuality, and it is used as a tool by the perpetrators to control woman's behavior by making a false allegation of adultery and threatening with divorce (Welchman & Hossain, 2013). Being aware of the power and role of the honor, and shame of the divorce in India, women, endure harassment and violence in silence for the sake of the family honor, as woman's behavior against socio-cultural norms dishonors not only her but her family. In such case, the most affected are her unmarried daughter(s) and sister(s). As the separation and divorce affect woman's and family's honor and reputation, women either endured in silence the violence, used resistance means, or sought help from the family. Women who received support

¹ Izzat refers to the concept of honor prevalent in the culture of North India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. It applies universally across religions (Hindu, Muslim and Sikh), communities and genders.
[**https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Izzat%20\(honour\)**](https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Izzat%20(honour))

from their family found it was easier to overcome the stigma related to disclosing the domestic violence stigma and get away from the abuser

As presented in the research studies conducted in 1996 and 1999, women in India since their childhood are raised with the idea of being good wives by being loyal, selfless, and focusing on what is best for their husbands (Pathak Bhat, 2008). Women are expected to comply with social and cultural norms of India, and to expect negative consequences in cases of not acting accordingly (Ahmad, Riaz, Barata, & Stewart, 2004). Moreover, when in a foreign country, they [women] feel more pressure to uphold the standards of the family as well as national values. They tend to keep private and public matters separate. Issues of domestic violence are considered a private issue; thus, is not discussed in public. Moreover, there is the denial that domestic violence is prevalent in the Asian Indian community. Women accept that they are responsible for keeping the family prestige intact; they also bear the weight of not shaming their community by accusing someone of being violent. So, these women do not consider separation or divorce as an option. Instead of seeking a divorce, they rather stay in abusive marriages and sacrifice for the sake of the family and children.

Another important factor that affects the decision to remain or not in the abusive relationship is children. Children are often used by the abuser to manipulate and control the partner. In some cases, women stay with the abusive partner for the sake of the children, especially if they do not have financial means to support the children, but also because they believe in the importance of the father figure for raising the children. In this respect, there were more interviewed women who claimed that they stay with the abuser for the sake of children, but

there were also cases where the children became the eventual catalyst of women to seek the way out of the abusive relationship.

Following the four research studies from 1996 to 2016, the main factors that affect women's decision to leave the abusive marriage are associated to the stigma related to the divorce and family honor. The narratives of the interviewees show the feeling of self-sacrifice for other's good, such as family and children, rather than for themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study intended to understand the socio-cultural factors that affect Asian Indian women to report domestic violence to informal and formal resources by analyzing four research studies that include narratives' analysis and quotations of the Asian Indian immigrant women in the United States. As well as, how the perception of the domestic violence and intimate partner violence has evolved through the years.

Though this research did not contribute with new findings to what is currently known about the socio-cultural factors that affect Asian Indian immigrant women who experience domestic violence, it proves that there is a need for awareness-raising regarding the DV among the immigrant communities and how to address this issue. Moreover, it brings up some other considerations to discuss further. For example, the trends of divorce are changing in South Asian populations, which could have an impact on women's help seeking behaviors.

Furthermore, women cope with domestic violence using tactics to survive before seeking formal help. Resilience and resistance strategies are utilized by battered women when coping with domestic violence. An understanding on how they develop resistance strategies can contribute to our understanding of their help seeking behaviors.

Ideas on help seeking are influenced by gender. Another area to explore could be how gender perspectives taught at an early age influence help seeking. Additional research can deepen the knowledge on how socialization of gender impacts perceptions of what is considered

domestic violence.

Following the narratives of the four research studies analyzed, the socio-cultural factors related to marriage, divorce, and family honor of the Asian Indian family affect the most one's perception of the domestic violence. Despite the period of twenty years between the research studies, the narratives of the interviewed women do not differ much. Commitment to the institution of marriage, the stigma of divorce, and family honor are the main factors to keep them silent in the abusive relationship and prevent them from seeking help. In their narratives, the interviewed women in the research studies do not show signs of acculturation, instead of adapting to the cultural changes of the host country, they tend to reinforce the cultural traits of the country of the origin. Regarding the socio-cultural factors, the developments in India have had more impact on immigrant women's lifestyle than the developments in the US. Thus, it is important to understand how the changes of trends in India are affecting the perception of the DV among the immigrant community. Despite the importance of the divorce factors in the perception of the domestic violence among Asian Indian immigrant women, the increase of divorce numbers in India does not reflect in the narratives of the participants in the research studies.

In their saga of coping with the domestic abuse by their partner, the interviewed women in their narratives show their vulnerability, but also strength and resilience, and despite the isolation, they utilized different ways to resist the abuse in the marriage. According to Mehrotra (1999), women express their resistance in various forms, such as they refuse to cook the meal for them, spit on their meal, take money from his wallet, call the family in India from calling cards, ignore him, refuse to sleep with him etcetera. In the research article, "Women's Resistance

Strategies in Abusive Relationships: An Alternative Framework” Hayes (2013) states that battered women are not passive, but actively seek out help while in an abusive relationship, though formal or informal resources from which a woman seeks help. That said, women do face institutional barriers because often institutions are “patriarchally structured and therefore do not consider women’s unique experiences” (Ferraro, 2006 & Rothenberg, 2003, as cited by Hayes, 2013, p. 2).

Some of the resisting strategies utilized by South Asian women are silence, confrontation, hiding, talking back, challenging the abuser’s fiscal control, contemplating suicide, though these actions may not give long term effects; still, they help women to feel empowered and retain the sense of self. The resisting strategies should be seen through the intersectionality lenses, as they are connected to the class, ethnicity, legal status, socioeconomic status, and the accessibility to the informal and formal resources to address the abuse (Abraham, 2002). Moreover, the pattern of abuse used by the partner and the location in the social structure impact the resistance strategies utilized by the woman (Hayes, 2013). Analyzing more thoroughly the cultures’ strength and weakness for the resistance strategies used by immigrant women experiencing abuse contributes to understanding the help-seeking behaviors of the South Asian immigrant women suffering abuse and why they are less likely to utilize the formal sources, such as criminal justice system in the United States.

Another factor that affects the perception of the domestic violence, as well as resistance strategies in coping with domestic violence and the help-seeking behavior is gendered childhood. In some parts of South Asia, discrimination against girls and women begins at conception, girls are considered the financial burden to the family due to the dowry demand, and this is reflected

in parents' behavior toward their children. Per the UN In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women Report of The Secretary-General (2006), the prenatal sex selection has impacts for half a million missing girls per year for the past two decades.

The narratives of the women describe that they are raised with the idea that they have different rights than men and that they need to be submissive and obey their husbands. The narratives depict that Domestic Violence is a gendered issue, though the interviewed women talk from their perspectives as women, they do not discuss how they raise and what they teach to their children, both daughters, and sons, about the gender issues. One way of contributing in eradicating the gender-based violence and educating and teaching children on gender equity. In the National Geographic article, "In Their Words: How Children Are Affected by Gender Issues" Eve Conant (2017) presents how children talk about the gender issues and how gender shapes their destiny. At the age of nine, a boy in India is aware that he will be pressured and he will be expected to harass women in public. And this is the time of gender revolution when children are aware how they are affected by gender issues of the social space they live. While providing and developing relevant sources to support women experiencing domestic violence help domestic violence survivors in the long term, educating children on gender equity contribute to preventing and eradicating the gender-based violence.

Another issue emerged from this analysis is that some immigrant women experiencing domestic violence are not aware of their right to self-petition for the US green card under a provision of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). As this study emphasized the socio-cultural structures that shape help-seeking behaviors of women experiencing domestic violence, it brings up cultural factors that affect how women conceptualize and address domestic violence.

Failure to utilize formal resources, including the self-petitioning option is most often associated with the cultural traits and stigma related to the shame of exposing the domestic violence in public realm, but there is not much discussion on how are the formal resources made available to the potential beneficiaries. Therefore, research studies tackling the issues of utilizing the formal resources may serve not only to explore the cultural sensitivity, but also to modify the accessibility of services provided by the formal resources for the target groups.

Recommendations

The increase in the number of the divorces in India may impact the domestic violence perception and behavior among Asian Indian community in the US. Research on the correlation between the divorce trends in India and domestic violence attitudes among the Asian Indian immigrants may contribute to the process of awareness-raising among respective communities.

Increase collaboration between organizations in India and the US in order to coordinate services to the domestic violence survivors who are migrating between the two countries. Learning about each other's services can result in providing a more comprehensive response to Asian Indian survivors who live in the US.

The campaigns on raising awareness on domestic violence, immigration, and respective formal resources should not target only immigrant women who are already in the host countries, but all women in India. Following the trends of migration, women can become immigrants at some point in their life, or they can also provide support to the immigrant women in need.

Raise awareness of the parents on the importance to educate their children on their gender socialization and how gender shapes their identity and behavior. Increasing awareness of the role of parenting in maintaining attitudes on gender violence may not have an immediate effect on

domestic violence survivors, but in the long term, it helps to prevent and to eradicate the gender-based violence.

Through community-based organizations, educate the community on domestic violence through health-promoting activities for the family that include information about healthy relationships, legal information, and other topics.

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