DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: CONCEPT, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT
Domestic violence is a social issue of concern to individuals and policy makers alike. It involves the abuse (emotional, physical, economic and sexual) by one or more family members on another family member within the home or a wider domestic context. Studies documenting the prevalence of and socio-demographic factors associated with domestic violence are shaping our understanding of what has become a national “epidemic”. What counts as “violence” is socially constructed, has varied over time and reflects power relationships. To prevent violence, it is obvious that one has to identify behaviour that constitutes violence. The process of labelling some behaviour as violent and others as non-violent is not simple.

Over the last decade, violence against women has emerged as a growing concern. In developing countries women are vulnerable to many forms of violence and domestic violence represents the most common (Husi, Petangey Germain 1994). The World Health Organization defines domestic violence as “the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners.” In a review of population-based studies, Krug et al, (2002) found that 10% to 69% of women reported that they had experienced physical violence from a male partner. There is growing recognition of the possible linkages between domestic violence and a range of adverse physical, mental, and reproductive health outcomes (Campbell 2002)

Against this background, we examine how violence is defined and conceptualized. What constructs as violence is socially constructed and varies with time and reflect power relationships.

KEY WORDS: Domestic violence, economic and social independence, power relationships, social constructionism.

References: