



INTERNATIONAL
PRESENTATION
ASSOCIATION

Making Uncomfortable Conversations Comfortable

Gender Stereotypes and Domestic Violence in India, United States and Zimbabwe



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Gender Stereotypes and
Domestic Violence in India,
United States and Zimbabwe



Foreword

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International Presentation Association
1011 First Ave
#1313
New York, NY, 10022
USA

e-mail: ipa.ngo.rep@gmail.com; execdirectoripa@pbvm.org; ella.j.rayment@gmail.com
website: <http://internationalpresentationassociation.org/>

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Foreword

The International Presentation Association (IPA) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations ECOSOC since 2000. As a network of Presentation Sisters and People (Friends and Associates) present in twenty countries, our unique mission is “to speak and act in partnership with others for global justice” through advocacy and direct service to people. Our goal is “to honour and advance the rights of women and children, indigenous and tribal people and the Earth”. At the United Nations in New York, we, and other members of civil society, aim to educate and influence policy makers at the global level to achieve a more just world.

In early 2020, when we were collectively enduring and witnessing a time of great upheaval due to COVID-19 pandemic, the IPA identified “Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children” as its specific UN Advocacy Focus. The focus emerged from the IPA Priority Action “Women and Children”, intersecting with Priority Actions to “Honour and Advance the Rights of the Earth and the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal people” as well as the Sustainable Development Goals framework. The COVID-19 global pandemic, since its outbreak, only intensified and worsened violence against women. The

confined living conditions of lockdown, with severe health, economic and social impacts, amplified existing inequalities and power imbalances and disproportionately affected those most vulnerable worldwide.

During COVID-19 pandemic, Presentation Sisters and People have actively engaged in various projects for minimizing violence against women. As leaders in their missions and professions, they work in partnerships with women and their communities to educate and empower them with skills in all aspects. Promoting gender equality has been a critical part of preventing and addressing violence against women. This includes interventions, at global and local level, that address the entrenched beliefs and cultural norms from which gender inequalities develop in order to reduce gender-based violence. Gendered stereotypes and attitudes might influence the likelihood of a gender-based violence survivor feeling comfortable or uncomfortable, being able or unable, to seek help and report to the support services.

The monumental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on entrenching gender roles and patterns of gender-based violence was the pressing reason for the current publication. Our particular interest lies in providing a voice to women experiencing gender stereotypes and domestic violence - presenting not only their experiences, but also their



needs going forward, as reflective of their culture and society. Beyond its impact on individuals, violence against women has serious and negative consequences upon families, communities, societies and entire countries, carrying severe economic and social costs. Lived experiences and voices from both survivors and experts of domestic violence in the United States, India and Zimbabwe constitute a main component of this project.

Many advances for women have been achieved. However, progress in transforming gender stereotypes and strengthening women's rights has not gone far or fast enough. We need to

do more, collectively and worldwide, to prioritize dismantling gender norms and addressing violence against women in order to meet the promise of gender equality. It is our hope that this study will trigger change and catalyse action so that together we will not only declare that gender stereotypes and violence against women are unacceptable but also make their prevention and elimination a living reality.

May we continuously be awakened with a global consciousness to the woundedness and pain of our world, standing with people in their struggles, while speaking and acting for justice, healing and hope for all.

Ann Marie Quinn

Ann Marie Quinn PBVM
Executive Director
International Presentation
Association

Despoina Afroditis Milaki

Dr. Despoina Afroditis Milaki
NGO Representative at the UN
International Presentation
Association



Preface

This research publication, 'Making Uncomfortable Conversations Comfortable', has been conducted under the supervision of Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki, the IPA NGO Representative at the UN, as a response to the unparalleled entrenchment of gender stereotypes and domestic violence as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Where many witnessed a loss of income, deterioration of health, and reduced education; these livelihood changes reinforced patterns of gender roles within many households. More insidiously, the conditions of reinforced gender roles and greater isolation intensified the scope and severity of domestic violence. As gender stereotypes vary spatially and temporally, this research centres the gender stereotypes and experiences of domestic violence within three countries: India, the United States and Zimbabwe before and after the pandemic.

Through listening to the testimonies of domestic violence survivors and advocates, this research publication highlights the similarities between gender stereotypes across and within countries to build synergies between how we understand the correlation of gender stereotypes and domestic violence. This research presents key recommendations for how we can advocate to better understand the interlinkages between gender

stereotypes and domestic violence towards the elimination of gender-based violence.

This research recognises the importance of empowering the voices of the grassroots as experts, which has been pertinent throughout this research project. This publication takes an international approach to address one of the most pressing issues within societies today, building connections across and within countries. Setting the stage for developing IPAs advocacy work in the future, this publication will be the first of many to work with survivors and advocates to privilege experiences and present solutions to gender stereotypes and domestic violence.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Ella Rayment'.

Ella Rayment
Research Fellow
International Presentation
Association

Acknowledgments

This research topic was conceptualized and initiated by Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki, NGO Representative at the United Nations for the International Presentation Association. As the project's lead consultant, Dr. Milaki provided invaluable support and guidance with her professional and academic experience in setting the frame of and executing the research, dedicating also time to contributing analysis, reviewing multiple drafts and making comments on the document.

The research was conducted and developed by Ella Rayment, Research Fellow of the International Presentation Association, who provided valuable insights and fresh perspectives. With her dedication, commitment and endless efforts, Ms Rayment served a critical role in performing scientific work, collecting sensitive data and moving forward despite the many challenges of the project.

A particular appreciation and gratitude extend to Ann Marie Quinn, PBVM, Executive Director of the International Presentation Association for her continued support and encouragement. Her enthusiasm and vision to put this project into a long-term view constituted significant pillars for the research to go above and beyond.

A special thank you goes to the International Presentation Association Board of Directors.

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The layout design was done by Ella Rayment under the guidance and contribution of Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki.

Acronyms

GBV - Gender-Based Violence

IPA - International Presentation Association

IPV - Intimate Partner Violence

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

SEM - Socioecological Model

VAW/G - Violence against Women and Girls

UN - United Nations

UN Women - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



TABLE OF
CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION
8	METHODOLOGY
15	LITERATURE REVIEW
26	GENDER STEREOTYPES IN UNITED STATES
30	GENDER STEREOTYPES IN INDIA
35	GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ZIMBABWE
38	LIVED EXPERIENCES
66	RECOMMENDATIONS
78	CONCLUSION





Introduction





The different roles and behaviours of women and men, boys and girls, are shaped and reinforced by gender stereotypes within some societies. These are social expectations that define appropriate behaviour for adults and children. Differences in gender roles and respective behaviours often create inequalities. Gender inequalities generate acts of violence or increase further the risk of acts of violence by men against women and children.

Gender stereotypes are issues that are not easily challenged or altered. The entrenched gendered attitudes people hold play a crucial role in affecting how they feel and respond to behaviour, including how they respond to victims/survivors of all types of gender-based violence (GBV). Societal attitudes and stereotypes impact how people respond socially, how police and services respond, and, importantly, how survivors feel about their own victimisation. There are many types of violence against women and children. Various settings and contextual factors may influence the types of violence that are prevalent. The prevalence of certain violence forms, such as domestic and sexual violence, is under-reported globally often due to fear of further harm, social stigma or bias, legal consequences etc. In this research, the International Presentation Association (IPA) aims to identify and examine how gender stereotypes influence and intensify attitudes and acts of domestic violence against women in the three case studies (United States, India and Zimbabwe).

Violence against women is a serious and complex human rights violation that occurs at alarming rates

worldwide. Available data indicate that women's and girls' experience of violence is widespread and takes different forms. To name few, almost 1 in 3 women, an estimated 736 million women, have experienced intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at some point in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). An estimated 650 million women and girls alive today were married before their 18th birthday (UNICEF, 2019). About half the world's children are subjected to physical punishment at home, as well as 1 in 3 adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have been victims of intimate partner violence (UNICEF, 2020). Globally, "243 million women and girls (15-49)" have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner between April 2019-April 2020 (UN Women, 2020c:1). This statistic illustrates an urgency that has been exacerbated through the course of the pandemic (UN Women, 2021). As 'lockdown' and 'stay at home' restrictions have been enforced, the issue of GBV and specifically domestic violence, has worsened; as is evident through increased engagement with helplines and support services (UN Women, 2020a). The unprecedented measures that arose from national and international policies made many survivors unable to seek pathways of support due to sheltering with their abuser. These concepts were identified through the UN Women's Measuring the Shadow Pandemic (2021:5) report on 13 countries, stating that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, 7 in 10 women believed that verbal or physical abuse had become more common. It is important that research is undertaken to explore the interrelationship between gender stereotypes and the causes and

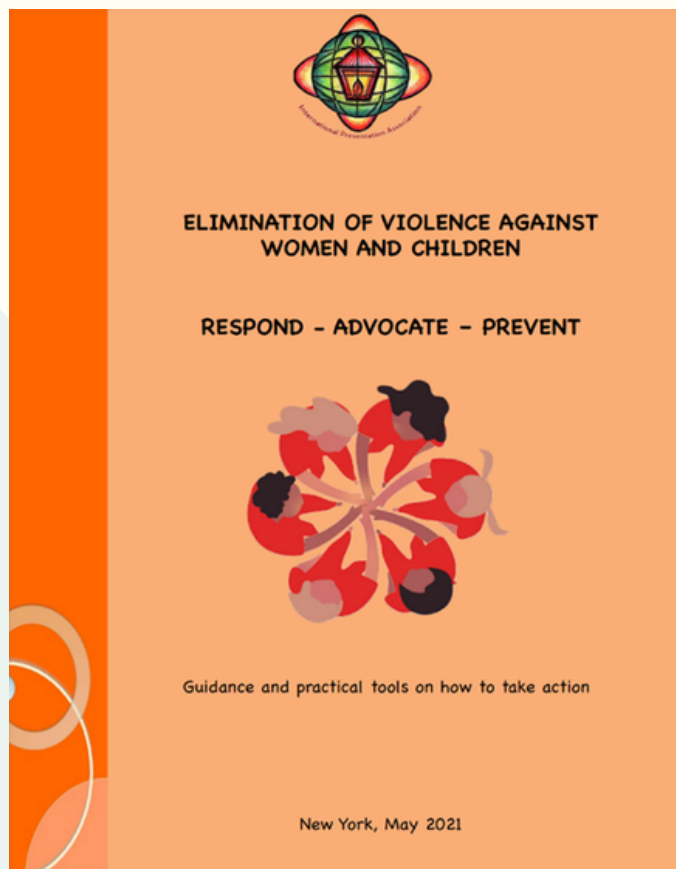
impacts of domestic violence as having become more intense and widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women of all ages and backgrounds must not be seen only as victims, but as agents of change and equal partners in eliminating violence. Formal and informal education is a powerful tool not only in responding to and advocating against violence, but also in dismantling gender stereotypes, hence preventing violence from occurring before it even starts. With this in mind, the International Presentation Association developed a booklet (see Figure 1) as a guiding document which provides information and tools, a helpful resource to be used in everyone's work on the elimination of violence against women and

children. Ending violence against women and children includes responding to violence, advocating for eradicating violence, and preventing violence before it even occurs. The booklet has been designed for individuals, groups, organizations and institutions across different spheres and at all levels that are actively working to end violence against women and children. It can be used as a toolkit to support projects and initiatives of all types and sizes, since it consists, inter alia, of a number of tools and tips that can be put together responding to a specific situation.

The research will use this toolkit later on to divide our recommendations by three categories: Respond-Advocate-Prevent.

Figure 1: The IPA booklet (toolkit) on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (Respond-Advocate-Prevent). **[Find the Toolkit here.](#)**



The main research questions that this project aims to answer are the following:

To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the scope, nature, and modalities of gender stereotypes in each case study;

To study empirically and comparatively how gender stereotypes shape attitudes and acts of domestic violence against women;

To examine how these stereotypes have impacted the societal and service responses to gender-based violence.

Figure 2: Three research aims for this project

Research Rationale

Our particular interest lies in providing a voice to women experiencing gender stereotypes and domestic violence - presenting not only their experiences, but also their needs going forward, as reflective of their culture and society. Violence against women and children has devastating lifelong effects, including on their physical and mental health. Beyond its impact on individuals, violence against women has serious and negative consequences upon families, communities, societies and entire countries, carrying severe economic and social costs. A pressing reason for this research being carried out now is the monumental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on

entrenching gender roles and patterns of GBV. Lived experiences and voices from both survivors and experts of domestic violence in the United States, India and Zimbabwe constitute a main component of this project.

What countries will be the focus?

To understand how gender stereotypes arise and the role they play in generating or reinforcing domestic violence, this research will focus on the experiences of people in three countries: the United States, India and Zimbabwe. These three countries were chosen as they all

occupy varied categories of economic development along with the fact that they all are from different continents of the world. Whilst India and Zimbabwe are considered 'lower-middle income economies' (with a Gross National Income (GNI) between \$1,046 to \$4,095), the United States is considered a 'high income economy' (GNI over \$12,696 or more) (The World Bank, 2022). This difference in economic classification may influence perceptions of gender stereotypes through the economic development of a society. Choosing geographically diverse countries is important as it provides heterogeneity to the case studies, allowing for diverse perceptions of gender stereotypes and experiences of gender-based violence to be uncovered across cultures. The IPA has a presence with Sisters and Presentation People in all of the chosen countries, allowing for future research in the countries with greater subnational variation and depth.

As the population and area of the United States is large and diverse, heterogeneity will be respected through gathering data from intersectional and migrant communities, to enable greater representation of gender stereotypes in this country. OECD statistics (2019) show that 11 percent of women (aged 15-49) in the US believe that a husband is justified in "hitting or beating his wife" for at least one specific reason (e.g burning the food, neglecting children, leaves the house without permission, refusing sexual relations). Although this statistic constitutes over a tenth of women in the US accepting perceptions of normalising domestic violence, this statistic is the lowest out of the chosen countries, therefore allowing for a diverse range of perceptions to be represented in this study. Additionally, 24.9 percent of the US population agrees with the statement that "when a mother works for pay, the children suffer" (OECD, 2019: Legend). This OECD statistic illustrates how almost a quarter of the population ascribe entrenched discriminatory gender perceptions whereby women are seen to occupy nurturing responsibilities in society rather than leadership roles. This perception limits the autonomy and opportunities of many women, a fact that makes survivors of domestic violence less likely to leave their abusers. When addressing rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) - one aspect of domestic violence - 35.6 percent of ever-partnered women have suffered physical and/or sexual violence in the United States (ibid),

The United States



where ‘ever partnered’ is defined as “reporting having had sex, been married, or been in a romantic relationship” (Decker et al, 2014). Of the available data from OECD statistics (2019) this is the highest rate of IPV from the chosen countries, inferring a great divergence between the perceptions of gender stereotypes and experiences of GBV.

India



India provides an interesting case study for analysing gender stereotypes as 75.0 percent of women agree with the statement that “when a mother works for pay, the children suffer”; (OECD, 2019). When compared to the United States, perceptions of female autonomy appear more limited in India. Perceptions towards domestic violence is evident through 22.1 percent of women in India agreeing with the statement that it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife for at least one specified reason, such as burning food or refusing sexual relations, compared to a global average of 27.7 percent (ibid). This

rate is double that of the United States, therefore illustrating diverse perceptions to both gender stereotypes and GBV which may provide a significant comparison when analysing the collected data. Moreover, over a quarter of ever-partnered women (28.7 percent) stated that they have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime (OECD, 2019). As IPV is structurally underreported due to the threat of harm if found out, the reality of women in India experiencing domestic violence from an intimate partner could be significantly higher, especially under ‘stay-at-home’ conditions imposed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is imperative that research is conducted in a safe and informed way to listen to the voices and lived experiences of survivors experiencing domestic violence. When considering how these gendered expectations and beliefs arise, previous research in India has highlighted the role of class, caste, and culture within South Asia in determining these intersectional experiences (Weitzman, 2014).

Zimbabwe





Zimbabwe was chosen due to its distinct historical and cultural trajectory providing contrast to the United States and India through the context of high HIV prevalence rates and its history of colonialism in the African continent. Statistics show that 35.4 percent of ever-partnered women have experienced IPV, 25.5 percent of the population believe that the children suffer when a mother works and 35.4 percent of women (aged 15-49) believe a husband to be justified in 'physically disciplining' his wife for the aforementioned specific reasons (OECD, 2019). These OECD statistics show the greatest rate of 'justifying' experiences of violence out of the three countries chosen, whilst the rate of IPV experiences is similar to the rate in the United States. Therefore, when conducting primary research, it is pertinent that data is analysed to account for entrenched gender stereotypes that normalise or

'justify' occurrences of domestic violence. As the literature research will identify in greater depth, each country and intersectional group in the country may have specific gender and patriarchal gender stereotypes that are obfuscated at a national level, emphasising a great need for in-depth understanding of variation within future research. This cross-sectional study will provide the framework for future research in understanding the causation of gender stereotypes and gender-based violence. These three case studies will provide a diverse range of perceptions towards gender stereotypes and experiences of GBV, and should by no means be understood as exhaustive or deterministic. This is with the aim to identify the different ways that gender stereotypes impact experiences of violence as a starting point to explore in more depth in the future.



Methodology





To understand how specific gender stereotypes are conducive to domestic violence, a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been used to achieve a holistic overview of the topic and ensure outcomes are not limited to particular economic and social contexts. **As this project is a cross-sectional study, the aim of this research is not to address causation of gender-based violence and gender stereotypes but rather correlation between perceptions and experiences of gender stereotypes and violence.** The questions asked are not specific to one country, allowing comparisons to be gained across and within countries. The semi-structured interviews were designed specifically to highlight the lived experiences, the perceptions of gender stereotypes and patterns of domestic violence people experienced before and during COVID-19 pandemic in a more comprehensive way.

The language used while reaching out to potential respondents was gender neutral and attitudes regarding gender stereotypes were hypothetical such that social desirability bias was minimised. Specific terms such as violence and abuse are reduced in the questions asked during the interviews due to the fear of “narrow representations of violence” resulting in not recognising experiences of violence (Flood and Pease, 2019:3). This research avoided using preconceived notions of violence to frame experiences around but rather allowed respondents to

describe their gendered experiences. When designing the research on a sensitive topic like perceptions and experiences of domestic violence, the issue may arise of social desirability bias whereby the person answers questions untruthfully so that their answers reflect better on them. This was partially addressed through the order of the questions, where questions regarding experiences of violence were before perceptions of violence as not to influence expectations when answering questions on experiences. When developing the language and construction of the questions, Glaesser et al's (2006) online evaluation tool of Question Understanding Aid was used to test 12 aspects of questions, such as: unfamiliar technical terms, vague or imprecise language, relative terms, vague or ambiguous language, complex syntax, and working memory overload (QUAID, 2021). This was a useful resource as it identified issues that an individual researcher may not have had the capacity to identify. By inputting questions into this tool, we were able to establish whether the language was appropriate for the respondents to understand and answer.

The semi-structured interviews were specifically designed to listen to and learn from people who have either direct experience of domestic violence or worked in a capacity whereby they have specialist knowledge on the subject of gender stereotypes and/or domestic violence. As experiences of violence are often

- 1 Do you feel that there is pressure from **society** to act a certain way in a relationship because of your gender?
- 2 Do you feel pressure from **tradition** to act a certain way in a relationship because of your gender?
- 3 How could this pressure of society [and/ or] tradition **impact relationships?**
- 4 How could this pressure cause [**conflict / strain**] in a relationship?
- 5 How could issues of conflict with a partner be **resolved?**

Figure 3: An example excerpt of questions asked in the gender stereotype section of the semi-structured interview.

invisible and under-reported, it is important that this research project identifies groups of individuals through a trusted source, which would allow snowball sampling to further increase the sample size. As a result, networks of NGOs addressing GBV and of the IPA's own Justice Contacts operating in the relevant countries were consulted to find relevant participants. The sample selection was not random but was subjected to self-selection bias where individuals that were willing to be interviewed for this research put themselves forward. Before the interviews were scheduled, informed consent was gained through two consent forms, clarifying the process of the research along with the aims of the project to build trust with

participants. Importantly, the consent forms outlined the anonymity of participants (unless wanting to be recognised by their own accord) in order to protect participants, which was paramount due to the sensitive nature of the research conducted remotely.

It was important to gain continuous consent from the participant to ensure that they were comfortable with the questions asked due to their sensitive nature. Questions were asked and recorded of whether the participant would want to be identifiable in the publication and, if that were the case, whether they would want their first names and / or surnames featured in the report. This is important as **the act of sharing the**

story of a survivor is an act of strength. This included a transparent account of what the research was for, what their contributions would be used for and how to access the final document at the end of the project.

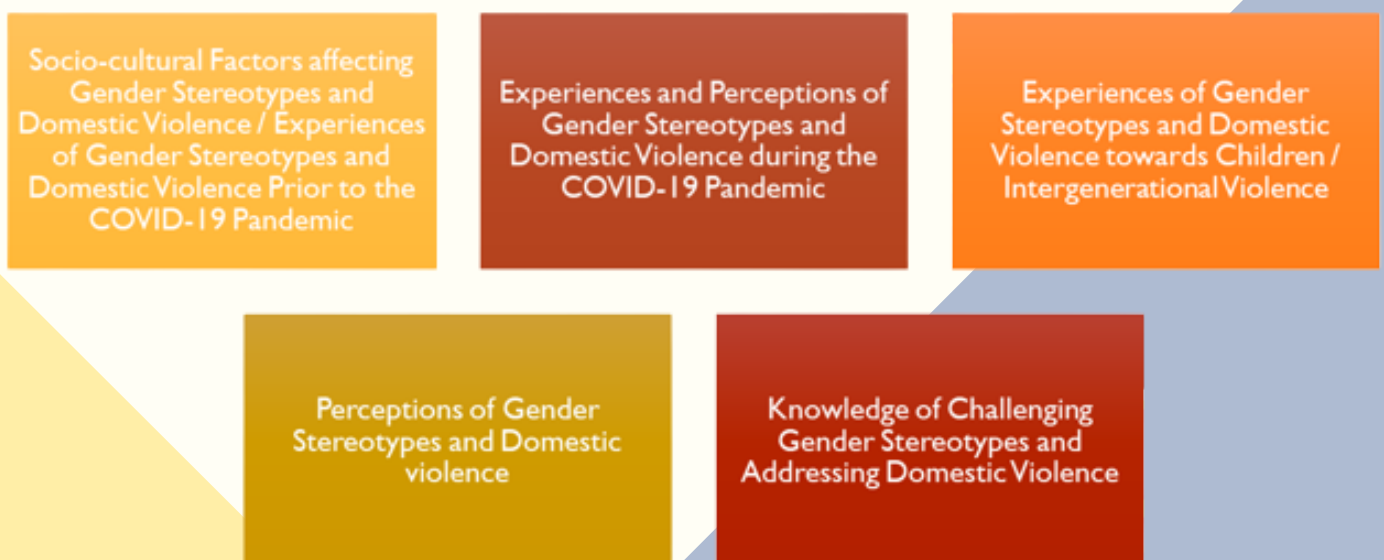
An example of questions for the interviews can be seen in Figure 3.

The outline of the thematic areas of the interview is visually explained in Figure 4. Many of the questions are appropriate for whether the interviewee has experience as a domestic violence survivor or advocate but in many cases, the phrasing was changed so that the questions engaged with the expertise and knowledge of the interviewee.

The structure of the interview was intended to be guiding in our aim to address the key topics in question,

with the ethos of building off the participant's responses rather than restricting their ability to talk freely. As questions were drafted for the semi-structured interview, the conversation was not free from structure; the experiences shared by participants were elicited from questions asking about specific themes. Therefore, this research should not be understood as an holistic account of experiences insofar that the conversation was constructed through wanting to know about specific experiences or perceptions (Silverman, 2014). As such, the data collected from the interviews are experiences specific to the questions asked in the circumstance of the interview, rather than necessarily an exhaustive account of perceptions or experiences.

Figure 4: Main thematic areas of the interviews.



Areas of Thematic Focus

Demographic Factors

The demographic questions were important to establish aspects of a person's identity that may influence their experiences or attitudes of gender stereotypes and domestic violence. The main demographic concepts of interest include the country the respondent resides in, their gender, age of marriage and highest attainment of education. The attributes of age of marriage and educational attainment were identified from the literature as being two key areas that shape experiences of domestic violence (Ahmad, 2016; Ahmad, Khan and Mozumdar, 2019; Begum et al, 2015). Another question considered is the rurality condition of the respondent in influencing attitudes or experience of domestic violence. For example, Lasong et al (2020), in their study in Zimbabwe, find that women who live in rural areas of Zimbabwe are more likely to experience GBV than women in urban areas. Therefore this methodology was directly informed by wider literature within the field of social sciences. By circulating the same questions across the United States, India and Zimbabwe, cross-cultural trends can be identified which would allow widespread trends of gender stereotypes and violence to be identified.

Socio-cultural Factors

Socio-cultural questions were included in the interviews with GBV survivors to ascertain contextual information regarding, inter alia, the respondent's relationship with their partners, their education attainment, income, or moral beliefs. Identifying the socio-cultural status of respondents within their relationship is important as literature identifies large differences in socio-cultural factors as an influencing factor for having attitudes and experiences of hostile patriarchy (Hindin, 2003). Whilst there is less emphasis on stratifying responses by these factors, this information provides an opportunity to identify correlation between aspects of a respondent's relationship and particular attitudes or experiences.

Experiences of violence before COVID-19

As one of the research objectives is to understand rates of domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic, this information is less useful unless we have comparative data. Therefore, this theme has asked respondents questions on whether they agree or disagree and/or how frequently experiences of domestic violence or gender stereotypes were experienced. By framing the question as before COVID-19, this question allows respondents flexibility to answer the question in accordance with when



this relationship was.

Throughout this research, it is important to have multiple questions assessing the same topic, to increase the reliability of the questions and consolidate information (Fowler, Jr., 2009). The questions assessing frequency give more information about an event beyond their 'agreement/ disagreement to a statement' but it does have the potential to be flawed due to recall bias. Therefore, the combination of repeating specific questions and reframing them in a different scale is one way that the reliability of questions has been increased, whilst balancing the length of the questionnaire to reduce the tedium of answering the same questions. To prepare respondents, this repeated structure was outlined at the beginning of the section so that respondents are not confused, which also reduces error by not understanding the question posed.

Experience of Violence During COVID-19

For this theme - experiences of violence during COVID-19 - respective questions were asked as in the previous theme, experiences of violence before COVID-19, to ensure direct comparisons between the themes. As this study can only provide correlation to why violence happened rather than statistically significant causation, this direct comparison allows us to establish any

changes in patterns of violence. As such, questions are identically worded (with the exception of changing past tense into present tense) to retain the comparability of the two themes. As this research is cross-sectional, the method of comparing experiences prior to and during COVID-19 allows for the collection of data over a period of time (albeit with the potential issue of recall bias). Nonetheless, this data from this theme and the previous one would allow us to establish correlation between patterns of behaviour before COVID-19 and during COVID-19, assessing how the pandemic may have changed relationships. As this research is not determining causation, we will be able to establish patterns of attitudes and experiences under different contexts to identify correlation between factors.

Perceptions of Gender Stereotypes

The penultimate theme that this research identifies is the role of perceptions regarding hostile social norms or beliefs. This theme was included near the end as not to create preconceived notions of gender stereotypes prior to establishing the respondent's experience of domestic violence. Knowing that including the questions on attitudes would influence the social desirability bias on the questions of experience, there is the risk that the earlier themes may

influence the attitudes listed in this theme.

Finding Solutions to Gender Stereotypes and Domestic Violence

The final theme that was developed in the methodology of this research is the need to listen to and learn from the knowledge and expertise of respondents. Within the interviews, the final theme focused on finding solutions to and challenging gender stereotypes and domestic violence

from the issues raised earlier in the interview. This section aims to incorporate and centre the voices and lived experiences of those involved in the research to privilege their expertise on how to address domestic violence through changing established gender stereotypes.

RAISE YOUR VOICE



END VIOLENCE

#MakeConversationComfortable



Literature Review





The current research draws upon a myriad of scholars' and experts' contributions within the field of domestic violence reflected in relevant publications from international organisations. This project is further situated within wider engagement of current policies and programmes that already strive to address gender inequality such as Oxfam India's (2017) "Changing Narratives" project and the Overseas Development Institute's (2017) "Tackling Intimate Partner Violence in South Asia". This research project will analyse the social construction of gender stereotypes through a postmodern framework (Butler, 1990), to assess the relationship between gender stereotypes and domestic violence. A postmodern approach can be surmised through understanding gender stereotypes as socially constructed, with the intent to identify and address patterns of gender stereotypes conducive to domestic violence.

affects gender relations uniquely within and between different contexts, allowing for varying degrees of gender expectations (Peoples and Bailey, 2012). This ultimately includes women navigating traditions of both public and private life in order to bargain with the terms of the "patriarchal 'structures of constraint'" of which they find themselves subjected to (Nazneen et al, 2019:458).

The presence of gender stereotypes or norms alone does not cause the prevalence of gender-based violence as it is evident that gender norms and stereotypes are dependent on cultural factors at different levels (Rieger et al, 2021). In turn, gender stereotypes influence how we experience these socio-cultural factors due to the entangled nature of gender in society.

Why context is important

Although the distinction of men as 'breadwinners' and women as 'homemakers' is reinforced in many cultures, this division of gender roles is not universal or experienced everywhere (Peoples and Bailey, 2012). The concept of a universal patriarchy has been dismissed due to the lack of accounting for the "concrete cultural contexts in which it exists" (Butler, 1990:5). Patriarchy

Gender stereotypes are one attribute conducive to shaping patterns of gender violence, along with diverse socio-cultural norms affecting violence at different levels in society. For example, factors of education, socio-economic advantage or disadvantage, age, religion and spiritual beliefs all contribute to shaping gender stereotypes (Lee and Choi, 2021, Ahmad et al, 2016, and Begum et al, 2015). These socio-cultural factors influence gender stereotypes at different levels: from the individual, community, institutional and cultural levels.



Along with socio-cultural factors influencing experiences of domestic violence, this research also recognises that national and subnational law and legislation play a significant role in shaping perceptions and behaviour.

The existing crisis of violence against women has only intensified and worsened as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. UN Women's (2020b:4) focus on GBV in the wake of the pandemic is illuminating as "the decisions designed to protect us from COVID-19 [...] exposed the depth of violence against women and girls". Certain patterns of violence shifted and intensified as a direct result of many government policies to reduce the spread of the pandemic. Certain forms of violence are one manifestation in which women have been harmed during the pandemic but there are also more subtle forms of gender inequality and unsafe environments that have also been exacerbated since 2020. Additionally, as the primary data illustrates, gender norms were further entrenched by COVID-19 'stay-at-home' or 'lockdown' restrictions, reinforcing the gendered nature of care for many women. To this end, women faced greater pressures to drop-out of the labour market when compared to men, resulting in unprecedented employment losses (ILO, 2021). Whilst restriction to the private sphere meant an increased burden of care for some, it also meant being confined with an abuser for others. Moreover, issues of insecure employment and housing also added

strain to a household, potentially manifesting as risk factors for experiencing domestic violence (Lee and Choi, 2021). In many countries, people experiencing domestic abuse during pandemic measures were provided with inadequate "sustainable, structural and societal" support (UN Women, 2020b:5), as the literature review indicates. It is imperative to listen to and learn from the experiences of those who faced GBV during the pandemic, from a threat just as invasive and endemic.

What do we mean by 'Gender Stereotypes'?

Within this research, gender is understood as a social construct of "cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes" (Butler, 1990:9). These cultural meanings include the binary categories of 'masculine' and 'feminine', constructed to create difference in society; difference that is legitimised through cultural tradition, myth and the patriarchal hierarchy. This project will not view gender as innate but culturally constructed to analyse how patriarchal discourse perpetuates gender stereotypes aiming to explain subordination and domestic violence towards survivors. In this context,



Patriarchy refers to the “manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general.” (Sultana, 2011:3).

Normative expectations of gender and the related power dynamics are ascribed to and learnt by individuals through socialisation. As Jonathan (1989:45) states: “the content of gender roles is culturally induced”; whereby masculine ideals of men are “the culturally induced role of Mighty Provider, recreating dominance tendencies whose putative “natural” rationale becomes culturally reinvented” (ibid:46). This distinction rests on the assumption of male perpetrators and female survivors, which does not reflect all experiences of violence. Without further entrenching heteronormative assumptions of GBV, this research will use inductive methods and non-gendered language in the methodology as not to assume a gendered perpetration of violence. As the focus is analysing patriarchal gender stereotypes, it is implied that the survivors of domestic violence featured in this research will be predominantly women. As recent data from UN Women (2021:5) highlight, “45% of women reported that they, or a woman they know, has experienced a form of violence since COVID-19”. Therefore, this research is not denying the occurrences of female perpetrators and male

survivors but the scope identifies patriarchal gender stereotypes as a contributing factor to domestic violence perpetrated by men.

Two key concepts that this research engages with are gender stereotypes and gender norms, whereby a distinction can be made between the terms by virtue of their function. Both gender norms and stereotypes are fluid constructs that are culturally and contextually dependent and are important when understanding constructions of gender. Hence,

Gender stereotypes are “generalisations about what men and women are like [and] derive from the discrepant distribution of men and women into social roles” (Hentschel, Heilman and Peus, 2019:2). These generalisations are informed by gender norms to categorise people by perceived attributes, regardless of whether the stereotypes conform to the lived experience or unique identity of the group in question.

Gender stereotypes emerge from gender norms: the “role-bound activities, and the characteristics favored by these roles become stereotypic of each sex” (Diekman and Eagly, 2000:1172), therefore recognising an interdependency between the two terms. Stereotyping can be projecting qualities and attributes onto a group or onto oneself; whereby perceived

characteristics can inform one's identity and behaviour. Gender stereotypes are the "basis for intersectional oppression" and emerge from different levels in society, from neighbourhood communities to history and structural discrimination (Rosenthal et al, 2020:921). The OHCHR (2021) identifies the role of gender stereotypes in how it intersects with aspects of identity:

"Gender stereotypes compounded and intersecting with other stereotypes have a disproportionate negative impact on certain groups of women, such as women from minority or indigenous groups, women with disabilities, women from lower caste groups or with lower economic status, migrant women, etc."

Within social science literature, gender stereotypes have been divided into two distinct categories of behaviour: agentic and communal; "Communion orients people to others and their well-being (e.g., compassionate, warm, expressive), whereas agency orients people to the self and one's own mastery and goal attainment (e.g., ambitious, assertive, competitive)" (Eagly et al, 2019: 302). Men are traditionally ascribed more agentic attributes and women more communal attributes (ibid; Rosenthal et al, 2020). These multidimensional categories encompass a broad range of descriptors and their distribution derives from the ascribed gendered roles and expectations across societies (Hentschel, Heilman and

Peus, 2019).

Gender stereotypes arise from socially constructed gender norms and expectations concerning "appropriate [gender] roles, rights and responsibilities" (Shamu, Shamu and Machisa, 2019:59-60).

As such, this project addresses the influence of gender stereotypes whilst acknowledging the root of gender construction through normative gender roles, responsibilities and expectations.

The type of gender stereotypes this research is especially concerned with are the "sexist, patriarchal, and/or sexually hostile perceptions and their use of violence against women" (Flood and Pease, 2019:2). The research specifically examines the gender stereotypes that maintain and reproduce power imbalances resulting in domestic abuse through behaviours and attitudes of harm before and during COVID-19.



Credit: The Red Dot Foundation

Socio-Ecological Model

As this research aims to identify gender stereotypes conducive to domestic violence, wider literature demonstrates how these gender stereotypes and forms of GBV exist and intersect at different levels. A way to make sense of the modalities of how gender stereotypes and domestic violence affect people is through the socio-ecological model

(SEM), originally used to understand child abuse in the 1980s but has since been used to make sense of how patterns of violence emerge (Heise, 1998). In Heise's (1998) study, this model was used to analyse GBV, where four concentric circles were shown to depict the overlapping and interconnected levels: the individual, the microsystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem (see Figure 5). The scale of the modalities increases with the circles, whereby:

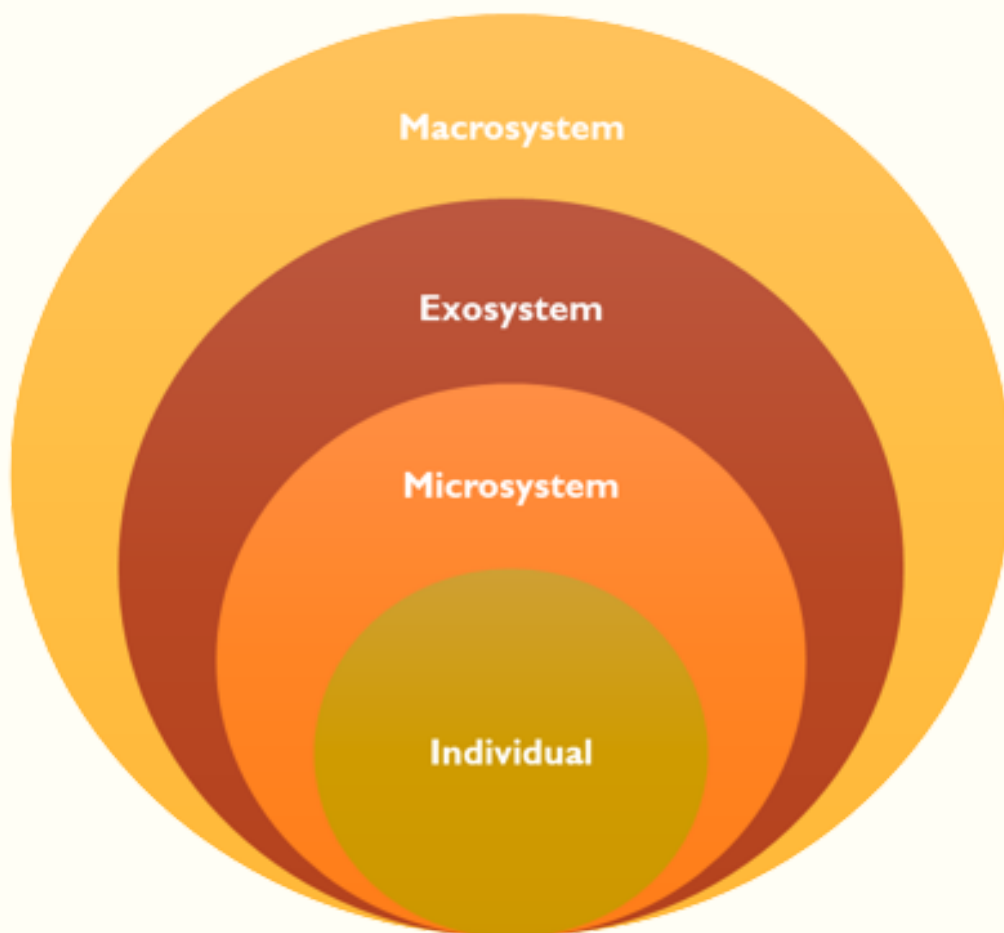


Figure 5: The Socio-ecological Model

The individual circle refers to the personal history factors of the individuals;

The microsystem refers to the immediate context in which the violence takes place;

The exosystem is the informal and formal institutions and social structures;

The macrosystem is the general views and attitudes within a wider culture.

Figure 6: Examples of the different levels of perceptions and experiences of gender stereotypes and domestic violence according to the Socio-ecological Model.

Recognising four distinct levels of influence, these systems do not operate independently, rather they intersect one another at different points in time, resulting in a network of factors exerting influence on behaviour. Although it is important to distinguish between the systems in order to identify the extent of the gender stereotypes and domestic violence acting on an individual, all the systems need to be considered holistically to understand all the influences acting on a person. Figure 6 explains the different levels of the SEM to understand how gender stereotypes and domestic violence affects an individual. This research uses the SEM to understand the different levels of factors that cause patriarchal gender stereotypes and certain experiences of violence.

To understand this SEM in greater depth, Heise (1998) identifies sociocultural factors and patriarchal gender stereotypes at each of the four systems that shape or reinforce domestic violence. At the level of the individual, these factors are associated with witnessing violence as a child, recognising an intergenerational cause of domestic violence. It should be noted that witnessing or experiencing violence as a child is not a determinant of domestic violence. Not all children who have been abused become abusers. It has been proven that the response to domestic violence could be one of condemnation because children have the ability to break the cycle of perpetuating violence. Therefore, the intergenerational aspects of violence needs to be

understood with different situational factors that emerge from other levels (Murnen, Wright and Kaluzny, 2002; Pease and Flood, 2006). These situational factors can range from excessive consumption of alcohol, peer pressure and peer support for beliefs and attitudes (Pease and Flood, 2006). Situational factors are important as they are the catalyst for why someone may perpetuate violence; adequately explaining the differences of why someone might perpetrate violence and why someone may not perpetrate gender-based violence even if they experience the same individual factors.

The next circle is the microsystem where factors causing domestic violence have been identified by Heise (1998) as: male dominance in the family, male control of wealth in the family, marital conflict, and a high consumption of alcohol. These factors all contribute to patriarchal

stereotypes and mostly assume a heteronormative relationship whereby there is a male abuser and female survivor. This model, however, does not recognise heteronormative violence to be the only way that violence is experienced so this approach can be utilised to understand the influencing factors on why anyone may perpetrate violence in future studies.

The third circle is the exosystem that encompasses the institutions and social structures, understood to be influenced by changes within larger systems (like the macrosystem). As this circle includes both informal and formal structures, it features factors such as unemployment/low socioeconomic status; isolation within the family; and detrimental peer associations (Heise, 1998). An example of how this level affects experiences of violence is summarised by Heise (1998:275):



“In low-violence societies, the family and community feels it is their right and obligation to intervene in private family matters, whereas in the cultures with high violence against women, families are isolated and husband and wife relations are considered outside of public scrutiny”.

This explains how the levels are interconnected and act on one another when shaping certain gender stereotypes and patterns of violence. The above quote alludes to the role of the macrosystem, as macrosystem factors encompass cultural values and beliefs that impact and inform the lower three levels. Therefore, this fourth level also features factors of broad scope such as: ideas of masculinity relating to dominance, toughness and honour; reinforcing rigid gender roles; sense of male entitlement over women; and acceptance of violence to settle disputes (ibid).

It should be acknowledged that gender stereotypes and domestic violence are exerted at different levels of the SEM. However, greater public awareness has helped recent generations to challenge gender stereotypes and domestic violence at these levels. Therefore, the following gender stereotypes described in the United States, India and Zimbabwe should not be seen as absolute stereotypes that everyone experiences.

What do we mean by 'Domestic Violence'?

The form of violence that this research focuses upon is 'domestic violence' and often, occurrences of intimate partner violence.

“Domestic violence, also called domestic abuse or intimate partner violence, is any pattern of behaviour that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It encompasses all physical, sexual, emotional, economic and psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by women globally.” (UN Women, 2021b)

This project addresses five types of IPV identified by UN Women (2022): physical violence, psychological violence, economic violence, emotional violence and sexual violence, whereby the specific occurrences and severity of violence is fluid and shifting.

The research identifies gender stereotypes that are conducive to domestic violence and analyses how these stereotypes could be addressed and reduced. This is in tandem with recognising how socio-cultural norms influence gender stereotypes and visa-versa. For example, gender stereotypes may



dictate submissive or dominant behaviour but that behaviour could be reinforced through communities or institutional factors. Likewise, cultural factors themselves may dictate gender norms too, highlighting an important interplay between these gendered and cultural factors that this research will disentangle.

Domestic violence can affect children but this study will predominantly focus on forms of intimate partner violence which explores gender stereotypes and experiences of violence between partners. Whilst the experiences and insights from children are important when understanding domestic violence, there is a need to narrow the scope of this project to comprehensively understand the gender dynamics of partners before including children. The exclusion of children as a primary focus is reinforced through research ethics that dictate children are

consulted when collecting primary data to ensure their experiences and words are recognised and not translated through the language or perception of parents or guardians (Holt, Øverlien, and Devaney, 2018). As such, this produces ethical considerations that the research is unable to address remotely, rendering the sample frame to only include adults in, or who have experienced intimate relationships, experiences of violence or expertise of GBV. With this in mind, experiences of children will not be neglected in this research, especially regarding the importance of understanding intergenerational violence or trauma and the fundamental role that children play in addressing the perpetuation of gender roles. Children will be included in the study insofar that participants will be asked about their childhood experiences and treatment of children (if applicable); children's experiences are also drawn from in



the literature review and advocacy section of the project.

Gender Stereotypes and Domestic Violence

There is nothing innate about gender; it is reproduced through “the various ways in which bodies are acted in relationship to the deeply entrenched [...] expectations of gendered existence” (Butler, 1988:524). These vast and fluid expectations influence and determine the behaviour of people in every society. The literature chosen within this review is by no means a comprehensive and exhaustive account of gender stereotypes in the United States, India and Zimbabwe. Rather, it should be viewed as a diverse collection of gender experiences in these countries, displaying the vast and intersectional ways that violence affects people and especially women. This literature review should be understood as a collection of gender stereotypes in the chosen countries to provide context for the primary data to further analyse the interrelation between gender stereotypes and gender-based violence.

A key framework and a foundation of this research is how gender stereotypes affect experiences of violence through three main ways: the types and patterns of violence experienced, the pathways survivors use to seek support and how survivors internalise the forms of

violence (Flood and Pease, 2019). This framework approaches gender stereotypes as a product of context specific variables, acknowledging that GBV and more specifically domestic violence is not experienced homogeneously but affects individuals based on identity.

The perpetration of violence

The institutional response to violence

The internalisation of victimisation

Flood and Pease (2019:6) describe the relationship between hostile gender stereotypes and violence: as “perceptions of the legitimacy of men’s violence to intimate partners [which] are constituted through agreement with the notions that men should be dominant in households and intimate relationships and have the right to enforce their dominance through physical chastisement, men have uncontrollable sexual urges, women are deceptive and malicious, and marriage is a guarantee of sexual consent”.

As explored in the introduction, these gender stereotypes described by Flood and Pease (2019) may result in violence when supported by wider socio-cultural factors acting on a relationship, such as socio-economic

status or the legal status of marital rape. Large disparity between socio-economic status, education or social class can cause conflict between partners. This has been identified in many studies aiming to explain why GBV may arise between some intimate partners and not others (Lee and Choi, 2021; Hindin, 2003). This increases the complexity for why patterns of violence emerge, acknowledging socio-cultural factors may enable patriarchal norms to become harmful within certain circumstances. Figure 7 illustrates the relationship between patriarchal norms and sociocultural factors, recognising the interconnected relationship. These two factors shape or reinforce gender stereotypes and affect how GBV is experienced.

Masculine behaviour has been outlined by Kilmartin (1994) as encompassing four themes: antifemininity, status and achievement, inexpressiveness and independence, and adventurousness and aggression. Through “traditional gender roles [that] encourage men to be violent in the name of “masculinity” and women to be sexually passive in order to be “feminine””, a stark power disparity is created through an adherence to these gender stereotypes (Murnen, Wright and Kaluzny, 2002:2). These gender stereotypes promote a rhetoric of male dominance and female subordination which conforms to patriarchal beliefs.

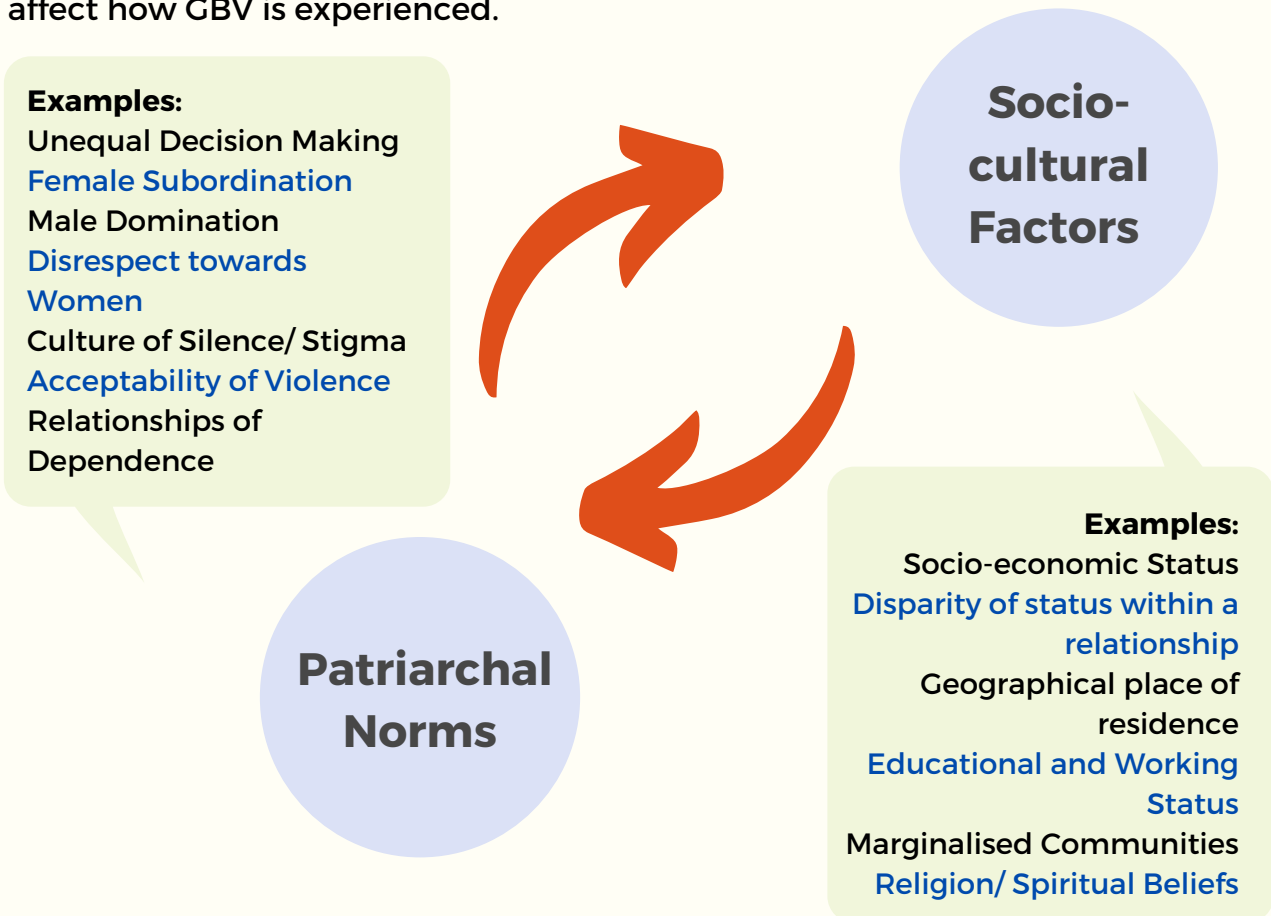


Figure 7: The relationship between patriarchal gender norms and socio-cultural factors, with examples



Gender Stereotypes in United States



This section provides an overview of different experiences women have with gender stereotypes and patterns of violence, including both how they experience violence and internalise it when seeking support, in accordance with Flood and Pease (2019). This is especially pertinent considering the rich history of immigration that the United States has experienced, making it a diverse country to identify distinct gender stereotypes and patterns of violence.

Gender stereotypes in the United States are produced and reinforced through the historical trajectory of patriarchal ideals. These patriarchal stereotypes have promoted values of male independence and 'breadwinner' imagery. Whilst not inherently harmful or conducive to violence, this rhetoric created gendered expectations which has

shaped certain factors that might increase violence. At the same time, gender stereotypes have emerged for middle and upper class American women who could afford to dedicate time to domestic responsibilities - creating and recreating gender roles in the US. This distinction is reflected in 16 national US public polls between 1946-2018, compiled by Eagly et al (2019:302). They showed how "communion prevails in the female stereotype, and agency in the male stereotype"; to the extent that 97 percent of respondents associated traits of communion (affectionate, compassionate, emotional etc.) with women. This shows how, despite the changing nature of stereotypes, gendered attributes have persisted since the mid-20th century in the United States, illustrating how entrenched these beliefs are in normative society. Within the second





wave of feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, women challenged the female stereotypes and a demographic shift was seen for women pursuing further education, engaging with paid labour and inhabiting more roles of public leadership. Despite this shift, the earlier statistics of gender stereotypes do not reflect the extent to which women have greater autonomy as the rhetoric of communal traits persists within female gender stereotypes. Whereby this gender distinction of communal and agentic traits may not appear harmful on the surface, it reinforces harmful imbalances of power and opportunity within relationships which can be usurped under the ideology of hostile patriarchy. These gender stereotypes are prevalent for many middle class and white Americans but, as Black scholars have illustrated, intersectional experiences of Black women makes their experiences different from White women (Crenshaw, 1991).

As mentioned prior, gender stereotypes are fluid constructs prescribed onto people of a specific group by virtue of their belonging to that group. Therefore, they represent a normative gender pressure which may be used to confine, oppress or discriminate against. One such gender stereotype is the myth of Black women as promiscuous. This dangerous fallacy was “developed and promoted during slavery to justify the systematic rape of Black women by white male slave owners” (Rosenthal et al, 2020:933). Whilst this quote depicts an extreme

instrumental objective for oppressing an intersectional group through sexual harm, the logic of using gender stereotypes as an oppressive tool to justify behavior is commonplace throughout the world. Along with promoting toxic masculinities through sexual violence, this myth and the way that it resonates in mundane settings reproduces a gendered imbalance of power that may influence how violence is experienced. With regard to seeking support for incidents of domestic violence, studies present how Black women are less likely to seek support from the police due to structural discrimination and perceptions of police incompetence (Hilson, 2020). The role of law enforcement influencing experiences of violence is an exosystem factor which exerts influence on both the microsystem and individual levels through limiting the support individuals feel they have. This identifies multiple sources of violence that may act on an individual: both domestic violence and structural violence from institutions.

Within Asian-American communities in the US, there exists an amalgamation of cultures and traditions informing gender roles and expectations. For example, within Lee and Choi’s (2012:2) study of American-Korean women in the US, they identify the expectation of “keeping family issues private”. This macrosystem level rhetoric, which is also identified within the section on gender stereotypes in India, is a way



in which survivors' self-silence acts of violence through under-reporting and reinforcing the narrative of domestic violence are a private issue (ibid). As the SEM levels are interconnected, the attitude of domestic violence as a private issue impacts how violence is internalised and the pathways of support that are sought.

Another group in the United States who face different gender stereotypes and experiences of violence are Latinx communities. In Rivera's (1994) study of domestic violence within Latinx communities, they identify particular logic for seeking support. Women in the study would not seek support from the police as the police are

viewed as outside forces and the ties to their community mean that seeking support from police is understood to be a form of betrayal (ibid). This presents logic to why different pathways of support are used based on aspects of identity and pressures from community.



Gender Stereotypes in India



When exploring gender stereotypes in India, much like any other country, there needs to be an awareness of geographical and demographic variation of intersectional experience of patriarchal norms (UNHRC, 2014). For example, the 29 states of India all contain unique social customs, languages and beliefs. Therefore, the research of gender stereotypes in India is not to diminish the diversity of the country but will instead explore gender norms and stereotypes in relation to caste, religion, and socio-economic status. This review includes cases of how marginalised groups experience gender stereotypes and violence alongside overviews of culture to illustrate the many ways that gender norms and stereotypes contribute to domestic violence.



Although gender stereotypes are contextually grounded and socially constructed, cultural factors can influence and are influenced by gender stereotypes. For example, the social stratification of caste, predominantly prevalent in South Asia, is one way in which gender is experienced through intersectionality. The way in which caste is understood varies between academics throughout the decades as the nature of caste is constantly shifting in response to society (Corbridge et al, 2013; Harriss, 2012). Corbridge et al (2013) posit that the best way to understand caste, is through understanding the concept of 'jati' or 'varna'. Varnas are the "four subdivisions of the traditional Hindu Hierarchy", comprising the highest Brahmins (traditionally priests), then the Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Sudras (ibid:239). This is a basic understanding of the four hierarchies informing the caste system, with the most marginalised group as the 'out-castes' or Dalits. Arya (2020) argues that there are multiple forms of patriarchy that emerge from the caste system within South Asia as a result of the intersections of caste and gender. The discriminatory emasculation that 'lower' caste men may experience from the 'upper' caste has been understood as a catalyst for GBV towards 'lower' caste women (ibid; Geetha, 2009) Caste informs the experiences of gender stereotypes and may further influence how violence is understood and internalised by survivors, through locally established attitudes and



perceptions.

Along with caste, experiences of women are also determined through a culture of silence, whereby internalisations of violence are minimised and rendered private at the cost of maintaining a public reputation. This culture of silence is fundamentally reinforcing the dichotomy of honour and shame ideology, where the binary of reputation furthers the oppressive and neglectful practises of silence and harm. This is particularly pertinent as women within South Asian context are seen to be responsible for maintaining “a family’s honour”, which creates greater pressures to conform to gender stereotypes and greater barriers in reporting acts of violence (Dutt, 2018:217). Adding further complexity to social pressures for women, the phenomenon of purdah (understood as female seclusion) exerts the silencing of female interests and limits the physical freedoms women have within public spaces and institutions, especially within northern regions of India, such as Rajasthan (Kruks-Wisner, 2018). Traditions of social exclusion and silencing are two ways in which women are socialised into reproducing the cycle of violence and victimisation (UNHCR, 2014). Along with the prevalent son preference, whereby sons are favoured at the cost of daughters (Dutt, 2018), these concepts reinforce the internalisation of female subordination and may perpetuate the self-silencing of survivors. This is reinforced by

Krishnakumar and Verma (2021:9) who state that “domestic violence in India is seen as a private affair and many people think twice before intervening”. Literature concerning domestic violence in India emphasised the difference between intervening and interfering, whereby police responding to an instance of domestic violence may be seen as interfering with private matters rather than intervening in violence (Dutt, 2018). It is this important cultural distinction that illustrates how domestic violence is internalised by both perpetrator and survivor as a private matter, therefore reducing the capability for the survivor to seek support. This reinforces the patterns of survivors not seeking support unless they experience extreme forms of domestic violence (Ahmad, Khan and Mozumdar, 2019; Dalal and Lindqvist, 2012).

A way in which domestic violence may be stigmatised in India is through the role of legal systems silencing forms of violence through laws on marital rape or the (non)prosecution of perpetrators. For example, national law on marital rape is different in the three countries chosen: from explicitly illegal in Zimbabwe, to illegal in the United States and legal in India, showing differences in the perceived power a wife possesses and the relative power of a husband over her (Jackson, 2015). This impacts normative understandings of consent whereby the law in India dictates that a wife consents to her husband at marriage to engage in sexual relations,

regardless of whether the wife consents to the acts themselves. This may shape perceptions and understandings of GBV as marital rape may be normatively accepted by virtue of being enshrined in law, which would shape internalisation of this form of violence by the survivor, to the extent it may not be recognised as violence (ibid). This research refrains from widespread use of the term violence to describe a violent incident due to preconceived normative expectations of what constitutes violence. As the example of marital rape illustrates, violence can be subjective to the survivor. Therefore, to adequately address experiences of GBV, near synonymous language is used, such as punish or harm, when referring to violent acts. For example, IPV has been recognised in India as a criminal offence since 1983 and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) came into effect in 2006 (Ahmad, Khan and Mozumdar, 2019). These

legal acknowledgments protect women under the law from GBV and domestic violence yet there have been low rates of decline of violence since their implementation (ibid). A disjuncture between protection in law and protection in practice is an important point identified in this context.

Along with recognising the role that family reputation plays in India in furthering harmful gender roles, traditional patterns of patrilocal household formation (which dictates that a wife lives with her husband and his family) is another way in which systems of oppression are regulated (Tonsing and Tonsing, 2019). This is enforced by members of the husband's family reinforcing traditional patriarchal structures so that the elder males of the family maintain power over the female members of the family (Kandiyoti, 1988). In this tradition, the newly wed wife has the least degree of authority





in the family (Krishnakumar and Verma, 2021); maintained through the promise of power later in life when the wife becomes a mother-in-law to a younger wife and can exert power over her (Dutt, 2018). This practice entrenches gender-based dependencies which socialises women into submissive and passive gender roles, further reinforcing gender stereotypes. Dalal and Lindqvist (2012:272) illustrate the dependencies that women experience in India:

“As a girl, she depends on her father, as a wife, she depends on her husband, and as a widow she depends on her sons or other male relatives”.

This presents how gender stereotypes are formed or reinforced through traditional power imbalances, maintaining the subordination of women through relationships of dependency. Further to this, cultural pressures in India deter divorce (Amad, Kham and Mozumdar, 2019), therefore disincentivizing survivors from leaving abusive or harmful relationships. This is especially pertinent when a “cultural approval of wife-beating [...] and the acceptance of wife-abuse as ‘legitimate’” exists in communities across India (Ahmad et al, 2016:3113).

As the earlier OECD (2019) statistics has shown, 22.1 percent of women believe it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife for specific mundane reasons, therefore showing the degree of internalisation of women

who normalise violence. Along with the aforementioned cultures of silence, the act of validating patriarchal gender stereotypes is understood by Dutt (2018:216) through self-silencing mechanisms that “minimize, trivialize and ultimately invalidate the male violence experienced by them”.

Where cultures of self-silencing and patrilineal descent are ways in which gender norms are cultivated, gender stereotypes are also formed through the dominant behaviour of husbands over wives. Inferred through the power imbalance of isolating a wife from her family at marriage, the “control of wives by their husbands is a salient social custom” across South Asia (Dalal and Lindqvist, 2012:265). This ‘control’ refers to promoting patriarchal ideology whereby men assume dominant gender roles in opposition to women assuming relative subordination. This concept is not unique to India, or even South Asia as the other case studies will digress, but the specific ways that gender stereotypes manifest are contextually grounded in India.



Gender Stereotypes in Zimbabwe





Gender stereotypes in Zimbabwe, as in many other societies, are grounded on the premise that women are considered to inhabit a lower status than that of men (Hindin, 2003). This emerges and is maintained through patriarchal rights and customs. Literature shows that the adherence to these patriarchal norms vary with both age and geographical location. Attitudes toward gender stereotypes and domestic violence vary in rural and urban regions, whereby rural and remote areas may have a higher acceptance of 'wife-beating'. In a study by Lason et al (2020) they have found that women who live in rural areas are more likely to experience domestic violence compared to women who live in urban areas. The prevalence of patriarchal gender stereotypes and domestic violence in rural areas may contribute to a normalisation of violence, whereby violence may be perceived as a legitimate method to settle disputes (Hindin, 2003). As a trend that exists beyond Zimbabwe, gender stereotypes may be more strongly observed in rural areas as opportunities to challenge patriarchal beliefs are fewer. Therefore, rurality may affect patriarchal gender stereotypes and how violence is experienced.

A gender stereotype that is seen in Zimbabwe and beyond, is the expectation of gendered work. In a heteronormative household, this often manifests as the husband being the 'breadwinner' whilst the wife assumes the domestic work of maintaining the household and



Credit: Allen Meki

caring for the family. Even in rural or agricultural contexts, a division may still exist of the type of work expected from men and women. Although these gender stereotypes are being constantly challenged, they are reinforced through tradition that opposes women's involvement in paid labour (Oxfam, 2019). In a study of women's advancement in leadership positions in education, a key reason for not pursuing positions of leadership was cited as the responsibility to the family (Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009). Literature has shown the extent of this tradition varies across geography and generationally, with greater collective and institutional pushes to challenge patriarchal gender stereotypes in urban areas and among younger generations.

One gender stereotype that emerged from the literature is that of women being socialised to be "sexually passive, reliant on men for protection [...] and even to be disciplined by their partners when they fail to behave according to their roles" (Shamu, Shamu, and Machisa, 2019:60). This implies a stark power imbalance that is upheld through a "long held tradition of male dominance" (Hindin,



2003:501). This tradition is evident through patrilineal descent, land and asset ownership, and fewer opportunities to educate girls and women (Kambarami, 2006). These traditions of male dominance are ways in which “toxic hyper masculinities” are expressed to normalise power imbalances and attitudes of GBV (Shamu, Shamu and Machisa, 2019:60). This is recognised regionally in Shona culture in Zimbabwe along with the expectation to be an “obedient” wife (Kambarami, 2006:3), reinforcing gender stereotypes of communal feminine attributes.

Rhetoric of subordination and dependency has emerged from the literature of gender stereotypes in Zimbabwe, but how gender stereotypes are experienced depends on intersectional factors of identity. For example, 70% of the world’s HIV positive population is in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Zimbabwe having one of the highest rates of HIV in the world (Henderson, Zerai and Morrow, 2017). Young women experience a disproportionate rate of infection in Zimbabwe, introducing intersectional stigma based on both gender and health. As contracting HIV can be the result of unprotected sex, Rwafa, Shamu and Christofides’s (2019) study explores how the power imbalance of refusing the use of condoms creates certain experiences of violence for women. Henderson, Zerai and Morrow’s (2017) exploration of the relationship between IPV and HIV has identified “hegemonic hypermasculinity” based on

stereotypes of “manhood”. Their framework includes the structural indicators of a society that favours men over women and the use of violence as a legitimate form of control to assert power in a relationship. This account is consistent with other literature, recognising the systematic nature of these stereotypes rather than understanding cases in isolation.

As was also found whilst researching literature in India, similar trends arose regarding domestic violence being a private issue. Hindin (2003) posits that police address domestic violence as a domestic problem, rather than a criminal problem, hence deterring survivors from pursuing legal measures of justice. Despite laws in Zimbabwe explicitly criminalising the marital rape since 2004, this crime is less widely prosecuted when compared to other forms of GBV (Dube, 2013). This identifies how forms of GBV are not responded to equally both in law and in practice. Another way in which a disjuncture exists between law and practice is the prevalence of stigma; evidenced in how the Zimbabwean government made it illegal to expel pregnant girls from school in 2020, yet they are still discriminated against at school (Martin and Ahlenback, 2020). This illustrates a discrepancy between established laws/legislation to protect survivors and seek justice for GBV and the practice of this rhetoric at a grassroot level. If domestic violence is traditionally seen as a private issue, self-silencing mechanisms are socially imposed to reinforce these norms.



Lived Experiences

SHARE YOUR STORY



STOP SILENCE

#MakeConversationComfortable



The key objective of this research is to understand how gender stereotypes influence experiences of domestic violence. Lived experiences i.e. participants' experiences as survivors and advocates, have been shared across India, the United States and Zimbabwe. We have identified common themes that emerged within and across respondents'

accounts, highlighting ways in which gender stereotypes affect individuals and experiences of domestic violence. Figure 8 below indicates the various factors shaping or reinforcing gender stereotypes and affecting patterns of domestic violence as emerged from our discussions with the gender-based violence survivors and advocates in the three countries.

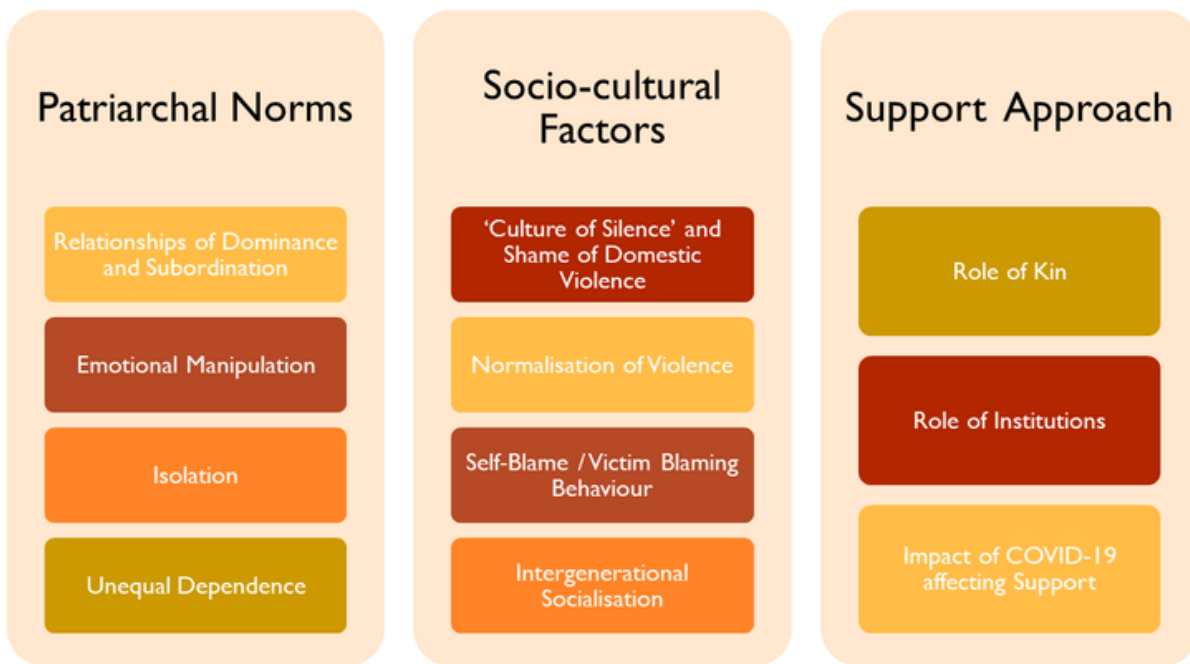


Figure 8: Main factors shaping/reinforcing gender stereotypes and affecting patterns of domestic violence

Patriarchal Norms

This main theme identifies how specific patriarchal gender norms contribute to attitudes and experiences of domestic violence. Patriarchal norms are identified as embodying the gender stereotypes that privilege men over women. This theme addresses the main research

question in a direct way, understanding that socio-cultural factors and pathways of support intersect and reinforce patriarchal gender stereotypes in different ways. There were four aspects of patriarchal norms that emerged from the data: relationships of dominance and subordination, emotional and psychological manipulation, isolation, and unequal dependence.



Relationships of Dominance and Subordination

One key theme identified in the research is the power imbalance between an abuser and a survivor. Often this power imbalance conforms to patriarchal gender stereotypes whereby violence is a tool to exert power over the survivor. Our respondents identified a sense of male entitlement being a contributing factor for why violence was experienced. This was evident through testimonies illustrating how forms of verbal and psychological violence were used to assert dominance over the survivor.

“I was made to feel like I'm not smart. I was made to feel like I didn't know what I was talking about. He always wanted to correct me: ‘let me help you understand. Let me help you understand. You're not saying it right. You're not doing it right.’” - Merredith, United States

Additionally, this relationship of dominance and subordination was also reinforced through pressures of tradition and society as identified within India and Zimbabwe.

“In the Northern States [of India], when a girl is born, she is seen as a curse. Especially when she is the first child of her parents. From the time of her birth till her grave, the mindset in society is that you are a girl and you've got to listen to your father, to your brother, to your husband. When

she's born she is under her father. When she's married, she's under her husband. When she's widowed she's under the guidance and protection of her son.” - Sneha, India

“Women are considered to be weak by society. Women are associated with the lighter work: fetching firewood and fetching water. Whereas men are told to be hunters, farmers and to be owners of everything. Sometimes you hear people in a community saying: ‘be like a man. Men think that you are weak’. Those pressures are really there. ‘Be like a man, even if you're a woman’. You rarely hear someone saying: ‘be like a woman, act like a woman’ but you hear them say: ‘be like a man’. Because men are considered to be stronger than women.” - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

“You have to be under your husband's control. If he says ‘sit down’, you have to sit. If your husband says ‘jump’, you have to jump” - Chipso, Zimbabwe

“Even as a kid you go to primary school, high school and you're treated differently from your brothers. You already assume a certain passive role. You're already told to talk a certain way: be polite, be nice, be sweet, that's not ‘lady-like’. Even [through] the toys that you get and the roles that you are assigned in the home.” - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

Destroying the willpower of the survivor so that the survivor is greatly subordinated to the abuser reinforces



patriarchal gender stereotypes, whereby strong support systems of kin and institutions are needed to support the survivor.

“If [the abuse] is prolonged or the grooming is very good, it breaks the confidence of a person. Once the confidence is broken and if there's no larger family support, that woman is trapped. It's a vicious cycle which takes a lot of strength, courage, and resources to get you out of it” - Elsa Marie, India

“When you're in a domestic violence relationship, your brain is so scrambled, you are so fried, and you are so tired. You don't have any fight left in you. If you are leaving, it takes every ounce of energy you have to get out and all you're doing is thinking about surviving and breathing. You're so tired. He had all the energy in his head to go around all day and I'm on

my knees crying and screaming ‘just be done playing with my head’.” -
Merredith, United States

“Domestic violence mentally disturbs a woman. A woman who lives with domestic violence has no peace of mind. [...] if we keep quiet, if we don't stand for our own rights and if we continue adopting traditional cultures which patriarchally affect us, we'll continue living like slaves. Being a woman is a crime. We live like victims in our lives. There is no peace.” - Chipso, Zimbabwe

Within the case study of India, the power imbalance of gender was additionally expressed as prevalent in society through the restriction of women in education, in public spaces



and general engagement outside the home.

“[My husband] always tried to suppress me. Not to give me an opportunity. I’m talking about an opportunity to study. An opportunity to pursue my higher qualification. He went for [his education] and I had to take care of his parents, my in-laws, and his grandmother. Even when he left me, I was taken to the village to take care of his grandmother, my husband’s grandmother! So for him, that is a marital responsibility of a wife. ‘You are married and you obey what my parents tell you and what I tell you. You will not question my authority’.” - Anshu, India (translation)

Interestingly, certain testimonies during our research have shown how gender stereotypes may appear to be shifting when women are encouraged to participate in work and public spaces outside of the home but inside homes these gender stereotypes are still maintained or even reinforced.

“Females are working much more than their partners. They can be doctors, nurses, professors, they can be engineers but when they come home, they have to perform as housewives. That's the contradiction.” - Sneha, India

“I worked with South Asian survivors of domestic violence. The men who were here really wanted the wives to work, even though maybe in their family and in their tradition, wives didn’t work outside the house. But clearly there was more money to be

made if women worked outside but it was almost like the minute you leave your shoes outside, the roles completely shift. When you are outside, you can be a doctor, you can be a professor, but the minute you came home, all the household chores, the household duties, are yours. And if you didn’t follow it? [...] If you challenged that in some relationships which were not abusive to begin with, it’s okay but those that were abusive, that was a big sort of supposed trigger of direct physical violence. Partly because you don’t have the same social sanctions you can use in the country of origin. It turns much more into physical violence which you may not need in India because there’s other ways to control people.” - Sujata, United States



Sujata Warriar, Chief Strategy Officer, Battered Women's Justice Project. **Credit:** BWJP.

The research has also shown how patriarchal traditions affect women’s behaviour in leadership roles both in India and Zimbabwe:

“It makes you very cautious. So your ability to take risks in life is subdued



because you're not allowed to fully be who you are, explore who you are, and therefore you have limited choices. Your mobility is restricted and your risk-taking ability is also curtailed. And then later when you become a leader, suddenly they expect you to be risk-taking and you're not going to be able to do that." - Elsa Marie, India

"When [women are] the ones who earn money, they have to constantly shrink themselves. It's like you're having a mental battle everyday. You have to watch how you talk so that you don't sound like a chief executive officer to your husband." - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

Emotional and Psychological Manipulation

Emotional and psychological manipulation has been a recurring

theme throughout the research, identifying the broad spectrum of how violence can emerge. Financial abuse that results in emotional violence is also included in this theme. This concept emerged from respondents from the United States and India, highlighting patriarchal gender stereotypes of financial dependence.

"He went to my bank account and he shuffled money, made bigger withdrawals and did things. To me, it was a violation of trust. I felt very violated. His response and his reaction was 'well you could switch it all back, you can change it all back, I was doing us a favour, this is for our family'." - Merredith, United States

"He exhausted all her money in the bank - it's also a thing that husbands don't want their wives to earn because then they're financially dependent on them. And [he] won't give her money and wants her to





**account for every single transaction.” -
Elsa Marie, India**

Furthermore, undocumented migrant women are particularly vulnerable to intimate partner violence and emotional manipulation. This is because their abusers often use their undocumented partner's immigration status as a means of control.

“I knew I had to get out of the house. I ran without anything but the clothes on my back to a friend's house, where I knew I would be safe for the night. My husband had hit me before, but this time it was more violent, and I was afraid for my life. [...] I had to go back home and get my 5-year-old daughter. [...] Since neither my husband nor I had proper documentation, if I had asked for a police escort to accompany me to my home, my husband would immediately have been arrested and then deported, and I would follow shortly [...] and my daughter would be handed over to an agency of social services. I cannot tell you that the abuse did not continue, but [...] I learned it is better to put up with it than to risk being deported.”, Undocumented migrant woman, United States (Schwendinger, 2018)

Another form of emotional and psychological manipulation is the restriction of freedoms as a mechanism for an abuser to control a survivor's behaviour. This can manifest as a form of emotional blackmail or a belittling of opinions in order to socialise the survivor into

‘giving in’ to the abuser. As the research has shown, this results in the survivor feeling like they have no autonomy to leave the relationship. This manipulation can take the form of gaslighting, whereby an abuser makes a survivor doubt themselves, to break their confidence. Gaslighting is a type of psychological abuse aimed at making victims seem or feel “crazy,” creating a “surreal” interpersonal environment (Sweet, 2019:851).

“About emotional violence, there's blackmailing of all kinds like: ‘we won't let you go and see your parents’. There's financial deprivation. There's the limiting of your choices: who you can see, who you can't see etc. What you can wear, what you can eat. Basically you have no power and often that can manifest itself in many ways.” - Elsa Marie, India

“I'll take a picture of my Ex eating an orange and I'll say ‘here's a picture of you eating an orange’ and he'll say ‘you're wrong, that's an apple.’ I'll say: ‘look, it's an orange. Clearly you're eating an orange’ and he'll say ‘I don't know what you're talking about. If you don't see the apple in this picture then there's something wrong with you’. Then you start to cry and then you get frustrated and then you feel like your brain is spinning” - Meredith, United States

As other respondents have highlighted, the manipulation of

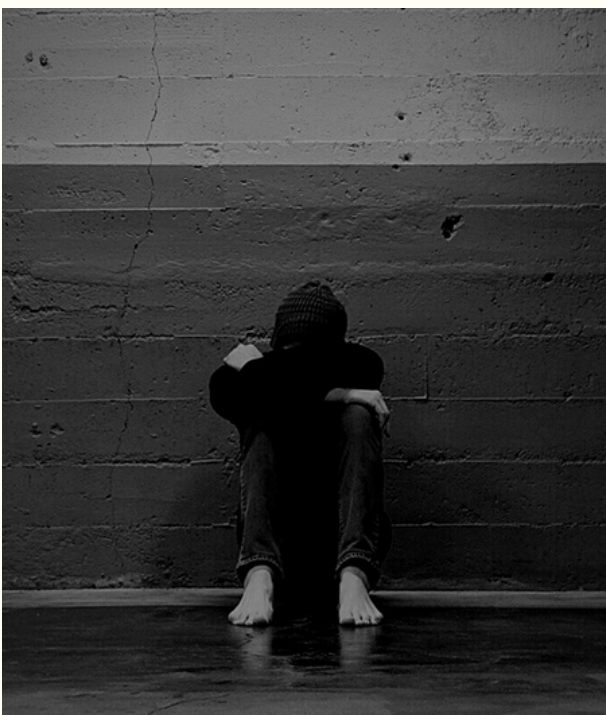
gendered expectations are used to restrict the power of a survivor.

“In abusive relationships, this is exactly what's used to control: ‘You are not a good woman. You’re not a good daughter or you’re not a good mother’ - All the things that are used to shame women into being a certain way” - Sujata, India

Gaslighting can reinforce patriarchal gender stereotypes. When someone does not meet these harmful expectations, then it may be a cause for violence in an abusive relationship.

Isolation

During the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation became a mechanism of which to increase the severity and frequency of domestic violence, as seen by UN Women (2021a). This reality has been strongly emphasised



by our research across all three countries, identifying how gender stereotypes have been strengthened and all forms of violence exacerbated.

“Her husband kept her captive for the entire time of COVID-19. Even though her parents lived down the road, he wouldn't let her go and meet them. Finally she had to escape from the house by breaking out of her bathroom window.” - Elsa Marie, India

“Within the household, the survivor sometimes has the capacity to go out and do things. There are breaks in violence. There is no break during COVID-19, it's relentless.” - Sujata, United States

“During COVID-19 there was isolation, lack of support, individuals didn't have their usual support systems whatever that looked like. They were cut off from their usual support. I think social isolation was like a tool for perpetrators” - Arlene, United States

Whilst isolation has been conceptualised as a ‘tool’ used by perpetrators through the research, it has also emerged as an outcome while pursuing support after experiencing domestic violence. Within societies which promote a ‘culture of silence’, seeking recourse from domestic violence could be a way in which a survivor is isolated from their kin, as described below in the Zimbabwean context:

“I spoke of an example of my friend who was assaulted by her husband.



Both her family and the groom’s family were calling and insisting that ‘you need to drop the charges, you need to get back with your husband’ and all that. So [she experienced] severe isolation and sometimes that isolation becomes economic because now you’re no longer living with your husband and you want to end the marriage. You want to go back to your family. Will your family give you that support? Will they give you that accommodation and acceptance? They will tell you ‘but we told you not to get your husband arrested’ so you’ll be severely isolated.” - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe



Tinotenda Ratidzo Chihera,
Women Rights Lawyer
Credit: Tinotenda Ratidzo Chihera

As domestic abuse encompasses more than just intimate partner violence, the impact of isolation on children was also considered in this research. Data from UNICEF (2021) highlights how “confinement measures are likely to result in increased risk for children”, including witnessing intimate partner violence and experiencing domestic violence. Identifying and preventing harm that children may face at home becomes difficult when there is less

opportunity for a bystander to intervene.

“And when children weren’t in school during COVID-19, teachers weren’t available to [recognise the signs of] domestic abuse and child abuse. There was one less set of eyes. That really made a huge difference too.” - Meredith, United States

Unequal Dependence

One way in which survivors can be dependent on their abusers is financially, especially with reduced female labour participation outside of the household.

“Women might be staying in abusive relationships longer and coming back more frequently just because of financial reasons” - Meredith, United States

When there is not a vast dependence on the abuser, then it is a smaller cost for the survivor to leave an abusive relationship, although it is still a complicated decision to make. Testimonies illustrate how gender stereotypes dictate that male partners manage the finances in a relationship as a way to have power over a woman. The lack of equal partnership and financial dependence was identified in India and the United States as reasons of why survivors may endure abusive relationships:

“Unequal partnership: everything



goes into a joint account and that's all managed by the man even though she may be a brilliant mathematician. So it's all those gender stereotypes that play out in these different ways.”
- Sujata, United States

In patrilocal societies, like India, a wife would traditionally live with her husband's family and as such would experience social expectations that restrict their opportunity and ability to leave the abusive relationship.

“As long as she's financially dependent on someone else, she becomes weak and she is not able to make her own decisions. With regards to all the cases of domestic violence, women are not able to break through the stereotype behaviour and stereotype attitudes because, ultimately, she has to depend on her husband for her own maintenance.” - Sneha, India

“In many families you can't go back to your father's house and if you don't earn enough to take care of yourself or your children, you don't really have any options.” - Elsa Marie, India

“I had absolutely no way to look after myself. Even my own personal needs had to be taken care of and I had to literally beg for everything from my parents. So I had no existence. I had absolutely no place in [my husband's] house.” - Anshu, India (translation)

Unequal dependence is a way in which gender stereotypes manifest between partners in a relationship. If you don't have the support of your

family and you are dependent on your partner, it becomes difficult to accumulate the resources to leave an abusive relationship. If the dependencies are challenged through the survivor gaining independence and no longer relying on an abusive partner, then independence increases the chance of a survivor leaving an abusive relationship.

“If you have money, education and knowledge, if you're empowered, then it's different to stand up for yourself.” - Jean, United States

“She doesn't have to compromise for [tolerating abuse], for all those rules because she can get a well paying job and fund herself. But a lot of people may not have an education, they may not have a supportive family or they may not have the confidence at that point in time to take that stand” - Elsa Marie, India

Socio-Cultural Factors

Cultural factors exist at the scale of the macrosystem in accordance with the Socio-ecological Model, and as such, are used to identify how broad normative notions permeate down levels to affect the individual. The four socio-cultural factors that emerged from research are: 'Culture of Silence' and Shame of Domestic Violence, Normalisation of Violence, Self-Blame, and Intergenerational Socialisation. These four factors

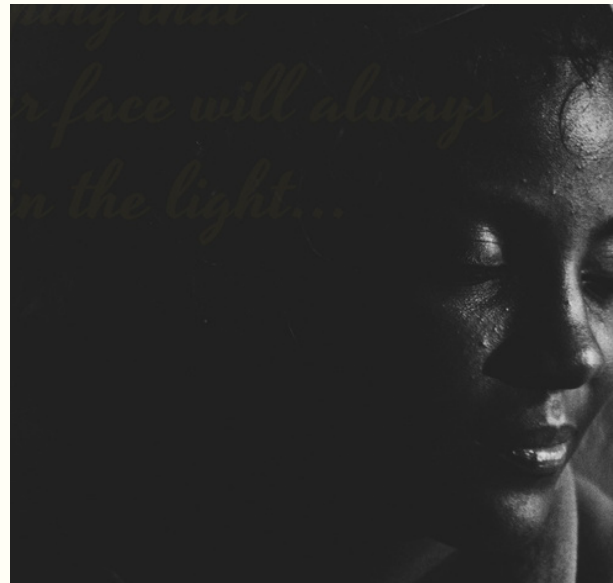


identify how cultures in society or within families and communities at the level of the Exosystem and Macrosystem could be seen to promote attitudes and experiences of violence.

'Culture of Silence' and Shame of Domestic Violence

A 'culture of silence' and the shame of domestic violence emerges from the concept of domestic violence as a private and personal phenomenon. As such, communities and cultures may hold the belief that maintaining the perception and (false) image of a "healthy" relationship or household is more important than addressing instances of violence, due to the stigma of domestic violence. From our research, strong understandings of domestic violence being treated as a private matter emerged from accounts of India, Zimbabwe and the United States. Many of the participants often acknowledged personal moral disagreement with the sentiment but acknowledged that it was a prevalent belief within cultures and communities, as the testimonies below illustrate.

"I had a conversation with somebody who said 'I didn't realise but we didn't go to church on Sundays if my mom had a fat lip or a black eye' but she never made the connection then that's why they didn't go to church. She was so excited that they didn't have to go to church on Sunday but then, much later as an adult, she



realised they didn't go to church because her mom's black eye would be exposed or her fat lip would be exposed" - Merredith, United States

"Somebody will come and say 'Sister, I was beaten by my husband' and her face is swollen and she's bruised and everything. Then I would say 'have you tried to resolve this with your family members?' Because, here in Zimbabwe, if we are married, before we consult anybody else we consult our relatives. Be it my relatives or be it my husband's relatives. So most of the responses are: 'ah! I didn't tell them. I told them last time and they said this one happens, don't expose the family by telling other people. Even if you have been beaten, don't scream because people hear the noise and they will come and they will expose our family'". - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

These quotes illustrate how the fear of publicly acknowledging acts of domestic violence reduces their ability to seek any type of support. As implied within the second quote



from a participant from Zimbabwe, the stigma attached to domestic violence and the 'cultural silence' of keeping it hidden, prevents recognising the full extent of prevalence. Ideas on stigma also emerged from Indian respondents as a broad phenomena that don't only affect the survivor but also the wider kin:

"Most of the girls find themselves in very vulnerable situations where they are simply thrown [out] before marriage. Parents see them as a burden and after the marriage, particularly when the marriage breaks, she neither belongs to in-laws nor to her parents. I don't like to go back and stay with my parents because the whole village will be asking about me. Relatives will be asking [about me]. So I have taken up a house in Delhi for the last 5-years and I am managing life all by myself" - Anshu, India (translation)

Stigma affecting extended family could relate to the intergenerational organisation of households in India, which observes strict patrilocal expectations in many states. The degree of stigma varied in India and Zimbabwe based on the rurality of the household, acknowledging stricter social sanctions in rural areas of the country compared to urban areas.

"The more traditional you are, it's harder for women to resist because the consequences are so much greater. If you have nothing else outside [the community], the more

orthodox and traditional the community is, it's that much harder to challenge that. I don't think women accept it but I also see it as: 'what else do you want me to do? Where am I supposed to go?'" - Sujata, India

"I should say most women from the village, from the periphery, have been [contented] with it. It's only now that when somebody has been educated, when somebody goes to school, they are empowered and they realise these things. That's when people start to challenge [domestic violence]. In most cases, the educated women are the ones in towns not in the village. In the village the communal land belongs to the men but when [women are] in towns where they're employed, [women] can buy a house in town, they can buy a car, they can even buy cows that are kept in the village. And in most cases when one is married, they're not yours, they're for the family of your husband." - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

This illustrates how socio-cultural factors may influence the extent of which patriarchal gender stereotypes are experienced. One aspect of socio-cultural factors is the communities in which survivors belong. Despite notions of silence within some communities, this was not absolute within all the research. As other participants stated, if individuals choose their communities and the values of their peers, then they can choose to engage within a culture whereby domestic violence is not tolerated.

“I’ve connected myself with communities that have a zero tolerance to violence against women. That’s not the same for everybody and in some particular cultures that is why people don’t seek help. It would be deemed shameful and there’s what we know to be true, in some communities, there’s loyalty to the perpetrator and to the victim so then that gets difficult.” - Arlene, United States



Arlene Vassell, Vice President for Programs, Prevention and Social Change, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.
Credit: Arelene Vassell

As the above quote explains, survivors may have power to navigate communities in order to establish pathways of support yet the social pressures exerted from the macrosystem may hinder their ability to seek support. Participants from India and Zimbabwe spoke of the pressures from kin to navigate the terms of their relationship with their abuser to make the relationship more tolerable without publicly alerting communities about abuse:

“One of her friends even told her: ‘Why don’t you reach an agreement with your husband? Don’t leave the

marriage’. So leaving the marriage [...] it’s a stain on his reputation” - Elsa Marie, India

“I remember when my friend experienced domestic violence and she was someone very close to me and she was very educated. Her own family and her husband’s family were calling her and telling her to withdraw the matter. And what disappointed me was even her own family was doing that. Her own mother, her own father and her sisters. Such a family pressure.” - Tintenda, Zimbabwe

Whilst making bargains with patriarchal constraints may seem like a tool to gain freedoms or alleviate violence, it may not be possible for all survivors - especially those experiencing emotional abuse or within a relationship governed by strict hostile gender stereotypes.

Ultimately, the research within all three countries has identified how shame and honour are normatively related to domestic violence but morally should not be. Uncoupling these two concepts would be the beginning of making acts of domestic violence seen in society rather than staying invisible.

“It’s an invisible violence because the survivor doesn’t feel confident enough in reporting it or talking about it and people around them pretend like it’s not their business so



they don't intervene.” - Elsa Marie, India

This section highlights how domestic violence is internalised as a private matter, individualised as the breakdown of a relationship. It is this individualisation of domestic violence that often puts onus on the survivor rather than acknowledging the responsibility of wider society and communities to dispel domestic violence. A ‘culture of silence’ of domestic violence has been also identified within institutions and systems alongside communities, illustrating the structural perpetuation of this violence. Our research participants believe that domestic violence is perpetrated through social norms at the level of society.

“You have to break gender stereotypes and that begins in our systems, in our various systems and our institutions: in our education system, Faith communities, the health system. All of these systems that families interact with; That children, that young people interact with. We have to break these unhealthy gender norms in order for individuals to better understand, or even equip individuals to deal with conflict [...] we need to break up these gender boxes that currently exist.” - Arlene, United States

“We don't lack policies, we don't lack laws, but we lack the will to change our attitudes. So that takes time for every country, for

every society. Just by bringing in laws, the rape cases don't come to an end.” - Sneha, India

Societal pressures to tolerate an abusive relationship due to fear, stigma or emotional manipulation are evident in all three countries, illustrating the existing similarities on how survivors experience domestic violence. There is a dire need to engage systems and institutions within societies in order to holistically address patriarchal gender stereotypes and domestic violence.

Normalisation of Violence

When violence is normalised, it supports a culture of silence as the survivor may not be able to identify or resist acts of violence. Since abuse can manifest in many different ways from emotional, sexual, psychological, financial and physical, it may be difficult to be identified in a relationship and seek support as a result. Furthermore, if patriarchal ideology is normalised, then acts of violence may be accepted within a relationship, especially if there is not adequate support for the survivor to challenge the acts of violence.

“I didn't know I was in an abusive relationship until somebody told me. It happens like a slow leak in a tire or a balloon. You don't know it's happening because it's so gradual.” - Merredith, United States



“I didn’t know it was an issue [...] It was only after I started my organisation that works on sexual and gender-based violence. In sharing all these stories and learning from others, I started recognising that what I had experienced was something like this.” - Elsa Marie, India

“Working particularly with homeless women and all that stereotyping, the irrationality, how women actually saw themselves in relation to men, particularly inner-city women. That was really different. It was like they thought it was right to be abused. They thought they saw the male as the powerful figure and so it was right what they were saying. It was right to be called by a particular name or not have a name at all.” - Jean, United States

Participants identified that it should be the responsibility of institutions to educate people about domestic violence to help identify violent acts.

This was a prevalent theme within respondents’ testimonies, expressing the need to be able to identify patriarchal gender stereotypes and domestic violence from a young age to both prevent it from happening and actively respond to it when it is actually happening.

“I wish I would have learnt what a healthy relationship looked like in middle school and high school. I wish there was a class on health or living. I wish the conversation introduced you to what healthy conflict looked like and what healthy resolution looked like. Nobody says it has to be easy and cohesive all the time.” - Meredith, United States

“I think the schools are a good starting point, catching the children young. As long as schools are perpetuating the same gender stereotypes we’re trying to fight, we’re not going anywhere. Schools, churches, and families are good starting points. Then we can move to

policy, laws, and affirmative action for women.” - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

“The [National Family Health Survey] statistic shows that 83 percent agree that men can beat their wives, right? So maybe it was happening in their families earlier as well and they think it's acceptable and normal so they don't know any better. They need education and we don't have that in our schools or colleges to help you identify the spectrum of violence.” - Elsa Marie, India



Elsa Marie D'Silva, Executive Director, Red Dot Foundation.
Credit: Elsa Marie D'Silva

Along with identifying the role of institutions and systems in educating young people to identify how and why violence manifests, the normalisation of violence from the macrosystem filters down to affect people at more individual levels. At the level of the exosystem, the expectation of violence and patriarchal stereotypes may be entrenched so that challenging this may result in the abuser being ostracised from their community. When diverging from normative expectations and associations of gender stereotypes, social pressures

may reinforce acts or beliefs of patriarchal gender stereotypes, as explained through relevant testimonies:

“When you work with [perpetrators of domestic violence]: “yeah, you know, I grew up like that, what's the point of me changing? Everybody in my community is going to make fun of me because I'm this wimp. That I let my wife dictate to me what needs to happen”. So those are the ways in which society also kind of clamps down on them” - Sujata, United States

“Because you're supposed to be masculine, you're supposed to be tough so anything that your partner may say that's not in alignment or in agreement with you, you don't know how to navigate that space without being angry because you haven't been given the message that you're a nurturer. ‘It's ok not to agree’ and ‘how to handle conflict’ - those messages are not in spaces where there's strict gender norms. So people don't know how to be themselves.” - Arlene, United States

These participants from the United States acknowledge individual pressures of the socialisation of abuse. Within the level of the microsystem, if violence experienced within the home is not condemned, it could be socialised into being the norm. Perceptions and attitudes of patriarchal gender stereotypes and domestic violence then play a crucial role in the perpetuation of violence. If patriarchal gender stereotypes are



challenged or subverted, that may also be a cause for exerting violence, as was identified within an Indian context. As previous literature shows, this is the case where other intersecting factors are at play within the microsystem such as social or cultural shocks.

“So the gender roles are defined in a certain way that, yes it’s the husband’s job to earn money, it’s the wife’s job to maintain the household. Clearly the minute you shift one of those it’s usually cause for dissension. That could be used by somebody who is very traditional in their thinking to say: ‘well, you’ve just transgressed’.” - Sujata, India

“I believe that men, especially men in India, are not used to strong independent women who have an opinion and makes them feel insecure and to cover up their insecurity they resort to these kinds of tactics.” - Elsa Marie, India

The above testimonies illustrate how strict patriarchal gender stereotypes can cause violence when compounded with socio-cultural factors. It is the combination of these stereotypes and other external pressures that amalgamate and cause violence. This is reinforced through the role of certain situational factors such as alcoholism. The reason why violent behaviour is maintained can be related with the power the abuser feels and the normative expectation of exerting that power over their partner.

[Men] feel: ‘yes, this person is listening to me and they’re obeying my every instinct because I’m the head of the household’. ” - Sujata, India

“He wants to prove that ‘I am a man’ and that leads to physical abuse.” - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

Self Blame / Victim Blaming Behaviour

When violence is associated with ideas of pride and shame, then the rhetoric often blames the survivor into believing that occurrences of domestic violence are their fault. This form of emotional manipulation illustrates how wider cultures, institutions and communities may engage with rhetoric of ‘victim-blaming’, which further traumatises the survivor even though the survivor herself is not responsible for causing domestic violence. Our research respondents have described the experience of support services reinforcing victim-blaming rhetoric, as well as how kin and society also promote a rhetoric of victim blaming in the United States, Zimbabwe and India, illustrating the widespread nature of this patriarchal stereotype.

“One of our marriage counsellors told me that I had waited a long time to get married and that maybe I needed to let some of my barriers down and allow my abusive partner, my fiance/husband, to take part in our lives. That was the first sign of abuse.



The second sign of abuse was when a therapist said: 'You know Meredith, you've been single for 36 years. You're not just used to having somebody help facilitate how your life could be' and I thought 'I guess this is how it works' [...] I felt violated when he got into my bank account but this therapist implied that maybe I needed to let go of some of the reigns and that was okay to trust somebody"
- Meredith, United States

"When you look at the instances of rape and where you are out drinking, you were partying, and you wore a low dress so [society perceives] that you invited it on yourself. According to them, the clothing puts the blame on the victim rather than on the perpetrator" - Jean, United States

"In most cases in Zimbabwe, women are considered to incite domestic violence because they're weak, their temperaments and some of them have been accused of prostitution. If the husband wanted revenge in most cases women were blamed for the increase of gender-based violence." - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

"The family also blames [the survivor]. Society puts blame on [the survivor] and even her own family blames the girl. The blame is on the victim. And in most domestic violence cases, I'm talking now from an advocate perspective, one has already been demoralised by her own parents, in-laws, her own friend circle." - Sneha, India

As indicated in the above testimonies,



there are certain support pathways which reinforce abuse and violence. The gaslighting and harm that support services - both from family and institutional agencies or actors - cause is a form of emotional abuse that reinforces patriarchal stereotypes of dependencies and subordination. The phenomenon of victim-blaming becomes a tool for the abuser to have power over the survivor:

“Her therapist told her: ‘there's nothing wrong with your husband. I don't know why you're making an issue’. And apparently the husband has paid off the therapist” - Elsa Marie, India

Along with feeling blamed for the violence when seeking support, this mechanism is used by an abuser as a form of emotional blackmail. As already explained in greater depth within the emotional and psychological manipulation section, this tactic of gaslighting is one way in which to instigate and reinforce power imbalances in an abusive relationship.

“I have experienced emotional blackmail and manipulation. They make you believe that you are at fault when you're not at fault. Then you start doubting yourself and you become submissive because you want to please but it's not your fault. [...] Women also start doubting themselves: whether they can earn, whether they can make money, whether they can

support their child.” - Elsa Marie, India

The above testimonies importantly recognise the internalisation that survivors are not to blame for domestic violence. They also illustrate how a culture of blaming survivors may affect the survivor at an individual level. Often tactics of emotional manipulation cause survivors to lose power and confidence. This form of emotional manipulation also reinforces unequal dependencies in a relationship, whereby the survivor is socialised into thinking they are dependent on their abuser. If the domestic violence victims have the necessary support and confidence, then they may not internalise the blame.

Intergenerational Socialisation

This factor identifies how gender stereotypes and attitudes of domestic violence are formed by socialisation throughout generations. As the family unit is an institution by which moral values and beliefs are formed from childhood, it is important to analyse the nature by which gender stereotypes are maintained. As a child gets older and more educated, they have the ability to challenge ideas and beliefs held by their family yet this may not always be the case. This was identified by participants in India, emphasising the comfort of traditional social behaviour as a motivating factor for maintaining



patriarchal gender stereotypes.

“If you grew up in certain circumstances where your father, your grandfather, and everybody treated their wives in a certain way, you would think that this is the norm. I think there’s also a certain amount of comfort if you know: ‘this is my role, this is what I’m expected to do, this is what I’ll do, and it’ll get me x, y, z’ then you’re going to adhere to that.” - Sujata, India

“I would recognise what they were picking up. I was recognising behaviours, particularly in young boys that were matching what they saw.” - Jean, United States

Along with experiencing pressure from tradition to maintain systems of beliefs and values, the above testimony illustrates the existential comfort in adhering to gender stereotypes. However, within a context of stigma of domestic violence and a normalisation of violence, there may have been generational shifts that change values and beliefs. This includes whether the abuser had a working mother or whether they grew up in a household where a woman had autonomy outside of the household.

“[Perpetrators of domestic violence] may not have had working mothers so they have not seen women financially independent outside of the home and making decisions. So they’ve always seen the father being the main head of the household, making the major decisions, setting

the tone for the rest to follow. [...] I believe that if you've had a working mother then maybe your whole view of women is different.” - Elsa Marie, India

Respondents have specifically pointed out that a domestic violence survivor does not experience violence just because they were used to violence from their childhood.

“In my conversations about domestic violence, nobody has ever said ‘I ended up in a domestic violence relationship because my dad was violent to my mum’. Nobody has ever said ‘my dad beat me up so I'm used to getting beaten up so it's ok that my partner beats me up...’. Nobody's ever said that to me and I've talked to a lot of people. That's never been a common theme.” - Merredith, United States

Additionally, some of our research respondents identified a generational gap on how domestic violence is responded to, with data acknowledging changing attitudes towards responding to domestic violence.

“I think there are generational gaps because if you see those who are 50 and above, they would say that you should not report these cases. But the other generations, they [won't take it]. ‘If the marriage doesn't work, let it end here. I'm a human being’ and many people are now talking about their human rights. They are now aware of their rights and their entitlements in a family. They should



not be treated like an object. They should be treated like humans.” - Annatollia, Zimbabwe



Sr. Annatollia Muzata, Presentation Sister, GBV Advocate and IPA Justice Contact **Credit:** Sr. Annatollia Muzata

Similarly to how domestic violence could be perpetuated throughout generations, children can be socialised into having certain attitudes through the socialisation of their family. Respondents from India and Zimbabwe explained how children are witnessing and experiencing patriarchal gender stereotypes through observation and mimicry.

“Most of the time the socialisation takes place at home.[...] The boys are supposed to come home, throw the bags, their shoes in one place, socks in another place and the mother will go and pick it up. But as you know, then mother will bring over the plate for them and she'll serve food and then after that, the boys are not expected to pick up the plate and wash it. When the girl comes home from school, she's supposed to cook for everybody. She will serve everyone. She will wash utensils of the entire family and then she's the one who's

supposed to eat last with the mother because she's seeing the mother eating last so the girls also started eating last: 'let us feed everybody else but first the male members, the father or brothers'. So I think we've got to begin from there. Break those stereotypes.” - Sneha, India

“You can see when a young boy is hitting a girl and saying 'I'm a man. I'm a man. What can you do to me because I'm a man?' I often hear young boys, even five-year-olds, saying when their father is not in the house: 'I'm the father of this house because I do one-two-three. I'm the father of this house'. So they grow up with it. I feel that there's a need to catch them young at that age and tell them 'you are equal with your sister here. She can do what you are doing and you can do what she's doing' and to swap roles in the house so that we help to demystify what has been the tradition for a long time.” - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

To address the impact of intergenerational beliefs and socialisation, the research participants acknowledged the need to address these perceptions when the child is young in order to break the cycle.

“We talk about support now for survivors but we should start early with children. Breaking down and talking about these negative gender norms and the impact they have because we can't start this at adulthood. We need to start this young” - Arlene, United States

“Train children and let parents, father and mother, exhibit the behaviour that we want to see in the society. It must begin from home. If you want gender stereotypes to change, then the father and the mother, both of them, need to play that role to bring that change. If only the mother is working and the boy doesn't see the father working, he's going to get into that role. So the change begins at home. It begins from the family and institutions and then it will go to a larger society and then at a global level.” - Sneha, India

“We do believe that early intervention strategies really are the key. They also break the cycle of the next generation. [...] I want people to become who they're meant to be and that children grow up in an environment that's empowering and healthy. The cycle of abuse [needs to be] broken.” - Jean, United States



Jean Quinn, Executive Director,
UNANIMA International
credit: Jean Quinn

Support Approach

This factor will explore the role of kin and institutions when domestic violence survivors seek support, as well as the impact of COVID-19 and how this pandemic affects support.

Role of Kin

This first section recognises the emphasis respondents placed on seeking support from family and friends as a common way to find support in all three case-studies. Specifically, research identifies how a supportive kin network is an asset for survivors.

“In this girl's case she said: ‘I am not going back’ and her family supported her and she doesn't have to compromise for that” - Elsa Marie, India

Women experiencing pressure from family to forcibly get married, may lose the support of family whenever they oppose the interests of the family during marriage, like in the case of some South Asian women living in the United States. This loss may become a deterrent to survivors seeking recourse for domestic violence.

“You really see this in young women who are trying to [leave abusive relationships]. It's not just in the South Asian community where young



women, as they're coming of age, are 'shipped' back to their home country to forcibly get married. When they [leave], they just think: 'I just want to get out, that's it'. They do [leave] but then after a while, it's like: 'I've lost my family'. It's a tough thing. What many of us who do this work don't account for very well is the grief about that loss and what is it that is going to replace that loss?" - Sujata, United States

Furthermore, if a survivor's family stigmatises domestic violence, then the family may deter the survivor from leaving an abusive relationship. This perspective emerged from participants from Zimbabwe, explaining how many families would rather maintain a culture of silence of domestic violence rather than speaking out about it.

"I have experienced abuse, my husband used to beat me. He's a drunkard so every time he gets drunk, he comes home being very, very violent but I can't understand 'why is he beating me?' 'why is he shouting at me?' 'why is he saying these vulgar words to me?' So I take my kids and I go back to my family. **My father would send me back to the marriage.**" - Chipso, Zimbabwe

"Sometimes in arranged marriages, a woman or a young girl might feel there is no love at all between the two, but somebody is being forced into that marriage. All forms of abuse will follow." - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

If the stigma of domestic violence is strong within societies, it is highly possible that the survivor will not



have the support of their kin.

“My marriage is broken today but for the last 5 years and [still to] this day, my father, my parents are not with me. Even today they neither support me financially nor do they respect my decision. I am studying now so it's all at my own expense. I have no security from my parents' side. I have no support. They neither support nor encourage nor stand by me, even today.” - Anshu, India (translation)

Within the context of Zimbabwe, the influence of bride price, known as roora or lobola whereby the husband's family pays for the wife, introduces an economic consideration that affects kin. Participants from Zimbabwe emphasised that survivors would be encouraged to stay in an abusive relationship if the family could not pay back the bride price.

“If I go back to my parents they tell me I received ‘lobola’ (1) from your husband so go back and stay with him. [...] So we have nowhere to go. If you want to go back home, they send you back to your husband.” - Chipso, Zimbabwe

“From day one of the marriage, I'm a commodity that was discussed over and negotiated over: ‘oh no, ten dollars, five dollars, six dollars, nine dollars’. We negotiate for

commodities, for goods, not for human beings. Then now, say my husband is ill treating me and [I'm experiencing] domestic violence etc' and I decide to leave the marriage. Normally the bride's parents would then say ‘ah we don't have the money to refund these people. We paid 4,000 USD. Where do we get the four thousand from? So, my daughter, just be strong, pray about it’, all these ridiculous things. And then women are stuck in these marriages forever for money they have nothing to do with” - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

When supporting survivors of domestic violence, advocates and NGOs can train and educate kin into providing effective support. Respective initiatives appear to be happening in the United States and India, as a way to dispel stigma, recognise the signs of domestic abuse and identify steps to address it.

“We are also focusing on training people to be first responders in [domestic] violence. To know how to be a better bystander, know how to be a better friend, how to be a buddy. Because our research tells us that people actually go to a friend, not necessarily a family member or the police. They'll go to a friend who is less threatening to confide in them but the friend often doesn't know what to do” - Elsa Marie, India

(1) Lobola is the “customary token paid by the groom-to-be when he is about to marry his bride-to-be to his in-laws”. This is common practice within Zimbabwe and other southern countries in Africa. Retrieved from: https://www.pindula.co.zw/Lobola_In_Zimbabwe [Accessed: 25/03/22]

“Domestic violence and gender-based violence is a public health issue in the United States so it's been addressed as such. I think in the general public, most people can acknowledge that it's a public health issue. They can acknowledge that it's problematic and want it to stop but don't know how. They don't know their role and don't know how they can contribute to change.” - Arlene, United States

Even when kin are trained to provide effective support to survivors, often the issue of abusers remaining in community networks proves difficult for the survivor to break free of the abuser. In order to leave an abuser, often they would have to physically and socially distance themselves from established communities if shared with the abuser.

“The idea was that you create enough of a support network because the abusers continued to hang out in families and communities whereas, for the survivor who broke out from that, there was nothing else.” - Sujata, United States

Role of Institutions

This factor identifies the role of social and judicial institutions in providing support to survivors. These institutions vary from social services, healthcare, education, police and legal systems. They exist at a macrosystem level, due to their overarching ability to influence kin and the individual in intersectional ways. These institutions are similar to the previous segment of kin's role, in the sense that they provide avenues of support for survivors. Similarly to the previous theme, there may be barriers to accessing this support or the support may not be available for some survivors.

“Women find it harder to take a stand or challenge [abusive] behaviour because everyone is not supportive: from her parents who don't want her back, to her friends who exclude her, to support systems who are supposed to give her the help but don't believe her, to the police or whether it's the therapist that she's going to.” - Elsa Marie, India





One way that survivors seek support in Zimbabwe is through the traditional courts and conflict resolution mechanisms.

“The courts are far and there’s the fatigue of working. I am not the breadwinner so I have to get money from my husband. How do I tell the perpetrator that I want ten dollars to board a bus to report him for domestic violence?” - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

“A [support centre for survivors of GBV] is a provincial department. Some people stay as far as 10 km away from those service providers. It’s not easy to travel for many kilometres, just to come to [the centre]. So the support is there but it’s very, very far.” - Chipo, Zimbabwe

Often these traditional mechanisms occupy a space between kin and formal institutions. This type of informal institutional support is more prevalent in rural areas of Zimbabwe where magistrate courts are not accessible. As participants stressed, these courts, along with many of the village leaders, reinforce patriarchal ideology which may be re-traumatising for the survivor.

“I used to go to my village leaders but those pastors and leaders are too patriarchal. They have a certain view just like our parents. ‘No matter who

you are, even if you’re abused, you must stay loyal to your husband.’” - Chipo, Zimbabwe

“Within the Shona culture (2), you go to the ‘te te’. Your ‘te te’ is your aunt - your dad’s sister. So you go there and you tell her the problem. If she’s a modern aunt, as we know women are evolving, she could pick up the phone, call the husband, cause drama and really stamp the authority to say ‘no’. But if she’s really a gatekeeper of patriarchy, which is most of them, they would tell you to ‘pray about it’. They’ll tell you to ‘be strong’, ‘this is how men are’. They even go as far as asking you ‘ah, what have you done to get slapped?’ They would blame the victim and then from there they would then call the Bride’s family - so from that side - they would call the ‘sekuru’. The ‘sekuru’ is your uncle and they talk about the problem. When it escalates, the two families convene. When they convene normally it’s really just about patronising the woman: ‘okay, maybe you should not have worn that dress. Maybe you should not have used that tone to the leader of the family’. And then they just go back to normal.” - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

As has already been pointed out, how violence is experienced in tandem with race and class is fundamental to understanding the manifestation of

(2) Shona refers to a “group of culturally similar Bantu-speaking peoples living chiefly in the eastern half of Zimbabwe, north of the Lundi River”. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shona> [Accessed: 25/03/22]

gender stereotypes and how violence affects the individual. Racial stereotypes also play out in institutions which affects the pathways that survivors may seek for support, as stated by respondents sharing experiences of Black women in the United States:

“Black Women are not taken seriously when it comes to gender-based violence, sexual violence, domestic violence etc. Within systems, Black women are expected to endure more pain. Regarding the healthcare system, as it relates to sexual violence and to domestic violence, [Black Women] are treated as a result of who they are, based on gender but not solely on gender. [It’s] based on gender and race.” - Arlene, United States

Both gender and racial stereotypes influence expectations of survivors and how they are received when seeking support, along with the types of institutional support they get. This introduces the salient point of intersectional aspects of identity needed to be considered holistically, in order to understand the unique ways in which survivors experience violence. When referring to discrimination based on stereotypes from institutions, then a domestic violence survivor also experiences violence from these institutions. Violence can also be inflicted on survivors through the inaction of support services.

“So, I was sitting on their couch [for counselling], with my abusive partner

right next door. The therapists knew that he had hit me. They knew that it was getting very hostile. Why didn't they say: 'I'm not qualified. I'm not trained.' They gladly took our \$145 an hour. They gladly saw us every Thursday. They gladly took our standing appointment but not one of them said: 'I don't trust that you're in a safe enough space to have an open conversation where I can help. 'Cause I trust that if you say the wrong thing you're afraid of retaliation at home' [...] Therefore, I highly recommend any time you're in an abusive relationship to always go through the state programs. They don't mix their words. They're not there for your money. They are there to focus on your safety.” - Meredith, United States



Merredith,
GBV Survivor.
A Purple
painted nail is
a symbol of
domestic
violence
survivor
Credit:
Merredith

This passive role of the therapists was then translated as a form of emotional violence whereby the abuser's actions were not condemned. In addition to counter intuitive support services, seeking support from institutions may also be re-victimizing for the survivor. This

concept emerged from literature and participants from all three countries as a lack of sensitivity from support services. This emerged strongly when reflecting on support from 'first responders' at the scene of domestic violence in the United States and through legal procedures of pursuing justice in both India and Zimbabwe.

"I thought: 'I might have to call the police or I'll end up in the hospital'. When the police officers arrived at my house I didn't feel safe in my own home when they talked to me. Here in the United States during a domestic violence call, it's police officers obviously who are sent to the call. There isn't room for a social service conversation. There isn't room for the pleasantries that affords a victim a safe conversation. If there was someone to broker the conversation... There were four men in black vests with big guns in my home and all I wanted to do, 45 minutes prior, was to get my husband to not yell at me. I thought he was going to

hit me so I backhanded him away and my wedding ring scratched his chest. Because of the scratch, I was arrested for domestic violence." - Meredith, United States

Through an act of self defence, the abuser gaslighted police into re-victimising a domestic violence survivor.

"[We need] training for the police and whoever are the guardians of state, particularly for women coming from a domestic violence situation, because in a lot of cases, it's male-dominated. There's quite a male dominated system still prevailing" - Jean, United States

"[Many] magistrates who usually deal with domestic violence are not gender sensitised, even though presently there are female judges. Most of them actually are female, but they all come from a very elite group of society so they have never experienced such incidents.



Regarding the kind of questions that are actually asked to the victims, the victim feels almost revictimized. When it comes to maintenance or asking for the maintenance of the husband or the children, there's such lengthy procedures in India that the delay itself is justice denied. The frustration of the client becomes so high that they start giving up on cases." - Sneha, India

"Survivors experience litigation fatigue. Imagine going to court four times a day. You go, the matter is postponed. Tomorrow you go and the prosecutor is sick. The next day you go, it becomes very traumatic to continue reliving that experience and narrating it. And also a court is a court of public record so it means that the journalists and anyone can come and I'm re-telling how I was battered and beaten and it becomes everyone's story. It's further humiliating" - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

Impact of COVID-19 affecting support

COVID-19 altered the way that stereotypes and violence were experienced and changed the ways in which survivors could deal with violence or seek support for it. Data from UN Women (2021a) show how the intensity and severity of domestic violence has increased at a global scale. This knowledge was reflected by many of the participants, illustrating how the increase of domestic violence was not restricted

to certain countries, rather was experienced globally.

"With abusers being in the house completely without going anywhere, nobody could go anywhere - it was everything that we expect of the worst of masculine stereotypes got played out in the house for both women and children. It was like: 'I'm the head of the household, I'm here, I tell you what to do.'" - Sujata, United States

"The home that you think is your home, there is more violence that comes from in-laws and violence from the husband's side. When you're at home all the time, that nagging feeling of each other comes up. I'm really lucky because I have a job." - Anshu, India (translation)



Sr. Sneha Gill, Presentation sister and domestic violence advocate (left) and Anshu Jha, domestic violence survivor (middle) **Credit:** Sr. Sneha Gill

"This pandemic brought another pandemic so I can say there are now two pandemics. Violence against women is a pandemic on its own." - Chipso, Zimbabwe



In addition to changing patterns of domestic violence, the ways in which survivors could seek support was also altered by the pandemic.

“In India, the number of cases for help increased tremendously but shelter homes weren’t accepting intakes because they didn't know how to manage COVID. Women didn't have access to transport because no public transportation was working and most women don't own cars. Apartment complexes weren’t allowing new members to come in so that meant that even if you owned another flat somewhere you couldn't go there. You couldn’t go to your parents, you couldn’t go to a sympathiser so you basically were stuck and there was no help from the government or the police.” - Elsa Marie, India

Previous pathways of support were often not available during the pandemic. Due to ‘stay at home’ measures, the support that was available prior was now offered digitally, restricting the accessibility and quality of support. Whilst ways of supporting survivors were reinvented through digital platforms, all participants stated clear restrictions and inequalities for accessing this kind of support, ranging from a lack of privacy and physical distance from abusers when confined to the home, to restricted broadband, internet connectivity and affordability to initially access the support services.

“I know the counselling services were available through the phone because in person counselling wasn’t an

option. But women don't have the privacy necessarily on the phone so they didn't have opportunities to have private conversations when their kids weren’t in school. Some people live in very small houses all within earshot and many women don't have privacy.” - Meredith, United States

“Most [advocates of GBV] have scrambled to figure out how to support women and survivors at a time when they didn’t have access to going to shelters or even getting in touch with somebody. Eight-hundred lines were not always working and survivors themselves, they didn’t have access to the internet, or they didn’t have access to a good solid phone line, or they couldn't even step away from the house ” - Sujata, United States

When considering how COVID-19 impacted legal recourse of justice for domestic violence, some respondents explained how the courts in the United States were held virtually, a fact that created numerous new problems of ensuring the safety of the survivor along with maintaining legal integrity. In certain cases this development during the pandemic relied on the skill and knowledge of the prosecutor to safeguard the survivor.

“The assumption here is that the judges know the whole issue inside out, prosecutors know so they are watching and looking for things: he may be controlling her in ways that you and I may not know. There was

this whole case in Michigan where she was almost strangled, these were felony charges and she was trying to back-pedal and recant and the prosecutor was smart enough to know that he was actually in the same room because you can be on different videos screens” - Sujata, United States



In certain regions of India, the reliance on digital technology for support from domestic violence exists with the stereotype whereby women having access to mobile phones is a sign of promiscuity. This stereotype further complicates how a domestic violence survivor might navigate support since owning a mobile may further inflict forms of violence.

“In many places in India, the politicians said that the mobile phone is a bad thing for a woman because it encourages her to be loose. So basically now even girls are not encouraged to have mobile phones because it's associated with them being “loose”.” - Elsa Marie, India



Recommendations





Various and different ways of addressing gender stereotypes and violence against women have emerged throughout our research.

Domestic violence could not be tackled and eliminated without addressing gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are integral to understanding why domestic violence occurs.

Our recommendations of addressing gender stereotypes and domestic

violence follow the approach employed in the IPA's booklet/toolkit (see Figure 1) on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (2021), hence they are divided into three categories: respond, advocate and prevent. Following testimonies from domestic violence survivors and advocates, we provide certain examples of how to address gender stereotypes and domestic violence within and beyond national borders. Figure 9 below summarises ways in which gender stereotypes and domestic violence can be challenged through response, advocacy and prevention methods.

Respond

- Educate and train to recognise gender stereotypes and forms of violence;
- Increase awareness and accessibility of legal support for survivors;
- Ensure that pathways of support are not re-victimising survivors;
- Develop support services based on lessons learned from COVID-19.

Advocate

- Ensure survivors' participation in planning and decision-making contexts;
- Adopt an intersectional approach;
- Gather and disseminate data;
- Hold people and systems accountable.

Prevent

- Establish a dynamic of equal partnership within a relationship;
- Dispel gender stereotypes during childhood;
- Establish communication with perpetrators.

Figure 9: Ways through which gender stereotypes and domestic violence can be challenged.



Respond



Educate and train to recognise gender stereotypes and forms of violence

As patterns of domestic violence are gradually increasing, the inability to not recognise gender stereotypes and forms of domestic violence has been widely and commonly identified throughout our research. There is a dire need to educate, train and develop understanding of domestic violence and relevant stereotypes in order to challenge it, as our respondents have illustrated. If the

survivor is aware of the many ways in which domestic violence can manifest or if they can recognise a gender stereotype when they experience it, then there is a greater chance that they, or an advocate, would be able to respond promptly. As Elsa Marie, a survivor and advocate from India, highlighted “83 percent agree that men can beat their wives so maybe it was happening in their families earlier as well and they think it's acceptable and normal. They don't know any better. They need education and we don't have that in our schools or colleges to help you identify the spectrum of violence.”

At the grassroots level, the International Presentation Association seeks to improve access to learning for all people, particularly youth in primary, secondary, and third level institutions, focusing on reducing bias against women and promoting gender equality. In



partnership with other organisations, the IPA also provides training and workshops on how to create a safe environment for women. Furthermore, the IPA educates people and raises awareness through planned training Justice Simulation Activities pertaining to violence against women and children.

It is evident that one important way to address domestic violence against women is by providing the survivors with immediate access to quality services. Such response services must be based upon survivors' needs and safety. Certain examples of quality and support services include:

- Health and medical services that address the immediate physical and psychological injuries resulting from violence.
- Safe houses and shelters for women who are escaping violence.
- Online and offline trauma counselling and psychosocial support for women who have experienced violence.
- Channels to assist survivors, in areas such as health, social welfare, police reporting and justice.
- Legal aid and legal literacy training for women.
- Capacity-building of 'first responders' (police, social and health care workers) to address effectively cases of violence against women.

- Behavioural change programmes for men and boys.



Increase awareness and accessibility of legal support for survivors

A survivor of domestic violence often feels powerless against their abuser, a fact that reduces their ability of seeking the necessary support. Legal support can only be used if the survivor is aware of their rights and entitlements, which can vary with intersectional aspects of identity. The power of the law can be an empowering force to rebuild the strength and confidence of the survivor. Raising awareness of the legal rights of survivors in each country and the mechanisms they can use to seek justice are integral ways towards challenging domestic violence and the power imbalance inherent in patriarchal gender stereotypes.

“The best way to challenge stereotypes in society is to come up with legal guides to make the girl child, or the woman, aware of what rights are available for her in the constitution. She will then be capable of looking for her rights or fighting for her rights as long as she's aware” - Anshu, India (translation)

As Sneha, an IPA advocate from India, has pointed out whilst providing legal support and literacy to a domestic violence survivor, “She has become a real source of strength, she's able to do her studies, she's able to guide, to strengthen, to counsel other women. She has suffered but now she is becoming a pillar of strength to other women.”

Although our research findings identified the sense of empowerment and independence instilled when taking a legal course of action, the participants’ testimonies also highlighted the emotional and financial burden emanating from this same action.

“I wish there was more pro bono legal work available for people who have questions or need help through the process. I wish that more attorneys would take interest in helping victims of domestic violence.” - Meredith, United States

“The court case is going to help you but it’s going to disturb your job, your family life, your children, your education and your career. [...] survivors have to keep coming and they have to balance the court with their work and the family. It’s too much. It tears women into pieces when they have to keep coming to the court every month.” - Sneha, India



Ensure that pathways of support are not re-victimising survivors

The way in which a survivor seeks support, such as through legal systems, may have procedures that question the validity of the violence or encourage re-telling the violence. This can be an emotionally intense situation for survivors, particularly as these forms of support are often slow and time consuming.

Furthermore, the pathways of support that a survivor may seek is often dependent upon intersectional factors influencing how they may be received. These intersectional factors include age, gender, ethnicity and race, class, ableism, sexuality and other factors of identity that influence how someone experiences the world. As such, some pathways of support may be untenable due to structural discrimination, lack of financial resources or legal status. When survivors pursue a form of support, systems may not be sensitised to the intersectional issues experienced by the survivor, thus risking to further traumatise the survivors. When a survivor seeks support for domestic violence, an advocate may not comprehend the survivor’s experiences and respond appropriately. This was also vocalised by multiple respondents when

speaking about support from both kin and institutions.

"You're in my house and if you leave me and not arrest or take him away, I don't feel safe with him here alone. Instead, I was fingerprinted [by the police officers], I was mugshot and I was booked. At no point did I ever feel like I could say: 'This is my face from a picture a year ago. This is what he has done to me now. I don't feel safe with him here alone'" - Merredith, United States

It is evident that there is a need for sensitising support service providers, police officers, civic authorities, as well as advocates to the unique ways survivors may experience violence. This is particularly pertinent for survivors of marginalised communities who face multiple forms of injustice as they face greater barriers to accessing support. When pathways of support are sensitised and the barriers to accessing support are reduced, then more survivors may be able to seek recourse from domestic violence.



Develop support services based on lessons learned from COVID-19

Domestic violence has become more intense and widespread during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Response to domestic violence has shifted rapidly throughout the duration of the pandemic due to changing patterns of domestic violence. The exacerbation of gender stereotypes and domestic violence has presented challenges to how survivors may seek support for domestic violence. Our research has shown how isolation through 'stay at home' government policies has presented barriers to seeking support. This is, inter alia, through the lack of physical distance within a household, preventing a safe conversation about the violence experienced.

Yet, important lessons can be learnt as networks of support had to adapt their ways of responding to domestic violence. A way that advocates responded to the increased isolation is through increasing the accessibility of mobile 'one-stop' centres and clinics to provide support for both GBV and COVID-19. In Zimbabwe's Bubi district, for example, mobile clinics were a way for survivors to seek support outside of the house (Reliefweb, 2020), particularly when digital support is not available. The provision of flexible support services to survivors, particularly in remote areas, encourages survivors to seek support in areas where a culture of silence exists. As Arlene, a respondent from the United States, emphasised "I think people went back to real survivor-centred solutions: What do survivors need? What are survivors saying? People went back to really listening to survivors. Another thing that came out of COVID, as it relates

to gender-based violence, is a new focus on advocates as frontline essential workers. I think in the past, advocates were not deemed essential workers. Not only looking at the well-being of individuals who are impacted by gender-based violence but also looking at the well-being of individuals who are providing support to [survivors].”



Ensure survivors' participation in planning and decision-making contexts

Advocate

Advocating for the elimination of violence against women and of respective gender stereotypes, means to raise your voice, to speak up for women's rights, and to bring about changes in laws, policies, and practices that will make a positive and lasting difference to the lives of all.

As the research has indicated, gender-based inequality and discrimination, social norms and gender stereotypes, are root causes of violence against women. Addressing its drivers and structural causes is the only way of putting an end to violence. Women and girls of all ages and backgrounds must not be seen only as victims, but as agents of change and equal partners in eliminating violence. In this sense, women's participation and leadership in all forms of decision-making, in public and personal life, needs to be



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END VIOLENCE

#MakeConversationComfortable

promoted. This is a necessary condition for their own interests and perspectives to be taken into account in policy-making and programs which affect them. They know best what they need to recover and how to prevent instances from happening again.

“Survivors need to be at the centre in anything that we’re doing. Survivors who are traditionally marginalised, like Black and Brown women, are being recognised and their voices, their leadership, and their experiences are being centred in anything that we are developing.” - Arlene, United States

“We need to take the time to talk to the women and not just the privileged ones - every woman. The response needs to be tailored around the needs of the survivors in a sustainable manner, in a futuristic manner, in a preventative manner, in a manner that brings the woman to where she was before the trauma.” - Tinotenda, Zimbabwe

Implementing solid legal and policy reforms ensures women’s equal access to and full participation in decision-making spaces. Furthermore, empowering women enables them to be good leaders, decision makers and participants in public life, as well as in their family and personal relationships. The empowerment of women and girls is further essential in eliminating gender stereotypes and harmful cultural and social practices. The IPA strongly emphasises that education is

a powerful tool in dismantling such stereotypes and practices. It further increases women’s and girls’ skills and abilities for participating in decision-making positions. From early childhood, girls need to be educated, encouraged and enabled to participate in activities that build leadership skills. Such preparation provides them with knowledge and expertise to recognize abusive behaviours and then to advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence in their families, schools and wider communities. Observing role models in a girl’s childhood enables her to vision and dream, and will generate a future empowered woman.



Adopt an intersectional approach

Gender-based violence issues are not experienced in isolation from other forms of injustice or discrimination. Intersecting aspects of identity such as race, class and caste, socioeconomic status, sexuality, rurality, education, age etc. are identified as integral in exploring survivors’ experiences of gender stereotypes and domestic violence. Many survivors who belong to minority or marginalised groups, face intersecting forms of discrimination which influences how they experience violence and the support

they may receive. As such, when advocating for the elimination of gender stereotypes and violence against women these factors need to be embedded in the planning of advocacy work for effective and meaningful change.

“I always hesitate to talk about gender based violence without talking about racism as well. You cannot address gender-based violence without addressing racism so I have to talk about them together. [...] No survivor justice without racial justice.” - Arlene, United States

There is an undeniable need to address multiple systemic injustices and forms of violence holistically in order to effectively reduce gender-based violence and address relevant gender stereotypes.



Gather and disseminate data

As the global spotlight has turned more sharply on the persistence of gender stereotypes and violence against women, the need for more and better data to inform evidence-based programming and policies has escalated. Data collection is more than just a technical issue. Advocates want to understand the nature and magnitude of gender-based violence, hence they seek information and

guidance on how sound data can be collected.

Data is essential to help quantify and qualify problems, inform and design programs based on evidence. A solid evidence-based advocacy strategy can only be better developed and evaluated through investing in the necessary research and data collection initiatives. Dissemination of data in accessible formats will continue to be needed to raise awareness and to foster the political will; a will which is required to implement effective solutions at all levels of society.

In this context, the IPA has decided to build upon a new partnership with the Red Dot Foundation Global, on the Safecity project; an online platform that crowdsources personal stories of sexual violence in public spaces.



The Safecity platform can create awareness on sexual abuse against women and get women and other disadvantaged communities to break their silence and report their personal experiences. Unfortunately, the official statistics do not reflect the true nature and size of the problem. Cases are usually underreported. Perpetrator data and information on the times and locations of incidents of violence collected by the Safecity platform can identify factors which contribute to behaviours leading to

violence, inform prevention efforts and enable more specific advocacy for policy change.



Hold people and systems accountable

Following the testimonies of research's respondents, it is evident that there is a disjuncture between making laws and seeing actual social change, particularly regarding social justice mechanisms. Laws and legislation need to be translated from policy to practice. In order to advocate for the elimination of gender stereotypes and domestic violence, social changes through legal systems have been identified as being integral to this cause. Respondents speak about holding institutions and individuals accountable in order to direct meaningful change:

"When you hold people accountable, then it starts becoming part of your daily normal process. You know, gender stereotypes and gender based violence has become normalised over a period of time. So much that people don't even recognise that what has happened to them is a stereotype and you are being targeted or you're at the receiving end of violence. But if you start challenging it then it starts creating this tension and then after a period of time it's not the victim who is in a minority but it is really the perpetrator who is in the minority

and we need to reach that level where everybody says it's uncool." - Elsa Marie, India

"It's not just a thing in my opinion to pass laws, because those are easy to do. But it's really putting money in it. The implementation part is the hardest. So how do you then take these policies and laws, and put them into practice across the board?" - Sujata, United States

Prevent

Preventing domestic violence from occurring before it even starts is the most difficult way to do, yet the most effective one. Transforming gender stereotypes and social norms, addressing the structural causes associated with violence in any society is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do for a long-term development and stability. Gender roles can establish and promote tolerance or acceptance of violence against women. As our research indicated, in certain communities and societies, women and girls grow up by learning to accept violence or further by not being able to recognise that they actually experience violence. In turn, men and boys grow up with specific ideas on what it means to be a man, which often allows them to perpetrate violence. In an endless cycle of violence, unequal gender



Workshop on the elimination of GBV against women and Children and their rights in Guruve, Zimbabwe.
Credit: Sr. Annatollia Muzata

stereotypes and roles may be further enforced through violence. Although prevention measures may overlap with respective measures in the previous two categories (respond-advocate) through which gender stereotypes and domestic violence can be challenged, certain examples of such prevention projects include:

- Awareness raising through advocacy public campaigns that promote a zero-tolerance attitude to violence against women.
- Empowerment of women's and girls' leadership skills for increased participation in decision-making at all levels, including at home, in school, in workplaces and within society.
- Economic empowerment of women through capacity-building programmes and training sessions.
- Men's and boys' engagement in all stages for eliminating gender stereotypes and all forms of gender-based violence.

- Formal and informal education for children and youth against gender discrimination and towards equal and respectful relationships.



Youth ambassadors for the Red Dot Foundation, India.
Credit: The Red Dot Foundation



Establish a dynamic of equal partnership

As the testimonies have illustrated, domestic violence may arise when there is an imbalance of power within

a relationship. This could emerge from patriarchal dynamics of subordination and domination, creating expectations for the perpetrator to exert dominance over their partner. To respond to this, partners should find ways to negotiate and share equal responsibility within a relationship. Instead of expecting the female to be responsible for the domestic work and the male responsible for the paid labour, this agreement should be a conversation rather than an expectation. By treating others as equal and appreciating the work required to maintain a relationship, a respect can be fostered which may prevent domestic violence emerging from patriarchal gender stereotypes.

“We should have shared responsibilities at home. If the wife works, the husband can also cook. There's a need for shared responsibility. There is a need for dialogue. No one's superior than the other.” - Annatollia, Zimbabwe

**“I think it's a responsibility of both to decide who's going to earn and who's going to provide. It is not one or the other, jointly they have to agree to it.”
- Elsa Marie, India**

“Break those cultural roles that have been handed over the generations where the patriarchal society sees females in subordinate roles. You've got to change it.” - Sneha, India



Dispel gender stereotypes during childhood

Education on healthy relationships should begin from childhood. As children are socialised into holding beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, it is paramount that positive values and role models are instilled in children to reduce the perpetration of



violence. According to our research's respondents, children who observe healthy relationships and have respect instilled in them for all genders, they may be less likely to perpetuate patriarchal or other gender stereotypes. Additionally to socialisation at home, gender stereotypes need to be challenged through educational institutions and wider social communities at a young age.

“Let parents exhibit the behaviour that we want to see in society. It must begin from home. If you want gender stereotypes to change, then the father and the mother need to play that role to bring that change.” - Sneha, India

“We should start it at a very tender age teaching them in schools. It needs to be introduced in elementary schools in their curriculum: what are children's rights? What are human rights? What are women's rights? From there, they grow, they learn that we are all human beings, we are all the same.” - Annatollia, Zimbabwe



Establish communication with perpetrators

Although this research takes a survivor-centred approach in understanding how gender

stereotypes and domestic violence is experienced, this approach is not equated with the onus on survivors to eliminate stereotypes and domestic violence. Working with perpetrators to understand causes and motivations of gender stereotypes and perceptions, as well as of patterns of domestic violence is integral to bringing forth the end of them and to long-term prevent them from occurring.

“We can't end gender-based violence if we're not intentionally working with the individuals who cause harm. That should be a part of our systems change work.” - Arlene, United States

“Not only women should be part of this approach because when they go back home, they go back to the very same people who have been violent in their life. There's a need that men, women and children - all inclusive - should be part of these approaches. So that they hear everything together so when they go home no one would say 'it's your own thinking, that's what you're thinking'.” - Annatollia, Zimbabwe



Gender stereotypes and violence against women remain pervasive across the world, despite the significant efforts that have been made to respond and advocate for their elimination in all its forms. A total elimination though can only be achieved through prevention. Successful prevention requires:

- political commitment and leadership,
- implementation of laws and policies that promote gender equality,
- solid investment in women's organisations,
- allocation of resources to address the multiple forms of discrimination women face daily.

Considering and assessing the context (current laws, policies and practices addressing gender-based violence and stereotypes) in which prevention strategies are to be implemented is an essential aspect of the planning process. Preventing gender stereotypes and violence against women before it occurs is fundamental to ensuring that women are truly able to live a life free from violence and gender inequality.



Conclusion





Domestic violence is a widespread human rights concern, posing a physical and mental health crisis to all those involved. This research endeavoured to realise the different ways that gender stereotypes affect how patterns of domestic violence manifest within India, the United States and Zimbabwe. Through centering the voices and experiences of domestic violence survivors and advocates, the research has given a platform to privilege their expertise and learn from their insights. Our particular interest lies in providing a voice to women experiencing domestic violence - presenting not only their experiences, but also their needs going forward, as reflective of their culture and society. A pressing reason for this research has been the monumental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on entrenching gender roles and patterns of GBV.

Through primary and secondary research, this project has illustrated how gender stereotypes affect experiences of violence through socio-cultural factors, patriarchal norms and the ways in which survivors navigate support from domestic violence. Specifically, we have identified the main factors that can shape or reinforce gender stereotypes and affect patterns of domestic violence, as those emerged from our discussions with the gender-based violence survivors and advocates in the three countries. Patriarchal norms have been identified as embodying the gender stereotypes that privilege men over women; factors like relationships of

subordination, dominance and unequal dependence, as well as emotional manipulation varied across the three countries, many of the influencing factors transcended national borders. Socio-cultural factors such as cultures of silence, normalisation of violence, victim blaming behaviour and intergenerational socialisation can also reinforce gender stereotypes and affect how domestic violence manifests. Research further showed how the role of kin and institutions affected the survivors' experiences of domestic violence. Across the countries, our research highlighted the importance of having the support of family or a community for a survivor to leave a violent relationship. When that support is not given or if a survivor is actively encouraged to stay in an abusive relationship, whether due to a 'culture of silence' promoting stigma of domestic violence or due to perceptions of male domination and female subordination, then the cost of leaving a violent relationship is even greater.

Additionally, some correlations between certain socio-cultural factors and patterns of gender stereotypes emerged from our research. Interestingly, there appeared a correlation between the rurality of a family and their adherence to patriarchal norms, whereby a more rural family may have a stricter entrenchment of gender stereotypes and less accessibility to seek support. Furthermore, there was a correlation between the level of educational attainment of the survivor and the



ability to seek support for domestic violence, particularly when accessing channels of legal support. Throughout our research, it was identified that if a survivor had a low educational achievement, then it was more difficult to attain the resources and capability to leave an abusive relationship, especially the knowledge of how to seek legal or further support for domestic violence or how to leave an abusive relationship. Education is a tool to empower survivors with the courage to address domestic violence. The socioeconomic status of a survivor, in relation to their abusive partner, may affect the survivor's experience of gender stereotypes and domestic violence. This was exemplified predominantly within our research in India and Zimbabwe where survivors who had paid employment were subjected to adhere to traditional gender stereotypes within the home. Testimonies illustrated a paradox that many survivors experience, whereby survivors may be self-assured and independent outside of the home but within the home gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms conform women to a submissive position in relation to men. These gender stereotypes assert an abuser's power over a survivor's which predicates many forms of violence to occur within a relationship. Our research illustrated consensus on the correlation of providing education for children to identify manifestations of gender stereotypes and domestic violence in order to address the transmission of harmful gender stereotypes across

generations.

The IPA recommendations for this project are predicated on the categories of **respond**, **advocate**, and **prevent**, in accordance with the IPA's Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (2021) toolkit. As such, this project found four key ways to respond to gender stereotypes and domestic violence through increasing education and training, increasing awareness of legal support, addressing the re-victimisation of survivors by support services and developing adequate support in response to changing practices under COVID-19. In order to advocate to address gender stereotypes and the domestic violence it perpetuates, our research identified the categories of ensuring the participation of survivors within planning and decision-making contexts, using an intersectional approach to understand the holistic experiences of survivors, emphasising the gathering and dissemination of data to understand the full extent of experiences, and holding people and systems accountable to address structural issues of gender stereotypes. Finally, the most difficult but effective way to address gender stereotypes and domestic violence is through prevention; our research specifically identified the need to establish a dynamic of equal partnership within a relationship, to dispel gender stereotypes from childhood and create communication with perpetrators. These recommendations reflect, inter alia, the voices and experiences of



gender-based violence survivors and advocates at the grassroots level. The invaluable testimonies from lived experiences will undoubtedly benefit future IPA advocacy work through a qualitative understanding of the role of gender stereotypes in affecting domestic violence to guide policies and intervention programmes at the local and global levels.

This publication has created the foundation for further in-depth analysis of the relationship between gender stereotypes and patterns of violence against women in other countries as well. To further develop this research, a greater sample size would be beneficial to ensure the reliability of the findings. When a sample size is large, it is more likely to be representative of the entire dimensions of the relationship between gender stereotypes and gender-based violence. This would

include greater intersectionality of participants at a grassroots level so that more unique experiences of GBV can be recognised. Developing this idea would include survivor-centred approaches alongside discussions with GBV perpetrators at the grassroots level to understand causes and motivations of gender stereotypes, perceptions, and patterns of domestic violence. Cross-sector partnerships alongside grassroots representation would be an additional asset to the future research in order to provide new perspectives and insight within the field of addressing GBV and gender stereotypes. The issues of gender-based violence, gender stereotypes and systemic discrimination cannot be tackled in isolation. Meaningful collaborations need to be established in order to effectively advocate for the elimination of violence at national and international levels.

RAISE YOUR VOICE

END VIOLENCE



SHARE YOUR STORY

STOP SILENCE

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