

Understanding Dating Violence and Coping Strategies: Insights from Guwahati, India

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Abstract

Dating violence happens in a dating relationship when one partner who is seen romantically harms another partner in some way, whether it is physically, sexually, emotionally or verbally, or all four. Dating violence may happen either on a first date, or once fallen deeply in love, however it always impacts the victim. A study was conducted using Case Study method to look into the torment of dating violence on the victims, and how they dealt with the toxic relationship. The study was chiefly based on primary data. The study divulges that respondents have experienced physical violence due to the aggressive nature of the partner (abuser), so majority of the victims decided to set themselves free from the noxious relationship.

Keywords: -Abuse, dating violence, physical abuse, relationship, victims

Introduction:

When indifference and clashes emerge in close relationship, it prompts dating misuse like intimidating, humiliating, beating, pushing, kicking, slapping and forcing partner for harmful sexual practice. These activities have a profound impact on the survivors as well as to the abuser's psychological health. Dating violence can be regarded as a pattern of assaultive and controlling behaviors that one person uses against another in order to gain or maintain power in the relationship. The abuser intentionally behaves in ways that cause fear, degradation, and humiliation to control the other person. Dating violence is an emerging problem of relationship.

Dating violence includes -**Physical Abuse:** Any intentional use of physical force with the intent to

cause fear or injury, like hitting, shoving, biting, strangling, kicking or using a weapon. **Verbal or Emotional Abuse:** Non-physical behaviors such as threats, insults, constant monitoring, humiliation, intimidation, isolation or stalking. **Sexual Abuse:** Any action that impacts a person's ability to control their sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity occurs, including rape, coercion or restricting access to birth control. **Digital Abuse:** Use of technologies and/or social media networking to intimidate, harass or threaten a current or ex-dating partner such as demanding passwords, checking cell phones, cyberbullying, non-consensual sexting, excessive or threatening texts or stalking on social media. **Stalking:** Being repeatedly watched, followed, monitored or harassed. Stalking can occur online or in person, and may or may not

include giving unwanted gifts. **Financial Abuse:** Exerting power and control over a partner through their finances, including taking or withholding money from a partner, or prohibiting a partner from earning, or spending their money. While both females and males may suffer dating violence, female teens in heterosexual relationships are more likely to be injured, more likely to be sexually assaulted, and more likely to suffer emotionally than are their heterosexual male peers.

Case studies:

For the present study, case study method was undertaken to look into the prevalence of dating violence in Guwahati, India. Five case studies were conducted in this regard. The name of all the respondents (survivors) and their abuser were changed.

Case Study- One

First case study was about 25 years old Monali who had been in a relationship for almost 6 years. She works in a private company and her boyfriend is a bank employee. According to Monali her boyfriend was a neurotic person, and this was the source of problem for their relationship. Monali had experienced physical violence from her boyfriend and had made several attempts to escape from the relationship but every time after certain incidents of physical violence her partner asked her for forgiveness and promised her that he will never replicate all those again but things never stopped. The fear that he might end up doing something wrong to himself or may end his life had always stopped Monali from ending the relationship and so she had been continuing with the relationship.

Case Study – Two

Second case study was about a girl name Shera who was 23 years old. She was a university student and was in a relationship with a boy name Arun who was 28 years old and was employed as an event manager. According to Shera, their relationship was 6 months old only, but she had been facing coercion as Arun always persuades her forcefully to do something that she doesn't want

to do and sometimes harms her physically also when she opposes to do. She said that her boyfriend becomes aggressive quite quickly. She realized that she had been in a toxic relationship so after giving much thought on how to deal with it, she finally decided to tell her parents and with their help she ended the toxic relationship. As of now, she is living a happy life but also added that the bitter experience also comes in her mind.

Case Study – Three

Third case study was about a college girl name Krisha who was 19 years old. She was in a relationship with a boy name Danish who was also a college student. According to Krisha she and Danish were in a relationship for 9 months but unsure about the relationship because Danish had major trust issues. Danish felt that she was having an affair with another boy from their college and began to verbally abuse her and also started to even judge her when she went out with her friends or family. He becomes more abusive when he is drunk, and he used to torture her physically. After 9 months, she decided to end her relationship with Danish, she had a conversation with Danish and expressed that it was difficult for her to be in such a noxious relationship. She also asked him not to pursue or contact her or else she will be forced to take legal actions against him.

Case Study – Four

The fourth case study was about a girl named Nanina who was 21 years old. She worked as a flight attendant and was in a living relationship with a man named Vicky (25 years) who was also working in the airlines. They were together for 2 years before it finally ended because of Vicky's aggressive and possessive attitude. When their flight time clashes or when Vicky finds Naina talking with other colleagues, Vicky would get mad and start abusing her. After experiencing torment for several months, Naina finally made up her mind to end the relationship. He begged her to get back to him but Naina was firm with her decision of leaving him and she moved on. It was a tough decision for her but she knew she will be better without him.

Case Study – Five.

Lilika, a college student of 22 years was in a relationship with her college mate Den for 1 and a half year. According to Lipika, her boyfriend was a kind person but sometimes abusive when angry which resulted in Lipika experiencing physical violence from her boyfriend. She started to feel uncomfortable with him since the day she experienced physical violence from Den and was with the fear of getting abused again in the future. She felt that there was no point of being in a relationship with someone who doesn't value or respect her, so she shared her tribulations with her friends and with their help she got out of the relationship.

Major findings and conclusion:

The study was carried out to understand the extent of suffering of the victims of dating violence and the solution they developed in order to get out of the lethal relationship.

Major findings of the study are given below-

1. In all the case studies women were the victims of dating violence.
2. All the victims were under 30 years of age.
3. The respondents were victims of verbal and physical abuse.
4. Case study one of Monali reveals that Monali partner was a neurotic person, due to which she has been continuing in the relationship because she fears that he might end up doing something wrong to himself or may end his life.
5. Case study two of Shera depicts that her partner tried to be more superior than her as she felt that he was trying to dominate her.
6. Case study three and four of Kritsha and Danish reveals that their partners had trust issues and possessive attitude towards them which was the main source of problem for their relationship.
7. The study reveals that there was lack of respect in the dating relationship.

8. None of the respondents have reported to the police regarding the violence that they had experienced.

Essentially, it was found that vulnerable women who got into fused, unbalanced relationships with vulnerable men tended to utilise system maintaining coping mechanisms to handle the violence and were vulnerable to strong seductive processes until they started to separate from their relationships. Internal or external events that caused women to reevaluate their relationships and take action to regain their own agency served as the catalyst for the disentanglement process. The process of disentanglement culminated with paradigm shifts, or transitions from relationship commitment to self-commitment, which gave women the motivation to end their relationships.

Dating violence is a prevalent problem of the society. The issue of dating violence must be treated with the same seriousness as the issue of domestic violence. Any one experiencing dating violence irrespective of their sexual orientation needs to find a suitable way to come out of the torment situation, either through mending the relationship or ending the abusive relationship. Dating violence prevention programme can be an effective tool to cure the pathological social condition created by dating violence. The various prevention programme can also edify all the members of the society to help those people who have become the victim of dating violence.

Psychological Recommendation

Threatening circumstances that are considered to have little chance of improving are typically handled with coping mechanisms that are primarily centred on feelings. On the other hand, circumstances that appear to have the potential to respond to positive action typically result in problem focused coping strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

Attempts to control emotional pain are referred to as "emotion focused coping," which includes avoidant or denial-like techniques such as wishful thinking, distance, stressing the positive, self-

blame, tension-reduction, self-isolation, and minimization.

Problem-focused coping, which encompasses behaviours including problem-solving, decision-making, creating plans, and taking decisive action, refers to attempts to fix the issue in the person-environment interaction (Folkman, 1984; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

In addition to cognitive appraisal processes, commitments, beliefs, coping mechanisms, vulnerabilities, and resources are also crucial aspects of the coping process, according to Lazarus & Folkman (1984). Commitments that "convey what is important to the person, what has importance for him or her" and dictate the decisions people make to "keep treasured ideals and/or to attain desired goals" have an impact on the evaluation and reappraisal processes.

Beliefs are created individually and are "preexisting beliefs about reality which function as a perceptual lens". They affect assessments by establishing what is true in the environment and by defining how it is understood.

One's assessments are significantly influenced by one's perceptions about one's capacity to control outcomes.

In terms of the assessment process, vulnerabilities generally pertain to the capacity of an individual's resources to satisfy demands, which impacts what can be done in a particular scenario as well as the coping mechanisms that are selected (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Resources can be found within oneself (e.g., self-worth, mastery), in interpersonal networks (e.g., family, friends), or in one's toolbox of coping mechanisms (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Those with more personal and social resources are more likely to use active coping strategies than people with less of these advantages (Holahan & Moos, 1987). Many studies have examined how gender differences affect self-esteem (a sense of one's own worth), mastery (a belief in one's own capacity to influence life events), and social support as modifiers of stressful conditions (see Antonucci & Depner, 1982; Belle, 1987; Hobfoll, 1986).

Therefore, coping mechanisms are mental and physical attempts to control, lessen, or put up with demands brought on by stressful transactions. As the stressful interaction progresses, these cognitive and behavioural coping strategies are continually altering. The constant reevaluation of the shifting person-environment interaction, which influences and is influenced by coping responses as well as one's commitments, beliefs, and resources, is what leads to changes in coping.

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