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CASE STUDY OF A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR SUPPORTED BY PARIHAR, BENGALURU

From Silence to Strength: A Case Study of a Domestic Violence Survivor Rehabilitated Through PARIHAR, Bengaluru

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Abstract

Domestic violence remains a significant social and public health concern affecting women across socio-economic backgrounds. This case study explores the experiences of a 32-year-old woman who survived prolonged domestic violence and sought assistance through PARIHAR, a family counselling and support centre initiated by the Bengaluru City Police. The study highlights the nature of abuse, psychosocial consequences, intervention strategies, and the survivor's journey toward recovery and empowerment. The findings emphasize the importance of integrated services including counselling, legal aid, police support, and livelihood assistance in facilitating survivor rehabilitation. PARIHAR provides multidisciplinary support such as counselling, legal assistance, police support, shelter referral, and psychological services for women in distress.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Women Empowerment, Counselling, Survivor Recovery, PARIHAR, Bengaluru

Introduction

Domestic violence encompasses physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse occurring within intimate relationships. Studies and service reports from Bengaluru indicate that domestic violence continues to be one of the major issues reported to counselling and support centres. PARIHAR, established with the support of Bengaluru City Police, has been actively addressing family disputes, domestic violence, and women's welfare through counselling and multidisciplinary interventions.

Case Profile:

Name: Mrs. A (Pseudonym)
Age: 32 Years
Education: Higher Secondary Education
Occupation: Homemaker
Marital Status: Married for 10 Years
Children: Two
Residence: Bengaluru, Karnataka
Referral Source: PARIHAR Family Counselling Centre

Background Information

Mrs. A was married at the age of 22 through an arranged marriage. During the initial years, the relationship appeared stable. However, following financial difficulties and her husband's increasing alcohol consumption, conflicts became frequent.

Over a period of six years, she experienced:

- Physical assault
- Verbal abuse
- Emotional manipulation
- Financial deprivation
- Social isolation from family and friends

The abuse intensified during the COVID-19 period when the family remained confined at home, resulting in severe psychological distress.

Presenting Problems

When Mrs. A approached PARIHAR, she reported:

- Frequent physical violence by her husband
- Threats of abandonment
- Economic control and denial of household expenses
- Anxiety and depressive symptoms
- Sleep disturbances
- Fear for her children's safety

She initially hesitated to seek help due to social stigma, concern for her children, and fear of family rejection.

Psychosocial Assessment

A comprehensive psychosocial assessment was conducted to understand the survivor's personal, family, social, economic, and psychological circumstances. The assessment revealed multiple layers of vulnerability that had developed due to prolonged exposure to domestic violence.

1. Personal Assessment

Mrs. A, a 32-year-old homemaker, appeared anxious, emotionally distressed, and hesitant during the initial counselling sessions. She exhibited low self-confidence and demonstrated fear while discussing her marital relationship. She reported feeling trapped within the abusive environment and expressed uncertainty regarding her future.

The survivor described repeated episodes of physical violence, verbal humiliation, intimidation, and emotional neglect. She frequently blamed herself for the violence and believed that she had failed in her role as a wife. Such self-blame reflected the internalization of societal norms that often hold women responsible for maintaining family harmony.

2. Psychological Assessment

The psychological assessment indicated significant emotional distress resulting from prolonged abuse.

Symptoms Identified

- Persistent sadness and crying spells
- Anxiety and excessive worry
- Fear of further violence
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Sleep disturbances
- Fatigue and reduced concentration
- Emotional numbness
- Social withdrawal

Mrs. A reported experiencing panic whenever her husband returned home intoxicated. She remained hyper vigilant and constantly anticipated conflict, indicating trauma-related stress responses.

The survivor's coping mechanisms were primarily passive, including silence, avoidance, and emotional suppression. These strategies provided temporary protection but contributed to long-term psychological deterioration.

3. Family Assessment

The family assessment revealed a highly patriarchal household structure where decision-making authority rested exclusively with the husband.

Family Characteristics

- Male-dominated power structure
- Frequent marital conflicts
- Poor communication patterns
- Lack of emotional support
- Inadequate conflict-resolution mechanisms

The husband exhibited controlling behaviour, monitored the survivor's interactions, and restricted communication with her natal family. The in-laws minimized the violence and encouraged her to adjust rather than seek help.

The children had witnessed multiple incidents of domestic violence, placing them at risk for emotional and behavioural problems.

4. Social Assessment

The survivor's social network was extremely limited.

Social Challenges

- Isolation from relatives
- Reduced participation in community activities
- Fear of social judgment
- Stigma associated with marital problems
- Lack of awareness regarding support services

Mrs. A avoided sharing her experiences due to fear of blame and community criticism. She believed disclosure would bring shame to her family.

5. Economic Assessment

Economic abuse was a significant component of the violence.

Economic Issues

- Complete dependence on spouse
- No personal income
- Limited access to household finances
- Restricted financial decision-making
- Lack of employment opportunities

Her husband controlled all financial resources and frequently denied money for basic household needs. Financial dependence significantly reduced her ability to leave the abusive relationship.

6. Risk Assessment

A risk assessment was conducted to determine the immediate safety concerns.

Risk Factors

- Escalating physical violence
- Husband's alcohol abuse
- Threats of abandonment
- Presence of children during violent episodes
- Social isolation
- Financial dependence

Protective Factors

- Strong motivation to protect children
- Willingness to seek counselling
- Supportive neighbour
- Access to PARIHAR services
- Basic educational background

Intervention Process

A survivor-cantered and multidisciplinary intervention plan was developed to ensure safety, emotional recovery, legal empowerment, and long-term rehabilitation.

Phase I: Crisis Intervention

Immediate Safety Planning

The primary objective was to ensure the survivor's immediate safety.

Actions included:

- Establishing rapport and trust
- Conducting risk assessment
- Developing a personalized safety plan
- Identifying emergency contacts
- Providing information about shelter services
- Educating her about crisis response options

The counsellor reassured Mrs. A that the violence was not her fault and validated her experiences.

Emotional Stabilization

Initial counselling focused on reducing emotional distress.

Techniques used:

- Active listening
- Empathic responding
- Emotional ventilation
- Reassurance
- Crisis counselling

These interventions helped reduce anxiety and enabled the survivor to express her emotions openly.

Phase II: Individual Counselling

The survivor participated in regular counselling sessions over six months.

Therapeutic Goals

- Restore self-esteem
- Reduce self-blame
- Strengthen coping skills
- Enhance emotional resilience
- Promote self-determination

Counselling Strategies

Cognitive Restructuring

The counsellor challenged irrational beliefs such as:

- "I deserve this punishment."
- "A good wife tolerates violence."
- "I cannot survive independently."

These beliefs were gradually replaced with healthier perspectives emphasizing dignity, rights, and self-worth.

Trauma-Informed Counselling

Sessions focused on:

- Understanding trauma reactions
- Managing fear and anxiety
- Developing emotional regulation skills
- Building resilience

Strength-Based Approach

The counsellor highlighted:

- Her courage in seeking help
- Her commitment to her children
- Her problem-solving abilities
- Her potential for independence

This approach increased confidence and hope.

Phase III: Family Intervention

Separate Sessions with Husband

The husband was invited for counselling.

Objectives included:

- Increasing accountability
- Identifying triggers of violent behaviour
- Addressing communication problems

- Promoting non-violent conflict resolution

Couple Counselling

Joint sessions were conducted only after assessing the survivor's safety.

Areas addressed:

- Communication skills
- Conflict management
- Shared responsibilities
- Emotional expression

Ground rules were established to ensure respectful interaction.

Alcohol-Related Intervention

The husband was educated regarding:

- Effects of alcohol on family functioning
- Impact of violence on children
- Need for behavioural change

Referrals were suggested for de-addiction support.

Phase IV: Legal Intervention

Legal empowerment formed an important component of rehabilitation.

Legal Awareness Sessions

The survivor received information regarding:

- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Right to residence
- Protection orders
- Maintenance rights
- Child custody rights
- Police complaint procedures

Documentation

The counsellor assisted in:

- Maintaining records of abuse
- Collecting evidence
- Understanding legal processes

Legal awareness reduced fear and increased confidence in decision-making.

Phase V: Economic Rehabilitation

Recognizing financial dependence as a major barrier, efforts were made to enhance economic self-sufficiency.

Vocational Guidance

The survivor expressed interest in tailoring and stitching.

Actions included:

- Referral to skill-development programs
- Career counselling
- Entrepreneurship guidance

Financial Literacy

Training focused on:

- Budget management
- Savings practices
- Financial planning

- Accessing government welfare schemes

Economic empowerment increased her sense of control and reduced dependency.

Phase VI: Child-Focused Intervention

Children exposed to domestic violence often experience emotional consequences.

Child Welfare Measures

- Assessment of emotional well-being
- Psycho education for the mother
- Parenting support
- Guidance on creating a safe home environment

The mother was encouraged to maintain open communication with her children and provide emotional reassurance.

Phase VII: Follow-Up and Rehabilitation

Regular follow-up sessions were conducted to monitor progress and prevent relapse.

Follow-Up Objectives

- Assess safety
- Reinforce coping strategies
- Monitor family dynamics
- Strengthen support systems
- Encourage continued self-development

Rehabilitation Outcomes

After six months:

- Anxiety levels reduced significantly.
- Self-confidence improved.
- Awareness of rights increased.
- Economic independence began to develop.
- Social support networks expanded.
- Violent incidents reduced substantially.
- Parenting confidence improved.
- Overall quality of life showed positive improvement.

Social Work Perspective

The intervention reflected the core social work principles of:

- Individualization
- Acceptance
- Self-determination
- Confidentiality
- Empowerment
- Social justice
- Strength-based practice

The case demonstrates that effective intervention in domestic violence requires coordinated psychosocial, legal, economic, and community-based support systems. Long-term recovery is enhanced when survivors are empowered to regain control over their lives while receiving sustained professional and social support.

Outcomes

Personal Outcomes

After six months of continuous intervention and follow-up support through PARIHAR, significant positive changes were observed in Mrs. A's psychological and emotional well-being. Initially, she presented with symptoms of anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, and emotional exhaustion. Through individual counselling and emotional support, she gradually developed healthier coping mechanisms and greater emotional stability.

Mrs. A reported a substantial reduction in anxiety symptoms, particularly those associated with fear of her husband's behaviour and uncertainty about the future. She became more capable of expressing her thoughts and emotions without fear and demonstrated improved decision-making abilities. Her self-confidence increased considerably as she began to recognize her strengths and rights as an individual.

Furthermore, the legal awareness sessions empowered her with knowledge regarding domestic violence laws, protection mechanisms, and available support services. This enhanced awareness reduced feelings of helplessness and enabled her to make informed choices regarding her personal safety and family life.

Key Personal Outcomes

- Significant reduction in anxiety and emotional distress.
- Improved self-esteem and confidence.
- Better emotional regulation and coping skills.
- Increased awareness of legal rights and protections.
- Enhanced ability to make independent decisions.
- Greater sense of personal safety and control over life circumstances.

Family Outcomes

The intervention process included family counselling and efforts to improve communication within the household. As a result, there was a noticeable reduction in the frequency and intensity of violent incidents reported by the survivor.

The husband became more aware of the negative consequences of his behaviour on the family and children. Counselling sessions encouraged accountability and facilitated discussions regarding healthy communication, mutual respect, and non-violent conflict resolution.

Although challenges remained, family interactions became less hostile and more constructive. Mrs. A reported feeling safer within the home environment, and both partners demonstrated a greater willingness to engage in dialogue rather than confrontation.

Key Family Outcomes

- Reduction in domestic violence incidents.
- Improved communication between spouses.
- Increased accountability and responsibility demonstrated by the husband.
- Enhanced understanding of family roles and responsibilities.
- Improved family functioning and emotional climate.
- Greater commitment to resolving conflicts through discussion rather than aggression.

Economic Outcomes

Economic dependence had been a major factor contributing to Mrs. A's vulnerability and inability to seek assistance earlier. Through vocational guidance and referrals provided during the intervention process, she enrolled in a tailoring and stitching training program.

Participation in skill-development activities enhanced her confidence and provided opportunities for income generation. Over time, she began undertaking small tailoring

assignments from neighbours and community members, which enabled her to earn a modest but meaningful income. The experience of earning independently contributed significantly to her sense of empowerment and reduced complete financial dependence on her husband.

Key Economic Outcomes

- Successful participation in tailoring and vocational training.
- Development of marketable skills.
- Generation of part-time income.
- Increased financial literacy and budgeting skills.
- Improved confidence regarding future employment opportunities.
- Greater financial independence and economic security.

Parenting Outcomes

The domestic violence situation had negatively affected the emotional well-being of the children, who had witnessed repeated conflicts and episodes of abuse. Counselling interventions focused on helping Mrs. A understand the impact of domestic violence on children and develop positive parenting practices.

As her emotional health improved, she became more emotionally available and responsive to her children's needs. The reduction in family conflict contributed to a safer and more nurturing environment within the household.

The children demonstrated improved emotional adjustment, and the mother-child relationship became stronger and more supportive.

Key Parenting Outcomes

- Creation of a more stable and emotionally secure home environment.
- Improved mother-child communication.
- Increased emotional support provided to children.
- Better understanding of children's psychological needs.
- Reduction in children's exposure to family conflict.
- Strengthened parent-child relationships.

Discussion

This case study illustrates the complex and multidimensional impact of domestic violence on women's psychological well-being, family relationships, social functioning, and economic security. The survivor experienced not only physical abuse but also emotional, social, and financial forms of violence that collectively affected her quality of life.

The findings demonstrate that domestic violence cannot be addressed solely through legal action or crisis management. Effective intervention requires a holistic and integrated approach that addresses emotional recovery, safety planning, legal empowerment, social support, family dynamics, and economic rehabilitation simultaneously.

The case highlights the importance of survivor-centered practice, where interventions are guided by the needs, preferences, and strengths of the survivor rather than imposing predetermined solutions. Through counselling and empowerment-based interventions, Mrs. A was able to regain confidence, rebuild her self-worth, and move toward greater independence.

Several factors contributed significantly to her recovery:

Factors Contributing to Recovery

Professional Counselling

Counselling provided a safe and supportive space for emotional expression, healing, and personal growth. It helped the survivor process trauma, reduce self-blame, and develop adaptive coping strategies.

Timely Intervention

Early engagement with support services prevented further escalation of violence and facilitated access to necessary resources.

Legal Awareness

Knowledge of legal rights and protection mechanisms empowered the survivor and reduced feelings of powerlessness.

Social Support

Encouragement from supportive individuals and professional service providers strengthened resilience and reduced social isolation.

Economic Empowerment

Vocational training and income-generating opportunities enhanced self-reliance and reduced financial vulnerability.

Survivor Resilience

The survivor's determination to protect her children and improve her circumstances played a crucial role in achieving positive outcomes.

The case also reveals that barriers such as social stigma, fear of family rejection, economic dependency, and concern for children often delay help-seeking among women experiencing domestic violence. Addressing these barriers remains a critical challenge for social service providers.

Social Work Implications

The case underscores the vital role of professional social work practice in responding to domestic violence. Social workers serve as advocates, counsellors, educators, facilitators, and coordinators of services that support survivor recovery and empowerment.

Implications for Practice

Early Identification and Intervention

Social workers should actively identify signs of domestic violence in healthcare, educational, and community settings to facilitate early intervention.

Community Awareness and Prevention

Awareness programs should challenge societal norms that justify or normalize violence against women and promote healthy family relationships.

Access to Comprehensive Services

Efforts should be made to ensure survivors have access to counselling, legal aid, shelter services, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities.

Survivor-Centered Practice

Interventions must respect survivors' choices, autonomy, and right to self-determination while prioritizing safety and well-being.

Economic Empowerment Initiatives

Social workers should facilitate skill development, employment opportunities, and financial literacy programs that promote long-term independence.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Strong partnerships among social workers, police, legal professionals, healthcare providers, and non-governmental organizations are essential for effective service delivery.

Advocacy and Policy Development

Social workers should advocate for policies that strengthen protection mechanisms, improve service accessibility, and promote gender equality.

Conclusion

The journey of Mrs. A demonstrates that recovery from domestic violence is both possible and achievable when survivors receive timely, comprehensive, and sustained support. The integrated intervention provided through PARIHAR enabled her to overcome fear, rebuild self-confidence, gain awareness of her rights, and move toward economic self-sufficiency.

The case highlights the transformative impact of coordinated psychosocial, legal, and economic interventions in promoting survivor safety and empowerment. It also reinforces the importance of adopting a holistic, survivor-centered approach in addressing domestic violence.

Ultimately, this case serves as evidence that with appropriate professional support, social acceptance, and access to resources, survivors of domestic violence can rebuild their lives, restore their dignity, and achieve long-term resilience and well-being.

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