

# **Prevalence, Causes and Mechanisms in Addressing Violence against Women (VAW) in Sri Lanka**

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## **Abstract**

Women have become main contributors to the societies across the world as they play multitasking roles in their families. Although they have gained achieved great heights, when it comes to both the private and public spheres, we can identify that some women are discriminated and marginalized. In this context in the present world many countries including Sri Lanka have understood the importance of women's empowerment and have implemented a number of policies and mechanisms to protect women from violence against women (VAW). Even in the presence of such actions, the rates of VAW are high in numbers. Therefore, in this context it is very essential to examine the root causes for this situation. This research examines the level of awareness in the general public on VAW, based on the three different contextual areas in the country. Through this research findings, an attempt has been made to draw attention to how human rights education can be used to eliminate VAW.

**Keywords:** Violence against women, root causes, Sri Lankan context, human rights education, awareness

## **Introduction**

Achieving gender equality is one of the debatable themes in the current world discourse. At present some scholars and academics have emphasized the importance establishing gender equality throughout the world. Global organizations including the United Nations (UN), have taken to account that the current practices are still contributing to violate gender equality in multiple ways. Achieving gender equality therefore

has become one of the UN sustainable developmental goals. Since more women than ever before are both educated and are participating in the labour market, and there is a greater awareness that gender equality is of paramount importance in efforts to reduce poverty and boost economic development, (International Labour Organization, 2018:07). It is mentioned that they have become equal contributors as men to the societies around the world by playing multitasking roles in their families. With this, their traditional role as a mother in the private sphere, whose primary concern was her family has changed into a more diversified one. In the traditional family setup in Sri Lanka, a good wife is one who obeys her husband, remains silent in his presence, avoids socializing outside the family and attends to household chores and child care for her family. Although women have a great potential to contribute to the development of the world, the problem is that when it comes to real-life practice, they are clearly being discriminated and have become voiceless and vulnerable in public and private spheres. As mentioned before, United Nations has dedicated their 5<sup>th</sup> sustainable development goal to emphasize the need of getting urgent action to eliminate the root causes of discrimination against women. According to UN, 49 countries still have lack of laws to protect women from domestic violence. Apart from this, based on data obtained from 87 countries, 1 in 5 women and girls - under the age of 50 will have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months. Harmful practices, such as child marriage, steal the childhood of 15 million girls under the age of 18 years annually and women do 2.6 times more unpaid care and domestic work than men (UN Women, 2018) which is a challenging situation to the entire world.

However, when paying close attention, evidently, it is quite common for women to fall into the prey of violence against women. According to the declaration on the elimination of violence against women, the concept of violence against women is defined as ‘Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private

life' (The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993). Apart from this 2<sup>nd</sup> article in the declaration, the article has emphasized the term VAW can be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following: (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking of women and forced prostitution; (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs (The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993). Therefore, based on this broad definition VAW can result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women which affect their quality of life in many ways. In the Sri Lankan context, article 12 of the 1978 constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, clearly provides equality for all men and women and nondiscriminatory treatment based on the sex to establish equality in the country while stating that 'No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any of such grounds' in article 12(2) (Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 1978:04). Further legal enactments and international conventions have provided supportive backup to prevent VAW in Sri Lanka (Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, 2016).

Even in the presence of a sufficient legal background, the expected outcome for prevention of VAW does not meet the practicality. According to The Sri Lankan Police statistics in 2016, there were 9042 reported crimes against women and among them only 4986 cases were resolved (Ministry of Public Administration, Management and Law & Order, 2017:09). As stated by Women in Need, every three out of five women have become victimized of domestic violence and only as low as 1% of

the total victims have used the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, No34 of 2005 to obtain redress. Their statistical findings have shown that once every 90 minutes a woman is raped and 97% of the rapists face no legal consequences (Women in Need, 2019). Therefore, these facts indicate that the violence against women is one of the main issues that need to be addressed in the present Sri Lankan context. In the aforesaid context, the main focus of this study was to investigate the level of awareness of women on the VAW, women's rights, and current mechanisms to prevent VAW in Sri Lanka.

When investigating the Sri Lankan situation, there are number of literary sources that have tried to address the matter of violence against women. In Edirisinghe's study on gender-based violence on post- conflict Sri Lanka and in 'Country profile on Gender-based violence of Sri Lanka' by the World Health Organization, Sri Lanka, in 2018, point out that the high number of cases of gender-based violence against women indicate the considerable problems that many women have faced in their daily lives. Therefore, these literary sources have recommended to address this problem with mechanisms such as policy implementation, active reaction at police and judiciary levels, providing support and assistance etc. (Edirisinghe, 2018:18-21; World Health Organization, 2018). 'Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to Address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Sri Lanka 2016 - 2020' by the Ministry of Women and Child affairs in 2016, has clearly identified the international and national legal frameworks that implemented to prevent these types of matters. Therefore, a majority of previous studies have concluded & emphasized the importance of a strong legal framework rather than creating merely awareness of this matter.

Additionally, Chulani Kodikara's work on 'Only Until the Rice is Cooked? The Domestic Violence Act, Familial Ideology and Cultural Narratives in Sri Lanka' has described how women are victimized inside and outside the household while discussing the ideological and conceptual background of this problem. Here, she has discussed how Sri Lankan society is generalizing and legitimizing the violence that occurs

between married men and women within the cultural framework in the society by using the popular phrases such as '*violence in the home is only until the rice is cooked*' which translates as, '*ගෙදර රත්වූ බත ඉදෙනකන් විතරයි*' and '*Don't give fires in the house to the outside*' which translates as, '*ගෙදර ගිනි පිටට දෙනේන එපා*' (Kodikara, 2012: 20). Other than this, in her work the author has discussed the national legal framework which is established to act against violence against women while pointing out some implementation gaps between the law and practice in the current Sri Lankan society. According to her, when law cases are filed, few implementation gaps due to the familial ideology continue to operate and manifest, even in court proceedings. Therefore, in her writing she has thoroughly discussed this matter while arguing how the Domestic Violence Act has been politicized.

Also in Rajan's work of '*Rethinking Law and Violence: The Domestic Violence (Prevention) Bill in India in Gender & History*' he has argued that the mere enactment of laws in itself is insufficient to ensure sufficient protection of women from violence. Therefore these literature findings reflect that even after a sufficient legal back up with provisions from the 1978 Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, which has ensured equality for every citizen under the fundamental rights chapter and some acts and conventions like Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, no 34 of 2005, Women's Charter, approved by the Sri Lankan government in 1993, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional protocol, VAW in Sri Lanka is still high in numbers. In this context there is a clear research gap in this area to investigate the women's perceptions on actual causes, mechanisms and prevalence for VAW in Sri Lankan society which is very much enclosed with cultural norms and practices.

### **Study Design and Methodology**

Based on the above facts and a thorough literature review, this research was directed to address the rationale behind the VAW that continuously happened in high numbers in the Sri Lankan society even in the presence

of a legal system to protect women from violence. In investigating this, the current study was based on the positivist approach and mixed method which has used both the quantitative and qualitative data. Here, six focus group discussions (FGDs) and six key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted to cover the qualitative aspects of the study. As for the purpose of covering the quantitative part of the study a field survey was conducted for a randomly selected sample of 60 women from the three selected divisions. The purpose of using random sampling on all three districts was to make a comparison of the participants' perceptions and awareness on the causes, mechanisms and prevalence of VAW. This sample was equally divided among the three districts representing 20 respondents each. In order to receive a ground level understanding, this study conducted as a survey in rural areas in different districts. When selecting the study sample, Gampaha, Matara and Moneragala districts were chosen as they have reported a high number of incidents in terms of violence against women according to the police headquarters statistics in Sri Lanka. According to the distribution of grave crime abstract for the year 2018 in Police Headquarters, there were 61 incidents in Gampaha, 129 in Matara and 76 in Moneragala districts during 2018 (Sri Lanka Police, 2018). Based on the above details, this study was conducted on Weligama in Matara district, Batuwatta in Gampaha district and Weliyaya in Moneragala district to identify the different aspects of VAW. Here, only five houses were skipped after every household chosen to ensure maximum spread of the sample.

### **Results and Discussion**

In Table 1 and 2, number of respondents by their age and number of respondents by their education in the study sample were summarized.

Table 1: No. of respondents by their age range

Age Range	No. of Respondents
18-28	24
29-38	15
39-48	07
49-58	11
59 and above	03

Table 2: No. of respondents by their educational qualification

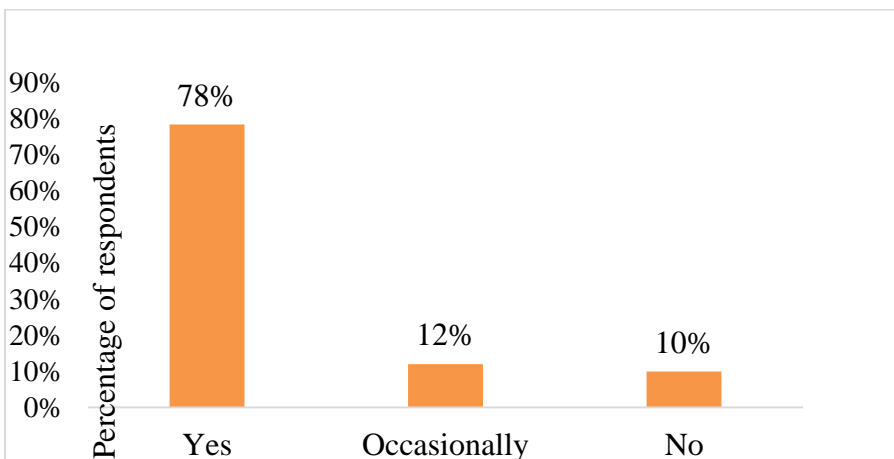
Educational Qualification	No of respondents
Degree/ Higher degree Level	03
Up to Advanced Level	07
Up to Ordinary Level	11
Above Ordinary Level	01
Grade 5 pass and above	03
Up to Grade 5	09
Never went to school	26

When considering the demographical data of Tables 1 and 2, these respondents belonged to different levels of social stratification. When considering their occupations, it can be identified that most of the respondents were engaged in various types of occupations such as studying, office work, teaching in schools, serving as police officers, attendants and nurses in the hospitals, garment factory workers, labourers, self-employees and housewives representing diverse levels of the society.

In the questionnaire based survey, both close and open ended questions were included. In the close ended questions, there were multiple answers to choose from. Based on their responses, it is identifiable that most of the respondents, nearly 61% were aware that VAW is a crime and it is against the Sri Lankan law. Among them 21.66% were not aware that it was a crime according to the Sri Lankan legal framework and 18.33% were not sure about the answer. However, when considering above fact, it has revealed a very interesting point that among these respondents 86% were considering VAW against the law but not as an absolute crime. This reveals a rather poor level of women's awareness on VAW in the country.

Additionally, when considering the awareness of types of sexual violence that they can face in day to day life; raping, sexual harassments, forced abortions, beating, murdering and burning are the top 6 answers given by respondents. According to their answers most of them were only aware of the physical and sexual harm (85%) while psychological harassments were not recognized by them as VAW. Among the respondents, only 15% were aware of the fact that VAW can occur in both physical and psychological means. This highlights the fact that the awareness of VAW is not in a satisfactory level in the selected areas.

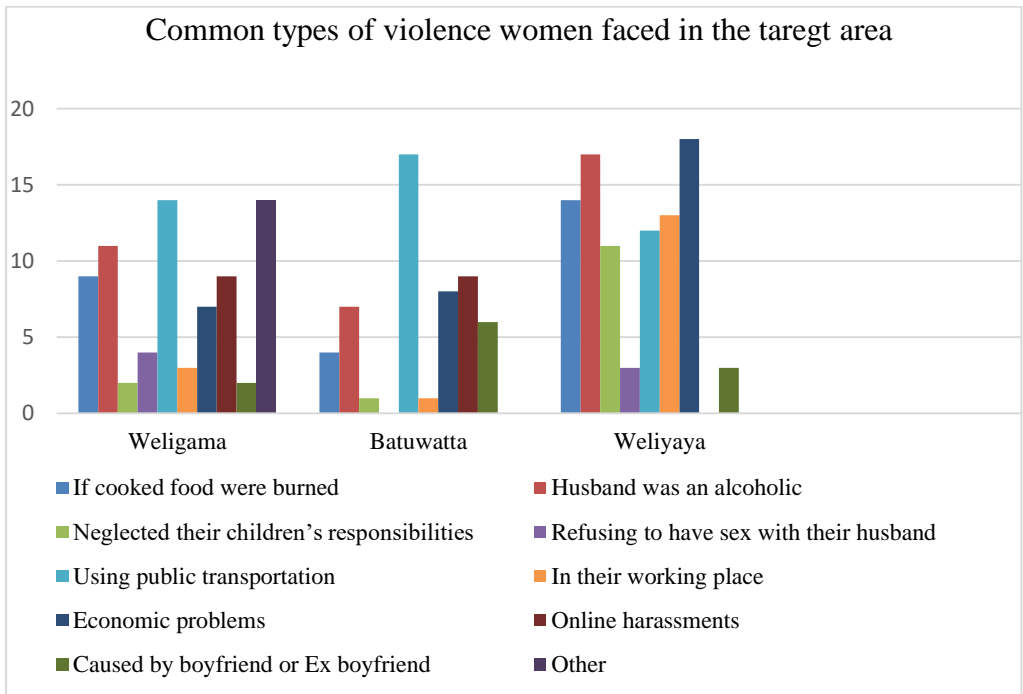
Figure 1: Being a victim of VAW



As figure 1 indicates, the frequency is high for those who are facing these types of violence. Among them 78% of respondents have faced these types of actions on a frequent basis and another 12% of respondents have faced these types of violence occasionally. 10% have not undergone any such kind of experience. Here, most respondents who have faced these harassments have experienced them while using public transportation such as buses and trains (Figure 2). When it comes to the respondents who barely faced these types of sexual harassments, most of them revealed that they are using their private vehicles and three-wheelers for transportation.

When looking at the root causes of VAW that occur at the households, the survey data and interview findings suggest that primarily these occur in the households due to deep or instant anger. For instance, if cooked food were burned, if their husband was an alcohol addict, if women have neglected their children's responsibilities knowingly or unknowingly and also if they have refused to have sex with their husband etc. Such domestic aggressions and grudges often burst out in the forms of extreme arguments and torture and eventually results in VAW. Also, women can have commonly become subjected to sexual harassment in their work places. Terminating relationships with their boyfriends or divorce also often lead women to get victimized not only by their former partner but also by the entire society. Breaking up with someone who was in a close relationship often results in various kinds of threatening and blackmailing, while exposing women to the direct blame and pressure from their society which in turn impairs their future progress and make women vulnerable.

Figure 2: Types of Violence faced by the women in the target area



When considering the statistics in figure 2, the range of violence that women faced vary between different areas. As noted in Weligama, the 'other' factor was reported frequently in significantly (14 votes by the respondents). Here, the respondents have mentioned that since coastal area of Weligama is one of the famous tourist attractions, that tourism in this area has created an unsafe environment for children, young girls and women in the region. According to the respondents in Weligama has a favorable environment for some unethical actions such as the use and dealing of drugs, maintaining illegal affairs etc. resulting in many sociocultural problems. In this context, some women and girls were knowingly and unknowingly trapped in unacceptable affairs and unhealthy relationships that can cause problems between parents and children and husbands and wives.

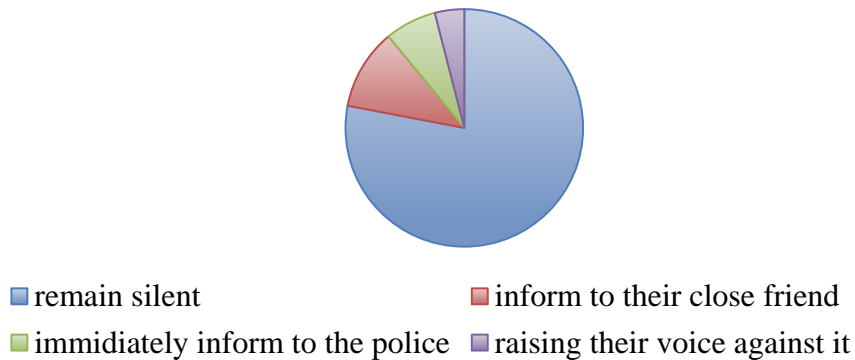
In the Batuwatta area, use of public transport (17 votes) and online and technology based violence (9 votes) were mentioned as a common type of violence that women face in their day today lives. According to the respondents, while they were travelling by bus or train, they have faced harassment, especially in the form of unnecessary touching and other unpleasant physical, verbal and psychological experiences. According to their opinion, most of these troublesome acts are caused by elder or middle-aged men. In such situations, sometimes these women respond by raising their voice against them, but the arguments with the perpetrators make women become helpless in this type of situations as the society around them is not supportive to seek justice for such maltreatments.

When it comes to Weliyaya, in Moneragala district, their economic problems, especially such as troubles created around micro finance loans and alcoholic habits of men cause most women to face various forms of violence. As Moneragala is the highest poverty reported district in Sri Lanka (Department of Census and Statistics, 2016:19), most people who live there face many financial problems (18 votes) that create socio-economical insecurities. In this situation, many companies give them micro finance assistance as loans. However, receiving these loans does not necessarily provide solutions to their financial struggles and most of the time these people hardly payback their monthly interest. These loan schemes tie up the lives of the poor as they now have another struggle to pay back the unpaid loans and the interest. Such financial situations have created many problems, especially within the family setup. Consequently, women get beaten up and tortured by their husbands unnecessarily and some women in such rural areas commit suicide due to feeling that there's no way out. Also according to the respondents, alcohol addiction of men (17 votes) was another main cause of VAW in this area. Their low level of financial stability leads to these types of misbehavior of their husbands. This has a direct impact on VAW as women are used as a target to relieve men's frustration.

Considering the entire study sample, most respondents (61%), have experienced such violence while using public transport. According to the survey data and interview findings, women become victimized at their households as well as in workplaces to various extents. This is well evident and common in all three districts. Women in Weliyaya has mostly experienced such abusive treatments due to the alcoholic habits of their husbands (17 votes). In Weligama and Batuwatta, cyber bullying and cyber based violence such as threats via social media such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Viber; threatening/blackmailing them to perform certain acts without consent in order to avoid their personal photos or videos (often exposing nudity) being published in public has become a novel threat. This is somewhat common in study areas that are urbanized and exposed to the use of novel technological appliances (18 votes). Therefore, in these areas, mainly, some young people have become vulnerable to such threats and these abusive uses of technology introducing new forms of VAW and thereby greatly impacting the Sri Lankan society. Additionally, some elderly women in the study sample also have experiences of being victimized by unknown callers and social media users on Viber, WhatsApp, Imo and etc.

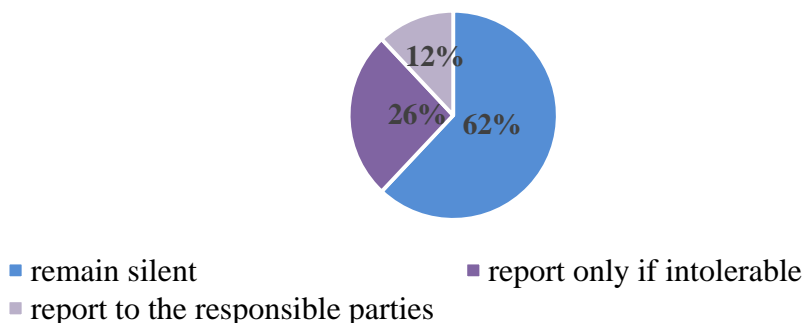
When focusing on the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, survivors of most incidents report that violence was caused to them by their close relatives & associates like their father, husband, brother, brother-in-law, mother-in-law, friends, boyfriends or ex-boyfriends. This suggests that closely associated people have easy access to cause VAW. Apart from these parties VAW happens by the hands of unknown parties such as persons in public transport, owners of fake Facebook accounts, by hacking social media accounts, giving missed calls to unknown numbers, editing photos were brought out by respondents during the qualitative section of the study to describe the perpetrator and the victim's relationship.

Figure 3: Reactions towards VAW



Focusing on the reactions towards VAW, figure 3 and interviews revealed that most of the time women prefer to stay silent when they become the victims of the violence or sexual harassment. Among the responses, a majority prefer to inform such incidents only to their close friends instead of informing responsible parties like the police, women’s affair hotlines or raising their voice against them in such instances. An associated problem is that this type of responses to VAW can create only a friendly environment to the perpetrator to comfortably continue such actions in the society in future. Therefore, when focusing on this, it shows that there is a clear attitudinal problem within women that makes VAW unreported or underreported unless it becomes extreme, unavoidable or unbearable.

Figure 4: Reactions against Domestic Violence



As shown on figure 4, the most prominently associated reactions against VAW and such incidents at domestic level was to remain silent (62%). The time they decide to report incidents of domestic violence was mentioned as only after such incidents become intolerable or increased in frequency (26%). This finding has shown that some women believe that some amount of physical, psychological or verbal harassments should be tolerated within their households to certain extent until they become uncontrollable. However, it is interesting to see that 56% of respondents has justified their answer that such tolerance was essential to keep their families/marriages intact. According to the key informant interviews and the study sample, most of time women suffer from these types of violence from their husbands and close family members, but prefer to stay silent because of their children, and the fear to report these types of complaints to the police or other responsible parties as they believe it will affect their children's future negatively. However, unreported violence which acts as an indirect acceptance of VAW, makes women more vulnerable to aggravated forms of maltreatments and they would not stand on their own feet to find justice for them. Sometimes they become reluctant to raise their voice for their rights independently since some of them are dependents of their husbands. These responses show the level of women's economic capability, the status of dependency and various familial bonds and obligations that make women prone to VAW in the Sri Lankan society.

In investigating the awareness of the legal mechanisms and aids related to VAW, the study shows that the current level of awareness is not adequate. Even though almost all the respondents said that they know where to report cases of VAW and from where to obtain free legal advice, none of them could mention an institute from which they could obtain such services other than the Sri Lankan Police. Other options such as Sri Lanka women's Bureau, Women's Hotline, Legal Aids Commission, cybercrimes investigation units, Sri Lanka Computer Emergency Readiness Team (SLCERT), and NGOs like Sumithrayo, Women In Need (WIN) were not mentioned by any of the respondents who participated in this interview. Not knowing such institutional

involvements and where to seek proper help if they need to share their concerns and receive assistance surely put women in a disadvantage sphere. This finding is highlighting the ignorance and unawareness as a major contributing factor that lie behind the scene of VAW. When considering awareness of the legal provisions, conventions and acts which describe and emphasize the actions against VAW, many respondents' awareness was not nearly accurate. According to the findings, respondents were only aware about constitutional provisions (41.33%) and the Prevention of Domestic violence act no 34 of 2005 (36%). Most of them were not even aware of the provisions of the penal code, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Women's Charter etc. all of which could support them further when they are in need.

According to Foucault, a person would learn how to write, speak, think, and behave through discursive practices that shape our minds, bodies and emotions. Also in this, power and knowledge interplay in the formation of these discourses (Foucault: 1990, 1980). Therefore, in this context we can identify how some patriarchal practices very strategically justify these types of actions against women while violating their rights due to the lack of awareness and necessary knowledge.

Other than the lack of necessary knowledge and awareness, social attitudes and cultural norms constantly contribute to create a favorable environment to continue VAW in the Sri Lankan context. Since Sri Lanka still operates under the patriarchal norms, society believes and accepts that the male is superior to female. Even when declaring The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it was identified that the VAW is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men. This prevents the fulfilled advancement of women, and therefore violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a

subordinate position compared to men (The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993).

Studying women's perspective on the violence that they face in their day to day life is crucial while discussing how familial ideology and cultural narratives operate within the society. This was proven in Kodikara's idea that the Sri Lankan society was generalizing and legitimizing the violence that occur between married men and women within the cultural framework by using the popular phrases '*violence in the home is only until the rice is cooked*', '*ගෙදර රණ්ඩු බන ඉදෙනකන් විතරයි*' and '*Don't give fires in the house to the outside*' '*ගෙදර ගිනි පිටට දෙන්න එපා*' (Kodikara, 2012:20). Therefore, this clearly shows that under the traditional set up both men and women seem to agree with the norm 'a good wife obeys her husband even if she disagrees with his view and actions'. Women are reluctant to go beyond the boundaries long created by the Sri Lankan society. In Sri Lanka there is a traditional saying that domestic violence lasts only until the rice is cooked (Kodikara, 2012:21) shows how the society is culturally and socially influenced to tolerate household issues under the impression that such issues would be resolved shortly without the need of any actions against them. VAW is also a kind of manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women in the Sri Lankan society and still the society tries to preserve and maintain such an imbalanced distribution of power between men and women placing men in a higher position.

Women's reaction towards actions of the perpetrator by just remaining silent or tolerating the harassment could only pave the way for future incidents of VAW and therefore it is not favorable to the progress of the society. For example, women facing such incidents in the public transportation services move to other locations within the same bus to get away from the harasser, shift seats or take an alternative bus or train to protect themselves from such harassments. Fleeing from such harassment may temporarily save them for the moment but could result in more threats in future occasions to them or to the others in their society. Therefore, such actions and silence provide a favorable environment to

the perpetrator to continue their actions and unfortunately, this response towards the unacceptable actions of the harassers are not at all affirmative to reduce the burden of VAW in Sri Lanka.

With the findings in this study, it can be suggested that the Sri Lankan society needs a massive attitudinal change to take away the long-held fear in women to defend themselves in order to create a socially secure environment for women. This shows that 'fear' and 'shame' plays key roles in this matter in preventing women from seeking justice. For example one officer mentioned that threatening and exposing women's character on social media is one of the ways that perpetrators use to get hold of the victim, to force them into certain actions that can further harm them. When women face such abusive exposure, they usually do not seek justice in order to avoid further exposure such as that of herself or her family to criticism and humiliation. The law, if accessed at all, is a last resort in these cases (De Alwis, Morseth, R. 2007:127). Continuous struggles that women face due to VAW has its root causes in cultural, social and attitudinal phenomena rather than not having access to legal support or provisions of law.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, among the causes of VAW, lack of awareness of the society on what is violence and the forms of violence one might experience, what rights peoples have and what actions can be taken regarding these types of matters have created the favorable environment to continuation of the VAW. Other than these causes, rapid misuse of technology and socially unsafe environment in both private and public spheres, remain contributory in addition to the attitudinal impact on VAW can be identified. Another major concern is that some women deny the means of help for VAW due to privacy issues. As evident in the interviews, some police stations do not have enough officers and especially female officers in the child and women's bureau. Therefore, sometimes the victims tend to conceal their experiences and underreport such cases in front of male officers. Also, according to the research

findings, it was mentioned that when some victims report to the police stations about such VAW, police officers themselves bring unusual proposals taking advantage of the situation. Therefore, the environment of the institute that receive the complaint can either encourage or discourage further actions against VAW in the area. This shows that negative attitudes within the law enforcement machineries also cause such crimes to go unrecorded or under-recorded. Inadequate knowledge about the other institutions that could help women have also played key roles in reluctance to seek assistance after facing VAW. The need of strengthening up the gender sensitivity in these institutions and the need of creating awareness regarding when, why and where to report VAW in Sri Lanka are truly a major requirement to reduce VAW.

As one important aspect to combat VAW, the concept of Human Rights Education (HRE) can be mentioned. HRE can be used as a tool to empower women who are suffering from such injustice. Moreover, as Rajan elaborates, enacting laws are insufficient to ensure the protection of women from violence. It is essential to supplement them with knowledge about human rights at least to stand up for themselves. In the study, it was well observed that most of the respondents did not know about the rights that they have as a person and as a woman. Other than this, most of them did not have any idea about what type of remedies that they can take if they become a victim. This clearly point out that human rights cannot get protected by establishing legal instruments alone. Furthermore, protection of human rights is not the sole responsibility of NGOs, youth organizations or volunteer groups but a responsibility of the country and every citizen. Active community participation is vital to ensure human rights are protected by being aware, reporting and holding attitudes against the violation of human rights.

Therefore, it is better to introduce and expand the practice of human rights education. In this process state also has a major responsibility towards promoting it by introducing and expanding the practice of human rights education in a more systematic way to prevent occurrence of VAW in Sri Lanka. As Council of Europe defines HRE, it includes education,

training, raising awareness, information, practices and activities which aim equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behavior (Council of Europe, 2012). This can be mentioned as a process of learning about, learning through and learning for human rights. It is essential to ensure that it is understood, upheld and promoted by everyone. In order to do so, active contribution of the socialization factors like, family, friends, religious institutes, school, media etc. is needed. Therefore, the instances of VAW should be approached with the application of HRE for the sake of transformative action against VAW. This can also be proved by investigating Monisha Bajaj's study based on the Dalit community in India, as her study has proven that Human Rights Education can uplift the marginalized, voiceless or discriminated people's lives in a progressive way by giving them adequate strength and a voice to the voiceless. Similarly, Sri Lankan society requires adequate levels of HRE education, clear awareness of the legal setup and institutions of Sri Lanka that promote protection against VAW and the attitudinal change in the society to reduce the burden of VAW and to truly establish equality for citizens of Sri Lanka.

As few limitations of the study, the preliminary study was conducted based on three GN divisions which can be considered as semi-urban and rural areas. Therefore, the identification of different aspects and dimensions requires extensions of this study to both rural and urban areas. Also, the study was conducted only with female respondents. Therefore, it is providing only one aspect of the problem from a female point of view. Such unilateral opinions may only demonstrate one aspect of the problem, hence investigation is required on the male point of view on VAW. Also, the perspective of the perpetrator should be studied in future research. This study therefore may help as a baseline for future researchers to further investigate the root causes for VAW in Sri Lanka.

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