

It Takes Two to Tango?: Narrations of Marital Abuse in Fiji¹

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Abstract

This paper examines domestic violence from the perspective of iTaukei men abused by their wives within an indigenous society. Indigenous Fijian society is typically regarded as culturally 'macho' and male dominated. The paper finds that women's anger and frustration over their husband's behaviours and the many social obligations (village fund-raising, contributions to birthdays, weddings and deaths etc) that couples feel obligated to, appeared to be the main 'trigger' of abuse against men. This paper describes the experiences of both men and women; men on their experiences of abuse and women on their roles as perpetrators of abuse while in a married relationship.

The Problem and its Context

The iTaukei community contains a mixture of Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian attitudes and values that are both hierarchical and patriarchal. Males are considered heads of households and hold power and authority in their communities. These characteristics of the iTaukei culture give the impression that domestic violence is a gendered problem in Fiji. Some commentators and researchers like Kernsmith (2005) and Berns (2001) who believe that violence has a cultural element, have blamed patriarchal and hierarchical settings for incidences of domestic abuse. Most feminist researches in the field of domestic violence agree with a radical position and have exclusively blamed patriarchy as the explanation for womens' victimization. The patriarchal system has adopted

¹ *It takes two to tango* may be used to mean 'a quarrel requires two disputing parties'. It is therefore an expression which is often used in situations in which both partners in the dispute should or could be said to share responsibility.

gender-role stereotypes that women cannot be abusers and men cannot be abused (Berns, 2001). For this reason, feminists have asserted over time that women have been limited on their opportunities and have become vulnerable to a number of abuses.

This study examines one aspect of domestic violence - that perpetrated by females on males; of women on men in a marital relationship, in an indigenous Fijian community. The study was conducted within an urban area in the municipality of Suva. Data was collected using a survey questionnaire administered in English and Fijian languages. 216 married persons were interviewed (n=216)² supplemented by a small number of face-to-face interviews (n = 16; 8 men and 8 women) to help identify and extract many of the more sensitive and complex issues associated with abusive behaviour. Field work was done from September to November 2008.³

Incidence of Abuse

Abuse, included in this study, are physical abuse, verbal abuse, financial abuse, sexual abuse and emotional/psychological abuse. Of the 108 males in the sample, 22 (20%) reported of not a single incidence of any form of abuse during their married life. In contrast 43 women (40%) reported to have never abused in their husbands in their married life. The 80% male response of abuse by their partners is a staggering incidence of domestic abuse of males by females. Even at the lower end, if female acknowledgement of their abuse of their partners is taken, 60% is a high figure.

In terms of overall incidences of abuse, physical abuse topped the list - 38% of all reported incidences of abuse were one form or the other of physical abuse, followed by verbal abuse, financial abuse, psychological abuse and sexual abuse. Table 1 shows the results on incidences of various categories of abuse. Each of the forms of abuse was characterised by a number of abuse activity. Table 2 shows the incidences of abuse by various abusive activities.

² This comprised 54 couples (108 respondents), and another set of 54 men and 54 women, all 108 married but not to each other, i.e. from the latter set of 54 families only one per family was selected in order to ensure that the responses were not affected by the presence of the non-respondent spouse. The questionnaires were filled in the homes of the 108 families.

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	Reported by Males	Reported by Females
Physical Abuse	37.5%	32.3%
Verbal Abuse	27.1%	34.8%
Financial Abuse	16.2%	20.4%
Psychological Abuse	14.2%	10.3%
Sexual Abuse	5.1%	2.3%

In total, the 108 men reported 743 abusive activities during their married life. The 108 females acknowledged 437 incidences of abuse by them towards their husbands. The single most recurring activity of abuse was 'being sworn at' (9%), followed by 'being shouted at' (7.3%), 'unjustly accused' (6.4%), 'money being withheld' (6.2%), 'objects thrown at them' (6.1%), 'pushed' (5.6%), 'slapped' (5.5%), 'money taken from them without permission' (5.4%), 'valuables destroyed' (5%), and 'hit with an object' (4.5%).

Main circumstances that give rise to men's experiences of abuse

To understand the prevalence of abuse, possible causes of and contributing factors to spousal violence that men experience must be documented. It is relevant to note that the causes of and contributing factors to spousal abuse experienced by iTaukei men are discussed differently. In this study, causes of abuse are considered primary factors (like anger) whereby they are regarded as directly responsible for the perpetration of abuse. On this note, contributing factors are considered secondary features (like too many social obligations, failure to communicate their whereabouts) that are responsible for the cause (anger) of violence. These differences were identified from the pilot study.

Possible causes of abuse

The study found seven possible causes of abuse against men; namely anger, stress, inability to cope with social obligations, women's behaviour and personalities, lack of communication between spouses on domestic responsibilities, and pre-marital assumptions and expectations. Results identified women's anger as the predominant factor. Anger itself subsumed some of the other causes; often anger arose from stress, jealousy, extra-marital affairs, and the many social obligations (village fund-raising, contributions to birthdays, weddings and deaths etc) placed on the family.

Table 2: Incidence of Abuse of Males by Females in Married Households

	Male Report of Abuse by Females (n = 108)		Female Responses of Abuse by them (n = 108)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Physical Abuse				
Object thrown at them	39	6.1%	28	6.4%
Push	36	5.6%	24	5.5%
Slap	35	5.4%	19	4.3%
Hit with an object	29	4.5%	15	3.4%
Punch	21	3.3%	16	3.7%
Kick	19	3.0%	9	2.1%
Burnt with any hot object	8	1.2%	4	0.9%
Other physical means	54	8.4%	26	5.9%
Total	241	37.5%	141	32.3%
Financial Abuse				
Money withheld from him	40	6.2%	40	9.2%
Taken money without permission	35	5.4%	28	6.4%
Denied access to household information	29	4.5%	21	4.8%
Total	104	16.2%	89	20.4%
Sexual Abuse				
Unable to perform sexually due to abuse	15	2.3%	4	0.9%
Forced to have sex	13	2.0%	5	1.1%
Bullied to watch pornography	5	0.8%	1	0.2%
Total	33	5.1%	10	2.3%
Verbal Abuse				
Swore at	58	9.0%	53	12.1%
Shouted at	47	7.3%	48	11.0%
Unjustly accused	41	6.4%	26	5.9%
Called insulting names	28	4.4%	25	5.7%
Total	174	27.1%	152	34.8%
Psychological Abuse				
Valuables destroyed	32	5.0%	15	3.4%
Withheld love or attention	27	4.2%	20	4.6%
threatened with weapon	16	2.5%	6	1.4%
Acquaintance hit	8	1.2%	3	0.7%
Acquaintance threatened	8	1.2%	1	0.2%
Total	91	14.2%	45	10.3%
TOTAL INCIDENCES	643		437	

Anger

33% of men indicated their wives were angry while 36% of women mentioned anger as causes of their violent reactions towards their husbands. Women being angry appeared to be the main causes of men's experiences of spousal abuse. To provide support to these findings, Luisa, a female participant confirms reasons for her anger. She stated:

*I'm usually angry at my husband's behaviour. First, he does not tell me where he goes and second, there are just too many social obligations. We cannot afford it anymore. I cannot even buy new dresses for these functions!*⁴

Frustrations of any cause can lead to anger. Social learning theorist, Albert Bandurra (1977) identified many reasons why individuals react angrily and aggressively towards one another. One reason is that it is a learned behaviour where one learns to do so because it is observed and learned. In a society where violence is used as a means to control ill or non-accustomed behaviours, members may see violence as a regulatory mechanism that controls society. Therefore, individuals learn that it is reasonable to perpetrate violence. For this reason, Bandurra said that nature and nurture play a significant role in the development of a person.

Anger becomes a problem when it affects concentration, mood, relationships, self-esteem, work or social life and can result in violence to self or to others (Swan, Gambone, Fields, Sullivan & Snow, 2005). Research reveals lack of emotional control in violent females, who are more likely than males to 'characterize their physical aggression as a failure to control their anger', results in males internalizing or repressing their emotions rather than externalizing or expressing them (Cahn and Lloyd, 1996: 34). Simple disagreements between spouses can cause anger which is likely to turn into aggression if not controlled at an early stage. Lack of emotional control has been identified to be the main contributing factor to anger. Therefore, when stressed or frustrated individuals fail to control their impulses, they act out their negative emotions towards their partners. These feelings of anger against spouses can cause both psychological and physical abuse whereby the angry partner perpetrate psychologically abusive tactics against the other spouse or may perpetrate physical abuse.

Stress

27% of men who were subjected to domestic violence rationalised that their wives were stressed while 31% women admitted being stressed

when perpetrating violence against their husbands. Stress appeared to be the second most common cause of women's violent behaviour towards their husbands. Luke said: *'My wife brings her stress from work home and this contributes to the way she treats me'*.

Negative life events like loss of jobs or increasing costs of living cause stress and further burdens breadwinners to cope with life's daily demands (Taylor, 2006). Researchers like Swan et al. (2005) and Renzetti (1992) have found that relationships that have more stress are more likely to experience violence. Fulfilment of multiple roles such as employment, marriage, parenting and social roles can also lead to stress. Now in Fiji, an increasing proportion of women hold multiple formal and accountability roles; while these provide satisfaction, they also can make women vulnerable to role conflict, overload and undue stress.

Health psychologists have looked at stressful life events, daily hassles, chronic strain, and stress at workplace and home as measures of assessing the effects of stress on psychological and physical health. The acute stress paradigm shows increased symptomatic activities such as blood pressure level when individuals are in stressful situations. Taylor (2006) maintained that reactions to stress are influenced by many factors such as personality, the presence of chronic stress and social support of an individual. The effects of stress in relationships need to be considered because they could be caused by a variety of factors. Stress leads to emotional disturbances, therefore, can cause conflicts between partners/couples. Gillies, Taylor, Gray, O'Brien & D'Abrew (2012) state that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is highly prevalent in children and adolescents who have experienced trauma, which if not properly managed can lead to the vicious cycle of violence. They added that this has high personal and health costs.

Social obligations against socio-economic factors

31% of men and 30% of women stated that too many social obligations have contributed to domestic abuse. This factor contributes to stress in a relationship. *iTaukei* culture contains many obligations whereby individuals are summoned to contribute to social functions like '*solu*' (financial contributions) and '*itavi*' (one's responsibilities like donations of traditional artefacts like mats and whales tooth). Not adhering to such expectations mean failure on an individuals' part as a member of that group. With due consideration to the current economic situations that *iTaukeis* face, there is bound to be stress and conflict when each earned dollar is stretched further to accommodate such obligations. If not managed ap-

⁴ To protect the identities of the respondents, names used here are fictitious.

appropriately, this affects marital relationships. Financial constraints can be a contributing factor to violence in a marital relationship. Jone blamed his economic situation as a contributing factor to his experiences of abuse by his wife. He said:

Now, that I am not working, it gets worse because we're facing lots of difficulties. For these reasons I am having a hard time in our relationship. It's also an issue of money. She has money because she gets paid while I don't.

Income level has been found by many researchers to be negatively related to spousal abuse, meaning that the lesser the income, the more the chance of violence occurring in a relationship (see Macmillan and Gartner, 1999). Abuse is associated with lower socio-economic statuses. In the iTaukei setting, men are viewed as providers for the family. Mere stated:

Another issue is there is less money for our family. I think it's my husband's responsibility to provide money for our family, since he is the one who goes to work.... but the cost of living is sky-rocketing.

A significant characteristic of indigenous urban families is that they often provide support for extended family members particularly for relatives in villages. At most times, urban-based families take care of nephews' and nieces' educational needs together with that of their own children's needs. While social support networks may be used as a moderator of stress in a collectivist-orientated society, this may on the other hand, cause extra burden on an already tight household financial status.

Social change has dramatically affected the structure of society particularly, amongst the iTaukeis living in urban areas. First, the number of women employed outside the home for remuneration has rapidly increased. 40% of female participants in this study had jobs, with 83% of these (i.e. 33% of total) having permanent employment. Changes in cultural norms have encouraged women to pursue careers and paid employment. These could have a favourable impact on reducing the rates of marital violence. What is known is that this trend has contributed to the decreasing prevalence of male to female abuse (Cook, 1997). Male-dominant marriages have seemed to wean off whereby equalitarian ones have surfaced to an acceptable level in society. Therefore, both men and women have equal say in family affairs. This can have both positive and negative impacts on domestic violence. Managing an egalitarian household in a society where patriarchy was the norm, is a critical factor influencing the extent and intensity of domestic violence.

Women's behaviours and personalities

27% of men stated that violence against them was because of their wives' behaviours and personalities while 19% of women blamed their own behaviours and personalities. Personalities and behaviours contribute to the way they acted toward their husbands. The word *ivakarau*, translated as 'character' or 'the way one behaves' is apt here. Respondent Peni stated:

..... my wife's personality never changes. She is more highly educated than me and thinks that she is the only one who decides best. Her belittling idea is one of the contributing factors to my experiences of abuse.

Personality includes thoughts and feelings which are covert processes that are associated with concept-formation, problem solving and intellectual functioning of an individual. For the reason that they cannot be directly observed, these mental activities (like suspiciousness) are important components of personality that cause domestic violence. As in Peni's experiences, he feels his wife controls his thoughts and feelings due to her educational level. Fagan (2005) argues that this is particularly pertinent for childhood victims of violence, who grow to tend to view the world negatively, have feelings of shame and helplessness and see violence as a way out of being further victimized. Luke stated:

I think my wife is jealous, because I socialize around with women in my class. I often meet with my classmates to discuss assignments and exams. On my experiences, she is always suspicious of my every move. She suspects that I'm having extra-marital affairs.

Behaviour is another important determinant of personality. Domestic violence is an overt response by an individual towards his or her victim. It includes aggressive, punishing, possessive, and dominating behavioural acts by perpetrators of domestic violence. The behaviour of Lukes' wife clearly signifies insecurity and loneliness. Being suspicious of another individual brings about ill-feelings against a person and can contribute to aggressive thoughts. Classified as a form of anxiety, jealousy is believed to develop from feelings of insecurity of a spouse in marital relationships. Jone said:

I believe that it's an issue of personality. I still feel that she is jealous. She looks down on me and there is no respect in our marriage. We started off as good and loving couple, attending social functions (like church). At most times, she points at my

weaknesses, not hers.

Hines, Brown & Dunning (2007) cited jealousy as one of the most common motivations for violence. It includes unhappy feelings because of ones' advantage and includes being suspicious and possessfully watchful of something (Reber and Reber, 2001). This can result in anger as the jealous partner can experience feelings of inferiority and insecurity (Pearson, 1997).

Communication between spouses on domestic responsibilities

21% of men stated that a lack of effective communication is a contributing factor to their fate, while 26% of women agreed that communication was an important determinant of their responses.

Communication is a process of sending and receiving messages whereby one constructs meanings from what was stated. What was encoded or decoded in communication becomes a key factor in ones understanding of the other. This is how people connect to each other. It is a life process; people interact with each other through gestures, language, signs and many more forms of communicative tools. Communication plays important roles in maintaining order in any society. Incompetent communication can lead to violence. Verbal and non-verbal communication varies from one culture to another. Social standards vary accordingly. Different cultures govern different expected, appropriate, permissible or prohibited communication (Cahn and Lloyd, 1996).

While verbal communication includes active roles in encoding and decoding of messages, non-verbal parts to any communication must also be considered in discussing communication dysfunctions. For an abused victim, the use of non-verbal communication will prove effective in reinforcing one's inferior role and refusing to communicate at all. Failure to respond involves responding with a stony silence, ignoring comments and completely shutting the other out. It may be easier to control what one says, but it is less easy to control facial expressions like frowns, eye rolls and many more. Gestures like crossing arms or use of hands signify meanings like 'keep away' whereas objectified interactions like slamming doors, hitting pets or tossing out favourite items are considered violent acts that signify anger. Kelera, a female participant stated:

Once, I physically assaulted him. He really had it from me. We fail to communicate with each other, therefore often end up with different interests. He does not even tell me where he goes! This makes me angry. Our experiences would have been a lot better if he did.

Cahn and Lloyd (1996) state that the nature of any marital relationship is characterized by how couples communicate. In violent relationships, spouses fail to realize that there are better ways to solve problems if they take some time to consider non-violent alternatives. This view is echoed by the response of Epeli, who stated:

At most times, I used to wonder why I was going through those experiences. My marriage is full of communication problems. We cannot communicate properly and often end up with violence.

Luisa was emotional during her interview session. She said:

This is my second marriage and I think my first one was much better. We have a great problem with communicating what we want from each other. My husband expects me to know what he needs and I do the same with him. Our experiences of abuse often begin with verbal exchange of bad words before we become physical.

Couples that communicate their experiences with each other successfully have a mutual understanding of each other's needs and expectations. In such situations violence is avoided. A male participant, Bari stated:

I communicate with my wife, to avoid unresolved problems. I've also tried to attend an educational program for families and spouses. My explanation regarding my experiences is now improving as I get to know and understand her better. I react this way because I want to have a good family. My wife's upbringing is a different one from the way I have been brought up and she tries to bring this style into our family.

Communicating responsibilities like child minding, shopping and household chores have been found to contribute to occurrences of domestic violence. Researchers like McKenry, Julian, & Gavazzi (1995) have found that the more children one has, the greater are the chances of abuse occurring. This is due to two reasons; first, more children mean more responsibilities, and second, more children means more expenses to cater for basic needs, educational and social activities. Epeli stated something similar:

There are too many responsibilities at home. Our relationship is now changing, after the birth of our first child. But the responsibility part is the problematic issue in our relationship. My mother-in-law is at home, helping her. Yet, she still expects me to contribute to chores despite my busy schedule at work. I think

that she is being unfair on me with household chores, because I work while she stays home.

Pre-marital assumptions and expectations

11% of men and 16% of women confirmed pre-marital expectations by both spouses have contributed to men's experiences of violence by their wives.

Violence might indicate differences in expectations of marital life. This is due to differences in upbringing and experiences of dysfunctions within families. Social statuses, social learning and childhood experiences of violence are some important determinants of incidences of violence. Peni stated:

She is the favourite child in her family. Her brothers and parents spoil her and they do not like it when I challenge her ideas. So, it's her family upbringing that spoils her.

Differences between spouses' climate of 'nurturance' is very influential in the way couples relate to each other (Wilson, 1995). Cakau believed the differences that exist in their families, particularly in terms of 'nurturing' had contributed enormously to their everyday relationship. He said:

I believe it's the differences in the way we have been brought up. Most women like my wife like to hear rumours from others and they become very angry. My wife's relatives visit and tell her all the flying news. She becomes very obsessed whenever they leave and stops me from visiting my friends. My wife entertains her relatives and friends at home while I'm away at work.

Discipline is an important context to study in understanding violence and its intergenerational transmission. Common forms of disciplining children were through physical, verbal or psychological abuse. Physically abusive methods include acts of using sticks, pipes or hands against children. Verbal abuses include swearing or calling children insulting names. Psychological abuse consists of acts that instil fear in children, ranging from verbal to physical threats. Therefore children grow up thinking that effective discipline is violence-related. Some children have been sack-packed and hanged, literally, for a certain time period.⁵ The ideologies behind such actions were that the abused and other children will learn to abide by all rules and follow norms. While relating her experiences to her husband's upbringing, Vika said: *'My husband was abused*

⁵ This is confirmed by personal experiences of the researcher also.

by his father and grand-father, who were both alcoholics'.

The influences of a dysfunctional family background on perpetrators of violence need to be considered, particularly on the effects of transmission of violence to children, who witness occurrences of family violence. Children who experience violence at the hands of their parents or caregivers are three times more likely to be more violent towards their own partners (Renzetti, 1992). Known as intergenerational transmission of violence, children from abusive homes learn to see violence as normal as it is part of everyday life activities.

Other Causes

17% of men have been abused by their wives due to rumours on alleged extra-marital relationships, alcohol use or when men fail to satisfy women's demands to attend social functions. Similar percentage of women acknowledged perpetrating spousal violence due to these reasons. Vika stated:

I think women abuse men to get what they want or when men fail to provide what women want or need, especially clothes for social functions. Women mostly engage in verbal abuse but men handle their experiences differently.

Alcoholism is one factor that has continuously emerged in domestic violence research. Despite uncertainties in its operative mechanism, a large body of research evidence supports the conclusion that alcohol is generally a strong causal antecedent of aggressive behaviour (Malow, Deviex, Martinez, Peipman, Lucenko and Kalichman, 2006). Luke thinks that his status as being drunk contributed to his experiences of abuse. He stated:

At times when I am drunk, I prepare myself to be physically assaulted. With these incidences, I accept them as I may have caused them (by being drunk). I have learnt to accept the abuse that I think I contributed to.

Other researchers have demonstrated that being drunk is a timed-out period where one can disregard norms of appropriate behaviour because alcohol provides an excuse for socially unacceptable behaviour (Renzetti, 1992). On a local orientation of being 'drunk', Mere admitted drinking 'kava' (piper methysticum) almost every night. She reported feeling irritable the next morning and on her husband questions about her previous nights' whereabouts, she becomes angry. She said:

I don't usually ask of his whereabouts when he goes out. All he

is interested in is where I have been the night before. This stirs up trouble at home. I only drink grog (kava) with my friends.

Naomi claimed her husband is having an affair with another woman:

We have grown up children and there's hardly any activity at home. My husband is probably bored with our relationship, that's why he is having affairs He does not attend church activities...

Although uncommon, Cahn and Lloyd (1996) stated that relationship issues such as marital boredom may be the focus of the abuse where violence emerge as direct results of violent outrage over one's lack of commitment to the relationship. In any relationship, it is important to continue to be of interest to the other partner. Spouses who are uninterested in improving their relationships are more likely to engage in other activities as they are presumably bored (Cahn and Lloyd, 1996). For this reason, spouses seek other avenues to enjoy themselves which can result in having extra marital partners.

Religion has been historically a decisive source of ideas which shape our culture and traditions. Influenced by Western civilizations, these belief systems are based upon the religious and moral teachings of the Bible. Perhaps, the most powerful symbolic message in the Bible about marital relationships is found in Genesis 2:20-25 when God provided Adam with a helper as his partner. Their relationship is to be one of equal and complementary, mutual companionship (King James Version). Kelera elaborated how they were coping and said:

There have been so many problems and difficulties in our marriage. Now, we are able to communicate and I think it's because we are going to church. We hardly fight now and if we do, they are minor ones, not like before. We are into our seventeenth year of marriage and our relationship has greatly improved.

The church has been an independent body that controls the conduct of most marriages in iTaukei families. Though not all denominations provide pre-marital counselling, priests offer free counselling and guidance to members who identify the need to do so. On this note, most priests are responsible for the monitoring of both, spiritual well-being and relationship survival issues of their members.

Men's reactions to their experiences

Results show that men react differently to their experiences of spousal abuse. Some participants indicated that they would use psycho-

logical tactics (verbally or emotionally) against their wives. Some leave the place of abuse, while some would physically abuse their wives as a mean of retaliation. Also, some men would use 'other' forms where the most reported is displacement of anger on children as a mean to get even with their wives. Luisa described her experiences as 'worsening' during the interview. She said:

My husband retaliates each time I try to abuse him, so I try very hard to control myself. At times, he attacks my children and this worsens our situation. He knows that this irritates me.

Peni, a male participant, said that he has experienced a lot of abuse and he often thought of separation but he cannot afford it. He stated:

...but we're married and it will mean maintenance payment for me, so I'll just stay. I do not consume alcohol or cigarettes. If I touch her, I'll have the law at my neck, so I really have no chance.

Most individuals with a 'low esteem' believe they will not better their present situation, so they chose to remain in the relationship. Seelau and Seelau (2005) found that men prefer to be left alone. Hines and Malley-Morrison (2001) mentioned that it is usually difficult to break bonds that exist between the abuser and the abused, even when such bonding experiences are traumatic. Therefore, most men remain in abusive relationships.

Use of Psychological Tactics Against Wife

Though not conclusive, psychological tactics include retaliating using threatening verbal comments. 60% of men who reported incidents of spousal abuse admitted using psychological tactics against their wives following an altercation. 65% of women confirmed this. Luke claimed that he verbally abuses his wife at times. He said: *'Sometimes I respond to her abuses verbally or pointing at her but I'm always cautious of how I respond. I have to abide by the law.'*

Mere is unemployed, while her husband has a well-secured job. She claimed that her husband retaliates to her abusive behaviour by being non-communicative and by not bringing home enough money as he spends them on alcohol. She said:

My husband never shares his experiences with anyone. Instead he uses his wages to consume alcohol and drown his sorrows. In this way, he punishes me but he does not realise that it is not only me that suffers; in fact, it's our family life that is affected.

Dinh-Zarr, Goss, Heitman, Roberts and DiGuseppi (2009) found a

strong association between alcoholism and domestic violence. Mere claims that at times, her husband does not respond to her verbal outbursts and this further perpetuates violence. She said: *'He remains cool while I become heated up, even when I verbally pressure him. It irritates me more when he does not respond.'*

Leave Her Alone

23% of men stated that they leave the place of abuse either during or immediately following the abuse. 17% of women stated that their husbands leave the abusive setting. Vika, who became emotional on this matter during the interview, stated:

He could not bear with his experiences and left home for almost two weeks. I know that he is a good man. He goes to work, ensures that we have what we need and want like food, money and clothes.

Due to the Government policy of zero tolerance of violent behaviours against females, enforced by the police, some men, who are aware of this law, choose to leave the setting in order to prevent further confrontations with their wives. Jone said he normally goes for a walk following abusive confrontations. He stated:

I feel so hurt. Sometimes while walking, I pray for bad things not to happen in my marriage. I even changed my religion to suit hers and in order to improve my relationship with her. I walk away because the Bible says one has to be non-aggressive, non-violent and able to listen. I feel that my absence might be helpful in calming my wife.

Another male participant Cakau, said:

When we have our confrontations, I try to walk away from it and leave her to think about it. I also think about it while walking. I try not to hit her because once you hit a woman, everyone knows about it and also the police will be involved.

Cakau's statement accords with the findings of Migliaccio (2002) who stated that men sometimes chose not to use their physical strength to stop the abuse, fearing legal retribution which some see as being biased in women's favour. Additionally, Migliaccio stated that men handle spouse perpetrated violence by engaging in 'avoidance', a situation where they try not to think of the abuse. They also try to be nice to spouses to avoid potential conflicts and try to disassociate themselves, by moving to 'a mind and body split' where they do not acknowledge the violence that they experience.

Physical Abuse Against Wife

Smedslund, Dalsbø, Steiro, Winsvold & Clench-Aas (2012) stated that violence by men against an intimate female partner is a serious and common problem. Regardless of the type of abuse that men experience from their wives, 14% of men admitted to physically abusing their wives in retaliation to their experiences while 16% of women confirmed this. Epeli stated that he occasionally physically assaults his wife in retaliation:

If I'm o.k, I cool off. It depends on my mood. Sometimes I retaliate by physically assaulting her. My explanations regarding my experiences keep on changing. My reactions depend on the situation in which we are in.

When a woman abuses her partner, she is at great risk of becoming a victim herself. Minor violence by women increases the probability of them receiving severe assaults by men (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).

Other Forms of Male Responses

3% of men indicated they will resort to 'other' ways of dealing with their experiences while 2% of women reported their husbands resorting to 'other' means. The most reported method used was 'displacing anger on children.' Displacing anger on children does not solve marital problems and is considered as the unhealthiest reaction to abuse. It adds on to it as children learn to adopt such behaviours (Kernsmith, 2005) and imitate such behaviours to resolve conflict in later life (Fagan, 2005). Some participants reported engaging themselves in talks with their wives as a way around their experiences of spousal abuse. However, some men will try to ask for forgiveness from their partners. Juita, a male participant, said:

.....my case is a complicated one. I have been through so many challenges in my marriage. I've tried to be an effective communicator. I see the many weaknesses in my wife as my challenges, so we communicate our experiences together and ask for forgiveness from each other.

Communicating effectively within marriages is the foundation of a healthy and wealthy society (Cahn and Lloyd, 1996).

Conclusion

This paper argues that domestic violence where females in a marital relationship display violence on their husbands is not an uncommon feature of Fijian society. On the basis of a survey conducted in an urban area

in Suva, the paper argues that men are victims of domestic violence even in patriarchal societies like that of indigenous Fijians. Female anger, fuelled by frustration over their husband's behaviours and the numerous social obligations (village fund-raising, contributions to birthdays, weddings and deaths etc), and a host of other factors like suspicion or allegations of marital infidelity, lack of communication, and alcohol abuse, are the main triggers of abuse against men by their wives. The common assumption that domestic violence against men does not occur within what is perceived to be a male dominated society must be re-considered. Findings also show that the corollary - that domestic violence at root is essentially a trait of a patriarchal society - also needs to be re-examined.

Domestic violence is a 'human problem'; whether perpetrated by men on women or women on men. The problem is not about violent men or violent women; the problem is violence as a response to a multiplicity of factors which affect the household and individual members of the household. Strategies undertaken by any society to address any type of domestic violence is an issue that must be considered because if it is ignored other types of violence may become acceptable. Where the abuse of a husband is suspected, this is typically regarded as a source of shame by the victim and ridicule by other men. Results from this study can be used to identify recommendations to assist professionals and those who may come in contact with victims of domestic violence.

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