Violence against Women: A Case of Structural–Institutional Breakdown in Mekelle, Ethiopia

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This article examines the causes and consequences of domestic violence, particularly in a culture where social and cultural norms and institutions are breaking down. This is a snapshot of behavioral problems caused by structural meltdown in the northern part of Ethiopia. Violence against women is viewed as a long process rooted in the existing traditions whereby men seek to preserve and extend their power to subordinate women. Violence against women is a serious human rights abuse. The study aims to explore an inclusive sociocultural context that has pronounced domestic violence against women in Mekelle, the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Many sociocultural factors—social norms, belief systems, and broken institutions—obscure our understanding of the root causes of this evil. Influential community leaders, such as religious leaders, traditional leaders, and neighborhood committees, may play a significant role to prevent this problem, which is compounded by economic inequalities, alcohol abuse, emotional problems, and above all men's traditional status in society. The cycle of violence perpetuates a dysfunctional system of interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: *domestic violence, social norms, economic inequality, human rights abuse, belief system*

Introduction

Domestic violence is defined as any form of abusive behavior and action against women perpetrated by men (i.e., current and former dates, spouses, and

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cohabitating partners). Estimates published by WHO indicate that globally about one-third of women have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or nonpartner sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is intimate partner violence. Worldwide, almost one-third (27%) of women aged 15–49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2021).

The higher prevalence and widespread violence against women in the Sub-Saharan African region are manifested in several studies. The studies conducted in Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria have found that 50, 57, 60, 42, 67, and 81% of all married women have experienced some form of violence in their life from partners or husbands, respectively (Heise, Elesberg, & Gottemoeller, 1999; Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Mann & Takyi, 2009; Speizer, 2010). A cross-sectional study in Ethiopia found that 45% of women had experienced physical violence at some point in their life, 10% had experienced violence in the past 3 months, and 53% of those who were abused experienced injuries (Deyessa, Kassaye, Demeke, & Taffa, 1998).

It is recognized that domestic violence against women is a complex and multifaceted problem with biographical, psychological, —social-cultural, and environmental roots. As Heise (1998) argued, there is no exclusively mentioned cause for domestic violence against women, rather several reasons combined to raise the probability that a specific man in a specific setting may act violently against a woman. We found, as Mohan did, a massive meltdown of structural-functional norms and institutions that held most family units as a pivotal foundation of society (2022).

Violence and violent behavior have attracted the interest of many researchers in Ethiopia. However, the sociocultural contexts behind domestic violence and violent behavior have been the focus of few studies. Along with this, the amount of research does not suffice to explain the sociocultural factors behind violent behaviors in general and domestic violence against women in particular. Against the above background, the study aims to explore an inclusive sociocultural context that has pronounced domestic violence against women in the study area. In exploring this phenomenon, a qualitative research approach has been used. Using a qualitative research approach has enabled the researchers to come up with varied experiences and interpretations of the issue in the study from the research participants' point of view.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Ayder sub-city, Mekelle, Ethiopia. This sub-city was purposively selected. The criteria for the selection of Ayder sub-city is based on the reality that most of the people who are living in Ayder sub-city have different lifestyles, compared to the metropolitan parts of Mekelle city; hence, they have preserved past customs, attitudes, norms, traditions, and values. The study

was conducted to explore sociocultural factors that perpetuate domestic violence against women. The study has employed a qualitative approach to collect and analyze the data needed to address the objectives of the study. Qualitative research is an approach meant to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social phenomenon they are experiencing (Creswell, 2009).

According to Brayman (2004), very often, a lack of transparency, which is sometimes a feature of qualitative research, is particularly apparent in the selection of participants. To avoid this ambiguity, the study has used purposive sampling, a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide, which cannot be obtained from other sources. The intention was to gain a deeper understanding of victims of domestic violence against women under investigation, although this cannot be generalized to the whole victim population.

Accordingly, the participants for in-depth interviews were purposively selected with the collaborative help of the women affairs officers who are working in the realm of gender-based violence. In line with this, 10 victims of domestic violence against women were purposively selected and interviews were held with them. In addition, key-informant interviews were held with the women affairs officers who are working on the issue of gender-based violence. The participants for key-informant interviews were recruited by giving importance to the number of years they spent dealing with domestic violence against women. The rationale behind selecting senior professionals is based on the assumption that they know better about the issues under study. Accordingly, two key informants were purposively selected.

Upon the rationale behind selecting the study participants, the sociodemographic data of the victims and women affairs officers are given in Table 1:

Table 1   Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Victims of domestic violence against women					
Respondents	Age (in years)	Education	Occupation	Marriage duration (in years)	Children
Victim 01	26	Primary	House mother	4	2
Victim 02	19	Primary	Self-employed	1	0
Victim 03	23	Secondary	Self-employed	3	1
Victim 04	31	Primary	House mother	8	4
Victim 05	19	Primary	House mother	3	2
Victim 06	21	Diploma	Government employed	2	1
Victim 07	21	Secondary	House mother	5	2
Victim 08	24	Graduate	Government employed	1	0
Victim 09	33	Uneducated	House mother	9	5
Victim 10	18	Secondary	Self-employed	1	0

Although the study mainly relied on primary data generated by in-depth and key-informant interviews, it has also used secondary sources of data. Therefore, an intensive review of related literature is the crucial source of secondary data. Accordingly, books, articles, other researchers' work, and published and unpublished materials were utilized to come up with secondary data. To achieve the research objectives and analyze the data obtained through interviews, a thematic approach of qualitative data analysis was employed. In the course of conducting the interview, the victims and key informants mentioned several concepts about the issue under study. The whole interviews were recorded using voice recording devices, and transcripts were generated. The interview records were transposed into text and used as verbatim quotations. The views of the respondents, as well as field note reports of the researcher, were categorized based on the sociocultural context behind domestic violence against women which were categorized into Historical Experiences, Role Assignment Based on Gender, Reproductive Role of Women, Social Norms, Cultural Beliefs, Excessive Alcohol Consumption, and Lack of Women Association.

Results of the Study

Causes of Domestic Violence against Women

Although many significant policy reforms and promising legal remedies have been conceived to deal with domestic violence in Ethiopia, domestic violence persisted in different parts of the nation as a rampant practice. Former Ethiopian regimes enforced to forbid violence against women into the laws from Imperial Regime to Federal Government. However, no significant change has been achieved as domestic violence has its roots in the customs and existing social setup as accepted norms in the society. In fact, in the traditional social setup, domestic violence has been overlooked as it is considered as part of life and has been assimilated into the customs.

Therefore, victims were interviewed to express their views on the possible sociocultural contexts associated with domestic violence against women in their sub-city. Most of them reported that the use of violence against women in the study area is attributed to historical, social, cultural, and economic inequality of women. And, most importantly, most of the respondents have accepted it as an integral part of their daily life, having fixed in their minds that males are traditionally superior to females, and so have the right to guide and control his wife.

Historical Experiences

As narrated by most of the victims, men commit violence against women because they grew up witnessing violence as a child. History has taught men to be aggressive, masculine, powerful, energetic, in command, and exercise patriarchal control over their wives. Historically, what men appreciated and expected from a wife

is an obedient and submissive wife, whereas they did not involve themselves in household activities but just observed what their wives were doing. Women, however, were nurtured to be passive, docile, humble, emotionless, free of personality disorder, obedient to their husbands. Informants in the study attributed such qualities of the women to a low level of education and acceptance of violence and the belief that the husband has the right to scold or beat his wife. It is believed that a husband has the right to assert his power and influence over his wife. Besides, a woman has to be silent and obey her husband's commands. If she disobeys, the husband has the right to beat and direct her in his way. She is not allowed to take any kind of decisions in the household unless her husband lets her to do so.

There are also instances of husbands beating wives for no fault of the wives to show their masculinity or authority of being a husband. Even women recognize the rights of their husbands in beating and directing them. But history doesn't recognize the right of a woman to punish her husband and the unequal power relations between them persists to this day. This is learned through historical experience from their ancestors via socialization. The following information is obtained during the study through a study participant's eye-witnessed in the area.

> It is the husband's right to beat his wife and the wife approves this act of his. One day we heard a husband beating his wife, who had a brother living in the neighborhood. Having heard the screaming of his sister, the brother right away appeared with a stick in his hand and struck his sister's husband. The husband collapsed to the ground in agony and his body was covered with blood. On seeing blood spilling oozing out from her husband, the wife picked up the stick from the ground and she beat her brother saying, "I screamed to pacify with my husband, but you are not allowed to beat my husband because a husband has the right to beat his wife".

There was another woman living in the same vicinity. She invited us for coffee at her home. We began discussing the issue and enquiring about the domestic violence in the area. She was a young lady aged around 28 years, quite active and talkative. Her husband was also sitting next to her. Her husband was a jovial person with a pleasing face, a year or two senior than her in age. She was saying laughingly that her husband does not have the habit of beating her while others do. Having seen other men living in her neighborhood beating and punishing their wives, she questioned her husband as follows:

> Why don't you beat me as a husband? I know you do not beat me because you do not love me.

According to the above statement, it can be inferred that there is a common belief that beating is associated with loving, and it brings the husband and wife closer to each other. There are two ideas to examine here. The first case study that

we mentioned above is that of a husband beating a woman and her brother fighting on the side of his sister. As soon as he arrived for her, he felt shocked and struck him on his head and seriously wounded him. Nevertheless, his sister knows that a husband has the right to beat and discipline his wife. Therefore, she felt pain and screamed when her husband battered her. However, she became offensive and got angry on her brother when her brother hit to collapse her husband to the ground. This shows that in the context where everybody beats his wife, she feels that the husband has the right to strike and control his wife and this is considered as a proper and acceptable social norm in the area. Men beating their wives and the wives accepting the punishment are assumed as appropriate and normal social behavior in the community of the study area. These are considered as suitable and correct moral societal rules.

According to informants, the society's approval of the patriarchal principle of cultural confirmation of male supremacy over females is related to status. Beating one's wife and the wife approving of her husband beating her is attributed to male personality formation through cultural construction. Nevertheless, an individual who considers beating a wife as inappropriate behavior is believed as improper behavior by other members of the community and people avoid him and turn aside for the normal social context of the community. There is little social condemnation and blame from society if a wife is beaten by her husband. People mock and look down on the husband if the wife commands and manages the family.

In the second case, there are two things to examine. On the one hand, beating a wife has some positive marital and social consequences. It is believed that beating a wife is interpreted as love. In the context of the people in the study area, if a husband beats his wife, he loves her, but if he does not beat his wife, it is taken as he does not love his wife. There is a common belief that if the husband does not beat his wife, the wife may feel that her husband does not beat her because she is being ignored and abandoned by her husband.

Gender Roles Assignment (Domestic Work) as the Cause for Domestic Violence

Informants asserted that the associated functional skills and expertise for the household is the most important merit of the woman according to the existing sociocultural belief. It is believed that a good wife would efficiently handle the domestic work, in failing her assignment she might be the subject to the violence. There is pressure on the wife from all sides—her kin, family, peers, and neighbors—to fulfill the expectations. It is expected that a wife has to meet the expectations of all the family members and not just her husband. This might be a serious issue that must be understood while dealing with violence against women in this region. However, people of the Ayder sub-city not only favor the cultural norms of women–men relationship but also the other associated responsibilities such as the socioeconomic balance of the family as well as dealing with the relatives and maintaining the family relations. Men have their roles in the community and women, in turn, have their gender roles. According to the roles, men and women

inherently have their duty and responsibility. Because people think and live in terms of their ancestral women–men and husband-wife relationships, they are expected to act accordingly. Their sociocultural rules, principles, and practices are inescapable and it is mandatory to abide by the existing customs.

Historically, women's experience of violence in the region varies across different women's capacities, employment, access to education, and cultural orientation. Violence against women is a manifestation of these historically unequal power relations and power imbalances between men and women, which have led to the domination and discrimination against women by men, and the prevention of women's full advancement. Men usually control women's daily jobs', household tasks, dress, along with where they go, with whom they join, and their mode of speech. Besides, the informants mentioned that gender roles allow the husband to beat his wife from the very beginning of their marriage. The reason why the husband is entitled to beat his wife is related to sociocultural factors. Among these, gender role assignments are one and it is defined as the process of assigning roles or the expected behaviors from being men and women. Thus, gender roles become social norms of the society in the Ayder sub-city. Once it becomes a norm, deviation from the norms will have social consequences. The social norms of the community are explained as follows;

Social Norms

Every informant that we interviewed stated that most people do not have any qualms about beating their wives; on the contrary, they considered it their right, although some of the younger generation disagreed and challenged it. Those who challenged it claimed that beating a wife is attributed to individuals' improper behavior. For this study, we took the definition of Bicchieri (2006) who states that "norms are agreed-upon expectations and rules by which a culture or population guides or shapes the behavior of its members in a given situation."

Considering the case of wife-beating, which is still a part of the custom in the study area, it has been found that it exists due to social norms, people's approval, and there is nothing uncommon in it. Key informants in the study described that the practices of wife-beating are guided by certain social norms. Human behavior cannot occur easily, rather it is the result of a lifelong process of learning, and once a certain behavior is introjected, it becomes an integral part of the culture. For instance, children of men who beat their wives without any reason also indulged in wife-beating just following the behavior as part of the norms.

Similarly, the study conducted by Hotaling et al. (1986) mentioned violence as a dynamic and multifaceted activity that goes beyond racial, ethnic, gender, and age boundaries. Since family structure exists in all cultures, it is present in all cultures. Violence in families was not considered a problematic issue until the 1960s, due to cultural norms that refused to consider it a problem with consequences.

The role of social norms in affecting behavior has been recognized during interview records and observation, ranging from wife-beating, psychological

attack, to the use of verbal assault. Social norms have been recognized to influence wife-beating in the study area. It has been observed during field observation while we were conducting interviews. We met two men who were discussing what they have been doing with their spouses throughout their marriage life. We asked them as follows: is it allowed to beat your wife in this modern world? They replied:

"If everyone is doing it, then why can't we?" On the contrary, if no one is doing it, can we?

Furthermore, we asked another man who also beat his wife the following question: don't you feel guilty if others see you while beating your wife? He stated that:

Sure, I feel guilty if my neighbors and my friends hear me while I beat my wife, but I think everybody is used to doing it, everybody also does that.

In many of the interviews we held, men preferred to beat their spouses since walloping is considered a collective social norm and normal social behavior among the community. The relationship between men and women has been revolving around the social vacuum. The notion that a man has a right to control, shape, and teach his wife is deeply rooted in the social norms of the study area. In another example of a physical attack on women in the area, we saw a neighbor beating his wife while his wife was in consequence screaming. We purposely visited his home the next day and asked him "why did you beat your wife last night?" He replied that:

That is okay to do it, and so everybody does it as well and you need to control your wife for the sake of family and children.

In line with this, on the key informants asking why wife-beating was much common, he replied that:

A man who beat his wife viewed it as a common rule here and it is a personal matter between the husband and wife, so what is wrong in it? Contrarily, a man who grow up looking at his father, neighbors, and friends as not beating their wives would less likely to practice beating his wife.

Moreover, key informants have reported that based on the norms of the community, a woman must serve her husband, care for her children, enter the kitchen, and stay in the marriage at all costs until the death of her husband and accept as her responsibility and duty for any kind of wrong if she is unable to please her husband. One consequence of this attitude is that wife-beating is not condemned by the community and also not viewed as inappropriate behavior. It has also been rarely reported to the police, rarely accused by the neighborhood committee, elders,

and even rarely punished by the court proceedings. Moreover, a key informant explained further that if most of the men stop abusing and beating their wives and also expect others as well not to beat their wives or use verbal assault and physical violence against women and start respecting their wives as well as value and support them and allow them in community engagement, there can be social sanctions from the community. This is due to the stigma that people are not following their family traditions and customs. Discontinuing the traditions is not respected in the community, and there is a growing pressure to follow the existing traditions.

Hence, we argue that expectations about other people's behaviors play a significant role in shaping individuals' behavior, and that is why social norms are crucial to account for when developing strategies to promote gender equality. Understanding the social and cultural context is most important in understanding domestic violence, as these factors ensure and determine the behaviors of men toward the women, as deviating from the norms and traditions may result in mild to severe punishment from the majority of people in the community.

The majority of informants and field works have explained the effects of social and cultural norms in shaping individual behaviors as described above. Currently, the informants have not only understood how norms work but also realized how they can be mitigated or changed. The informants also stated that they hold the firm belief that norms can be changed from the exterior of a given group or social system. This implies that influential leaders such as community-based organizations (CBO), religious leaders can mainly serve as catalysts or facilitators of change, and discussion can be the key approach in influencing any change in the behavior of wife-beating.

Cultural Beliefs

Another social connotation of wife-beating in the study area is associated with a belief system. According to informants, there is a widespread belief in the community that a male has to be aggressive, solemn, powerful, and intelligent, whereas a female should be polite, humble, submissive, passive, and incompetent in the community. Associated with this, there are many colloquial phrases in which culture makes women incompetent in the community. In the study area, it is believed that "knowledge of the female cannot be extended beyond the domestic work" and "woman does not have knowledge but they born knowledgeable." The knowledge of the woman cannot extend beyond the household as societal belief could inform the social and cultural definition of women's knowledge.

On the one hand, the meaning of the knowledge of women cannot go beyond the domestic work, and it is interpreted as how to restrict the women to domestic work and defend the patriarchal status of men over women. The argument is that there have been several women in the world who emerged as leaders in national and international politics. On the other hand, in the colloquial statement that says female does not have knowledge but she gives birth to the knowledgeable person, whereas, it is natural for a woman to give birth to male and female. She gives birth to both, but who is the knowledgeable? The answer is a male. A female's

knowledge cannot extend beyond the household. In the context of this statement, any woman who bears a male child is seen from the point of view of intelligence, competence, and problem solver, whereas women who give birth to females in the community where women's knowledge could not extend beyond domestic work are interpreted as ignorant and boorish.

Another colloquial statement on how to approve violence against women in society is that work and wife are made to be defeated at an early stage. In this idiomatic expression, there are two points to examine as to how the community members effectively defeat their wife and work at an early stage. In this concept, wife and work should be defeated. They set the strategy of easily succeeding in their work through cultural construction. Everybody works to produce something useful, and sustain their life, so they need to spend a lot of time working from morning to night to accomplish their task. Therefore, the meaning of defeating their work early is that the work is easily accomplished as it is fresh and in the early stage when people have full time and energy.

Nevertheless, the idea of an overpowering wife immediately after the couple got married is another mechanism of bounding women to conform to the idea of her husband and to belittle the competence of the women and give recognition of dominance to men in the community. This is also to deconstruct the equality of men and women, and girls regarding the right to enjoy equal opportunities. This idiomatic expression is also used to defend the dominance of males over females and ensure that men and women do not have equal decision-making power on their common property and to subjugate women to the status of obeying rather than making decisions and thereby extending their work from the domestic to the public work.

Another idiomatic example of means to use violence against women is that "both female and *seed* do not have rest." The aspect that should be interpreted here is that both women and *seed* are not allowed to take rest. Among the community, this thought sets the mechanism of exploiting the labor of women. Comparing a *seed*, which is inanimate, with women, who are living beings, is another strategy of violence against women.

The concept of women should be the leader of the household instead of the husband has social meaning among the community. Why do people of the study area narrate this proverb? The answer is to sideline women to the level of domestic work. This relates to the social norm, which condemns if someone deviates from the community norms. A social norm is an expectation from one's community. What people in the study area expect from women is that their knowledge must not extend beyond domestic work. Thus, women who command and have power over their husbands do not get appropriate social approval. This idiomatic expression is very crucial to examine the relationship between women and men in the study area. Women, who have superiority over their husbands often dictate terms to outsiders, too. This means that women who exercise supremacy over their husbands also wish to extend their authority beyond the household to community leaders and public administration.

Informants further state that women's participation in community employment is higher as compared to the males in the study area. However, women are paid less in the study area although they usually work in a job that needs hard labor and presents hazardous situations. Most of the time, the responsibility of women cannot extend beyond households and neighborhoods to the community occupation and decision-making. It is difficult for women to engage in community employment since they shoulder the responsibility of every task of the household at the same time, whereas men are seen as concerned with works outside the household, such as being on the neighborhood committee and being a senior manager, and leaders of a CBO such as *idir*, *ikub*, and *mahber*[1].

Informants have noted that male domination and female consent and internalization of that dominance are the widespread norms in the community despite some transformations that are promising and seen. One of the key informants stated that:

> Male exploitation and oppression of women's labor at the household level are usually evident. The ideology that women have to stay at home and do domestic tasks while men have to work outside the household in the community has been deep-rooted in the community right from childhood. From their birth, women are also encouraged to take care of children, old age people, and serve their husbands, handling every task at the domestic level and nearby surroundings, and the males controlling the women are culturally approved in the study area.

Almost all of the respondents gave a similar opinion; one of the key informants interviewed during the study stated that:

> Women attached to domestic work remain intact and their participation in community work is not enough compared to men. For example, when

[1]**Iddir:** Iddir is a form of traditional institution that is established by mutual agreement of community members in order to collaborate with each other whenever a family member faces a difficult time. . One of the suggestions given regarding its nature by Pankhurst and Hailemariam (2000) is a modern formalization of collective assistance that was practiced in the traditional structure, basically mirror the traditional village patterns of mutual assistance and social control.
Mahiber: Mahiber is established to fulfil spiritual commitments of individuals. They are usually named after Saints. Mahiber in this context is somehow different from other forms of associations. In most cases, members are people worshiping in the same congregation and are close friends, from neighborhoods, and relatives. Members were obliged to prepare small feasts every month in turn (like get-together) which they share among themselves. Mahiber members support each other at times of adversity.
Iqqub: Iqqub in the frame work of financial intermediation as it is the case with similar Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). It is considered as a new approach analysis of ROSCAs in terms of 'the logic of collective action.

women are employed in public work and participate in community jobs, they usually entrust their responsibility of domestic work to their female servants or their female children.

The informants also mentioned that "when they were sometimes employed as government personnel, they left behind the responsibility of domestic work to their female children when the servant was not available. Women's lower educational achievement due to lack of access to education and training opportunity and the existing misconception about their role and contributions in domestic work are some of the contributing factors for existing gender-based discrimination in community-related tasks".

Gender Roles

Gender roles are also a major cause of domestic violence in the community. Before we interpret what the respondent reported, we have to define what gender role is. Gender roles are shared expectations of behavior given to one's gender, which is women should do domestic work and men should work in the public areas (Eagly, 1987).

The story of a woman that we interviewed substantiated the above argument as follows:

Women doing all the household work is the appropriate or natural role of women in society while their husbands take rest. She further argued that the appropriate place for women is within the home, and they are discouraged from participating in activities outside the domestic sphere.

Informant during the study further mentioned that:

The women are responsible for the domestic work according to the culture of the study area. It is attributed to culture, which has made women be bound to domestic tasks, and they are taught that domestic work naturally belongs to women's duty in the household. Women are being bound to cleaning or being associated with solid waste from the bodies, mostly child waste.

Besides, male patriarchy in the study area is largely defined by the level of education, access to finance, and access to cash. By this, one of the key informants during the study stated that:

Women who have achieved higher educational status have relatively less chance of domestic violence than women who do not have any job or higher academic status.

Reproductive Role of Women

The interviewed people reported that in terms of activity, domestic work and care of infants are assigned to females, while males were concerned with outdoor business endeavors. The limited role assigned to females tries to confine her to the level of biological experience. The interviewed respondents asserted that their life is connected to rearing children. The culture of the people in the study area does not let men assist in taking care of children and other such works of the household. If the husband sees his children defecating or urinating, he will not clean it. Instead, he will call his wife to clean the even if she has other work to do. This is because culture does not approve of men cleaning.

One of the informants reported that:

I have spent all my life raising children; my life is a boring life; while I am rearing one child, I find myself pregnant; then the next child follows.

This shows that women's reproductive roles are the major causes of domestic violence against women. Why only women are bound to clean and men are not required to do the same? The answer is associated with the sociocultural factors of society.

Alcohol

The principal cause of domestic violence against women is alcoholism. The harms on women particularly and on the functioning of the family unit as a whole inflicted by the problematic consumption of alcohol are the main factors for family dislocation. The result of the study shows the evidence of alcohol connection in domestic violence as severe and brutal.

Generally, it is argued that alcohol is the major factor that causes men to use violence against women. The study agrees with Johnson, Leonard, and Jacob (1989) who argue that alcohol causes men to behave inappropriately and indulge in antisocial behavior; men most likely become violent because they do not feel that they will be held accountable for their behavior if they are drunk.

Due to excessive alcohol consumption, one of the informants during the study reported that when her husband wakes early in the morning, he is the most modest person, but at night she is frustrated and intimidated by her drunken husband who loses control of himself. From this, we can understand that alcohol consumption instigates violence against women in the study area.

Since recently, alcohol-related wife-beating has been a subject of increasing problems in the study area. There have been women concerned about alcohol-related domestic violence against women since local norms do not condemn alcohol-related use of violence. Almost all of the study participants have mentioned that the main cause of men's violent act against them is men's alcoholism and this specifically accounted for the violent acts against them, and it is the main factor for separation and divorce.

Three informants have attributed alcoholism to the severity of their lives. A key informant during the study states the impacts of alcoholism on their abuse in the house as follows:

> I and many others like me experienced three or more attempted suicides when their husbands have frequently appeared drunk in the midnight and threatened their lives. They experienced physical beating especially after six o'clock from their husbands who spend in hotels and bars taking a heavy amount of alcohol. They have endured one or more incidents of physical battering by their partners; they experienced jealousy of rages in the place where they are moving for entertainment. Others receive verbal abuse every night.

Others were assaulted from time to time over several months before leaving the batterer and filing for divorce. The majority of the women endured chronic abuse for many years before permanently ending their relationships. The overwhelming majority of the women are not living with their abusers. The abusive acts range from dragging, slapping, and punching. Most of these women who are usually facing domestic violence are couples who are in early marriage.

Lack of Women's Association

Besides the above facts, the respondent pointed out that women's associations are the key in preventing domestic violence because women were more sensitive to the use of violence by the male partner. However, few women's associations mobilized the masses against the violent acts, domestic abuses, and maltreatment of women, who immediately inform women affairs when a husband beats his wife, insulting her and mocking her, whenever inappropriate dumping was observed. The informants further mentioned that despite the formation of the women's association which is significant in their fight against domestic violence, their life style and conditions are not in sync with management or decision-making positions, as any participation in these activities will hurt many domestic tasks as well as their married life.

All of the key informants reported that the domestic burden of work could prevent them from participating in CBO. They further asserted that increased participation in community tasks would mean little time for other household activities, such as child-rearing, food preparation, etc. From the above information, it is evident that culture made women of the study area to be bound to household tasks despite being employed in the community service.

From these situations, the researchers argue that, the absence of women's participation in decision-making and community work due to culture affected the efficiency of combating domestic violence in the study area. Furthermore, the researchers argue that if the municipality provides a suitable environment for women to conduct awareness campaigns concerning domestic violence against women, they will be more effective in changing the attitude and behavior of men

despite women's participation in the community task hurting domestic work. Another point in focus is that there is a widespread customary practice wherein women have to take care of their children, serve their husbands, and be bound to domestic work.

Why Do Women Stay in Abusive Relationships?

The informant mentioned that most women who did not divorce their husbands stated that they did not want to divorce their husbands even if they experienced violent acts from their husbands as they are economically and socially dependent on their husbands. In addition, they were often religious and so they did not want to leave their husbands. Others reported that they did not want to divorce since they have many children. Compared to those who have a few children, those who have many children did not want to divorce although the abuse is severe and their relationship with their husbands is abusive. They are nurturing and caring mothers who wanted to keep their families together for the sake of the children.

   Most women who have faced economic difficulties due to the heavy drinking of their husbands have lost hope of sustaining their lives. The research informants have noted the importance of an institution called women affairs, which was established for the prevention of violation of women's rights. Usually, they pay attention to affirmative action and empowering women, and encourage women to divorce their alcohol addict husbands in the court proceedings. However, the informants have also mentioned that the institution does not assist them in rehabilitation programs once they have divorced their husbands, and thus the divorced and disbanded families usually end up having a worsened and miserable life. The women affairs claims that they are benefiting the women by following the principle of separation from their spouses and sending them to financial aid organizations.

Conclusion

Violence against women is viewed as the process whereby men seek to preserve and extend their power to subjugate women. Violence against women has currently obtained due attention as a serious human rights abuse. The causes of domestic violence against women are associated with several sociocultural factors such as social norms, belief systems. Influential people in the community like religious leaders, traditional leaders, and neighborhood committees can contribute to minimizing the domestic violence. Inclusion of these influential leaders can help fight gender inequality. As it was found that domestic violence against women is mostly based on stigma and stereotype, traditional structure and social belief inspires men to dominate the women. Other forms of domestic violence against women are caused by economic inequalities of women, alcohol, emotional problems, and men's sociocultural background. These abusive relationships between men and women in the Ayder sub-city are attributed to women's

past historical, social, cultural, and economic inequality. Men perpetuate violence against women because they grew up witnessing such violence as a child in their families. Whereas other causes of domestic violence are associated with the long age gap between the husband and wife, emotional upheavals, personality disorder, and low level of education. Community's acceptance of violence is also one of the principal factors for domestic violence against women.

Among the people in the study area, it is believed that a husband has the right to assert power over his wife. However, an individual who does not beat his wife to discipline her is considered as exhibiting improper behavior. Such behaviors are taken as a deviation from the accepted norm in the social context of the community. There is little social condemnation and blame from society if a wife is beaten by her husband. However, if men do not beat and discipline their wives, the husband himself does not get the approval of being a male. There is increased social pressures on couples that a male must command and exercise power over the wife in the study area in the northeastern part of Ethiopia.

Beating one's wife has some positive marital and social consequences. It is believed that beating a wife is interpreted as a sign of love. In the context of people of Ayder, if the husband beats his wife, he loves her, but if he does not beat his wife, it is taken as if he did not have love and affection for his wife; this factor is associated with myth and sociocultural factors. This shows that expectations about other people's behaviors play a significant role in shaping individuals' behavior. This might be the reason why social norms are crucial to account for developing strategies to promote gender equality. Understanding the social and cultural context can ensure that such elements would be factored in the process of change in the behavior of wife-beating. The harms also inflicted by the problematic consumption of alcohol on women, particularly spouses and children, and the functioning of the family unit as a whole are the main factors for family dislocation.

Therefore, it is recommended that a positive response of the community to the prevention of domestic abuse can be cooperative or accommodating if influential leaders', such as CBOs, religious leaders, and their ideas, are included in achieving gender equality to comment about how well or how badly the program through their cultural institutions is a major factor for mitigating violence against women. Other than education and gender awareness, people are more willing to accommodate informal leaders' ideas than formal organizations such as women affairs. Economic empowerment of the women can also be a factor to reclaim women's rights as well as securing their social status (Mishra, 2018, Quazi, 2018).

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