Introduction
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Violence is the undue exercise of physical power against a person or other living things to cause an injury. It includes threats of physical force, use of abusive language and harassing actions. The narrowest definition of violence is confined not only to physical violence but emotional, psychological and sexual abuse as well. Physical violence is when one person, directly or indirectly, ill-treats or injures others including hitting, pushing, burning or freezing or any other form of physical assault on persons or property. The emotional or psychological abuse includes verbal aggression, threats of future abuse, taunts, yelling and isolation. According to Violence Prevention Alliance under Global Campaign for Violence Prevention (WHO, 1997), “Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.

Violence can be observed under different forms. Violence can be both self inflicted and interpersonal. Self inflicted violence is when an individual harms or causes injury to oneself whereas interpersonal violence is between individuals. It comprises violence within the families against spouse, children and elderly in the family. The commonest form of violence within families is the ‘domestic violence’.

‘Domestic violence’ is a behavioural, emotional, psychological, physical or sexual abuse that one person in an intimate relationship uses in order to control the other. It can take many forms such as threats, name calling, isolation, withholding of money, power or privileges, actual or threatened physical harm or sexual assault. According to Population Reports (2000) domestic violence is violence between intimate partners. It is not just hitting and fighting or an occasional argument rather it is chronic abuse of power. The abuser tortures and controls the victim by calculated threats, intimidation and physical violence.
Domestic violence is a global phenomenon and not restricted to any geographical area though regional variations may exist. Various religions, castes and societies have supported subjugation of women in one form or the other. Gender violence cannot be traced only to individual male dominance but has been linked to larger social and familial structures that are based on patriarchy and exploitative relationships. Violence is an act of aggression usually found in interpersonal interactions and is situated in the socio-economic and political content of power relations (Kelker, 1991). Everybody including men, women and their children can be the victims of domestic violence in a family. In patriarchal society the chances of men being victims of domestic violence are very less and the women and children are at a larger risk.

The world has entered the new millennium but it is a harsh reality that the women in India, are deprived of their independent identities and are looked upon as a commodity or a slave and therefore have to face various atrocities committed on them by their male counterparts. The irony of the situation is that she is not only robbed of her dignity and pride by the way of seduction by the men outside doorsteps of home, but also, she may become a victim of cruelty within the four walls of her own home.

In Indian society, domestic violence is present at high rate since earlier times. A number of studies have indicated that physical abuse of Indian women is quite high ranging from 22% to 60% of women surveyed (Mahajan, 1990 and Rao, 1996). The National Crime Record Bureau (2000) revealed a shocking increase in violence against women i.e. 71.5% which includes torture and dowry deaths during the period from 1991 to 1995. In another study 18% to 45% of married men in five districts of Uttar Pradesh agreed that they physically abused their wives (Narayana, 1996). United Nations Population Fund (2007) reported that as many as 70% of married women in India between the ages of 15-49 are victims of beating. Jejeebhoy (1998) carried out a study regarding violence against women in Uttar Pradesh and Tamilnadu and have reported that violence against women is 36 % to 38% in Uttar Pradesh and 42% to 48% in Tamilnadu.
Punjab is considered to be the most prosperous state of India but it also shows a high incidence of crimes. Sharma (2008) carried out a survey from the year 2002-2006, in which a total of 2298 cases of violence against women have been reported. Singh and Kaur (2007) carried out a survey in Ludhiana, which is the most developed and important industrial and business hub of Punjab and reported that crime rate against women is increasing day by day. Mahajan (1990) carried out a survey in a village of Punjab and reported that 75% of women from Scheduled Caste households reported regular beating.

Ego clashes between spouses have been found to be one of the major reasons behind marital discords involving working women (The Hindu, May 14, 2003, p.3). The most serious and unfortunate about domestic violence is that it usually happens at a place which is considered to be the safest i.e. Home (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Ahuja, 2001 and Sriram, 2001). Singer (1971) opined that the greatest personal violence within the family is an outcome of aggressive behaviour which is more closely tied to the emotional consequences of frustration of hopes, images and day to day stress among persons who have important complex relations.

One of the most serious effect of family violence is the damage it can do to a woman’s perceptions over time, so that she becomes habituated to the behaviour, seeing it as normal or as something she deserves. Most of the women tolerate this violence because they witness the same treatment being meted out to their elder senior women relations and therefore, consider it as normal behaviour customary and of minor nature. In spite of the extreme physical and psychological violence meted out to many women, they do not seek divorce, as they feel it is trauma for them, as their children would be a part for a price to be paid for this act. Thus to a great extent, they accept domestic violence as a part of life (Jejeebhoy, 1998 and Gandhi, 2001). According to International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS, 2000) 50% of women respondents have accepted violence within the home and they believed that wife beating is justified on at least one of the six grounds – neglecting the house or children, going out without telling the husband,
showing disrespect to the in-laws, not cooking food properly, if she is suspected by her husband of unfaithfulness and if she does not bring money or goods in their marriage.

Veeraraghavan (1995) opined that whatever may be the type of violence, the effect of various forms of violence in the family are often very disastrous both in terms of immediate effects that are quite visible as well as long term effects that are often less visible. This is true not only for the victim but also for the other members of the family, the family as a whole and society at large. Campbell and Lewandowski (1997) studied the effect of spousal violence on the mental health of women and reported that battered women were found to have more depressive symptoms than other women. It has also been reported that the more severe the abuse, the greater its impact on a woman's physical and mental health (Laserman et. al. 1996). Women who live with abuse and violence in homes generally live in a state of fear and shame and suffer from depression, anxiety, low self esteem, anger and poor relationships which also affect their children who do not grow up in domestic violence type families.

Home environment effects children to a great extent, many people think that children are too young to understand what is happening in the home. But the notion is not totally correct. The children might not be able to know the reasons for domestic violence but they very well understand what is going on between their parents. They even understand relations of their parents, what to talk of interpersonal violence which is apparent. These children witness what happens in the family when they are at home. Witnessing domestic violence leaves strong imprints in their minds and it can have long lasting impacts on their personality. Children of all ages ranging from infants to adolescents get affected by domestic violence. They exhibit a wide range of problems like emotional, behavioral, developmental and academic problems. (Shaw & Emerry, 1987; Long et. al. 1987 and Pandey, 2008.) Exposure to recurrent traumatic experiences in early childhood, including domestic violence, places a child at much greater risk of long term psychological, emotional and behavioral problems (Smith, 1978; Wyndham, 1998; Herman et.al. 1989 and Edleson et. al. 1991).
In every society, the child suffers incalculable harm which may be mental, emotional, physical and sexual at the hands of those who are supposed to mould them into wholesome personalities. The victims who are thus, scared of life may either belong to childhood or adolescence period. Children may exhibit a wide range of reactions to exposure to violence in their homes. Younger children sometimes do not understand the meaning of abuse but they tend to believe that they must have done something wrong. They don't have the ability to express their feelings verbally. Children may become withdrawn, non verbal and exhibit regressed behaviour which may lead to eating and sleeping problems, anxiety and physical complaints like headaches etc. Unlike younger children, pre-adolescent child has greater ability to externalize negative emotions (i.e. verbalize). In addition to symptoms commonly seen with the childhood anxiety (e.g. sleep problems, eating disturbance and nightmares), victim within this group show a loss of interest in social activities, self concept and avoidance of peer relations in the school.

It is also common to observe temper tantrums, irritability, frequent fighting at school and between siblings, lashing out at objects, teasing pet and attempts to gain attention through hitting, kicking or choking peers and family members. Girls are more likely to exhibit withdrawal. Adolescent children are at the risk of academic failure, school drop-out, delinquency and substance abuse (Martin et. al. 1987; Attala et. al.1995 and Holden & Ritchie, 1991). Nair (1997) and Sunny (2003) reported that witnessing domestic violence can cause long term effects, the children have more physical and mental problems, become more likely to be abusive as adults if they are males. Sometimes they feel responsible for the abuse and powerless to stop it. Mosca (1992) conducted a study on the personality characteristics of the children exposed to family violence and reported that children from violent families have more behaviour problems, have less social interaction, increased feeling of anxiety, aggression and lesser use of adaptive behaviour.

The effects on children who have been the victims of violence or who have witnessed violence include physical injury, bedwetting, insomnia, nightmares, reluctance to go to school, obsessive behaviour, sometimes
attempt to suicide and delayed emotional and educational development. Sometimes they are misdiagnosed as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The consequences can be life long and devastating. It has been observed that children in violent homes are not mute and passive spectators rather they often try to intervene to protect the adult victim, which puts them in a dangerous situation. Children are capable of copying the violent behavior they witness, both as children and as adults. Often they may develop stress-related problems in health. They may lose self-confidence and blame themselves for what is happening or feel guilty.

Children are sometimes intentionally hurt by abusive parent or they get caught in the middle of a domestic violence situation and get accidentally hurt. These kids may suffer from chronic illness, headaches or stomachaches. Jaya and Narasimhan (2003) interviewed the children who were exposed to violence and reported that 7% wanted to get rid of their parents and 4 percent wished to run away from the family because they were frightened to the inconsistent characteristics of the parents, felt lost and rejected due to the parental violence.

Jaffe et. al. (1986) and Tandon (2003) reported that boys exposed to domestic violence exhibit more behaviour problems than girls, especially externalizing behaviours such as hostility and aggression while girls exposed to domestic violence demonstrated more internalizing problems such as depression and somatic complaints. Peterson (1986) and Joshi (2002) have reported that higher the level of parental conflicts with longer duration, more adverse is the child outcomes. The conflicts had stronger and more lasting effects on boys leading to anti social behaviour whereas girls were found to become more depressed and withdrawn due to persistent conflicts. The higher number of persistent conflicts and marital disruption were found to be related with an increased incidence of behaviour problems in children of 12-16 years of age.

The psychological effects for both women and children include loss of self esteem, loss of faith in one’s own perception of reality, constant fear of attack, fear of self assertion, depression, feelings of shame, self blame,
failure, powerlessness and worthlessness. A woman may feel or be unable to protect her children and this can have some serious effects, like damage to her relationship with the children.

All these studies reveal that domestic violence is a serious problem pervasive across all strata of society and is a global pandemic. No doubt that it is the basic hurdle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. This violence against women both violates and nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedom. This display of violence by the dominant sex is the extension of age-old male chauvinism, economic empowerment and the similar role models through their life times. This is a point towards the long standing failure to protect and promote the rights of women and children. This domination over and discrimination against women by men is a big barrier to women's full advancement and also affects their children who become the innocent victims of the situation, without being even aware of the reasons for their victimization. The violence might be a ego tripper for the violent counterpart but it is a great physical and emotional trauma for the sufferers. The total home environment is impacted negatively, distorting the normal functioning of family life.

Domestic violence also affects children’s cognitive development and academic performance. Cognitive development means obtaining knowledge, through thought, experience and senses. Various studies have proved that domestic violence decreases the academic performance of children as they find it difficult to concentrate in the class room (Moore & Pepler, 1998 and Rossman et. al. 1993). Koenen et. al. (2003) reported that children exposed to domestic violence have lower Intelligence Quotient. Memory problems, learning disabilities and weak performance of academics were related to domestic violence (Aron &olson,1999 and Naghavi, 2006). Cumming and Davis (1999) have reported that stressful environment at home affects the children and the find it difficult to concentrate with school work, which may lead to poor academic performance.
Domestic violence damages the quality of life not only of the victim, but also the children and the whole family. Moreover, the damage is not temporary but it leaves everlasting marks on the victim and the family. Children are known to be the worst victims of the growing menace of domestic violence. Therefore, it is important to study the children for their physical growth, emotional and cognitive development. With this backdrop, the present study has been planned with the following objectives:

1. To know the domestic violence in families of the school children ranging in age from 8 to 16 years.
2. To study the impact of domestic violence on physical growth of school children.
3. To study the psychological behaviour of children influenced by domestic violence.
4. To know the impact of domestic violence on academic performance of school children.