Chapter-IX

MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis makes a new contribution to the body of literature on domestic violence in general, and more specifically to the study of domestic violence among women of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh in particular. This study tried to fill the gap between the existing literature on domestic violence and the situation of women abuse in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, and thereby expands the range of existing literature. Most importantly, this study gives voice to the experiences of women who have lived through abusive and violent experiences within their intimate relationship by including their experiences and stories within the study of domestic violence in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. Moreover, by providing women with safe space in which they can discuss their experiences of survival, misery and hardiness, without presuming to predefine their experience, this research seeks to convey a respect for these women’s experiences.

The purpose of this research is to fill the gap in the literature of domestic violence, and thereby to draw society’s attention to the issue of domestic violence occurring in Himachal Pradesh community and to the need for inclusive services and policy for women experiencing domestic violence.

This study is just a start, and it is wished that further more in-depth studies will be conducted into the issues related to domestic violence in India, where this matter has not been established and remained unexplored.
Domestic violence has been transformed from a subject of private matter to an object of public concern through the efforts of the women’s movement which began in early 1970s’.

The thesis titled “A Study of Domestic Violence against Married Women in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh” was undertaken to study the nature and extent of violence experienced by women in their marital homes, factors leading to domestic violence, the reasons for which abused women continue to stay in an abusive relationship and reasons for not staying in such relationships. The study also looks into the coping patterns and help seeking behaviour of the victims and measures to control, minimize and if possible elimination of domestic violence against women.

The present chapter covers major findings based on the analysis of data along with the recommendations put forth by the respondents as well as the researcher.

9.2 FINDINGS

The findings derived from the respondents subjected to domestic violence in the four blocks of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh are written below under the various heads. The major findings in this respect are as under:

9.2.1 Socio-Economic Profile

9.2.1.1 Present Age of Respondents

Out of 183 respondents about 90 percent of the respondents were from the age-group of 18-40 years. It was observed that the incidence of violence was more in the age group of 26-32 years and 33-39 years.

9.2.1.2 Age at the time of marriage of Respondents

The majority of respondents i.e. 63.38 percent were married when they were between 19-25 years of age, and 20.76 percent respondents respectively were married at an age of \( \leq 18 \). The data clearly dispelled the fact that women who got married
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before 25 years of age are at higher risk of being subjected to domestic violence than other women.

9.2.1.3 Education of Respondents

The result analysis indicated that about 91 percent respondents were literate and more cases of violence were seen where the women were educated up to higher secondary.

9.2.1.4 Occupation of Respondents

About 79 percent of the respondents were housewives and were not engaged in any occupation outside the homes. The data thus showed that mostly unemployed women were victims of domestic violence.

9.2.1.5 Income of Respondents

About 79 percent of the women were housewives, had no source of income and were wholly dependent on their husbands, in-laws or parents to meet their personal expenses. The above data thus pointed out that domestic violence was prevalent more among those who were dependent on others for their basic needs.

9.2.1.6 Religion

The women respondents were classified on the basis of their religions. Majority of respondents i.e. 97.8 percent were Hindu by religion and about 2.2 percent were Muslims. The small representation of Muslims and no representation of other religions were due to the small denomination of other religion.

9.2.1.7 Caste/Category

The prevalence of domestic violence was highest in Schedule Caste category followed by General, Other Backward Caste and Schedule Tribe categories.
9.2.1.8 Residence

An overwhelming majority (About 84 percent) was villagers. Most of the respondents belonged to rural area because as per 2011 census out of the total Kangra population 5.71 percent lives in urban regions and 94.29 percent lived in rural areas of district.

9.2.1.9 Type of Family

About 50.3 percent of respondents lived in joint families, 48.6 percent were in nuclear families and only 1.1 percent were staying in extended families. The 67.75 percent respondents belonged to families comprising 4 to 6 members. Information related to the number of children showed that a majority of the victims i.e. the 71.58 percent of respondents had 1 or 2 children.

9.2.1.10 Housing pattern and Standard of living

About 73.4 percent of respondents had pucca houses and 85 percent respondents had two or more than two room’s house. All the respondents had electricity and drinking water facility where as 75.4 percent and 63.9 percent of the houses had provision for bathrooms and toilets respectively. Most of the respondents had land, telephone, television in their houses whereas only 36.6 percent and 15.3 percent had two wheelers and four wheelers respectively. About 34 percent of respondents had domestic animals. The 81 percent of them had saving accounts in a bank or post office.

9.2.1.11 Difference in Socio-Economic Status of Partner Families

A very small proportion of respondent revealed that difference in socio-economic status existed.
9.2.1.12 Husband’s Background

9.2.1.12.1 Present Age of Respondents’ Husbands

About 87 percent of the respondent’s husbands were from the age-group of 19-47 years.

9.2.1.12.2 Age at Marriage of Respondents’ Husbands

The age of respondents’ husbands at marriage indicates that about 44.80 percent of respondents were married when they were between 26 and 32 years of age, 39.89 percent were married when they were below 25 years of age.

9.2.1.12.3 Education of Respondents’ Husbands

About 98 percent respondents’ husbands were literate and more cases of violence were seen where respondents husbands were educated up to higher secondary.

9.2.1.12.4 Occupation of Respondents’ Husbands

About 96.2 percent of the husbands were employed. It could be said that a majority were enjoying the security of a job, while the remaining 16.4 percent were not secure as far as a steady job was concerned.

9.2.1.12.5 Income of Respondents’ Husbands

Income status of the respondents’ husbands showed that 2.18 percent were unemployed and dependent on their family member, 41.53 percent were earning less than Rs.5000 per month. The figure from the data showed that domestic violence existed in each income group. Majority of the respondents’ husbands (approximately 45 percent) belong to low income category. The figures thus pointed out to the fact domestic violence was prevalent among those whose income in less than Rs. 5,000 per month.
9.2.2 Marriage

9.2.2.1 Nature of Marriage

The 92.3 percent of the marriages were arranged by their own parents and 87.57 percent said that parents sought their opinion regarding marriage. For a small percent of respondents and their husbands, it was their second marriage.

9.2.2.2 Dowry

About 82 percent of the respondents had given dowry for their marriages of which 71.03 percent had given in the form of kind/household articles. About 37.16 percent of the respondents had been subjected to demands for dowry from their husband’s family. However, 56.28 percent of women reported that their in-laws were not satisfied with the dowry received.

9.2.3 Children

Of the respondents who were childless, 14.28 percent were abused by their in-laws and remaining 85.71 percent told that they were separated from their husbands after few months of marriage. Women who had children, 41.29 percent had girl as first child and 48.43 percent of them told that their in-laws were sad and humiliated them on the birth of girl child.

9.2.4 Participation in Decision-Making

About 55 percent of the decisions in the families were made by the husbands of the respondents; in 42.1 percent families the elders took approximately all the decisions and very small percent of women i.e. 2.7 percent took decisions in the family matters with their husbands. The 39.49 percent of women told they had given the chance to express an opinion in the family matters but there opinion was not always considered.
9.2.5 Family Environment

The 70.5 percent of women found troubled environment in the family after marriage and 65.5 percent of women told that they felt differences in married life within a month or after one month of marriage. Respondents also told that their husbands started verbally and physically abusing them in the initial period of marriage.

9.2.6 Interpersonal Relationship with In-Laws

About 51 percent of the respondents were residing with their in-laws at the time of filing the case. The 84.7 percent of the respondents experienced violence from their in-laws, much of which had been initiated by their mother-in-laws, although father-in-laws, brother-in-laws, sister-in-laws were also identified as perpetrators and instigators of violence in some cases. About 26 percent of the women had to suffer ‘regular’ attacks by the in-laws in a month and 45.4 percent told that their in-laws quarreled with them in front of others also. Significant proportion was verbally and psychologically abused, 25.1 percent physically and 6.55 percent were sexually abused by their in-laws. This illustrates that in-laws inflicted more psychological violence than physical and sexual violence on the victims.

9.2.7 Impact of Domestic Violence on the Life of the Children

Majority of the respondents told that violence had a bad impact on their children as they had indifferent attitude and loss of respect for their fathers due to violence against their mothers. Of the children who were abused by the father about half of them were verbally/emotionally abused, 57.69 physically and 3.84 percent were sexually abused by their fathers as reported by the respondents. About 11 percent of the respondents told that education of their children had been badly affected. The reasons they quoted were: separation from the husbands, disturbances at
home, financial constraints, lack of proper attention, inability to bear all the expenses individually, and frequent change of schools.

9.2.8 Causes for the Violence at Home

About 74 percent of the respondents told that drug addiction or alcoholism of the husband were the main cause of domestic violence against the women. Extra marital affairs of husbands, not attending to the household chores, not preparing good food, and instigation of in-laws were other causes of domestic violence in majority of the cases.

9.2.9 Nature and Extent of Domestic Violence

Most of the women were physically, verbally/emotionally/psychologically and economically abused by their husbands in one form or other. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women experienced more physical violence compared to those who belonged to other backward caste and higher caste. Education had significant positive effect on physical violence, as higher the education lower was the physical violence. Substantial proportions of respondents were injured by the violence inflicted on them. Physically injured women were highest for those who belonged to scheduled caste than other caste but the variation was not enough in different caste groups. About 79 percent of women were restricted from purchasing household and personal things and they had to give account for every penny spent on household and personal expenses. About 42 percent of the women were denied from basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter or medical attention and the women were totally dependent on husbands for such basic necessities. A good proportion of women, i.e. 27.3 percent were victims of sexual violence in one form or the other, their husbands considered them sex object and they felt that they were raped by their husbands. The sexual abuse was the major reason for complaining and leaving the relationship. The higher caste
women experienced less sexual violence compared to those who belonged to lower castes, whereas women whose husbands were highly educated experienced less sexual violence compared to those whose husbands were educated up to high secondary.

9.2.10 Frequency of Domestic Violence

Majority of cases the respondents were exposed to violence more than 6 to 10 times and 11 to 20 times in a month. Of the respondents 40 percent of them faced domestic violence 11 to 20 times and more than 20 times in a month and 31.7 percent were exposed to violence 6 to 10 times during a month. The total analysis of data led to a conclusion that it was difficult to catch the frequency of violence in terms of periodicity. Therefore, the responses could be interpreted only as a trend.

9.2.11 Consequences of Domestic Violence

About 64 percent of the respondents were injured by the violence inflicted on them. There existed an inverse relationship between education of husband and physical violence; in other words women whose husbands were highly educated experienced less or no physical bruises compared to those whose husbands were educated only up to high secondary. Education had significant positive effects on physically hurt. The proportion of women physically injured was the highest among those women who belonged to scheduled caste than other castes.

Majority of the victims, i.e. 70.94 percent got blue marks on their body, 16.23 percent got blue marks and stitches on their head, 2.56 percent got stitches on their head, 0.85 percent were burnt with cigarettes, got blue marks and were not able to sit and stand due to abuse, 2.56 percent of women got blue marks and fractures, 3.41 percent were injured with weapons whereas 3.41 percent of women got internal injuries.
9.2.12 Visited a Health Professional as a Result of Injuries

The 46.44 percent of the victims visited a health professional as a result of injuries. Domestic violence affected women’s mental health; it grind down women’s self-confidence and led to problems such as depression, suicides, sleeping as well as eating disorders, nervousness and fear. Most of the respondents had suffered depression. Among the respondents, 53 percent had thought of committing suicide. The mental effect of domestic violence was so severe that for 53 percent of the victims, domestic violence had an adverse effect on their appearance in terms of grooming and dressing.

9.2.13 How Usually React to the Domestic Violence

About 47 percent of respondents opposed verbally, 3.2 percent opposed violently against the perpetrators. Whereas 38.25 percent suffered domestic violence in silence, 5.4 percent of the victims under study went to their parents’ houses immediately after the fight, 1.1 percent reacted to the domestic violence by neglecting the household chores. Only 3.8 percent tried to communicate and resolve the issue forthrightly.

9.2.14 Ways Use to Cope with the Abuse

About 67 percent of respondents adopted avoidant strategies during the first phase of abuse and with the increase of violence they adopted active strategies to cope with the abuse. It has been found that a substantial proportion of women whenever faced with incidents of violence in their in-law’s family, they would inadvertently prefer to seek refuge in their mother’s house first and if the violence was unbearable then they were ready to stay alone and seek legal separation from the abuser.
9.2.15 Reasons for Continuing and Quitting the Relationship

About 52 percent of the respondents indicated different compulsions and gave a number of reasons which forced them and want to stay with their husbands. The main reasons of the abused women to stay in such relationship were attachment to the partner, emotional investment in the relationship, sanctity of marriage, economic dependence on the abuser, concern for children, lack of alternative housing, and cultural or religious constraints. The remaining respondents indicated different reasons which forced them to leave the relationship with the husband, e.g. for the sake of children, lack of understanding, husband didn’t want to continue relationship, alcoholic habit, and regular and sever abuse were the major reasons for leaving the relationship.

9.2.16 Help-Seeking Behaviour

Women used many strategies to escape, avoid, and stop the violence and abuse against them. These included: 1) Seeking help from informal organization such as Parents, In-laws, Friends and Neighbours; 2) Formal help-seeking strategies such as seeking help from the Panchayat, Police, NGO, Protection Officer, Lawyer and filing a case with Court. Women who experienced domestic violence were not passive victims; they actively sought help from formal resources and informal network. The 97.3 percent of women sought the help from their parents and most of them were helped by them by indulging in the matter, accompanied them and provided economic support. Whereas 34.2 percent women told that their brother and sister-in-laws were not supportive and humiliated them for staying, seeking help and considered them burden. About 91 percent women were satisfied with the help and support received from their parents. Substantial proportion of women told that their in-laws and neighbours were already aware about the violence and a very few shared the matter.
with their in-laws. The victims were humiliated and criticized for raising the family issue. The in-laws did not want to continue relationship whereas very few women were helped by their in-laws. The 75 percent of women told that their neighbours never indulged in the matter and protected them from the abuse and they were mere spectators. A very few proportion of women was satisfied with the behaviour and help received from their in-laws and neighbours. About 76 percent of women sought the help of panchayat members and a very few were helped and cooperated by the panchayat members. Substantial proportion of women were not helped by the panchayat people because they didn’t want to lose their votes by helping the women against their husband and in-laws so they only advised the women to settle down in the family without criticizing their husband and in-laws.

A small proportion of women, i.e. 18.3 percent sought the help of NGO, and 57.57 percent of them were helped and cooperated by the NGO. Majority of women were helped by the NGO people like they were offered shelter and free legal aid, given counseling with their husbands, and involved in income generating activities. All women were comfortable in disclosing their problems with the NGO and about 87 percent of them were satisfied with the help received from the NGO. About 65.27 percent of women sought the help of a protection officer and they got the information about the services of protection officer from NGO and anganwadi workers, friends/ neighbours, police and court about the working and help given by the protection officer. About 61 percent of the protection officers were males with whom they had registered their case and 64.38 percent of them told it was very difficult to explain and disclose the problem to them. Of the victims who sought the help 22.6 percent were helped and cooperated whereas 73.1 percent of cases were simply registered and forwarded to court by the protection officer. About 30 percent of
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victims who got the help of protection officer got the counseling singly and jointly from the protection officer and 10.8 percent of the perpetrators’ behaviour was changed and they were ready for the compromise and took their case back from the court. The 22 percent of women were satisfied with the behaviour and help received from protection officer and 71 percent of women told they could not rate because they simply forwarded the case to the court. The police are a key agency for women experiencing domestic violence. About 69 percent of women sought the help of police of which in 25.39 percent cases police personnel advised to compromise and solve the matter within family; in 23.8 percent cases, they were helped and cooperated, in 17.4 percent cases police simply registered and forwarded the case to the protection officer and NGO, 29.36 percent victims were humiliated and criticized and 3.96 percent were humiliated, criticized and their cases were not registered easily. In 33.29 percent cases police personnel blamed them for all this, they told a good wife never disclosed their family matters to anyone and they asked very humiliating questions regarding sex life and wanted money for registering the case. The 12.69 percent of the victims husbands behaviour was changed and they were ready for the compromise and took their case back from the court. The police officials were not gender sensitive and made jokes of victims. A 32.5 percent of victims told they could not rate their service because they were advised to compromise and simply forwarded the case to the NGO, protection officer and court for further decisions, and 32.5 percent were not satisfied with the help.

About 80 percent of the victims appointed the lawyer themselves because some of them didn’t know about the service and others wanted the services of best lawyer, whereas 36.30 percent got free legal aid with the help of formal organizations and one third of victims who got free legal aid told the lawyers were still charging
money for the case. A very small proportion of women is not satisfied with the help of lawyers, one fifth of women did not rate the services because their case was still pending with the court. Majority of women were not comfortable in disclosing their problem with the males in panchayat, police station, protection officers and lawyers. About 85 percent of cases were forwarded to court/taken the help of court and 91.02 percent of them attended the court proceeding. More than fifty percent of cases were still pending with the court 28.16 percent of cases were solved by the court in one year whereas in the remaining cases court had taken more than one year to take some sort of decision and small proportion of women had taken their cases back because the case proceedings were very time consuming.

In 26.05 percent cases compromise was made between the couple and most were living happily but sometime their husbands verbally abused for taking help from formal organization, still they were happy because they changed a lot. Three fifth of victims told that the court proceedings were very time consuming, humiliating, low maintenance, proof requiring for everything and insisting for compromise and slightly more than one fifth of victims were happy because their husbands changed their behaviour after complaining to the court. Regarding the effectiveness of the services provided by the various formal organizations, a significant proportion of the victims opined that the services were not satisfactory.

They did not have faith in the services provided by them because they only registered and forwarded the case to other organization.
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9.2.17 Measures Suggested for Reducing/Ending Domestic Violence

A good proportion of women told higher education of boys and girls, economic independence, equality, proper Implementation of law and order and strict punishment, share in the property at the time of marriage, free hotlines, and counseling centers were the measures to reduce or control domestic violence against women.

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

With the prevailing status of the domestic violence against women in the District Kangra of Himachal Pradesh, the recommendations of the researcher to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic violence against women are made in the light of the objectives and findings of the present study. They are as follows:

9.3.1 Judiciary

- Special courts must be set up for cases of violence against women and cases should be taken up quickly and completed without any delay.
- The services of female magistrates should be used to handle domestic violence cases.
- The services of female advocates should be used to handle domestic violence cases.
- A pleasant atmosphere should be provided to women in the family courts to present their cases.
- Strict implementation of laws regarding dowry and drug addiction should be made for reducing the occurrence of domestic violence.
- Measures should be taken to reduce and regulate the availability and harmful use of alcohol which can substantially decrease violence.
9.3.2 Family
- There should be change in the socialization process. The male and female should be brought up in a similar manner only then the attitude of men will change towards women in future.
- Education plays an important role, so it should be provided both to the males and females equally.

9.3.3 Amendments in the Act
- Provisions for separate court to handle domestic violence cases.
- Amendment is required for the appointment of protection officers; they should be women with social work education background.
- Sensitisation of and training in regular intervals to protection officers, police personnel, members of judiciary and service providers.
- Increase in budgetary allocation, timely release with proper guidelines.

9.3.4 Counseling
- Pre-marital and post-marital counselling should be given to minimize the breaking down of the families.
- More counselling centres with professionally qualified counsellors should be opened both in rural and urban areas.

9.3.5 Police
- Gender sensitive training should be mandatory in the trainings of police personnel.
- Special training should be given to police personnel for handling domestic violence cases.
- Women police personnel should be assigned with the duty of handling all the cases of crime against women.
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- Separate wing of police personnel dealing with only women’s issues should be attached to all the police stations.

9.3.6 NGO

- NGOs should be made proactive to the issues of domestic violence so that timely help could be given to the victims.
- Short stay homes for distressed women should be provided and emphasis should be laid on vocational training to rehabilitate them.
- Facilities like free telephone hotline, legal assistance, counselling service, income generating programme and long term rehabilitation facilities for the survivor of the domestic violence.
- Special care and attention to enhance the educational and social functioning of the children of the survivors of domestic violence.
- Measures should be adopted for empowering survivors of domestic violence to make use of various services.
- Self-help group should be encouraged to facilitate mutual sharing between women.

9.3.7 Awareness Generation and Sensitization

- Gender equality must be taught at school level.
- Awareness regarding law and legal aid services to victims of violence against women in the society.
- Campaigns against drug addiction, alcoholism should be organized to minimize the occurrence of domestic violence.
- Legal awareness camps and social awareness about women status and rights should be organized for women and men in rural and urban areas.
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- Awareness regarding the governmental organisations and non-governmental organizations dealing with women’s issues should be made available to the public.

9.3.8 Government
- Coordination between the different service providers such as health workers, social workers, NGOs, counsellors, police, doctors, protection officers and the prosecution.
- The police officers, prosecutors and judges at all the levels of hierarchy need to be exposed to the gender equality education.
- Efforts should be made for proper implementation of laws related to women.
- Economic empowerment programs and economic advocacy strategies can help survivors gain or regain their financial footing during and after abuse.

9.3.9 Media
- Restriction on telecast of gender insensitive programmes.
- Presenting the impact of domestic violence on the victims and their families by the ways of advertisements and serials.
- Media can be a powerful organization for disseminating information regarding women’s right, developmental programmes and shelter for women in suffering.

9.3.10 Health Care
- Proper training should be given to medical personnel in dealing with the cases of domestic violence against women.
- Special care and health providers should be gentle in examining the victims of violence.
- Steps should be taken to recognize domestic violence as a public health issue.
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- Mental health services should be provided for appropriate care for the survivors of domestic violence.

9.4 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. This study included only battered women who contacted formal social services during the abuse. The results of this study did not reflect the experiences of battered women who had never contacted formal social services. Although battered women who have never contacted formal social services might tell completely different stories, were not included in the study.

2. The researcher may not generalize the results of this study, because the results are not representative of people from other locations.

3. The results were based on what the participants had to share with the researcher. Some of the participants were secretive and not very open to talk about certain issues.

4. Another possible limitation of this study is that, the only women victims of domestic violence are interviewed not the perpetrators of violence. It is based on the self-reports of the victims about their experiences and perspectives on domestic violence, it has the obvious limitation that there were no direct observation or check on their behaviour.

9.5 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, suggestions for the future research are highlighted.

1. This study included only battered women who contacted formal social services during the abuse. The results of this study did not reflect the experiences of battered women who had never contacted formal social services. So, it is
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recommended for future research to include battered women who have never contacted formal organizations for help.

2. This study includes only women victims not the perpetrators of violence. So, there is future prospect to study the perpetrators of violence to understand their mind-set, cultural background and conditions.