



Domestic Violence vs. Future of the Children Case Study in the Eravur Pattu Divisional Secretariat Division, Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both the authors. Author JK designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author AS managed the analyses and went through the final version of the manuscript. Both the authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence in Sri Lanka plays a vital role in Gender Based Violence. The degree of such violence differs from place to place and house to house. Many parents, especially the mothers, who mainly reside at Sittandy, Mavativembu, and Vantharumoolai at the Eravur Pattu Divisional Secretariat Division, Batticaloa District have migrated to Middle East countries for work due to such violence. Parents and their children's future become questionable though their parents are virtually living. The women who migrate to any foreign country are doubly oppressed; both physically in their working places and mentally – thinking their own future and their children to whom they are migrated. The children of such migratory parents face many difficulties and their future also becomes questionable as that of their mothers. Objectives of this particular study is to check how far these children are affected due to the domestic violence that their parents are involved in and if there are any, then do the children used to cope up with. Children of these conditions may face many challenges like mental and physical harassment, lack of necessary psychosocial well being

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and these things can be happen at every place where they are involve in. Now these target villages were selected due to the recent increasing rate of reported cases on domestic violence. The research was conducted on mixed method, by organizing personal interviews of the victimized children along with their parents and informations of the relevant family status were collected through higher authority of District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) of the Batticaloa District. Based on the analysis, this research reveals that domestic violence forces children to become orphans due to the migration of parents, especially loss the mothers.

Keywords: Migration; domestic violence; gender based violence; psychosocial well being.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women comprise slightly less than half of all international migrants worldwide. Globally, the proportion of women among all migrants fell from 49.3 per cent in 2000 to 48.4 per cent in 2017., and sometimes find under that major domestic suppression. In the Year 2017, Sri Lanka has 40000 international migrants, which constituted 0.2% of total population of Sri Lanka. Percentage of Females among international migrants from Sri Lanka was increased 45.3% (in 2000) to 47.8% in 2017. It is also interesting to note that the Median age of international migrants from Sri Lanka fell from 55.2 years (in 2000) to 25.3 years in 2015 [1].

Domestic Violence against women is a universal phenomenon and is as old as mankind. The definition of domestic violence was modified over the years with the introduction of new forms of abuses. The women studies formulated the following definition encompassing different forms of domestic violence: "Domestic violence is defined as an abuse of power perpetrated mainly by men on women. The most commonly acknowledged forms of domestic violence are physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional and economic abuse." [2] Domestic violence against women (DVAW) is a worldwide phenomenon and refers to any act committed against women that results in physical and psychological harm, and coercion, loss of liberty, and deprivation [3]. A large literature has documented a complex and interdependent relationship between domestic violence, women empowerment, domestic risk factors, and violence-related health injuries [4]. Demonstrated that immigrant women reported higher levels of perceived risks/barriers to leaving, provided some support for the use of a holistic risk assessment in understanding women's decisions to leave, and demonstrated that immigrant and nonimmigrant women have both similarities and differences in the factors that predict leaving. Clinical and policy implications are addressed [5].

1.1 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes slapping, punching, beating, shoving, etc. It could include attempts to harm the victim with weapons, such as knives, sticks, or other items found lying at home. In extreme cases firearms may also be used to threaten and/or harm the victim.

1.2 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes rapes, physically attacking a woman's genetic organs preventing the victim from using birth control and/ or safe sex practices, etc. Rape is forcing woman to have sex against their will, which in many cases involves violence. In all cases it is a violation of Fundamental Human rights.

1.3 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse includes all intentional attempts to minimize the victim's concerns and to make them suffer mental agony. Humiliating the victim in front of the other people, family and friends is a common way of emotional abuse.

1.4 Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse includes any threats that are made or carried out with the intention of financial or emotional injury, blackmail or humiliation. Threat may be made to take the children away from the woman could also be included in this category.

1.5 Economic Abuse

Economic abuse creates financial dependence. The victim can have her money taken away by her abuser, forcing her to ask for money whenever she needs.

1.6 Intimidation

Intimidation as a form of abuse includes threatening women and demanding money,

action and gestures by destroying their property or by brandish weapons.

Incidence of domestic violence against women varies from country to country. According to Sri Lankan survey, half of migrant workers are women, many of whom are mothers who left behind their families in their native country of Sri Lanka to perform domestic work abroad [6]. They went to earn money but their children's are left in the lurch without any source of livelihood. In a case study made by Rasika Jayasuriya and Brian Opeskin in the "The Migration of women Domestic Workers from Sri Lanka: Protecting the Rights of Children Left Behind" indicates that one million Sri Lankan children are directly affected by this migration phenomenon (48 Cornell International Law Journal) [7]. The possible harms experienced by children left behind include disruption to family relations, diversion from education as children are pressurized into domestic roles formerly discharged by the absent parent, feeling loneliness and depression [8].

The Sri Lankan government has been encouraging the migration of domestic workers, with large –scale migration to the Middle East steadily increasing since the 1980s, but now migration to abroad becomes the most common and easy one in the Batticaloa district. There are three categorized women who are travelling abroad as follows:

1. Widow
2. The drug addicted and the unemployed husband
3. Burden of debt

This research was conducted to examine the future of the children whose mothers left for abroad for work due to domestic violence. Thus the study was conducted in three selected villages viz. Sittandy, Mavadivembu, and Vantharumoolai, in the Eravur pattu (Chenkalady) D.S division in the Eastern Province, Sri Lanka.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Children have generally been afforded little attention in migration research or unsatisfactorily included within family migration [9]. The Journal of International Law states clearly about the fundamental position of the family is enshrined in international human rights law. What is commonly referred to as the International Bill of Rights— the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights (1948) (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) (ICESCR) - identify the family as being "the natural and fundamental group unit of society." 88 Article 16(3) of the UDHR and Article 23(1) of the ICCPR recognize that the family unit is "entitled to protection by society and the State," 89 while Article 10(1) of the ICESCR states that the family should be accorded the widest possible protection and assistance, "particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children (90)." In explicating the rights of the family, the U.N. Human Rights Committee has stated that: The right to found a family implies, in principle, the possibility to procreate and live together. The possibility to live together implies the adoption of appropriate measures, both at the internal level and as the case may be, in cooperation with other States, to ensure the unity or reunification of families, particularly when their members are separated for political, economic similar reasons [10].

The International Bill of Rights in the Legal and the Policy Framework indicates "the special needs of children are also recognized" in Article 25(2) of the UDHR, which specifies that "[m]otherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance (92)," and in Article 24(1) of the ICCPR, which states that "[e]very child shall have . . . the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor (93)." In interpreting the rights of the child under the ICCPR, the U.N. Human Rights Committee has recognized that "[r]esponsibility for guaranteeing children the necessary protection lies with the family, society and the State," and while the Committee primarily allocates this responsibility to the family (particularly the parents), it indicates the importance of States being held accountable for "how society, social institutions and the State are discharging their responsibility to assist the family in ensuring the protection of the child (94)." Article 10(3) of the ICESCR also recognizes the need for special measures of protection and assistance to be taken on behalf of children and young people, which include being "protected from economic and social exploitation (95)." A child's right to education is embodied in Article 13 of this Covenant (96). These specific rights are discussed further in Part II. "Not all States that are net receivers of labor from Sri Lanka are parties to the two

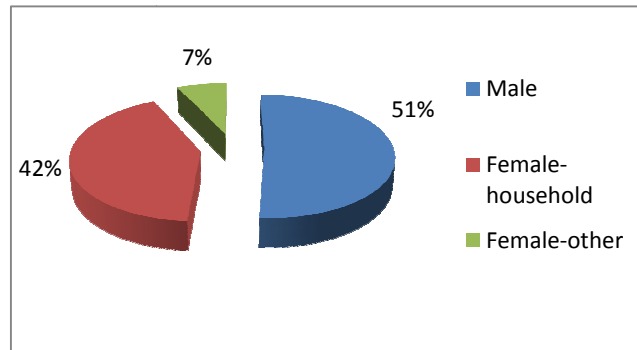


Fig. 1. Mother migration in Sri Lanka

International Covenants, but many of their core provisions are also found in the UDHR, which generally binds all States as a matter of customary international law” [7]

According to “The Sunday Island” published a pie chart to indicate an impact of mother migration in Sri Lanka (Dr.R.M. Surantha Perera, September 30, 2015) [11].

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted to examine the future of the children whose parents migrated particularly mothers. Interviews with the particular area officers, people and their children to examine their present plight were poised to the following parties:

1. Grama Niladhari (G.N)
2. Child Protection and Rehabilitation Officer (CRPO)
3. District Child Protection Unit Officer
4. Personal interview with the affected families

The above personals were asked the following questions:

1. Why women wanted to migrate to other country for work?
2. What about their child protection?
3. Who is responsible for that child if something happens to him/her in the absence of mothers?

3.1 Grama Niladari

Grama Niladari is an important person in approving the women to migrate abroad. So he was personally interviewed to have some details

of the women migration. The main questions raised to him were:

Information according to the Grama Niladhari states clearly that the women were not properly educated and most of them married at the age of 15, whereas they were not matured enough to understand the family life and family setups. Always they obey their husbands whatever the husband say. So, undefendable poor wives never object their husbands’ words for the sake of their children. Though they are obedient to their husbands and do their domestic chores, they are subjected to domestic violence by their husbands like hitting and giving harsh punishments. They feel their homes like “concentration camps”. They are used to tolerate those punishments as there are no any alternative ways to survive without the help of their husbands. Ultimately they have to reluctantly continue to live with their husbands, tolerating all the tortures and harassment because they have to (or compelled to) feed their children and to look after their family needs. This village has more children at each house. Mostly husbands are drug addicts or drunkards. When the children are in small age they do not need more money but once they are grown up, their needs increase. The head of the family (Father) is unable to manage their family with the meagre income. So when the spouse begins to ask for more money to meet their family expenses, the husband is not in a position to earn more money. Then the family face dire poverty. When poverty level is increased in the family, disputes also increased. Mothers are unable to bear up all the harassment and torture perpetrated by husbands, but when husbands start to harass their children it cannot be tolerated by the mothers, and in turn the mothers start reacting against their husbands. Then automatically the father gets out of the family and all the

responsibilities fall on her head. She needs to take cater the needs of her children like protection, education, etc. In that situation there are nobody to extent helping hands to her. As a result she makes up her mind to approach any of the sub-agent in her village who would give her some idea about migration. The special attraction is given to her by the sub-agent that once they are eligible to travel, the agency would give three hundred thousand of money. Mostly women are getting attracted by this and getting ready to travel.

“Money” played another important role in the life of the single mother, because as a single mother she needs to take care of everything for their children like shelter, clothes, education, etc. But to have money she is compelled to migrate to foreign countries for work to take care of their children. Then the problem of the children arise automatically that their life became a problematic one. Nobody is there to take care of the children which lead to be irregular to school, wearing untidy uniform, force to do household work by their relatives. This further leads to drop out of school and with improper guidance they fail and most probably they don't sit for the ordinary level exam (O/L).

So this is the major problem in the village level and children's life become questionable without their mothers. Some young boys without proper guidance become drug addict and alcoholic etc. Young girls are subject to sexual abuse by their neighbours, engage in love affairs and like her mother they get early marriage. So this sympathetic situation may continue to their children too.

3.2 Child Protection and Rehabilitation Officer

Child protection and rehabilitation officer plays another important role in the protection of children once their mother migrated abroad [12]. The followings are the information according to the Child Rehabilitation and Protection Officer (CRPO) states clearly that

- I. If the mother has a child (children) below the age of five they cannot travel abroad for work. So they are not approving such cases to migrate anticipating any wrong doings to their child (children)'s future. But unfortunately these women give some wrong information and by some strangers' advice they leave illegally without any

formal approval. When we the CROPs get some information like this, they take those children) into children home and try to collect some information about the mother and try hard and to bring her back home. But in some cases the CRPOs are unable to trace some mothers since they give false information and leave.

- II. If the mother has a child above the age of five, she can migrate for work but she needs to nominate a perfect guardian to look after their children. Before approving, the CRPO team visits their houses and check the protection of the children and also they receive a letter from the in-charge person that they would take care of that child until the mother returns. After doing all these formalities also, the 'left-out' children face problems like physical, sexual, psychological abuses.
- III. Mothers travelling abroad because of their financial strait and their main aim are to uplift their children's future, but this actually not happening in practical in most of the villages.

3.3 District Child Probation Unit Officer

District Child Probation Unit Officer also becomes a main partner in the protection of the children's future. The Commissioner of District Child Probation Unit Officer, Batticaloa was also personally interviewed with the same questions and his reply reveal that there are more cases reported on domestic violence and abuses in these three villages in Eravur Pattu Divisional Secretariat Division. Even though more information about such cases are given, women are not ready to stay here in these villages to take care of their children. More teenage pregnancy, abuses by adults etc were also reported. So the Unit needs to take all these children and adults to the home and Rehabilitation centres to rehabilitate them.

3.4 Personal Interview with the Affected Families

- I. Mostly in the families, mothers are leaving abroad than fathers because if the father wants to travel, they personally want to pay for visa and ticket fees. But in case of women, it's entirely different. They do not need to pay anything and the agency will take care of everything. The women are given more than three hundred thousand

- rupees to the women who are ready to travel.
- II. Loan System - Nowadays more financial companies are mushroomed inside the villages and giving loan strictly to the women. These women do not think of their financial background due to their poor education. They are impelled by the curiosity of money and draped into the hands of those finance companies without any knowledge about interest rates. Once the companies begin to recover the loan granted to them, then the problem starts; they do not have sufficient money to settle their monthly instalment, and to repay they need to borrow money for more rate of interest, which subsequently results in the earlier case which leads to more complicated. Then family situation becomes worse, the husbands fight with their wives which ends up in peace less life.

Then the sub-agent in the village appears with the same idea and the women pack up for abroad for work.

- III. Drunkenness of the aggressor

This survey also reveals some other clues that fathers' adapt the children and become single parent of the child and his subsequent addiction to alcohol, drugs and gambling or his extramarital relationships distance them from their children. This worsens the situation for children because the fathers' behavior does little to mitigate and sometimes aggravates the effects during the absence of the mothers'.

The young daughters of the migrant mothers become the substitute for the mother and are subjected to sexual abuse, rape, and incest in the hands of the fathers and male relatives. The absence of mothers is often cited as prime cause of incest in this country, where fathers use their young daughters to satisfy their sexual needs.

4. FINDINGS

The pull factors are better employment opportunities in overseas, attractive salaries, active or deceptive advertising by the recruitment agents, pre-departure loans made by agents to male family members such as husbands, extra-marital relationships of the mothers where mother elopes with the 'new' partner, attitude that foreign employment can provide them a better

life, motivation by friends and relatives who have migrated for work abroad, freedom and the opportunity to have exposure in a foreign land.

Batticaloa stands first in migration to Middle East Countries from 2012 to still now this trend persists. Here is some statistical evidence collected from the Department of Foreign Ministry, Sri Lanka that indicates the above statement.

Table 1. Total Abuse cases of young girls in these three villages reported at DCPU

Relationship	Number
Known person	13
Boyfriend	10
Guardian / Relatives	16
Strangers	08
Total	47

Sexual abuse was the commonest form of abuse among girls in all these three villages. All these cases were reported at the District Child Probation Unit, Batticaloa. These children were under 15 years only. Some of them admitted in the hospital also because of teenage pregnancy. After interviewed by all officers and victims, it is stated clearly that domestic violence have put their future into trouble. The following table shows the migration of the women in these three villages.

Table 2. Statistics of migration of Women from above three villages

Year	Month	Number
2015	January	16
2015	February	12
2015	March	12
2015	April	07
2015	May	08
2015	June	04
2015	July	09
2015	August	08
2015	September	06
2015	October	06
2015	November	14
2015	December	03
2016	January	19
2016	February	23
2016	March	25
2016	April	26
2016	May	29
2016	June	30
2016	July	32
2016	August	33
2016	September	33

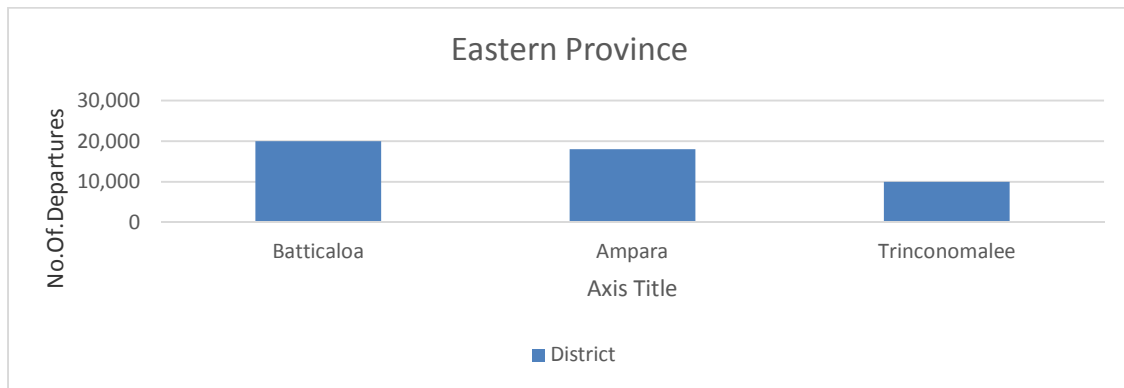


Fig. 2. The abuse cases reported in the districts

According to this table it is clear that month by month women travelling to abroad is increasing in these three villages at Batticaloa District.

5. CONCLUSION

Incidences of abuses are visible among young girls and girl children in all three villages, and sexual abuse are the commonest form of abuse. These girls don't have any common knowledge to judge the person whom they are talking or dealing with and they don't know about the word which is essential now "Good Touch" and "Bad Touch." To stop such violence among the girls and the girl children the mothers must take responsibility and be with them and must educate them the pros and cons of sexual issues.

Second common problem about boys in this villages are addiction to alcohol, smoking, cannabis, etc. and they don't know how to behave in public places. They are used to speak more filthy words and they don't have regard for elderly people which make our society into more trouble.

At present, the available supportive services to the victims to overcome emotional disturbances are inadequate. Abused children are often subjected to further abuses as a result of adverse publicity, disruption of schooling, protracted legal procedures and lack of proper coordination among the different agencies involved in the investigation and management of cases of child abuse.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Development of our country is highly dependent on the personality and intellectual development

of our youngsters, because they are the future pillars of Sri Lanka. Prevention of abuse among our society is very important and an essential and immediate task and it's equally important to provide the necessary facilities to make them good citizens. Also its very important to make them good human being too.

Based on the above findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to be considered for implementation, so as to prevent children from being abused and to help rehabilitate those already abused:

1. Educating children about domestic violence and giving some valuable advice regarding usage of drugs and illegal and improper sexual relationship,
2. Conducting awareness programmes on sexual and physical abuses to children, guardian, and general public with a view to motivate them,
 - (a) To make the girls to identify the ulterior motive of a stranger before becoming familiar and friends and
 - (b) To make the boys to realise the impact and menace of drugs and to show them the side effect of drugs in which we can make them to quit usage of drugs
3. Educate children to be safe in our society environment especially when they are left alone,
4. District Child Probation Unit Commissioner must order their staff in charge of these villages to visit at least once or twice a week to identify and rectify the problem of these children,
5. Grama Niladhari and the police department should be more vigilant about illegal travelling abroad by the mothers,

6. Police should take legal action against unlicensed and unauthorized sub agencies in the villages,
 7. Government should take necessary actions to control women migration, especially the mothers of girl children,
 8. Government must immediately take actions to give proper guidance and livelihood to the affected women who have children,
 9. Government must take actions against the financial institutions who misuse the general public in the villages, especially the women, and
 10. Relevant authorities in Sri Lanka should coordinate efforts to support families of migrant mothers to safeguard the rights of the children and uplift the quality of life.
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DISCLAIMER

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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