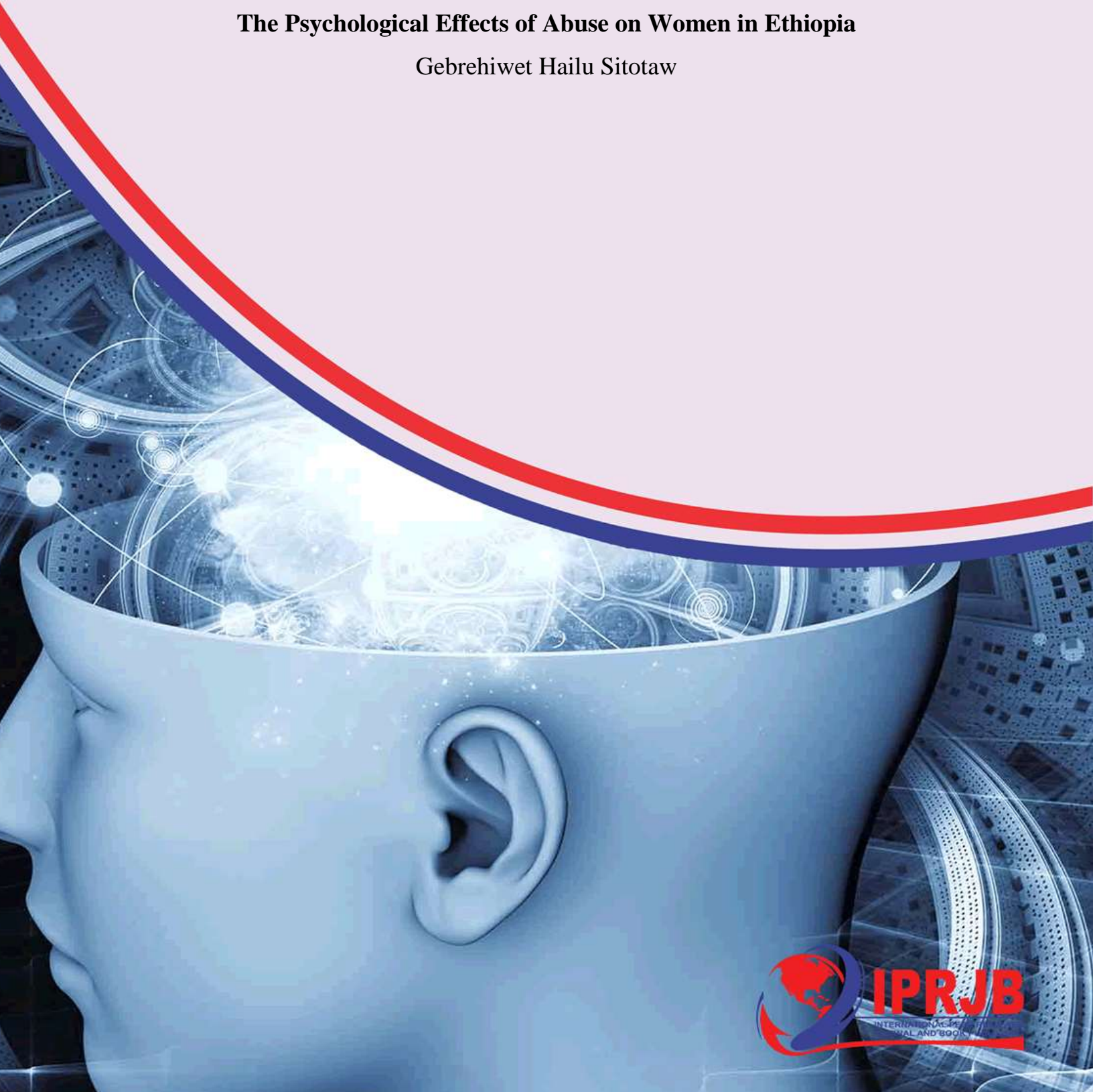


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The Psychological Effects of Abuse on Women in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine the forms of abuse, the causes of abuse, physical and the psychological impact of abuse in Ethiopia.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Results: The results revealed that there exist conceptual and contextual gaps relating to the study on psychological impact of abuse on women in Ethiopia. Preliminary empirical review reveals that several forms of abuse exists in the Ethiopian communities which were due to inequality between men and women, patterns of using violence to resolve conflicts, male authority and control of decision making and transgression of gender roles.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Intra-individual theory and social-learning theory may be used to provide insight to the forms of abuse, the causes of abuse, physical and the psychological impact of abuse.

Keywords: *Abuse, Aggression, Anxiety, Depression, Psychological Impact.*

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INTRODUCTION

Abuse is any deliberate behaviour which is geared towards hurting another person (Population Report, 2020). It is a term used to describe a variety of actions that occurred in society relationships. The term is used narrowly to cover incident to physical attacks. It may take the form of physical and sexual violation, such as punching, choking, stabbing, burning with water and acid, or setting a blaze, the results of which can range from bruising to death. Abuse also includes psychological or mental abuse which consist of repeated verbal abuse, harassment, confinement and deprivation of physical, financial and personal resources. (United Nations, 2020).

The above forms of abuse exist in the Ethiopia where quite a number of women both married and single are affected. This is because of sex roles prescribed by the Ethiopian culture which perceives women as domestic slaves in disguise. Barrenness for instance, results in blaming each other and often it is the women who get the blunt end of the deal. Fights also arise from sex of the children, often with the bias towards preference of male children. Parenting and control of children causes misunderstanding and fights break up. Another cause of abuse is infidelity, where one of the partners engages in extra marital affairs, jealousy is aroused in the other and is followed by aggression. Drugs and alcohol are other causes of abuse with these communities which sometimes lead to serious beating or even killing.

Using complex statistics and coded ethnographic data from 90 societies throughout the world, Levinson (2019) identified four factors that are taken together and are strong predictors of the prevalence of abuse against women in society. These factors are economic inequality between men and women, a pattern of using physical abuse to resolve conflicts, male authority and control in the family and a woman's inability to divorce. These findings reinforce the feminist view that women abuse is not an inherent part of maleness, but a function of socially constructed norms of accepted behaviour. As Cheryl Bernard, Director of Australia's Ludwig Boltzmann institute of politics notes: "Violence against women in the society takes place because the perpetrators feel and their environment encourages them to feel that this is an acceptable exercise of male prerogative, a legitimate and appropriate way to relieve their own tension in condition of stress to sanction female behaviour, or just to enjoy a feeling of supremacy" (Bernard, 2016.).

A woman's response to abuse is often limited by the options available to her. Women remain in abusive relationships because of fear of retribution, lack of other means of economic support, concern for the children, emotional dependency, lack of support from family and friends, due to too much love; where some women genuinely love their mates in spite of abuse, fear of sinning until death do them part and an abiding hope that "he will change." (CREAW Article, 2020). In developing countries, women cite the unacceptability of being single or unmarried as an additional barrier that keeps them in destructive marriages. At the same time, denial and social stigma often prevent women from reaching out for help. In surveys for instance, 22-70% of abused women say that they have never told anyone about their abuse before being asked or interviewed. Those who reach out do so primarily to family members and friends. Few have ever contacted the police (Population Report, 2019). Abuse has been linked to many serious health problems both immediate and long term. This includes injuries sometimes leading to death or disability, a variety

of chronic physical conditions, reproductive health problems, mental health disorders, including suicide and unhealthy behaviour such as drug abuse.

While Abuse has several consequences for the affected, it is a social problem that warrants an immediate coordinated response from multiple sectors. Many cultures have beliefs, norms and social institutions that legitimize and therefore perpetuate women abuse. In many societies children learn that males are dominant and that abuse is an acceptable means of asserting power and resolving conflicts; (Brencht, Chadwick and Jacobson, 2018). Women as mothers and mothers-in-law unwittingly perpetuate violence by socializing girls and boys to accept male dominance and by yielding to male demand throughout life. In some courts, men who confess to murdering their wives are acquitted in the name of legitimate defense of honor (Population Report, 2019), and most cases end up with little or no punishment at all.

According to World Bank (2020) most studies on violence against women reveal the following: The perpetrators of abuse are almost exclusively men. In most societies 8090% of homicide offenders are male (Giddens, 2020). Women are at greatest risk of abuse from men known to them. Contrary to the view of the family as a haven of love and support, data from around the world suggest that women are at greater risk of abuse in their homes than anywhere else.

Abuse in relationships is not limited to psychological abuse, but it has other categories. In relationship the abused woman undergoes a number of abuses which involve psychological and emotional abuse (Lokesh, 2022). This includes threats, insults and put-downs. They can just be as damaging as physical abuse because they endanger a woman's feelings of self-worth and her ability to control her own life. There also occurs social abuse. This form of abuse occurs most frequently in a domestic situation where a woman is kept totally dependent on her partner and isolated from the support of others (Lori, 2015). In such a case a woman's response is limited to options available to her.

In the same way financial abuse can also occur. In this category a woman is prevented from seeking employment or not allowed to have a bank account or keep any of her income. Having no control of money keeps a woman totally dependent and at the whim of others; even for her basic needs. Sexual abuse can also take place whereby a woman is forced to do or watch something sexual without the woman's consent or to have pain inflicted on her during sexual acts. Physical abuse also occurs which includes hitting, punching, slapping, biting, kicking or bruising, breaking bones, throwing things and even using weapons. The denial of human needs such as food, water, sleep and even shelter are also forms of physical abuse which occur throughout the life cycle of a woman.

In the Ethiopia physical abuse in relationships is almost always accompanied by severe psychological and verbal abuse. Those who work with victims of abuse report that women often consider psychological abuse and humiliation more devastating than physical assault (Collins, 2018). In abuse, nearly 50% of the abusers are not mentally ill, contrary to common perception. Studies of abusive men in the United States indicates that few exhibit diagnosable psychopathology (Mitchell, 2018) and among those who do, there is no consistent pattern of illness (Broom, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia women abuse is a paradox, because it occurs where people maintain intimacy and experience the greatest emotional support in their relationships. A number of women are abused physically, sexually, financially and even psychologically. This leaves them physically injured or death. The extent and magnitude of abuse cannot be precisely measured because there are many cases where victims fail to report. Abuse leads to a number of psychological problems such as suicide attempt, stress, resulting to divorce, leading to single parent families and interferes with economic growth at society level. However, there is no documented evidence about abuse in Ethiopian communities. Therefore, it is crucial that detail scientific research be conducted to establish forms of abuse, causes and psychological impact of abuse.

Theoretical Review

Intra-Individual Theory

This theory explains abuse in terms of individual related to personality, or defects, alcohol and drug use as causing violent psychopathological tendencies in humans. It further explains that chromosomes in male are medically linked to abuse. These chromosomes are productive of low intelligence, which correlates with low education level, limited occupational opportunities and increased frustrations. This leads to anti-social behaviour and violence, (Jarvik,2015).Some theories link organic brains syndrome to violent outbursts(Monroe,2020). However the study reveal that in many families, drunkenness may occur without any violence precipitated while violence may occur without any alcohol being consumed. According to Leonard and Blane(2022),the relationship between alcohol use and violence is moderated both by the man's level of hostility and the level of marital satisfaction.

Social-Psychological Theories

Frustration-aggression Theory

Views the expression of aggression as a response of frustration being the product of learning (Steinmetze, 2018, Abraham, 2015). The study revealed that highly related violence is related to social stress such as poverty and job loss. As marriage declines in satisfaction a growing sense of anger and frustration emerges in men that increases the potential for women abuse.

Social-Learning Theory

Proposed by Albert Bandura and Richard Walters, (2015). It views violence as a learnt phenomenon. Together with the role model theory, they assume that children learn violent behaviour when they see their parents or significant others resolving their problems by means of violence (Abraham, 2015).The study revealed that children then model this role of violent interpersonal behaviour when they themselves become parents.

Conflict Theory

The theory assumes that conflict is an inevitable part of association, which are characterized by supper ordinate and subordinate relationship as well as competing goals. The family is viewed as an arena of confrontation, and conflicting interests and so abuse is a likely outcome.

Empirical Review

Postmus, Hoge, Breckenridge, Sharp-Jeffs and Chung (2020) carried out a study investigating economic abuse as an invisible form of domestic violence. The predominant perception of intimate partner violence (IPV) as constituting physical violence can still dominate, particularly in research and media reports, despite research documenting multiple forms of IPV including sexual violence occurring between intimate partners and various forms of psychological and emotional abuse. The purpose of the study was to review and analyze the global literature focused on either economic or financial abuse to determine how it is defined and what measures are used to capture its prevalence and impact. The 46 peer-reviewed articles that met all inclusion criteria for analysis came from a range of countries across six continents. Our review found that there is growing clarity and consistency of terminologies being used in these articles and found some consistency in the use of validated measures. Since this research is in its “infancy,” we need to have stronger collaborative efforts to use similar measures and terminology. Part of that collaborative effort is to consider how language and cultural differences may play a part in our understanding of economic abuse.

Machisa, Christofides and Jewkes (2018) investigated social support factors associated with psychological resilience among women survivors of intimate partner violence in Gauteng, South Africa. Women’s experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) increase their risk for mental ill health. However, some women exposed to IPV and adversity are psychologically resilient and function well despite these exposures. The aim of the study to investigate the factors that are associated with psychological resilience among abused women, using data collected in a household survey conducted in Gauteng province of South Africa. Data is from a cross-sectional study. A multi-stage random sampling approach was used to select a sample of 501 women. Forty two percent of women scored below the threshold for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depressive symptoms at the time of the survey and so were categorized as resilient. Social support indicators were associated with increased resilience. Women who perceived that their communities were supportive and they would easily find money in an emergency were more likely to be resilient. Women who binge drank, experienced severe IPV in the past 12 months, received negative reactions to disclosure and utilized medical or psychosocial services were less likely to be resilient.

Stets and Straus (2017) evaluated gender differences in reporting marital violence and its medical and psychological consequences. The findings on gender differences in reporting violence show that, for "minor only" violence such as slapping and throwing things, the gender of the respondent makes no difference in either the victimization rate or the offense rate. The differences between victims and non-victims in the incidence of such psychological problems as psychosomatic symptoms, stress, and depression reveal that assaults do increase the propensity to experience psychological injury. The interview included measures of depression, stress, and psychosomatic symptoms. The Conflict Tactics Scales was used to measure the incidence of husband-to-wife and wife-to-husband violence. The data on severe violence rates by men indicate a "reporting effect" and suggest that men "understate" their violence. Consequently, data on violence by men obtained from men needs to be treated with skepticism. When violence is measured by acts, women are as violent as men; when violence is measured by injuries, men are more violent.

Lewis, Rowe & Wiper (2017) examined online abuse of feminists as an emerging form of violence against women and girls. Abuse directed at visible and audible women demonstrates that cyberspace, once heralded as a new, democratic, public sphere, suffers similar gender inequalities as the offline world. The study reports findings from a national UK study about experiences of online abuse among women who debate feminist politics. It argues that online abuse is most usefully conceived as a form of abuse or violence against women and girls, rather than as a form of communication. It examines the experiences of those receiving online abuse, thereby making a valuable contribution to existing research which tends to focus on analysis of the communications themselves.

Oram, Khalifeh and Howard (2017) carried out a study on violence against women and mental health. Violence against women is widely recognized as a violation of human rights and a public health problem. This study argued that violence against women is also a prominent public mental health problem, and that mental health professionals should be identifying, preventing, and responding to violence against women more effectively. The most common forms of violence against women are domestic abuse and sexual violence, and victimization is associated with an increased risk of mental disorder. Despite clinical guidance on the role of mental health professionals in identifying violence against women and responding appropriately, poor identification persists and can lead to non-engagement with services and poor response to treatment.

McGlynn, Rackley and Houghton (2017) conducted a study on the continuum of image-based sexual abuse. Reproductive coercion and abuse is defined as any behaviour that seeks to control a woman's reproductive autonomy. In Australia, women often access reproductive health care through a primary care clinician, however, little is known about clinicians' experiences responding to reproductive coercion and abuse. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the barriers to responding to reproductive coercion and abuse in Australian primary care. In this qualitative study, twenty-four primary care clinicians from diverse clinical settings in primary care across Australia were recruited to participate in a semi-structured interview. Data were analyzed thematically. Through analysis, three themes were developed: *It's not even in the frame*; which centred around clinicians lack of awareness around the issue. *There's not much we can do*, where clinicians described a lack of confidence in responding correctly as well as a lack of services to refer on to. Lastly *There's no one to help us*, explaining the disconnect between referral services and primary care as well as the impacts of lack of abortion on women experiencing reproductive coercion and abuse.

O'Campo, Daoud, Hamilton-Wright and Dunn (2016) investigated the experiences with material and psychological instability among women living with partner violence. Although recent research has documented that partner violence places women at risk of homelessness and material housing instability, sparse evidence yet documents the existence or importance of psychological housing instability for this group. The study draws from 45 women's reports of their experiences of housing instability across three periods: while living with their abusive partner, immediately after leaving the partner, and long after leaving. Housing instability material and especially psychological was a major concern for women across all periods, along with co-occurring social, familial, financial, mental health, and violence related problems. In the absence of coordinated services models,

access to and navigation of available services to address these simultaneous problems posed important challenges for these women. The concept of housing instability should be expanded to include psychological instability, and, for women who are experiencing abuse, should be considered alongside numerous social and health problems that exacerbate housing precarity.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

RESULTS

The results were grouped into various research gap categories namely as conceptual, contextual, and geographical.

Conceptual Gaps

Studies by Postmus, Hoge, Breckenridge, Sharp-Jeffs & Chung (2020), Machisa, Christofides & Jewkes (2018), Stets & Straus (2017), Lewis, Rowe & Wiper (2017), Oram, Khalifeh & Howard (2017), McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton (2017), O'Campo, Daoud, Hamilton-Wright & Dunn (2016) had a conceptual framework gap. The forms of abuse, the causes of abuse, physical and the psychological impact of abuse in Ethiopia were not established by any of the research cited. The research did not provide a clear breakdown of the psychological effects of abuse on women. Because of this, the current work aims to fill in these conceptual gaps.

Contextual and Geographical Gap

Studies by Postmus, Hoge, Breckenridge, Sharp-Jeffs & Chung (2020), Machisa, Christofides & Jewkes (2018), Stets & Straus (2017), Lewis, Rowe & Wiper (2017), Oram, Khalifeh & Howard (2017), McGlynn, Rackley & Houghton (2017), O'Campo, Daoud, Hamilton-Wright & Dunn (2016) had geographical gap because they weren't actually done in Ethiopia. This suggests that the findings may not be applicable in Ethiopia due to the fact that the methods employed in each country vary. This study was undertaken with the intention of filling that void.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Abuse against women affects woman's health in that it snaps woman's energy, compromising their physical health and eroding their self-esteem. This study might contribute to existing knowledge by giving more information and creating awareness about the forms and causes of abuse. The research might help the Ethiopians and other agents working in the country to recognize that abuse in society is a serious problem impeding development as well as violating human rights issues of its victims, particularly women. It might help women and society in general to realize their rights and know how to promote non-violent relationships.

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