

What's done in the Dark must come into the Light

By Jared Logan

Domestic violence is a pervasive, global problem, extending across national, racial, cultural, and economic boundaries. When an individual is involved in domestic violence, you most likely notice the physical signs first such as bruising but domestic violence can be sexual, emotional, and even psychological. A large number of domestic disputes occur in heterosexual marriages or between couples and usually involves the man being the one who is performing the violence on his spouse. The root causes of violence against women are gender equality and discrimination which are influenced by power imbalances between women and men which exist in varying degrees across all communities in the world.

Violence against women and girls is related to their lack of power and control, as well as to the social norms that prescribe men and women's roles in society and condone abuse. Inequalities between men and women are manifested in restrictions and limitations on women's freedoms, choices and opportunities. These inequalities can increase women's and girls' risks of abuse, violent relationships and exploitation.

The United Nation Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women states that there are a variety of factors at the individual, relationship, community and levels intersect to increase the risk of violence for women and girls; those factors include but are not limited to: lack of safe spaces for women and girls, which can be physical or virtual meeting spaces that allow free expression and communication, attitudes and practices that reinforce female subordination and tolerate male violence (e.g. dowry, bride price, child marriage), low levels of education, normalized use of violence within the family or society to address conflict, and lack of punishment for perpetrators of violence.

According to a survey in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, population-based surveys in the United States indicate that 21-30% of women will be beaten by a male partner at least once in their lives. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence states that every nine seconds in the United States a woman is assaulted or beaten and that women between the ages of 18-24 are most commonly abused by an intimate partner. Researchers are just beginning to understand the deeper association between domestic violence and a wide range of health and social programs such depression, substance abuse, and suicide. The impact of domestic violence in the United States is terrible but what happens when researchers look into countries that are not developed? What we find is that the impact of domestic violence is likely to be magnified in regions with fewer material resources, greater cultural and political disruption, and more oppressive governmental structures.

A recent study done in Chile found that similar to other countries, domestic violence is a widely prevalent and serious problem and that in most instances, domestic violence occurs in private, hidden from the public view. In fact, domestic violence in Chile is commonly referred to as *la violencia privada* or the private violence. This deeply saddens me because the country itself has a slang term for domestic violence because it is such a prevalent part of their society. Around

79% of Chilean women will be verbally abused in their relationship with men over their lifetime and 31% will experience physical abuse.

Individuals that commit domestically violent acts do not care the state that their victims are in because many believe that they have the right to abuse their partners. In Lebanon, female Palestinian refugees have reported that their partners will emotionally and physical abuse them while they are pregnant if they choose to. The research behind this showed that the prevalence of domestic violence in the prenatal period reaches 23-25% but increases to 52% during pregnancy. The findings also stated that women had higher odds of abuse during their third and second trimesters this is because as the pregnancy continues, it becomes harder to ignore due to women's decreasing ability to perform her usual responsibilities which angers husbands who may not have wanted the pregnancy.

In Arab countries, such as Lebanon and many others, domestic violence against women has not been considered a public health issue, and furthermore Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been considered non-citizens and have been largely excluded from Lebanese society. This includes no access to governmental healthcare, making the data collection of domestic violence and the needs of pregnant refugee women a public concern.

To eradicate this issue of domestic violence there must be major cultural changes they may be difficult for some societies. One solution is a need of recognition at the national level of the domestic violence issue. Domestic violence is one topic that all countries have an issue with so there should be excuse as to why this is still an issue in our world. Sending letters to your government officials to help bring light to this topic can be a simple way to assist in this change. We as a society and other societies as well, have to create and enforce more firm and consistent repercussion of domestic violence. Another big solution is educating both men and women in all countries about ways in which to handle confrontation other than physical aggression. Many children grow up in households where they have seen domestic violence regularly and begin to believe that this is normal when is not. Increases in social support and just simply reporting when you believe there is domestic violence are easy ways that an individual can assist in the eradication of this awful crime against women.

Jared is a senior Applied Sociology major with a concentration in marriage and family and a minor in child development and family relations graduating in May 2016. He is hoping to attend graduate school to pursue a master's degree in Higher Education. He is hoping to redefine how males are viewed in society through promoting male leadership on college campuses.