

Gender Transformative Approach among Tribal married men to promote gender equality: Qualitative Findings Emerging from Field Study in Jharkhand, India

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Background

It is well established that Gender Based Violence (GBV) has remained long term practice, veiled in secrecy. This widespread phenomenon is common to all societies and is not limited to any particular social group or class. World-wide research and reports have shown, however, that to empower women, especially the poorest, it is critical to work with and through men as well. Discussing violence, against women, men are overwhelmingly found in the role of the perpetrators. Male violence is used to produce and reproduce the subordination of women, and patriarchal norms and practices create the conditions that condone and even encourage violence against women. Tackling violence is an essential component of any effort that seeks to create greater gender equality. Men can be gender sensitized in a positive way as allies with women in achieving equality. They can be seen as other than perpetrators of gender discrimination and inequity. Involving men in ending any act of violence is crucial to stop violence before it occurs. Gender transformation among men in conversations about and action against aspects of dominant traditional masculine culture, which is a societal factor contributing to partner violence. Transforming men is central to empowering by standers and primary prevention efforts where everyone is an ally and takes responsibility for ending violence. Transforming “men’s attitude” as part of the solution to gender inequity is a paradigm shift that needs to be bring into the discourse on addressing issues of violence against women, and enhancing the rights of women and girls. The belief being that gender issues have to be owned and solved by the men and community together rather than the past approach of onus only on the “women as the victim”.

To elucidate the issue, first research question arguably centered the discussion is—Are tribal women really empowered? In tribal system of social organization where there is no distinct categories of dominant groups and subordinate groups - it becomes relevant to investigate the nature of these tribes more clearly in the course of exploring the major constructs of gender role attitude among tribal people. In addition, it is observed by scholars that in the post-Independence era tribal society has witnessed an unprecedented change, where women

do not enjoy better social status than their counterparts in the larger Indian society. It is suggested by Basu, that increasing tendency towards growing inequality in gender relations among indigenous societies of India, are more pronounced in tribes that have integrated with mainstream Indian society (Basu et al.,1997). The Socio-cultural and demographic behaviour including gender role attitude and violence against women of India's tribal population, which together numbered are 104,122,516 at India's 2011 Census, or 8.6 percent of India's total population, remains one of the country's great demographic unknowns. Since, British times the study of the tribal populations has been left largely to anthropologists, who have concentrated on the behaviour of individual tribes, ignoring broader demographic and health issues, and lacking the interest or necessary expertise in demographic methods that would have allowed more extensive enquiries of gender transformation among young men.

The Research Approach

In order to address the problem of domestic violence and to promote gender-equitable, non-violent attitudes among young men from a strategic and evidence based perspective it is necessary to have a broad understanding of the issue, particularly the extent of domestic violence and various context in which it perpetuate taking into account the nature of the target population. In developing scientific research it is important to envisage the contemporary situation of the study population. Therefore, the purpose of this research is two-fold: First to know more about a significant but deprived section of the population, especially their psycho-social and cultural constructs of gender role attitudes and how the norms coupled to gender role has transformed across generation. More broadly, such knowledge would also help to illuminate more general aspects of gender based violence, particularly the role of socio cultural and traditional values allied to it.

This study presents qualitative evidence from nine villages in central and eastern Jharkhand drawn from open-ended interviews with 22 women's life history narratives. 10 group discussions (5 with young men age 18-29, 5 with old parents age 30 and above).

Lesson Learned

While response from IDIs includes supporting the victims, ensuring the safety of the young women experiencing the abuse; and holding the perpetrator accountable through criminal prosecutions, public

inquiries, compensation programs, civil actions, community-based settlements or customary legal systems. Response systems are made up of coping mechanisms that enable victims to thrive, for example referral systems in which victims are directed to the services they need, such as emotional support and counseling, medical treatment and services, and legal aid for victims and their families. Response systems encompass reporting procedures, health care, psychosocial assistance, security and safety and social support system (formal and traditional).

The qualitative data illustrated women's perception about men's controlling behavior. But the data also brought out their concern for women's and girls' safety and the role restrictions played in protecting them, albeit in a gender inequitable way.

According to one women

"Women in Santhal community (Tribal clan) have to take permission in each and every issue of life... doing without the consent of husband is not considered a good behavior in our clan. It is the practice what we can do".

-Women , age 32, Santhal Pargana, Jharkhand

Another women Noted

"...Men used to show their possession over their wives that is the reason why they always check our mobility.. My husband do nothing except drinking Handi (Rice Beer) whole day and gossiping.. when I comes home from field I have to give explanation why I am late by few minutes"

-Women , age 29, Dumka , Jharkhand

During the interviews and focus group discussions the men noted that they had become more understanding of women's and girls' vulnerability to violence.

According to a men

"Earlier we use to hear the stories in our district about tont(Teasing), Balatkar(Rape) and use to think that the girl did something to provoke. But now I recognize the soreness and trying to understand how to change the min set of the young boys in our community regarding violence which is so very important in Santhal".

-Men , age 26, Ranchi , Jharkhand

Ten sets of focus group discussion (FGD) were conducted with young married tribal men and old male parents or guardians. Before each FGD session, the facilitators introduced themselves, explained the purpose for the visit and asked permission to take notes and use a voice recorder. Participants were assured confidentiality. The FGD had three common areas. First, researcher explored the participants' perceptions of a safe and welcoming neighborhood and whether they thought that their neighborhood fit this perspective. Second, they assessed participants' understanding of community-related gender-based violence. In particular, facilitators asked participants to talk about the different types of GBV in their neighborhood and in the homes, the factors that contributed to GBV, and the impact of GBV on survivors. Third, they explored participants' perceptions about the response systems and their awareness of existing regulations related to GBV. Also, specific topics were included to accommodate group differences. For example, old men were asked to reflect on the current scenario and its response to GBV and the roles and responsibilities of the community in dealing with GBV issues. While young men were asked for their perceptions on life skills as gender sensitive group and how they thought it helped them to respond to GBV. Additional questions explored the issue of, knowledge and attitude towards government policy towards violence against women, dowry and property rights, child hood witness to any act of violence, Action performed to stop such violence, corporal punishment etc.

Key Findings:

Based on the most common responses from young man and community members, the concept of gender-based violence is not clearly understood. Many of those in the study emphasized general ill treatment—physical abuse, punishment or denial of rights—without any specific mention of gender dynamics. While educated community people, and Government employees in particular, had a clearer understanding of the concept of gender and gender-based violence, many concentrated on physical or sexual violence, without recognizing the different forms of psychological violence such as emotional or verbal abuse.

Focus group discussions revealed that adolescent girls are victims and men are perpetrators of gender-based violence. Incidents of violence occur in the neighborhood, community, and on the way to and from local *hatt*(Village market). The main perpetrators of gender-based violence in neighborhood are boys, with certain groups of community members responsible for abuses that occur while girls travel to and from *hatt*.

The most common pathway for reporting abuse at the community level is for the victim or observer to report to *Mukhiya* (usually a Village Head Man who has been elected by local *Panchyat*), traditional leader or take the matter directly to Police. Each community has its own criteria for deciding when a matter is to be handled by specific authorities. It should be noted that all communities in this study agreed that a substantial number of GBV cases were not reported. There are several actions taken against perpetrators of GBV. When the offense is grave, such as having a sexual violence with a woman outside marriage, the *Mukhiya* is asked to transfer the perpetrators to another clan. However, evidence from the study indicates that transferring perpetrators does not solve the problem because the perpetrators often continue their behavior at the new clan (There are all together 12 different clan found in state).

Conclusion and recommendations

Although this study reveals a lack of knowledge about gender-based violence in communities in tribe dominated Jharkhand state of India, all of the villages in the study have some kind of reporting structure in place in the event that violence against women occurs. Increased gender sensitization about women's rights in addition to cataloguing possible sanctions that can be imposed on perpetrators is a possible entry point for reducing GBV in the communities. Introducing guidance and counseling services at the community level for both perpetrators and victims of violence might also help to reduce the incidence of abuse in neighborhood. Properly addressing GBV requires interventions that tackle both the gender transformative approach among young men and the home life by soliciting support and understanding of the wider community. The findings strongly suggest that GBV is mounting in these villages as gender roles still intact in the hands of strong patriarch norms. Periodic surveys are recommended to measure trends in the incidence of GBV in settings where gender transformation among young men are under way and women roles must expand and they gain a stronger sense of their rights.