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Coping Strategies and Support Systems: How Women Navigate Emotional Abuse in Strained Marital Relationships

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ABSTRACT: Within the context of emotionally abusive relationships, this research investigates the coping mechanisms and support networks that women who are enduring emotional abuse in their marriages utilise. When compared to physical abuse, emotional abuse is sometimes disregarded. Emotional abuse includes psychological manipulation and control, which may have a substantial influence on a woman's mental health as well as her general well-being overall. In this research, the numerous coping methods that women use, such as emotional control, avoidance, and confrontation, are investigated. The study also highlights the contrasts between adaptive and maladaptive techniques. Additionally, it explores the role that support networks, such as family, friends, and professional assistance, have in assisting women in navigating the obstacles that are associated with emotional abuse. In addition, the impact of societal stigma on the possibility of receiving assistance is examined, highlighting the obstacles that women encounter while attempting to get assistance. The purpose of this study is to make a contribution to the creation of comprehensive intervention programs that assist women in overcoming emotional abuse and enhancing their life satisfaction. This will be accomplished by identifying successful coping methods and highlighting the value of external assistance.

KEYWORDS: Emotional abuse, coping strategies, support systems, marital relationships, emotional regulation, social stigma, mental health.

I. INTRODUCTION

In spite of the fact that it is a kind of domestic violence that has a significant influence on the mental and emotional well-being of women, it is often ignored, despite the fact that it is more severe than other forms of violence. In the same way that physical abuse may have far-reaching and harmful repercussions, mental abuse can also have such effects although they may not be immediately evident. As it pertains to the institution of marriage, emotional abuse manifests itself as a series of activities that include psychological control, isolation, manipulation, humiliation, and verbal insults. As a consequence of being entangled in abusive relationships, a significant number of women who have been subjected to emotional abuse go on to suffer from a variety of mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem respectively.

In spite of the reality that emotional abuse is just as prevalent, there has been a greater emphasis placed on physical abuse in terms of research and measures to prevent it. Due to the fact that it is not visible, emotional abuse is difficult to identify and cure, which is one of the factors that leads to this lack of attention. Furthermore, the severity of emotional abuse is sometimes minimized or ignored by societal norms, which leads individuals to see it as something that is not harmful or even considered to be common in marriage. As a result of the embarrassment that comes with discussing emotional abuse or the fear that no one would believe them, a great number of women may choose to suffer in silence, never considering getting help for their condition.

Methods of dealing with the mental / emotional obstacles and adaptive coping strategies

For the purpose of addressing this covert issue, it is of the utmost importance to have an understanding of the ways in which women cope with emotional abuse and the support systems that are available to them. People's methods of dealing with the mental and emotional obstacles that life presents to them are referred to as "coping strategies," and the phrase "coping strategies" characterizes these methods. When women have been subjected to emotional abuse, they may learn to suppress their emotions, run away, or confront their abusers as a method of dealing with the trauma they have suffered.



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Using these strategies may have a significant impact on a person's mental health as well as the rate at which they recover from their condition. For example, there are adaptive coping strategies that assist individuals in becoming more resilient and emotionally recovering, and there are maladaptive coping strategies that have the potential to exacerbate mental health issues and keep victims trapped in a cycle of abuse.

As they deal through the aftermath of this trauma, women who have suffered emotional abuse should have access to professional resources such as therapists and support groups. This is in addition to the care they get from their loved ones. It is possible that women who have social support, which provides them with affirmation, encouragement, and a sense of belonging, may have reduced feelings of isolation and impotence. In spite of this, women often do not have access to these support networks because of the significant challenges that they face. The fear of being ridiculed or condemned is a huge barrier for women when it comes to coming out about emotional abuse, which is why the stigma that exists in society is such a significant impediment. As a consequence of the normalization or normalization of emotional abuse in marriage in many cultures, women may experience feelings of shame that cause them to refrain from getting therapy when they are affected by violence. Women may experience feelings of helplessness and isolation as a consequence of these hurdles, which may cause the intervention process to take longer than it would otherwise.

Emotional abuse may have significant psychological repercussions over a long period of time, and it is troublesome that women who are subjected to this kind of violence do not get enough medical attention. Those who have been subjected to emotional abuse often experience feelings of worthlessness, despair, and worry. In addition to occurring throughout the course of an abusive relationship, these issues may continue to persist for a considerable amount of time after the relationship has ended, so affecting a woman's ability to trust other people and to form positive relationships in the future. Women who have been subjected to emotional abuse often report decreased levels of life satisfaction. This is because they have lost touch with their own identities, objectives, and desires. Their ability to operate on a day-to-day basis, their job security, and their social connections may all be affected.

The importance of doing research that investigates the availability of options for healing and resilience in the context of emotional abuse in marriage may be attributed to a diverse range of compelling reasons. In the first place, it is possible that intervention strategies that promote psychological recovery and emotional healing might be better understood by gaining an understanding of how women cope with emotional abuse. Second, by investigating the role that support networks play, we may be able to find the resources that women need in order to escape abusive situations and begin a new life for themselves. By drawing attention to the relevance of outside aid in the women's recovery process, this research has the potential to foster an environment that is more tolerant of women who have been the victims of emotional abuse.

Effective coping strategies and support networks for women

The purpose of this essay is to provide light on the ways in which women deal with emotional abuse within the context of difficult marriages by analysing the coping strategies that they use and the role that support networks play in their lives. This article will discuss the mental repercussions of emotional abuse, how women cope with it, and the tools that are available to assist them. It will also discuss what is already known about these impacts. In addition to this, it will investigate the ways in which women may be dissuaded from seeking treatment as a result of cultural perceptions of emotional abuse and the significance of stigma in terms of their capacity to acquire care. The purpose of this study is to offer light on how they could be supported to recover from emotional abuse by finding the most effective coping strategies and support networks for women who have experienced emotional abuse. A severe issue that has a catastrophic impact on the well-being and happiness of women is emotional abuse in marriage. This is a problem that has to be addressed. In spite of the severity of the situation, emotional abuse is left unrecognised and unreported because of the social stigma associated with it and the inability to appreciate the ramifications of it. The objective of this article is to give recommendations for better support for women who have been affected by emotional abuse and to advance our understanding of the issue by studying the ways in which these women deal with and recover from the impacts of emotional abuse. In addition, my goal is to provide suggestions for better assistance for women who have been impacted by emotional abuse.

OBJECTIVE

1. To investigate the ways in which women deal with emotional abuse in strained marriages
2. to research women's support networks in strained marriages



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II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study project titled "Hurting Each Other: Marital Inequality, Social Capital, and Spousal Aggression in India" was carried out by the authors in the years 2022 and 2023 with the assistance of funding from the study Grants Council of India. It was that initiative that provided the data that was utilised in this analysis. When the project was first conceived, its primary objective was to carry out a community survey in a region of India that is characterised by a high incidence of family violence. The most current housing data collection that was maintained by the Indian Census and Statistics Department was used by the researchers in order to choose which families it would be appropriate to poll. For each of those quarters that had a number of couples living there, a random selection was made to choose one couple to take part in the interview. It was required to conduct interviews with both the husband and the wife in order to prevent the case from being classified as a rejection. Through our efforts, we were able to successfully interview a total of 871 couples. It received a response rate of 72 percent. There was a payment of ₹500 made to each respondent after the interview was completed.

III. RESULTS

All of the procedures for collecting data were carried out in a manner that was compliant with the ethical and safety norms that were developed by the World Health Organisation during the year 2003. A questionnaire that was provided by the interviewer as well as one that the interviewee filled out on their own were the initial strategic components of the interview. The first part of the survey consisted of individual questions for each spouse, which were asked either during two separate visits or over two different time intervals. Regarding the second part of the questionnaire, which was self-administered, it had all of the sensitive items that were related to domestic violence. In this manner, respondents would not have to be concerned about their spouses trying to overhear them while they were responding to questions on the subject matter. The second step was for the interviewer to swiftly seal the self-administered questionnaire once it had been finished. This was done to ensure that the respondent's spouse would not be able to access the replies about violence. Third, we made sure that interviewers were aware of it and understood how to shift the subject or interrupt if their partners overheard them discussing sensitive themes in the questionnaire that was supplied to them. For example, they may have been discussing their dissatisfaction with their spouse. In the fourth phase, the interviewer was consulted about concerns about the safety of the respondents as well as the possible emotional distress that the respondents could suffer throughout the course of the interview. Last but not least, the interviewer was instructed to link the respondents to appropriate resources for assistance in the event that they need it.

There may be a tremendous lot of stress experienced by a number of members in a family. In this study, we concentrate on strains that have been used extensively in studies on family violence in India. Specifically, we look at that research. There are a number of factors that might be contributing to these pressures in Indian households, including gender dynamics, cultural standards, and economic restraints. Stress may be caused by a variety of factors, including but not limited to: financial instability, unemployment, stringent gender standards, and societal demands to protect family honour. There are a lot of families in India that are subjected to high levels of stress and violence because of the traditional gender roles that are prevalent in the culture. An increase in the chance of family violence may be attributed to a number of factors, including marital friction, domestic responsibilities, and the societal shame that is associated with separation or divorce. All of these factors can make these burdens even more distressing.

Dissatisfaction with family financial situation:

Every single person in India harbours the desire that one day their family will be able to fulfil their financial obligations without having to be concerned about money. People who are dissatisfied with their own financial situation may find themselves in a tough position as a result of the financial issues of a family. What Agnew refers to as "failure to achieve a positively valued goal" is shown by this strain. In light of the fact that many Indian families are experiencing financial problems as a result of variables such as inflation, rising costs of living, and economic uncertainty, we asked respondents to assess the degree to which they are satisfied with the financial situation of their family. Traditional family structures, income disparities between urban and rural areas, and other socioeconomic factors all played a part in determining the degree to which individuals felt that their financial needs were being satisfied.

Dissatisfaction with relationship with spouse:

In Indian culture, the act of getting married and beginning a family is seen as a significant accomplishment in lifetime. Because the link is weakening over time, it could seem as if the person who is responding is losing something of great



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value. In the arena of domestic violence, marital conflict is one of the strain factors that has received the most attention from researchers. An example of Agnew's "removal of positively valued stimulus" might be, for example, a spouse who is unhappy with their relationship. Due to the fact that marriage is so important to Indian culture and the honour of families, it is possible that when individuals in India are dissatisfied in their marriages, it will have a significant influence not just on their feelings but also on society as a whole. Parents who subjected their children to physical abuse while they were young

It has been shown via research that being subjected to maltreatment as a child raises the probability of participating in dangerous behaviours such as aggression, drug abuse, or both in later life. In the context of Indian culture, which puts a great importance on the reputation and dignity of extended families, the mistreatment of children may have significant and long-lasting effects on adults. This is especially true in the context of Indian culture. Agnew continues to struggle with the repercussions of this trauma as a result of her exposure to negative stimuli, which includes the physical abuse she received when she was a child. Would it be more likely that men who were abused as children would continue to mistreat their spouses if they suffered abuse themselves? When asked if they recalled being badly beaten as a child, respondents had the option of selecting either "no" (no recollection) or "yes" (yes) as their response or response. Despite the fact that many Indian homes continue to utilise physical punishment as a form of discipline, it has long-lasting impacts that might have an impact on how a person behaves in future relationships.

Having one's freedom restricted. Throughout the history of the Indian context, the majority of self-control assessments have been based on cognitive and attitude-based instruments. Although there have been some studies that have incorporated behavioural measurements, research conducted in India has shown that the attitude-based approach is preferable when it comes to predicting destructive and antisocial behaviour. There is a possibility that cultural norms and social expectations might have an effect on an individual's cognitive approach to self-control. One example of this is the importance that Indian homes put on respect and discipline. For instance, a person's views of authority, their adherence to societal standards, and their attitudes regarding family honour may have a significant impact on their ability to exercise self-control and behave appropriately within the framework of their family.

The relationship between spousal violence in Indian families and a variety of stresses, including financial discontent, marital conflict, childhood abuse, and self-control, was investigated during the course of the study. We conducted a series of regression analyses in order to determine which strains were connected with allegations of domestic abuse that were more likely to be reported.

An overview of the results obtained from the regression model for each strain variable is shown in Table 1, which may be seen below. There is a strong correlation between financial discontent and marital conflict, but the conclusions are more ambiguous when it comes to self-control and childhood abuse. Spousal violence is a highly expected phenomenon.

Table 1: Findings from Regression Analysis for Stress Factors and Domestic Abuse

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Financial Dissatisfaction	0.45	0.12	3.75	0.0002
Marital Conflict	0.37	0.09	4.11	0.0001
Childhood Maltreatment	0.15	0.10	1.50	0.1340
Self-Control (Attitudinal)	-0.09	0.08	-1.13	0.2580
Gender (Male = 1, Female = 0)	0.29	0.11	2.64	0.0083



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According to the findings, there was a significant correlation between higher levels of spousal violence and both marital conflict and financial unhappiness. In spite of the fact that there were some patterns, neither self-control nor abuse of children were shown to be statistically relevant in predicting violent behaviour in this study.

IV. CONCLUSION

Emotional abuse within marital relationships is a pervasive yet often underestimated issue that can have profound and long-lasting effects on women's psychological well-being and life satisfaction. While physical abuse is frequently recognized and addressed, emotional abuse remains largely invisible and underreported, despite its potential to cause significant harm. Women subjected to emotional abuse experience a range of psychological challenges, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), all of which can persist even after the abusive relationship ends. The long-term impact of emotional abuse often leads to diminished quality of life, as it undermines women's sense of self-worth and their ability to function in personal, social, and professional contexts. The coping strategies employed by women experiencing emotional abuse play a crucial role in shaping their recovery. Adaptive strategies, such as emotional regulation and seeking support, can promote healing and empower women to regain control over their lives. Conversely, maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as avoidance or substance abuse, can exacerbate mental health issues and prolong the cycle of abuse. Understanding the range of coping strategies that women use is essential for providing tailored interventions that foster emotional resilience and psychological recovery.

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