

Theories of Abuse in an Intimate Partner Relationship: A Critical Review



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DAV Research Journal

Vol. 5 No. 2 @DAV RMC

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<https://doi.org/10.3126/davjr.v5i2.97487>

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Received: March 11, 2026

Revised: May 09, 2026

Accepted: June 16, 2026

Abstract

Theories are bodies of knowledge that help to describe the what, how, and why of the phenomenon. It helps to increase the understanding of the particular phenomenon the researcher is interested in and helps to accumulate the body of knowledge. It provides a useful direction to understand and explain the phenomenon. If theories fail to explain or predict, they are refined or rejected, or a new theory emerges. Most of the domestic violence theories are used to explain from women's (victims) perspectives. The objectives of this paper were to describe the existing theories that are relevant to understand men as the victim and briefly introduce the core theme or assumptions of the theories and empirical pieces of evidence. A review method was applied to collect theories of domestic violence, and described with available works of literature. Social exchange theories, social control theory, power-control theory, social and cultural theories, intergenerational violence theory, and social learning theory were selected by assuming that these theories are not focused on individuals (victim or perpetrator) alone nor with a social and cultural concept that extrapolate men as a symbol of gender discriminator, hegemonic masculine, bearer of the patriarchal system, violent and stereotyped single authorial and dominant men. Instead, the selected theories focus on external (such as family, society, and culture) as well as internal (such as learning, motivation, and self-concept) dynamics that can explain the domestic violence phenomenon irrespective of the gender of the victim. Domestic violence has been largely projected as a unisexual phenomenon and women who are violent perpetrators are explained their behavior as the victim's self-defence act in response to the culture of asymmetrical violence. This bidirectional violence by women to men is justified in favor of women. There were fewer documented facts about men as victims as compared to women even though new researches on same-sex violence as well as intimate partner violence among men in a heterosexual relationship have begun to be published. The selected theories indicate that faulty social learning, specific behaviors of unequal relationships passed through the intergenerational process, relationships based on cost and reward, as well as role of dynamic social and cultural systems can lead to violent and abusive relationships. In absence of specific theories of domestic violence against men by women, the selected theories described in this paper were thought to be capable to examine the domestic violence phenomenon without being in favor of males or females. Scientific neutrality and objectivism are expected to pervade the empirical exploration of the phenomenon.

Keywords – Abuse, Domestic violence, Gender, Intergenerational violence, Social exchange

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How to cite this paper:

Maharjan, R. (2026). Theories of abuse in an intimate partner relationship: A critical review. *DAV Research Journal*, 5(2), 57-65.
<https://doi.org/10.3126/davjr.v5i2.97487>

1. Introduction

Many scholars have adopted the feminist approach to interpret domestic violence or abuse and is being focused on masculinity and a patriarchal society that believe in having the right to dominate against women and have the dominant role in the house and public sphere (Dobash et al., 1979). Millett (1969) examined the idea of patriarchy in the power-structured relationship and stated that it maintained and controlled over another group based on one's sex; male dominants and female subordinates. Although women have experienced domestic violence more than men, men are also experiencing violence from their women, intimate partner, or ex-partner and their plights are comparatively neglected (Millett, 1969). Violence should be focused on by the Government and the legal system, and male victims feel hesitant, shame, fearful, embarrassed so they cannot inform the police of being victimized (Cook, 2009; Moreau, 2019).

The awareness and actions in relation to violence against women started initially in the 1970s with the term 'battered women's syndrome' in Great Britain (Pleck, 1987). The term 'Intimate Partner Violence' almost replaced the 'domestic violence'. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) means violence or abuse by a current partner and ex-partner in an intimate relationship against the other partner or spouse. World Health Organization (2022) defines IPV as ... any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse to those in the relationship, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors. Clinical case studies in counseling, psychotherapy, and psychiatric treatment helped to unfold the evidences of violence against men (Hines & Douglas, 2010; Tsui, 2014).

Studies were being conducted on culture and contextualized meaning of patriarchy, masculinity and how it was being viewed in different cultures (Hines & Douglas, 2010; Tsui, 2014). The debate on 'unidirectional violence', 'symmetrical and asymmetrical violence' are being examined by researchers (Johnson, 2008; Straus, 1979; Strauss & Gelles, 1979). The present paper, however, is focused on domestic violence (or IPV) against men. In the context of domestic violence research in Nepal, this paper is expected to sensitize the fact that domestic violence is not a unidirectional, unisexual phenomenon. The paper is also an indication that physical violence, as well as psychological violence (and mental abuse), are equally devastating to the mental health status of the person. Intimate partner violence or abuse is the issue of collective silence of one gender, trapped in the sociocultural world of patriarchal, masculinity, power, dominance, the identity of manliness.

Social control or power control theories are applied to understand domestic violence. In the case of man-women relationships, power does not always rest on physical forces, and control is not the absolute domain of the masculine (Anderson, 2005; Hagan et al., 1985). Men are domesticated by women and though they are still living in the castle, in the twenty-first century, men are no longer kings in their castles. Masculinity is the characteristics that are socially learned and socially reinforced. This is evident in a same-sex female relationship where one acts like dominant and masculine while the other is feminine and submissive (Anderson, 2005). Thus, the theories included and described, in this article, are assumed to have enough strength to describe and explain the issues related to domestic violence against men from the micro as well as macro level. The role of the social and cultural world is vital as the intergenerational theory has indicated. The social and cultural world is also not the domain of manhood as projected in the external world. The outside world and domestic world, especially with the 21st century milieu, are different as the evidence of the relationship between intimate partners is emerging (Giddens, 1992).

On the person's action and reaction (perpetrator and victim), appear to address with scientific neutrality. The strong point of these theories is the view it holds that culture and the social world are not static. The structure and functions of the social world and culture are ever-changing and with this dynamic society and culture, the men and women and their relationship are changing. This is also leading to the change in the domination, power relationship, and inequality. To some extent, different perspectives and views conclude that domestic violence is a harmful activity. It can create side effects for the short and long term for both partners. Most of the literature indicates that domestic abuse occurs from different contexts and issues, such as socio-cultural, socio-economic, social structure, and situational aspects (Anderson, 2005; Hagan et al., 1985).

Despite the extensive studies of IPV with women as the main victims, relatively few studies have focused on experiences of men being victims of abuse from their female intimate partners. There is little available literature on the causes of intimate partner violence directed at men and the types of abuse used for domination, coercion, or control of them. In addition, the literature offers scarce information on experiences and interpretations of domestic violence from the perspective of male victims. Insufficient attention has also been paid to the way men perceive the societal implications of being a victim of domestic violence, such as stigma, embarrassment, masculinity, mass

media portrayal, and social norms. Finally, there is an absence of a comprehensive insight into the perception of self, intimate partner, and the whole world by male victims of domestic violence. Consequently, this paper presented the literature review aiming to fill these gaps in knowledge.

2. Review of Theoretical Perspectives of Domestic Violence and Abuse

Theory in social sciences is a body of knowledge, composed of data either quantitatively or qualitatively collected that are designed to explain the why of the phenomenon. In a theory, there is a well-substantiated explanation of the natural world phenomenon with its laws, principles, and facts. A theory is composed of interrelated principles or propositions with its definition, functional relationship, and operational definition of the concepts. Theory helps in classifying the phenomenon, describe the processes, and helps in establishing a causal relationship of the phenomenon. For researchers, the theory provides a useful direction to understand and explain the phenomenon under study, and help to advance knowledge.

There are myriads of theories, models, assumptions put forwarded to explain domestic violence and most of them are from women victim's perspectives. Among the vast number of perspectives, theories, and models, a few of them are briefly exemplify the extension and application of the theories used by feminist to study generally the women as the victim of domestic violence (Hyde-Nolan & Julio, 2012; Robinson, 2015). Theories that deals with mental health and other issue such as alcohol and drug use, culture of violence theory, ecological theory, evolutionary theory, and feminist theories that exclusively concerned with feminist view on domestic violence against women are not included. Feminist theories that address the root of violence against women as due to gender inequality, domestic terrorism, and patriarchal violence were not examined.

Social Control Theory

According to the theory, the social bonds function as a social control to the individual's propensity to engage in criminal behavior. The bonds which are the elements of social cohesion include an attachment to the family, commitment to socially accepted norms and institutions, involvement in activities, and belief that these things are important. This theory can be regarded as linked to developmental theory since these bonds are linked to childhood to adult life and a part of social, cognitive, and moral development (Anderson, 2005). There are four principles of social control theory, and these include: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief.

Power Control Theory

Hagan (1985) talks about gender and power relations within the family structure and functioning by distinguishing between patriarchal, matriarchal, and egalitarian families. In such type of family system, the power is largely determined by the occupation of the family members outside the family. A person, whether male or female, is employed then this person is more powerful with more possibilities of resources than others. In patriarchal families, the male partner is more powerful, females are socialized to internalize as less powerful or "inferior" and more controlled (Hagan et al., 1985). Boys are granted more freedom and allowing them to engage in deviant behavior. In an egalitarian family structure, the socialization differs providing girls more freedom leading to more risk behavior and delinquency as compared to patriarchal families. In egalitarian family structures, women take more power and can lead to changes in boy's behavior. Boys will refrain more from risk-taking behavior thus less prone to delinquency than in patriarchal families.

Heimer (2000) states that patriarchy is the source of gender differences across behavior including criminal behaviors. Power control theory asserts that power relations within the family determine the levels of social control over sons and daughters. The core themes of this theory as stressed by feminist researchers are: (1) In patriarchal households, the husband has more dominant power thus power distribution is unbalanced, (2) In an egalitarian structure where both spouses are in the same positions of authority due to employment, the household will be balanced, and (3) In a patriarchal structure, family members, especially boys are free to deviate from social norms.

Social and Cultural Theories

The sociocultural theory was created by Lev Vygotsky and later his associates in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The theory is related to learning and development that considers the knowledge is constructed socially through interaction and shared by individuals (Bryman, 2001). The theory is based on the social constructivist paradigm. The individual develops and shapes the knowledge while interacting with other people living in a particular cultural environment. Thus, the shaping of cognitive processes is linked to cultural, institutional, and historical context. Individual interaction with other individuals, participation in social interaction, and cultural activities influence psychosocial development. This is the social dimension of

consciousness. This social and cultural development along with unique interactions with other people in social settings brings out the psychological dimension of consciousness. This approach emphasizes the influence of society and culture on the learning process. The varieties of external influences shape the internal worldview. An individual consciousness has its root in the collective consciousness. Sociocultural theory explores the influence of the external world in shaping the internal world. It emphasizes the importance of interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. The process of learning is largely social. The core assumptions of this theory are: (1) Learning is a crucial part of passing down cultural ideas from parents to children, (2) All behavior occurs in a social context, and other people and society are the major influencers in an individual's behavior, thought processes, and emotions, (3) Language is crucial in sharing and acquiring as well as in cognitive development, and (4) A person's spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional aspects are influenced by sociocultural perspective theory.

Intergenerational Transfer of Domestic Violence

Violence can also occur between male to male (same-sex homosexual relationship) or female to female (same-sex lesbian relationship) living in an intimate partner relationship. All these can be termed as domestic violence, or family violence, or violence in intimate partner relationships, depending on social and cultural settings, where violence has taken place. Similarly, the violence can be physical (observable injury) or non-physical (psychological or emotional injury), mild or severe generating imbalances in interpersonal or social level between the family members.

The social scientists believe that 'violence begets violence' by transmitting violence from one (parental) generation to another (offspring) generation even though it can develop antisocial behavior and mental health problems both to perpetrator and victim (Bandura, 1973; Ehrensaft, 2003; McLaughlin et al., 2012; Widom, 1989). The behavioral strategies or scripts of the perpetrator or victims are transmitted from their parents. In a broad sense, this model is similar to the models of 'cultural transmission' as proposed by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) and by Boyd and Richerson (1985), yet it is different in a sense that the intergenerational transmission occurs within the families in the form of domestic violence.

Violent behaviors of the one parental generation are transmitted to the subsequent generation of offspring. The new generation learns the violent behavior and understands of rewards of violent behavior against the cost. Intergenerational transmission of violence is a theoretical concept that initially grew from the narrative of victims. The transmission of violence is also regarded as a 'cycle of violence' (Moffitt & Caspi, 2003; Widom, 1989). This concept of 'cycle of violence' is generally used in the political world to explain larger group level conflict and violence yet its similarity is evident in the intergenerational transmission of violence at the family level especially concerning how the social environment mechanism plays a potent role in transmitting aggressive and violent behavior. 'Cycle of violence' is regarded as repeated and dangerous acts of violence as a cyclical pattern and is associated with high emotion and generally an act of retribution and revenge that are repeated can happen time and time again in a relationship (Moffitt & Caspi, 2003; Widom, 1989).

Social Learning Theory and Domestic Violence

Social learning theory was developed by Albert Bandura (1977) who emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of other people for the child's learning of behavior. According to Bandura, children observe the behaviors of others (called models) as examples to imitate. Such behavior occurs in a social setting. For example, masculine or feminine behaviors are observed, encoded, imitated, and later, if consistent with child interest, it is reproduced. If the reproduced behavior is socially approved the behavior is retained. Gender-related behavior and many others including violent behaviors are attended, observed, encoded, and later reproduced. A child imitates people who are similar to it (gendered related behavior) and reproduces and retains. All imitated behaviors are likely to be reinforced or punished. If the consequences of reproduced behavior are rewarded, the child continues to show the behavior; if ignored or punished the behavior will not continue.

Attachment to specific person (or model) occurs when the qualities are possessed by the models that the child likes to possess and if intrinsically or extrinsically rewarding, the child will learn that behavior. Children and adolescents in their formative stage of development develop identification with these significant people they are impressed with. The significant people, children identify as models, can be any people with qualities the child cherishes. The models can also be fantasy characters seen or read in books or media. When identification occurs, the child also internalizes observed behaviors, values, beliefs, attitudes, etc. of the models. Domestic violence is always discussed in relation to women. Man is always considered as the perpetrator. However, because of the

socioeconomic changes affecting the family structure in recent times, domestic violence is not limited to women only. Men also are abused verbally, physically, emotionally, psychologically, and sexually. Men do not report these abusive behaviors and are silent victims of the consequences. As the laws in our society favour women as victims of violence, these hapless men do not get justice for their pitiable condition in the family and society. So, this research tried to explore the extent of this problem and highlights its causes and effects. There is a need for gender neutral laws for domestic violence.

Domestic violence should be considered as spousal violence. Nowadays, men and women both are equally experiencing intimate partner violence; about 30-40% of men have experienced it. Thus, it comes to know as a gendered social problem. According to the gender perspective, men are brave, dangerous, have the power to control women through physical, sexual, psychological, and financial violence but the trend is changing with the passing of time and situation. Now more men are experiencing intimate partner abuse than women. Men are also marginalized in the legal system and support services. Josolyne (2011) states that there is a lack of researches on the topic of men victims. Men feel shame, fear of family, friends, fear of society making ridicule on his unmanliness, or embarrassment, along with the accusation from police and women. Further, due to the social-cultural barrier, patriarchal society, and accusation of being toxic masculinity, men do not complain. As a result, an accurate number of men-victims is difficult to document.

According to Sarantakos (1999), structural conditions like male-dominated, patriarchal, and masculine privilege are well maintained. First-wave feminism has enabled women to be powerful to voice against male dominant society, Feminist inspired model of partner abuse (Duluth Model) reinforced the image of gender-stereotyped men as violent and women as vulnerable (Dutton & Corvo, 2007). Seager et al. (2014) state that there is a lack of interest in male victim researches in society. Males have also experienced domestic abuse. Younger (2011) expresses that there are several factors not to get actual data of domestic violence against men i.e. Lack of very limited research on men victims, unreported and unregistered incidents due to socio-cultural factors that make men feel embarrassing, feel shame, fear of being ridiculed by friend's circle, face losing in the community, and society and police not believing that men are the victim. Domestic violence is an act of aggression that can be committed by a partner or family member, victims are criticized by the partners for small things, the victims are forced to have sex without a will, and the victims are monitored by their spouse, the victims whose property is destroyed by the partner or family member (Montgomery, 2010).

Barber (2008) states that domestic violence is a form of emotional, physical, and financial. The weakness of males is not telling others such as police and authority sectors, by thinking about their repercussive action. So, they live in silence and struggle with domestic abuse. According to Hogan (2016), the female-perpetuated intimate partner violence (IPV) issue is controversial. He applied different methods such as semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of the interviews to explore the men's experiences of both physical and psychological violence and concluded that men are facing very difficult situations that can lead to traumatic disorder i.e. depression, anxiety, and can harm their mental health. The writer adds that the strong logic on the male victim is that they try to maintain a sense of masculinity, therefore, they feel hesitant and embarrassed to report others and police do not believe and do not respect the male victim, hence, they do not go to report to the authorities.

Schofield and Bailey (2020) indicated gender bias that not only the female has experienced domestic violence but male also has experienced the violence. Understanding man as a victim is complicated to many people because of widespread belief in gender roles, societal norms, self-identity, and stereotyped belief in masculinity. According to Zilbergeld and Zilbergeld (1992), at the age of six or seven years, society or parents teach the children that men should not be like a girl, to be smart, have physical strength, have masculine characteristics and, in contrast, women are socialized to be soft, gentle, and cherish being merciful. They also send the message that to be powerful or masculine, one should be heterosexual, and men do not report domestic violence against them because they strongly focus on masculinity and male pride (Herek, 1986). Male victims do not show that they are weak and unmanly. These types of attitudes and behavior try to maintain that males are superior physically and psychologically in society. Thus, societal stereotypes concept as men is always the abuser, not the abused persist.

Most people believe that women and girls are victims and men and boys are the perpetrator but Belknap and Melton (2005) argue, based on gender symmetry, that both men and boys and women and girls are equally involved in intimate partner violence. Research findings also indicate that women and girls are also engaged in intimate partner violence. Most of the researchers oppose the belief that only men are the perpetrators of IPV (Brush, 1990; Madgol et al., 1997; Moffit & Caspi, 1999).

Belknap and Melton (2005), critically review by adopting gender symmetry in Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA). According to them the "Gender symmetry" is used to indicate that men and women are equally IP abuse offenders. According to them, women's use of violence in IPV is different in intentions than those of men's abuse. They apply the feminist approach and interpret that female has experienced IPV, due to gender inequality in the political, social, culture, economical, and justice system. Frnkak et al. (2003) focus on three components of a model attempting to explain female perpetrated IPA: learning, opportunity, and choice. Learning refers that women or girls learn to be abusive through their experiences of other violent behaviors. They state that in the case of learning, women have an experience of IPV and watched their mother's and others' serious IPV. So that learning provides to some an opportunity to attempt to be violent against men; for instance, when the male abuser uses alcohol, women attempt violence against him knowing that he is more vulnerable. Women report that to defend them from further battering. Thus, to some extent, the opportunity component may be more self-defence than retaliation. To illustrate the choice cases; they commit violence as they like for example, for coping strategy and so on (Swan et al., 2008).

3. Method

This paper has adopted the review-based method in which different articles and theories were the sources of examination and analysis. It was a literature review approach to identify, explore, categorize, and synthesize theories as well as related empirical papers to understand and explain men as victims of domestic violence. Some major related theoretical perspectives, like social control theory, power-control theory, social and cultural theories, the intergenerational transmission framework of domestic violence, and social learning theory were focused as the main sources of understanding abuse and violence. Theories that focus on patriarchal violence, gender inequality, and domestic terrorism, including feminist interpretations of violence that support women as victims and men as perpetrators, are excluded. Thus, this paper blended theoretical explanations to focus on conceptual and analytical aspects rather than an empirical approach.

4. Findings

One of the major findings of this literature-based review was that domestic violence against men was a neglected and underreported issue. Public image and the majority of the articles identified women as victims and men as perpetrators. The reviewed articles indicated that men can also be the victim of domestic violence, and the form of domestic violence against men may include physical, verbal humiliation, emotional abuse, psychological control, financial abuse, monitoring, property destruction, and social isolation.

Similarly, the review found that men, as victims, did not report being abuse by women. The reasons included shame, embarrassment, fear of ridicule, masculine pride, fear of being considered a weak man, and lack of support and supportive services. Men were found to be more fearful that disclosure would damage their social identity, personal reputation, or standing in the community.

The third major finding was that the phenomenon of domestic violence is strongly connected with social and cultural expectations of masculinity that many societies encourage and socialize to appear strong, dominant, emotionally controlled, and invulnerable. Such socio-cultural expectations silence male victims from reporting and prevent them from publicly accepting that they are the victims of domestic violence by women. Third, the review found that domestic violence against men was strongly connected with social and cultural expectations of masculinity. Men were often socialized to appear strong, dominant, emotionally controlled, and invulnerable. These expectations may silence male victims and prevent them from seeking help.

In addition, the review found that the selected theories provided more gender-neutral explanations than prevalent theoretical practices that emphasized the phenomenon of domestic violence which was unidirectional, with women as victims and men as perpetrators. For example, social and cultural theories explained that domestic violence was influenced by the role of norms, stigma, and gender expectations. Similarly, social learning theory explained how abusive and submissive behaviors were observed, reinforced, and reproduced. The review also strongly emphasized that psychological and emotional abuse might be as damaging as physical violence, which, as a result, might lead to vulnerability to different forms of negative mental health conditions such as distress, anxiety, depression, trauma, reduced self-worth, loss of dignity, and personal isolation. This was a strong indication that domestic violence should not be measured only by visible physical injury.

5. Discussion

Based on literature review, domestic violence against men are a real because it is often hidden as social problem. Earlier studies on domestic violence mainly focused on women as victims and men as perpetrators because many researchers explained violence through feminist and patriarchal perspectives (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Millett, 1969). The review showed that men are also experienced physical, emotional, psychological, verbal, financial, and controlling abuse from their intimate partners. This finding is similar to the studies of Cook (2009), Hogan (2016), and Schofield and Bailey (2020), who reported that men also experience different forms of intimate partner violence. Therefore, this review supported that domestic violence should be understood as a problem that can affect both men and women. Domestic violence against men is greatly underreported because many men feel ashamed, embarrassed, and afraid of being judged by society. Men often hesitate to seek help because they fear losing their masculine identity or being considered weak. This finding is consistent with the studies of Josolyne (2011), Younger (2011), and Hogan (2016), who found that social stigma, fear of ridicule, and lack of trust in legal and support systems. Similarly, Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) reported that domestic violence against men is a significant issue and that more support services are needed for male victims. While previous studies mainly emphasized the low reporting of abuse, and keep silence itself increases the emotional burden on male victims.

Another important finding of this review is that psychological and emotional abuse may affect male victim's more than physical violence. Many men experience humiliation, insults, threats, controlling behavior, and emotional manipulation, which reduce their self-esteem and mental well-being. Such types of ideas are accepted by (2016), who found that psychological abuse may lead to anxiety, depression, trauma, and emotional distress. Likewise, Barber (2008) explained that domestic violence includes emotional, physical, and financial abuse, while Montgomery (2010) described controlling behaviors, forced sexual acts, monitoring, and property destruction as forms of domestic violence. The present review extends these findings by emphasizing that psychological abuse often remains hidden because there are no visible physical injuries, even though its effects may be equally harmful. Furthermore, it also found that social and cultural beliefs as well as the concept of masculinity play an important role in keeping male victims silent. Society often expects men to be strong, independent, and emotionally controlled, because of these expectations, many men avoid reporting abuse. This finding is similar to the views of Zilbergeld and Zilbergeld (1992), who explained that boys are taught from childhood to appear strong and avoid showing weakness. Likewise, Herek (1986) argued that traditional masculine beliefs discourage men from expressing vulnerability. The theoretical review also reflected that many traditional explanations of domestic violence mainly focus on women as victims and men as perpetrators. There are different theories such as Social Learning Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Social Control Theory, Power-Control Theory, Sociocultural Theory, and Intergenerational Transmission Theory provide more gender-neutral explanations. These theories explain that violent behavior is influenced by family learning, social norms, unequal relationships, cultural beliefs, and learned behaviors rather than gender alone. This finding supports the review by Hyde-Nolan and Julio (2012), who argued that domestic violence should be understood through multiple theoretical perspectives instead of relying on a single explanation. Therefore, the review suggests that domestic violence should be studied different perspectives and approaches.

The Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977), which explained that aggressive and controlling behaviors are learned through observation and reinforcement. Similarly, the Intergenerational Transmission Theory also explained that children, who grow up in violent families may learn abusive behaviors and repeated in adulthood (Moffitt & Caspi, 2003; Widom, 1989). However, the review suggests that learned violence can occur in both genders depending on family experiences and social reinforcement. Finally, it concludes that domestic violence should not be viewed as a problem of men victims. Although women continue to experience high levels of domestic violence, while reviewing the theories and empirical review they showed that men can become victims of domestic violence and abuse by women and had faced serious psychological, emotional, and social consequences. Similar to the findings of Cook (2009), Hogan (2016), Schofield and Bailey (2020) as their theories emphasized that the need for gender-inclusive research, support services, and public awareness.

6. Conclusion

Based on a review of the articles and theories, it can be concluded that violence against men is a neglected issue. The phenomenon of violence against men is as real as violence against women and requires more balanced academic, legal, and socio-cultural attention. Violence is not a unidirectional act as described and explained in many documented literatures projecting women as victims and men as perpetrators. The selected theoretical perspectives included in this paper provide explanations that appear neutral since it focuses not on gender as an origin of domestic violence; rather it examines domestic violence through social bonds, power relations, cultural learning, family transmission, and how

one learns violence and abuse in a social context. Thus, we can conclude, based on the review, that domestic violence research requires scientific neutrality, gender sensitivity, and the practice of recognizing all victims regardless of gender identity. Finally, in absence of specific theories of domestic violence by women against men, the theories mentioned above are more capable to examine and explain the phenomenon of domestic violence than feminist theories.

7. Implications

The findings of the review have important implications in research, policy, law, social services, and public awareness. Research should focus as seriously on men as on women. The legal system should consider gender-neutral provisions that must protect all victims irrespective of their gender. Medical, social, psychological, and other experts concerned with domestic violence should be trained to identify male victimization without biases and prejudices. Mental health services like counseling and social work should be accessible to male victims who go through anxiety, depression, trauma, shame, and emotional isolation, and public awareness programs should challenge and reduce the stereotyped perception that men are always the perpetrators and women are always the victims. To prevent domestic violence by any gender, the focus should be on families, social relationships, culture, socialization, and power relationships instead of gender blame and gender victim.

8. Limitations

Despite some interesting findings, this paper has several limitations. The papers collected for review do not include empirical data, and most of the original articles reviewed were the articles come from outside Nepal, which may limit the direct application in the Nepali sociocultural context. This was primarily due to the existence of only a few articles on Nepal on male victims of domestic violence. Further, the review is made on men as victims and not on comparative analysis on elderly, children, and primarily on women. The term domestic violence includes elderly, children, and women, but in the absence of a typical term to indicate the relationship between husband and wife and violence, the researcher uses domestic violence. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is also not exclusively confined to violence between husband and wife. However, this paper has used both terms but major focus is on husband and wife. Similarly, the paper is primarily concerned with theoretical synthesis on the phenomenon of violence against men (husbands) by women (wives) as an explanatory framework.

Future empirical research on domestic violence against men should be conducted with a neutral view, applying qualitative research methods to explore rich and vivid lived experiences and perceptions of male victims and examine such topics as shame, silence, masculinity, stigma, family structure and pressure. Quantitative studies should examine and measure the prevalence, forms of violence, causal factors, as well as the consequences of such violence on personal, psychological, social, cultural, and other aspects. Comparative studies should also be conducted to find the similarities and differences between male and female victimization without favoring one gender against the other. Such research practices and culturally grounded research may help to develop theories and intervention techniques that are relevant to the Nepali context.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest while preparing this article.

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