

Intervention strategies for family social work to prevent and control domestic violence against women

Hui Li^{*1.a}, ShengNan Yan^{2.b} and Sisi Zhang^{3.c}

¹Nansha District baimin Social Work Service Center, Guangzhou 511458, China

²School of Social Development, East China Normal University, Shang Hai, 200241, China

³School of law, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu 610000, China

Email: ^am15521453915@163.com. ^b15757387130@163.com. ^c495363661@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Li, H., Yan, S. N., & Zhang, S. S. (2025). Intervention strategies for family social work to prevent and control domestic violence against women. *Education and Social Work*, 1(3), 25–32. ISSN Print: 3079-515X, ISSN Online: 3079-5168.

<https://doi.org/10.63313/ESW.9033>

Published: 2025-05-06

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Erytis Publishing Limited.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Abstract

Social work, as a highly specialized means and method of solving social problems, plays an increasingly important role in the current process of building a harmonious society. Starting from the professional perspective of family social work, this article proposes social work intervention strategies for preventing and treating domestic violence against women from three aspects: case work methods, group work methods, and community work methods.

Keywords

Domestic Violence; Family Social Work

1. Introduction

In people's impression, home is synonymous with warmth, and it seems to always be a safe haven in life and a place to enjoy family happiness when we feel frustrated. Domestic violence, on the other hand, is like a "cancer" that exists in the home. It not only destroys the happiness of the family, but also causes physical and mental devastation to family members. At present, the problem of domestic violence is becoming increasingly serious, with divorce cases caused by domestic violence accounting for a quarter of all divorce cases in the country every year. According to the main data report of the third survey on the social status of Chinese women released by the All China Women's Federation and the National Bureau of Statistics, 24.7% of women in China have experienced various forms of domestic violence, among which 5.5% have explicitly stated that they have experienced domestic violence. [1] Ac-

According to survey data, we can conclude that domestic violence is no longer a traditional issue within families. It has to some extent affected social stability and hindered the construction and development of China's economy. Domestic violence happens around us all the time, so we should pay more attention to the issue of domestic violence. Eliminating domestic violence and safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of women have become the responsibility of each and every one of us.

2. Definition and harm of domestic violence

2.1. Definition of Domestic Violence

There are broad and narrow definitions of domestic violence. Broadly speaking, domestic violence refers to violence that occurs within family members. It strictly defines the relationship between family members, indicating that there must be a blood relationship, marriage, or adoption between family members. Specifically, it manifests as violent behavior committed by stronger family members against relatively weaker family members, with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, and women often becoming the main victims of domestic violence. [2] This article mainly studies domestic violence against women in a narrow sense. It refers to the abusive behavior committed by men during the existence of a marital relationship in order to control and possess women.

2.2. the harm of domestic violence to women

When domestic violence occurs, women are often the most direct victims. The dominant party will physically abuse the weaker party through beating, binding, throwing and smashing things, causing physical pain, while women will also experience tension and fear in male violent behavior, leading to secondary psychological harm. It can be seen from this that the harm of domestic violence is still quite significant.

2.2.1. Reduce women's happiness index.

The occurrence of domestic violence brings dual physical and mental harm to women, and seriously infringes on women's rights. In such an environment for a long time, they gradually cannot feel the warmth of their family and the care of their loved ones. After a period of tension, depression, and despair, they usually experience a mental breakdown and choose to escape or commit suicide to seek self liberation, resulting in extreme behavior. Regardless of the situation, the consequences are unimaginable.

2.2.2. Marriage breakdown and weakened social function.

Most women lose confidence in their marriage and choose to pursue divorce after experiencing multiple acts of domestic violence from their husbands. The family is the foundation of society and also the place where family members receive socialization. Even if women choose not to divorce for the sake of their children and family,

a long-term environment of domestic violence can still affect the physical and mental development of the next generation. A survey shows that children living in domestic violence environments often have insecure and introverted personalities, and also have a higher tendency towards violence.

2.2.3. Inducing crime and endangering social stability.

Women who have been in a domestic violence environment for a long time may resort to the path of crime through "revenge" because they cannot continue to tolerate their husband's cruel behavior. In recent years, it has been common for women to choose to kill their husbands due to domestic violence. However, this extreme and violent approach cannot fundamentally solve the problem. This behavior not only harms others and oneself, but also seriously affects the overall happiness index of society. Long term existence will only lead to an increase in social disharmony factors.

3. The main causes of domestic violence

3.1. Personal reasons

In people's minds, domestic violence mostly occurs in economically underdeveloped and culturally low impoverished areas. However, the fact shows that there is no direct relationship between people's cultural level and the occurrence of domestic violence. People who engage in domestic violence generally have biased views on life, values, and the world. They suffer from severe deficiencies in good character traits such as benevolence, filial piety, and kindness, as well as low moral standards and significant personality defects. [3] Women who are involved in domestic violence generally have lower levels of self-esteem, lack confidence, lack independent thinking, and have higher levels of anxiety. Once domestic violence occurs, abused women are influenced by the concept of "family shame should not be exposed", and instead of choosing to use legal weapons to protect their rights, they choose to swallow their pride.

3.2. Family reasons

In most regions of our country, especially in rural areas, there is a male centered family structure where men are the main breadwinners and women are the main homemakers. These women no longer work after marriage, but choose to become housewives who take care of their spouses, parents, and children. Married women rarely continue to learn and focus on improving their own abilities, gradually becoming detached from society. After marriage, women have no job or source of income, and they have to demand daily expenses from their husbands, which leads to economic inequality. However, abusive husbands often overlook their wives' roles, tasks, and values in taking care of parents and children in the family, and belittle their wives' contributions to the entire family.

3.3. Social reasons

The pollution of the social environment is also another major cause of domestic violence. In China, the traditional concept of "male superiority and female inferiority" has deeply penetrated people's hearts, and men are superior to women in both family and social status. Many men believe that 'beating their wives' is a natural and justifiable act. Women in marital relationships also adopt a submissive attitude towards their husbands' violent behavior. So the main reason for domestic violence is male dominated culture and gender inequality. Women often subconsciously believe that domestic violence is their own problem and ignore the problem of the perpetrator.

The legislation against domestic violence in our country is mostly theoretical at a macro level, and its implementation often poses certain difficulties. As the saying goes, 'it is difficult for honest officials to cut off household chores.' In people's minds, domestic violence is considered an internal problem within the family, and outsiders are not allowed to intervene. Even when dealing with domestic violence, the general public tends to adhere to the idea of 'it's better to demolish ten temples than one marriage', with the ultimate goal of maintaining family integrity rather than protecting women's own rights. The neglect of domestic violence by society has led to a reluctance of the public and law enforcement agencies to intervene in family conflicts, which further condones the wrongdoings of perpetrators.

4. The advantages of social work intervention in solving domestic violence problems

How does the public view domestic violence and how to solve it? Currently, most of them adopt moral and legal approaches to solve the problem. In the rapidly developing new normal of the economy, population mobility has increased and heterogeneity is poor. Relying solely on traditional moral constraints is difficult to curb the occurrence of domestic violence. In order to protect vulnerable groups such as women and provide legal basis for solving domestic violence problems, China officially promulgated the Anti Domestic Violence Law in 2016. However, as a form of "public power", the law poses certain difficulties in intervening in the private lives of others and resolving domestic violence. Even if the victim chooses to punish the perpetrator through legal means, they often lose the case due to a lack of sufficient evidence, and the issue of domestic violence remains unresolved. Due to the hidden and repetitive nature of domestic violence, it is difficult to effectively solve the problem through the power of morality and law.

Social work, as an emerging applied social discipline, profession, and occupation guided by altruism, has developed a professional philosophy of "helping others and helping themselves" through long-term practice. Meanwhile, social work also has certain advantages in intervening to address domestic violence issues. Firstly, the service targets of social work are groups whose needs cannot be met and whose

problems cannot be solved. Victims of domestic violence suffer from both physical and mental torment for a long time, which is a service object of social work. Secondly, social workers strictly adhere to the principles of confidentiality, respect, and client self-determination when providing services, which not only protects the privacy and safety of clients, but also enhances their awareness of self-protection. Finally, when addressing the issue of domestic violence, social workers can help victims overcome it by correcting and learning from the perpetrator's behavior, and providing mental and physical treatment to the abused.

5. Strategies for Intervening Family Social Work to Address Domestic Violence Issues

Family social work is a social work intervention and family services provided with the family as the center; Its purpose is to assist in solving family problems, improve daily family life, enhance the family's ability to solve problems, promote the harmony of family relationships, and facilitate the normal functioning of the family. [4] In other words, the intervention of social work in solving family problems is family social work. Therefore, the author believes that there should be three main models for family social work intervention to solve the problem of domestic violence:

5.1. Case work mode

In traditional domestic violence case work, case workers generally engage in face-to-face communication and collaboration with abused women, combining disciplinary expertise and skills to help them overcome their difficulties. Its purpose is to assist abused women in connecting material relief resources, fully recognizing their potential, promoting their own growth and change, and ultimately solving the problem of domestic violence. However, the reality is that only abused women have made changes in their family relationships, while husbands who have long engaged in domestic violence have not changed. If the perpetrator's domestic violence mentality is not corrected for a long time, when the abused woman returns to her original family and continues to accept the perpetrator's punches and kicks, the behavioral changes learned by the abused woman in the case will also be difficult to persist in the pathological family for a long time. So, to fundamentally reduce domestic violence, it is necessary to allow both abused women and perpetrators to correct and change their behavior simultaneously.

This requires us to take the entire family as the service object when conducting case work, and focus on assisting the service object to understand and clarify the family roles between each other. By conducting case studies, we aim to enhance the self-awareness of our service recipients, enabling them to recognize the equal status of the couple in their marital relationship and restore their sense of family responsibility. The specific intervention process is as follows:

Firstly, social workers need to establish a trusting relationship with abused women. During this stage, social workers need to introduce themselves to abused women

and eliminate their resistance towards social workers. At the same time, social workers also need to fully accept, trust, and respect abused women, establish professional relationships with abused women, and gain mutual trust.

Secondly, social workers need to understand the issues that both spouses face. Social workers should encourage abused women to speak freely, express their true thoughts, and communicate with their abusive husbands to understand their thoughts. At the same time, social workers

Thirdly, it is necessary to establish contact with the parents and children of both parties involved in the case to learn their views and attitudes towards the issue of domestic violence. Thirdly, social workers need to create conditions for the client and her husband to communicate effectively as much as possible. Firstly, both parties need to reach an agreement on whether to divorce. Secondly, ask both spouses to list their own problems. Finally, both parties will sort their existing problems and determine the priority order for solving them. Fourthly, social workers assist both spouses in learning about the Anti Domestic Violence Law, making the abusive husband aware of the dangers of domestic violence, while also helping the client learn and master ways and methods to combat domestic violence. In this stage, social workers need to tap into the potential and strength of the service recipients themselves, allowing them to see their own strengths and enhance their confidence.

5.2. Group Work Mode

For the issue of domestic violence, it can also be addressed by establishing support groups for abused women. The purpose is to establish a women's social support network, reduce members' feelings of inferiority and loneliness, thereby enhancing gender awareness, promoting self reflection, confidence, and self-identity. The establishment of a support group for women who have been subjected to violence is conducive to encouraging group members to share their experiences of experiencing violence and generate emotional resonance. Social workers use professional skills such as respect, care, and understanding to enable group members to accept each other. This not only helps abused women gain emotional support, but also helps them relieve inner stress and vent negative emotions caused by domestic violence. At the same time, women's support groups can design a series of targeted activity plans, such as role swapping, scenario simulations, etc. On the one hand, it can reverse their misconceptions in family relationships. For example, if one is filled with a sense of guilt and believes that they are guilty, the reason why their husband has become what he is today is because of their own actions, changing their traditional thinking of "marrying a chicken and following a chicken, marrying a dog and following a dog". On the other hand, it can help abused women enhance their self-awareness and rebuild their confidence. During group activities, workers need to give full recognition and encouragement to abused women's resistance to domestic violence. Discuss with abused women how to reduce or eliminate domestic violence and find solutions to address it. Women who have suffered from domestic vi-

olence for a long time often lack self-protection awareness, so social workers also need to assist them in enhancing their self-protection awareness. Workers need to make it clear to them that when they are suffering or about to suffer from domestic violence, only by bravely taking up legal weapons to protect their rights can domestic violence be truly curbed. After each group activity, social workers need to assign homework to abused women and encourage them to apply the correct behaviors learned in group activities to their daily family life. The most important task of workers is to guide these women who have been deeply affected by domestic violence to explore together in group activities, confide in each other, find confidence in encouragement and support, and help them get out of the shadow of domestic violence as soon as possible.[5]

5.3. Community Work Model

Community is a high-risk area for domestic violence, so social workers in the community are required to conduct visits and investigations to understand the situation of domestic violence in their community, and also have the ability to flexibly handle domestic violence. Social workers can carry out community activities to combat domestic violence, educate women on the legal system against domestic violence, promote the concept of gender equality, enhance the legal awareness of vulnerable groups such as women, fundamentally transform their weak thinking and submissive attachment, and effectively improve their self-protection ability. In the community, it is difficult to fundamentally eliminate the phenomenon of domestic violence solely through the efforts of social workers. At this time, it is also necessary to rely on the strength of the majority of residents. Social workers can take the lead in integrating various social resources, fully tapping into community volunteers, and creating a positive atmosphere within the community to jointly oppose domestic violence. On the one hand, reversing the public's misconceptions and reducing their apathy towards domestic violence. On the other hand, when abused women encounter domestic violence, their neighbors and relatives provide them with the support they deserve in the first place, helping them comfort their hearts, relieve stress, and get out of trouble. In carrying out anti domestic violence work, social workers also need to link support systems and resources such as neighborhood committees, public security, and medical care to form a network for preventing and treating domestic violence, such as establishing shelters within the community. For those victims of domestic violence, social workers in the community need to make full use of resources both inside and outside the community to actively provide assistance, such as psychological counseling, physical examinations, life skills training, basic living security, etc. [6]

References

- [1] All China Women's Federation, National Bureau of Statistics Main Data Report of the Third China Women's Social Survey [R]. Women's Research Series, 2011

- [2] Yan Lina, Han Wei Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence from the Perspective of Social Work: Targeting Women Taking Domestic Violence as an Example [J]. Social Observation, 2008 (10): 220-221
- [3] Cheng Cheng Research on Social Work Intervention for Resolving Domestic Violence Issues [D]. Jilin University, 2012
- [4] Zhu Dongwu, Zhu Meihua Family Social Work [M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2011:23
- [5] Li Xia Analysis of the advantages of social work intervention in domestic violence [J]. Yinshan Journal, 2011.2 (01): 87-90
- [6] Liu Jun, Gu Zhaoming How social workers intervene in domestic violence [J]. Rule of Law and Society, 2009 (10):295-296