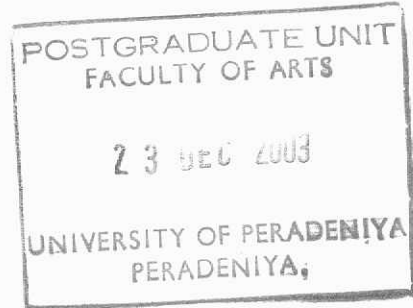


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**A STUDY OF PATRIARCHAL VALUES AFFECTING
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE
DOMESTIC CONTEXT
AN EXAMINATION OF URBAN HOUSEHOLDS**



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Abstract

Various theoretical approaches do exist to explain the issue of domestic violence particularly against women. These can be broadly categorized as socialist feminist, radical feminist and eco-feminist theories. Social feminist theories try to explain feminist issues as a result of different social and economic conditions which are to a large extent beyond the control of humans; the radical feminist theories attempt to focus more on the social structure and social system as the reason for the existence of female subordination in societies. The eco feminists' explanations are geared more towards explaining ecological conditions as the reason.

The focus of this research is on the radical feminist approach which explains female oppression as emanating from the social structure of the society. The research focus on an in-depth analyses of patriarchal values governing marital relationships of 'husbands' and 'wives' or partners in co-habitation, and how these values affect or influence "wife abuse" in marital or conjugal relationships. A range of patriarchal values (which emerged from the literature review) were examined such as patrilineal descent based property inheritance, the practice of dowry, patrilocal residence; feminine and masculine gender based household division of labour, virginity tests and control of female mobility.

The study revealed that wife abuse frequently takes place within families due to in-laws instigation mainly as a result of patrilocal residence, dowry issues or female infertility. Abuse of wives is also caused as a result of men having extramarital affairs and also as a result of spouses not having adequate sexual freedom within the household due to lack of space or other constraints such as the wives engagement with child rearing or being pregnant. This study found that when there is high conformity to patriarchal values in a marital relationship the cause for abuse often arose from the said values and also that when the social and economic status of the wives were higher than that of the husband especially among middle class couples, the abuse was higher, but the incidence was comparatively lower among lower class marital partners whose wives had higher status than that of the husbands. Among higher income categories abuse arose more out of husbands wanting to control their wives as a reason of status disparities whereas among the lower income categories it arose more out of extramarital affairs, lack of sexual freedom, economic dependence and dowry issues.

The overall findings of the study showed that wife abuse frequently arose as a result of socially and culturally created 'subordinate' status of women, and the 'dominant' status of the males within marital relationships, reinforced through the prescribed customs and traditions within the Sri Lankan society identified as indicators. The husbands most often found justice to their aggressions and frustrations through patriarchal values and beat up their wives under different social and economic conditions.

