The Role of Social Work in Addressing Domestic Violence: Trends and Challenges

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Abstract

Regardless of a person's gender, age, socioeconomic class, or ethnocultural background, domestic violence is still a serious and complicated societal problem that has become worse all around the globe. Smart technology services, programs, and solutions that are digital, online, or AI-based provide innovative ways to combat intimate partner abuse and other forms of domestic violence. Examine the function of social work in combating domestic violence in this article. This review highlights that initial unreported cases of domestic violence often remain unnoticed, leading to re-victimization and negative impacts on children. Emerging ML/AI-based forecasting tools offer potential in predicting and preventing IPV but require human oversight and community collaboration. The findings emphasize trauma-informed approaches, effective practices, and tailored interventions for social workers. Resilience is fostered through clear communication, supervision, mentoring, and collaborative networks, which reduce stress and build trust. Multi-actor approaches and support systems are crucial in combating exclusion and fatigue, thereby strengthening survivor-centered practices and enhancing the overall role of social work in addressing domestic violence.

***Keywords;** Social Work, Domestic Violence, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Education, Prevention, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).*

INTRODUCTION

Consorting is a phenomenon that is applicable to all cultures, geographical areas, and socioeconomic classes. In the broadest sense, domestic "assaults" refer to any form of psychological, physical, emotional, sexual, or financial abuse that occurs in close relationships that are connected by marriage or family, such as when a parent abuses a child or children or a wife beats her husband [1]. These abuses are frequently extremely dangerous and leave survivors with severe and long-lasting injuries. Social taboos, shame, and cultural traditions keep the impacts of domestic abuse tightly hidden, preventing survivors from getting the help and legal protection they need [2]. Social professionals are seen as the most important stakeholders in this context as they often have the initial interaction with survivors and help them deal with the difficulties of escaping abusive relationships and rebuilding their lives [3].

Social workers also provide advocacy, case management, counselling, crisis intervention, and follow-up assistance as part of their interventions for domestic violence. Domestic abuse victims may get counselling services in addition to assistance with satisfying their basic survival requirements since social workers are trained to deal with the emotional and social aspects of human suffering [4]. In spite of this, they encountered some challenges in their efforts to combat domestic violence. The following are examples of practice constraints that restrict the effectiveness and continuity of social workers' work: They include relational/family, financial material, legal/regulatory, and structural/infrastructural, the latter of which includes the lack of integrated and ethnoculturally relevant services [5].

One of the most pressing issues in the fight against domestic abuse is the limited number of tools and resources available to social workers.

The services that certain agencies can provide are restricted by their inadequate funding and understaffing, particularly in rural or low-income areas [6], [7]. Social workers are able to manage many patients at once, according to some sources, which means that most cases do not get the care they need. Furthermore, the number and quality of resources available to survivors of domestic abuse, such as shelters and support programs, are often inadequate, forcing many individuals to continue living in dangerous situations because they have no other, safer choices [8]. The lack of resources puts social workers in a difficult position where they must help people and do all in their power to meet their needs, despite the few resources they have, while also dealing with emotional exhaustion and job burnout [9].

Table 1 Domestic violence forms and meaning

Forms	Meaning
Physical Abuse	Any action or behaviour that impairs the victim's growth, physical or mental health, or puts her life or body in jeopardy.
Emotional & verbal Abuse	Any kind of humiliation, insult, or mockery directed at the victim, particularly because she did not have a male child. Name-calling, degrading, humiliating, domineering conduct, and threats of bodily harm to the victim's loved ones are only a few examples.
Financial Abuse	The victim is repeatedly deprived of all or some of the financial resources to which she is legally entitled.
Sexual Abuse	Any sexual act or behaviour that diminishes, violates, or degrades a woman's dignity.

The Role of Social Workers in Addressing Violence

Addressing domestic violence often puts social workers at the forefront of the fight. Among their responsibilities are:

- **Risk Assessment and Safety Planning:** Social workers evaluate survivors' risk levels and assist them in creating safety plans to safeguard both themselves and their kids.
- **Counselling and Emotional Support:** In order to assist survivors heal from trauma and develop resilience, it is essential to provide them emotional support and therapy.
- **Advocacy and Resource Referral:** Social workers link survivors with vital services including housing, financial help, and legal aid while also advocating for their rights.
- **Education and Prevention:** In order to alter cultural perceptions and stop more abuse, social workers teach communities about domestic violence.

Figure 1 Role of Social Workers in Addressing Domestic Violence

Causes of Domestic Violence

- One of the primary causes of domestic violence in India is the patriarchal nature of Indian culture. There is a widespread belief in Indian culture that women are inferior to males. This leads to men's conviction that they are entitled to manage their relationships and their willingness to use violence in order to preserve that authority.
- One important factor that contributes to domestic violence is poverty. The likelihood of domestic violence is higher for women from low-income homes since they are often financially reliant on their spouses.
- Currently, "section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code" makes it illegal for a woman to be the victim of cruelty by her husband or his family members. However, domestic abuse is not fully addressed by the penal laws.

Emerging Issues and Trends in Social Work

The issues of the twenty-first century are complicated and call for creative methods of social work practice. Please find below a list of the most significant emerging trends and issues that are currently influencing the field.

1. The Rise of Inequality and Social Exclusion

A significant worry is the growing wealth disparity and social exclusion due to caste, gender, and handicap considerations. Social workers are being asked more and

more to deal with social justice, poverty, hunger, and lack of access to healthcare and education [10].

2. Climate Change and Environmental Justice

Social injustices already in place are being made worse by climate change, which disproportionately affects marginalised populations. In encouraging sustainable behaviours, fighting for environmental justice, and helping communities adjust to climate change, social workers are playing a critical role [11].

3. Technology and Social Work

Social work now faces both possibilities and problems as a result of technological improvements. Technology poses ethical questions around privacy, access, and digital inequalities even while it may make communication, data collecting, and service delivery easier [12].

4. The Role of Social Media in Social Change

Social media sites have developed into effective instruments for lobbying, social activism, and awareness-building. Social media is being used by social workers to engage with communities, rally support for social concerns, and elevate the voices of under-represented groups.

Challenges Facing Social Workers

There are several obstacles that social workers must overcome in the ever-changing field of social work:

1. Increased Demand for Services

Due to a lack of resources and an increase in social issues, social workers are in more demand. This often leads to excessive workloads, fatigue, and trouble in attending to the demands of every customer.

2. Funding Constraints

Getting enough money for social projects and activities is a never-ending task. Having limited resources often forces people to make tough choices about how best to distribute monies and which services to prioritise.

3. Ethical Dilemmas

Social workers often deal with difficult moral conundrums, especially when handling matters like conflicts of interest, power disparities, and secrecy. Making wise decisions and having a solid ethical foundation are necessary for navigating these conundrums.

4. Burnout and Stress

The rigorous demands of social work, which often expose practitioners to trauma, challenging life situations, and systematic injustices, may result in stress and burnout. Social workers' well-being depends on self-care routines and encouraging work settings.

5. Lack of Recognition and Professional Development

Limited opportunities for professional development and career advancement are frequently the result of social work's undervaluation and underappreciation. This may make it more difficult to recruit and retain qualified social workers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Baukaite et al., 2025) [13] The identification, screening, and reactions of DA in mental health settings are examined in this systematic review of 20 papers. The results showed that DA screening techniques varied widely, ranging from direct screening instruments to patient file retrospective studies. Professionals cite time restrictions, a lack of clarity about their position, and the significance of developing trust with service consumers as obstacles to recognising DA. However, many emphasise how crucial it is to regularly enquire about DA. Although a few treatments have been successful in increasing professionals' preparedness to deal with DA, it is still unknown what kind of training works best. When admitting DA, service users express emotions of humiliation and worry of not being believed; nevertheless, therapeutic involvement and increased professional awareness help. The study does not adequately include a variety of perspectives. In conclusion, there is a lot of room to create best practices that will help mental health practitioners recognise and address DA in training and assessment tools, as well as in figuring out what encourages service users to reveal.

(J. Petersson & Larsson, 2025) [14] The purpose of this research was to investigate how social workers in a remote and rural area of Sweden perceive and experience "intimate partner violence (IPV)" and the likelihood that victims may re-victimize it. A lack of practical applicability of the current risk assessment methods, varying skill in risk assessment, and difficulties in diagnosing IPV were the three themes that emerged. Identifying IPV was difficult for a variety of reasons, chief among them being a lack of protocols and IPV understanding. These difficulties were thought to extend to determining the likelihood of re-victimization. For instance, since IPV instances were seldom detected, the necessary understanding of risk assessment procedures was limited, unequally dispersed, and challenging to sustain. Overall, the findings are consistent with earlier research. However, as this research included professionals working in distant and rural locations, we also found issues that are specific to a setting with a small population, which are described.

(Khandagale, 2024) [15] societal workers should assist and advocate for victims of intimate partner abuse since it remains a significant societal issue that affects people from all walks of life. According to this study's conceptual paper, cultural preconceptions, legal considerations, and a lack of monetary assistance are some of the barriers that prevent interventions in child sexual abuse situations. It also exemplifies cutting-edge approaches including providing trauma-informed treatment to diverse groups, strengthening ties between the legal and medical sectors, and providing survivors with culturally appropriate care that promotes long-term healing. In order to improve the capacity of social workers to combat domestic violence, the paper advocates for professional development, collaboration, and these policy reforms. In order to protect survivors, the goal of this research is to determine the importance of social work's reaction to domestic abuse in the community.

(Olsson et al., 2024) [16] The use of risk assessments and risk management by social workers in instances involving intimate partner abuse was examined in this research. The research looked at how social workers experienced possibilities and difficulties at work, internal and external cooperation, organisational circumstances, and job performance. According to the research, job experience improved the social worker's ability to apply rules and regulations in real-world situations, which helped to foster trust and security. Trust, stress reduction, and easy access to direct and honest contact with others were all characterised as aspects of a successful internal and external cooperation. The process was made easier by accessible instructions and sustainable habits. A lack of trust, a culture of quiet, and tension were all signs of an unsupportive work environment. When the management and/or the workgroup did not approach operational work in a supportive manner, feelings of vulnerability in the professional position emerged.

(Novitzky et al., 2023) [17] examines the potential and ethical dilemmas that these smart and digital (protective) technologies provide to the many parties. Our findings show that the most common narratives around domestic violence—which is often understood to be gender-based violence—are those related to public health and society. The analysis emphasises a new trend in the detection and prevention of domestic violence: the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning-based techniques. However, we contend that there are few guidelines available to professionals regarding the responsible use of these approaches, and that simple technologies used by criminals frequently undermine the sophistication of high-tech technologies, resulting in an imbalance that also hinders the

effective development of a comprehensive socio-technical regime that supports families' safety and resilience in their communal setting.

(C. C. Petersson & Hansson, 2022) [18] examines the experiences, perceptions, and reactions of social workers at women's shelters in Sweden to domestic abuse in light of the COVID-19 epidemic. Over the course of a year, 14 professionals from women's shelters participated in many semi-structured interviews as part of a qualitative longitudinal study design. The findings are grouped into three main themes: (a) professional difficulties brought on by growing demands, (b) professionals' adaptations to changing situations, and (c) professionals' perceptions of the obstacles that clients face when seeking assistance. The findings demonstrate that as the epidemic spread, the professionals' experiences were more varied and dynamic. Clients and professionals have experienced the same collective trauma due to the pandemic, which has influenced the professionals' comprehension and response to domestic violence. Under these new conditions, the experts recognise that they and their clients are more exposed to danger. Clients and professionals had both good and negative outcomes from social work modifications that prioritised safety, reduced risk, and maintained communication. The research comes to the conclusion that the professionals used their prior knowledge and professional experience of domestic violence, as well as their shared trauma experience with clients, to help them deal with the uncertainties they faced during the epidemic.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To study the role of social work in addressing domestic violence.
- To study the trends in social work and challenges face social worker.
- To study the various literature's perspective on the role of social work in addressing domestic violence

RESEARCH GAP

Despite growing recognition of social work's critical role in addressing domestic violence, significant research gaps remain. Existing studies primarily emphasize outcomes and broad interventions but often overlook context-specific practices, particularly in culturally diverse or resource-constrained settings. Limited evidence exists on the integration of emerging technologies, such as ML/AI-based predictive tools, into social work practice. Furthermore, gaps persist in documenting effective trauma-informed approaches, resilience-building strategies, and inter-

organizational collaborations. Insufficient focus has also been given to the professional training needs of social workers and the long-term impact of support networks, leaving room for more comprehensive, practice-oriented, and survivor-centered research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This review paper employs a qualitative research methodology grounded in secondary data analysis to systematically explore the role of social work in addressing domestic violence, with a focus on emerging trends and challenges. A structured literature review was conducted by examining peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, legal commentaries, case law, government reports, and policy documents published between 2017 and 2025. Sources were identified through academic databases and institutional repositories, ensuring relevance and credibility. The analysis involved synthesizing key themes, identifying gaps, and evaluating practical interventions. This approach provided comprehensive insights into practices, and collaborative strategies shaping social work responses.

CONCLUSION

The review reveals that initial and unreported cases of domestic violence often remain unnoticed or dismissed by close communities and relatives, leading to re-victimization and harmful spillover effects on children. A novel and emerging trend highlights the potential of ML/AI-based forecasting and predictive tools to identify and possibly prevent intimate partner violence (IPV). However, these technologies remain in their infancy and require human-in-the-loop oversight, in close collaboration with affected communities. The study underscores the importance of comprehensive research that not only evaluates outcomes but also develops effective practices, training, and interventions tailored to the needs of both service users and mental health professionals. Documentation of risk assessment tools, guides for sensitive communication, and clear decision-making frameworks were identified as essential. Resilience in social work practice was strengthened by shared responsibility, effective communication, access to mentorship, and collaborative teamwork. Well-functioning internal and external partnerships fostered trust, reduced stress, and enhanced professional support. Furthermore, adopting trauma-informed and multi-actor approaches was found to be critical for establishing survivor trust and preventing exclusion or fatigue among practitioners. Overall, the findings suggest that social work's evolving role in addressing domestic violence must integrate innovation, collaboration, and resilience-building strategies to improve outcomes.

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