

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The researchers have found that the family has become a less safe place and is not as peaceful as before. Many studies have been conducted on domestic violence, which cite numerous sources from non-governmental agency statistics, tables and percentage showing that the number and types of domestic violence against women are increasing nowadays. This violence directly affects children and should be considered a social problem.

Unfortunately, domestic violence is often hidden from public view and contained in the home and it seems not to be taken seriously by society including police and the Public Health Ministry. The problem can happen in both urban and suburban areas. Chiang Mai where this study was conducted is one of the largest cities in Thailand. The study will focus on Saraphi District where no published studies on domestic violence have been conducted. Various statistics and reports from local police officers indicate that data to conduct a study on domestic violence is widely available allowing use of the appreciative methodology of data collection. In this chapter, the statement and significance of the problem and the background are described in Section 1.1. Section 1.2. has details of the purpose of this research. The method and scope of the study are explained in Section 1.3. The application advantages are listed in Section 1.4. Finally, definitions are given in Section 1.5.

#### 1.1 Statement and Significance of Problem

The family is generally defined as the smallest social unit in a society, and it is the fundamental unit of the larger social structure, the contributions of which every other social structure depends. The family unit defines what is behaviorally required and accepted in every other segment of society. Moreover, the family is supposed to be a safe place for growing up and feeling secure. It should create an environment of

peaceful cohabitation, making houses into “homes.” The family provides its members physical care and comfort as well as emotional support from birth until death. Families should fulfill these functions without condition, everywhere, and at all times.

Sociologists and academics have often had different definitions of what a family is, while several factors link these definitions to create a more unified idea of what a family is composed of. However, William J. Goode (1992), a renowned sociologist, argues that the family can no longer be treated as a simple set of dependent variables defined by “economical forces.” According to Frank D. Cox (1994:6), an ideal family environment fosters strong bonds between family members and includes six key characteristics. First of all, family members should be deeply committed to one another and promote each other’s welfare. Each family member works to make other family members happy. Secondly, members of strong families appreciate one another and make every effort to make one another feel good about each other. They find good qualities in one another and express appreciation for them. Next, strong families have good communication patterns. They spend time talking and listening to one another. Moreover, strong families spend time and do a lot of things together. They genuinely enjoy being together. Additionally, strong families have a strong system of values. Family members believe in something and those beliefs are similarly understood by each member of the family. Lastly, strong families are good at solving problems. Even in a major crisis, they manage to find something positive to focus on. They unite in dealing with the crisis and do not let it divide them.

Other definitions of family have looked at family within the context of marriage and children. From another perspective, William N. Stephen (1963:3) defined family as a “social arrangement based on marriage and the marriage contract, including recognition of the rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife and children, and reciprocal economic obligations between husband and wife.” This definition assumes that marriage meets four primary conditions: 1) it involves a sexual union between two individuals which is preceded by 2) an announcement that publicly clarifies 3) their mutual intention that the union be permanent so long as both individuals are alive and honor 4) a “marriage contract,” which defines shared responsibilities to one another and to their children.

As long as a marriage remains a happy one, a home is a safe haven for the members. These are many factors, however, which would deteriorate the happy atmosphere and among these tarnishing factors, domestic violence is certainly a major one. It can change a family “home” into an insecure and horrible place for members of the family. It can happen to both spouses, but women are most frequently the victims. In such instances, the home becomes the most dangerous place for a woman, a place of abuse and torture. Abusive men believe in and act out the inequality within the privacy of the home and the intimacy of relationships. Many are possessive, jealous and use abuse to enforce double standards by which they are free but their wives and partners are like prisoners (Mullender, 1996: 63).

There are a variety of theories about domestic violence which will be explored in this study. Ava Vivian Gonzales suggests in her article *Home is where the hurt is* about domestic violence that men often become violent towards their wives and other female family members after marriage. Marriage may have come from the fact that women were originally considered to be the property of the male and marriage was a way of entering a property agreement of sorts. The word “family” once referred to the total numbers of slaves owned by a man. Today, even with women’s perceivable rise out of property or slave status, their transformation from property into a person continues to challenge the foundations of intimate heterosexual relationships, especially within marriage ([http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=633&Itemid=20](http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=633&Itemid=20)). However, the issue of domestic violence is now more commonly recognized as a serious problem in many societies where it was ignored before. Much of this can be attributed to the emergence of a women’s movement against violence.

Domestic violence has emerged as a leading issue in countries around the world. A variety of studies provides evidence that domestic violence has been a major problem for a long time and exists in all societies. A study by Ramani Rangavajhula, et al entitled *The Identification of Victims of Spouse Abuse by Family Practitioners*, (May 30<sup>th</sup> 2004), revealed that violence of an intimate partner is an epidemic in the United States. A study by Stark et al, (1992) found that domestic abuse may be the single major cause of injury to women, more frequent than automobile accidents,

mugging and rape combined. Approximately 25% of all adult women in the United States are at risk of being abused by a male intimate partner during their lifetime. Each year an estimated 8% to 11% of all married women (4-6 million) in the United States have been physically abused by their current or former intimate partners. The American Medical Association (1992) reported that each year more than 1.5 million women nationwide seek medical treatment for injuries related to abuse. Moreover, victims of spousal abuse are much more likely to use health care facilities than other women. It has been estimated that 22%-35% of women seeking care in the emergency departments are victims of spousal abuse (Abbot et al, 1995; Roberts et al, 1996; Kurz, 1987; Stark et al, 1979). It is also estimated that about 25% of women seeking care in ambulatory and family medical clinics are victims of spousal abuse (Gin et al, 1991; Rath et al, 1990; Stark et al, 1988). The current research estimate for spousal abuse victims among women seeking prenatal care are close to 25% (Helton et al, 1987; McFarlane et al, 1992). Over 60% of women hospitalized in psychiatric facilities are also believed to be victims of spouse abuse (Carmen et al, 1984). Such statistics, and the widespread nature of domestic abuse, lead one to seek the most basic causes of such violence and what creates them.

The hidden problem is often rooted in the customs and norms of a society. Traditionally, men play the role of family leader. For instance, their primary responsibility is commonly seen in society as being to provide family members with economic security. On the other hand, female family members' responsibilities often evolve around duties related to taking care of children, other family members and the home. As Wilasinee Panakornsap (2002) stated in her study, these aspects would lead one to believe that a "family" home is a place filled with love, and most importantly, it is the most secure place for family members. Moreover, the study also demonstrated that these imagined aspects of how a family *should be*, often overwhelm us given the unfortunate truth that the idea is contradicted in the real world. One example of this is that it seems violence against women is now becoming more widely accepted.

In some communities, the wife's duties are enforced to a considerable extent by her husband's physical strength and by the authority customarily given to him within the context of societal customs insomuch as the wife is regarded as "the personal property" of the husband (Borkowski, 1983:26). In such a society, women are

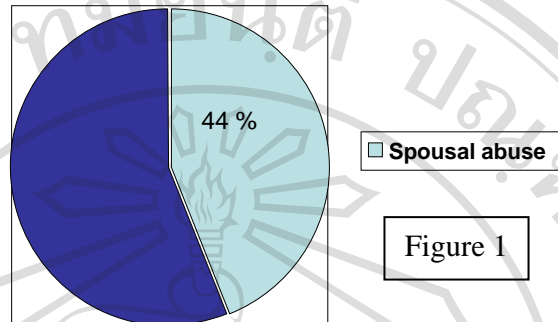
not able to express their problems. They are too afraid of the men's power to feel free to do so. They live their lives in constant fear and incapable of finding safety or even people to whom they can talk. As stated by Simone De Beauvoir (1949: 149), who is recognized as one of the first leading women of the feminist movement, "But, after all, to see things clearly is not her business, for she has been taught to accept masculine authority. So she gives up criticizing, investigating, and judging for herself, and leaves all this to the superior caste. Therefore, the masculine world seems to her transcendent reality, an absolute."

Family violence has also been found to be a significant social problem in Thailand. Attention to the incident has led to documentation by both Thai and non-Thai observers and researchers, including representatives of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, including the United Nations. In particular, a great deal of attention has been given to the high rate of physical abuse which men perpetrate against their female partners and the causes of such violence. The charts below represent recent statistics regarding violence against women by their spouse. There were a total 44% of the respondents that experienced domestic violence.

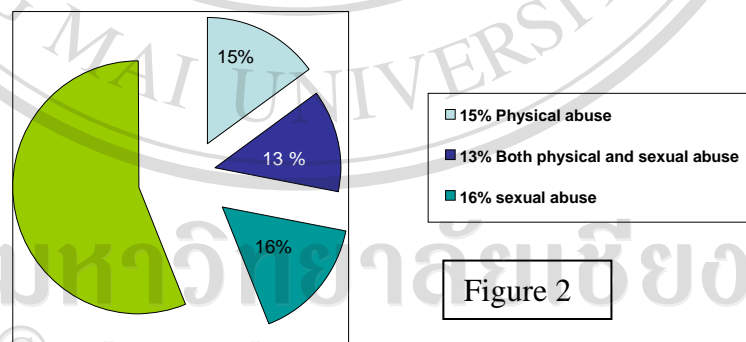
According to a survey by the Asia Foundation (2003) of the 2,078 Thai married women who were surveyed, 15% had been physically abused, 16% sexually abused and 13% both physically and sexually abused. The abuses are categorized as slapping (19%), hitting (18%), punching (9%), threatening (5%) and grabbing by the neck (5%). Moreover, the sexually abused are categorized as surrendering to have sex (26%), and forced to have sex (8%). From the survey group, 40% of the victims chose to commit suicide and 15% unsuccessfully attempted to commit suicide.



## Asia Foundation (2003) report



## Asia Foundation (2003) report



Incidents of domestic violence often go unreported and are thus difficult to detect. Even when such violence is reported, there is often a failure to protect the victims or punish the perpetrators. Policemen often use their positions of authority to induce the spouses to not be concerned about the problem. They try to tell a woman who has been abused not to take it too seriously because it occurs frequently in marriages (Wilasinee Panakornsab, 2002). Moreover, the reports of the women are often rejected. One of the officers at the Saraphi police station stated domestic abuse has to do with their personal lives and is best solved within the home and among the couple themselves.

Statistics from various studies have attested to the existence of domestic violence in Thai society. A study by Hemanut (1990) on *Family Violence: The Case Study of Low-Income Husbands in Municipal areas, Mueang District, Ubonratchathani Province* indicated that 31.5% of low income husbands, 27.9% of medium income husbands, and 24.7% of high income husbands have brutalized their spouses. Her study aimed at finding out the primary factors that motivate husbands to abuse their wives. Data was collected from married men from the lower income group who lived in Mueang District in Ubonratchatani.

Another study by Punchalee Chotikut (1998) shows spousal abuse is equally prevalent in Bangkok, Thailand's largest city. Her study looked at three different aspects of spousal abuse. First, it aimed at studying forms, types and degrees of spousal violence. Second, it studied types and degree of spouse violence in male and female samples. Third, it studied motivating factors behind spousal violence. Questionnaires were used for data collection. A sample of 321 individuals was drawn from married officials at Thammasart University. Panchalee found that the most common types of spousal violence were verbal aggression, physical harm and threats to use physical harm respectively. Factors related to spousal violence in male sample groups were previous violent experiences, level of social participation, length of marriage, frequency of alcohol use and whether the parents of the participants discouraged violence when they were children.

Domestic violence is a universal problem that occurs in urban communities. The previous two studies provide evidence in support of this hypothesis. Despite being Thailand's second largest city, Chiang Mai has very few reported cases of

domestic violence. There were only 9 reports found in Saraphi district within a year. Saraphi is a suburban area near the centre of town. Domestic violence occurs just as frequently in suburban areas as in urban areas. Also the information from the officer at the Saraphi's district shows that most of official reports of domestic violence are retracted by the victims. Most of the people who live in this area are of a lower income class which could be a main factor pointed out in the Hemmanut study as a contributing factor in spousal abuse. According to data collected by Saraphi officials in 2007, 7 Tambons out of the 10 in Saraphi District show that there are a lot of people who have a low income.

**Table 1** Population Survey of Saraphi District, 2007

Item	Tambon	Income/year/person (Baht)
1	Rongkok	39,246
2	Saraphi	42,219
3	Sun Kab Tong Tai	55,188
4	Pakkong	56,645
5	Saraphi	57,483
6	Sun Kab Tong Nua	61,743
7	Changkung	62,201

Also, the data indicated that 3.7% in Padad, 0.6% in Pakkong, and 0.3% in Chankung are not able to read and have no basic mathematical skills. However, in order to acquire the details regarding the nature and prevalence of domestic violence in this area, the questionnaire must be conducted appropriately for reliable results to be generated. This study also emphasizes that both physical and emotional abuse negatively affect women's health. From research, children who live in abusive households tend to engage in abusive relationships of their own in the future.

The causes of domestic abuse and the psychological responses of the abused are often a mystery as abused women rarely tell their stories. This study will attempt to give them an avenue to express their feelings. This project's research will focus on



the different types of domestic abuse and investigate reasons behind the frequent and seemingly self-sacrificial choice of abused women to remain in an abusive relationship.

## **1.2 Purposes of this study are**

- 1) To find out if there are cases of domestic violence in the family of female workers in Saraphi District, Chiang Mai.
- 2) To study forms and types of spousal violence.
- 3) To investigate why abused women stay with their spouse.
- 4) To present abused women's experiences of domestic violence by providing an opportunity for them to express their feelings and self-define and assess their own life within the context of their unique situations.

## **1.3 Method and Scope of the study**

This study will focus on abused women in Saraphi District, Chiang Mai from February 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2007. The study aims to uncover the most prevalent types of spousal violence and how the victims cope with this situation. The researcher will focus attention on a scale measuring women attitudes towards violent husbands and measurements of physical and psychological abuse. A questionnaire among 100 female factory workers in Saraphi will be the primary method of collecting data. The researcher will cite a Snowball Technique similar to Awasada's study, in which one abused women in a local area provides introductions to other abused women. Data analysis will be conducted using the following framework:

- Variation
- 1) Analysis of situation which leads to domestic violence.
  - 2) Forms and types of domestic violence.
  - 3) The focal point is "wife".

## 1.4 Application Advantages

The researcher is interested in improving the quality of women's lives by using the data that is collected to create awareness related to the problem of domestic abuse by giving its victims a voice.

- 1) To raise awareness of domestic violence as one of the major social problems in Thailand.
- 2) To gain more understanding about gender roles and attitudes regarding domestic abusive problems.

## 1.5 Definitions

### Violence

Legal definitions of violence are somewhat more restrictive than those outlined above. These definitions are premised on the use of intentional physical force applied to another person, contrary to that person's will. The degree of physical force may vary, ranging from minimal (e.g. nonconsensual touching) to severe (e.g. fatal injury). Offences that fall under this broad banner include assault, at one end of the spectrum, and homicide, at the other (Hatty, 1999:46).

Feminist writings about violence towards women have dispelled several popular myths, namely that victims of violence "ask for" or provoke violence or that battered wives "seek out" a battering partner. Whether violence takes the form of rape, battering, incest, sexual harassment, or pornography, feminist theories prove that violence against women is pervasive and that it is the product of a patriarchal culture in which men control both social institutions and women's bodies.

Feminist sociologists argue that violence is the form of power differential in marriage. They show that the existence and scale of wife battering and male domestic violence makes the issue of domestic violence a major example of the contradictory forces (the State, money, law and the sexual division of labor) which shape women's lives. Feminist historians reveal that the issue of battered women often becomes an area of social concern during periods of active feminism, but that violence is common and institutionalized part of marriage in European culture. Violence against women is

both a means of women's subordination and part of institutional and ideological domination (Humm, 1990:230).

### **Abuse**

*Verbal:* Terms of address or reference which denigrate women; in English, these are legion. Verbal abuse is a ubiquitous form of sexual harassment which renders the workplace, campus, or public setting inhospitable to women and which interferes with their ability to carry out their responsibilities; it is defined as a form of sexual harassment.

*Physical:* Actions which inflict bodily harm on women.

*Psychological:* Interpersonal strategies in personal, social, or professional situations which serve to reinforce stereotypical views of women, disregard or erase evidence of their contributions, deny or fail to credit the reality of women's experience, and encourage women to analyze situations and problems as personal and individual rather than systemic and collective (Kramarae & Treichler, ND: 26).