Tackling Domestic Violence in UK: Persistent Problems

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Abstract

Over the past three decades we have witnessed the public exposure of attitudes and academic discourse concerning the problem of domestic violence in the UK. It is evident from literature that domestic violence has been present throughout the history, yet changes to laws concerning the matter of domestic violence are quite a recent phenomenon. It can be argued that policies dealing with the problems of domestic violence have largely been unsuccessful, and have failed to protect victims of violence. In this context the purpose of this paper is to explore the reasons behind such recent exposure, and to answer why implemented policies and laws have largely failed. In this paper the literature, both past and present, on domestic violence and gender inequalities in the UK, has been considered for analysis and further presented to better cope with the problem of domestic violence. The paper has developed starting with addressing distinct but related aspects of the issue that is reflected in section I. The section II introduces the paper by highlighting what domestic violence consists of, followed by an introductory insight into each of the sections and discusses violence as a form of control over women and their lives, perpetuated by previous or present partners. Section III emphasises the importance of understanding of the victims, as each victim has h/her own distinct needs. Section IV explores the role of the police, to find out how much protection is provided and what type of help is available. Finally paper is concluded with discussion and possible measure that should be taken into consideration to mitigate domestic violence.

It is evident that patriarchal values and beliefs still exist in modern British society, leading to the failure of recent policy and the continuing of domestic disputes. Domestic violence is just one part of the existing inequalities between men and women. The subordination of women is socially constructed, and is reinforced continually, not only by the use of violence from their husbands, but also in other areas such as salary differences etc. which in turn has created an immutable patriarchal culture. Until the embedded attitudes are tackled, policies concerning the issue of domestic violence cannot be completely successful in tackling the problem.

Key Words: Domestic Violence, Persistent Problems, Women, Victim, British Police

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Ⅰ. Introduction

Domestic violence is often seen as a private matter\(^1\), which should be contained within the privacy of home. It is only since the 1970s and 1980s that this attitude has been changed and domestic violence, a once ‘tolerated’ activity, has regarded widely as an unjust act\(^2\). Even today, however, the tacit toleration of domestic violence is still a common problem. Given the hideous nature of the problem and the complexity of its formation in family structure very often the issue of domestic violence has been either ignored or if expressed isolated. However in recent past the issues of domestic violence has been a matter of debate and looked for further ways to handle it in most appropriate way which can be seen as with emergence of activists of feminist ideology. Britain in this respect has been a pioneer to identify the problem, discuss it and have put in place a system to deal with it when there is a need of criminal justice system. In this paper we have tried to outline the development of criminal justice system in Britain in terms of domestic violence crime. The paper further discusses the policing and its operational system to help people deal with the problems when it comes in term to domestic violence in British society. In more detail we have discussed in what ways the response of British Policing contributes in terms of criminal justice system against domestic violence and how they tackle the issues in difficult circumstances?

The methodology that we have adopted for the purpose of this study are secondary analysis of qualitative data gained from various sources, such as official government documents, previous literature, mass media outputs, etc. The analysis that is presented here is based on the available literature on domestic violence and ways of dealing with it in British Justice System. The aim of the study is also to incite knowledge about criminal justice system, especially police service to consider seriously the issue of domestic violence as a main part of justice system's response to domestic violence and abuse, by introducing and critically discussing the British experiences in terms of perspectives, regulations and practice despite certain limitations specific to the country.

It has been suggested that the term domestic violence itself trivialises the offence, compared to other crimes, as the word ‘domestic’ suggests something private, kept behind closed door and the use of the word ‘violence’, gives only a narrow perspective on the range of abuse encompassed by the crime\(^3\)\(^4\). On top it limits the operational boundaries to deal with it. In the society where modern