

Mandatory Reporting System for Domestic Violence Cases: A Comparative Legal Analysis

Daleleer Kaur Randawar

Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam Selangor
Email: dolly@uitm.edu.my

Muhammad Izwan Bin Ikhsan

Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sabah Branch, Kota Kinabalu Campus
Email: izwanikhsan@uitm.edu.my

Afezah Binti Rosun Khan

The Sexual, Women and Children Investigation Division (D11), Royal Malaysia Police
Email: upe145@gmail.com

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a worldwide phenomenon that cuts across different cultural and social backgrounds. In Malaysia, the government and NGOs have made many efforts to curb domestic violence. For instance, the Domestic Violence Act 1994 (DVA) supports victims in protection and investigation. Nevertheless, many victims often refuse to lodge a police report on domestic violence. Hence, this article aims to explore the viability of the mandatory reporting system for domestic violence cases in Malaysia. This study employs a doctrinal approach and a comparative study with selected jurisdictions. This study examines statutory provisions, case laws and other literature. For primary data collection, an interview with respondents from the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), healthcare, and social welfare departments was conducted. This study highlights the relevant features and effectiveness of the mandatory reporting systems in other jurisdictions through comparative analysis. This study concludes that the systems applicable in other jurisdictions can be used and adopted as a guideline in Malaysia.

Keywords: Mandatory Reporting, Domestic Violence, Healthcare Professionals, Police, Welfare Officers

Introduction

Domestic violence is a critical issue that affects individuals, families, societies, and nations alike. Previous research has identified domestic violence as a common problem across all

communal, racial, religious, age, and economic backgrounds (Pyles & Potmus, 2004; Sawikar, 2019). Similarly, Malaysia is no exception. Intimate partner violence is commonplace, with a range of 4.94 to 39.50 per cent. The most common form of violence is emotional or physical violence, followed by physical and sexual violence (Shahar et al., 2020). In another research, it was reported that nine per cent of women had experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime (Rahman et al., 2019).

Domestic violence negatively impacts women's physical and mental health and overall wellbeing (Malik et al., 2021). Women are more vulnerable to domestic violence targets either in a marital or domestic relationship (Mitchell & Hodson, 1983). Domestic violence has been on the rise in Malaysia and has worsened during the lockdowns to contain the COVID-19 pandemic (Sekaran, 2021). This is because the movement control orders compel the family members to stay at home, opening the opportunity for domestic violence (Qistina, 2020). The difficulty of the women to report their abusive husbands to the police have led the perpetrators scot-free with perpetuating the violence (Mohammed, Uddin & Saidi, 2021).

In realising the problems faced by the women in reporting their abusive partners, this study examines the need for a mandatory reporting system by healthcare professionals and other parties in Malaysia. This is to prevent domestic violence cases from continuously occurring behind the veil of secrecy.

Literature Review

Domestic Violence: A Matter of Public Concern

The severity of domestic violence has increased the concern in society. An increase in the number of wives battering and child abuse cases has made the damage and horror more publicly visible. Domestic violence against women is not an individual problem but a social problem that needs to be addressed seriously. It is a public issue and not a personal problem, and therefore more vigorous efforts are required to reduce and stem family violence. The police should deal with domestic violence as a social issue. Choi 's article (1994) explains that the law considers violence in public as a serious matter. Law enforcers are very prompt to arrest, summoning, and sentencing offenders who resort to violence in traffic disputes. However, in domestic violence cases which occur in a private setting, such zealotry was not observed.

Similarly, Carillo (2021) opines that domestic violence is a public issue that requires police and other support agencies to improve training, equipment and procedures when responding to domestic abuse cases. Busch (1994) believes that domestic violence is as severe as stranger violence; hence the abusers need to be held accountable for their actions, similar to criminals who are strangers to the victims. The conventional thinking that domestic violence is a private issue must change.

It is indisputable that the role of the police is essential in managing domestic violence offences. However, police involvement is very much dependent on whether a report is lodged or otherwise (Voce & Boxall, 2018). Various factors influence women's decision to come forward and report the occurrence of domestic abuse, such as access to shelters and protection, medical and mental health help, and their knowledge of the domestic violence law (Jordan & Pritchard, 2021). However, many factors contribute to women's unwillingness to report domestic violence, such as the lack of available agency and resources for care and referral and the pressures placed on women to remain in the marriage (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The unwillingness of the victims to disclose (shame, being judged or not believed, and confidentiality concerns) remains a mounting challenge for healthcare professionals in

dealing with domestic violence cases (Hegarty et al., 2020). The doctor's lack of training in "whole-person medicine" and the low priority of such cases usually cause the sympathetic doctor to feel helpless and powerless when handling such cases (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

The lack of collaborative efforts also affects the effectiveness of domestic violence treatment and prevention (Hegarty et al., 2020). While healthcare professionals play a vital role in detecting, identifying, and consulting the victims Szilassy et al (2021), they require social workers, psychologists, lawyers, and police assistance in managing domestic violence cases (Lee, 2002). According to a study conducted by Vatnar et al (2021), victims, to a certain extent, were generally supportive of a law requiring professionals to report on intimate partner violence. Thus, religious leaders, doctors and physicians can assist the victims of domestic violence who seek medical treatment.

According to Mills (2001), mandatory reporting alone is insufficient to solve domestic violence cases. An arrangement for protection, shelter, living arrangement, mental support, and restraining order is equally important. If there is no additional support and protection for the victims, there are higher possibilities that the victims will be assaulted again by the abusers. Without a proper support system in place, victims are often unwilling to come forward knowing that the mandatory reporting law requires information sharing with police. At the same time, the victims were left not receiving any aid or help (Lippy et al., 2020).

Malaysian Legal Perspective

The legal framework to address domestic violence in Malaysia is provided under the Domestic Violence Act 1994 (hereinafter referred to as the DVA 1994). The Parliament passed the statute on 24 June 1994 and was gazetted on 7 July 1994. It was enforced on 1 June 1996. The amendments to the DVA 1994 in 2012 and 2017 provide civil and criminal penalties in domestic violence cases (Randawar & Jayabalan, 2018). Besides, under the Penal Code, the offenders may be prosecuted for causing hurt or grievous hurt (Na'aim et al., 2019).

S 18(1) of the DVA 1994 states that anyone who witnesses or has information regarding domestic violence 'may' report such an incident to an enforcement officer. S 18(2) further provides immunity to the informant from civil and criminal liability if such information is given in good faith. However, the Act does not make it mandatory to report domestic violence cases. The use of 'may' indicates the permissive nature of the provision. In *Ambank (M) Bhd v Malaysian Coal & Minerals Corp Sdn Bhd [2016] 11 MLJ 590*, the High Court upheld that the word 'may' is a permissive term and shows the existence of discretionary power. Similarly, in *Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Hj Abd Razak [2020] MLJU 1254*, the High Court interpreted the word 'may' in a statute to mean that it is permissive and non-mandatory.

Comparative Perspective

As it is known, domestic violence has always been a global concern. Law enforcers and various helping authorities have undeniably taken steps to raise awareness and combat domestic violence in most nations. Initiatives taken by some countries to prevent domestic violence are concomitant to mandatory reporting laws of domestic violence crimes by relevant authorities.

The Northern Territory, Australia

In Northern Territory Australia, the Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007 (hereinafter referred to as DFVA 2007) is the State legislation about domestic violence. The Act was amended in 2009 to provide mandatory reporting of severe physical harm in a domestic relationship. (National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009).

The amendment was a response to the high rates of domestic violence in the Northern Territory and the high-profile inquest into the death of an aboriginal woman from the Tiwi Islands in 2005 (KPMG, 2012).

Before the mandatory reporting system, the victim, member of the society or service provider may report domestic violence to the police. Usually, when a woman goes to a hospital, clinic or other service providers, the staff would advise her to file a police report (KPMG, 2012). Police officers also refer victims to hospitals, clinics or other domestic violence specialist services. Police also often rescue victims from the domestic home and place them in shelters or alternative accommodation (KPMG, 2012).

The duty to report is provided under s 124A of the DFVA 2007. An adult with reasonable ground to believe that domestic violence has occurred or would likely happen must report the matter to a police officer. Failure to do so is an offence. Meanwhile, S 125 of the Act confers immunity from civil and criminal proceedings to the informant. The informant's identity shall also not be disclosed except with the court's leave. Failure to report domestic violence is an offence under s 124A, which carries a maximum of 200 penalty units.

S 124E of the DFVA 2007 allows an information-sharing entity to give information to another entity if it reasonably believes that the information might help assess a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare because of domestic violence. S 124F allows a police officer to share information concerning domestic violence with an information-sharing entity. S 124B provides an exhaustive list of information-sharing entities, such as the adult correctional services, child protection services, community services, disability services, education services, housing services, public health services, youth justice services, court and tribunal.

Mandatory Reporting in the United States

Certain jurisdictions in the United States have a legislative mandate for mandatory reporting of domestic violence among healthcare professionals. For instance, § 11160(a) of the California Penal Code provides that healthcare and other professionals report to the police if they reasonably believe that their patients are suffering from domestic violence-linked injury. The healthcare professionals must inform the police by telephone and submit their written findings within two working days. Information that must be shared with the police includes the patient's name, their whereabouts, the extent of the injuries, and the identity of the alleged abusers. Failure to report is a misdemeanour and punishable by imprisonment not exceeding six months or fines not exceeding \$1,000 or both as provided under § 11162 of the California Penal Code.

Similarly, in Oklahoma, s 22-58 of the Oklahoma Statutes provides mandatory reporting. A report can be made orally, by telephone or in writing. It must specify the domestic violence incidents, the injuries suffered by the victim, and the treatments provided or prescribed. However, if the victim is an adult and not incapacitated, the healthcare professional is not required to report the incident to the law enforcement agency. The victim will then be referred to the domestic violence and victim services programmes. Nonetheless, the statute is silent regarding the penalty for non-compliance with the reporting obligation.

Kentucky Statutes 209.030 also stipulates mandatory reporting. It states that any person who has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult has been subjected to abuse by the spouse shall report the matter to the department for social services. Kentucky law is not limited to healthcare professionals only as it intends to engage all members of society to assist victims of domestic violence and prevent future occurrences. Generally, domestic violence victims

support the mandatory reporting law in the US, especially when victim support services accompany the law (Antle et al., 2010).

Mandatory Reporting in China

In China, the Anti-Domestic Violence Law (ADVL) was enforced on 1 March 2016 (Chen Tingting, 2016). Article 1 of the law provides that it aims to prevent domestic abuse and protect the victims' rights. The scope of domestic violence under Article 2 is extensive as it covers physical and psychological violence, verbal intimidation, and restriction of physical freedom. On mandatory reporting, Article 14 of the ADVL stipulates the responsibility of third parties to report instances of domestic violence. A long list of organisations is obliged to report, such as educational institutions, medical providers, residents' and villagers' committees, social work organisations, and welfare organisations.

However, in China, the duty to report is restricted to situations where the victims lack capacities, such as children and people of unsound minds. Another limitation of the law is that the law is quite ambiguous in terms of the penalty for non-compliance. Under Article 35 of the ADVL, where a mandatory reporter fails to make a report and causes a grave effect to occur, he will receive sanction by his workplace or authority supervising him. The nature of the sanction is not articulated by the law (Wang, 2016). It is left to the subjective professional judgement of the supervisor or manager of the workplace to decide on the nature of punishment (Daum, 2020).

Methodology

Doctrinal Research

This study primarily employs doctrinal research methodology. Doctrinal research involves the interplay of legal doctrine and legal practice in which causal, structural and functional connections between legal doctrine, legislation and legal practice are scrutinised (Pattaro, 2005). The Domestic Violence Act 1994, Penal Code, and the Criminal Procedure Code are the primary legislation examined. Other secondary data such as textbooks, journal articles, conference papers, published statistics, and reports supplement the doctrinal research.

Comparative Benchmarking

Since Malaysia has yet to enact laws on mandatory reporting of domestic violence, this study also employs comparative benchmarking with three selected jurisdictions, namely, the Australian Northern Territory, China, and the United States. Comparative benchmarking of the foreign legal systems is essential to understand the socio-cultural background of the law and its evolution (Palmer, 2004). The Australian Northern Territory was chosen because it is a common law country where its law is persuasive in the Malaysian courts should there be lacunae in the Malaysian law, under the Civil Law Act 1956. Meanwhile, China's law on mandatory reporting is referred to due to the Asian family, and societal values shared among both jurisdictions, especially on domestic violence. On the other hand, the American jurisdiction is benchmarked against Malaysian law due to the long history of mandatory reporting implementation at States' level that is beneficial to guide the proposed Malaysian law on mandatory reporting. Comparative legal research is valuable in a legal development process where modification, amendment and changes to the law are required. It also helps understand the rules and principles of laws and involves exploring detailed knowledge of other countries' laws to understand them.

Qualitative Study: Interview

The second phase of the data collection is the fieldwork. The primary data was generated from interviews conducted with an officer from the Royal Malaysian Police, a medical officer from the Ministry of Health and a social welfare officer from the Department of Social Welfare Kuala Lumpur. These respondents were selected based on their experience in handling domestic violence victims in their line of duty. Besides, these respondents have served in their service for more than five years. The first respondent is an investigating officer for the sexual crime unit from Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM), handling various sexual, children and domestic violence cases throughout her service as an investigation officer. The second respondent is a medical officer from the Ministry of Health (MoH) who had experience working in the One-Stop Crisis Center (OSCC). She had met and assisted domestic violence victims for their medical treatment. The third respondent is a social welfare officer from the Department of Social Welfare who currently works as an assistant director for the compliance unit of the legislation and enforcement department. She is responsible for monitoring and regulating the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and providing consultation to the victim's accordance with the Act.

Results and Discussion

Domestic Violence in General

The main themes embarked by this study consist of the understanding of domestic violence in general; the domestic violence situation in Malaysia; the adequacy of the domestic violence law in Malaysia; mandatory reporting system; and the role of healthcare professionals, police, and social welfare officers in reporting.

As regards the understanding of the definition of domestic violence, all three interviewees gave a similar response that domestic violence involves the element of aggressive and abusive behaviour committed by one spouse to another. The form of violence varies from physical, mental, psychological, and verbal abuse. The first interviewee further added that, based on her experience, most domestic violence victims suffer long-term and continuous violence throughout the marriage. Apart from intimate partners, other family members such as children and the elderly are also susceptible to domestic violence.

The second respondent, who is a healthcare professional, gave her opinion that, from the healthcare perspective, domestic violence, which involves abuse towards partners, children, and the elderly, is a worrying phenomenon. Apart from physical injuries, there are other adverse effects on the emotional and psychological conditions of the victims. They often suffer from mental problems such as depression, anxiety disorder, eating disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Medical treatment on the physical injuries alone is insufficient to treat domestic violence victims. A proper support system such as counselling service, police protection, and social welfare aid is necessary to help the survivors. Meanwhile, the third interviewee believed that domestic violence covers broad conduct and can take various forms, including non-physical acts, such as isolation, exploitation, and manipulation.

Domestic Violence in Malaysia

All three interviewees agreed that domestic violence is a serious issue in Malaysia, and most victims are women and children compared to men. The first interviewee shared her experience as an investigating officer that she handled domestic violence victims of different races, religions, cultures, economic and social statuses. In most cases, wives were battered

by husbands, and in most serious instances, weapons were involved, such as knives, sticks, and hard objects. As regards the reason the victims lodged a police report, most of them decided so to protect their children's safety, not themselves. Police will then investigate the report under Penal Code and assist the victims in obtaining a protection order from the court. The first interviewee further added that the women asked for protection only and did not want their spouses to be charged in court in most cases. The victim's financial dependence on the partner, fear of further physical violence, the overall interests and welfare of the children, and fear of family pressure and societal perceptions are the reasons for not wanting the husbands to be prosecuted.

The second respondent also agreed that most domestic violence cases in Malaysia occur in a husband-wife relationship. As a medical officer stationed at the One-Stop Crisis Center (OCC), she shared her experience that a comprehensive report needs to be prepared in treating abused victims. The medical officer will obtain information regarding the complaint, how the injuries were caused, past medical injuries and the social background of the victims and reduce them into writing. Based on the second respondent's experience, most victims encountered were Malays and this could probably be due to the Malay population being the majority in the country.

The third interviewee, a social welfare officer, also opined that domestic violence is a severe issue in Malaysia. Based on the officer's experience, many victims who suffered from domestic violence are often unwilling to tell the truth and come forward due to the conventional belief that it is a private issue that should be resolved between the partners. Apart from that, many victims were unaware of their rights and did not understand how to deal with domestic violence issues. Hence, social welfare officers need to understand the victims' problems and help them to take proper and necessary actions such as reporting the perpetrator to the police, aiding the victims to get a protection order from the court, and referring them to counselling or other support services.

Adequacy of Domestic Violence Law in Malaysia

On the question of the adequacy of domestic violence law in Malaysia, the first respondent thought that the current Domestic Violence Act 1994 (DVA 1994) is sufficient in dealing with domestic violence. Respondent further added the Act has already been in place for over 20 years and underwent amendments in 2012 and 2017. The 2012 amendment is concerned with the expansion of all domestic violence as seizable offences where police may arrest the suspects without a warrant. Besides, an order to investigate is also not necessary for seizable offences. In 2017, the Act was further amended to empower social welfare officers to issue Emergency Protection Order (EPO) to domestic violence victims. According to the first respondent, the amendment was made in response to current needs and situations. Although domestic violence is not a crime per se, the Penal Code is applied in defining domestic violence offences that cover the causing of hurt or grievous hurt, criminal force, assault, and criminal intimidation. Meanwhile, the Criminal Procedure Code is relevant in governing the procedures for domestic violence investigation. Another milestone that the Royal Malaysian Police have achieved is the establishment of the Sexual, Women and Children Investigation Division (D11) that investigate cases involving sexual crimes involving women and children, including domestic violence.

The second respondent also agreed that the current law regarding domestic violence in Malaysia is adequate. However, the respondent admitted that not being very well versed with the provisions in the DVA 1994, although the respondent believed that the lawmakers must

have considered all relevant matters and interests before enacting the Act. The third respondent also concurred that the current law on domestic violence is adequate. Malaysia is the first Asia Pacific country that introduces domestic violence law. The Act covers a broad definition of domestic violence and various protective measures available to the victims. Additionally, many parties, such as the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), had prioritised the effective implementation of the DVA 1994. Community-based programmes were conducted to raise awareness of the legislation and women's rights.

Current Reporting System in Malaysia

The first interviewee stated that the reporting system for domestic violence in Malaysia is similar to other criminal offences. Any parties, including the victims, witnesses, or third parties, may complain to the nearest police station. The police will then assign an investigating officer to investigate the report. Here, powers concerning arrest, interrogation, visit of the crime scene, search, and other investigating powers are applicable.

The second respondent disclosed her experience that police reports were only made if the victims wished so. Based on her experience, if the victim refuses to file a police report and only seeks medical treatment from the doctor, the doctor cannot compel the victim to lodge a police report. The third respondent shared the victims or immediate family members usually lodge that police reports. Still, she agreed that they could only advise the victims as social welfare officers to do so. They cannot force the victims if the victims do not want to report the matter to the police.

The first respondent strongly agreed that a mandatory reporting system on domestic violence is essential to stop the continuing cycle of violence. This is because most domestic violence cases happen in private at home. Therefore, having a mandatory reporting system would help the police investigate and take appropriate actions more effectively. The report should be lodged as soon as possible. Thus, preventive action may be taken. In contrast, the second respondent disagreed with the idea to make reporting mandatory. She believed that the victim should be given the liberty whether to report the matter to the police or not. As a medical practitioner, the main concern is not to delay initial treatment and examination of the victims.

The third interviewee believed that there are benefits and problems with the mandatory reporting system. One of the main advantages of such a system is that it will ensure that police can take prompt action and the victim can be given immediate assistance to prevent further victimisation. On the other hand, a mandatory reporting system can be argued to be treating women as though they are incapacitated, helpless, and incapable of making a rational decision by themselves. The mandatory reporting system is paternalistic towards women.

Should Healthcare Professionals Have Mandatory Reporting Obligation?

On whether the law should mandate healthcare professionals to report domestic violence cases to the police, the first respondent answered affirmatively. Based on her experience, most victims would not go directly to the police station but instead seek medical treatment for their injuries first. Therefore, as the first-response officer, the medical officer should report the matter to the police so that intervention can be done as early as possible. Besides, the medical report is also an essential piece of evidence for police investigation and prosecution. Again, obligating medical officers to make a police report helps in the early

detection of crime and relieves the victims from the need to go to the police station to report the offence.

The second respondent felt that mandatory reporting by healthcare professionals is inappropriate as it would damage the trust relationship between a doctor and a patient. As a medical professional, she believed that the client's confidentiality and privacy must be upheld. She further added most victims of domestic violence come from broken families and have trust issues. If the doctor reports the matter to the police, it can be seen as if the doctor breaches the patient's confidentiality and trust. Besides, reporting the case to the police might endanger the victim's safety and cause retaliatory abuse from the perpetrators. The barriers created by the mandatory reporting system may result in the unwillingness of the victims to confide with the medical professionals.

The third respondent supported the idea of compelling healthcare professionals to report domestic violence cases. She believed that anyone who has information on domestic violence should be obliged to make a police report. This includes family members, neighbours, and communities alike – not only the healthcare professionals. However, the respondent did not deny that there may be instances that the victims themselves would disagree for third parties to report domestic violence on their behalf.

The first interviewee was confident that the current reporting system for domestic violence in Malaysia is sound, but improvement is always welcomed. She opined that it would be good if the mandatory reporting system in Child Act 2001 were adopted in the DVA 1994. This will help the police and other parties to assist the victims appropriately. The second respondent refused to comment on this matter. Meanwhile, the third respondent also agreed that the current reporting system is functional. Since the reporting system is similar to other offences as laid down in the Criminal Procedure Code, any changes to the current system must be carefully scrutinised. Both the advantages and disadvantages of the special mandatory reporting system for domestic violence cases must be carefully considered before it is being introduced.

Discussion

This study found that to date, there is no specific provision in the DVA 1994 that requires any person to lodge a report on domestic violence cases. The law only provides that anyone who has information regarding domestic violence may report the incidents to an enforcement officer. In Malaysia, in most instances, the victims are the ones who report domestic violence to the police. It is rare for the third party to do so on behalf of the victim without their consent. Since this leads to the inability of the police to detect and respond to the crimes early, it is worth considering the idea of mandatory reporting to help police investigate and protect victims from continuous violence.

In comparison, several American jurisdictions such as California, Oklahoma, Kentucky; Australian Northern Territory; and China have enacted laws explicitly providing for mandatory reporting obligations. The laws require broad categories of persons, including healthcare professionals and social welfare officers, to lodge police reports should they suspect the occurrence of domestic violence. All of the comparative jurisdictions mandate the reporting obligation to people above 18. Since Malaysia has no system for mandatory reporting yet, the models in those jurisdictions can be adopted.

Whether mandatory reporting should be imposed on healthcare practitioners, it must be noted that doing so might jeopardise the client's confidentiality and trust. That would be tantamount to a breach of ethics and professional medical conduct. Besides, mandatory

reporting may also result in the refusal of domestic violence victims to seek medical treatment for fear that the cases will be reported to the police. The mandatory reporting system may also force the victims to lie and not disclose the real cause of their injuries to the doctor to prevent the issue from undergoing a police probe.

Nevertheless, the perspective on client's confidentiality must be weighed with the main intent of mandatory reporting law to protect victims' rights and interests. Healthcare professionals play a crucial role as the first responding officer to detect domestic violence and channel the information to an enforcement agency for further action and investigation. As domestic violence does affect not only the victim's physical health but also her mental and psychological health, the medical officer needs to report the matter so support service and protection can be accorded to the victim (Usta & Taleb, 2014). Although there is a concern that the victim herself is unwilling to report the partner Jordan & Pritchard (2021), it must be noted that mandatory reporting will enhance protection towards the victims. Not reporting the matter will only worsen the situation as the victim will continuously be in the vicious cycle of abuse. In Antle et al (2010), 92% of women stated that doctors should mandatorily report domestic violence. This gives the victim a sense that someone cares about her and prevents her from feeling alone, helpless, and lonely. Early intervention by healthcare professionals prevents the recurrence of domestic violence.

Another critical aspect of the mandatory reporting system is that relevant support services must accompany it. The participation of healthcare professionals, police, and social welfare services is necessary to ensure that if this law is implemented, it will offer comprehensive protection and support to the victims. If a report is made, the investigation will be carried out, and evidence will be collected. As a result of the report and proper investigation, police may charge perpetrators with criminal offences. At the same time, the victims obtain all the helps they require, including counselling services, medical treatment, shelter, and other welfare services.

Conclusion

It is worth noting that domestic violence law aims to intervene and assist victims of domestic violence in providing safety. As much as the act can intervene and prioritise victims' safety, it is also essential to include methods to increase offender accountability to ensure and avoid regression among the offenders. Mandatory reporting systems by public and health care officers may help enable law enforcement officials to more effectively intervene in domestic violence crimes.

There are still specific concerns raised by victims and health care providers on mandatory reporting, although generally, most victims agree with mandatory reporting. The law alone cannot safeguard women from the heinous crime of domestic violence. Collaborative cooperation is required to respond to domestic violence because a functional legal framework cannot exist singly from its social milieu. Irrefutably, the police and law enforcers must prevent and combat domestic violence and other law-breaking acts; however, reporting such crimes is equally essential.

Moreover, when crimes like domestic violence happen within the proximity of family relationships within four corners of a home, the visibility of such crimes can only be known upon a reporting or complaint. Thus, no one should ever have to endure this horrendous offence that happens behind closed doors. Collaborative efforts by all are essentially crucial in curbing and obliterating this dreadful happening in society. Witnessing and knowing of the

occurrence of such offence makes a person equally responsible for surging such crimes in the community.

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