

Spousal Domestic Violence of Married Women in India

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ABSTRACT The national family health survey in its 3rd round during 2005 – 06 had collected information on different forms of spousal violence experienced by ever married women between the ages of 15 – 49 years (66,658) belonging to all states and union territories of India. Making use of this data from its all India report, in this paper, an attempt is made to identify the prevalence rate, forms and the factors correlated with the forms of the violence and to examine help seeking behavior of men and women. At all India level, 35 percent of ever married women had experienced physical spousal violence, whereas 16 percent and 10 percent had encountered emotional and sexual violence, respectively. Further, these magnitudes vary considerably across the states and union territories of India. The correlation analysis revealed that, with a few exceptions, the magnitude of all the three forms of spousal violence has a negative correlation with percentage of women and men who have 10 + years of education, who are exposed to mass media, and also with the percentage of households wealth index that falls under 4 – 5 quintiles (richer and richest) at different levels of significance. Conversely, the levels of either 1 or 2 types of spousal violence positively correlated with the percentage of women belonging to Hindu and Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities as well as with the percentage of men and women employed during 12 months preceding the survey.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide domestic spousal violence has been widely acknowledged as a violation of basic human rights. Domestic violence may result due to factors such as dowry, low educational status, suspicion and infidelity. It may also result due to indifferent behaviour of women such as negligence of in-laws and children, and negligence of home. Gossip, other sociable nature of women as well as lifestyles of men such as smoking, drug use and drinking alcohol promote men to commit domestic violence (Rao 1997; Bhatt 1998; Murthy et al. 2004; Audinarayana 2005). In a study in Uttar Pradesh (Gershtein 2000), family stressors, particularly low educational levels and poverty are considered as strong risk factors for wife abuse. Nevertheless, the community treats domestic violence as legitimate. An increasing amount of research highlights the health burdens, intergenerational effects and demographic consequences (U. N. 1997; Heise et al. 1999; Jewkes 2002; Campbell 2002; Kishor and Johnson 2004; 2006; Audinarayana 2005). However, in the Indian context, data on the prevalence of domestic violence among married women including the types of violence and the factors related to the forms of violence at the national level are rare phenomena. This paper, therefore, aims on these issues.

Review of Literature

Violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic that kills tortures and maims physically, psychologically, sexually and economically. It is found in every country, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age. Even though most societies proscribe violence against women, the reality is that violations against women's human rights are often sanctioned under the garb of cultural practice and norms or through misinterpretation of religious tenets. Moreover, when the violation takes place within the home, the secured place for women, as is very often the case, the abuse is effectively condoned by the tacit silence and the passivity displayed by the state and the law enforcing machinery. Unfortunately, the global dimensions of this violence are alarming, as highlighted by studies on its incidence and prevalence but no society can claim to be free of such violence, the only variation is in the patterns and trends that exist in countries and regions.

The trend of violence against women was recently highlighted by India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which stated that while in 2000, an average of 125 women faced domestic violence every day, the figure stood at 160 in 2005. Domestic violence is described as violence consisting of physical, sexual, psy-

chological, verbal and emotional abuse. A wide range of aggressive behaviors are examples of abuse including hitting, forced sexual intercourse, harassment, extreme possessiveness, isolating the woman from her family and friends, withholding financial resources, physical damage to her body and murder. Domestic violence affects both men and women; however, women are more commonly the victims of domestic violence. It may mostly result due to factors such as dowry, low educational status, suspicion and infidelity. Shubakumar et al. (2005) concluded that among 9938 subjects, 40% of Indian women have experienced some sort of spousal violence during their marital life and that has led to poor mental health. An analysis of NFHS – III 2005 – 2006 data (among 3836 women) in Tamil Nadu, Audinarayana (2011) reported that spousal physical violence is 42% among the age group of 30-49 years residing in rural areas who lack education and belong to the Hindu and Christianity religious groups and, 165% in terms of emotional violence. Bontha and Shantanu (2009) have observed from a study in Eastern India that among 1753 samples (married women) 21.1% in Jharkhand, 14.6% in West Bengal and 13.2% in Orissa face physical violence, while, 32.4% in Orissa, 19.7% in West Bengal and 27.4% in Jharkhand have experienced sexual violence, whereas, more than half of the women in all the above mentioned states were subjected to psychological violence. A significant relationship of domestic violence was observed with deviant behavior of the husband like drug addiction, habitual gambling and practice of visiting Commercial Sex Workers besides addiction to alcohol. Audinarayana (2011) reported that partner's frequency of alcohol consumption and the father ever beat mother are the most significant factors influencing physical and emotional violence at a greater level. Interestingly it is noted that the leading social risk factors of domestic violence perceived and reported by the affected women (110) age ranges from (26 – 30 years), are alcohol addiction and other factors were poverty, son preference, dowry conflict and illicit relationship of husband with other women (Mitra 2006). Another study by Koenig et.al (2006) after examining 4520 subjects concluded that the women from high socio-economic status were found to be quite protected against physical but not sexual violence which is due to the household economic pressure, childlessness and husband's extra-marital relation-

ships and, are positively and significantly related to the sexual violence. Further, he also added that in rural Uganda by 2003, among 5109 women, the factors that have strengthened physical violence were the denial of a woman towards sex, household chores, disobedience toward spouse and family elders, adoption of contraception without the partners' permission and woman's argument over money. The foregoing literature indicates that most of the studies conducted in the past have focused on either regions of India like, east, west, north and south with small sample sizes, which generally reflect the micro level understanding of this phenomenon. Against this backdrop, the present paper attempts to highlight the magnitude of domestic violence, types and the help seeking behavior at national (macro) level.

Objectives

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the prevalence of types of domestic violence among married women in India.
2. To find out the differences in different forms of violence experienced by the ever married women across states of India.
3. To examine the factors those are correlated with three forms of domestic violence under consideration across the states of India.
4. To find out the type of help seeking and source of help by the women ever had spousal domestic violence in India.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data Source

Data for the present paper was drawn from the National Family Health Survey – 3, 2005-06 (NFHS-3) conducted during November 2005 – August, 2006 in 29 states of India. In each state, about 3000 to 5000 sample households, 10,000 in the case of Uttar Pradesh and ever-married women (15-49 years) living in these households were interviewed for the survey purpose. In all, 1, 24, 385 ever-married women (15-49 years) were interviewed from 1, 09, 041 households and the response rate was 97.7 percent (For more details see IIPS and Macro International 2007). However, with the restrictions such as security precautions required and for

privacy reasons, only one woman was administered the domestic violence module in each sample household and thereby, the sample women for domestic violence comes out as 83,703. For this paper, information from 66,658 women only was used because of the exclusion of the never married and widowed women from the ever-married women and because of the availability of comparable data for background characteristics.

Dependent Variables

Physical spousal violence, sexual violence and emotional violence experienced by the ever married women have been taken into consideration as dependent variables.

Independent Variables

Women's background characteristics, partner's background characteristics and family/household characteristics for the states as a whole of the ever married women and their spouses which were mostly self explanatory were the independent variables (Refer Table 4) except the following two indicators- household wealth index and women's participation in decision making.

Household Wealth Index

In NFHS-3, wealth index of household has been computed based on 33 household assets and housing characteristics viz., Household Electrification, Type of Windows, Drinking Water Source, Type of Toilet Facility, Type of Flooring, Material of Exterior Walls, Type of Roofing, Cooking Fuel, House Ownership, Number of Household Members per Sleeping Room, Ownership of a Bank or Post-office Account, and Ownership of a Mattress, a Pressure Cooker, a Chair, a Cot/Bed, a Table, an Electric Fan, a Radio/ Transistor, a Black and White Television, a Colour Television, a Sewing Machine, a Mobile Telephone, Any Other Telephone, a Computer, a Refrigerator, a Watch or Clock, a Bicycle, a Motor Cycle or Scooter, an Animal-drawn Cart, a Car, a Water Pump, a Thresher, and a Tractor. Based on the pooled scores, the sample households are divided into quintiles, that is, five groups with an equal number of individuals (20 percent) in each at national level.

Women's Participation in Decision-making

The four different categories of decisions in which the women participate are one's own health care, major household purchases, purchases for daily household needs and visits to one's own family and relatives.

Data Analysis

The analysis has been carried out in the following manner. Mostly it was based on frequency and correlation. The magnitude of different forms of domestic spousal violence viz., physical, sexual and emotional as well as whether women ever sought help and from whom such help is sought are analysed with the help of frequency tables. To identify the relationship between the explanatory variables and forms of violence, Karl Pearson correlation was adopted.

RESULTS

Magnitude of Different Forms of Spousal Domestic Violence

On the whole, in India, 35 percent of ever-married women report having experienced any form of physical violence; slapping being the most common one (refer panel 1 of Table 1). A sizeable percent (11-15%) reported physical violence activities like, 'twisted her arm or pulled her hair', 'pushed her, shook her, or threw something at her', 'kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up', and 'punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her' (refer panel 3 of Table 1). About 16 percent of women experienced any form of emotional violence; 'said or did something to humiliate her in front of others' being the major one (refer panel 2 of Table 1). It is interesting to note that one-tenth of ever-married women came out openly that they faced any form of sexual violence; the major one being 'physically forced to have sexual intercourse with husband even when she did not want to'.

Differentials in Different Forms of Spousal Domestic Violence across States of India

The magnitude of different forms of spousal domestic violence varies greatly across the states of India as denoted in Table 2. Firstly, in all

Table 1: Percentage of ever-married women ever had spousal domestic violence by type of violence, NFHS, 2005-2006

Type of violence	Ever (%)
1. Physical Violence	
<i>Any Form of Physical Violence</i>	35.1
Pushed her, shook her, or threw something at her	13.6
Slapped her	34.0
Twisted her arm or pulled her hair	15.4
Punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her	10.9
Kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up	11.5
Tried to choke her or burn her with on purpose	2.2
Threatened her or attacked her with a knife, gun, or any other weapon	1.2
2. Sexual Violence	
<i>Any Form of Sexual Violence</i>	10.0
Physically forced her to have sexual intercourse with him even when she did not want to	9.5
Forced her to perform any sexual acts she did not want to	4.6
3. Emotional Violence	
<i>Any Form of Emotional Violence</i>	15.8
Said or did something to humiliate her in front of others	13.1
Threatened to hurt or harm her or someone close to her	5.4
Insulted her or made her feel bad about herself	8.2
Number of ever-married women (Age 15-49)	66,658

states, physical violence alone tends to be the most common form of violence. Sexual violence is reported least often in most states with the exception of West Bengal, where the prevalence of sexual violence is much higher than the prevalence of emotional violence. Among the major states for which data presented, by and large, in the states located at the northern, central and northeastern parts of India (including Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh states from south), the magnitudes of all forms of spousal violence are comparatively higher than the other ones. The prevalence of physical violence ranges from 6 percent in Himachal Pradesh and 20 percent in Karnataka, to above 40 percent in Madhya Pradesh (44%), Tamil Nadu (42%), Uttar Pradesh (41%), and Rajasthan (40%) and the highest in Bihar (55). In the case of sexual violence, the magnitude ranges from a low level of 2 percent in Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, to 19 percent in Bihar, 20 percent in Rajasthan and the highest 22 percent in West Bengal. Emotional violence also found to be the lowest in Himachal Pradesh (4%), the states like Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan stood comparatively at higher side (20-23%) in this regard.

Table 2: Percentage of ever-married women ever had different types of spousal Domestic violence across elected states of India, NFHS, 2005-2006

States	Emotional (%)	Physical (%)	Sexual (%)
India	15.8	35.1	10.0
North			
Haryana	8.7	25.5	7.1
Himachal Pradesh	3.8	5.9	1.8
Punjab	10.7	24.4	7.2
Rajasthan	22.9	40.3	20.2
Uttaranchal	8.9	27.3	6.1
Central			
Chhattisgarh	12.7	29.2	6.9
Madhya Pradesh	22.5	44.0	11.0
Uttar Pradesh	16.1	41.2	9.4
East			
Bihar	19.7	55.6	19.1
Jharkhand	18.0	34.7	12.5
Orissa	19.8	33.5	14.7
West Bengal	12.3	32.7	21.5
Northeast			
Arunachal Pradesh	16.6	37.5	9.5
Assam	15.6	36.7	14.8
West			
Gujarat	18.5	25.7	7.5
Maharashtra	17.5	30.6	2.0
South			
Andhra Pradesh	13.3	35.0	4.1
Karnataka	8.1	19.5	4.0
Kerala	10.1	15.3	4.8
Tamil Nadu	16.8	41.9	3.2

Correlation Coefficient between the Explanatory Variables and Different Forms of Domestic Violence

On the whole, majority of the variables under consideration are significantly (at different levels) correlated with different forms of spousal violence and that too, mostly in the expected direction which is presented in Table 3. It is conspicuous to note that the different forms of spousal violence are negatively and significantly ($p < 0.001$) correlated with the percentage of households belonging to upper (4-5) quintiles of wealth index, closely followed by the percentage of women and men who have 10+ years of education and exposed to mass media. Such pattern is also true to some extent in the case of percent of women who are participating in four household decisions. Conversely, the percent of women who have faith in Hindu religion and from scheduled castes have exhibited positive correlations with physical violence and sexual violence, but to a moderate and lesser extent only. On the other hand, the percent of men employed during 12 months preceding the sur-

vey has demonstrated a positive correlation with emotional violence ($p < 0.01$) and physical violence ($p < 0.05$). Likewise, the percent of women who are working during 12 months preceding the survey has shown a positive correlation with emotional violence only that too at a moderate level ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3: Zero-order correlations coefficients between the selected explanatory variables and types of spousal violence

<i>Explanatory variables</i>	<i>Physical violence</i>	<i>Emotional violence</i>	<i>Sexual violence</i>
% Women Hindu	0.372*	0.282	0.323+
% Women SC	0.319+	0.128	0.337+
% Women 10+ years education	-0.590***	-0.656***	-0.605***
% Men 10+ years education	-0.383*	-0.570***	-0.450**
% Women employed <12 months	0.277	0.354*	0.004
% Men employed <12 months	0.416*	0.459**	0.272
% Women exposed to mass media	-0.551***	-0.552***	-0.571**
% Men exposed to mass media	-0.360*	-0.421*	-0.458**
% Households in wealth quintiles 4-5	-0.671***	-0.636***	-0.635***
% Women participating in 4 decisions	-0.313+	-0.312+	-0.411*

Note: +, *, **, and *** = Correlation Coefficients are Significant at 0.10, 0.05, 0.01 And 0.001 levels, respectively.

Help Seeking and Sources of Help by Women who Experienced Any Physical and Sexual Violence

In NFHS-3, all ever married women (currently married and formerly married) who reported physical or sexual violence were asked whether and from whom they sought help to try to end the violence. The result based on these questions are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Results provided in Table 4 highlight that only one in four women have 'ever sought help to end the violence' they have experienced. Two out of three women who have experienced violence have 'not only ever sought help', but also have 'never told to anyone' about the violence. Interestingly, among those who sought help is shown in Table 5. It predicts that a large majority of women most often seek help from their own families. The second most common source of help for women who experienced spousal violence is husbands' family (28%). It is interest-

ing to note that for about 14 percent of women neighbours would help in such situations closely followed by friends (9%). Few women only seek help from any institutional sources such as the police, medical personnel, or social organizations.

Table 4: Percentage of ever-married women ever had spousal domestic violence by type of help seeking, NFHS, 2005-2006

<i>Type of help seeking</i>	<i>Ever(%)</i>
Never sought help	73.8
Never told anyone	66.1
Told someone	7.7
Have sought help from any source	23.8
Don't know / missing	2.4
Total no. of women	29,595

Table 5: Percentage of ever-married women ever sought help for spousal domestic violence by source of help, NFHS, 2005-2006

<i>Source of help</i>	<i>Help sought (%)</i>
Own family	71.0
Husband's family	28.4
Neighbours	14.4
Friends	9.4
Police	2.1
Religious leader	1.0
Others (lawyer, doctor, social service Organization, etc.)	3.6
Total no. of women	7,048

DISCUSSION

The present study findings denote that there is a positive correlation between women's employment and forms of violence which differs to the study findings of (Bontha and Shantanu 2009) that occupation of women is a protective factor against physical violence. This contrast is plausible because the income earned by women might be low and hence less chances to satisfy their husbands. Whereas, the forms of all the three violence has a negative correlation with the percentage of households wealth index and supports the study finding that higher socioeconomic status is a low risk factor for domestic violence (Koenig et al. 2006).

CONCLUSION

Overall, in India, 35 percent of ever-married women age 15-49 reported having experienced any form of physical violence, slapping is the most common one; 10 percent faced any form

of sexual violence, physically forced to have sex is the major one; and about 16 percent experienced any form of emotional violence, said or did something to humiliate her in front of others as the most mentioned. With a few exceptions, the magnitude of all forms of spousal violence is higher than the national average in the states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, and Orissa, and the lower being in Himachal Pradesh. The result based on correlation reveals that the different forms of violence are negatively and significantly ($p < 0.001$) correlated with the percentage of households belonging to upper (4-5) quintiles of wealth index, closely followed by the percentage of women and women who have 10+ years of education and mass media. Interestingly, one in four women has ever sought help to end the violence they have experienced. Two out of three women who have ever experienced spousal violence have not only ever sought help, but also never told anyone about the violence. Abused women most often seek help from their own families followed by husband's family, neighbours and friends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the aforesaid results and discussion, the following are the recommendations put forth for the control and/or eradication of the evil of spousal domestic violence. First of all, creating awareness and sensitization of the issue of domestic violence and its consequences have to be done among public in general and among those married couples in particular. For this government as well as non-governmental channels may be involved with suitable strategies depending upon the type of groups such information has to be disseminated. Both central and states governments may strengthen and monitor the laws related to domestic violence, can help the NGOs to work effectively at grass roots levels, in addition to steps may be taken to regulate the mass media and other channels that advertise / promotes various forms of domestic violence. Police have to be sensitized about the domestic violence act of 2005 and they should be given proper guidance how to go about the act in case of victims of domestic violence. Steps may also be initiated to include the contents of the act in suitable curricula of schools, colleges and universities so that educated persons would

not only show proper treatment to persons of opposite gender, but also would be able to educate the out-of school youth and public in general. Efforts also should be taken up to provide proper counseling and health care support to those victims of domestic violence. Finally, judicial reforms and strict enforcement of selected laws like domestic violence act, dowry harassment act, etc. have to be taken care in a proper fashion.

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