



Experience of Domestic Violence in India: Prevalence and Variation among Different Socio-Economic Status Groups

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This paper tries to explore the link between the socio-economic status of women and their experience of violence in the Indian context as well as the complexities of domestic violence which in turn assists in the framing of policies and programmes and in the formulation of appropriate laws.

The recently released compendium of factsheets of key findings for 22 States/UTs generated by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-20) highlight some visible shifts in the proportion of women experiencing domestic violence. It shows five out of 22 States/UTs have the highest percentage of ever-married women in the age group of 18-49 years who have ever experienced spousal violence (physical and/or sexual violence). These are Bihar (40 per cent), Manipur (39 per cent), Telangana (32 per cent), Assam (32 per cent) and Andhra Pradesh

(30 per cent). The states which witnessed an increase in the rate of domestic violence in 2019-20 over 2015-16 are Assam, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Meghalaya, Sikkim, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir. The data given in NFHS-5 pertains to the pre-Covid situation in the year 2019-20. However, studies in India during the lockdown due to Covid-19 and thereafter, show that there has been a further increase in domestic violence during this time¹. The National Commission for Women (NCW) received 4,350 complaints of domestic violence, as reported between 1st March to 18th September 2020².

This paper is based on the unit level data from NFHS-4, 2015-16. It discusses four types of domestic violence i.e., physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and emotional violence.

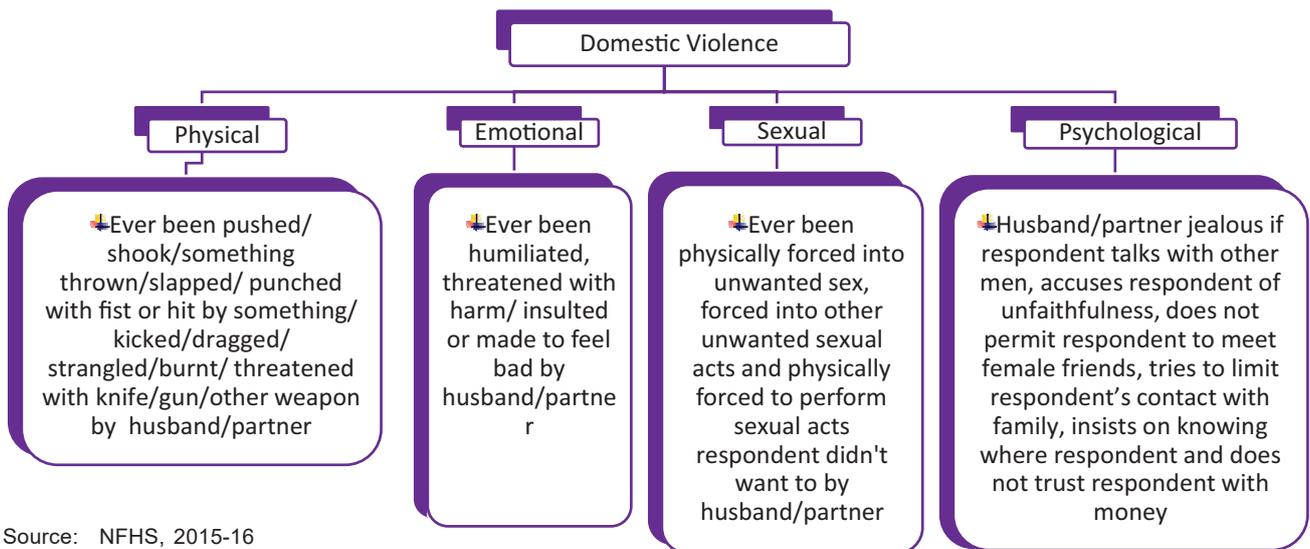
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1. Arora, Kanika and Kumar, Shubham (2020), "Locked-down: Domestic Violence Reporting in India during COVID-19", New Delhi: Oxfam India, Retrieved from <https://www.oxfamindia.org/> 03 Aug, 2020.

2. <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/4300-cases-of-domestic-violence-reported-with-ncw-since-march-893807.html>

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Source: NFHS, 2015-16

All the domestic violence-related indicators have four responses such as never, often, sometimes, yes but not in the last 12 months. Women reporting violence “often” or “sometimes” were categorised as experiencing domestic violence.

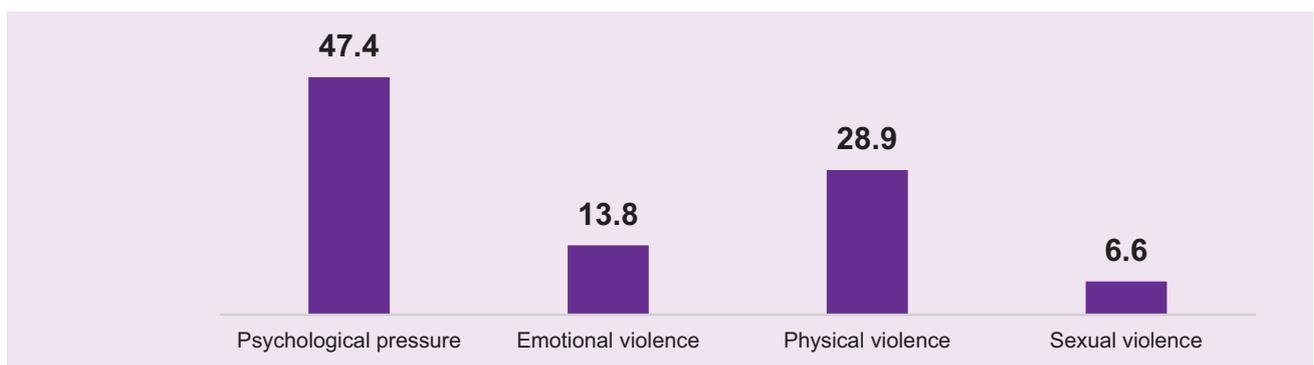
It needs to be noted that psychological pressure is the most widely reported form of domestic violence. With 29 per cent of women facing physical violence, it is the second most reported form. 14 per cent of surveyed women reported emotional violence and 6.6 per cent faced sexual violence.

In terms of physical violence, the states that registered the highest proportion of women are Andhra Pradesh (42 per cent), Bihar (41 per cent),

Tamil Nadu and Telangana (40 per cent each) and the state registering lowest are Himachal Pradesh (5 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (8 per cent), Uttarakhand (11 per cent).

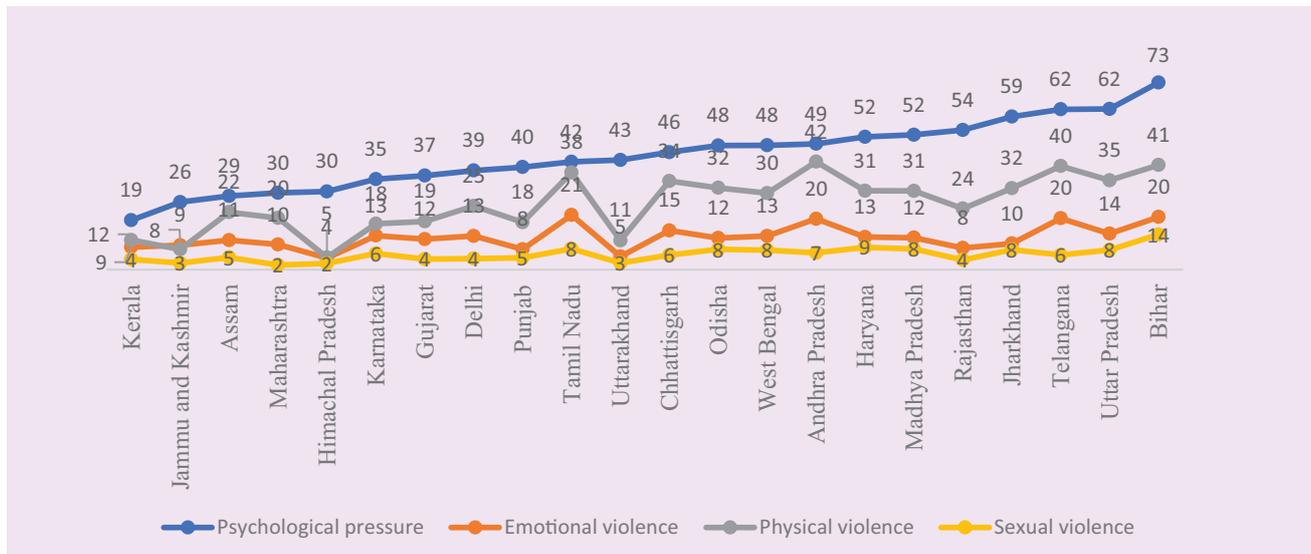
The proportion of women facing psychological pressure is the highest in the state of Bihar (73 per cent) followed by Uttar Pradesh and Telangana (62 per cent each). On the other hand, states reporting the least prevalence such as Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh had less than one-third of women facing psychological pressure. A 54 percentage point difference exists between the highest and lowest occurrence states, i.e., Bihar and Kerala.

Percentage of Women Faced Domestic Violence in India, 2015-16 (NHFS)





State-wise Percentage of Women Faced Domestic Violence, 2015-16 (NFHS)



Among the 22 major states, those registering the highest proportion of women experiencing emotional violence include Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Bihar where more than one-fifth of total women experience emotional violence. On the other hand, the states showing the lowest proportion are Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir where less than 10 per cent of women experience emotional violence.

In sexual violence, Bihar occupied the highest position (14 per cent) followed by Haryana and Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, states showing the lowest proportion are Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu Kashmir.

Linkage of Domestic Violence and Socio-Economic Indicators

Education of Women

Educated women reported less psychological pressure. One in every two women who are not educated faced psychological pressure whereas a 15 percentage point reduction is registered if she has attained education up to the secondary or above level. Emotional violence shows a

negative relationship with education. Education appeared as the key to end or reduce physical violence against women. The occurrence of physical violence has a negative relationship with women's level of education. The occurrence of physical violence with women having no education is 2.5 times higher than with those having attained a secondary or a higher level of education. A clear negative relationship is found between educational status and the proportion of women who experienced sexual violence. The proportion of illiterate women who experienced sexual violence is three times more as compared to the proportion of women having education up to the secondary level or above.

Economic Status (Wealth Quintile)

The percentage of women experiencing emotional, physical and psychological violence reduces with the increase in the economic status of the women's household. There is a 24 percentage point gap between the poorest and richest quintile in terms of the proportion of women experiencing psychological pressure whereas in terms of emotional violence there is an 11 percentage point gap between richest and poorest.



There is also a negative relationship between the proportion of women who experienced sexual violence and the wealth quintile. Women from the poorest households faced more than three times more sexual violence as compared to women who belonged to the richest wealth quintile.

Age of Women

It is interesting to find that with the increase in age there is a reduction in the proportion of women experiencing psychological pressure whereas in the case of physical violence the reverse trend was found. In emotional and sexual violence no clear trend was found with the age of women.

Socio-Religious Category

The prevalence of psychological pressure among women belonging to the Buddhist and Christian category is lower as compared to women belonging to other religious groups. On the other hand, the psychological pressure of women is higher for women belonging to SC, ST and OBC. A lower proportion of Sikh and Buddhist women face physical violence. Christian women have registered the highest proportion of sexual violence whereas it is lowest among Sikh and Buddhist religious groups.

Geographic Area (EAG and Non-EAG)³ and Area (Rural and Urban)

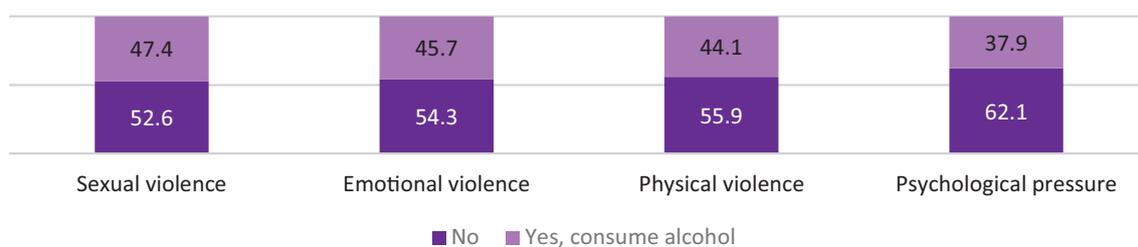
A clear difference was registered among women experiencing domestic violence between EAG and Non-EAG states and between rural and urban areas. The proportion of women experiencing psychological pressure in EAG and non-EAG states was 60 per cent and 39 per cent respectively.

The differential between urban and rural areas is 10 percentage points. In terms of physical violence, a 6 percentage point gap was found between women who belong to EAG states and non-EAG states. Similarly, a 7 percentage point difference was found between urban and rural areas. The occurrence of sexual violence among women who belong to rural areas and EAG states was higher when compared to their counterparts in urban areas and non-EAG states.

Alcohol Consumption

The World Health Organization estimates that roughly 55 per cent of domestic abuse perpetrators had drunk alcohol prior to physical assault⁴. It is interesting to find that of the total women who experienced domestic violence a

The proportion of Women Experiencing Domestic Violence by Alcohol Consumption by Partner (NHFS 2015-16)



3. EAG states included Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh whereas the other states are the non-EAG states.
2. https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_intimate.pdf



large proportion of them belong to a household where one or more members drink alcohol. In the case of sexual violence, the proportion is the highest with 47 per cent followed by 46 per cent in the case of emotional violence.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on the prevalence of domestic violence against women and its relationship with women's socio-economic characteristics in India and 22 major states. Women facing less domestic violence belong to higher education and the richest wealth quintile compared to women with no education and lower wealth quintiles. The Government of India has taken steps to ensure justice to women facing domestic violence through the enactment of programmes like The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005; The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1960 and

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. Different Government Schemes also provide various kinds of services to women who have faced domestic violence. Sakhi one-stop centres provide an integrated service to the victims of violence. There is a 24 hour helpline number for emergency calls when in need. Also, the Government has initiated a Nirbhaya fund for the safety and security of women.

However, the problem of domestic violence cannot be solved unless men are made a part of the solution. There is a need to sensitize men through imparting education on violence against women. Some of the good examples of male engagement in reducing domestic violence through different campaigns include the White Ribbon Campaign in Canada, Promundo in Brazil, Sonke in South Africa and Men Can Stop Rape in the US.