



A Study on Domestic Violence in India

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Abstract

Responses to domestic violence need to address the issue of acceptability of violence as a feature of gender relations in the marital home. Unless the norms of acceptability of violence are broken, women will continue to experience physical and psychological violence. The site of first response to violence, which includes members of the natal family, the marital family, neighbors, co-workers, and social and community groups, must be strengthened. These are the community members who can make a difference by not condoning violence with their silence and by responding positively to a woman's effort to seek help. Finally, it is critical that community responses are grounded in a human rights framework to ensure every woman's freedom from violence.

Key words : community, violence, Family Harassment

Introduction

The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) has conducted a three – year research program on domestic violence in Indian partnership with researchers from a range of Indian academic and active is organizations. A national Advisory council, representing the various constituencies in India that address the issue, provided guidance for the programme. This volume summarize4s the large multi-site household survey conducted by the International Clinical Epidemiologists Network (INCLENT) to estimate domestic violence prevalence in India and to increase understanding of domestic violence correlates and outcomes.

Although many provide the socially assumed family characteristics of love, support and bonding it has become evident that families frequently are also the scenes of violent human relationships both between the couple and among

parents and their offspring. Within the last few decades, gradual improvements in women's status due to women's activism in various parts of the world have helped slowly to increase the visibility of domestic violence as a social problem.

Objectives

1. What is the magnitude of family violence against women in India?
2. Especially in the seven sites, what is the prevalence of physical and psychohlogical maltreatment against adult women in the family?

Methodology

In India, the study was undertaken between 1997 and 1999 at seven sites: Bhopal, Chennai, Delhi, Lucknow, Nagpur, Thiruvananthapuram and Vellore. Research team from medical Colleges from these respective cities implemented the study. The sites



selected represent the different regions of India geographically and culturally. The study had a total sample of 9,938 households from three strata – Rural, Urban slum and Urban non-slum to ensure that different socio – economic classes were represented. The rural stratum included a range of households from different socioeconomic classes were represented. The rural stratum included a range of households from different socioeconomic, these households were generally involved with agricultural activities and wage labour and lower level of education. The urban slum stratum was characterized by households in poverty, household members had lower levels of education and engaged in both regular and irregular work.

The study Instrument

Each site included samples from two of the here strata. The criterion to establish family eligibility to participate was that the family contain at least one women (15-49 years of age) who has at least one child (<18years of age) living in the household. The unit of analysis was the woman respondent, who was selected randomly from all eligible females within the household, whether that female was currently married or not. It was a multi-site study, considerable attention was paid to developing a uniform sampling strategy.

Study Limitation

The study results should be interpreted in light of the following considerations. The magnitude or prevalence of family violence against women is likely to be underestimated for the following reasons. The world SAFE eligibility criteria restrict childless women from participating yet these women may be vulnerable to family

violence. This criterion may also bias the sample away from younger, newly married women. The data is based on self reporting, which relies on perceptions and vulnerable to criticisms of validity.

Socio-Economic Status

For socioeconomic status rather than relying on income levels, which are notoriously problematic in developing – country settings, researchers explored the use of several indicators of household consumption. These included the type of household consumption. These included the type of housing and the type and number of appliances owned. Preliminary analyses with most of these measures suggest that there is a negative relationship between socioeconomic status and reported lifetime experience of physical and psychological violence among women. The strongest association found was with the number of consumption goods owned. Women coming from families with fewer appliances are more likely to report being hit, kicked and beaten. With respect to psychological violence, women who come from households with: A) Lowe levels of education, B) Fewer household appliances, C) Higher levels of husband unemployment and D) Higher levels of index women unemployment are more likely to report being demeaned, threatened, abandoned and that their husbands are unfaithful.

Women's Health

Women's health was explored using two indicators a self assessment of overall health status and the SRQ (Self Reporting Questionnaire), Self Reporting Questionnaire widely used as a screening instrument for assessing mental health status. Women who reported poor health or had a positive screening test on the



SRQ were more likely to report both physical and psychological violence compared to women reporting their health status as average or excellent.

Socio Demographic Profile

The eligibility criterion that a family have t least one women between the ages of 15 to 49 with at least one child is likely to have resulted in an under sampling of women in the age group 15-

24. This is a serious limitation of the study, since other studies based on community surveys and institutional records have highlighted that young women experience violence in the early years of marriage even prior to childbirth. The eligibility criteria likely contributed to the average age of women respondents being fairly high 31 years and the duration of marriage long an average of 12 years.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of sample (*Age, Education and Employment*).

	Total N=9938	Rural N=3611	Urban Slum N=3155	Urban Non-Slum N=3172
Age (Years)				
Women Respondent	31.0	30.9	29.8	32.5
Husband	39.1	36.8	35.1	38.1
Education				
<i>Women Respondent</i>				
Illiterate	29.0	40.0	32.0	13.0
Primary (1-5)	16.0	19.0	19.0	9.0
Secondary (6-12)	44.0	40.0	47.0	46.0
>12	11.0	1.0	2.0	31.0
<i>Husband</i>				
Illiterate	15.0	20.0	18.0	8.0
Primary (1-5)	15.0	21.0	17.0	8.0
Secondary (6-12)	52.0	54.0	62.0	47.0
>12	15.0	4.0	4.0	38.0
Employment (%)				
<i>Woman respondents</i>				
Unemployed	74.0	68.0	77.0	79.0
Employed (total)	26.0	32.0	23.0	21.0
Regular	48.0	30.0	65.0	60.0
Seasonal	22.0	30.0	6.0	25.0
Irregular	30.0	40.0	30.0	14.0
<i>Husband</i>				
Unemployed	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Employed	97.0	97.0	97.0	98.0
Regular	65.0	48.0	66.0	83.0
Seasonal	12.0	23.0	5.0	8.0
Irregular	23.0	30.0	29.0	9.0

Overall, about 50percent of women reported experiencing at least one of the behaviors outlined above at least once in

their married life: 43.5 percent reported at least one psychologically abusive behaviour and 40.3 percent reported



experiencing at least one form of violent physical behavior.

Similar proportions of women in rural and urban slum areas reported physical violence. Significantly fewer urban non-slum women reported either psychological or physical violence than rural or urban slum women. Women reported that they experienced violent behaviors in combination. Of the total **Lifetime Marital Physical Violence**

sample 15 percent reported at least two different types of physical abuse in the last twelve months. Of the 2,593 women who reported being hit, kicked, or beaten in their marriage, three out of every four experienced at least two of these behaviors and nearly half suffered from all three behaviors and nearly half (1,259 or 49 percent) suffered from all three behaviors.

Behaviours of husband toward woman respondent	Total N=9938	Rural N=3611	Urban Slum N=3155	Urban Non-Slum N=3172
Hit you				
None	80	77	74	88
1-2	8	9	10	4
≥3	12	14	16	7
Kicked you				
None	83	80	77	90
1-2	6	8	8	4
≥3	11	12	15	6
Beat you				
None	80	74	78	87
1-2	8	10	9	4
≥3	12	16	13	9
Slapped you				
None	60	56	52	73
1-2	16	16	19	11
≥3	24	27	29	15

Statistical significance – All four behaviours of physical violence are statistically significant at $P < 0.001$ for stratum differences

Prevalence of Violence across sites

An important study was to explore the variability in prevalence rates of physical and psychological violence across the seven geographically diverse sites within India. The above table shows prevalence rates of physical and psychological violence in the seven regions according to strata. Although it is possible that the variability reflects true differences among regions alternative explanations are also considered.

Physical Violence

Urban slum sites: Four sites assessed physical violence in the urban slum stratum. Prevalence of physical violence at these sites ranged from a low of 35.3 percent in Bhopal to a high of 65.1 percent Nagpur. The higher prevalence in Nagpur may be related in part to the experience of the field interviewers for many of whom this study was the fourth survey.



Urban non-slum sites: Five sites assessed physical violence in the urban non-slum stratum. Prevalence of physical violence at urban non-slum sites ranged from a low of 12.8 percent in Delhi to a high of 43.1 percent in Thiruvananthapuram. Interestingly, the two largest cities Delhi and Chennai had essentially comparable prevalence of physical violence.

Relative Risks: Multivariate Analysis

In order to identify the strongest associations between violence and the correlates discussed above, the values for the main outcome variables were dichotomized to allow for the use of Logistic Regression Modeling. Women who reported experiencing violent behaviors three or more times. The main independent variables considered were two representing socioeconomic status.

Variable	Any physical Violence	Any Psychological Violence
Number of cases	1854	3151
	Exp β	Exp β
	p	P
Household crowding	1.05 .0041	0.96 .0183
Number of appliances	0.83 <.0001	0.96 <.0001
Gap in employment	1.22 .0002	1.12 .0202
Gap in education	0.92 .2659	0.80 .0010
Difference in age	0.98 .0738	0.98 .0019
Drunkenness	1.72 <.0001	1.73 <.0001
Harassment	3.61 <.0001	5.55 <.0001
Social Support	0.84 <.0001	0.97 .2630

Exp β – exponential of the Beta coefficient, refers to the odds ratio, which is an estimation of the adjusted relative risk. A number higher than one represents its risk factor and less than one a protective factor.

Logistic regression modeling of the two main outcome measures any severe violent physical behavior (Hit,

Kick, Beat, Force sex) and any violent psychological behavior- revealed similar predictors. The top three predictors were dowry harassment, husband’s drunkenness and employment gap. The remaining predictors were similar but of less magnitude. A more refined analysis could explore whether the reporting of violence shift as the gap between a



husband wife's status moves from the woman having a status lower than equal to or greater than that of her husband.

Summary and Conclusions

The India SAFE study underlines that the situation of Indian women is quite severe in terms of the violence they experienced in the marital home. Women are subject to frequent and multiple forms of violence in their lifetime. While dowry harassment has been the focus of attention as an important precipitating factor for violence within the marital home, the survey highlights that conflicts center around various aspects of gender roles and expectations. This was especially apparent in the severity and consistency across strata of violence during pregnancy and of forced sex. The study offers a more complex understanding of the dynamics of gender power relations in the marriage and the link to violence.

The study confirms that domestic violence experienced in the marital home in the Indian context is not matter completely hidden between four walls. More disturbingly, the presence of violence is often well-known and accepted. More than half of the women reporting violence (58 percent) said that members of their immediate family were aware of the violence. In addition 41 percent of the women reported that neighbors also knew of the violence. Fewer than 10 percent of the women reported that they left their husbands.

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