

# Violence against Women: Reality, Challenges & Perceptions in India

Lopamudra Bagchi<sup>1</sup> & Namrata Dutta Karamchandani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Geography Department, Dum Dum Motijheel College/West Bengal State University, India

<sup>2</sup>Research Associate, We Care Society, Bangalore, India

**Abstract:** This paper attempts to analyze the status of women in modern India. In a world where women empowerment is still highly debated and where women empowerment is considered most vital for the development of the society, it is difficult to find respect for women in their own home. In our day to day life it is seen that women are victimized in many ways. Daily reporting of rape cases, murders and abduction of women or trafficking shows how unsafe women are in the country. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. It was found from the study that in order to achieve women empowerment, change is needed in the mindset of the people, both males and females. It is the women herself who thinks it is right for a husband to beat his wife if he disobeys him. This thinking is being passed through generations and hence women empowerment has become critical. Statistical representations of the primary findings were done in order to arrive to conclusions.

## 1. Introduction

One of the 17 Global Goals which constitute the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is gender equality. Gender discrimination which violates human rights may take place in different form like sexual harassment, pre birth sex selection, under pay for women, violence against women and many others. However, empowerment of women varies from place to place, from caste to caste and from religion to religion. Education of women is also an important factor for women empowerment. Violence against women is a serious violation of humanity and punishable under law. India has a range of laws for safeguarding women but in reality the scenario is different.

It is always a topic of debate about how insecure women are in the country but here many tends to forget that insecurity begins from home. Many cases of child abuse happens in India and in most of the cases it has been found that the abuser is someone close from the family, a friend or a relative. Here insecurity starts from birth and is carried forward till death. When a girl is born, especially in Indian society, she is not wanted even by the parents. When she is married off, her husband becomes her sole

enemy in many cases. Here we live in such a society where she is in danger from her main protector. However, the situation may differ in western countries. The skewed sex ratio of India, the cases registered for violence against women in courts of India, the cases for sexual harassment in offices, and last but not the least, domestic violence faced by the women of India, shows undoubted male dominance in the society.

To achieve gender equality, it is necessary to have a holistic approach towards women. First we need to save girl child, stop female infanticide, educate them, teach them to value themselves, make them financially independent and last but not the least to respect their own decisions. In Bihar around 75.2% married women participate in household decisions according to NFHS-4, 2014-15 data. Highest is found in West Bengal (89.9%). But the irony is that West Bengal also reports the highest percentage of domestic or spousal violence among all states of India according to NCRB 2014 data.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To assess domestic violence more specifically spousal violence in various states and districts of India.
- To assess the status of women in various states of India.
- To find out the contributing factors behind domestic violence.
- To offer useful suggestions in the light of this finding.

## 3. Methodology

This paper is mainly descriptive and analytical in nature. We obtained data from various sources like NFHS and Crime Records Bureau regarding domestic violence. Primary survey was done among 200 married women. Random sampling was used for the study.

#### 4. Domestic Violence in India

According to National Crime Records Bureau 3,37,922 cases of crime against women (both under various sections of IPC and SLL) were reported in the country during the year 2014 in comparison to 3,09,546 in the year 2013, thus showing an increase of 9.2% during the year 2014.

It was seen from the NCRB data that the cases of dowry deaths have increased by 4.6% during the year 2014 over the previous year (8,033 cases). In 2014, around 8,501 victims were reported under 8,455 dowry deaths cases in India. Around 29 % of the total cases of dowry deaths were reported in Uttar Pradesh (2,469 cases) followed by Bihar (1,373 cases).

However, the percentage of women suffering cruelty by husband and relative has decreased from 44% in 2010 to 36.4% in 2014. Among the total crime reported against women, around 36% suffered cruelty by husband and relatives which is the highest among all the other crime percentages against women. During 2014, the cases of Cruelty by husband or his relatives in the country have increased by 3.4% over 2013 (1,18,866 cases). According to 2014 data by NCRB, most of these cases were reported in West Bengal (23,278 cases) followed by Rajasthan (15,905 cases), Uttar Pradesh (10,471 cases) and Assam (9,626 cases), these four States together accounted for 50% of total such cases. The highest crime rate (62.1) was reported from Assam in comparison to the national rate at 20.5.

From NFHS-4 (2014-15), it can be seen that Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Telangana are the states with highest percentage of domestic violence. Census data says that among all the religions, Buddhists experienced highest physical violence since age 15 in India and also employed women are more prone to spousal violence. Sexual violence by spouse is found highest in West Bengal.

Highest rate of cruelty against women by husband and relative is reported in Jaipur (79.4) according to NCRB, 2014 data whereas Kolkata shows the lowest rate (16.8%). Around 140 incidence under protection of women from domestic violence act is reported in Kerala, highest among all the states.

#### 5. Primary Study Findings

Around 200 married women were surveyed for the study. Mixed reviews were observed in the survey. The survey was mainly about their opinion and experience in domestic violence.

**Table 1: Respondent's opinion depending on their educational background**

Educational background	Yes, Husband should beat their wives	No, Husband shouldn't beat their wives
No Education	81.4%	18.6%
Primary Education	76.2%	23.8%
Upper Primary Education	31.7%	68.3%
Secondary Education	10.1%	89.9%
Graduate	0%	100%
Post Graduate	0%	100%

It was seen from the primary study that with the increase in education level, perception about domestic violence changes. Around 81.4% of women with no education says that they think it is right for the husbands to beat their wife if they don't obey him or show disrespect. (see Table 1)

**Table 2: Respondent's opinion depending on their financial background**

Monthly income of the family	Yes, Husband should beat their wives	No, Husband shouldn't beat their wives
<Rs 6000	90.3%	9.7%
Rs 6000- Rs 10000	78.5%	21.5%
Rs 10000- Rs 25000	36.6%	63.4%
Rs 25000-Rs 40000	8.6%	91.4%
>Rs 40000	100.0%	0.0%

The primary study shows that economic background of the women also effects her decision. Here women belonging to families with monthly income less than Rs 6000/- said that it is right for the husbands to beat their wife if she disobey him. (see Table 2)

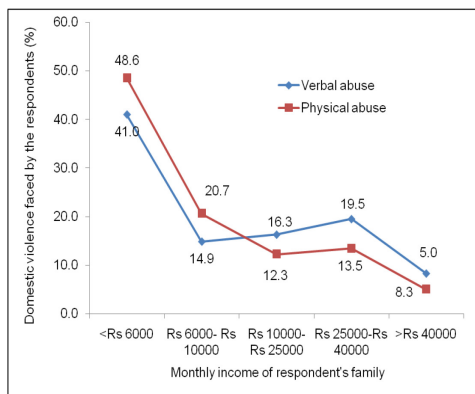
**Table 3: Currently married women aged 15-49 yrs who have experienced spousal violence by marital duration**

Marital Duration	Ever	Past 12 months
0-4 yrs	15.6%	10.3%
5-9 yrs	27.3%	17.2%
10+ yrs	41.1%	22.4%

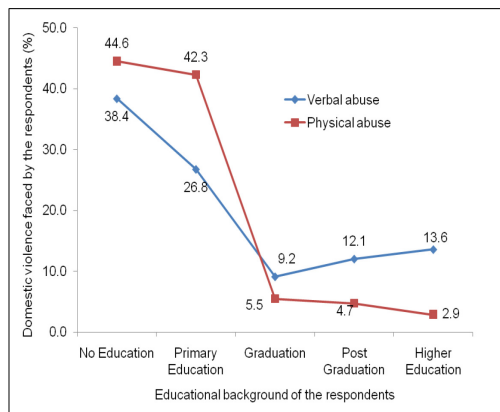
**Table 4: Currently married women aged 15-49 yrs who have experienced physical violence**

Marital Duration	Ever	Past 12 months
0-4 yrs	15.6%	10.3%
5-9 yrs	27.3%	17.2%
10+ yrs	41.1%	22.4%

Although spousal violence can occur at any time in a marriage, the first time it occurs tends to be in the early years of the marriage. According to NFHS-3, 81% of currently married women aged 15-49 yrs have ever experienced physical or sexual violence by their husbands within five years of marriage for the first time. The primary survey shows that around 66% of currently married women aged 15-49 yrs have experienced spousal violence within five years of marriage for the first time. Slapping is the most common physical violence faced by women.



**Figure 1: Domestic violence faced by currently married women based on their financial background**

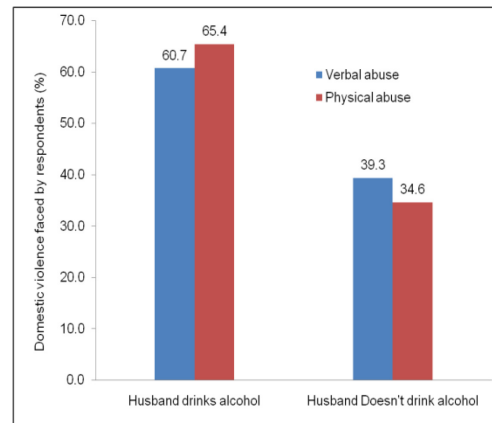


**Figure 2: Domestic violence faced by currently married women based on their educational background**

Two very important findings from the primary survey were both education and economic status of the family affects the range of physical and verbal abuse (see Figure 1 & 2).

As education of the women increases, abuse tends to be more verbal than physical and the same is noted when economic condition of the family improves. With the rise in income, verbal abuse becomes more prominent than physical abuse.

Alcohol may be cited as another reason for domestic violence. Both physical and verbal abuse is found higher in families where husband drinks alcohol. In the families having income level below Rs10,000/-, it was found husband didn't earn anything or whatever he earned is spent in buying alcohol. In these type of families domestic violence was higher. (see Figure 3)



**Figure 3: Domestic violence faced by currently married women based on the drinking habits of their husbands.**

## 6. Decision making: Observations

When it comes to decision about one's own earning, it is not always the person earning decides. In India it is found that in many cases it is the husband who decides what to do with his wife's earning. From NFHS-3 data, it can be seen that only 24% of women have their main say alone in the use of their earning. But here, in contrast it is also seen that men also tend to decide jointly the use of their earnings along with their wives. The data set from NFHS-3 also reveals that for men, having the main say alone in decisions about own earnings declines with education, and having a joint say increases with education; for women, by contrast both tend to increase with education.

**Table 5: Permission required by respondent from in-laws/husband**

Respondent's activity	Requires permission	Doesn't require permission
To visit parental place	57.1%	42.9%
To do job after marriage	74.1%	25.9%
To meet friends	65.1%	34.9%
To go for office tour	81.0%	19.0%

Once a woman is married, she needs to take permission for every activity she does. Rarely is the case where a woman can move out freely. Around

57.1% of women needed to take permission for visiting parental place. Since in India women are generally viewed as a home maker, they need to take permission for job after marriage. There are many cases where woman gave up job due to family pressure. (see Table 5)

**Table 6: Currently married women allowed to go alone to four places (market, health facility, relative's house, outside neighborhood) depending upon their income & education status**

Educational background of respondent	Women who earns	Women who doesn't earn
No Education	10.1%	8.3%
Primary Education	12%	11.2%
Upper Primary	15.1%	18.3%
Secondary	22.4%	24.2%
Graduate	40.4%	38%

It can be seen from the survey that with increasing education and women earning their own money, they are allowed to go alone to some of the places. With no education and no earnings, only 8.3% of women are allowed to move alone. This shows that if women are educated, they are valued and respected by the society, so they are trusted to move alone. Around 40% of women who earn their own money and have college education are allowed to go alone to these four places (market, health facility, relative's house, outside neighborhood). (see Table 6)

**Table 7: Perceptions of family members about not letting the women of the family to go outside alone**

Perceptions of family members	
Not safe outside	54.4%
Women cannot judge people or situations	12.3%
Women cannot understand	15%
Women cannot take decisions alone	10.1%
Loose family respect/honor	8.2%

Most people (54.4%) feared about safety of women. Family members thought that the women are unable to protect themselves if they go alone, so it is better to move together rather than alone. Another 12% said that women are unable to judge people and situations and 10% said that they cannot take decisions. Around 8.2% also feared to lose family respect if they allowed their women to move alone.

## 7. Challenges faced by women

There are several challenges faced by women which act as a hindrance to women empowerment in India. Domestic violence is such a challenge. In the study, it was clearly seen that opinion varied among women depending upon economic class and education. It was found that education of females have serious impacts over thinking of family members in some respects. For a woman who has passed college, the family members didn't worry that she could not judge situations or take decision or she is unable to understand. They worried mostly about the safety of her. But for a woman with very little or no education, the family members worried about her decision making powers.

As education among female increases, the mentality of the society changes. But it is necessary to increase awareness among the society regarding domestic violence. Many poor women think that it is necessary for the men to beat their wives so that they can get rid of their frustration or for women to behave properly a stick is always needed. In Indian society, whatever may the husband does, it is unthinkable even for the well off class to go and report to the police station because it will bring shame to their family.

Earning own income sometimes help women to address their issues and to take part in household decision process. However, situation differs depending on the standard of living of the household. It was found from the primary survey that around 76.2% of women from BPL households had no say in whatever decision is taken in the house even if they work for money.

## 8. Various Schemes taken up by Government

Indian Government has taken up various schemes for helping women empowerment like:

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** This scheme was introduced to prevent declining Child Sex Ratio in 100 gender critical districts of India thereby ensuring elimination of sex selection prior birth and protection & education of girl child.

**One Stop Centre Scheme:** Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), has formulated a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for setting up One Stop Centre, a sub scheme of Umbrella Scheme for National Mission for Empowerment of women including Indira Gandhi Matritiv Sahyaog Yojana. for providing integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces in phased manner.



**Women Helpline Scheme:** This scheme is intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence through referral.

**Ujjawala:** A comprehensive scheme for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of victims of sexual exploitation.

**Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY):** A new maternity scheme which contribute to better enabling environment by providing cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and Lactating mothers.

**SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances):** The scheme is meant to provide temporary accommodation, maintenance and rehabilitative services to women and girls rendered homeless due to family discord, crime, violence, mental stress, social ostracism or are being forced into prostitution and are in moral danger.

Besides, these schemes there are also state government sponsored schemes like Kanyashree Scheme, Sukanya Scheme, Sabla Scheme etc in West Bengal and similar others in various states of India.

## 9. Conclusion

Domestic Violence is regarded worldwide as violation of human rights. Spreading awareness & knowledge in the society is necessary for ending domestic violence. Changing the mindset towards a girl child will help to initiate development in all sectors of the country. It is necessary that we accept that a woman is as important as men even if she is unable to reproduce or earn. She is the base of the society. In particularly India, grave importance is given to producing child and looking after home rather than having a career and these women are considered goddess-like and those who considered career over everything are considered demon-like. These perceptions need to be changed which are so deep routed in our mind sets and not only men are the guardians of these baseless theoretical believes but also some women are. So until and unless we think that it is time to think differently, no one could alleviate the status of women.

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