

Domestic Violence Against Women in India

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Abstract

This study purports to highlight the impact of women empowerment on domestic violence against women in India based on the data available from the latest round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). The analysis is based on the multinomial logit regression of the domestic violence experienced by ever married women aged 15-49 years on their selected social and economic characteristics which classifies the domestic violence experienced by women into eight mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. The analysis reveals that domestic violence experienced by ever married women in India is statistically significantly associated with such characteristics of the woman as current marital status, age at first marriage, level of education and occupation, in addition to the use of alcohol by the husband/partner of the woman, her standard of living and religious affiliation.

Introduction

Historically, women have faced significant limitations in terms of education, work, and decision-making. Women and girls represent almost half of the world population and, therefore, half of its potential. But gender inequality persists everywhere and contributes to the stagnation of the social progress. Women empowerment and gender equality have always been emphasised as the necessary foundation for peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable development as emphasised under the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). The Goal 5 of the Agenda calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls worldwide by the year 2030. The Agenda advocates closing the gender gap in all aspects of life through ensuring equal opportunities for all women and girls. The Agenda also calls for ending all forms of discrimination against women, specifically, elimination of all forms of violence against women in public and private spheres, including elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, encouraging full and effective participation of women in productive activities, creating equal opportunities for women at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. India is a signatory of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has developed the national indicator-framework to monitor the progress towards the goals and targets of the United Nations Agenda. Women empowerment and gender equality occupies an important

position in the national indicator-framework adopted by the Government of India (Government of India, 2021).

Despite all the emphasis on women empowerment and gender equality, violence against women, especially, the domestic violence, remains a major development concern in India because of the typically patriarchal nature of the Indian society. The domestic violence against women in India was recognised as a criminal offence under the Indian Penal Code way back in 1983 and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (PWDVA) Act was enacted in 2005 which came into the effect in 2006. This Act provides comprehensive definition of domestic violence against women and girls including all forms of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic violence (Government of India, 2005). Domestic violence against women implies any form of abuse or violence faced by women and girls within the home, usually by the husband or the partner, family members, relatives, friends, and others. Different forms of domestic violence against women and girls comprise of physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence. Physical violence implies beating, hitting, or causing bodily harm. Sexual violence comprises of coercion or forcing a woman into involuntarily and unwanted sexual acts. Emotional violence or psychological abuse implies insults, threats, and humiliation of different nature. Economic violence implies controlling money or preventing women from working. The Act has also recognised that domestic violence against women is a serious social problem that violates dignity, safety, and human rights of women. It has been argued that domestic violence against women affects health and confidence of women and constrains freedom of women and girls (Mahapatro and Kumar, 2021).

The latest (2019-2021) round of the National Family Health Survey provides an idea about the challenge of domestic violence against women in India. According to this survey, close to 30 per cent of ever married women aged 18-49 years in India appear to have ever experienced any form of physical violence, more than 6 per cent ever experienced any form of sexual violence and around 14 per cent ever experienced any form of emotional violence (Government of India, 2022b). The ever experience of any form of domestic violence by women varies widely across states and Union Territories of the country. For example, the proportion of women reporting ever experience of any form of emotional violence has been estimated to be the highest in Karnataka but the lowest in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. On the other hand, the proportion of women who had ever experienced any form of physical violence was the highest again in Karnataka but the lowest in Lakshadweep. Lastly, the proportion ever married women aged 18-49 years who experienced any form of sexual violence has also been found to be the highest in Karnataka but the lowest in Lakshadweep (Government of India, 2022).

Factors that may be attributed to the prevalence of domestic violence against women may be grouped into three categories. The first group of factors are specific to women themselves and can be summarised in terms of their agency, capacity, and opportunity (Davis, 2015). Women empowerment has been advocated to address these factors and, therefore, is perceived as an effective strategy to address the challenge of violence against women, especially, the domestic violence. Women empowerment implies fostering self-worth, autonomy, and equal rights for women to thrive in all spheres of life. Key focus areas of women empowerment comprise of ensuring access to education,

creating economic opportunities, providing legal protection, and enhancing decision-making power, which collectively enhance women autonomy, reduce discrimination, and foster overall societal progress. Women empowerment is based on six principles: 1) self-confidence, 2) self-respect, 3) self-reliance, 4) self-support, 5) self-sufficiency, and 6) self-realisation. Women empowerment also emphasises improvement in social behaviour and enhanced community participation. Women empowerment has also been viewed as essential for sustainable development and for creating empowered families, communities, and nations. It has also been identified as a catalytic agent towards building resilient and confident individuals (Verma, 2023).

The second group of factors that contribute to domestic violence against women are related to the husband or the intimate partner of the woman (Gautam and Jeong, 2019; Pathak and Kumar, 2023). Education and occupation of the intimate partner, along with such habits as addiction to alcohol have been found to have a strong association with all forms of domestic violence – emotional, physical, and sexual violence - experienced by women. The husband-wife age difference has also been argued to be a factor that plays an important role in all forms of domestic violence experienced by women within the household. Finally, the third group of factors that influences the domestic violence against women is related to the household characteristics and religious affiliation. The standard of living of the household, the ethnicity and the place of residence are some of the factors that have been found to be associated with domestic violence experienced by ever married women.

It is in the above context that the present paper attempts to explore how the variation in women-specific factors, factors specific to the husband/intimate partner of the woman, household factors and religious affiliations explain the variation in the domestic violence experienced by ever married women in India. There are many studies that have analysed the determinants of domestic violence against women in India (Mishra et al, 2024). The domestic violence against women has been classified as either a dichotomous variable or a variable having three responses – emotional violence, physical violence, and sexual violence. The present paper differs from the existing studies in the sense that it classifies the domestic violence experienced by ever married women into eight mutually exclusive yet exhaustive categories. The paper assumes that a woman may experience either no domestic violence of any form or different combinations of the three forms of domestic violence – emotional, physical, and sexual. A woman may experience only the emotional violence or only the physical violence or only the sexual violence or she may experience, simultaneously, more than one category of domestic violence. The present paper, therefore, categorises the domestic violence experienced by ever married women or women living with a partner into seven mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories to explore how characteristics of the woman and her husband/intimate partner, household factors and religious affiliation influence the domestic violence experienced by women. To the best of our knowledge, we have not come across any study in which the domestic violence experienced by women has been categorised into seven mutually exclusive yet exhaustive categories depending upon the nature of the domestic violence. The paper, therefore, provides a deeper understanding of the domestic violence experienced by women which may have important policy and programme implications as far as reduction and ultimate elimination of domestic violence against women is concerned.

The paper is organised into six sections including this introduction. The next section of the paper describes the data source. The analysis is based on the latest (2019-2021) round of the National Family Health Survey conducted by the Government of India. Section three outlines the methodology of the analysis. We have first carried out a classification exercise to classify women in mutually exclusive and exhaustive groups based on their defining characteristics and then estimated the proportion of women who had not experienced any form of domestic violence in different groups. Women characteristics identified through classification exercise have been used to explore determinants of domestic violence against women by fitting the multinomial logit regression model. The dependent variable in the regression analysis is a categorical variable that takes eight values. Section four of the paper presents results of the bivariate analysis while results of multivariate analysis are presented in section five. The last section of the paper summarises main findings of the analysis and their policy and programme significance.

Data Source

The analysis is based on the data on domestic violence available from the latest (2019-2021) round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) in India. The National Family Health Survey Programme was instituted by the Government of India in 1990, and five rounds of the survey have so far been conducted while the sixth is in progress (Government of India, 2022). The domestic violence module of the survey was not canvassed to all ever married women but randomly to one woman per household among all eligible women in the household following the recommendations put forward by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001). Therefore, information about the experience of domestic violence was available from 72320 women. Among these women 8469 women were never married, or they were married but their marriage was not consummated so that the present analysis is based on 63,851 ever married women.

A large part of the domestic violence module of NFHS-5 is related to the information about the violence perpetrated by the current husband/partner of the woman and the most recent husband/partner for the widowed, divorced, or separated women (Croft et al, 2018). Based on this information, women were categorised into the following eight categories on the basis of their ever experience of emotional violence, physical violence, and sexual violence:

1. Women who did not experience any emotional, physical, or sexual violence.
2. Women who experienced only emotional violence.
3. Women who experienced only physical violence.
4. Women who experienced only sexual violence.
5. Women who experienced emotional and physical violence but not sexual violence.
6. Women who experienced emotional and sexual violence but not physical violence.
7. Women who experienced physical and sexual violence but not emotional violence.
8. Women who experienced all emotional, physical, and sexual violence.

Table 1: Distribution of women by the experience of domestic violence.

| Experience of domestic violence | Unweighted | | Weighted | |
|---|------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Number | Per cent | Number | Per cent |
| Experienced no domestic violence | 44413 | 69.56 | 425761 | 68.15 |
| Experienced only emotional violence | 1673 | 2.62 | 17197 | 2.75 |
| Experienced only physical violence | 10049 | 15.74 | 96462 | 15.44 |
| Experienced only sexual violence | 403 | 0.63 | 4059 | 0.65 |
| Experienced emotional and physical violence | 4196 | 6.57 | 47149 | 7.55 |
| Experienced emotional and sexual violence | 128 | 0.20 | 1230 | 0.20 |
| Experience physical and sexual violence | 978 | 1.53 | 10757 | 1.72 |
| Experienced emotional, physical and sexual violence | 2011 | 3.15 | 22092 | 3.54 |
| Total | 63851 | 100.00 | 624707 | 100.00 |

Source: Authors

Table 1 gives the unweighted and weighted distribution of the ever married women interviewed by the type of the domestic violence experienced by them. Around 70 per cent of the women interviewed reported that they did not ever experience any type of domestic violence. On the other hand, the most common form of domestic violence experienced was the physical violence. At least one fourth of the women reported that they ever experienced some form of physical violence. On the other hand, the least common form of domestic violence reported was the sexual violence. Only around 6 per cent of the women interviewed reported that they ever experienced some form of sexual violence. A substantial proportion of women also reported that they experienced some form of emotional violence. Around 8 per cent of the women interviewed reported that they experienced both emotional and physical violence while around 4 per cent reported that they experienced all the three forms of domestic violence for which information was collected during NFHS-5. More than 13 per cent of the women reported that they experienced more than one form of domestic violence.

The following explanatory variables were used to examine the factors that influence the domestic violence experienced by women:

1. Age of the woman
2. Current marital status
3. Age at first cohabitation
4. Difference between age of husband/partner and woman
5. Education of the woman
6. Occupation of the woman
7. Bank account in the name of woman
8. Woman has at least one living son
9. Age of the husband/partner
10. Education of the husband/partner
11. Occupation of the husband/partner
12. Use of alcohol by husband/partner
13. Residence of the household
14. Religion of the household
15. Standard of living of the household

Table 2: Proportionate (per cent) distribution of women (Unweighted and weighted) by the background characteristics of women, their husband/partner, and the characteristics of the household.

| Characteristics | | Proportion (x100) | | Unweighted N |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|----------|--------------|
| | | Unweighted | Weighted | |
| Age (years) | 15-19 | 3.3 | 4.8 | 2082 |
| | 20-24 | 13.9 | 14.3 | 8888 |
| | 25-29 | 21.0 | 17.9 | 13386 |
| | 30-34 | 20.2 | 18.3 | 12884 |
| | 35-39 | 18.2 | 18.8 | 11589 |
| | 40-44 | 13.8 | 15.0 | 8812 |
| | 45-49 | 8.7 | 10.8 | 6210 |
| Marital status | Married | 94.7 | 94.0 | 60480 |
| | Widow | 3.8 | 4.3 | 2412 |
| | Divorced/Separated | 1.5 | 1.7 | 959 |
| Age at marriage (years) | ≤ 18 | 61.4 | 65.9 | 39192 |
| | 19-22 | 21.8 | 20.0 | 13903 |
| | 22-25 | 10.2 | 8.7 | 6488 |
| | 25-28 | 4.3 | 3.5 | 2746 |
| | ≥ 28 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 1522 |
| Difference between age of husband/partner and woman (years) | < 3 | 42.6 | 35.5 | 25783 |
| | 3-5 | 23.4 | 24.2 | 14144 |
| | 5-7 | 13.5 | 15.6 | 8191 |
| | ≥ 7 | 20.5 | 24.8 | 12417 |
| Education | No data | | | 3371 |
| | No education | 29.4 | 28.5 | 18783 |
| | Primary | 14.6 | 13.7 | 9302 |
| | Secondary | 45.3 | 46.4 | 28943 |
| | Middle | 10.7 | 11.2 | 6823 |
| Occupation | No occupation | 63.7 | 64.5 | 40615 |
| | Professional | 2.6 | 2.8 | 1687 |
| | Service/Clerical | 6.1 | 6.7 | 3895 |
| | Agriculture | 19.5 | 17.6 | 12405 |
| | Labour | 6.6 | 6.8 | 4237 |
| | Others | 1.5 | 1.5 | 934 |
| | No data | | | 78 |
| Living son | No | 23.7 | 26.4 | 15153 |
| | Yes | 76.3 | 73.6 | 48698 |
| Bank account | No | 18.8 | 20.1 | 11978 |
| | Yes | 81.2 | 79.9 | |
| Education of husband/partner | No education | 18.3 | 19.3 | 11628 |
| | Primary | 14.5 | 15.1 | 9268 |
| | Secondary | 53.3 | 51.3 | 33902 |
| | Higher | 13.9 | 14.3 | 8819 |
| | No data | | | 234 |
| Occupation of husband/partner | Professional | 7.4 | 7.6 | 4735 |
| | Service/Clerical | 21.0 | 22.5 | 13430 |
| | Agriculture | 37.3 | 33.1 | 23834 |
| | Labour | 28.9 | 30.9 | 18428 |
| | Others | 5.4 | 60.0 | 3424 |

| Characteristics | | Proportion (x100) | | Unweighted N |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------|--------------|
| | | Unweighted | Weighted | |
| Alcohol use by husband/partner | No | 72.1 | 76.1 | 46019 |
| | Yes | 27.9 | 23.9 | 17832 |
| Residence | Rural | 75.7 | 69.3 | 48363 |
| | Urban | 24.3 | 30.7 | 15488 |
| Religion | Hindu | 76.0 | 79.1 | 48548 |
| | Muslim | 11.9 | 16.0 | 7585 |
| | Others | 12.1 | 4.8 | 7718 |
| Standard of living | Very poor | 20.7 | 19.8 | 13222 |
| | Poor | 21.2 | 21.0 | 13566 |
| | Middle | 20.3 | 20.3 | 12977 |
| | Rich | 19.4 | 20.8 | 12383 |
| | Very rich | 18.3 | 18.1 | 11703 |

Source: Authors

Table 2 shows the distribution of the explanatory variables specific to the woman, to the husband/partner of the woman and the household used in the present analysis by their mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories.

Methodology

Both bivariate and multivariate analyses were carried out to analyse the determinants of domestic violence experienced by women. The bivariate analysis analysed the distribution of women by the form of domestic violence ever experienced by them and their background characteristics, including characteristics of their husband/partner and characteristic of the household. The Pearson chi-square test was carried out to test the association of the domestic violence experienced by women with the independent variables included in the analysis.

The multivariate analysis, on the other hand, employed classification analysis and multinomial logit regression analysis to highlight important predictors of different forms of domestic violence ever experienced by women interviewed. The response variable was the categorical variable having eight mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories as described in table 1. The reference category comprised of those women who reported that they never experienced any form of domestic violence. The classification analysis was carried out through the application of classification and regression tree (CRT) procedure (Breiman et al, 1984) which is a non-parametric procedure. On the other hand, parameters of the multinomial logit regression model were estimated through the maximum likelihood estimation procedure. The estimated regression coefficients and associated odd ratios facilitate the discussion on the odds of different categories of explanatory variables on the dependent variable – form of domestic violence ever experienced by women relative to the odds in the reference category. Concerns related to the interpretation of the increase or decrease in the odd ratio in the multinomial regression analysis have been highlighted in an earlier study (Gulati, Ramesh and Retherford 1996). Details regarding the formulation, estimation procedures, and proper interpretation of the effects in the multinomial regression analysis are given elsewhere (Retherford, 1993).

Bivariate Analysis

Results of the bivariate analysis depicting the association between the explanatory variables and different forms of domestic violence experienced by ever married women are summarised in table 3. The variation in the form of domestic violence experienced by ever married women is found to be statistically significantly associated with the variation in all the 15 explanatory variables included in the present analysis. The role of different characteristics of women, their husband/partner, and their household in experiencing different forms of domestic violence has also been found to be different. For example, more than 20 per cent of divorced/separated women interviewed reported that they experienced all the three forms of domestic violence compared to less than 3 per cent of the currently married women and around 4 per cent of the women who were widow. This observation suggests that the domestic violence experienced by these women may possibly be a cause for the divorce or the separation of these women from their husband/partner.

Similarly, more than 22 per cent of the ever married women who informed that their husband/partner was alcoholic reported experience of some form of physical violence and more than 7 per cent reported experience of all the three forms of domestic violence compared to, respectively, around 13 per cent and less than 2 per cent of the women who reported that their husband/partner was not alcoholic. Alcohol use by the husband/partner appears to be a major factor in domestic violence experienced by women.

Education of the woman appears to have an impact on the experience of domestic violence as more than 82 per cent of women who had higher level of education reported that they did not experience any form of domestic violence compared to less than 62 per cent of the women who had no education. Women occupation also has a strong impact on the experience of domestic violence. Almost 80 per cent of women who were in some professional occupation reported that they did not experience any domestic violence compared to just around 60 per cent of those women who had either agriculture or labour as their occupation. Interestingly, more than 73 per cent of those women who had no occupation also reported they did not experience any domestic violence. On the other hand, having a living son or having a bank account did not appear to have any impact on the experience of domestic violence.

The education and occupation of the husband/partner have also been found to be associated with the domestic violence experienced by women interviewed. The proportion of women who experience any form of domestic violence was comparatively low in women whose husband/partner was having higher education compared to women whose husband did not have any education. Similarly, the proportion of domestic violence experienced by those women whose husband/partner was having agriculture or labour as occupation compared to women whose husband/partner was having a professional occupation. Finally, household characteristics have also been found to have a say. The proportion of urban women reporting experience of domestic violence was substantially lower than the proportion reported by rural women. The proportion reporting experience of domestic violence was the highest in Hindu women compared to women of Muslim and other religions. Similarly, the proportion of women experiencing domestic violence was the highest in the poorest households but the lowest in the richest households.

Table 3: Distribution of women by different forms of domestic violence experienced and background characteristics.

| Background characteristics | Proportion (per cent) of women by domestic violence experienced | | | | | | | | Unweighted N |
|---|---|----------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| | No experience | Only emotional | Only physical | Only sexual | Emotional and Physical | Emotional and sexual | Physical and sexual | Emotional, physical, sexual | |
| Age ($\chi^2=161.360$, $df=42$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| 15-19 | 75.22 | 2.64 | 11.34 | 1.01 | 5.81 | 0.10 | 1.44 | 2.45 | 2082 |
| 20-24 | 72.39 | 2.58 | 14.36 | 0.78 | 5.68 | 0.20 | 1.32 | 2.70 | 8888 |
| 25-29 | 70.02 | 2.87 | 15.19 | 0.64 | 6.32 | 0.18 | 1.55 | 3.23 | 13386 |
| 30-34 | 68.53 | 2.55 | 16.23 | 0.64 | 6.58 | 0.26 | 1.76 | 3.45 | 12884 |
| 35-39 | 69.20 | 2.28 | 16.24 | 0.56 | 6.86 | 0.14 | 1.50 | 3.22 | 11589 |
| 40-44 | 68.32 | 2.76 | 16.48 | 0.58 | 7.15 | 0.26 | 1.43 | 3.03 | 8812 |
| 45-49 | 67.17 | 2.74 | 17.38 | 0.47 | 7.26 | 0.18 | 1.56 | 3.25 | 6210 |
| Marital status ($\chi^2=1563.432$, $df=14$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| Married | 70.12 | 2.60 | 15.81 | 0.64 | 6.28 | 0.20 | 1.52 | 2.83 | 60480 |
| Widow | 68.45 | 1.99 | 15.96 | 0.41 | 7.30 | 0.12 | 1.49 | 4.27 | 2412 |
| Divorced/Separated | 37.12 | 5.53 | 10.43 | 0.42 | 23.15 | 0.52 | 2.40 | 20.44 | 959 |
| Age at marriage ($\chi^2=735.850$, $df=28$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| ≤18 | 66.03 | 2.58 | 17.83 | 0.63 | 7.45 | 0.21 | 1.71 | 3.56 | 39192 |
| 19-22 | 73.35 | 2.66 | 13.64 | 0.66 | 5.54 | 0.16 | 1.38 | 2.60 | 13903 |
| 22-25 | 77.45 | 2.67 | 10.85 | 0.55 | 4.59 | 0.22 | 1.14 | 2.53 | 6488 |
| 25-28 | 78.59 | 2.48 | 10.74 | 0.58 | 4.15 | 0.11 | 1.17 | 2.18 | 2746 |
| ≥28 | 75.89 | 3.35 | 10.91 | 0.79 | 6.11 | 0.33 | 0.59 | 2.04 | 1522 |
| Difference between age of husband/partner and woman ($\chi^2=76.440$, $df=21$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| < 3 | 71.26 | 2.53 | 15.10 | 0.64 | 5.77 | 0.21 | 1.50 | 2.97 | 25751 |
| 3-5 | 68.24 | 2.71 | 16.80 | 0.78 | 6.69 | 0.18 | 1.75 | 2.85 | 14133 |
| 5-7 | 70.01 | 2.48 | 16.59 | 0.45 | 6.49 | 0.18 | 1.34 | 2.46 | 8186 |
| ≥7 | 69.94 | 2.69 | 15.65 | 0.62 | 6.74 | 0.19 | 1.41 | 2.76 | 12410 |
| Education ($\chi^2=1369.673$, $df=21$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| No education | 61.76 | 2.72 | 19.92 | 0.64 | 8.61 | 0.21 | 2.11 | 4.02 | 18783 |
| Primary | 65.94 | 2.76 | 17.85 | 0.75 | 7.11 | 0.23 | 1.82 | 3.55 | 9302 |
| Secondary | 72.65 | 2.65 | 13.99 | 0.59 | 5.81 | 0.20 | 1.29 | 2.82 | 28943 |
| Higher | 82.81 | 2.04 | 8.78 | 0.62 | 3.43 | 0.15 | 0.57 | 1.61 | 6823 |

| Background characteristics | Proportion (per cent) of women by domestic violence experienced | | | | | | | | Unweighted N |
|---|---|----------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| | No experience | Only emotional | Only physical | Only sexual | Emotional and Physical | Emotional and sexual | Physical and sexual | Emotional, physical, sexual | |
| Occupation ($\chi^2=1223.278$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| No occupation | 73.22 | 2.44 | 14.46 | 0.58 | 5.30 | 0.17 | 1.38 | 2.45 | 40615 |
| Professional | 79.61 | 2.25 | 10.02 | 0.53 | 3.73 | 0.06 | 0.77 | 3.02 | 1687 |
| Service/Clerical | 68.24 | 2.88 | 14.56 | 0.69 | 7.98 | 0.23 | 1.46 | 3.95 | 3895 |
| Agriculture | 59.65 | 3.07 | 19.98 | 0.69 | 9.81 | 0.31 | 2.06 | 4.44 | 12405 |
| Labour | 61.41 | 2.74 | 19.31 | 0.80 | 9.02 | 0.14 | 1.82 | 4.77 | 4237 |
| Others | 66.49 | 3.43 | 14.13 | 0.96 | 6.96 | 0.64 | 1.61 | 5.78 | 934 |
| Living son ($\chi^2=149.739$, $df=7$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 73.01 | 2.67 | 12.87 | 0.70 | 6.31 | 0.18 | 1.35 | 2.92 | 15153 |
| Yes | 68.48 | 2.61 | 16.63 | 0.61 | 6.65 | 0.21 | 1.59 | 3.22 | 48698 |
| Bank account ($\chi^2=56.786$ $df=7$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 69.19 | 3.02 | 14.46 | 0.75 | 6.84 | 0.16 | 1.85 | 3.73 | 11978 |
| Yes | 69.64 | 2.53 | 16.03 | 0.60 | 6.51 | 0.21 | 1.46 | 3.02 | 51873 |
| Education of husband/partner ($\chi^2=1296.587$, $df=21$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| No education | 60.19 | 2.98 | 19.88 | 0.62 | 9.24 | 0.19 | 2.02 | 4.87 | 11628 |
| Primary | 63.78 | 3.00 | 18.43 | 0.64 | 7.87 | 0.27 | 2.06 | 3.96 | 9268 |
| Secondary | 71.47 | 2.52 | 15.03 | 0.67 | 6.00 | 0.18 | 1.40 | 2.73 | 33902 |
| Higher | 80.69 | 2.17 | 10.19 | 0.52 | 3.76 | 0.22 | 0.83 | 1.62 | 8819 |
| Alcohol use by husband/partner ($\chi^2=4042.445$, $df=7$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 76.11 | 2.51 | 13.29 | 0.57 | 4.65 | 0.16 | 1.08 | 1.62 | 46019 |
| Yes | 52.64 | 2.91 | 22.05 | 0.79 | 11.52 | 0.30 | 2.70 | 7.10 | 17832 |
| Occupation of husband/partner ($\chi^2=702.112$, $df=28$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| Professional | 80.40 | 2.45 | 9.76 | 0.53 | 3.84 | 0.13 | 0.82 | 2.07 | 4735 |
| Service/Clerical | 74.24 | 2.61 | 13.10 | 0.73 | 5.30 | 0.21 | 1.33 | 2.49 | 13430 |
| Agriculture | 65.86 | 2.75 | 17.58 | 0.67 | 7.75 | 0.18 | 1.73 | 3.48 | 23834 |
| Labour | 67.49 | 2.43 | 17.47 | 0.55 | 6.82 | 0.22 | 1.65 | 3.37 | 18428 |
| Others | 73.07 | 3.01 | 12.27 | 0.58 | 5.81 | 0.26 | 1.26 | 3.74 | 3424 |

| Background characteristics | Proportion (per cent) of women by domestic violence experienced | | | | | | | | Unweighted N |
|--|---|----------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| | No experience | Only emotional | Only physical | Only sexual | Emotional and Physical | Emotional and sexual | Physical and sexual | Emotional, physical, sexual | |
| Residence ($\chi^2=146.463$, $df=7$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| Rural | 68.33 | 2.67 | 16.36 | 0.65 | 6.88 | 0.20 | 1.63 | 3.28 | 48363 |
| Urban | 73.39 | 2.46 | 13.80 | 0.56 | 5.60 | 0.20 | 1.24 | 2.76 | 15488 |
| Religion ($\chi^2=447.511$, $df=14$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| Hindu | 68.04 | 2.51 | 16.82 | 0.62 | 7.04 | 0.16 | 1.56 | 3.25 | 48548 |
| Muslim | 70.34 | 3.10 | 14.66 | 0.67 | 5.91 | 0.30 | 1.90 | 3.12 | 7585 |
| Others | 78.36 | 2.84 | 9.96 | 0.67 | 4.30 | 0.34 | 1.01 | 2.51 | 7718 |
| Standard of living ($\chi^2=1226.190$, $df=28$, $p=0.000$) | | | | | | | | | |
| Poorest | 61.42 | 2.65 | 20.19 | 0.67 | 8.31 | 0.23 | 2.05 | 4.47 | 13222 |
| Poor | 66.33 | 2.86 | 17.09 | 0.80 | 7.17 | 0.21 | 1.74 | 3.80 | 13566 |
| Middle | 68.94 | 2.50 | 16.37 | 0.71 | 6.73 | 0.21 | 1.63 | 2.93 | 12977 |
| Rich | 72.53 | 2.80 | 14.01 | 0.51 | 6.11 | 0.18 | 1.31 | 2.56 | 12383 |
| Richest | 80.04 | 2.25 | 10.28 | 0.44 | 4.23 | 0.16 | 0.84 | 1.77 | 11703 |
| All | 69.56 | 2.62 | 15.74 | 0.63 | 6.57 | 0.20 | 1.53 | 3.15 | 63851 |

Source: Authors

Multivariate Analysis

The multivariate analysis was carried out in two parts. The first part of the analysis was related to the classification of the women into mutually exclusive and exhaustive groups in terms of their characteristics and characteristics of their husband/partner and household in such a way that the domestic violence experienced by women of different groups is different. The classification and regression tree (CRT) technique (Breiman et al, 1984) was used for the classification purpose. The classification exercise revealed that 63581 ever married women may be classified into 8 mutually exclusive and exhaustive groups in terms of their individual, husband/partner and household defining characteristics and the experience of different forms of domestic violence. Results of the classification exercise are presented in table 4. An important observation of the table 4 is that women were categorised in terms of only seven of the 15 explanatory variables only. The variation in the remaining eight explanatory variables contributed little to the variation in the experience of domestic violence across different categories of women. The classification exercise, therefore, suggests that the factors influencing the experience of domestic violence should be explored in terms of the following seven explanatory variables only and the remaining eight explanatory variables can be excluded from the analysis:

1. Current marital status
2. Age at first cohabitation
3. Education of the woman
4. Occupation of the woman
5. Use of alcohol by husband/partner
6. Religion of the household
7. Standard of living of the household

Table 4 also indicates that the proportion of ever married women who reported that they had never experienced any form of domestic violence varies widely across the 17 mutually exclusive and exhaustive group of women with distinct characteristics. This proportion who had never experienced any domestic violence is found to be the lowest in those women who were either divorced or separated at the time of the interview and whose husband/partner was alcoholic irrespective of their level of education, occupation and other characteristics, characteristics and their husband/partner, and characteristics of the household. On the other hand, this proportion has been found to be more than 80 per cent in four groups of women identified through the classification exercise. The common characteristic of the women of all these four groups is the husband/partner of the woman was not alcoholic, although other characteristics of the women of the four groups were different. The classification exercise also confirms that the use of alcohol by the husband/partner of the woman is a prime factor in the domestic violence experienced by women interviewed. Another important observation of table 4 is that the current marital status of the women did not matter in terms of the experience of any form of the domestic violence when the husband/partner of the woman was not alcoholic. In women having affiliation to religions other than Hindu and Muslim religion, less than 17 per cent of the women reported experience of any form of domestic violence irrespective of any of their own characteristics or characteristics of their husband/partner or household. The use of alcohol appears to be the great divide between women who experienced and who not experienced any form of domestic violence.

Table 4: Classification of women by their individual characteristics, characteristics of husband/partner, household characteristics and their religious affiliation and the proportion of women in different groups not experiencing any form of domestic violence.

| SN | Characteristics of the woman, her husband/partner, and her household | | | | | | | Women not experienced any domestic violence (Per cent) | Number of women |
|----|--|-----------------|-------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------|
| | Marital status | Age at marriage | Education | Occupation | Husband/ Partner alcoholic | Religion | Standard of living | | |
| 1 | Divorced/ Separated | All | All | All | Yes | All | All | 21.6 | 564 |
| 2 | Married Widow | All | No education Primary | Agriculture Labour Others | Yes | Hindu Muslim | All | 41.6 | 3456 |
| 3 | Married Widow | All | No education Primary | No occupation Service/Clerical Professional | Yes | Hindu Muslim | All | 48.3 | 4004 |
| 4 | Married Widow | All | Secondary Higher | Service/Clerical Agriculture Labour | Yes | Hindu Muslim | All | 48.5 | 2268 |
| 5 | All | All | All | Agriculture Labour Others | Yes | Others | All | 60.2 | 1039 |
| 6 | Married Widow | All | Secondary Higher | No occupation Professional Others | Yes | Hindu Muslim | All | 60.9 | 4735 |
| 7 | All | All | No education Primary | Service/Clerical Agriculture Professional | No | All | All | 65.6 | 5242 |
| 8 | All | < 18 | Secondary Higher | Agriculture Labour | No | All | All | 67.4 | 2015 |
| 9 | All | All | No education Primary | No occupation Labour Others | No | Hindu Muslim | Poorest Poor Middle | 69.9 | 9449 |

| SN | Characteristics of the woman, her husband/partner, and her household | | | | | | | Women not experienced any domestic violence (Per cent) | Number of women |
|----|--|-----------------|-------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| | Marital status | Age at marriage | Education | Occupation | Husband/ Partner alcoholic | Religion | Standard of living | | |
| 10 | Married Widow | All | | No occupation Professional Service/Clerical | Yes | Others | All | 72.9 | 1766 |
| 11 | All | All | No education Primary | No occupation Labour Others | No | Hindu Muslim | Richest Rich | 75.8 | 2886 |
| 12 | All | < 18 | Secondary Higher | No occupation Professional Service/Clerical Other | No | All | Poorest Poor Middle Rich | 76.4 | 6495 |
| 13 | All | ≥ 18 | Secondary Higher | All | No | Hindu Muslim | Poorest Poor Middle Rich | 79.7 | 9421 |
| 14 | All | < 18 | Secondary Higher | No occupation Professional Service/Clerical Other | No | All | Richest | 82.1 | 1901 |
| 15 | All | All | All | All | No | Others | All | 83.1 | 1671 |
| 16 | All | ≥ 18 | All | All | No | All | Richest | 86.8 | 6458 |
| 17 | All | ≥ 18 | Secondary Higher | All | No | Others | Poorest Poor Middle Rich | 87.0 | 1481 |

Source: Authors

Results of the multinomial logit regression analysis are presented in table 5 in terms of the odds of experiencing different forms of domestic violence by women having different background categories relative to the odds of experiencing different forms of domestic violence by women of the reference category. The regression coefficient (β) of the multinomial logit regression model depicts the additive effect of a unit change in the predictor variable on the log of odds of the response or the dependent variable which means that $\exp(\beta)$ depicts the multiplicative effect on the odds-ratio or the ratio at which the odds of the response of dependent variable would respectively increase or decrease depending upon the positive or negative sign of the regression coefficient. The table shows that the current marital status and the educational status of the woman are the most important predictors of different forms of physical violence experienced by the women interviewed except a few exceptions. Currently married and currently widow women have statistically significantly lower risk of experiencing all but one form of domestic violence as compared to the risk experienced by divorced or separated women. It is only in case of only sexual violence that there appears no statistically significant difference in the risk of experience among the three categories of ever married women.

On the other hand, women having no education are estimated to have more than 43 per cent higher risk of experiencing some form of physical violence compared to women having higher education. Women without education have also been found to have more than 44 per cent higher risk of experiencing both emotional and physical violence and more than two times higher risk of experiencing both physical and sexual violence as compared to women having higher education. This observation suggests that women empowerment through universalising women education does matter in addressing the challenge of domestic violence experienced by women, particularly, any form of physical violence. However, education of the woman does not appear to have any impact on either only sexual violence or emotional and sexual violence experienced by the woman.

The effect of woman occupation on the risk of experiencing domestic experience by women has, however, not been found to be so strong, although the risk of experiencing any form of domestic violence is found to be relatively the lowest in women without any occupation relative to women engaged in some occupation. The relatively lower risk of experience of domestic violence experienced by women having no occupation may be explained in terms of the negative correlation between the level of education of the woman and her occupational status. Almost half of the women having secondary education had no occupation and this proportion was more than 15 per cent in women with higher education compared to only about 12 per cent in women having only primary education and 23 per cent in women having no education.

The other dominant factor in deciding the risk of experiencing domestic violence by women is the use of alcohol by their husband/partner. Women whose husband/partner was alcoholic were having statistically significantly higher risk of experiencing all forms of domestic violence except the sexual violence compared to women whose husband/partner was not alcoholic. Women whose husband/partner was no alcoholic were having more than 90 per cent lower risk of experiencing all the three forms of domestic violence compared to women who husband/partner was alcoholic. Similarly, the risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence in women whose husband/partner was not alcoholic was more than 60 per cent lower than the corresponding risk in women whose husband/partner was alcoholic.

Table 5: Results of the multinomial logistic regression analysis. The table shows the value of $\exp(\beta)$.

| Characteristics | | Form of domestic violence | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|---------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | Reference category is no experience of domestic violence | | | | | | |
| | | Only emotional | Only physical | Only sexual | Emotional and physical | Emotional and sexual | Physical and sexual | Emotional, physical, sexual |
| Intercept | Intercept | | | | | | | |
| Current marital status | Currently married or living with partner | 0.286 | 0.912 | 1.016 | 0.183 | 0.286 | 0.420 | 0.107 |
| | Widow | 0.193 | 0.713 | 0.555 | 0.149 | 0.150 | 0.299 | 0.109 |
| | Divorced/Separated® | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Age at marriage | <18 | 0.893 | 1.438 | 0.918 | 1.175 | 1.066 | 1.617 | 1.709 |
| | 18-21 | 0.913 | 1.231 | 0.683 | 0.976 | 1.074 | 1.425 | 1.404 |
| | 21-24 | 0.947 | 1.052 | 0.738 | 0.898 | 0.650 | 1.400 | 1.415 |
| | 24-27 | 0.907 | 0.979 | 0.683 | 0.711 | 1.315 | 1.143 | 1.096 |
| | ≥27 ® | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Education | No education | 1.477 | 1.726 | 0.819 | 1.790 | 1.089 | 2.601 | 1.675 |
| | Primary | 1.427 | 1.556 | 0.948 | 1.460 | 1.089 | 2.246 | 1.443 |
| | Secondary | 1.323 | 1.308 | 0.788 | 1.326 | 1.020 | 1.745 | 1.338 |
| | Higher ® | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Occupation | No occupation | 0.688 | 0.973 | 0.596 | 0.786 | 0.272 | 0.839 | 0.488 |
| | Professional | 0.729 | 1.004 | 0.577 | 0.778 | 0.105 | 0.856 | 0.878 |
| | Service/Clerical | 0.849 | 1.074 | 0.758 | 1.175 | 0.377 | 0.949 | 0.692 |
| | Agriculture | 0.981 | 1.329 | 0.772 | 1.379 | 0.572 | 1.188 | 0.779 |
| | Labour | 0.835 | 1.294 | 0.887 | 1.202 | 0.244 | 1.024 | 0.736 |
| | Others ® | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Husband/Partner alcoholic | No | 0.613 | 0.432 | 0.517 | 0.300 | 0.387 | 0.272 | 0.168 |
| | Yes ® | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Religion | Hindu | 1.143 | 2.043 | 1.172 | 2.228 | 0.672 | 2.032 | 1.986 |
| | Muslim | 1.535 | 2.120 | 1.450 | 2.611 | 1.671 | 3.391 | 3.212 |
| | Others ® | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

| Characteristics | | Form of domestic violence | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|--|---------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | Reference category is no experience of domestic violence | | | | | | |
| | | Only emotional | Only physical | Only sexual | Emotional and physical | Emotional and sexual | Physical and sexual | Emotional, physical, sexual |
| Standard of living | Poorest | 1.215 | 1.686 | 1.729 | 1.492 | 1.292 | 1.773 | 1.848 |
| | Poor | 1.295 | 1.499 | 1.978 | 1.413 | 1.194 | 1.663 | 1.771 |
| | Middle | 1.123 | 1.470 | 1.761 | 1.365 | 1.187 | 1.630 | 1.391 |
| | Rich | 1.250 | 1.266 | 1.205 | 1.276 | 1.048 | 1.364 | 1.259 |
| | Richest ® | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Remarks: ® Reference category. Statistically significant $\exp(\beta)$ ($p < 0.05$) are highlighted.

Source: Authors

The household standard of living, measured in terms of the household wealth index, has also been found to be closely associated with the experience of domestic violence by women. The risk of experiencing all forms of domestic violence faced by women is found to be, in general, the lowest in the richest households, households having wealth index higher than the fifth quintile of the inter-household distribution of wealth index but relatively the highest in the poorest households, households having wealth index lower than the first quintile of the inter-household distribution of the wealth index, with only a few exceptions. Table 5 suggests that a major challenge to reducing and ultimately eliminating domestic violence against women is the challenge of reducing and ultimately eliminating household poverty.

Finally, religious affiliation has been found to have a strong effect on the domestic violence experienced by women. Among Muslim women, the risk of experiencing any form of domestic violence is found to be the highest relative to Hindu women and women of other religions. Muslim women have more than three times higher risk of experiencing all the three forms of domestic violence compared to the risk experienced by women of other religions whereas Hindu women have almost two times higher risk. It appears that the values accorded to women in different religions is a strong influencing factor as far the domestic violence against women is concerned. However, ethnicity does not appear to have any influence on the sexual violence experienced by women.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To the best of our knowledge, the present analysis is the first which classifies the domestic violence experienced by women into eight mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. The paper reveals that the risk of experiencing different forms of domestic violence by women is determined primarily by the level of education of the woman, use of alcohol by the husband/partner of the woman, her standard of living and her religious affiliation. The only exception is the sexual violence which does not appear to be influenced by these factors. In other words, the risk of domestic violence experience by women emanates from a complex web of individual factors, social and economic factors and factors related to the behaviour of the husband/partner which suggests that addressing the problem of domestic violence against women is a challenging proposition that requires a multidimensional approach.

The most common form of the domestic violence ever experienced by Indian women is the physical violence which has been found to be clearly associated with the educational status of the woman after controlling other characteristics. Since the main plank of women empowerment is the universalisation of women education, it may be argued that women empowerment through universalising women education does matter in addressing the challenge of domestic violence against women in India. It is, however, clear from the analysis that universalising women education, alone, may not be sufficient enough to effectively addressing the challenge of domestic violence against women, as another important factor that influence the domestic violence experienced by women is the use of alcohol by the husband/partner of the woman. Similarly, the standard of living of the household has also been found to be a strong predictor of the domestic violence experienced by women.

The analysis suggests that a multi-dimensional approach is needed to address the challenge of the domestic violence experienced by women. The findings of the present analysis are in line with the comprehensive global agenda adopted in 1995 by the Beijing Platform for Action which has identified 12 critical areas of concern regarding women empowerment and alleviating domestic violence against women and which has been reiterated in the Beijing+15 and Beijing+30 conferences (United Nations, 2015; 2026).

An interesting observation of the present analysis is that risk of experiencing sexual violence has, in general, not been found to be associated with such factors as education and occupation of women, use of alcohol by their husband/partner, standard of living and religious affiliations. It is generally argued that sexual violence against women is primarily driven by unequal power dynamics, patriarchal norms, and structural gender inequality within the household that result in harmful gender stereotypes, low education, alcohol abuse, and acceptance of violence as a means of control, among others. The present analysis, however, suggests that these factors are not main determinants of sexual violence experienced by Indian women. It may be emphasised that unlike the physical violence, collecting information about sexual violence is quite tricky as "rough sex" or consensual violence or pain is often accepted as a method of increasing sexual pleasure. It is, therefore, crucial to differentiate consensual rough sex from non-consensual sexual violence.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the anonymous reviewer and the Editor for their very constructive comments and suggestions that led to improvement in the quality of the paper.

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