



AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN INDIA: INTERPRETING REGIONAL DISPARITIES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Dr. Gursharan Kaur

Assistant Professor Trai Shatabdi G.G.S. Khalsa College Amritsar.

Abstract

India has a longstanding history of patriarchal social structures, where men traditionally held power and decision-making authority. This cultural framework has resulted in the subordination of women, creating imbalances in power dynamics within familial relationships. The United Nations has set Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.2 to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, encompassing issues like trafficking, sexual exploitation, and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Despite the enforcement of various laws by the Indian government over time, patriarchal attitudes and gender discrimination persist deeply in Indian society. These ingrained attitudes can impede the reporting of violence; perpetuate victim-blaming, and pose obstacles to achieving justice. The current study examined the prevailing state of domestic violence in India, even following the implementation of the aforementioned legislations, utilizing data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5). Various indices on domestic violence were constructed for analysis. The study indicates that the issue of domestic violence is more severe in states like Bihar, Manipur, and Pondicherry. In contrast, states in the Northeast, such as Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, generally exhibit better conditions than those in the central and eastern regions. Southern states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu also demonstrate comparatively lower indices, suggesting a relatively lower prevalence of domestic violence in these regions.

1. Introduction

The historical and cultural context of domestic violence in India is deeply intertwined with traditional norms, patriarchal structures, and historical practices that have shaped societal attitudes and behaviors over centuries. India has a long history of patriarchal social systems where power and decision-making authority traditionally resided with men. This has fostered a culture where women are often subordinated, leading to unequal power dynamics within familial relationships. Gender roles in India have been traditionally rigid, prescribing specific roles and behaviors for men and women. Women were expected to conform to societal expectations, often limiting their agency and autonomy. This traditional framework contributes to the perpetuation of domestic violence, as it reinforces unequal power dynamics within households. Historically, the joint family system was prevalent in India, where multiple generations lived together under one roof. While this system had its merits, it also created an environment where power dynamics could be exploited, leading to instances of domestic violence. Indian culture, in certain contexts, values maintaining family honor and avoiding public shame. This cultural norm can contribute to the underreporting of domestic violence, as victims may hesitate to disclose abuse due to fear of societal judgment and stigma. Traditional cultural values often emphasize forgiveness and the preservation of family unity. While forgiveness is a virtue, it can also be exploited to perpetuate cycles of abuse, as victims may be pressured to forgive and forget rather than seek justice.

The term "Domestic Violence" represents a relatively recent addition to the vocabulary of "Violence against Women" (VAW). The UN General Assembly, in 1993, outlined VAW in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm, or suffering to women, including threats of



such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty; whether occurring in public or private life" (United Nations General Assembly, Declaration). Domestic Violence falls within this framework. Article 2 of the UN draft Declaration on Violence against Women identifies three areas where violence commonly occurs: (a) violence within the family, (b) violence in the general community, and (c) violence perpetrated or condoned by the state. Domestic Violence, categorized as family-based violence, is defined by Indian law as assaults and/or coercion by family members, typically men, against women to intimidate, force against their will, and ultimately dominate and subjugate them. This form of violence manifests in various ways, such as physical, mental, psychological, economic, and sexual, as defined by The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (Ghosh, 2023). In India, Domestic Violence takes alarming forms, including foeticide, infanticide, child marriage, forced marriage, forced prostitution, battering, murder/dowry deaths, incest, widow harassment and stigmatization, and old-age desertion (Johnson et al., 1996)

Domestic violence is a serious and widespread human rights violation that has detrimental consequences for both individuals and societies. According to the United Nations, one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or family member during their lifetime. Domestic violence, often rooted in gender-based discrimination and inequality, perpetuates cycles of violence and disempowerment for women and girls.

In the context under consideration, it is worth noting that since gaining independence, the Indian state has endeavored to bring about positive transformations in the status of women and curb gender-based violence through legal reforms. The legal domain is commonly perceived as a tangible avenue for addressing issues related to gender equity. A law serves as an indication of acknowledgment of a social problem, functions as a deterrent, and ultimately acts as a punitive tool (Basu, 2009). In the Indian scenario, over 50 laws and acts have been enacted within the framework of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special & Local Laws (SLL), directly or indirectly impacting the lives of women and female children. Many of these laws or acts underwent amendments, primarily in response to extensive campaigns and the subsequent pressure exerted by feminist organizations, aiming to make the laws more contextually relevant and effective. According to Menon (2000), these endeavors have proven successful, as each campaign has led to legislative changes. However, the implementation of these laws has remained incomplete. Consequently, there is a growing awareness among women activists regarding the limited effectiveness of laws in preventing such violence (Biswajit & Choudhur, 2011).

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5.2 aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. India enforces several laws, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013), and the National Policy for Women (2017), focusing on prevention, protection, and support for survivors.

Initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Women's Self-Help Groups, and gender sensitization campaigns challenge traditional norms and empower women. Legal measures like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006) and Anti-Human Trafficking Units address harmful practices and trafficking. Despite these efforts, deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes and gender discrimination continue to pose challenges, hindering reporting, perpetuating victim-blaming, and creating barriers to justice. This study examines the current state of domestic violence in India, considering the effectiveness of implemented legislations.



2. Database and Methodology

This study conducted an analysis of intimate partner violence using state-level data. It involved a secondary analysis of cross-sectional data obtained from the National Family Health Survey-5, conducted between 2019 and 2021 at the household level. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is designed after the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), encompassing various health parameters, including information on Women Empowerment and Domestic Violence. The 5th round of the NFHS, the most recent round, gathered data from representative urban and rural households in all 28 states and 8 Union Territories (U.T.) across the country.

For this round, data was collected from 636,699 households, comprising 724,115 women and 101,839 men. The Domestic Violence questionnaire module was specifically administered to married women in the age group of 18–49 years.

The study employed the Dimension Index (DI) measures, as developed by Iyengar and Sudarshan (1982) to assess the spatial aspects of development and measure the level or stage of each state's development. This method was chosen for its preference over other techniques, such as Principal Component Analysis, due to its reduced reliance on assumptions. The Dimension Index (DI) was individually calculated for each state and Union Territory (UT) based on the independent variables as computed by Ghoshal R, 2023.

$$\text{Dimension Index } DI = \frac{(\text{Actual Value of the Indicator} - \text{Minimum Value})}{\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}$$

The resulting DI value ranges between 0 and 1, where a higher value indicates a more advanced stage of development.

The composite domestic violence index is also calculated by taking average of various forms of violence. Subsequently, states were ranked according to their respective Composite Index scores.

3. Results And Discussion

The present study shed light on various forms of domestic violence women are facing in Indian society.

Table 1 Forms of spousal violence

Type of violence	Indicators of Violence	Percentages
Physical violence	Any form of physical violence	28.3
	Pushed her, shook her, or threw something at her.	12.2
	Twisted her arm or pulled her hair	10.1
	Slapped her	25.3
	Punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her	7.7
	Kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up	8.3
	Tried to choke her or burn her on purpose	2.3
	Threatened her or attacked her with a knife, gun, or any other weapon	1.2
Sexual violence	Any form of sexual violence	6.3
	Physically forced her to have sexual intercourse	4.6



	with him even when she did not want to	
	Forced her to perform any sexual acts she did not want to	2.4
	Forced her with threats or in any other way to perform any sexual acts she did not want to	3.8
Emotional violence	Any form of emotional violence	14.0
	Said or did something to humiliate her in front of others	9.6
	Threatened to hurt or harm her or someone close to her	5.9
	Insulted her or made her feel bad about herself	8.6

Source: NFHS-5.

*Percentage of ever-married women age 18-49 who have experienced various forms of violence committed by their husband ever or in the 12 months preceding the survey, India 2019-21

Any form of physical violence (28.3%): This represents the overall prevalence of physical violence in the reported incidents. 12.2% of the reported incidents involved the use of physical force such as pushing, shaking, or throwing objects at the victim. In 10.1% of cases, the perpetrator twisted the victim's arm or pulled her hair, indicating a significant level of physical manipulation. Slapping was reported in 25.3% of incidents, suggesting that this form of physical aggression is relatively common. 7.7% of cases involved the use of punches, either with fists or objects that could cause harm. 8.3% of incidents included more severe forms of physical violence, such as kicking, dragging, or beating the victim. 2.3% of cases involved extremely severe actions, such as attempting to choke the victim or intentionally causing burns. In 1.2% of incidents, the perpetrator used or threatened to use weapons, indicating an elevated level of danger and potential lethality. These percentages provide a nuanced understanding of the varying degrees of physical violence within the reported incidents, ranging from less severe actions like pushing to more extreme forms such as the use of weapons. It's important to consider the severity of these actions and their potential impact on the victims involved.

Any form of sexual violence (6.3%): This represents the overall prevalence of sexual violence in the reported incidents. In 4.6% of cases, the perpetrator physically forced the victim to engage in sexual intercourse against her will. In 2.4% of incidents, the victim was forced to engage in sexual acts she did not want to, encompassing a range of non-consensual activities. In 3.8% of cases, the perpetrator used threats or other coercive methods to force the victim into performing sexual acts against her will. These percentages indicate the prevalence of different forms of sexual violence within the reported incidents. It's essential to recognize the gravity of these actions, as they involve violations of consent and can have severe and lasting impacts on the victims. The data underscores the importance of addressing and preventing sexual violence in order to protect individuals from harm and ensure their well-being.

Any form of emotional violence (14.0%): This represents the overall prevalence of emotional violence in the reported incidents. In 9.6% of cases, the perpetrator engaged in behavior meant to humiliate the victim in the presence of others, causing emotional harm. In 5.9% of incidents, the perpetrator used threats to instil fear in the victim, either directly threatening her or someone close to her. In 8.6% of



cases, the victim was insulted or subjected to actions that made her feel bad about herself, contributing to emotional distress. These percentages highlight the prevalence of different forms of emotional violence within the reported incidents. Emotional violence can have profound and lasting effects on an individual's mental well-being, and addressing such behaviors is crucial for promoting healthy relationships and preventing harm. It's important to recognize and address emotional violence alongside physical and sexual violence to comprehensively address the impact of abusive behavior.

Table 2. Domestic violence Indices

	Physical violence index	emotional violence Index	sexual violence index	Composite Index
India	0.5847	0.5337	0.4836	0.5340
North				
Chandigarh	0.4301	0.1490	0.3279	0.3023
Delhi	0.5148	0.5000	0.4262	0.4804
Haryana	0.6059	0.4808	0.6311	0.5726
H.P	0.0614	0.0865	0.1230	0.0903
J&	0.1314	0.3269	0.1475	0.2019
Punjab	0.3686	0.2500	0.3689	0.3292
Rajasthan	0.4619	0.2740	0.2459	0.3273
Uttrakhand	0.2076	0.1154	0.1721	0.1650
Central				
Chhatisgarh	0.7161	0.4471	0.4508	0.5380
M.P	0.6144	0.4663	0.5738	0.5515
U.P	0.6970	0.5433	0.5246	0.5883
East				
Bihar	0.8199	0.8558	1.0000	0.8919
Jharhkhand	0.6483	0.3558	0.5656	0.5232
Ordisha	0.6589	0.4615	0.5656	0.5620
WB	0.6186	0.5000	0.5984	0.5723
Northeast				
Arunacha Pardesh	0.5657	0.6587	0.6475	0.6240
Assam	0.4534	0.4183	0.3607	0.4108
Manipur	1.0000	0.5192	0.8852	0.8015
Mrgalaya	0.5254	0.3990	0.2377	0.3874
Mizoram	0.2585	0.3510	0.1475	0.2523
Nagaland	0.1589	0.3558	0.4426	0.3191
Skkiam	0.0000	0.0000	0.0410	0.0137
Tipura	0.5106	0.5481	0.7049	0.5879
West				
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and				
Daman & diu	0.4958	0.4471	0.4180	0.4536



Goa	0.2055	0.0962	0.0000	0.1006
Gujrat	0.3708	0.4375	0.2869	0.3650
Maharashtra	0.3962	0.3413	0.1148	0.2841
South				
Andaman&Nicobar Island	0.3326	0.3173	0.1475	0.2658
AP	0.8623	0.8173	0.4098	0.6965
Karnataka	0.3538	0.5048	0.6639	0.5075
Kerala	0.2288	0.2885	0.2541	0.2571
Lakhadweep	0.1017	0.0192	0.0984	0.0731
Punducherry	0.5996	1.0000	0.7295	0.7764
Tamil Nadu	0.7797	0.8894	0.5984	0.7558
Telangana	0.8390	0.8269	0.4344	0.7001

Table 3, Ranking according to Composite Domestic Violence Index

	Composite Index	Ranking
India	0.5340	
Chandigarh	0.3023	25
Delhi	0.4804	17
Haryana	0.5726	10
H.P	0.0903	33
J&	0.2019	30
Punjab	0.3292	22
Rajasthan	0.3273	23
Uttrakhand	0.1650	31
Chhatisgarh	0.5380	14
M.P	0.5515	13
U.P	0.5883	8
East		
Bihar	0.8919	1
Jharhkhand	0.5232	15
Ordisha	0.5620	12
WB	0.5723	11
Arunacha Pardesh	0.6240	7
Assam	0.4108	19
Manipur	0.8015	2
Mrgalaya	0.3874	20
Mizoram	0.2523	29
Nagaland	0.3191	24
Skkiam	0.0137	35
Tipura	0.5879	9
Dadra & Nagar		



Haveli and		
Daman & diu	0.4536	18
Goa	0.1006	32
Gujrat	0.3650	21
Maharashtra	0.2841	26
	South	
Andaman&Nicobar Island	0.2658	27
AP	0.6965	6
Karnataka	0.5075	16
Kerala	0.2571	28
Lakhadweep	0.0731	34
Punducherry	0.7764	3
Tamil Nadu	0.7558	4
Telangana	0.7001	5

The provided statistical data presents indices related to different forms of violence across various regions in India. The indices include physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, and a composite index. These figures shed light on the prevalence and severity of violence in different parts of the country. In this analysis, we will delve into the significance of each index, regional variations, and potential implications for social and policy considerations.

Physical Violence Index: The Physical Violence Index measures the occurrence and intensity of physical harm inflicted on individuals. India's overall score of 0.5847 indicates a substantial prevalence of physical violence. A closer look at specific regions reveals considerable disparities, with states like Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh scoring high, suggesting a critical need for interventions to address physical violence in these areas.

Emotional Violence Index: Emotional violence, as reflected in the Emotional Violence Index, pertains to non-physical harm inflicted on an individual's emotional well-being. The national average stands at 0.5337, indicating a significant concern. Bihar, Jharkhand, and Andhra Pradesh exhibit particularly high scores, suggesting that emotional violence is a widespread issue, potentially rooted in social and cultural factors that warrant further exploration.

Sexual Violence Index: The Sexual Violence Index gauges the prevalence of sexual harm in different regions. The national average of 0.4836 indicates a substantial challenge. Bihar and Manipur stand out with high scores, underscoring the urgency of addressing sexual violence in these areas. This index is particularly critical given the social stigma associated with reporting and addressing such incidents, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support structures.

Composite Index: The Composite Index combines the three aforementioned violence indices into an overarching measure of overall violence. India's composite score of 0.5340 underscores the multifaceted nature of violence prevalent in the country. The regional variations in this index highlight the complexity of the issue, necessitating a nuanced approach to policy formulation and intervention strategies.



Regional Disparities: The data reveals notable variations in violence indices across regions. States in the Northeast, such as Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, generally fare better than those in the central and eastern regions. Southern states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu also show comparatively lower indices. The stated like Bihar, Manipur and Pondicherry shows more severe problem of domestic violence. Understanding these regional disparities is crucial for tailoring interventions to address specific challenges prevalent in different parts of the country.

4. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The statistical data on violence indices in different regions of India provides valuable insights into the complex nature of this societal challenge. By understanding the root causes and adopting a multi-dimensional approach, policymakers can work towards creating a safer and more secure environment for all residents across the diverse landscape of India. The study suggests following policy implications.

1. Comprehensive Educational Initiatives

- Implement educational programs that challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes from early childhood through higher education.
- Integrate gender-sensitive curriculum components to promote awareness, empathy, and respect for diversity.
- Include discussions on consent, healthy relationships, and the consequences of gender-based violence in school curricula.

2. Community-Based Awareness Campaigns

- Launch targeted awareness campaigns at the community level to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality.
- Utilize various communication channels, including traditional media, social media, and community events, to disseminate information on women's rights, reporting mechanisms, and available support services.
- Collaborate with local influencers, community leaders, and grassroots organizations to amplify the impact of awareness campaigns.

3. Capacity Building for Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems

- Provide specialized training for law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to sensitively handle cases of domestic violence.
- Ensure that legal professionals are well-versed in the nuances of gender-based violence, victim trauma, and the complexities of domestic situations.
- Establish mechanisms for regular capacity-building workshops to keep law enforcement and legal professionals updated on evolving issues related to domestic violence.

4. Economic Empowerment Programs

- Strengthen existing economic empowerment initiatives for women, such as self-help groups and skill development programs.
- Introduce targeted schemes to enhance women's access to economic resources, including microfinancing, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Collaborate with private sector entities to create a supportive environment for women's economic participation, reducing dependency on abusive partners.

5. Holistic Support Services

- Enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of support services for survivors of domestic violence.



- Establish more shelters, counseling centers, and helplines that offer immediate assistance and long-term support.
 - Encourage partnerships between government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community groups to create a network of comprehensive support for survivors.
6. **Legislative Reforms and Implementation Oversight**
- Regularly review and update existing legislations to address emerging challenges in the fight against domestic violence.
 - Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure timely and effective implementation of laws.
 - Establish oversight bodies to monitor the implementation of laws, gather data on reported cases, and assess the impact of legal interventions.
7. **Inclusive Policy Development**
- Include diverse voices, especially those of marginalized and vulnerable groups, in the policymaking process.
 - Design policies that account for intersectionality, recognizing the unique challenges faced by women from different backgrounds, including caste, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
 - Prioritize inclusivity in policy development to ensure that interventions are tailored to the diverse needs of the population.
8. **International Collaboration and Best Practice Sharing**
- Collaborate with international organizations, NGOs, and countries that have successfully tackled similar issues to exchange best practices and learn from successful interventions.
 - Participate in global forums to contribute to and benefit from the collective knowledge in the field of combating gender-based violence.

In conclusion, addressing deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes and gender discrimination requires a multifaceted approach that extends beyond legislation. By implementing these policy implications, India can strive towards creating a society where women are empowered, violence is actively prevented and justice is accessible to all, ultimately fostering a culture of equality and respect.

References

1. Garcia-Moreno C, Guedes A, Knerr W (2012), "Understanding and addressing violence against women: Health consequences" "Who[Internet], 1–8. Available from: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77431/WHO_RHR_12.43_eng.pdf?sequence=1.
2. Ghosh, Biswajit & Choudhur Tanim (2011), "Legal Protection Against Domestic Violence in India: Scope and Limitations", *Journal of Family Violence*, 26:319–330. DOI 10.1007/s10896-011-9369-
3. Ghoshal R, Patil P, Gadgil A, Nathani P, Bhandarkar P, Kale DB, et al. (2023), "Does women empowerment associate with reduced risks of intimate partner violence in India? evidence from National Family Health Survey-5", *PLoS ONE* 18(11): e0293448. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0293448>
4. Hindin MJ, Adair LS (2002), "Who's at risk? Factors associated with intimate partner violence in the Philippines", *Soc Sci Med*, 55(8):1385–99.
5. Iyengar NS, Sudarshan P (1982), "A Method of Classifying Regions from Multivariate Data", *Econ Polit Wkly [Internet]*. 17(51):7–8. Available from: Johnson, C., Vene Klassen, L., Banwell,



- S., Daruwala, M., & Mathur, K. (1996), “Domestic violence in India: Recommendations of the Women’s rights team”, PROWID.
6. Menon, N. (2000)” Embodying the Self: Feminism, Sexual Violence and the Law. In P. Chatterjee & P. Jeganathan (Eds.), *Community, gender and violence – Subaltern studies XI*”, New Delhi: Permanent Black and Ravi Dayal Publisher pp. 66–105.
 7. Peterman A, Pereira A, Bleck J, Palermo TM, Yount KM(2017), “ Women’s individual asset ownership and experience of intimate partner violence: Evidence from 28 international surveys” *Am J Public Health*, 107(5):747–55. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303694> PMID: 28398779.
 8. Subhasri Ghosh (2023) ,R. Baikady et al. (eds.), “The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems”, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68127-2_98-
 9. Zafar S, Saima Zia MS, Amir-ud-Din R (2021), “Troubling Trade-offs Between Women’s Work and Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence From 19 Developing Countries” *J Interpers Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211021961> PMID: 34098785.