

# Impact of family violence on the physical and mental health of women in Kashmir

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## ABSTRACT

The discrimination of women is most flagrant in all the spheres of life. The presence of Family violence against women is no longer a notion nor even debatable. Family violence is one of the crimes against women which are linked to their disadvantageous position in the society. The paper focuses on the inducement of violence in nuptial setting and the effect this violence has on the "Physical and mental" health of women. The study revealed that family violence as a traumatic experience associated with various physical problems in all women victims of family violence. An attempt has been made to identify the various causative factors leading to family violence and discuss various consequences and experiences in relation to it.

**KEY WORDS :** Family violence, Physical and mental health Kashmiri women

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## INTRODUCTION

Violence is something that a transgressor inflicts upon a victim. Unlike natural pain, which occurs without a human agent, violence is inflicted upon by one human being to another. Whether this is done for the assertion of power or for some other reason, what matters is the transgression or violation by one on another, in a manner which is socially unacceptable.

Domestic violence is as old as the Indian history. The nature and extent of domestic violence depends upon the quality of life and basic social cultural milieu. Family as an institution in the ancient India laid down certain principles, which regulate the relationship between husband, wife and their children. The domestic violence causes a breach in the husband wife relationship due to many reasons. Primarily this violence can be categorized in two ways *i.e.* mental and physical. The mental violence can be carried out with the help of psychological weapons (insult, abuse, humiliating treatment etc.), that hurt the individual and the scar are deep rooted. The physical violence includes different types of aggressive / physical assaults *i.e.* husband beating wife or wife beating husband. This physical violence is quite common among people living in lower and lower middle strata of the society. The inmates

living in the family are greatly affected by such incidents. But the adults such as parents, brother and sister, in laws are less affected by such acts compared to the innocent children who are in the formative phase and / or developing stage.

There are two perspectives on domestic violence. First there is the "family violence perspective" which suggests that women and men learn from childhood experiences, media portrays and societal norms that violence is an acceptable way to resolve disputes. Secondly, there is the feminist perspective which states that men and women do not have equal positions in society; men have had privileged position in society for centuries and have acquired dominant status, forces women to tolerate violence to a great extent.

Domestic violence is a problem that affects many people in many countries now-a-days. The victims are mostly women and children and the abusers are usually their husband/fathers. But the problem is not only the quantity, but the quality of violence: it usually happens at home. Women of all cultures, races, occupations, income levels and ages are battered by husbands, boyfriends, lovers and partners. In addition, the violence does not occur in separate cases of loss of temper, but it is used in form of

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battering, intimidation, threats, psychological abuse, isolation etc., as a way to coerce and control the victim. Even if the violence does not happen often, it remains as a hidden and constant terrorizing factor. The worst is that most of the victims are afraid of looking for some help because they fear some reprisal, like more abuse or even death (women who leave their aggressive partner-boyfriend or husband-are at 75 per cent greater risk than those who stay).

Family violence is most often a relationship between a man and a woman in which the male partner seeks to assert power and control over the female partner. The abuser may use many different types of abuse to assert this power, and the overall framework in which the abuse occurs may follow a pattern called the cycle of violence. There are three phases in the cycle -the woman may experience ongoing, nonstop abuse or the abuse may stop and start. One pattern of abuse often seen in a violent relationship begins with a tension-building phase, followed by the battering incident, and then calm, making-up phase often called the manipulation stage.

Everywhere and in all ages, women have been victims of violence. They are and often raped, mutilated, battered and murdered. In most societies, gender-based violence has long been tolerated, letting the perpetrators go unpunished, their crime tactically condoned; based on the popular view that wife is the property of her husband and that therefore he may do with her whatever he thinks fit.

Women all over especially in India have been facing violence in all spheres of life for thousands of years. They face domestic, political and social violence which lead to subordinate position of women. There are many ways in which women suffer and are made to suffer. In behavioral terms, violence against women ranges from simple suppression to abuse, aggression, exploitation and severe oppression. Female infanticide, the abortion of the female fetus, the neglect and under nourishment of the girl child, denial of education to girls, rape, pre- puberty marriage, wife beating and the harassment of a bride lead to her suicide or murder. Each of these is more awesome than comparable or even greater pain or fear experienced in the other contexts like childbirth. One never refers to the pain of childbirth as violence, no matter how severe it is. The fear of death, in a situation of terminal illness, can be extremely terrifying, but one does not refer to as violence.

It has been widely recognized that death is the most extreme outcome of domestic violence. In fact, domestic violence is the 'leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15-44 years' (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2004). Domestic violence, which affects the lives of millions of women, children and

men worldwide (Mishra, 2000) in all socio-economic and educational classes, can result in suicide (Astbury *et al.*, 2000; Hirigoyen, 2000; Jones, 2000; Taft, 2003). Women who have been abused by their intimate partners are almost four times more likely to have suicidal ideation compared to non-abused women (Taft, 2003). Women are criminal offenders too. Although women's crimes are most often trivial and much less often violent compared to men's (Pickering and Adler, 2000), very often no clear distinction can be made between victimization and offending. 'Women who are offenders are also victims of crime, particularly violent crimes' (Pickering and Adler, 2000). According to Walker (1989), many women who killed their abusers initially intended to commit suicide themselves. In Australia, despite the fact that community awareness of domestic violence has risen significantly over recent decades; that women's refugals have been built; that legislative changes have been made; and that the serious nature of intimate partner violence has been underlined by making it a social and criminal issue (Adler, 1995), suicide rates and homicide rates have remained relatively constant (Mouzos and Segrave, 2004).

### Objectives :

The present study has been undertaken with the specific objectives are as too study the extent or prevalence of family violence, to study the socio- cultural factors affecting violence, to study the extent of family violence in different socio – economic classes and to identify the signs and symptoms of family violence both physical and psychological.

### METHODS

Present study has been carried out with the aim to obtain information about family violence and its impact on physical and mental health of women. Primary data collection was done by the questionnaire cum interviewing the victims. A qualitative research method was used to explore how abused women describe their personal experiences. The data collection technique involved in-depth interviews with 100 women victims of domestic violence. The interview included a series of broad, open-ended questions about women's experiences of abuse. Questions designed to elicit concrete answers were combined with open-ended questions so that respondents could describe their experience in their own words.

Mental health squeals to spousal violence are significant that have long-term health implications. Psychosocial status of women inhabited to violence is often faced with a number of practical problems. The physical environment in which women need to live and endure has

a direct bearing on their physical and mental health. Keeping this into consideration, the related questions were therefore included in the questionnaire. In addition, ongoing stress caused by feelings of insecurity and dependency can deplete physical and psychological flexibility enhancing physical and mental problems. Questions about feelings of physical safety and dependency on external resources such as finances were included to assess this area of concern. The questionnaire also included questions to elicit information regarding psycho-social as well as mental health problems of married women within their families.

The Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ), an instrument developed by the World Health Organization (1994) was used to measure general physical, psychological and emotional distress.

A pilot study was carried out on women respondents with a view to know the gaps and limitations of the tool. The present study has been conducted in both rural and urban areas of Srinagar district. One hundred such women victims were selected on purposive random sampling basis. An ordinal scale was designed with predetermined purpose to assess various modes (physical, emotional, sexual and financial) of violence by the male partner against women.

The violence intensity was devised with the cognizance of the four paramount factors concerned to physical, economical, psycho-social and type of family that amounted to a total score of 250 points. The score of = 30 per cent was considered as low violence intensity for being the point where some impeachments in characteristics are in existence. Similarly, the scores of 30- 50 per cent, 51- 75 per cent and = 75 per cent were considered as unwrap, soaring and turbulent modes of violence intensity.

Factors contributing to family violence were categorized under fourteen headings. All the components lying within the fourteen factors were clubbed by taking affected parts into account. Maximum score was assigned severe order and zero to non-sufferings. The cumulative percentage of 60 and above was considered as a cause of violence. The fourteen respective questions which lead to violence were assigned scores as per the rank order of severity of the constraints. Hence, interrelationship of all the fourteen factors was portrayed by the suitable inference.

The data have been expressed as percentages / and the intergroup comparison of violence intensity is measured by non-parametric tests. Chi square test, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis test were used to analyze the data for drawing valid inferences.

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Study on domestic violence demonstrates that it is a

complex and multidimensional problem. Explanations include cultural, societal, family and individual factors that decrease or increase the probability of women to become victims of violence. Several complex and interconnected institutionalized social and cultural factors have kept women particularly vulnerable to the violence. Demographic characteristics of the studied subjects did not show any significant difference with respect to their age; literacy status; qualification or husband's literacy status. However, the difference has been significant with respect to dwelling, size of family, type of family and husbands qualification (Table 1).

The age of the victims of the present study varied from 25 to 45 years. Violence was majorly experienced in between 30 to 39 years of age that comprised 53 per cent of the studied sample but was not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ). 34 per cent of them were matriculates or below and 52 per cent were graduates and post graduates. Further, 61 sample of the husband's were graduates and postgraduates (Table 1). These factors were significantly associated ( $p<0.05$ ) with violence intensity.

Majority of respondents were dependent economically as 55 per cent had no income of their own. Although matrimonial violence is in all-classes, turbulent violence was observed in 96.43 per cent of the dependent subjects (Table 2). Although men in middle class occupations who are relatively disadvantageous and whose ambitions are not fulfilled, show an unexpected predisposition to violence. The cruel system of family violence has become a great problem in our society and the desire of money has given rise to such practice. Majority (83 %) of respondents suffer from sleeping problems. 70 per cent of victims suffer from headache / backache when they experience soaring violence. The physical problems were alarming and equally high with respect to various modes of violence intensity that lead to insignificant associations ( $p>0.05$ ).

The study reveals that the emotional consequences of victimized women were anxiety, sadness, anger, frustration, fear, nervousness, tension and most of the women suffered from hopelessness (64.29%) when they face turbulent violence. It has been further observed that 51 per cent of women suffer from anxiety. More than 64 per cent of women often show aggressive and irritable behaviour when violence is turbulent, a fact which is not surprising. More than 60 per cent of women found difficulty in expressing themselves when they face turbulent violence. About 84 per cent of women suffered concentration problems when violence is soaring and on the other hand 82.14 per cent of women experienced the same when violence is turbulent. Most of the respondents experienced arresting cognitive problems like constantly

Table 1 : Violence intensity in relation to demographic characteristics													
Demographic characteristics		Violence intensity										Conclusion p' value Result	
		Low		Unwrap		Soaring		Turbulent		Total			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Age	25 to 29	1	33.33			9	18.00	2	7.14	12	12.00	0.581	NS
	30 to 34	1	33.33	8	42.11	10	20.00	8	28.57	27	27.00		
	35 to 39	1	33.33	4	21.05	13	26.00	8	28.57	26	26.00		
	40 to 44			5	26.32	9	18.00	7	25.00	21	21.00		
	? 45			2	10.53	9	18.00	3	10.71	14	14.00		
Dwelling	Rural			6	31.58	22	44.00	18	64.29	46	46.00	0.048	Sig.
	Urban	3	100.00	13	68.42	28	56.00	10	35.71	54	54.00		
Size of family	Small	2	66.67	12	63.16	20	40.00	9	32.14	43	43.00	0.043	Sig.
	Large	1	33.33	6	31.58	23	46.00	9	32.14	39	39.00		
Type of family	Extended			1	5.26	7	14.00	10	35.71	18	18.00	0.000	Sig.
	Nuclear	2	66.67	16	84.21	22	44.00	6	21.43	46	46.00		
	Joint	1	33.33	3	15.79	28	56.00	22	78.57	54	54.00		
Woman's literacy status	Literate	3	100.00	13	68.42	37	74.00	14	50.00	67	67.00	0.102	NS
	Illiterate			6	31.58	13	26.00	14	50.00	33	33.00		
Woman's qualification	Illiterate			7	36.84	13	26.00	14	50.00	34	34.00	0.069	NS
	Up to Hr.			4	21.05	7	14.00	3	10.71	14	14.00		
	Secondary												
Husband's literacy status	Graduation and above	3	100.00	8	42.11	30	60.00	11	39.29	52	52.00	0.108	NS
	Literate	3	100.00	13	68.42	45	90.00	21	75.00	82	82.00		
Husband's qualification	Illiterate			6	31.58	5	10.00	7	25.00	18	18.00	0.029	Sig
	Illiterate			6	31.58	5	10.00	7	25.00	18	18.00		
	Up to Hr.			4	21.05	9	18.00	8	28.57	21	21.00		
	Secondary												
	Graduation and above	3	100.00	9	47.37	36	72.00	13	46.43	61	61.00		

NS=Non-significant

Table 2 : Violence intensity in association with socio economic status													
Socio economic status		Violence intensity										Conclusion p' value Result	
		Low		Unwrap		Soaring		Turbulent		Total			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Woman's monthly income (Rs.)	1000- 5000			11	57.89	9	18.00			20	20.00	0.000	Sig
	5000-10,000	2	66.67	6	31.58	11	22.00	1	3.57	20	20.00		
	10,000 and above	1	33.33	1	5.26	3	6.00			5	5.00		
	Nil			1	5.26	27	54.00	27	96.43	55	55.00		
Monthly income of husband	1000- 5000			8	42.11	9	18.00	11	39.29	28	28.00	0.017	Sig
	5000-10,000			3	15.79	12	24.00	9	32.14	24	24.00		
	10,000 and above	3	100.00	8	42.11	29	58.00	8	28.57	48	48.00		
Socio economic status	Low					5	10.00	11	39.29	16	16.00	0.001	Sig
	Lower middle			8	42.11	11	22.00	8	28.57	27	27.00		
	Average middle	2	66.67	10	52.63	31	62.00	9	32.14	52	52.00		
	Upper middle	1	33.33	1	5.26	3	6.00			5	5.00		

thinking of the problems (76%) and indifferent attitude (56%) with family and friends.

Factors contributing to family violence were categorized under fourteen headings (Table 3). The personality or attitude of the abuser has been generally perceived to be the root cause of violence against women. Stress, addictions or substance abuse, family histories of violence as well as relationship or marital problems are also perceived to be the causes of violence against women. Alcohol and a decline in moral values are also seen to be contributing factors. Violence against women is seen more as a recurring problem or pattern than as an isolated incident within a relationship. Younger age at marriage puts a lot of stress for adjustment, which exhibits in violent behavior pattern.

The age group of 25 to 29 years was mostly victimized due to economic reasons, difference of opinion, moral behaviour, psychological aspects, emotional changes,

behavioural changes and overall impact. The size of family affects the relationship within the family and thereby the overall development of human being, the chance of friction also increases. This type of family composition would lead to disturbing influence within the family. Hence, presence of a large number of members in the family not only creates the problem of adjustment but they also act as instigators for domestic violence against women. The study revealed that 82.6 per cent of the women belonging to nuclear family suffered violence due to economic reasons in contrast 87 per cent suffer violence due to this fact found living in a joint family. The educational level of women victims disclosed that women who were illiterate or literate were both prone to family violence. The educational level of husband's of the respondents played a significant role in causing violence.

Socio-economic status of families depicted 27 per cent of the respondents belonged to lower middle class

**Table 3 : Distribution of respondents by their age in relation to violence**

Factors of violence	Age in relation with violence											Result	
	25 to 29		30 to 34		35 to 39		40 to 49		≥ 45		Total		
	N=12	%	N=27	%	N=26	%	N=21	%	N=14	%	N=100		
Economic reasons	Yes	11	91.7	24	88.9	23	88.5	16	76.2	11	78.6	85	0.611
	No	1	8.3	3	11.1	3	11.5	5	23.8	3	21.4	15	
Cultural reason	Yes	1	8.3	2	7.4	1	3.8	2	9.5	3	21.4	9	0.471
	No	11	91.7	25	92.6	25	96.2	19	90.5	11	78.6	91	
Physical reason	Yes	3	25.0	6	22.2	5	19.2	1	4.8			15	0.162
	No	9	75.0	21	77.8	21	80.8	20	95.2	14	100.0	85	
Difference of opinions	Yes	12	100.0	25	92.6	22	84.6	21	100.0	13	92.9	93	0.263
	No			2	7.4	4	15.4			1	7.1	7	
Addiction and speculation	Yes	8	66.7	13	48.1	7	26.9	6	28.6	7	50.0	41	0.103
	No	4	33.3	14	51.9	19	73.1	15	71.4	7	50.0	59	
Moral behaviour	Yes	12	100.0	27	100.0	25	96.2	21	100.0	14	100.0	99	0.584
	No					1	3.8					1	
Marriage and its impact on social life	Yes	7	58.3	26	96.3	24	92.3	18	85.7	10	71.4	85	0.015
	No	5	41.7	1	3.7	2	7.7	3	14.3	4	28.6	15	
Attitude towards family life	Yes	12	100.0	27	100.0	24	92.3	21	100.0	11	78.6	95	0.022
	No					2	7.7			3	21.4	5	
Recreation (Social)	Yes	10	83.3	17	63.0	16	61.5	20	95.2	8	57.1	71	0.039
	No	2	16.7	10	37.0	10	38.5	1	4.8	6	42.9	29	
Community and social ills	Yes	2	16.7	10	37.0	4	15.4	4	19.0	4	28.6	24	0.364
	No	10	83.3	17	63.0	22	84.6	17	81.0	10	71.4	76	
Psychological aspects	Yes	12	100.0	26	96.3	24	92.3	20	95.2	13	92.9	95	0.870
	No			1	3.7	2	7.7	1	4.8	1	7.1	5	
Emotional changes	Yes	12	100.0	27	100.0	24	92.3	20	95.2	14	100.0	97	0.435
	No					2	7.7	1	4.8			3	
Behavioral changes	Yes	12	100.0	26	96.3	20	76.9	20	95.2	10	71.4	88	0.027
	No			1	3.7	6	23.1	1	4.8	4	28.6	12	
Overall impact	Yes	12	100.0	27	100.0	26	100.0	21	100.0	13	92.9	99	0.189
	No									1	7.1	1	

families, 52 per cent belonged to average middle class families and 16 per cent belonged to low family background. Only 5 per cent of the victims were from upper middle class. The study revealed that economic reasons are an important component of socio-economic status. Low income was considerably associated with higher marital instability. The study further reveals that psychological violence is more in upper and lower middle class families; and women experience high emotional violence in low, lower and upper middle class families. Childless women were more victimized than those women who bear children. The prevalence of violence towards married women among reported cases in Police Dept. indicated that it has always been in existence over the years.

### Conclusion and recommendations:

The present study has been designed to explore the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of battered women. The research highlighted the complexities of violence in a patriarchal culture. The study provides insights into the ways that family violence in Srinagar puts women at risk of violence through a complex interweaving of cultural, social, economic and interpersonal factors. The findings dispel the myth that family violence was largely a problem among the poor and uneducated people. It showed that abuse cuts across all socio-economic boundaries. The evidence of this study suggests that traditional gender relationships have imposed a heavy cost on these women. Although in recent years, important changes have taken place in Srinagar, women's subordinate status remains well entrenched. The study identified the long-term tragedy that has imbued women's lives, some of which are deeply scarred by hidden pain. The research portrays that the affects of violence have been devastating to a woman's physical and mental well being. Significant numbers of women suffer from anxiety, depression and stress which are often miserable.

To prevent and control the atrocities against women within their families and make violence visible in society, it is imperative for programmatic intrusion to address violence against women in educating men and society about the adverse consequences. Though many activities have been started, they need to be given greater momentum to pledge that the changes in legal provisions and policies become functional and receive social sanction in the real

sense.

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