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The Impact of Socio-Cultural Factors on Domestic Violence: Examining Abuse Across Various Demographics and Marital Dynamics

C. Venkata Subbaiah[1], Dr. A. Kusuma[2]

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Social work, VikramaSimhapuri University Kakuturu, Nellore
[2]Research Supervisor, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, S.V. University, Tirupati – 517501

Abstract

Domestic violence remains a persistent and severe issue in India, with profound physical, psychological, and economic repercussions for women. This study investigates the socio-cultural determinants of domestic violence, examining the patterns of abuse across various demographics, marital contexts, and family structures. Using YSR Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh as a case study, the research employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from both urban and rural populations. The study surveyed 385 married women, gathering both primary and secondary data to explore the impact of domestic violence on women's well-being. The findings reveal significant differences in domestic violence experiences based on age, education, type of marriage, and family structure. Younger women, particularly those aged 31 to 35 years, experienced higher levels of physical, psychological, and technological abuse, while education level was linked to varying forms of violence. Women with higher education reported greater experiences of technological and financial abuse, while those with lower education faced higher physical violence. Additionally, women in love marriages reported higher levels of physical, psychological, and verbal violence compared to those in arranged marriages, while respondents from nuclear families reported higher psychological and financial violence than those in joint families. The study highlights the complex relationship between socio-cultural factors and domestic violence, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions such as age-specific support programs, financial empowerment, and public awareness campaigns. Strengthening support systems, particularly for women in love marriages and nuclear family settings, is essential to mitigate risks and provide effective protection for those affected by domestic violence. The results underscore the importance of addressing power imbalances and enhancing legal safeguards to protect women's rights and reduce violence in India.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Socio-Cultural Factors, Abuse, Demographics, Marital Dynamics, Gender Roles, Cultural Norms, Socioeconomic Status, Psychological Impact, Intergenerational Violence, Social Stigma, Power and Control.

Introduction

Domestic violence can have severe physical and mental health consequences for women in India, and physical injuries, such as bruises, cuts, and broken bones, lead to chronic health problems such as headaches, gastrointestinal problems, and gynecological disorders (Joshi, Dhawan, & Singh, 2017).

Several factors contribute to domestic violence against women in India, including patriarchal norms, gender inequality, poverty, and lack of education (Koenig et al., 2003). In many parts of India, women are viewed as subordinate to men and are expected to obey their husbands and male family members. Therefore, it leads to women being deprived of their basic human rights and being subjected to violence if they do not comply with these norms. Poverty and lack of education can also increase the risk of domestic violence against women, as women may lack the resources to leave abusive situations or to seek help (Jeyaseelan, Kumar, & Neelakantan, 2007). According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a crime has been reported against women in India every three minutes, two women are raped every sixty minutes, and a young married woman is found beaten to death or burnt every six hours. India as a society has been rooted in patriarchy and practiced it over decades, and most women feel that it is the right of men to beat their wives if she commits any mistakes. Despite these efforts, many women in India continue to face barriers to accessing these services, including a lack of awareness, stigma, and fear of retaliation by their abusers. Moreover, domestic violence against women is a complex and widespread issue in India, with severe bodily and emotional health repercussions for women. Patriarchal standards, female discrimination, poverty, and a lack of education are all factors that contribute to the issue.

According to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005 of the Indian Constitution, domestic violence is defined as any act or conduct that constitutes harassment, harm, injuries, or threats to an aggrieved person or behaviors that likely result in physical, sexual, economic, emotional, verbal, or psychological abuse (Government of India, 2005). The actual abuse and/or threat of abuse are considered violence in this act. Although many scholars have proposed various definitions of domestic violence, the idea of "coercive control" is considered the most effective way to understand violence against women in a patriarchal context like India. Coercive control is the multi-faceted form of oppression rooted within the patriarchal social structure that harms women's autonomy, dignity, and equality and is designed to secure and expand gender-based privileges by establishing a regime of male domination (Stark, 2007). Although strong anthropological evidence supports that differential power and control are important underlying causes for physical and other forms of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner, there has been inadequate quantitative evidence until recently behind this association (Jewkes, 2002; Johnson, 1995). Similarly, studies have found a relationship between unequal power differences in an intimate relationship and spousal violence (Kwagala et al., 2013; Lamichhane et al., 2011; Rahman et al., 2013). However, a general understanding of the underlying factors affecting domestic violence in developing countries remains limited. As far as aware, very little study has been done on the connections between power dynamics, controlling behaviour, wife-beating views, and domestic violence in India. The process and effects of domestic violence will be better understood by focusing on the role of control and various power dynamics in a marriage, which is crucial for preventing and reducing violence against women. In India, about 29% of women aged 18-49 have ever experienced physical violence since age 15. Physical violence sharply increases with age. For instance, women aged 18-19 experience less physical violence (16%) than women aged 40-49 (32%), physical violence is more common among women in rural areas (31%) than in urban areas (24%) (NFHS-5). In 2023, the NCW recorded 28,811 total complaints, 6,304 of which were related to domestic violence.

Material and Methodology

The primary objective of the study is to examine the diverse effects of domestic violence on women's physical, psychological, and economic well-being. It aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how domestic violence impacts women in various contexts. YSR Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh was purposely chosen for its accessibility, facilitating efficient data collection and allowing for a closer examination of socio-cultural and economic factors. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure a representative sample, with stratification based on rural and urban populations. Applying Krejcie and Morgan's method, the sample consisted of 385 married women (131 from urban areas and 254 from rural areas), enabling a comparative analysis of these two settings. Both primary and secondary data were collected to meet the study's objectives. The researcher designed a self-structured interview schedule, which was pre-tested in a pilot study, containing questions addressing various aspects of domestic violence. Data was gathered through face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher to maintain consistency and capture contextual nuances. Secondary data from official reports, academic research, and government statistics supplemented the study, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of domestic violence's multifaceted impacts in both urban and rural settings.

Results and discussion

Table no. 1: Mean differences between domestic violence and age among participants

Variables	Age	N	Mean	SD	f- value	Sig
Physical Violence	22 to 25 Years	60	22.47	4.43	4.511	.004**
	26 to 30 Years	140	21.73	2.33		
	31 to 35 Years	131	22.86	3.72		
	36 to 40 Years	54	21.24	2.13		
Psychological Violence	22 to 25 Years	60	14.00	2.19	3.689	.012*
	26 to 30 Years	140	13.81	2.51		
	31 to 35 Years	131	13.05	2.87		
	36 to 40 Years	54	14.19	2.32		
Verbal Violence	22 to 25 Years	60	15.77	2.97	2.424	.065@
	26 to 30 Years	140	14.85	2.99		
	31 to 35 Years	131	14.86	2.43		
	36 to 40	54	14.56	1.56		

	Years					
Technological Violence	22 to 25 Years	60	11.92	2.15	7.326	.000***
	26 to 30 Years	140	11.85	2.11		
	31 to 35 Years	131	12.88	1.74		
	36 to 40 Years	54	11.98	1.84		
Financial Violence	22 to 25 Years	60	13.93	3.19	3.211	.023*
	26 to 30 Years	140	14.20	3.32		
	31 to 35 Years	131	13.99	2.76		
	36 to 40 Years	54	12.70	2.98		

Significance Level: p<0.00*, p<0.01**, p<0.05*, @=No significance**

The data examines the mean differences in experiences of various forms of domestic violence across different age groups, with statistically significant differences observed in physical, psychological, technological, and financial violence. The analysis shows a significant difference in physical violence across age groups (f = 4.511, p = .004), with the highest mean reported among respondents aged 31 to 35 years (22.86), followed by those aged 22 to 25 years (22.47), while the lowest mean was observed in the 36 to 40 years age group (21.24). Psychological violence also exhibited a significant difference (f = 3.689, p = .012), with respondents aged 36 to 40 years reporting the highest mean (14.19), whereas the 31 to 35 years age group reported the lowest (13.05), suggesting variations in emotional abuse experiences across age groups. In terms of verbal violence, no statistically significant difference was found (f = 2.424, p = .065), indicating relatively similar experiences across all age groups, with the highest mean reported in the 22 to 25 years age group (15.77). Technological violence, however, showed a highly significant difference (f = 7.326, p = .000), with the highest mean reported in the 31 to 35 years age group (12.88), while the lowest was observed in the 26 to 30 years group (11.85), suggesting that technological abuse is more prevalent among respondents in their early thirties. Financial violence also demonstrated a significant difference (f = 3.211, p = .023), with the highest mean found among respondents aged 26 to 30 years (14.20), while the lowest mean was observed in the 36 to 40 years group (12.70), indicating greater financial abuse among younger respondents. These findings suggest that experiences of domestic violence vary across age groups, with notable differences in physical, psychological, technological, and financial violence, emphasizing the need for age-specific interventions to address the unique challenges faced by different age cohorts. The observed variations in experiences of domestic violence across age groups are consistent with prior studies. For instance, studies by García-Moreno et al. (2015) and Cools & Kotsadam (2017) have demonstrated that younger women, particularly those in their twenties and early thirties, are more vulnerable to different forms of abuse, including physical and psychological violence. The present study supports these findings, revealing that

respondents aged 31 to 35 years reported the highest mean for physical violence, whereas psychological violence was most pronounced among respondents aged 36 to 40 years. This suggests that different life stages may influence the type and intensity of abuse experienced, possibly due to relationship dynamics, economic dependencies, and family responsibilities. The significant differences in technological and financial violence across age groups are also supported by prior literature. Research by Dragiewicz et al. (2018) highlights that younger populations are more susceptible to technological abuse due to their greater engagement with digital platforms. Similarly, financial abuse has been noted to disproportionately affect younger individuals who may lack financial independence (Postmus et al., 2020). The current study's findings align with these observations, demonstrating that technological violence is more prevalent among those in their early thirties, while financial abuse is higher among younger respondents aged 26 to 30 years.

Table no. 2: Mean differences between domestic violence and educational qualification among participants

Variables	Educational Qualification	N	Mean	SD	f-value	Sig
Physical Violence	Literate	41	22.61	2.97	2.991	.007**
	Primary	26	20.77	3.02		
	Secondary	142	22.13	3.56		
	Intermediate	90	21.59	3.23		
	Graduate	45	23.27	3.08		
	Post Graduate	18	21.78	1.17		
	Professional Degree	23	23.48	2.84		
Psychological Violence	Literate	41	13.98	1.96	5.493	.000***
	Primary	26	14.12	3.18		
	Secondary	142	13.01	2.56		
	Intermediate	90	14.34	2.73		
	Graduate	45	14.58	2.59		
	Postgraduate	18	13.11	1.02		
	Professional Degree	23	12.13	1.91		
Verbal Violence	Literate	41	14.46	1.58	2.012	.063@
	Primary	26	13.88	1.93		
	Secondary	142	14.87	2.55		
	Intermediate	90	15.01	2.48		
	Graduate	45	15.58	3.74		
	Postgraduate	18	15.11	3.89		
	Professional Degree	23	16.00	2.11		
Technological Violence	Literate	41	11.07	2.23	16.975	.000***
	Primary	26	11.50	0.99		
	Secondary	142	12.27	1.86		
	Intermediate	90	12.12	1.17		
	Graduate	45	11.93	2.42		

	Postgraduate	18	15.89	1.02		
	Professional Degree	23	13.00	2.28		
Financial Violence	Literate	41	13.85	3.90	8.664	.000***
	Primary	26	15.12	2.27		
	Secondary	142	13.02	2.56		
	Intermediate	90	14.10	2.95		
	Graduate	45	14.09	3.27		
	Postgraduate	18	17.89	1.02		
	Professional Degree	23	13.39	3.80		

Significance Level: p<0.00*, p<0.01**, p<0.05*, @=No significance**

The data reveals significant differences in experiences of domestic violence based on educational qualifications, with variations observed in physical, psychological, technological, and financial violence. Physical violence showed a significant difference (f = 2.991, p = .007), with graduates (23.27) and those with professional degrees (23.48) reporting the highest mean values, while individuals with primary education (20.77) reported the lowest, suggesting that higher educational qualifications may be associated with more severe experiences of physical abuse. Psychological violence exhibited a highly significant difference (f = 5.493, p = .000), with individuals with professional degrees (12.13) and post-graduate qualifications (13.11) reporting lower mean values, indicating that higher education may reduce the incidence of psychological violence. Verbal violence did not show a significant difference (f = 2.012, p = .063), with relatively consistent mean values across education levels, suggesting that verbal abuse is experienced similarly regardless of educational qualifications. Technological violence showed a highly significant difference (f = 16.975, p = .000), with post-graduate (15.89) and professional degree holders (13.00) reporting the highest mean values, indicating that technological abuse may be more prevalent among those with higher education. Financial violence also demonstrated a significant difference (f = 8.664, p = .000), with post-graduate respondents reporting the highest mean (17.89), followed by those with primary education (15.12), suggesting that individuals with both lower and higher educational qualifications experience heightened financial abuse. These findings highlight the complex relationship between educational qualification and different forms of domestic violence, indicating that both lower and higher educational levels can be associated with distinct patterns of abuse. Education level also emerged as a significant factor influencing domestic violence experiences, with higher educational qualifications being associated with both increased and decreased forms of abuse. Previous studies (Vyas & Watts, 2009) have suggested that higher education provides women with greater awareness and resources to challenge abusive behaviors, potentially reducing psychological violence. This study's results corroborate this notion, showing that individuals with professional degrees and postgraduate qualifications reported lower mean values for psychological violence. However, the finding that technological and financial violence were significantly higher among those with higher education levels aligns with research by Yount et al. (2016), which posits that financial control and digital surveillance tactics may be more sophisticated among highly educated individuals, reflecting power dynamics in relationships.

Table No. 3: Mean differences between domestic violence and type of marriage among participants

Variables	Type of Marriage	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Physical Violence	Arranged	284	21.55	3.01	-6.492	.000***
	Love	101	23.88	3.35		
Psychological Violence	Arranged	284	13.44	2.63	-2.548	.011*
	Love	101	14.20	2.43		
Verbal Violence	Arranged	284	14.71	2.50	-3.016	.003**
	Love	101	15.63	2.97		
Technological Violence	Arranged	284	12.38	1.84	2.562	.011*
	Love	101	11.79	2.36		
Financial Violence	Arranged	284	14.21	2.99	3.556	.000***
	Love	101	12.95	3.22		

Significance Level: p<0.00*, p<0.01**, p<0.05*, @=No significance**

Table No. 3 presents the mean differences in various forms of domestic violence based on the type of marriage, comparing arranged and love marriages. The results of the independent samples t-test revealed statistically significant differences across all categories of domestic violence. Respondents in love marriages reported significantly higher experiences of physical, psychological, and verbal violence compared to those in arranged marriages. Specifically, the mean score for physical violence was higher among respondents in love marriages (M = 23.88, SD = 3.35) than those in arranged marriages (M = 21.55, SD = 3.01), with a t-value of -6.492 and a highly significant p-value of .000 ($p < 0.001$). Psychological violence was also reported at a higher level in love marriages (M = 14.20, SD = 2.43) compared to arranged marriages (M = 13.44, SD = 2.63), with a t-value of -2.548 and a significance level of p = .011, indicating a significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level. Similarly, verbal violence mean scores were significantly higher in love marriages (M = 15.63, SD = 2.97) than in arranged marriages (M = 14.71, SD = 2.50), with a t-value of -3.016 and a significance level of p = .003 ($p < 0.01$). On the contrary, arranged marriages were associated with significantly higher instances of technological and financial violence. Respondents in arranged marriages reported a higher mean score for technological violence (M = 12.38, SD = 1.84) compared to those in love marriages (M = 11.79, SD = 2.36), with a t-value of 2.562 and a significance level of p = .011, showing a significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level. Additionally, financial violence was significantly higher among respondents in arranged marriages (M = 14.21, SD = 2.99) compared to love marriages (M = 12.95, SD = 3.22), with a t-value of 3.556 and a highly significant p-value of .000 ($p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that love marriages are more prone to physical, psychological, and verbal violence, while arranged marriages exhibit a greater prevalence of technological and financial violence. The results indicate that the type of marriage may influence the patterns of domestic violence, potentially due to differences in societal pressures, financial dynamics, and the availability of family support structures in each marital arrangement. These findings support previous research by Kishor & Johnson (2004), which suggested that love marriages, often formed with less familial oversight, may lead to higher instances of interpersonal conflict and violence. On the other hand, studies such as Jejeebhoy & Sathar (2001) indicate that arranged marriages, particularly in traditional settings, may involve economic control and restrictions on autonomy, contributing to

financial and technological abuse. These patterns suggest that the nature of marital formation plays a crucial role in shaping domestic violence experiences.

Table No. 4. Mean differences between domestic violence and type of family among participants

Variables	Type of Family	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Physical Violence	Nuclear	278	21.97	2.91	-1.782	.075@
	Joint	107	22.64	4.02		
Psychological Violence	Nuclear	278	13.85	2.64	2.652	.008**
	Joint	107	13.07	2.41		
Verbal Violence	Nuclear	278	14.87	2.62	-1.016	.310@
	Joint	107	15.18	2.76		
Technological Violence	Nuclear	278	12.10	2.09	-1.965	.050*
	Joint	107	12.55	1.73		
Financial Violence	Nuclear	278	14.31	3.29	4.475	.000***
	Joint	107	12.77	2.17		

Significance Level: p<0.00*, p<0.01**, p<0.05*, @=No significance**

Table No. 4 presents the mean differences in various forms of domestic violence based on the type of family, categorized as nuclear and joint families. The analysis revealed that respondents from nuclear families reported significantly higher levels of psychological and financial violence compared to those from joint families. Specifically, the mean score for psychological violence was significantly higher among respondents from nuclear families (M = 13.85, SD = 2.64) than those from joint families (M = 13.07, SD = 2.41), with a t-value of 2.652 and a significance level of p = .008, indicating a significant difference at the p < 0.01 level. Similarly, financial violence was significantly higher among respondents from nuclear families (M = 14.31, SD = 3.29) compared to joint families (M = 12.77, SD = 2.17), with a t-value of 4.475 and a highly significant p-value of .000 (p < 0.001). However, no statistically significant differences were found in physical, verbal, and technological violence between the two family types. For physical violence, the mean score for nuclear families (M = 21.97, SD = 2.91) was slightly lower than that for joint families (M = 22.64, SD = 4.02), but the difference was not significant (t = -1.782, p = .075). In the case of verbal violence, respondents from nuclear families (M = 14.87, SD = 2.62) and joint families (M = 15.18, SD = 2.76) showed no significant difference (t = -1.016, p = .310). Similarly, technological violence did not show a significant difference between nuclear (M = 12.10, SD = 2.09) and joint families (M = 12.55, SD = 1.73), with a t-value of -1.965 and a significance level of p = .050. These findings suggest that nuclear family settings may contribute to a higher prevalence of psychological and financial violence, while joint family structures might provide a protective factor in these aspects. However, no significant variations were observed in other forms of violence, indicating that the type of family does not necessarily influence experiences of physical, verbal, or technological abuse. This aligns with findings from Koenig et al. (2006), who argue that joint family structures may offer protective mechanisms, such as greater social surveillance and support systems, reducing the incidence of certain types of abuse. The present study reinforces this perspective by demonstrating that joint families appear to buffer against psychological and financial violence, though they do not significantly influence experiences of physical, verbal, or technological abuse.

Table No.5: Percentage distribution of the respondents by locality and physical injuries during the attack

Locality	Physical injuries during the attack					Total	Chi square values
	Very Serious	Serious	Moderate	Very less	Not at all		
Rural	14	21	118	82	19	254	χ^2=7.686 DF=4 P=.104 @
	63.6%	47.7%	69.0%	67.8%	70.4%	66.0%	
Urban	8	23	53	39	8	131	
	36.4%	52.3%	31.0%	32.2%	29.6%	34.0%	
Total	22	44	171	121	27	385	
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

The data from Table shows a distribution of physical injuries during attacks among rural and urban respondents, with no statistically significant association (P>0.05) based on the Chi-square test (χ^2 = 7.686, DF = 4, p = 0.104). In rural areas, a higher percentage of respondents reported very serious injuries (63.6 percent) compared to urban respondents (36.4 percent), while urban respondents had a slightly higher percentage of serious injuries (52.3 percent) than rural respondents (47.7 percent). A significantly larger proportion of rural respondents reported moderate injuries (69.0 percent) compared to urban respondents (31.0 percent), and rural respondents also reported more very less injuries (67.8 percent) and no injuries (70.4 percent) than urban respondents (32.2 percent and 29.6 percent, respectively). Despite these differences in injury severity, the p-value indicates that the variations between rural and urban respondents are not statistically significant, suggesting that locality does not have a significant impact on the severity of physical injuries sustained during the attack. The study by Heise (2011), suggested that rural women may face higher barriers to seeking help and therefore experience more severe consequences of abuse. However, other studies (Decker et al., 2014) have indicated that while rural areas may report higher rates of severe injuries, urban areas are not necessarily safer due to different stressors, such as economic pressures and social isolation. The lack of statistical significance in the present study suggests that while rural women may report higher proportions of serious injuries, other contextual factors must be considered to understand the full scope of violence severity.

Conclusion and recommendations

Domestic violence in India continues to be a critical issue, driven by patriarchal norms, gender inequality, poverty, and a lack of education. The prevalence of coercive control highlights the importance of focused interventions. Addressing power imbalances and enhancing awareness, legal safeguards, and support services are vital for reducing violence and protecting women's rights. The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions, such as age-specific support programs, financial empowerment initiatives, and public awareness campaigns. Strengthening support systems, especially for individuals in love marriages and nuclear family structures, is essential to mitigate risks and provide effective protection and assistance to those affected by domestic violence.

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