

A Study on Spousal Violence Under Different Background Characteristics in Jharkhand

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Abstract

Spousal violence is a major socio-economic concern in India, particularly among marginalized communities. This study explores the prevalence of emotional, physical, and sexual violence against ever-married women aged 18-49 in Jharkhand based on NFHS-5 (2019-21) data. The analysis considers various background characteristics such as age, residence, education, marital status, number of children, household structure, religion, caste/tribe, wealth quintile, and family history of violence. Using statistical tools, tables, and visualizations, the paper highlights the disparities in spousal violence and its implications for policy intervention. Objectives of the study are to know the rate of spousal violence under different background characteristics.

To know the reasons of spousal violence

Keywords: Spousal violence, sexual, emotional, physical, caste, religion, family, husband, women, rural.

1. Introduction

Spousal violence is a major hindrance to gender equality and empowerment of women, especially in the developing nations. In India, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) states that a significant number of women face violence from their husbands. Jharkhand has a diverse socio economic background and high concentration of Scheduled Tribes, making it a potential case for studying spousal violence. This paper investigates the impact of different background traits on the incidence of emotional, physical and sexual violence against women residing in the state.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Spousal Violence in India

Research indicates that spousal violence is deeply entrenched in patriarchal social norms. Studies have shown that factors such as low education, economic dependence, and cultural acceptance of domestic violence contribute to its persistence (Jejeebhoy, 1998; NFHS-5, 2021).

2.2 Socio-Economic Determinants of Violence

The likelihood of experiencing spousal violence varies by economic status, caste, and religion. Dalal et al. (2012) found that women from lower economic strata and marginalized castes face higher risks. Similarly, tribal women, particularly in Jharkhand, have reported higher levels of violence due to economic vulnerabilities and weaker institutional support (Kumar & Tiwari, 2019).

2.3 Policy Interventions and Gaps

Although legal frameworks such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) exist, implementation remains weak. Studies have emphasized the need for targeted intervention programs, particularly in rural and tribal communities, to reduce spousal violence (Singh & Singh,2020).

3. Objectives of the study are:

- To know the rate of spousal violence under different background characteristics.
- To know the reasons of spousal violence

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Source

The study utilizes secondary data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) conducted in 2019-21. The dataset includes responses from ever-married women aged 18-49 in Jharkhand.

4.2 Variables Considered

Dependent Variable: Experience of spousal violence (emotional, physical, or sexual).

Independent Variables: Age, residence, schooling, marital status, number of children, household structure, religion, caste/tribe, wealth quintile, and history of domestic violence in the respondent’s family.

4.3 Analytical Tools

- Descriptive Statistics: Percentage distributions for various background characteristics.
- Visualization Analysis: Tables are used to explain and represent trends.
- Comparative Analysis: Correlation between socio-economic factors and spousal violence.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Spousal Violence by Age

Age Group	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
18-19	10.5	18.8	7.1	24.6
20-24	12.2	24.3	5.4	28.2
25-29	13.4	27.1	6.2	30.7
30-39	14.4	29.4	6.7	32.8
40-49	15.0	29.9	6.1	33.7

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21).

- Spousal violence increases with age, peaking in the 40-49 age group.
- Emotional violence is more commonly reported by older women, increasing from 10.5% in the 18-19 group to 15.0% in the 40-49 group.
- Physical violence is highest among women aged 30-39 (29.4%) and 40-49 (29.9%).
- Sexual violence is highest among younger women (18-19 years: 7.1%) and declines slightly with age.
- The findings suggest that younger women face more sexual violence, while older women report higher emotional and physical violence, possibly due to prolonged exposure to abusive relationships.

5.2 Spousal Violence by Religion

Religion	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
Hindu	14.2	29.1	6.2	32.7
Muslim	13.7	26.2	7.3	30.3
Christian	13.3	22.0	4.6	26.3
Sikh	6.7	10.3	3.0	12.4
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	16.8	28.1	6.8	31.8
Jain	2.1	20.2	0.6	20.2
Other	7.6	24.3	6.5	26.4

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21).

- Hindu women report the highest levels of overall spousal violence (32.7%), with physical violence being particularly high (29.1%).
- Muslim women experience higher sexual violence (7.3%) compared to other religious groups.
- Christian and Jain women report lower levels of physical violence (22.3% and 20.2%, respectively).
- Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist women report the highest level of emotional violence (16.8%) and women from Jain religion report the lowest rates of emotional violence (2.1%) but still experience significant level of physical violence.
- These findings suggest that socio-cultural and economic factors, rather than religion alone, play a significant role in determining spousal violence rates.
- Hindu and Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist women report higher levels of spousal violence compared to other religious categories. This could be due to cultural norms and varying levels of gender equality in different religious communities.

5.3 Spousal Violence by Caste

Caste	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
Scheduled Caste	16.9	33.7	7.4	37.3
Scheduled Tribe	15.2	30.9	6.7	34.7
OBC	13.6	29.5	6.0	32.9
Other	12.3	21.6	5.7	25.6
Don't Know	7.7	22.5	6.1	24.2

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21).

- Scheduled Caste (SC) women face the highest overall spousal violence (37.3%), with physical violence (33.7%) being significantly higher than other groups.
- Scheduled Tribe (ST) women also report high levels of violence (34.7%), with physical violence (30.9%) being a major concern.
- OBC women experience slightly lower but still significant levels of violence (32.9%), indicating that caste-based discrimination and economic vulnerabilities may contribute to spousal abuse.

- Women from General/Other Castes report the lowest violence levels (25.6%), suggesting that socio-economic privilege and access to resources may reduce vulnerability.
- The data highlights the intersection of caste-based marginalization and gender-based violence, particularly among SC and ST women.
- Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women experience significantly higher levels of spousal violence compared to OBC women. Socio-economic marginalization and cultural factors contribute to this disparity.

5.4 Spousal Violence by Education Level

Education Level	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
No Schooling	17.9	37.1	8.4	40.6
Less than 5 years	16.2	31.3	8.8	35.7
5-7 years complete	14.8	30.6	6.5	33.9
8-9 years complete	12.1	25.6	5.5	29.3
10-11 years complete	13.1	24.4	5.2	28.7
12 or more years complete	9.2	17.0	3.4	20.3

Source: National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), 2019-21.

- Women with no schooling report the highest rates of all forms of violence, while those with 12 or more years of education report the lowest.
- Women with no schooling (17.9%) experience more emotional violence than those with higher education (9.2% for 12+ years).
- The highest incidence of physical violence (37.1%) is among women with no schooling, compared to only 17.0% among those with higher education.
- Women with lower education levels also experience higher sexual violence, with the highest (8.8%) among those with less than 5 years of schooling and the lowest (3.4%) among 12+ years of education.
- The data indicates an inverse relationship between education level and spousal violence.

5.5 Spousal Violence by Residence

Residence	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
Urban	12.2	23.8	4.8	27.3
Rural	14.9	30.3	6.9	34.0

Source: National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), 2019-21.

- Women in rural areas experience significantly higher rates of all forms of spousal violence compared to urban areas.

- Emotional violence is highest in rural areas (14.9%) than in urban areas (12.2%).
- Physical violence is notably higher in rural areas (30.3%) than in urban areas (23.8%).
- Sexual violence is also more prevalent in rural areas (6.9%) compared to urban areas (4.8%).
- The higher prevalence of violence in rural areas can be attributed to lower literacy rates, economic dependence, limited legal awareness, and stronger patriarchal norms that normalize domestic violence.

5.6 Spousal Violence by Household Structure

Household Structure	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
Nuclear	14.8	31.0	6.9	34.6
Non-Nuclear	13.3	25.7	5.7	29.3

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21).

- Women in nuclear households experience higher spousal violence (34.6%) compared to those in non-nuclear households (29.3%).
- Physical violence is notably higher in nuclear families (31.0%) than in non-nuclear households (25.7%).
- Sexual violence is also slightly more prevalent in nuclear families (6.9%) compared to non-nuclear families (5.7%).
- Possible reasons:
 1. Women in nuclear households may have less family support, making them more vulnerable to spousal violence.
 2. In contrast, non-nuclear households (joint families) may provide some protection, as the presence of other family members may discourage severe violence.
- The data suggests that living arrangements influence domestic violence risk, with women in nuclear families being at greater risk.

5.7 Spousal Violence by Number of Children

Number of Children	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
0	12.9	19.4	5.3	23.6
1-2	13.3	25.8	5.6	29.5
3-4	15.5	34.0	7.0	37.4
5 or more	15.7	37.6	10.5	41.0

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21).

- Spousal violence increases with the number of children. Women with more children report higher levels of all forms of violence.
- Women with five or more children face the highest overall violence (41.0%), with physical violence (37.6%) being particularly severe.
- Sexual violence is also highest among women with five or more children (10.5%), indicating greater vulnerability.
- Emotional violence is also highest among women with five or more children (15.7%).

- Possible reasons for this trend: First, Women with more children may be more economically dependent on their husbands, reducing their ability to leave abusive relationships. Secondly more children could increase household stress, leading to higher conflict and violence.
- The data highlights the need for family planning, economic empowerment, and social support programs to protect women from domestic violence.

5.8 Spousal Violence by Wealth Quintile

Wealth Quintile	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
Lowest	18.6	36.9	10.2	41.2
Second	16.0	34.3	7.8	37.9
Middle	14.6	28.9	5.7	32.7
Fourth	11.7	23.4	4.3	26.7
Highest	8.8	16.5	3.1	19.7

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21).

- Spousal violence is significantly higher among women from lower wealth quintiles.
- Women in the lowest wealth quintile experience the highest overall violence (41.2%), with physical violence (36.9%) being the most prevalent.
- Sexual violence is higher in the lowest quintile (10.2%) compared to the highest quintile (3.1%).
- As wealth increases, spousal violence decreases:
 1. Middle-class women experience moderate levels of violence (32.7%).
 2. Women in the highest wealth quintile face the least violence (19.7%).
- Possible reasons:
 - Economic dependency makes it harder for poorer women to leave abusive relationships.
 - Women from wealthier households may have better education, legal awareness, and social support systems.
- These findings suggest the need for economic empowerment programs and financial independence initiatives to reduce vulnerability to spousal violence.

5.9 Spousal Violence by Family History of Violence

Family History	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
Father Beat Mother - Yes	26.3	53.2	11.9	57.7
Father Beat Mother - No	11.0	21.9	4.7	25.3
Don't Know	16.5	36.6	10.7	41.0

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21).

- Women who witnessed their father beating their mother are significantly more likely to experience spousal violence themselves.
- Emotional violence (26.3%), physical violence (53.2%), and sexual violence (11.9%) are highest among women whose fathers abused their mothers.

- Intergenerational cycle of violence:
 1. Women who grow up in violent households may perceive spousal violence as normal or inevitable.
 2. Men raised in abusive households may be more likely to engage in violent behavior themselves.
- Women with no family history of violence report significantly lower spousal violence (25.3% overall).
- The data highlights the importance of breaking the cycle of domestic violence through awareness programs, counseling, and legal interventions.

5.10 Spousal Violence by Marital Status

Marital Status	Emotional Violence (%)	Physical Violence (%)	Sexual Violence (%)	Any Violence (%)
Currently Married	13.2	27.3	5.8	31.0
Widowed/Separated/Divorced/Deserted	26.9	42.9	13.4	46.4

Source: National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), 2019-21.

- Higher Violence Among Widowed/Separated/Divorced/Deserted Women:
 1. Women who are widowed, separated, divorced or deserted report the highest levels of spousal violence (46.4%), indicating that violence may have played a role in the dissolution of their marriage.
 2. The higher levels of emotional (26.9%), physical (42.9%) and sexual violence (13.4%) suggest that many women face abuse before separation.
- Violence Among Currently Married Women:
 1. 31.0% of currently married women experience some form of spousal violence, with physical violence (27.3%) being the most common.
 2. The presence of violence in marriage highlights the need for stronger legal protections and social support.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion:

This study confirms that spousal violence is influenced by multiple background characteristics. Spousal violence is a serious problem in Jharkhand. Three types of spousal violence namely emotional, physical and sexual violence are prevailing in Jharkhand. There are various reasons of spousal violence such as illiteracy, backwardness of society, alcoholism, early marriage, male dominancy etc. Study of spousal violence under background characteristics such as age, residence, education, marital status, wealth quintile, family history of violence, religion, household structure, caste/tribe and number of children suggests that Younger women (18-19 years) experience higher sexual violence, while older women report higher emotional and physical violence. Also Spousal violence increases with age, peaking in the 30-39 age group. Rural women face greater physical and sexual violence, likely due to economic dependency and social norms that discourage reporting. Higher education is strongly linked to lower violence. Women with no schooling experience over twice the violence of those with 12+ years of education. Educated women are more financially independent and aware of legal protections, reducing their vulnerability. Women from General/Other Castes report the lowest violence levels (25.6%), indicating socio-economic privilege plays a role in reducing risk. Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) women report the highest levels of violence (37.3% and 34.7%, respectively). Women in

nuclear households face higher violence compared to those in non-nuclear households. Joint family structures may offer some protection against spousal violence. Women with more children experience more violence. Those with 5 or more children face the highest overall violence (41.0%). Economic stress and caregiving burdens may contribute to higher conflict in larger families. Lower economic status is strongly linked to higher spousal violence. Women in the lowest wealth quintile report the highest violence (41.2%), while those in the highest quintile report the least (19.7%). Financial independence is a key factor in reducing spousal abuse. Women who witnessed their fathers beating their mothers are far more likely to experience spousal violence themselves. Over half (57.7%) of such women report experiencing spousal violence, highlighting the intergenerational transmission of abuse. Women who are widowed/separated/divorced/ deserted experience highest level of spousal violence (46.4%) before marriage that may have cause in ending their marriage.

6.2 Policy Recommendations:

1. **Strict implementation of laws:** Laws such as PWDVA,2005 along with IPC sections 498A and 304 B should be properly enforced.
2. **Education and Awareness through ‘Nukad Natak’ and Media Advocacy:** Giving importance to female education to reduce vulnerability and creating awareness through media, television and social media about laws and support mechanisms.
3. **Rural Outreach Programs:** Strengthening legal aid services in rural Jharkhand.
4. **Economic Empowerment :** Skill development program for women to reduce dependency on their husband and making them financial independent.
5. **Outreach through SHGs:** Special program should be conducted to help victims of spousal violence.
6. **Community Policing and Reporting Mechanisms:** Encouraging safe reporting of domestic violence cases.
7. **Men’s engagement programs:** Programs for men and boys education for changing behavior towards female and making them more responsible and sensitive.
8. **Helpline and support:** Strengthen 24×7 helpline and promoting mobile apps to reporting abuse.
9. **Periodic Surveys and research studies:** Surveys and research studies should be more often conduction in this area through Government support.
10. **Women Empowerment:** Overall empowerment through Government support such as financial independence, equal opportunities and giving women the opportunity to make their own decision will reduce the percentage of spousal violence.

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