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Socio economic status and wife battering: A sociological study on married women in Amritsar district of Punjab

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Abstract

The present paper examined the association between husband's socio economic status and wives' exposure to physical beating in Amritsar district of Punjab. The data was collected from 292 married women through interview method. In the statistical analysis of the primary data, socio economic features like husband's education, occupation and income are taken as independent variables and wife battering is the dependent variable. The findings of the present study showed significant relationship between husbands' socio economic status and infliction of wife battering. More the husband's education and income, lesser would be the battering against wives. The highest numbers of men showing physical aggression towards their women are engaged in casual work having employment instability in other words. It has also been found that women of all the strata suffer physical violence at the hands of their husbands though there is class wise variation in terms of education and income. It is found to be lowest among the highest educational and income categories.

Keywords: Husband's education, income, occupation, wife battering

Introduction

The cruel form of domestic violence in Indian society is the wife battering (Sabharwal and Kumar, 2010) [10]. For an Indian woman, the society, the religion, her parents and in-laws, everyone expects her to become husband's shadow. The worst thing is that all these come as a rude shock to her after marriage. In Indian families, man enjoys absolute power and authority, makes every decision as the undisputed "head of the family" (Ram, 2003) [9]. The physical punishment of wives has been particularly sanctioned under the notion of male's entitlement (entitlement means having monopoly over all the developmental factors like education, occupation, health care, nutrition and material assets) and ownership of women (Krishna, 2011). Thus male domination, patriarchal system, gender discrimination, social dependency and unequal power relations trigger beating of wives. Since the status of women is very low in her "ghar" (in-laws' home) her only influence in the joint family is through her husband. When a husband who is supposed to love and protect his wife, beats her, slaps her, or kicks her, it becomes a shattering experience for the wife. Wife battering is defined as "willfully striking wife by her husband with or without injury" (Ahuja, 2000) [11]. Battering in any form would be covered by the definition of 'hurt' as given under section 319 of the IPC. 'Hurt' is defined as "causing of bodily pain, disease or infirmity to any person" (Nagla, 1991) [5]. Bruises, broken bones, head injuries, lacerations and internal bleeding are some of the acute effects of wife beating incidents that require medical attention and hospitalization. Victims who are pregnant during that critical time of violence experience greater risk of miscarriage, pre-term labour and injury to or death of the fetus with vaginal infection (Vashistha, 2012) [14].

Battering is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of physical violence. Wife battering though a universal phenomenon and existing through all ages has been shrouded in secrecy, guilt and shame on the part of the victims. As we live in a patriarchal society, beating of wife is seriously under-reported crime because of its location, the "home". Moreover in our culture we have the quotation of Tulsidas such as "Drums, donkeys and women need to be beaten". Even religion has played more or less a crucial role in reinforcing

brutal attitudes towards women which include “mortification of the flesh” deemed religious and more appropriate to the female (Misra, 2006) [4].

Magnitude of the Problem

The world development report (1993), pointed out that globally marital rape and physical abuse account for about 5 per cent of the total disease burden amongst the women in the age of 15-44 years. Nearly 60 per cent of the women were killed by severe beating in the US in the hands of their husband’s or boyfriend’s. According to the UNIFEM Report (1998), in the United States, one woman is physically abused by her intimate partner every nine seconds. In UK, one woman in ten is severely beaten by an intimate partner. In Kenya, 42 per cent of women in Kissi district reported

that they were regularly beaten in their homes. In Brazil, 88.8 per cent of the female victims of physical violence were housewives. Studies in Canada show that women are more likely to be murdered by an intimate partner than by a stranger. In India dowry-related violence claims the lives of over 5000 women each year.

According to National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), in 2000, 45,778 cases of wife abuse were reported which rose to 58,319 cases in 2005. Incidents of domestic violence against women have risen over the last five years with 27 percent in India. Further, relevant statistics related to Cruelty by Husband and Dowry harassment as they are directly linked with Wife battering have been extracted from Crime in India, from the year 2005-2012. The number of cases reported these years are given below.

Table 1: Cases of Domestic Violence in India as per National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), 2005-2012.

Nature of Crime	No.							
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Cruelty by husband	58319	63128	75930	81344	89546	94041	99135	106527
Dowry	3204	4504	5623	5555	5650	5182	6619	9038

Source: Official site of National Crime Record Bureau:- www.ncrb.gov.in

As per the records of NCRB, the crimes reported under cruelty by husband have increased from 58319 in 2005 to 106527 in 2012. The data reveals an increase of 48208 cases

along seven years. Similarly, dowry related cases increased from 3204 cases in 2005 to 9038 cases in the year 2012 i.e. an increase of 5834 cases along the seven years.

Table 2: Crime against Women in Punjab (2010-2013).

Nature of Crime	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Rape	546	479	680	888	2593
Dowry Death	184	143	118	126	571
Assault on Women with intent to outrage her modesty	354	282	340	1045	2021
Cruelty by Husbands and relatives	1163	1136	1293	1741	5333
Insult to the modesty of women	38	31	31	67	167
Total incidents of Crime against Women	2285	2071	2462	3867	10685

Source: Additional Director General Police, Crime Branch, Punjab

Above table represents the trends of crime against women in Punjab since 2010-2013 as per the NCRB data. Total number of registered cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives in Punjab is high among all types of crimes against women.

The important causes of wife battering are sexual maladjustment, emotional disturbances, husband’s alcoholism, jealousy and wife’s passive timidity. Suspicion of infidelity, dowry and instigation by in-laws are also the major ones (Prabhakar, 2012) [8]. Still there are diverse factors such as age, religion, caste, educational background, rural or urban background, child bearing, male child, economic status-all reflect the status of both man and woman in the social, political and economic system but its roots are found in history and culture. Violence against women like all other historical phenomenon of violence must be seen in a socio-economic and political power relation (Tiwari, 2009). Cubbins and Vannoy (2005) [13] studied the socio economic resources, gender traditionalism and wife abuse among couples. They used the resource theory of wife abuse and studied how the socio-economic resources and gender traditionalism influence wife assault. It is not only prevalent among the poor and the illiterate but even the rich and highly educated women are similarly tortured by their husband.

Domestic violence can happen in any socio economic class, but it is more prevalent among the poor and illiterate or low

educated families (kaur and Nagaich, 2019) [6]. Just as wife’s socio economic attributes like educational attainment, income and occupational level instigate husband’s physical torture against her, in the same way husband’s socio economic status in terms of education, income and occupation etc. effect wife battering.

Objectives and Methodology

The objective of this paper is to analyze the influence of socio economic aspects of respondents’ husbands on wife battering in Amritsar district of Punjab (India). In order to fulfill the objective of present study, primary data was collected. 292 ever married women were interviewed through interview schedule in Amritsar district of Punjab. To see the association of husband’s socio economic status and wife battering, the chi-square test was applied and percentages were drawn for statistical analysis of data.

Socio Economic Aspects of Respondents’ Husbands

Socio economic status of the respondents’ husbands is measured in terms of husband’s education, income and nature of occupation. The above spousal characteristics are taken into consideration because women’s status variables operate at the family level where men are generally considered the bread winners of homes. He is addressed and elevated to the position of the *Annadata* (giver of grains) and *Grih Karta* (household authority). Though the women

do supplementary jobs for the good of the family, the ideologies of domesticity always reaffirmed the domestic subservience of women who are believed to be dependent. On the whole, welfare of a woman is dependent on her husband's status. On the other hand if the husband is not a

sufficient provider to his family, the economic hardship, educational backwardness and occupational instability emerge as the provoking factors behind her torture and humiliation. Her closeness or physical proximity with her husband makes her an easy target for all his frustration.

Table 3: Education of Respondent's Husband.

Educational level	No. of Respondent's Husband	Percentages
Primary	113	38.7
Matric	62	21.2
Secondary	45	15.4
Graduation	41	14.0
Above Graduation	31	10.6
Total	292	100.0

Table 3 reveals the educational status of respondent's husband. The analysis shows that majority of the respondents' husbands are educated up to primary level i.e. 38.7 per cent followed by 21.2 per cent of men with matriculation and 15.4 per cent males with Secondary level of education. Only 14.0 per cent are graduates and 10.6 have acquired higher education.

Table 4: Husband's Occupation.

Nature of employment	No. of Respondents' Husbands	Percentages
Regular	50	17.1
Casual	177	60.6
Self	65	22.3
Total	292	100.0

Table 4 depict the nature of husband's employment. 60.6 per cent of counterparts of women respondents are engaged in casual work. Only 50 males (17.1%) are occupied in regular work followed by 22.3 per cent men who are self-employed. Quite a large proportion of casually employed males as obvious in analysis form the in formalization of labour as the hub of male employment.

Table 5: Income level of Respondents' Husbands.

Income Groups	Frequency	Percentages
Up to 5000	122	41.8
5001-10000	91	31.2
10001-15000	30	10.3
15001-20000	29	9.9
Above 20000	20	6.8
Total	292	100.0

Table 5 represent the income distribution pattern of respondents' husbands. A dominant proportion of males' i.e. 122 (41.8%) have an income of rupees less than 5000 or some have nearly 5000 per month while 31.2 per cent of men earn between the range of 5001-10000 rupees. 10.3 per cent males are having the earning above ten thousands to 15000 rupees followed by the income group of 15001-20000. The least proportion of life partners of women earn above 20000. Thus majority of the men have poor financial status that implies difficulty in meeting basic costs, including struggling to pay for food, accommodation, clothing, education, health care etc. and trying to balance competing demands. Minority falls in the middle and high income group.

Table 6: Distribution of socio economic attributes of respondents' husband as per the extent of wife battering.

Variables	Wife battering	Chi-square
Educational status of respondents' husbands		
Primary	93.3	Chi-square (χ^2) = 100.797 (P=.000)-significant
Matriculation	90.2	
Secondary	84.1	
Graduation	38.7	
Higher	25.8	
Total	69.2	
Nature of Employment of Husband		
Regular	63.1	Chi-square (χ^2) = 8.294 (P=.016)-significant
Casual	86.0	
Self	66.7	
Total	69.2	
Income of Husband (per month)		
Upto 5000	79.3	Chi-square (χ^2) = 35.207 (P=.000)-sign
5001-10000	76.9	
10001-15000	65.6	
15001-20000	50.0	
Above 20000	30.0	
Total	69.2	

Table 6 describes the occurrence of wife battering as per the educational level of husbands. The highest and the lowest percentage of males who batter their wives are educated up to primary level (93.3%) and higher level (25.8%) of

education. Even the percentages of men with Matric (90.2%) and Secondary i.e. 84.1 per cent is quite high as wife abusers. There is another category of graduates (38.7%) who are in the bottom-two. An in depth analysis of

the table reveals the huge difference of educational attainment among the spouses of women. In other words, with the increase in the educational level of husbands, the physical torture against wives seems to decrease. Again in this table, an effort has been made to observe the association between wife battering and educational level of husbands by using chi square test. And the test showed the positive result. It showed that there is significant association between the two variables as the P-value is less than .05 and is .000 with a chi square value of 100.797.

The other considered socio economic feature of the better halves of the women respondents is their occupation. Here the nature of the employment of husband is analyzed in relation to wife battering. The findings of data reveal that the males having regular employment less batter their wives. That means only 63.1 per cent of the respondents suffer less physical violence at the hands of their husbands. The dominant proportion i.e. 86.0 per cent of men is shown to be the most aggressive spouses who earn their livelihood on casual basis not permanently. Meaning hereby that they face both employment instability and economic hardships. Thus wives being the closest companion or subordinate to her husband tolerate battering with all pain. Another category is of self employed men (66.7%) who rank last in the analysis of assaulting wives. Thus there is more likelihood of battering wives by the men being informally occupied in casual works. The test of chi square shows the significant association between the husband's nature of occupation and wife battering with the chi square value of 8.294. P-value is less than .05 and is .016.

Thirdly table discloses the battering of wives according to the income of their husbands. A large proportion of women (79.3%) are battered whose husbands' earning is up to 5000 rupees only. In the other adjoining income category of 5001-10000, 76.9 per cent women are physically tortured. The husbands of the respondents in the highest income category of 20000 and above 20000 inflict less battering on wives i.e. 50 per cent and 30.0 per cent respectively. The remaining battered women (65.6%) are the wives of men having the income group of 10001-15000. Thus the chances of battering against wives decrease with the increase in husbands' income. The two variables have come out to be significantly associated as the P-value is less than .05 and is .000. The chi-square value is 35.207.

Kaur and Nagaich, (2019) ^[6] revealed the same results in their study wherein about 45.2 per cent women were victims of physical domestic violence at the hands of their illiterate husbands engaged in casual work and having lowest level of income. Another study by Smith, (1990) ^[11] dealt with the socio-demographic risk factors in wife abuse and showed results that low income of husband and wife abuse are strongly and consistently associated. The third study in the same context is of Fergusson *et al*, (1986) which indicated that 11.2 per cent women were victimized by husbands having no formal education in comparison to those women whose husbands had low qualification.

In nutshell it can be concluded from the above analysis of wife abuse in relation to socio economic attributes of the husbands that the men, whose nature of employment is casual with insufficient income to support the family economically, are more likely to abuse their wives physically. They think that they are losing their command over family resources. Out of frustration they beat their wives. Due to low level of education they can't get stable

and good employment because mere literacy is not helpful in getting good employment. Though wives face less battering whose husbands are highly qualified and are on good jobs with handsome salary or income from some business but that does not mean that they are totally free from spousal violence. The scenario of wife battering is common in all the strata. Still, it is noteworthy that as the level of education and income increases, there is observable decrease in wife battering. In this way good education and good income curb battering against wives. So there is a need to uplift the educational level of people basically to provide them suitable employment orientations.

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