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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONGST WOMEN IN PUNJAB: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Abstract

The rise in domestic violence against women in India, especially in the pandemic and post-pandemic period, is an alarming issue that needs immediate attention. The dominant explanation for this emerging trend is structural inequality, internalized patriarchy, and misogyny. Factors such as patriarchal nature of society, hierarchy of relationships, perception of women as housewives, caregivers and child bearers they being the lower sex, encourage their suppression. Domestic violence in families is influenced by instability in relationships, excessive male power, control over the mobility of women, poverty, power relationships, preference for male offspring, alcohol and drug abuse by the male partner, and economic imbalance. This study has attempted to identify frequency of different forms of domestic violence such as physical violence, emotional violence, social violence, economic violence and sexual violence. The study revealed that all forms of violence were reported to be prevalent among the respondents. Considering each type of violence, emotional violence topped the chart, followed by economic violence and social violence. Respondents also reported to suffer from sexual violence and physical violence. The study suggests that for holistic sustainable development and women empowerment, different forms of domestic violence and causes/situations leading to it, needs to be identified. Additionally, the society needs to be sensitized how it affects the physiological, psychosocial and psychological wellness of women, at large, thus hampering their empowerment.

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Introduction:-

In India, nearly 1 in 3 Indian women in age group 18-49 years have suffered some form of spousal violence. A little more than 30 percent of married women, have experienced different forms of violence, such as, physical, sexual or emotional violence at the hands of their spouses (National Family Health Survey 2021).

Patriarchal nature of the society, hierarchy in relationships, social perception of women, as home-makers, children bearers and carers, perception of women, as an inferior gender, existence of norms that instigate violence in the

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society, existence of the violence pattern in families, instability in relationships, excessive male dominance, poverty, preference of a male offspring, alcohol and drug addiction of the male partner, and economic imbalance, are some of the factors which contribute to domestic violence (Tittlova and Papacek 2018).

Structural approaches, such as socialization, continue to dominate the environment, we live in, thus reinforcing the gender stereotypes. Domestic violence, which occurs in families, is thus only a reflection of the imbalance between power relations of men and women. In this context, this paper explores the frequency and causes/situations leading to domestic violence against women, which further impacts their psychosocial, physiological and psychological wellness.

Objective:-

To ascertain causes/situations leading to domestic violence amongst women.

Materials and Methods:-

To obtain comprehensive insights, a cross-sectional structured study was conducted, which involved interviewing 220 females within the age range of 18 to 55 years. These interviews were conducted across seven districts of Punjab, encompassing all three socio-cultural zones: Majha, Malwa, and Doaba. The data collection process utilized a pre-designed and pre-tested survey questionnaire. Following data collection, statistical analysis was performed using simple proportions and tests of significance (z-score at a 95% confidence interval).

Results:-

Frequency of physical violence across locale

The findings from Table – 1 suggest that the causes and situations that resulted in physical violence were similar in urban and rural areas. Statistical analysis indicated that the overuse of mobile phones and waking up late were the primary causes of physical violence (urban area \bar{x} = 1.19 and rural area \bar{x} = 1.05, z – score 2.732 at 5% significance level). Pertinently, physical violence under the influence of intoxication (urban area \bar{x} = 2.00 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.01, z – score 0.201 at 5% significance level) and to release stress (urban area \bar{x} = 2.00 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.03, z – score 0.549 at 5% significance level) was prevalent in both urban and rural areas. Situations like food not cooked properly (urban area \bar{x} = 1.48 and rural area \bar{x} = 1.29, z – score 3.827 at 5% significance level) and arriving home later than the husband (urban area \bar{x} = 1.28 and rural area \bar{x} = 1.17, z – score 2.185 at 5% significance level) were some of the situations that led to physical violence, with urban areas showing significantly higher rates compared to rural areas.

Table 1:- Frequency of physical violence across locale.

	Urban Mean score \bar{x} (n = 112)	Rural Mean score \bar{x} (n = 108)	z – score (significant at 5% significance level)	Overall Mean score \bar{x} (n = 220)
Situations/causes of physical violence	(1-3)	(1-3)		(1-3)
Causes				
Under the influence of intoxication	2.00	2.01	0.201	2.00
To release stress	2.00	2.03	0.549	2.02
Wake up late	1.41	1.31	2.106*	1.26
Disagreement with husband	1.49	1.50	0.199	1.50
When watching television (only)	1.16	1.23	1.304	1.30
Do not work upto the standards of family	1.26	1.15	1.953	1.33
For not adding to the income of the family	1.14	1.18	0.675	1.16
Overuse of mobile phone for a longer period of time	1.19	1.05	2.732*	1.13
Engaged in mobile phone and not attending to husband	1.14	1.10	0.456	1.12
Engaged in mobile phone and not tending to children	1.07	1.06	0.166	1.07

Situations				
When food is not cooked properly	1.48	1.29	3.827*	1.39
When get ready properly and look better than husband	1.37	1.29	1.685	1.34
Come home later than the husband	1.28	1.17	2.185*	1.23
Watching television from a longer time	1.20	1.23	0.549	1.22

**Mean score: Never -1, Sometimes -2, Always - 3

The table above provides an overview of the data, which indicates that the causes and circumstances leading to physical violence are generally similar in urban and rural areas. A majority of the participants attributed physical violence to intoxication and the need for stress relief. However, in urban areas, the excessive use of mobile phones and waking up late were identified as significant factors contributing to physical violence, whereas these factors were not as prominent in rural regions. Furthermore, statistical analysis revealed that issues such as improperly cooked food and returning home later than one's husband were more prevalent triggers for physical violence in urban settings. Evans, et al (2022) discovered that despite the prevailing belief among the majority of Indians regarding the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, a significant number still uphold traditional, patriarchal norms. The study revealed that approximately 64% of Indians, including 61% of women, firmly believe that a wife is always obliged to obey her husband. Thus, it can be inferred that men and women are socialized to conform to traditional gender-specific roles. Non-compliance with these roles can lead to violence against women, particularly physical violence.

Frequency of emotional violence across locale

The primary factors contributing to emotional exploitation of female victims of domestic violence, as indicated in Table 2, were not bringing enough dowry (\bar{x})= of 1.98 in urban areas and 2.197 in rural areas) and the ego satisfaction of the perpetrator (\bar{x})= 1.72 in urban areas and 1.62 in rural areas). These factors were notably more prevalent in urban settings compared to rural areas, with (\bar{x})= of 2.197 and 2.106, respectively, at a significance level of 5%. Similarly, statistically significant instances included restrictions on clothing (\bar{x})= 2.02 in urban areas and 1.65 in rural areas; z-score of 6.570 at 5% significance level) and comparison of the victim with other women in the family (\bar{x})= 1.91 in urban areas and 1.71 in rural areas; z-score of 3.374 at 5% significance level). Additionally, a family member's bad mood (mean score of 2.53 in urban areas and 2.34 in rural areas; z – score 3.827 at 5% significance level) and not getting enough gifts from victim's parents (mean score of 1.81 in urban areas and 1.56 in rural areas; z – score 4.157 at 5% significance level) were also some situations, which attributed to emotional violation of females. The constant yelling and swearing by the husband and his family members were among the other reasons that occasionally resulted in emotional violence. In urban areas, the mean score attributed to this reason was 2.39, while in rural areas it was slightly higher at 2.45. Furthermore, the victims in the age group of 18-55 years experienced further emotional distress when they were humiliated in front of their children (urban area mean score = 2.18, rural area mean score = 2.21) and their family and friends (urban area mean score = 2.18, rural area mean score = 2.09). These additional factors contributed to the emotional misery endured by the victims.

Table 2:- Frequency of emotional violence across locale.

	Urban Mean score \bar{x} (n = 112)	Rural Mean score \bar{x} (n = 108)	z – score (significant at 5% significance level)	Overall Mean score \bar{x} (n = 220)
Causes/Situations of emotional violence	(1-3)	(1-3)		(1-3)
Causes				
For not bringing enough dowry	1.98	1.86	2.197*	1.92
For ego satisfaction of the other person	1.72	1.62	2.106*	1.66
If do not wake up early in the morning	1.55	1.47	1.589	1.51
For not bearing children after marriage	1.33	1.33	-	1.26
For not bearing a son	1.28	1.28	-	1.25
For not earning enough	1.22	1.22	-	1.26
Situations				

If a family member is in a bad mood	2.53	2.34	3.827*	2.44
Constantly yelled and swore at	2.39	2.45	1.208	2.41
Humiliated in front of the children	2.18	2.21	0.549	2.20
Humiliated in front of family/friends	2.18	2.09	1.895	2.14
In front of family/friends for disagreeing with husband on a particular issue	1.95	1.87	1.589	1.91
In front of family/friends for disagreeing with in-laws on a particular issue	1.83	1.74	1.677	1.78
When told what to wear and what not	2.02	1.65	6.570*	1.98
Compared with other women in the family	1.91	1.71	3.374*	1.81
Mistrust when interaction done with the male members of the family	1.77	1.75	0.390	1.76
When parents do not get enough gifts when they visit	1.71	1.62	1.026	1.67
For not getting enough gifts from parents, when paid visit to them	1.81	1.56	4.157*	1.69
If don't tend to household chores	1.49	1.50	0.174	1.48
Mistrust when there are male colleagues in office	1.20	1.21	0.201	1.20

**Mean score: Never -1, Sometimes -2, Always - 3

The findings revealed that a substantial number of respondents attributed emotional violence to dowry, with ego satisfaction being another significant factor. The situations that precipitated such violence encompassed instances of family members being in a bad mood, unfavorable comparisons with other female relatives, insufficient gifts brought from parents during visits, and restrictions imposed on clothing choices. Interestingly, these occurrences were more prevalent in urban areas as opposed to rural areas. Shaktawat (2023) provided insights in an article titled "Psychological/ Emotional abuse against women" that 48.4 percent of women have encountered at least one form of psychologically aggressive behavior from an intimate partner, and four in ten women have experienced some form of coercive control by a partner in their lifetime. The author also referenced case studies showing instances where women were insulted for reasons such as not providing a dowry, not having a male child, or not having any children.

Frequency of social violence across locale

Statistically, social violence found its roots in situations like victims were kept away from seeing friends (urban area \bar{x} = 1.36 and rural area \bar{x} = 1.65; z - score = 4.893), continuous criticism of their friends and family (urban area \bar{x} = 2.33 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.15; z - score = 3.791), their humiliation in front of maternal family (urban area \bar{x} = 2.24 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.05; z - score = 3.774), not allowed to go out of the house without permission (urban area \bar{x} = 2.78 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.58; z -score = 3.222) and restriction to make contacts with parents and family (urban area \bar{x} = 2.22 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.05; z - score = 3.019), as seen in Table 3. While it was prevalent across both urban and rural areas, it was significantly higher in former than in latter at 5% level of significance.

Table 3:- Frequency of social violence across locale(n=220).

	Urban Mean score \bar{x} (n = 112)	Rural Mean score \bar{x} (n = 108)	z - score (significant at 5% significance level)	Overall Mean score \bar{x} (n = 220)
Causes/Situations of social violence	(1-3)	(1-3)		(1-3)
Situations				
Not allowed to go out of the house without permission	2.74	2.58	3.222*	2.66
Humiliated in front of family and friends	2.33	2.34	0.183	2.33
Friends and family are continuously criticized	2.33	2.15	3.791*	2.24
Humiliated in front of the maternal family	2.24	2.05	3.774*	2.15
Restricted to make contacts with parents and	2.22	2.05	3.019*	2.12

maternal family				
Expected to take permission before accessing health care facilities	2.22	2.14	1.491	2.18
Kept away from seeing my friends	1.36	1.65	4.893*	1.65
Phone calls are monitored	1.55	1.47	1.561	1.51
WhatsApp messages are monitored	1.05	1.16	1.254	1.20
Facebook activity is monitored	1.01	1.00	0.174	1.01
Emails are monitored	1.00	0.00	0.163	1.07

**Mean score: Never -1, Sometimes -2, Always - 3

The other situations which may not be statistically significant, but led to such kind of violence of the victims were their humiliation in front of family and friends (urban area \bar{x} = 2.33 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.34; z – score = 0.183) and they were expected to take permission before accessing health care facilities (urban area \bar{x} = 2.22 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.14; z – score 1.491).

Overall, women were socially violated by setting an expectation that they were supposed to take permission before leaving the house (mean score 2.66). According to the NFHS – 5 (2019:2021) data from Punjab, 12% of women and 14% of men agreed that violence against women was justified if the woman went out without informing her husband. To conclude, this table highlights that patriarchal norm such as seeking permission before leaving the household, limiting access to parents and family, and constant criticism from family and friends are the primary instances of social infringement. These norms have been perpetuated across generations and are considered the norm, necessitating the need to address them and find solutions that promote equality and equity, leading to women empowerment.

Frequency of economical violence across locale

The factors contributing to economic violence are further outlined in Table 4. Statistically significant situations included not being provided by an allowance for victims (urban area \bar{x} = 2.46 and rural area \bar{x} = 2.64; z score = 3.791), restrictions on working outside the home (urban area \bar{x} = 2.08 and rural area \bar{x} = 1.89; z – score = 3.708), and not given sufficient money to run the household (urban area mean score = 2.41 and rural area mean score = 2.28; z – score = 2.380). These differences were statistically significant between urban and rural areas at a 5% level of significance.

Table 4:- Frequency of economical violence across locale(n=220).

	Urban Mean score \bar{x} (n = 112)	Rural Mean score \bar{x} (n = 108)	z – score (significant at 5% significance level)	Overall Mean score \bar{x} (n = 220)
Causes/Situations of emotional violence	(1-3)	(1-3)		(1-3)
Causes				
Do not own a personal property	2.78	2.69	1.813	2.73
Do not have access to financial resources	2.26	2.18	1.491	2.23
Do not have control to financial resources	2.32	2.28	0.795	2.30
Situations				
Not provided with an allowance for my personal use	2.46	2.64	3.791*	2.37
Not given sufficient money to run the household	2.41	2.28	2.380*	2.35
Not allowed to work outside the house	2.08	1.89	3.708*	2.00
Money given by the parents is taken away	1.66	1.64	0.228	1.65
Expenses are monitored	1.67	1.56	1.953	1.62
Pressurized to inherit property from parents	1.52	1.53	1.53	1.53
Entire salary is taken by the husband/other family members of the household	1.22	1.26	1.26	1.24
Debit cards are used without permission	1.13	1.07	1.07	1.08

Credit cards are used without permission	1.01	1.02	1.02	1.02
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****Mean score: Never -1, Sometimes -2, Always - 3**

The reasons for economic exploitation, although not statistically significant, included not owning personal property (\bar{x})= 2.78 in urban areas and 2.69 in rural areas), lack of access (\bar{x})= 2.26 in urban areas and 2.18 in rural areas), and control over financial resources (\bar{x})= 2.32 in urban areas and 2.28 in rural areas). In conclusion, this table reveals that respondents from both urban and rural areas have reported economic exploitation, albeit with a significant divide. Nevertheless, the causes and circumstances remained consistent for both groups. According to Pasha (2023), Ohlan (2021), and Kanougiya et al. (2021), women's economic exploitation is further exacerbated by the denial of their property rights, lack of trust with money, restricted work freedom, unauthorized use of their funds, and coercive appropriation of their belongings.

Frequency of sexual violence

As could be seen in Table - 5, sexual violence was also reported by the respondents of the study. This is a closed walls violence, which is seldom reported due to privacy issues of such a life. Situations that statistically contributed to such a violence of the respondents were that their husbands maintained a sexual relationship outside the wedlock (urban area \bar{x})= 1.57 and rural area \bar{x})= 1.28; z - score = 5.660) followed by respondents being forced into sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases (urban area \bar{x})= 1.59 and rural area mean score = 1.34; z - score = 5.265). The other two situations were sexual needs of the respondent not being satisfied (urban area \bar{x})= 1.41 and rural area \bar{x})= 1.20; z - score = 3.913) and unwanted exposure to pornography (urban area \bar{x})= 1.35 and rural area \bar{x})= 1.19; z -score = 3.178). This was statistically significant across urban respondents when compared to their rural counterparts.

Other situations though may not be statistically significant but led to sexual violence episodes were when the respondent was forced to have sex even when the respondent was menstruating (urban area \bar{x})= 2.18 and rural area \bar{x})= 2.12). The prime cause which led to such a violent episode was sexual assault under the influence of intoxication (urban area \bar{x})= 1.74 and rural area \bar{x})= 1.71).

Table 5: -Frequency of sexual violence across locale (n=220).

	Urban Mean score \bar{x} (n = 112)	Rural Mean score \bar{x} (n = 108)	z - score (significant at 5% significance level)	Overall Mean score \bar{x} (n = 220)
Causes/Situations of emotional violence	(1-3)	(1-3)		(1-3)
Causes				
Sexually assaulted under the influence of intoxication	1.74	1.71	0.604	1.72
Situations				
Forced to have sex even when the respondent is menstruating	2.18	2.12	1.012	2.15
Forced to do sexual acts which the respondent found degrading or humiliating	1.62	1.62	0.000	1.61
Husband maintains a sexual relationship outside the wedlock	1.57	1.28	5.660*	1.53
Forced into sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases	1.59	1.34	5.265*	1.46
Unwarrantedly exposed to pornography	1.35	1.19	3.178*	1.27
Sexual needs are not satisfied of the respondent	1.41	1.20	3.913*	1.20
Forced to maintain a sexual relationship outside the wedlock	1.14	1.06	1.421	1.06

****Mean score: Never -1, Sometimes -2, Always - 3**

To culminate this table, it can be seen that across urban areas and rural areas, the causes and situations which led to sexual violence were almost same. However, the proportion of urban respondents reporting sexual violence were greater than that of their rural counterparts. It can be ascribed that rural respondents may not be that open to discuss these issues, and hence low proportion reported instances related to this violence.

Nadda, et. al (2018) in their study titled “Study of Domestic Violence among Currently Married Females of Haryana, India” found out that in total 14.7 percent women had ever experienced sexual violence. Being physically forced to have sexual intercourse was more common (14.4%) than being forced to perform any other sexual acts she did not want to perform (2.3%). It was significantly more common in the urban area (19.7%) than in rural area (12.7%). This can be explained on the basis that the cultural norms in rural area discourage the discussion of sexual or conjugal issues leading to the under-reporting of sexual violence in the rural area. However, females from the urban area were more open about discussing issues of sexual violence. This could be the possible reason for the significant difference in the rural-urban prevalence of sexual violence.

Conclusion:-

Overall, physical violence was caused majorly under the influence of alcohol and to release stress. Causes like bad mood of a family member and not bringing enough dowry contributed to emotional violence. Situations like constantly yelled & swore at and humiliation in front of children mainly led to emotional violation. For social violence, situations like - not allowed to go out without permission, humiliation in front of family & friends and constant criticism of friends & family led to such violence. The main causes which led to economic violence were – not owning a personal property, no access and control over financial resources. The situations that led to such a violence were not given sufficient money to run the household, not allowing the respondent to work outside the house and money given by the parents was taken away.

Sexual assault under the influence of intoxication was the prime cause of sexual violence. Situations which led to sexual violence of the victims were forced to perform sexual acts which they found degrading or humiliating, forced to have sex even when they were menstruating and husband maintaining a sexual relationship outside the wedlock.

Increasing the income and making the women economically self-dependent can help in combating domestic violence, consequently making a mark in women empowerment. Providing education to women is vital as it helps them comprehend their rights and duties, allowing them to assert themselves, especially in situations where they face physical, economic, social, emotional, and sexual violations.

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