

A Feminist Study of Domestic Violence in Rural India

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Introduction

As with family violence in western societies, violence within the Indian home has long been considered a private matter. However, towards the end of the 20th century the Indian women's movement brought the problem of domestic violence to the forefront of feminist dialogue (Ray, 1999). These feminist analyses focused not only on the patriarchal ideology that supported the subordination of women in the family, but also on the extent to which such cultural norms differed by region, religion, family systems, and class.

Although there is evidence to support tremendous state variability in the status of women and the structure of the family (Bharat, 2001), there has not been a large-scale study of wife battery done in India (Vindhya, 2000). Miller (1999) believes that there is a need to get a more holistic view of the violence in India as "it is difficult to judge the extent of the problem, or which areas and sub populations are at risk"(Miller, 1999). Official estimates from the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs speculate that over 60% of urban households experience domestic violence (defined by the Indian Legal system as physical or mental torture), out of which 5% report the matter to the police and prosecute the perpetrator of the abuse (Jaising, 2001). While these figures have not been found in any national large-scale study, a few small-scale studies have documented high rates of violence (Visaria, 2000; Mahajan, 1990; Daga, 1998).

Because of limited resources, researchers tend to select small samples in cities or villages and interview or study them for a period of time. The findings thus generated, as a whole, are wide ranging because of the contextual factors that define the particular sample. For example, researchers studying violence in Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka produce varied estimates of

domestic violence that range from 33% to 66% (Magar, 2001; Mitra, 2000; Rao et al., 2000; Bhatti, 1990; Visaria, 2000; Poonacha & Pandey, 2000). Also, because of the severe social sanctions on women for even acknowledging that violence persists in the house, women do not generally come forward to report the violence. Examinations of health records reveal that women who are hospitalized because of beatings by their husbands refuse to identify or report the perpetrator (Vindhya, 2000). Given these circumstances, it is extremely hard to estimate the true rates of domestic violence in India.

Another complication that interferes with an accurate estimation of domestic violence even in survey research is the respondent's definition of violence. An ICRW (International Center for Research on Women) report indicates that if women believe that a justification could be given for a violent act, emotional or physical, they do not perceive it to be violent and do not report the incident as violent. Thus, the statistics about the prevalence of domestic violence are merely "the tip of the iceberg" (Dagar, 1998). Also, violence is shaped by the normative experience of the individual in the society, and within the home. According to a study done by International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), domestic violence depends on not only the characteristics and situation of the woman, such as her place of residence, her religion, her family type, or her socio-economic status, but also on the "norms of acceptable behavior" (ICRW, 2000). Given the tremendous variability in the fabric of Indian society, this study examines regional variability in the prevalence of domestic violence and the effect of family and personal characteristics that might help explain the regional variability of domestic violence in India.

Description of this Study

While researchers have argued for a holistic view of domestic violence in India, few studies have taken into consideration regional effects on domestic violence. Because of this gap in research in documenting patterns of domestic violence in India we will first examine the likelihood of

experiencing domestic violence across geographical regions. Given that women's lives in India are to a large extent defined by the family, family characteristics such as the family's religion, family type (nuclear or non-nuclear), socio-economic status, decision-making structure, and previous abuse in the natal family are inspected. The personal characteristics of women interconnect with the environment and family characteristics to give rise to women's own individual experience of violence. Recognizing this interconnection, we will also examine personal characteristics of the individual women. These personal characteristics include women's level of education, labor force participation, financial independence, and personal attitudes towards domestic violence. Thus, the question asked by this study is: How do regional, family and personal characteristics affect a woman's likelihood of being hit by her husband?

Hypotheses

Regional Differences. One of the structural factors considered in this study is regional variability. While the pervasiveness of domestic violence goes unquestioned, the extent of the violence and the manifestation of the violence are different for different regions (Miller, 1999). The research on regions has usually concentrated on the north-south cultural dichotomy (Miller, 1999). While this comparison is useful, it does not recognize the diversity among areas within the north or the south. Thus, we will examine differences among six regions in India. The six regions are: North (Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan); Central (Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh); East (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal); Northeast (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim); West (Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra); South (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu). I hypothesize that there will be some variability across the six regions, and that because the northeastern and southern parts of India have documented high-status for women (Miller, 1999; Srinivasan, 1998), they will report a lower incidence of violence compared to the northern regions.

Family Characteristics

Religion. The variability reflected in region may be related to variations in religious affiliation. However, we cannot hypothesize specific effects of different religions on domestic violence. Because the states are divided on linguistic bases, the development of religion in each state is also different among regions (Ray, 1999). Religious groups are more likely to adhere to the cultural norms of the region, rather than the general norms of their religion. Also, since there is a politically charged religious propaganda that suggests that some groups might be more violent than others, we have chosen not to draw upon this rhetoric of social differences in religious groups. The only specific prediction that we are willing to make is that there will be a lower prevalence of violence amongst religions that advocate peaceful ways of living, for example, Buddhism and Jainism.

Joint Family. Another structural factor that is of considerable importance is the structure of the family. Because the dataset that we used for this study (Demographic Health Survey, 1999) provides limited opportunity for constructing the complex relationships that represent joint family systems, we have to be satisfied with indirect indicators of the 'jointness' of respondents' families. So while we hypothesize that there would be more violence against women in traditional joint families than in nuclear families, the categories of comparison are in fact nuclear and non-nuclear. We hypothesize that violence against women will be more pronounced in non-nuclear families because in a joint family system, the social hierarchy within the family usually takes control from the women, leaving them vulnerable to violence.

Decision-making. We also hypothesize that if a woman has autonomy in the household, she is less likely to be beaten by her husband. In other words, we expect that if there are other members in the household who make decisions for the woman, be it her husband or other family members, she will be more likely to be abused.

Socio-economic Status. Research in India has documented that women from lower socio-economic status experience more physical violence than women from higher socio-economic status (Bhatti 1990; Visaria, 1999). While non-physical forms of abuse are prevalent in higher socio-economic categories, reports of physical assault are substantially higher in the lower classes. So we hypothesize that reports of physical violence will be less likely for families with higher socio-economic status.

Natal Family Violence. Apart from these factors, we also examine the women's history of abuse. Because marriages are usually endogamous in India, women are very likely to transfer to households similar to their own (Bharat, 2001). If the ideology of the threat of violence was present in her natal family, it is likely that the belief systems of the marital family are similar (Sengupta, 1998). Thus, if the woman experienced any physical assault in her natal home, chances are higher that she will experience physical assault from her husband.

Personal Characteristics

Education. One of the major predictors of domestic violence is education. The risk of being beaten is substantially reduced if the woman is educated. Many policy recommendations therefore concentrate on the education of women as a key factor in reducing violence (Ray, 1999). Thus, we propose that women will report a lower incidence of violence if they are highly educated.

Labor Force Participation and Financial Independence. Labor force participation and financial independence are important factors. Because working women typically contribute to the family income, it is hypothesized that the self-reliance of these women will lower the chances of abuse (Levinson, 1989; Mencher, 1989). Therefore, the chances of experiencing abuse from their husband are reduced for women who are engaged in the work force. However, in many parts of the country, women engaged in the labor force are likely to give their entire income to their families. Thus, work force participation might not automatically make them financially independent. To

gauge the effect of financial independence of women on the experience of domestic violence, we have included the variable in the study. We propose that women's financial independence, apart from their labor force participation, will lower the incidence of violence (Mencher, 1989).

Attitudes towards Domestic Violence. There is considerable variability in women's attitudes towards domestic violence. Some women believe that there are conditions under which a husband is justified in beating his wife. They do not consider such 'punishment' to be violent (ICRW, 2000). Therefore, we predict that attitudes endorsing the use of violence will be reflected in higher incidence of spousal violence. The more positive a woman's attitudes towards domestic violence, the greater the likelihood that she will experience abuse from her husband.

Sample

The dataset used in this study is the Demographic Health Survey conducted in India in 1999, otherwise known as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-1999). The main objective of this survey was to obtain state-level and national-level information on various aspects of health such as fertility, family planning, nutrition of women and children, and quality of health and family welfare services. NFHS-2 is a nationally representative household survey, covering over 99% of India's population living in all 26 states. The overall target sample size of the survey was approximately 90,000 ever-married women between the ages of 15 to 49.

Because of the complexity and diversity involved in the examination of domestic violence in India, we narrowed the focus of this study to only rural women. We further narrowed the sample to women who were currently residing with their husbands, to ensure that the absence of the husband in the household did not compromise the rates of domestic violence reported by women. Thus, the sub-sample for this study consists of married rural women who are living in the same residence as their husbands. These two specifications reduced the size of the sample to approximately fifty thousand women.

Questionnaires

The NFHS-2 survey used three questionnaires – the Household Questionnaire, the Woman’s Questionnaire and the Village Questionnaire. Only the first two are used in this study. The Household Questionnaire collected information from the head of the household and in the absence of the head of the household, from any other member of the family, on various characteristics of the health of all its members, such as the presence of asthma, tuberculosis, malaria, etc. It also collected information on characteristics of the household such as number of members living in the household, religion of the family, ownership of property or house and other information. The responses to the household questions established household members’ eligibility for the Women’s questionnaire.

All women in the household aged 15 through 49 who were currently married, formerly married, or widowed were interviewed using the Women’s Questionnaire. Eligible women from the households were asked about age, marital status, education, and employment status. The majority of the questions in the survey were focused on the reproductive behavior of the women, addressing issues of use of contraception, sources of family planning, reproductive health, and knowledge of AIDS. As women’s reproductive health is closely related to their physical well-being, women were also asked about their experience of domestic violence in the household and their attitudes towards violence.

Measurement

Dependent Variable: Husband violence / Domestic violence

We used two questions from NFHS-2 to measure Domestic Violence. The first question inquires whether the woman has been battered. The question is worded as follows:

- Since you have completed 15 years of age, have you ever been beaten or mistreated physically by any person?

The answer choices are “Yes” or “No.” If the respondent answers in the affirmative, she is prompted to the next question.

- *Who has beaten or mistreated you physically?*

The interviewer of the original survey is instructed to record all the persons the respondent discloses. The answers to these questions can include members of the natal family, marital family, and also strangers. We coded women who were beaten by no one or only someone other than their husband as 0 and those beaten by their husbands as 1.

An important aspect to consider is the definition of violence that we have used in this study. While the English version of the questionnaire treats domestic violence as ‘beating’ or ‘physical mistreatment’ the translation of these words into 25 different languages can blur the exact meaning of domestic violence. Nevertheless, we will refer to the measure of domestic violence as a measure of ‘beating’. This decision is fueled by two factors. First, the English version of the questionnaire clearly includes beating. The second reason is the phenomenon of under-reporting. Researchers have stressed that because of the prevalence of violence in all aspects of life, minor forms of violence such as pushing, shoving or a slap are often not reported by respondents (Straus, 1999). Women tend to report only severe forms of violence. Therefore, the domestic violence in this study is assumed to capture only severe forms of domestic violence and will be referred to as beating.

Independent Variables

Region. The Women’s Questionnaire begins with preliminary questions regarding the place of residence of the respondent, including the state in which the respondent resides. Since comparing across each individual state can be cumbersome, we have divided the states into six broad regions as follows:

- *North (Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan)*
- *Central (Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh)*
- *East (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal)*
- *Northeast (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim)*

- *West (Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra)*
- *South (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu)*

We were guided by the Census of India and NFHS-2 to use these categories, which seem to tap into the cultural, social, historical, and physical proximity of the states within each regional category.

Family Characteristics

Religion. There is no question in the Women's Questionnaire that inquires about the religious faith of the women. So, we have assumed that the women's religious faith is tied to the faith of the head of the household. In the Household Questionnaire, the question on religious faith is worded as follows:

- *What is the religion of the head of the household?*

The possible answers are Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist/Neo Buddhist, Jain, Jewish, Zoroastrian/Parsi, No religion and Other. For the sake of simplicity, we included only the major religious faiths in our study. These include Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. All other religious faiths form the category of Others.

Nuclear Family Structure. In the Household Questionnaire, there are a series of questions that inquire about the number of persons living in the household; their individual relationship to the head of the household; and the age, place of residence, literacy levels and marital status of each member of the family. The researchers working with the raw data manipulated this information into a variable that describes the household structure of the family, focusing only on adults. The categories are as follows.

- *No adults*
- *One adult*
- *Two adults, opposite sex*
- *Two adults, same sex*
- *Three+ related adults*

- *Unrelated adults.*

Because this study examines only women who are currently residing with their husbands, only two categories of this variables were used – Two adults, opposite sex and Three + related adults and the two categories correspond to nuclear and non-nuclear families.

According to this variable construction, a nuclear family is defined as a family structure that consists of the husband, wife and perhaps some children. A non-nuclear family consists of a husband, wife and other adults, which could include their adult children or other adults, any of whom may have families of their own living within the same household and extended family members of the head of the household.

It must be acknowledged that the non-nuclear family structure does not *necessarily* represent a joint family system. Because the relationship between the three and more adults in the category of Three+ related adults is not specified, we cannot be certain that this family structure functions like a joint family system. However, the presence of more family members in the household is likely to represent a joint family in a patriarchal society such as that of India.

To measure women's autonomy in the household, the NFHS-2 requests information about women's participation in making household decisions. The question in the original survey was formulated as follows:

- *Who makes the following decision in your household?*
 - *What items to cook*
 - *Obtaining healthcare for yourself*
 - *Purchasing jewelry or other major household items*
 - *Your going and staying with parents or siblings*

The answer choices were:

- *Respondent*
- *Husband*

- *Jointly with husband*
- *Others in household*
- *Jointly with others in the household*

Another question that related to autonomy was about freedom of movement. The respondent was asked if she needed permission to visit relatives or go to the market.

The complications of creating a scale out of these items led to our final decision to choose one “best” item to tap autonomy. Because the owner of jewelry in an Indian household is identifiable, we hypothesize that the possession and purchase of jewelry gives women ownership and a modicum of control over that resource (Jacobson, as cited in Leonard, 1978). Jewelry is a piece of property that women can claim rights to and the decision-making process for purchasing such a valuable resource is indicative of women’s position and autonomy in the household (Leonard, 1978). Thus, we presumed that the purchase of jewelry can be used as a tool for measuring women’s autonomy.

Socio-economic Status of the Household. We used the presence of basic amenities and possession of commodities in lieu of income levels. In the Household Questionnaire, inquiries were made by interviewers about consumer goods that the household possesses. The question is worded as follows:

- *Does the household own any of the following:*
 - *A mattress*
 - *A pressure cooker*
 - *A moped, scooter or motorcycle etc.*

The Household Questionnaire also asks about the use of amenities by the household. For example, the households were asked about the type of fuel that they used for cooking. The question is worded as follows.

- *What type of fuel does your household mainly use for cooking?*

- *Wood*
- *Crop residues*
- *Dung Cakes*
- *Coal/Coke/Lignite*
- *Bio-Gas etc.*

The choices given are an indicator of the standard of living of the household. For example, households that use wood for fuel are less likely to be wealthy compared to households that have access to electricity. Similar questions such as source of drinking water and type of toilet facility are also included in the original questionnaire as an indication of socio-economic status.

After reliability tests were performed on all the indicators of socio-economic status, we identified a set of 15 indicators. The final variables selected are the use of electricity, radio, television, bicycle, motor cycle, mattress, cot/bed, table, clock/watch, pressure cooker, sewing machine, water pump, source of drinking water, type of toilet facility and main cooking fuel. We dichotomized the responses to indicate the presence and absence of consumer goods and amenities. Then we created a scale of socio-economic status by taking the sum of the dichotomized variables. The range of the scale is 0 to 15, the lower numbers indicating lower socio-economic status ($\alpha = .82$).

Natal Family Violence. Natal family violence is the violence that is perpetrated by the mother, father, stepfather, stepmother, brother, or sister of the respondent. As mentioned before, women who were beaten after the age of 15 in the questionnaire were asked the identity of the perpetrator. Because women who were beaten by members of the natal family are identifiable, we constructed a scale of natal family violence by taking the sum of the responses for each of the relationships listed above. Since the abuse by natal family members is dichotomous, the potential range of the scale is from 0 to 6. The actual range of the scale is from 0 to 3. The lowest value, 0 indicates that no

member of the natal family had abused the respondent and the highest value 3, indicates that three types of members of the natal family had beaten the respondent since the age of 15.

Personal Characteristics

Education. Education of the respondent is measured by various questions in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked if they ever attended school, what was the highest grade they completed in school, and whether they could read or write. Researchers handling the raw data combined the answers to all the education questions into a number of simpler formats for easier investigation. Out of the many choices, we used the following variable for its ability to capture the variation in the sample. The categories are:

- *Higher Secondary complete or more (equivalent to completing senior high school in the United States)*
- *High School complete (equivalent to completing sophomore year of high school in United States)*
- *Middle School complete (equivalent to finishing 8th grade in United States)*
- *Primary School complete (equivalent to finishing 5th grade in United States)*
- *Literate, < Primary school complete*
- *Illiterate*

Labor Force Participation. In the Women's Questionnaire, the working status of the respondent was addressed in a variety of questions and although analyses of all of these factors may be useful in assessing the impact of labor force participation on the experience of violence, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, we analyzed only one critical aspect of working status. Women were asked whether they worked for family or outsiders. The question was worded as follows:

- *Do you do the work for your family's farm or business, for someone else, or are you self-employed?*
 - *Family farm/Business*
 - *Someone else*
 - *Self-employed.*

This aspect of women's work was chosen for two reasons. First, it gave me an indication as to the autonomy of women's work. It also gave me a rough estimate of the physical mobility of the

women and interaction with the outside world. For example, women working for someone else were more likely to work outside the vicinity of their households, whereas women working on a family farm were more likely to interact with family members than others in the work environment. Also, the relationship between whom women work for and mode of payment was a contributing factor. Women who worked for someone else or were self-employed were mostly paid in cash whereas those who worked on the family farm/business were not paid at all.

Financial Independence. Financial independence of women is usually tied to their working status. However, in a patriarchal household, this relationship is not inevitable. Women might be working full time, but not be in control of their own money. So used the question that gauged the financial independence of all women, working and non-working. The question is worded as follows:

- *Are you allowed to have some money set aside that you can use as you wish?*

Women were asked to respond in a yes/no format. One of the possible problems of using this question is that it does not give us any indication whether the woman controls the use of this financial resource for herself or for her family. It is quite possible that a woman's husband gives her some money for household expenditures about which she has enough discretion to respond affirmatively to the question. This use of money does not constitute financial independence on the part of the woman. However, given the lack of alternatives, and also the fact that this question was asked of both working and non-working women, we have decided to include it in the analyses.

Attitudes towards domestic violence. In order to gauge whether women justify domestic violence, the NFHS-2 included the following:

- *Sometimes a wife can do things that bother her husband. Please tell me if you think a husband is justified in beating his wife in each of the following situations:*
 - *If he suspects her of being unfaithful*
 - *If her natal family does not give expected money, jewelry or other items*

- *If she shows disrespect for her in-laws*
- *If she goes out without telling him*
- *If she neglects the house or children*
- *If she doesn't cook food*

The women were asked to agree or disagree with each statement and were also given the option of marking “I don't know” as an answer choice. We dichotomized the separate variables such that agreement would imply a more permissive attitude towards domestic violence. We summed all the responses and constructed it into a scale. The scale varied from 0 to 6 ($\alpha = .81$). Low values indicate that women endorsed fewer statements, and higher values indicate that women endorsed more statements justifying domestic violence.

Main Results

Regional Variations in the Prevalence of Domestic Violence

First, using logistic regression, we examined the variation among the states with respect to husband battery. The results (not presented here) indicate that compared to Meghalaya, the state with the lowest reported incidence of violence, the variation amongst the other states is tremendous. The odds of being beaten dramatically change depending on the state in which the respondent resides. For example, the odds of being beaten by one's husband in Tamil Nadu (a southern state) are 19 times the odds of being beaten by one's husband in Meghalaya (a north-eastern state). Dramatic as these results are, it is almost impossible to make sense of variability across 25 states. For this reason, we decided to divide the states into six standard regions, with the northern region as my reference category.

Using logistic regression, the variation among the regions with respect to domestic violence was examined. The results in Table 1 indicate that there is considerable variability with respect to region. For example, the odds that a woman is beaten by her husband are 2.07 times higher if she comes from the central part of the country than they are if she lives in the north, 2.27 times higher if

she is a resident of the eastern part of the country. We hypothesized that the rates of domestic violence would be lower in the southern and northeastern regions than they are in the northern regions. These hypotheses were not confirmed. The odds of being beaten by one's husband in the south are twice the odds of being beaten in the north (2.36), and the odds in the northeastern regions are quite similar to those in the north.

Family Characteristics

Religion. To examine how these regional differences are related to other factors, the effect of religion is controlled. At the zero order, there are tremendous effects of religion on the odds that a woman will be beaten by her husband (see Table 2). Compared to Hindus, the odds of being beaten are higher if the woman is Muslim (1.15). Women from all other religions seem to fare better than Hindu women. Because of the philosophies of Buddhism and Jainism emphasize non-violence, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that the odds of women being beaten by their husbands are lower (compared to Hindu households) in households where violence is unacceptable. At the same time, it is surprising that there is *any* violence at all in these households.

Family structure. At the zero order, the odds of being beaten for women living in a non-nuclear setting are actually less than those of women living in a nuclear household (odds ratio = 0.69, see Table 2). This finding is very surprising, considering the great volume of research on domestic violence that indicates that family members, particularly female kin of the husband's family, play an active role in the violence perpetrated by husbands (Miller, 1999; Madhurima, 1996).

Another indirect indicator of "jointness" is the manner in which women contribute to the decision-making process of the household. When we examined decision-making with respect to purchasing jewelry as a predictor of domestic violence, we found that compared to respondents in families in which women made the decision themselves, those who lived in families in which the decision involved people other than their husbands had lower odds of being beaten. The odds-ratio

for women who reported that these other individuals (apart from the husband) made the decision by themselves was .49; it was .37 for those who reported that ‘others’ made the decision jointly with the respondent (see Table 2). Looking across the categories of decision-making, we see that there is a systematic reduction of odds when decision-making is made by persons other than the respondent. Once again, these patterns are opposite to those that we predicted.

Socio-economic status. At the zero order, for every unit increase in the possession of basic amenities or commodities, the odds of being beaten by one’s husband are reduced by a factor of .87 (see Table 2).

Natal family violence. At the zero order, natal family violence does have a strong relationship with likelihood of being beaten by one’s husband. For each additional type of natal family member who had beaten the respondent, the odds ratio of being beaten by one’s husband increases by a factor of 1.73 (see Table 2).

Looking at family characteristics as a block. From the results, we see that apart from some changes on the effects of non-nuclear family structure (odds ratio = .87 vs .69) and natal family violence (odds ratio = 1.73 vs 1.84), the effects of individual family variables do not change when other family characteristics are controlled. All the results seem to show that the indicators of jointness (family structure, and decision-making), are associated with lower instances of domestic violence perpetrated by the husband.

Personal Characteristics

Education. The zero order relationship between education and domestic violence reveals that education reduces the chance of domestic violence. The odds ratio declines regularly with each increase in the level of education (see Table 3). The odds of being beaten for women who have completed higher secondary or more are only about one-seventh (.14) those of illiterate women.

Labor force participation. The zero-order relationship between labor force participation and domestic violence reveals that the odds of being beaten are greater for women who work, especially so for women who work for someone outside the family (see Table 3).

Financial independence. At the zero order, the results indicate that the odds that women who were allowed to have money set aside would be beaten are less than those of women who do not have that independence (odds ratio of .91).

Respondent's attitudes towards domestic violence. At the zero order, we see that each unit increase in the acceptance of justifications for violence increases the odds of being beaten by one's partner by a factor of 1.19.

Looking at personal characteristics as a block. Controlling for other personal characteristics, the effects of education, natal family violence, and attitudes towards domestic violence are diminished slightly. There are some changes with respect to labor force participation after controlling for other personal characteristics. We see in Table 3 that the odds ratio for each of the categories changes: working for a family member from 1.44 to 1.16; for someone else from 2.29 to 1.89; self employed from 1.66 to 1.57. The general pattern of increased odds of being beaten when one works outside the household is still clear. The effects of financial independence were small to begin with and are completely eliminated by controls.

Explaining Regional differences

The role of family characteristics in explaining regional differences. Controlling for family characteristics reduces the relationship between region and domestic violence. Four of the five odds ratios for the regions become less extreme. The changes in the odds ratios for five non-Northern regions are as follows: South 2.36 to 2.06; West 1.13 to 1.11; Northeast .96 to .93; East 2.27 to 1.74 and Central 2.07 to 1.83 (see Table 4). The relationship between family characteristics and domestic violence continue to be the same, after controlling for region. There are minimal changes in the

odds ratio of religion, socio-economic status, and women's autonomy. Thus, the overall model indicates that while regional differences are still strong, they are explained marginally by family characteristics. Also, family characteristics seem to uniquely contribute to the variability in domestic violence in India.

The role of personal characteristics in explaining regional differences. The regional differences in predicting domestic violence changed after controlling for personal characteristics (see Table 4). In all regions except the Central region (odds ratio from 1.74 to 2.20) the addition of personal characteristics into the model explained some of the regional variation. Family characteristics such as religion, family structure, decision-making, presence of mother-in-law and others are minimally affected by the introduction of personal characteristics. Controlling for family and regional characteristics, there are only minimal changes in the effects of personal characteristics on likelihood of domestic violence.

Summary

This study documents regional differences in the reports of domestic violence in rural India. While some of this diversity is explained through the addition of family characteristics (religion, family structure, decision-making, socio-economic status and natal family violence) and personal characteristics (education, labor force participation, financial independence, and attitudes towards domestic violence), the regional differences are still strong.

This study produced a number of surprising results, contrary to its hypotheses. One of the surprising findings is the difference between the reports of domestic violence in the northern and southern regions of the country. Because the status of women is assumed to be related to violence against women, we hypothesized that southern women would be less likely to experience domestic violence. Instead we find that the odds of women being beaten by their husbands are two times the odds for northern women.

The presence of family characteristics indicating ‘jointness’ (non-nuclear family structure, and decision-making shared with people other than the husband) also had effects the opposite of those that we predicted. By these criteria, there was less domestic violence in joint families.

How can we explain these anomalous findings? We could begin by hypothesizing that joint family households may not be much more patriarchal in orientation than nuclear households. In fact, Krishnaraj (1989) has argued that the contention that a nuclear family gives women more autonomy and freedom may not always hold true, because the “strength of the ideology that confines women to restricted roles may still operate.” This hypothesis can be tested with the NFHS-2 data. First, when we compare the attitudes towards domestic violence of women living in nuclear and non-nuclear families, the differences are not great (means of 1.93 vs. 1.78 on 0-6 scale). Similarly, natal family violence experienced by women living in nuclear households does not differ from women living in non-nuclear households. Thus, the findings (not shown) indicate that the ideology of patriarchy is not restricted to the joint family system and seems to transcend family structure.

However, even if patriarchy is present in both family structures, the *lower* prevalence of violence in joint families is still puzzling. We have to ask why husbands in patriarchal joint households are actually *less* likely to be violent towards their wives than those who live in patriarchal nuclear households. Three possibilities exist. First, the system of patriarchal control may be more effective in a joint household, reducing the need for violence. Joint households would contain more members, enabling them to monitor women’s behavior effectively and take action to keep them in line. A second possibility is that additional family members can act as potential supporters for the woman (Goode, 1978), taking her side when conflicts arise with her husband or serving as mediators in disputes. Thus, husband-wife conflict might be less likely to continue to the point of violence. Third, given that a significant percentage of rural women do not accept many justifications for wife

beating, it is possible that other women in the household act as monitors, of the husband's behavior, discouraging husband violence by their disapproving presence of domestic violence in general (Vindhya, 2000).

Another important finding is the increased likelihood of women being beaten if they are employed. Women who work are assumed to have more freedom of movement than women who do not work. Perhaps it could be argued that *because* women acquire freedom of movement and are at times outside the ideological control and role expectations of the family, they are more likely to be beaten (Madhurima, 1996). The independence of these women is seen as a threat to the authority of the family and thus, violence is used against them to control them (Miller, 1999; Bhatti, 1990).

Feminist researchers believe that the patriarchal attitudes and their manifestation within the family are primary sources of gender violence. The patriarchal ideology of male dominance would encourage men to control their women including by the use of violence against them. One would expect, then, that more patriarchal contexts would produce a higher incidence of violence against women. In particular, the joint family system with its rigid male hierarchical system and role expectations should produce more violence than nuclear families that are relatively less rigid and women of the 'liberal' South are more likely to be beaten than those of the 'traditional' North.

The NFHS-2 data, however, indicate quite the opposite pattern. All of my indicators of family 'jointness' are *negatively* related to wife-beating. Women in the liberal South are *more* likely to be beaten than those in the 'traditional' North. The explanation may lie in an elaboration of the feminist theory that treats domestic violence as the patriarchal control tactic of last resort. It is reasonable to argue that violence might be used to control women *only* after all other means of control mechanism have failed.

In *The Velvet Glove*, Mary Jackman argues persuasively that violence is likely to be a control tactic of last resort because it undermines the relationship between the dominant group and its

subordinates. Jackman's argument, meant to apply to all paternalistic relations of domination and subordination, is largely pragmatic, relying on reasonable arguments for the relative ineffectiveness or inefficiency of violence as means of control (Jackman, 1994, 61-62). For example, she quotes at length from Edmund Burke's 1775 speech to the British Parliament regarding the likely consequences of the use of violence to control the American colonies:

First, Sir, permit me to observe that the use of force alone is but *temporary*. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered.

My next objection is its *uncertainty*. Terror is not always the effect of force, and an armament is not a victory. If you do not succeed, you are without resource; for...force failing, no further hope of reconciliation is left....

A further objection to force is that you *impair the object* by your very endeavors to preserve it. The thing you fought for is not the thing which you recover, but depreciated, sunk, wasted, and consumed in the contest. (Burke, 1775/1954, 89-90, as cited in Jackman, 1994, 62-63)

In the case of domestic violence, the closeness of the relationship between the husband and wife would further militate against the use of force as a last resort. On practical grounds, the consequences noted by Burke would have implications for the minutiae of daily life together. On more emotional grounds, it is often (one would hope even usually) the case that husbands do love or at least feel strong affection for their wives, and therefore would not want to do her any physical harm.

In the joint family system where systems of control not only take the form of specific and rigid role expectations, but also encompass additional monitoring of behavior by multiple family members, women's lives are controlled to quite a degree by the institutional structure of the joint

family system. Violence in this case is unnecessary. On the other hand, nuclear families, especially in this age of increased labor force participation of women, have very unclear role expectations and poor systems of structural control. In this case, men could potentially resort to acts of violence to elicit compliance from women.

All of these anomalous findings, taken together, suggest a general elaboration of the feminist analyses of motivations for domestic violence. Feminists have argued that family violence is about power and that violence against women in the family is usually used to gain control over “our women.” Given this premise, we could argue, with Jackman (1994), that when power is concentrated along patriarchal lines, the likelihood of using violence is reduced because the power structure effectively imposes cultural, social, and physical restrictions on women. In such situations, because the structural control over women is already established, the use of violence is redundant. Finally, it should be stressed that while the effects of family form on husband-to-wife violence is a significant finding, there is much left to be explained. Even after controlling for family and personal characteristics, differences among regions in prevalence of domestic violence remain substantial.

Two important characteristics of domestic violence emerge from the results of this study. First, patriarchy does not necessarily lead to the use of violence. Second, violence may be used primarily as a means of last resort, after all other control tactics have failed. It is not enough to understand that a patriarchal family system occasionally endorses acts of violence, or that violence is a man taking control rather than a man out of control. A deeper understanding of the conditions under which violence is used by patriarchal families to control recalcitrant women will enable us to more fully comprehend the complex ways in which patriarchy controls women’s lives.

*Table 1 : Summary of the Logistic Regression Analysis for Regional Variation (by Regions) predicting Husband**Violence.*

<i>Region</i>	<i>Regional Differences</i>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>
North	-	-	-
Central	.73	.04	2.07**
East	.82	.04	2.27**
North East	-.05	.05	.96
West	.13	.05	1.13
South	.86	.04	2.36**
Constant			

Note. This table refers to the effect of regional differences when used as the only predictor of the dependent variable, Hit by Husband.

*e^B = exponentiated B. *p < .01. **p < .001.*

Table 2 : Bivariate and partial effects of Family Characteristics on log odds of Husband Violence

<i>Predictor</i>	Bivariate Relationship			Multivariate Relationship		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>
Religion						
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-	-
Muslim	.14	.04	1.15**	.13	.04	1.14**
Christian	-.61	.06	.54**	-.61	.07	.54**
Sikh	-.48	.09	.62**	.18	.10	1.20
Buddhist/Neo Buddhist	-1.20	.17	.30**	-1.04	.17	.35**
Jain	-1.26	.52	.28	-.77	.52	.46**
Others	-.01	.10	.99	-.10	.11	.91
Family Structure						
Nuclear	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non - Nuclear	-.37	.02	.69**	-.15	.03	.86**
Socio Economic Status						
	-.14	.00	.87**	-.12	.00	.89**
Women's Autonomy						
Respondent	-	-	-	-	-	-
Husband	-.17	.05	.85**	-.27	.05	.77**
Jointly with Husband	-.48	.05	.62**	-.47	.05	.63**
Others in the Household	-.71	.06	.49**	-.61	.06	.54**
Jointly with Others in the Household	-.10	.06	.37**	-.81	.06	.45**
Natal Family Violence						
	.55	.04	1.73**	-.61	.04	1.84**
Constant						
				-.42	.05	.66
χ^2					13.0	
<i>df</i>					2076.92	

Note. The zero-order relationship in the table refers to the effect of individual variables when used as the only predictor of the dependent variable, Hit by Husband.

*e^B = exponentiated B. *p < .01. **p < .001.*

Table 3 : Bivariate and partial effects of Personal Characteristics on log odds of Husband Violence

<i>Predictor</i>	Bivariate Relationship			Multivariate Relationship		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>
Education						
Illiterate	-	-	-	-	-	-
< Primary School Complete	.37	.05	.69**	-.28	.05	.76**
Primary School Complete	-.57	.04	.57**	-.44	.04	.65**
Middle School Complete	-.90	.06	.41**	-.74	.06	.48**
High School Complete	-1.20	.08	.28**	-1.09	.08	.34**
Higher Secondary School Complete	-1.88	.14	.15**	-1.76	.14	.17**
Labor Force Participation						
Non - Working	-	-	-	-	-	-
For Family Member	.36	.01	1.44**	.15	.03	1.16**
For Someone Else	.83	.03	2.29**	.64	.03	1.89**
Self Employed	.51	.05	1.66**	.45	.05	1.57**
Financial Independence	-.09	.02	.91**	.03	.02	1.04
Attitudes towards D.V.	.17	.01	1.19**	.14	.01	1.15**
Constant				-1.78	.03	.17
χ^2					10.0	
<i>df</i>					2222.82	

Note. The zero-order relationship in the table refers to the effect of individual variables when used as the only predictor of the dependent variable, Hit by Husband.

*e^B = exponentiated B. *p < .01. **p < .001.*

Table 4: Summary of the Logistic Regression Analysis for all the models Predicting Husband Violence, comparing regional differences, family characteristics and personal characteristics.

<i>Predictor</i>	Zero Order Relationship			Family Characteristics			Family and Personal Characteristics		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	e^{β}	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	e^{β}	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	e^{β}
Region									
North	-.73	.04	2.07**	.60	.04	1.83**	-.56	.04	1.75**
Central	.82	.04	2.27**	.55	.04	1.74**	.79	.05	2.20**
East	-.05	.05	.96	-.11	.06	.90	-.04	.06	.96
North East	.13	.05	1.13	.11	.06	1.11	.01	.06	1.01
West	.86	.04	2.36**	.72	.04	2.06**	.69	.05	1.99**
South									
Family Characteristics :									
Religion									
Hindu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Muslim	.20	.04	1.22**	.20	.04	1.22**	.20	.04	1.22**
Christian	-.37	.07	.69**	-.43	.07	.69**	-.43	.07	.65**
Sikh	.43	.10	1.53**	.43	.10	1.53**	.60	.10	1.83**
Buddhist/Neo Buddhist	-.59	.18	.55*	-.59	.18	.55*	-.60	.18	.55*
Jain	-.85	.52	.43*	-.85	.52	.43*	-.54	.53	.59*
Others	.28	.12	1.32	.28	.12	1.32	.23	.12	1.26
Family Structure									
Nuclear	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non - Nuclear	-.18	.03	.83**	-.18	.03	.83**	-.20	.03	.82**
Socio Economic Status									
Women's Autonomy	-.10	.00	.91**	-.10	.00	.91**	-.04	.01	.97**

<i>Predictor</i>	Zero Order Relationship			Family Characteristics			Family and Personal Characteristics		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	e^{β}	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	e^{β}	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	e^{β}
Respondent	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Husband					.05	.80**	-.23	.05	.80**
Jointly with Husband				-.37	.05	.69**	-.36	.05	.70**
Others in the Household				-.59	.06	.55**	-.58	.06	.56**
Jointly with Others in the Household				-.66	.06	.52**	-.59	.07	.55**
Natal Family Violence				.62	.04	1.86**	.61	.04	1.83**
<i>Personal Characteristics:</i>									
Education									
Illiterate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
< Primary School Complete							-.17	.05	.84**
Primary School Complete							-.27	.04	.76**
Middle School Complete							-.45	.06	.64**
High School Complete							-.80	.08	.45**
Higher Secondary School Complete							-1.32	.14	.27**
Labor Force Participation									
Non - Working	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
For Family Member							.28	.03	1.33**
For Someone Else							.51	.03	1.67**
Self Employed							.38	.06	1.47**
Financial Independence							.02	.03	1.02
Attitudes towards D.V.							.14	.01	1.15**
Constant	-1.96	.03	.14	-.97	.06	.38	-1.65	.07	.19

Note. e^{β} = exponentiated B. * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. The dependent variable is Hit by Husband

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