

**UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG MARRIED  
WOMEN IN URBAN SRINAGAR AND ITS RIPPLE  
EFFECT ON FAMILY STRUCTURE AND  
CHILDREN**

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**Abstract**

*Domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportions with far-reaching consequences for individual victims, their children and their communities. According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), "in every three minutes a crime has been reported against women in India. Two women are raped every sixty minutes in the country. A young married woman is found beaten to death or burnt every six hours. Violence against women is not a new thing. Women have been bearing domestic, public, physical and mental violence against them for a very long time, which has also affected their status in society. Domestic violence in Indian culture includes violence from the husband as well as the in-laws. Women are expected to endure violence for fear of bringing shame to their families. It is over the last decade that research in this field of domestic violence has led to greater recognition of the issue as a public health problem. The present study was undertaken to explore the lived experience of married women regarding domestic violence in urban Srinagar. Furthermore, it explores the complex and often obscured issue related to domestic violence, which makes it imperative to shed light on the prevalence, dynamics, and consequences of domestic violence within Kashmir. The socio-political landscape of the region and traditional patriarchal norms exacerbate the vulnerability of women to various forms of violence within familial settings. Administrated online interview method on 12 participants, based on purposive sample technique. The results of the study are divided into four themes, which revealed that violence against women is the harsh reality of today which exists in urban Kashmir in various forms and contents. In Kashmir where women are*

*thought to be highly esteemed, many examples of violence against women exist. The impact of violence leaves behind many broken families, which impacts children. Children are often the silent and innocent victims, bearing the emotional and psychological scars of broken families out of domestic violence.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, women, family structures, broken families, children

### **Introduction**

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together or dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, faith or class. Domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportions with far-reaching consequences for individual victims, their children and their communities. Domestic violence results in death, serious injury, and chronic medical and mental health issues for victims, their children, the perpetrators, and others. The lethal outcome of domestic violence is tragically evident in media reports that describe a steady stream of homicides against victims, their children, family or friends, those who are trying to protect them, innocent bystanders, and perpetrators. Domestic violence is a persistent worldwide problem that affects many women regardless of their

demographic characteristics (Dobash and Dobash, 2017). Sometimes domestic violence begins — or increases — during pregnancy. Domestic violence puts your health and the baby's health at risk. The danger continues after the baby is born. Even if your child isn't abused, simply witnessing domestic violence can be harmful. Children who grow up in abusive homes are more likely to be abused and have behavioral problems than other children. As adults, they're more likely to become abusers or think abuse is a normal part of relationships.

Violence against women tends to increase in any emergency, including epidemics. Stress, disruption of social and protective networks, increased economic hardship and decreased access to services can exacerbate the risk of women suffering violence. The Eastern Mediterranean Region has the second highest prevalence of violence against women (37%) worldwide. This is due to structural systems that maintain gender inequalities at different levels of society, compounded by political crises and socioeconomic instability in the Region. The Region also faces more humanitarian emergencies than any other part of the world, with a huge number of refugees and internally displaced populations.

In India about half of our population is women, they have been ill-treated for a long time. Women have been deprived of their right to life and personal liberty which is provided to them under the constitution of India. Women have been considered physically and emotionally weaker than males, however, at present women have proved themselves in every field of life affirming that they are no less than men whether at home or workplaces. Behind the closed doors of homes all over the country, women are tortured, beaten and killed. According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), “in every three minutes a crime has been reported against women in India. Two women are raped every sixty minutes in the country. A young married woman is found beaten to death or

burnt every six hours. Violence against women is not a new thing. Women have been bearing domestic, public, physical and mental violence against them for a very long time, which has also affected their status in society. The statistical data of increasing crimes against women is shocking, women are subjected to various types of attacks i.e. foeticide, infanticide, medical neglect, child marriages, bride burning, sexual abuse of girl child, forced marriages, rapes, prostitution, sexual harassment at home as well as workplaces etc.” (Jain & Singh, 2001). Violence against women is a harsh reality. Domestic Violence is certainly a human rights issue and it is important to know the reasons for domestic violence. The main causes for women stalking and battering include, “exploitation of women for more dowry, discrimination against women, alienation of women’s self-acquired property fraudulently, torture by husband and in-laws, arguing with the partner, refusing to have sex with the partner, going out of home without telling the partner, not cooking food properly, abusing and insulting by using vulgar language, sexual harassment, molestation, immoral traffic, rape, sodomy and all other inhuman acts. In all above stated causes women are subjected to torture and will be considered as the aggrieved person. Generally, violence takes place due to lack of understanding between the couples as well as in the family members” (Jain & Singh, 2001). Sabarwal et al. (2013) in their study “Determinants of Marital Violence” analyzed the huge number of married ladies in India who experience physical and sexual viciousness inside their family. In this review information gathered from 4,880 rural ladies of four states-Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Bihar-drawn from the National Family Health Survey-2 directed in 1998- 99 and a subsequent report for a sub-gathering of ladies conveyed in 2002-2003. Those significant extents of married ladies experience physical and sexual savagery inside marriage and it is viewed as a typical thing. Many studies have been conducted by

researchers on domestic violence within marital relationships.

Traditional Kashmir society was patriarchal and patrilocal, i.e. the couple lives with the husband's family. Although the practices of infanticide, foeticide, and dowry deaths were not resorted to, women were generally abused, maltreated, subjugated and physically victimized right from their childhood because of the socially structured inequality. However, the family patterns are changing significantly and so are the traditionally defined roles of women. The changing social structure, which exposed Kashmiri women (belonging to all social strata) to the outside world, has made them more vulnerable to all types of sexual abuse. They are subjected to the abuses like sexual harassment, molestation, eve-teasing and even to immoral trafficking, kidnapping, abduction and rape. The Kashmir Valley, a Muslim-dominated area of the state, has been witnessing a lot of domestic violence in recent years; women bear the scars of violence deeper than men and face all kinds of injustices and crimes.

Domestic violence against women is on the rise in Jammu and Kashmir. Even educated and economically independent women are at the receiving end, according to anecdotal evidence contained in police data (Sharma, 2010). The violence against women has increased both qualitatively as well as quantitatively in Jammu and Kashmir over the past more than two decades and the direct impact of the militancy and armed conflict has intensified the problem. "The practice directly or indirectly related to domestic violence against women prevails in urban as well as rural J&K in all educational, economic, social, age, cultural and other groups and classes. 15 per cent of married women are physically and mentally being abused (Dabla, 2009). Almost 70% of all crimes reported to the police involve women beaten by their husbands. This is mostly related to matrimonial disputes family squabbles and harassment for dowry (Gul and Khan, 2014). Women have been bearing domestic, public, physical and

mental violence against them for a very long time, which has also affected their status in society. Domestic violence in Indian culture includes violence from the husband as well as the in-laws. Women are expected to endure violence for fear of bringing shame to their families. It is over the last decade that research in this field of domestic violence has led to greater recognition of the issue as a public health problem. The present study was undertaken to explore the lived experience of married women regarding domestic violence in urban Srinagar. Furthermore, it explores the complex and often obscured issue related to domestic violence, which makes it imperative to shed light on the prevalence, dynamics, and consequences of domestic violence within Kashmir. The socio-political landscape of the region and traditional patriarchal norms exacerbate the vulnerability of women to various forms of violence within familial settings.

**Aim of the study**

In the present study, the emphasis has been given to understanding the Domestic violence against women in urban Srinagar. To understand the nature and extent of violence, the researcher formulated the following objectives: to study the nature and extent of domestic violence against women, to study the factor responsible for domestic violence against women, and to study the effect of domestic violence on family members.

**Methodology**

The present study has been conducted in the district of Srinagar. The study is qualitative in nature. The participant pool comprised urban married females aged 27 to 37 years, N=12. The data was gathered by the researchers using an in-depth interview method. Employing a purposive sampling method, participants were selected based on specific criteria:

- a) agreed to participate,
- b) victims of domestic violence
- c) location (living in urban Srinagar)

- d) marital status (currently married), and  
e) age

**Table 1**  
**Demographic profile of respondents**

Participants	Age at marriage	Present Age	No. of children	Occupation
P1	24	27	1	Homemaker
P2	26	32	3	School Teacher
P3	28	30	1	Homemaker
P4	25	29	2	Teacher
P5	32	35	2	Nurse
P6	32	34	1	-do-
P7	33	35	Nil	Homemaker
P8	28	30	1	-do
P9	27	30	2	-do
P10	26	28	Nil	Heath worker
P11	33	37	2	Teacher
P12	28	31	1	School Teacher

*Source: field study, 2018*

### **Finding of the study**

#### **Types of abuse**

Abuse of various kinds, including physical, psychological, sexual, and financial, was experienced by the 12 individuals. Object hits, demeaning comments about their appearance, poor cooking skills, and financial hardship were all forms of abuse. As additional forms of abuse and harassment, women often reported their husbands' infidelity, second marriages (legal or otherwise), and financial demands from the birth family. Pregnancy was a time of abuse and neglect for the majority of women. For instance, one partner was physically violent and callous during pregnancy and/or labour, failed to provide adequate rest to his wife during these times, and then disappeared once the kid was delivered. "Abusing is there, and about beating, he has beaten me once or

twice," one woman said of her partner's violent behaviour throughout their pregnancy, which she said caused her to miscarry. One of the violent altercations caused me to miscarry once. I had miscarried due to the stress of his severe beatings, which caused me to cry a lot. The fact that blood was oozing from the cord indicated how dangerous it was (P6).

There were other forms of abuse that the ladies endured besides torture during pregnancy. According to another participant, her husband resorted to further physical violence when she confronted him about his affair. "She told me, "I told my spouse, tell me why you lied to me. The woman [whose husband had an affair] spilt the beans to me. Ever since then, he has made my life hell by thrashing me daily. As soon as he woke up in the morning, he would begin fighting and would not stop until bedtime. He discontinued all forms of physical contact with me. Another manner in which the women were victimized was by being socially isolated. "He used to beat me a lot," P1 said, describing how she was abused as others in the neighbourhood looked the other way. Despite the abundance of people in the area, no one ever came. Some respondents said that after being married, their spouse changed. After just two months of marriage, his true character became apparent, according to one participant (P1). He was a heavy pot smoker who frequently assaulted me. In the past, they would accuse me of having extramarital affairs. "His nature changed after getting married," said P3, another participant. He went from wanting all ladies to exclusively wanting strong workers within four days. "Get money from home and don't trouble me for anything," was his nature. For just four days, he was nice to me. After describing the violent cycle in her marriage, the participant said, "I still used to think, 'Let it go; I can't live with my parents after marriage.'" My in-laws' house has become my home in the end. Thus, I would weep while trying to remain [in my marriage], but it was an immense burden for me. I would then tell my parents, and my brother would come to collect me. I



used to believe that in four days he would get over his rage and act appropriately again. The same problems persisted when I returned two days later: they constantly beat me, they never gave me anything to eat, and they doubted my character.

### **Engaging Family Members in Abuse**

It was not uncommon for the in-laws to mistreat the women, who were their daughters-in-law, in addition to their intimate partners. Internships with in-laws were the norm for the women surveyed here. Conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law often arose from differences in daily routines, as well as cooking and cleaning techniques. As a result of these disagreements, verbal and physical assaults occurred multiple times. Most of the time, the husband was either directly involved in the argument or just stood by and did nothing to help his wife. If the argument started while he was at the office, he would listen to his relatives' accounts rather than his wife's. One participant's teasing for these lifestyle inequalities is shown in the following comment: No matter how right I am, my hubby will never side with me. Every time his mother tried to hurt me, he would back her up. A second responder gave the story of a mother-in-law who was physically violent. Based on what the mother-in-law claimed, this participant's husband will mistreat her. "Yes, my mother-in-law also beats me. She holds my hair, twists my hand backwards, kicks and punches, and hits me on the head. It's just a simple thing. My mother-in-law would tell him something, and then he would beat me up" (P4). Women were made fun of for a variety of reasons, one of which was that they couldn't cook. My mother-in-law would always tell me, "Something is pungent," when I was in the kitchen making dinner, one participant recalled. Cut back on the salt. Among other things, she would attack me and insult me. Oh, and my brother-in-law would rush over to beat me while my husband was out. Even my mother-in-law was a former batterer of mine (P6).

Many wives also expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that their husbands did not accept their account of events. He primarily pays attention to what my mother-in-law says, P8 admitted. His intellect is unused. He takes his mother's advice on everything. His mother's instructions would be his guide. (P8) My spouse is just like that.

The respondents felt immense societal pressure to make amends with their violent spouse, go back to their in-laws' house, and remain married. This kind of pressure came from the abuser's family as well as the victim's own. My mother would still keep me for four days if I went to her house, according to one answer; plus, my brother and brother-in-law would be there as well. Another thing they'd say is that a woman doesn't deserve respect unless she lives with her spouse, not her parents. Wherever my husband is, I must go. It is my actual dwelling place (P11).

How come this only occurs to females? That is beyond my comprehension. Who will you turn to for help if [your husband] abuses you? Neither your mother's house nor your husband's are suitable for her. What options do women have? You may ask, "What will you do at a women's orphanage?" Also, that doesn't help at all. From what I've heard, all sorts of terrible things occur there. "Where should I go?" is something I often ponder when sitting. Even though my husband is physically abusive, I fear that my brother and his wife will oppose me if I seek my mother's help. Then what's the next step? There were cases where the children's best interests necessitated mending fences with the violent spouse. Many times, the ladies gave in to this pressure. One respondent recounted how she was told she couldn't provide her son with the same fatherly affection and a stable home environment that her husband could: According to my parents, a husband is a husband. 'You're young now,' they advised. On your own, what are you planning to do? Do you have any further plans for the future? How about some paternal affection and a place to live for your son? Well, at least

your husband will have a stable future and a place to call his own. Thus, I consented to his First person.

**Impact on children**

The respondents who answered talked about how the abuse affected their children in different ways. There was abuse and/or neglect of the children, or the children were used as pawns by their parents. The kids were sometimes allowed to leave with their moms and go to a safe place, usually with their birth family. Other times, they were not allowed to do that. In these situations, the kids were used to bother and scare the women. More than once, the husband just wasn't taking care of things. For example, one husband wouldn't support his family financially and wouldn't pay for food or home bills: Foods like rice and wheat are very expensive, as well as lentils. There are also other costs. "The kids need to eat something." They're kids. They see something and need it. When he doesn't work, how will I pay for everything? Working is the only way to pay your bills and keep your home running. It's always going to be short on people who don't work. (P7). Domestic violence within families creates a cycle of trauma and instability that profoundly impacts both the victims and any children involved. When families are torn apart by violence, children are often the silent and innocent victims, bearing the emotional and psychological scars long after the physical wounds have healed. The breakdown of families due to domestic violence can have far-reaching consequences. Children exposed to violence in the home may experience a range of negative outcomes, including increased likelihood of developing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They may struggle with behavioral problems, poor academic performance, and difficulties forming healthy relationships in the future. Moreover, witnessing or experiencing violence at home can perpetuate a cycle of abuse, with some children growing up to become either victims or perpetrators themselves. This perpetuation of

violence can have intergenerational effects, further destabilizing families and communities

### **Patriarchy and Domestic Violence**

Patriarchy has always been an instrument of oppression and exploitation against women resulting in various forms of gender-based violence (Shafi and Jahangir, 2013). It occurs in all settings; at work, in the home, in the streets and the community at large. From the data revealed by P1, P2, and P8, the most significant fact is that married women experience violence primarily at the hands of men they know and within the so-called 'safe heaven' of the home and family. In all of these cases, differences in power between men and women and other forms of inequality play a big part in how violence happens. In Kashmir, women experience the same ups and downs of life as women in other parts of the world. While infanticide, foeticide, and dowry deaths don't happen there, women are still abused, maltreated, subjugated, and physically victimized from a young age because of the way society is set up.

### **Discussion**

This study had several limitations. The small purposive sample of 12 respondents was drawn from the city of Srinagar. Thus, generalizing the results to other populations without similar contextual factors (e.g., rural) is limited. Nevertheless, this study is an important contribution to the scant literature on married women experiencing domestic violence in urban areas. After marriage, women are considered a part of the in-laws' household and are at the bottom of the familial ladder. Abuse may be perpetrated not only by husbands but also by both male and female in-laws (Adam, 2011). The findings in the study demonstrate several situations in which family members were involved in domestic violence. Abuse by the mother-in-law, in particular, was in line with research reported in other studies (Rew, et al., 2013) and may be attributed,

in part, to a female hierarchy centred on generation, and to the fact that she is the mother of a son. Women in this environment do not bond with one another, rather, a pecking order may become established, with the mother-in-law assuming the highest position of influence and entitlement among the women in the family, and the daughter-in-law with the least.

Moreover, the abuse perpetrated by in-laws is in line with the Indian culture's patriarchal beliefs and traditional ideologies involving female inferiority. In most cases, women (both in India and other parts of the world) gain status by giving birth to a male child. Due to the cultural norm that the husband is the only source of security, divorce or separation is not considered a feasible option for women, who are thus pressured to reconcile with an abusive husband. In addition to the stigmatization of divorce in the culture, children play a huge role in women's marital and life decisions. In the current study, children were the driving force behind women's decisions to either stay in or leave the abusive home. The urge to protect their children was some women's impetus for either separating from or reconciling with their abusive husbands. Leaving or staying in an abusive relationship for the sake of protecting the children is in line with other research on abused women conducted in the United States (Bhandari et al., 2011). In Indian culture, a woman's identity is derived primarily from marriage and motherhood; therefore, a woman without a husband is treated as an incomplete person. Furthermore, a divorced woman and/or single mother is perceived as having failed in the role of wife and mother, regardless of the conduct of her partner (Dasgupta & Warriar, 1996). This cultural perception leads to multiple disadvantages for women in India. On the one hand, abandonment by her husband, separation, and/or divorce is generally seen as evidence that the woman did something wrong or is flawed in some way. On the other hand, this perception leads to the woman's disadvantage in her natal home. Because

the natal home is now the home of her brother's wife and their children, she may receive direct or indirect messages that she is unwanted there, too. Moreover, a divorced woman is shunned when she participates in holy events or celebrations (particularly weddings) for fear that she may bring bad luck (Ayyub, 2000). These cultural pressures, coming from all sides, leave abused women with very little choice in their lives, and thus, their best recourse is usually to force themselves to try to reconcile with abusive husbands.

### **Conclusion**

Violence against women is the harsh reality of today which exists everywhere. Even in Kashmir where women are thought to be highly esteemed, we found many examples of violence against women. The types of violence are not limited to emotional, psychological, and social it is physical also. It is prevalent in different forms and content, it is unique, as it is perpetrated not only by intimate partners but also by the in-laws. Furthermore, the natal family equally plays its part as a partner of violence, as a woman experiencing domestic violence tends to seek help from her natal family to put pressure on her husband to stop abusing her and her children. However, in the present study, it was found that because of the lack of support from their native kin majority of the respondents were rendered vulnerable to domestic violence. In general, women are expected to endure violence for long periods of their lives for fear of disgracing their families and/or because of a lack of social and financial support independent of their husbands. Moreover, domestic violence within families creates a cycle of trauma and instability that profoundly impacts both the victims and any children involved. When families are torn apart by violence, (what sociologists call the emergence of broken families) children are often the silent and innocent victims, bearing the emotional and psychological scars. Addressing domestic violence requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes the safety and well-being of all

family members. Future research could identify culturally acceptable ways to bring independence and financial strength to victims of domestic violence.

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