

Physical and Psychological Violence on Farm Women in Rural Punjab

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Abstract

Mental health is a condition of well-being in which a person acknowledges his or her own potential and able to cope with daily problems, works successfully, fruitfully and contributes to his or her community. The women belonging to any class, caste, creed or religion can be victims of this cruel form of violence and disfigurement. The present study was conducted with this specific objective of measuring physical and psychological violence on farm women in rural Punjab. Three agro climatic zones had been taken and sample size was 240 farm households. The findings of the study revealed that shoving and hair pulling were found as major physical violence faced by farm women. Among psychological violence, culture of silence, anxiety and loneliness were majorly found among respondents. The study concluded that violence had adverse effect on farm women's mental and social health which hinders her overall wellbeing.

Key words: Violence, Farm women, Psychological, Physical, Rural, Punjab

JEL Classification: I10, I31, R10, R12

Introduction

Socio-economic development and integration of women into the mainstream of national life has been pursued as a national policy objective since independence. The constitution of India has granted equal rights to both men and women but still women face extreme discrimination and violence and thus occupies low status in society. Discriminatory mind-set towards women has existed since many centuries and has affected the lives of women. The women across the world irrespective of age, caste, class and socio-economic status face violence of all kinds. Domestic violence is a universal problem and existing through ages. It is present in all cultures and societies and not confined to one region or community. It is widely reported in the print and electronic media that one third of the women had been slapped once in their lifetime all over world, this type of violence against women had been reported generally from their husbands. The rising prevalence of violence over the years has made it count as one of the serious forms of human rights abuse. Domestic violence is presently recognized as the root cause of an array of public health concerns due to the subsequent physical, mental and reproductive health issues that the victimized women face as a result of this violence. (Semahegn and Mengistie 2015) The most dreadful aspect of domestic violence is that women experience physical, psychological and emotional violence by people who belong to their

domestic environment. The assaulters who harm women with the intention of inflicting harm, dominate them or sexually subjugate them are usually their husbands, father in law, friends, family members and acquaintances. (Sharma *et al* 2019 and Varma and Gupta 2020) In India, domestic violence towards women is considered as any type of abuse that can be considered a threat, it can also be psychological, or sexual abuse. According to NCRB latest reports, violence against women in India has increased from 56.5 per cent in 2020 to 65.7 per cent in 2021. Women overall health is the least priority and neglected areas of research in India. Available empirical evidences in India pointed out that the Indian women do not enjoy good health status. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2019-2021 showed that an overall 30 percent of women in India face gender based violence putting a third of all women in India at higher risk of developing anxiety disorders and depression. Thus, present study is an attempt to investigate physical and psychological violence on farm women in rural Punjab.

Data Sources and Methodology

The study was conducted in three agro climatic zones of Punjab. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used and total sample size was 240 farm households. A self-structured interview schedule was formulated to collection of data. The data were tabulated and analysed by using mean scores, percentages and rank order to find out logical conclusions.

Results and Discussion

A socially constructed age group is a period of time such as adulthood, middle and old age that is viewed as a social position that influences how individuals are perceived and treated, as well as what is expected of them. It is frequently referred to in terms of grade levels or age groups. The data in Table 1 revealed the age distribution of women was categorised into three groups i.e., young (less than 35), middle (35- 55) and old (above 55). A majority (71.67%) of respondents were found in the middle age group whereas more than one third (36.1%) of farm women were either illiterate or lowly educated and another half (50%) of respondents had attained education up to matriculation and senior secondary level. Further data indicates marital status of farm women. It was found that majority (90.8%) were married while eight per cent were widow followed by less than one per cent each unmarried (0.83%) and divorcee (0.83%). The occupation of person is considered a crucial factor of social status and reflects their social standing. It has a significant effect in defining an individual's socio-economic status. Majority of women were engaged in household chores like looking after children, old aged parents, domestic work, tending livestock etc. in all three zones followed by 6.25 per cent in service like teaching job, *anganwadi* worker and two per cent each in entrepreneurial activities like boutique, food preservation and farming. It is disheartening to note that just 2.5 per cent of the women respondents from farming households divulged their involvement in farming activities. This involvement was found in small (3.09%) and medium (4.54%) categories.

The study found two types of families' i.e., nuclear and joint. The trend of nuclearization of families, which was formerly seen only in urban areas, is increasingly noticeable in rural regions as well. The study also found that more than half (57.5%) of the households had nuclear type of families and rest 42.5 per cent were found to be of joint families. The caste system still prevails in our society. It was also reflected from the study in the Table 1 that majority (87.5%) of women respondents belonged to general caste viz. *Jatt Sikh, Brahmin, Khatri* whereas 10 per cent belonged to SCs like *Ravidasia, Ramdasia* and just two per cent belonged to OBCs viz. *Gujjar, Rai, Saini*. Farm size category data show that majority of farm women in medium and large farm categories belonged to general caste in all three zones whereas one fourth of respondents of small farm sized belonged to SCs. Family income includes earnings from crops, dairy, remittances, services etc. The study found that nearly half (45.4%) of respondents had annual income up to 4 lakh, while one third (31.2%) and one fourth (24%) had an annual income 4–10 lakh and more than 10 lakh respectively. The study further revealed that the majority (85.71%) of small-sized farm women had their annual income of up to 4 lakh, while half (51.5%) of large farm-sized respondents had

their annual income more than 10 lakh. Similar results was observed in other studies i.e. Kaur *et al* (2017) and Guleria *et al* (2022).

Violence in any form affects not only physical, mental and reproductive health of women but also adversely affects their self-esteem, ability to do work and make decisions. Women belonging to any class, caste, creed or religion can be victims of this cruel form of violence and disfigurement. In India, domestic violence toward women is considered as any type of abuse that can be considered a threat, it can also be physical or sexual abuse to any current or former partner. The NCRB report also noted, "Majority of cases under crime against women under IPC were registered under 'cruelty by husband or his relatives' (31.8%) followed by 'assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty' (20.8%), 'kidnapping and abduction of women' (17.6%) and 'rape' (7.4%). Many studies has been conducted which showed that incidences of violence, crime against women were increased day by day in our society.

Kaur (2007) revealed some facts of domestic violence. Women faced physical and visible injuries at the hands of husbands and other family members. Nearly sixty (59.92%) per cent respondents reported minor injuries like cuts, facial scars, bruises, minor burns, aches, and sprains to their feet, ankles, knees, wrists or elbows with injuries in ligaments in trying to escape from their perpetrators intentionally twisting and hurting them and less severe eye injuries. Some of them suffer injuries from being slapped tightly having hand prints on faces and breasts, abdomen and genital pains on been kicked in these areas usually covered by clothing. About 40 per cent respondents endured major injuries such as deep wounds in scalp and skull fractures as head injuries causing blurry vision, speech problems and seizures and broken bones on being hit with large or pointed object, dislocations on being pushed to the ground or suffer a fall caused by abuser. Kaur and Nagaich (2019) studied factors associated with domestic violence in Punjab. The study shows socio- economic factors were highly responsible for violence against women. Most of the respondent's husband are illiterate and engaged in casual work that increases the chances of using violence against the women because their inability to improve the economic situation of the family irritates them which are exploded on the female partners. As the income of the husband increases, there are less chances of physical violence against women, so we can say that income of the husband is also important factor for curbing domestic violence. Further, table 2 highlights physical violence faced by farm women. The study found that shoving (2.72) was considered as major problem followed by hair pulling (2.52) and battering (2.35). Those cruelties done by their husbands, any elder member in the family which shows that women were still victimized by physical violence and they are not feel safe in their homes with their family members. Farm size

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic profile

| Particulars | Small | Medium | Large | Total |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Age (Years) | | | | |
| Less than 35 | 12 (15.58) | 9 (13.63) | 13 (13.40) | 34 (14.17) |
| 35-55 | 49 (63.63) | 49 (74.24) | 74 (76.28) | 172 (71.67) |
| Above 55 | 16 (20.77) | 8 (12.12) | 10 (30.92) | 34 (14.17) |
| Level of Education | | | | |
| Illiterate | 8 (10.39) | 5 (7.58) | 11 (11.34) | 24 (10.00) |
| Primary | 28 (36.36) | 14 (21.21) | 22 (22.68) | 64 (26.67) |
| Matriculation | 23 (29.87) | 23 (34.85) | 25 (25.77) | 71 (29.58) |
| Senior Secondary | 8 (10.39) | 14 (21.21) | 27 (27.84) | 49 (20.42) |
| Graduation and above | 10 (12.98) | 10 (15.15) | 12 (12.37) | 32 (13.33) |
| Marital Status | | | | |
| Married | 65 (84.42) | 61 (92.42) | 92 (94.85) | 218 (90.83) |
| Unmarried | 1 (1.30) | 1 (1.52) | - | 2 (0.83) |
| Widow | 11 (14.29) | 3 (4.55) | 4 (5.15) | 18 (7.50) |
| Divorcee | - | 1 (1.52) | 1 (1.03) | 2 (0.83) |
| Occupation | | | | |
| Farming | 3 (3.90) | 3 (4.54) | - | 6 (2.50) |
| Service | 4 (5.19) | 6 (9.10) | 5 (5.15) | 15 (6.25) |
| Entrepreneur | 2 (2.59) | 2 (3.03) | 1 (1.03) | 5 (2.08) |
| Household work | 68 (88.31) | 56 (83.33) | 91 (93.81) | 214 (89.17) |
| Family Type | | | | |
| Nuclear | 55 (77.43) | 37 (56.06) | 46 (47.42) | 138 (57.50) |
| Joint | 22 (28.57) | 29 (43.94) | 51 (49.48) | 102 (42.50) |
| Caste | | | | |
| Jatt Sikh/ General | 59 (76.62) | 57 (86.36) | 95 (97.93) | 223 (92.96) |
| OBC | 3 (3.89) | 3 (4.54) | - | 6 (2.50) |
| SC | 17 (22.07) | 6 (9.09) | 2 (2.06) | 23 (9.58) |
| Family Income (Rs. per annum) | | | | |
| Up to 4 Lakh | 66 (85.71) | 29 (43.94) | 14 (14.43) | 109 (45.42) |
| 4-10 Lakh | 9 (11.69) | 33 (50.00) | 33 (34.03) | 75 (31.25) |
| More than 10 Lakh | 2 (2.60) | 4 (6.06) | 50 (51.55) | 56 (23.33) |

Note- Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their incidences of physical violence

| Physical Violence | Small | | Medium | | Large | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------|-----|--------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| | MS | R | MS | R | MS | R | MS | R |
| Battering | 2.21 | IV | 2.17 | III | 2.42 | III | 2.35 | III |
| Hair pulling | 2.41 | II | 2.90 | I | 2.54 | II | 2.52 | II |
| Shoving | 2.71 | I | 2.76 | II | 2.69 | I | 2.72 | I |
| Sexual abuse | 2.30 | III | 2.17 | III | 2.42 | III | 2.31 | IV |

Note: MS: Mean score, R: Rank

category results reveal that shoving and hair pulling were main incidences faced by respondents among all three farm sized women.

Various studies on mental health indicates orthodox thinking in Indian families, overemphasize on women's domestic duties, lack of family support in taking a decision and lack of economic independence still occupy strong position in the factors associated with poor mental health of women. Studies have shown that females are more predisposed to mental illness due to rapid social change, gender discrimination, social exclusion, gender disadvantage like marrying at young age, husband's substance abuse, domestic violence etc. (Gupta and Varma 2020). These results infer that hardly any change has taken place in the causes of mental health problems when compared to what was reported by women in the researches done during 1980-2000. Moreover, the limited awareness and resistance to accept the mental health problems in any of the family members is one of the crucial factors in the seriousness of mental health problems especially in Indian context.

The information given in Table 3 reveals the incidences of psychological violence faced by farm women. In overall sample, the culture of silence (2.49) was found to be a major problem (Rank I) in which they stated that due to the cultural pressure not to speak in front of village and family elders, they were unable to contribute meaningfully in many interactions, situations and were not able to put forth their values and

judgements. The commonly held belief disclosed by sample women was *changia ghara di kudiya/aurta vadya morree nhi boldia*, the cultural pressure of not to speak in front of village and family elders. Anxiety and loneliness (2.44) and always being under surveillance (2.38) by husband or any other family member were ranked IInd and IIIrd, respectively. Furthermore, the study found that the culture of silence was observed as the major psychological violence faced by all three farm size categories, i.e., small (2.36), medium (2.44) and large (2.51) farm households and scored Ist rank in the study, whereas criticism and public humiliation were other psychological violence faced by small and medium farm-sized women and ranked IInd and IIIrd in the study.

Table 4 explains the association between different aspects of violence with their socio-economic profile which included variable viz. age, marital status, family income, occupation and education. The study found that income and education was not significantly associated with physical and psychological violence, substantiating the fact that non-economic variables such as social norms of patriarchy and socially established practices of beliefs and ideologies had greater role in determining physical and psychological violence. Further, data highlights that age, marital status and occupation had significant association with psychological violence which indicates that most of married women engaged in household chores were victim of psychological violence.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their incidences of psychological violence

| Psychological violence | Small | | Medium | | Large | | Total | |
|------------------------|-------|-----|--------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| | MS | R | MS | R | MS | R | MS | R |
| Public humiliation | 2.30 | III | 2.30 | III | 2.40 | IV | 2.31 | V |
| Criticism | 2.31 | II | 2.36 | II | 2.45 | III | 2.36 | IV |
| Anxiety and loneliness | 2.29 | IV | 2.30 | III | 2.49 | II | 2.44 | II |
| Depression | 1.91 | V | 1.79 | V | 1.90 | V | 1.87 | VI |
| Under surveillance | 1.71 | VI | 1.76 | VI | 1.69 | VI | 2.38 | III |
| Culture of silence | 2.36 | I | 2.44 | I | 2.51 | I | 2.49 | I |

Note: MS: Mean score, R: Rank

Table 4. Association of violence with different aspects of socio-economic profile.

| Socio- economic Profile | Age | | Marital Status | | Family Income | | Occupation Education | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|---------|----------------|---------|---------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| | Chi test | p-value | Chi test | p-value | Chi test | p-value | Chi test | p-value | Chi test | p-value |
| Psychological violence | 18.09* | .021 | 12.64* | .049 | 6.11ns | .191 | 8.27* | .016 | 15.38ns | .052 |
| Physical violence | 5.09ns | .747 | 5.40ns | .493 | 1.06ns | .900 | .87ns | .644 | 5.13ns | .743 |

ns: Non-significant

* Significant at five per cent level

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The study concluded that women's poor physical and psychological health in Punjab is closely intertwined with socio-economic and cultural factors. Illiteracy, low education level, rural residence, low work participation have adverse effects on Punjabi women's mental, physical and social health which hinders her overall wellbeing. It is essential to recognize their burden and drudgery of unpaid household and care work advocates the need of redistribution of unpaid work within family institution which requires collective reflection and challenge the social construct of gender and its norms. Women must be made aware regarding their existing rights, their access to judicial relief and redress could be provided through legal aid, assistance and counselling. The study suggested that economic empowerment of rural women will reduce physical and psychological violence against than to some extent.

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