

## Nature and Magnitude of Domestic Violence Against Rural Women in Kashmir

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**Abstract:** Violence against women has devastating physical, emotional, financial and social effects on women, children, families and communities around the world. Domestic violence is an extremely complex and vicious form of abuse, committed most often within the four walls of the family or within a particular deep rooted power dynamic and socio-economic structures, which do not allow even the acknowledgement or recognition of this abuse. It is a serious sociological problem in rural society of Kashmir and has a number of forms like wife beating, harassment of women, and threat of divorce to wife, discrimination, sexual exploitation and bride burning. Based on a sample of 150 respondents selected from Ganderbal district of Kashmir valley, the study examines the nature and magnitude of domestic violence against rural women in Kashmir. A stratified random sampling technique was used to collect information from female victims of domestic violence chosen from rural areas of Ganderbal district. Besides, community members and socially notable persons were approached to identify the respondents. For the present study, a descriptive research design was used. The paper provides useful insights into nature, magnitude, frequency, sources and conditions of domestic violence against rural women in Kashmir.

**Keywords:** Nature, magnitude, frequency, domestic violence, rural women, Kashmir.

### INTRODUCTION

Violence refers to infliction by any man or woman on any other man or woman and manifested in various forms as physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. It involves at least two people – an actor or a perpetrator of violence and a victim or a person on whom violence is inflicted. Violence against women has devastating physical, emotional, financial and social effects on women, children, families and communities around the world [1]. Mishra, P. (2010) states that “violence means unjust or unwanted use of force usually accompanied by fury, vehemence or outrage, physical force unlawfully exercised with the intent to harm” [2]. Violence is “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation” [3]. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women. It affects women across the life span from sex selective abortion of female fetuses to forced suicide and abuse, and is evident, to some degree, in every society of the world.

Domestic violence may involve different means such as hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, and restraining, throwing objects. It includes threats, sexual

abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive/covert abuse and economic deprivation, rape, abduction, kidnapping, murder (all cases of criminal violence), dowry death, wife battering, sexual abuse, maltreatment of a widow and for an elderly women (all cases of domestic violence) and eve-teasing, forcing wife/daughter-in-law to go for foeticide, forcing a young widow to commit sati, etc. (all cases of social violence) are issues which affect a large section of society. Thus rape, kidnapping, wife-beating, sexual abuse, eve-teasing, mental harassment, physical torcher are all examples of violence against women. Domestic violence is an extremely complex and vicious form of abuse, committed most often within the four walls of the family or within a particular deep rooted power dynamic and socio-economic structures, which do not allow even the acknowledgement or recognition of this abuse. Domestic violence is a serious sociological problem in Kashmir society and “women are trapped in a traditional situation which is characterised by discrimination, suppression and inequality” [4]. Women face domestic violence within the family and outside the family. Domestic violence in Kashmir have a number of forms like wife beating, harassment of women, threat of divorce to wives, eve-teasing of girls, discrimination, sexual exploitation and bride burning. The effects of domestic violence on victim women are

devastating. It is a reality encompassing all walks of the social life that gets manifested at different levels of individual life and at all times in varied phase of development.

### **Nature and magnitude of domestic violence**

There has been a constant rise in dowry death, bride burning, rape, molestation, kidnapping and other crime against women. Hardly, a day passes without reports in news-papers of women setting themselves on fire or girls committing suicide. It is however, difficult to determine the nature of violence against women accurately on the basis of cases reported to the police for varied reason, due to social stigma attached to the victims of sexual offences (i.e. rape, molestation, uttering words, making gestures etc.). The patriarchal system reduces women to commodities controlled by men. Domestic violence against women is based on the idea of women as their property. Violence is a weapon that is used to carve, control and regulate women's behaviour and aspiration. It is observed that domestic violence against women is universal across culture, religion, class and ethnicity. Despite this, widespread nature of domestic violence remains so due to social construction of the divide between public and private affairs [5]. The violence against women is multidimensional and multidirectional. Its magnitude varies from society to society and from community to community. But most of the time, violence against women is done by the people who form close circle of social boundary. Violence against women affects her sense of self-esteem and confidence. The 2005-2006 National Health Family Survey (NFHS-III) reported that one-third of women aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical violence, and one in 10 had been a victim of sexual violence. The survey also found that only one in four abused women had ever sought help and that 54 percent of women believed that it was justified for a husband to beat his wife [6]. Domestic violence is a very common problem now-a-days and life time prevalence to report the incidence of domestic violence. The extent, validity and reliability of the data available are critical in determining. Such studies were initially conducted in industrialized countries – the United States, Canada, and Europe. For example, one very influential survey conducted in Canada in (1993) under the auspices of the Canadian government was developed in consultation with women's organizations and ensured adequate support and services for women participating in the survey. When designing research on violence against women, it is important that the research itself does not put women at risk. Most of the data available on violence against women is believed to be not only conservative, but unreliable. Studies vary in the sample size of women chosen, and the ways in which questions have been posed. It is difficult to compare these studies because of inconsistency in the definition of domestic violence and in the parameters Used which can range from physical abuse alone, to physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Debate

regarding the magnitude of the problem is also clouded by the fact that domestic violence is a crime that is under-recorded and under-reported. When women file a report or seek treatment, they may have to contend with police and health care officials who have not been trained to respond adequately or to keep consistent records. On the other hand, shame, fear of reprisal, lack of information about legal rights, lack of confidence in, or fear of, the legal system, and the legal costs involved make women reluctant to report incidents of violence [7]. Physical abuse a growing body of research studies confirms the prevalence of physical violence in all parts of the globe, including the estimates of 20 to 50 per cent of women from country to country that have experienced domestic violence. Statistics are grim no matter where in the world one looks. Data from industrialized and developing countries as well as from transitional countries provide an overview of the global problem. There are few comparable statistics on psychological violence, sexual abuse, and murder of women at the hands of intimate partners and other family members. Sexual abuse and rape by an intimate partner is not considered a crime in most countries, and women in many societies do not consider forced sex as rape if they are married too or cohabiting with the perpetrator. The assumption is that once a woman enters into a contract of marriage, the husband has the right to unlimited sexual access to his wife. Surveys in many countries reveal that approximately 10 to 15 per cent of women report being forced to have sex with their intimate partner. Some countries have begun to legislate against marital rape. These include Australia, Austria, Barbados, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad & Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Although provision of such laws represents considerable progress, it is often difficult for a woman to press charges because of the evidential rules concerning the crime. Psychological violence is harder to capture in quantitative studies, a full picture of the deeper and more insidious levels of violence defines quantification. Victim-survivors report that on-going psychological violence – emotional torture and living under terror – is often more unbearable than the physical brutality, with mental stress leading to a high incidence of suicide and suicide attempts. A close correlation between domestic violence and suicide has been established based on studies in the United States, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Peru, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Suicide is 12 times as likely to have been attempted by a woman who has been abused. In the United States, as many 35 to 40 percent of battered women attempt suicide. In Sri Lanka, the number of suicides by girls and women of 15-24 years age is 55 times greater than the number of deaths due to pregnancy and childbirth [8]. Thus, the author reveals that the statistics of domestic violence available from various countries evince the proportion of domestic

violence. The magnitude of problem is demonstrated by statistical studies which show that in 48 population-based survey carried out around the world by the World Health Organization, between 10 and 69 percent of women were reported as having suffered physical aggression by an intimate male partner at some time in their lives. Studies from Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and United States indicate that 40-70 percent of female homicides were perpetrated by their husbands or boyfriends. The problem of violence against women has gained increasing attention in recent years. Domestic violence against women in under-industrialized Countries such as Canada are 29 percent of women (a nationally representative sample of 12,300 women) reported being physically assaulted by a current or former partner since the age of 16. Japan 59 percent of 796 women surveyed in 1993 reported being physically abused by their partner. New Zealand 20 percent of 314 women surveyed reported being hit or physically abused by a male partner. Switzerland 20 percent of 1,500 women reported being physically assaulted according to a 1997 survey. United Kingdom 25 percent of women (a random sample of women from one district) had been punched or slapped by a partner or ex-partner in their lifetime. United States 28 percent of women (a nationally representative sample of women) reported at least one episode of physical violence from their partner.<sup>13</sup> Underdeveloped countries such as India up to 45 percent of married men acknowledged physically abusing their wives and according to a 1996 survey of 6,902 men in the state of Uttar Pradesh abuse their women.

### **Types of domestic violence**

Domestic violence against women may be classified as physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence. Abuse doesn't only refer to physical violence and battering. Sometimes people think that since they haven't been hit or seriously injured, they are not victims of abuse. What is known that abuse happens in many more ways than just physical assaults? All forms of domestic violence have one purpose: To gain and maintain control over the victim. Abusers use many tactics to exert power over their spouse or partner as dominance, humiliation, isolation, threats, intimidation, denial and blame. There are many other ways by which a person can dominate and /or hurt the intimate and that all forms of abuse are scary, painful, and shaming.

### **Physical violence**

Physical violence is violence involving contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering and/or bodily harm. Physical abuse includes hitting, slapping, punching, choking, pushing, burning and other types of contact that result in physical injury to the victim. It can also include behaviours such as denying the victim of medical care when needed, depriving the victim of sleep or other functions necessary to live, or forcing the victim to

engage in drug/alcohol use against her will. If a person is suffering from any physical harm then they are experiencing physical abuse. This pain can be experienced on any level. It can also include inflicting physical injury into other targets, such as children or pets, in order to cause psychological harm to the victim.

### **Emotional violence**

Emotional violence (also called as psychological violence or mental violence) can include humiliating the victim privately or publicly, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family, implicitly blackmailing the victim by harming others when the victim expresses independence or happiness, or denying the victim access to money or other basic resources and necessities. Degradation in any form including undermining the victim's self-worth or self-esteem can be considered psychological abuse. Often perpetrators will use children to engage in emotional abuse by teaching them to harshly criticize the victim as well.

### **Verbal violence**

Verbal violence is a form of emotionally abusive behaviour involving the use of language and can also be referred to as the act of threatening. It may include profanity but can occur with or without the use of expletives. Verbal abuse may include aggressive actions such as name-calling, blaming, ridicule, disrespect, and criticism, but there are also less obviously aggressive forms of verbal abuse. Statements that may seem gentle on the surface can be thinly veiled attempts to humiliate; falsely accuse; or manipulate others to submit to undesirable behaviour, make others feel unwanted and unloved, etc. While oral communication is the most common form of verbal abuse, it can also include abusive communication in written form.

### **Economic violence**

Economic violence is a form of violence when one intimate partner has control over the other partner's access to economic resources. It may involve preventing a spouse from resource acquisition, limiting the amount of resources to use by the victim, and/or exploiting economic resources of the victim (having the name of the abuser on all the victims' property like house, cars, and apartments). The motive behind preventing a spouse from acquiring resources is to diminish the victim's capacity to support her, thus forcing her to depend on the perpetrator financially. In addition, the abuser may also put the victim on an allowance, closely monitor how the victim spends money, spend victim's money without her consent and creating debt, or completely spend victim's savings to limit available resources.

**Sexual violence**

Sexual violence is any situation in which force or threat is used to obtain participation in unwanted sexual activity. Coercing a person to engage in sexual activity against their will, even if that person is a spouse or intimate partner with whom consensual sex has occurred, is an act of aggression and violence. Sexual abuse includes forcing the person into participating in any sexual act with which he/she is uncomfortable, forcing a person to look, act or pose for pornography, knowingly infecting the person with HIV, STDs etc., and involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the sexual act, unable to decline participation, or unable to communicate unwillingness to engage in the sexual act, because of illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or pressure.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Universe of the study**

The universe of present study constitutes female victims of domestic violence in district Ganderbal. The district has four tehsil's: Ganderbal, Wakora, Gund and Kangan. According to census (2011), Ganderbal district has a population of 2, 97,446 in which males were 1, 58,720 and females were 1, 38,726 respectively [9].

**Sampling plan and design of the study**

The present study is based on a sample of 150 female victims of domestic violence chosen from rural areas of district Ganderbal. . It is important to mention here that the whole sample of 150 respondents was chosen from the population of female victims of domestic violence as per the nature and objective of the study. Later on, a stratified random sampling technique was used to collect information from the respondents. For the present study, a descriptive research design was used.

**Techniques of data collection**

In order to carry out the empirical data from the field, the technique of interview schedule was administered on the respondents. The relevant literature was used to review and to analyse and provide some direction in drafting schedule. Schedule and informal discussion with the respondents were the major tools of data collection. The interview schedule was pre-tested and suitably modified. In-depth Interviews and discussions were conducted as the technique of data collection to elicit information from the respondents. The interview schedule which formed the major tool

was catered to the respondents to draw information from them.

**Sources of data collection**

The present study involved primary and secondary sources of data collection, for primary sources, first-hand information was collected through the interview schedule and observation in the field. The secondary information was based on books, journals, papers, news articles, magazines etc. available on topic. Facial expression, body language was given due an importance and informal talks with the respondents helped in enriching the study. The American Psychological Association 5th ed. (APA) style was used in the present study for citation and references.

**Hypotheses of the study**

In order to analyse the given research problem, the following hypotheses were laid down:

- Rural women in Kashmir are considered as unequal, inferior and weak,
- They are experiencing physical and mental violence not only from the in-laws but also from their intimate partner,
- The conditions of violence that they face are usually unbearable and extreme

**Objectives of the study**

In order to testify the aforesaid mentioned hypotheses, the following broad objectives have been taken into consideration:

- To find the nature and types of domestic violence against rural women in Kashmir,
- To explore the magnitude of domestic violence against rural women in Kashmir,
- To highlight the conditions of rural women vis-a-vis domestic violence in Kashmir,

**DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS**

**Nature and magnitude of domestic violence**

Domestic violence is an old social evil which remains hidden from the eyes of the society. In rural society of the Kashmir, women are still considered unequal, inferior and weak. These notions are supported by myths, dogmas and traditional belief system. They are experiencing physical and mental violence not only from the in-laws but also often from their intimate partner. The women are treated unequally and less value is placed on their lives because of their sex. The following table shows the nature of violence as:

**Table-1: Nature of violence in households**

Nature of violence	Number	Percentage
Physical violence	68	45.34
Mental violence	46	30.66
Both	36	24.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field work, 2016 carried out in Ganderbal



The above table (1) shows that out of 150 respondents, 68 respondents i.e. 45.34 percent admitted that they face physical violence, 46 respondents i.e. 30.66 percent, revealed that they face mental violence and 36 respondents i.e., 24.00 percent faced both physical as well as mental violence in their households. It follows that the majority of respondents faced physical and mental type of violence in their households. Most of this violence takes place within intimate relationships, with many women reporting their husbands or partner as the perpetrator. It causes damages to the victim's physique and psyche. This violence was an act of verbal or physical force, life threatening deprivation directed at a respondent by family members that cause physical or psychological harms, humiliation and perpetuates female subordination.

Similarly, out of 68 respondents, slapping is the most commonly reported act of physical violence and (41.17 percent) ever-married women report being slapped by their husband. The next most common acts of physical violence experienced by women involve having being pushed shaken or having something thrown at them (26.47 percent) and (20.58 percent) women reported having been kicked, dragged, or beaten up show that threatening with sharp weapons faced by

women. These findings are in consonance with Gupta (2007) as cited by Bhat (2007) [10] who in his study found that over a third of women who had been married at any point in their lives said they had been pushed, slapped, shaken or otherwise attacked by their husband at least once. Further the author has highlight that about (32.00 percent) of respondent were mentally tortured, (24.00 percent) of respondents were stressed, while as (8.00 percent) of respondents were living in depression. It has been observed from the field that due to physical violence and mental violence against women in study area has deteriorated as a result of stress, anxiety, trauma, depression, emotional, scars and suicides tendencies. The study further revealed that women have experienced physical/mental violence by their intimate partners in their lifetime.

**Frequency of violence**

Violence against women assumes the form of a social problem when it is a repeated action in the family. The respondents were asked to state the frequency of violence subjected to them. Women who reported intimate partner violence were also asked whether the violence had occurred once, a few times or many times.

**Table-2: Frequency of violence**

Frequency of Violence	Number	Percentage
Daily	60	40.00
Weekly	38	25.33
Monthly	32	21.33
Quarterly	20	13.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field work, 2016 carried out in Ganderbal

The above table 2 indicates that the frequency of domestic violence is equitably distributed over different time periods. The above table very explicitly shows that out of 150 respondents; 60 respondents i.e., 40.00 percent experience daily violence in their family, 38 respondents i.e. 25.33 percent are experiencing violence weekly, 32 respondents i.e. 21.33 percent facing violence monthly and 30 respondents i.e. 13.34 percent said that they are subject to domestic violence quarterly. It has been observed from the study that the majority of respondents who had experienced intimate partner violence reported that the violence occurs daily. This reveals that partner violence is not often a once off

event but a repeated pattern of abuse. It therefore, follows that majority of respondents reveals frequent violence.

**Sources of violence**

Domestic violence is the most common form of gender based violence. A woman after getting married not only gets uprooted from her parents' house but also has to make adjustments at her in-laws house with all the family members particularly if the family is joint in nature. Hence, she faces violence after marriage also. In all cultures, the perpetrators are mostly men in the family and women are the victims.

**Table-3: Source of violence in the family**

Source of Violence	Number	Percentage
Husband	36	24.00
Father-in-law	12	8.00
Mother-in-law	28	18.66
Brother in-law	16	10.67
Sister in-law	16	10.67
All of the above	42	28.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field work, 2016 carried out in Ganderbal.

The above table 3 shows that out of 150 respondents, 36 respondent's i.e., 24.00 percent revealed that husband is most common source for domestic violence, 12 respondents i.e., 8.00 percent revealed that their father in-laws have sometimes threaten them, 28 respondents i.e., 18.66 percent clearly reveals that mother-in-law is responsible for domestic violence; whereas 16 respondents i.e. 10.67 percent revealed that they sometimes face violence from their brother in-laws, 16 respondents i.e., 10.67 percent revealed that they face violence from their sister in-laws, 42 respondents i.e., 28.00 percent of respondents acclaimed that most of the times they face violence from all the family members. It is evident from the above table that husband were considered as the main cause of domestic violence in the family. It was further observed from the study that women experience violence from their family members and also the husband was mostly to blame for violence. Some women reported that in-laws (husband's parents) were also responsible for few acts of violence, particularly of psychological violence. It has been observed in the study that the majority of the respondents also said that

they were not beaten only by her husband but all members of his family. Thus, it can be concluded that women in study area suffer after marriage, at in-laws house, emotionally, psychological and even physically. The main role of her suffering is played by mother-in-law, who herself is a woman at superior position inside the family.

**Conditions of violence**

Violence against women is unprovoked and the victim is left to survive, the experience and to cope with the various consequences are being violated. Violence against women creates an intimidating and hostile environment for women and children. It frustrates and diminishes women's satisfaction with their chosen work, study and creativity. Violence against women humiliates the victim and asserts the power of the perpetrator. Violence against women forces women and children to serve the interests, desires and needs of men, perpetuating male dominance and female submission. Violence against women forces women and girls to hide their negative responses to violations and remain silent in order to survive.

**Table-4: Conditions of violence in the family**

Conditions of violence	Number	Percentage
Bearable	40	26.67
Unbearable	62	41.33
Extreme	30	20.00
Suicidal	18	12.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field work, 2016 carried out in Ganderbal

The above table 4 reveals that out of 150 respondents 40 respondents i.e. 26.66 percent reveals that the nature of violence is bearable, 62 respondents; 41.37 percent told that violence is unbearable while as 30 respondents i.e. 20.00 percent reveals that the nature of violence is extreme, 18 respondents i.e. 12 percent reveals that the violence is suicidal. It has been observed that majority of the respondents reveals that there is unbearable violence against them in their marital family.

**CONCLUSION**

Domestic violence is an extremely complex and vicious form of abuse, committed most often within the four walls of the family house or within a particular deep rooted power dynamic and socio-economic structures, which do not allow even the acknowledgement or recognition of this abuse. Domestic violence against women may be classified as physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence. In rural society of the Kashmir, women are still considered unequal, inferior and weak. These notions are supported by myths, dogmas and traditional belief system. They are experiencing physical and mental violence not only from the in-laws but also often from their intimate partner. The women are treated

unequally and less value is placed on their lives because of their sex. Violence against women is unprovoked. The victim is left to survive, the experience and to cope with the various consequences are being violated and creates an intimidating and hostile environment for women and children.

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