

Psychological, Physical, Sexual Violence And Control Over Life In Relation To Decision Of Marital Separation Among Women Facing Domestic Violence

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Abstract

Introduction: Violence against women effects marital relationships. The present study aims to find out the relation between psychological, physical, sexual violence, control over life and decision of marital separation in women victims of domestic violence.

Method: Descriptive correlational design was used. A sample of 80 women domestic violence victims selected by using purposive sampling method from rural areas of State Haryana, India. Indian family violence and control scale given by Kalokhe et al. (2016) was used to measure different forms of violence namely, psychological, physical, sexual violence and control. Marital status inventory by Weiss & Cerreto (1980) was used to know the present state of women in regards to their decision of marital separation.

Result: Pearson correlation and regression analysis was done to analyse the data. Psychological, physical, sexual violence, was positively correlated with decision of marital separation. Control over life was negatively correlated with decision of marital separation. Physical violence and control over life were the predictors in decision of marital separation.

Conclusion: Women in the rural areas are not aware to different forms of violence that are happening in their homes. It is important to do advocacy and awareness about the same.

Key Words: India, domestic violence, marital separation, women

Introduction

Violence against women, whether it occurs inside her own premises or outside, has become a major global issue. Violence against women can take many forms. Within a community, violence can be in the form of stalking, sexual harassment, rape, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, honour killings, and failure to respect freedom of choice regarding reproduction (Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission (GEC), 2002). According to the United Nations, violence against women is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." (United Nations, 1993). WHO indicated that in a lifetime, nearly 1 in 3 women face physical/sexual violence once (WHO, 2021). Any form of violence within the family setting is domestic violence; if done by the spouse, it is referred to as intimate partner violence. WHO data from the previous study also points out the prevalence estimates of intimate partner violence for the lifetime or past 12 months among women aged between 15-49 to be 35% and 18%, respectively (WHO, 2018). In India, the NFHS-5 survey data shows that 29.3 % of women between 18 and 49 experience spousal violence. The prevalence of violence in rural and urban India was 31.6% and 24.2%, respectively (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2022).

Marriages in India are a sacred institution, serving a pious purpose in the evolution of a society. It gives a woman her status, rights, and future social security through her children. India, which follows a patriarchal social structure, sees men as superior to women and asymmetrical gender expectations. Patriarchy gives males more privileges in the name of family values and tradition, perpetuating domestic violence (Jaliansyah, 2021; Deosthali et al., 2013; World

Bank, 2012). For married women, dowry, sexual health problems, not having a male child, deviation from perceived gender roles, and substance/alcohol use or abuse in male partners contribute to domestic violence (Krishnan et al., 2012). Other risk factors for domestic violence include lower education level, early marriage, and relocation to the marital home without economic resources. Women are socialized to accept and tolerate the violent behaviour of the male as they feel they have not carried out their household duties properly or were not obedient to others.

Acts of violence like verbal abuse, psychological abuse, beating, or sexual harassment can hamper a woman's day-to-day living. Both physical and mental health are impacted due to domestic abuse. Physical violence in the form of beatings can cause injuries, fractures, and chronic pain. Sexual abuse can result in unwanted pregnancies, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases. Psychological health impacts include poor self-esteem, mood and anxiety disorders, and PTSD. The trauma may sometimes lead to self-harm and suicidal attempts (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). Violence harms victims and society physically, socially, economically, psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Although domestic abuse seriously affects physical and mental health, many women remain in abusive situations. The reasons could include cultural beliefs, keeping family together, social isolation, economic dependency, and learned helplessness or coping mechanisms (Heron et al., 2022; Barnett, 2001). Not all women victims seek separation or divorce. Their main concerns are preserving their marriages and ending the abuse. Also, societal judgments and fear stop them from seeking help and reporting to the concerned authority.

According to NFHS-5 data (2019-2021), domestic violence has a high prevalence rate of 29.3%, and in rural India it is 31.6%. The National Commission for Women (NCW) registered over 23% of cases for protection from domestic violence (The Times of India, 2023). Though the prevalence of domestic violence is high, women may not seek separation or divorce. The present paper aims to study different forms of violence (i.e., psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over live) in relation to the decision of marital separation in women of

rural areas.

Objective

1. To study the relationship between psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over life and decision of marital separation.
2. To study psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over life as predictor of decision of marital separation.

Hypothesis

1. There would be significant positive correlation between psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence and decision of marital separation
2. There would be significant negative correlation between control over life and decision of marital separation
3. Psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence and control over life would be the significant predictor in decision of marital separation

Methodology

Research design

Descriptive correlational design was used to conduct the study.

Sample

For the present study, purposive sampling was done considering 80 married women from the rural areas of the National Capital Region (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs). The inclusion criteria for the study were married women in the age group of 18 - 40 who had an understanding of Hindi or English. The exclusion criteria consisted of widows, women suffering from severe physical or mental illness, and women who did not agree to participate.

Measures

Socio-demographic details

Socio-demographic details included age, education status, working status, number of children, marital status, and whether they lived in their marital home or were separated.

Indian family violence and control scale (IFVCS; Kalokhe et al. (2016))

The IFVCS consists of a total of 63 items within four subscales, namely, the control subscale (14 items), the psychological violence subscale (22 items), the physical violence subscale (16 items), and the sexual violence subscale (11 items).

Marital Status Inventory (MSI; Weiss & Cerreto (1980))

The MSI is used to measure the likelihood of divorce or relationship dissolution. The MSI is based on the assumption that marriage dissolves in a series of discrete sequential acts. It is a 14-item true or false dichotomous, Guttman-like scale that assesses the cognitive and behavioural acts that typically precede marital dissolution. Scores range from 0 to 14, and higher scores reflect more active steps toward divorce. A score of four or more indicates a substantial risk of dissolution, and a score of eight and above would indicate an unstable relationship, which means that the marriage may be already dissolved.

Results

Data was analysed using Pearson correlation method and regression analysis. The correlation between psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over life and marital status was analysed. The descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 Sociodemographic characteristics

Baseline characteristics	n	%
Age Group		
18-25	27	33.8
26-30	25	31.3
31-35	7	8.8
36-40	21	26.3
Education		
0	22	27.5
5 th	6	7.5
8 th	9	11.3
9 th	7	8.8
10 th	17	21.3
12 th	9	11.3
UG	7	8.8

PG	3	3.8
Employment status		
Non-Working	46	57.5
Working	34	42.5
Children		
No	12	15.0
Yes	68	85.0
Decision of Marital Separation		
No chance	42	52.5
Medium chance	19	23.8
High chance or separated	19	23.8

Note. N = 80

The relationship between psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over life and marital status of women is presented in Table 2. The results shows that there is a significant positive relationship between decision of marital separation and the three forms of violence i.e., psychological, physical and sexual. The more the women experience any form of violence, chances of separation increases. There is also a significant negative relationship between decision of marital separation and control over life. That means, the more a women victim has control on her life, less chances are there of separation.

Table 2 Correlation between psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over life and decision of marital separation (N=80)

	Psychological Violence	Physical Violence	Sexual Violence	Control over life	Decision of Marital separation
	p value				
Psychological Violence	1	.685**	.573**	-.718**	.679**
Physical Violence		1	.629**	-.474**	.677**
Sexual violence			1	-.386**	.392**
Control over life				1	-.619**

Decision of
Marital
Separation

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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis

R	R Square	% Variance	F	Sig
.774	0.598	59.8%	27.930	<.001

Model:

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Sexual Violence, Control over life, Physical Violence, Psychological Violence
- b. Dependent Variable: Decision of marital separation

Multiple regression analysis was done on the data set to show the contribution of each variable in the prediction for decision of marital separation in women victim. Result is shown in Table 3. The result shows that there is 59.8% variance in decision of marital separation which can be explained by psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence and control over life. The F ratio is 27.93 and is significant which shows that the model is fit for regression.

Table 4 Summary of Regression Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Standardized Coefficient B	t	Sig
Constant	-0.959		-0.050	0.960
Psychological Violence	0.489	0.239	1.837	0.070
Physical Violence	1.217	0.476	4.345	0.000
Sexual violence	-0.449	-0.153	-1.568	0.121
Control over life	-0.821	-0.281	-2.669	0.009

a. Dependent Variable: Decision of marital separation

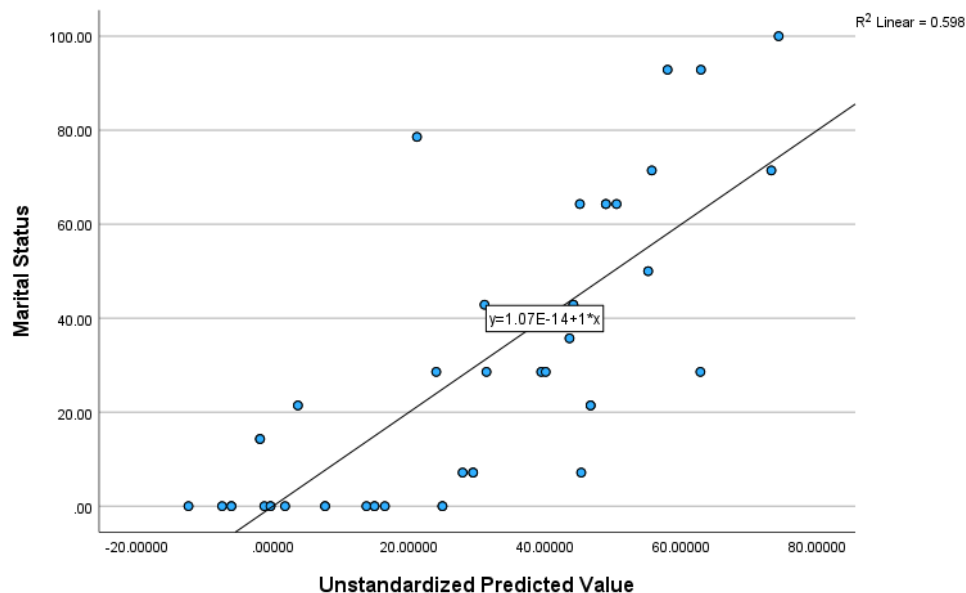
Figure 1 Line of best fit

Table 4 shows that from the four independent variables, physical violence and control over life, significantly predicted the decision of marital separation. The result shows that for every one score added to physical violence, there will be 1.217 increase in the decision of marital separation score ($t=4.345$, $p<0.05$). Similarly for an increase of one score in control over life, there will be a decrease of -.821 in decision of marital separation score ($t=-2669$, $p<0.05$). In life of women victim of domestic violence, increasing amount of physical violence and a decreasing amount of women's control on her own life can lead to decision of separation or vice-versa.

Discussion

The present study was done to find if, in the life of a domestic violence victim, there was any relationship between psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over life, and their decision to marital separation. Psychological, physical, and sexual violence showed a positive significant correlation. Control over life had a negative significant correlation with psychological violence, physical violence, and sexual violence. Children

exposed to psychological or physical family violence, being a victim themselves or just a witness, can negatively impact their lives and be the victims of violence themselves later. They can be at a greater risk of adverse psychosocial outcomes. Domestic violence at home results in emotional damage, which exerts continued effects as the victim matures (Huecker et al., 2023; Wilkins et al., 2014; Kaur & Garg, 2008). Any disturbance at home can cause adverse psychological effects on the person. Individuals exposed to violence at home or the community level are at a higher risk of experiencing other forms of violence. Girls who have experienced sexual abuse at home are more likely to eventually experience intimate partner violence, participate in self-harming behaviour, and be subjected to physical and sexual abuse (Wilkins et al., 2014; Kaur & Garg, 2008)

The study found that the decision of marital separation in the women victims of domestic violence was significantly and positively correlated with the three forms of violence: psychological, physical, and sexual. The decision of marital separation was also found to be significantly and negatively correlated to control over life, which means that as the psychological, physical, and sexual violence increases, there are more chances of separation from the abusive relationship. If these abuses are on the higher side, the women have little control over life and may decide to leave. However, at a societal level, the decision to separate is complicated and consists of many factors, including economic stability, children and family, and societal support. Separation happens in phases, which involves leaving the marital life at cognitive and emotional levels before physically leaving (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Weiss & Cerreto, 1980).

The other objective of the study was to find out if psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, and control over life could predict the decision of marital separation. The study found that physical violence and control over her life could predict the decision of marital separation in women's lives. In the present study, out of the 80 participants, only 19 (23.8%) women have a high chance of separation. The reason could be that if there is no control over life for women, which means that she is not allowed to meet anyone or talk to them freely, spend money on necessary things, or have no role in decision-making, then they could get isolated from the family and society leading

to psychological abuse (Krishnamoorthy et al., 2020). Physical abuse, visible to everyone, can bring in severe injuries, disabilities, and sometimes even death. In this case, the women seek help from family members and society. If she gets appropriate help and support, she gets the strength to come out of the abusive relationship. Despite the stigma of separation, women in rural areas are now coming up for separation more than before (Yadav, 2022; Chishti, 2016).

Separation or divorce in Indian culture is not common. Saving a marriage and giving the best for it is the only motive for the individuals. Especially for women in rural areas of India, where patriarchy is at a higher level, and due to gender inequalities, the women are uneducated and primarily unemployed, making them financially dependent on the male member of the family (Bhatla & Rajan, 2003; Barnett, 2001). Also, in a rural area, separation or divorce is not much talked about, so even in adverse conditions, women do not come forward with the idea of separation from their husbands, which was also found in the present study (Sharma et al., 2013).

The other two variables, sexual violence, and psychological violence, were not found to be reasons in making a decision of marital separation. There is a lack of information regarding these two types of violence among women. Marital rape/sexual violence in married life is an uncommon word for women in rural India. They see it as a duty towards their husbands. Psychological abuse is also less talked about, as it is common for them because of a lack of knowledge and awareness.

Conclusion

A significant relationship has been found between psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, control over life, and the decision of marital separation. In case of higher amounts of physical violence and low control over life in women victims of domestic violence, their chances of deciding on marital separation could increase. For the present study hypothesis 1 and 2 were accepted and hypothesis 3 was partially accepted.

Due to a sensitive topic of study, which intrudes into the lives of many families, the study has a few limitations. Women are not prepared to talk about the issue at large as it is supposed to be a family matter for them. The study's small sample size covers a small rural area in

National Capital Region of India. This study cannot be generalized as India has many cultures and traditions. In general, there was a lack of awareness regarding mental health in rural areas. Psychological violence is not considered as a type of abuse. Hence, it is required to spread awareness regarding psychological violence and mental health. There is a need to also talk about domestic abuse and create awareness.

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