

# Education

## Is it an Empowering Factor against Domestic Violence in India?

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### Abstract

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*This work examines the domestic violence in multi-dimensional perspective to demonstrate the relationship between education and domestic violence. The previous research argued that improvements in women's education would raise their awareness and thereby reduce violence against them. The findings of the researchers are in support that the main cause of domestic violence is lack of education. Taking this as a hypothesis the work focused on the comparative analysis of domestic violence in Rajasthan and Kerala. Rajasthan is considered as the state with lowest female literacy rate whereas Kerala is considered as the state with highest female literacy rate. The analysis of the NFHS data showed the result that both lack of education and rising levels of education among women has negligible effect on protection of women from violence against them. In fact, the temporal analysis showed the increasing trend in the percentage of women in Kerala who have completed ten or more years of education are more vulnerable to all forms of violence than the women in Rajasthan.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Several researchers like Bott and Morrison (2005) in their work 'Preventing and Responding to Gender-based Violence in Middle and Low-income Countries: A Global Review and Analysis', Cook and

Jejeebhoy (1997) in their work 'State Accountability for Wife-beating: The India Challenge' found lack of education to be responsible for domestic violence. They suggested that increase in educational level has shown remarkable impact on

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the decline in reported violence. 'The Gujarat Institute of Development Studies conducted a research on domestic violence and education and found that 60 per cent of women with no education had been assaulted by their husband in comparison to 10 per cent of women with secondary or higher education' (Burton et al. 2000, Simister and Makowiec, 2008: 509). "High educational attainment of women was associated with low levels of violence" (Jewkes, 2002, Simister and Makowiec, 2008). Domestic violence works on cause and effect relationship which explains that educated women are much more conscious about their rights and rejects the justification of accepting the violence in comparison to women with no education and further the women who do not accept violence are less likely to be the victim of violence than those women who accept it.

According to NFHS-4 data, almost 48.23 per cent educated women agreed on husband's right to beat his wife and almost 42.9 per cent women who have 12 or more years of completed education agreed at least one specified reason to justify wife beating. With the demand of changes in educational system, feminists' account shows how education system in itself has many loopholes to entrap women into patriarchal norms of society. Feminists have addressed the issue of gender inequality in education acquisition. The main concern of feminist sociologists is to explore the hidden curriculum which is promoting gender inequality and

stereotyping in the field of education. The argument is the education system and methodologies implied to it have potential to create education as a very powerful tool for gender empowerment.

However, a marked differentiation of gender has always been there in education. According to NFHS-4 data, overall gender disparity in educational attainment of the population falling under the age group 6 and above is sixteen percent. There is a remarkable gender disparity that can be observed in education. "Taking gender disparity table in education from NFHS-3 and comparing it with that of NFHS-4, the survey revealed the pattern of increment in median number of years of schooling for both females and males. The fact from the survey suggests the median educational attainment for females increased from 1.9 years to 4.4 years, whereas the median educational attainment for males increased from 4.9 years to 6.9 years" (NFHS-4 2015–16, 2017). Worth noting point is the median educational attainment for males in the year 2005–06 was more than the most recent median educational attainment for females in the year 2015–16. These facts are complete to explain the gender biasness prevailing in the educational aspect of the nation. There search focus on to reanalyse the education as a factor in women's experiences of their everyday confrontations and negotiations with domestic violence. The attempt resulted in reaching the conclusion that it is not merely educating

women that provide them the sense of empowerment and protection from domestic violence but the kind of education, quality education plays a major role in an individual's life.

### METHOD AND MATERIAL

The method used aimed to identify the social causes emerging from the literature survey and NFHS round of survey in order to address the 'why' question and to analyse whether education makes any difference in women's experiences of domestic violence. For the purpose, NFHS third and fourth round of survey are used. NFHS data works only on physical, sexual and emotional violence. Hence, this research relying on NFHS data is based on comparative analysis.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of the study is to test the hypothesis which holds that education acts as a protective factor for women against domestic violence. This objective further leads the study to frame certain related questions in order to achieve the objective of the study—

1. To find out the conditions of domestic violence and its relation to educational level of women in two Indian states, Rajasthan and Kerala.
2. To examine whether or not education ensures protection to women against domestic violence.

### ANALYSIS

When we compare domestic violence experienced by women in Rajasthan which has lowest female literacy rate with domestic violence experienced by women in Kerala which has highest literacy rate not much difference is observed. From the Table 1 below we can observe that being the most developed state on human development index and having highest literacy rate, Kerala has higher percentage of women who agrees wife beating on at least one specified reasons than Rajasthan and the trend showed increment in the last ten years. Tracing the trend from NFHS-3 and NFHS-4, data suggests irrespective of level of educational attainment more than fifty percent of women in Kerala justify one of the specified reasons of wife beating.

**Table 1**  
**Gender role attitude**

Education	Percentage of women who agree that wife beating is justified for at least one specified reason					
	Kerala		Rajasthan		State Difference	
	NFHS-3	NFHS-4	NFHS-3	NFHS-4	NFHS-3	NFHS-4
No Education	70.5	82.0	68.2	41.2	2.3	40.8
<5 years complete	69.0	76.7	55.3	41.8	13.7	34.9

5–9 years complete	69.5	75.3	47.7	2.8	21.8	42.5
10–11 years complete	61.8	67.1	22.0	25.6	39.8	41.5
12 or more years complete	*	66.8	*	18.1	*	48.7

Source: This table is prepared by the researcher based on NFHS-3, 2005–06: India, 2008; NFHS-4, 2015–16: India, 2018, statistics on two states. \*data not available. State Difference: difference of per centage of women experiencing domestic violence in Rajasthan from that of Kerala (Kerala-Rajasthan).

Referring to Table 2 below, women with five or more years completed education experience more domestic violence in Kerala and with the increase in level of their education shows increment in their experiences of domestic violence. The women with highest level of education experience more violence. Whereas women in Rajasthan are more uneducated this is the reason the greater percentage of women with no schooling shows highest percentage of women ever experienced domestic violence. Taking husband's schooling into account the trend in the table shows, with the increment in the level of education of husbands, the women's experiences of domestic violence also increased in Kerala. Whereas in Rajasthan a mixed trend is observed

yet the conclusion can be made that the husband with highest level of education perpetrates more violence. On the basis of spousal educational difference, Table 2 shows that husbands with better education than their wives perpetuate more violence in Rajasthan in comparison to Kerala but wife's better education or equal education makes husband to engage in domestic violence more in Kerala than in Rajasthan. Considering Table 1 and 2, data suggests that in Rajasthan, lack of education among women seems to be a predisposing factor for violence against women whereas in Kerala, women's attainment of education seems to be a predisposing factor indicating that women's empowerment and protection against violence does not lie in women's education alone.

**Table 2**  
**Experience of domestic violence by educational background**

<b>Background Characteristic</b>	<b>Number of women ever experienced domestic</b>		
	<b>Number of women ever experienced domestic violence in Kerala</b>	<b>Number of women ever experienced domestic violence in Rajasthan</b>	<b>State Difference</b>
No schooling	*	1598	598
<5 years complete	50	152	102
5–9 years complete	387	933	-546

10–11 years complete	333	186	147
12 or more years complete	580	445	135
Husband's schooling			
No schooling	20	621	-601
<5 years complete	99	129	-30
5–9 years complete	469	1277	-808
10–11 years complete	351	439	-88
12 or more years complete	418	844	-426
Spousal schooling difference			
Husband has more schooling	290	2059	-1769
Wife has more schooling	690	378	312
Both have equal schooling	371	324	47
Neither attended school	*	549	-549

Source: This table is prepared by the researcher based on NFHS-4, 2015–16: India, 2018, statistics on two states.

K:Kerala. R:Rajasthan. SD:State Difference: difference of percentage of women experiencing domestic violence in Rajasthan from that of Kerala (K-R). \*In the table, the total number of women with educational characteristic who ever experienced domestic violence constitute no women with no schooling.

The comparative data analysis from NFHS-3 and NFHS-4 for the two states, Kerala and Rajasthan proves that merely educating women provides no protection from domestic violence. There are other factors which trigger domestic violence thereby nullifying the education factor. We can conclude that socialisation and entrenched patriarchal authority are stronger than education in the women's experiences and internalisation of domestic violence. "The risk of wife abuse in south Indian community increases when

the cause of the abuse is seen as 'legitimate' by the community" (Rao, 1997, Simister and Makowiec, 2008: 509). "In Rajasthan, men feel that women has to be controlled and kept at home so that society does not say that women in the household are undisciplined" (Kumar, 2002, Simister and Makowiec, 2008).

According to NFHS-3, comparing gender role behaviour in Rajasthan and Kerala, the finding suggests some degree of more domestic violence among women in Rajasthan than Kerala but the highest and lowest disparity is in favour of Kerala which means 10.6 per cent women in Kerala experience more domestic violence than women in Rajasthan if they neglect house or children and 0.9 per cent women in Kerala experience more domestic violence than women in Rajasthan if they refuse to have sex. According to Table 3 below,

Kerala shows higher percentage of women who internalise gender roles and justify all specified reasons of wife beating than women in Rajasthan. The reason identified for internalisation of wife beating is gender role attitudes. “Young married women often assume and are socially assigned the primary responsibility of housekeeping, cooking and keeping up social and family contacts. Women generally feel it is their primary responsibility to keep the marriage happy and intact” (Romer 1981). “Marriage is thought to be of primary importance to women and of secondary importance to men. The ultimate goal is that the woman become a wife and the man become a worker, which defines their respective social statuses” (Dobash and Dobash 1980). This proves that the education factor in isolation cannot be the protective measure for women against domestic violence.

## CONCLUSION

In the Indian context, increasing access of women to education and income often leads to domestic violence. Lakshmy Devi (2008) in ‘Education, Employment and Job Preference of Women in Kerala: A micro-level study’ finds higher education and women’s preference of white-collar, salaried jobs as causes of domestic violence because it improves and gives higher socio-economic status to women. Where women gain access to education and income and attain social mobility, domestic violence also increases due to social stresses caused by women’s success that reflects the power relationship that exists between spouses. This results in low self-esteem and women undergoes episodes of depression caused by absence of personal resources and lack of institutional and societal support.

**Table 3**  
**Justification of beating wife on specified reasons**

<b>Percentage of women who agree wife beating is justified</b>			
<b><i>Specified reason for justification of wife beating</i></b>	<b><i>Kerala K</i></b>	<b><i>Rajasthan R</i></b>	<b><i>State Difference K-R</i></b>
She goes out without telling him	30.8	16.9	13.9
She neglects house or children	49.4	17.8	31.6
She argues with him	30.0	18.2	11.8
She refuses to have sex with him	13.7	9.5	4.2
She doesn’t cook food properly	14.9	14.8	0.1
He suspects she is unfaithful	39.5	14.2	25.3
She shows disrespect for in-laws	46.1	24.8	21.3

*Source:* This table is prepared by the researcher based on NFHS-4, 2015–16: India, 2018, statistics on two states: K:Kerala. R:Rajasthan. SD:state difference of percentage of women experiencing domestic violence in Rajasthan from that of Kerala (K-R).

It is indeed a cause of concern that while lack of education of the women was considered to be predisposing factors for domestic violence in the past, educational attainment and economic mobility of women are proved to be important factors in

women's vulnerability to violence and conflict. This clearly exposes how the challenge to underlying patriarchal structures by improvements in women's status is likely to meet with resistance and repression.

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