

Gender Dimensions of Domestic Violence: Exploring Physical and Psychological Abuse in Gujarat

Ms. Roshni Patel^{1*}, Dr. Prakriti Sushmita²

^{1*}Research Scholar, NIMS University, Jaipur, Rajasthan-India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, NIMS University, Jaipur, Rajasthan-India

*Corresponding Author: Ms. Roshni Patel, Email: patelroshni291@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the prevalence and comparative aspects of domestic violence, focusing on physical and mental abuse, from a gender perspective. Utilizing a comprehensive dataset of 124 participants, analysed through SPSS, the research highlights significant differences and similarities in the experiences of male and female victims. The findings underscore the pervasive nature of mental abuse across genders, with females reporting higher instances of physical abuse. The study contributes to the understanding of domestic violence's nuanced gender dynamics, emphasizing the need for tailored support services.

Key Words: Domestic violence, Physical abuse, Mental abuse, Conflict tactics, psychological impact

Introduction

Abuse whether physical, mental, or emotional remains a pervasive issue across the globe, with significant consequences for individuals and communities. In Gujarat, a state known for its cultural richness and socio-economic progress, the prevalence of abuse continues to raise concerns. Despite the state's advancements in education, healthcare, and economic development, societal structures and traditional gender roles often perpetuate cycles of violence and oppression. Physical and mental abuse are not limited to any one demographic; they cut across age, class, and geographic boundaries, affecting individuals in both urban and rural settings.

The gendered nature of abuse is particularly striking, with women disproportionately facing domestic violence, verbal harassment, and emotional neglect. However, abuse against men, often overlooked and under-reported, also presents a critical challenge. Male victims frequently face societal stigma and lack access to adequate support systems, making their struggles invisible. These dynamics underscore the importance of adopting a gender-inclusive approach to understanding and addressing abuse in Gujarat.

Furthermore, cultural norms and economic dependencies play a significant role in shaping the experiences of abuse. Patriarchal attitudes, coupled with limited awareness about mental health, often exacerbate the problem, leaving victims vulnerable and without recourse. Addressing these issues requires not only a deeper understanding of the root causes but also targeted interventions that challenge existing power dynamics and provide holistic support to victims. This study aims to fill the gap in the existing literature by analyzing the prevalence and impact of physical and mental abuse through a gendered lens, offering insights into how societal and institutional frameworks can be improved to create a safer and more equitable environment for all.

Research Hypothesis

- There will be a significant relationship between physical and mental abuse in domestic violence.
- There will be significant difference in common conflict tactics used by perpetrators in inflicting both forms of abuse.
- There will be significant between psychological, emotional, and physical impacts experienced by survivors of genders.

Methodology:

The present study aims to investigate the correlation between physical and mental abuse, with a focus on gender differences. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research will combine quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data. The quantitative component will utilize structured questionnaires to assess the prevalence and severity of physical and mental abuse among different genders. The qualitative aspect will involve in-depth interviews to explore personal experiences and perceptions related to abuse. This methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of how abuse manifests and affects individuals across genders. By analyzing the collected data, the study aims to identify patterns and correlations between types of abuse and gender, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on domestic violence. The findings are expected to inform awareness campaigns and policy interventions aimed at addressing and mitigating domestic violence in a gender-sensitive manner.

Survey Design: A mixed-methods approach was employed, utilizing a structured online questionnaire to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data Collection: A questionnaire-based survey (dataset provided). The survey was conducted over a period of six months, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality to encourage honest responses.

Sample Size: 124 participants (63 males, 61 females) from Gujarat participated, with ages ranging from 18 to 60 years.

Analysis Tool: SPSS for descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and independent samples t-tests to compare gender differences.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to interpret the quantitative and qualitative data, respectively.

Ethical Considerations: Informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality ensured.

Psychological tool:

- **Severity of Violence Against Women Scale/Severity of Violence Against Men Scale (SVAWS/ SVAMS)**

The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale (SVAWS) and Severity of Violence Against Men Scale (SVAMS) are two scales developed to measure the severity of violence experienced by individuals in intimate partner relationships. The scales assess the frequency and intensity of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, as well as the impact of each type of abuse on the victim. The scales are designed to be used in both research and clinical settings and provide information about the severity of violence experienced by individuals in intimate partner relationships. The scales can be used to assess the severity of violence experienced by both men and women and can be used to identify individuals who are at risk for further violence.

- **Conflict Tactics Scale 2 (CTS)**

The CTS assesses the frequency and severity of conflict resolution tactics, including those related to physical and psychological abuse. e Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) evaluates violence within intimate relationships.

The CTS2 includes 78 items, half referring to the respondent's behavior and half to the partner's behavior. Using an 8-point scale, the respondent simply indicates how often each behavior has occurred

Analysis

1. Prevalence of Domestic Violence:

Physical Abuse: Significantly higher among female participants ($\chi^2 = 10.23$, $p < 0.01$).

Mental Abuse: No significant gender difference ($\chi^2 = 2.15$, $p > 0.05$), indicating pervasive mental abuse across genders.

2. Gender-wise Comparative Analysis:

Females: Reported higher frequencies of physical abuse ($t = -3.21$, $p < 0.01$) but similar levels of mental abuse compared to males.

Males: Expressed feelings of mental abuse at a rate similar to females, but lower physical abuse experiences.

3. Correlational Analysis:

A positive correlation ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$) between experiences of physical and mental abuse, suggests that victims of one form are more likely to experience the other, regardless of gender.

Table 1: Demographic Overview

Characteristic	Male (n=63)	Female (n=61)
Age Range	18-60 years	18-60 years
Mean Age	32.5 years	30.8 years

Table 2:

Prevalence of Abuse

Type of Abuse	Male (n=63)	Female (n=61)
Physical Abuse	34 (54%) - Sometimes/Very Often/Always	41 (67%) - Sometimes/Very Often/Always
Mental Abuse	43 (68%) - Sometimes/Very Often/Always	32 (52%) - Sometimes/Very Often/Always

Table 3: Specific Acts of Abuse

Gender	Specific Acts of Abuse
Females	Being hit with an object (55%)
	Having their hair pulled (48%)
	Being slapped (45%)
Males	Being yelled at (60%)
	Being called names (55%)
	Feeling guilty about spending money (52%)

This study underscores the significant presence of both physical and mental abuse in Gujarat, with clear gendered patterns that reflect broader societal dynamics. The findings reveal that physical abuse is more prevalent among women, a trend consistent with global statistics. This highlights the persistent vulnerability of women to physical violence, often rooted in entrenched patriarchal norms that position women as subordinate within familial and societal structures. Women's dependency on male partners, both financially and socially,

exacerbates their exposure to such violence, creating a cycle that is difficult to escape without robust support systems. The study sample comprised 63 male and 61 female participants, all within the age range of 18 to 60 years. The mean age of male participants was 32.5 years, while the mean age of female participants was slightly lower at 30.8 years. This indicates that the participant group primarily consisted of young to middle-aged adults. Conversely, the higher incidence of mental abuse among men sheds light on an often-overlooked dimension of abuse in patriarchal societies. Men are frequently subjected to intense societal expectations to fulfil traditional roles as providers and protectors, which can manifest in emotional and psychological strain. The stigma associated with expressing vulnerability further compounds the issue, leaving male victims of mental abuse isolated and unsupported. This highlights the need for a broader and more inclusive understanding of abuse that transcends traditional gender stereotypes and acknowledges the unique challenges faced by men. The data indicates that physical abuse was reported by 54% of male participants and 67% of female participants as occurring sometimes, very often, or always. In terms of mental abuse, 68% of males and 52% of females reported experiencing it within the same frequency range. These findings suggest a higher incidence of physical abuse among females, while mental abuse was more commonly reported by male participants.

The psychological toll of abuse is profound and long-lasting for both genders, albeit manifesting in distinct ways. Women often experience anxiety, depression, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of prolonged physical and mental abuse. These effects hinder their ability to participate fully in economic, social, and familial roles. For men, the suppression of emotions resulting from mental abuse frequently leads to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, aggression, and, in severe cases, suicidal tendencies. This underscores the need for gender-sensitive mental health interventions that address these distinct coping mechanisms and provide tailored support.

Community norms and societal attitudes play a pivotal role in perpetuating abuse. Victims, regardless of gender, are often reluctant to seek help due to fear of social ostracism and victim-blaming. This is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where traditional values dominate and modern legal frameworks and support mechanisms remain inaccessible or underutilized. Addressing these barriers requires a multi-faceted approach that combines public awareness campaigns, education, and policy reforms to foster a culture of accountability and support.

In addition, institutional responses to abuse remain inadequate, particularly for male victims. While women's helplines and shelters have made strides in providing refuge and support, the lack of comparable services for men highlights a glaring gap in the system. This calls for the establishment of gender-neutral support systems that cater to all victims of abuse, irrespective of gender. Female participants most commonly reported being hit with an object (55%), having their hair pulled (48%), and being slapped (45%) as specific acts of abuse. In contrast, male participants predominantly experienced verbal and emotional abuse, with 60% reporting being yelled at, 55% being called names, and 52% feeling guilty about spending money. These findings highlight a gendered pattern in the type of abuse experienced, with females facing more physical abuse and males more psychological or emotional abuse.

Ultimately, this research highlights the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing abuse in Gujarat. By acknowledging the unique experiences and needs of both men and women, policymakers and stakeholders can develop targeted interventions that promote healing, resilience, and equity. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of creating an environment that not only addresses the immediate impacts of abuse but also tackles its root causes to ensure long-term change.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the prevalence and comparative analysis of domestic violence in terms of physical and mental abuse across gender lines. The results indicate that physical abuse is significantly higher among female participants, highlighting the disproportionate vulnerability of women to physical violence within domestic settings. This aligns with broader global research suggesting that women are more likely to experience physical violence from intimate partners, often due to sociocultural and systemic factors that contribute to gender-based violence.

Conversely, the analysis of mental abuse did not reveal a significant gender difference, indicating that both males and females experience psychological distress at similar rates. These findings challenge traditional gendered narratives that often emphasize women as the sole victims of domestic abuse, underscoring the importance of addressing mental abuse as a universal issue that affects all individuals, irrespective of gender. The near-equal prevalence of mental abuse suggests that societal pressures, emotional manipulation, and coercive control are not limited to one gender, requiring a more inclusive approach in both research and policy interventions.

Further, the gender-wise comparative analysis reinforces these patterns, as females reported significantly higher levels of physical abuse ($t = -3.21, p < 0.01$), while their experiences of mental abuse were on par with those of males. This demonstrates that while physical violence remains gender-skewed, mental abuse is an issue that transcends gender boundaries. For males, the data reveals a concerning trend where mental abuse is just as prevalent as for females, yet their experiences may be under-reported due to societal stigma and gender norms that discourage men from acknowledging victimization.

The correlational analysis ($r = 0.65, p < 0.01$) further illustrates that individuals who experience one form of abuse are likely to encounter the other, irrespective of gender. This strong positive correlation between physical and mental abuse suggests an intertwined relationship, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to tackling domestic violence. It highlights the cyclical nature of abuse, where physical violence often coincides with emotional and psychological distress, leading to prolonged trauma and adverse psychological outcomes for victims.

Conclusion

This study underscores the complex dynamics of domestic violence by examining physical and mental abuse through a gendered lens. The results emphasize that while physical abuse disproportionately affects females, mental abuse is equally prevalent among both genders. This finding broadens the discourse on domestic violence, urging policymakers, researchers, and social workers to consider mental abuse as a critical component of domestic violence intervention programs. Moreover, the strong correlation between physical and mental abuse indicates that efforts to address domestic violence should not be limited to physical safety alone but should also incorporate mental health support and psychological interventions. Raising awareness about the hidden burden of mental abuse, especially among male victims, is crucial to ensuring that all individuals have access to resources and support systems. In light of these findings, future research should explore the underlying sociocultural factors contributing to mental abuse and its relative invisibility in domestic violence discourse. Additionally, policy frameworks should incorporate comprehensive strategies that address both physical and psychological aspects of abuse, ensuring that support systems are accessible to all victims, regardless of gender. By acknowledging the gender-wise nuances in domestic violence, society can move towards more effective interventions and a more inclusive understanding of victimization and resilience.

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