



Socio-Cultural Determinants of Domestic Violence among Married Women: A Sociological Study in Indore District, Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

Domestic violence remains one of the most persistent forms of gender-based violence affecting women irrespective of caste, religion, education, or socio-economic status. Despite legal safeguards and policy interventions, violence within the family continues to be a major public health and human rights concern in India. The present study explores the socio-cultural determinants of domestic violence among married women in Indore District, Madhya Pradesh. The research adopts a descriptive sociological approach using both primary and secondary data. Primary information was collected through structured interviews with respondents selected from the study area, while secondary information was obtained from books, journals, government publications, census reports, and previous research studies. The findings indicate that patriarchal family norms, gender inequality, alcohol consumption, economic dependency, educational disparities, dowry practices, and weak social support systems significantly influence domestic violence. The study concludes that domestic violence is deeply embedded in socio-cultural structures and therefore requires integrated interventions involving education, women's economic empowerment, legal awareness, community participation, and effective implementation of protective legislation. The findings contribute to understanding the structural dimensions of domestic violence and offer policy recommendations for strengthening women's safety and social justice.

1. Introduction

Domestic violence is recognized as one of the most widespread violations of women's human rights across the world. It encompasses physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse occurring within domestic relationships. Although India has enacted several legislative measures, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, domestic violence continues to affect women across all socio-economic groups.

In India, cultural traditions, patriarchal family systems, unequal gender relations, and economic dependence often prevent women from reporting violence. The social acceptance of male dominance, coupled with inadequate institutional support, reinforces unequal power relations within households. Consequently, domestic violence should be understood not merely as an individual or family problem but as a broader sociological issue shaped by social institutions, cultural values, and structural inequalities.

The present study focuses on married women residing in Indore District, Madhya Pradesh, with the objective of understanding how socio-cultural factors contribute to domestic violence and influence women's experiences.

2. Review of Literature

Previous studies have consistently identified patriarchy, gender discrimination, poverty, educational inequality, alcoholism, and dowry practices as major determinants of domestic violence. Research conducted by the World Health Organization highlights that intimate partner violence remains one of the leading causes of physical and psychological trauma among women. Indian studies also indicate that women with lower educational attainment and limited economic independence are more vulnerable to domestic abuse. Despite increasing awareness, many incidents remain unreported due to fear, social stigma, and financial dependency.

However, limited research has comprehensively examined the combined influence of socio-cultural and structural factors at the district level in Madhya Pradesh. The present study attempts to address this gap.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the socio-cultural determinants responsible for domestic violence among married women.
- To analyse the relationship between patriarchal values and domestic violence.
- To study the influence of education and economic dependency.
- To suggest suitable policy interventions for preventing domestic violence.

4. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research design. Primary data were collected through structured interviews from respondents residing in selected areas of Indore District. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, government reports, census publications, and research articles. Descriptive statistical methods were employed to analyse the collected information.

5. Results and Discussion

The study reveals that domestic violence is influenced by multiple socio-cultural and structural factors.

Major findings include:

- Patriarchal family structures significantly increase women's vulnerability.
- Economic dependency limits women's ability to report violence.
- Alcohol addiction among husbands contributes substantially to family conflicts.
- Dowry-related disputes continue to trigger psychological and physical violence.
- Women's education plays a protective role by increasing awareness and decision-making capacity.

- Joint family dynamics may either provide support or reinforce patriarchal control, depending on the family environment.

These findings suggest that domestic violence cannot be understood solely from a legal perspective. Rather, it is closely associated with socialization processes, cultural expectations, and structural inequalities embedded within society.

6. Conclusion

Domestic violence remains a multidimensional social problem requiring coordinated interventions by government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, civil society organizations, and community leaders. Women's education, economic empowerment, legal awareness, and gender-sensitive socialization are essential for reducing violence within families. Strengthening institutional support mechanisms and promoting gender equality at the community level can significantly improve women's safety and dignity.

Recommendations

- Strengthen awareness regarding the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- Promote women's economic empowerment through skill development programmes.
- Establish counselling and rehabilitation centres at district and block levels.
- Conduct community-based awareness campaigns involving men and youth.
- Enhance coordination among police, healthcare institutions, and social welfare departments.

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