

# **A Comparative Study on the Prevalence of Domestic Violence among Rural and Urban Dalit Women of Prayagraj (Allahabad) District**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Domestic violence is one of the major forms of violence that occurs within the four walls of the home and hampers the lives of women. Women from all walks of life endure violence but Dalit women are the most vulnerable category and they face triple discrimination due to their caste, class and gender. This paper makes a comparative study on the domestic violence faced by rural and urban dalit women of Prayagraj (Allahabad) district and discusses the various factors which are responsible for the high prevalence of domestic violence in the rural set up in contrast to the urban milieu. An action research with a cross sectional approach was followed for the present study. Systematic random sampling method was adopted for the selection of district, Blocks, Villages, Wards and Primary Sampling Units (PSUs). A total of 240 married Dalit women between the ages of 19-40 years (early adulthood) were randomly selected from the rural and urban areas for the study. Pre-designed scale known as the Women's experience with Battering Scale (WEB) was used to seek information on the prevalence of domestic violence from the respondents. The results of the study revealed that urban dalit women are more literate and economically empowered than their rural counterparts which contribute to their experiencing less domestic violence. The study recommended the use of intervention strategies to combat domestic violence against dalit women which may aid in promoting egalitarian sex roles in the society and stimulating healthy masculine and feminine relationships.

**Key Words :** Domestic violence, Rural and Urban dalit women, Villages, Wards

## **INTRODUCTION**

Violence against women continues unabated even though we are on the verge of entering the 21st millennium and boast of an egalitarian society for both the sexes. Various forms of violence which encroach upon the lives of women right from conception include foeticide, infanticide, medical neglect, child marriages, bride burning, sexual abuse of girl child, forced marriages, rape, prostitution, sexual harassment at home as well as at work places.

The extensive violence against women can be attributed to the notion of patriarchy prevalent in our Indian society. Sylvia Walby (2018) defined patriarchy as "a system of interrelated social structures which allow men to exploit women. Patriarchy is the crux of all the subordination and subjugation faced by women and can assume many forms (Gordon, 1996). Patriarchal norms are deep rooted in our society and girls from the very beginning of their life are tutored to follow these norms without questioning their relevance or genuineness.

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Gender divide leads to iniquitous power equations between women and men and promotes stereotypical attitudes in the society affecting the women at large. The tides of inequality produce ripples which create turbulence in the life of women.

The home which is supposed to be safest lair for women is where women are most exposed to violence. Not only has there been a rapid upsurge in the crimes against women, there also has been a dramatic increase in violence against women within the household. This form of violence which takes place within the four walls of the home is generally referred to as domestic violence. Domestic violence includes various forms such as physical violence, sexual violence, economic control, psychological assault and emotional abuse.

Domestic violence shatters the lives of its victims and diminishes the quality of life for everyone in the community. It is the leading cause of homelessness for women and families. It also can be incredibly traumatic for children who witness it. Domestic violence creates a culture of fear and intimidation that can affect every member of a family. In his quest for control, the abuser forces everyone within the range of his authority to respond to his behaviour.

The objective of this paper is to make a comparative study on the prevalence of domestic violence among rural and urban dalit women of Prayagraj (Allahabad) district. Before moving further it is imperative for us to understand what the term dalit means and why dalit women are the most vulnerable to this sort of violence. The term Dalit means broken or scattered in Sanskrit and Hindi and is a term frequently used for the ethnic groups in India that have been kept dejected by subjecting them to untouchability. Out of the 167 million Dalits in India Dalit women number 80.517 million or approximately 48 per cent of the total dalit population, 16 per cent of the total female population and 8 per cent of the total Indian population (Irudayam *et al.*, 2011). Dalits as a whole are a vulnerable category but the vulnerability experienced by the dalit women is manifold. They face tripe alienation on the basis of their caste (outcaste), class (poor) and gender (female). Due to high rates of illiteracy, poverty and low socio-economic status the dalit women are more vulnerable to discrimination and violence than the non-dalit women.

Domestic Violence against dalit women is also the core outcome of gender based inequalities. Husbands who batter wives typically feel that they are exercising a

right, maintaining good order in the family and punishing their wives delinquency especially the wives failure to keep their proper place (WHO, 2001). Alcoholism and associated demands of money from men is very often associated with family violence. Other causes related to domestic violence are the wives inability to bear children, not bearing male children, suspected extra marital relationship, denying sex to husband, demanding freedom or asserting her space and rights.

A three year study of 500 dalit women's experiences of violence across four Indian states shows that the majority of dalit women reported having faced one or more incidents of verbal abuse (62.4 per cent), physical assault (54.8 per cent), sexual harassment and assault (46.8 per cent), Domestic Violence (43.0 per cent) and rape (23.2 per cent) (UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, 2013).

Domestic violence today has been brought more into public view due to the combined effort between law enforcement agencies, the courts, social service agencies and corrections/ probation agencies who previously treated domestic violence as a personal matter.

## METHODOLOGY

An action research with a cross sectional approach was followed for the present study. The state of Uttar Pradesh was purposively selected for the study owing to its large Scheduled caste population. Uttar Pradesh has the largest chunk of the total scheduled caste (SC) population accounting to 20.5 per cent as per the 2011 census of India. A systematic random sampling method was adopted for the selection of Prayagraj (Allahabad) district of Uttar Pradesh. Systematic random sampling method was also followed for the selection of Blocks, Villages, Wards and Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) from Prayagraj (Allahabad) district.

The Prayagraj (Allahabad) district was broadly divided into two clusters- the Trans Ganga region and the Trans Yamuna region. Trans Ganga region comprises of 11 blocks and Trans Yamuna region comprises of 9 blocks. From each region one block was selected through systematic random sampling method. Bahadurpur Block was selected from the Trans Ganga region while Chaka Block was selected from the Trans Yamuna region.

Two villages each were selected from the identified blocks through systematic random sampling. The villages Durjanpur and Malawa Bujurga were selected from the Bahadurpur Block and the villages Sarpathaiya and

Tignauta were selected from the Chaka Block.

For the selection of wards Prayagraj (Allahabad) district was divided into two zones- The Northern Prayagraj Junction and the Southern Prayagraj Junction. A total of eight wards were selected from both the zones through systematic random sampling to identify the urban dalit women for the study. The eight wards selected were ward no. 16, 18, 37 and 40, 55, 58, 66 and 74. From each of these wards one PSU was selected through systematic random sampling. A total of eight PSUs viz., Madhwapur, Baghambari Housing Scheme, Katra, Mutthiganj Part-I, Medical College Area, Mohatsimganj, Meerapur and Chaukhandi were selected for the study.

A total of 240 married Dalit women between the ages of 19-40 years (early adulthood) were randomly selected from the rural and urban areas for the study. From the eight selected PSUs 120 urban dalit women were selected wherein fifteen urban dalit women were randomly selected from each PSU. The rural group comprised of 120 dalit women wherein thirty women respondents each were selected from the four villages. Among the randomly selected sample only those women were interviewed who were married and currently living with their husbands within the same household.

A self-structured interview schedule was formulated to collect preliminary data about the respondents. The interview schedule comprised of the general and specific information pertaining to the respondents. The general information was related to the personal profile of the respondents and their families. The specific information consisted of awareness level and knowledge of the respondents related to domestic violence and its various dimensions like the various forms of domestic violence, the legal acts and laws related to domestic violence, their perception about domestic violence, their attitude towards domestic violence, their knowledge about referral services, any action they have taken against their perpetrator, their past history of domestic violence, the impact of domestic violence on their children.

Pre-designed scale known as the Women's experience with Battering Scale (WEB) devised by Smith *et al.* (1995) was used to seek information on the prevalence of domestic violence from the respondents.

The Data collected was coded, tabulated and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test. p value was calculated to see the significant difference between the variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the study have been discussed in the following section

The socio-demographic profile of the rural respondents depicted in Table 1 shows clearly that majority of the rural respondents (70 per cent) belonged to the Bhartiya sub-caste while 2.5 per cent belonged to the Banskar sub-caste. Majority of the respondents (55 per cent) were in the age group of 31-40 while 45 per cent were in the age group of 19-30.

It is evident from the table that majority of the respondent's husbands were non -agricultural labourers *i.e.* 40 per cent while the minimum number of respondent's husbands were migrant workers *i.e.* 4.2 per cent. Respondents whose husbands were unemployed were found to be 3.3 per cent. Majority of the respondents (76.6 per cent) were unemployed while only 1.7 per cent respondents were engaged in government service as a anganwadi workers.

Majority of the respondents husbands were illiterate *i.e.* 35 per cent while only one of the husbands had received some kind of professional education. The respondents literacy level also depicts that majority of them (81.7 per cent) were illiterate while only one respondent was post graduate.

Maximum respondents (48.3 per cent) had tied the marital knot when they were in the age group of 18-20 years while 41.7 per cent respondents had been married off when they had not even reached the legal age of marriage *i.e.* below 18 years. The family type of the respondents shows that majority of them (77.5 per cent) lived in nuclear families whereas 22.5 per cent lived in joint families.

The table illustrates that majority of the respondents (31.7 per cent) husbands had monthly income greater than 5000 per month but less than 10,000 per month while the monthly income of 7.5 per cent respondent's husbands was more than 10,000 per month. Respondents whose husbands did not have any monthly income and were unemployed were found to be 3.3 per cent. Majority of the respondents (76.7 per cent) had no monthly income while 9.2 per cent respondents had monthly income upto rupees 1500. There were also 9.2 per cent respondents whose monthly income was greater than 1500 but less than 3000.

The socio-demographic profile of the urban respondents depicted in Table 2 shows that majority of the urban respondents (21.7 per cent) belonged to the

**Table 1: Socio Demographic profile of the rural respondents**

Rural		Number	Percentage
Sub caste	Bhartiya	84	70.0
	Pasi	10	8.3
	Chamar	23	19.2
	Banskar	3	2.5
Age group (in years)	19 to 30	54	45.0
	31 to 40	66	55.0
Husband's Occupation	Unemployed	4	3.3
	Non-agricultural labour	48	40.0
	Agriculture labour	26	21.7
	Skilled labour	16	13.3
	Migrant worker	5	4.2
	Pvt. Service	7	5.8
	Contractor	14	11.7
Respondent's Occupation	Unemployed	92	76.6
	Non-agricultural labour	5	4.2
	Agriculture labour	3	2.5
	Skilled labour	3	2.5
	Cultivation	15	12.5
Husband's Education	Govt. Service	2	1.7
	Illiterate	42	35.0
	Primary	32	26.7
	Upper primary	16	13.3
	High School	14	11.7
	Intermediate	7	5.8
	Graduate	6	5.0
	Post Graduate	2	1.7
Respondent's Education	Professional Education	1	0.8
	Illiterate	98	81.7
	Primary	4	3.3
	Upper primary	2	1.7
	High School	6	5.0
	Intermediate	6	5.0
Age of the respondent at the time of marriage (in years)	Graduate	2	1.7
	Post Graduate	1	0.8
	Professional Education	1	0.8
	Below 18	50	41.7
	18 to 20	58	48.3
Type of Family	Above 20	12	10.0
	Single	93	77.5
Husband's Monthly Income (in rupees)	Joint	27	22.5
	Total	120	100.0
	None	4	3.3
Respondent's Monthly Income (in rupees)	Up to 1500	0	0
	>1500 - 3000	33	27.5
	>3000 - 5000	36	30.0
	> 5000 - 10000	38	31.7
	> 10000	9	7.5
Respondent's Monthly Income (in rupees)	None	92	76.7
	Up to 1500	11	9.2
	> 1500 - 3000	11	9.2
	> 3000 - 5000	5	4.2
	> 5000 - 10000	0	0.0
>10000	1	0.8	

**Table 2 : Socio Demographic profile of the urban respondents**

Urban		Number	Percentage
Sub caste	Bhartiya	24	20.0
	Pasi	10	8.3
	Chamar	26	21.7
	Belbanshi	7	5.8
Age group (in years)	Hela	9	7.5
	Khatik	13	10.8
	Ravidas	19	15.8
	Banskar	12	10.0
	19 to 30	71	59.2
Husband's Occupation	31 to 40	49	40.8
	Non-agricultural labour	28	23.3
Respondent's Occupation	Agriculture labour	14	11.7
	Skilled labour	16	13.3
	Cultivation	10	8.3
	Migrant worker	8	6.7
	Business	6	5.0
	Private Service	29	24.2
	Others	9	7.5
	Unemployed	64	53.3
	Non-agricultural labour	4	3.3
	Agriculture labour	9	7.5
Husband's Education	Skilled labour	1	0.83
	Private Service	42	35
	Illiterate	70	58.3
	Primary	30	25.0
	Upper primary	12	10.0
Respondent's Education	High School	3	2.5
	Intermediate	3	2.5
	Graduate	2	1.7
	Illiterate	85	70.8
	Primary	14	11.7
	Upper primary	9	7.5
Age of the respondent at the time of marriage (in years)	High School	9	7.5
	Intermediate	1	0.8
	Graduate	2	1.7
	Below 18	44	36.7
Type of Family	18 -20	66	55.0
	Above 20	10	8.3
Husband's Monthly Income (in rupees)	Nuclear	94	78.3
	Joint	26	21.7
	None	0	0.0
Respondent's Monthly Income (in rupees)	Up to 1500	0	0
	>1500 - 3000	37	30.8
	> 3000 - 5000	40	33.3
	>5000 - 10000	41	34.2
	>10000	2	1.7
Respondent's Monthly Income (in rupees)	None	64	53.3
	Up to 1500	19	15.8
	> 1500 - 3000	33	27.5
	> 3000 - 5000	2	1.7
	> 5000 - 10000	2	1.7
> 10000	0	0.0	

Chamar sub-caste while 5.8 per cent respondents belonged to the Belbanshi sub-caste.

The table clearly shows that majority of the respondents (59.2 per cent) were in the age group of 19-30 years while 40.8 per cent were in the age group of 31-40 years.

Maximum of the respondent's husbands were in private service *i.e.* 24.2 per cent while the minimum number of respondent's husbands (5 per cent) had their own small business. None of the husbands were found unemployed. The table clearly reveals that majority of the respondents (53.3 per cent) were unemployed while only 1 respondent was found to be a skilled labourer. She was involved in bidi making at home.

The table further indicates the literacy level of the respondents and their husbands. The husband's literacy level clearly shows that majority of the respondents husbands were illiterate *i.e.* 58.3 per cent while only 1.7 per cent of the respondent's husbands had received education upto the graduate level. The respondents literacy level also depicts that majority of them (70.8 per cent) were illiterate while only one respondent had received education till the intermediate level.

It is clear from the table that majority of the respondents (55 per cent) had been married off by their parents when they were in the age group of 18-20 years while 36.7 per cent respondents had been married when they were below 18 years.

The family type of the respondent's shows that majority of them (78.3 per cent) lived in nuclear families while 21.7 per cent lived in joint families.

The table illustrates that majority of the respondents (34.2 per cent) husbands had monthly income greater than 5000 per month but less than 10,000 per month while the monthly income of 1.7 per cent respondent's husbands was more than 10,000 per month. There were no respondents whose husbands did not have any monthly

income. Majority of the respondents (53.3 per cent) had no monthly income while 1.7 per cent respondents had monthly income greater than 3000 but less than 5000 rupees. There were also 1.7 per cent respondents whose monthly incomes were greater than 5000 but less than 10,000 rupees.

Table 3 depicts the prevalence of domestic violence among the rural and urban respondents. It is clearly seen from the table that no violence was encountered by 24.2 per cent rural respondents while 25.0 per cent urban respondents did not face any violence during their marital lives. There were 20.8 per cent rural respondents who had endured mild form of domestic violence as compared to 19.2 per cent urban respondents. The table further shows that the moderate form of domestic violence experienced by the urban respondents was 33.3 per cent while it was 21.7 per cent for the rural respondents. Severe domestic violence was experienced by majority of the rural respondents *i.e.* 33.3 per cent while 22.5 per cent urban respondents experienced severe domestic violence within their marital lives. The prevalence of overall domestic violence among the rural and urban respondents revealed that 27.9 per cent respondents experienced severe domestic violence followed by moderate violence (27.5 per cent), no violence (24.6 per cent) and mild violence (20.0 per cent), respectively.

It can be observed from the table that the prevalence of severe form of domestic violence was more among the rural groups as compared to the moderate and mild forms of domestic violence. This could be due to their low literacy levels and financial bickering which arises due to their low income levels thereby provoking the men to squabble with their wives. Similar findings were reported by George et al (2016) who in their study found a statistically significant association between illiteracy of women and domestic violence (AOR: 4.3, 95 per cent confidence interval: 1.1-15.7 P: 0.03).

Degree of violence	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Frequency (n=120)	Percentage	Frequency (n=120)	Percentage	Frequency (N=240)	Percentage
No violence (0-19)	29	24.2	30	25.0	59	24.6
Mild (20-33)	25	20.8	23	19.2	48	20.0
Moderate (34-47)	26	21.7	40	33.3	66	27.5
Severe (48-60)	40	33.3	27	22.5	67	27.9

Multisectoral response such as improving literacy, creating awareness regarding legal aid and screening the victims of violence at primary health centers, should be initiated to mitigate this public health issue. It was also seen that such type of violence usually begins when the victims are married off as child brides. In such situation their ability to question and stand up against violence is often severely diminished.

The table further reveals that the prevalence of moderate form of domestic violence was more among the urban groups as compared to the severe and mild forms of domestic violence. Dalit women who live in the urban milieu experienced less severe forms of violence which might be due to the fact that urban dalit women are more aware of their surroundings, are more assertive and try to resist the violence inflicted on them to some extent.

The results of the study can be supported by a research study conducted by Kalokhe *et al.* (2018) who reported that women who dwell in India's slums are among those at greatest risk of domestic violence, with lifetime estimates of 21–99 per cent. Women in slum communities may be more likely to experience domestic violence and are compelled to remain in abusive relationships because their partners and families into which they marry suffer greater stress due to inadequate finances, crowding, limited resources, and poor sanitation, discrimination, and subordination. They reside in communities where normalization and acceptance of domestic violence is greater, alcohol use is greater, have weakened support systems that do not allow them to develop and exercise positive coping mechanisms, and use domestic violence as means of countering feelings of powerlessness.

Table 4 shows a comparative analysis of the prevalence of domestic violence among rural and urban dalit respondents. The mean score of no violence in rural

areas was  $13.86 \pm 2.71$  whereas it was  $12.37 \pm 2.28$  in urban areas. A significant difference was observed between rural and urban respondents for no violence as the t value was found to be 2.296 and the p value was 0.025. The mean values further indicated that no violence was practised by more of the rural respondents as compared to their urban counterparts. The table further indicates a non significant difference between rural and urban respondents as far as the categories of mild, moderate and severe violence was concerned as the calculated value of t was found to be 0.553, 0.022 and 0.376 and the p value was found to be 0.583, 0.982 and 0.708 respectively indicating a non-significant difference between the groups. On comparing the prevalence of overall domestic violence on the rural and urban respondents it was seen that a non-significant difference existed between the two groups as the t value was found to be 0.842 and the p value was found to be 0.400.

The result can be supported by the study conducted by Peek Asa *et al.* (2011) who reported in their study that rural women experienced higher rates of domestic violence and greater frequency and severity of physical abuse than their urban counterparts. This can be attributed to the fact that the literacy and awareness levels of rural dalit women are quite low as compared to their urban counterparts. On account of their low socio economic backgrounds and girl child discrimination which exists strongly in their socio cultural setting the rural girls are not sent to school and are only made to do household chores which affects their awareness levels on these issues. The rural dalit women gradually begin perceiving violence as a part and parcel of their lives and consider it to be the result of their own mistakes and actions which might have caused trouble to their husbands or in-laws.

While in the case of urban dalit women their awareness level on these matters is comparatively high

**Table 4 : Comparative Analysis of rural and urban respondents on the basis of prevalence of domestic violence**

Degree of Violence	Socio-cultural setting	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	df	t calculated	p
No violence	Rural n=29	13.86	2.71	57	2.296	0.025*
	Urban n=30	12.37	2.28			
Mild	Rural n=25	24.24	3.96	46	0.553	0.583
	Urban n=23	24.87	3.91			
Moderate	Rural n=26	41.42	4.48	64	0.022	0.982
	Urban n=40	41.40	3.86			
Severe	Rural n=40	55.80	3.21	65	0.376	0.708
	Urban n=27	55.48	3.66			
Total	Rural n=120	35.98	17.30	238	0.842	0.400
	Urban n=120	34.14	16.40			

since they frequently move out of their house for work or they work in educated households where they are counselled from time to time on such issues and how to handle them. In addition to this being financially independent makes them fearless while resisting against their husbands of their violent acts.

### Conclusion:

The present research was undertaken to make a comparative study on the prevalence of domestic violence faced by rural and urban dalit women of Allahabad district at the hands of their husbands. It was concluded from the study that the prevalence of domestic violence is more in the rural milieu in contrast to the urban set up. The illiteracy and ignorance of rural dalit women coupled with their submissive and meek attitude adds on to their woes and worries and provides a greater chance for their vulnerability as opposed to the urban dalit women. On the other hand the urban dalit women are more aware of their surroundings, are more assertive and financially empowered.

It was also found that the factors which sustain domestic violence could be strong in rural areas. Rural women generally justified wife beating and believed that wife beating was used by men as a means to discipline their wives for the good. Going out without telling their partners, not doing household chores properly, not taking good care of the children and in laws were some of the reasons justified by the rural women for domestic violence. The urban women cited that refusing sex to the husbands could be one of the reasons for domestic violence. The burden of domestic violence is also higher in the rural communities since the women are totally dependent on their husbands for financial requirements. The men in the rural milieu abuse alcohol and this takes a toll on the finances of the family. When the husbands feel stressed due to family pressures they feel that the best way to vent out anger and get relief is to thrash their wives. It was seen that the husbands of urban respondents also consumed alcohol often but the urban women did not bow down to their atrocities and retaliated with all their might. This could be due to the fact that urban women were more likely to be educated and economically empowered than their rural counterparts.

The urban dalit women did not feel hesitant to call the police or file a report against their husband's atrocities. As compared to rural women they reported domestic

violence to authorities such as law enforcement agents, they sued the culprits in court, or they did both. This could be because the urban women were more educated; more empowered economically, and understood their fundamental human rights better than their rural counterparts.

It was hence concluded from the study that prevalence of domestic violence was high in the rural milieu as compared to the urban milieu. It was recommended to plan some intervention strategies to combat domestic violence against dalit women. These strategies will act as a catalyst in promoting gender egalitarian roles in the society and stimulating healthy relationships among both the sexes by bringing about a positive change in their behaviour.

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