



Spousal Violence in Northeast India: Special Reference to Manipur

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Abstract

One in every three ever-married women in India is a victim of spousal Violence in NFHS-5, 2019-21. In eight sister states of Northeast (NE) India, around a quarter of married women have ever experienced spousal violence. Manipur and Assam have persistently reported higher incidences in different rounds of NFHS. The study investigates the influencing factors for spousal violence in NE along with level, trend, and pattern by background characteristics. The study finds the most common type of spousal violence in NE is physical violence, followed by emotional and sexual violence. Slapping, pushing/something throwing, kicking/dragging, and emotional violence, like insulting or making to feel bad, and physically forced for unwanted sex are pervasive forms of spousal violence. Highly predictive determinants are the alcohol consumption of husbands, women's education, and occupation. The social determinant- religion, considerably influences the association. Women's work participation rate in NE is remarkably higher compared to the rest of India. But, working women in NE face more spousal violence compared to non-working women. Women's safety in the work and domestic space must be prioritised in policy measures. Alcohol and drug addiction are a very common and decades-long issue in NE states due to its frontier location and diverse demographic composition. All the NE states need to push a concerted policy against alcohol and drugs to curb the high domestic violence as well as to promote gender well-being.

Keywords

Alcohol
 Consumption,
 Domestic Violence,
 Emotional Violence,
 Physical Violence,
 Spousal Violence.

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Introduction

Domestic violence against women is one of the social evils prevailing in every corner of the world. Article-1 of the United Nations' (1993) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defined violence against women as- "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (UN, 1993, p.2). In the past, violence against women was not seen as a problem, but it has progressively been considered as a serious threat to women's health and well-being and a serious human rights issue (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). There are different forms of domestic violence- spousal violence, sexual violence by other family members, friends or strangers that is non-partner sexual violence, femicide, including honour killing, and trafficking of women. Among these, spousal violence, such as physical, sexual, and emotional, is the most common (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). Studies (Portwood & Heany, 2007; Chandrasekaran et al., 2007; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006) revealed that the principal reason for the injuries suffered by women is the domestic violence exercised by men. Spousal violence results in not only the direct health effects of injury and fatality but also indirectly influences other health outcomes, which adds to the burden of disease (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). According to the 'Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018' by WHO (2021), nearly one in three or 30 percent of women have been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence or both. Globally, on average, 27 percent of ever-married or partnered women of reproductive age (15-49 years) were

estimated to have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence at least once in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). The lifetime prevalence of domestic violence among ever-married women aged 15-49 years was highest among the least developed countries, at 37 percent, and in the three subregions of Oceania- Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia (WHO, 2021). It is followed by Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, 35 and 33 percent, respectively (WHO, 2021).

According to the National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)-5 (2019-21), around 32 percent of ever-married women, which includes currently married and formerly married women aged 18-49 years, have ever experienced spousal physical, sexual, and emotional violence in India. There was a wide variation in the intensity of spousal violence, ranging from 48 percent in Karnataka to 10 percent in Goa in 2019-21. Karnataka is followed by Bihar (42.5 percent), Manipur (41.6 percent), Tamil Nadu (39 percent), Assam (34.3 percent), Andhra Pradesh (33.4 percent), Jharkhand (32.8), Odisha (32.4 percent). Manipur and Assam, among the eight sisters Northeast (NE) states, persistently reported higher spousal violence in different rounds of NFHS. Manipur reported 46.2 percent in NFHS-3 (2005-06), which increased to 54.7 percent, the highest among Indian States/UTs, in NFHS-4 (2015-16). In NFHS-5, spousal violence in Manipur slightly declined to 41.6 percent and ranked third after Karnataka and Bihar. In addition, Assam witnessed comparatively higher spousal violence, 42.1, 26.1 and 34.3 percent, respectively, in 2005-06, 2015-16 and 2019-21.

NE Indian states perform well in different parameters of women empowerment, such

as sex ratio, female work participation rate (WPR) and education attainment (Mahanta & Nayak, 2013). Three NE states, namely Nagaland (44.7 percent), Sikkim (39.6 percent) and Manipur (38.6 percent), placed among the top five States/UTs in terms of female WPR in the 2011 Census. Regarding sex ratio, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram ranked 6th, 7th, and 9th among the top ten States/UTs in the 2011 Census. NE states' literacy rate is higher than many mainland Indian states. Moreover, many tribal communities in NE believe in a matriarchal society (Saikia & Dasvarma, 2007). Against this backdrop, the prevalence of domestic violence among ever-married women, especially in Manipur and Assam, is an anomaly. Hence, the present study tries to investigate the factors associated with higher spousal violence in NE India, with special reference to Manipur.

Objectives and Data Sources

The present study highlights the level and trends of spousal violence in India and NE states since the NFHS-3 (2005-06). It also discusses the micro-patterns by background characteristics of spousal violence in the NE region and Manipur in NFHS-5 (2019-21). Finally, it examines the factors influencing spousal violence in NE and Manipur in 2019-21.

The study consults the published reports and unit-level data of the NFHS, rounds 3 to 5, freely available in the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) programme sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Acquiring information on domestic violence was first introduced in NFHS-3 conducted in 2005-06. In NFHS-5, 72,056 women aged 18-49 completed the domestic violence module, of which 63,851 were ever-married women, which includes currently- and formerly-

married women. Spousal violence is related to ever-married women who have ever experienced any form of physical, sexual, or emotional violence committed by their current husband, if currently married, or their most recent husband if formerly married.

Methods

Around 13 predictors, which influence spousal violence, are identified within the limitation of unit data of NFHS-5. These predictors are broadly classified into the following categories- women characteristics (age, years of schooling, occupational status, current marital status, and media exposure), household characteristics (no of living children, type of resident, wealth index, religion, and caste/tribe), husband characteristics (occupation, education, and alcohol consumption). A Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) model is constructed to predict the likelihood of spousal violence over the non-probability of the same under the above-mentioned predictors.

NE Indian states are diverse in terms of socio-cultural and political identity. The multi-ethnic composition of the indigenous peoples manifests a unique culture, language, and religious profile, which distinguish one state from another. Meanwhile, NE states face common development issues like poor transportation and communication, slower economic growth, severe unemployment, immigration issues, and law and order instability due to long-term insurgency and secessionist movements (Sharma, 2016; Kipgen, 2013; Upadhyay, 2006). States are still encountering drug trafficking, illegal taxing and extortion, and more than 65 years under the draconian law, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) of 1958 (Sharma, 2016; Kipgen, 2013). These factors

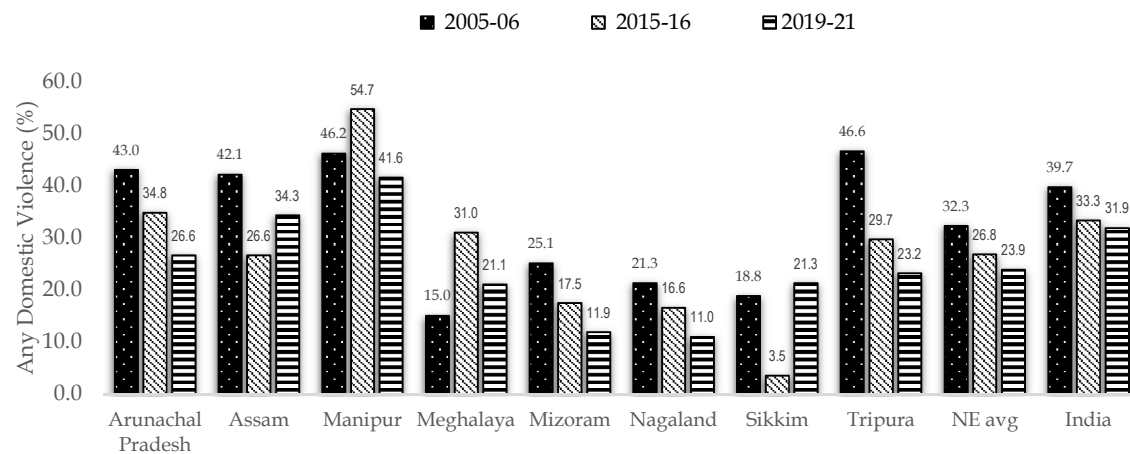
may influence the policy and regulation for state-specific domestic violence. Hence, the 'state effect' needs to be controlled. The state of residence/state is considered as a proxy indicator for state-specific policy and structure in the BLR model.

Results

Spousal Violence in India, NE and Manipur

Figure 1 shows the magnitude and trends of ever-married women aged 18-49 who have ever experienced any spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence from 2005-06 to 2019-21. In 2019-21, nearly 32 percent of women reported spousal violence, which declined from around 40 percent in 2005-06. Likewise, it dropped to almost 24 percent in the NE region in 2019-21 from 32 percent in 2005-06. But, there is a wide deviation

among the sister states. Spousal violence in Tripura, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh is conspicuous. In 2005-06, Tripura and Manipur were in the top five in terms of spousal violence among Indian States/UTs. In 2005-06, Tripura recorded the highest, around 47 percent, spousal violence, followed by Manipur (46.2 percent), Arunachal Pradesh (43.0) and Assam (42.1 percent). Over the period, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh have improved a lot; roughly two-fold declined violence during 2005-06 to 2019-21. Manipur and Assam have retained a high prevalence of spousal violence. Manipur has remained one of the top five states in spousal violence since 2005-06 and ranked all India top (54.7 percent) in 2015-16. In 2019-21, one in every two ever-married women was victimised of spousal violence in Manipur, whereas the Indian average was one in every three.



Note: NFHS Round-3, 4 and 5 were conducted in 2005-06, 2015-16 and 2019-21, respectively.
 Source: Compiled from NFHS- 3, 4 & 5 India Report by IIPS & Macro International, 2007; IIPS & ICF, 2017; 2021, respectively

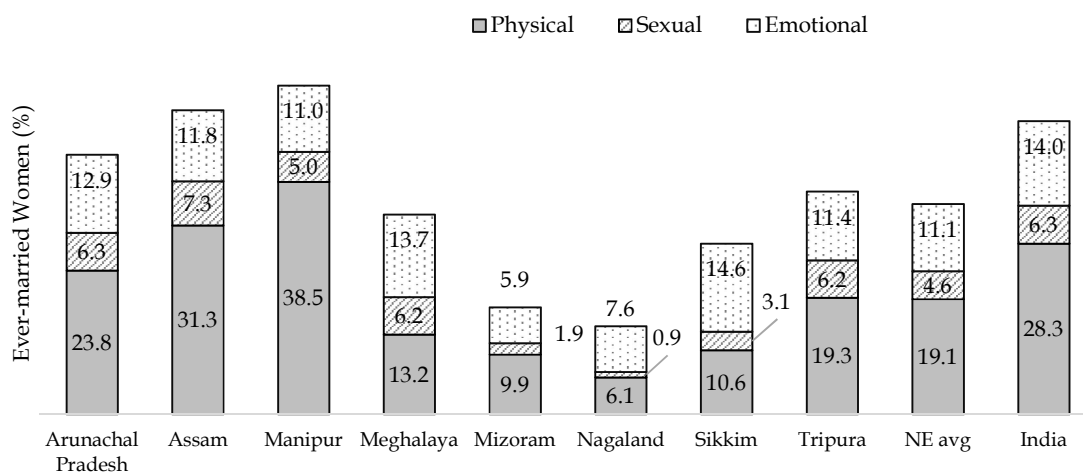
Figure 1 Any Spousal (Physical, Sexual, or Emotional) Violence in India and NE, NFHS-3 to 5

Assam, the biggest state in NE in terms of population (68 percent of NE population), reported a quarter of spousal violence in 2015-16, which declined from 42.1 percent in 2005-06 but again revived to around one-third in 2019-21. Likewise, in Sikkim, spousal violence bunched back to 21.3 percent in 2019-21 from 3.5 percent in 2005-16. The lowest level of domestic violence was recorded in Nagaland (11 percent), followed by Mizoram (nearly 12 percent) in 2019-21.

Forms of Spousal Violence

The most common form of spousal violence in India is physical assault, with victims 28.3

percent of ever-married women aged 18-49 in 2019-21 (Fig 2). In NE, it was reported 19.1 percent, followed by emotional violence, 11.1 percent, and sexual violence, nearly 5.0 percent. In Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, physical violence by current or most recent husbands is noticeable- 38.5, 31.3 and 23.8 percent, respectively. In three NE states, namely Sikkim, Meghalaya and Nagaland, emotional violence surpasses physical violence (Fig 2). The highest proportion of sexual violence was reported in Assam (7.3 percent), followed by Arunachal Pradesh (6.3 percent), Tripura and Meghalaya.



Source: Compiled from NFHS-5 unit-level data by DHS, 2021

Figure 2 Forms of Spousal Violence in NE in NFHS-5

It is hard to distinguish- physical and sexual violence occurrence in isolation; women may experience a combination of different types of violence. However, slapping, pushing, shaking, or throwing are the most common forms of physical violence against women in NE (Fig 3). Slapping by husbands/partners is conspicuous, reported by 32 percent of ever-married women in Manipur, and 18.1 percent were pushed, shaken, or had something thrown by their husband/partner in 2019-21. Seven percent reported being

punched with a fist or with something, and 7.4 percent reported having their arm twisted or hair pulled. Among the severe physical violence, kicking or dragging by husband/partner is predominant; 5.1 and 8.1 percent of women reported, respectively, for NE and Manipur (Fig 3). Around one percent of women in NE and Manipur said that their husbands tried to choke or burn them on purpose, and another one percent of women reported that their husbands had threatened or attacked them with a knife,

gun, or other weapons. Nearly five percent of women in Manipur said that their husbands physically forced them to have sexual intercourse even though they did not want to. Around four percent reported that their husband forced them to perform any sexual acts they did not want to. In

emotional violence, insulting or making them feel bad is most likely to reported (6.0 percent), followed by their husbands saying or doing something to humiliate them in front of others (around 5.0 percent).

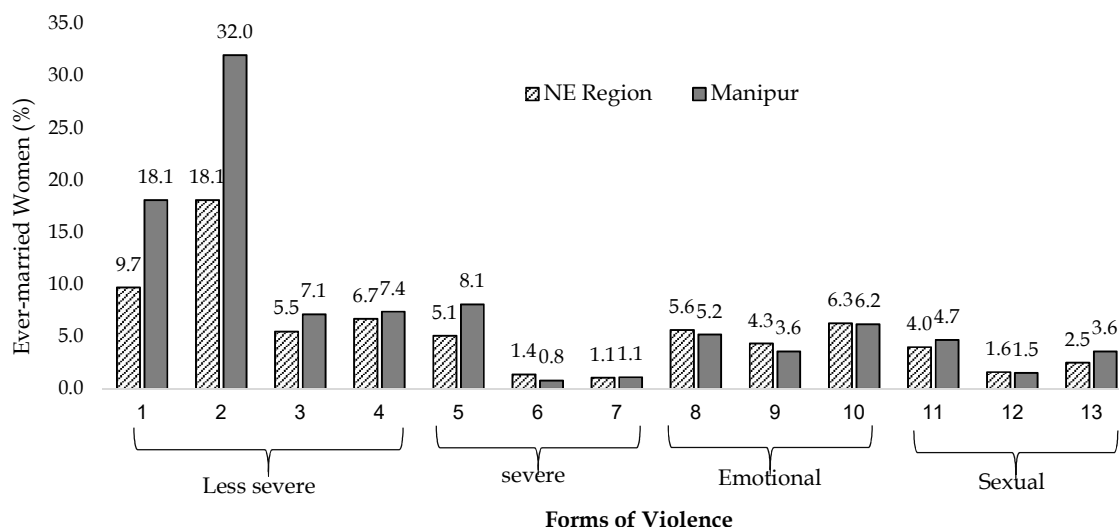


Figure 3 Spousal Violence by Sub-types in NE and Manipur, NFHS-5

Abbreviations:

Physical violence

- 1: Ever been pushed, shook or had something thrown by husband/partner
- 2: Ever been slapped by husband/partner
- 3: Ever been punched with fist or hit by something harmful by husband/partner
- 4: Ever had arm twisted or hair pulled by husband/partner

- 5: Ever been kicked or dragged by husband/partner
- 6: Ever been strangled or burnt by husband/partner
- 7: Ever been threatened with knife/gun or other weapon by husband/partner

Emotional violence

- 8: Ever been humiliated by husband/partner
- 9: Ever been threatened with harm by husband/partner
- 10: Ever been insulted or made to feel bad by husband/partner

Sexual violence

- 11: Ever been physically forced into unwanted sex by husband/partner
- 12: Ever been forced into other unwanted sexual acts by husband/partner
- 13: Ever been physically forced to perform sexual acts respondent didn't want

Source: Compiled from NFHS-5 unit-level data by DHS, 2021.

Patterns of Spousal Violence by Background Characteristics

Table 1 highlights any spousal (physical, sexual, or emotional) violence pattern of

ever-married women aged 18-49 years by background characteristics in NE India and Manipur in 2019-21. The association between a background character and spousal violence

portrayed a one-to-one relationship. *The chi-square (χ^2)* test suggests that around 12 background characteristics are significantly (at a five percent level of significance) associated with spousal violence against ever-married women by their current or most recent husbands. Education gives people the tools to make better decisions and choices (Smith & Iversen, 2018). Increasing women's levels of education serves as a barrier against domestic abuse and helps to reduce intimate partner violence (Ackerson

et al., 2008). In the present study, women's experience of violence declines sharply with women's level of schooling. The percentage of women who reported spousal violence declined from one-third of women with no schooling to a quarter of women with 12 or more years of schooling in the NE region in NFHS-5 (Table 1). Similarly, in Manipur, the experience of violence ranges from 48 percent among women with no schooling to 34 percent of women with 12 or more years of schooling.

Table 1 Spousal Violence against Ever-Married Women aged 18-49 by Background Characteristics in NFHS-5, 2019-21

Background Characters	Any spousal (Physical, Sexual, or Emotional) Violence					
	NE India			Manipur		
	No	Yes	Chi-square	No	Yes	Chi-Square
A. WOMEN'S CHARACTERISTICS						
1. Age						
18-24	(900) 75.8	(288) 24.2	$\chi^2 = 7.120$, $n=9582$, $p=0.065^*$	(54) 62.8	(32) 37.2	$\chi^2=3.71$, $n=729$, $p=0.29$
25-29	(1393) 74.8	(470) 25.2		(64) 52.5	(58) 47.5	
30-39	(2776) 72.5	(1051) 27.5		(188) 60.1	(125) 39.9	
40-49	(2017) 74.6	(687) 25.4		(114) 54.8	(94) 45.2	
2. Years of Schooling						
No schooling	(1335) 67.3	(649) 32.7	$\chi^2=117.91$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(39) 52	(36) 48	$\chi^2=10.085$, $n=729$, $p=0.039^{**}$
<7 years	(1931) 72.1	(746) 27.9		(85) 56.7	(65) 43.3	
8-9 years	(1727) 75.1	(573) 24.9		(111) 56.6	(85) 43.4	
10-11 years	(898) 75.8	(287) 24.2		(53) 49.1	(55) 50.9	
≥12 years	(1195) 83.2	(241) 16.8		(132) 66	(86) 34.0	
3. Occupation						
Not working	(4594) 77.4	(1338) 22.6	$\chi^2 = 98.646$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(211) 66.6	(106) 33.4	$\chi^2 = 17.749$, $n=729$, $p=0.000^{***}$
Working	(2492) 68.3	(1158) 31.7		(209) 50.7	(203) 49.3	
4. Marital Status						
Currently married	(6700) 74.3	(2317) 25.7	$\chi^2 = 9.88$, $n=9582$, $p=0.002^{***}$	(395) 58.2	(284) 41.8	$\chi^2=0.961$, $n=729$, $p=0.327$
Widowed/divorced/ separated/deserted	(386) 68.3	(179) 31.7		(25) 50	(25) 50	
5. Media Exposure: watching TV						
Not at all	(2338) 72.2	(902) 27.8	$\chi^2 = 46.192$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(84) 54.2	(71) 45.8	$\chi^2= 8.502$, $n=72$, $p=0.014^{**}$
Less than once a week	(1839) 70.8	(759) 29.2		(157) 53.0	(139) 47.0	
At least once a week	(2909) 77.7	(835) 26.0		(179) 64.4	(99) 35.6	
B. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS						
6. Number of living children						
No children (0)	(559) 80.8	(133) 19.2	$\chi^2 = 36.588$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(41) 70.7	(17) 29.3	$\chi^2=5.898$, $n=729$, $p=0.117$
1 - 2	(4073) 75.0	(1359) 25.0		(221) 58.0	(160) 42	
3 - 4	(1932) 70.6	(804) 29.4		(127) 55.7	(101) 44.3	
≥5	(522) 72.3	(200) 27.7		(31) 50	(31) 50	
7. Residence						

Urban	(1354) 77.7	(389) 22.3	$\chi^2=15.396$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{**}$	(130) 61.3	(82) 38.7	$\chi^2=1.475$, $n=729$, $p=0.224$
Rural	(5732) 73.1	(2107) 26.9		(290) 56.1	(227) 43.9	
8. Wealth Index						
Poorest	(1995) 67.8	(946) 32.2	$\chi^2=133.903$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(97) 60.2	(64) 39.8	$\chi^2=5.969$, $n=729$, $p=0.113$
Poorer	(2276) 72.7	(856) 27.3		(142) 54.2	(120) 45.8	
Middle	(1577) 79.2	(414) 20.8		(98) 54.4	(82) 45.6	
Rich	(1238) 81.6	(280) 18.4		(83) 65.9	(43) 43.1	
C. HUSBAND'S CHARACTERISTICS						
9. Education						
No education	(1161) 68.9	(525) 31.1	$\chi^2=86.170$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(33) 61.1	(21) 38.9	$\chi^2=7.615$, $n=729$, $p=0.108^*$
Primary	(1181) 69.8	(511) 30.2		(44) 59.5	(30) 40.5	
Secondary	(3889) 75.2	(1284) 24.8		(250) 54.5	(209) 45.5	
Higher	(808) 83.3	(162) 16.7		(93) 65.5	(49) 43.5	
10. Occupation						
Professional/technical/ managerial/Clerical	(635) 81.5	(144) 18.5	$\chi^2=114.085$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(39) 85	(21) 35.0	$\chi^2=17.190$, $n=729$, $p=0.005^{***}$
Sales	(784) 77.6	(226) 22.4		(47) 75.8	(15) 24.2	
Services/household and domestic	(870) 81.3	(200) 18.7		(34) 54.8	(28) 45.2	
Agricultural	(2753) 72.0	(1068) 28.0		(171) 59.8	(115) 40.2	
Skilled and unskilled manual	(1477) 67.9	(697) 32.1		(91) 49.5	(93) 50.5	
Other	(567) 77.9	(161) 22.1		(38) 50.7	(37) 49.3	
11. Alcohol Consumption						
No	(4872) 80.5	(1178) 19.5	$\chi^2=368.650$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(235) 67.0	(116) 33.0	$\chi^2=23.441$, $n=729$, $p=0.000^{***}$
Yes	(2214) 62.7	(1318) 37.3		(185) 48.9	(193) 51.1	
D. SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS						
12. Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste (SC)	(582) 72.2	(224) 27.8	$\chi^2=65.490$, $n=8201$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(26) 60.5	(17) 39.5	$\chi^2=6.347$, $n=711$, $p=0.96$
Scheduled tribe (ST)	(4008) 77.6	(1154) 22.4		(218) 61.1	(139) 38.9	
Other backward class (OBC)	(969) 69.3	(429) 30.7		(41) 49.4	(42) 50.6	
Other	(571) 68.4	(264) 31.6		(120) 52.6	(108) 47.4	
13. Religion						
Hindu	(2731) 71.4	(1096) 28.6	$\chi^2=145.688$, $n=9582$, $p=0.000^{***}$	(115) 51.6	(108) 48.4	$\chi^2=6.118$, $n=729$, $p=0.106^*$
Muslim	(776) 63.4	(448) 36.6		(29) 64.4	(16) 35.6	
Christian	(2788) 79.5	(72) 20.5		(221) 61	(141) 39	
Other	(791) 77.3	(232) 22.7		(55) 55.6	(44) 44.4	

Note: figures within the parenthesis () denote frequency, and outside is percentage. * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1% level of significant respectively.

Source: Computed from unit-level data of NFHS-5, 2019-20 by DHS, 2021

Working status is an important measure of women's empowerment. A good quality of life may result from women having their sources of income. There are mixed findings regarding the relationship between the working status of women and domestic violence. According to a study conducted in the southern part of Kerala by Panda & Agarwal (2005), employed women are less

likely to encounter domestic abuse than unemployed ones. Another study by Thomson et al. (2015) reveals that women who make more money than their spouses are more likely to face violence. In NE, working women face more spousal violence (32 percent) compared to non-working women (23 percent). Manipur, one of the top five states in female WPR, reported around

49 percent spousal violence against working women, whereas 33.0 percent of non-working women said the same in 2019-21 (Table 1).

Compared to women who are currently married, women who are separated or divorced are more likely to experience domestic violence. Women's separation or divorce may be a reaction to their spouses' potentially fatal maltreatment. In India, divorce or separation occurs in circumstances of severe or life-threatening violence, but women are more likely to stay married because of socio-cultural norms (Sabri et al., 2016). In NE, the experience of spousal violence is slightly higher among formerly married women than current married women in NFHS-5, but it is insignificant for Manipur.

The media exposure impacts the occurrence of domestic violence both in positive and negative ways. The introduction of cable television is associated with significant decreases in the reported acceptability of domestic violence toward women and son preference, as well as increases in women's autonomy and decreases in fertility (Jensen & Oster, 2009). But, another study conducted in Indonesian villages found that watching television substitutes for time spent on social and household activities. Spending time watching TV could lead to more domestic violence (Olken, 2009). In NFHS-5, those women who had watched TV at least once a week reported the lowest experience of spousal violence, which accounted for 36 and 26 percent, respectively, for Manipur and NE.

Household characteristics, such as the number of living children, residence type (rural or urban) and economic status, play an important role in attributing the variation of spousal violence among married women.

Spousal violence increases with having more children (Das & Roy, 2020). A study (Sabri et al., 2014) based on NFHS-3 revealed that severe physical domestic violence in India increases by 11–12 percent for every additional child in the family. In families with low income, adding children creates additional problems for the family, leading to physical domestic violence (Sabri et al., 2014). In NE, the experience of spousal violence increased from 19 percent for no children to 28 percent for five or more children in NFHS-5. Rural women (27 percent) are more experienced in spousal violence than urban women (22 percent). The wealth index in NFHS measures the living standards of households. The Index is constructed based on the number and kinds of consumer goods households own, housing characteristics and enjoying basic provisions. Married women in the poorest (32 percent) and poorer families (27 percent) in the NE face higher domestic violence by their husbands/partners than middle-class (21 percent) and wealthy families (18 percent).

Spousal violence declines with the husband's level of education increases. Educated man value and respect their partner more. Higher education of husbands increases the wife's empowerment and autonomy and allows them to provide information for home decision-making (Doku & Asante, 2015). Experience of spousal violence in NE ranges from 17 percent of women with higher education of husband to 31 percent of women with no education of husband in NFHS-5.

Women whose husbands do heavy physical labour are more likely to have lifetime domestic violence (Ames et al., 2013). Men engaged in heavy manual labour prefer using a simple and arbitrary method to

resolve family conflicts than those who perform mental work (Cunradi et al., 2009). Negative emotions caused by job burnout may be brought to the home, including irritability and failure to care about their wives, resulting in the occurrence of domestic violence (Ames et al., 2013). The same pattern is observed in NE- husbands engaged in skilled and unskilled manual work (32 percent) and farming (28 percent) commit more spousal violence than husbands in tertiary or service sectors. In Manipur, around half of the married women (50.5 percent) whose husbands worked in skilled and unskilled manual work reported spousal violence, followed by 40 percent of women with husbands engaged in agriculture. Whereas 24 and 35 percent of the married women whose husbands worked respectively in sales and professional/technical/managerial/ clerical work experienced spousal violence in 2019-21.

Drinking alcohol impacts cognitive and physical functioning, lowering self-control and making people less able to negotiate a non-violent resolution to disagreements in relationships (Zawacki et al., 2005). Alcohol consumption diminishes aggression inhibition and increases the chance of committing severe domestic violence (Johnson, 2001), and many wives are killed by their husbands during drunken outbursts (Vindhya, 2000). In India, the husband's drinking alcohol is a major cause of domestic conflict (Kamat et al., 2010). The NE Indian states are not an exception. Alcohol addiction of husbands is a significant factor for spousal violence in NE. Over one-third, 37 percent, of ever-married women reported that their husbands committed violence (especially physical violence) after drinking alcohol. It is conspicuous in Manipur;

around half (51 percent) of the ever-married women in Manipur reported spousal violence related to alcohol addiction.

NE India is a large habitat of indigenous people of Mongoloid race. A substantial proportion, 28 percent of the total NE population, belongs to Scheduled Tribes (STs). Out of eight sister states, four, namely Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh, are the STs majority states. Spousal violence is witnessed lowest among STs (22 percent), followed by Scheduled Castes (SCs) and highest among non-SC/ST/OBC. There is also a significant variation in spousal violence in terms of religious belief in NE. Married women in the Muslim community reported the highest, 37 percent, marital violence, followed by Hindu (29 percent) and Christian (21 percent).

Factors Affecting Spousal Violence

Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) in Table 2 shows the likelihood of spousal violence explained by the factors related to women, households, husbands of women, and socio-cultural characteristics, and it depicts the controlled relationship between the response variable and a predictor. Model I for the NE region predicts that the likelihood of spousal violence is higher in younger age groups. The probability of spousal violence for women aged 30-39 is 1.18 times higher than for women aged 40-49 at a five percent level of significance. Younger women are less likely to comprehend the complexities of domestic violence in relationships, such as the range and seriousness of behaviour that may predispose them to domestic violence, than older women (Cohen & Maclean, 2002; Macouly, 1999). Moreover, young women lack life experience and knowledge of coping mechanisms for family issues (Owusu & Agbemafle, 2016).

By comparing women with no schooling, 8 to 9 years and 12 or more years of schooling are less likely ($OR=0.816$ and 0.536 , respectively) to be victimised by spousal violence. Compared with working women, non-working women are around 40 and 44 percent less likely to experience spousal violence, respectively, in models I and II. In a society where men are regarded as primary breadwinners, women are homemakers. When women get employed outside their husbands' homes, especially in societies with deeply rooted patriarchal norms, this can be seen as challenging the husband's status and power within the relationship (Kimmel, 2002). The marital status of women is a significant predictor for NE but is not for Manipur. Compared to formerly married women, currently married women are 20 percent less likely ($OR=0.798$) to experience domestic violence. Spousal violence may continue even after the termination of the marriage. As a form of maintaining dominance, former spouses may continue to exert control, harass, or even stalk their ex-partners, leading to violence, especially if the abuser cannot accept the end of the relationship (Stark, 2007). Women who don't watch TV or watch less than once a week in Manipur are more likely ($OR=1.788$ and 1.790 , respectively) to report violence than women who watch at least once a week.

Among the household characteristics, the number of children is a significant predictor

in model II for Manipur. Women with no children are less likely to face spousal violence than five or more children. The log of odd is -0.975 for women having no children in Manipur. Having more children increases household financial stress, leading to conflicts between spouses (Leonardsson & Sebastian, 2017; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Women in middle-class ($OR=0.796$) and rich families ($OR=0.888$) are less likely to experience spousal violence compared to the poorest married women. Poverty may create mental pressure on the husband, who is eventually forced out with anger and depression, leading to conflict between the spouses (Das & Roy, 2020).

Husband's characteristics, such as occupation and habit of alcohol consumption, are strong predictors for spousal violence in both NE India and Manipur. Those women whose husbands engaged in services of household and domestic work in NE are 15 percent less likely to experience spousal violence compared to women whose husbands work in agriculture. In Manipur, women with husbands in skilled and unskilled manual work are 1.502 times more likely to experience spousal violence. Manual workers face various problems, such as low wages, job insecurity, job-related stress and fatigue. Substance abuse is very high in manual labourers.

Table 2 Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) Model: Influencing Factors for Spousal Violence against Women aged 18-49 in NFHS-5, 2019-21

Response Variable: any spousal (physical, sexual, or emotional violence) violence: No-0 and Yes-1						
Background Characters	Model-I: NE Region			Model-II: Manipur		
	β	OR	<i>p-value</i>	β	OR	<i>p-value</i>
A. WOMEN'S CHARACTERISTICS						
1. Age						
18-24	0.026	1.026	0.810	-0.021	0.980	0.949
25-29	0.046	1.047	0.601	0.314	1.369	0.252
30-39	0.167	1.182	0.015**	-0.074	0.929	0.719
40-49 @						
2. Years of Schooling						
No Schooling@						

< 7 years	-0.121	0.886	0.150	-0.209	0.812	0.512
8-9 years	-0.203	0.816	0.031**	-0.316	0.729	0.324
10-11 years	-0.163	0.850	0.147	-0.021	0.980	0.954
≥ 12 years	-0.624	0.536	0.000***	-0.609	0.544	0.080*
3. Respondent Occupation						
Not Working	-0.511	0.600	0.000***	-0.588	0.556	0.001**
Working ®						
4. Marital status						
Currently Married	-0.225	0.798	0.043**	-0.354	0.702	0.300
Formerly Married ®						
5. Media Exposure: Watching TV						
Not at all	-0.020	0.980	0.783	0.580	1.786	0.017**
Less than once a week	0.115	1.122	0.097*	0.582	1.790	0.002**
At least once a week ®						
B. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS						
6. Number of Living Children						
No children (0)	-0.223	0.800	0.169	-0.975	0.377	0.031**
1 - 2	0.035	1.036	0.762	-0.507	0.602	0.138
3 - 4	0.127	1.136	0.263	-0.381	0.683	0.237
≥ 5 ®						
7. Type of Residence						
Urban	0.091	1.095	0.285	-0.127	0.881	0.542
Rural ®						
8. Wealth Index						
Poorest ®						
Poorer	-0.075	0.928	0.291	0.352	1.422	0.139
Middle	-0.229	0.796	0.013**	0.370	1.448	0.185
Rich	-0.119	0.888	0.315	0.353	1.423	0.306
C. HUSBAND'S CHARACTERISTICS						
9. Education						
No Education ®						
Primary	0.135	1.145	0.157	-0.249	0.780	0.538
Secondary	0.043	1.044	0.629	0.059	1.061	0.872
Higher	-0.129	0.879	0.378	0.162	1.176	0.527
10. Occupation						
Professional/ Technical/ Managerial	0.067	1.070	0.579	0.198	1.220	0.590
Sales	-0.142	0.867	0.180	-0.495	0.609	0.180
Services/ Household and Domestic Agriculture®	-0.180	0.835	0.083*	0.375	1.456	0.267
Skilled and unskilled manual	0.116	1.124	0.104	0.406	1.502	0.060*
Other	-0.167	0.846	0.142	0.459	1.589	0.123
11. Alcohol Consumption						
Yes	0.980	2.664	0.000***	0.681	1.975	0.000***
No ®						
D. SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS						
12. Caste/Tribe						
SC	0.155	1.167	0.147	0.090	1.094	0.919
ST ®						
OBC	0.144	1.155	0.116	0.429	1.535	0.628
Others	0.017	1.017	0.877	0.230	1.259	0.789
13. Religion						
Hindu ®						
Muslim	1.138	3.119	0.000***	-0.629	0.533	0.145
Christian	-0.015	0.985	0.882	-0.323	0.724	0.704
Other	-0.235	0.791	0.037**	-0.261	0.770	0.346
E. INFRASTRUCTURE AND POLICY						
14. State						
Sikkim	-0.750	0.472	0.000***			
Arunachal Pradesh	-0.210	0.810	0.035**			
Nagaland	-1.187	0.305	0.000***			
Manipur	0.455	1.576	0.000***			
Mizoram	-1.130	0.323	0.000***			
Tripura	-0.310	0.733	0.003**			
Meghalaya	-0.620	0.538	0.000***			
Assam ®						
n-	8,201			711		

Note: OR- Odd Ratio/ Exp(β); ® - indicates reference category; * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1% level of significance respectively.

Source: Computed from unit-level data of NFHS-5, 2019-20 by DHS, 2021

Because of these reasons, the rate of spousal conflict is very high. Women whose husbands drink alcohol are 72.7 and 66.3 percent more likely to face spousal violence compared with non-alcoholic husbands in NE and Manipur, respectively. This result is similar to the findings of other previous studies by Abramsky, 2011 and Foran & O'Leary, 2008. Religious belief is a significant predictor in NE India, but it is not for Manipur. Muslim women in NE India are more prone ($OR=3.119$) to be victimised of domestic violence by husbands or partners than Hindu women. By comparing with Hindu women, women in other religions, excluding Muslim and Christian, are less likely ($OR=0.791$) to face spousal violence in NE India.

NE states are heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, culture, and other demographic compositions. There are around 220 ethnic communities in NE. They have distinct cultures and languages and occupy roughly defined territories. Ethnic conflict in NE dates back to colonial times. State governance, policies and institutional structures have been influenced by the ethnic issues, insurgency and AFSPA of 1985 (Upadhyay, 2006). Much time and money are wasted on security and peace restoration, resulting in less prioritising social sector measures. However, the state's strong policies and programmes can reduce domestic violence against women. In model I, all the NE states, except Manipur, are less likely to report spousal violence than Assam. Women in Manipur are 1.576 times more likely to encounter spousal violence than in Assam.

Discussion

Highly predictive determinants for spousal violence against ever-married women aged 18-49 include husband's characteristics, such

as alcohol consumption and occupation, and women's characteristics, like occupation and education. Drug and alcohol addiction are common problems in NE states. Being a frontier region close to the Golden Triangle, drug trafficking is a chronic issue, and one of the outsources of the insurgency economy in NE (Upadhyay, 2006). Moreover, brewing liquor is a traditional practice among the many tribal and non-tribal communities in NE. On the one hand, traditional practices as a part of food habits and culture, on the other hand, reduce the social problem and gender well-being- is a tough trade-off between the two from the policy perspective.

NE states do not have a concerted policy against alcohol and drugs. Only in Mizoram and Nagaland have strictly prohibited alcohol by law. The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act of 2019 was passed unanimously in the state assembly, replacing the four-year-old Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act of 2014. Nagaland has been a dry state since 1989, banning the trade and consumption of alcohol under the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act (NLTP). Manipur is the highest-ranked state in NE, followed by Assam, and they ranked third and seventh, respectively, among Indian States/UTs in terms of spousal violence in NFHS-5. Till now, Assam has no specific plan for the alcohol prohibition act. Manipur enacted the Manipur Liquor Prohibition Act of 1991, which had been practised for over three decades. On 20 September 2022, the Manipur government announced a partial lift of the ban on liquor from all district headquarters, tourist areas, hotels with more than 20 bedrooms, Imphal city, and establishments and camps of security forces in the state. When Manipur is already suffering a higher level of domestic violence, revoking the alcohol prohibition will place the women in

a more precarious situation, which will be taught to manage on the policy front. Moreover, Manipur has been shattered both psychologically and physically; the law and governance are an utter concern after the ethnic conflict burst on 3rd May 2023. The government's priority is different rather than dealing with social issues like domestic violence.

Women's work participation rate in NE is comparatively higher. On average, 34 percent of women in eight sister states were engaged in work in the 2011 Census. It is also noticeable that females in NE are more active in work than males. Instead of actively participating in work at large and doing hard, working women in NE face more spousal violence. When the working status is considered a reliable measure of women's empowerment and well-being, it provides a delusive perception in the NE context considering spousal violence. It evokes the question- whether the higher female work participation in NE is by choice or compulsion.

Women's education, especially the level of education, plays a significant role in domestic violence (Ackerson et al., 2008). Females in higher education in NE states are conspicuously low, though women's participation in higher education is a concern all over India. In the 2011 census, nearly 74 percent of women in NE reported an education level below matric/secondary level, whereas all India averages 68.6 percent. On the contrary, a quarter of women reported their education level as matric/secondary and above, of which around 6.0 percent was in graduation and above. At all Indian levels, nearly 30 percent of women reported secondary and above education level, and graduate and above was only 8.0 percent in 2011. Only in Manipur in

NE, women's participation in higher education is outstanding- around 10.4 percent of women graduated and above, and nearly 38.4 percent were secondary and above. But Manipur recorded a higher level of domestic violence. This contrast finding needs to be investigated through in-depth studies of different socio-cultural aspects like ethnicity, caste/tribe, valley-hilly divides, etc.

Conclusion

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) of 2005, which came into effect in 2006, is one of the civil legal protections in India to safeguard women from domestic violence. Still, a substantial proportion of married women face physical, emotional, and sexual violence. The state-specific scenario has widely varied. The spousal violence in NE has improved, but around a quarter of women still have to face the same. In Manipur and Assam, the violence against women has been witnessed persistently high in successive rounds of NFHS.

The husband's characteristics are very crucial for spousal violence in NE. The alcohol consumption of the husband is the most significant predictor of spousal violence. Being a frontier region and very close to the Golden Triangle, drug trafficking, largely opium cultivation and illegal trade, is a chronic issue and outsourcing of the terrorist activities and ethnic conflict in NE. Only Mizoram and Nagaland strictly prohibit alcohol by law. Manipur, suffering a higher level of domestic violence, partially revoked the alcohol prohibition recently. All the NE states will have to push a concerted policy against alcohol and drugs. Domestic violence against working women in NE is conspicuous. Governments can take

measures for women's safety in the work and domestic space to check the higher propensity of violence against women. State-wise development and policies significantly differ in NE states, partially due to often being disturbed by ethnopolitical issues, and the government's high priority is to restore law and governance, while social issues, like domestic violence, are gravely neglected. More attention to social problems is of utmost time demand.

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