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Prevalence of Spousal Violence against Women: Insights from the Seven Sister States of India

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Abstract

The Seven Sister States (SSS) of India, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura, are dominated by tribal cultures; however, women are vulnerable to violence. The present study aims to focus on the current scenario of Spousal Violence (SV) against ever-married women in the SSS and their major influencing factors using the fifth National Family Health Survey dataset. Quantitative techniques, like the Composite Index and qualitative analysis, such as chi-square tests and binary logistic regression, have been executed in this work. Results revealed that SV is relatively high in Arunachal Pradesh, followed by Assam and Tripura, whereas Nagaland and Mizoram record relatively low. Women's education, working status, mass media exposure, and their husband's drinking habits and education have a significant association with different forms of SV. The study's findings will help consider the responsible factors in the problematic states and implement proper policies or schemes. Moreover, it will help to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Five by identifying and eliminating SV against women.

Keywords

Binary Logistic Regression, India, Spousal Violence, Sustainable Development Goal and Violence against women

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Introduction

The issue of violence against women (VAW) is always a hindrance to women's empowerment, whereas sexual violence is a significant public health problem and a violation of women's human rights (World Health Organization, 2024). Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls globally by 2030 is the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 5 (United Nations, 2022). Unfortunately, different forms of VAW are endemic worldwide (World Health Organization, 2001; Medie, 2019). The physical, sexual, and emotional violence from any family member by another is domestic violence (DV), whereas intimate partner violence (IPV) is concerned with violence from intimate partners or husbands (Patra et al., 2018; Cunradi, 2010). Likewise, Spousal Violence (SV) means women who have experienced any of the specified acts of physical, sexual, and emotional violence (Figure 1) by their current husband or their most recent husband, ever and in the 12 months preceding the NFHS survey (NFHS-4, 2017). Every 1 in 3 (30 percent) women all over the world have to face physical and/or sexual IPV and sometimes non-partner violence (World Health Organization, 2024), where more than 1 in 4 women above 15 years of age (641 million) have been subjected to IPV at least one in their lifetime (United Nations, 2022). Besides, every one in three women has to face SV (Krishnamoorthy, et al., 2020). In the country, 30 percent of women have experienced physical spousal violence (PSV) since 15 years of age, 6 percent have ever experienced sexual spousal violence (SSV) in their lifetime, and 3 percent of ever-pregnant women have experienced PSV during any pregnancy, whereas 31.9 percent of ever-married women experienced PSV, SSV or

emotional spousal violence (ESV) by their current or most recent husband in the past 12 months (NFHS-5, 2021). The issue of VAW is quite severe, which brings many difficulties (Zellerer, 1996). It has an impact on women's health (Pandey et al., 2009a), as violence may occur physically due to violent behaviors like hitting, kicking, or beating (Jeyaseelan et al., 2007). Various forms of spousal VAW have not only an impact on women's physical, mental, and sexual health (Paranjape et al., 2006) but also adversely affect pregnancy outcomes and reproductive health of women in India (Bramhankar & Reshmi, 2021), even to fetal and infant deaths. Inevitably, women are more exposed to violence than men inside their houses (Abashidze & Goncharenko, 2022). It is a severe issue in any patriarchal society, including a developing country like India, where women have to face maltreatment for ages (Sharma & Gupta, 2004; Kaur & Garg, 2008; Palermo et al., 2014). Besides, in most Indian societies, male children are preferred because they are more likely to benefit the parents. Male superiority is entrenched to such an extent that in most societies, men are supposed to control the lives of their wives, including physical punishment (Martin et al., 2002). In the northeastern states of India, which is also known as the Seven Sister States (SSS), women are more vulnerable to several aspects of violence and gender biases (Swami, 2021a). There is also a gender gap in school enrolment rate, age of average marriage, gender parity index, nutrition, work participation, infant mortality, and unemployment in these states (Shome & Das, 2020). The SSS of India, ethnically, linguistically, and socio-culturally, is very diverse from the other states of India (Das et al., 2015). Thus, it is essential for social policy-making and providing women with a healthy and dignified mental life.

Additionally, the research questions are: What is the present scenario of SV in the SSS, and which factors impact it more? Accordingly, the forms of SV ever faced by

reproductive women from their husbands in the SSS of India and their association with different background variables have been taken into consideration in this study.

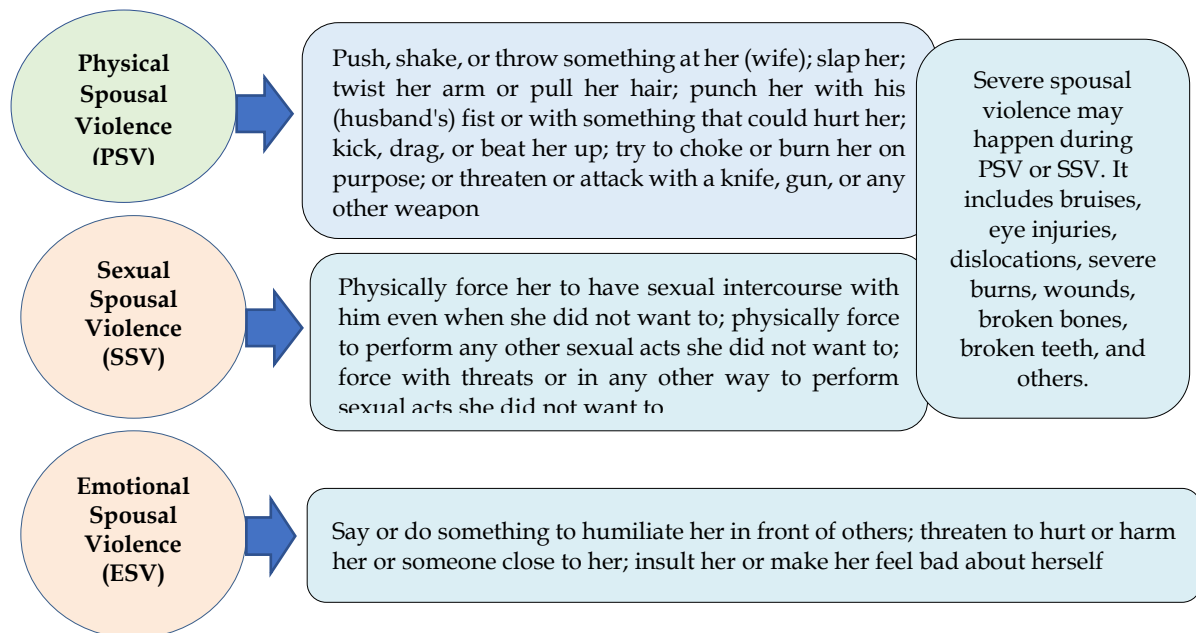


Figure 1 Concepts of physical, sexual, emotional, and severe spousal violence according to NFHS (NFHS-5, 2021)

In the literature, several attempts have been made to enlighten people about various aspects of VAW in India and abroad. Considerable literature exists on different dimensions of DV against women worldwide (Guedes et al., 2016; Jewkes et al., 2017; Lövestad et al., 2017; Leite et al., 2022; Adjah & Agbemafla, 2016; Tanimu et al., 2016; Dabaghi et al., 2023). Thompson and Erez (1994) found that among the tribal cultures of Sierra Leone, polygamous civilizations may take on different forms of physical abuse other than beatings. A previous study recognized that physical violence varies according to women's state, age, religion, caste, education, and monthly family income (Babu & Kar, 2009). Substantial works have also been undertaken on various aspects of DV against women in India (Purkayastha et al., 2003; Kavitha, 2012; Martin et al., 2002; Chowdhury & Chakraborty, 2017).

Haobijam & Singh (2022) found that Manipur has the highest and Sikkim has the lowest percentage of DV ever experienced by ever-married women of 15 to 49 years among all the states of India. Another research found the prevalence and issues of various forms of DV against women from the eastern zone of India, considering Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, and Jharkhand (Babu & Kar, 2009). However, it is also prevalent among married rural women in South India (George et al., 2016). Singh et al. (2017) investigated the most noticeable types of VAW in North India.

Indian modernization has the wide-ranging effect of increasing the prevalence and severity of wife-beating and crimes against women, whereas lower-class people particularly suffer (Bowker, 1985). Scholars have noted the effects of gender disparity and empowerment on the likelihood of help-seeking for IPV, where acquiring help-

seeking behavior is a crucial step for healing a major traumatic event (Hayes & Franklin, 2017). Apart from that, there are also instances of harassment by their husband, like some partners forcing their wives to have sex with others (Decker et al., 2013). It is also truly found that some female teenagers are the victim of rape owed to low self-esteem and a negative attitude toward sex (Shin, 2011). Morash & Bui (2008) focus on IPV against women, which has a wide range of mental and physical side effects like headaches, memory and sleep issues, appetite loss, sadness, depression, stress, anxiety, dizziness, elevated blood pressure, and suicidal thoughts and attempts. Justifiably, Uthman et al. (2009) appraised that improved wealth, education, urbanization, access to media, joint decision-making by women and husbands, etc., can decrease IPV against women.

Pieces of literature also specifically studied SV. Ahmad et al. (2021) attempted to explain the experience of SV using a social-ecological framework by obtaining data from the National Family Health Survey 2015 to 2016 (NFHS-4). Spousal violence (SV) is an obstacle to empowerment, mobility, and education among young women aged 17 to 22 in India (Nieder et al., 2019). Gul (2015) investigates the role of women's empowerment in the VAW in Jammu and Kashmir, whereas Srivastava & Kumar (2018) studied this aspect in northern and southern India. Rahaman et al. (2022) found polygamous marriages to be the factor in SV against women in India, which is more profound among Muslims compared to Hindus. Gupta & Yesudian (2006) identified that northern and northeast parts of India have relatively better statuses of women with household autonomy but relatively low. Hence, the present research is essential for comprehensively revealing a region-specific

freedom of movement. There are positive and negative aspects of women's status in the northeast region (Singh et al., 2020). Moreover, the SSS has some confines regarding poverty, lack of collaboration between the public and private sectors, deficiency of grassroots-level planning, and their proper implementation (Sivaramakrishnan et al., 2016).

From the above-mentioned literature survey, the present study identified the specific research gaps. Firstly, VAW has been widely studied concerning DV, SV, PV, and even IPV, but very few focus on SV. Secondly, some studies attempted to region-specific different kinds of VAW in India, mainly focusing on the northern, southern, and eastern parts of India. Notably, very few studies have been conducted in SSS, India. This part of the country carries a distinct background. However, one study endeavored to determine the determinants of VAW in northeast India, but it considered DV (Haobijam & Singh, 2022), not SV. Thirdly, very few studies have attempted to analyze the scenario of SV, including investigating significant factors. Moreover, very few attempts have been made to find the role of women's empowerment in the VAW (Gul, 2015; Srivastava & Kumar, 2018). Thus, considering the literature gaps and the compulsion of further research, the main objectives have been designed as follows:

- i. To recognize the prevalence of overall spousal violence against married women in the SSS of India and
- ii. To comprehend the association between the forms of SV and different influencing factors in India's SSS.

analysis and understanding substantial facts and findings behind the situation. It is an

extension of violence-related scholarly work that can contribute to the existing literature and our knowledge. Furthermore, the study will add some new facts and findings regarding this particular issue and help guide the planners, policymakers, and the government to adopt and implement proper policies for the SSS of India and nurture women's awareness and empowerment, considering the responsible factors in the problematic states. Most significantly, the study can help to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Five by eliminating SV against women.

Materials and Methods

Selection of the Study Area

The study has been accomplished in the SSS of India, representing a unique socio-cultural background. These states are part of the northward migrating 'Deccan Peninsula,' known as 'Seven Sister States,' covering 7 percent of India's total geographical area (Sivaramakrishnan et al., 2016). The SSS includes Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland,

and Tripura (Figure 2). These isolated states are connected to India by a small passage and are enclosed by Bhutan, China, Bangladesh, and Burma. People of this disconnected region with fewer infrastructural facilities are socio-economically deprived (Konwar, 2015). The people have a diverse quality of life, mainly based on primary economic activities such as house-making, small-scale businesses, etc. (Singh et al., 2020).

Though tribal communities are most predominant in this region, these states also exhibit distinct ethnic groups belonging to diverse socio-cultural traditions. Moreover, the states experience aggravated political instability due to inter-ethnic rivalries (Behal, 2004). Some Tribes like Bodo-Santhal, Bodo-Karbis, Kuki-Naga, Kuki-Paites, Tamil-Kukis from Arunachal Pradesh, Hmars in Mizoram, the tribal and non-tribal population from Tripura, etc. are in most unrest situation (Swami, 2021b). Furthermore, tribal women are economically empowered and hold superior positions.

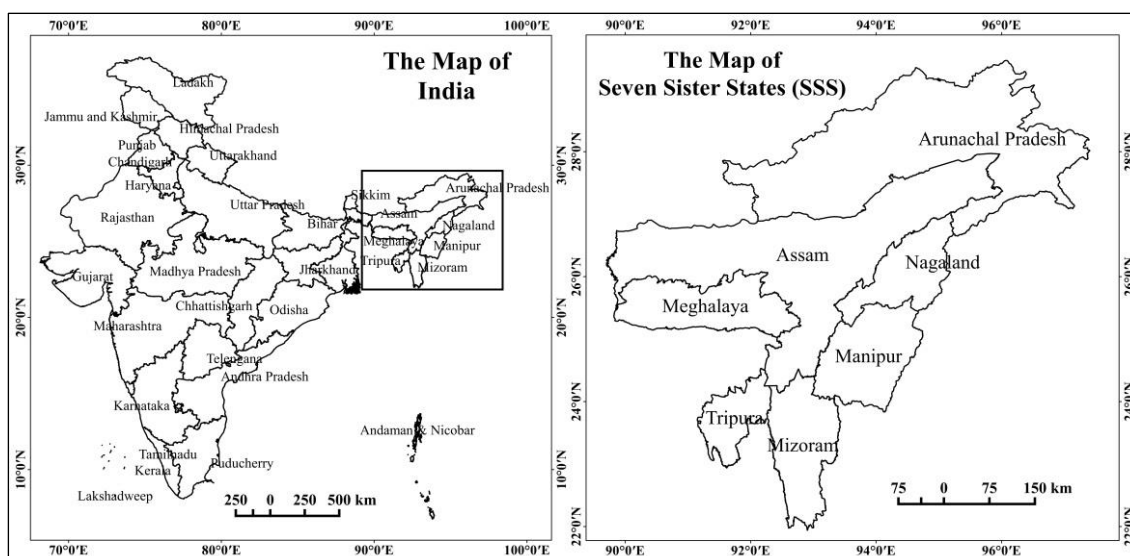


Figure 2 Location map of the study area

Besides, dowry practices are not prevalent in this region (Behal, 2004). Besides, this region

also has both matrilineal (Garo, Jaintia, and Khasi tribes) and patrilineal (Mishing, Bodo,

Kuki, and Bhutia tribes) societies where in matrilineal societies, women are considered the head of the family, and daughters are the successors of their family name and inherit property (Mal & Saikia 2024). Surprisingly, the cases of VAW have increased in these states (Behal, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial to study the prevalence of different forms of SV and their association with different socioeconomic characters in SSS exhibiting a diverse background.

Database, sample size, and sampling technique

The fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) dataset has been used in this study, obtained from the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) Program (<http://dhsprogram.com>) after granting permission from the DHS data center. The International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) of Mumbai conducted the NFHS-5 survey covering 707 districts, 28 states, and eight union territories using a two-stage stratified sampling technique. It uses the Census of India (2011) as the sampling frame (IIPS and ICF, 2021). In this study, 8810 ever-married women of 18 to 49 years of SSS are the sample population. However, the work utilized the NFHS-5 pdf file to attain the percentage data regarding different SV forms and execute the quantitative techniques and the individual recode (IR) file to perform the non-parametric or the qualitative statistical analyses, respectively.

Techniques for Data Analysis and Representation

Quantitative techniques (*using NFHS-5 pdf file percentage data*)

• **Composite Index**

The study analyses the present status of SV against ever-married women in SSS with a composite index, which is the average of composite scores of the Physical Spousal Violence Index (PSVI), Sexual Spousal Violence Index (SSVI), and Emotional Spousal Violence Index (ESVI). These three indices have several variables separately (Table 1) based on the NFHS-5 report. The composite Index method has been prepared based on the calculation of the Human Development Index, which was previously used by several studies (Baru, 1998; Biswas & Banu, 2022; Trivedy & Khatun, 2023a, 2023b, 2024)

$$Dimension\ index(DI_{X_i}) = \frac{(X_i - Min_i)}{(Max_i - Min_i)} \dots\dots\dots (i)$$

Where X_i is the normalized value of the i th variable for X^{th} State of the index.

$$Composite\ Index\ (CI) = \left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n DI_i}{n} \right] \dots\dots\dots (ii)$$

$$Total\ Spousal\ Violence\ Index\ (TSVI) = \frac{PVI + SVI + EVI}{3} \dots\dots\dots (iii)$$

• **Chi-square test**

The chi-square test has been incorporated to understand whether there is a relation between the dependent/ outcome variable, i.e., the prevalence of any form of spousal violence, and the individual, household, and community levels independent or predictor variable. The individual-level variables are the women's age, education, working status, exposure to media (reading newspapers/magazines, watching television, having a mobile phone, using the internet), and the marital status of the women

Qualitative techniques (using individual recode file categorical data)

Table 1 Different types of variables under the sub-indicators of spousal violence experienced by ever-married women (18-49) from their current husband (in percentage)

Main Indicator	Sub-indicators	No.	Variables
Total Spousal Violence Index (TSVI)	Physical Spousal Violence Index (PSVI)	X1	Any form of physical violence
		X2	Ever pushed her, shook her, or threw something at her
		X3	Twisted her arm or pulled her hair
		X4	Slapped her
		X5	Punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her
		X6	Kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up
		X7	Tried to choke her or burn her on purpose
		X8	Threatened her or attacked her with a knife, gun, or any other weapon
		X9	Any form of sexual violence
		X10	Physically forced her to have sexual intercourse with him even when she did not want to
		X11	Physically forced her to perform any sexual acts she did not want to
		X12	Forced her with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts she did not want to
		X13	Any form of emotional violence
		X14	Said or did something to humiliate her in front of others
		X15	Threatened to hurt or harm her or someone close to her
		X16	Insulted her or made her feel bad about herself

Note: Husband refers to the current husband for currently married women and the most recent husband for widowed, divorced, separated, or deserted women

Source: (NFHS-5, 2021)

The household-level variables include the sex of the household head, husband's education, husband's alcohol consumption, number of living children, and wealth index, and the community-level variables comprise the place of residence, religion, and social group (caste) in the SSS of India. The categorical independent variables have been coded separately as "0", "1", "2" etc. Here, the dependent variables are any forms of physical, sexual, emotional, and severe violence, which are coded in a dichotomous form, i.e., "1" if ever experienced any form of violence, and coded "0" if never experienced any form of violence. Severe violence includes bruises, eye injuries, dislocations, severe burns, wounds, broken bones, broken teeth, and others.

- **Logistic regression**

Further, the Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) has been performed to observe the association between the forms of SV with the individual and other socioeconomic background variables, which are significant at 10 percent, 5 percent, and 1 percent levels in the chi-square test.

Software used

IBM SPSS 20 and Microsoft Excel have been utilized to perform the data analyses, and Quantum GIS software to show the spatial distribution mapping.

Results

Prevalence of spousal violence

Datasets represents that Meghalaya experienced the highest emotional (13.7 percent), and Manipur experienced the highest percentage of physical (38.5 percent) SV among the ever-married women aged 18-49 who have ever experienced various forms of SV committed by their husbands (Table 2). Remarkably, PSV is more profound than the other forms of SV in these states. Moreover, 41.6 percent of ever-married women reported experiencing ESV, PSV, or SSV in Manipur. Thus, among these states, Manipur represents worst in terms of physical; physical, or sexual; and emotional, physical,

or sexual SV (Figure 3). However, severe violence, i.e., injuries to women due to PSV or SSV, shows an exciting scenario (Table 3). The percentage of women who have had cuts, bruises, or aches due to physical or sexual SV is observed to be lesser in Manipur and greater in Mizoram (Table 3, Figure 4). Likewise, the percentage of women who have had eye injuries, sprains, dislocations, or minor burns due to PSV or SSV is found to be higher in Meghalaya. However, more than 20 percent of women have experienced any form of injuries due to PSV or SSV, except in Manipur. Thus, the state represents best among the other SSS in terms of severe violence to women due to PSV or SSV.

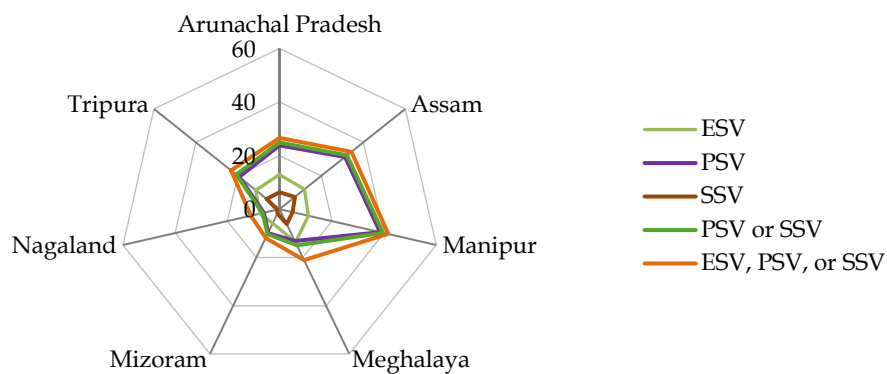


Figure 3 Radar diagram presenting the percentage of ever-married women aged 18–49 facing different forms of spousal violence committed by their husbands in SSS of India

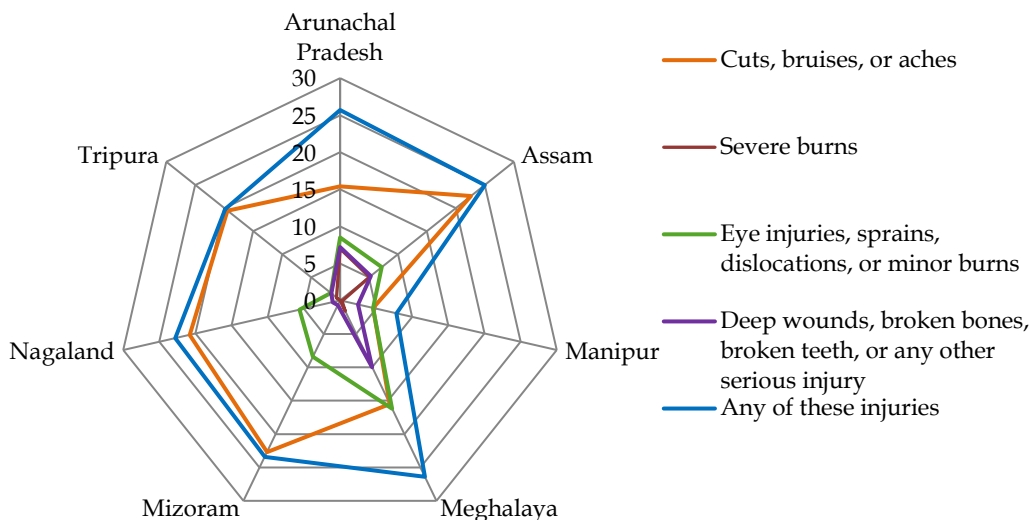


Figure 4 Radar diagram displaying the percentage of ever-married women aged 18–49 facing different forms of severe violence due to PSV or SSV

Results from the composite index denote that the PSVI value reveals that Arunachal Pradesh has the highest PSV among the different states, followed by Manipur and Assam (Table 4 and Figure 5). On the other hand, Assam has the highest SSV, followed by Arunachal Pradesh. Moreover,

Arunachal Pradesh has the highest ESV, followed by Meghalaya and Tripura. Hence, the SV is more profound in Arunachal Pradesh, followed by Assam and Tripura. Overall, Nagaland and Mizoram represent the lowest Total Spousal Violence Index (TSVI) among the SSS.

Table 2 Percentage of ever-married women aged 18–49 facing different types of spousal violence in SSS of India

State/UTs	PSV	SSV	ESV	PSV or SSV	ESV, PSV, or SSV
Arunachal Pradesh	23.8	6.3	12.9	24.9	26.6
Assam	31.3	7.3	11.8	32.2	34.3
Manipur	38.5	5	11	39.6	41.6
Meghalaya	13.2	6.2	13.7	15	21.1
Mizoram	9.9	1.9	5.9	10.3	11.9
Nagaland	6.1	0.9	7.6	6.5	11
Tripura	19.3	6.2	11.4	20.7	23.2
Mean	20.3	4.83	10.61	21.31	24.24
Standard Deviation	11.7	2.45	2.83	11.88	11.15

Table 3 Different forms of severe violence to women due to physical spousal violence (PSV) or sexual spousal violence (SSV)

NE States	Percentage of women (18-49) who have had:				
	Cuts, bruises, or aches	Severe burns	Eye injuries, sprains, dislocations, or minor burns	Deep wounds, broken bones, broken teeth, or any other serious injury	Any of these injuries
Arunachal Pradesh	15.4	7	8.5	7.2	25.7
Assam	22.6	5.1	7.2	5.3	25
Manipur	4.6	0.3	4.6	2.5	7.8
Meghalaya	15.5	1.6	16.2	10	26.4
Mizoram	22.7	0	8.4	0.7	23.4
Nagaland	20.8	0	5.6	1	22.8
Tripura	19.4	0.6	1.6	1.5	19.8

Table 4 Condition of Spousal Violence in the Seven Sister States of India based on the calculation of composite index

NE States	Sub-indexes							Overall Rank
	PSVI	Rank	SSVI	Rank	ESVI	Rank	TSVI*	
Arunachal Pradesh	0.813	1	0.899	2	0.802	1	0.838	1
Assam	0.754	3	0.904	1	0.599	4	0.752	2
Manipur	0.799	2	0.575	5	0.376	5	0.583	5
Meghalaya	0.252	5	0.747	3	0.78	2	0.593	4
Mizoram	0.198	6	0.111	6	0.030	7	0.113	6
Nagaland	0.008	7	0	7	0.188	6	0.065	7
Tripura	0.439	4	0.669	4	0.688	3	0.599	3

*More index value denotes more violence

Table 5 Chi-square test between some selected socioeconomic factors and different forms of Spousal Violence in SSS

Socioeconomic and demographic variables		Chi-square <i>p</i> Value			
		Any PSV	Any SSV	Any ESV	Any Severe
Individual-level variables	Age group	0.063*	0.076*	0.151	0.000***
	Education of women	0.060*	0.005***	0.000***	0.000***
	Women’s working status	0.012**	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	Reading newspaper/ magazine	0.093*	0.030**	0.098*	0.000***
	Watching television	0.000***	0.049**	0.000***	0.000***
	Have own mobile phone	0.477	0.038**	0.000***	0.000***
	Use of internet	0.001***	0.015**	0.000***	0.000***
Household-level variables	Marital status of the women	0.061*	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	Sex of household head	0.48	0.951	0.124	0.860
	Husband’s education	0.010***	0.001***	0.000***	0.000***
	Husband’s alcohol consumption	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
Community-level variables	Number of living children of women	0.000***	0.061*	0.019*	0.009***
	Wealth index	0.620	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	Place of residence	0.157	0.000*	0.000***	0.010**
	Religion	0.000***	0.000*	0.002***	0.002***
	Social groups (Caste)	0.000***	0.074*	0.000***	0.000***

p-value is significant at * 90 % confidence level, ** 95 % confidence level, and *** 99 % confidence level

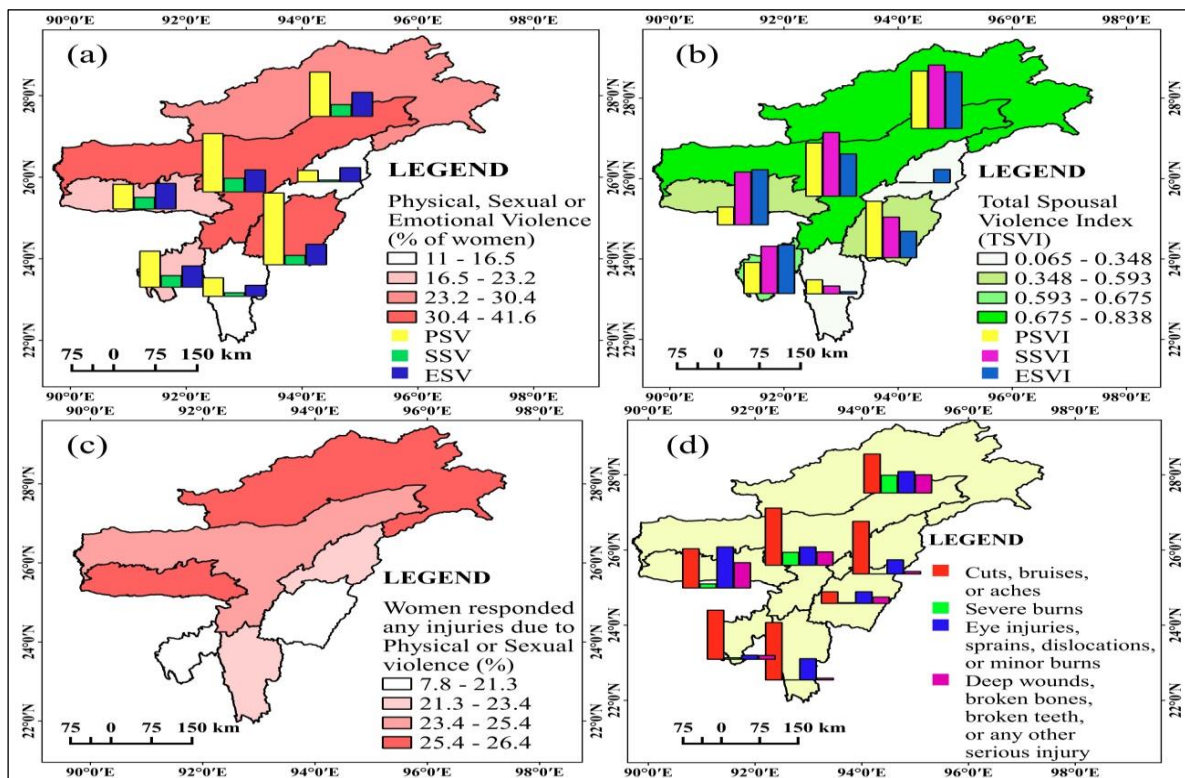


Figure 5 Spatial distribution of (a) Percentage of ever-married women aged 18–49 facing different types of spousal violence committed by their husband, and (b) Overall condition of spousal violence in the seven sister States, (c) Any forms of injuries due to PSV or SSV and (d) Different forms of injuries to women (%) due to PSV or SSV

Influencing factors

Results from the chi-square test (Table 5) reflect that most of the independent variables are significant at 10 percent, 5 percent, or 1 percent level, except for the variable regarding the sex of the household head. However, we perform the BLR analysis using all the variables from the chi-square test (Table 6).

Physical Spousal Violence (PSV)

The results from the BLR exhibit that women aged 30 to 49 years are relatively lower prone to PSV (OR=0.915) than those below 30. Higher education (OR=0.590) is related to less violence. Surprisingly, the working women who read newspapers or magazines and watched television (TV) are respectively 1.181 times, 1.292 times, and 1.744 times likely to have experienced any PSV. However, the women who use mobile phones (OR=1.033) are slightly facing more PSV, and those who use the internet denote a lower prevalence of any PSV (OR=0.864). The separated (OR=3.406) or divorced

(OR=2.242) women have ever experienced any PSV. On the other hand, female-headed households are related to less PSV (OR=0.626). The husband's higher education also reflects a lower prevalence of any PSV (OR=0.743). The drunkenness of the husband is revealing 2.139 times more likely to have experienced any PSV. Nevertheless, more children do not show less PSV. Rather, the wealth status of households has a negative association with this violence. The poorer, middle, more prosperous, and most affluent wealth index reflect 0.79 times, 0.629 times, 0.759 times, and 0.633 times the prevalence of any PSV compared to the poorest reference category. Besides, rural areas (OR=0.821) denote lower pervasiveness of any PSV. Religion and social groups or caste also reflect a noteworthy relation with this violence. Unfortunately, any PSV is observed highest in Muslim communities (OR=4.126) among the other religions and in Tribal communities (OR=2.383) under several social groups.

Table 6 Binary Logistic Regression Analysis between some selected socioeconomic factors and Prevalence of Various Forms of Spousal Violence (any PSV, SSV, ESV, and any severe violence) in SSS

Socioeconomic and demographic variables			Odds Ratio / OR			
			Any PSV	Any SSV	Any ESV	Any Severe
Individual-level variables	Age group	15-29				
		30-49	0.915	1.133	0.932	1.334**
	Education of women	Illiterate (ref)				
		Primary	0.957	1.084	0.867	0.809
		Secondary	0.773	1.12	0.922	0.739**
	Working status	Higher	0.590*	0.977	0.841	0.702
		No (ref)				
		Yes	1.181	2.019***	1.943***	1.893***
	Reading newspaper/magazine	No (ref)				
		Yes	1.295	0.937	1.071	0.832
	Watching television	No (ref)				
		Yes	1.744***	1.184	0.961	1.195
	Have own mobile phone	No (ref)				
		Yes	1.033	0.939	0.846*	0.804*
Use of internet	No (ref)					
	Yes	0.864	0.982*	0.905	0.962	
	Married (ref)					

	Marital status of the women	Widowed	0.794	0.504*	0.626*	0.605
		Divorced	2.424*	2.764***	4.164***	7.71***
		Separated	3.406***	3.197***	4.786***	5.176***
Household-level variables	Household head	Male (ref)				
		Female	0.626***	0.871	0.89	0.65***
	Husband's education	Illiterate (ref)				
		Primary	0.921	0.961	1.128	0.871
		Secondary	1.111	0.878	0.978	0.777*
	Husband's drinking nature	Higher	0.743	0.861	0.771	0.821
		No (ref)				
	Number of living children	Yes	2.139***	2.681***	2.304***	3.087***
		0 (ref)				
		1 to 2	1.182	0.95	1.051	1.033
3 to 4		1.724**	1.028	1.308**	1.255	
Wealth index	More than 4	1.693*	0.962	1.352*	1.197	
	Poorest (ref)					
	Poorer	0.79*	0.86	0.853	1.039	
	Middle	0.629***	0.638	0.78*	0.885	
	Richer	0.759	0.463	0.838	0.81	
Community-level variables	Place of residence	Richest	0.633	0.119	0.715	0.287**
		Urban (ref)				
	Religion	Rural	0.821	0.963	1.109	0.913
		Hindu (ref)				
	Social groups	Muslim	4.126***	2.613	2.989***	2.424***
		Christian	1.009	0.75	1.005	0.729**
		Buddhist / Neo-Buddhist	0.492***	0.577	0.865	0.872
		Others	0.778	0.664	1.327*	1.039
	Social groups	General (ref)				
		Scheduled Caste	1.824*	0.778	1.31	0.82
Scheduled Tribe		2.383***	0.54	0.97	0.797	
Other Backward Class		2.057**	0.756	1.114	0.709*	
Constant		0.089	0.017	0.064	0.049	
Cox & Snell R Square		0.077	0.029	0.048	0.046	
Nagelkerke R Square		0.119	0.088	0.100	0.129	
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test (Sig. value)		0.011	0.741	0.915	0.934	

* ref = reference category

p-value is significant at * 90 % confidence level, ** 95 % confidence level, and *** 99 % confidence level

Sexual Spousal Violence (SSV)

For the age group, the scenario is just the opposite, and for women's education, it is similar to PSV. Women in the 30 to 49 age group are 1.133 times, and women with higher education are 0.977 times more likely to have experienced any SSV. The working women and those who watched TV, respectively, were 2.019 times and 1.184 times more likely to have experienced any SSV. The women who read

newspapers/magazines (OR=0.937), have a mobile phone (OR=0.939), and use the internet (OR=0.982) experienced lower SSV, which is also found in the case of the female-headed households (OR=0.871), and having husband's higher education (OR=0.861). The separated (OR=3.197) or divorced (OR=2.764) women responded with a higher prevalence of any SSV. Husband's alcohol consumption is more likely to have a higher incidence of SSV (OR=2.681) and a significant association. More than four

children reflect a relatively low occurrence of SSV. Like the PSV, any SSV is lesser for the higher wealth index. It is insignificantly lower (OR=0.963) for rural areas than urban. Surprisingly, any SSV is also observed to be highest in Muslim communities (OR=2.613) among the other religions and in general castes under several social groups. The Scheduled Tribe (ST) women are likely to have experienced less dominance of any SSV (OR=0.54).

Emotional Spousal Violence (ESV)

In the case of ESV, the BLR analysis indicates that the prevalence of ESV is lower among those of higher age (OR=0.932) and education (OR=0.841). Results from the regression show that women working (OR=1.943) and reading newspapers/magazines (OR=1.071) are related to relatively higher ESV. On the other hand, Women who watch TV, have their mobile phones and use the internet have a lower prevalence of ESV. Moreover, the association of women's marital status with ESV reflects nearly the same scenario as the PSV and SSV. Female-headed households and higher education for husbands are associated with low ESV, such as PSV and SSV. Women with 1 to 2, 3 to 4, and more than four living children are respectively 1.051 times, 1.308 times, and 1.352 times likely to have experienced ESV. Thus, the more children there are, the more ESV there is. The husband's drinking habit and wealth index demonstrate a similar situation to ESV, as are PSV and SSV. This violence is relatively high in rural areas (OR=1.109). Like the scenario of the above-discussed SV forms, the Muslim communities (OR=2.989) among the other religions have a relatively higher prevalence of ESV. Besides, the ST category (OR=0.97) among different social

groups or castes have relatively lower experience of ESV.

Any Severe Violence

Women from the 30 to 49 years age group are 1.334 times more likely to have experienced any severe violence. Results from the regression show a similar association of women's education and working status with any severe violence as of other forms of SV mentioned above. On the other hand, watching TV, reading newspapers/magazines (OR=0.832), using mobile phones (OR=0.804), and using the internet (OR=0.962) are related to less severe violence. The association of this violence with marital status, sex of the household head, husband's education, and their drinking nature reflects the equivalent condition of the other forms of SV, i.e., PSV, SSV, and ESV. Besides, more living children reflect a higher experience of severe violence. The odds ratio for 1 to 2 children, 3 to 4 children, and more than four children are 1.033, 1.255, and 1.197, respectively. Furthermore, wealth status has a negative association with violence, i.e., the higher the wealth index, the lower the violence. The women from rural areas (OR=0.913) are less likely to experience this violence. Additionally, the Muslim, Christian, Buddhist / Neo-Buddhist, and Other religious communities are respectively 2.424 times, 0.729 times, 0.872 times, and 1.039 times more likely to have experienced severe violence as compared to Hindu. On the other side, from the social group or caste variable, the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Other Backward Class (OBC) are correspondingly 0.82 times, 0.797 times, and 0.709 times likely to have faced any severe violence as compared to general caste

Discussions

This work explores the present status of SV experienced by ever-married women in the SSS of India and its influencing factors. Collectively, the SV is more profound in Arunachal Pradesh, followed by Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Manipur, whereas Mizoram and Nagaland show the lowest spousal violence. The study found a variation in the SV condition among the SSS. Various personal and socio-cultural indicators are worked behind for the different positions of the states. The values from logistic regression elaborate on the significant impact of various socioeconomic variables. Higher education for women reflects a lower prevalence of any form of SV, and illiterate women have to face more spousal violence. As a supporting evidence against this findings, it can be said based on a previous study that educated girls could significantly protect themselves against IPV (Ackerson et al., 2008). Education is vital in empowering women (Gupta & Yesudian, 2006), and empowered women can protect themselves against violence. However, a preceding research observed that wives with higher education than their husbands were less likely to experience DV as compared to equally or low-educated spouses (Rapp et al., 2012). Similarly, a highly educated husband may resist being violent with his wife; the higher education of the husband reflects a lower presence of any form of SV. On the other hand, Firdaush & Das (2025) found that educated couples and the women who have decision-making supremacy are less likely to experience IPV in India.

Besides, unexpectedly, this study shows that employed women are more prone to SV in SSS. Employment are somehow related to economic autonomy of women which denote empowerment also. Thus, the

women who are professionally engaged with some work, have to prone less violence. But the scenario is different. Trivedy & Khatun (2025) also examined Arunachal Pradesh has an improved WE condition where the SV should be less. But, there SV is predominant. The nature of women's economic empowerment and IPV is complex (Stöckl et al., 2021). Generally, an empowered woman with decision-making power in the household is relatively free from IPV when the empowerment is based on their autonomy rather than their education and employment (Pathak, 2022). Economically independent women may have a lower tolerance for SV, and gender equity may unconsciously promote VAW (Bulte & Lensink, 2021). In the Indian context, electronic empowerment of women is more protective than economic empowerment to reduce the occurrence of women's violence, and policymakers should also pay attention to women's awareness against violence (Dalal et al., 2022). Electronic empowerment or digital empowerment generally means using the media through the internet. The present study also denotes that women's mass media exposure, especially the use of mobile phones and the internet, represents a lower pervasiveness of any form of SV. Moreover, improving the contextual aspects of women's empowerment is necessary to increase women's behavior against SV (Rowan et al., 2018). Ever-married women experienced SSV or any severe SV from their husbands more after 30 years of age. Romans et al. (2007) found that the younger age are more experienced different forms of SV in case of being divorced or separated, or single and having children in the household. In this context, the self-help groups (SHGs) are very crucial for enhancing woman's self-reliance

and autonomy (Nichols, 2021; Raghunathan et al., 2019) which will protest against SV.

Other factors at the household level show an exciting scenario. Women of male-headed households have to face more SV. It is quite natural that male-headed households have male dominance and have a higher probability of forcing the household's women. From the regression analysis, the women whose husbands drink alcohol are reflected twice more likely to face any PSV, SSV, and ESV; and thrice more likely to face any severe violence compared to the women whose husbands do not drink. Remarkably, alcohol consumption by husbands increased the violence against their wives. Drinking alcohol makes them lose control over their own and insist them to do harmful social practices. Some literature also explored the fact that partner's alcohol use is significantly associated with the various types of IPV against their wives (Wilson et al., 2020; Yaya & Ghose, 2019). Husband's drunkenness harms women, but the employment status of men and women or education difference did not affect violence (Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu et al., 2012; Begum et al., 2015). Generally, SV should be as lesser in front of children, but in this study, it is observed more in the case of more than three living children. It may be because couples struggle for personal space in the presence of their kids. Furthermore, the women from the poorest wealth index are more violence-prone, and those from the wealthiest wealth index are lower SV prone. Hence, it can be appraised that the evidence of SV or IPV may exceed in lower economic circumstances (Kebede et al., 2021; Larsen et al., 2021). Sometimes, hostile socioeconomic conditions enhance the inferiority complex and insecurity of men, which causes them to exhibit unusual behaviors and violence against their wives (Pandey et al., 2009b).

Except for the ESV, other acts of violence (PSV, SSV, severe) are likely to have less probability of occurring in rural areas. Women's employment is possibly higher in urban areas, creating an internal ego between couples and can initiate SV. Further, the study shows that Muslim communities are likely to experience more SV. According to Rahaman et al. (2022), SV is provoked by polygyny marriages, which is more insightful among Muslims compared to Hindus. However, it cannot always be said that only religion influences SV (Ellison et al., 2007). Any form of ESV and SSV is likely to experience more in the social groups of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) women. The SC women need special attention (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Tribal populated states are less violence-prone except PSV; thus, Mizoram and Nagaland have very low TSVI. Perhaps the cause is that women are more empowered in the tribal community than in other social groups. However, Mal & Saikia (2024) discovered that patrilineal tribal women were more empowered in their attitude to violence.

Cox & Snell R Square, Nagelkerke R Square, and Hosmer and Lemeshow Test (Sig. value) have been calculated to understand the fitness of the regression models. The regression with socioeconomic variables and any PSV shows a 0.077 Cox & Snell R Square value, which means the model reflects 7.7 % (0.077×100%) variability in the dependent variable. It recommends the model's low fitness. Besides, in the case of SSV, ESV, and any severe violence, the models explain only 2.9 %, 4.8 %, and 4.6 % of the variance in the dependent variable, signifying a fit. The Nagelkerke R Square values reflect a poor fit for PSV and SSV and a moderate fit for ESV and severe violence. If the Hosmer and Lemeshow Significance value is significant,

i.e., less than 0.05, then the model is considered a poor fit. Conversely, a non-significant Hosmer and Lemeshow significance value (more than 0.05) means the model fits well. In the present study, all the regression models are well-filled except any PSV. Thus, there is a variation in different model fitting tests. SV is a sensitive issue which can not be adequately explained with these selected variables. Capturing the complexities of women's mental health, qualities, and emotions also requires to understand the scenario of SV. It indicates further scope for in depth empirical study.

Role of the Government of India (GOI)

Domestic violence (DV) against women is a punishable offense by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) (Rahaman et al., 2021). After 1983, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 498A commenced the first legal provisions on marital violence in India for the husband or relative of the husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty (Abeyratne & Jain, 2020; Kimuna et al., 2013). After many debates, the PWDVA was finally passed in 2006 (Leonardsson & Sebastian, 2017). However, women are afraid of raising their voices or taking any legal steps against their husbands. The government of India (GOI) launched various programs for empowering women like the Swadhar Greh Scheme, Ujjawala Scheme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Pradhan Mantri Janani Suraksha Yojana, etc., and the Skill India Mission for ensuring economic independence of women (PIB Delhi, 2022a; PIB Delhi, 2022b). However, some government or non-government programs should be executed through different mass media like TV, radio, etc., to raise women's empowerment and

protect them against SV. Moreover, self-help groups (SHGs) significantly impact the status of rural women (Zaei et al., 2018). In this context, it can be explored in India's SSS. The GOI's resolute guidelines for developing and bridging the social and physical infrastructure gaps in the SSS (Press Information Bureau, 2017), but the socioeconomic and cultural constraints, including SV against women, should be considered, too. GOI launched the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) in 2007-08, aiming to generate awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco consumption (Government of India, 2024) and the GoI should take and implement effective policies to diminish the drinking alcohol as alcoholic nature of husband is an essential factor against SV. Also, forensic departments should take action on the investigations of evidence of sexual violence (Miranda & Maras, 2017). Additionally, Police authority should positively respond to violence-related issues against women (Yim, 2006). Educational improvement is one of the significant strategies. Enhancing social independence through proper education of both spouses is essential to reduce SV against women. Thus, the GOI should consider it to be of utmost priority. Moreover, various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and movable health campaigns can be beneficial in developing awareness against VAW.

Limitations and Significance

This study uses a secondary cross-sectional data set from NFHS-5, DHS, collected in 2019. It is one of the limitations of this study. The issue of SV is related to women's life protection and needs an in-depth investigation. Scholars should consider exploring this kind of work at a micro level to identify SV's personal, social, cultural,

economic, and situational factors. The primary datasets should be executed further where the qualitative or narrative description of the women has also been explored.

However, this work is vital for revealing both the condition and underlying factors of SV in the SSS of India and contributing some suggestive actions. The study extends existing literature, which is essential to understanding the region-specific analysis of SV. Furthermore, the facts and findings help planners, policymakers, and the government adopt and implement the proper policies for India's SSS. Most significantly, the study will help achieve Gender Equality, i.e., Sustainable Development Goal Five, by eliminating SV against women.

Conclusions

The overall condition of SV and the physical injuries due to PSV or SSV reflect an exciting and contrasted scenario in the SSS. Manipur has a relatively high percentage of reproductive women ever experiencing PSV but lower in any form of injuries due to PSV and SSV. Physical violence is more prevalent among the other forms of spousal violence. The index values show that SV is more profound in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and less common in Nagaland. Various underlying factors that seem to affect the violence condition of the states have been taken to recognize the independent variables that are more likely prone to the prevalence of spousal violence. It comes into view from the underlying socio-demographic factors of SV that women from low educational backgrounds respond as experiencing more spousal violence, and also, whenever

women have more schooling than their husbands, have experienced relatively less violence. Education of both husband and wife can diminish violence. On the other hand, various forms of SV might be enhanced in male-headed households where the husbands took alcohol often.

Thus, it can be concluded that improvement of education and restriction on the consumption of alcohol is an utmost essential need to combat spousal violence. Besides cognition, consciousness, improved mental health, and well-being, dignifying women is crucial to diminish spousal VAW in all its forms. Considering these, the government should also take appropriate interventions and increase media campaigns to increase people's awareness. The government should especially take state-specific action plans, recognizing the nature of SV in SSS. The realities in Mizoram, Manipur, and Assam differ greatly in terms of violence. Moreover, the unique socio-cultural contexts of these states further underscore the necessity for targeted strategies. Therefore, proper planning and implementation should be needed for the violence-free married life of couples as well as healthy and happy women's lives.

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