

## Impact of Abuse and its Duration on the Mental Health of Abused Women

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### Abstract

Abuse against women in India appears to be depleating on the surface but what happens behind the closed doors in an Indian marriage setup, the victims mental status describes. The present study was conducted to gain insight into the mental health of abused women belonging to Chandigarh. The study was conducted on 100 abused women facing abuse by their husband. Percentages were used to depict the number of sample population undergoing depression to what degree and the duration of abuse in abused women with children and abused women without children. The objectives of the research were to study the duration of abuse faced by women and the degree to which abused women suffer from depression. The tool involved in the study was Beck's Depression Inventory. The results revealed that majority of the sample were going through abuse from past 1-5 years and majority of the sample suffered from either moderate or severe depression.

#### **Keywords:**

Abuse;  
Depression;  
Mental health.

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### 1. Introduction

Domestic violence against women is a serious problem in India. Overall, one-third of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence and about 1 in 10 has experienced sexual violence. In total, 35 percent have experienced physical or sexual violence. This figure translates into millions of women who have suffered, and continue to suffer, at the hands of husbands and other family members. National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3) collected information from married and unmarried women age 15-49 about their experience of physical and sexual violence. Married women were also asked about their experience of emotional violence. NFHS-3 findings underscore the extent and severity of violence against women in India, especially married women.

Domestic violence is currently defined in India by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. According to Section 3 of the Act, "any act, omission or commission or conduct of the

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respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it - (a) harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or (b) harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or (c) has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or (d) otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person." Serious health problems often result from physical, emotional, and sexual forms of domestic violence.

According to the "National Crime Records Bureau of India, reported incidents of crime against women has increased 6.4% during 2012, and a crime against a woman is committed every three minutes. In 2012, there were a total of 2, 44,270 reported incidents of crime against women, while in 2011, there were 2, 28,650 reported incidents. Of the women living in India, 7.5% live in West Bengal where 12.7% of the total reported crime against women occurs. Violence by husbands against wives is widespread, sexual violence by husbands than by anyone else. Nearly two in five (37 percent) married women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their husband. The reports reveal the following:

#### **Violence by husbands against wives is widespread:**

- Married women are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence by husbands than by anyone else.
- Nearly two in five (37 percent) married women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their husband.
- One in four married women has experienced physical or sexual violence by their husband in the 12 months preceding the survey.
- Slapping is the most common act of physical violence by husbands. Thirty-four percent of married women say their husband had slapped them; 15 percent say their husband has pulled their hair or twisted their arms; and 14 percent have been pushed, shaken, or had something thrown at them (see figure).
- One in 10 married women has experienced sexual violence at the hands of their husband, i.e., they have been physically forced against their will by their husband to have sex or perform other sexual acts they did not want to perform.
- Often, this physical and sexual violence causes injuries. Almost two in five women who have experienced physical or sexual violence report having injuries, including 36 percent who had cuts, bruises or aches; 9 percent who had eye injuries, sprains, dislocations, or burns; and 7 percent who had deep wounds, broken bones, broken teeth, or other serious injuries.
- The prevalence of spousal physical or sexual violence is much higher among women in the poorest households (49 percent) than among women in the wealthier households (18 percent).
- Nearly half (46 percent) of married women with no education have experienced spousal violence; similarly, nearly half of women whose husbands have no education (47 percent) have experienced spousal violence.
- Twelve percent of married women with 12 or more years of education have experienced spousal violence, compared with 21 percent of married women whose husbands have 12 or more years of education. This suggests that women's own education reduces their likelihood of experiencing spousal violence more than their husband's education.
- Spousal violence is lower among couples in which husbands and wives have both been to school and are equally educated (23 percent) than among couples where the husband has more education than the wife (36 percent).
- The cycle of domestic violence is repeated across generations. Women whose mothers were beaten by their fathers are twice as likely to experience violence as women whose mothers were not beaten by their fathers: 60 percent, compared with 30 percent.
- Women married to men who get drunk frequently are more than twice as likely to experience violence as women whose husbands do not drink alcohol at all. However, even though alcohol is important, it is not the only factor accounting for the high prevalence of violence against women, as 30 percent of even women whose husbands do not drink have experienced spousal violence.
- Spousal violence varies greatly by state. The prevalence of physical or sexual violence ranges from 6 percent in Himachal Pradesh and 13 percent in Jammu and Kashmir and Meghalaya to 46 percent in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and 59 percent in Bihar. Other states with 40 percent or higher prevalence of spousal physical or sexual violence include Tripura, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Assam (see figure),
- One in six (16 percent) married women have experienced emotional violence by their husband.
- Only one percent of married women have ever initiated violence against their husband.

In a longitudinal study, Balsco-Ros et al. (2010) studied the recovery from depressive symptoms, state anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder in women exposed to physical and psychological, but not to psychological intimate partner violence alone.

Depression is a common mental disorder, characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration. Depression is an affective, or mood disorder. It is an illness that immerses its sufferers in a world of self-blame, confusion, and hopelessness. It is an illness of the mind and the body. Some could argue depression is a way of coping with life's pressures (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1993).

The most interesting statistical differences dealing with depression's prevalence rate between different groups occur between men and women. Women are twice more likely than men to suffer from depression (Wetzel, 1984).

Keeping these factors in mind the present study was taken up with the following objectives:

**Objectives:**

- To assess the duration of abuse in women with children and without children
- To study the degree to which abused women suffer from depression

## 2. Research Method

The present study was conducted on 100 abused women. The respondents were selected randomly. Care was taken to see that the abused women were married. It was taken care that the respondent belonged to middle class income group. None of the respondents were divorced or widowed.

**Tool used:** Tool used for measuring various variables of the study was Beck Depression Inventory, by Beck et al. (1996)

## 3. Results and Analysis

### Percentage Analysis

The percentage distribution of duration of abuse has been given in Table-1.

Table 1. Duration of abuse since marriage

Variable	Categories	Abused women with children (N-50)		Abused women without children (N-50)	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Duration of abuse	0-1 years	0	0	2	4
	1-5 years	32	64	41	82
	5-15 years	12	24	7	14
	15-30 years	6	12	0	0

The diagrammatic presentation of percentage distribution of the respondents with regard to the duration of abuse faced by the abused women has been given in the following figure:

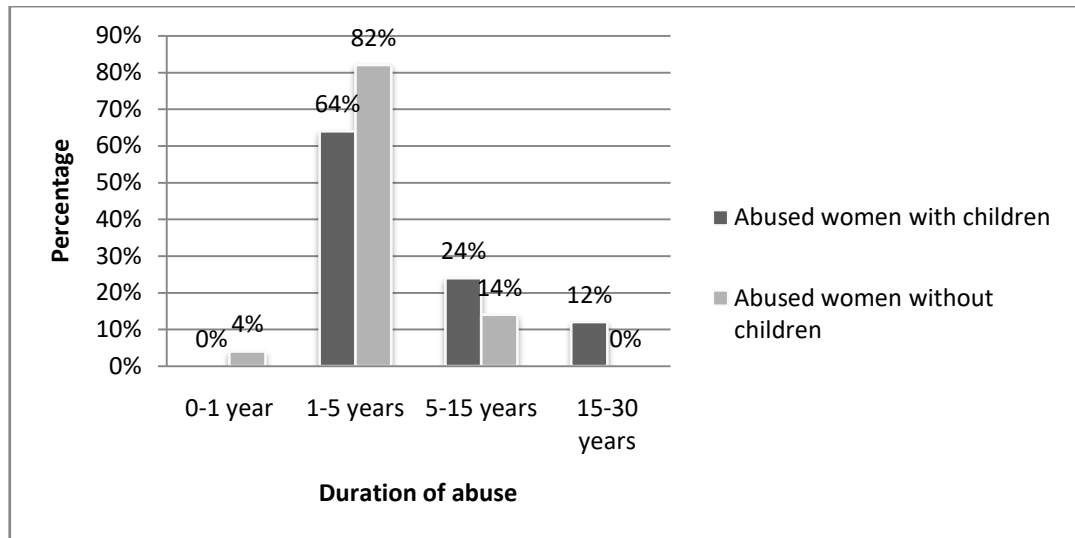


Figure 1. Bar Graph Showing Duration of Abuse on Abused Women in Percentages

In table 1 it was seen that 4% of the abused women without children were facing abuse from 0-1 year, 82% of the abused women without children were abused from 1-5 years and 14% women without children were abused from 5-15 years. On the other hand, 64% of the women with children were facing abuse from 1-5 years, 24% from 5-15 years and 12% from 15-30 years as shown in figure 1

The percentage distribution of degree of depression faced by abused women, according to the interpretation of Beck's Depression Inventory has been given in Table-1.

Table 2. Degree of depression as interpreted from Beck's Depression Inventory among abused women

Degree of Depression			
Minimal	Mild	Moderate	Severe
4%	6%	24%	66%
Total Sample: 100			

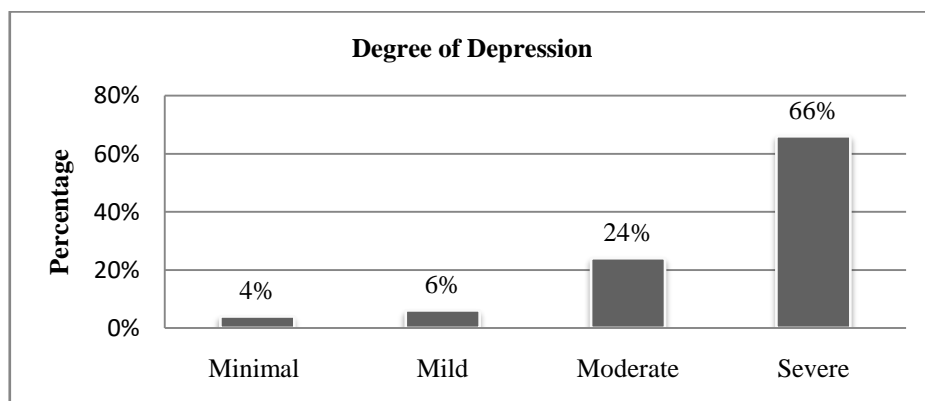


Figure 2. Graphical representation showing the degree of depression among abused women

Table-2 revealed that 4% of the abused women had a minimal degree of depression, 6% of mild depression was recorded in abused women, whereas moderate and minimal depression was found among the majority of the sample population, i.e. 24% of the abused women suffered from moderate depression, an alarming rate of 66% abused women were undergoing severe depression as shown in figure 2.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the above results it can be concluded that:

- Majority of the abused women without children were being abused from the past 1-5 years,
- Majority of the women with children were undergoing abuse from 1-5 years also and a few had been facing abuse from past 15-30 years.
- Majority of the abused women were recorded to be in moderate or severe depression

Thus, respondents in the study reported a long period of time since they have been under abuse. The repercussions of abuse unfolded in their mental health as majority of the women who were abused in their marriage by their lawfully wedded husband were undergoing moderate to severe depression. Many studies reveal that any kind of abuse affects the mental health of the victim.

In an observational multi- country study on Intimate Partner Violence and Women's Physical and Mental Health and Domestic Violence by Ellsberg et al. (2008), revealed that Pooled analysis of all sites found significant associations between lifetime experiences of partner violence and self-reported poor health and with specific health problems in the previous 4 weeks: difficulty walking difficulty with daily activities, pain, memory loss, dizziness, and vaginal discharge. For all settings combined, women who reported partner violence at least once in their life reported significantly more emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, and suicidal attempts, than non-abused women.

In another study Wong et al. (2011) found psychological abuse to be the significant predictor of higher levels of IPV-related depression in their study of Chinese women.

Thus, the results and many researches unfold a dangerous place where women are and it is a matter of concern for the sustainability of the society.

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