

# WOMEN'S PRODUCTIVE ROLE AND MARITAL VIOLENCE IN BANGLADESH

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## **WOMEN'S PRODUCTIVE ROLE AND MARITAL VIOLENCE IN BANGLADESH**

**ABSTRACT:** This study assesses the role of women's participation in productive activities in reducing the risk of marital violence. Data were collected from villages where numerous non-government organizations (NGOs) had micro-credit based income generating programs for the poor. Both the surveys and in-depth interviews were used to collect information from a randomly selected sample of 500 currently married women aged <50 years living in 70 villages in 10 regions of Bangladesh. Findings reveal that the prevalence of marital violence such as mental torture and physical assault had negative association with women's participation in economic activities. Situation that invoked violence against had most often been their failure of performing expected role in the household. Women's productive roles not only improved women's position in their household but also significantly reduced both mental torture and physical assault against them. The paper argues that participation in productive activities has the potential to bring a significant reduction in the risk of marital violence among women in the poor community.

## INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence is common and inherent to all societies (Gelles, 1980; Finklar, 1997; Counts, 1992; Mitchell, 1992). Although there is no universally accepted definition of violence against women,<sup>1</sup> the United Nations Commission of the Status of Women defined it as 'any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women' (Economic and Social Council, 1992). Violent behaviors such as beating, pushing, slapping or throwing things by family members are considered domestic violence (Heise, Moore & Toubia, 1995).

Until recently, violence against women has never been an important issue to most of the societies, to their cultural values and development processes. During the last two decades, gender-based violence has emerged as the most pressing and intractable social problems across regional, social and cultural boundaries (Desjurlais & Klienman, 1997; Fischback & Herbert, 1997). The development planner have become convinced that the consequences of gender violence are usually pervasive and highly damaging (Desjurlais & Klienman, 1997).

The social forces that perpetuate gender-based violence can be viewed from various approaches viz. cultural values that tend to legitimize violence, legal systems that are not gender sensitive and cannot protect women, economic systems that sub-ordinate women, and political systems that marginalize the women's need (Heise, Raikes, Watts & Zwi, 1994). Violence against women has never been new in history. In discussing the theoretical perspectives of gender violence, Levinson (1989) pointed out that women's position was weakened because of her economic dependence, lesser physical strength, legal and social subordination to her husband, and her obligation to fulfill the physical demands of her husband. The legitimization and promotion of rigid gender roles, masculinity, toughness and male honor within the society perpetuates gender violence (Counts, Brown & Campbell, 1992).

Violence against women can be viewed from the socio-structural approach as well. The assignment of family responsibilities and obligations is gender rather than competency specific that creates tension between spouses (Strauss, 1980). Changing demands placed on the family by society create enabling condition for violent behavior by the family members (Gelles & Cornell, 1983). The nature of family relationship forces women to struggle alone against violence where society encourages husband to exercise his right to dominate and control wife (Dohash & Dobash, 1992) and women are socialized to accept physical and mental abuses as part of husband's marital prerogatives (Olavarrieta & Sotelo, 1996).

Woman with lowered self-esteem, severe depressive symptoms with minimal personal resources, and least institutional support are more vulnerable to be abused by her spouse (Strauss, 1980). The society neither protects battered women nor promotes to develop institutional support system for them. A completely different view is presented by Flavia (1988) where she argues that marital violence is common

across social classes (Karlekar, 1998). She denounces the notion that the perpetrators are frustrated, alcoholic, paranoid or aggressive persons. The violence is learnt by the children as part of their socialization (Strauss, 1980) and is a reflection of the power relationship between spouses (Strauss, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). Existing literature tend to link the context of marital violence with the patriarchal family structure and the lack of women's autonomy or freedom. Women's autonomy within the family is also linked to more economic independence, wider interaction of women with the outside world, and gradual modification of legal and economic systems (Kornblit, 1994).

It is widely acknowledged that conducting research on such sensitive aspect of human behavior as household violence is extremely difficult (Jeejebhoy, 1998; Glantz & Halperin, 1996). Although the documentation on the prevalence of violence against women has remained poor, studies indicated that the reported incidence of such occurrences as rape, incest, molestation and sexual harassment has been increasing in Bangladesh (Jahan, 1994; Akanda & Shamim, 1985). One study, conducted in 1994, reports that about 47% women were ever beaten by husband while 19% were beaten in the past year (Schuler, Hashemi, Riley & Akhter, 1996). A recent study in India observes that nearly 41% women reported being beaten and 47.5% were intimidated by their husbands (Jeejebhoy, 1998). Increasing awareness of women's issues in recent years has facilitated the process of uncovering the ugly face of violence against women in public. Thus, it is not clearly known whether the incidence of violence or the reporting of incidence has increased in Bangladesh.

Given the patriarchal family structure in Bangladesh, the women are taught to consider them inferior to men; husbands were socialized to 'own' their wives and to exercise their right to dominate them including to the use of force when necessary. Such attitudes are reinforced by religious code of ethics and the legal system. It is very difficult to convince women that gender inequality is not a natural but a social construct, the disadvantaged women's position in family and society is not given naturally but comes about as an interaction of a multiplicity of social, economic and religious factors. In addition, the patriarchal norms are supported and reaffirmed by traditional institution of *Fatwa*<sup>2</sup> or interpretations of Islamic law issued by local religious authority. *Fatwa* is used, for example, to discourage women to involve themselves in NGO-led productive activities (Amnesty International, 1994).

Although emancipation of women and the reduction of gender violence is difficult in patriarchal society where women have traditionally been exploited by men, micro-credit<sup>3</sup> based development intervention for women is widely regarded successful in creating an enabling condition for women to take control over their lives (Schuler & Hashemi, 1994; Amin & Bayes, 1996). Credit program, introduced primarily by the non-government organizations (NGOs) in mid seventies, is now regarded as an alternative approach for development in Bangladesh. The program includes not only the collateral-free credit for the

rural women but a package of support services such as group formation, skill training, non-formal education, reproductive health services and legal awareness.

The participation of poor women in NGO-led productive activities has been considered a driving force of the change of women's position by strengthening their economic role in the household (Naved, 1994). When a woman gets credit and invests her money into a successful enterprise, she undergoes through a process, viz. she gains knowledge, attends weekly meetings and skill training sessions and so on. NGOs provide women culturally legitimate reasons to go outside home, interact with men and strengthen their self-confidence. Ability of poor women to provide financial assistance to households promotes their sense of identity and reduces their dependence on men. Nevertheless, studies remain inadequate to clearly demonstrate how women's position is associated with marital violence. Women's participation in productive activities has been believed to contribute in modifying women's status and change of women's perception about their own well-being.

Elimination of all forms of discrimination has always been a cherished social goal of any development program although it is felt that the reduction of marital violence may be very difficult in a patriarchal society where women are exploited by men. No organized effort or intervention has been planned to deal with this problem so far except a few sporadic attempts by non-government development organizations. Among these, micro-credit based development intervention for the poor women is widely regarded as successful in creating an enabling condition for women to take control over their lives (Hashemi, Schuler & Riley, 1996). The objective of this paper is an attempt to understand the prevalence and correlates of violence against women within marriage. First, a description of the prevalence of marital violence and their associations with socioeconomic characteristics of women is presented. Second, the common situations in which marital violence occurs are identified. Finally, the role of the participation of women in productive activities in reducing the risk of marital violence is examined.

## **SAMPLE AND METHOD**

As there is no universally accepted definition of violence against women, we define marital violence as an act or behavior displayed by their husband that destabilizes or reduces the physical or emotional well-being. The reference period considered to measure the prevalence of violence is one year. Two forms of marital violence are examined in this study viz. mental torture<sup>4</sup> and physical assault<sup>5</sup>. Data for this research were collected from a demographic and health surveillance system, known as *Watch*<sup>6</sup>, in 70 villages located in ten regions of Bangladesh. In-depth interviews were conducted by a team of ten

resident female researchers who stayed in the study villages. The interviewers maintained very good relationship with the subjects by visiting them once a month for the last two years. Confidentiality of information collected was strictly followed. Each interview took three sessions over a week. Also, a structured questionnaire was used to collect demographic and socioeconomic information.

Women aged <50 years were only considered to be included in the sample. A systematic random sampling technique was followed to select 50 married women from each of 10 study regions. Not all selected women agreed to provide information on marital violence. Also, some (less than 5%) of them, who initially agreed to participate in this project, refused to cooperate after one or two sessions although they were assured that the confidentiality would be strictly observed. Maintaining privacy during sessions was difficult sometimes that led to incomplete interviews. In such cases, sample women were substituted by others selected again at random. In total, information from 500 women was collected during March--May 1996.

The study focuses on the reduction of the risk of marital violence as a result of their participation in productive activities in rural Bangladesh. Only poor women were eligible<sup>7</sup> to participate in NGO-led income generating activities. Credit organizations generally target to adult women of poor households who own very small amount of cultivable land. Following that criteria, nearly 42% sample women were found non-poor and, thus, not eligible to participate in NGO-led credit-based productive activities. Among the eligible women, about a third of the sample women participated in income generating activities while the rests were not involved in such programs. This made the study to be based upon a three-cell experimental design where poor women involved in productive activities (productive women) were compared with women involved only with domestic activities (domestic women) and with the non-poor in the community.

In this paper, logistic regression models were employed to assess the contribution of productive as well as other factors on marital violence. The incidence of violence was coded one if a woman was exposed to violence and zero if otherwise. The main independent variables were women's economic role<sup>8</sup> and women's position<sup>9</sup> with spouse. Women's role is coded as domestic, productive for <5 years, productive for 5> years and non-poor. *Women's position* is conceptualized in this study as the relationship between spouses that categorized as 'sub-ordinate' or 'moderate'. It was assumed that participation of women in economic activities could significantly modify the spousal relationship and, thus, has the potential to reduce marital violence among the poor. The confounding variables added to the regression equation are age, age at marriage, education of women, spousal education gap,<sup>10</sup> land ownership and living standard. *Age* and *age at marriage*, also coded in single years. *Education of women* was respondent's year of schooling coded in single years. *Living standard*<sup>11</sup> is coded as poor and moderate.

This study has certain limitations. It should be noted that cross-sectional data without random assignment of sample women between domestic and productive activities might generate biased estimates

because women who are relatively innovative may be more likely than others to join the productive activities (Pitt, Khandker, McKernan & Latif, 1999). In the absence of longitudinal data, the factors that might be influenced by endogeneity or selection bias were adjusted by employing multivariate analyses.

Table 1 here

## RESULTS

### PROFILE OF SAMPLE WOMEN

The differences in sociodemographic characteristics of sample women by their participation in economic activity were very wide (Table 1). Women involved in productive activities were generally older than others as reflected in the mean and proportion of age groups (at  $p<.01$ ). Illiteracy has been widespread in the study villages. Nearly two-third (64.6%) women never went to school and only 11.6% had secondary or higher level of education. Poor and domestic women were the most deprived of education compared to productive and non-poor women ( $p<.05$ ). After joining the credit program, women were expected to participate in basic literacy and skill training sessions to be eligible to receive credit. This requirement may have raised the literacy among the productive than domestic women. Education gap between spouses was assumed to increase marital violence. The gap in attaining education was higher among both the non-poor and productive than the domestic women. Non-poor and productive women had more land than women who played only domestic role.

Living standard depends upon the wealth and capacity to earn money for the household expenses. While nearly 29% sample women were estimated to have moderate or decent living standard on average, only 13.7% domestic and 23.3% productive women were able to satisfy that standard. The difference was statistically significant (at  $p<.01$ ). Early marriage among girls was very common in rural communities in Bangladesh. Although the legal minimum age at marriage for girls was 18 years, nearly 79% sample women got married before they reached 18. Early marriage was higher among the productive than domestic women. Women's position or relationship with husband also varied among the three groups as the relationship with their spouse was much better among the productive than domestic women ( $p<.05$ ). It seems that earning an income, group solidarity and confidence have raised women's position. The comparison between the domestic and productive women indicates the existence of selection bias to become the participants of credit-based income generating activities. This finding confirms the assumption that only a small proportion of the very poor has access to micro-credit programs (Pitt, Khandker, Mckernan & Latif, 1999).

Table 2 here



## SITUATIONS EVOKING VIOLENCE

It is not clearly known why men become violent against their spouses. The marital violence is considered largely incidental rather than planned. There are many situations that can invoke the occurrence of violence. Cultural values, in most countries, encourage that men should have masculinity-linked dominance and toughness over their wives (Counts, Brown & Campbell, 1992). The violent behavior by husband is justified when wife fails to conform to traditional role expectations. Table 2 shows that neglecting household chores, beating children or quarrels with in-laws provided opportunities for their husbands to abuse them. One woman in Joypurhat stated, *'My husband gets angry when he comes back from work and finds that his meal is not ready. He also shouts angrily and beat me when I beat any of my three children.'* In another situation, wife became the victim when she alleged her husband as unfaithful or having affair with other women.

Disobedience to husband's orders was also found as a cause of beating wife. Beating a disobedient wife was culturally accepted as one woman justified, *'My husband is a short-tempered man and gets angry for minor disagreements. I get angry too sometimes and keep arguing with him. Sometimes, you know, he shouts at me, threatens to beat, divorce or abandon me when I misbehave with him. Then I realize that I should behave properly with him.'* Women did not dare to leave such abusive relationship as they thought their social network would not approve their behavior.

Table 2 shows that husbands keep pressing their spouses to collect money from her parents either as dowry or her share of the property. In cases of non-compliance, she faces violent behavior of her husband. Not paying dowry does not generally provoke a husband to become violent but the husband may use this opportunity to keep pressure on his wife. The incidence of violent behavior displayed by husband because of drunkenness was not very common in Bangladesh. There were, however, cases of drug-related violence as one woman complained: *'My husband wastes money taking drugs. When I ask him not to misuse money for drugs, he beats me.'*

The participation of women in productive activities has defused many occasions of violence against them. The strength of earning an income, combined with the strength of belonging to a group, helped women to negotiate their relationship with husbands. As one respondent who joined credit program reacted, *'I was alone and had to depend on my husband. Now, I have friends who support me. My husband does not threaten me anymore.'*

Table 3 here

## WOMEN'S POSITION AND ITS DETERMINANTS

Independent earning and ability to provide financial assistance to the household were found to promote women's autonomy and reduce their dependency on husbands (Schuler & Hashemi, 1994). In Table 3, the factors that determine women's relation with their spouse were estimated using three models. The participation in productive activities had positive and statistically significant effect on women's position when other influences such as marital age, education, spousal education gap and land ownership were controlled (Model I). When living standard was added to the regression equation, the effect of women's productive role had been reduced (Model II). When both the age of women and living condition of their family were added (Model III), the effect of the productive role on women's position had been reduced further indicating that age of women also explained its relationship with their spouse. Among the controls, education played a significant role in modifying their relationship with spouse. The educational effect persisted even after controls such as living standard and age of women were applied supporting the hypothesis that 'education strengthens women's bargaining position with their spouse'. The effect of marital age on women's position was not significant and, thus, the notion that marriage at older age reduces the vulnerability of women was not supported by the data. Among other controls, living standard and land ownership (not shown here) significantly (at  $p < .01$ ) raised women's status.

Table 4 here

## CORRELATES OF MARITAL VIOLENCE

Of the study women, nearly 28% were mentally abused and 22.4% were physically assaulted by their husbands at least once in the last year. The socioeconomic differentials of the prevalence of marital violence are shown in Tables 4-5. Table 6 presents the results of the multivariate analysis, in odds ratios, predicting the probability of women to be emotionally abused and physically assaulted by their husbands. In model I, the effects of women's productive role on violence measures were estimated while, in model II, the *women's productive role – marital violence* linkage in the context of spousal relationship was examined.

Table 5 here

Table 4 shows that the prevalence of both measures of violence was negatively associated with age of women (Table 4). Multivariate analysis also supports this finding when other socioeconomic confounding variables were controlled (Table 6). Older women were less likely to become victims of violence than younger women probably because older women gained more power and prestige within the

household as a result of being the mother of adult children. Also, older couples could endure several strains simultaneously that reduces the likelihood of violence among them (Howell & Pugliesi, 1988).

Studies indicated that marriage at young ages makes women vulnerable to abuse (Jejeebhoy, 1998). Unlike this finding, Table 4 shows that women married at younger (<18 years) were not more vulnerable than women married at the older age although the influence of marital age became insignificant when other variables were controlled (Table 6). It is quite possible that women married at younger ages were more dependent on husband, who tended to be so insecure that they avoided provoking husband to become violent against them.

Table 6 here

Illiterate women were more likely to be abused by their husbands than educated women (Table 4). It is not clear which trait of education has modified the violent behavior of men. The wider gaps in prevalence of violence between ever and never school-goers (in bivariate relationship) indicate that the learning process in school might have increased spousal communication and, thus, raised their capacity to protect themselves from violence. The gap between the educational attainment levels of women and their husbands was found positively associated in many studies (Jejeebhoy, 1998). Women with wider education gap were not more likely to suffer beating or emotional abuse than women with narrow or no education gap.

Like age and education of women, socioeconomic condition, reflected in the amount of land owned and the living standard of the household, was also inversely associated (at  $p<.01$ ) to both measures of violence against women (Table 5). Among the household level controls in multivariate analysis, living standard had considerable negative influence ( $p<.01$ ) on marital violence. The findings are consistent with the notion that low-income families have higher rates of violence than other (Gelles & Losake, 1993) but contradict with Flavia (1988) who found that violence was common across social classes. The apparent high prevalence of marital violence in lower social classes is a reflection of poor spousal relationship as found earlier. Poverty and economic crisis in the lower classes keep pressing the bread-winner, who are almost always men, to make them mentally unstable. Thus, the occasion of even minor disagreements among spouses can create violent situation.

Women's economic role seems to have significant (at  $p<.01$ ) negative role in reducing both measures of marital violence (Table 5). The negative association was more pronounced where the duration of involvement in productive activities was 5 years or more. Multivariate analysis (in Table 6) also indicates that women enjoyed protection from violence when they were involved in productive activities. As one woman, who participated in economic activities, linked her new role with the change of husband's

behavior, *'My husband used to shout angrily and beat me when his meal was not ready. But now he does not beat me'*. Table 6 shows that the effect was not significant in reducing physical assault where the duration of productive role was <5 years. The odds ratios (in model I of physical assault) indicates that the participation in productive activities for longer duration (5+ years) could cut two-third of the incidence of violence (Table 5). When women's position was added to model II, the odds ratios of women's economic role had not changed much indicating that women's productive role had independent association with both measures of marital violence.

Gender inequality, attempt to use force to resolve conflict and control of decision-making were found the reasons of marital violence in many studies (Levinson, 1989; Jejeebhoy, 1998). Table 5 shows that the prevalence of both mental torture and physical assault was significantly (at  $p < .01$ ) lower among moderate than sub-ordinated spousal relationships (Table 5). This finding was also reflected in multivariate analysis (in Table 6) where the improvement of women's position reduced marital violence to nearly half controlling other important correlates. Data clearly suggest that women's participation in productive activities considerably reduces the risk of marital violence.

## DISCUSSION

This study clearly points out to the darker aspects of human society where gender violence has been deeply entrenched. While the results demonstrated that age, delayed marriage, education and standard of living have remained significant predictors of the prevalence of violence against women, the participation of rural women in micro-credit based productive activities creates an enabling environment for women to reduce the risk of marital violence. The creation of this environment was directly linked with the opportunities for women to work and earn.

How does the participation of women in credit program affect violent behavior of their husband have remained to be clearly understood. One explanation is that the program participants are able to bring home resources in the form of credit or incomes that may diffuse poverty-related stress among husbands (Schuler, Hashemi & Badal, 1998). On the other hand, ability to financial contribution may encourage battered women to take a new role in their family. The cultural sphere of rural women has been changing as the economic life has become more complex and a large number of poor women are engaged in productive activities outside home (Cleland & Phillips, 1993). The credit program-induced self-employment reduces their dependence on men, modifies persistent unequal relationship with their spouse and changes the context of marital violence. The implication of this conclusion is that although the prevalence of violence in Bangladesh has remained very high, ample scope is still there to improve the

situation if appropriate and timely measures are taken. While it is not clearly known what causes men to be violent, findings indicate that the probability of a woman to be abused increases if she (and her husband) is young, illiterate and poor.

Marital violence implies weak communication skills among spouses which are summed up to disequilibrium relationship when one spouse attempts a 'running away' from cultural stereotypes. A more egalitarian relationship focusing on the better spousal communication may help coping with them who suffer pressures from individual and cultural tensions. Improving women's position by involving them in productive activities achieves that goal. Emotionally abused women with minimal personal resources and lack of institutional support have more health and psychological problems than others. This problem can be effectively handled through credit-based forums by providing counseling and other services to potentially vulnerable women. In Bangladesh, women victims have no legal protection from abusive spouses. To compensate, some activists and NGOs have now been pushing to recognize marital violence as a crime by the legal system in particular and the society at large.

While a negative association between the behavioral aspects of micro-credit program and the prevalence of household violence is established in this research, it is clear that credit program alone cannot do much to have a significant impact in reducing violence against women. Experience of NGOs suggests that the negative association of the participation of micro credit program and marital violence may be sustained if specific components such as social awareness, human rights and legal education are added to it. The study concludes that the economic and social aspects of credit program participation can immensely change the life of poor women by raising economic security and raising their relationship with their spouse. But the programs should have a long way to go to adequately address the underlying structural factors that perpetuate the exploitation and violence against women in Bangladesh. The study suggests addressing the immediate needs of the victims and then focus on the root causes of violence – subordination of women. A range of interventions, directed at individuals and society, may be considered. Violence against women is a learned behavior and, thus, this attitude can be changed by a major awareness raising campaign most likely by feminist organizations, NGOs and mass media. Marital violence primarily affects women, but it is a societal problem as it goes beyond its immediate effects on victims and can create irreparable damages to the entire family. An integrated approach comprising the government, grassroots organizations and international agencies should be adopted where legal system, health professionals, development activists and the media work together to achieve the desired goal (World Bank, 1993; Fischbach & Herbert, 1997).

## NOTES

An earlier version of this paper was presented to the *4th Asia-Pacific Conference on Social Science and Medicine* in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in December 7-11, 1998. The author wishes to thank the participants of the conference for their valuable comments and suggestions on the paper. This research was supported by the *Strengthening Research and Evaluation Activities in BRAC* Project of the Ford Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

- 1 The World Bank published a document in 1994 where gender-based violence was understood as ‘any act of verbal or physical force, coercion or life-threatening deprivation, directed at an individual woman or girl that causes physical or psychological harm, humiliation or arbitrary deprivation of liberty that perpetuates female subordination’ (Heise, Raikes, Watts & Zwi, 1994).
- 2 Fatwas are irregular interpretations of Islamic laws which generally are controlled by religious leaders of the community. By using Fatwa, the society reaffirms its patriarchal norms and domination over women.
- 3 Collateral-free micro credit program is designed primarily for the poor rural women with a package of support services such as group formation and skill training to provide them the opportunity to earn by themselves and financially contribute to their family.
- 4 Mental torture is defined as threat to beat, divorce or abandoned and pressing for dowry by the husband.
- 5 Physical assault includes beating, pushing, slapping or throwing things to women by the husband.
- 6 *Watch* is a demographic and health surveillance system of BRAC covering more than 50,000 population living in 70 villages in 10 regions of Bangladesh where BRAC, Grameen Bank, Proshika and a number of local NGOs have been operating credit-based income generating activities. The regions were selected to be representative of the rural Bangladesh. In each region, BRAC operates a field research station to cover approximately 1,000 households in neighboring 6 to 8 villages. Two female and one male field investigators routinely visit all households of the study villages each month and record relevant information on the registers. Information is then entered onto computers in the central office of BRAC in Dhaka.
- 7 NGO-led development activities are directed to the poorest group in the community. In identifying the poor households in rural areas, NGOs generally consider landless households who sell their manual labor to others for survival. In this study, we have defined ‘the eligible to participate’ as those households that own less than 50 decimals of land and in which the principal worker sells at least 100 days of labor over the past year. Not all eligible households in the study villages participated in NGO-

led development programs. The study households were categorized into three groups: i) the participants, ii) eligible to participate but not participated in any NGO program and iii) not eligible households.

- 8 Economic role is defined as the participation of women in credit-based income generating activities where they are able to earn money.
- 9 Women's position is conceptualized in this study as the process where they should have freedom from control by husbands, ability to manage their households and significant role in decision meeting process within the household (Batliwala, 1994). The respondent was asked to assess herself on a five-point scale (ranging from 0 to 4) where zero was considered negative and four was given for positive responses in constructing this variable. The items were whether i) her husband always consulted with her about family finance, ii) she participated in controlling household resources, and iii) she had considerable decision making role in household affairs. The points were then added together to get the women position index. Women's position was considered 'poor' if her score was 6 or less and 'moderate' if otherwise.
- 10 Education gap is measured by the difference of years of schooling between spouses. No gap was estimated for about two-third women because both spouses were illiterate. Women whose husbands were 1-4 years more educated than them were considered to have a 'moderate' educational gap and women whose husbands had 4 or more years of education were considered to have a 'considerable' educational gap.
- 11 Living standard of the household was estimated on the basis of the per capita expenditure of food, education and health care for each household in the last one year. The variable was then arbitrarily categorized into 'poor' and 'moderate' based on their expenditure where top 30% households were categorized as moderate and others as poor.

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**TABLE 1**  
**Profile of Sample Women by their Economic Role**

Study Variables	Poor		<i>P</i>	Non-poor <sup>a</sup>	All Women
	Domestic	Productive		Women	
Age of women (years)			<.01		
< 20	8.5	1.2		6.6	5.2
20 - 29	59.8	44.8		45.5	48.6
30 - 39	19.7	33.7		29.4	28.6
40 +	12.0	20.3		18.5	17.6
<i>Mean</i>	27.8	32.1		30.7	30.5
Education of women			<.05		
No school	86.3	74.4		44.5	64.6
Primary	12.8	20.9		32.2	23.8
Secondary+	0.9	4.7		23.2	11.6
<i>Mean</i>	0.48	1.2		3.5	2.0
Spousal education gap			ns		
Considerably lower	7.7	11.0		25.1	16.2
Moderately lower	9.4	12.2		25.1	17.0
Same or higher level	82.9	76.8		49.7	66.8
Land ownership (decimal)			<.01		
Landless	85.5	59.3		23.2	50.2
1 - 199	14.5	34.9		47.9	35.6
200 +	--	5.8		28.9	14.2
<i>Mean</i>	3.8	45		197	100
Moderate living standard	13.7	23.3	<.01	43.1	29.3
Married before 18 (years)	77.8	82.6	ns	76.8	79.0
Women's position	38.5	51.2	<.05	43.6	45.0
N	117	172		211	500

NOTE: <sup>a</sup> Women involved in both domestic and productive roles were added as only a very few non-poor women were productively employed.

**TABLE 2**  
**Reasons of Being Physically or Mentally Abused by Husband**

Reason	Poor		Non-poor <sup>a</sup>	All Women
	Domestic	Productive	Women	
Neglects household chores	26.5	12.8	15.2	17.0
Beats children	10.2	14.5	10.4	11.8
Quarrels with in-laws	12.0	6.4	5.7	7.4
Alleging husband as unfaithful	5.1	2.3	3.8	3.6
Not paying dowry/money	5.1	0.6	1.4	2.0
Not having a son	0.8	2.3	2.4	2.0
Complained by other	1.7	1.7	0.9	1.4
Asking husband not to drink	1.7	1.2	0.8	1.0
Meeting with other men	0.8	0	0.8	0.4

**TABLE 3**  
**Log Odds Ratios Predicting Women's Position Controlling for Spousal Education Gap and Land Ownership of the Family**

Explanatory Variable	Women's Position		
	I	II	III
Women's economic role (rc=domestic)			
Productive (<5 years)	1.63*	1.58	1.43
Productive (5+ years)	1.72**	1.65*	1.31
Non-poor	1.08	0.99	0.88
Other indicators			
Education of women	1.61*	1.61*	1.67*
Age at marriage	0.94	0.95	0.99
Living standard (rc=poor)		1.52**	1.67**
Age of women			1.04****
-- 2 log likelihood	673.11	669.04	657.08
Pseudo R squared	0.04	0.04	0.08

NOTE: \*  $p < .10$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .05$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 4**  
**Prevalence of Violence Against Women by Sociodemographic Factors**

Sociodemographic Factors	N	Marital Violence			
		Mental Torture	<i>P</i>	Physical Assault	<i>P</i>
All	500	27.8		22.4	
Age of women			<.01		<.05
< 20	26	35.8		23.1	
20 - 29	243	34.6		27.2	
30 - 39	143	20.3		21.0	
40 +	88	18.2		11.4	
Marital age			ns		<.05
< 18	395	26.3		20.8	
18 +	105	33.3		28.6	
Education of women			ns		<.01
No school	323	30.7		27.2	
Primary	119	24.4		13.4	
Secondary+	58	19.0		13.8	
Spousal education gap			<.05		ns
Considerably lower	81	22.2		18.5	
Moderately lower	85	18.8		17.6	
Same or higher level	334	31.4		24.6	

**TABLE 5**  
**Prevalence of Violence Against Women by Socioeconomic Factors**

Socioeconomic Factors	N	Marital Violence	
		Mental Torture	Physical Assault
Land ownership			
Landless	251	34.7	30.3
1 – 199 dec	178	24.7	18.0
200 + dec	71	11.3	5.6
Living standard			
Poor	352	34.1	27.3
Moderate	146	13.0	11.0
Women's economic role			
Domestic only	117	45.3	40.2
Productive (<5 years)	86	26.7	25.6
Productive (5+ years)	86	17.4	12.8
Non-poor	211	22.7	15.2
Women's position			
Sub-ordinate	275	35.3	28.0
Moderate or better	225	18.7	15.6

**TABLE 6**  
**Log Odds Ratios Predicting the Probability of Having Been Abused by Husband**  
**Controlling for Spousal Education Gap and Land Ownership of the Family**

Explanatory Variable	Mental Torture		Physical Assault	
	I	II	I	II
Women's economic role (rc=domestic)				
Productive (<5 years)	0.56*	0.58*	0.75	0.78
Productive (5+ years)	0.35***	0.36***	0.32***	0.33***
Non-poor	0.71	0.71	0.65	0.63
Women's position		0.51***		0.56**
Other indicators				
Age of women	0.96***	0.96**	0.97**	0.97*
Year of schooling	0.94	0.95	0.91*	0.91
Age at marriage	1.02	1.01	1.08**	1.08*
Living standard (rc=poor)	0.31***	0.33***	0.48**	0.52**
-- 2 log likelihood	529.6	520.4	460.9	466.6
Pseudo R squared	0.16	0.19	0.20	0.18

NOTE: \*  $p < .10$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .05$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .