

**Physical and sexual violence within marriage among youth in India:
Findings from the *Youth in India, Situation and Needs Study***

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Gender-based violence has increasingly been acknowledged as a major concern in India, including in policies, programmes and research. There are, for example, a number of policies and programmes that focus on preventing violence against women and supporting women who experience such violence; these include, for example, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2001) and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2006). At the same time, evidence of physical and sexual violence against women within marriage has increasingly been documented. The recent National Family Health Survey (2005-2006) reports that two-fifths of all married women had experienced sexual or physical violence – 38% had experienced physical violence and 10% had experienced sexual violence (IIPS and Macro International, 2007). Information is, however, relatively sparse with regard to the experience of physical and sexual violence among married *youth*, with regard to the perspectives of young husbands as perpetrators and with regard to factors that protect women or place them at increased risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence within marriage.

Drawing on data from a sub-nationally representative study undertaken for the first time in India of key transitions experienced by young people, this paper examines the following issues: the extent of physical and sexual violence experienced by young women within marriage; men's reports of having perpetrated such violence on their wives; and the factors associated with the experience (women) and perpetration (men) of such violence. In particular, with reference to this paper, the study explores young people's socialisation experiences, their agency, and their perceptions about the extent to which young men in their community are involved in community level violence, assumed to influence the experience and perpetration of marital violence.

Background

Young people (aged 10-24) constitute almost 315 million and represent about 31% of India's population (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2001a). These numbers are projected to increase and peak at around 358 million in 2011 before stabilising at around 336 million by 2026 (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2006). Today's Indian youth are better educated than earlier generations; for example, 43% and 31% of 20-24 year-old men and women, respectively, had completed at least high school in 2005-06, compared to 38% and 19%, respectively, in 1992-93 (IIPS and Macro International 2007; IIPS 1995). A substantial proportion of young people, including a rising percentage of young women are absorbed into the formal or informal labour market (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2001b). However, marriage continues to occur in adolescence for large proportions of young women. Indeed, although the age at marriage has been increasing, almost half of young women married before they were 18, and 32% of young men before they were 21, the minimum legal ages at marriage for females and males, respectively (IIPS and Macro International, 2007).

The prevalence of both physical and sexual violence against women within marriage has been increasingly documented in India. As discussed earlier, the National Family Health Survey reported that 38% and 10% of married women had experienced physical and sexual violence, respectively, with considerable variation by socio-cultural setting (IIPS and Macro International 2007). Experience of physical and sexual violence reported in other studies varied widely depending on the socio-cultural and geographic setting, the sub-population addressed and the kinds of questions posed to elicit the experience of violence. For example, studies have observed that between 20% and 70% of married women reported the experience of physical violence (Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Rao 1997; IIPS and Johns Hopkins University, 2005) and 8%-30% of women ever faced sexual violence in their married life (IIPS and Johns Hopkins University 2005). While most studies in India have focused on the experiences of women, there are a few that shed light on the male perspective. In a survey of married men in Uttar Pradesh, for example, about one in three men admitted that they had perpetrated physical violence, and that they had ever forced their wife to engage in sexual relations (Martin et al. 1999; Koenig et al. 2006). Another study in three states, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu reported that about two-thirds of young men admitted forcing sex on their wives in past year (Duvvury, Nayak and Allendorf 2002).

A few studies in India have focused exclusively on the experiences of violence among young women and perpetration by young men (Santhya et al. 2007, Gujarat and West Bengal; Santhya et al. 2008, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh; Alexander et al 2007, Maharashtra). Findings are similar to those reported among all married individuals, suggesting that violence within marriage is initiated early. For example, 17-25% of married young women in Pune district, and 36-41% of those from Gujarat and West Bengal reported the experience of physical violence; 12% of women from Gujarat and West Bengal, and 44-56% of those from Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh had experienced forced sex within marriage. These high rates of violence reported by women were by and large corroborated by young men. Indeed, 23-26% of married young men from Pune district, and 33-41% of those from Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, and Dhar and Guna districts, Madhya Pradesh, reported perpetrating physical violence on their wife (Alexander et al. 2007; Santhya et al. 2008). Just slightly fewer – 10-36% -- of young men in Guntur, Dhar and Guna districts admitted perpetrating forced sex on their wives (Santhya et al. 2008).

While existing studies have documented the prevalence of physical and sexual violence in marriage in India, including among the young, little work has been done to explore the factors that place women at risk of experiencing violence. The ecological framework (Heise, 1998) has been increasingly accepted as a useful one to understand this extremely complex phenomenon; it recognizes, for example, the possible interplay of individual, familial, relational, societal and community factors that combine to place women at risk of violence within marriage. Individual factors include, for example, life cycle indicators and husband's alcohol use. The immediate familial context in which violence takes place includes characteristics of the couple, such as extent of marital conflict and husband-wife communication on the one hand, and intergenerational exposure to domestic violence and presence of others in the family on the other. At the next level, are factors at the community level, including community wealth, attitude towards violence against women and level of crime in the community. Finally, societal factors are held to influence violence, such as, for example, gender norms, levels of overall violence, laws and systems addressing violence against women. In short, the ecological framework combines factors from these several levels to explain why some individuals and some societies are more violent than others.

A large number of studies exist worldwide that attempted to explain several of these factors and their interplay with violence against women.

Several individual level factors have been consistently identified as risk or protective factors in studies in both developed and developing countries. Significant risk factors include a woman's relative young age (Suitor et al. 1990; Kim and Cho 1992; Bachman et al. 1995; O'Campo 1995; Schuler et al. 1996; Haj-Yahia 2000; Black et al. 1999; Hadi 2000; Koenig et al. 2003; 2004; Naved et al. 2005) and early age at marriage (Khan et al. 1996; Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Joshi et al. 2001; Jejeebhoy and Bott 2003). Another frequently observed risk behaviour is husband's consumption of drug or alcohol (for example, see Jewkes et al. 2002; Rao 1997; van der Straten et al. 1998; Watts et al. 1998; Koenig et al 2003; 2004; Acharya et al. 2005). Also consistently observed is the protective effect of education (both husband's and wife's) on physical and sexual violence (O'Campo 1995; Hadi 2000; Koenig et al. 2003; 2004; Naved et al. 2005; Koenig et al 2006); likewise, the number of living sons in South Asia (Rao 1997; Schuler et al. 1996) are found to have protective influence on marital violence. A number of studies in India and elsewhere have, likewise, highlighted the role that female autonomy plays in protecting women from marital violence (Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Hindin and Adair 2002; Acharya et al. 2005; Jejeebhoy 1998; Koenig et al. 2003). Other factors – women's paid work experience and participation in group activities – have been observed to be protective in some studies and to pose a risk in others (see for example Acharya et al. 2005; Naved 2005 for findings relating to economic activity; and Levinson 1989; Naved 2005; Schuler et al. 1998; Rahman 1999; Kabeer 2001 for findings relating to group participation).

Several family level factors are observed to exacerbate or inhibit the likelihood of physical and sexual violence within marriage. For one, while violence against women is seen to cut across socio-economic classes of the society, particularly so for sexual violence, many authors have found that women from poor family are disproportionately affected (Straus et al. 1980; Hotaling and Sugarman 1989; Straus

and Smith 1990, Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Ellsberg 1999; Martin et al. 1999; ICRW 2000; Koenig et al. 2003). Another frequently observed risk factors include intergenerational exposure to violence – either witnessing violence among parents or experiencing violence in childhood (Caesar 1988; Hotaling and Sugarman 1986; Sugarman and Hotaling 1989; Kalmuss 1984; Straus and Gelles 1990; Ellsberg et al. 1999; Jewkes et al. 2002; Martin et al. 2002). Greater intimacy and communication between partners is believed to reduce marital conflict and, as a consequence, both physical and sexual violence (Berns et al. 1999, Gordis et al. 2005; Naved 2005; Joshi et al. 2001; Khan et al. 1996; George 2002). Living arrangements have also been observed to influence risk of violence; contrary to the common belief that the extended structure of family is source of marital conflict in family, some studies in India suggest that the presence of others deters perpetration of violence (Visaria 1999; Koenig 2003) as does the availability of or support from the wife's natal kin (Nelson and Zimmerman 1996; Rao 1997 George 2003; Ouattara et al. 1998). Finally, studies in India have observed an inverse association between the amount of dowry paid and the experience of marital violence (Rao 1997; Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Acharya et al. 2005; Naved et al. 2005).

As far as community and societal level influences on marital violence are concerned, evidence is limited and inconsistent. A significant association has been observed, for example, between community-level crime rates, poverty levels, female status and domestic violence levels on the one hand, and risks of marital violence on the other (O'Campo 1995; Cunradi et al. 2000; Koenig et al. 2003; McQuestion 2003), however, these associations have not been consistently observed (Koenig et al. 2006).

Study setting

The study was conducted in both rural and urban settings of six states in India, namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu in order to fill gaps in what is known about youth transitions in India. Although only 6 out of 30 states of India were covered in the study, young people in these states together account for about two-fifths of the total youth population in the country (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2001a). Moreover, distributions of the youth population in these six states by age, level of literacy, religion, caste and marital status were fairly similar to that of the youth population nationally.

Nevertheless, reflecting the wide diversity that exists in the country, the six states differed from each other in many respects. Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are among the more economically progressive states in the country, accounting for 7-13% each of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while Bihar, Jharkhand and Rajasthan are among the less developed states, accounting for only 2-4% each of the national GDP (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2008). Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are among the most urbanised states, with over two-fifths of their total population living in urban areas. In contrast, 85-90% of the populations of Bihar, Jharkhand and Rajasthan reside in rural areas (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2001a). These three states also represent settings in which women's status is particularly low and gender relations grossly inequalitarian. Child marriages are extremely common in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Rajasthan and somewhat common in Maharashtra; between two-fifths and two-thirds of young women aged 20-24 were married before age 18 in these five states, compared to just over one-fifth in Tamil Nadu. Likewise, between one-seventh and one-fourth of 15-19 year-old girls had begun childbearing in these five states, compared to just 8% in Tamil Nadu (IIPS and Macro International, 2007).

Methodology

Study design

The study comprised three phases: a pre-survey qualitative phase, a survey and post-survey in-depth interviews with selected survey respondents. Data presented in this paper are drawn from the survey.

The survey focused on married and unmarried young women and unmarried young men aged 15-24 and, because of the paucity of married young men in the younger ages, married men aged 15-29. The study treated rural and urban areas as independent sampling domains and a systematic, multi-stage sampling design was adopted to draw sample areas independently for each of these two domains. In order to avoid potential risks associated with interviewing both women and men from the same primary sampling unit (PSU)¹, interviews were conducted in separate but neighbouring PSUs for female and male respondents. In each PSU, households to be interviewed were selected by systematic sampling. Within each selected household, no more than one married and one unmarried respondent was interviewed. In case more than one married or unmarried respondent was found in the household, one respondent was selected randomly, and no replacement of the respondent selected was allowed.

Fieldwork was undertaken in two phases (in Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu during 2006-07 and Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan during 2007-08). In a total of 174,037 households that were enumerated, 50,848 youth were successfully interviewed (8,052 married young men, 11,522 unmarried young men, 13,912 married young women and 17,362 unmarried young women). Response rates for individual interviews were in the range of 84-86%.²

The development of the survey instrument was informed by other survey instruments and insights obtained in the pre-survey qualitative phase; the questionnaire was finalized after extensive pre-testing. The questionnaire contained extensive sets of questions on experiences (women) and perpetration (men) of physical and sexual violence in marriage, adapting questions used in the NFHS (IIPS and Macro International 2007). Other questions of relevance to this paper included those relating to background characteristics, parental interaction, gender role attitudes and self-efficacy, connectedness and friendship, pre-marital sexual relationships, marriage process and married life, substance use and violence, media exposure and participation in civil society and political life.

Data presented in this paper are restricted to 8,052 married young men aged 15-29 and 13,912 married young women aged 15-24.

Variables and analytical methods

Following from the ecological framework and the literature discussed earlier, we included several predictors at multiple levels in our models that explore the determinants of physical and sexual violence among married young women and men. A list of variables and their measurements is presented in Appendix table.

Our main dependent variables are physical and sexual violence recently experienced by married young women or perpetrated by married young men. In our survey, a battery of questions was asked of young men about the perpetration of physical and sexual violence on their wife, and of young women about its experience. Questions relating to physical violence included whether the young man had ever slapped his wife, twisted her arm/pulled her hair, pushed/shook/throw something at her, punched her with his fist or something else, kicked/dragged/beat her, tried to choke/burn her on purpose, or threatened or attacked her with a knife, gun, or any other weapon, and correspondingly whether the young woman had experienced any of these forms of physical violence perpetrated by her husband. Youth who reported ever having experienced or perpetrated any of these forms of violence

¹ In rural areas, a Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) refers to a village or a group of several small villages and in urban areas it refers to a census enumeration block.

² The main reason for non-response was that the respondent was not at home; fewer than one percent of respondents refused to participate in the interview.

were asked whether they had done so in the 12 months preceding the survey and if yes, how frequently. Questions relating to sexual violence included whether the young man had ever perpetrated, and the young woman experienced forced sex on the wedding night or at any time during their marriage. As in the case of physical violence, those reporting having experienced or perpetrated sexual violence were asked whether it had occurred in the 12 months preceding the interview.

At the individual and spousal levels, we included educational attainment as measured by years of schooling successfully completed by the respondent and his/her spouse, the age at marriage of the young woman or wife of the young man, work status (defined as whether the young woman or wife of the young man had worked for wages in the year preceding the interview), and rural-urban residence.

Agency was measured only for young women and included their decision-making authority, access to money and sense of self efficacy. Decision-making authority comprised a dichotomous variable set to equal 1 if the young women reported that she usually made decisions on how to spend money and buying clothes for herself and zero if not; access to money also comprised a dichotomous variable that equalled one if the woman reported having saved money from her income, gifts etc and zero if not; and a sense of self-efficacy assessed whether or not the young woman perceived that prior to marriage she would have been able to confront her parents if she did not approve a match selected by them.

Two indicators reflecting young men's lifestyles were also included. The first measured the husband's alcohol consumption, captured by a dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the young man reported alcohol consumption or the young woman reported alcohol consumption by her husband, and 0 otherwise. It also included, just for men, a dichotomous indicator reflecting whether or not they had engaged in extra-marital sexual relations.

Finally, in order to capture husband-wife relations, we have constructed a dichotomous variable which takes the value of 1 if the respondent reported that s/he had visited the wife's natal home together with the spouse in the six months preceding the interview, and zero otherwise.

At the family level, several indicators were constructed. We assessed the extent to which the respondent reported gendered socialisation experiences. Gendered socialisation was measured by a dichotomous variable set to equal one if married young women reported that they had less freedom to move around, or were expected to do more housework than their brothers or male cousins; and if young men reported that they had more freedom or were expected to do less housework than their sisters or female cousins. Household economic status was measured by a wealth index, composed of household asset data on ownership of selected durable goods, including means of transportation, as well as a number of amenities. The wealth index was constructed by allocating appropriate scores to a household's reported assets or amenities; the value of the index ranged from 0 to 54. Last, we included mother's literacy (a dichotomous variable) to reflect the household's socio-economic situation while the young person was growing up. Also included were two indicators reflecting intergenerational exposure to violence: whether or not the respondent had witnessed their father beating their mother, and whether or not the respondent had been beaten by a parent anytime after age 12.

Our analysis also included two community-level variables, constructed by aggregating the responses of young men and women, respectively, at community level: a) poverty, that is, average standard of living of the respondent's neighbourhood; and b) young men's engagement in violence in the community, represented by the percentage reporting that young men in their community engaged in violence. In constructing all of these measures, individual responses were aggregated at the primary sampling unit level (a total of 881 and 898 for young men and women, respectively). The index case was removed while aggregating individual responses (the jackknife method).

Finally, in order to capture the heterogeneity in socio-cultural conditions represented by our six states, a variable reflecting region was constructed, and set to equal 1 for respondents from southern or western states (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu from the south and Maharashtra from the west) and 0 if they were from northern states (Bihar, Jharkhand and Rajasthan).

Analysis

Univariate analysis was first carried out to calculate the proportion of young women who had experienced, and the proportion of young men who had perpetrated physical and/or sexual violence, and the timing of the first time they had experienced or perpetrated violence within marriage, and its frequency.

Thereafter multivariate analysis is performed to assess the correlates/determinants of marital violence. As described above, our outcome variable, physical or sexual violence experienced (women) or perpetrated (men) in the 12 months period preceding the interview, is dichotomous and hence logistic regression analysis was performed. Since our data are hierarchically structured, with individuals nested in communities, and since the characteristics of individuals within each community are likely to be similar (ie., the intra-community correlation is expected to be more than 0) we have used a two-level logit model with parameters adjusted for community-level correlation and unobserved heterogeneity. Analyses were performed separately for young women and men.

Findings

Selected characteristics of surveyed youth, presented in Table 1, suggest that married young men and women were similar in terms of rural-urban residence, religion, caste, household economic status and maternal education levels. They were, however, different on several characteristics. Married young men were, on average, four years older than married young women (25 and 21 years, respectively). Differences were also evident in terms of education, with young men reporting, on average, three more years of education than young women (8 and 5, respectively). In terms of women's work, while 31% of young women reported that they had been engaged in paid work in the year prior to the interview, just 16% of husbands reported that their wife had done so.

Between one-quarter and one-third of young men and husbands of young women reported ever having consumed alcohol or taken drugs. About 4% of married young men revealed that they had an extramarital sexual relationship.

As far as young women's agency is concerned, two-thirds of young women made decisions pertaining to spending money and buying clothes, over two-fifths (43%) perceived no difficulty in confronting parents if they did not like the match that their parents had had chosen for them, and just 36% reported having some savings, reflecting their limited access to financial resources. Although we have not included young men's agency in our analysis, we note that young men were considerably more likely than young women to report decision-making authority, but were about as likely to report self-efficacy and access to resources.

As far as husband-wife interaction is concerned, three quarters or more youth reported that they had accompanied their spouse to the wife's natal home in the six months preceding the interview.

Family life while youth were growing up was characterised by gendered socialization and family instability for many. For example, some 43-46% of young men and women reported that boys in their family had more freedom and was required to do less housework than girls, and more than one-fifth of both young men and women reported that they had witnessed their father beating their mother. Experiencing violence at the hands of their parents was however reported by far more young men than women (45% and 17%, respectively).

Finally, findings suggest that the majority of youth (70-71%), irrespective of sex, resided in villages or urban wards in which young men were perceived to engage in physical violence.

Prevalence

Table 2 presents data on the levels of lifetime and recent physical and sexual violence reported by married young women in the six Youth Study states. In total, one-quarter of young women reported experiencing physical violence over the course of their married lives. State-wise differences were relatively narrow. For example, experience of physical violence over the course of married life ranged from 18% in Rajasthan to 30% in Bihar. In contrast, sexual violence was experienced by more young women and state-wise variation was wide. In total, about one-third of young women reported the experience of sexual violence over the course of their married life, with women in northern states far more likely than those from Maharashtra and the southern states to so report (40-54% compared to 10-27%). In total, between roughly one-third and three-fifths of married young women reported the experience of physical or sexual violence in their marital life.

Recent experience of physical or sexual violence (in the 12 months preceding the interview) was reported by one-third of young women (33%): 22% reported the experience of physical violence and 17% of sexual violence. Women in the northern states and Tamil Nadu were, moreover, considerably more likely to have experienced physical or sexual violence (34-42%) in the 12 months preceding the interview than those in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh (24-28%).

Table 3 presents the percentages of young men who reported perpetrating physical and sexual violence on their wife over the course of their married life and in the 12 months preceding the interview. Findings suggest that in the case of physical violence, men's reports were similar to those of young women: 24% reported ever perpetrating physical violence on their wife in the course of married life and 19% reported doing so in the 12 months preceding the interview. State-wise differences were evident, with young men in Rajasthan least likely and those from Tamil Nadu most likely to report perpetration of physical violence over the course of their married life (14% and 34%, respectively), and in the 12 months preceding the interview (9% and 35%, respectively)

In contrast, young men's reports of perpetration of sexual violence differed considerably from young women's reports of its experience. Indeed, just 17% of young men reported that they had ever forced their wife to engage in sexual relations and just 6% reported that they had done so in the 12 months preceding the interview. In each state except Andhra Pradesh, young men were considerably less likely to report perpetrating sexual violence on their wife (Table 3) than were young women to report its experience (Table 2). For example, in Bihar, while 54% women reported ever experiencing sexual violence in marriage, only 25% men reported perpetrating sexual violence on their wife, and differences were similar in the remaining four states as well (40% vs. 23% in Jharkhand, 40% vs. 17% in Rajasthan, 27% vs. 9% in Maharashtra, and 25% vs. 15% in Tamil Nadu).

Findings on the duration between marriage and the first occurrence of violence among those who had cohabited for at least one year are reported in Table 4. Again, reports of initiation of physical violence were similar for young men and women: 11% and 10%, respectively, reported that they had experienced or perpetrated violence in the first year of marriage. Moreover, 13% of young women reported that they had experienced more than one form of physical violence perpetrated by their husbands, and 9% of young men reported that they had perpetrated more than one form of violence on their wife. As far as sexual violence is concerned, gender differences in reports of forced sex on the wedding night were wide: over one quarter of young women (27%) reported forced sex at initiation, whereas only 10% of young men reported that they had forced their wife to engage in sex the first time. State-wise differences with regard to physical violence within the first year of marriage were relatively narrow among young women 7-14% and somewhat wider among young men; indeed, fewer young men in northern settings (6-9%) reported perpetrating physical violence within the first year of marriage compared to 10-21% in Maharashtra and the southern states. State-wise variation in percentages reporting more than one form of physical violence was, in contrast, narrow for both young men (4-14%) and young women (9-16%). Finally, sexual violence on the first night, like sexual violence more generally, was considerably more likely to have been experienced and perpetrated by young women and men, respectively, in northern settings (33-49% and 13-15%) than those in Maharashtra and the southern states (6-23% and 4-9%, respectively).

Correlates

Tables 5 and 6 present odds ratios from multilevel logistic regression analyses exploring factors underlying the experience of physical and sexual violence among young women (Table 5) and their perpetration by young men (Table 6). Findings suggest that individual, family and contextual factors do indeed play a role in determining the risk of or protection from violence within marriage, but that the relative contributions of various explanatory factors differ by type of violence (physical or sexual) and among men and women.

Correlates of violence among married young women: Table 5 shows that several factors were significantly associated with both physical and sexual violence experienced by young women. At the individual level, delayed age at marriage, decision-making and self-efficacy played a significant protective role. Indeed, women who made decisions were significantly less likely than those who did not to have experienced each form of violence, and those who reported self-efficacy were considerably less likely than others to experience violence. For example, the risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence was 20-25% lower among young women who reported self efficacy than those who did not so report. At the same time, husband's consumption of alcohol or drugs exacerbated women's risk of facing both forms of violence -- indeed, the risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence were elevated 2.9 and 1.5 times if the husband was reported to have consumed alcohol or drugs. So did women's work: working women were 1.2-1.3 times as likely as non-working women to have suffered sexual and physical violence, respectively, in the year preceding the interview. Finally, other individual level indicators such as years of education attained, urban residence and extent of spousal interaction protected women against physical but not sexual violence; and conversely, access to savings protected women from sexual but not physical violence.

Family level factors also play an important role. Young women whose socialization experiences were gendered were significantly (1.3-1.4 times) more at risk of having experienced both forms of violence as were those whose socialisation was more egalitarian. The economic status of the young woman's marital household was found to have a consistent negative relationship with the experience of physical violence, but was unrelated with the experience of sexual violence.

Community-level factors representing the immediate context in which married youth live were inconsistently associated with women's experience of violence. For example, the standard of living of the neighbourhood in which the young woman resided was unrelated with the risk she faced of marital violence. However, young women who lived in a neighbourhood in which young men engaged in physical violence were significantly more likely (odds ratio 2.2) to have experienced physical violence, but only mildly and insignificantly more likely to have experienced sexual violence, than were those who did not live in such neighbourhoods.

The larger social context, represented by region, also influenced young women's risk of violence within marriage; however the directions of the association varied. Compared to young women from the northern states, the relative risk of experiencing physical violence was found to be 1.8 times higher among respondents from Maharashtra or the southern states; however, the risk of experiencing sexual violence was significantly less likely among those from Maharashtra and the southern states compared to those from the northern states.

Correlates of the perpetration of violence by young men: As evident from Table 6, a somewhat different set of explanatory variables was used in assessing factors influencing the perpetration of physical and sexual violence among young men: notably, indicators measuring agency were excluded and those reflecting violence while growing up and experience of extra-marital sexual relations were included. Findings suggest that two individual level factors were important. Young men who consumed alcohol or drugs were 2.5 and 1.5 times as likely to have perpetrated physical and sexual violence on their wife as were those who had not done so, and those who reported extra-marital sexual relations were 2.6 and 4 times as likely to have done so, respectively. Several more factors were important correlates of the perpetration of physical violence: wife's marriage age, respondent's education and wife's education levels had a significant inverse effect on perpetration of physical

violence, and, as in young women's experience, those who had a working wife were more likely than others to perpetrate physical violence on her than other men.

Among family level factors, young men who had witnessed parental violence in childhood were significantly more likely – 1.9 and 2.6 times -- than others to perpetrate both forms of violence on their wife. Again, other family level factors were significant in explaining physical but not sexual violence. For example, young men who were beaten by their parents in childhood or adolescence were significantly more likely to perpetrate violence on their wife, as were those whose socialisation was gendered and those whose mother had never been to school. Household economic status was, in contrast, unrelated to the perpetration of both forms of violence.

Community-level factors were also more likely to explain the perpetration of physical than sexual violence. For example, young men residing in economically better off neighbourhoods were clearly less likely to perpetrate physical violence on their wife; and conversely, those residing in neighbourhoods in which young men engaged in physical violence were significantly more likely to have done so (odds ratio 3.1).

Finally, the influence of the larger social context, that is, region, was similar to that observed among young women. Compared to young men from the northern states, those from Maharashtra and the southern states were significantly more likely to perpetrate physical violence on their wife (odds ratio 1.7) but significantly less likely to perpetrate sexual violence on her (odds ratio 0.3).

Discussion

Findings clearly suggest that marital life of youth was not free from violence; indeed, a considerable proportion of married young women (25%) reported the experience of physical violence perpetrated by their husbands, a finding corroborated by men's report of perpetration of physical violence on their wife (24%). State differentials in reported experience and perpetration of physical violence were narrow. Indeed, proportions of young women who experienced physical violence were comparable with those observed in other studies (IIPS and Macro International, 2007).

The picture with regard to sexual violence is somewhat different. For one, sexual violence was experienced by a larger proportion of young women (32%) than was physical violence and regional variation was wide. Indeed, between 40% and 54% of young women in the three northern states reported the experience of sexual violence, compared to between 10% and 27% of those in Maharashtra and the southern states. Second, young men were considerably less likely than young women to report the perpetration of sexual violence (just 17%) and this was so in almost every state; we argue that the attitude that sex is a husband's right that is prevalent in much of India may have resulted in these significantly differing perspectives. Third, proportions of young women reporting the experience of sexual violence within marriage are much larger than what was reported in the National Family Health Survey-3 (IIPS and Macro International, 2007), perhaps the result of the detailed probing that was undertaken in the Youth Study and the fact that questions about forced sex were framed in a more general set of questions inquiring about forced sexual experience in NFHS-3.

Our findings have also confirmed that the onset of violence was early, within the first year of marriage for many, and in the case of sexual violence, from sexual initiation for many. Physical violence was sustained, in that we observed little difference in proportions reporting lifetime violence and violence in the 12 months preceding the interview. Sexual violence, in contrast, was less likely to have occurred in the 12 months preceding the interview than over the course of married life, and was most likely to have been reported early in married life.

The Youth Study has identified a number of factors that influenced young women's experience and young men's perpetration of physical and sexual violence within marriage, but reiterates that these correlates were different for physical and sexual violence, and for perpetration by young men and experience of young women. Many of our findings support those observed in other settings, and corroborate that a number of factors putting women at risk of experiencing violence also play a

significant role in exacerbating the perpetration of violence by young men. Several notable findings were observed.

The most consistent finding was the role of gender imbalances, young women's agency and norms of masculinity in influencing the experience and perpetration of violence within marriage. As others have noted (see, for example, Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Hindin and Adair 2002; Acharya et al. 2005; Jejeebhoy 1998; Koenig et al. 2003), women's autonomy plays a significant role in protecting women from marital violence: indeed, all three indicators of women's autonomy, namely their decision-making autonomy, their access to resources and their self-efficacy were, for the most part, consistent and powerful factors protecting women from both physical and sexual violence within marriage. Likewise, delayed age at marriage played a prominent role in protecting young women from violence within marriage, likely because of the greater agency associated with delayed marriage (Khan et al. 1996; Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Joshi et al. 2001; Jejeebhoy and Bott 2003). At the same time, gendered socialisation, or the extent to which young men grew up with greater freedom and fewer expectations of housework than their sisters and young women grew up with less freedom and greater work expectations than their brothers, also played a consistently important role; gendered socialisation exacerbated the risk of violence among young women and the likelihood of its perpetration among young men. Finally, youth residing in contexts characterised by traditional displays of masculinity – communities in which young men engaged in violence – were consistently more likely to experience (young women) and perpetrate (young men) physical violence. All of this evidence suggests that where gender disparities persist, where men are brought up with a strong sense of male rights over women, and young women are brought up to be submissive and are denied a voice in their own life, violence within marriage ensues.

Also consistently observed was the role of intergenerational exposure to violence – either witnessing violence among parents or experiencing violence in childhood in promoting the perpetration of physical and sexual violence by young men on their wife, a finding also observed in other studies in a host of settings (Caeser 1988; Hotaling and Sugarman 1986; Sugarman and Hotaling 1989; Kalmuss 1984; Straus and Gelles 1990; Ellsberg et al. 1999; Jewkes et al. 2002; Martin et al. 2002). Indeed, our findings suggest that young men who had witnessed their father beating their mother were, in turn, more likely to perpetrate physical and sexual violence on their wife, and those who had been beaten by a parent in childhood or adolescence were, likewise, more likely than others to perpetrate physical violence on their wife. These findings suggest that young men learn from their parents about how to cope with conflict and use similar strategies with their own wife.

Men's lifestyle indicators also played a key role in their perpetration of violence within marriage. Young men who consumed alcohol or took drugs were consistently more likely to perpetrate both forms of violence on their wife, and young women whose husband did so were more likely to experience marital violence. These findings have also been frequently documented (Jewkes et al. 2002; Rao 1997; van der Straten et al. 1998; Watts et al. 1998; Koenig et al. 2003; 2004; Acharya et al. 2005). Less frequently reported is men's extra-marital sexual behaviour as a factor influencing the perpetration of marital violence, a finding strongly reflected in our study.

Women's economic activity has been observed in the literature to be both a risk and a protective factor for marital violence. Work in some studies has been observed to provide women the agency that acts as a deterrent to the perpetration of violence by their husband. Our findings however support other studies that have observed that women's paid work heightens their risk of marital violence (see, for example Acharya et al. 2005; Naved 2005). Indeed, our findings suggest that in a generally conservative culture such as that prevailing in India, a working wife may be unacceptable and perceived as a threat to masculinity, thereby elevating the risk of marital conflict and violence.

Limitations

Our study has several limitations. First, given the cross-sectional nature of our data, we are unable to infer causation or address temporal ordering. Although we made efforts to ensure temporal sequencing – for example, our outcome variable was recent violence (within the year prior to the interview), several of our predictors lack specificity in reference to time and we cannot assume that all

our explanatory did indeed reflect the period prior to the violent incident (for example, measures such as indicators representing women's agency, woman/wife's paid work, or husband's consumption of alcohol or drugs).

A second limitation concerns the measurement of sexual violence. Our study probed whether the husband had ever "forced" his wife to have sex, and whether this had happened in the 12 months preceding the interview. We acknowledge that respondents may have interpreted the term "forced" in different ways, and that young men and women may have interpreted it in different ways, resulting in the wide gender difference in reporting observed.

Thirdly, we cannot completely rule out the possibility of bias resulting from differential reporting by married young men and women in our study. It is possible that some associations that are reported may be a function of a greater or less willingness among respondents to report incidence of violence rather than true differentials. This is particularly so with sexual violence, which is likely to carry significant social stigma.

Conclusions

Despite these limitations, our study has made several contributions to understanding of the key factors influencing the experience and perpetration of physical and sexual violence within marriage. It has identified an expanded set of factors that may explain young people's risk of experiencing or perpetrating marital violence; it has explored the perspectives of both young men and women and identified several common risk and protective factors; and it has highlighted that violence is initiated early in marriage and continues into marriage for considerable proportions of youth in each state.

The finding that gender issues – women's agency, gendered socialisation, community level indicators reflecting traditional notions of masculinity – are key factors explaining the experience and perpetration of violence in marriage calls for programmes that break down traditional norms about masculinity and femininity among the young, and that build girls' agency including their ability to exercise choice and negotiate wanted outcomes for themselves. Findings of the links between young men's lifestyle – alcohol and drugs, and sexual relations outside of marriage – and perpetration of violence suggest that these programmes must also address male lifestyle issues and their adverse implications. Finally, the finding of intergenerational transmission of violence is a finding that has implications for programmes that inform parents about their role in perpetuating violence, and encourage greater family stability when children are growing up.

Our findings also have methodological implications, particularly with regard to sexual violence reporting -- more research is needed that explores factors underlying the variation between states in the prevalence of sexual violence and seeks a better understanding of how questions relating to sexual violence were interpreted and can be posed in ways that do not permit differential interpretation.

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Table 1: Selected background characteristics of surveyed married young women and men

Characteristics	Married women (N=13,912)	Married men (N=8,052)
Mean age (in years)	20.7	25.1
Age at marriage (in years)	16.1	20.8
Median years of schooling completed	5.0	8.0
Median years of schooling completed by spouse	8.0	5.0
Woman's/wife's paid work (%)	31.2	16.1
Residing in rural area (%)	78.0	76.1
Religion (%)		
Hindu	85.1	86.5
Muslim	9.5	9.4
Other religion	5.4	4.1
Caste (%)		
Scheduled castes	21.5	22.5
Scheduled tribes	7.4	11.6
Other backward castes	52.2	48.6
General castes	18.1	16.7
Decision-making autonomy: takes decisions on spending money and buying clothes (%)	67.5	92.4
Access to resources: Has some savings (%)	35.6	35.1
Self-efficacy: Would have been able to confront parents if s/he disapproved of marriage plans (%)	42.9	37.9
Husband/Man consumed alcohol or drug (%)	22.6	36.1
Spousal interaction: visited woman's/wife's natal home with spouse in the six months period prior to survey (%)	72.7	78.1
Witnessed parental violence in childhood (%)	21.6	22.0
Experienced violence at the hands of parents (%)	17.0	44.8
Extra-marital relations (%)	-	3.9
Had gendered socialization experience while growing up	45.7	43.3
Household standard of living (mean index value)	15.2	16.1
Mother's education: Literate (%)	19.4	15.9
Community perception about young men's engagement in violence: Young men engaged in violence (%)	70.8	70.2

Table 2: Prevalence of physical and sexual violence within marriage as experienced by married young women (age 15-24)

	Bihar	Jharkhand	Rajasthan	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	All States
% reported lifetime experience of violence by husband							
Any	59.4	51.6	43.2	41.6	28.9	42.1	44.1
Physical	29.7	27.0	18.4	26.9	22.9	27.0	25.3
Sexual	53.7	39.7	39.8	27.3	10.3	25.3	32.2
Number of respondents	2,237	2,660	2,381	1,942	2,326	2,006	13,549
% reported physical or sexual violence by husband in the last 12 months							
Any	42.1	34.9	35.5	28.0	23.5	34.0	32.6
Physical violence	25.0	22.2	15.5	25.1	19.9	26.5	22.3
Sexual violence	27.2	19.2	27.6	8.4	5.3	13.6	16.6
Number of respondents who cohabited for at least 12 months	2,017	2,461	2,181	1,714	2,089	1,758	12,220

Table 3: Prevalence of physical and sexual violence within marriage as perpetrated by married young men (age 15-29)

	Bihar	Jharkhand	Rajasthan	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	All states
% reported lifetime experience of violence by husband							
Any	42.5	40.6	22.8	28.7	27.3	41.7	32.5
Physical	29.7	27.0	13.5	24.8	19.7	34.3	23.9
Sexual	24.8	23.4	17.2	8.5	14.7	14.7	16.7
Number of respondents	1,072	1,246	1,712	1,057	1,404	1,321	7812
% reported physical or sexual violence by husband in the last 12 months							
Any	27.9	27.3	13.0	19.7	20.2	37.1	22.8
Physical	20.2	22.3	8.8	19.5	17.4	35.4	19.0
Sexual	11.0	8.4	6.5	1.4	4.8	4.1	6.0
Number of respondents who cohabited for at least 12 months	955	1,143	1,533	892	1,247	1,119	6,889

Table 4: Timing of first experience/perpetration of physical and sexual violence within marriage and percentage experienced/perpetrated more than one form of physical violence

	Bihar	Jharkhand	Rajasthan	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	All States
% Experienced	Married women (15-24)						
Physical violence within first year of marriage	9.4	8.8	7.4	14.3	7.0	12.5	9.8
More than one form of physical violence	16.4	13.7	8.9	14.2	13.1	12.0	13.3
Sexual violence on the wedding night	48.7	35.3	32.8	22.5	5.6	19.9	27.0
% Perpetrated	Married men (15-29)						
Physical violence within first year of marriage	8.4	8.5	5.9	17.9	9.5	20.9	11.3
More than one form of physical violence	13.9	8.8	4.4	9.3	8.5	8.0	9.1
Sexual violence on the wedding night	13.1	15.0	13.5	4.3	7.6	8.2	9.8

Table 5: Odds ratios from multilevel logistic regression for young married women experiencing physical and sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the survey

	Experienced physical violence in the last 12 months	Experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months
Individual		
Age at marriage	0.957***	0.961**
Respondent's education	0.977**	0.995
Husband's education	0.998	1.000
Respondent's paid work (Ref. - No)	1.258***	1.146*
Place of residence (Ref. - Rural)	0.844*	0.991
Decision-making autonomy (Ref. - None)	0.898*	0.828***
Access to resources: Has some savings (Ref. - No savings)	0.996	0.738***
Self-efficacy: Would have been able to confront parents if she disapproved of marriage plans (Ref. - No)	0.757***	0.805***
Husband consumes drug/alcohol (Ref. - No)	2.912***	1.514***
Spousal interaction: Together went to wife's natal home (Ref. - No)	0.837**	1.121
Family context		
Household wealth quintile (Ref. - 1 st quintile)		
2 nd Quintile	0.931	1.019
3 rd Quintile	0.818*	1.031
4 th Quintile	0.690***	0.915
5 th Quintile	0.548***	0.914
Had gendered socialization	1.315***	1.427***
Mother's education (Ref.- Illiterate)	1.009	0.870
Contextual factors (at PSU level)		
Standard of living (Mean)	0.995	1.007
Young men engaged in violence (Mean)	2.221***	1.232
Larger social context		
Region (Ref: North)		
West/South	1.808***	0.288***
N	12200	12200
Log-likelihood ratio	-5730.70	-5097.36
PSU level random intercept	0.488 (0.039)	0.632 (.043)

*p<= 0.05, **p<=0.01, ***p<=0.001

N: those who had cohabited for at least 12 months

Table 6: Odds ratios from multilevel logistic regression for young married men perpetrating physical and sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the survey

	Perpetrated physical violence in the last 12 months	Perpetrated sexual violence in the last 12 months
Individual		
Wife's age at marriage	0.951***	0.960
Respondent's education	0.979*	0.978
Wife's education	0.982*	1.013
Wife's paid work (Ref. - No)	1.416***	1.253
Place of residence (Ref. - Rural)	0.822	1.181
Consumes drug/alcohol (Ref. - No)	2.484***	1.450**
Has extra-marital relation	2.646***	3.978***
Spousal interaction: Together went to wife's natal home (Ref. - No)	1.007	1.164
Family context		
Witnessed parental violence in childhood	1.859***	2.612***
Beaten in childhood	1.681***	1.102
Household wealth quintile (Ref. - 1 st quintile)		
2 nd Quintile	0.924	0.952
3 rd Quintile	0.792	0.837
4 th Quintile	0.779	0.733
5 th Quintile	0.757	0.879
Had gendered socialization (Ref. - No)	1.187*	1.033
Mother's education (Ref.- Illiterate)	0.802*	0.941
Contextual factors (at PSU level)		
Standard of living	0.969***	0.995
Young men engaged in violence	3.135***	1.163
Larger social context		
Region (Ref: North)		
West/South	1.703***	0.340***
N	6866	6866
Log-likelihood ratio	-2918.14	-1360.42
PSU level random intercept	0.677 (0.059)	0.779 (0.104)

*p<= 0.05, **p<=0.01, ***p<=0.001

N: those who had cohabited for at least 12 months

Appendix 1: Description of variable used in the analysis

Variable	Measurement type	Codes/range
Woman's/wife's age at marriage	Continuous	Years
Respondent's education	Continuous	Years of schooling
Spouse's education	Continuous	Years of schooling
Woman's/wife's paid work status	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Place of residence	Categorical	Rural (reference category) Urban
Decisionmaking autonomy: Took decisions regarding spending money and buying clothes	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Access to resources: Has some savings	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Self-efficacy: Would have been able to confront parents if she disapproved of marriage plans	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Husband (for females) / self (for males) consumes alcohol	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Witnessed parental violence in childhood (for males only)	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Beaten by parents in childhood (for males only)	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Has extra-marital relations (for males only)	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Household standard of living index (quintile)	Categorical	1 st – poorest (reference category) 2 nd quintile 3 rd quintile 4 th quintile 5 th quintile - richest
Gendered socialization	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Mother's education	Continuous	Years of schooling
Husband accompanied wife to natal home	Categorical	No (reference category) Yes
Community standard of living (mean)	Continuous	%
Young men engaged in violence in community (mean)	Continuous	2.5 – 44.0
Region	Categorical	<i>North India</i> – Bihar/ Jharkhand/ Rajasthan (reference category) <i>West/South India</i> – Maharashtra/ Andhra Pradesh/Tamil Nadu