CHAPTER 5
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

The previous chapter dealt with the overall problem of domestic violence against women which is deeply rooted in the strict gender norms and patriarchal beliefs. This chapter ‘Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam’ specifically presents an analysis of the data collected in the field survey that examines the strong link between patriarchy and domestic violence. The chapter would also examine the role of the socio-economic status of women, their spouses and their family members exerting dominance in the power relations of a household, leading to violence. In connection with this chapter, it may be mentioned that from among the cases in the category of Cruelty by Husband and Relatives (Section 498-A of Indian Penal Code) in all the police stations of the two blocks namely Rani Development Block and Dimoria Development Block and one (All Women Police Station) of the urban centre namely Greater Guwahati Urban Area of Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam, 60 respondents were taken for study keeping in view various factors during the period 2008-2013. However the study does not claim that the cases are representative of the society as a whole but it can be rightly said that they represent a wide variety of issues concerned in connection with the problem of domestic violence against women in the Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam. Thus, before elucidating the nature and forms of domestic violence against women in the Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam, it is significant to have a detailed
understanding of the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of women victims, their husbands and their family members.

5.1 Socio-Demographic Features

The respondents for this study were sixty married women who volunteered to discuss their experiences of living in relationships marked by domestic violence. Women's age, education and occupation; husbands’ education and occupation; type and income of family have been taken into consideration for a socio-demographic profile of the respondents in understanding domestic violence.

5.1.1 Age of the Respondents

The frequency of domestic violence varies depending on the age of the victim. Of the sixty women represented in the survey, the maximum number of respondents i.e, 35 (58.33%) were in the age-group of 18-30 years, followed by 18 (30.00%) in the age group of 31-40 years and 7 (11.67%) in the age group of 41 years and above when they faced domestic violence. The data clearly reveals the fact that age is not a barrier for domestic violence and it can happen at any age level. However, it is obvious from the data that women between the age group of 18-30 years are at a higher risk of being subjected to domestic violence. Younger women are more likely to experience domestic violence because as women grow older, they gain more power and have increased access to resources. Moreover, women in their matured years were comparatively spared probably for reasons like men found it to be very embarrassing to abuse their wives in the presence of their grown up children and daughters-in-law. They may be afraid of being opposed by their grown up children or they might want to save their image in front of the daughters-in-law. Another important factor
explaining decreasing wife abuse with the advancement of age is that men generally
tend to mellow down to a large extent with the wane of physical strength and fear of
old age in terms of care and support.

5.1.2 Type of Family
The present study also examines the nature of families of the victims. It has been
found that although a few respondents belong to the nuclear families, joint families
were predominant. Parents and their unmarried children make a nuclear family; on the
other hand, a joint family is formed by the members of an extended family living
together. On the basis of the survey data of the present study, more than half of the
respondents 37(61.67%) reported that they have lived in joint families. As a result, all
of the violent incidents inflicted on them were reported to be perpetrated not only by
their husbands alone but also by their in-laws. The remaining 23(38.33%) of abused
women lived in nuclear families. Therefore, interviewees who have lived in joint
families have been found to be more exposed to domestic violence. The reason for
this might the fact that women have to conform to strict gender roles in a joint family
because of the presence of elders and in-laws and failure to adhere to the traditional
gender norms, often led to violence.

5.1.3 Religion, Caste, Language of the Respondents
It is seen from the study that domestic violence prevails among families irrespective
of religious beliefs and values. The religion of the respondents depicts that the
majority of them i.e., 35(58.33%) belong to Hinduism, followed by 19 (31.67%) who
are Muslims, three respondents (5%) follow Jainism and another three respondents
(5%) practice Christianity. Women from diverse linguistic backgrounds have been
found to experience domestic violence. The largest number of the women i.e, 32 (52.33%) speak Assamese and 21(35%) speak Bengali. A very small number 4 (6.67%) speaks Hindi and three respondents (5%) belong to linguistic communities other than those who speak Assamese, Bengali and Hindi. Domestic violence also transcends caste barriers. Many studies (Solidarity of the Nation Society, 2009; Babu and Kar, 2012; CARE India; 2006) revealed that domestic violence is more commonly seen among women belonging to all other Caste than the ‘General’ category of Caste. But the findings of the earlier studies are found contrary to those of the present study. As regards the number of the respondents, belonging to various caste categories, 27(45%) belong to the General Caste, 18(30%) belong to the Scheduled Castes, 10(16.67%)) belong to the Other Backward Classes and only 5(8.33%) belong to the Scheduled Tribes.

As per the survey, domestic violence appears to be higher among the Hindus; similarly it appears to be more in the Assamese speaking community. Another impression is that domestic violence is higher among the people of General Caste. However, it has to be mentioned that the survey had its limitations. Certainly, a wider survey will present a clearer picture.

5.1.4 Education of the Respondents and their Husbands

The level of education is one of the determining factors of domestic violence. A number of studies (Mahapatro et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2002; Vachhani et al., 2017) revealed that the prevalence of domestic violence decreases as the education level of women and their husbands increase. In fact, women who have higher level of education are found to be substantially less likely to experience domestic violence
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

while men’s higher education level also reduces the likelihood of occurrence of violence against their wives. However, in the study area, the data on educational qualification of the women and their husbands presents a different picture.

The educational qualifications of the respondents and their husbands have been grouped from the lowest to the highest level of education completed. In the case of the abused women, 17 (28.33%) have studied till Secondary Level, 21 (35%) up to Higher Secondary Level, 8 (13.33%) up to Upper Primary Level, 7 (11.67%) have graduated, 4 (6.67%) women have studied up to Lower Primary Level and 3 (5%) completed Post Graduation. No illiterate respondent has been found in the study. In the case of education of the respondents’ husbands, 24 (40%) have studied up to Secondary Level, 20 (33.33%) up to Higher Secondary Level, 8 (13.33%) up to Upper Primary Level, 4 (6.67%) are graduates and 4 (6.67%) completed Post Graduation. None of the respondent’s husbands were with Primary Level education or illiterate. Thus it was found that women among the respondents who are moderately educated are more prone to domestic violence and moderately educated husbands are more likely to commit violence.

5.1.5 Occupation of the Respondents and their Husbands

The occupational status of a woman and her husband also made significant difference on the prevalence of domestic violence in a family. Two important studies (Gaikwad et al., 2011; Centre for Women’s Studies & Development, 2005) indicated that the unemployed women are more vulnerable to domestic violence than employed women. The findings of these studies correlate with the findings of the present study in which the employment status of women has been found to have profound effect on domestic
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

violence. It was found that when the violence took place, a large number of the victims 45 (75%) were unemployed and 12 (20%) were employed and 3 (5%) were self-employed. Therefore, the dependence can be considered to be positively related with domestic violence against women. Those women who do not have independent source of income seem to be at greater risk of being abused. Those who are dependent on their husbands generally accept the roles assigned to women traditionally. As such, they do not normally question the authority and dominant position of their husbands in conjugal life. They even tolerate violence because they have to depend on their husband economically.

When these women were further asked about their present occupation, it came to be light that most of the women were unemployed while they were living with their husbands but when they were separated or divorced they started earning their livelihood as a strategy of survival. In analyzing the present occupation, 28 (46.67%) of the women were identified as employed, 25 (41.67%) as unemployed and 7 (11.67%) as self-employed. Therefore, most of the women who were unemployed during the period when they were abused admitted that being financially dependent on their partners was a serious factor for violence. But after their divorce or separation, they engaged in some job so that they could meet their financial requirements and be emancipated from male domination.

Similarly, some studies (Yugantar Education Society, 2003; Solidarity of the Nation Society, 2009) also associated domestic violence with the occupational status of the husbands. These studies revealed that unemployed husbands are more likely to commit violence against their wives, though the present study shows different results. The majority of the respondents, 35 (58.33%) reported that their husbands are
employed, followed by 22 (36.67%) whose husbands are self employed and only 3 (5%) reported that their husbands are unemployed.

### 5.1.6 Income of the Families

The present study also examines the income of the families as a factor that plays a significant role in the occurrence of violence against women in any household. The propensity of violence is generally found to be higher among families of low income. In view of the Barker (1999), in low income settings, mainstream sources of masculine identity like educational achievement or steady job are not easy to get, young men may be found to be more inclined to the violent or takes recourse to certain other behaviors of control in order to establish their manhood. The findings of Gelles (1997) arrived at the opinion that that low income and poverty were risk factors in general for victimization and abuse. Heise (1998) came to the conclusion that in poor families, there was a likelihood of violence occurring in poor families because of stress and struggle to earn one’s bread. Low income is one of the risk factors of domestic violence against women. However, the present survey has revealed different results contrary to the above studies. Out of all the respondent’s families, 7 (11.67 %) families have a monthly income between Rs 1000-5000, 7 (11.67%) have a monthly income between Rs 5000-10000, 19 (31.67%) have a monthly income between Rs 10000-20000, 17 (28.33%) have a monthly income 20000-30000, 6 (10%) have a monthly income 30000-50000 and 4 (6.67%) have a monthly above 50000. The data may indicate that the occurrence of domestic violence is higher among the middle income group.
This, however, does not mean that only Middle Class people are more prone to domestic violence. Because of the fear of social stigma and the over anxiousness to project a good family image before relatives and friends, many victims of domestic violence who belong to the higher strata of the society do not reveal their victimization. Interestingly, the same phenomenon is seen among the women of the lower strata. Many cases of violence that victimized them go unreported probably for various reasons. One such reason seems to be ignorance of the victims; another reason may be their willingness to suffer in silence; yet another reason seems to be their sense of self prestige.

5.2 Socio-demographic Features and its Relevance to Domestic Violence against Women

Domestic violence is a form of gender-based violence and prevalent in large parts of the world. Women of all ages and irrespective of their religion, language, caste, economic status, educational and occupational backgrounds and may face domestic violence. But the forms of such violence may vary with the socio-demographic background of the abused women.

5.2.1 Age of the Victims and Forms of Domestic Violence against Women

Women’s age is an important factor of domestic abuse. The prevalence of domestic violence is higher among the women of younger age and they are more likely to experience multiple forms of domestic violence. The four types of domestic violence - physical, mental, sexual and economic and their relation with the age of the abused women have been presented in the tables below:
Table 5.1: Types of Physical Violence and Age-Group of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Physical Violence</th>
<th>18-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>40 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pushing</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slapping</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening to Kill</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throwing Objects</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grabbing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaking</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Pulling</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punching</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choking</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm Twisting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beating with Stick</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2015

It is apparent from Table 5.1 that slapping is the most dominant form of violence that occurs highly in the age group of 18-30 years. Other forms including pushing, slapping, threatening to kill, throwing objects, grabbing, shaking, hair pulling, kicking, punching and beating with a stick are some of the common forms of physical violence found in all the three categories of ages of abused women. Choking, arm twisting and burning are some other forms of violence which are found against the women in the age-group of 18-30 years and 31-40 years but these forms of physical violence are not observed among the women in the age group of 41 years and above. In fact, only one case of biting is reported by a women belonging to the age-group of 18-30 years and no such cases has been found in other two age-groups of the women.
Table 5.2: Types of Mental Violence and Age-Group of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Mental Violence</th>
<th>18-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>40 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yelling</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrational Blaming for all Problems</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Threats</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Abusive Language</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant Criticism</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliation or Making Fun of Victims</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive Possessiveness</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Distrusts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of Family and Social Contacts</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation from Friends and Family</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulting or Ridiculing for not Bearing a Child or a Male Child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2015

Table 5.2 shows that out of the different forms of psychological violence, yelling is the most general form reported by women of all the three age-groups. Irrational blaming for all problems by their husbands and in-laws, verbal threats, use of abusive language, constant criticism, humiliation or making fun of victims when alone or in front of other members of the family or friends or public, control of social and family contacts of victims are found in all the age-group categories of various abused women. Moreover, these forms of violence are even found highly reported by the women in the age-group of 18-30 years. Excessive possessiveness, expressing distrusts in the victims, isolation of victims from friends and family, insulting or ridiculing for not bearing a child or a male child were some forms of mental violence inflicted upon respondent women of the age group 18-30 years and the age-group of
31-40 years and no such forms have been reported by the women of the age-group of 40 years and above.

**Table 5.3: Types of Sexual Violence and Age-Group of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Sexual Violence</th>
<th>18-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>40 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hurting on Sexual Parts of the Body</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced Sexual Contact</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force to Perform Sexual Acts that may be Degrading or Violate the Dignity of Women</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2015

It is observed from Table 5.3 that forced sexual contact is found to be the most widespread form in all the three categories of age-groups of the women respondents. The women of the age-group of 31-40 years who reported sexual violence are found to be more exposed to ‘forcing sexual contact’ or marital rape than the other two categories of sexual abuse such as hurting on sexual parts and forcing to perform sexual acts that may degrade a woman or violate her dignity. Respondents in the age group of 18-30 years have been found to be more exposed to sexual abuse such as hurting on sexual parts and forcing to perform sexual acts that may degrade a woman or violate her dignity. The number for the abuse of hurting on sexual part is 8 (22.86%) and that for forcing to perform sexual acts that may degrade a woman or violate her dignity is 5 (14.29%). It may be noted that ‘forcing sexual contact’ without consent of the spouse is called marital rape, and sometimes intimate or spousal rape. It is both a form of domestic violence and sexual abuse and is very common in India as ‘marital rape’ is not a criminal offence; marriage in India is a contract *inter alia* for legal sex, as well as other matters where the husband need not take the wife’s
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

consent or is free to impose himself on the spouse. This is generally because of high illiteracy rate, poverty, and the bond of marriage, strengthened by religion.

Table 5.4: Types of Economic Violence and Age-Group of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Economic Violence</th>
<th>18-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>40 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Amount of Support Money</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Basic Necessities of Life</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barring Access to One’s Own Income, Bank Accounts and Savings</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unauthorized Use of the Victim’s Money, Assets and Property</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevented to Work Outside the Home</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced to Work Outside the Home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 5.4 shows that insufficient amount of support money is the most highly reported economic violence revealed by women of all the three age-groups category of the interviewees. Women in all the three categories of age-groups are found to be denied of basic necessities of life and also forced to work outside the household. Other forms of economic violence such as barring access to one’s own income, bank accounts, and savings; unauthorized use of the victim’s money, assets or property; forcing and preventing from working outside the household are reported by only women in the age-group of 18-30 years and 31-40 years but women in the age-group of 40 years and above have been seldom found exposed to such forms of violence.
5.2.2 Type of Family and Forms of Domestic Violence

Table 5.5 Forms of Domestic Violence and Type of Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Domestic Violence</th>
<th>Nuclear Family</th>
<th>Joint Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

As per data displayed in Table 5.5, physical violence, 21 (91.30%) is found to be the highest form of violence that outnumbers any other form of violence and it occurs most in nuclear families. At the same time, sexual violence has also been found to be in highest number in nuclear families. As for the joint families, both psychological violence, 33 (89.19%) and economic violence, 24 (64.86%) occur in the highest number.

5.2.3 The Role of Religion, Language, Caste and Causes of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can occur irrespective of the caste, religious and linguistic backgrounds of the women. There are also certain discriminatory practices against women which are often defended on cultural, religious and traditional grounds. The religious values and customs not only play significant part in sustaining discriminatory practices against women but also help in justifying the subordinate status of women and also normalizing violence against women. The causes of domestic violence and its relation with religion, language and castes of the abused women have been presented in the tables below:
Table 5.6: Causes of Domestic Violence and Religion of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Jain</th>
<th>Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disobeying the Husbands and his In-laws</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Problems</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Related to Household Work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Related to Cooking</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-marital Affairs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygamy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 5.6 shows that among the Hindus, dowry happens to be the most common reason and the number of respondents is 27 (93.10%) for such abuse of women. Some other causes of domestic violence such as disobeying their husbands and in-laws, financial problems, issues related to household work and cooking are reported by all religious groups. These causes are also found to be highly reported by women of Hindu respondents. Interestingly, cases of violence against women arising out of financial problems were reported most by Muslim women. Alcoholism as a cause of violence is mostly reported by the Hindu respondents followed by Muslims, Christians and Jains. Of all the sixty respondents, polygamy as a cause of violence is reported by four respondents and three of these abused women belong to Islam and one of them belong to Hindu religion. No respondent belonging to Jainism has fallen a victim to suspicion and no Christian and Jain respondents are found to be troubled by extra-marital affairs of their spouses.
Table 5.7: Causes of Domestic Violence and Caste of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>General Caste</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>OBC</th>
<th>ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disobeying the Husbands and his In-laws</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Problems</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Related to Household Work</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Related to Cooking</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-marital Affairs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygamy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

It is observed from Table 5.7 that alcoholism is one of the major causes of abuse against women, 17 (94.44%) of Scheduled Caste. There was no respondent from the Schedule Tribe Category who reported that she was abused on the issues of childcare nor was extra marital affairs that led to violence in her family. Respondents from both Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes reported that polygamy was not an issue in their households leading to domestic violence. Disobeying their husbands and in-laws is most highly reported as a cause of domestic violence by respondents belonging to Other Backward Castes. Dowry, financial problems, issues related to cooking and childcare has been found to have caused domestic violence highly among the women of Schedule Castes. Women of the General Castes have reported highest number of leading to domestic violence because of suspicion and issues related to household work.
Table 5.8: Causes of Domestic Violence and Linguistic Background of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Assamese</th>
<th>Bengali</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disobeying the Husband and his In-laws</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Problems</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Related to Household Work</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Related to Cooking</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-marital Affairs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygamy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field Survey year

Table 5.8 shows that disobeying the husband and in-laws is the most common cause of abuse against Assamese speaking women among the respondents, 30 (93.75%). Some other causes of domestic violence such as issues related to household work, childcare and issues related to cooking are common among all the linguistic groups. These causes are also found to be mostly reported by the Assamese. Childcare as a cause of abuse is found from the results of the survey mostly among women who belong to linguistic communities that exclude the Assamese, Bengali and Hindi. The financial problem is a major issue among Bengali women, 16 (76.19%) and alcoholism as a cause of violence is mostly reported among the Assamese respondents followed by Hindi, Bengali and speakers of other languages. It is also observed that dowry and polygamy as causes of violence are highly reported by the interviewees.
No Hindi speaking respondents is found to be reporting suspicion and extra-marital affairs as a cause of violence.

5.2.4 The Relation of Education, Occupation, Income with Forms of Domestic violence

The level of education and occupation of the abused women and their husbands are some of the major determining factors of domestic violence against women. The figure of domestic violence against women varies with the educational attainment and occupation of the women and their spouses. The educational level and occupation of the abused women and their husbands in relation to the forms of domestic violence is presented below-

Table 5.9: Forms of Domestic Violence and Educational Background of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Illiterate</th>
<th>Lower primary</th>
<th>Upper primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Higher secondary</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Post Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

From Table 5.9 makes it clear that victims among the respondents with educational qualifications up to the Secondary Level are exposed to highest number of
incidents of physical violence, 20 (95.24%). The varied forms of domestic violence such as physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence are found to be common among women in all categories from Lower Primary to Post Graduation. The only exception is that no respondent in the category of Post-Graduate reported economic violence. It is also observed that economic violence decreases with the higher educational attainment of the respondents. No illiterate respondents are identified in the study.

Table 5.10: Forms of Domestic Violence and Educational Background of the Respondent’s Husband

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Respondent’s Husbands</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Lower primary</td>
<td>Upper primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Higher secondary</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source**: Field Survey, 2015

From Table 5.10, it can be seen that husbands of the respondents who read up to Secondary Level of education have been found to have committed physical violence, 22 (95.65%) of the highest degree while those who read up to the Higher Secondary have been found to have inflicted highest number of sexual violence, 19 (95.00%). Moreover, psychological violence, 21 (91.30%) and economic violence 6 (75%) are inflicted in the highest number by husbands who had education up to the
Secondary and Upper Primary Level respectively. Interestingly, it has been found that as the educational qualifications of the perpetrator increases, the number of economic acts of violence perpetrated by him decreases. Respondents in the category of Lower Primary level as well as illiterates were not found in the sample.

**Table 5.11: Forms of Domestic Violence and Employment Status of the Respondent and Respondent’s Husband**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Respondents Respondents’ Husbands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field Survey, 2015*

It is apparent from Table 5.11 that among all forms of domestic violence, sexual violence is one of the most common forms of violence among the respondents who are unemployed, 42 (93.33%). It is also surprising that psychological violence, 11 (91.67%) and economic violence, 10 (83.33%) are reported more by employed women than by the other two categories of occupational status. The few employed women who have acquired higher professional positions than those of their husbands are found to be psychologically abused because of the husbands’ frustration and also clash of ego with their wives. In some cases, the suspicious nature of the husbands also led them to have low perception of women’s character and this affected the
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

women more as they are employed. It is also observed that those among the respondents who are unemployed are more exposed to physical violence.

In the case of the respondents’ husbands, the largest number, 32 (91.43%) commit physical violence which is one of the most common forms of violence, are found to be employed. It is also found that physical violence, 20 (90.91%) and sexual violence, 20 (90.91%) are very highly inflicted by self-employed husbands. These respondents’ husbands abused their wives both physically and sexually; the majority of these abused women are found to be unemployed. Moreover, employed husbands highly commit economic violence against their wives.

Table 5.12: Forms of Domestic Violence and Monthly Family Income of the Respondent’s Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>1000-5000</th>
<th>5000-10000</th>
<th>10000-20000</th>
<th>20000-30000</th>
<th>30000-50000</th>
<th>50000 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The Table 5.12 shows that physical violence and psychological violence are reported by all the victimized women whose family income falls in the range of Rs 10000-Rs 20000. As for sexual violence, a very large number of respondents 15 (88.24%) whose family income ranges from Rs 20000- Rs 30000 reported to have been victimized by both their husbands and male in-laws. Economic violence has been found to be the highest among the women victims whose family income ranges from Rs 10000-Rs 20000 per month.
5.3 Position of Women in the Family

Some questions were also put up regarding their right to take decisions in matters relating to their life and issues concerning their families. These questions may not have direct relationship with domestic violence. Nevertheless, their information will help us analyze the factors that are instrumental in determining the subordinate status of women which often make women victims of domestic violence in their own families.

5.3.1 Decision- Making in Marital Affairs

19 (31.67%) respondents viewed that it was their own decision to get married and 41 (68.33%) said that it was not their own decision to get married. These forty-one abused women were further asked whose decisions made them marry. 35 (85.37%) of them said that their marriage had been decided by their parents. To quote a respondent:

My marriage was an arranged one and I married according to my parent’s wishes. I was never asked to talk to my prospective husband and was not able to know him before marriage. It was told by my parents that he was a descent fellow and he had got handsome income.\footnote{Interview with Sumi Roy (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 19 years, 29/3/2015}

In fact, the majority of the respondents said that it was usually the father who took all major decisions as to when and whom a daughter should get married to; her mother, too, had no say in this regard; only some opinions were taken into consideration in some matters related to the marriage. 5 (12.20 %) of them said that their marriage had been decided by their siblings either because of their father’s death or illness. To quote a respondent: ‘I wanted to carry on my study but as soon as my father died, I was forcefully married off to a boy arranged by the elder sister and
Only one (2.43%) of the respondents said that her marriage was decided by her relatives who were acting as guardians after her parents’ death. The respondent stated:

I was not ready to marry a man who was 23 years older than me but my relatives after my parent’s death forcefully made me marry a divorcee who was 42 years old and who had three children from his first wife.

The responses, thus brings to light how the female voice is muted in patriarchy on such an important and life-changing event of one’s life.

5.3.2 Decision-Making in Household Matters

When the women were asked as to who took decisions in household matters, 31 (51.67%) of them said that all important decisions regarding the household matter were taken jointly by the other members of the family. The women who responded in this way mostly lived in joint families. It is found that though decisions are taken jointly in joint families, it is usually the male members of the family who decide on household matters.

16 (26.67%) respondents said that decisions on matters of the household were exclusively taken by their husbands. These included education of their children, their health matter, marriage, share in property and some other matters concerning their families. Some of these women even stated that although in some cases they were informed about the issues decided by their husbands, there are others who said that they were not even informed but it came to their knowledge when it is discussed by other persons.

---

2 Interview with Putuli Patgiri (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 21 years, 22/7/2015
3 Interview with Binita Mali (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 19 years, 16/4/2015
Only 13 (21.67%) women said that the decisions were jointly taken by both the husband and the wife. Most of these women said that decisions were actually taken by their husbands but they did it after discussing and taking some opinion on matters of the household.

5.3.3 Decision- Making regarding Family Planning

Out of the 60 respondents, it is surprising to see that the majority of women, 27 (45%) said that they did not take recourse to any family planning method and, therefore, the question of family planning did not arise. 17 (28.33%) women said that both the husband and the wife jointly took decisions regarding the number of children they should have and when to have. 14 (23.33%) said that their husbands took the decision on family planning and 2 (3.33%) stated that their in-laws took the decision in this regard. One respondent stated:

I already have two daughters and I and my husband decided not to have any more children but my mother-in-law tortured me and my husband. She wanted me to conceive one more time to bear a son. So, I conceived one more time but unfortunately a baby girl was born. Since then, my husband and in-laws have been brutally torturing me to bring dowry from my parents because I gave birth to three daughters and huge amount of dowries will be required to marry them off.\(^4\)

No respondent was found in this survey who took any decision herself regarding family planning. It was observed that majority of these women do not have the freedom to decide how many children they want, when to have them, whether they can use contraception or terminate a pregnancy. Patriarchy, thus emerges to be a deciding factor that keeps recurring to have control even over women’s reproductive power.

---

\(^4\) Interview with Sonia Rajak (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 23 years, 9/8/2015
5.3.4 Ownership of Property

When the respondents were asked about the ownership of property, 57 (95%) said that they did not have any ownership of property and only 3 (5%) said that they owned a plot of land. When it was further inquired about the importance of an ownership of property for women, 23 (38.33%) replied that it was necessary for a woman to have a property of their own. Although these women replied in the affirmative, the majority of them further stated that the necessity arose only when a woman developed any problem with her husband. They stated that when their husbands tortured them both physically and mentally, they had to suffer from such violence for many years because if they left the husband house, there was no one to give them shelter. But if they had any ownership of property, they would not have to think of shelter and suffer from violence. A few of them also said that they could earn some money from rented house for day to day expenses and they would not have to ask their husbands for money in any situation- when living with them or after separation from them. One respondent reported:

I never thought of ownership of property. But when my husband and my in-laws started torturing me, many a time, I felt like leaving the house but I had nowhere to go and as such suffered in silence for many months and that was the time when I felt the significance of the ownership of land5.

The remaining 37 (61.67 %) replied that it was not necessary for a woman to have any ownership of property. Many of these respondents did not specify any reason for the matter but some of them wanted to know what they would do with the ownership of property. Another respondent stated, ‘Why do women need an

---

5 Interview with Mina Das (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 29 years, 16/8/2015
ownership of property? Whether its father’s or husband’s property, a woman needs a shelter for her security.6

Thus, a considerable section of the respondents display through their views that patriarchal beliefs which enhance the male ownership of property are deeply rooted in their psyche. That is why, they neither feel the need for an ownership of property nor do they imagine a life without their husbands.

5.4 Dowry Related Demands and Harassment

Traditionally, dowry is regarded as the gifts given by the bride’s parents to a groom at the time of marriage. However, in course of time, it degenerated into a social evil. Dowry is now demanded and this frequently leads to violence by the groom’s family and it makes use of various tactics which also includes violence, to extort dowry from bride’s family.

In this study, out of sixty respondents, 47 (78.33%) were identified in whose case no dowry demands were made at the time of their marriage and 13 (21.67%) agreed that dowry demands were made during their marriage. But it is surprising that, out of the respondents in case of which no dowry demands were made during marriage, 40 (85.11%) viewed that in spite of no dowry demands from their husbands and in-laws, parents gave dowry during marriage. The remaining 7 (14.89%) said that no dowry demands had been made by their husbands and in-laws and no dowry were provided by the parents of the bride at the time of marriage. Among these seven respondents, the majority stated that no issue of dowry was involved at the time of their marriage because they married without the consent of the bride’s family.

6 Interview with Sunaina Khatun (name changed), Rani, Aged 27 years, 4/6/2015
Of all the respondents who agreed that dowry demands were made during their marriage, only the parents of 5 (38.46%) were able to give the amount of cash or property demanded by their grooms and in-laws, while 8 (61.54%) specifically said that their parents were not able to provide the demanded items or cash. These eight abused women specified that their parents could not provide all the items or cash demanded by their husbands and in-laws owing to financial problems. The majority of them further stated that although all the items or cash demanded were not provided during the marriage, their parents promised their sons-in-law and their family members to give the things or cash demanded in installments. One respondent sadly narrated:

My father worked in private sector and he used to earn six thousand rupees in a month. I also have a sister and I am the younger one. When my marriage was arranged, twenty five thousand rupees and a motorcycle were demanded but my parents could not give the motorcycle because my marriage was solemnized after eight months of my elder sister’s marriage in which a huge amount was spent besides the dowry. After one year of marriage, my parents somehow managed to give one motorcycle to my husband by taking loan from a bank but demands did not end. My husband and in-laws started torturing me for more things which my parents failed to give. Finally, after suffering torture for almost two years, I left my husband’s house and started living with my parents.7

The respondents who agreed that dowry demands were made during their marriage were further asked about the reasons for marrying despite the dowry demands by their husbands and in-laws. 9 (69.23%) replied that they were in favor of the social culture related to dowry. Some of these women viewed that they supported the dowry system because they considered it to be their tradition. One respondent reported, ‘Giving things on the occasion of marriage ceremony is a traditional practice and I do not want to oppose a part of our culture that has been going on for

7 Interview with Luchima Saikia (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 31 years, 19/7/2015
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

centuries’. Some even viewed dowry as essential to start a new life and one respondent even expressed that,

The things that I had brought as a bride to my husband’s house could not be termed as dowry because those were usually the things that I needed in my day to day life. Such things, according to me were essential to lead a good life for newlywed couples.

One respondent emphatically stated that she considered dowry as a share of her parental property. She said, ‘A girl child never gets a share of paternal property; so dowry is the only way through which she receives her part of father’s property’. 4 (30.77%) respondents said that they did not favor the dowry culture but since their parents, husbands and in-laws made a deal on dowry items on their marriages, they did not have the courage to go against the decision of their elders. One respondent lamented:

I am not beautiful and as such I was rejected by many prospective grooms. I was thirty-six years old when a boy decided to marry me and demanded fifty thousand rupees as dowry. My father was a daily wage earner and had no savings. So in order to give the dowry, he sold one half of the piece of land on which we are residing. I was not happy with my marriage as the person whom my father chose as the groom demanded dowry even after knowing that we were poor. I could not go against my parent’s decision and sat for the marriage.

On further enquiry whether their husbands and in-laws demanded dowry after their marriage, 46 (77%) of the respondents replied in the positive and stated that they were brutally abused by their husbands and in-laws after marriage to extort dowry. The remaining 14 (23%) said that their husbands and in-laws did not demand dowry after marriage. Dowry, thus plays a significant role in the domestic violence scenario in the area taken for the study.

---

8 Interview with Mitu Deka (name changed), Rani, Aged 27 years, 20/6/2015
9 Interview with Rina Basumatary (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 34 years, 7/4/2015
10 Interview with Ritika Mazumdar (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 34 years, 18/9/2015
11 Interview with Rita Das (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 26 years, 6/3/2015
5.5 Forms of Abuse

Domestic violence is seen in the forms of physical, psychological, sexual and economic. This section of the study recounts the experiences of the abused women regarding the types of violence perpetrated by their husbands and in-laws. The victims mentioned different forms of domestic violence. However, the most common is psychological violence which accounted for 52 (86.67%) of all forms of domestic violence. The victims mentioned yelling, verbal threats, humiliation, insults, constant criticism as some of the psychological violence that was committed against them. As for physical violence, 51 (85%) of the women were exposed to continuous physical assaults and they reported to have been slapped, kicked, punched, choked and so on.

Sexual abuse is usually treated as personal and private matters by the society. Consequently, interviewing abused women in regard to sexual issues was a challenge. Nonetheless, 49 (81.67%) women out of the total respondents reported they had experienced this form of abuse. In the area of financial abuse, 37 (61.67%) of the women were found to be exposed to economic violence. It is also worth mentioning that a substantial number of respondents reported that they had experienced not only one particular form of violence but all types of violence that are categorized as violence against women.

The findings show that the respondents reported psychological violence to be the most prevalent form of violence. It is a form of violence which occurs when one person intends to hurt the feelings of another person. The respondents reported many forms of psychological violence that were inflicted upon them. Their viewpoints have been presented in the figure.
It is apparent from the Figure 5.1 that out of the different forms of psychological violence, yelling has been reported by all the fifty two. In the words of one respondent, ‘My husband used to shout at me every day for every minor issue such as for not getting food ready in time, for not doing proper cleaning and ironing of his clothes, for missing his phone calls etc’\textsuperscript{12}.

Irrational blaming for all problems by their husbands and in-laws is found to be the second highest form of violence accounting for 47 (90.38\%) of psychological violence. One respondent stated that ‘her husband and in-laws tortured her mentally whenever her child fell down and got minor injury and bruises or even when he fell sick. They used to wrongly blame her for not taking proper care of her child’\textsuperscript{13}. This anecdote of the victim exemplifies how the concept of motherhood leads to abuse against women. Motherhood is an ideology shaped and fixed by patriarchy. In this

\textsuperscript{12} Interview with Ritika Mazumdar (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 34 years, 18/9/2015

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Namita Dutta (name changed), Rani, Aged 25 years, 19/5/2015
ideology of patriarchy, a woman is not only forced to be a mother but also imposes upon her certain conditions of motherhood. If a woman falls short of meeting the conditions of motherhood, it leads to violence against her. This experience of the victim, therefore, justifies the Radical Feminist theory which believes patriarchy to be the basis of violence against women.

Many abused women were also exposed to verbal threats which account for 45(86.54%) of all forms of psychological violence. One respondent said, ‘My husband tortured me brutally for dowry. He always used to threaten me verbally saying that if I didn’t bring the amount of money that he had demanded, he would kill me by pouring kerosene over me’. It has also been found that forty-two (80.77%) of the respondents reported the use of abusive language against them and the majority of such respondents viewed that abusive language was used against them specifically in verbal conflicts. One respondent reported, ‘My husband abuses me every day as he has a very low perception of my character. He even calls me a prostitute often and hurls many abusive words’.

Constantly criticising the victim is a form of violence which was reported by thirty-nine (75%) of the sample. One respondent narrated her experience:

I experience mental torture every day. I am also criticized by my husband and in-laws on the allegation that I can’t cook well. Sometimes my husband goes to bed hungry because he does not find the food I cook tasty. One particular day, he even threw the plate of food in my face.

---

14 Interview with Smita Poddar (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 22 years, 15/8/2015
15 Interview with Hema Talukdar (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 28 years, 27/8/2015
16 Interview with Arifa Begum (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 22 years, 17/9/2015
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

Other forms of psychological violence include humiliation or making fun of the victims either when they were alone or in front of other members of the family or friends or public. This accounts for 34 (65.38%). One victim said,

There was always mental pressure on me to earn more. Apart from that I was humiliated and teased by my in-laws and husband for bringing a low income and for being a daughter from a poor family. ‘aukat se zyada mil geya he tumko, gawar ladki, bewakuf ho tum, velli ho din bhar ghar pad padi rehti ho, dimag kharab ho geya he tumhara’ (you are getting more than your worth; illiterate girl; you are stupid; sitting idle and spend the whole day at home; you are going crazy) were the taunts continuously showered on me\textsuperscript{17}.

Showing excessive possessiveness and expressing distrusts in the victims account for 29 (55.77%) and 20 (38.46%) respectively of all forms of psychological violence. This is the version of one respondent, ‘I am a teacher in a private kindergarten school. I face brutal mental torture from my husband. He is very possessive and he does not allow me to talk to other males. He always threatens me that if he found me talking to any other male, he would kill me and after that he would himself commit suicide’\textsuperscript{18}. Putting restriction on family and social contacts of the victims was reported by eleven (21.15%) and the isolation of victims from friends and family were reported by eight (15.38%). One of these abused women stated, ‘My husband and in-laws do not allow me to talk to my family members and the neighbors. One day when I tried to speak to my parents, my mobile was smashed by my father-in law and after that I was locked in a room for almost two to three days’\textsuperscript{19}.

Six (11.54%) of the respondents are psychologically abused at home because they are often insulted or ridiculed specially for not bearing a child or a male child. One respondent said, ‘I face mental violence every day. My first child is a girl and

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with Shweta Agarwal (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 26 years, 12/7/2015
\textsuperscript{18} Interview with Hema Talukdar (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 28 years, 27/8/2015
\textsuperscript{19} Interview with Nizara Kalita (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 24 years, 3/4/2015.
that is why my husband and in-laws always insult me for not having a son. They call me a kulokhoni (unlucky woman) and always threaten me that they will soon bring another bride in the home. This episode illustrates the phenomenon of preference for the male child in patriarchy which often leads to violence and this justifies the Radical Feminist theory.

Next to psychological violence, physical violence has also been reported by the majority of the abused victims. Physical violence involves the application of physical force by one person to another with the intention to cause physical or bodily harm. These women reported different forms of physical violence like pushing, slapping, grabbing, punching, kicking, choking, shaking, pinching, biting etc. Their viewpoints have been presented in the figure 5.2.

---

20 Interview with Sumi Roy (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 19 years, 29/3/2015
It is revealed by Figure 5.2 that pushing is the most common form of physical assault that has been committed against these women. This accounts for 43 (84.31%) of all physical violence. Thirty-four (66.67%) respondents which is next to that of pushing, are found in each category of slapping and life-threat. More than half, that is, thirty one (60.78%) of the respondents also complain of being targets of thrown objects. One victim stated that throwing objects toward her was a common means of her husband to show his anger at her. Her husband threw at her whatever object he could lay his hands on in the house; he used it to hurt her; it could be a bowl, a plate or an iron lock. She further stated ‘My husband is a psychiatric patient and he not only abuses me but also abuses my parent’s and his.’ This is an example of an abuse that emphasizes the fact that individuals are led to violent behavior by certain internal characteristics like psychological disorders, mental illness as well as personality disorders. It is clear from what the woman has said that her husband is mentally sick and he is not violent only to her; he is violent to his own and her parents, too. From her words, it can be observed that the reason behind her husband’s committing violence is his mental disorder. The psychopathology theory can be applied to this incident of the woman as this is a case where mental disorder leads to violence.

The other forms of physical violence that the victims suffered from are grabbing 28 (54.91%), shaking 21 (41.17%), hair pulling 14 (27.46%), kicking 11 (21.57%), punching 10 (19.61%), choking and arm twisting 8 (15.69%) each. In the words of one respondent,

I was frequently subjected to physical violence by my husband who slapped me, pushed me, shook me, pulled my hair and also punched me. Whenever I protested against his violent acts, he often retorted that

---

21 Interview with Pranita Baruah (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 25 years, 8/8/2015
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

I might have higher educational qualifications but he can never override him as he is always superior to me as a male.\textsuperscript{22}

The present case gives the facts of a person who is less qualified than his wife and resorts to violence. As he is less educated, his resources are insufficient. That is why, he uses violence as the last resort as per the Resource theory, which states that in the absence of sufficient other resources, violence comes to be applied.

Another respondent said:

From the very first day of my married life, I was treated like a maid servant by my in-laws. The burden of all the household work was put upon me. My parents-in-laws along with the sister-in-law and brother-in-law simply set idle. But whenever I spoke against this kind of injustice, I was assaulted physically, they grabbed, pushed, slapped and kicked me. They went to the extent of threatening me that if I complaint against them to my parents, they would kill me.\textsuperscript{23}

The case that has just been referred to justifies the view of the Radical Feminist theory which looks upon patriarchy as the principal agent of violence against women. In patriarchy, women are forced to perform all household chores on the basis of their gender. This division which is discriminatory to women often leads to violence against women as it has found in this study.

5(9.81\%) out of the total respondents reported that they had been beaten with a stick. 4 (7.84\%) complained of burning. One of the respondents even stated, ‘My husband and in-laws demanded dowry during my marriage and my parents fulfilled all their demands. But this demands continued even after marriage and they brutally tortured me. They used all means - slapping, hair pulling, punching and scalding to

\textsuperscript{22} Interview with Richa Patgiri (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 23 years, 27/9/2015
\textsuperscript{23} Interview with Liza Roy (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 24 years, 17/4/2015
acquire more dowries from my parents.\textsuperscript{24} In this case, it is found that violence against the bride by her husband and in-laws provide rewards in the form of dowry. In patriarchy, violence against a bride is often looked upon as an acceptable family norm and the risk of social condemnation that can be considered as a cost is very low for the perpetrators. As such, the reward of force and violence which is dowry is higher than the cost. Therefore, this experience of the victim can be associated with the Exchange theory.

There is only case of biting which accounts for 1.97\% of the total victims. One respondent said, ‘My husband was an alcoholic. One day when he was drunk, verbal conflicts broke out between us as I was angry with his drinking habit but when I asked him not to enter home in a drunken condition, he grabbed me with force and bit me in my face’.\textsuperscript{25} In this case, the principal reason for the conflict between the husband and wife which often turns to violent is the husband’s habit of drinking. This episode of the victim clearly reveals the relevance of the Substance Abuse Theory which propagates that the use of alcohol in a family perpetuates violence against women.

In the case of sexual violence, out of sixty women, eleven have not reported any form of sexual abuse. Sexual violence is a form of forced and non-consensual act of having sex. The points of view of forty-nine (8.67\%) women who reported that they had experienced this form of abuse have been presented in the Figure 5.3.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{24} Interview with Namita Dutta (name changed), Rani, Aged 25 years, 19/5/2015}\hfill \textsuperscript{25} Interview with Rita Das (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 26 years, 6/3/2015}
As per Figure 5.3, more than half of the respondents, that is, thirty-nine out of forty-nine women (79.59%) interviewed are exposed to sexual contacts by their husbands and male - in-laws without their consent. Most of the women who had experienced sexual violence for long, revealed how refusal to sex led to repercussions like brutal physical assaults, verbal and other emotional abuses. One of the victims said, ‘Many a time, when I denied him sex, owing to my illness, he tortured me brutally and had sex with me forcefully’\(^{26}\). This anecdote of the women exemplifies how a woman is treated as an object of sex by his husband leading to marital or spousal rape. In patriarchy, women are denigrated to sexual slavery who exists for the sadistic pleasure of males. They are bound to provide sexual services to their men according to their wants and wishes and if they fail, they would be brutally battered by the males. This dominance of the male over the female body often leading to violence is reflective of the Radical Feminist theory.

\(^{26}\) Interview with Nizara Kalita (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 24 years, 3/4/2015
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

A total of 10 (20.40%) respondents were forced to perform sexual acts that may be degrading or violate the dignity of a woman. One respondent stated:

After our marriage, we went to abroad for honeymoon and had happy time till we returned to hometown. But our return, I found my husband to be a heavy drunkard and a drug addict. On many occasions, he used to come home very late and abuse me brutally and in fact in a drunken stage, many times I was forced to have unnatural sex with him and when I refused, he became violent\textsuperscript{27}.

12 (24.49%) abused women even reported hurting on sexual parts of the body. One of these abused women even expressed that ‘Many a times, whenever I disobeyed my husband regarding any matter, he would willingly hurt on my sexual parts as he knew it led to extreme pain and suffering’\textsuperscript{28}. This experience of the victim speaks of how seriously any women’s refusal or denial or disobedience to her husband can lead to violence. Patriarchy ensures full power and privileges to the male in the household which should be ‘respected’ by women. The victim in this case went against these norms of patriarchy and invited violence upon her justifying the Radical Feminist theory.

Economic violence is another form of domestic violence which is found to be the lowest against women in comparison to psychological, physical and sexual violence. It is a form of abuse involving behaviors that attempt to make another person financially dependent. In this study, the abused women who were subjected to economic violence talked about different forms of economic violence that have been presented in Figure 5.4.

\textsuperscript{27} Interview with Anisha Borah (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 32 years, 16/8/2015
\textsuperscript{28} Interview with Pranita Baruah (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 25 years, 8/8/2015
Figure 5.4 represents that out of the sixty respondents, twenty-eight (75.68 %) stated that they were not provided with sufficient amount of support money and this led to difficulties in living a comfortable life. One woman stated, ‘It is very difficult for me to manage two square meals a day and my husband as I am not given adequate amount of money to run the household. Many a times, I had to skip either my lunch or dinner even during pregnancy because whenever I complaint I was badly tortured’\(^{29}\). Another commented, ‘My husband does not give me sufficient money that I need to move around. Sometimes I need to walk for one to two kilometers to reach my destination or to return home’\(^{30}\).

\(^{29}\) Interview with Sumi Roy (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 19 years, 29/3/2015

\(^{30}\) Interview with Rubi Ahmed (name changed), Rani, Aged 42 years, 9/5/2015
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

Twenty-four (64.86%) of the victims are found in each category of denial of basic necessities of life and barring to access their income, bank accounts, and savings. One of these abused women narrated her experience of how she is denied of the basic necessities of life even during the period of pregnancy:

I face brutal violence every day. My husband and in-laws did not spare me from violence even during my period of pregnancy. I was beaten, slapped, kicked and punched and was also not provided with adequate amount of food, clothes and medicine. Owing to such extreme torture, I had miscarriage two times and now I have lost my ability to conceive.\(^{31}\)

Another case which illustrated how a woman is barred access to her income, bank accounts, and savings. ‘He forcefully took my ATM card and saving bank account book. He told me that if I needed money I could beg of him by giving reasons why I needed it; for which I had to suffer extremely.\(^{32}\)’ Here is a case of coercing a woman to be economically dependent upon male; a situation ultimately leading to violence. In patriarchy, the males inflict various forms of violence including physical, psychological, sexual and economic to perpetuate their dominance and to keep the women subjugated and dependent. In this case, this economic dominance of men over women often leading to abuse is a reflective of the Radical Feminist theory which believes patriarchy at the root of all abuse against women.

21 (56.76%) of the women fell victim to unauthorized use of their money, assets or property by husbands and in-laws. One respondent said,

“My husband forcefully took a signature on a legal document in order to get possession of my piece of land. He explained that he could get a bigger amount of loan because his income was very high. Eventually,

---

\(^{31}\) Interview with Mina Das (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 29 years, 16/8/2015

\(^{32}\) Interview with Geetika Das (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 27 years, 14/7/2015
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

it was found that he made a conspiracy to take possession of my land and assets. After that he forced me out of my own home.33.

Preventing the women from working outside the home and forcing them to work outside the home account for 13 (35.14 %) and 9 (24.32%) of economic violence respectively. One victim narrated,

My husband was an alcoholic. He did not work anywhere. Since my marriage I had been working as a domestic helper in the neighborhood to earn a little to meet the household expenses and to provide money to my husband for his drink every day. But when I took a break from my work during my pregnancy and post pregnancy period, my husband forced and made me work outside home even when I was not willing to do so for my physical weakness.34.

A case which illustrates how a woman is prevented from working outside the home was cited by a respondent. She said, ‘I was working in a grocery shop but my husband tortured me to leave my job because he was possessive in nature and he didn’t like when I socialized among men’.35.

5.6 Reasons for Violence

The abused women were assaulted physically, mentally, sexually and economically for a numbers of reasons. The following Figure 5.5 represents the proportion of the various reasons in the terms of the percentage-

33 Interview with Ritisha Dutta (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 25 years, 7/8/2015  
34 Interview with Rina Mandal (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 33 years, 13/8/2015  
35 Interview with Sumita Bhattacharjee (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 31 years, 10/9/2015
It is observed from the figure 5.5 that the majority of the women are abused for disobeying the husbands and in-laws. Among the various reasons offered by the respondents, this was the most common accounting for 54 (90.00%) of all reasons of violence. The majority of the victims stated that they were under total control of their husbands and in-laws and if they disobey them over any matter, they fell victim to violence.

Dowry related violence is the second major problem. Forty-five (75 %) of the women who suffered domestic violence on issues related to dowry. They reported that violence had been often committed for not providing sufficient dowry at the time of marriage or failing to meet continued demands for dowry after the marriage. Economic constraints in the family were found to be the third main reason for violence. The inadequate financial resources to meet the day to day expenditures are also a source of family disputes. A total number of thirty four respondents reported
violence owing to financial crisis in the family which accounts for 56.67% of all causes of violence.

Alcoholism is another significant factor behind domestic violence against women. Thirty-three (55%) of the total respondents reported alcoholism of the husbands to be one of the common reason of disputes between them and their husbands which often took a violent turn. Many of the women stated that when their husbands were drunk, quarrels broke out between them and this often led the husbands to use either abusive language or hurt the victims physically, mentally and sexually. The most of the respondents blamed the locally available liquor for having caused much of their domestic problems as their husbands were used to drinking. Some of these women also reported that they were also assaulted brutally by their brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law in a drunken condition.

The typical role of a woman in a patriarchal society is expected to be that of a person who takes care of household chores and looks after their children. Twenty-eight (46.67%) of the victims of the areas surveyed reported that they were exposed to violence on the issues related to household works. Twenty-six (43.33%) fell victims to violence on the issues of childcare and twenty-five (41.67%) on the issues related to cooking. They stated that they were abused by their husbands and in-laws because they sometimes could not perform their household chores properly because of their illness or for some other reasons. They were also falsely blamed that they were incapable of household work, and unable to cook food well. They were even blamed for neglecting their children. It was also stated by more than half of the respondents that their husbands were more likely to commit violence over these issues when they were under the influence of alcohol.
Suspicion is one of the reasons accounting for 28.33% of all causes of domestic violence. Out of sixty respondents, seventeen reported that the suspicious nature of both the husbands and the in-laws made them suffer from violence within the household. Some of the women even reported that their own suspicious nature also made their husbands and the in-laws commit violence against them. Many of the respondents 13(21.67%) also viewed that extra-marital affairs of the husbands led to conflicts in the families which sometimes took a violent turn. In fact, one respondent even admitted that her extra-marital affairs invited violence from her husband. A small number of women (6.67%) also reported polygamy to be another reason of domestic violence against women.

5.7 Perpetrators of Violence

The abused women stated that violence was inflicted against them not only by their husbands but also by their in-laws including their mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and relatives of the in-laws. Fifty-eight (96.67%) of the total victims revealed that they suffered violence in the hands of their husbands. Forty-three (71.67%) of them reported that violence was committed against them by their mothers-in-law; this figure is followed by sisters-in-law 32 (53.33%), fathers-in-law 21 (35%) and brothers-in-law 3 (5%). Respectively, some of the women i.e., 17 (28.33%) stated that violence was committed against them even by the relatives of the in-laws.

5.8 Frequency of Violence

When asked further about the frequency of violence, thirty-five (58.33%) respondents said that violence was committed daily; seventeen (28.33%) stated that it was inflicted
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

occasionally while 8 (13.33%) reported that it was committed frequently by their husbands and in-laws.

5.9 Problems after Violence

The women were asked about the problems that were faced by them after such acts of violence. They stated that violence had severely affected them physically; and out of the total respondents, fifty-one (85%) reported that they had been physically injured as a result of such abuse. They mentioned multiple types of physical injuries including small or severe cuts, burns, sprains and broken bones, bruises in the head, face, neck, breasts, abdomen and other parts of the body. Many of these women also said that they had sought medical care specifically for those injuries. Twenty eight (46.67%) among them reported that they had suffered terribly from body pain and two (3.33%) of them said that they had become permanently disabled.

Violence during pregnancy is another major problem that these abused women had to face. A few of them 9 (15%) mentioned that they had been abused by their husbands and in-laws even during their period of pregnancy and consequently, they had suffered from many complications during pregnancy. Some of these abused women also had miscarriages.

They also suffered from multiple mental and psychological problems: sleeping problems, fear, anxiety, depression, feeling of loneliness and helplessness. Fifty two (86.67%) of them had suffered from anxiety, forty-six (76.67%) had depression and forty-two (70%) had feeling of loneliness and helplessness. Sixteen of them complained of suffering from fear and seven of sleeping problems both accounting for 26.67 % and 11.67% respectively.
Apart from physical and mental problems, thirty-nine (65%) of them said that as a result of abuse they had problems in performing their day to day activities. Thirty-three (55%) said that they had economic problems. The majority of these abused women stated that when they were living with their husbands they were fully depended economically on them but after started living separately, they had experienced very difficult economic situation for which they could not even meet their basic necessities of life. One respondent stated, ‘I suffered from financial crunch after I left my husband. Sometimes I could not even manage two square meals a day for me and my two children’.

5.10 Knowledge of Laws related to Domestic Violence

There are several provisions in the Constitution of India to protect women from the evils of domestic violence. The knowledge of such legislations is important for all women and especially for those who are abused by their husbands and others. When the respondents were asked whether they had any such knowledge, eleven (18.33%) of them said that they had. In this connection, they specifically mentioned the Section 498 A and also the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. But the majority of them stated that they had only come to know about the acts and laws on domestic violence when they came to lodge complaint in the police stations. One victim said, ‘I didn’t know earlier that there was any specific law in regard to domestic violence but when I contacted the police and my lawyer, only then I came to know that my case falls under Section 498 A’.

The remaining forty-nine (81.67%) of the victims said that they were ignorant of any such acts. One respondent said, ‘I

---

36 Interview with Namita Dutta (name changed), Rani, Aged 25 years, 19/5/2015
37 Interview with Nizara Kalita (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 24 years, 3/4/2015
just simply know that I can lodge complaints in police stations against my husband and in-laws but I don’t have any idea about any laws.38

5.11 Lodging of Cases at Police Stations

The victims reported the matter of abuse to the police. However, the time they took before lodging complaint in the police stations varied among the victims. Out of the sixty respondents, five (8.33%) said that before they reported the matter to the police, they had suffered violence around six months; seventeen (28.33%) said that they had faced violence for around one year, twenty-nine (48.33%) said that they had suffered violence for around two years. This period was three years and above for nine (15%) victims of domestic violence. Thus, it is observed that the maximum number of respondents had faced violence for long time, that is, around two years, before they approached the police.

When they were further asked why they had tolerated domestic violence for such a long time before they reported the matter to the police, they cited different reasons. Forty-one (68.33%) of these women thought that the members of the society as well as their parents would not approve if they raised their voices against the actions of their husbands and their relatives. They were taught that a woman should treat her husband as a God and a good wife should keep household matters within the four walls of her home. This speaks volume of the deep seated cultural traits of a society shaped by patriarchy and those traits made the victims tolerate violence in silence for a long time. Thirty-seven (61.67%) women said that they had stayed for a long period in violent relationship for the sake of their children. One of these abused

38 Interview with Sunaina Khatun (name changed, Rani, Aged 27 years, 4/6/2015
Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam

women stated, ‘It would be better to tolerate the pain than to destroy my children’s future’\textsuperscript{39}. These women also feared that if they were separated from their husbands, they would not be able to send their children to a good school or would not be able to provide them with the essential requirements of life.

Financial problems were also mentioned by thirty-five (61.67\%) of these abused women as a reason for continuing in violent relationship. It has been found that the majority of the respondents are unemployed; as such they don’t have economic security to lead an independent life. One respondent said, ‘I am treated violently by my husband, though he is at least providing me with the daily requirements’\textsuperscript{40}. It is also observed from the responses that they feared that reporting the matter to the police and filing a case would require a great amount of money which they could not afford. Twenty-seven (45\%) also thought that if they reported the matter to the police, their husbands and members of their family might become more violent towards them and their children. Some of them apprehended that their husbands and in-laws might harm their parental families if they reported the matter to the police. The absence of shelter homes for the victims of domestic violence is one of the major reasons for living in the violent relationship for longer time. Almost twenty-three (38.33\%) respondents stated that they had no place to go if they left their husband’s home. They also felt that they would not be welcome by their parents because they had already been married off. They had, therefore, no alternative but to tolerate the brutal violence of their husbands and in-laws. The majority of these women stated that they had tried their best to continue the conjugal life even in a

\textsuperscript{39} Interview with Rima Bhuyan (name changed), Guwahati, Aged 33 years, 16/8/2015

\textsuperscript{40} Interview with Rina Basumatary (name changed), Dimoria, Aged 34 years, 7/4/2015
violent relationship but when they found that their lives were at risk, they finally reported the matter to the police.

5.12 Present Status of the Police Cases

These abused women were asked about the present status of their cases after they had reported the matter of violence to the police and there were varied responses. The majority i.e, thirty-four (56.67%) of the respondents’ cases have been settled and they got divorced from their husbands. The cases of twenty-five (40.00%) women have been to be found continuing in the courts of law. One particular victim’s case continued for three months but owing to her husband’s death, her case was dismissed in the middle of the proceedings of the case.

5.13 Current Residential Status

Only one among the sixty respondents has been found to have got married after her divorce. She has started a new life and is now living happily with her present husband. The majority i.e., fifty-two (86.67%) are presently living with their parents. Three (5%) women are living alone with their children in rented houses, two (3.33%) women are staying with their brothers and one (1.67%) is with her sister. Moreover, one (1.67%) respondent has also been living with her aged parents’-in-law.

Thus, the analysis of the research findings from the survey shows that domestic violence is an intrinsic part of the lives of most women of Kamrup Metropolitan Area. In the study, it has been found that there are a large number of socio-economic factors like age, religion, language, caste, education, occupation, income and type of family that determine the frequency, type, nature of the perpetuation in the context of domestic violence. Domestic violence is found to be
highly common among the women of lower age-group and mostly, unemployed. They are found to be assaulted physically, psychologically, sexually and economically not only by their husbands but also by their in-laws including their mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. It is observed that they are abused for a number of reasons including dowry, polygamy, alcoholism, suspicion, extramarital affairs, financial problems, issues related to household chores, cooking and childcare, although the majorities are subjected to violence for not obeying their husbands and in-laws. It clearly indicates that domestic violence is a pattern of behavior which is intended to control and dominate one family member by another through one or various forms of violence. The husbands and in-laws of these abused women attempt to dominate through violence, threat of violence, or by controlling her finances and social life. In fact, it is found that the perpetrators used wide range of physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence as a weapon to control their mobility, body and sexuality, labor and economic independence. Therefore, domestic violence is a manifestation of unequal power relations within the household used by one dominant person against the other to control, hurt and demean. This is well reflected in the narratives of the abused women as ‘woeful voices’ in the following chapter.
5.14 References


Domestic Violence against Women in Kamrup Metropolitan District of Assam


Solidarity of the Nation Society (2009), Socio-Economic & Educational Background of the Victims of Domestic Violence in India, Report, Sponsored by Ministry of Women & Child Development, Govt. of India, Lucknow.
