



Research article

Risk Factors for Domestic Violence against Women in South and Southeast Asian Countries: A Pooled Cross-sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence against women encompasses actions or behaviors within an intimate relationship that inflict sexual, physical, and psychological harm on women. Domestic abuse is a scourge for women in underdeveloped countries. This study aimed to explore the risk factors associated with domestic violence against women. This study aimed to identify the risk factors associated with domestic violence against women. A total of 56,432 married women were selected from the DHS secondary data of nine developing countries for the study. Binomial logistic regression was employed for the analysis. The primary individual risk variables included a woman's age, education, professional qualifications, and exposure to parental abuse during childhood. Risk variables at the relationship level encompass cohabitation status (respondent's age when they started living with their partner), the partner's status regarding alcohol addiction and educational qualifications, and family structure. This study also identified several societal and community-level risk variables, including family inequality, social norms, media connectivity, women's religious status, and distinctions between rural and urban areas. The results focused on the multifaceted features of domestic violence. These insights are essential for formulating targeted interventions and public policies that advance gender equality, facilitate early prevention through education, and enhance community awareness.

Introduction

Domestic violence against women encompasses acts or behaviors within an intimate relationship that inflict sexual, physical, or psychological harm on women. The term also includes threats of such actions, coercion, and unrestricted curtailment of freedom. Domestic violence has a more pronounced physical and social impact on women when it is inflicted by a spouse or male partner rather than by an external assailant. Sexual and physical violence is not confined to impoverished nations; it also occurs in affluent countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Nevertheless, the prevalence is elevated in low- and middle-income countries (Garcia-Moreno and Jansen et al., 2006). Globally, approximately one in three women has experienced intimate partner violence (IPV), encompassing both physical and sexual abuse or non-partner sexual assault (WHO, 2019). The WHO indicates that 13%–61 percent of women will encounter physical violence at any point in their lives (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005).

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A survey conducted in Afghanistan revealed that 51 percent of ever-married women aged 15 to 49 years had experienced physical or sexual violence at some stage in their lives (Afghanistan DHS, 2015). Additionally, 46 percent of women in Myanmar have experienced suffering in the past year, and 17 percent over their lifetime (Myanmar DHS, 2015-16); 25 percent of women in Nepal have faced suffering in their lifetime, with 11.2 percent in the past year (Nepal DHS, 2016); and 24.5 percent of women in Pakistan have endured suffering in their lifetime, including 14.5 percent in the past year (Pakistan DHS, 2017-18). In Cambodia, 13.7 percent of women have encountered this in their lifetime, with 8.7 percent having experienced it in the past 12 months (Cambodia DHS, 2005). In the Philippines, the statistics indicate 17.9 percent for lifetime prevalence and 10.3 percent for the past 12 months (Philippines DHS, 2008). In the Maldives, 163 percent of women reported this occurrence in their lifetime, while 56 percent reported it in the past 12 months (Maldives DHS, 2016-17). In Timor-Leste, the numbers indicate 34.6 percent for lifetime prevalence and 31.5 percent over the past 12 months (Timor-Leste DHS, 2009-2010). In India, 37.2 percent of women have encountered

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this in their lifetime, with 23.9 percent having experienced it in the past 12 months (India DHS, 2005-2006).

Domestic abuse against women has emerged as a global catastrophic problem. Women in various nations endure violence due to the influence of diverse risk factors. Employed, literate, affluent, and professional women encounter far less intimate partner violence than unemployed, illiterate, impoverished, and unaware women (Shakya, 2016). Conversely, rural women encounter significantly more violence than their urban counterparts. However, urban and educated women have encountered emotional and psychological aggression rather than physical assault (Berhane and Wall, 1999). Risk factors of domestic violence incorporate individual factors (age, education, literacy, occupation, unions, childhood physical punishment, whether the father ever beat the mother, age at first marriage, etc.), relationship factors (partner's age, age differences between partners, wealth index, educational disparities between partners, marital status, duration of the relationship, partner's alcohol consumption, family size, access to decision-making, education of the husband or partner, partner's occupation, etc.), community-level factors (place of residence, neighbor support, social regulations, laws and norms, religion, abusive peers, and information support, etc.) (Castro et al., 2017) and societal factors (mass media, social isolation, inequality, etc.).

Globally, spousal violence is more prevalent among women with poor household income, lack of education, lower caste affiliation, unemployment, and partners who consume alcohol or engage in physical abuse (Babu and Kar, 2009; Koenig et al., 2006). Early marriage is associated with domestic abuse against women. It is elevated in underdeveloped nations compared to that in developed nations. Child marriage adversely affects a woman's social standing and access to education and career prospects (Sing and Samara, 1996). Socioeconomic conditions are also associated with domestic abuse against women. In emerging nations, women's socioeconomic status is precarious. Poverty increases the likelihood of domestic violence (Gonzales de Olarte and Gavilano Liosa, 1999; Heise, 1998). Exposure throughout childhood increases the probability of marrying an aggressive partner (Downs et al., 1992; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986). Cohabitors experience significantly greater distress than married women (Brownridge and Halli, 2000) because of the informal and non-permanent nature of their relationship (Waite, 1999). Cohabitors are marginalized because of the precarious nature of their relationships (Brown and Booth, 1996). Family size and domestic violence exhibit positive linear correlations (Brinkerhoff and Lupri, 1988; Elsberg et al., 2000; Farrington, 1977). Large family size contributes to domestic abuse against women (Brinkerhoff and Lupri, 1988; Hoffman et al., 1994). A partner's alcohol intake is a significant factor contributing to abuse (Fagan, 1993; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986; Roizen, 1997). Partnerships can occasionally foster more misconduct and aggressive behavior (Field et al., 2004). The exercise of power disparity leads to increased violence (Anderson, 1997). The length of marriage is another factor contributing to domestic violence (Kimuna and Djamba, 2008). In Mexico, long-term relationships are a detrimental element

contributing to domestic violence (INMUJERES, 2006; Castro and Casique, 2009). Age discrepancies contribute to interpersonal violence (Castro and Casique, 2009). In urban regions, it is elevated in certain neighborhoods (Gonzales and Gavilano, 1998; Lazo, 2015; Flake, 2005). However, additional research indicates that the prevalence of domestic violence is elevated in rural regions (Mendoza and Roca, 2011; OMS, 2005). Societal regulations, laws, and customs also impact domestic violence (Carlson, 1984) with community assistance. The correlation between abusive peers and their informational support for violence against women is considerable for both physical and sexual violence against women (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997, 2000). The internet has exacerbated unfavorable views towards women due to the proliferation of violent pornography (Allen et al., 1995). Individuals who consume violent television programs or films during early childhood exhibit significantly increased aggression in later life (Strasburger and Wilson, 2002). Inequality is a significant factor in domestic violence. In certain communities where women lack equal access to economic or political opportunities, the incidence of abuse is elevated (Levinson, 1989).

Domestic violence against women is a prevalent global issue that engenders numerous complications in their lives. Cohabitation at an early age, alcohol consumption, early marriage, poverty, illiteracy, and socioeconomic status are significant factors that influence domestic violence against women. In developing nations such as India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Afghanistan, numerous married and illiterate women endure physical violence from their spouses because of cultural structures, traditional customs, and early marriage practices. Early marriage may sometimes ruin a woman's professional prospects, autonomy, and self-esteem. Ultimately, they become reliant on their spouses and domestic associates. Consequently, they readily obtain opportunities to dominate and exploit women. Moreover, inebriated spouses inflict significant distress on their partners. In such instances, women who do not seek assistance from family members become estranged from both their families and society. Moreover, they may resort to suicide because of depression. Impoverished and uneducated women endure significant hardships. Furthermore, partners' alcohol consumption, excessive exercise, mistrust towards spouses, and disparities in age and position adversely affect women. Domestic violence has occurred due to the influence of the community and mainstream media. Individual, relational, communal, and societal variables contribute to the likelihood of domestic violence against women (DVW). It has emerged as a global catastrophic issue, inflicting physical, psychological, and sexual harm on women. Given that women constitute half of our society, their safety and well-being are our obligations. Regrettably, women in underdeveloped countries experience greater exploitation in the form of domestic abuse than those in rich nations. The primary factors contributing to this issue are insufficient education, low socioeconomic status, early marriage, cohabitation, large family size, traditional community norms, and the influence of mass media. Domestic abuse is a scourge for women in developing countries. Women are victims of physical, psychological, and sexual violence and abuse.

Identifying sensitive risk factors is essential for mitigating domestic violence against women. The primary objective of this study was to identify the principal risk factors for domestic violence against women in South and Southeast Asian countries.

Literature Review

Domestic abuse inflicts physical, psychological, and sexual harm on women. Several risk factors are directly or indirectly associated with domestic violence (DV). These encompass individual, relational, communal, and social factors. These issues affect women differently across diverse countries and civilizations. A component that is positively correlated with one country or society may be negatively correlated with another country or society.

Personal Risk Factors for Violence

Women predominantly endure the significant consequences of violence because of disparities in their abilities, resources, and experiences. It is presumed that women possess inferior capabilities compared to men in all sectors. Education is a significant factor directly associated with domestic abuse against women in India. Given that women constitute half of society, their access to education is vital. It fosters mental, personal, and social strength in women while enhancing knowledge, information, and ideas. Educational attainment has been shown to decrease the likelihood of violence (Firestone et al., 2000; Loi, 2000). In most instances, violent women are unaware of the measures required to mitigate domestic violence. Education facilitates independence (Waite, 1993). Educated women can eradicate violence because of their self-sufficiency. Early marriage is an additional risk factor for violence. In most instances, it has occurred in rural regions. Occasionally, this has occurred in urban regions. It is directly or indirectly associated with familial position and financial circumstances. In most established households, vulnerability is diminished compared to that in less stable families. Familial, communal, and societal approval also impacts early marriages. This can undermine women's social standing. It also undermines educational and employment opportunities (Sing and Samara, 1996). Employment accessibility can reduce reliance on spouses and foster independence (Panda and Agarwal, 2005). However, education alone cannot mitigate this issue. Educated women also experience marital abuse due to their demanding schedules and excessive work-related stress. They are unable to allocate sufficient time to their families due to several factors, including professional commitments and personal engagements. In Western countries, employed women are less likely to experience violence. This is due to their economic independence. They can readily implement measures against domestic abuse owing to the robustness of their legal framework and societal backing, surpassing that of emerging nations. Consequently, individuals may terminate a relationship upon encountering violence (Kyriacou et al., 1999). However, this trend is reversed in Latin America (Flake and Forste, 2006). In Latin America, employed women experience domestic abuse more frequently than housewives do (Castro and Casique, 2009; Meekers et al., 2013). They encounter conflict and violence in their married lives (Bumpass et al., 1991).

Socio-economic status is directly or indirectly associated with domestic violence. An elevated socioeconomic position diminishes domestic abuse perpetrated against women. Conversely, a low socioeconomic position contributes to violence against women (Jewkes, 2002). Impoverished women are more frequently victims of violence than affluent women (Ellsberg et al., 1999; Heise, 1998; Jewkes, 2002). Poverty increases the likelihood of domestic violence (Gonzales de Olarte and Gavilano Liosa, 1999; Heise, 1998). Exposure throughout childhood increases the probability of marrying an aggressive partner (Downs et al., 1992; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986). It instructs women that such occurrences are commonplace and can happen to them as well. Consequently, they become accustomed to this violence upon marriage, developing a significant tolerance from the onset of their relationship (Simons et al., 1993).

Relationship-related Risk Factors of Violence

Numerous relationship-related factors affect the violence against women. Cohabitants (respondents who started living with their partner for the first time) experience significantly more violence than married women (Brownridge and Halli, 2000) because of the informal and non-permanent nature of their relationship (Waite, 1999). In this instance, people are not obligated to make sacrifices for each other. Cohabiters are marginalized due to the precarious nature of their relationship (Brown and Booth, 1996). This stage of the relationship exhibits minimal commitment compared to that of a married partner (Nock, 1995). Consequently, it is simpler to exploit women through cohabitation. Family size may impact domestic violence. There is a positive linear correlation between family size and domestic violence (Brinkerhoff and Lupri, 1988; Elsberg et al., 2000; Farrington, 1977). Domestic violence is less prevalent in small households than in large families. A large family size contributes to domestic violence against women (Brinkerhoff and Lupri, 1988; Hoffman et al., 1994). Her boyfriend's alcohol consumption is the primary cause of the abuse she experiences. This is directly associated with domestic violence (Fagan, 1993; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986; Roizen, 1997). Excessive alcohol use may lead partners to exploit women (Jeyaseelan et al., 2004; Abramsky et al., 2011). Partnerships foster increased misconduct and aggressive behavior (Field et al., 2004). Consequently, women endure torment inflicted by their addicted boyfriends or husbands in several developing nations. The exercise of power based on gender is a significant factor in relationships that exacerbates domestic violence. The exercise of power disparity leads to increased violence (Anderson, 1997). Men consistently attempt to assert their dominance over their partners. The prevalence of domination is lower in urban areas than in rural ones. Urban individuals have more opportunities to attain higher education than their rural counterparts. Education expands mental and cognitive abilities. Moreover, women in metropolitan areas are employed and self-sufficient. In North America, employed women experience lower rates of violent victimization than their unemployed counterparts (Kalmuss and Straus, 1990). This condition arises from their educational qualifications being comparable to those of their husbands (Walker, 1984). The

duration of marriage is a factor influencing domestic violence, as indicated by Kimuna and Djamba (2008), exhibiting both positive and negative correlations with domestic violence. In many instances, a long-term relationship serves as a protective factor against domestic violence towards women (WHO, 2010). In Mexico, long-term relationships are a detrimental element contributing to domestic violence (INMUJERES, 2006; Castro and Casique, 2009). A significant age mismatch contributes to marital violence (Castro and Casique, 2009) due to differing mentalities. There is a mismanagement of emotions, decision-making, and cognition. Consequently, a communication gap exists between them, occasionally resulting in violence.

Community Level Risk Factors of Violence

The community is seen as a risk factor for domestic violence against women (DVAW). Communities comprise several categories of individuals. The mindset of individuals varies from one another. Occasionally, the community can safeguard women from such assaults. However, it may exacerbate the risk of domestic violence (Levine and Rosich, 1996). Domestic abuse is more prevalent in urban neighborhoods with high crime rates (Gonzales and Gavilano, 1998; Lazo, 2015; Flake, 2005). However, additional research indicates that domestic violence prevalence is elevated in rural regions (Mendoza and Roca, 2011; OMS, 2005). Poverty and illiteracy rates are high in rural regions (Salgado, 2009). Poverty and unemployment exacerbate interpersonal violence against women (Gonzales de Olarte and Gavilano Liosa, 1999). In certain communities, women are subjected to humiliation by men. Men systematically inflict suffering on women in this area. Women are unable to act because of fear of familial or societal pressure. If they undertake any measures against violence, they are estranged from their family or community. Societal regulations, laws, and customs also impact domestic violence (Carlson, 1984) with the assistance of the community. There is a considerable correlation between abusive peers and their informational support for violence against women and the occurrence of physical and sexual violence against women (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997, 2000). Religion is a significant factor in domestic violence against women in Pakistan. In certain Arab and Islamic nations, men physically assault their spouses. They want to demonstrate their adherence to the divine directives. They utilize selective extracts from the Holy Quran (Dowki et al., 2003).

Societal Risk Factors of Violence

Society significantly influences domestic violence against women through various channels, including mass media, such as television, the Internet, and newspapers. Currently, pornography is accessible over the Internet. A clear correlation exists between pornography and sexual aggression (Malamuth et al., 2000). Violent pornography has heightened unsympathetic views towards women (Allen et al., 1995). Television (TV) significantly influences women's daily lives. Men exposed to violent television shows or films from early childhood exhibit significantly increased aggression in later life (Strasburger and Wilson, 2002). Numerous women are separated or secluded post-marriage due to personal choices or familial regulations. This exacerbates aggression against them due

to their reliance on their family's post-divorce. Social isolation exacerbates domestic violence against women (Counts et al., 1992). Inequality is a significant factor in domestic violence against women (DVW). In certain countries where women lack equal access to economic or political opportunities, the incidence of enjoyment is higher (Levinson, 1989).

Risk Factors of Violence in Developing Countries

Domestic violence is a global phenomenon that affects women worldwide. Moreover, it is a significant concern in developing nations (Garcia-Merono et al., 2005). In India, 39 percent of women experience abuse (Mahapatro et al., 2012). The incidence of domestic violence varies between 6 percent and 60 percent (National Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005-06). In many cultures, there is a significant prevalence of physical violence, although psychological and sexual violence is minimal (Babu and Kar, 2009). Worldwide, marital violence is more prevalent among women with poorer household incomes, reduced educational attainment, lower caste affiliations, non-employment status, and partners who consume alcohol or exhibit violent behavior (Babu and Kar, 2009; Koenig et al., 2006). Protective factors against domestic violence towards women include an elevated socioeconomic position, economic autonomy, and the quality of the marital partnership (Visaria, 2000). An elevated level of education serves as a potent antidote to violence (Hindin and Adair, 2002; Jejeebhoy and Cook, 1997). Research in South Asian nations has identified that individual and household risk variables, including age, the number of male offspring residing in the household, and living in an extended family, are correlated with domestic violence (Rao, 1997; Martin et al., 1999).

In Pakistan, 47.5 percent of women are compelled to marry before the age of 18, and one-third of these married women report experiencing marital violence (Nasrullah and Muazzan; Zakar and Rubeena; Zakar and Muhammad, 2004). Approximately 20–30 percent of women in Pakistan have suffered from various forms of violence (Gosselin and Denise Kindschi, 2009). Approximately 5,000 women are believed to be killed annually because of domestic abuse in Pakistan (Hansar and Robert, 2007). They endure physical, psychological, and sexual assault from their spouses (Ajmal and Umer, 2012). The Thomson Reuters Foundation conducted a survey on domestic abuse, ranking Pakistan as the third most perilous country for women globally, following Afghanistan in first place and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Anderson and Lisa, 2011). In Sri Lanka, 17 percent of ever-married women aged 15 to 49 have experienced domestic abuse in their relationships (DHS, 2016). In Afghanistan, 51 percent of ever-married women aged 15 to 49 have encountered physical or sexual assault at some point in their lives (Afghanistan DHS, 2015). Furthermore, 46 percent of women had experienced physical or sexual assault in the past 12 months, and 17 percent across their lifetime in Myanmar (Myanmar DHS, 2015-16). A survey from the American Journal of Public Health indicates that 20% of Chinese women have encountered physical abuse from their partners in the past year (Xu et al., 2005). In Brazil, a government assessment indicates that a woman is victimized by domestic violence every seven minutes, and over 70 percent of women experience some form of

violence throughout their lifetime (Livre de Abuso, 2017). In the Maldives, 163 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual abuse in their lives, and 56 percent have encountered such violence in the past 12 months (Maldives DHS, 2016-17). In Timor-Leste, 34.6 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual assault in their lifetime, and 31.5 percent have encountered such abuse in the past 12 months (Timor-Leste DHS, 2009-2010). Conversely, in Nepal, 25 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual abuse over their lifetime, and 11.2 percent have encountered such violence in the past 12 months (Nepal DHS, 2016). In Cambodia, 13.7 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual abuse in their lives, while 8.7 percent have encountered such violence in the past 12 months (Cambodia DHS, 2005). Ultimately, 17.9 percent of women had experienced physical or sexual violence throughout their lives, and 10.3 percent in the past 12 months in the Philippines (Philippines DHS, 2008).

Materials and Methods

Research Design and Data Description

This study employed a quantitative analytical strategy to investigate the risk factors associated with violence against women in developing countries. This study utilized secondary data sourced from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), focusing on nine deliberately selected countries: Afghanistan, the Philippines, Cambodia, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Timor-Leste. The target demographic comprised women aged 15–49 years, using data derived from the DHS Individual Recode (IR) dataset, which was specifically designed for women who engaged in interviews. A pooled cross-sectional dataset was established, comprising a total sample size of 92,224 women. Of these, 56,432 consented to disclose their experiences of domestic violence and were subsequently analyzed. This study emphasizes the significance of both micro- and macro-level elements in understanding violence against women.

Table 1: Sample Size

Country	Year	Sample Size
Afghanistan	2015	10,414
Philippines	2017	2696
Cambodia	2014	3060
India	2016	63,696
Maldives	2017	1998
Myanmar	2016	2623
Nepal	2016	2422
Pakistan	2018	3334
Timor-Leste	2016	1981
Total		92224

Details of Variables

The author uses the following outcome variables and some major explanatory variables (Table 2) to achieve the objective of the study:

Outcome Variable

The dependent variable in this study is the reports of women regarding their experience of violence within the preceding 12 months. The women were asked whether their husbands had ever perpetrated physical, sexual, or emotional violence against them. There are different questions for each kind of violence, for instance, whether her husband has ever (a) pushed, shaken, or thrown

something; (b) slapped her; (c) twisted her arm or pulled her hair; (d) punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her; and (e) kicked, dragged, or beaten her. (f) intentionally suffocated or burned her (g) threatened or assaulted her with a knife, firearm, or any other weapon (h) compelled her to engage in sexual intercourse against her will and (i) coerced her into performing sexual actions that she did not consent to? Each affirmative response from a woman to questions (a) through (i) indicated evidence of violence, with cumulative values assigned as “1” for experiencing violence and “0” for not experiencing partner violence.

Explanatory Variable

The explanatory variables were constructed as indicators of domestic violence predictors. These variables were structured into four main blocks: individual, relationship, societal, and community contexts. The characteristics of each category and their measurement units are given in the Table 2, along with the expected outcome sign.

Empirical Methods of Analysis

The analysis began with descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, maximum, and minimum values) to understand the characteristics of each variable. The authors then applied logistic regression analysis to investigate the association between risk factors and domestic violence perpetrated against women. Logistic regression is particularly appropriate for this research because the dependent variable, indicating whether a woman experienced violence in the past 12 months, is binary (1 = experienced violence, 0 = did not experience violence). The approach includes individual, relational, societal, and community-level risk factors as independent variables to assess their influence on domestic violence probability.

Model Specification

The empirical model for this study is specified as follows:

$$V = \Theta_0 + \Theta_1A + \Theta_2E + \Theta_3O + \Theta_4PA + \Theta_5FB + \Theta_6AFC + \Theta_7WI + \Theta_8MS + \Theta_9PDA + \Theta_{10}FT + \Theta_{11}DMA + \Theta_{12}PE + \Theta_{13}MME + \Theta_{14}IF + \Theta_{15}SRS + \Theta_{16}R + \Theta_{17}RS + \epsilon$$

Where, V = Violence;

Θ_0 = Constant;

$\Theta_1, \dots, \Theta_{17}$ = Coefficients;

A = Age;

E = Education;

O = Occupation;

PA = Physical Abuse by Parents;

FB = Father Ever Beat Mother;

AFC = Age at First Cohabitation;

WI = Wealth Index;

MS = Marital Status;

PDA = Partner Drinks Alcohol;

FT = Family Type;

DMA = Decision-Making Access;

PE = Partner’s Education;

MME = Mass Media Exposure;

IF = Inequality in Family;

SRS = Social Rules and Support;

R = Religion;

RS = Residence;

ϵ = error term

Table 2: List of Variables with Explanation

Variables	Unit of Measurement/Questions	Sources	Expected Sign
Dependent Variable			
Women Experiencing Violence in the Past 12 Months	Yes/No	Castro et al. (2017); Dutta et al. (2016)	N/A
Individual Risk Factors			
Age	<20 years = 0 20-29 years = 1 30-39 years = 2 40 years and over = 3	Castro et al. (2017); Dutta et al. (2016)	(-)
Education	No Formal Education = 0 Schooling Years Primary = 1 Secondary = 2 Higher = 3	Castro et al. (2017); Dutta et al. (2016); Atteraya et al. (2014)	(-)
Occupation	Not in Work Force/No Occupation = 0 In the Past = 1 Currently Working = 2	Castro et al. (2017); Dutta et al. (2016)	(+)
Physical Abused	Mother = 0 Father = 1	Castro et al. (2017); Dutta et al. (2016); Atteraya et al. (2014)	(+)
Father ever Beat Mother	No = 0 Yes = 1 Don't know = 2	Castro et al. (2017)	(+)
Respondent's Age at First Marriage	<18 years = 0 18-29 years = 1 30-40 years = 2 over 40 years = 3	Atteraya et al. (2014)	(-)
Relationship Risk Factors			
Wealth Index	Poorest = 0 Poor = 1 Middle = 2 Richer = 3 Richest = 4	Castro et al. (2017); Dutta et al. (2016); Atteraya et al. (2014)	(-)
Partner Drinks Alcohol	No = 0 Yes = 1	Castro et al. (2017); Dutta et al. (2016); Atteraya et al. (2014)	(+)
Family Type	Single Family = 0 Alone Only = 1 Jointly Only = 2	Atteraya et al. (2014)	(+)
Decision-Making Access	Woman Herself = 0 Woman and her Husband = 1 Husband Himself = 2	Atteraya et al. (2014)	(-)
Partner's Education	No Formal Education = 0 Incomplete Primary = 1 Complete Primary = 2 Incomplete Secondary = 3 Complete Secondary = 4 Higher = 5 Don't Know = 6	Atteraya et al. (2014)	(-)
Community Level Risk Factors			
Place of Residence	Rural = 0 Urban = 1	Castro et al. (2017); Atteraya et al. (2014)	(+)
Maintaining Social Rules and Support from Family and Friends	No = 0 Yes = 1	Authors' Compilation	(-)
Religion	Others = 0 Muslim = 1 Hindu = 2	Dutta et al. (2016); Atteraya et al. (2014)	(+)
Society Level Risk Factors			
Exposure to Mass Media	No = 0 Yes = 1	Authors' Compilation	(-)
Inequality in Family	No = 0 Yes = 1	Authors' Compilation	(-)

Results

Descriptive Statistics

This study aimed to illustrate the major risk factors for domestic violence against women. All respondents were married women aged between 15 and 49 years. In this study, the maximum age of respondents was 49 years, the minimum age was 15 years, the average age of respondents

was 30.537 years, and the standard deviation was 9.55, which expresses more reliable data because a standard deviation measures how data are clustered around the mean. With the help of Table 3, we can easily understand the characteristics of these variables.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.
Age (Years)	56432	30.537	9.55
Residence (Urban/Rural)	56432	1.652	0.476
Education (No Formal Education/Primary/Secondary/Higher)	56432	1.264	1.061
Mass Media (No/Yes)	56432	0.734	0.96
Religion (Others/Muslim/Hindu)	56432	2.511	10.535
Internet Use (No/Yes)	56432	0.414	0.526
Wealth (Poorest/Poor/Middle/Richer/Richest)	56432	2.962	1.402
Marital Status (Married/Single/Divorced)	56432	0.955	0.751
Age At First Cohabitation (Years)	56432	19.349	4.283
Partner Occupation (No Occupation/In the Past Year/Currently Working)	56432	3341.212	5265.691
Partner Education (No Formal Education/Incomplete Primary/Primary/Incomplete Secondary/Secondary/Higher)	56432	2.242	1.861
Partner Age (Years)	56432	36.953	10.106
Occupation (No Occupation/In the Past Year/Currently Working)	56432	0.851	0.97
Inequality (No/Yes)	56432	1.648	0.853
Decision Making (Woman Herself/Woman and Husband/Husband Himself)	56432	2.738	1.581
Family Type (Single/Alone/Joint)	56432	0.728	0.972
Partner Drinks (No/Yes)	56432	0.288	0.453
Physical Abuse (by Mother/Father)	56432	0.031	0.173
Social Rules (No/Yes)	56432	0.001	0.037
Father Ever Beat Mother (No/Yes)	56432	1.065	2.395
Protection (No/Yes)	56432	2.422	1.307

Percentage of Women’s Violence Experience or Not within 12 Months

The pie chart shows that 49 percent of the observed women had been victims of domestic violence within the last 12 months. It is assumed that the remaining 51 percent are also victims but have not faced such severe circumstances within that period, or they are afraid to provide the information.

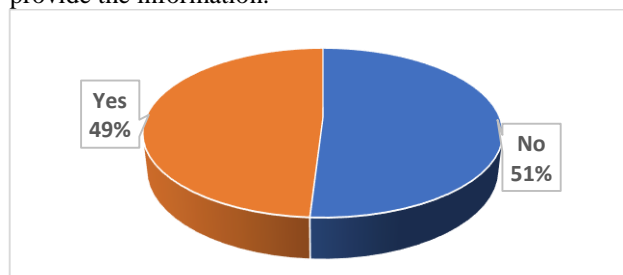


Figure 1: Women’s Violence Experience or Not within 12 Months

Relationship between Violence against Women and Their Age

The subsequent Table 4 illustrates which age group of women experienced a higher incidence of violence. Typically, elevated violence is prevalent among women aged 20–29 years. Approximately 14037 women reported experiencing violence from their families or partners. This demographic of women, having encountered familial

responsibilities at an early stage, struggles to comprehend the management of their marital or family lives. This may explain the violence victimization.

Table 4: Violence against Women and Their Age

Respondent's Current Age	Violence Experience or Not		
	No Violence	Violence	Total
0-19	755	1284	2039
20-29	5394	14037	19431
30-39	12872	7918	20790
40+	9738	4434	14172
Total	28759	27673	56432

The age group of 0-19 has also experienced significant aggressive behavior. However, the situation has evolved for the 30-39 age demographic. They (12872) reported that they did not experience any violence directed towards them. This may be because they possess sufficient maturity to handle familial relationships and obligations. They have children, so they obtain the means to prevent violence. Women above the age of 40 years are less likely to be victims of domestic violence. The presumed cause is that as women age, the incidence of domestic violence diminishes. Advancing age improves awareness and decision-making ability within the family.

Relationship between Violence against Women and Their Partners' Drinking Alcohol Habit

Table 5 examines the relationship between violence against women and their partners' alcohol consumption habits. In this study, 11465 women who were victims of violence said that their husbands consumed alcohol. Conversely, 23901 women, who have not experienced

violence, report that their husbands are not addicted to alcohol. The table illustrates that alcohol consumption induces violent behavior, whereas drug addiction exacerbates withdrawal symptoms upon cessation. As time progresses, violence escalates due to moral decline.

Table 5: Violence against Women and Their Partners' Drinking Alcohol Habit

Husband/Partner Drinks Alcohol	Violence Experience Or Not		
	No Violence	Violence	Total
No	23901	16208	40109
Yes	4858	11465	16323
Total	28759	27673	56432

Relationship between Violence against Women and Their Educational Qualifications

The subsequent Table 6 elucidates the correlation between women's educational qualifications and their experiences of violence in the preceding 12 months. In this context, 13697 women endure domestic violence and lack educational qualifications. Conversely, 9786 women with higher educational qualifications did not experience violence. Only 1227 women with higher education suffered domestic violence. This may be because they are not working women. Simultaneously, they have less

control over their families. It is clear from the table that the more educated a woman is, the lower the possibility of her suffering from domestic violence. The reason behind this may be because a comparatively well-educated woman is more capable of maintaining her family relationship. Moreover, she has decision-making ability, self-dependency, and financial solvency. Therefore, they face less domestic violence.

Table 6: Violence against Women and Educational Qualifications

Highest Educational Level (Schooling Years)	Violence Experience or Not		
	No Violence	Violence	Total
No Education (0)	8679	13697	22376
Primary (1-5)	3173	5185	8358
Secondary (6-10)	7121	7564	14685
Higher (Above 10)	9786	1227	11013
Total	28759	27673	56432

Relationship between Violence against Women and Their Occupation

Education and professions are interconnected. Most educated women are employed in the formal sector. Employment reduces the likelihood of individuals becoming victims of domestic violence. They possess the capacity to advocate against violence as they have financial backing and formal avenues for assistance. The various professions of women exert distinct impacts on their familial acceptance and security concerns. It has been determined that 18210 currently employed women do not experience violence. Conversely, 20628 unemployed

women endured domestic violence. In developing nations, 5030 working women suffer from abuse. This may be due to excessive self-sufficiency and diminished control over their behavior with family members. Professional women are often perceived as engaging in extramarital relationships or disregarding familial rules and traditions. During this period, they may encounter violence. Furthermore, they are unable to voice opposition to violence due to their esteemed societal stature.

Table 7: Violence against Women and Their Occupation

Respondent Worked in the Last 12 Months	Violence Experience or Not		
	No Violence	Violence	Total
No	5531	20628	26159
In the Past Year	3753	1915	5668
Currently Working	18210	5030	23240
Have A Job, But on Leave Last 7 Days	1265	100	1365
Total	28759	27673	56432

Relationship between Violence against Women and Their Residence

Table 8 shows the association between violence against women and their place of residence. Women residing in rural regions (21522) are more likely to encounter

domestic abuse than those in metropolitan areas (6151). Disordered daily occurrences of rural living have been established as the cause of this consequence.

Table 8: Violence against Women and Their Residence

Type Of Place of Residence	Violence Experience or Not		
	No Violence	Violence	Total
Urban	10936	6151	17087
Rural	17823	21522	39345
Total	28759	27673	56432

Result of Logistic Model

This study is mainly based on the risk determinants of domestic violence against women (DVW). Therefore, a logistic regression model was applied to explore the significant risk factors of domestic violence. The following Table 9 includes the odds ratios of different individual, relationship, community, and societal risk factors.

Among the individual-level risk factors, the age of women is significant in the case of experiencing violence against them. The odds ratio indicates that women experience 1.3 times the odds of violence compared to those below 20 years old (OR = 1.30, $p < 0.05$). This may be because women under 20 years of age are generally unmarried. As parents try to marry off women who are 20-29 years old, they face more violence in their new home and family environment. They are not mature enough to maintain all the responsibilities of a new culture. The women between 30-39 years old have lower odds of experiencing violence than the reference group of women below 20 years old (OR = 0.86, $p = 0.075$). Women aged 40 years and over showed no significant differences compared to the control group. This is because they are aware of their family responsibilities and have the power to make decisions at this stage of their lives. Education is an important factor in predicting domestic violence incidence. The odds ratio exhibits that primary and secondary educated women experience 11.3 percent and 21 percent more odds of violence compared to the women who have no formal education qualification (OR_{primary} = 1.11, $p < 0.01$; OR_{secondary} = 1.21, $P < 0.05$). Conversely, women with a higher level of education have a 79 percent ($p = 0.05$) lower chance of being victims of violence.

From Table 9, we found that women who worked in the past year had a 28 percent lower (1 percent significant) probability of being violent compared to women who had no occupation. Current working women have a 36 percent (5 percent significant) lower chance of being victims of violence. The reason is that she is self-dependent and aware of her rights and decisions. Therefore, their family respects them for participating in their responsibilities to carry out the family's expenses rather than being a burden on the family. The odds ratio indicates that women who witnessed their father beating their mother experience 1.23 times the odds of violence compared to those who did not witness such situations (OR = 1.23, $p < 0.05$). From childhood, they have observed this type of scenario in their homes. Therefore, emotional, physical, and psychological violence is normal for them. Sometimes, they think that this is the normal environment for them, as they are accustomed to such situations.

In the relationship-level risk factors, the first cohabitation age of (18 – 29) years has a 21 percent (5 percent significant) lower possibility of suffering domestic violence compared to the first cohabitation age below 18 years. Under 18 years of age is an immature age, and there

is a high possibility of committing physical and sexual violence. Additionally, the richest women faced significantly less violence than the poorest women.

The odds ratio indicates that women whose partners drink alcohol experience 1.50 times the odds of violence compared to those whose partners do not drink alcohol (OR = 1.50, $p < 0.01$). Addicted partners exploit their wives because they must expose their anger to them. Due to the different complexities for the people of a joint family, women from a joint family faced 1.01 times odds of violence than the single-family based women (OR = 1.01, $p < 0.10$). Women who make decisions along with their husbands have a 13 percent lower probability (5 percent significant), but women whose partners make decisions alone have a 6 percent higher probability (10 percent significant) of being violent, rather than women who make decisions alone. The educational qualifications of the husband/partner are also an essential factor in domestic violence. The educated partner exhibits less violent behavior in his house because he understands the respect, rules, and formalities of a family.

At the societal level, family inequality is a considerable issue. When women face inequality in their household, with their family members, the odds ratio indicates that women experience 1.83 times the odds of violence than women who do not experience inequality in their family (OR = 1.83, $p < 0.10$). In a society where women maintain all the social rules and receive proper support from their family and friends, there is 17 percent (10 percent significant) less violence than against women who do not receive proper support, assuming other things remain constant. When a woman watches TV, listens to the news, uses a computer, an android, and the internet regularly, she has less chance of being affected by violence because she is aware of the causes and remedies of domestic violence from the media.

Regarding community-level risk factors, Muslim and Hindu women of the study countries have a higher probability of experiencing violence, respectively, compared to the other religious groups, holding other things constant. Muslim and Hindu women must maintain more rules, regulations, bindings, norms, and community-level responsibilities in developing countries. If they make mistakes, they must suffer more than other religious women. The odds ratio explicit that women living in urban areas experience slightly lower odds of violence than women living in rural areas (OR = 0.92, $P < 0.05$). Due to being illiterate and unemployed, rural women have no idea about their decision-making, rights, and voice against violent activities. Their family also teaches them that they must obey all the instructions (good or bad) of their life partner and their in-laws' house.

Table 9: Result of Binomial Logistic Regression

Variables	Coefficient	p-Value
Age group (Ref: <20 years)		
20 – 29	1.013	0.042
30 – 39	0.857	0.075
40 and Over	0.963	0.092
Education (Ref: No Formal Education)		
Primary	1.113	0.009
Secondary	1.210	0.038
Higher	0.210	0.053
Occupation (Ref: No Occupation)		
In the Past Year	0.722	0.008
Currently Working	0.643	0.015
Physical Abuse by (Ref: Mother)		
Father	1.854	0.129
Father ever Beat Mother (Ref: No)		
Yes	1.233	0.029
Don't Know	1.225	0.334
Respondent's Age at First Cohabitation Group (Ref: <18 years)		
18-29 years	0.787	0.017
30-40	0.455	0.128
Over 40	0.478	0.621
Wealth (Ref: Poorest)		
Poor	1.048	0.019
Middle	0.98	0.889
Richer	1.022	0.196
Richest	0.301	0.056
Partner Drinks Alcohol (Ref: No)		
Yes	1.495	0.001
Family Type (Ref: Single Family)		
Alone Only	0.244	0.043
Jointly Only	1.012	0.091
Decision Making Access (Ref: Woman Herself)		
Woman and her Husband	0.862	0.013
Husband Himself	1.06	0.068
Partner's Education (Ref: No Formal Education)		
Incomplete Primary	1.238	0.026
Complete Primary	0.53	0.524
Incomplete Secondary	0.991	0.261
Complete Secondary	1.356	0.723
Higher	0.984	0.041
Don't Know	2.748	0.317
Exposure to Mass Media (Ref: No)		
Yes	0.8	0.051
Inequality in Family (Ref: No)		
Yes	1.831	0.086
Maintaining Social Rules and Support from Family and Friends (Ref: No)		
Yes	0.822	0.051
Religion (Ref: Other)		
Muslim	1.132	0.06
Hindu	1.241	0.018
Residence (Ref: Rural)		
Urban	0.918	0.040
Constant	1.077	0.085
Pseudo r-squared	0.030	
Chi-square	95.731	
Number of Observations	56432	

(Note: *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$)

Discussion

Domestic violence against women is a significant global problem. A multitude of women globally endure this violence. The primary objective of this study was to identify the most significant risk factors for domestic violence against women. This study demonstrated a negative correlation between age and domestic violence at the individual level of risk factors. The results of this study are consistent with those of Castro et al. (2017) and Dutta et al. (2016). Mature people often develop emotional sophistication, improved conflict resolution skills, and more stability in personal relationships—qualities that can help reduce the likelihood of either engaging in or coming across domestic abuse. Older people are more likely to have established social networks and financial independence, which may be protective. Younger women, on the other hand, could be more susceptible to situations that might turn violent, as they have more emotional instability, financial difficulty, and less experience in handling personal problems. Furthermore, younger couples may be under more pressure from cultural expectations, which would increase tensions and the likelihood of violence. Thus, age functions not only as a demographic factor but also as a sign of many social, emotional, and financial elements influencing the probability of domestic violence. Education is a significant factor and has a negative association with domestic violence, according to the results of this study. This reveals that women with higher education experience less violence. According to Firestone et al. (2000) and Loi (2000), education can equip women with increased awareness of their rights, enhanced economic prospects, and superior negotiation abilities, and diminish the likelihood of violence. However, education is incongruent with the findings of Castro et al. (2017), Dutta et al. (2016), and Atteraya et al. (2014). They explored the positive relationship between women's schooling years and domestic violence. This may be due to the socio-economic context: when men have lower educational qualifications and have inferior complexity, there is greater resistance and tension towards educated women, as they challenge conventional notions of femininity. A reaction may occur if men resort to violence in such situations. Consequently, cultural perceptions of women's autonomy, power hierarchies, and overarching gender dynamics may influence the extent to which education mitigates domestic violence risk. Owing to increased social exposure, financial independence, and self-assurance, the present study explored a negative link between work and violence against women. This empowerment helps women to rebel against abusive marriages. This conclusion contradicts those of Dutta et al. (2016) and Castro et al. (2017). Meekers et al. (2013) and Castro and Casique (2009) have reported women in Latin America claiming increased cases of domestic abuse. In certain cultures, women's employment challenges accepted gender roles, caused male anxiety or envy, and led to violence used for control. Contextual factors, such as social standards, gender dynamics, and the claimed outcomes of female economic empowerment, influence occupation and domestic violence. This study also shows that women who witnessed their father beating their mother had a positive relationship with domestic violence. This result

corresponds to the findings of earlier studies (Flake 2005; Castro and Casique 2009). The observation of parental abuse normalizes such behavior for women and enhances the probability of either tolerating or replicating violence in adult relationships.

In terms of relationship-level risk factors, women have a lower probability of experiencing domestic violence in the mature age of cohabitation (the age when a woman starts living with her partner). This result matches the findings with Johnson and Das (2009), Chan (2009), and Abramsky et al. (2011). Mature women possess better emotional maturity, life experience, and decision-making capabilities. These may help them contribute to understanding their partner and relationship and minimize their vulnerability to domestic violence. Heavy alcohol consumption by a partner is positively correlated with domestic violence. This aligns with the findings of Castro et al. (2017), Dutta et al. (2016), and Atteraya et al. (2014). An alcohol-addicted partner has a deficiency of self-control, which enables them to torture their spouse at any moment without reason. Consequently, this study indicates that women whose partners possess incomplete basic education or comprehensive secondary education are at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence. Conversely, women whose partners have attained higher educational qualifications experience a reduced likelihood of violence. Atteraya et al. (2014) have also found the same inverse association between partner's education and domestic violence. Highly educated partners believe in gender equality, have good communication skills, and can recognize the negative sides of domestic violence. However, a partner's lower educational attainment is related to traditional views of society and the mentality to control women, as well as a greater propensity to justify violence to control.

From a community-level perspective, this study analyzed the data and found a statistically significant relationship between religious affiliation and experience of domestic violence. The results indicate that women identifying as Muslim and Hindu may have a higher likelihood of experiencing violence than women of other religious backgrounds. The prevalence of suffering from violence within specific religious groups may be affected by community structure, traditional and cultural norms, or socioeconomic factors. This does not imply that religion itself is the reason for domestic violence. According to the research study of Dutta et al. (2016) and Atteraya et al. (2014), gender-biased attitudes are influenced by religious and cultural norms or traditional regulations, which result in domestic violence. This study also demonstrated that women residing in rural areas are more likely to experience domestic abuse than those living in urban settings. This result is consistent with the findings of Castro et al. (2017). The probable reason for this is that women living in rural areas are more socially isolated. They have limited access to support and faith in traditional gender norms. However, other research indicates that domestic violence is prevalent in metropolitan regions (Mendoza and Roca, 2011), possibly because that research focused on urban environments where higher reporting rates and greater visibility of domestic violence may exaggerate prevalence statistics. However, rural incidents may be underreported despite being more common. Societal-level risk variables

included familial inequality and media exposure. It has been determined that women with equal access within their families and regular media usage are less likely to experience domestic violence.

In summary, this study delineates several individual, relationship, community, and societal-level risk factors for domestic violence against women. The major findings indicate that younger age, lower levels of educational qualification and employment status, early age of cohabitation, partner's alcohol addiction, lower educational background of the partner, rural residency, and adherence to specific traditional religious norms are correlated with a higher probability of domestic violence. However, factors such as higher education, a stable employment background, emotional maturity, and equitable family dynamics are related to a decreasing probability of violence. The promotion of women's education and employment, enhancement of awareness about healthy relationships, strengthening the community support system in rural areas, and confronting detrimental gender bias through various culturally sensitive media campaigns are the best policy responses for minimizing domestic violence. The term should be addressed using an integrated approach, not only to protect women but also to empower them through proper education, quality employment, social support, and legal reform.

Conclusion

This study conducted a quantitative investigation of women's experiences with domestic abuse in South and Southeast Asia, utilizing secondary data from the DHS and a sample of 56432 married women aged 15 to 49 years. The analysis revealed a complex issue influenced by individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. Higher educational achievement, formal employment, emotional maturity, and urban residence are consistently linked to a lower likelihood of experiencing domestic abuse. In contrast, a partner's alcohol dependency, lower educational attainment, younger age of women, traditional societal beliefs, and exposure to childhood violence in their own families significantly increased the risk of violence against women. In rural communities and extended family environments, traditional and cultural behaviors, as well as misinterpretations of various norms,

help to create power imbalances; women are therefore used to accepting violence. Differentiating between negative sociocultural behaviors and misconstrued religious views mistakenly linked to religion is vital. Approaching this difference with a culturally appropriate policy response will help prevent overgeneralization and support inclusiveness while respecting diversity.

This study provides significant insights, although it has some limitations. The authors acknowledge that the DHS data for all southern and southeastern countries were not available, and the DHS dataset has variable constraints. Not all variables are available, and the authors must keep proxy variables in some cases. The use of secondary data limits the depth and scope of the analysis. This study intends to promote policy interventions that focus on expanding educational and economic opportunities for women, promoting effective parenting and equitable household decision-making, and implementing steps to minimize alcohol use. Legislative processes must be followed, law enforcement training must be improved, and civil society events must raise awareness of issues. Changing the abuse of conventional norms and the distortion of religious ideas depends on community involvement and awareness campaigns launched by civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concurrently. NGOs and international organizations play a crucial role in providing resources and assistance. A multi-stakeholder approach is important for empowering women and minimizing domestic abuse, involving government commitment and community-level activities. Policymakers and stakeholders can use these findings to formulate targeted initiatives designed to foster a safer and more equitable society for women in developing nations. Future research should incorporate longitudinal data and South Asian countries' data and include local and regional analyses to determine the most effective risk factors for interventions against domestic violence against women.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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