

# Violence against married and unmarried women in Haryana: voices from public and private spaces

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## Abstract

*Violence against women has increasingly drawn the attention of academicians as it is the most pervasive violation of human rights that occur in both developing and developed countries. Women experience violence both in public and private spaces which undermines their dignity, security, health, and autonomy. The present paper evaluates the levels, forms and socio-economic correlates of violence against married and unmarried women in public and private spaces in the rural and urban settings of a patriarchal north Indian state of Haryana. Patriarchy works differently in the case of married and unmarried women and so is its controlling behaviour in public and private spaces. The paper is based on primary data, collected through a multistage stratified random sampling technique by selecting 501 households spread over four villages and two towns in two districts of the state. The results reveal that almost every second unmarried women in public space and every third married woman in private space have experienced violence in rural and urban areas of the state.*

**Key Words:** *violence, public and private spaces, socio-economic.*

## Introduction

Internationally, violence against women is defined as an act of verbal or physical force, coercion or life-threatening deprivation, directed at an individual woman that causes physical or psychological harm, humiliation, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty and that perpetuates female subordination (Heise et al., 1994). In other words, it refers to: (i) violence that is directed towards women; and (ii) violence that tends to disproportionately affect women. Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon and all nations, whether developed or developing, report such abuses. On a global scale, over one third (35%) of women are victims of any kind of physical, emotional, sexual/intimate partner sexual violence (WHO, 2013). India is no

exception where violence against women is quite high and the statistics from both (data collecting agencies) National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) and National Family Health Survey (NFHS-IV) reveal that majority of it takes place in the private sphere, e.g. domestic violence and that too within the precincts of the family and at the hands of intimate partners or relatives of their partners (NCRB, 2015; IIPS, 2017). Ironically, numerous studies indicate home as the most dangerous place for women and frequently the site of cruelty and torture (Bunch and Carrilo, 1991; Kellerman and Mercy; 1992; Moreno et al., 2005; Hacket, 2011; Kumari, 2009). It may, however, be noted that women consistently face the high level of violence in public spaces also and it ranges from

everyday unwanted comments, stares, gaze, discomforting attention, and harassment in streets, public transport, workplaces, schools, colleges and all other different spaces.

It may also be noted that the violence against women is reported across all religions, caste, class, age, education barriers and geographical boundaries (Carrilo, 1992; Fried, 2003; Bergen, 2006; Subadra, 1999, Rajeshwari and Preeti, 2017). This widespread phenomenon of violence against women is a result of various social, economic and legal factors. Societal factors include the low social and economic status of women, social acceptance of violence, strong patriarchy, non-compliance to gender role performance and gender inequality (Coker et al, 2000; Dagar, 2002; Anandhi and Jejaranjan, 2002; Dash, 2007; Choudhary, 2012; Chandrasekharan, 2013). Economic factors include among others, their financial dependence on men, limited access to employment and economic opportunities, denial of economic inheritance of property and absence of an economic alternative to escape the abusive relationship (Tiwari, 2002; Naved and Persson, 2005; Babu and Kar 2009). Among the other factors which are individual-level factors range from the use of alcohol and drugs, witnessing or experiencing violence as a child to extramarital affairs, etc. (Rao, 1997; Visaria, 2000; Koening, 2006; Gundappa and Rathod, 2012; Vranda, 2013; Aswar et al., 2013; Islam et al, 2015).

The present research deals with the levels and forms of violence against women (married and unmarried) in public and private spaces in Haryana. Haryana is an interesting case study as in terms of per capita income and State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP), it is growing at the rate of 8 to 9 percent per annum and is categorized as one among the developed states of India (Economic Survey, 2018). Ironically, its economic performance does not commensurate with parameters of social development. In terms of sex ratio, the state ranks last among all Indian states with 879 females per thousand male. In terms of female literacy, it is only 65.94 percent and ranked at 22<sup>nd</sup> position in Indian states (Census, 2011). Haryanvi society is basically patriarchal in nature where women are not expected to be disobedient and outspoken. The prevalence of the *purdha* system (a custom in which women either remain in a special part of the house or cover their faces and bodies to avoid being seen by men who are not related to them) and practice of child marriage are strong evidence in this regard. Studies have documented gender discrimination in various spheres in the state and this subjugation and discrimination of women perpetrate violence against them (Pal, 2018; Chowdhary, 1994; 2007). The state has little respect for the legal entitlement by not allowing women to exercise property rights and is notorious for its mindless violence in the name of 'honour' (Chowdhry, 2012). Women are not merely denied the right to

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1. The public and private spaces are distinguished on the basis of accessibility, interference, and freedom. Private space is that part of social space controlled by individuals and is generally unknown, unobserved and exclusive, associated with intimacy, emotion, love, affection, comfort, and sense of freedom (Gavison, 1992; Landes, 1998; Erica, 2009; Pomeray, 2010). Public spaces are usually considered to be places occupied by large number of people.). These spaces are outside the individual control and used for a

be born; their voices go unheard in both the public and private spaces.<sup>1</sup> Patriarchy works in both brazen and insidious form in both the spaces and equally for married and unmarried women. In private spaces, the form of violence varies for married and unmarried women. In case of unmarried girls, the visible physical abuse i.e. frequent kicking, hitting is far less frequent but they are subject to various diktats and restrictions with regard to dressing, movement and many more restrictions related to their everyday life, and is practiced with a full social sanction in order to ensure obedience at husband's home. It may also be noted that unmarried girls are less subjected to physical abuse, but obedience is ensured by the fear of violence by gender stereotype which prescribes authority, aggressiveness, and decisiveness for masculinity and accommodation, subservience, timidity and obedience for femininity. However, in public spaces, they are subject to verbal and non-contact sexual violence, which is largely a reflection of the patriarchal mindset, that accord low value to women in general. In case of married women, deep-rooted gender relations not only favours men, rather it allows them to control their lives and they are subject to physical and emotional violence ranging from slapping, kicking, throwing out of home, etc, and is kept outside the legal purview on the pretext of personal and familial matter.

Hence, the present paper discusses the (i) levels of violence against women (married

and unmarried) in public and private spaces in a rural and urban setting in the state and (ii) analyzes the type of violence vis-à-vis socio-economic characteristics of victims in public and private spaces in case of married and unmarried women.

### **Data Base and Methodology**

The research depends heavily on primary data, obtained from a survey of 501 households in both rural and urban areas of Haryana. It was carried out during the year 2016. The selection of households is based on multi-stage sampling method. At the first stage, all the districts of Haryana were grouped into four categories on the basis of crime against women per lakh population for the year 2011 as available from NCRB data for the year 2011). The first quartile represents the districts with the least crime rate and the quartile second, third and fourth represents the districts with a successive higher rate of crime against women respectively (Fig.1). Two districts namely Fatehabad and Rohtak have been selected from the first and fourth quartile representing the least and highest crime rate respectively. In the third stage, two villages and one town are selected from each of these districts. A total of four villages- Ayalki and Dhingsara from Fatehabad district and Singhapura and Kharawar from Rohtak district- and two towns, namely Ratia from Fatehabad district and Mahem from Rohtak district are selected (Fig.2). The selection of sample households is

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variety of purposes and are associated with coldness and have justice, right and equality (Erica, 2009; Pomeray, 2010). Further, it may be noted that feminine has been constituted in private realm - as described from its traditional duties of home, whereas, masculinity is constituted in the public realm (Rose, 1993; Raju, 2003; 2011; Tabrea, 2010; Paul, 2011; Perregaux, 2005).

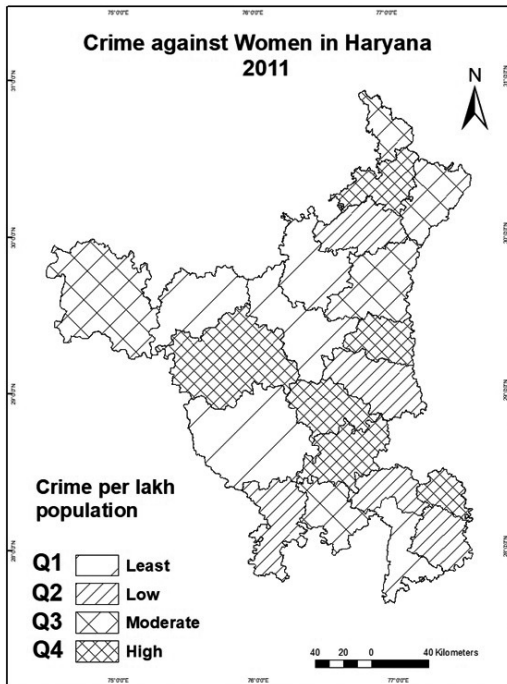


Fig. 1

Source: Crime in India, 2011, NCRB

based on a stratified random sampling technique which is representative of all the caste groups in the village. Adequate care was taken to select households with at least one married or unmarried woman. In all, 451 ever-married women (15-59 age group) and 80 unmarried girls (15-29 age group) were interviewed from urban and rural locations.

Violence is categorized into three distinct types i.e. physical, emotional and sexual violence. Physical forms include slapping, kicking and pushing, etc, while emotional violence refers to controlling, insulting or shouting, verbal abuse, throwing out of home, neglect for money and threat to crime/burn, committed by husband or in-laws and intimate. Sexual violence is taken in two forms: contact sexual violence (CSV) and non-contact sexual violence. CSV may be defined as

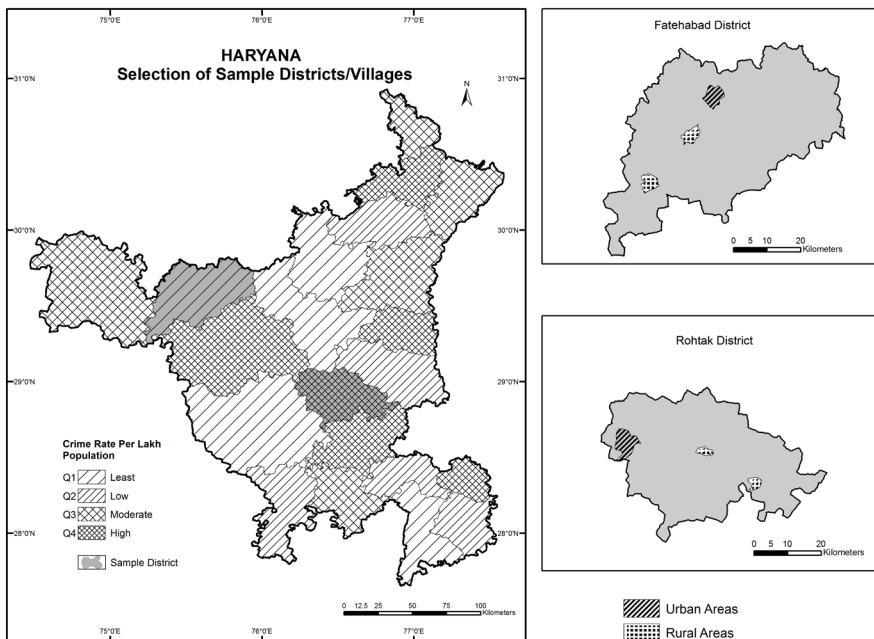


Fig. 2 Location of Sample Villages/Towns

unwanted touching and forcefully trying to intimate without consent. This may be by strangers, relatives or intimate partners. The non-contact sexual violence refers to staring, making dirty comments or gestures. It may be noted that all three forms of violence i.e. the physical, emotional and sexual violence occur in public and private spaces.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Level and Form of Violence in Public and Private Spaces***

The level of violence against women shows remarkable variations in public and private spaces and also in rural and urban areas. As discussed earlier the patriarchal values manifest quite differently for married and unmarried women. It has been found that in the case of ever-married women, its level is higher in private spaces as compared to public spaces. The low reported violence among married women in public spaces is largely due to their low mobility or that in patriarchal setup, gender codes for married women confirms to domesticity. In the case of unmarried women, however, the level of violence is higher in public spaces as compared to private spaces. This is reported from both the sample study districts in rural and urban areas respectively (Table 1). It is distressing to note that at the public spaces of urban locations, the level of violence against unmarried women is significantly high as compared to their rural counterparts. Relatively less violence against unmarried women in private spaces does not mean that they are valued more, rather patriarchy has many direct and insidious ways to

control them through various diktats in the name of 'honour'. Further, in view of their marriageable age and a short stay in the native homes, the physical and visible form of violence is much less than faced by married women. There is also denial in accepting that verbal and emotional are forms of violence by the majority of unmarried women in the name of 'affection' and 'honour'.

It may also be noted that the fear and forms of violence against women also differ under patriarchal set up in public and private spaces. While in private spaces, the form of violence varies from various controlling behaviours like including physical abuse and even throwing them out of the home on the pretext of gender role performance to sexual violence, etc., in public spaces, stalking, verbal dirty comments and unwanted touch, etc. are all manifestation of patriarchal mindset, which places women as subordinate and undermines their equality and gets reflected in public spaces.

In private spaces, both married and unmarried women are subject to emotional, physical and sexual violence. In the study area, however, the married women reported all these forms of violence in private spaces (Table 2), while its absence was conspicuous in private spaces in case of unmarried women. In private spaces, the most common form of violence was verbal abuse, followed by all sorts of physical violence, i.e. slapping, kicking pushing, etc. Emotional forms of violence are quite high in both rural and urban areas. Physical forms of violence in rural areas are equally high (Table 2).

Table 1: Levels and Types of Violence against Married and Unmarried Women in Haryana (Percent of women experienced violence)

Types of Violence	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried
<b>Violence in Private Spaces</b>						
Any form of physical violence	16.0	0.0	6.9	0.0	12.8	0.0
Any form of emotional violence	26.0	0.0	17.6	0.0	23.0	0.0
Any form of intimate partner sexual violence	14.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	10.8	0.0
<b>Violence in Public Spaces</b>						
Any form of non-contact sexual violence	2.7	15.7	5.6	45.9	3.7	38.7
Any form of contact sexual violence	0.0	5.2	0.0	8.1	0.0	7.5
Any form of physical, emotional or sexual violence in public or private space	29.4	15.7	22.6	45.9	26.6	38.7
Total (N)	292	19	159	61	451	80

Source: Based on the Primary Survey, 2016.

It may also be noted that intimate partner sexual violence is reported by 14 percent of women in rural areas. Interestingly women living in urban areas reported lower physical and sexual violence as compared to their rural counterparts. In public spaces, the most commonly reported form of violence is non-contact sexual violence. Statistics reveal that about 40 percent of unmarried girls in the study area reported non-contact sexual violence, while it was only four percent in the case of married women. The difference again might be due to the immobility of married women. It may again be noted that in urban areas, almost every second girl

reported non-contact sexual violence such as staring and dirty comments. Incidents of unwanted touch were reported by 8 percent unmarried women in urban areas and by 5 percent in its rural areas.

### ***Violence vis-à-vis Socio-economic Characteristics***

Many studies find how social status and values are major reasons in variations in underreporting, conception and acceptance of domestic violence (Kapadia-Kundu et.al. 2007; Raju, 2011; Tichy, et.al. 2009; Jacob and Chattopadhyay, 2019). Table 3 reveals that married women from the lower socio-

economic classes (corresponding to certain caste groups) experience significantly more violence as compared to middle and upper class (caste) women. This variation, however, may partly be due to under-

reporting by upper caste/class groups where the concept of honour and honourable conduct (by not reporting the domestic violence) is a commonly shared social behaviour.

Table 2: Forms of Violence against Married and Unmarried Women in Haryana (Percent of women experienced violence)

Forms of Violence	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried
<b>Forms of Violence experienced in Private Spaces</b>						
<b>Physical Violence</b>						
Slapping	16.1	0.0	6.9	0.0	12.9	0.0
Kicking	12.0	0.0	6.3	0.0	10.0	0.0
Pushing	5.1	0.0	3.1	0.0	4.4	0.0
Thrown out of home	2.1	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.8	0.0
<b>Emotional Violence</b>						
Controlling behaviour	12.7	0.0	10.1	0.0	11.8	0.0
Verbal Abuse	19.9	0.0	15.1	0.0	18.2	0.0
Neglect for money	1.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.9	0.0
<b>Intimate Partner Sexual Violence</b>						
Forcefully being intimate	14.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	10.8	0.0
<b>Forms of Violence Experienced in Public Spaces</b>						
<b>Non-contact Sexual Violence</b>						
Staring	3.1	15.8	5.7	45.9	4.0	38.8
Dirty comments	3.1	15.8	5.7	39.3	4.0	33.8
<b>Contact Sexual Violence</b>						
Unwanted touch	0.0	5.3	0.0	8.2	0.0	7.5
Total (N)	292	19	159	61	451	80

Source: Based on the Primary Survey, 2016

Table 3: Violence against Married Women vis-à-vis Socio-economic Characteristics (Total)

Socio-economic Characteristics	Violence in Private Spaces			Level of Significance	Public Space	Total N
	Emotional	Physical	Intimate Partner Sexual		Stalking, Staring and commenting	
<b>Caste Groups</b>						
Upper and dominant caste	13.9	6.4	5.9	$\chi^2 = 21.6,$ df-2 (Significant at 0.000)	4.8	187
Other backward caste/ Artisan caste	21.9	10.5	9.6		3.5	114
Lower caste	35.3	22.7	18.0		3.3	150
<b>Age Group of Respondents</b>						
15-29	23.4	12.0	9.1	$\chi^2 = 0.1,$ df-2 (Not Significant)	8.0	175
30-44	23.3	13.7	13.2		1.8	219
45-59	21.1	12.3	7.0		0.0	57
<b>Educational Level of Respondents</b>						
Illiterate	33.3	23.4	20.7	$\chi^2 = 10.5,$ df-4 (Significant at 0.03)	0.0	111
Up to Primary	23.4	17.2	15.6		0.0	64
Primary to matric	20.2	9.0	8.4		0.6	178
Secondary and Higher secondary	19.3	5.3	1.8		5.3	57
12th above	12.2	4.9	0.0		34.1	41
<b>Occupational status of Respondents' Husband</b>						
Landless labor	34.7	24.0	23.1	$\chi^2 = 14.2,$ df-2 (Significant at 0.00)	0.0	121
Cultivators	21.2	7.5	8.7		0.0	80
Self employed	19.8	9.9	6.6		7.7	91
Service	15.4	6.9	3.8		7.7	130
Others	24.1	17.2	10.3		3.4	29
Total	23.0	12.8	10.8		3.7	451

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

Women belonging to all age groups in the study area have reported similar magnitude of physical, emotional and sexual forms of violence. Many scholars have found that younger women are more likely to experience physical violence compared to their older counterparts (Madhurima 1996, Kapadia-Kundu 2004).

Level of education of the respondents and all forms of violence in private spaces show a significant association meaning thereby that less-educated women are more vulnerable to violence in private spaces. As far as public spaces are concerned, a smaller proportion of married women (about 4%) reported violence against them (Table 3). This can



easily be related to their low mobility and also due to not moving alone. In public spaces, the pattern, however, is reverse, i.e. women of higher caste group, of lower age group, with higher levels of education and the ones who are self-employed or are in service are more subjected to violence in public spaces.

Unmarried women, in rural and urban Haryana, reported different forms of violence than that of married women. While in private spaces, the reporting of violence is negligible, it is quite high in public spaces. In public spaces, it ranges from stalking, staring, dirty comments, and unwanted touch– which all are forms of sexual violence.

Table 4: Violence against Unmarried Women vis-à-vis Socio-economic Characteristics

	Rural			Urban			Total			
	Non-contact Sexual Violence	Contact Sexual Violence	Unwanted touching	Non-contact Sexual Violence	Contact Sexual violence	Unwanted touching	Non-contact Sexual Violence	Contact Sexual Violence	Unwanted touching	
Socio-economic characteristics	Staring/ stalking	Dirty comments	Unwanted touching	Stalking/Staring	Dirty comments	Unwanted touching	Stalking/Staring	Dirty Comments	Unwanted touching	Total (N)
Upper and dominant caste	20.0	20.0	0.0	44.0	28.0	8.0	40.0	26.7	6.7	30
Other backward caste/Artisan caste	33.3	33.3	33.3	47.4	47.4	0.0	45.5	45.5	4.5	22
Lower caste	9.1	9.1	0.0	47.1	47.1	17.6	32.1	32.1	10.7	28
15-19	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.3	33.3	3.3	29.5	22.7	2.3	44
20-24	50.0	50.0	0.0	51.9	48.1	11.1	51.6	48.4	9.7	31
25-29	100.0	100.0	100.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	5
Secondary to higher secondary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15
12th to graduate	20.0	20.0	0.0	45.3	37.7	3.8	43.1	36.2	3.4	58
Graduate and above	100.0	100.0	50.0	80.0	80.0	60.0	85.7	85.7	57.1	7
Landless labor	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.7	7.7	0.0	5.3	5.3	0.0	19
cultivator	0.0	0.0	0.0	80.0	80.0	20.0	50.0	50.0	12.5	8
Self-employed	0.0	0.0	0.0	47.8	43.5	8.7	45.8	41.7	8.3	24
Service and other	33.3	33.3	11.1	60.0	45.0	10.0	51.7	41.4	10.3	29
Total	15.7	15.7	5.2	45.9	39.3	8.1	38.7	33.7	7.5	80

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

Table 4 reveals that in both rural and urban areas, non-contact sexual violence is more common. Its magnitude is high in urban areas and does not show any correspondence with social status in terms of caste affiliation. Its prevalence in relation to the age group of the respondents, however, is more among women in 25 to 29 years of age in rural areas; in urban it is distressingly high even for girls of much lower age i.e. 15 to 19 years. Further, staring, stalking and suggestive commenting shows correspondence with levels of education of girls in urban areas, as they are the ones who are more mobile. The non-contact sexual violence also does not show a significant association with economic status (which is measured by the occupation of the household as a proxy). Contact sexual violence in the form of unwanted touch was also experienced by unmarried women in public spaces. Its prevalence was high in urban areas. However, socio-economic characteristics do not reveal any pattern and much association.

## **Conclusion**

Patriarchal societies have different forms of control for women which differ in the two contrasting domains of public and private spaces. In private spaces, these controls range from emotional, verbal, physical and sexual violence. In public spaces, these controls or male authority get articulated in the form of lewd comments, stalking and other forms of non-contact sexual violence. These are all threatening or harassing tactics, an expression of power and dominance and display of male authority. The analysis reveals that both in rural and urban Haryana, married women are vulnerable to violence, particularly in private spaces, so that they do not transgress the prescribed norms of

patriarchy, i.e. doing something without family approval. The social arrangements and norms actually give men formal and informal authority over their wives and daughters, thus providing perceived legitimacy to the use of force against them. The unmarried women in private spaces reported less violence as they are not only tolerant of verbal and emotional violence but also in their acceptance of patriarchal values, i.e. men can be aggressive, enact masculinity and exert authority. In private spaces, men's violent behaviour to claim his authority is accepted social and cultural norm under patriarchy. Hence, in the study area, there was denial in acceptance of violence by unmarried women in private spaces and if at all it was reported, it was seen as a proxy of affection, or accepted cultural norm. In public spaces, however, all forms of violence (stalking, lewd comments and other non-contact sexual violence) were recognized / accepted and were being reported by unmarried women.

In general, lower caste women suffer from more violent behaviour. This association is statistically significant. Further, less literate women were found more vulnerable to violence in private spaces. It was just reverse when it comes to public spaces. As far as socio-economic characteristics and violence against girls are concerned, the result shows that in public spaces, irrespective of caste, class, educational background they can be violated. It is distressing to find the same situation in both rural and urban areas.

There are many issues that merit further investigation; one of them is to find or explore the triggers of this violence, which in the patriarchal setup can be related to gender role performances. Another major issue is to study the multi-dimensional consequences of such violence.

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