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Promoting Women's Education and Financial Independence to Combat Gender-Based Violence

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Abstract

Women's education and economic empowerment is the driving force for shaping an egalitarian society. At the global level, the violence against women has been very intense for decades. It is also noted that women's education and economic empowerment are prominent in gender equality indices. Women's education and economic empowerment have a significant impact on child health, women's fertility, civic life and women's occupational participation. If a well-educated and empowered women community is subjected to gender-based violence, the question arises as to whether the women community is independent. It is therefore necessary to understand the effective implementation of gender policies. Against this background, women's education, economic empowerment - efforts are being made to confront gender-based violence.

Theories of feminism and women's empowerment posit that women's emancipation can be achieved through women's education and women's economic empowerment. But most of the research has made it clear that women's education and economic empowerment alone do not liberate women from gender-based violence. Women's education and economic empowerment have raised awareness of gender-based violence against women, but women have not been freed from it. Numerous studies have confirmed that literate and employed women are more victims of gender-based violence than the unemployed, illiterate. In other words, women's education-empowerment thoughts and researches are influenced by the patriarchal culture and not based on the needs of women's lives. For this reason, the present study recommends thought-research-policy-programmes that promote gender equality, by challenging social norms, inculcating gender-equal thinking from childhood.

Key words: Financial Independence, Gender based violence,

Introduction

Gender-based violence is a public health and human rights issue that is motivated by assumptions based on gender inequality. It can affect any gender. But in the male dominated system of thought, the women community and third genders are subjected to more gender-based violence. Violence against women ranges from the most common to the most extreme forms. In some key countries, women's education and women's economic empowerment are perceived as factors that protect women from gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is a barrier to women's equal participation in society. It is having its impact not only on the women community but also on the overall social and economic development. With the hope of reducing gender disparity, increasing school enrolment of girls, complementary programs for skill building and economic empowerment, girl-child education should go towards combating gender-based violence.

Findings on the relationship between women's education and gender-based violence are inconsistent. Existing studies in various contexts show contradictory results that women's economic empowerment can reduce or increase gender-based violence against women. Also, economic dependence of women on men is the leading cause of domestic violence in India, with 82.3% of the population in India. A solution to gender-based violence in India includes the women community receiving formal education. But women's economic empowerment is being defined only by the centre of employment and wealth. Therefore, the women community is not able to be free from gender-based violence.

Objective of the study

This study seeks to examine the relationship between women's education and economic empowerment. Based on the literature review and theoretical framework so far, the present study formulated the following objectives based on the hypothesis that women's education and economic empowerment will reduce women's exposure to domestic violence.

1. Has women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence reduced due to women's education?
2. What is the relationship between women's economic empowerment and exposure to domestic gender-based violence?

Research methodology

This study adopted a descriptive design approach. Various types of information collected from unmarried and married women in India and quantitative aspects of secondary data from national surveys are described. The survey report covers information on women's level of education, economic empowerment and gender-based violence in India, particularly community violence against married or unmarried women. The secondary source data required for this study was obtained from the 2020, 2021 and 2022 India Demographic Survey and Health Surveys, National Population Commission, which were considered in answering the specific research questions of this study.

Literary dimensions

Gender-based violence against women is prevalent worldwide as 30% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence by their partners. Gender-based violence against women is high in India with 31% of women aged 15 and above. While this may be due to Nigerians endorsing spousal violence and blaming women victims, the high rate of gender-based violence against women appears to be linked to women's poor education and lack of economic independence.

The literature on the protective potential of women's education and economic empowerment to limit women's exposure to intimate partner violence revealed inconsistent results. A small-scale study in India showed that education does not protect women from domestic violence but threatens the traditional power of men. Studies in Bangladesh, Malawi and India have shown that girls' education does not lead to better gender relations and equality for women in these countries. Showed that an increase in women's education was associated with an increase in psychological violence and financial control behaviour without changes in physical violence in turkey. Other studies have shown that women's higher education attainment reduced their exposure to gender-based violence.

It is a popular belief that women who are financially independent from their partners reduce the risk of gender-based violence. Many people in India share the belief that economic empowerment of women will protect them from domestic violence. In Uganda, women who are financially dependent on their husbands share a similar belief. However, existing studies exploring this relationship show conflicting results. Dalal's (2011) study in the Indian context showed that economic empowerment did not protect women from intimate partner violence (IPV) and that while working women were more likely to seek help, IPV was higher among working women than non-working women.

A study in Kenya found that women's economic empowerment did not reduce gender-based violence. In Uganda, this increased women's exposure to gender-based violence, where additional forms of violence were reported by economically independent women, such as female spouses fighting to control women's economic advancement and neglecting to provide for the family as a strategy to control women's income. Some other studies in Bangladesh, South Africa and Latin America have suggested that women's economic empowerment can reduce their risk of domestic violence by increasing women's access to microfinance and employment outside the home. This suggests that engaging men in women's economic empowerment programs can reduce women's risk of gender-based violence. If the goals of gender equality are to be realized, more studies are needed to clear up the contradictions in existing studies on how women's education and economic empowerment influence gender-based violence against women in different contexts. This study is much needed in the context of India where there is little information on the relationship between women's education, economic empowerment and gender-based violence against women.

Theoretical background

Women's education – economic empowerment provides important dimensions for understanding the relationship between women's susceptibility to gender-based violence. Feminist ideology is a consequence of institutionalized patriarchal structures that limit power imbalances and inequalities that exist between men and women. Feminism advocates that

women should have equal access to power and resources. By bridging the gap created by inequality on the grounds of gender, it aims to eliminate patriarchy. Dismantling patriarchal structures can lead to the elimination of gender-based violence in the long run. Women's education and economic empowerment are powerful ways to tackle the problem of gender-based violence. Women's empowerment is about realizing women's rights and gender equality. Empowerment theory promotes efficiency, equality, development and social change as individuals increase control over their own lives and their participation in solving problems and making decisions that affect their lives, communities and functioning. Women's economic empowerment includes promoting women's equal access to existing markets, productive resources and decent work. Women have greater participation in economic decision-making at all levels and greater control over their time, resources and lives (UN Women, 2018). "Women's education is an important means of empowering them with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process" (UNFPA, 1994).

Feminist and empowerment theories assume that educated, working and income-earning women are less likely to experience oppression, domination and domestic violence because they have achieved some level of equality with men through their economic independence. But many studies have shown that the reality is completely different.

Discussion

The women community is constantly subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence. Like illiterate women, women with secondary education and higher education are sure to be subjected to the most direct as well as veiled violence. The gap between illiterate women and literate women in the victims of domestic violence is substantial. The difference in the percentage points of domestic violence victims between those with secondary education and those with higher education is very low. This suggests a negative relationship between female education and exposure to domestic gender-based violence. In other words, women's education has little or no positive effect on reducing women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence in India.

Figure: 1 Educational status of women subjected to domestic violence

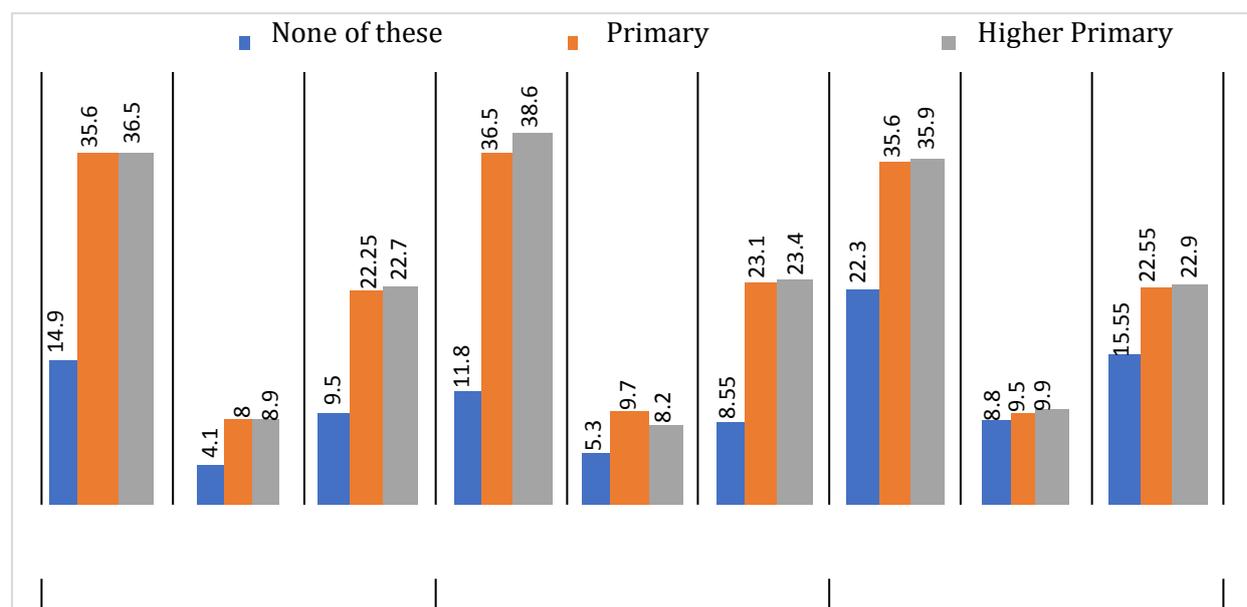


Figure 1: Women with no education are less victims of physical, sexual, and gross (domestic gender-based) violence. Women community who have higher education, secondary education are subjected to all kinds of violence. The difference in the percentage of victims of domestic violence clarifies the difference between women with no education and women with any level of education. The difference in the percentage points of domestic violence victims between those with secondary education and those with higher education is very low. This suggests a causal relationship between female education and exposure to domestic gender-based violence. Based on this information, women's education does not have a significant effect in reducing domestic violence against women.

Figure: 2 Spousal Educational Differences – Female Victim

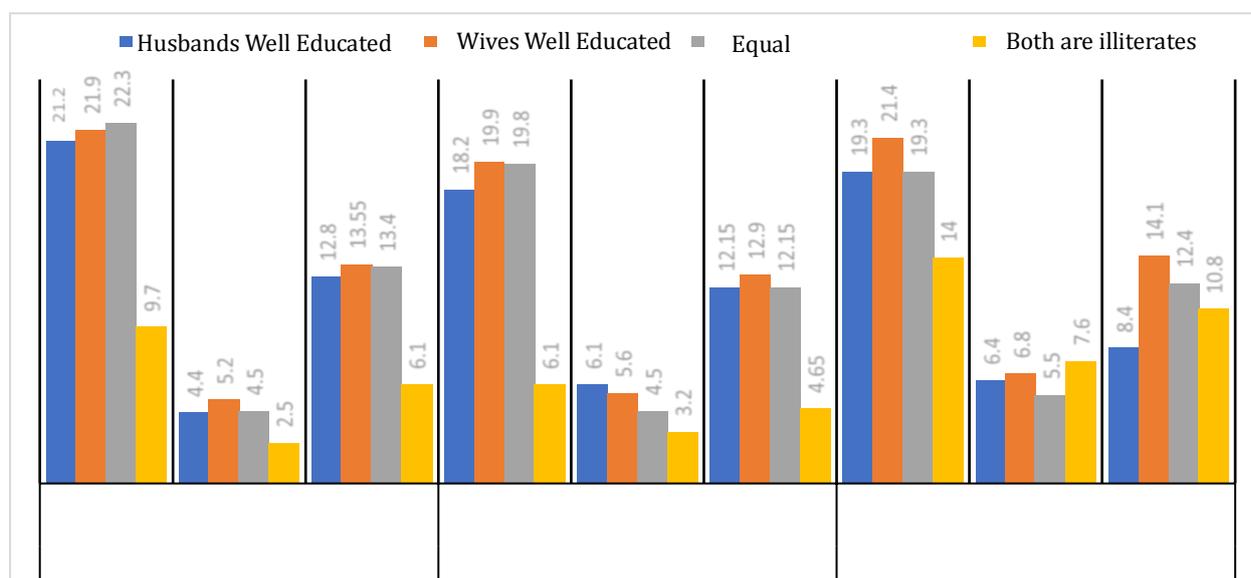
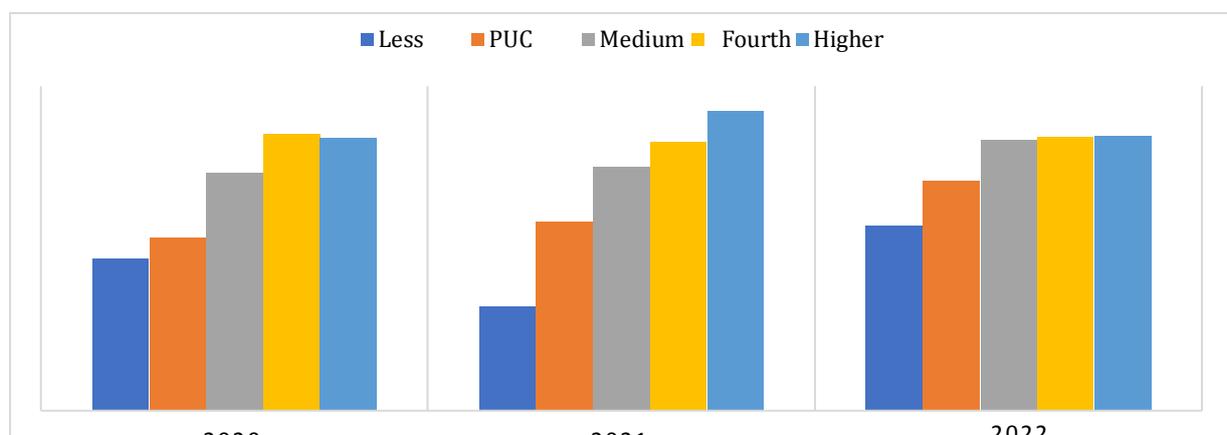


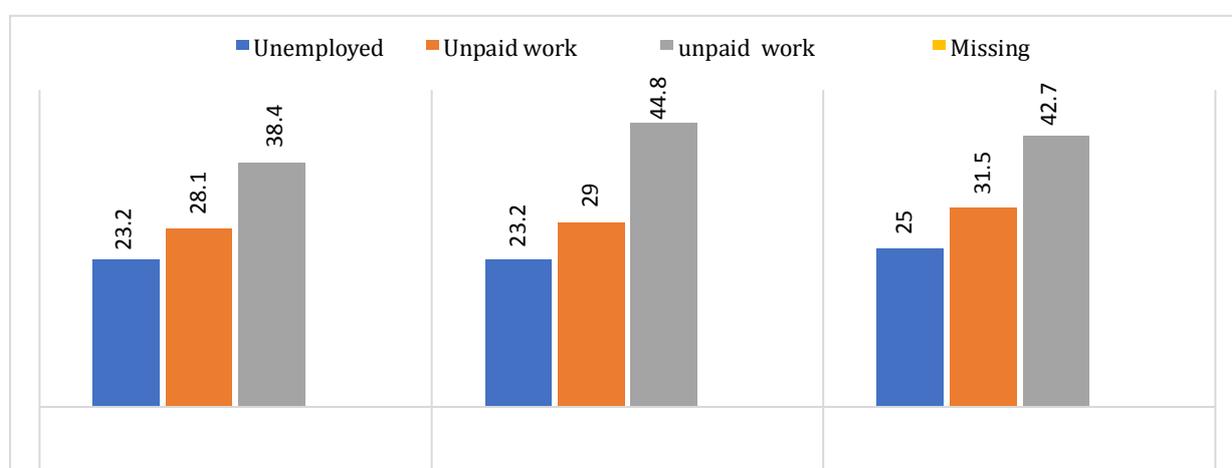
Figure 2 represents those women who are more educated than their husbands experience more gender-based violence. Women who are less educated and less educated than their husbands are less likely to experience domestic violence, except that more educated women report higher rates of sexual violence than women who are equally educated to their husbands. Women who are better educated than their spouses are more exposed to domestic violence. Although such women faced less sexual violence when they had partners who were better educated than them, they reported experiencing more psychophysical violence from their educated partners. These data suggest that mainstream education does little to deter men from perpetrating violence against women. Overall, the result presented by the map suggested above is reversed. Indicates a negative relationship between spouse's education and the perpetration of gender-based violence.

Figure: 3 Husband and wife are equally educated and uneducated



What is the relationship between women's economic empowerment and women's exposure to gender-based violence? Using participant-reported women's wealth or employment status as an indication of women's economic empowerment, the study reported on the relationship between women's economic empowerment and women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence. Wealthy women in India, more than other women, have continuously experienced psycho-physical violence from their spouses

4 Exposure of women to physical violence by spouse



That is, a wealthy woman is more likely to experience physical violence from a partner. Women with less wealth experienced the least amount of psycho-physical violence from their spouses. In other words, women's economic empowerment has no positive effect on reducing women's exposure to domestic gender-based violence. This finding violates the progressive order of development and suggests a negative relationship between women's economic empowerment and exposure to intimate partner violence. A later section presents possible explanations for this finding. Figure 4 documents that unemployed women experience less spousal violence. But women employed without cash income are experiencing more physical violence from spouses. This study examines the relationship between women's education and economic empowerment. Women exposed to domestic gender-based violence based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys of India. The assumption that women's education and economic empowerment will achieve complete women's empowerment is false. Based on the maps recorded above, it suggests that women's education and economic empowerment do not reduce the incidence of gender-based violence against women by spouses, but instead introduce a changed face of the male-dominated system. Contrary to the belief that women's economic independence from men reduces domestic violence against women, the results of the study reveal different facets of women's education and economic empowerment and violence against women.

A number of different studies have observed that women with higher education are more likely to report being abused by a partner. It represents a transformation of the unequal gender relations faced by educated women as gender-based violence is still on the rise despite high levels of educational equality. In the case of India, women's education has failed to go a long way in curbing gender-based violence given the proportion of women who are subjected to gender-based violence by education and economic empowerment. Perhaps women's education cannot protect women from gender violence. This is because mainstream formal education does not emphasize self-defence against gender-based violence. It is clear that girls' education and women's economic empowerment are not moving towards reducing gender-based violence without further measures such as reorientation towards relaxation of gender norms and involvement of men in gender initiatives. Patriarchy—an ideology that views and treats men as superior to women, with its persistent practice—dictates roles and expectations for men and women.

In a patriarchal system, women are equated with traits to which people cannot apply emotional, passionate standards of justice. But men are seen in terms of rationality and the ability to apply standards of dispassionate reason and justice. Even today, women's educational preferences are very rare in patriarchal contexts. High class educated wives asserting their rights in the family challenges the traditional authority and dominance of men. Most of the time his frustration is a precursor to violent behaviour. Complementary social expectations, patriarchal orders and beliefs are clear evidence that rich, well-educated, educated women are subjected to spousal domestic violence.

Religion is also a contributing factor behind increasing gender-based violence. Biased teaching about the expectations and roles of women and men, hegemonic masculinity against women in the system is another factor that promotes gender-based violence, especially domestic violence. Gendered ideas about roles, expectations, and value are developed through religious indoctrination in a social setting. Masculinity is often promoted by religions as a whole. Additionally, women who are well-educated and economically empowered are reflected differently from conventional models. Women's behaviour is explained as the cause of men's misbehaviour as a result of their expansion of awareness. A curriculum that promotes stereotyping continues to reinforce the subordination of women that is a common practice in society.

Topics such as gender discrimination, inequality and widowhood practices, and harmful traditions will be taught in the primary and junior secondary social studies curriculum as well as in the curriculum of higher institutions. The recommended textbooks used with these subjects in the classroom represent discrimination against women by associating women mainly with subordinate and gender-normative roles. Teacher education programs ignore gender dimensions. Moreover, teaching is dominated by teacher-centred approaches that do not challenge the status quo and teachers hold views, including stereotypes that are reflected in their teaching practices. Gender-related topics introduced in texts by the current education system are insufficient to address aspects of sexism throughout life, the division of public and private spheres, or the enablement of gender-based violence. This limited inclusion, presentation and implementation of gender-related themes in texts further illustrates the situation in which academics condone gender-based violence.

An alternative major source of promotion of gender-based violence against educated and successful women is the contribution of media and ignorance in increasing gender-based violence. The media often normalizes and trivialises violence against women, inequalities and the commodification of women's bodies. Educated and successful career women are represented as archetypes of stereotypical roles in films. Physical violence against women is interpreted as a remedial measure by men who are ignorant of gender-based violence in the system. A misrepresentation of feminism and women's empowerment, constantly seeks to gain control over educated women. A subtle way of resisting women's liberation and empowerment through gender-based violence is the widespread perception of women's liberation as Western culture.

Conclusion:

There is a need for gender equality education to eradicate gender-based violence through education. Through this, more focus should be placed on training men and women to see them as people with equal rights and opportunities rather than on an unequal footing. Gender equality education should create awareness among men to end control in their relationships with women. It should help to dispel the idea that women are inferior and recognize the values of women. An educational system that teaches love, care, humanism, respect and inclusiveness should become the norm. Efforts should be made to promote positive perception of women as independent beings. Gender-based violence should be made clear as a crime.

Equal citizenship and human rights concepts introduced in school subjects should be more effective in reducing gender-based violence. Citizenship lessons addressed from a feminist perspective often recognize the traditional division of private and public spheres. Programs should embrace discussions that challenge this divide to empower both men and women to promote greater women's representation and participation in the civic-public arena to learn about the elimination of systemic gender discrimination. The increasing misrepresentation of gender equality and feminism sold through the media, especially social media by extremists and sociopaths-increases men's mistrust and hostility toward women. It calls for adopting a more feminist approach to civil, human rights and gender-related issues. Misinterpretations of gender equality and feminism through the media that lead to growing gender-based violence in the system must stop. Education in this digital age, information about feminism that young people misrepresent on social media, fails to achieve feminism and gender equality in schools.

Women's empowerment does not stop at improving educational qualifications and their employment and economic well-being. Gender-based violence should also extend to challenging and empowering women to break free of systemic discrimination against them. Education and wealth fail to protect women from domestic gender-based violence. It has completely failed to train women themselves and the entire system against gender-based violence.

By understanding the dimensions that foster gender-based violence, feminists should begin to explore better ways of empowering women to be free from gender-based violence and their implementation measures in the system. A gender equal education program for young women and girls should be continuous learning. Women should be mobilized beyond their traditional perceptions of subordination to men towards a gender-equal worldview. It is crucial to

promote the perception of women as equal partners of men from a young age by implying the perception that women's traditional gender roles are a stabilization of stereotyped roles, including enduring domestic violence.

Their early independent development and critical feminist worldview reduce their tendency to succumb to social pressures, promoting patriarchal orders. Having that kind of perspective reduces the chances of women partnering with men who violate their rights and perpetrate domestic gender-based violence against them. It is important that initiatives and programs aimed at promoting gender equality take note of these recommendations.

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