Domestic Violence: Emotional and Physical Abuse of Wives in India

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Chapter 4

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Abstract

Using data from the National Family Health Survey for 2015–16 (NFHS-4) for India, this chapter examines the likelihood of wives from different backgrounds and circumstances suffering abuse, emotional or physical, from their husbands. It estimates the relationship for emotional and physical abuse as a system of equations so that the correlation between the two types of abuse can be taken into account. It then computes the probabilities of wives facing spousal abuse under a variety of circumstances depending upon, *inter alia*, household poverty, the women's social group, education, the state in which they reside, their husbands' controlling behaviour and frequency of drinking. These probabilities are then employed to decompose inequality in the likelihood of wives being abused according to a few important factors. This analysis shows that most of the inequality in the likelihood of being emotionally and physically abused could be explained by just three factors: household poverty, husbands' controlling behaviour, and husbands' drinking habits.

4.1. Introduction

The treatment of women in India, in the context of emotional, physical and sexual violence against them, has become an important topic of discussion and debate in India. Although most of the public anger and outrage in India and abroad has been directed towards sexual violence against women outside the home — India was recently judged the most dangerous country in the world for women, more dangerous than the war-affected countries of Syria and Afghanistan or the extreme patriarchy of Saudi Arabia[1] — there is reason to believe that they are also treated badly, both in terms of emotional and physical abuse, within the home.

The triple-*talaq* system, by which Muslim husbands can divorce their wives by simply uttering the word *talaq* (divorce) thrice, is a particularly egregious example of the emotional abuse of Muslim wives by their husbands. Although this practice was recently set aside by India's Supreme Court, the triple-*talaq* system had its supporters, most prominently the All India Muslim Personal Law Board which argued that the practice was consistent with *shariah* law.[2] However, the Forum Against the Oppression of Women (2017) argued that triple-*talaq* simply highlighted the broader inequality experienced by Muslim women in marriage since in a "patriarchal society, in which marriage is defined in a religious context, marriage cannot be seen as a contract between equals" (p.2).

The violent behaviour of husbands against their wives is deeply rooted in a patriarchal culture which regards such violence as a necessary instrument to keep women in a subordinate role in the context of marriage and family. Bhattacharya (2004) has pointed out that in many Indian families the husband is addressed as *annadata* (provider of grains) and *grihakarta* (household authority). Martin (1983), in her classic study of domestic violence in the USA, emphasises that the roots of domestic violence lie in the historical attitudes towards women, the assumptions underlying the institution of marriage, the adequacy of social services, and in the slant of the criminal justice system and of legislation towards spousal assault.

Much of the violence inflicted on Indian wives revolves around dowry disputes, with the bridegroom's family feeling that they had been short-changed in terms of the dowry that accompanied the wife. Although the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 made the giving and taking of dowry an offence, the implementation of the Act was judged to be a failure. As the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) reported: "we are compelled to record our finding that the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, passed with the ostensible purpose of curbing this evil…has signally failed to achieve its purpose…there are practically no cases reported under this Act" (p.115).

There are two problems associated with discussing domestic violence in India in the context of dowry. First, domestic violence is taken seriously by the criminal justice system only for assaults that occur in connection with dowry disputes. Consequently, tying gendered violence to dowry means that only very specific assaults are taken seriously by the law as material for prosecution, with violence inflicted for non-dowry related reasons being brushed under the carpet (Agnes, 1995). The second problem is that legislators who were concerned about domestic violence nevertheless placed a higher priority on preserving the family unit and proceeded on the assumption that this was also the desire of the (battered) Indian wife (Ghosh, 2004). As the Lawyers' Collective Women's Rights Initiative (LCWRI) point out, under this ideology, a woman's place is with her husband and such counselling as the legislators propose was aimed at persuading her to continue in a violent marriage (LCWRI, 2002).

Karlekar (1998) points to the importance of the generic characteristics of families in affecting the status of women who, after marriage, exchange the familiarity of their natal homes for the unfamiliarity of spousal homes, with all the attendant tensions and conflicts in loyalties. The upshot is that the newly married woman is expected to conform to the image of the ideal Indian woman or *adarsh bharatiya nari* whose feelings and desires are subordinate to those of her husband and in-laws (Dutta, 2015). A consequence of this subordinate status is the number of controls imposed on wives by their husbands. The Indian Human Development Survey for 2011 reports that: 38% of women were not given permission to work; 58% had to practice some form of face concealment; 54% could

not travel outside the home without permission; and 26% ate only after the men in the household (Desai *et al*., 2015). Many wives in Indian homes thus lack agency. As this chapter shows, the greater the loss of agency, the higher the probability of being a victim of spousal abuse. Visaria (2000) shows for the state of Gujarat that the powerlessness of women led to violence against them; more generally, as Heise *et al*. (1994) argue, violence is a corollary of beliefs that men have the right to control women's behaviour and that "deviant" behaviour would and should be punished.

Kishor and Johnson (2004, p. xv) observe that "the scientific investigation of the problem of domestic violence is a relatively recent endeavour…it is only within the past 30 years that violence against women has been acknowledged internationally as a threat to the health and rights of women as well as to national development". Similarly Karkelar (1998, p.1741) writes that while "the battery of statistics and reports made available by official sources and the media reinforce the view that this form of gendered [that is, domestic] violence is fast becoming a feature of daily living in India it has yet to become a priority area of research".

Against this background, this chapter attempts to redress this research deficit in issues relating to domestic violence by estimating the relative strength of factors underpinning spousal abuse in India. A novelty of the chapter is that it examines both *emotional* (insulting, humiliating, threatening) and *physical* abuse (slapping, pushing, kicking, etc.) and estimates relationships for the two types of abuse as a system of equations: this means that the correlation between the two types of abuse can be taken into account. The equations were estimated using data from the National Family Health Survey for India for 2015–16 (hereafter NFHS-4), described in the subsequent section.[3]

Using the estimates from these equations, the chapter then computes the probabilities of wives facing emotional and physical abuse under a variety of circumstances, including household poverty, the women's social group, education, their husbands' controlling behaviour and frequency of drinking, along with their state of residence as a fixed effect. These probabilities are then employed to decompose inequality in the likelihood of wives being abused according to a few important factors.

This analysis showed that most of inequality in the likelihood of being abused could be explained by just three factors — household poverty, husbands' controlling behaviour, and husbands' drinking habits.

Kimuna *et al.* (2012) have studied domestic violence in India using data from the NFHS-3 for 2005–06. This study differs from theirs in certain important respects. First, there is the obvious difference of time period: 2005–06 versus 2015–16. Second, this study, unlike that of Kimuna *et al.* (2012), includes emotional as well as physical abuse. Third, the research methodology employed is different: the results in this study are presented in terms of predicted probabilities, rather than odds ratios, which renders them easier to understand. Fourth, the methodology allows the probability of being abused to be predicted for each woman in the estimation sample. This then allows an analysis of inequality (in these probabilities) using decomposition techniques.

4.2. Domestic Violence in NFHS-4

The NFHS-4 administered the "Women's Questionnaire" to all women between the ages of 15 and 49 and, as part of this questionnaire, ever-married and formerly married women were administered a household relations questionnaire which asked them about their experience in respect of: (i) controlling behaviour by their husbands; (ii) emotional abuse by their husbands in terms of being insulted, humiliated, and threatened by them; and (iii) physical abuse by their husbands in terms of being pushed, slapped, punched or hit, kicked or dragged, arm twisted or hair pulled, sexual violence.[4]

The questions on emotional and physical abuse asked in the NFHS-4 invited responses in terms of the frequency of abuse: "never", "often", "sometimes", "yes, but not in the past 12 months". In this chapter, a woman was judged to have been *abused*, either emotionally or physically, if her response was "often", "sometimes", "yes, but not in the past 12 months" and judged to have been *not abused*

only if her response was “never”. The question on sexual violence (“experienced any sexual violence by husband/partner?”) invited a simple yes/no answer.

In addition to the answers provided by these questions, NFHS-4 also provides information about the women outside the sphere of household relations, *inter alia* their caste/religion, household wealth, age, education, and state of residence.

4.2.1. Social Groups

From the information provided on caste and religion, the women were defined as belonging to households in one of the following social groups: (i) Scheduled Tribes (ST); (ii) Scheduled Castes (SC); (iii) non-Muslim Other Backward Classes (NMOBC); (iv) Muslims; (v) non-Muslim upper classes (NMUC). These comprised 9% (ST), 21.3% (SC), 38.3% (NMOBC), 11% (Muslim), and 20.3% (NMUC) of the total of households in NFHS-4.

4.2.2. Controlling Behaviour

Table 4.1 shows the controlling behaviour of husbands by social group and household wealth by the type of control imposed by them on their wives: (i) the husband is jealous if the wife speaks to another man; (ii) the wife is not permitted by her husband to meet friends; (iii) the wife’s contacts with her family are limited by her husband; (iv) the husband insists on knowing the wife’s whereabouts; (v) the husband does not trust his wife with money. The first row of Table 4.1 shows that 26.4% of husbands were jealous, 21.6% of husbands did not permit wives to meet their friends, 16.5% limited contact their wives’ contact with their families, 19.9% of husbands insisted on knowing their wives’ whereabouts, and 24% of husbands did not trust their wives with money. In terms of social group, the percentage of women subject to these controls was, for every type of control, lowest for women from the NMUC and it was generally the case that the percentage of women subject to these controls was

highest for those from the SC and for Muslims. In terms of wealth, Table 4.1 makes clear that the percentage of women subject to these controls fell dramatically as household wealth increased: for example, 22% of women in the poorest, but only 11% of women in the richest, households had access to their families restricted by their husbands.

<Tables 4.1 and 4.2 here>

In terms of the number of controls imposed by husbands on their wives, Table 4.2 shows that 50.5% of wives did not have any controls imposed while, at the other extreme, 17% of women faced three or more controls. The percentage of women *without* any controls was highest for those from the NMUC (57.4%) and lowest for Muslim women (49%) and women from the SC (46.3%); at the other extreme, the percentage of women with 3+ controls was lowest for those from the NMUC (12.8%) and highest for Muslim women (19.2%) and women from the SC (19.5%). In terms of wealth, 61% of women in the richest households, but only 37.1% of women in the poorest households, did not have any controls imposed; at the other extreme, 26.9% of women in the poorest households, but only 9.9% of women in the richest households, faced 3+ controls.

4.2.3. Emotional Abuse

Figure 4.1 shows that 14% of all wives suffered some kind of emotional abuse — they were humiliated, threatened, or insulted — and this proportion rose to 17.5% for wives from the SC and fell to 9.1% for wives from the NMUC. Similarly, Figure 4.2 shows that with 14% of all wives suffering some kind of emotional abuse, 19.2% of wives from the poorest households, compared to 8.4% of wives from the richest households, suffered emotional abuse of one kind or the other.

< Figures 4.1 and 4.2 here>

Table 4.3 shows the percentage of wives who been subjected to different types of emotional abuse by their husbands. Overall, 9.8% of wives said that they had been humiliated, 5.6% said they had been

threatened, and 8.2% said they had been insulted by their husbands. The highest rates of emotional abuse were reported by women from the SC (12.1%, 7.4%, and 10.2% for, respectively, humiliated, threatened, and insulted) and the lowest rates of emotional abuse were reported by women from the NMUC (6.1%, 2.9%, and 5.7% for, respectively, humiliated, threatened, and insulted). There was an inverse relation between incidences of emotional abuse and household wealth. Women in the richest households were least likely (6.1%, 3.1%, and 4.8% for, respectively, humiliated, threatened, and insulted), while women in the poorest households were most likely (13.2%, 8.6%, and 11.3% for, respectively, humiliated, threatened, and insulted), to suffer emotional abuse.

<Table 4.3 here>

4.2.4. Physical Abuse

Figure 4.3 shows that 31.8% of all wives suffered some kind of physical abuse — pushed, slapped, punched/hit, arm twisted/hair pulled, kicked/dragged, sexual violence — and this proportion rose to 39.2% for wives from the SC and fell to 21.6% for wives from the NMUC. Similarly, Figure 4.4 shows that, with 31.8% of all wives suffering some kind of physical abuse, 44.5% of wives from the poorest households, compared to 17.1% of wives from the richest households, suffered physical abuse of one kind or the other.

< Figures 4.3 and 4.4 here>

Table 4.4 shows that the most common form of physical abuse was slapping: 27.5% of all the women said that their husbands had slapped them and this rose to 30% for ST women and to 33.4% for SC women. Being pushed or shaken and having one's arm twisted or hair pulled were the next most common forms of spousal assault: 13.7% of all women — and 17.9% and 15.6% of, respectively, SC and ST women — said that their husbands had pushed or shaken them; and 11.5% of all women — and 15.4% and 13.7% of, respectively, SC and ST women — said that their husbands had twisted their arm or pulled their hair. The lowest incidence, for all forms of physical abuse, was among wives

from the NMUC. Table 4.4 shows that, in the poorest households, 39.8% of women had been slapped by their husbands, 21.7% of women had been pushed or shaken, and 19.6% had had their arm twisted or their hair pulled. Again the incidence of spousal abuse was lowest among wives living in the richest households.

<Table 4.4 here>

4.3. Econometric Estimation

The dependent variable in the emotional abuse (EA) equation took the value 1 if the woman had suffered any form of emotional abuse (detailed in Table 4.3) from her husband and took the value 0 if she had not; the dependent variable in the physical abuse (PA) equation took the value 1 if the woman had suffered any form of physical abuse (detailed in Table 4.4) from her husband and took the value 0 if she had not. Since the dependent variables took binary values, the appropriate method of estimation was probit.

<Table 4.5 here>

Table 4.5 shows the results from estimating probit equations for the EA and PA equations. The EA and PA equations were estimated as a two-equation system using STATA's *biprobit* command. Estimates obtained from this system of two probit equations (*bivariate probit model*) are more efficient than those obtained from a single-equation probit model because now, in the same spirit as Zellner's (1962) "Seemingly Unrelated Regressions" (SURE) model, the bivariate model explicitly takes account of correlation between the disturbance terms of the two equations (Greene, 2003, chapter 21.6). In addition, the fact that the equations are estimated as a system allows hypotheses to be tested *between* equations rather than just *within* an equation.

Following the advice contained in Long and Freese (2014), the results in Table 4.5 are presented in the form of the *predicted probabilities* from the estimated probit coefficients and not in terms of the

estimates themselves. This was made possible by using a suite of options associated with the powerful *margin* command in STATA v15.0.[5] The reason for this was that the probit estimates themselves do not have a natural interpretation: they exist mainly as a basis for computing more meaningful statistics and, in this case, these are the predicted probabilities.

The numbers in Table 4.5, under the columns marked "probability", show the predicted probabilities (hereafter, PP) associated with the outcome for each variable. So, with respect to the social group variable, the PP of suffering emotional and physical abuse are, respectively, 24.8% and 53.2% for wives from the SC, and 23.6% and 49.5% for wives from the NMUC. The PP were computed using the method of "recycled predictions" as described in Long and Freese (2014, chapter 4) and in the STATA manual.[6] The method of "recycled predictions", described below — and discussed in some detail in the previous chapters — isolates the effect of a variable on the predicted probability of an event occurring.

The PP for wives from the SC and NMUC were computed by assuming that *all* the 16,127 women in the sample were, respectively, SC and NMUC, with the values of the other variables unchanged at their observed values. Applying the probit estimates to these all-SC and all-NMUC "synthetic" samples, the PP of emotional and physical abuse were computed as 24.8% and 53.2% for SC wives and 23.6% and 49.5% for NMUC wives. Since the *only* difference between the two synthetic samples was that, in the first, all the 16,127 wives in the estimation sample were regarded as SC and, in the second, they were all regarded as NMUC, the difference in predicted probabilities between the two all-SC and all-NMUC synthetic samples (24.8% and 23.6% for emotional abuse and 53.2% and 49.5% for physical abuse) was *entirely* the result of the difference between belonging to the SC and the NMUC.

The model predicted that 23.9% and 51.5% of *all* wives would face, respectively, emotional and physical abuse. Since a property of the estimated bivariate probit model is that it passes through the mean values of the dependent variables, these figures represent the average proportion of the 16,127

women in the estimation sample who faced emotional and physical abuse. The null hypothesis that the predicted probabilities of emotional and physical abuse, computed over the entire estimation sample (respectively, 23.9% and 51.5%), were equal was decisively rejected. In a similar vein, the null hypothesis that the predicted probabilities of emotional and physical abuse, computed over women in the five different subgroups, were equal was also decisively rejected.[7] *From these results one can conclude that the likelihood of wives in India facing physical abuse was significantly, and substantially, higher than the likelihood of them facing emotional abuse.*

The *marginal probability* associated with a variable refers to the *change* in the PP, consequent upon a unit change in the value of the variable, *the values of the other variables remaining unchanged.* For discrete variables (which applies to all the variables reported above), a unit change in the value of a variable refers to a move from the *reference* category (the reference category being identified by [R]), the values of the other variables remaining unchanged.[8] Dividing these marginal probabilities by their corresponding standard errors yields the z-value associated with these marginal probabilities.[9] The marginal probabilities that were significantly different from zero at the 5% and 10% level are identified by ** and *, respectively, in Table 4.5. The strengths of the various variables identified in Table 4.5 on the predicted probabilities of wives facing emotional and/or physical abuse from their husbands are detailed below.

4.3.1. Social Groups

Table 4.5 shows that the PP of emotional abuse was greater for Muslim wives than for wives from the reference category of NMUC (29.6% versus 23.6%) while PP of physical abuse was greater for SC and NMOBC wives than for wives from the NMUC (53.2% and 51.9%, respectively versus 49.5%). Apart for these instances, there were no other instances of a significant difference in the PP of emotional and physical abuse between wives in the non-reference groups and those from the NMUC.

These results are consistent with findings from the Punjab where, compared to upper caste women, a much larger percentage of SC women reported being beaten by their husbands (Mahajan, 1990).

The results show that the PP of emotional abuse was also significantly higher for Muslim wives (29.6%) than for SC wives — who, at 24.8%, had the next highest PP of emotional abuse — but that there was no significant difference in the PP of emotional abuse between SC and ST wives (who, at 23%, had the lowest PP of emotional abuse). The results show that the PP of physical abuse was also significantly higher for SC wives (53.2%) than for ST wives — who, at 48.8%, had the lowest PP of physical abuse — but that there was no significant difference in the PP of physical abuse between SC, NMOBC, and Muslim wives (respectively, 53.2%, 51.9%, and 51.4%). *The overall conclusion, therefore, is that Muslim wives were more likely to face emotional abuse than wives from other social groups.* On the other hand, wives from the SC were more likely to face physical abuse than those from the ST or NMUC. There was, however, no significant difference in the predicted likelihood of physical abuse between SC wives and wives from the NMOBC or Muslim wives.

Anandhi *et al.* (2002) in a study of the culture of masculinity in Thirunur village in the state of Tamil Nadu, drew attention to the fact that the masculine subculture of men from the SC takes the form of violence against women. One aspect of this is the harassment of upper class women on their way to work. Another aspect, however, is violence against women from their own community. This violence is triggered by the growing numbers of SC women who are joining the labour force and, as a corollary of this, flouting controls imposed on them by their menfolk. Anandhi *et al.* (2002, p.4403) quote a SC youth as saying: "Now that women go to work, they are boldly questioning everything….they now know how to disobey their parents and brothers". Underlying SC concerns about women's insubordination is anxiety about the sexual behaviour of SC women as they discover a life outside the home: "suspicions about women's sexuality seem to be a major source of anxiety among SC men as they see their main role as of protectors of 'their' women's honour and family dignity" (idem, p. 4404).

In terms of Hindu–Muslim differences, Muslim women were more likely to be denied work opportunities and were, thereby, less vulnerable to physical abuse in terms of the discussion in the preceding paragraph. At the same time, Muslim women, after marriage, became less alienated from their natal families than their Hindu counterparts which might also reduce the chances of physical abuse (Jejeebhoy, 1998). On the other hand, the higher level of emotional abuse endured by Muslim women is possibly due to their having to live under the shadow of the triple-*talaq* system without any recourse to economic support in the event of divorce.

4.3.2. Household Wealth

Table 4.5 indicates very clearly that the predicted likelihood of wives being emotionally and physically abused by their husbands falls as the wealth of households rises. The model predicted that wives in the poorest households had a 26.1% chance of being emotionally abused and a 56.3% chance of being physically abused while wives in the richest households had significantly lower PP of being emotionally and physically abused of, respectively, 20.8% and 41.3%. However, the only significant reduction in the PP of emotional abuse of wives in *successive* wealth bands occurred between middle and rich households: the fall from 24.7% to 21.3% in the PP of emotional abuse between the middle and rich wealth bands was significantly different from zero.

The fall in the PP of being physically abused was, however, significant for wives in *successive* wealth bands. The model predicted that wives in the poorest wealth band would have a 56.3% of being physically abused and this was significantly higher, albeit at the 10% level, than the prediction of 54.3% for wives in the next highest ('poor') wealth band. Similarly, the PP of being physically abused was significantly higher for wives in the 'poor' wealth band (54.3%) than for wives in the 'middle' band (51.7%). Lastly, the PP of being physically abused was significantly higher for wives in the 'rich' wealth band (50.4%) than for wives in the 'richest' band (41.3%). It was only between the

'middle' and 'rich' bands that the fall in the PP of being physically abused (from 51.7% to 50.4%) was *not* significantly different from zero.

The inverse relation between household wealth and the likelihood of abuse is consistent with evidence from India and from other countries (Djamba and Kimuna, 2008; Jejeebhoy, 1998; Kimuna and Djamba, 2008) and has two possible explanations. First, there is the effect of the financial stress engendered by poverty spilling over into marital strain. Added to this is the effect of poverty undermining the status of husbands in terms of fulfilling their traditional role as breadwinners and providers (Fahmy *et al*., 2016; Slabbert, 2016). The second explanation is inter-class bias in reporting abuse: as Bhattacharya (2004) points out, class often determines a victim's response to domestic violence, with women from the upper and middle classes concealing the fact that their husbands are abusive in contrast to women from the working classes who are more likely to be open about abuse.

4.3.3. Controlling Behaviour

Table 4.5 shows that the number of controls that husbands impose upon their wives significantly affects the predicted probabilities of their wives being abused emotionally and physically. When husbands did not impose any controls, wives were predicted to have a 11.4% chance of facing emotional abuse and a 38.4% chance of facing physical abuse. When husbands imposed a single control, these predicted probabilities rose to 22.2% and 52.6%. In other words, the marginal probabilities associated with an additional control, starting from no controls, were 10.8 and 14.2 points for, respectively, emotional and physical abuse. Table 4.5 shows that the marginal probabilities associated with an additional control, starting from one control, were 19.2 and 21.9 points for, respectively, emotional and physical abuse and the marginal probabilities associated with an additional control, starting from two controls, were 32.1 and 30.2 points for, respectively, emotional and physical abuse. In other words, the marginal probabilities of abuse by husbands, both emotional and physical, were estimated to be an *increasing* function of the number of controls imposed by them.

In a study of Hindus and Muslims in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Jejeebhoy (1998) found that the most commonly stated cause of beating is disobedience to a husband's orders or, in other words, a flouting of (husband-imposed) controls. Thus, lack of autonomy is a major determinant of violence against women: as Levinson (1989) showed, in an ethnographic study of 90 societies, inequality between men and women and male authority and control over decision making at home was the breeding ground of domestic violence.

4.3.4. Wives' Age

Table 4.5 shows that the youngest wives (in the 15–19 age-band) were most vulnerable to emotional abuse, with a predicted probability of 28.9% of facing such abuse. This was significantly higher than the predicted probability of facing emotional abuse by older wives (those who were in the 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, and 35–40 age-bands). However, the model predicted that wives in the 20–24 age band had the *lowest* likelihood of being emotionally abused. This PP was not significantly different from the PP of emotional abuse of wives between the ages of 30–40 but it was significantly lower than the PP of emotional abuse of wives in the age-bands 40–44 and 45–49. *The conclusion from this is that it was the youngest and the oldest wives — 15–19 and 40–49 — who were most vulnerable to emotional abuse and the least vulnerable were wives between the ages of 20 and 40 years.*

In terms of physical abuse, Table 4.5 shows the youngest wives (15–19) had the lowest predicted likelihood of being physically abused (46.9%) and this was *significantly* lower than the PP for wives between the ages of 20–34. At the other end of the scale, Table 4.5 shows that wives in the 30–34 age group were most vulnerable to physical abuse, with a predicted probability of 53.5% of facing such abuse. It may be that women in the 30–34 age group had recently given birth, or had very young children and, therefore, were reluctant to have sex with their husbands and this reluctance met with a violent response.

4.3.5. Wives' Education

Table 4.5 shows that, in terms of the predicted probability of facing emotional abuse, there was no significant difference between wives with no education, with primary, and with secondary education. It was only for wives with higher education that there was a significant fall in the PP of emotional abuse, from 24.4% for no education to 19.5% for higher education.

In terms of physical abuse, wives with no education or primary education were predicted to have a 54% chance of facing such abuse. There was a significant fall to 48.9% for wives with secondary education and a further significant fall to 44.1% for wives with higher education. *So, in terms of emotional and physical education, wives with higher education were significantly less vulnerable to abuse than wives with no, or little (up to primary level), education.*

These results are consistent with other research findings. Babu and Kar (2009), in a study of domestic violence in Eastern India, show that the prevalence of violence decreased with an increase in women's education and in family income. Similarly, Jejeebhoy (1998) found that education played a significant role in protecting wives from spousal violence in the Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh although this effect was much stronger in the more egalitarian state of Tamil Nadu than in the more traditional patriarchy of Uttar Pradesh. Bates *et al.* (2004), in a study of rural Bangladesh, point to a link between dowry and education by showing that there was a negative association between a woman's education and dowry agreement: since dowry disputes were a major source of violence against wives in their spousal homes, there was *ipso facto* a negative association between women's education and their exposure to abuse.[10]

4.3.6. Wives' Occupation

In terms of the relationship between occupation and abuse, wives who were not working were predicted to have the lowest PP of being abused by their husbands, both emotionally (21.9%) and physically (49.2%) and, in respect of emotional abuse, the PP of facing such abuse was significantly lower for non-working wives than it was for working wives irrespective of occupation.

At the other extreme, wives who were in domestic service were predicted to have the highest PP of being abused by their husbands, both emotionally (28.9%) and physically (58.5%). In terms of emotional abuse, the PP of facing such abuse was not significantly higher for wives in domestic service than it was wives in the other occupations (professional, managerial, technical; sales and clerical; agricultural; and manual). However, the PP of facing physical abuse was significantly higher for wives in domestic service compared to wives in the other, except manual, occupations.

Wives who were not working conformed most closely to the notion of the ideal woman or an *adarsh bharatiya nari*, referred to above and, consequently, fitted best into the fabric of the patriarchal Hindu household. Indeed, according to the *Economist* (2018, p.16), "outside a small urban elite, the default position is for women not to work unless there is no other way to make ends meet". The greater vulnerability to spousal violence of wives in manual occupations or in domestic service possibly mirrors the link between poverty and domestic abuse discussed earlier.

4.3.7. Children and Location

Table 4.5 shows that the presence of children significantly increased the predicted probability of emotional and physical abuse, albeit only at the 10% level. For emotional abuse, the presence of children raised the PP of facing such abuse from 23.4% to 24.7% while, for physical abuse, the presence of children raised the PP of facing such abuse from 50.8% to 52.4%. The presence of children reduces the per-capita resources of the family and, could, through the poverty–violence link, increase the probability of spousal violence (Martin *et al*., 1999). On the other hand, the link between

the presence of children and spousal violence may operate through relative reluctance of wives with children to have sex, perhaps for reasons of a lack of privacy, compared to their childless counterparts.

In terms of urban–rural location, the predicted likelihood of being both emotionally and physically abused was higher for urban than for rural wives (24.7% versus 23.6% for emotional abuse and 53.2% versus 50.7% for physical abuse) but this urban–rural difference was only significant for physical abuse.

4.3.8. Husbands' Drunkenness

NFHS-4 asked wives how often their husbands were drunk and were prompted to answer: never (6% of the estimation sample), sometimes (75% of the estimation sample), or often (19% of the estimation sample). Table 4.5 shows that the predicted likelihood of facing both emotional and physical abuse increased dramatically with the frequency with which husbands got drunk. The predicted likelihoods of wives facing emotional and physical abuse from husbands who were never drunk were, respectively, 17.3% and 39.4%; these increased (significantly) to 20.6% and 49.2% for wives whose husbands were sometimes drunk; and the predicted likelihood of being emotionally and physically abused jumped to, respectively, 37.6% and 64.6% for wives whose husbands were often drunk.

There are at least two channels through which an excessive intake of alcohol leads to domestic violence. First, alcohol directly affects cognitive and physical function, reduces self-control, and makes the non-violent resolution of conflict more unlikely (Room *et al.*, 2005). Secondly, alcohol increases domestic stress by exacerbating financial difficulties and reducing the welfare of family members (WHO, 2012). Alcohol, however, does not *cause* domestic violence but, rather, *exacerbates* it. Although men who drink heavily have a higher rate of inflicting assault on their wives, the majority

of men who are high-level drinkers do not abuse their wives (Strauss and Gelles, 1990) and the majority of physically abusive situations occur in the absence of alcohol (Kantor and Straus, 1987).

Javaid (2015), on the basis of research conducted in the north-east of England through semi-structured interviews with professionals who dealt with domestic violence, argues that alcohol is not the cause of domestic violence but, rather, it offers perpetrators the pretext of identifying themselves not as violent abusers but rather as persons whose drinking leads to behaviour they would not engage in while sober. In policy terms, therefore, it would be a mistake, as Zubretsky and Digirolamo (1996) argue, to seek a solution to domestic violence through the treatment of alcohol addiction. The problem of domestic violence is one of an "exercise of control" not one of a "loss of control": alcohol allows the abuser to disguise the former as the latter.

4.3.9. Wives' Attitude to Wife-Beating

Wives were distinguished by those who did not regarding wife-beating as justified under *any* circumstance (55% of the estimation sample) and those who thought that it might be justified under some circumstances (45% of the estimation sample).[11] Table 4.5 shows that wives who regarded beating as unjustified under any circumstances were predicted to be *more* likely to suffer emotional and physical abuse than wives who thought that it might be justified under certain circumstances (25.2% versus 22.1% for emotional abuse and 55.7% versus 46.2% for physical abuse).

Jejeebhoy's study of women in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh showed that nearly three out of four women agreed that, under certain circumstances, husbands had the right to beat their wives, a finding reinforced by focus group discussions conducted by her which affirmed the right of husbands to chastise wives who 'misbehaved'. Against this background, the results reported here possibly reflect the fact that wives who rebelled against this ethos by not accepting this right of husbands were more

likely to 'misbehave' by flouting their husbands' injunctions and, therefore, were more likely to be beaten.

4.4. How Much of the Inequality in Emotional and Physical Abuse Can Be Explained?

The analysis of the preceding section, encapsulated in Table 4.5, highlighted several factors which affected the likelihood of wives facing emotional and physical abuse from their husbands. Of these, three in particular stood out: the number of controls imposed on women by their husbands; the wealth of the wives' households; and the frequency with which the husbands were drunk. The issue that is analysed in this section, using the tools of inequality decomposition, is the relative contribution of these three factors to inequality between wives in the predicted likelihood of being emotionally and physically abused.

The estimated bivariate probit equations for emotional and physical abuse predicted, for each of the 16,127 women in the estimation sample, the probability of her being emotionally and physically abused, conditional upon the relevant values of the determining variables for that woman. Armed with a knowledge of these individual probabilities, it is possible to estimate how much of the overall inequality in these 16,127 probabilities of emotional abuse, and the 16,127 probabilities of physical abuse, can be explained by a particular factor.

To this end, this section uses the methodology of *inequality decomposition*. This decomposes overall inequality into "between-group" and "within-group" inequality. When the decomposition is *additive*, overall inequality can be written as the *sum* of within group and between group inequality:

$$\underbrace{I}_{\text{overall ineqality}} = \underbrace{A}_{\text{within group inequality}} + \underbrace{B}_{\text{between group inequality}}$$

When inequality is additively decomposed then one can say that the basis on which the individuals were subdivided (say, household wealth) contributed [(B/I)×100] % to overall inequality, the

remaining inequality, [(A/I)×100] %, being due to inequality *within* the groups. So, inequality decomposition provides a way of analysing the extent to which inter-personal inequality (in this case, in the probabilities of emotional and of physical abuse) is "explained" by a factor or a set of factors. If, indeed, inequality can be "additively decomposed" then, as Cowell and Jenkins (1995) have shown, the proportionate contribution of the between-group component (**B**) to overall inequality is the income inequality literature's analogue of the R^2 statistic used in regression analysis: the size of this contribution is a measure of the amount of inequality that can be "explained" by the factor (or factors) used to subdivide the sample.

In order to decompose inequality additively, however, it has to be measured in a very specific way. Only inequality indices which belong to the family of *Generalised Entropy Indices* are additively decomposable (Shorrocks, 1980) and one of these indices is Theil's (1967) Mean Logarithmic Deviation (MLD) Index which is used in this section's analysis. The MLD index is defined over N persons as $\left(\sum_{i=1}^{N} \log(p_i / \overline{p}) \right) / N$ where p_i is the probability of person i $(i=1…N)$ being abused, either emotionally or physically, by her husband and $\overline{p} = \sum p_i / N$ is the mean probability.

<Table 4.6 here>

Table 4.6 shows that, for the 16,127 wives in the estimation sample, inequality in the distribution of the predicted probabilities of being abused by their husbands was considerably greater for emotional abuse than for physical abuse: the MLD values for emotional and physical abuse were, respectively, 0.358 and 0.198 with associated Gini coefficients of 0.438 and 0.278. Thus, inequality in the distribution of the predicted probabilities of physical abuse was, in terms of the MLD, only 55% of inequality in the distribution of the predicted probabilities of emotional abuse.

When the 16,127 wives were grouped by the number of controls imposed on them by their husbands (0, 1, 2, or 3+), inequality *between* the four groups (that is, wives with: no controls, one control, two

controls, three or more controls) contributed 54% to overall inequality in emotional abuse and 30% to overall inequality in physical abuse. When the 16,127 wives were grouped according to number of controls imposed on them *and* the frequency with which their husbands were drunk (never, sometimes, often), inequality *between* the 12 groups contributed 72% to overall inequality in emotional abuse and 38% to overall inequality in physical abuse. Lastly, when the 16,127 wives were grouped according to number of controls imposed on them *and* the frequency with which their husbands were drunk *and* their households' wealth (poorest, poor, middle, rich, richest), inequality *between* the 60 groups contributed 74% to overall inequality in emotional abuse and 49% to overall inequality in physical abuse. *So, nearly three-fourths of overall inequality in the predicted likelihood of emotional abuse, and nearly half of overall inequality in the predicted likelihood of physical abuse could be explained by just three factors*: (i) the number of controls that husbands imposed on their wives; (ii) the drunkenness of husbands; and (iii) household wealth.

In order to assess the separate contributions of wealth and drunkenness to inequality in the distribution of the probabilities of emotional and of physical abuse, the calculations are as follows. When the division was only by the number of controls imposed, the between-group contribution, for emotional abuse, was 0.193 to an overall inequality of 0.358 and, for physical abuse, it was 0.059 to an overall inequality of 0.198. When the division of the sample was by wealth *and* drunkenness, the between-group contribution for emotional abuse rose to 0.257 and, for physical abuse, it rose to 0.075. Lastly, when the division of the sample was by wealth *and* drunkenness *and* household wealth, the between-group contribution for emotional abuse rose to 0.266 and, for physical abuse, it rose to 0.097.

Thus of the overall 0.266 between-group contribution to emotional abuse, the number of controls contributed 73% (0.193/0.266), husbands' drunkenness contributed 24% ([0.257-0.193]/0.266), and household wealth contributed the remaining 3%. On the other hand, of the overall 0.097 between-group contribution to physical abuse, the number of controls contributed 61% (0.059/0.097), husbands' drunkenness contributed 17% ([0.075-0.059]/0.097), and household wealth contributed the remaining 22%.

4.5. Number of Controls Imposed Upon Wives

The previous section showed that the number of controls imposed upon wives (no controls, one, two, three or more) was a major explanation in the predicted probabilities of their facing emotional and physical abuse: 73% of the between-group contribution to inequality in the distribution of emotional abuse, and 61% of the between-group contribution to inequality in the distribution of physical abuse could be so explained. As Table 4.2 showed, in the aggregate, 50.5% of wives did not face any controls, 19.3% faced a single control, 13.2% faced two controls, and 17% faced three or more controls.

This section turns to an analysis of the number of controls faced by individual wives. The variable representing the number of controls *(C)* is a "count variable" since it takes a finite number of values. The five controls identified in NFHS-4 were: husband is jealous if wife speaks to other men; wife is not permitted to meet female friends; wife's contact with family is limited; husband insists on knowing wife's whereabouts; wife is not trusted with money. The variable *C*, therefore, took values between five (maximum number of controls) to zero (no controls).

Consequently, the equation with *C* as the dependent variable needed to be estimated by techniques appropriate to counting variables and the technique used is this chapter is that of *negative binomial regression*. In this regression, the count variable is generated by a Poisson process except that the variation is greater than a true Poisson.[12] The results from estimating the negative binomial distribution with *C*, the number of controls, as the dependent variable are shown in Table 4.7 in terms of the predicted probabilities of the various outcomes. The determining variables used in estimating the equation were the same as those identified in Table 4.5. The average number of controls faced by the 15,881 wives in the estimation sample for controls was 1.25. Of these wives, 6.969 (or 44%) did

not face any controls and, putting them to one side, the average number of controls faced by wives who faced at least one control was 2.24.

<Table 4.7 here>

As Table 4.7 shows, Muslim and SC wives faced the largest number of controls (respectively, 1.55 and 1.4) and this was significantly larger than the number of controls faced by NMOBC wives (1.28). The results of Table 4.5 are mirrored in Table 4.7: the number of controls imposed on wives fell with household wealth and wives' age, was lowest for women with higher education, and increased with the propensity of husbands to drink.

4.6. Conclusions

This chapter examined the likelihood of wives from different backgrounds and circumstances suffering abuse, emotional or physical, at the hands of their husbands. Data from NFHS-4 show that 14% of wives were emotionally, and 32% were physically, abused. To the extent that a significant amount of abuse stems from the controls that many husbands impose upon their wives which, in an Indian context, might involve limiting or excluding contact with natal family, this study concurs with the view that the rationale for abuse was exercising power and control over an intimate partner (Zubretsky and Digirolamo, 1996). Another important influence on the likelihood of abuse is household poverty which overlays domestic tensions with financial worries while simultaneously undermining the self-worth of husbands as adequate providers. A third influence that this study identified was the intake of alcohol by husbands, although this, as has been argued in the literature, should be seen as an exacerbating rather than a causal factor in instances of domestic abuse.

Martin (1981) has drawn attention to the isolation of abused wives who feel that they cannot discuss their problems with anyone both because of the embarrassment and humiliation and because, in an Indian context, they are isolated from their natal family. This isolation is compounded by cultural

traditions which offer justifiable reasons for a wife to be beaten and which, therefore, tend to blame victims for violating norms and excuse perpetrators who chastise their wives for these violations. A further line of research, conducted in the preceding section, was to enquire into the nature and the number of controls imposed upon wives and the characteristics of women who had controls imposed upon them and those of husbands who sought to impose these controls.

Another line of enquiry, into which this study has not delved, is to study physical and sexual assault separately and, within the context of physical assault, to study the various means by which wives were assaulted. Lastly, spousal abuse impacts on a woman's mental and physical health. The direct effects of domestic violence include injuries such as bruises, cuts, broken bones, lost teeth, and hair. But the results of domestic violence can also be long-term, and may cause or worsen chronic health problems of various kinds, including asthma, epilepsy, digestive problems, migraine, hypertension, and skin disorders. Domestic abuse also has an enormous effect on mental health, and may lead to increased use of alcohol, drugs, and other substances (Women's Aid, 2012). Against this litany of possible illnesses, consequent upon abuse, the link between spousal abuse and the health of Indian wives also deserves greater attention from academic researchers.

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Notes

[1] Thomas Reuters Foundation, *The World's Most Dangerous Countries for Women 2018*, http://poll2018.trust.org/ (accessed 15 July 2018).
[2] *Indian Express*, 25 December 2017, http://indianexpress.com/article/india/aimplb-urges-withdrawal-of-bill-on-triple-talaq-4997304/ (accessed 15 July 2018).
[3] The NFHS are conducted under the auspices of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) programme and are available from https://dhsprogram.com. Prior to NFHS-4 (2015–16), there were three such surveys: NFHS-3 (2005–06); NFHS-2 (1998–99); and NFHS-1 (1992–93).
[4] This is in contrast to studies of domestic violence based on interviews with men (Koenig *et al*, 2006; Martin *et al*, 2002).
[5] These options, which are only available from STATA 14.0 onwards, are very demanding of computing power.]
[6] See https://www.stata.com/manuals13/rmlogitpostestimation.pdf. (accessed 1 June 2018).
[7] These tests, incidentally, point to the advantage of estimating the equations as a system which allows cross-equation testing.
[8] So, the *marginal probability* of emotional abuse associated with SC wives is defined as the *difference* in the PP of emotional abuse between SC and NMUC (the reference category) wives. From Table 4.5, this marginal probability was 24.8-23.6=1.2 percentage points (pp) which is shown in Table 4.5 as 0.012. Similarly, the *marginal probability* of physical abuse associated with SC wives is defined as the *difference* in the PP of physical abuse between SC and NMUC (the reference category) wives. From Table 4.5, this marginal probability was 53.2-49.5=3.7 percentage points (pp) which is shown in Table 4.5 as 0.037.
[9] For the SC, $z=2.8$ under the physical abuse panel and so this difference in the PP of physical abuse between wives from the SC and (the reference category) NMUC was significantly different from zero or, in other words, the PP of SC wives facing physical abuse from their husbands was *significantly* higher than that of their NMUC counterparts (53.2% versus 49.5%).
[10] The Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act 1986 defined for the first time the term "dowry death", making it an offence under the Indian Penal Code: where the death of a woman is caused by any burns or bodily injury or occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage and it is shown that soon before her death she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any relative of her husband for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry, such death shall be called "dowry death", and such husband or relative shall be deemed to have caused her death.
[11] Possible justifications given were: goes out without telling him, neglects the house of children, argues with him, refuses to have sex with him, doesn't cook food properly, he suspects her of being unfaithful, she shows disrespect towards her in-laws.
[12] See Stata Glossary and Index – Release 15, Stata Corp LLC, College Station, Texas.