

# Intimate Partner Violence: Exploring Links with Men's Childhood Gender Inequality and Violence Experiences

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**Abstract:** Intimate partner violence refers to any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship (WHO). Correlation between perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence and childhood violence experiences of abusers have been endorsed by theory of cycle of violence since long while feminist theorists presume that an entrenched patriarchal societal configuration and an inbuilt asymmetrical power distribution among men and women are the main culprits of transmission of intimate partner violence. At the same time socio-cultural theorists suggest that the traditions and norms which sanction violence and its tolerability aggravated by attitude of humanity towards gender inequity since childhood exacerbate the situation. This article attempts to give invigorate emphasis to the relevance and importance of understanding the version of intimate partner violence from the perpetrator's perspectives to have an inclusive understanding of this violence and their violent deeds. In this study author seeks to find out the prevalence of men's perpetration of different types of violence against their intimate female partners in four districts of Gujarat, India with a descriptive study in which a multistage random sampling method is used to select the samples. Also an attempt is done to explore the correlations between intimate partner violence and men's early childhood gender inequality and violence experiences. Findings revealed statistically significant correlations between Intimate partner violence and men's childhood gender inequality and violence experiences.

**Keywords:** Intimate Partner Violence, Gender equality, childhood, gender inequality experiences, violence experiences

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## Introduction

Intimate partner violence refers to any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship. It includes acts of physical aggression, psychological abuse forced sexual intercourse or any other controlling behavior (WHO 2015). It may include a single act of violence, or a number of acts that form a pattern of abuse. This can have serious-and sometimes fatal-consequences for victims and for those who see or hear the violence (Department of Justice, Canada 2017). Intimate partner violence may involve sexual, sadistic control, economic, physical, emotional and psychological abuse (Paula Nicolson, 2010).

Violence against women is one of the most extreme manifestations of gender power inequalities used by many men to exert control and dominance over women (ICRW 2012).

In his Times of India blog Jug Suraiyan endorses that it is the demonstration of the total dominance of men over all women, and is the logical extension of an entrenched patriarchal society fighting against any form of empowerment for women.

Available literature suggests various reasons behind violence against women. While some argue that hierarchical gender relations, perpetuated through gender socialization and socio-economic inequities, are the root cause of violence against women (Heise *et al.* 1994), a multi-country study in Chile, India, Egypt and Philippines identified regular alcohol consumption as by the husband or partner as a risk factor for any life time intimate partner violence across all four study countries (WHO 2015).

According to the brochure of a National Seminar on Violence against Women Sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), MHRD, Government of India, New Delhi and Himachal Pradesh

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University, Shimla on 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2013 the causes and factors of violence against women include entrenched unequal power relations between men and women that foster violence and its acceptability, aggravated by cultural and social norms, economic dependency, poverty and alcohol consumption etc. 9 Early childhood experiences of gender inequality have been found in many studies to shape people's views and behaviors in their later life (Gil-Gonzales *et al.* 2008; UNICEF 2007; WHO, 2005; Heise, 1998).

### **Understanding Intimate Partner Violence: Different Theories**

There are many theories that have tried to explain perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence. No one theory can explain why every perpetrator becomes abusive. Correlation between perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence and childhood violence experiences of abusers have been endorsed by theory of cycle of violence since long while feminist theorists presume that an entrenched patriarchal societal configuration and an inbuilt asymmetrical power distribution among men and women are the main culprits of transmission of intimate partner violence. At the same time socio- cultural theorists suggest that the traditions and norms which sanction violence and its tolerability aggravated by attitude of humanity towards gender inequity since childhood exacerbate the situation.

### **Theory of cycle of violence**

Children who grow up in families where IPV was present are more likely to become involved in relationships that are affected by IPV. Abusers are more likely to have witnessed abuse as children than those who engage in situational couple violence (Marilyn Fernandez 2010). According to the National Clearing house on Family Violence, Canada partners in violent and abusive relationships have often experienced family violence themselves as children.

Coker and colleagues found that men were 2.5 times more likely to report exposure to IPV as adults if they had reported being physically assaulted as a child. Childhood exposure to violence is associated with increased risk for future perpetration.

The results from a large multi country study show that, to varying degrees, childhood trauma is highly prevalent among women and men in the general population, across the Asia-Pacific region. The findings indicate that there are strong links between childhood experiences of maltreatment and the perpetration or experience of violence against women in adulthood, and that the cycle of violence is facilitated and fuelled by gender inequality. Importantly, the findings show the pathways through which experiences of childhood trauma contribute to violence against women and further child maltreatment. The data point to both a co-occurrence and a cycle of abuse, with childhood trauma leading to violence against women and further child maltreatment, which in turn increases the risk of experience or perpetration of violence during adulthood (Emma Fulu *et.al.* 2017).

The pathways from childhood trauma to adulthood experiences and perpetration of violence are complex and multifaceted. There is some evidence that women who experience intimate partner violence are more likely to physically abuse their children than women who do not experience abuse (Srinivasan, Sharada & Bedi, 2007). Furthermore, children who grow up witnessing abuse are at increased risk of being physically and sexually abused themselves.

(Saenger 2000) observes from infancy to adolescence, family violence interfered with the children's growth and development. For them violence is their role model and violence is a mean of survival.

**Feminist theory-** A second important perspective is feminist theory which explains that transmission of IPV is maintained by a normative patriarchal social structure, based on gender-related power differentials

Intimate partner violence and abuse is rooted in a power imbalance between individuals, within families and in society. Basically, when one person is controlled and/or considered less worthy than another one -- because they are a vulnerable person or part of a vulnerable population -- there is the potential for abuse.

The chances of intimate partner violence are more when men have gender inequity attitude towards women and they feel that their spouses are inferior to them. The more they feel that wives do not obey them blindly, do according to their instructions and try to take more freedom than allowed to them, more the violence inflicted upon them by men. It is been proved by many studies that when the belief of men that they are superior to women is shattered by the way their partners talk, behave or act, they try to put them down usually with violence.

So it is believed that intimate partner violence is not uncommon among high class and rich societies also where women sometimes have educational qualifications and earn more than their husbands. It is generally assumed that violence would decline with an increase in educational status. However, a study conducted in Rajasthan, India reported that violence by men does not corroborate this assumption. On the contrary it is been found that sexual violence does not seem to have any association with educational gap and women with more education tend to experience more violence. At the same time when the woman was more educated, control (restrictions, sanctions and surveillance) was found to be considerably higher (91.3 percent) than other groups.

### **Socio-Cultural Theory**

Socio- cultural theorists suggest that the traditions and norms which sanction violence and its tolerability aggravated by attitude of humanity towards gender inequity since childhood exacerbate the situation. Intimate partner violence in India is prevalent in all castes, socioeconomic classes, religious groups and regions. Societies where gender inequitable practices are accepted as normal chances are more to inflict violence upon women on deviations from these practices. An indissoluble relation is apparent with culture-attitude- belief and practice followed in a society and the prevalence of IPV perpetuated by men on their women in that society. Many societies believe that the said duties of women according to their perceived roles are supposed to be done by them, and failing to complete them, they are deserved to be punished including physical, emotional and sexual violence. Shockingly some women too sanction this attitude and carry forward this belief to their offsprings.

### **Relevance and significance of the study**

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women passed by the UN General Assembly, in 1993 states that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms by women, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men; and it is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position (Coomaraswamy 1995).

Although childhood trauma and violence against women are global public health issues, few population based data from low-income and middle-income countries exist about the links between them. Even though there is evidence that the main perpetrators of intimate partner violence in almost all developing country settings are men, most of the relevant research has been mainly focused on the perspectives of women respondents ( Koenig et al 2006).

A majority of these studies highlights the types of the intimate partner violence and the coping mechanisms women and society use to overcome the stress and trauma. Some of them have tried to analyse and understand the effectiveness of existing support systems and legal provisions to the victims of intimate partner violence. Programs and policies that address the needs of victims (including same-sex victims), while critically important, fail to address the root causes for the behaviors that lead to the violence.

A general understanding of the underlying precipitating factors for intimate partner violence in developing countries remains limited while important knowledge about its root causes is lacking. It is very important to understand the version of intimate partner violence from the perpetrator's perspectives too in order to have a complete comprehension of this violence and their violent behavior. To find out whether their childhood gender inequity attitude and violence experiences bear any impact on the prevalence of IPV is essential to have relevant policy changes in the curriculum of school syllabi to inculcate a gender equity attitude among children so that to an extent they grow with a positive attitude to adolescent and adulthood stages.

Some studies even if few, reported that for men, all forms of childhood trauma are associated with all forms of intimate partner violence perpetration. and children who witness abuse between their parents are more likely to experience or perpetrate violence as adults. At the same time men who experience childhood emotional abuse and neglect and childhood sexual abuse, are also at increased risk perpetration of rape, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault.

In order to develop effective intervention programs and policies, it is vital to study the attitudes and behaviours of both men and women to understand this problem. Yet, most of the available studies concentrate on women's perspective of domestic violence. Studies on prevalence and patterns and the risk factors of domestic violence have viewed the male partner as a perpetrator of the violence, but there are few studies that reveal a male perspective on this issue. Further, research on men and violence is extremely limited in India and theory building on this issue within the Indian context has rarely been attempted. Therefore, there is an urgent need to understand the men's perspectives, along with the factors and circumstances that shape the masculinity of men in India.

While launching the He For She initiative, on September 20, 2014, which aims to get men and boys to pledge to join the feminist fight for gender equality, Emma Watson (2016), British actor and Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women pointed out that in order for gender equality to be achieved, harmful and destructive stereotypes of and expectations for masculinity have got to change. To end gender inequality, she stressed, the need of everyone's involvement and she appealed to as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for change.

While this study aims to assess men's perpetration of different types of violence against their intimate female partners in Gujarat it will try to assess and compare the correlations between the intimate partner violence and their early childhood gender inequality and violence experiences. The information obtained as a result of this study will be the reality situation of the extent of violence within the intimate relations perpetrated by men. In addition, the determinants of violence against an intimate partner also will be identified and discussed.

Moreover, it will highlight the need to encourage and engage boys at a very early stage in gender equitable norms and practices. It will also help us to understand the importance of a gender related violence-free family environment where children should be brought up so that they develop healthy gender role concepts and practices in their entire life. This is so because childhood experiences of gender equality can make a man able to respect his intimate partner and can give enough space for equality in all spheres of their family lives including division of labour in domestic works. This is in fact one of the urgent needs of the day as more women are stepping out of their houses to get into the work force while many women are forced to stay back leaving their lucrative and much needed jobs, which give them a feeling of identity and empowerment to them.

Early childhood gender inequality and violence experiences of men are proved to have a significant correlation with their gender inequality attitude, which they learnt from childhood gender inequity experiences, and violent behavior with intimate partners. For these men women are not equal partners, they are subordinates and supposed to obey them always. There is a need to be more sensitive to this relationship and thus pay more attention towards gender sensitization of boys and men. They should be learned and experienced from their childhood itself that men and women are equal partners in all respect, a notion which

is widely acknowledged and propagated by all those who are concerned about the ever increasing violence against women including within the intimate relations too.

The findings of this study will definitely throw more light into the interconnectedness of this issue and will highlight the urgent need for sensitizing the society especially the parents about the importance of upbringing their children imbued with real gender values. Also it will contribute towards guiding and influencing policies for active governmental intervention in direction to correcting gender imbalances and promoting proper gender socialization among boys and girls.

### **Literature Review**

The most common type of violence against women worldwide is domestic violence, defined as the physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse of women by their intimate partners (Heise 1999).

Several factors have been found to be consistently associated with the physical assault of intimate partners, and as a result they are widely believed to play some causal role. At the societal level, these include poverty (Bachman & Saltzman, 1995; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Aldorando & Sugarman, 1996) and social norms that reflect male dominance (Levinson, 1989). At the individual level, it has been demonstrated that those who physically assault their female intimates are more likely to have witnessed inter parental violence (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986), experienced child abuse (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998; Alexander, Moore & Alexander, 1991; Simonelli *et al.*, 2002), have been raised in families with patriarchal values (Fagot, Loeber & Reid, 1998; Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard & Bohmer, 1987; Riggs & O'Leary, 1989), subscribe to patriarchal values (Yllo & Straus, 1990), and use alcohol or drugs more than their non-abusive counterparts (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Tolman & Bennett, 1990; Kantor & Straus, 1989).

In dysfunctional families, the husband sees himself as the absolute individual power within the family system. He strongly believes that his position as the only bread winner of the family grants him the right exercise control of all aspects of the family life and overall individuals living in the same household (Forte, Franks & Rigsby 1996).

Rudo & Powell (1996) asserts that family violence is inter-generational. In dysfunctional families, the victim as well as the perpetrator is capable of child maltreatment and neglect. Research in family violence established evidence that abusive parents have experienced some form of abuse in their childhood. Adults who experienced and witnessed violence in their childhood had increased potential of becoming a batterer themselves. Marital rape is also a strong link that child abuse is imminent.

Saunders (1994), Rudo and Powell (1996) believe that the sins of the parents and the failings of society are to blame for child abuse and neglect. When the structure is interrupted by dysfunctional behavior, child rearing becomes a significant problem. In these families parents use socially inappropriate child rearing practices including inconsistent parental supervision of children, use of harsh punishment, failure to set limits, neglect in rewarding pro-social behavior and a coercive style of parent-child interaction.

In a survey of married men in Bangkok, 20% reported physical abuse towards their wives (Hoffman *et al.* 1994). In South Africa, 44% of working men surveyed in Cape Town reported physical and/or sexual abuse towards their partners in the last 10 years (Abrahams *et al.* 1999). In a study on men and marital violence in Peru, Fuller (2001) found that it was always wives who triggered violent reactions, either because they didn't comply with their part of the marital contract or because they "react[ed] with energy" when the man did not fulfill his duties.

Findings from ICRW's first phase of research demonstrated that domestic violence in India is a widespread problem with an extensive, but inadequate response. In the household survey, nearly one in two women reported experiencing at least one form of domestic violence, and over 40 percent of women reported being slapped, hit, kicked, or beaten by their husbands (INCLEN 2000).

Reports of a study from Rajasthan, India revealed that nearly 87 percent of the men had engaged in at least one violent behavior in the past year. On further exploring the forms of violence, emotional violence (73.3 percent) emerged to be the most commonly inflicted form of violence against women by men. However, the prevalence of other forms of violence was also high. Fifty-seven percent of men reported at least one sexual violence behavior, 37 percent reported at least one physical violence behavior and at least 61 percent reported one control behavior in the past year.

Sometimes due to insufficient financial resources, the battered women are unable to provide for themselves and their children. Other resources such as governmental housing and shelter for battered women are also limited in numbers in a country like India throughout many communities. Studies in this area point out, that leaving the violent relationship increases the severity and tendency of physical injuries to the battered women and the children involved (Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, Winstok, 2000). Sometimes it means death.

So the main reason why women remain in abusive relationship with the batterer is primarily due to her "serious loss of income from leaving the relationship, locating employment and childcare, and lack of intimate relationship" (Dutton, Gordon, 1996, p.9).

Children at any age who are traumatized by violent acts inside the family very likely develop psychological, behavioral and cognitive problems later on in life. Studies in this area support facts that violent events can cause symptoms of PTSD. According to McNew and Abell (p.116), symptoms of PTSD are of multiple characteristics and may include the following: " flashbacks, numbing, restriction of affect, hyper vigilance, sleep disorder, problems with intimacy and sexuality, depression, dissociative responses, anger and rage, guilt, shame, fear, somatic complains, anxiety, helplessness, dependency, low-self esteem, survivor guilt" and "enuresis".

Research on adolescence concluded that adolescence's aggressive behavior is associated to the hostile environment they live in. (ibid. p. 348). From infancy to adolescence, family violence interfered with the children's growth and development. For them violence is their role model and violence is a mean of survival.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess men's perpetration of different types of violence against their intimate female partners.
2. To understand their childhood gender inequality & violent experiences.
3. To assess the correlations between men's childhood gender inequality & violent experiences and perpetration of intimate partner violence.
4. To guide and influence policies for active governmental intervention towards correcting gender imbalances and promoting proper gender socialization among boys and girls.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There exists a significant association between men's childhood gender inequality & violent experiences and perpetration of intimate partner violence.

### **Scope and Methodology**

#### **(i)Research Design**

Descriptive research design is used in this study as the main purpose of this study is to describe the men's perpetration of different types of violence against their intimate female partners and its associations with their childhood gender inequality & violent experiences.

## **(ii) Universe, Sample & Sampling Frame**

The sampling frame for the present study comprises of men in the age group of 18 to 50 years from Gujarat state. A multistage random sampling method is used to select the talukas, villages and households from which 200 samples are selected. In his working paper titled "Reporting and incidence of violence against women in India, Aashish Gupta (2014) accounted that Gujarat has a comparatively higher incidence of both physical and sexual violence of women by their husbands than many other states in India.

Multiple study sites were chosen in order to represent a range of gender equality and development indices within Gujarat. The chosen sites include Ahmedabad with low gender equality and high development indices, Banaskantha with both low gender equality and development indices, Gandhinagar with both high gender equality and development indices and The Dangs with high gender equality and low development indices.

## **(iii) Tools of Data Collection**

Detailed Interview schedule covering areas of demographical variables are used to collect the demographical variables of the respondents. Following standardized tools are used to assess their attitude towards gender equality and perpetration of violence on intimate partners.

a. Intimate Partner Violence Scale: List of questions are asked to the respondents which are prepared with the help of Margolin's "Domestic Conflict Scale" or "Conflict Inventory" (Margolin, G., B. Burman, R.S. John, and M. O'Brien, *The Domestic Conflict Instrument*, Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1990) and Straus's "Conflict Tactics Scales" (Straus, M.A., "Measuring Intra family Conflict and Violence: The Conflict Tactics Scales," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 41(1979): 75-88).

b. Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale developed by the Horizons Program and Instituto Promundo in Brazil with young men aged 15-24 years (Barker *et al*, 2011) and later adopted by the IMAGES for adult is used to assess the men's attitude towards gender equality.

c. A men's Childhood experience of gender equality scale and Men's Childhood experience of Violence scales are developed to assess their violence and gender inequality experiences during childhood.

## **Discussion**

Findings of this study indicate that there are strong links between childhood experiences of maltreatment and the perpetration or experience of violence against women in adulthood, and that the cycle of violence is facilitated and fuelled by gender inequality. Importantly, the findings show the pathways through which experiences of childhood trauma contribute to violence against women and further child maltreatment.

Men perpetrate violence against intimate partners throughout the sites even though the prevalence of different types of violence against their intimate partners varies significantly within different sites.

Findings of this study clearly established high prevalence of emotional and sexual abuses followed by physical abuses experienced by men during their childhood. Following table shows the percentage of respondents reported different types of violence experiences.

*Table: 1 Childhood Violence Experiences of respondents*

| Type of Abuse   | Low  | Medium | High |
|-----------------|------|--------|------|
| Physical abuse  | 25.0 | 59.5   | 15.5 |
| Emotional abuse | 29.0 | 48.0   | 23.0 |
| Sexual abuse    | 28.0 | 53.0   | 19.0 |

More percentage of respondents report high level of emotional abuse (23.0) followed by sexual abuse (19.0) and physical abuse (15.5). The results from a large multi country study show that, to varying degrees, childhood trauma is highly prevalent among women and men in the general population, across the Asia-Pacific region.

*Table: 2 Childhood Gender Inequality experiences of respondents*

| Indicators of Gender Inequality           | Low  | Medium | High |
|---|------|--------|------|
| Gender Role                               | 26.0 | 54.0   | 20.0 |
| Social Freedom                            | 18.0 | 50.0   | 32.0 |
| Social Taboos                             | 26.0 | 45.5   | 28.5 |
| Health & Nutrition                        | 25.5 | 50.5   | 24.0 |
| Educational & Developmental Opportunities | 30.0 | 52.2   | 17.8 |
| Value                                     | 22.0 | 48.5   | 29.5 |

Findings of this study endorse gender inequality experiences of men during their childhood. It is clear majority of the respondents experience inequality with all the indicators while the highest percentage of respondents report high level of gender inequality childhood experiences with respect to social freedom (32.0), value (29.5), social taboos (28.5), health and nutrition (24.0) and so on.

To find out the childhood gender inequality experiences of men under study, a scale is developed and items included in this scale are given in Table.3. The statements are given under six indicators namely Gender role, Social Freedom, Social Taboos, Health & Nutrition, Educational & Developmental Opportunities and Value. Levels of gender inequality experiences of respondents are calculated with the aggregate total the respondents got on this five point likert scale having options from strongly agree to strongly disagree.



*Table: 3 Items included in Childhood Inequality Experiences*

|   |
|---|
| <p>Gender Role</p> <p>My sisters were expected to do cooking while I was not supposed to do the same.</p> <p>I saw my father helping mother in cooking.*</p> <p>I saw my father helping mother in taking care of children.*</p> <p>I saw my father ordering and mother getting things done for him.</p> <p>Social Freedom</p> <p>I could come back home late at nights after hanging out with friends while my sisters were not allowed to do the same.</p> <p>My parents considered their sons and daughters equally.*</p> <p>I and my sisters enjoyed all types of freedom in our family.*</p> <p>My sister had to answer to so many questions to get permission to go out something not applicable to me.</p> <p>Social Taboos</p> <p>I could talk loudly in my family when, sisters were not allowed to do the same.</p> <p>I saw my sisters were having many restrictions imposed on them when they were having their menstrual periods.</p> <p>I saw my sisters not allowed to choose stream of study of her choice.</p> <p>I saw my sister not allowed to choose career of her own choice.</p> <p>Health and Nutrition</p> <p>Men in my family had food first and then women.</p> <p>Sons in my family were breastfed for a longer period than daughters.</p> <p>Dishes were made in my family according to the preference of male members.</p> <p>In my family all sit together and used to have food.*</p> <p>Educational and Developmental Opportunities</p> <p>My parents were always concerned about my sister's marriage while they were concerned about my studies and career.</p> <p>My parents were equally concerned about their daughters' and sons' future.*</p> <p>My parents were ready to give the best possible education to their son' and daughters'.*</p> <p>Only the son's business ideas were promoted in my family.</p> <p>Value</p> <p>I had more said in my family than my sister.</p> <p>I was given more pocket money than my sister.</p> <p>My father respected my mother's opinion in all matters.*</p> <p>My mother enjoyed financial freedom.*</p> |
|---|

Evidences from this study prove statistically significant correlations between intimate partner violence perpetrated by men and their childhood violence (significant at 0.01 level) and gender inequality experiences (significant at 0.05 level).

It is therefore undoubtedly clear that young boys who experience violence at home, neighborhood or school tend to inflict violence on their intimate partner too. Youngsters who used to get discriminated importance due to their gender in their families also are prone to act violence on their partners. These findings strongly

point towards importance of creating violence free and gender friendly family environments to our small children so that coming generations will respect their partners. Complete prevention of all types of abuses of children can, to some extent, ensure a mentally healthy generation.

At the same time eradication of age old discriminatory practices and beliefs prevailing in society in favour of boys will help them to grow up without any such self- proclaimed importance. Efforts should be taken to incorporate lessons of respect, equality, dignity of labour including household work from early childhood so that they can shed away the wrong beliefs they used to acquire from the society.

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