

# Factor Determining the Spousal Violence Against Woman in India: Evidence from Bihar State

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## Abstract

Violence against women is a burning issue not only in human right perspective but also for human development in all over the world. It not only affects economic development but also increases the various social costs such as result of unwanted pregnancy, HIV/STD diseases, and healthy family environment. Excluding other family members, 30% to 60 % of violence against women occurred by their own partners. Despite the various legal measures against this social evil, data reveals that four women out of ten are still experiencing domestic violence in India. Present study attempts to identify the determinants of spousal violence against women by using the data of National Family Health Survey-III, 2005-06 for Bihar state, where highest domestic violence experience in India. The bivariate analysis shows a significant association between spousal violence and various individual, socio-economic and family environmental factors. Whereas, multivariate analysis results reveal that woman's education, woman's age, partner's alcohol consumption, rural- urban differential, and caste are the major significant predictor of spousal violence against women. Present study suggests policy makers and governments should emphasis and improve quality of determinants of spousal violence to make society a safe place for women.

**Keywords:** Women, Spousal Violence, India, Socioeconomic status, Logistic Regression.

## Introduction

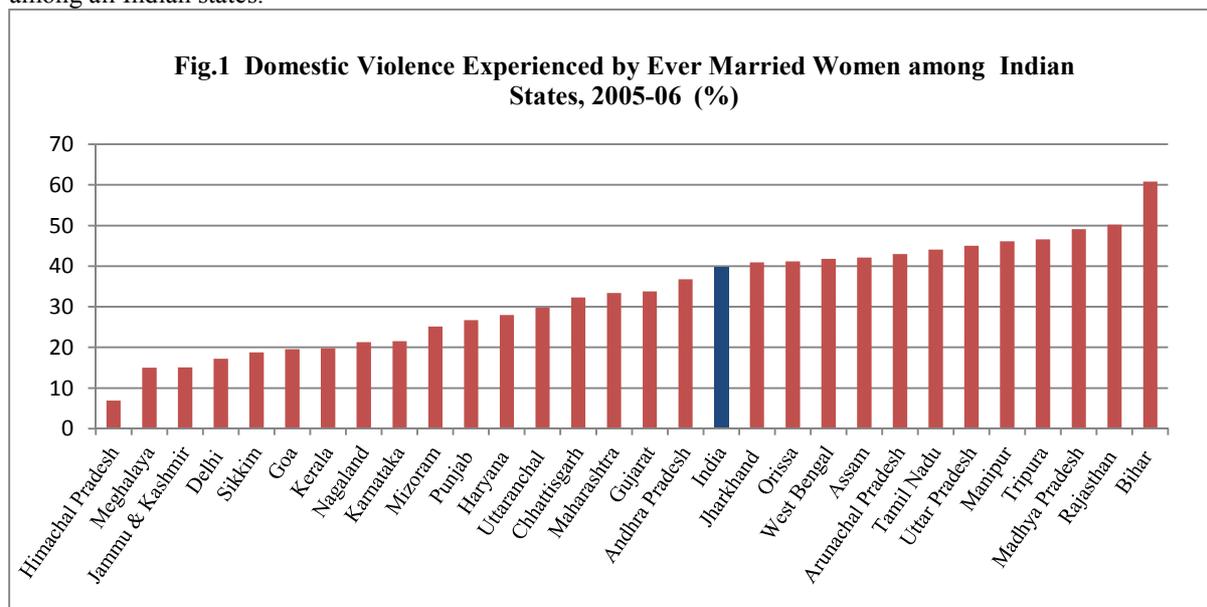
During last two and half decade, lot of attention was given on violence against women not only in developed world but also in the developing world. Violence against women is not only an issue of human right but also a concern of human development because violence against women in a society affects the well-being and development process by increasing the health burdens, disability and loss of labour costs (Campbell, 2002; Laserman et al, 1996). Domestic violence occurs in all socioeconomic and cultural population subgroups, but it varies from one society to another society due to their socioeconomic conditions and women's status. It not only affects women's physical and mental health but also the all aspects of family and society. If one incident of domestic violence occurs it means woman losing seven working days which not only have negative impact on economic output but also increase social costs such as unwanted pregnancy, increasing in HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), infant child mortality and low utilization of maternal health care (Ackerson & Subramanian 2008; Shane & Ellsberg 2002; Kishor & Johnson 2006; WHO, 1997).

In society, crime against women are not only committed outside the home but most of them are victimized by their family members. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2007), the proportion of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence or both by their partner ranged from 15% to 71%, with the majority between 29% and 62%. In case of India, married women are experienced more domestic violence form their husband compared to other persons in family. Every two women out of five are victim of violence by their partners (IIPS & Macro International, 2007). In India, first time in 1983 domestic violence was considered as a crime and many other laws were construct to provide protection for women against crimes but most important legislation for violence against women is "Domestic Violence Act 2005" which was enacted in 2006 which defined domestic violence in comprehensive manner by including any type of physical, mental, verbal, emotional, sexual and economic abuse, harassment for dowry, acts of threatening to abuse the victim or any other person related to her and marital rape. Despite of these legal provisions, still four women out of ten are experienced domestic violence it shows even homes are not safe place for women in our society.

Violence against women is an intricate problem in our society which is affected by various socio-economic, cultural and family environmental related factors. Some studies showed that individual characteristics such as woman's age, education, work status and income having great impact on domestic violence (Burazeri et al. 2005; Koenig et al. 2006; Tadjoeeddin & Murshed 2007). Education works as protective measure whereas, women's age, work status and income affect differently in rural and urban area against it. Sometime relationship between husband and wife are affected by issues such as dowry, husband's alcohol consumption, man's attitude towards wife and communication gap problem, as a result of all these woman suffer not only physically but also mentally (Naved and Perssons 2005; Bates et al. 2004). Many studies revealed that husbands describe beating of his wife as legitimate in the case of dowry, disobedience of husband's wish for sexual activities against her need, and ignoring family duties. Alcohol consumption by partner is also important reason to delude husband-wife relationship and sometime become cause for violence against her (Rao 1997; Karlekar 1998; YES).

Some household factors such as socioeconomic status, family structure, and women's status in family

also determine the violence against women. The higher socioeconomic status, women empowerment and joint family works as safeguard for spousal violence (Koeing et al. 2003; Kaye et al. 2005). Whereas, social institutions such as caste and religion, social and cultural norms, traditional male dominance in society and legal provisions and safeguards against violence are some social and community level factors those have impact on violence against women in India (Dalal & Lindqvist 2012). Sometime social and economic constraints and lack of awareness about their rights in society make women more vulnerable for suffering continuously in trap of violence by their partner (ICRW 1999). Therefore, Present study is an attempt to identify the individual, household, social and community factors which determine spousal violence against women in Bihar, an Indian state where every three out of five women experience some kind of violence by their partner which is highest among all Indian states.



Source: NFHS-3 (2005-006)

### Data and Methods

Present study used National Family Health Survey -III (2005-06) data to examine the determinants of spousal violence in Bihar an Indian state. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is large scale sample survey which provides data on the issues of physical<sup>1</sup>, sexual<sup>2</sup> and emotional violence<sup>3</sup> experienced by women in their reproductive age groups. In this study data on spousal violence are analyzed for ever-married women who belong to 15- 49 ages groups. The bivariate and multivariate analysis methods are used to perform study. In bivariate analysis, cross tabulation and chi-square test are applied to see the association and differential in spousal violence with individual, household and societal characteristics. In multivariate analysis, whereas, logistic regression method applied to the see net effect of individual, household and social factor on spousal violence against women. In logistic regression method, spousal violence is used as dependent variable which is dichotomous in nature whether a woman experience physical or sexual or emotional violence or not, while, woman's age, marital status, women's education, women's work status, partner's education, wealth index, household structure, residence, caste and religion are used as independent variables . All these data are analyzed with the assistance of SPSS 20.0.

### Results

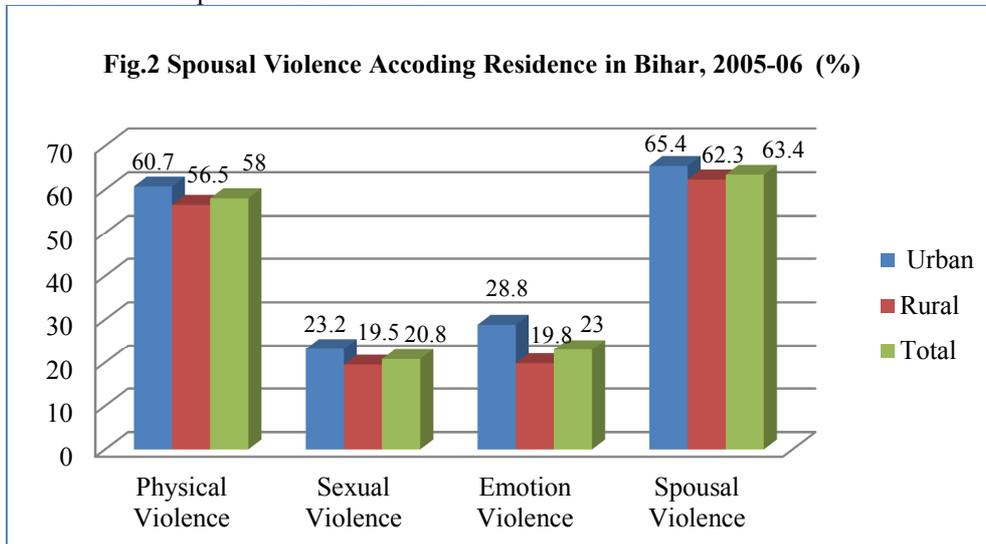
Statistics show that Bihar has the highest number of violence case against women among the all Indian states. Nearly every six out of ten women experienced the domestic violence in Bihar (Fig.1). Spousal violence against women also varies according to their residence place. Women who reside in urban area are more suffered

<sup>1</sup> In NFHS-III, **Physical violence** defined as if husband slap or punch his wife, twist her arm or pulling hair or Push, shake, or throw something at her or Kick , drag or beat up or he tries to choke or burn or threaten or attack on her with a knife, gun, or any other weapon.

<sup>2</sup> A woman considered as a victim of **sexual violence** if her husband physically forces her for sexual intercourse or performs any sexual acts against her desire.

<sup>3</sup> If a woman is humiliate in front of others or threaten to harm someone close to her and insult or do something that make her feel bad about her by husband then she is considered a victim of **emotional violence**.

compared to women who live in rural area (Fig.2). Nearly 65 percent urban women experienced spousal violence, whereas, in rural area it was observed only 62.3 per cent. According to types of violence, they are more vulnerable to face physical violence compared to sexual and emotional violence. Around 58 percent women experienced physical violence while, nearly 21 percent and 23 percent women experienced both sexual and emotional violence by their partners respectively. Thus, Data revealed that urban women are more vulnerable to suffer spousal violence compare to rural women.



Source: NFHS-3 (2005-006)

**Bivariate Analysis:** The results of bivariate analysis (Table -1) show significant association and differential between types of violence and various individual, household, and socioeconomic characteristics of women. Such as a significant inverse U shape relationship is observed between the woman’s age and spousal violence. In their early age 15-19 women experience low spousal violence but as their age increase violence cases are also increased and at age 25-29 they suffer higher around 68 percent women tolerate spousal violence at this age, but afterward with increasing age cases of spousal violence decrease. Woman’s marital status and spousal violence doesn’t show significant association but women who belong to divorced or separated group suffered more violence compared to married and widowed women.

Woman’s education shows a significant negative association with violence against woman. Nearly 69 percent women those have no education suffer spousal violence, whereas, in case of physical, sexual and emotional violence it observer 63.8, 23.6 and 25.6 percent respectively. Data reveals that spousal violence against woman decrease with an increase in woman’s education. Woman’s working status also shows a significant association with spousal violence. In all cases of violence, woman who worked in past tolerate more violence by her husband comparative to not working and currently working woman. Nearly 67 percent women who worked in past year experienced physical violence, whereas, in case of not working and currently working it observes 54.2 and 65.2 per cent. Similarly pattern and association is observed in case of sexual and emotional violence. It could be result of man’s unaccepted attitude of woman’s challenge to the traditional work norms of woman in society.

**Table 1: Spousal Violence against Women 15-49 Age Groups in Bihar According to their Background Characteristics, 2005-06 (%)**

Background characteristics		Physical Violence	Sexual Violence	Emotional Violence	Spousal Violence	Chi-Square
<b>Age</b>	15-19	41.3	19.4	14.4	48.8	28.7322** *
	20-24	55.1	19.4	21.8	60.4	
	25-29	62.4	21.7	25.2	67.7	
	30-39	61.8	24.9	23.5	67.4	
	40-49	57.7	14.7	25.2	62	
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	58.2	21.1	23	63.7	5.8438
	Widowed	50	5.6	13	50	
	Divorced/Separated	66.7	20.8	55.6	77.8	
<b>woman's Education</b>	No Education	63.8	23.6	25.8	68.6	63.4499** *
	Primary	58.5	25.5	24.5	66	
	Secondary	43.7	12.9	15.5	50.2	
	Higher	37.5	5.6	13.9	43.1	
<b>Woman's Work Status</b>	Not Working	54.2	19.4	20.4	59.7	25.9057** *
	Worked in past year	66.8	26.9	26.3	74.1	
	Current Working	65.2	22.5	29.1	69.6	
<b>Partner's Education</b>	No Education	63	23.3	26.4	67.7	25.6302** *
	Primary	63	23.5	22.7	67.2	
	Secondary	56.5	20.3	21.6	62.2	
<b>Partner's alcohol consumption</b>	Higher	44.2	12.4	16.1	50.6	93.78072** **
	No	48.6	15.9	17.9	55.1	
<b>Household structure</b>	Yes	72.1	28.1	30.5	75.9	13.3266** *
	No	48.6	15.9	17.9	55.1	
<b>Respondent's father Beats her mother</b>	Nuclear	62.6	22.1	26.3	67.6	13.3266** *
	Non-nuclear	53.7	19.9	18.7	59.6	
<b>Wealth Index</b>	No	48.1	15.5	15.6	53.9	1.342***
	Yes	77.9	34.7	38.2	81.3	
	Don't Know	67.9	19.1	28.8	73.3	
<b>Residence</b>	Poorest	64	25.4	27.4	69.6	25.0556** *
	Poorer	60.1	20.8	23.2	64.9	
	Middle	55.7	23.5	21.4	61.4	
	Richer	57.2	18	20.4	62.3	
	Richest	46.8	13.6	19.3	52.8	
<b>Caste</b>	Urban	60.7	23.2	28.8	65.4	1.9154
	Rural	56.5	19.5	19.8	62.3	
<b>Religion</b>	S.T./S.C.	69.6	26.4	28.3	74.5	35.7134** *
	O.B.C.	57.5	20.3	22.5	63.4	
	Other castes	49.8	17.8	23	54.2	
<b>Religion</b>	Non-Muslims	57.8	20.6	22.8	63.5	0.01852
	Muslims	59.4	21.9	24.2	63.1	
N (samples)		2092	2093	2095	2092	

- Note: 1. Sample numbers are varied due to missing value  
 2. Chi-square test applied only for spousal violence  
 3. \*\*\*  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*  $P < 0.05$

In regards to husband's characteristics, partner's education and alcohol consumption both showing significant association and relationship with spousal violence. Similar to woman's education, partner's education also shows a negative relationship with violence against women. Nearly 63 percent women whose husband have no education, tolerate physical violence and in case of sexual and emotional violence it was found 23.3 and 26.3 percent respectively. Results suggest that the spousal violence decrease with increasing the education level of husband. If woman's partner drinks alcohol then she suffers more spousal violence. Nearly 76 percent women experience the spousal violence when their husband drink alcohol otherwise only 55 percent women found to suffer with this social evil. Similarly trends observed with all types of violence against women in case of alcohol consumption by their partner.

In household characteristics, household structure, family behaviour towards women, and socioeconomic status show association with spousal violence. Women in a nuclear family suffer more violence comparative to a non-nuclear family. Similarly women who belonging to a family in which her father beats mother experience more violence it shows the intergenerational effect on the violence against woman. Family's economic status also has significant negative association with domestic violence. It was observed that violence against women decrease as family economic status increase. Where in poorest family nearly 70 percent women suffer spousal

violence, with increasing income of family it decrease and in richest family only 53 women suffer with this problem. These patterns are also observed in case of physical, sexual and emotional violence.

In regard to social characteristics, only caste shows association with spousal violence against women. In Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Caste (ST/SC), 74.5 percent women tolerate spousal violence whereas; for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Other Classes it was only 63.4 and 54.2 percent respectively. In case of physical violence, nearly 70 percent of Scheduled Tribes or scheduled caste women suffer, while in Other Backward Classes and Other Classes it was observed around 57.5 and 50 percent respectively. Similarly women belong to Scheduled Tribe or Scheduled Caste tolerates more sexual and emotional violence. The Residence and religion factor doesn't observed to have any significant association with spousal violence but the urban and the Muslim women experience more spousal violence compared to women who belong to rural and non-Muslims.

**Multivariate Analysis:** The Table-2 presents the result of logistic regression in which spousal violence is used as dependent variable. The logistic regression model's Chi-square and Nagelkerke  $R^2$  shows a significant and moderate relationship between the dependent and the independent variables.

Woman's age and education are observed strong predictor of spousal violence against women. Women who belong to 20-24 age group, are 1.9 times more likely to suffer spousal violence compared to women aged 15-19. Similarly women in aged 25-29, 30-39, and 40-49 years are having more probability to suffering from spousal violence compared to women aged 15-19 years. Women those are having secondary and higher education are 45 and 58 percent less likely to suffer spousal violence respectively. It shows women with higher education are less likely to suffer with spousal violence. In case of marital status, widowed women are 60 percent less likely to suffer spousal violence, whereas, divorced or separated women are more likely to experience this problem. In our study woman's work status and partner's education don't have any significant impact on spousal violence against woman but partner's alcohol consumption observer with a significant impact on it. Women who husbands drink alcohol are 1.9 times more likely to suffer spousal violence compared to other women. Similarly women who belong to the family in which her father beats her mother are 3.2 times more likely to experience spousal violence compared to other family's women. It shows the intergenerational effect on spousal violence against woman. Wealth index which is used as a proxy indicator of economic status doesn't seem to have impact on spousal violence in family, Whereas, Woman's residence observe a significant predictor of spousal violence in study. Rural women are 27 percent less likely to suffer from spousal violence. Similarly Other Backward Classes and Other Caste's women are also observed less likely to experience spousal violence in family compared to women who belong to Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Caste.

## Discussion

In India, spousal violence against women is widespread phenomena. Around 85 percent women are suffering physical violence by their husband and 87.5 percent are tolerated sexual violence by their partner. Whereas, in Bihar every three women out of five are at risk to experience spousal violence which shows Bihar's women are worst suffering with this problem among all Indian states. Similar the other studies, present study reveal that higher woman's education and higher socioeconomic status are protective for spousal violence, whereas, partner's alcohol consumption and intergenerational effect are observed with high risk for spousal violence against woman. The woman's higher education works as protective measure against spousal violence could be associate with this fact that women with higher education get sufficient marital power to protect themselves from risk of spousal violence (Yount & Carrera 2006) and woman with low education experiences higher stress in her life due to their low socioeconomic status that become sometime cause of tension between husband-wife relationship (Narayana 2006). Another major important factor associated with spousal violence is woman's age. Results suggesting women in middle age are more likely with risk of spousal violence compared to their early and later age of reproductive. In early age (15-19) case both man and woman are newly in their married life so their husband-wife relationship may don't experience or experience very low conflict, but in middle age, they experience martial conflict due to some family issues that may be cause of higher spousal violence while in later year of their married life they are less likely to experience of spousal violence because woman get respect and higher status in family in her later years.

Where most of studies (Martin et al. 2006; Koenig et al. 2006; Naved & Persson 2005) show that women who husbands are witness of mother beating by their father are observed with higher risks of spousal violence but present study also suggesting woman whose father beats her mother become habitual to tolerate of violence and are observed more spousal violence by their partner. This fact found related to rigid tradition gender norms and low status of woman in family (Martin et al. 2006).

Similarly to other studies (Rao 1997), Alcohol consumption by husband observed a strong predictor of spousal violence in our study. Alcohol consumption is considered as a muscularity activity in society and sometime it becomes reason for marital conflict between husband and wife due to over expenditure on such unnecessary activities. Place of residence and Caste are other social factors which affecting spousal violence in India. Women in urban area are having higher probability to risk to experience violence from their husband.

Some studies (Koenig et al. 2006) show higher crime rate in urban area has significant impact on both physical and sexual violence against woman. Caste also observed a significant predictor of spousal violence in this study. In Indian society, Caste represents the socioeconomic and cultural status of a family. In upper castes, most of the women have high education and their status in family is well respected which help them to protect from spousal violence. While, in lower Caste, situation generally find just opposite in related to woman status and education, which make them more vulnerable to experience the spousal violence.

**Table 2: Results of Logistic Regression for Spousal Violence against Women in Bihar, 2005-06**

<i>Variables</i>		<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Sig. Level</i>	<i>S.E.</i>
<b>Women's Age</b>	15-19 (RC)	1	0	
	20-24	1.935***	0.002	0.215
	25-29	2.613***	0.000	0.214
	30-39	2.475***	0.000	0.209
	40-49	1.956***	0.003	0.223
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married (RC)	1	0.01	
	Widowed	0.393***	0.003	0.317
	Divorced/Separated	1.436	0.555	0.613
<b>women's Education</b>	No Education(RC)	1	0.003	
	Primary	0.966	0.86	0.196
	Secondary	0.552***	0.001	0.173
	Higher	0.423**	0.012	0.343
<b>Women's Work Status</b>	Not Working (RC)	1	0.673	
	Worked in Past Year	1.195	0.378	0.207
	Current Working	1.05	0.721	0.138
<b>Partner's Education</b>	No Education (RC)	1	0.739	
	Primary	1.06	0.748	0.181
	Secondary	1.17	0.266	0.142
	Higher	1.119	0.627	0.231
<b>Partner Drinks alcohol</b>	No (RC)	1		
	Yes	1.917***	0.000	0.114
<b>Household Structure</b>	Nuclear (RC)	1		
	Non-nuclear	0.93	0.508	0.11
<b>Respondent's Father Beats her Mother</b>	No (RC)	1	0.000	
	Yes	3.192***	0.000	0.14
	Don't Know	2.169***	0.000	0.157
<b>Wealth Index</b>	Poorest (RC)	1	0.823	
	Poorer	0.88	0.387	0.147
	Middle	0.844	0.337	0.177
	Richer	0.938	0.76	0.209
	Richest	0.817	0.443	0.264
<b>Residence</b>	Urban (RC)	1		
	Rural	0.726**	0.019	0.137
<b>Caste</b>	S.T./S.C. (RC)	1	0.016	
	O.B.C.	0.669**	0.022	0.157
	Other castes	0.56***	0.004	0.204
<b>Religion</b>	Non-Muslims (RC)	1		
	Muslims	1.043	0.793	0.162
<b>Constant</b>		<b>1.001</b>	<b>0.998</b>	<b>0.272</b>
<b>-2 Log Likelihood</b>		2229.194		
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>		0.181		
<b>Model Chi-Square(df)</b>		271.404***(26)		
<b>N</b>		1912		

Note:  $p < 0.01 = ***$ ,  $p < 0.05 = **$ ,  $p < 0.1 = *$ ; (RC) - Reference Category

With some interesting findings present study have some limitations. This whole study is based on secondary data which generally provide a snapshot of spousal violence against woman and don't cover it in intensive manner. In Indian context, a lot of women are suffered violence at their home due to dowry and marriage demands (Rao 1997; Naved & Perssons 2005) but this aspect doesn't cover in this survey. Some community level factors such as law and legal protection against violence, community's gender norms also determine the violence against women (Koenig et al. 2006). The role of all these aspects can examine only through an intensive primary study focused on violence against women.

## Conclusion

Spousal violence is a serious problem in society particular in case of India where marital rape still not consider as rape by the definition of law. In this context, present study show Woman's education and socioeconomic status observed as protective factor against spousal violence, whereas, alcohol consumption by partner increase the risk of this problem. Therefore, it needs to focus on these aspects to provide safe and secure environment for women in our society. Present study suggests urban women are more vulnerable to face domestic violence which may be associated with high crime against women in urban area. Therefore, government needs to pay strong attention on to enforce and enact all legal machineries to stop violence against women. If women are unsafe at their home, then it not only has a negative impact on family but also for whole society. Thus, government and policy makers should focus to improve the woman's status in society and socio-economic development and need to integrate determinants of spousal violence with the women empowerment's policy and programmes, at same time, it also require some amendment in law regards to woman's safety such as a inclusion of marital rape in the definition of rape, to make home a safer place for woman in the our society.

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