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Gender-based violence: A qualitative exploration of norms, experiences and positive deviance

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**SHIREEN J. JEJEEBHOY
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The Population Council confronts critical health and development issues—from stopping the spread of HIV to improving reproductive health and ensuring that young people lead full and productive lives. Through biomedical, social science, and public health research in 50 countries, we work with our partners to deliver solutions that lead to more effective policies, programmes, and technologies that improve lives around the world. Established in 1952 and headquartered in New York, the Council is a nongovernmental, nonprofit organisation governed by an international board of trustees.



The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), India is a nongovernmental organisation (NGO) with the mission to mobilize women and girls to achieve gender equality. Since 1987, CEDPA in India has been working to improve the lives of girls and women in the country through technical assistance, community-based reproductive and child health programmes and innovative youth programmes.



Our mission is to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide; working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education and translation of knowledge into policy and practice.



UK aid is currently supporting a Research and Evaluation Partnership, comprising the Population Council, CEPDA India and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, to develop and evaluate state-of-the-art interventions for the prevention of violence against women and girls and supporting women in distress in Bihar. The study described in this report was conducted by the Population Council during the inception phase of the programme to inform the selection and design of the interventions.

The study has been funded by UK aid from the UK Government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report presents the findings of formative research in the district of Patna that aimed to better understand the context of violence—physical, emotional and sexual—against women and girls, and notably, the prevailing norms about men’s entitlement and women’s acquiescence to violence. The study has benefitted hugely from the input of many. First and foremost, we would like to extend our deep gratitude to UK aid for envisioning the need for this study and for its support for this and the larger programme of work in which this study is located on addressing violence against women and girls in Bihar. We are grateful to Mamta Kohli, Nupur Barua and Peter Evans of UK aid for their insightful comments and suggestions of on both the design and content of the study.

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Shireen J. Jejeebhoy

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A. Introduction

India has articulated its commitment to eliminating violence against women and girls through numerous policies, laws and programmes (for example, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, and the strategies outlined in the Xlth Five-Year Plan). However, violence against women remains widespread. Nationally, one in three (35%) women aged 15–49 has experienced physical or sexual violence, in general, increasing to 56 percent among women in Bihar (International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2007). The key challenge underlying the gap between policy and programme commitments and realities is the limited evidence on both what drives violence against women and girls, and effective programme strategies that reduce such violence.

With support from UK aid, the Population Council undertook formative research in the district of Patna to better understand the context of violence—physical, emotional and sexual—against women and girls, and notably, the prevailing norms about what constitutes acceptable violence in terms of severity and provocation, and gender norms about men’s entitlement and women’s acquiescence to violence. It compares the perceptions of women and girls with those of men and boys, respectively, with regard to the prevalence, severity and acceptability of violence committed against women and girls by husbands/boyfriends, family and community members, and looks into the likely factors that precipitate such violence. It also explores factors that may be associated with positive deviance, that is, the characteristics and motivations of nonviolent men. Finally, it explores the extent to which study participants were aware of programmes and entitlements intended to address violence against women and girls, and the obstacles they face in seeking help, and concludes with their recommendations regarding action that may be undertaken to reduce violence against women and girls in their community.

B. Study setting

The study was conducted in the rural areas of Patna district of Bihar. The state of Bihar represents not only one of the most economically and socially backward states in India, but also one that has a higher percentage of women reporting

the experience of violence than any other state. For example, 53.5 percent of the population in Bihar was estimated to be living below the poverty line (Planning Commission, 2012). A significant proportion of the population, moreover, remains illiterate: according to the recent census, just 53.3 percent of women were literate compared to 73.4 percent of men (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2011). At the same time, Bihar ranks highest among all states in India in terms of violence against women, with 56 percent of women reporting the experience of violence (International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2007). Although violence in Bihar cuts across socio-demographic groups, women with no education, those belonging to scheduled castes and those belonging to poor households are most severely affected. Moreover, while evidence on factors underlying violence against women is limited, key risk factors as assessed in the global literature are widely prevalent in Bihar. First, norms justifying partner violence are strongly held by both men and women—57 percent of women and men alike justified wife-beating (International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2007). Similar norms were held by young people (International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2008; International Institute for Population Sciences and Population Council, 2009). Second, women’s agency and options are limited—only 33 percent of currently married women made decisions about personal matters; only 36 percent could attend a health facility unescorted; only 59 percent had money that they could decide how to use and only 27 percent knew of a microcredit programme (International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2008). Third, intergenerational transmission of violence is substantial in the state; 20 percent of young men and women in Bihar had witnessed their father beating their mother, and 55 percent and 11 percent, respectively, had experienced violence perpetrated by a parent (International Institute for Population Sciences and Population Council, 2009). Fourth, alcohol consumption is common among men: 35 percent of those aged 15–49 consumed alcohol and 28 percent of these men consumed alcohol frequently (International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2008). Finally, seeking help when faced with violence is limited: only 21 percent of women in Bihar who had experienced violence sought help to end the violence (International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2008), a situation that, in turn, reduces women’s ability to prevent further violence.

The study was conducted in two blocks selected at random from the 23 blocks of Patna district. Within these blocks, referred to as Block A and Block B, respectively, a total of 15 villages were selected for data collection.

C. Study design

The study comprised three components. The first involved focus group discussions (FGDs) with unmarried youth aged 15–24, and married women and men aged 15–50. The second component was a short survey of (a) all the female FGD participants, to help identify husbands who perpetrated marital violence and obtain their consent for contacting their husbands, and (b) available husbands from among those contacted. Finally, in-depth interviews were held with selected husbands identified by the married female FGD participants as violent and nonviolent.

Focus group discussions: FGDs were held with unmarried young women and men (aged 15–24), married young women and men (aged 15–24) and adult women and men (aged 25–50) from the selected villages to seek their views on norms relating to violence against women and girls, that is, on norms relating to physical, sexual and emotional violence. Discussions concentrated on inter-partner violence and family violence perpetrated against women and girls, and in the case of the unmarried, violence perpetrated by those outside of the family as well.

In the course of FGDs, participants discussed such issues as what constituted violence against women and girls, the experiences and acceptability of violence, their perceptions of the characteristics of a nonviolent husband/boyfriend, the circumstances in which violence occurs, and the obstacles women face in addressing, communicating and seeking help in case of marital violence. In FGDs with the unmarried, participants also discussed how safe their villages were for girls and the reasons for these vulnerabilities. The participants

also suggested programme approaches they perceived had the potential to stop violence against women and girls.

A total of 21 FGDs were conducted in the two blocks—five with the unmarried (three with young women and two with young men), eight with married young women and men (four each), and eight with married adult women and men (four each) (Table 1).

A survey of married FGD participants: As indicated in Table 1, we administered separate short, structured questionnaires to all the married women who participated in the FGDs and to available husbands of all married FGD participants who gave their consent for the field teams to contact their husband. The questionnaires comprised a two-page screening form in which, aside from the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, obtained information on their experience of marital violence—physical, sexual and emotional. The field team administered the questionnaires to a total of 82 female FGD participants and 36 husbands of female FGD participants (Table 1).

In-depth interviews with selected husbands of FGD participants: In-depth interviews (IDIs) sought to better understand the characteristics, motivations and attitudes of both men who do not perpetrate violence against their wife, that is, the positive deviants, and men who do perpetrate violence against their wife. In order to do so, we interviewed in-depth both husbands revealed as nonviolent and those revealed as violent by their wife in the screening process. Interviews focused on men's marital experiences, sense of entitlement to control or perpetrate violence against their wife, alcohol use, gender role attitudes and perceptions of masculinity, and finally, suggestions about programme approaches they perceived had the potential to stop violence against women. A total of 21 IDIs—10 with nonviolent husbands and 11 with violent husbands were held in the two blocks (Table 1).

	Group	Number of FGDS/IDIs
Focus group discussions	Unmarried youth	5 (3 with young women and 2 with young men)
Focus group discussions	Married youth	8 (4 with young women and 4 with young men)
Focus group discussions	Married adults	8 (4 with women and 4 with men)
Survey, using a structured questionnaire	Married female FGD participants aged 15–24 years and 25–50 years	82 (41 women aged 15–24 years and 41 women aged 25–50 years)
Survey, using a structured questionnaire	Available husbands of married female FGD participants aged 15–24 years and 25–50 years who consented for contact with husband	36 (19 husbands of women aged 15–24 years and 17 husbands of women aged 25–50 years)
In-depth interviews	Selected husbands of consenting women who participated in FGDs, based on reports of experience of violence in survey	21 (10 husbands of women reporting nonviolent husbands, 11 husbands of women reporting violent husbands)

D. Study instruments

Three guides were prepared for qualitative data collection. Two of these were FGD guides, one of which sought the perspectives of the unmarried and the other, of the married. The third was an IDI guide that sought the experiences of violent and nonviolent husbands, and contained a few modules specific to nonviolent and violent husbands. Both the FGD and IDI guides included the broad thematic areas to be covered and key questions that served as prompts under each broad theme. The guides were translated into Hindi, pre-tested and revised in the light of insights obtained during pre-testing.

In addition, two short survey questionnaires were developed, one each for married women and married men. The women's questionnaire was administered to all married women participating in the FGDs, and, the men's questionnaire was administered to the husbands of those women FGD participants who consented to their husband's participation in the survey.

E. Recruitment, training and fieldwork

A total of six young women and men underwent interviewer training and were selected for fieldwork. These research assistants were graduates in the science or social science stream, proficient in Hindi and with at least five years of experience in conducting field-based studies, including qualitative data collection, under the supervision of the principal investigators of the current study.

Training of interviewers was conducted by the Population Council staff over a three-day period. It included the following: (a) an overview of the situation relating to violence against women and girls and the rationale for this study; (b) a short participatory refresher on qualitative methods, techniques of prompting to guide their interactions with study participants, and research ethics; (c) in-depth training on each of the instruments (FGD/IDI guides and short structured survey questionnaire); and (d) the method to be used in order to select husbands for in-depth interviews. Role plays, mock FGDs/interviews and field practice sessions were conducted. Moreover, to ensure data quality and adherence to ethical principles, Council staff members provided on-going supervision and support to the interviewers. Data collection was undertaken during May-June 2012.

F. Ethical considerations

Several steps were taken to address the ethical issues involved in conducting the assessment. First and foremost, given the sensitive nature of the subject, all study instruments were pre-tested and modified to ensure that questions were posed in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. Likewise, given the possibility that contacting husbands of married women would place some women at risk of violence, we obtained consent from female FGD participants to approach their husband, and made contact with only those husbands for whom women had provided consent.

Third, as mentioned earlier, although the interviewers were experienced, they underwent a refresher session in ethical issues, including the respondent's right to refuse to participate or answer any questions, and informed consent. Fourth, consent was sought from each individual to be interviewed; permission from a parent or guardian was sought before obtaining assent from unmarried adolescents aged 15–17. Finally, the questionnaires and transcripts of the FGDs were anonymous and names were never recorded.

G. Data processing

The textual data from the FGDs and IDIs were transcribed by the research assistants and translated into English by consultants recruited by the Council. Quantitative data were entered and analysed using SPSS.

H. Brief profile of study participants

We start with a brief socio-demographic profile of study participants, largely reflecting the profile of the villages from which they were drawn. Most were Hindu, from scheduled or other backward castes and poorly educated.

A profile of the unmarried youth who participated in our FGDs shows that female FGD participants ranged in age from 15 to 18, and male participants tended to be older, ranging in age from 15 to about 22. Schooling profiles suggest that while some girls were still in school, others had discontinued their education before completing high school. Boys, in contrast, continued their education until at least secondary school, and several had been to college. In terms of daily activities, all girls reported involvement in housework and some in working on the family farm; boys, in contrast, often combined school with work on the family farm and tending to family cattle. Time for play was expressed in FGDs with young men; young women reported that they were not permitted to play once 'grown up'.

A profile of married participants was gleaned from both the FGDs and the survey questionnaires administered to all female FGD participants, and fewer than half of their husbands (as many husbands were not available for the survey, or, more commonly, some women were reluctant to permit the study team to approach their husband, fearing violence). The socio-demographic characteristics of those who participated in the survey show that the large majority of female FGD participants—34 of 82—had never attended school; the situation was just slightly better among younger than older women, with 19 of 41 younger women having attended school compared with 15 of 41 adult women. Among husbands, in contrast, 32 of the 36 husbands for whom survey data are available, had been to school and 19 had completed Class 10. One-half of the study participants resided in nuclear families. As far as economic activity is concerned, married women's time was largely spent in housework and unpaid work on the family farm, while men were engaged in both cultivation and wage work, mostly agricultural and, for some, requiring travel to Patna.

I. Structure of the report

This report is divided into ten chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 sets the stage, highlighting the gender norms prevailing in the study settings from the perspectives of unmarried and married study participants. Chapter 3 focuses on norms relating to violence against women and girls in particular: it explores how study participants define violence against women and girls and their perceptions of the limits of acceptable violence. Chapter 4 focuses on the unmarried in terms of their perceptions of the experiences of violence among girls, including the nature of violence experienced and responses to such experiences. Chapters 5–7 focus on married women and men. Chapter 5 describes participants' perceptions of the experiences of women with regard to physical, sexual and emotional violence, including likely scenarios, and perceptions of likely factors precipitating violence against women. Chapter 6 describes the perceptions of the married about violence perpetrated on married women by other members of the husband's family,

and Chapter 7 presents their perceptions of the responses of women who suffer violence, and the extent and nature of support received from their marital and natal families, the community and the authorities from whom help is sought. Chapter 8 focuses on insights from FGDs among the unmarried and the married with regard to the characteristics of a positive deviant, that is, a nonviolent boyfriend (in the case of the unmarried) and a nonviolent husband (in the case of the married); more specifically, it draws on insights obtained from in-depth interviews of husbands, and compares the experiences, attitudes, characteristics and motivations of nonviolent husbands with those of their violent counterparts and highlights the factors distinguishing each group. Chapter 9 summarises the awareness of unmarried and married women and men regarding existing programmes to address violence against women and girls; and their recommendations regarding the contours of programmes to reduce such violence in their community. Chapter 10 summarises the main findings of this study and highlights lessons for implementing interventions to address violence against women and girls.

In order to better understand gender norms in our study settings, we probed participants' perceptions of a 'real' man and a 'real' woman, and the characteristics of a 'good' versus 'bad' husband in FGDs with married women and men. Drawing on these data, this chapter presents an overview of the participants' perceptions of these issues.

A. Characteristics of a 'real' man

Married participants' descriptions of the characteristics of a 'real' man underscore deep-rooted traditional norms of masculinity. Participants described a 'real' man in terms of individual traits, capabilities, behaviours, roles and responsibilities within the family, and roles and responsibilities outside the family. We also note that while there were commonalities in the responses of male and female participants on several fronts, their perceptions differed on many others, as described below.

Roles and responsibilities within the family

The most frequently cited characteristics of a 'real' man centred around the roles and responsibilities within the family that are traditionally ascribed to men. Specifically, a 'real' man was described as one who fulfils the roles and responsibilities of a bread-winner, household head, and a caring son, husband and father. For example in several FGDs with the married, both male and female participants observed that a 'real' man is one who earns, feeds and takes care of his family. Similarly, they described a 'real' man as one who is child-oriented and who fulfills the roles of a parent, that is, educates his children, inculcates good values in them and takes care of them. For example:

I: According to you what are the qualities of a 'real' man?

R: (A 'real' man is) one who earns and feeds his family.

R: (He is) one who educates his children.

R: (He is) one who raises his child(ren) (well).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: He should have all good qualities.

R: He should instil good values in his children.

R: He should run his family properly.

R: He should take care of his children.

R: He should take care of the whole family.

R: He should not be irresponsible.

R: Only he (who has all the qualities expressed above) can be called a 'real' man.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: The identity of a 'real' man is that he takes care of his family.

R: He should educate his children and bring them up to be good human beings.

R: He should teach his children good values (sanskar).

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Participants, particularly, female participants described a 'real' man as one who makes his wife happy, who respects his wife's views, does not impose restrictions on his wife, and does not perpetrate violence. For example:

I: According to you what are the qualities of a 'real' man?

R: A 'real' man is one who loves his wife.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

R: (A 'real' man is) one who ...behaves properly with his wife....

R: (He is) one who does not ...fight at home and does not beat his wife...

R: He is one who does not put restrictions on his wife and if she is correct, lets her do whatever she wants to.

R: He is one who listens to what his wife says and lives harmoniously with her.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

I: Will you call him a 'real' man who beats his wife or the one who does not do so?

R: One who treats his wife like a goddess (Laxmi) is a 'real' man.

R: One who treats his wife in a proper way is a 'real' man.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

Male participants in a few FGDs also reported similar views. We note that while non-perpetration of marital violence emerged spontaneously in several narratives of women, men recognised non-perpetration of marital violence as a characteristic of a 'real' man when probed specifically about whether a violent or nonviolent husband was a 'real' man. Indeed, when so probed, participants in every single FGD with women and six of the eight FGDs with men affirmed that a 'real' man is nonviolent. For example:

I: Will you call him a 'real' man who beats his wife or the one who does not do so?

R: A person who beats his wife is not a 'real' man.
(In chorus)

R: He is the worst person.

R: If a man beats his wife, his soul will not be at peace. It is good if he lives with love.

R: A person who does not beat his wife daily is a 'real' man.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: A 'real' man is one who does not beat his wife.
(Mixed responses)

R: One who beats his wife is the most useless person in the world.

R: A man should not beat his wife.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: No, he is not a 'real' man who beats his wife.
(In chorus)

R: Because beating a woman is not manliness.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: Such a person (a man who beats his wife) is not a 'real' man; in fact, he is an animal.

R: Only he can be called a 'real' man who does not beat his wife, who maintains harmony with her and carries on living his life.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

In several of these FGDs, however, participants argued that while a 'real' man does not beat his wife unless provoked, he does perpetrate violence against his wife in certain situations, notably, if his wife disobeys him. For example:

I: Will you call him a 'real' man who beats his wife or the one who does not do so?

R: If the wife makes a mistake, then he must hit (her); that is (the trait of) a 'real' man. The man who hits his wife for no mistake of hers is not a 'real' man.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: Yes; he can be called a 'real' man who can control his wife; it is all right even if it means beating her.

R: Yes, he should beat her, but not daily. He should do it only according to the situation.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Finally, some participants described 'real' men as those who respect and take care of their parents. For example:

I: What are the qualities of a 'real' man?

R: (A 'real' man is) one who looks after his parents and children with care and affection.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

Individual traits and capabilities

Married participants in a number of FGDs, particularly those conducted with young men aged 15–24, described a 'real' man in terms of physical and intellectual traits. Specifically, they perceived a 'real' man as one who is strong, "can do anything", is intelligent and smart, and is powerful. Female participants rarely described a 'real' man in terms of these traits, although in one FGD with young women, the participants observed that a 'real' man is educated and mature. For example:

I: According to you what should the qualities of a 'real' man be?

R: A 'real' man should be strong and able to do any work.

R: A 'real' man should have a sharp brain.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: A 'real' man should be intelligent and should have the potential to do everything.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: A 'real' man should be educated and mature.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

Participants, especially male participants, also described a 'real' man in terms of his capabilities; these capabilities ranged from being virile to winning fights as the following narratives suggest:

- R: A 'real' man is one who is capable of producing children.
- R: A 'real' man always wins a fight, that is, he is always victorious.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Roles and responsibilities outside the family

Married participants in some FGDs also described a 'real' man in terms of his behaviour outside the family. For example, one who does not engage in socially undesirable behaviour, including consuming alcohol or other substances, one who treats everyone with respect, one who abides by the village culture, and one who guides others in the community on the right path. These views were expressed by both male and female participants:

I: According to you what are the qualities of a 'real' man?

R: (He is) one who respects everyone.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

R: (A 'real' man is) one who lives properly (respectfully) in the society....

R: (He is) one who does not drink (alcohol)....

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: (He is) one who does not drink (alcohol).

R: (A 'real' man is) one who does not drink.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: A ('real' man is a) person who conducts himself according to the (norms of) the village, its people and the society as a whole. If he sees anyone going on the wrong path, he explains to the person and tells him to follow the correct path in life.

R: A 'real' man is one who does not consume any kind of alcohol or does not chew any intoxicating substance like gutka (a sweetened mixture of chewing tobacco, betel nut and palm nut).

R: (He is) one who does not see anyone with an evil eye and one who respects his parents and others in the society.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

B. Characteristics of a 'real' woman

In contrast to the expansive description of the myriad characteristics of a 'real' man, the descriptions of the characteristics of a 'real' woman were brief, gendered and centred around the roles traditionally assigned to women as

a wife, a daughter-in-law and a mother. For the most part, women were perceived as nurturing, caring for their home and children, and, in particular, serving and obeying their husband and his parents. These views were expressed by both married women and men, and both young and adult groups. For example, women described the qualities of a 'real' woman as:

I: What are the qualities of a 'real' woman?

R: (She is) one who serves her husband.

R: (She is) one who serves her father-in-law and mother-in-law.

R: She should look after everyone.

R: She should look after the children.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: (She is) one who does all her household work properly.

R: She is one who talks to her husband and parents-in-law in a proper way.

R: She is one who respects her husband.

R: A 'real' woman explains (what is right and wrong) to her children.

R: She is one who looks after the children properly.

R: When the husband returns home from work, she (a 'real' woman) gives him proper food.

R: The woman who loves only her husband is a 'real' woman (does not have relations with other men).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

Married men's perceptions of a 'real' woman also focused on these characteristics, but stressed obedience to her husband. For example:

R: That woman is also a 'real' woman who obeys her husband.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: (A 'real' woman is) one who follows her husband and his family members and conducts herself according to their wishes.

R: Only that woman will be called a good wife who obeys her husband.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

In fewer FGDs, a 'real' woman was described by men as one who is able to bear children:

R: The woman who can give birth to children is a 'real' woman and the one who is not able to do so is not a 'real' woman.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Finally, in several FGDs, men linked a 'real' woman with sexual faithfulness on the one hand, and the ability to satisfy her husband sexually on the other. For example:

R: (A 'real' woman is) one who does not take a wrong path.

R: (She is) a woman who does not get influenced by other men.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: (A 'real' woman is) one who can satisfy her husband like a prostitute.

R: (She is) one who can keep her husband happy by any means.

R: (She is) one who can physically satisfy her husband like a prostitute.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

C. Characteristics of a 'good' husband

Married FGD participants were also probed about what they perceived to be the characteristics of men who treat their wife well. Responses reveal a considerable overlap between ideas about a 'real' man and a 'good' husband. Typically, a 'good' husband was described as someone who showed love and respect for his wife, and met her needs. Notable gender differences were apparent in women's and men's interpretations of how these needs are to be fulfilled. Thus, women perceived needs to encompass needs with regard to maintaining the household, and conversely, equated a 'bad' husband as one who squandered away his money and did not care for the survival needs of his family. For example:

I: What are the characteristics of a 'good' husband?

R: They ('good' husbands) fulfil the needs of their wife.

R: They give everything to their wife, whatever she needs.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: They ('bad' husbands) do not give proper food to their wife.

R: They ('bad' husbands) do not go (out to work) and earn money.

R: They ('bad' husbands) do not realise that if they do not earn, they will not be able to bring up their children.

R: They ('bad' husbands) do not give any money at home.

R: They ('bad' husbands) ask their wife to manage the house without (giving her) any money.

R: They ('bad' husbands) almost kill them (wife and children) with hunger.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

In contrast, men were somewhat more likely to perceive that meeting women's needs constituted purchasing gifts or non-essentials for their wife. For example:

R: Husbands fulfil their wife's needs; from time to time, they get her things she needs like face cream, powder, lipstick etc.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: From time to time, they (husbands) give her (wife) new clothes to wear, and if she wants to go somewhere or return home from some place, they give her money to meet her transportation costs.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Another dimension of a 'good' husband that was also reported by some participants in most FGDs with the married was one who maintains a close and equal relationship with his wife. They reported that a 'good' husband shows affection toward his wife, respects her, makes decisions jointly with her, shares housework with her, and communicates with her on matters relating to the family. This dimension was expressed by both women and men, as follows:

I: What are the characteristics of a 'good' husband?

R: A ('good') husband is one who behaves properly with his wife, provides all utilities and luxuries to his wife and also helps her in the housework.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: They ('good' husbands) maintain their wife and children with love and affection.

R: They speak in a good way (courteously).

R: They agree to whatever their family says and take their family for outings.

R: They care for them (wife and children) with love and affection.

R: They listen to what their wife says.

R: They take their wife's suggestions.

R: They ask their wife if she has any problems etc.

R: They get their wife whatever she wants.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: Both of them (a 'good' husband and his wife) jointly raise their family.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: *If the wife is ill, he (a 'good' husband) takes her to the doctor.*

R: *They ('good' husbands) take her (wife) shopping, to the movies and also eat together.*

R: *They take her (wife) to the fair.*

R: *They fulfil her (wife's) needs.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: *A 'good' husband is one who takes care of his wife and children.*

R: *A 'good' husband should take the advice of his wife before doing any work. There should be mutual consent for doing any work.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

Some participants also alluded to a satisfying and faithful sexual relationship as reflected in the following narratives:

R: *They (a 'good' husband and his wife) sleep in one bed (do not have extramarital relations).*

R: *They ('good' husbands) love them (their wife).*

R: *They kiss them (their wife).*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: *From time to time, the husband loves his wife (has sex); this is also good behaviour.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: *They ('good' husbands) treat their wife with love. They live together with love.*

R: *'Good' husbands live peacefully with their wife, have a good sex life (sambhog); they treat her nicely.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

A third dimension of a 'good' husband that also featured prominently was the absence of two practices: alcohol abuse and violence. Indeed, in most cases, women and men stressed that a 'good' husband is one who does not consume alcohol and does not beat his wife. In many narratives, these two characteristics were discussed simultaneously. For example:

I: *So what do men who treat their wives in a good way, do?*

R: *They ('good' husbands) do not drink (alcohol).*

R: *They do not drink and live their lives in a respectable way. They do not beat their wife; they earn well and run their family properly.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: *Even if the wife commits a mistake, the husband does not hit her; this is also good behaviour.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: *A 'good' husband is one who does not say anything that would make his wife feel that she is being ill-treated.*

(Married adult men, aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

In almost every narrative among women and men, the discussion of a 'good' husband also encompassed that of a 'bad' husband. Consistently cited as a 'bad' husband was one who abused alcohol and perpetrated violence against his wife, including forced sex and forcing her to engage in sex with other men (reported in two of the eight FGDs with men). For example:

R: *They ('bad' husbands) start beating their wife if she says something (that he does not like).*

R: *(A 'bad' husband) beats his wife if she says something wrong.*

R: *They ('bad' husbands) beat their wife and do not listen to what she says.*

R: *When they ('bad' husbands) come home drunk, they beat her (their wife).*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: *They ('bad' husbands) come home drunk and beat their wife.*

R: *They get angry with their children.*

R: *They throw utensils etc.*

R: *They abuse them (their wife).*

R: *They beat their wife.*

R: *He (a 'bad' husband) drinks, abuses and does not care for his children.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *They ('bad' husbands) beat them (their wife).*

R: *They abuse them (their wife).*

R: *Some men ('bad' husbands) beat their wife when they go to their in-laws' and some of them even beat and abuse their wife in the market.*

R: *A ('bad') husband is one who gets angry and beats her (wife) for example if he comes home from work and asks for water and she is late in getting him the water.*

R: *There are some men ('bad' husbands) who have physical relations with other women and if the wife gets to know about it and questions him, he gets angry and beats and abuses her.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: In their greed for money, some men ('bad' husbands) give their wives to other men for sex.

R: Even when the wife tells him not to consume alcohol and come straight home, they ('bad' husbands) still do it (drink).

R: (A 'bad' husband) consumes alcohol daily and beats his wife; this is also ill treatment.

R: If a woman has her period and her husband makes her have sex, it is also ill treatment.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

D. Summary

This chapter has highlighted the gendered context in which married women and men live and, notably, the wide differences in perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of women and men, and the power of men over women, displayed in terms of perceptions of a 'real' man and a 'real' woman, and a 'good' husband. Both women and men expressed traditional notions of masculinity, with a 'real' man described as fulfilling the roles and responsibilities within the

family traditionally assigned to men, endowed with physical and intellectual traits and capabilities, and fulfilling the roles and responsibilities outside the family. While most FGD participants agreed that a 'real' man would not perpetrate violence against his wife, many agreed that if disobeyed or provoked, a 'real' man should indeed "control" or perpetrate violence against his wife. Both women and men, albeit in somewhat different ways, perceived the characteristics of a 'good' husband to include three key features: maintaining the household and meeting his wife's basic requirements for running the household; maintaining a close and affectionate relationship with his wife; and finally, neither abusing alcohol nor perpetrating marital violence.

In contrast to the expansive description of the myriad characteristics of a 'real' man, the descriptions of the characteristics of a 'real' woman were brief, gendered and centred around the roles traditionally assigned to women as a wife, a daughter-in-law and a mother: caring for her home and children, and serving and obeying her husband and his parents. In a few cases, a 'real' woman was defined as one who is able to bear children, one who is sexually faithful to her husband, and one who can satisfy her husband sexually.

In the course of FGDs with both unmarried youth and married women and men, we probed the ways in which they defined violence against women and girls, and their perceptions of its acceptability. Specifically, we asked participants what constituted violence against women and girls in their view: whether a less severe act such as slapping was considered violence, whether such violence was acceptable and if so, the conditions, if any, under which it is acceptable.

A. Definitions of violence against women and girls

Both unmarried youth and married women and men were asked identical questions relating to their perceptions of what constitutes violence perpetrated against women and girls. Their responses varied considerably. As expected, their definitions of violence were consistent with their marital status that is, the definitions of the married focused on women and those of the unmarried on girls.

Defining violence: The unmarried

Gender differences were evident in unmarried young people's definitions of violence. What is notable is that unmarried girls' definitions of violence focused, to a considerable extent, on acts of gender discrimination and violation of their rights while those of unmarried boys were more direct in terms of verbal, physical and sexual violence. Specifically, in many FGDs with unmarried girls, participants defined violence perpetrated against girls to encompass severe restrictions placed on unmarried girls' freedom of movement, excessive demands placed on them to perform housework, restricted access to money, forced discontinuation of schooling, restrictions on interaction with the opposite sex, and early and forced marriages. For example:

I: What are the ways in which violence is committed against unmarried girls?

R: If they (unmarried girls) want to go out, elders in their family ask them where they want to go, and until they get permission to do so, they have to stay at home. Only boys are free to roam about; we, girls, cannot.

R: All of us feel like going out but the family refuses.

R: We cannot go anywhere without our family (an escort). We also feel like roaming like the boys do.

R: We think that being a girl is of no use; God should have made us a boy so that, like boys, we could also go wherever we want to without having to take anybody's permission. Boys have all the freedom.

R: Boys do not have to cook or do anything (any housework).

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

R: They (parents) do not get her (daughter's/girl's) consent for marriage. They get her married to anybody (even a boy who is not acceptable to her) thinking that their burden will lessen. They get her married at a young age.

R: They do not ask her whether she wishes to get married; they just marry her off at a young age.

R: They (parents) prefer the brother (boys over girls).

R: Girls do not have the freedom to go out.

R: Girls do not have any freedom.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

R: They (parents) discontinue their daughters' studies and get them married as soon as possible.

R: If they (parents) see her with a boy outside (the home), then too she is scolded by her parents.

R: They (girls) are even beaten up.

R: If a girl works in the fields, her parents take the money (that she earns) from her.

R: They (parents) say that they (girls) will spend and waste the money.

R: If boys ask for money, they (parents) give it to them. (In chorus)

R: If we ask for money, we do not get it. (In chorus)

R: If we ask for money, they (parents) say, "From where will we get that much money?"

R: (But) they (parents) have money for boys. (In chorus)

R: Girls do not have any freedom.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

A few unmarried girls focused specifically on verbal and physical abuse by parents (sometimes for no fault of the unmarried young women) and teasing by boys. For example:

R: The families of some girls beat them.

R: If we go out and somebody does something (harasses/teases us), then when we come home they (parents/elders) abuse and hit us. (Several respondents)

R: For example, if a boy goes to college and says something to (teases) a girl and her parents come to hear of the incident, then because of this (teasing) someone (parent/elder) says something (abuses the girl) when she returns home.

R: The girl does not say anything (tell her parents) if a boy teases her (because) then she will not be allowed to go out of the house.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

R: They (parents) abuse her.

R: They (parents) beat us (daughters/girls) for no reason; this (such abuse) can only be called violence.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

In contrast, boys defined violence against girls more directly in terms of verbal, physical and sexual violence. They mentioned verbal abuse, unwanted touch, slapping and forced sex; in rare instances, they also included the restrictions placed on girls as a form of violence. For example:

I: What are the ways in which violence is committed against unmarried girls?

R: A girl walking on the road gets (eve) teased.

R: Pulling the girl's clothes is also violence.

R: Slapping is also a kind of violence. (In chorus)

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: They (boys) have forceful physical relations (forced sex) with girls.

R: The girl's family members tell her to give up her studies if something wrong (harassment) happens with her (while she is at school or going to/returning from school). This is also a way of torturing her.

R: If a girl is raped, the society insults her; nobody gets his son married to her. This is the way she is tortured by the society.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

Defining violence: The married

Married, young and adult women and men defined violence against women in terms of physical, sexual and emotional

acts. In their descriptions of violence against women, both women and men identified husbands as the key perpetrators, although some FGDs also named other family members and people in the neighbourhood.

Physical violence

In all the 16 FGDs with married women and men, physical violence was defined as including beating, and in a few cases, such actions as pushing. For example, the most common responses to the question about the way in which married women suffer from the violence committed by their husbands, included the following:

R: They (husbands) beat them (wives) or fight with them.

R: They beat them.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: They (husbands) beat her (wife) with whatever they can lay their hands on; be it a stick or their own hand.

R: They hit them (their wife) with anything they lay their hands on.

R: They push them (their wife) if they are irritated by (the way she has performed) some household work.

R: They drink alcohol, come home and beat their wife.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: They (husbands) beat their wife and attack her with a sharp object or weapon.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: Some husbands come home drunk and beat and hit their wife.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

However, in several FGDs—two with women and five with men—more life-threatening forms of violence were also mentioned as constituting violence against women. These included attempts to murder by burning, strangulating, choking and so on as the following excerpts suggest:

R: If they (wives) do not bring enough dowry, they (husbands) leave their wife or poison her or burn her alive.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: They (husbands) burn them (their wife) alive for dowry or throw her out of the house.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: If a woman is not able to give birth to a child then either the husband or his family members burn her alive or kill her by poisoning her. This has happened in our village and in nearby villages too.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: (The husband) kills his wife by poisoning her.

R: (The husband) burns his wife.

R: (The husband kills his wife) by hanging her.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

While severe forms of violence were discussed, not a single woman or man spontaneously described slapping as a form of violence. However, in response to a specific question about whether slapping is a form of violence, most FGD participants did agree that it was so, although some, especially men, qualified this statement, indicating that it was considered violence only if it was committed without provocation or only if it was committed frequently; for example:

I: Is slapping a kind of torture on wives?

R: Yes, slapping is a kind of torture. (In chorus)

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

I: Is slapping women a way of showing violence to women?

R: Yes it is. (Mixed responses)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: No. (Several responses)

I: Why not?

R: It doesn't matter if they (husbands) slap them (their wife) once or twice. It's their way of showing love.

R: If they (wives) have done any mistake then they (their husband) can slap them.

R: It is the husband's right to slap her (the wife) if she has made a mistake.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

I: Is slapping a part of the violence happening on women?

R: Yes, it is. (A few participants together).

R: Slapping is not violence because sometimes the husband slaps his wife out of affection on her committing a mistake.

R: No; the husband slapping his wife in any way, is violence.

R: If the husband hits his wife without any reason, only then it is violence.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Emotional violence

In almost every FGD with married women, aspects of emotional violence were also discussed. Key aspects of emotional violence were taunting the wife, starving her, withholding money from her, not talking to her, not obtaining treatment for her when she is ill, throwing her out of the house and finally, deserting or divorcing her. For example:

I: How do people do violence on women?

R: They (husbands) do not give her (wife) any money, not even to buy vegetables.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: Some of them (husbands) do not give any food to their wife.

R: Some of them (husbands) do not give any clothes to their wife.

R: They (husbands) do not let her (wife) go out of the house.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

Married men also articulated these acts of violence, but named the more extreme forms of emotional violence too, that is, desertion of the wife, having her return to her parents' home or divorcing her. For example:

R: They (husbands) throw her (wife) out of the house.

R: They (husbands) tell her (wife) to go and live with her parents.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: Some husbands leave their wife for (getting a limited) dowry.

R: Sometimes, the husband or family members do not talk to the wife; this is also a kind of mental and emotional torture.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: Sometimes, if the woman is not able to give birth to a baby; the husband leaves her and marries another woman.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: (Husbands commit violence) by not giving the wife any food or drink.

R: Not getting her (wife) treated if she is ill, is (a form of) violence only.

R: Throwing her out of the house, not fulfilling her necessities, not talking to her—all these are nothing but acts of violence against women.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Sexual violence

In just three FGDs, married women and men discussed sexual violence, sometimes combined with physical violence, in their definitions of violence. For example, in response to the question on how they would describe violence against women, they said:

R: They (husbands) make us have forceful sexual relations.

R: Even if the wife is not willing, he (the husband) beats her and makes her have sex.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: They (husbands) have forceful (sexual) relations with them (their wife).

R: They make relations (have sex) with them (their wife) even when she is unwilling.

R: They do it (forced sex) even when a woman (his wife) is not left with any energy in her body.

R: They disturb them (their wife) when she is asleep and even when there is no energy left in her body.

R: If women say no (refuse sex), then they (husbands) beat them up.

R: They (husbands) ask them (their wife) to do work (have sex) even when they are not willing to do so.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: They have sex by violence (forcefully).

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

B. Acceptability of violence against women and girls

In order to explore the extent to which the unmarried and married FGD participants justified violence against women and girls, we asked them whether violence against women and girls is an acceptable form of behaviour, and if acceptable, the conditions under which it is considered justifiable and unjustifiable. The perceptions of the unmarried and the married were different, and also indicated gender differences.

Acceptability of physical violence against women and girls: perspectives of the unmarried

In all the FGDs, unmarried young women maintained that violence against women and girls was unacceptable. The dominant discourse suggested that girls believed that if a girl had made a mistake, adults and others should explain her mistake to her rather than perpetrate violence against her, as follows:

I: Which forms of violence do you think are acceptable?

R: Nobody thinks violence ('atyachar') is okay.

R: No, they (adults/elders) can make us understand but not by hitting.

R: Any kind of violence is not okay. (Mixed responses)

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A)

However, in a few cases, girls did justify violence if it was mild or committed in case of what they perceived as a serious transgression; such cases usually related to being unfaithful. For example:

I: What kind of violence do you think is okay?

R: Imposing restrictions is okay but there should be a limit. The girl should not be confined to her home till she starts feeling as if she is in jail, as if she will never be able to get out.

R: No form of violence is okay. Everyone wants to succeed in life; just like boys have freedom, we too should be given freedom. (Mixed responses)

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A)

I: Is it okay if boys use violence on girls?

R: If the girl loves (shows her love for) someone else (another boy), then it is okay.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

R: If a girlfriend says something wrong to her boyfriend, then it is right for her boyfriend to beat her.

R: Beating a girlfriend is acceptable in a situation in which she is in love with her boyfriend but marries someone else.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

In contrast, in both FGDs with boys, boys justified violence far more consistently than girls, arguing that it is justified if a girl or woman “crosses the limit.” Slapping and beating were both considered acceptable in such cases, but perpetration of violence without provocation was considered unacceptable. For example:

I: In what situations is it right for a boyfriend to beat his girlfriend?

R: If a girl roams here and there with a boy other than her boyfriend, then it is okay for the boyfriend to beat her.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

R: If a mistake is committed then two to four slaps are okay; but not more than that.

R: Slapping is okay because the woman understands that she has been slapped because she has committed a mistake.

I: *What kind of violence is not okay?*

R: *Hitting a woman when it is not her mistake is wrong.*

R: *Hitting more than two to four slaps is not okay*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Acceptability of physical violence and men's authority to perpetrate violence against their wife: perspectives of the married

In almost every FGD, married women, and to a lesser extent married men, argued that men do not have the authority to perpetrate violence against their wife, but in almost all discussions, both women and men qualified this statement by suggesting that it was acceptable for men to perpetrate violence against their wife if they were provoked, if the violence they committed was 'mild' or if the violence they perpetrated was occasional and did not take place on a regular basis.

Violence is justified if provoked

In several FGDs, married women argued that violence perpetrated by a man against his wife is acceptable if she has committed a 'mistake'. Typical examples included if the wife has extra-marital relations, if she does not comply with the husband's orders, if she shows disrespect for her parents-in-law, and if she neglects the housework and children. Women's narratives uniformly maintained this view and differences by age were not apparent. Women justified such violence on the grounds that the husband is a married woman's guardian and that he takes care of her needs. For example:

I: *Is it all right for a man to commit violence against his wife?*

R: *It is right to beat the wife if she does something wrong.*

R: *It is okay to beat her if she does not cook food properly.*

R: *If she has physical relations with another man, then too it is right for a husband to beat his wife.*

R: *It is right to beat her (wife) if she has physical relations with another man.*

R: *If she has not cooked the food on time, then too it is right to beat her.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

I: *Does a husband have any right to beat or push his wife or pull her hair?*

R: *He does have the right (to beat her). (In chorus)*

R: *If she makes any mistake, he will beat her for sure.*

R: *(Yes, he has the right to beat her) because he is her guardian.*

R: *(Yes, because) he feeds her.*

R: *(Yes,) he can beat her.*

I: *In which situations is it right for a husband to beat his wife?*

R: *When she makes a mistake.*

R: *If she has illicit relations with someone else, then it is right for her husband to beat her.*

R: *If she fights with someone.*

R: *If her husband has to go out on work and she does not cook food for him in time, she should be beaten.*

R: *If she does not give food to her parents-in-law.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

I: *Can you give some examples and tell me in which situation it is right for a husband to beat his wife?*

R: *If she makes a mistake.*

I: *Any mistake like?*

R: *If she keeps relations with another man even when she has her own husband, he can beat her.*

R: *If she does not take care of the house properly.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

Married men held similar views but, by and large, were more likely than women to support men's right to perpetrate violence against their wife. In addition to reasons provided by women to justify violence, men also discussed how men should perpetrate violence in order that their wife remains afraid of them, obeys them, understands their views and decisions, and does not humiliate them. For example:

I: *Does a husband have any right to beat or push his wife or pull her hair?*

R: *(Yes;) if she does not listen to him.*

R: *No one has a right to beat anyone but they have to do it under pressure.*

R: *(Yes). If she does not listen to her husband, then the husband has a right to hit her, push her etc.*

R: *Beating them (wives) is acceptable to a certain extent.*

R: *(Yes,) because there is no other solution except this. If a woman does not understand anything (his instructions) even after explaining them to her, the husband will have no option but to beat her.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: *If the wife is told to do some work and she does not do it, then she is abused or hit and if the husband is very angry, he will give her one or two slaps. In such cases, the wife understands that this (abuse) has happened because she has made a mistake.*

I: *Can you give examples of cases when it is okay for a husband to hit his wife?*

R: If the wife says something that makes her husband feel bad in front of 10 people (others), he will definitely hit her.

R: If the wife talks about what goes on in the house in front of others, then hitting is okay.

R: If the wife makes a mistake, she should be given two to four slaps. (Three respondents)

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

I: You told me about violence faced by women these days. When is violence acceptable?

R: If they (husbands) want their wife to be afraid of them, it is sometimes all right to beat her. Also, because if they (wives) are not afraid of their husband, they will feel completely free and will run here and there (do whatever they want). Hence, there is no harm if they are beaten sometimes.

R: It is okay to beat them (wives) sometimes because if we do not do so, they will not be scared of us and if they are not scared, they will not listen to us. (Everyone laughs) It is necessary to beat them so that there is a sense of fear in them and they can be controlled.

I: Can you give me some examples of situations in which it is okay for men to beat their wife?

R: It is not right to beat her ever, but when the wife makes the same mistake again and again, even after explaining repeatedly, what can the husband do? He will have to beat her.

R: When she does not listen to her husband or does not respect his family, it is okay to beat her.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

I: You have told us about the different ways of violence happening on women. What kind of violence is okay?

R: Any kind of violence is okay.

R: If the woman does not obey (her husband), then slapping is fine.

R: If the wife does not obey (her husband's instructions), then slapping is okay to make her understand.

R: If the wife is told to do some work and she does not do it or if she does not listen to him (obey her husband's instructions) then, in such cases, it is okay for the husband to slap her once or twice.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

'Mild' violence is acceptable

In some FGDs, married women and men reported that 'mild' violence, such as a slap, was acceptable, but severe

forms of violence such as beating the wife with shoes and sticks, attempting to kill or burn her, forcing her to commit suicide, and attacking her with a weapon were not justifiable. Differences by age and sex were not apparent. For example:

I: What kind of violence is not acceptable?

R: Beating her (the wife) with shoes, beating her with sticks etc. is not at all acceptable.

R: They (husbands) beat them (their wife) with sticks etc. which can harm them physically.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: No (form of) violence is acceptable (Mixed responses). But if the violence is not very serious, it is okay.

I: What kind of violence is not acceptable?

R: It is not okay (for husbands) to beat their wife.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: It is not right to burn her (wife), attempt to kill her or even beat her.

R: To beat her again and again without any reason is not acceptable.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: It is not okay to force her (one's wife) to commit suicide.

R: It is not right to attack her (one's wife) with a weapon.

R: It is not right to attempt to kill her (one's wife).

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

I: You have told me about the various types of violence. According to you which type is okay?

R: She (wife) can bear slapping (but not more than that).

R: Hitting her too much is not okay.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: The husband burns his wife. He kills her. All this is not right.

R: Some husbands poison their wife; this is not okay.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: Beating the wife with sticks etc., burning her alive, poisoning her, strangling her; all these forms of violence are unacceptable.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Others equated 'mild' violence with violence that did not leave a mark on the wife's body; for example:

I: Which of these forms of violence do you think are acceptable?

R: Beating is fine as long as she (the wife) does not suffer any physical injury.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: If she (the wife) gets a head injury, she will bleed and it will leave a mark (scar).

R: If she (the wife) has to go to the doctor, it (such violence) is not right.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: It is all right if the violence does not leave any mark or wound on her (the wife's) body.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

It is acceptable for men to perpetrate violence sometimes, but not repeatedly

Other married, FGD participants argued that it was acceptable for men to perpetrate violence against women sometimes, but that frequent violence—slapping more than once or twice a day, beating daily, hitting daily or too much—was unacceptable. Again, this view was expressed by both women and men, and both younger and adult participants. For example:

I: Now tell us when is violence acceptable?

R: It is acceptable to slap them (wives) once or twice, not more than that.

R: It is the duty of the husband to explain to his wife if she does something wrong, but if she still does not understand, he can slap her once or twice. If she does not understand even after being beaten many times, then she will not understand ever, no matter how much you beat her.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

I: What kind of violence is not acceptable?

R: Beating her (one's wife) daily.

R: It is all right (to beat one's wife) sometimes.

R: It (violence) may happen sometimes but not all the time.

R: It (violence) should not be such that he (the husband) slaps her morning, evening, afternoon etc. This is not acceptable.

R: It (violence) may happen once or twice in two to six months.

R: One should not beat one's wife daily.

R: If he beats his wife every day, she will stop listening to him.

R: It is not good to abuse and beat her (wife) daily.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: It is wrong to beat one's wife daily.

R: A wife is not a drum (dholak) that she should be beaten daily.

R: He should understand that beating his wife daily is not good; that she is a human being, not an animal, and should not be treated badly.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: How long can she (the wife) bear it if a lot of violence is committed? How will she bear it if she is hit every day or hit hard every day? All this should not happen; violence against women is not good.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Circumstances in which violence is not acceptable

Despite widespread acceptance of violence against women, a few women and men in FGDs with the married articulated responses suggesting that violence against women was never justified, that men and women were equal and that women have the same rights as men. Those upholding women's rights explained their case as follows:

I: According to you, is it all right for a man to commit violence against his wife?

R: Both of them (husband and wife) have equal rights.

R: It is never right (for husbands) to beat their wife.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: No, he (husband) does not have this right.

R: Where is it written that he can beat or push his wife?

R: He does not have this right.

R: Both men and women have equal rights.

R: If they have made a relationship with each other, it is not for beating her up.

R: If a man has the right to beat his wife, then his wife also has a right to beat him.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: Violence of any kind is not okay. Any form of violence against the wife should not be committed.

R: Even in a situation when the wife does something wrong or does not listen (follow his instructions), the husband should make her understand with love.

R: *In no case is it okay for a husband to hit his wife.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

I: *You told me that it is not fine to beat them so why do you think it is not fine?*

R: *She (wife) also has the same rights as me. She can also understand all that I am able to understand. She knows how she should run her family, how she should treat her husband. It is also possible that sometimes I may make a mistake but that does not mean that she should beat me. That is why we (husbands) should not beat them.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

A few others suggested that violence against women was not acceptable at least under certain circumstances; for example, if the woman takes good care of the household and family members, including her children; if she behaves appropriately, if she is not feeling well, if she is engaged in income generating activities, and if she obeys her husband:

I: *Can you give some examples and tell us in which situations it is not at all right for a husband to beat his wife?*

R: *If the wife behaves well, she should not be beaten.*

R: *If she (wife) works properly, she should not be beaten.*

R: *(He should not beat his wife) if she looks after the family well.*

R: *(He should not beat his wife) if she teaches her children properly.*

R: *He should not beat such a wife (who looks after her home and family, is obedient, respectful) at all.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: *Suppose her (the wife's) health is not good and she is unable to work, he should not beat her.*

R: *If a woman wants to do some work like stitching, giving tuitions etc., she should be allowed to do so. Husbands should not beat their wife in such situations.*

R: *It is not right to put restrictions on her (the wife) when she wants to go somewhere.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: *If the wife obeys her husband fully, then it is not right for him to beat her at all.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

Acceptability of sexual violence and the right of an unmarried girl to refuse unwanted sex: Perspectives of the unmarried

Unmarried girls and boys were questioned about a girl's right to refuse the sexual advances of her boyfriend. In all the FGDs, young people argued that it was indeed the girl's right to decide whether to have sex with her boyfriend. Although forced sex via threats, blackmail and false promises were reported by both girls and boys as commonly occurring within romantic partnerships, both girls and boys appeared to acknowledge that girls had a right to refuse the sexual advances of their boyfriend. They perceived, unanimously, that physically forced sex constitutes rape. Indeed, narratives from all five FGDs were virtually identical. For example:

I: *Suppose a girl has a boyfriend and the boyfriend forces her to have physical relations with him, then does that girl have the right to refuse him?*

R: *Yes, she has the right to refuse. (In chorus)*

R: *(Yes,) it is her body and her mind.*

I: *If she refuses and still the boyfriend forces her to have physical relations, so is it rape?*

R: *It is rape. (In chorus)*

R: *(It is rape) because it is by force. (In chorus)*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

R: *Yes, she has the right to do so (refuse to have physical relations with her boyfriend if he forces her).*

R: *Yes, she can deny.*

I: *If a girlfriend denies sex but her boyfriend forcefully has relations with her then will that be called rape?*

R: *Yes, it will be called rape. (In chorus)*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

Acceptability of sexual violence and women's right to refuse unwanted sex: Perspectives of the married

In order to better understand the acceptability of sexual violence within marriage and women's right to refuse unwanted sex, we probed, in FGDs with the married, the participants' perceptions of women's sexual rights within marriage. First, they were asked whether it is a woman's right to refuse to engage in marital sexual relations, including on the wedding night, and second we probed whether forced sex within marriage constituted rape. Responses of women and men were, as before, quite different.

Perceptions of women's right to refuse sex in married life

Married women's perceptions were largely mixed about whether a woman has the right to refuse her husband's sexual advances. In five of the eight FGDs with married women, some women argued that women do have the right to refuse sex, especially if demands for sex are too frequent or if the woman is not physically fit. By and large, it was married young women who argued for women's rights, as follows:

I: When a husband forces his wife to make sexual relations then does the wife have any right to deny him?

R: Yes, she can refuse. (Several responses)

R: It is not necessary that they should make relations (have sex) daily; if the wife is not fit physically, she can deny sex. She has the right to do that. (In chorus)

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: Yes, she (the wife) has the right (to refuse sex). (Several responses)

R: Yes, she is his life partner. The couple should do it (have sex) only when both are willing.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: No, she (the wife) cannot deny sex.

R: Yes, she (the wife) has the right to deny sex.

R: Yes, she is his wife, she can deny sex.

R: Yes, she has an equal right to deny. (Several responses)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

In three FGDs with married women, all the participants argued that they did not have the right to deny sex when forced by the husband. Older women were, by and large, unlikely to support women's sexual rights within marriage; reasons advanced by these women ranged from perceptions that since she is the wife, it is her duty to obey her husband to fears that if she denies her husband sex, he will seek it elsewhere, as follows:

R: No, she (the wife) cannot deny (sex).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: How can she refuse?

R: They (wives) should keep their husband happy.

R: She is his wife; so, she should obey her husband. (In chorus)

R: It is the right of the husband.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: No, she cannot deny (sex). (Mixed responses)

R: Because if we (wives) say no, he will go to some other woman.

R: A woman is always scared (that if she denies sex, her husband will seek it elsewhere).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: It is our responsibility to fulfil his needs.

R: He has got us only for this (sex).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

Married men's responses fell into two broad groups. In several FGDs, men reiterated adult women's perceptions expressed above and argued that women had no right to refuse the sexual advances of their husband. A second group of men qualified this perception, arguing that women had the right if they had a just cause, such as, being unwell, pregnant or menstruating. For example:

I: When a husband insists on sex from his wife, does she have the right to refuse sex?

R: No, the wife does not have the right to refuse (sex). (Three respondents)

R: Yes, she has the right to refuse.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: Yes, she has the right to deny him (sex); it is possible that the wife is menstruating and yet the husband forces her to make relations. So, in that case, she can deny.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: She can refuse in some cases, like if she is not well, she is menstruating or if she is pregnant.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Perceptions of women's right to refuse sex on the wedding night

Mixed responses were also observed with regard to a question about whether it is a man's right to force his bride to have sex on the wedding night. In several FGDs with married women and men, all participants—women and men, young and adult—maintained that it was indeed a man's right to force sex on his bride by virtue of the fact that he had married her, as the following responses suggest:

R: Yes. It is his right to forcefully make relations with a woman on the first night of their marriage.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: Yes, it is his right (to force sex). (In chorus)
R: (Yes.) He has married her.
R: If has married her, then he has the right to do so.
R: (Yes.) He has married her.
(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: (Yes.) It is his right. (In chorus)
R: He has the full right to do so because he has married her.
R: (Yes.) He has brought her (home) after marrying her, so he has the full right. (In chorus)
(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: (Yes.) It is his right. (In chorus)
R: They should celebrate their first night in a good way.
R: He has the complete right as he has married her.
(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: In 95 percent of the cases, it is like a car whose brakes have failed; men cannot be controlled by anyone. The wife should either agree to have physical relations or else the husband will do so forcefully.
R: On that day, he has the complete right (to force sex) because he has spent lakhs of rupees and brought his wife to his house. So, he has the full right to put his stamp on her (to have sex with her).
(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: It is the husband's right because it (wedding night) is a happy occasion.
R: If he has married her and brought her home, then it is his right to have physical relations with his wife on the first night.
R: This is the identity of a man (to have sex with his wife on their wedding night).
(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Other FGDs, largely but not exclusively among the married young, included some voices of dissent, with some participants supporting the woman's right to refuse sex on the wedding night. Although even in these FGDs, attitudes were mixed, some participants did argue that women had the right to decide, and still others suggested that although it was the man's right, he should be more understanding of his bride's feelings. Mixed responses were expressed:

I: Is it a man's right to force his bride to have sex on the wedding night?
R: No, it is not the man's right (to force sex).

R: No they (husbands) do not have a right to do it (sex) forcefully. (Mixed responses)
R: Because it is my body; I will do it (have sex) when I feel like it.
R: It is our own body; we (wives) will not do it if we do not feel like it.
(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: No, this (forced sex) is not his (the husband's) right.
R: It is wrong to make forceful relations with her (the wife); he should get to know her first (and have consensual sex).
(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: It is not his (the husband's) right; he should understand her.
R: It is his right, but he should understand if his wife is not willing (to have sex).
(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: No, he has no authority (to force his wife to have sex).
R: He has no authority to have relations by force; he should do so only with the permission of his wife. (In chorus)
(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Perceptions about whether forced sex in marriage constitutes rape

Although FGD participants were mixed about whether women have the right to refuse their husband's sexual advances, in almost every FGD with the married, both women and men believed that forced sex perpetrated by the husband was not rape. In every single FGD, the majority suggested that if a husband forced sex on his wife, it should not be considered as rape, because providing sex to her husband is one of the duties of a wife, and only forced sex perpetrated by an outsider constituted rape. For example:

I: Even after the denial of his wife, if the husband makes sexual relations forcefully with her then will that be called rape?
R: He is her husband, so we will not call it rape.
R: No, it will not be called rape.
(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: We cannot call it rape if the husband does it.
R: (No.) He is not some other man who is doing something forcefully with her.

*R: It will not be called rape as he is her own husband.
(In chorus)*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: No, it will not be called rape. (In chorus)

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: No, it is not rape. Even if the husband forces her to have sex, how can it be rape when he does it with his wife? Forcing one's wife to have sex is not rape.

R: It would be called rape if he had sex with a woman other than his wife.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: No, it will not be rape.

R: How can having sex with one's own wife be called rape? It is not rape; rape is when one has forced sex with someone else.

R: No, this keeps happening in the relations between a husband and wife. Sometimes bad, sometimes good; all this keeps happening. That is why it is not considered as rape.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

One participant each in two FGDs with adult married men made efforts to explain that legally, even forcing a wife may be considered as rape but the majority opinion did not concur with their views:

I: If the wife refuses and her husband forces her to have sex, is that rape?

R: According to the law, it is rape. This is because according to the law, if a man has forceful sexual relations with any woman, even if she is his wife, it is called rape. But according to us, it is not rape.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

R: If you force another woman to have sex, then you call it rape and if you force sex on your own wife, that too comes in the category of rape because in both cases, you are forcing sex.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

C. Summary

This chapter has shed light on how the unmarried and the married define violence against women and girls, and the extent to which such violence is considered acceptable. While age differences were difficult to discern, gender differences and differences between the unmarried and the married were apparent in many instances. For example, unmarried

girls defined violence against girls to encompass physical violence as well as acts of gender discrimination and violation of their rights. Unmarried boys focused more directly on physical and sexual violence, articulating verbal harassment, unwanted touch, physical violence and rape as aspects of violence against girls. While girls described key perpetrators to include boys as well as parents, boys' definitions focused on the violence perpetrated by boys against girls. In contrast, the married defined violence in physical, emotional and, to a lesser extent, sexual terms, typically in terms of violence perpetrated by a husband against his wife. Physical violence was defined as encompassing beating, pushing and so on as well as attempts to murder, burning, choking, strangulating and poisoning of women. Slapping was not spontaneously mentioned as a form of violence against women and girls, although when probed, many did agree that if unprovoked, it would be a form of violence. Emotional violence was described as taunting the wife, starving her, withholding money from her and deserting her. Forced sex was rarely mentioned as a form of violence against women.

Attitudes about the acceptability of violence differed considerably between girls and boys. Most girls maintained that violence, whether provoked or unprovoked, was not justified in any circumstances and advocated, rather, verbal resolution of conflict. In contrast, in not a single FGD with boys was this attitude expressed; indeed, in all the FGDs, boys argued that violence was an appropriate way of responding to any perceived transgression by women and girls. Among the married, just a minority maintained that violence is unacceptable under any condition, while the majority suggested that it was acceptable under three broad conditions: if the husband was provoked, that is, if the wife did not follow his instructions; if the violence was not severe; and if the violence was perpetrated occasionally.

With regard to the acceptability of forced sex within pre-marital relationships, the unmarried perceived, unanimously, that physically forced sex constitutes rape. Perceptions of the married about marital rape and women's right to refuse unwanted sex within marriage were mixed. In most FGDs, women and men argued that women did not have the right to reject their husband's sexual advances. In a few FGDs, particularly among young women, some study participants argued for women's right to refuse sex. Even women who argued that women had the right to refuse sex, suggested that this was rarely feasible in practice, given the fear of reprisal on the one hand and the husband seeking sex elsewhere on the other. Forcing sex on women on the wedding night, moreover, was seen as men's right in the majority of FGDs, although in some instances, participants did argue that women had the right to decide or that the man had the right but should be more understanding of his wife's feelings. Irrespective of whether the participants believed that forcing sex constituted violence, not a single participant agreed that forced sex within marriage constituted rape; indeed, the common perception was that rape could only be perpetrated by men other than the husband.

Focus group discussions among unmarried girls and boys focused on both experiences of violence at the individual, family and community levels and fears about the safety of girls. While the focus was largely on girls, we did also explore perceptions of violence perpetrated on boys. We also probed participants about the key perpetrators of violence as well as the likely responses of girls who had experienced violence. The findings of these FGDs are summarised in this chapter.

A. Experiences of violence

In the course of FGDs with unmarried youth, we explored four different types of experiences of violence against girls: witnessing violence in the family, a well-known correlate of perpetration/experience of violence in subsequent years, as well as their perceptions of specific experiences of the young in terms of violence in intimate relationships, violence perpetrated by family members, and violence perpetrated by community members and other outsiders.

Witnessing family-level violence

Witnessing family-level violence was a common occurrence in our study settings, as described in every single FGD. In several FGDs, unmarried young people noted that their father beating their mother was the most common form of family violence they had witnessed, and associated it with alcohol consumption by the father. In several FGDs, they also described violence by a married brother against his wife, suggesting that marital violence has been observed by the unmarried across generations. For example:

I: Do young people witness any violence in their homes?

R: Yes, they do see it. (Mixed responses)

R: They see a lot of it.

R: Yes, they do. They have been seeing it since childhood.

I: So, what kind of violence happens according to you?

R: For example, someone's mother is hit by their father without any reason when he is drunk and much more.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

R: Sometimes, there is violence between the brother and his wife (bhabhi) too.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Reactions to family violence were gendered. Young people suggested that, for the most part, girls were helpless and witnessed such violence silently. However, sometimes they did intervene verbally, requesting parents not to engage in such violence or seeking the support of relatives to stop the violence; some suggested that girls go out of their home so that they do not witness the violence. In contrast, boys were described as more proactive, intervening, for the most part physically, to protect their mother. Participants reported that in extreme cases in which, for example, parental violence is a daily affair, boys may leave their home for extended periods and seek employment elsewhere. For example:

I: What do young girls do when they witness any kind of ongoing violence in their home?

R: Nothing.

R: What can they do?

R: They go out of their house.

R: They try to make their parents understand.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

R: What can a girl do? She just watches quietly.

R: If her parents fight, what can she do about it?

R: Girls do not have the right to speak.

R: She may explain to her parents.

R: She may tell her aunt, grandmother or someone. What else can she do?

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

I: What do boys do then?

R: They try to separate them (parents) when they are fighting with each other.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

- I: *What does a young boy do when he sees any kind of ongoing violence in his house?*
- R: *Sometimes the boy gets frustrated seeing his parents' daily fights; he leaves the house and goes somewhere else (to another village) to work.*
- R: *Some boys make their parents understand.*
- R: *Sometimes, boys may also hit their parents.*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Intimate partner violence

We also probed unmarried adolescents about intimate partner violence, that is, physical violence and sexual coercion within pre-marital relationships, the ways in which young people describe a nonviolent boyfriend, and the options available to girls who suffer violence perpetrated by her boyfriend.

Physical violence and sexual coercion within pre-marital relationships

In most FGDs, unmarried girls (but not boys) were reluctant, at first, to admit that intimate partnerships took place among the unmarried; they admitted, however, that relationships do happen 'sometimes' or 'rarely'. Nevertheless, discussions of intimate partner violence among the unmarried, referring to this small group of young people, did take place. Narratives suggest that a girlfriend is perceived as the possession of her boyfriend and deserving of violence perpetrated by the boyfriend if she misbehaves in his opinion. Girls who suffer violence perpetrated by their boyfriend are perceived, moreover, as bad girls, girls who defy community norms and girls who have limited parental support. For example:

- I: *How common is it for girls of your age to experience physical violence from other boys?*
- R: *Four or five out of 10 girls who have boyfriends (experience such violence). (Several responses)*
- I: *Why do boyfriends do violence?*
- R: *(Because they feel that) she (girlfriend) should not talk to anyone else (other boys).*
- R: *(Because they think thus: 'You come with me (you are my girlfriend), so you are my responsibility. Hence, you should not talk to anyone else.'*
- I: *What kinds of girls experience this kind of violence?*
- R: *Those girls who do wrong.*
- R: *Those who are naughty.*
- R: *Those who have (casual) sexual relations with people.*
- R: *Those who do not have parents.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

- I: *How common is it for boys of your age to perpetrate violence on a girl?*

- R: *In our village, five percent of boys abuse their girlfriend or shout at her. This happens when a boy's girlfriend meets someone (another boy) and talks to that boy; the boyfriend suspects her (loyalty to him) and perpetrates violence against her.*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

In the course of FGDs, we also probed whether and how boyfriends sexually harass their girlfriends, with specific reference to verbal harassment, unwanted touch, forced kissing and forced sex. Indeed, in two of the three FGDs with girls and both FGDs with boys, the prevalence of such behaviour was acknowledged. In most FGDs, young people were aware that boys used blackmail, threats and false promises of marriage to force a girlfriend to engage in sexual relations. In one FGD, they suggested that boys would even murder a girlfriend who did not accede to their demands for sex. For example:

- I: *How do boyfriends force girls?*
- R: *By promising to get married. (Several responses)*
- R: *They threaten to break the relationship.*
- R: *They say, 'I will tell everyone that I have (physical) relations with you.'*
- R: *They say, 'I will tell everyone about our relationship.'*
- R: *They say, 'I will tell everyone that you also have (physical) relations with someone else.'*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

- R: *Boys threaten her (their girlfriend).*
- R: *He (boyfriend) tells her that if she does not have sex with him, he will kill her.*
- I: *Do boyfriends try to forcibly make sexual and physical relationships with girls?*
- R: *Yes, they do. (Mixed responses)*
- R: *He (boyfriend) tells the girl that he will marry her to make her agree to have physical relations with him.*
- R: *He tells her that he will spend his entire life with her.*
- R: *He says that (if she gets into a relationship with any other boy), he will break that relationship.*
- R: *He says that he will blame (blackmail) her.*
- R: *He says that he will tell all the people in their community about their relationship.*
- R: *He says that he will spread a rumour that she has relations with other boys.*
- R: *Many boys kill their girlfriends if they refuse their sexual advances, and dispose off the body.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

- R: Ninety-nine percent of boyfriends (who have sex with their girlfriend) have forceful sexual relations.
- R: No boyfriend thinks (cares) about his girlfriend; he just has physical relations with her and leaves her.
- I: How does a boyfriend force his girlfriend to make physical relations with him?
- R: He promises to marry his girlfriend.
- R: The boyfriend tells his girlfriend that he will marry her, and then takes her to his house so that he can have physical relations with her.
- R: Yes, and he also says that if she does not have physical relations with him, he will tell everybody (about their relationship). (In chorus)
- R: He threatens her by saying that if she does not have physical relations with him, he will tell everyone that she has physical relations with other men.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A).

Violence perpetrated by family members

Recognising that violence against girls is also perpetrated by family members, the FGDs also sought to explore the extent to which girls acknowledge the presence of such violence. Girls' narratives of experiences of violence perpetrated by family members included the restrictions placed on their behaviour and freedom of movement, violation of their rights (for example, withdrawing girls from school, early marriage) and denial of food, as well as verbal abuse; physical violence, including slapping and hitting, and sexual violence. Clearly, the home is not a safe haven for all girls. Most female participants reported that the majority of girls experienced some form of violence at the hands of the family members and may continue to do so till they are married; the perpetrators included parents and brothers, as suggested by the following narratives:

- I: How common is it for family members to mistreat unmarried girls in your village?
- R: It is a common thing.
- R: This happens to seven out of 10 girls.
- I: Mostly, who does this kind of violence?
- R: Parents and brothers. (Mixed responses)
- R: They (family members) stop them (girls) from going outside the house. They hit and abuse them.
- R: And then they (family members) get her married. (Mixed responses)
- I: How commonly does this violence happen?
- R: Many times, till she gets married.
- R: They keep taunting her.
- R: It happens regarding work; if you do not do it, you get scolded.

- R: This happens to everybody; for example, if the mother tells (the daughter) to do some work and if she does not do it or gets someone else to do it, then she is beaten.
- R: People say that when we turn 18, we have rights but here we have to live in fear of our parents and have to listen to them.
- R: If we do not obey (our parents), they hit us. (Mixed responses)

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

- I: How common is it in your village for family members to be violent with unmarried girls of your age?
- R: It happens sometimes.
- R: Parents do it (violence).
- R: They (family members) have the right to both scold us and sometimes, also to slap us once or twice.
- R: They (family members) stop giving her (girl) food once or twice, saying that because she has made a mistake that day, she will have to bear the brunt.
- R: This (violence) happens sometimes.
- R: No this happens often. (Mixed responses)
- I: What is the reason for being violent like this?
- R: If the girl goes out and makes some mistake and her guardian gets to know about it, then she is scolded and also beaten.
- R: If anything or any household work goes wrong, they scold her a little.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B).

While physical violence committed on girls by family members was discussed in all the FGDs, girls in two of the three FGDs and boys in one of the two FGDs acknowledged that sexual violence took place within families, but described this as a rare event. Where sexual violence took place, the perpetrator was typically described as the girl's brother-in-law. For example:

- I: Anyone from the girl's family (commits sexual violence on a girl)?
- R: Brother-in-law, brother-in-law's brother, sister-in-law's brother.
- R: Brother-in-law's brother, sister-in-law's brother.
- R: Uncle.
- R: A girl had relations with her brother-in-law and got pregnant; later, she died.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A).

- I: How common is it for unmarried girls in your village to be subjected to sex-related violence by members of the family?

R: *It happens. (In chorus)*
 R: *They (family members) do it forcefully.*
 R: *They (family members) forcefully kiss her (the girl).*
 R: *Very rare. (In chorus)*
 I: *Mostly, which member of the family uses such force with girls?*
 R: *Brother-in-law's brother, sister-in-law's brother.*
 (Unmarried girls aged 15–24, Village 8, Block B).

I: *How common is it in your village for family members to forcefully make sexual relations with an unmarried girl?*
 R: *No, it has never happened in our village. (In chorus)*
 R: *Sometimes it happens in case of distant relatives.*
 R: *Mostly, it happens with the brother-in-law (sister's husband).*
 (Unmarried boys aged 15–24, Village 5, Block A).

Violence perpetrated by someone other than a boyfriend or family member

In order to assess whether girls were at risk of harassment or violence by others (aside from intimate partners and family members), we asked unmarried young people whether unmarried girls in their community experienced such behaviours, who the likely perpetrators are, how they harass girls and the likely places where such harassment or violence takes place. Verbal harassment was acknowledged as widespread in every FGD, as follows:

I: *In what ways do boys/men from outside the family harass young girls?*
 R: *They (outsiders) say, 'Marry me. I love you.'*
 R: *They abuse. (Several responses)*
 R: *They forcefully try to kiss. (Several responses)*
 R: *(They) whistle, sing songs.*
 R: *They say wrong things.*
 R: *They say, 'I love you.'*
 R: *They say, 'What an item ('bombshell').'*
 I: *How much does this happen?*
 R: *Not a lot. (In chorus)*
 R: *Out of 10 people, four or five do it.*
 (Unmarried girls aged 15–24, Village 8, Block B).

R: *Yes, they (outsiders) whistle and tease them (girls).*
 (Unmarried boys aged 15–24, Village 5, Block A).

In several instances, fears of young men taking and displaying young women's photographs on their mobile phones were expressed as follows:

R: *Nowadays, all (boys) have mobile phones so they click photos whenever girls go out.*
 I: *What do they do with those clicked photos?*
 R: *They look at the photos and show them to their friends.*
 R: *If their (the boys') parents get to know, they will scold them (the boys). (In chorus)*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24, Village 9, Block A)

Unwanted touch was also reported, ranging from boys trying to hold a girl's hand, to boys pulling off the girl's dupatta (a long scarf worn over the outfit, a symbol of modesty) and deliberately brushing past girls in crowded places; in fewer narratives, rape was also mentioned:

R: *It (violence) happens in crowded places like in the train, at the Dasher a (a festival) mela (fair) and in the market. They touch.*
 R: *You cannot say anything (complain) in a crowded place.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24, Village 1, Block A).

R: *When they (girls) walk (down the street), boys try to touch them while passing.*
 R: *They (boys) touch them (girls).*
 R: *If they (boys) are on a bicycle, they touch them (girls) and ride away.*
 R: *When they (boys) are drunk, we are scared that they will say something to us or hold our hand.*
 R: *They (boys) tease them (girls) and commit violence against girls.*
 R: *They (boys) touch them (girls) anywhere.*
 R: *We are scared of all this.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24, Village 9, Block A).

R: *Girls are also scared of being caught and raped by a boy.*
 R: *They feel scared because they are worried about being raped.*
 R: *(We hear about) it (incidents of rape) once or twice in a year.*
 R: *Mostly, they (boys) abuse girls.*
 R: *Yes. They (boys) even touch them (girls) and tease them.*
 R: *If it is afternoon time and a girl happens to be out alone, then they (boys) may even kiss her.*
 R: *Sometimes, they (boys) even tear the clothes off a girl (who is unescorted).*

R: Sometimes, they make forceful sexual relations with a girl (who is unescorted) and kill her.

R: It (forceful sex/murder) has never happened in our village. It has happened in the nearby village.

(Unmarried boys 15–24,
Village 5, Block A).

R: A boy was chatting with three of his friends. One of them was very friendly with a girl and had had sexual relations with her. He told his friend 'You come, and you can make relations with that girl too.' When the friend came near her and tried to kiss her and make sexual advances, she screamed. This brought the villagers to the spot, and she told them that the friend was forcing her to have sex. The girl's family filed a case against the boy. It (the news about the incident) spread in the whole village. Today, the girl is married, the boy has a job and the case has reached a compromise.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B).

In the course of FGDs, we also probed young people's perceptions of likely perpetrators of violence. Most associated such perpetration with boys from their village or surrounding villages, some specifically suggested boys and men in power and authority, and those who had consumed alcohol. For example:

I: Who are these people who trouble girls?

R: Those who drink alcohol.

R: There are drunkards in the market; they might say something.

R: There are also useless (awaara) boys at the bus and taxi stands and drunkards too; they say anything (offensive) like, 'What an item! Where are you going?'

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B).

I: What kind of boys mostly torture girls?

R: Boys who consume alcohol.

R: A boy from a rich or influential family who thinks that even if he does something (abusive) to a girl, his family members will handle the matter. I mean, people who have power and are not scared of anyone.

R: Only strangers do all this.

I: Do teachers do all this?

R: Sometimes, they do.

R: There are very few teachers who do this.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A).

We also probed likely locations for the perpetration of violence by persons other than intimate partners and family

members. Verbal harassment and unwanted touch were described as taking place typically when girls were conducting necessary day-to-day activities such as going to or returning from school, fetching water, shopping at the market or working in the fields. For example:

I: Where do these things happen mostly?

R: Outside, in the street.

R: Outside the house, in the fields. (Several responses)

R: On the road.

R: On the way to school.

R: In the bus/train.

R: In the market.

R: In the fields.

R: This happens mostly after the school gets over; boys stand there surrounding the place.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B).

I: Where does this teasing take place?

R: When they (girls) go to school and on their way back from school. It happens at home too; for example, if the girl goes to the rooftop (terrace), seeing her up there, some boy may whistle at her.

R: In school; sometimes, after school gets over someone may try to pull their (girls') clothes off or say something (offensive).

R: It happens more often in the market. If they (boys) see a bad (wayward) girl, they say anything (something offensive) to her.

R: They (boys) tease girls even on their way to and from the fields.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B).

We also probed the extent to which unmarried girls of the same ages as the FGD participants felt safe in their villages, and the extent to which girls' life and their mobility are circumscribed by fears for their safety. We asked participants to list places where adolescent girls felt safe and unsafe and what made these locations safe or unsafe for girls. Narratives of all the FGDs, with both girls and boys, suggest that the fear of violence did indeed limit the places in which girls are safe: their own homes, the homes of their relatives or female friends, and the school:

I: What are the places in the village where unmarried girls feel safe?

R: In their own house; in their friend's house.

R: At home, and in their grandmother's and aunt's house.

R: In their own house.

I: Can you tell what the reason is for girls to feel safe in these places?

R: *Our family is with us; so, nobody can do anything (harm us).*

R: *Grandmother's and aunt's homes are also our home; so, nobody can do anything (harm us).*

R: *In a friend's house, where we are two (together). If, on the way (while going to some place), there are two (we are together), it is safe; but not (when one is) alone.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

I: *Which are the places in the village where girls feel safe?*

R: *They (girls) are safe at school too.*

R: *(They feel safe because) there are teachers in the school.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A).

R: *No, there is no such place.*

R: *If they are at home, they feel safe. If they go out of the home, they feel unsafe.*

R: *They are safe only at home. (In chorus)*

R: *There is no one to harass her (the girl) at home. At home, she does not have to face any outside problem because her family is with her.*

R: *If anyone (dares to) tease the girl (when she is) at home, she knows that he will not be spared; the family members will beat him. That is why she feels safe at home.*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A).

As suggested by the above narratives, what made the home and the school safe for unmarried girls was largely the presence of people around them, including family members, friends and peers, and teachers. Indeed, the presence of these people served to give girls the confidence that no one would dare to misbehave with them or that even if someone dared to do so, adults around them would protect them. Notably, boys were as likely as girls to recognise the lack of safety for girls, and as likely to attribute this lack of safety to the behaviour of young men.

Girls were described as being unsafe in the streets, in neighbourhood shops, in the fields, in the places from which they drew water, and at bus stops, if unaccompanied. For example:

I: *What are the places where unmarried girls don't feel safe?*

R: *In the fields and outside their house. (More than one response)*

R: *At places from where we fill water. (More than one response)*

R: *When going to the market. (More than one response)*

R: *At bus and taxi stands. (More than one response)*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B).

Violence against boys

In view of evidence suggesting that boys may also be subjected to physical violence, sexual harassment or forced sex, we explored, in the FGDs, the extent to which boys experienced violence, the types of violence experienced and the likely perpetrators. Several forms of violence were discussed: beatings from family members or being forced to work; harassment by a girl; and, in just one case, forced sex perpetrated by older boys on younger boys. For example, FGD participants discussed family violence against boys thus:

I: *Do boys ever experience harassment or violence? What kinds of things happen?*

R: *They (boys) are beaten by their family members.*

R: *When boys who are studying (in school or college) are made to discontinue their studies and forced to get married, it is a kind of torture for them.*

R: *The family members send the boys out to earn money.*

I: *Boys being physically abused, how common is that in your village?*

R: *Boys do get physically abused.*

R: *The family members beat boys and force them to earn money.*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

Sexual harassment or violence was discussed, but focused more on female to male rather than male to male harassment and violence, as follows:

I: *Do boys ever face the problem of sexual harassment or teasing?*

R: *Yes. (Mixed responses)*

R: *Sometimes, they (boys) come across girls who tease them.*

R: *Such girls ask the boy to marry her and thereby force him to do something he may not want to do*

R: *She can commit physical violence against him.*

R: *She can get him beaten up.*

R: *They (girls) can get him beaten up by anyone.*

R: *It (boys getting beaten up by girls) happens very rarely.*

R: *It has happened with two or three boys (in this village). (Several responses)*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A).

I: *Do boys ever experience violence or unpleasantness?*

R: Yes; this happens. Sometimes when the boy is sharp (bright) in studies and the girl wants to do better than him, she attracts him towards her, distracts him from his studies (so that he does badly in class), and she does better than him.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B).

Male to male forced sex was discussed in just one FGD:

R: Boys of our age make sexual relations with younger boys.

R: Villagers get to know about it (boys having sex with younger boys) but they do not pay much attention to it. The (older) boys have physical relations with younger boys by enticing them with something to eat or drink or something else so that they do not tell anyone about it. That is why it does not spread much in the village.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B).

B. Actions that an unmarried girl who suffers violence may take

We asked unmarried FGD participants about possible actions that unmarried girls may take who have suffered violence perpetrated by a boyfriend, a family member, and an outsider. Findings suggest that the focus of these discussions was on sexual rather than all forms of violence, and that the extent to which young people perceived that girls will seek care depended largely on who the perpetrator is.

Action if violence is perpetrated by a boyfriend

Silence was described as the typical response to the experience of violence perpetrated by a boyfriend. Unmarried FGD participants reported that if violence was perpetrated by a romantic partner, girls would be reluctant to reveal the incident to anyone but a trusted friend; fewer participants said that girls would reveal it to a female family member such as her mother, sister or sister-in-law. They acknowledged, however, that even if the girl communicated the incident to a friend or female family member, no action would be taken against the perpetrator for fear of the family being embarrassed and ostracised by the community at large. In several FGDs, girls and boys suggested that if revealed to the family at large, girls' freedom of movement would become further restricted, her schooling discontinued, and her marriage prematurely fixed. Indeed, both girls and boys suggested that boys are confident in the knowledge that girls have limited options to take action in case she suffers violence perpetrated by her boyfriend and have far more to lose than the boyfriend who may have perpetrated the violence. For example:

I: What do unmarried girls normally do when they are subjected to sexual and physical violence by their boyfriends?

R: If she mentions it in the village, there is the fear of embarrassment; so, she does not say anything about it.

R: She is scared of being shamed; that is why she remains silent.

I: Who does she talk to about this?

R: She could talk to a friend. (Mixed responses)

R: She can talk about it but nothing more. (Mixed responses)

I: Why only that person?

R: Because the friend is closer.

R: She can tell her friend.

R: Nobody else.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

I: The unmarried girl who bears physical and sexual violence perpetrated by her boyfriend, what does she do?

R: The girl does not tell anyone (about it).

R: She will not be allowed to study (go to school if she talks about it). (In chorus)

R: She stops going to school.

R: She says (tells her parents/family) that she will not go to school; she will stay at home and remain illiterate.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A).

R: She tells her friends about it.

R: If she is educated, she tells all her family members. And, if her mother is uneducated, she tells her to not to tell anyone about it.

R: Generally, girls hide it and do not tell anyone.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A).

In one FGD, girls highlighted the extent to which options for victims and perpetrators differed, and the extent to which support is denied to girls who suffer sexual violence, as follows:

I: What had happened?

R: Both the girl and boy were from the same village. The boy raped the girl and subsequently he was married off into another place (village); the girl was poisoned and she died.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B).

Action if violence is perpetrated by a family member

Unmarried FGD participants were also asked about the action taken if violence was perpetrated on an unmarried girl by a family member. Responses again suggested that girls would remain silent or communicate the incident to a friend or her mother, as follows:

I: What does an unmarried girl who suffers physical or sexual violence from family members typically do? Who does she tell about it?

R: They (unmarried girls) do not do anything.

R: They do not tell it (incidence of violence) to anyone.

I: Do they talk to someone about it?

R: They talk about it to their friends (In chorus).

I: Why do they tell them?

R: Because the friend can understand (their problem).

R: Friends can help them to resolve their problem. (In chorus)

R: They cannot tell their parents.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A).

I: What does an unmarried girl commonly do, if she experiences physical or sexual violence by her family members?

R: She tells her mother.

R: She talks to her mother first.

R: She shares it with her mother only; she does not talk to anybody else.

R: We (unmarried girls) feel ashamed or shy. Mother will tell Father, and he will do what is to be done.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

Action if violence is perpetrated by someone other than a boyfriend or family member

Action was far more likely to be taken if the perpetrator happened to be an outsider that is not a boyfriend or a family member because, in such cases, young people believed that “it is not the girl’s fault.” For example:

I: What does an unmarried girl who suffers physical or sexual violence from people outside the family typically do? Who does she tell about it?

R: She tells her family.

R: Her family will support her so that no outsider can do anything to her.

R: The girl tells her friends if it concerns a boyfriend and it is the girl’s fault because then, she cannot tell her family. But if any other man (an outsider) is forcing himself on her, she can tell her family as it is not her fault.

R: If something like this happens, the girl will tell others in the village and the person will be beaten up.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

R: She goes home and tells her mother, her father and brother. Sometimes, the problem goes to the police or the brother goes and beats them [perpetrators] up.

I: You said that when this happens the girl goes home and tells her mother, why so?

R: The girl thinks that by telling her mother, a solution to the problem will be found; that is why she goes to her mother.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B).

Notably, few young people suggested that an unmarried girl has recourse to formal mechanisms for redressing experiences of violence. Indeed, in just one FGD did participants suggest that an unmarried girl could inform, directly or through her family, such authority figures as the police, the village head, and community influentials more generally, if their own efforts to settle the issue were not successful. Boys who suffer sexual violence are, in contrast, seen as having other options—they are perceived to be able to refuse the sexual advances or move away from home, options that are not available to girls. For example:

I: If boys experience this kind of sexually-related violence then what do they do?

R: They can do anything.

R: They can refuse; they can wipe out the relationship; they can stop meeting the person.

R: They will not live here (in their village); they can go and live elsewhere.

R: They tell their family what is happening (about the violence they have been suffering).

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

C. Summary

Findings of this chapter confirm that unmarried girls (and rarely, unmarried boys) in the study communities do face violence and the threat of violence. Not only did FGD participants acknowledge that young people grew up witnessing family violence, in the form of their father beating their mother, but also that physical, sexual and emotional violence against girls was quite common. Common perpetrators included boyfriends as well as family members and others in and around the study villages. As far as intimate partner violence is concerned, although romantic relationships between girls and boys in the study villages may be rare, unmarried girls and boys were aware that violence did take place in intimate relationships. Boys were described as perpetrating physical violence against a girlfriend if they

perceived that she was unfaithful; and deceiving, threatening or blackmailing girlfriends into engaging in unwanted sexual relations. Violence perpetrated by family members included the multiple restrictions placed by parents on girls' movements and behaviour, the physical punishment received by girls for disobedience and usually perpetrated by parents and brothers, and, more rarely, sexual violence perpetrated by a family member, usually a brother-in-law or a distant relative. Sexual violence perpetrated by others was described at length. Typically, it was perpetrated by boys and men in the neighbourhood or school, and took the form of verbal harassment, unwanted touch and, rarely, rape. Also acknowledged was boys' practice of taking girls' pictures, against their will, on their mobile phones and distributing these pictures as a way of harassing girls.

Girls were thus described as having few safe spaces. The home and the school were typically described as the only safe spaces available to girls, largely because of the presence of family members and other trusted adults. In contrast, girls were described as feeling unsafe in the streets, going to shops, in the fields and at the water source. Typically, these locations were described as unsafe because of fears of sexual harassment, and study participants reported that girls were always accompanied by a parent or at least other girls if they moved outside the home.

Responses to the experience of violence depended largely on who the perpetrator was and the extent to which the unmarried girl was considered to be responsible for precipitating the incident. Both girls and boys recognised that girls who experienced violence perpetrated by a boyfriend had few options for recourse; typically, they were described as keeping silent about the incident or talking to a trusted friend, but fear of reprisal and loss of family reputation inhibited them from taking further action. Responses to family violence were similar. Study participants implied that unmarried girls passively tolerated emotional, physical and even sexual violence perpetrated by family members; in the case of sexual violence, they agreed that a girl may share the incident with a friend or her mother, but that further action in these cases was rare. Action was far more likely to be taken if the perpetrator was an outsider than if he were an intimate partner or family member because in such cases, the incident was less likely to be perceived as being the girl's fault or hurting the family's reputation. Even in such cases, though, the typical action was to inform a family member who would resolve the situation informally; access to formal mechanisms was rarely suggested.

CHAPTER 5

EXPERIENCE, PERPETRATION AND NATURE OF MARITAL VIOLENCE: PERSPECTIVES OF THE MARRIED

In order to better understand the extent to which marital violence characterised marital relations in our study settings and the nature of such violence, FGDs among married women and men probed perceptions of how common it was for a man to commit violence against his wife, the type of violent acts perpetrated and the context in which such violence was committed. The discussion focused on four aspects of marital violence; namely, physical, sexual and emotional violence, and violence during pregnancy. Discussions also focused on the risk factors and perceptions of the prevalence of marital violence over the marital lifecycle, that is, whether it increased or decreased over the course of married life.

In addition, among women, all consenting FGD participants responded to a short survey questionnaire outlining the extent of violence experienced within marriage; besides, we also administered a similar questionnaire among available

and consenting husbands of women FGD participants who permitted us to contact their husbands (most did not) to assess the extent of violence perpetrated by men on their wife. Findings, presented in Table 5.1, are clearly not representative but are illustrative of the extent of marital violence in the study communities. Two key findings emerge. First, marital violence was indeed pervasive, with more than four-fifths of all married women reporting the experience of at least one form of violence, ranging from 59 percent reporting the experience of sexual violence to 71 percent reporting physical violence and 79 percent reporting emotional violence. Second, while husbands also suggested that violence against women was pervasive, they were less likely than their wife to acknowledge that they had perpetrated most forms of violence against their wife; they were particularly less likely to report slapping their wife, forcing her to engage in sex, or humiliating or threatening

Table 5.1 Experience and perpetration of violence against women within marriage: Responses of female FGD participants and available husbands to survey questionnaires

	Experience: Married women FGD participants	Perpetration: Available husbands of consenting FGD participants
N	82	36
Physical violence	70.7	58.3
Slapped	69.5	55.6
Twisted arm or pulled hair	29.3	27.8
Pushed, shook or threw something	24.4	22.2
Punched with fist or with something that could hurt	20.7	25.0
Kicked, dragged or beat	14.6	19.4
Tried to choke or burn on purpose	3.7	5.6
Threatened or attacked with knife, gun or any weapon	9.8	5.6
Emotional violence		
Was humiliated in front of others, or husband either threatened to harm wife or someone close to wife	79.3	36.1
Sexual violence	58.5	41.7
Was forced to do something sexual that she found degrading or humiliating	26.8	11.1
Was forced to have sex when she was unwilling	58.5	41.7
Any physical or sexual violence	76.8	66.7
Any violence (physical, sexual, emotional)	82.9	69.4

her. At the same time, they were more likely than their wife to report perpetrating such forms of physical violence against her as punching with their fist or with an object that could hurt, and kicking, dragging or beating her. Both findings were reinforced in the course of the FGDs.

A. Physical violence

Pervasiveness of marital violence

In every single FGD, married women and men agreed that marital violence took place in many homes, with women somewhat more likely to argue that it took place in more than one-half of all homes and men arguing that it took place in fewer homes, as follows.

I: How common is it for the men in your village to do violence on their wives?

R: It is very common. (In chorus)

R: Whenever they want, they do it. Whenever they come back home drunk, they beat their wife for some reason or the other.

R: It is too much in this village.

R: Five to six people out of every 10 do so (commit violence against their wife).

R: (I think that) it happens with all 10 of them.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A).

I: How common is it for the men in your village to beat their wives?

R: They all do so. (In chorus)

R: They (men) do violence against them (their wife).

R: Five out of every 10 men do so. (In chorus)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B).

As in the short survey, married men were far less likely than married women to acknowledge the pervasiveness of marital violence, although in a few FGDs men did suggest that it was widely practised. In several FGDs, men suggested that as women became more educated and more likely to be engaged in income generating activities, men's perpetration of violence against their wife had reduced. For example:

I: How common is it in your village for a man to beat up his wife?

R: It is very rare in our village.

R: Out of 100 families it happens in 10–15 families only.

R: There is much improvement compared with some years ago. (Now) it (wife beating) happens in some families only.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A).

R: Earlier, it (wife beating) used to happen a lot in our village but now because of improvement in education, all this has reduced.

R: Earlier, in our village around 50 percent of men used to beat their wives but now it is 2–3 percent only. Nowadays, even women are earning, and there are a few husbands who are living on the income of their wife. How can such men commit violence against their wife and why would such women submit to violence and torture?

R: Now, how can the husband commit violence against his wife when both husband and wife are educated, both are earning and if both are equal?

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A).

In three FGDs, however, men agreed with women that violence against women was a common feature of marital relations in the study settings, for example:

I: How common is it for the men in your village to beat their wives?

R: It happens frequently.

R: Out of 100, it happens in 75 cases.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A).

I: How common is it in your village for wives to experience violence from their husbands?

R: It hardly happens.

R: In about 100 couples, it happens in 50.

R: This keeps happening in every home.

R: In most families, the husband commits some kind of violence against his wife.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B).

Differences were also apparent in the responses of married women and men regarding the frequency with which such violence took place. Women typically reported that it took place frequently, with women in six FGDs agreeing that it took place daily, and women in all FGDs suggesting that it took place at least weekly. For example, when asked about how frequently men perpetrate marital violence, women reported thus:

R: Eight to ten times a month.

R: Many of them (husbands) also do it (violent acts) daily. (Mixed responses)

R: It happens daily. (In chorus)

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A).

R: They (husbands) do it (acts of violence) a lot.

R: It happens almost daily.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A).

In contrast, married men were more likely to give mixed responses. Unlike in FGDs with women, in just two FGDs did at least one participant suggest that violence was perpetrated on a near-daily basis, while others did concede that it happened at least monthly; many, however, suggested that it was a rare event. In response to the question about how frequently husbands commit violence against their wife, men's varied responses suggested the following:

R: It (violence) happens two to four times in a year; they beat their wives.

R: It is common to abuse them (wives), it happens 15–20 days in a month.

(Married young men aged 15–24, Village 3, Block A).

R: It (violence) happens once or twice in a month.

R: It (violence) does not happen.

R: Some men abuse and hit their wife every day.

(Married young men aged 15–24, Village 12, Block B)

R: It (violence) happens once or twice a month.

R: It (violence) does not happen much; only sometimes.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 2, Block A).

R: This (violence) does not happen every day; it happens sometimes.

R: In some houses, it (violence) happens sometimes; in some, every day and in some, it does not happen at all.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 12, Block B).

Perceived risk factors underlying physical violence in marriage

In the course of FGDs with the married, participants also discussed the reasons for marital violence. Altogether, women and men discussed four broad factors that placed women at risk of marital violence: actions that displeased the husband, husband's alcohol consumption, sex-related demands and infertility. While women's narratives focused on all four of these risk factors, men's narratives focused largely on disobedience to the husband as the main reason for marital violence. Findings relating to each of these perceived risk factors are presented below.

Actions that displease the husband

By far, the most frequently cited risk factor underlying violence, mentioned by both married women and men, was actions that displeased the husband—a 'mistake,' 'disobedience', unfaithfulness. In response to a question on why husbands would perpetrate marital violence, women responded thus:

R: When the wife keeps relations with someone else.

R: When the husband is insulted (humiliated) by his wife (in front of others).

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 13, Block B).

R: When the wife does not listen to (follow the instructions of) her husband and does something wrong.

R: When she talks to a man other than her husband and keeps relations with him, then too her husband can beat her.

(Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 6, Block A).

R: When she (wife) has done something wrong.

R: When she has not cooked (food for her husband) on time.

R: If she is sleeping without having prepared his food when it is time for him to go to work.

(Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 13, Block B).

Many men also identified provocation or disobedience of the wife as a key factor underlying marital violence, suggesting that women invited violence by not behaving appropriately. Indeed, from several of the narratives below, it is clear that men beat their wife for the slightest perceived provocation, for example:

I: Why would a husband commit an act of violence on his wife?

R: If the wife makes a mistake, the husband beats her.

R: If the wife does not listen to (disobeys) the husband.

R: For example, when the husband comes home from work and asks the wife to serve food, she tells him to wait (as she is busy with some other work). In such a situation, the husband gets annoyed and beats her.

(Married young men aged 15–24, Village 3, Block A)

R: When the wife does not behave according to her husband's wishes, he gets angry; there is a tiff between them which (escalates and) reaches the point of violence and hitting.

R: In our village, men do not commit violence against their wife but they do so when she does not listen to the husband; this is the main reason for fights (among couples) in our village.

R: In that case, husbands abuse their wife, they slap her. What else can they do?

R: Sometimes women themselves are to blame for the violence (they experience). Women who do not understand the norms (dayatva) of their family,

who neglect their duties, who do not behave nicely with their husband, who create problems for their father- and mother-in-law and/or are unfaithful;— such women get beaten. They themselves are to blame for the violence they suffer.

R: There are also some women who want to keep their entire family under their control (nivantran), who want the family's 'satta' (power) in their hands alone. They want everyone to obey them unquestioningly. Violence is committed against such women as well.

R: Overall, women themselves, at some point, are responsible for the violence committed against them.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

I: Why would the husband be violent with his wife?

R: When the husband comes home from work and asks for a glass of water and his wife does not get it promptly, he starts hitting her.

R: If the wife keeps (physical) relations with another person, her husband hits her.

R: If the husband gives his wife some money and she spends it without telling him, he hits and abuses her.

R: If the wife hits her children in anger, the husband too gets angry as to why she is doing so and hits her.

R: If the wife does not behave nicely with the (marital) family members, the husband hits her.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Alcohol misuse

Women were far more likely than men to link alcohol misuse among husbands with marital violence. In as many as six of eight FGDs with the married, women linked violence with alcohol misuse. They described their experiences thus:

R: When they come home drunk, they do it (beat their wife) a lot.

R: They come home drunk and do so.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: Because they come home drunk, they beat their wife.

R: He comes home drunk, abuses his wife, beats her and does not understand his family (responsibilities).

R: No, he is always drunk and beats his wife when he gets home.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

Married men, in contrast, in just two of eight FGDs, suggested that men's alcohol consumption practices underlie their violence towards their wife.

I: Why does a husband torture his wife?

R: In our village, most of the people are uneducated; they beat their wives when they consume alcohol.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: When the husband comes home drunk and knocks at the door, and his wife does not open it because he is drunk, then he beats her up.

R: Suppose the husband earns Rs. 200 and on his way home, he spends it on gambling or alcohol. On reaching home, when his wife asks him for money (to run the house), he gets annoyed and beats her up.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Sex-related demands

Sex-related demands were described as a reason for marital violence by married women in three FGDs; not a single married man, in contrast, reported so. Women linked physical violence with women's refusal to have sex, suggesting that if they denied sex to their husband, the husband would perpetrate violence against his wife as the following narratives indicate:

R: If we refuse to have physical relations with them (our husband), they beat us.

R: Even if she is pregnant, he asks her to have relations with him.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: They (husbands) make forceful sexual relations.

R: As one's age increases, one does not feel like having sex frequently, but our husbands do it forcefully.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

Infertility

In two FGDs, women suggested that some women's inability to become pregnant was a risk factor for physical violence, and again, men's narratives did not so suggest. Married women described their situation thus:

R: They (husbands) beat women who are not able to give birth to a child.

R: If they (wives) do not have (bear) children, they (husbands) get married again quietly.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: When the woman is unable to bear children, it becomes another reason for violence.

R: When the woman is not able to bear children, her husband marries another woman.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

B. Sexual violence within marriage

In the FGDs with married women and men, we also probed sexual violence within marriage in two ways: we sought participants' perceptions of the prevalence and pattern of sexual violence in the study settings at the time of the discussion, and at first sex within marriage, that is, on the wedding night. As in the case of physical violence, huge gender disparities were evident in responses to questions relating to sexual violence within marriage, with women far more likely to acknowledge the pervasiveness of sexual violence than men.

Sexual violence: The current situation

In response to a question on how common is it in the study settings for a husband to force sex on his wife, married women suggested that sexual violence within marriage was a common occurrence, substantiating the findings of the short survey. Indeed, they suggested that more than one-half of married women may experience such violence, as follows:

R: It (sexual violence) is very common.

R: It happens sometimes.

I: How many people out of 10 do it?

R: Five people out of 10.

R: Five people.

R: Yes, five people.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: It (sexual violence) happens sometimes.

R: When the husband is drunk, it (sexual violence) happens.

I: Out of 10, how many husbands do that?

R: Out of 10, three to four husbands do that.

R: Out of 10, five men do that. (Several responses)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

Women also perceived that sexual violence took place frequently in the study settings, with women in most FGDs arguing that forced sex took place at least 10–15 times a month. Some suggested that forced sex took place when the husband had consumed alcohol; others suggested that the price women paid for refusing their husband's sexual advances was physical violence as well as forced sex. For example:

I: How common is it in your village for a husband to forcefully make sexual relations with his wife?

R: Out of 30 days, it (forced sex) happens once or twice.

R: It (forced sex) happens on 15 days in a month.

R: It (forced sex) happens on 10–15 days in a month (Mixed responses)

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: They even have sexual relations when the woman is menstruating.

R: It (forced sex) happens a lot here.

R: Mostly, it (sex) happens forcefully. It is very rare that it is done with the consent of both. (Laughs)

R: If we deny doing so (sex), they beat us. So, if he asks us to sleep with him daily, we have to do so. (Laughs)

R: If he comes home drunk, then it (forced sex) happens.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: It (forced sex) happens at least four to five times (in a month).

R: (Forced sex takes place) when they (husbands) are drunk and wish to have sex.

R: They do it forcefully three to four days out of 10 days.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: It (forced sex) happens five to six days (in a month). (In chorus)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: Many husbands do that (forced sex) once a week and many of them do it every two to four days.

R: It happens two to three times in 10 days. (In chorus)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

In contrast, married men perceived that sexual violence within marriage is relatively rare. For example, in response to the question on how common sexual violence perpetrated by men against their wife is, in all eight FGDs, men reported that it happens in 'two percent' or fewer cases. Responses included the following:

R: No, it (sexual violence within marriage) happens rarely.

R: Only one percent of husbands make forceful sexual relations.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: This does not happen in our village at all. Sex does not happen with force between husband and wife.

R: Sex happens when both want it; if the wife refuses, then the husband does not have sex because it is a long night and some time or the other, the wife feels like having sex; so, then it happens with the consent of both.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: It (forced sex) is not very common in this village; it happens rarely.

R: It (forced sex) happens in about two percent of cases.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

The responses of married men on the frequency of sexual violence were more mixed than those of married women, reflecting a range of perceptions; while some reported that it took place rarely, others said that it took place sometimes. For example:

R: It (sexual violence) happens four to five times in a month.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: It (sexual violence) happens sometimes; not always.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: It (sexual violence) is very rare. (In chorus)

R: It (sexual violence) happens once or twice in two to three months.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Sexual violence: First sex in marriage

As in the discussion of the current situation with regard to sexual violence within marriage, gender disparities were also evident with regard to the forced nature of sexual initiation within marriage. In response to a question about whether husbands forced their wife to have sex on their wedding night, married women in all eight FGDs responded that it is common, as follows:

R: Yes, it (forced sex on wedding night) happens. (Mixed responses)

R: It happens with all of them.

R: It happens on the first night.

R: It does not happen with all women.

R: Out of 10 women, it (forced sex) happens with six.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: It (forced sex on the wedding night) happens in the whole village (in all households).

R: It happens often.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: It happens.

R: That night they do it (have sex) more forcefully.

R: It (forced sex on the wedding night) happens, mostly.

R: If she does not have physical relations that night, her husband will send her back home.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

Married men's responses were more varied. In just three FGDs, men reported that it was common for a husband to force his wife to have sex on their wedding night. For example:

R: It (forced sex on the wedding night) happens in 100 percent of the cases.

R: About 75 percent of people (men) make forceful sexual relations on the night of their marriage.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: It (forced sex on the wedding night) happens in about 75 percent of the cases.

R: It should happen as it is the right of the husband.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

However, in the majority of FGDs (five of eight FGDs) men argued that forced sex does not take place on the wedding night. In a few FGDs, men argued that because men give their brides gifts on the wedding night, sex takes place consensually. For example:

R: Nobody has forced sex on the first night. It happens only with the agreement of both.

R: On the first night, both the boy and girl are strangers to each other because they have met for the first time that day. So, the boy fears that on his doing this (using force), she will feel bad. That is why he does not use force; physical relations take place with the consent of both.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: On the first night, there is no forced sex with the wife. It happens with the consent of both because that night, the husband gives the wife a gift and then they have sex.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: No, nothing is done forcefully that night. All girls are ready for this (sex); they too want to celebrate their golden night.

R: On the first night of marriage, relations are not made forcefully; everything happens with the wish of both the newlyweds.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

C. Emotional violence

In the course of FGDs with married women and men, we also focused on emotional violence; study participants discussed, for example, how common it was in their community for husbands to insult or humiliate their wife, call her names, or verbally abuse her. As in the short survey, FGD findings were fairly unanimous that emotional violence is widespread, although discussions among men revealed a more mixed response than did those among women. For example, women perceived the following:

What about husbands insulting or humiliating their wife, calling them names, or verbally abusing them; how commonly does this happen in your community?

R: It (emotional violence) happens with 90 percent of them (women). (Mixed responses)

R: Out of 10 women, it happens with nine.

R: If someone visits his house, the husband abuses his wife (in front of them).

R: They (husbands) start scolding their wife in front of other people, saying that she does not take care of him.

R: For example, they (husbands) call their wife by the name of the village she belongs to.

I: Can you give me some examples; how do they abuse them?

R: They (husbands) call them very bad names; they use abusive words about her mother.

R: They say, 'Randi (prostitute), come here'.

R: They call them by abusive names.

R: They call them 'm....c...', 'b....c...' (swear words) etc. This is also a kind of violence.

R: Yes. It (verbal abuse) happens often.

R: Out of 10 women, it happens with eight or nine. (Mixed responses)

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: It (verbal abuse) happens a lot. (Mixed responses)

R: It happens with four out of 10 women.

R: They (husbands) call them (their wife) by very bad names like 'randi', 'bhosdi wali', 'khachhar', 'm....c...' etc. They abuse them often by using these names. (Mixed responses)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

Among men, perceptions varied. In response to a question about how common it was in the study settings for a husband to insult his wife, call her names or abuse her verbally, while some reported that emotional abuse is common, others reported that it is rare. For example:

R: It (verbal abuse) happens a lot.

R: It happens in 80 families out of 100.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: About two to four percent of people abuse their wives (verbally).

R: Yes, there are only these percentages (two to four) of people who do such things (verbal abuse). It is not very common.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: No, this (verbal abuse) does not happen in our village.

R: They (husbands) do (abuse their wife verbally); it happens most of the time.

R: They hit (their wife) and it (usually) begins with verbal abuse.

R: Approximately 80 percent of husbands do this (abuse verbally).

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

D. Violence during pregnancy

In the course of FGDs with married women and men, we also inquired about the prevalence of violence during pregnancy and the reasons for such violence. Discussions focused largely on physical violence, although sexual and emotional violence were also mentioned. Again, gender disparities were evident, with women far more likely to acknowledge the prevalence of violence during pregnancy than men.

Prevalence of violence during pregnancy

In all the FGDs with married women, participants agreed that the practice was common; women affirmed that between one-half and all pregnant women in their settings had experienced violence and that it did not decline during their pregnancy. Responses across all eight FGDs were similar:

I: What do you think, does this violence happen more with a woman who is pregnant or who is not pregnant?

R: It is the same for both.

I: How common is it in your village to do violence on the pregnant women?

R: It (violence) happens to everyone.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

I: In your village, how commonly does a pregnant woman face the violence done by her husband?

R: It (violence) happens.

R: Out of 10 women, it (violence) happens with five.

R: It (violence) happens with half of all women.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

Married men, in contrast, believed that marital violence during pregnancy was rare, and that men, rather than committing violence against their wife during pregnancy, supported her in housework and so on, as follows:

R: It (violence during pregnancy) has never happened in our village. (In chorus)

R: Yes, some men also torture (their wife) like this (during pregnancy).

R: Yes, five out of 100 husbands do it.

R: Two percent of husbands must be doing so.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: At that time (during pregnancy), we husbands help her; if she is unable to prepare food, we tell our sister or mother to prepare it.

R: If a pregnant woman is not able to prepare food, then the husband prepares it; at that time (during pregnancy) they (husbands) are not violent with her (wife) because they know that she is not in a condition to do much work.

R: We (husbands) let her (wife) rest because she is in a condition in which she requires rest. Why then would the husband use violence on her? This (violence) does not happen.

R: In our village, violence is not committed against a pregnant wife by her husband.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Men, and a few women, acknowledged that sexual violence took place when the wife was pregnant, with men forcing sex on an unwilling wife, for example:

R: They have physical relations with her even when she is pregnant.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: Yes. There are many husbands who forcefully have physical relations with their (pregnant) wife.

R: Yes. It may so happen that the husband wishes to have physical relations (when his wife is pregnant) but the wife refuses. In that case, he beats her and has forced physical relations with her.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: The husband goes out to work and the wife does all the household work. After coming back from work, if he wants to have physical relations with his wife, he does it forcefully without even considering how many months pregnant his wife is and whether it is bad for her health or not.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Reasons for marital violence during pregnancy

The leading reason for violence committed against the wife during pregnancy, expressed by both married women and men, and similar to reasons expressed earlier for physical violence in general, was women's perceived disobedience. The most commonly expressed reasons were: if she is unable to provide her husband food when he wants it, if she does not attend to the family farm or if she is found to be resting instead of working. Women, however, did suggest, in addition, that husbands would commit violence for petty reasons or would withhold food from his wife. For example:

For what reasons do men commit violence against their wife when they are pregnant?

R: They (husbands) beat them (wives) if they are not able to serve him food on time.

R: They abuse their wife if she takes rest.

R: (The husband abuses her) if she is unable to do work.

R: They say that she is not the only woman to deliver a child (experience a pregnancy).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

R: A pregnant woman is not able to do hard work, but they (husbands) expect her to work in the field.

R: Their husbands beat them (women).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: If the wife is pregnant and is not able to do too much work or is late in doing something, then her husband is violent with her.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: The woman is also made to do household work even if she is ill.

R: If the food has not been cooked on time, then too they (husbands) beat their wife.

R: After the eighth month of pregnancy, husbands allow them (their wife) to take rest and do not ask them to do much work.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Women, but not men, linked violence in pregnancy with forcing women to undergo ultrasound and aborting a female foetus. This issue was raised in three FGDs, as follows:

For what reasons do men commit violence against their wife when they are pregnant?

R: Many of them (husbands) force their wife to get the child aborted.

R: They (husbands) do not want a girl child to be born.

R: If the couple already has two girls, they (husbands) try to avoid the birth of another girl. In order to do so, they get an ultrasound done and (if the foetus is female) force the woman to undergo an abortion. If she refuses to do so, it becomes a reason for beating and violence.

R: If a girl child is born, it too becomes the reason for a fight (violence).

R: The man does not do any wrong (share or take the blame) ever; he always blames the wife.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

E. Perceptions about the intensity of marital violence over the marital life cycle

In the FGDs, we also probed whether marital violence increased, decreased or remained unchanged over time, and the reasons for this perception. In the majority of FGDs with married women and men, participants reported that violence increased over time within marriage. A number of reasons were cited.

Women reported that once women had children, they had few options to leave their husband, thereby giving men greater freedom to commit violence. Others suggested that with greater familiarity, women were more likely to become disobedient and therefore prone to violence. Still others attributed increased violence to increased financial stress arising from a growing family. A few suggested that violence increased because husbands became more likely to consume alcohol, and were more demanding in relation to sex. For example:

I: Does the violence done on women by men increase, reduce or remain the same after a few years of their marriage?

R: It generally increases. (In chorus)

I: What are the reasons for violence on women to increase?

R: Gradually, the husband realises that she (his wife) has to live with him only; so, even if he commits violence against her, she cannot go anywhere.

R: Husbands think that they can do anything to their wife—that even if he beats her or commits violence against her, she cannot go anywhere.

R: If he has children (violence increases due to the financial stress of a big family).

R: If he (husband) has illicit relations with another woman, he does not feel like listening to (communicating with) his wife; he gets irritated with her, and commits violence.

R: After marriage, when children are born and the household expenditure increases (it leads to arguments and violence).

R: Household expenditure increases (with a growing family, leading to financial problems and hence, violence).

R: If they (wives) ask them (husbands) to bring something, they get annoyed (and this ends in violence).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

I: Does the violence done on women by men increase, reduce or remain the same after a few years of their marriage?

R: It (marital violence) increases. (In chorus)

R: Yes; it increases.

R: Everything is fine for one to two years (In chorus).

R: It increases after two to three years.

R: Sometimes, it increases within six months of marriage.

R: (Violence increases) if she (the wife) does not do her work properly.

R: (Marital violence increases) if the husband does not do any work (he becomes violent when pressurised to earn).

R: (Marital violence increases) if the husband starts drinking.

R: Marital violence increases because of financial problems (of an expanding family). (Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 14, Block B)

R: It (marital violence) increases. (In chorus)

I: What are the other reasons for the increase of this violence?

R: As she (the wife) grows older, she does not feel like having sex (her lack of desire angers him and leads to violence).

R: Violence (marital) increases because of sexual relations (refusal or suspicion of extra-marital sex).

R: The husband feels that his wife no longer obeys him; so, he asks her to leave the house.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

Men's reasons for perceiving that violence increased over the course of married life focused largely on financial problems and their inability to meet the needs of their family. A few did also suggest that violence increased because, with time, women begin to show disrespect for their husband and his family. For example, in response to a question about

whether marital violence increases, decreases or remains the same after a few years of marriage, married men responded thus:

R: Violence against women increases (after some years of marriage). (In chorus)

I: Why does it increase?

R: Because they (the husband and wife) keep on arguing and fighting with each other. The wife knows her husband very well and tries to argue with him.

R: After marriage, the husband's responsibilities increase; he has children and has to earn. If he is not able to fulfil the needs of his wife and children, then it leads to tension among them (husband and wife).

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: It (marital violence) increases because if, after a few years of marriage, the husband becomes unemployed, then because of financial problems there are fights every day and the wife gets beaten.

R: When the wife is new, all is fine and both share love but after one or two children are born and household spending increases, clashes begin to take place between them, leading to violence against the wife.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: There is love between them (the husband and wife) when the marriage is new and both keep good tuning (live in harmony); but, as time goes by, they begin to have tiffs and violence (against the wife) occurs and gradually increases.

R: After a few years of marriage when the couple has two to four children and the husband is not able to fulfil their needs, fights occur every day when the wife says, 'I want this; I want that' (necessities for the household/children).

R: Here, men are not able to earn enough to fulfil the necessities of their family. (Hence, tension and violence increases).

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Although the consensus in every FGD was that marital violence increases with marital duration, in some FGDs, a few participants did suggest that violence may also decline, largely because emotional bonds and mutual understanding strengthen over time, as the following narratives suggest:

R: Violence (marital) against women is more during the initial days of marriage; after a few years it reduces.

R: During the initial days of her marriage, the woman is not able to understand her (husband's) family;

gradually, she adjusts to it and violence (marital) against her decreases.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: When the woman bears his children, they (husbands) become emotional and therefore, it (violence) may reduce too.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: As time passes, the husband's relationship with his wife gets better adjusted and their understanding of each other increases. Gradually, as the children grow up, he realises that if he abuses or beats her in front of their growing children, it will have a negative impact on them. That is why it (violence) decreases slowly over time.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

F. Summary

This chapter has provided evidence that marital violence against women—physical, sexual and emotional—was widespread in the study settings, and among women who experience such violence, its occurrence was frequent. Although both married women and men agreed that marital violence took place, men were far less likely to report that it occurred in large numbers of households in the study settings or that it took place frequently. Indeed, wide gender disparities were evident in descriptions of levels and patterns of violence.

Three forms of marital violence were discussed, namely, physical, sexual and emotional, as well as physical violence occurring during pregnancy. As far as physical violence is concerned, women agreed that the large majority of women experienced violence perpetrated by their husband and that such violence took place frequently. Men agreed that violence took place but argued that it took place relatively infrequently. Perceived risk factors for physical violence also differed among women and men. While both agreed that women's failure to obey their husband's instructions were a key reason for violence, women also noted that men's alcohol consumption, sex-related demands, and women's inability to bear children were also common factors precipitating marital violence. Sexual violence was also considered widespread by women; indeed, women in a few FGDs suggested that all women in their settings had experienced sexual violence, that it took place frequently, and that forced sex on the wedding night was almost universal. Again, men were less likely to acknowledge forced sex, with those in most FGDs arguing that it rarely happened and that sexual initiation within marriage was always consensual. Emotional violence, in women's reports, was widespread, and comprised, to a large extent, verbal abuse with sexual implications and public humiliation. Men's responses were more mixed, with some groups

suggesting that it was pervasive and others suggesting that it was rare. Finally, a similar picture emerged with regard to violence during pregnancy: women argued that it took place frequently, that is, as frequently as it did when the woman was not pregnant. They attributed violence during pregnancy to the same factors as they attributed violence in other situations—displeasing the husband, the husband’s alcohol misuse, and the husband’s sexual demands on women—but added one more namely, forcing women to undergo an ultrasound and abort a female foetus and/or beating women who give birth to a daughter. In contrast, once again, men believed that violence during pregnancy was rare, and that, rather than committing violence against their wife, men helped her with housework and were understanding about her inability to work during pregnancy.

Discussions also sought women’s and men’s views on whether marital violence increased, declined or remained

unchanged with marital duration. The majority of both married women and men believed that it increased with time. Gender differences were apparent, however, in perceived reasons for this increase. Women maintained that once women have children, they have few options to leave their husband, thereby giving men more freedom to commit violence against them. They also suggested that with time, women were more likely to disobey their husband, husbands were more likely to misuse alcohol, financial stress increased with larger families and men’s demands for sex increased, and attributed the increase in violence to all of these changes in a married couple’s life as reasons for increased marital violence. Men reported fewer reasons for this increase, focusing largely on financial stress and women’s growing disobedience to their husband. We note that some study participants, however, maintained that marital violence declined over time, as couples became better acquainted with each other or recognised the harm that witnessing parental violence would do to their children.

CHAPTER 6

EXPERIENCE, PERPETRATION AND NATURE OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY MARITAL FAMILY MEMBERS: PERSPECTIVES OF THE MARRIED

In addition to examining study respondents' perceptions of the nature of violence within marital relationships, the FGDs also explored the views of married women and men about the extent, frequency and nature of violence perpetrated by other members of the marital family towards a married woman, and the reasons for such violence. In the course of the FGDs, discussions focused on the perceived pervasiveness of violence by marital family members, the main perpetrators of such violence, the frequency of non-marital violence, the key reasons underlying such violence and whether such violence increased or decreased over the course of the marital lifecycle. Also probed were perceptions of the extent of sexual violence perpetrated by members of the marital family and violence perpetrated by marital family members during pregnancy. This chapter summarises the findings from these FGDs.

A. Physical and emotional violence perpetrated by marital family members

Pervasiveness and frequency of violence perpetrated against women

While both men and women in all the FGDs with the married acknowledged the existence of family violence, women were more likely to perceive it as being common than men. In response to a question on how common it was for other members of the marital family, such as the father-, mother-, brother- or sister-in-law to perpetrate violence against women, the conclusion in every single FGD with women was that the practice was very common. Typically, the focus was on physical and emotional violence. For example:

How common is it for other family members to commit violence against a woman, among women like you?

R: People (marital family members) do it (violence). (Mixed responses)

R: It (violence committed by marital family members) happens a lot. (Mixed responses)

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 7, Block A)

R: It (violence committed by marital family members) is a common thing.

R: It happens in almost every house.

(Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 7, Block A)

In contrast, men were far less likely to acknowledge that the practice was common. In five of the eight FGDs with men, the consensus among participants was that marital family members rarely perpetrated violence against women. For example:

R: It (violence committed by marital family members) is very rare.

R: It happens only among one to two percent of women.

(Married young men aged 15–24, Village 3, Block A)

R: It (violence committed by marital family members) happens among two to four percent of women in our village.

R: Yes; they also torture women but it is very rare.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 2, Block A)

R: Mostly, this (violence committed by marital family members) does not happen in our village; it happens only in some homes.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 12, Block B)

Differences were not as apparent in women's and men's responses regarding the frequency with which violence was perpetrated by marital family members. Women typically reported that it took place frequently, at least weekly, while men in most FGDs (except one) reported that it occurred two to three times a month. For example:

R: It (violence committed by marital family members) happens every 5–10 days.

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 14, Block B)

I: Usually, how many times do they do violence on the woman?

R: Out of 10 days, it happens on eight days.

R: *Out of 10 days, it happens on eight days.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *Those (marital family members) who do this (violence), do it most of the time.*

R: *This happens two to four times in a month.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Leading perpetrators of family violence against women

There was considerable agreement between married women and men regarding the perpetrators of family violence. By and large, in most FGDs, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law were identified as the main perpetrators of violence. Women in some FGDs also mentioned the father-in-law as a key perpetrator of violence but only in one FGD with men, was the brother-in-law described as a key perpetrator. For example:

I: *Generally, who does this kind of violence?*

R: *Mother-in-law and sister-in-law.*

R: *Mother-in-law and sister-in-law.*

R: *Mother-in-law and sisters-in-law.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *All of them do it (violence).*

R: *Sister-in-law (gotni) does it more.*

R: *Women generally do it against other women.*

R: *The father-in-law and mother-in-law, generally.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

I: *Mostly, who tortures her more?*

R: *Usually, the sister-in-law, father-in-law and mother-in-law and brother-in-law torture her more. Almost all the family members do it.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

I: *Mostly, who does this kind of violence or unpleasantness?*

R: *Mostly, the father-in-law and mother-in-law do this kind of violence.*

R: *Brothers-in-law commit less violence.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Ways in which marital family members perpetrated violence against women

Focus group discussions with married women and men also probed the specific forms of violence committed by marital

family members. Most commonly reported were emotional and physical violence; gender differences were not observed. For example, in terms of emotional violence, participants reported that family members insulted and taunted women, finding fault with their work, withholding food from them, making them work without rest, and complaining to their husband about their bad behaviour. In terms of physical violence, they reported that family members hit and beat women, and some even discussed burning, poisoning and killing them. A number of FGDs with both married women and men also referred to indirect violence, that is, the in-laws complaining to the husband who then perpetrated violence against his wife. Thus, even though this was a case of the husband beating the wife, most respondents perceived it as a form of in-law violence. For example, in response to a question on the forms of violence perpetrated on women by marital family members, FGD participants responded thus:

R: *They (marital family members) hit (the daughter-in-law).*

R: *They insult (the daughter-in-law). They find mistakes in all her work.*

R: *They (marital family members) also abuse them (daughters-in-law).*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: *They (marital family members) taunt them (daughters-in-law). (Several responses)*

R: *They complain about the food they (daughters-in-law) cook.*

R: *They say that she (daughter-in-law) has not cooked properly.*

R: *They (marital family members) beat her (daughter-in-law).*

R: *They complain to her (daughter-in-law's) husband and get her beaten up.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

R: *She (mother-in-law) abuses her daughter-in-law.*

R: *She tells her daughter-in-law that she should do some work and should not sit idle like a queen.*

R: *She does not give her daughter-in-law proper food. (Mixed responses)*

R: *They (marital family members) beat them (daughters-in-law).*

R: *They also burn them (daughters-in-law) for (bringing a limited) dowry.*

R: *They kill her (daughter-in-law) by poisoning, or abandon her and then get their son remarried.*

R: *They keep food items away from the daughters-in-law.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

- R: *They (marital family members) say that she (daughter-in-law) does not cook food properly.*
- R: *(Marital family members say that) she does not run the house properly.*
- R: *(They say that) she eats her own food (has her meal) without asking permission from other family members.*
- R: *(They say that) she thinks only about having her own food and does not bother about anyone else.*
- R: *(They say that) she keeps sleeping. They say all such things to the daughter-in-law.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

- R: *No matter how well she (daughter-in-law) cooks, they complain about it.*
- R: *They (mothers-in-law) tell their sons to leave their wife.*
- R: *She (mother-in-law) fills the ears of (complains to) her son (about his wife).*
- R: *She (mother-in-law) complains to her son and then he starts beating his wife.*
- R: *Even if the girl is not at fault, she is beaten up.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

- R: *Sometimes, they (marital family members) beat her (daughter-in-law) very badly and throw her out of the house, and sometimes she is physically tortured (like pulling her hair etc.).*
- R: *They ask her (daughter-in-law) to work throughout the day and never let her rest.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

Perceived factors underlying perpetration of violence against women by family members

Focus group discussions with married women and men revealed a range of reasons for the perpetration of violence by family members. These reasons can be clubbed according to several themes: financial issues, household chores, lack of obedience towards in-laws, and insecurity among in-laws about deepening bonds between husband and wife. The financial issues mentioned by study participants related to the use of income or money earned by the son; both men and women agreed that the in-laws did not want their son to give any money to his wife, and they committed violence against her if she received any money from her husband. Dowry was also mentioned as a reason for violence in a few FGDs. For example:

I: *What are the reasons for such violence?*

R: *In villages, mostly, it is the man who earns. (He) brings money home and gives it to his parents and not to his wife. They (in-laws) do not want him to listen to his wife but to do as they say.*

R: *Generally, these (financial) are the issues (which lead to violence). (Mixed responses)*

R: *If their son is earning, he should not give it (his wages) to her (his wife).*

R: *They beat her (daughter-in-law) because of this (husband giving his wages to his wife).*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: *If they ask the daughter-in-law to get something for the house (from her parents) and she refuses (it results in violence).*

R: *All this happens because of shortage of money.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: *If the daughter-in-law brings a limited dowry at the time of her wedding, she will have to suffer such violence.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Violence was also reported to be perpetrated by marital family members if the daughters-in-law did not perform their household duties to the satisfaction of the family members; for example, if food was not cooked properly or promptly, if the daughter-in-law was unwilling to perform all the tasks assigned to her, or if she did not complete these tasks on time. For example:

I: *What are the reasons for behaving violently or unpleasantly like this?*

R: *(The reasons are) that she (daughter-in-law) does not do the housework, does not cook food on time, the food is not prepared nicely and/or she does not look after her children properly.*

R: *In our village, after finishing their housework, women mostly go to work in the fields because most people are farmers. If the woman does not do so, her father-in-law and mother-in-law will say, 'Why are you sitting at home after finishing the housework? Go, work in the fields!'*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

R: *If she does not do her housework or does not do it on time, then too she is taunted.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: *If the woman is late in completing some housework, her mother-in-law screams at her.*

R: *Sometimes, if the woman does not cook the food well, the family members insult her.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

A commonly cited reason for marital family-perpetrated violence against daughters-in-law included the daughter-in-law's perceived disobedience, described to include her visiting her parents' home without taking permission from her in-laws, or not using proper language or showing appropriate respect while talking to her in-laws etc. Reasons cited by participants included the following:

R: If the mother-in-law does not like her language (it is not polite/respectful). (In chorus)

R: If the mother-in-law feels that her daughter-in-law is not taking (good) care of her. (Mixed responses)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: If she (daughter-in-law) does not respect the elders of the house or does not obey them, then too all this (violence) happens.

R: If the daughter-in-law goes to her parent's house without asking (taking her in-laws' permission), then too she is violated.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: When the father- or mother-in-law are not given food on time, when she does not obey them and does not look after them properly etc. (she suffers violence).

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

Finally, concerns among in-laws about the development of deeper bonds between husband and wife were also cited, although rarely. For example:

R: They (in-laws) do all this (violence) so that the son does not listen to his wife and does only whatever they say.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

B. Sexual violence perpetrated by marital family members

In contrast with emotional and physical violence, married FGD participants did not spontaneously mention sexual violence perpetrated by marital family members, and in response to a specific probe about its prevalence, men were far less likely than women to acknowledge that members of the marital family perpetrated sexual violence against the daughter-in-law.

Women's responses to a specific probe about how common it was in their village for other family members to force sex on a woman suggested—in seven of eight FGDs—that such violence did indeed happen, but that it was not common, as the following narratives indicate:

R: It (forced sex perpetrated by marital family members) happens. (Mixed responses)

R: It does not happen often.

R: It rarely happens.

R: It happens; two to three people out of 10 (perpetrate such violence).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: It (forced sex perpetrated by marital family members) happens.

R: It happens.

R: They do so.

R: Five to six people out of 10 do so.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

Men, in contrast, were less likely to so acknowledge. Of the eight FGDs conducted with married men, participants in six FGDs affirmed that family members in their settings never perpetrated sexual violence against women in their family, or suggested that where extra-marital relations with a family member took place, it was always consensual or at the discretion of the woman. For example, in four FGDs, men maintained that such violence never took place:

I: How common is it in your village for the other people of the family to make forced sexual relations with a woman?

R: Such an incident has never happened in our village.

(Married young men 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: No, this does not happen. So far, this has not happened in our village.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: If the daughter-in-law is like that (willing to engage in extra-marital relations), then why won't it happen? If she only wants to keep relations with outsiders or family members other than her husband, then why won't all this happen? It (consensual sexual relations with a family member) happens here as well.

R: No, between them it does not happen with force; it happens with love. If she does it with her brothers-in-law and father-in-law with her own consent, it is not called force. It will happen with her agreement, no? (Respondents talking among themselves).

R: Some women cross all boundaries (of morality) and keep relations of this sort (extra-marital).

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Only in two FGDs did men acknowledge that forceful sexual relations occurred between a woman and her in-laws. Like women, men in these FGDs agreed that such encounters took place rarely; they responded as follows:

I: How common is it in your village for other people of the family to make forceful sexual relations with a woman?

R: Yes, this also happens.

R: It is very rare.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: Yes; this happens in our village. The brother-in-law of the woman forcefully has sexual relations with her. In our village, there are one to two percent such cases.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

Both men and women held similar views about the perpetrators—brothers-in-law and, to a lesser extent, fathers-in-law—were seen as common perpetrators of such violence.

I: Mostly, which member of the family uses this force with women?

R: Nothing is certain; any member can do it.

R: Mostly, the brother-in-law does it. (In chorus)

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: Brothers-in-law or father-in-law.

R: Brothers-in-law.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

C. Marital family violence during pregnancy

In the course of FGDs with married participants, we also inquired about violence perpetrated by marital family members on women while they were pregnant. Once again, gender differences were evident, with women far more likely than men to agree that violence was perpetrated against women during pregnancy. Indeed, in all the FGDs, women agreed that violence continued to be perpetrated against women during pregnancy, and suggested that the reasons mirrored those precipitating violence, in general; for example:

I: In your village, how common is it that women face violence by the other family members when she is pregnant?

R: Yes, it happens. (Mixed responses)

R: They (marital family members) do it (violence).

R: (It happens) if they (daughters-in-law) do not cook food for them (family members).

R: (It happens) if she (daughter-in-law) is not able to do certain work; then, her in-laws abuse her.

R: The mothers-in-law say that when they were pregnant they used to do all the work, unlike their daughters-in-law.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

In contrast, the consensus among men was that violence is not perpetrated by other family members against women during pregnancy. Indeed, in just two FGDs did men admit that any violence took place during pregnancy, and even here, only emotional violence was mentioned. The main reason men cited for the lack of violence during pregnancy was that during pregnancy, the in-laws took special care of the woman; for example:

I: Does violence happen on a pregnant woman by other members of the family apart from her husband?

R: No, it does not happen by other members of the family.

R: Family members actually look after her quite well. They help her because a new member of the family will be born from her womb. Family members take care of her every requirement and look after her with much love.

R: In our village, pregnant women do not experience any form of violence from their family members.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: No one from the family commits violence against them. They want the child to be healthy.

R: Family members do not commit violence against the pregnant woman.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

R: Yes, there are some families who commit violence against their daughters-in-law during this time (during pregnancy). They tell her to work and taunt her if she takes too much rest.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

D. Perceptions about the intensity of marital family violence according to age and over the marital life cycle

In the FGDs, we also probed the married participants for their perceptions of whether violence perpetrated against women by other members of the marital family increased, decreased or remained the same over time, and the reasons for this perception. Gender differences were apparent, with women in seven of eight FGDs reporting that violence increased over time in marriage, and men in most FGDs reporting diverging views. For example, in response to a question probing whether violence committed by family members was more likely to be perpetrated against women who had recently been married or those who had been married for some time, or showed no change over time; responses were as follows:

R: It (marital family violence) rarely happens with women who have been married recently.

R: As they are new (newly married), they work according to (the wishes of) the family members.

R: Women who have been married for some time are more likely to face such violence.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: This (marital family violence) happens with women who have been married for some years. (Mixed responses)

R: It (marital family violence) happens more often in the case of women who have children.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: It (marital family violence) increases (after some years of marriage). (In chorus)

R: It increases after one or two years of marriage.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

Men's perceptions were more mixed. In four of eight FGDs, men reported that violence committed by marital family members declined over time; in the remaining four, both views were expressed; for example:

R: Marital family violence reduces after a few years of marriage.

R: It (marital family violence) rarely happens with women who are recently married.

R: As they (women) are newly married, they work according to (the wishes of) the family members.

R: Women who have been married for some time face more (marital family) violence.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: Those who have been married for some years (experience more marital family violence).

R: Those who have had one or two children (experience more marital family violence).

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: Mostly, it (marital family violence) happens with those who have been married for some years. It does not happen with women who are newlywed.

R: Everybody (in the marital family) likes the newlywed daughter-in-law and everyone treats her with a lot of affection; but, as time goes by and the family members get to know the good and the bad things about her, then violence takes place against her.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: It (marital family violence) increases and also decreases.

R: No, it keeps increasing. (1–2 people together)

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: It (marital family violence) mostly happens with women who are recently married. (In chorus)

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

R: It (marital family violence) reduces as compared to before (when newly married).

R: After a few years of marriage, the torture does not happen.

R: Whatever happens is with newly-married women only.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

Married participants' perceptions of factors underlying the increase or decrease over time in violence perpetrated by marital family members mirrored the responses they provided for changes in the incidence of violence perpetrated by the husband, and reported in Chapter 5. Specifically, participants recognised that once women had children, they had few options to leave their husband, thereby giving family members greater freedom to commit violence. Others suggested that financial stress increased with growing families and this resulted in increased violence perpetrated against women by marital family members. Still others suggested that with greater familiarity, women were more likely to reveal their negative traits and therefore become more prone to violence. Finally, study participants suggested that if husband-wife bonds became close and the husband shared his wages with his wife rather than his parents, family members tended to perpetrate violence against the wife, fearing that she was causing a rift in the family. For example:

Why do you think violence against women by marital family members increases the longer a woman has been married?

R: Because she has been with them for three to four years. They will not do it with a new woman in their house.

R: They (marital family members) think that a new daughter-in-law will go back to her natal home if they commit violence against her; that she will not live with their son. What can an older daughter-in-law do who already has children?

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: They (marital family members) think: 'Where can she (daughter-in-law) go now (leaving her children)?' (In chorus)

R: They think: Where can she (daughter-in-law) go now that she has children?

R: *(Marital family members know that) even if they beat her (daughter-in-law), she cannot go anywhere.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *Because the family size increases (inability to meet increased living costs creates tension and thereby marital family violence).*

R: *Expenditure increases (as the family grows resulting in financial stress and marital family violence).*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

I: *Why doesn't it happen to those who have been newly married?*

R: *Because everyone likes a newlywed daughter-in-law; the family does not know much about her and does not let her do much work. They do not let her go out too. As time passes, they (family members) get to know her good and bad traits, and when the bad traits begin to appear, fights also start between them and the daughter-in-law.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

I: *What is the reason that this violence increases?*

R: *Perhaps because her (daughter-in-law's) thoughts do not match those of her marital family members.*

R: *If the husband works and gives it (his wages) to his wife and not to the members of his family, they become more hostile towards her and start committing violence against her.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Reasons offered for the decrease in violence perpetrated by family members over time was attributed in a few FGDs with married men to include the greater understanding that develops over time between the daughter-in-law and other family members. For example:

I: *What are the reasons that violence perpetrated by marital family members reduces?*

R: *(Because) gradually, she (daughter-in-law) gels with the marital family.*

R: *When she (daughter-in-law) lives in that (her husband's) house, she starts understanding all the members of his family and they too start understanding her; that is why it (violence) reduces.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: *Because she (daughter-in-law) gets to know everything about the family and what each one is like. Hence, as she gets adjusted, she is able to fulfil everybody's needs.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

E. Summary

This chapter highlights the existence of violence perpetrated by members within the marital family towards a woman, and, as in the case of violence perpetrated by the husband, married FGD participants discussed the prevalence and patterns of physical, sexual and emotional violence, as well as violence that occurred during pregnancy. Here too, as in the case of marital violence, gender differences in responses were apparent in that women were far more likely than men to perceive that family members perpetrated violence against women.

Women FGD participants indicated that the large majority of women experienced physical and emotional violence perpetrated by members of the marital family and that this violence took place frequently. Most women agreed, moreover, that violence continued to take place even during pregnancy. Men were far less likely to agree that family members perpetrated violence against women at any time, and especially during pregnancy. Leading perpetrators of physical and emotional violence were named as mothers-, fathers- and sisters-in-law. Emotional violence took the form of insults and taunts, withholding food from women and forcing them to work without rest, while physical violence ranged from beating and hitting to attempts to murder by burning or poisoning women. Although women and men differed with regard to the prevalence of physical and emotional violence perpetrated against women by family members, they perceived a similar set of factors underlying such violence. Both women and men agreed that violence was committed for four broad reasons: financial issues including both a limited dowry and conflicts over control of men's wages; dissatisfaction with women's performance of their household duties; women's perceived disobedience to or lack of respect for her in-laws; and tensions resulting from the deepening bonds developing between husband and wife. In contrast with physical and emotional violence, FGD participants did not spontaneously mention sexual violence perpetrated by other family members. When probed, women agreed that sexual violence perpetrated by family members against women did take place in the study settings, albeit rarely; they suggested that it was the father- and brother-in-law who were key perpetrators of sexual violence. Men, in contrast, were far more likely to deny that it took place or suggest that such relations were typically consensual.

Discussions also sought women's and men's views on whether violence perpetrated by marital family members

increased or declined with marital duration. Gender differences were apparent: the majority of women believed that it increased with time, whereas men's responses were more mixed, with both views expressed. Gender differences were not apparent, however, in perceived reasons for this increase. They suggested that once women had children, they had few options to leave their husband, thereby giving family members greater confidence about committing violence. A second set of reasons related to financial stress, which was perceived to increase with growing families and result in increased violence perpetrated against women by

family members. A third related to the perception that with time, women were more likely to reveal their negative traits and therefore become more prone to violence. Finally, study participants suggested that if husband-wife bonds became close, family members tended to perpetrate violence against the wife, fearing that she was causing a rift in the family. In contrast, in several FGDs with men, participants suggested a decline over time in violence perpetrated against women by marital family members, and attributed this decline to the greater understanding that develops over time between women and other members of their marital family.

CHAPTER 7

RESPONSES OF WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY THEIR HUSBAND OR OTHER MARITAL FAMILY MEMBERS: PERSPECTIVES OF THE MARRIED

Focus group discussions with married women and men also inquired about the likely responses of women who experience violence—both violence perpetrated by the husband and that perpetrated by other members of the marital family. Specifically, we probed three broad areas with regard to participants' perceptions of women's responses: situations in which women experiencing violence would take action and the actions they would take, obstacles that prevent women from seeking help, and the supportiveness of families (both marital and natal), the community and the authorities from whom they seek help. This chapter presents findings from FGDs on each of these issues.

A. Actions that married women who suffer violence may take

The FGDs explored the situations in which women who experienced violence perpetrated by their husband and other family members, would take action and the kind of action women would likely take.

Actions that may be taken by women experiencing marital violence

Women's typical reaction to what is perceived as 'acceptable' violence committed by their husband was silence and toleration. In many FGDs with women, and just one with men, participants suggested that a woman would typically tolerate the violence in silence for the sake of her own future and that of her children. For example:

What does a woman who suffers physical violence committed by her husband typically do? Who does she tell about it?

R: They (women) do not go anywhere (to complain).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: If she has children, she keeps her patience and continues to live with her husband so that their children can have a good life.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: One (the woman) who is intelligent thinks about her life (future).

R: She continues to live with her husband.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: She thinks, 'I have been violated today; it may not happen tomorrow.' She explains to herself thus, and keeps quiet.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Although silence and toleration were described as the norm, in several FGDs, participants suggested that women who experienced violence may seek help or take action only if the violence was severe or frequent, for example:

I: What are the situations in which a woman asks for help?

R: When her husband tortures her repeatedly and tortures her a lot, she feels helpless and tells someone in her family about it. For example, she would ask for help in a situation in which her husband comes home drunk and beats and abuses her every day.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: When the violence becomes excessive, then she asks for help.

R: She also asks for help when she gets frustrated with her husband's daily beating.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Dhobichak (dhobhawan), Block B)

R: If the woman experiences excessive violence, then she asks for help.

R: When her husband hits her repeatedly, she seeks help.

R: When her husband and family members separate her completely from her natal family, she asks for help.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

When the violence crossed acceptable bounds, both women and men reported that women took various actions, all of which underscored their extremely limited options. Typical responses in such cases were to seek the support of the marital family, neighbours and friends, and their natal family; often, the natal family was approached only after efforts to seek help from the marital family and others in the marital village failed. Other options, cited in fewer FGDs, included making efforts to become financially independent, seeking the intervention of an influential person from the village, or approaching the police or the courts. For a few, exiting a violent marriage was cited as likely action. Most tragically, in several FGDs, participants suggested that if the violence was very severe or if the natal family was unwilling or unable to help, women would make efforts to commit suicide by setting themselves on fire, poisoning themselves and so on. We describe each of these reactions below.

Seeking support from in-laws or others in the village

In all eight FGDs with married women and four of the eight FGDs with married men, participants suggested that women who experience repeated violence perpetrated by their husband share the incident with their in-laws, typically the father-, mother-, sister- and brother-in-law, and/or friends and neighbours in order to seek their support and intervention. Some suggested that they would try to speak directly to their husband. Study participants noted that women would seek the support of these people because they believe that they could influence their husband to refrain from committing violence against his wife. For example, women reported thus:

What does a woman who suffers physical violence typically do? Who does she tell about it?

R: She tries to talk to her husband.

R: She tells the people of the village (neighbours) that her husband violates her.

R: She talks to her father-in-law and brother-in-law.

R: She talks to her in-laws or neighbours, she thinks that they can solve her problem. (Mixed responses)

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 7, Block A)

R: She (wife) talks to her neighbours.

R: She takes everyone's advice.

R: They advise her about how to cope.

R: They (neighbours) will persuade her family members (to counsel their son).

R: If she is beaten up, then she goes to her neighbours as only they would rescue her.

(Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 6, Block A)

R: She requests her neighbours to explain to her husband.

R: She tells her guardian (head of household) (expecting him/her to resolve the problem).

R: They (guardian/neighbours) understand what we (daughters-in-law) say (and will help us).

(Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 13, Block B)

Men's responses were similar:

R: She (wife) takes help from her father-in-law and mother-in-law and tells them, 'Your son does all this to me.'

R: She does not go to anyone apart from her father- and mother-in-law.

R: (The wife goes to her father- and mother-in-law) because only they can make their son understand (that he should refrain from violence) and help her.

R: Where else can she go apart from her father- and mother-in-law? Only they can make both of them (wife and husband) understand and resolve their quarrel.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 12, Block B)

R: First, she (wife) makes her husband understand; she tells him not to fight or hit her.

R: She tells her mother-in-law and father-in-law who, in turn, try to make their son understand (that he should not ill-treat his wife).

(Married young men aged 15–24, Village 10, Block B)

R: She (wife) tells some person in the village that her husband hits her.

R: Sometimes, she talks to her neighbours about it.

R: She feels that if she tells her neighbours, they will advise her husband and family members (that the husband should not commit violence) and that they would follow the neighbours' advice.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 11, Block B)

R: When the torture perpetrated against the woman increases greatly and becomes unbearable, when she is physically and mentally tortured, then she goes to her parents-in-law or her own parents, or to the neighbours to seek help.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 3, Block A)

Seeking the support of parents and the natal family

Where violence became unacceptable, participants in all the eight FGDs with married women and five of the eight FGDs with married men noted that women would seek support from their natal family (parents, brother), suggesting that

since it was they who had arranged her marriage, it was their responsibility to intervene with the husband. For example:

What does a woman who suffers physical violence typically do? Who does she tell about it?

R: She goes to her parent's house and tells her mother, father, sister and brother. They then go to her husband and talk to him.

R: If the man (husband) understands, they try and sort things out with him.

R: The (woman) feels that because her parents have arranged her marriage, they (parents) will be able to solve her problem.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: Sometimes, in addition to her parents, she also tells other members of her natal family, such as aunts (bua or maasi) etc. and tries to take their help.

R: (She does so) because it is the natal family members who the husband (man) will understand. Men, here, listen to them.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

Efforts to become financially independent

In three FGDs with adult married women, participants suggested that women who suffered violence sought to become more financially independent by seeking work; not a single FGD with young women or men of any age so reported. For example:

What does a woman who suffers physical violence typically do?

R: Many of them (women who suffer violence) go out to earn.

R: Some of them also take up stitching work etc. (to earn some money)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: She (woman who suffers violence) starts doing some work (to earn some money).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: If her family is facing financial problems, she goes out to earn.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

Seeking help from the authorities

In two of the eight FGDs with married women and almost all of those with married men, participants suggested that

women who experience violence may, albeit rarely, seek help from the police, elected officials of the village, the court, and other influential members of the community. Men suggested, moreover, that women sought help from these more formal mechanisms if the interventions of parents, in-laws and neighbours failed to reduce the violence. For example:

What does a woman who suffers physical violence typically do? Who does she tell about it?

R: She (woman) tells this (marital violence) to the police or panchayat.

R: (She tells the authorities) so that they can give her advice.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: Some women also tell their parents who then come and try to put an end to the husband's violence by making each one (marital family member) understand (that violence is an offence and should be stopped). If the husband does not comply, then they approach the court for help.

R: She (woman) takes the help of neighbours as well as the panchayat. They make her husband understand (his wrongdoing) and try to settle the issue; if he does not listen, then they take the help of the police.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

I: Does she also go in this state for help from the panchayat or the police?

R: When it (marital violence) becomes excessive, then she goes (to the police/panchayat for help).

R: First, she goes to the panchayat, then to the guard who belongs to the police force.

R: She goes to the police representative of the village (who is actually from the police force), or to a knowledgeable person in the village who can make her husband understand (that he should stop being violent).

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: If nothing happens even after speaking to all of them (in-laws, parents), then she resorts to legal action because nowadays even girls are educated (and know how to resort to legal action).

I: Can she ask for help from the panchayat and police?

R: Yes, she takes the help of the panchayat and tells the head of the panchayat. He tries to explain (to her husband) but if nothing happens despite that, she goes to the police.

R: She takes the help of the police in order to free herself from (a life of) torture.

R: Earlier, women never used to take the help of the law but now they do so.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: She talks to an important (influential) person of the village.

R: She believes that if she explains her problem to an important person in the village who people listen to, the person will make her husband understand (that he should not commit violence against his wife).

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Leaving a violent marriage

In addition to a general question regarding women's reactions to violence, a specific question was posed regarding the likelihood that a woman who suffers violence will exit from the marriage, and if so, under what conditions. We note that in response to the general question, while not a single FGD described exiting a violent marriage as a reaction to violence, in almost all the FGDs with married women (seven out of eight), participants suggested that leaving a violent marriage was not unknown in the study settings. However, while it was extremely rare for a woman to exit from a violent marriage, it usually occurred if the violence was experienced frequently or comprised life-threatening actions such as burning. For example:

How common is it for women who are beaten by their husband to leave him? For what forms of violence?

R: It (woman exiting from marriage) happens. (Mixed responses)

R: The wife leaves her husband.

I: What type of violence is done to them?

R: They get beaten daily (by their husband). (Several responses)

R: They (husbands) beat their wife daily after drinking alcohol.

R: He (husband) kicks his wife after drinking alcohol; he also beats her with sticks.

R: He (husband) insults her (wife).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: It happens; she (wife) leaves him.

R: (She leaves her husband) if there is some excessively violent incident.

R: (She leaves him) if she is being beaten daily.

R: (She leaves him) if she is beaten with a weapon.

R: Yes, (she leaves him) if he tries to burn her.

R: She (leaves him because she) feels that living with her husband will endanger her life.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: They (women) think: how much can one bear? He (husband) drinks and beats her, so she leaves the house.

R: She also leaves (her husband) if he attacks her with a weapon.

R: (She leaves her husband) if he tries to burn her.

R: They (women) think that it would bring disgrace to the family if they die (commit suicide). So, they prefer to leave their husband.

R: They (women) also leave them (their husband) if the husband drinks a lot.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

In just two FGDs, men expressed views similar to those expressed by women with regard to the conditions under which a woman would leave a violent marriage thus:

R: When the husband hit her a lot, she got frustrated and left.

R: He (husband) would hit and abuse her (wife) without any reason; that is why (she left him).

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: Yes, this (wife leaving her husband) has happened sometimes.

R: If it is not going well between husband and wife (she exits from the marriage).

R: When the husband tries to burn his wife, she leaves her husband.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

In contrast, in other FGDs, all with married men, participants denied that women in their village left a violent marriage. Their discussions focused on the reasons why women in a violent marriage did not exit from it, highlighting women's lack of options and concerns about upholding the family's reputation. For example:

I: How common is it in your village for a wife to leave her husband if he commits violence on her?

R: No, this has not happened in our village till now.

R: No, this has not happened in our village till now. (In chorus)

R: Where will she go after leaving her husband? She has to be with him for the rest of her life, no matter how he keeps her.

R: Women think that (after marriage) her husband's house is her house too; that is why she keeps bearing it (violence) and is not able to leave.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: No, it (leaving the husband) has not happened in our village.

I: Why doesn't she go?

R: She cannot go because of old rituals and culture. Once a girl is married with all the rituals, she has to live only with the man she marries. In our village, the bond of marriage is very strong and a woman does not want to break it nor does she break it.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Suicide

The lack of options women face in reality was underscored in four FGDs with the married—three with women and one with men—in which participants suggested that women had so few constructive options, that suicide was perceived as the only way of escaping violence. They described situations that had taken place in their villages in which women who had experienced violence had hung themselves, consumed poison or burnt themselves. For example:

I: What does a woman who suffers from violence usually do?

R: She kills herself—she burns herself, hangs herself, consumes poison—or, she goes to her parental home.

R: If her husband beats her too much, she strangulates herself or consumes poison.

R: She commits suicide by throwing herself under a train.

I: Has this ever happened in your village?

R: Yes, it has happened in one house where the woman burnt herself.

I: When did this happen?

R: Three-four days ago; she is in hospital and the doctors say that she will not live as she is very badly burnt.

R: One woman committed suicide by hanging herself.

I: When did this happen?

R: Two years have passed.

R: One woman consumed poison.

I: When did this happen?

R: One year ago.

I: So, are they alive presently or are they dead?

R: All of them are dead.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

Actions that may be taken by women who experience violence perpetrated by other members of their husband's family

Focus group discussions with married women and men also inquired about the actions likely to be taken by women who experience physical and sexual violence perpetrated by other members of the husband's family. Actions were, by and large, similar to those mentioned in the case of women experiencing physical violence perpetrated by their husband. The typical response was silence. However, participants suggested that while women who experienced repeated physical violence did have recourse to support mechanisms, sexual violence remained a taboo, and women were unlikely to take any action or seek help if they experienced forced sex perpetrated by a member of their husband's family.

Actions taken in case of physical violence

In several FGDs, participants reported that a typical response would be to bear the violence since women have limited options. For example:

I: What does a woman who suffers from physical violence generally do?

R: She bears it.

I: What are the reasons that she bears it?

R: Where can she go with her children?

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: If no one listens to her, she just continues to live like that.

R: In our villages, women can neither say nor do anything.

R: After they have had children, they cannot do anything (except put up with violence).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

However, other responses were also articulated; these ranged from seeking support from her husband, her natal family members and neighbours to such extreme reactions as suicide. In addition, several men and a few women suggested that women would approach the authorities, including the *panchayat* and the police. For example:

I: What does a woman who suffers physical violence done to her by her in-laws usually do?

R: She talks about it to the neighbours.

R: She tells her parents and husband about it.

R: She tells her husband.

R: She goes back to her parents' house (Several responses).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: She goes to her parents' house or else she appeals to the panchayat and seeks a solution.

R: She commits suicide.

R: She consumes poison or kills herself by throwing herself under a train.

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 7, Block A)

R: She leaves her husband.

R: She tells her neighbours about it.

R: She tells her natal family members.

(Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 13, Block B)

R: She goes back to her parents' house.

R: She goes back to her parents' house.

R: She talks to a friend or sister-in-law.

I: Why does she talk to these people only?

R: They will explain to her (advise her about what to do).

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 14, Block B)

I: What does a woman do or where does she go for help if her family members perpetrate physical violence on her?

R: She tells the neighbours and takes their help.

R: She goes to the headman of the village and tells him everything. Then, he and the neighbours come to her house and make her in-laws understand (that violence is bad) and stop them from doing so.

R: She tells her parents and brother who then come and discuss (with her husband/marital family members) and try to resolve the problem.

(Married young men aged 15–24, Village 10, Block B)

R: She talks to those other than the ones who are violent with her.

R: She tells her own (natal) family members.

R: Sometimes, when the violence increases, she may commit suicide.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 11, Block B)

R: She asks for help from the people of the village or else she goes to the panchayat to seek help. She also goes to the police station sometimes.

I: Why does she ask for help from these people?

R: Because the villagers can explain to her in-laws (that they should treat their daughter-in-law well).

R: The panchayat and police can scare them (in-laws) by telling them that they could be punished; this would help reduce the violence.

(Married young men aged 15–24, Village 3, Block A)

I: What does a woman who is physically tortured by her in-laws usually do?

R: She raises her voice; she takes the help of the police and society.

R: She takes the help of the police.

(Married adult women aged 25–50, Village 7, Block A)

R: First of all, she goes to her parents. Her family members then go to her in-laws and other people in the society (to resolve the problem) but if things do not work out, they take the help of the law.

(Married adult men aged 25–50, Village 3, Block A)

Actions taken in case of sexual violence

Options became far more limited in case of forced sex perpetrated by a member of the husband's family. In such cases, the two most common responses indicated by FGD participants were silence and communicating the incident to the husband. In very few FGDs, did some participants also suggest that the woman may inform her parents or friends and neighbours if she experienced sexual violence perpetrated by a family member, and in extreme cases, even consider suicide. For example:

I: What does a woman, who is facing sexual violence done by a member of her in-laws' family, do?

R: She takes poison.

R: She burns herself.

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 7, Block A)

R: She does not tell anyone about it.

R: She tells her mother-in-law and father-in-law about it.

R: (She tells) her neighbour.

R: She tells her husband. (In chorus)

(Married young women aged 15–24, Village 14, Block B)

R: She keeps quiet and does not tell anyone about it.

R: She is a woman, so she is forced to be like that (suffer silently).

R: The woman asks for help.

R: She talks to her brother-in-law.

R: She talks to her father-in-law.

R: She tells everything to her father-in-law.

R: She tells her husband.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: She talks to her husband about such matters too. She tells him everything; whatever has happened with her. Subsequently, there are arguments between the family members, there are fights, after which both the husband and wife separate from the marital family.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: All this (violence) happens secretly, nobody comes to know. Such matters are never leaked.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

B. Perceived obstacles that prevent women from seeking help

As suggested above, the most common reaction to violence was silence and toleration. Reasons why women hesitated to seek the help of family, friends and the authorities unless the situation became severe were probed in the course of FGDs. Although we probed perceptions of key obstacles that prevented women from seeking help if they experienced violence perpetrated by their husband and other family members separately, responses were largely similar and hence we present responses in a consolidated way. Key reasons expressed as obstacles to seeking help in case of violence perpetrated both by the husband and a family member were: women feared that revealing the violence to others would exacerbate the violence they experienced, and disclosing the incident would be disrespectful to their marital family or spoil its reputation. Participants gave a third reason inhibiting women from seeking help for violence perpetrated by their husband, that is, fear that they would be thrown out of the marital home and separated from their children. In two FGDs with men, they also suggested that women faced no obstacles in seeking help. The responses of FGD participants are described below.

Fear of exacerbating violence

In six of the eight FGDs with women, participants suggested that a major obstacle that inhibited women from seeking help if they suffer violence perpetrated by their husband or other members of the marital family was the fear of exacerbating violence if the husband was confronted. Not a single FGD among men suggested this obstacle. Women revealed their fears as follows:

What are some of the obstacles that might prevent the woman from getting help?

R: They (women) believe that if they ask for help, their husband will be angry with them.

R: They (women) believe that if they ask someone for help, their husband will harm them.

R: They (husbands) beat her (wife) and do not let her go anywhere to ask for help.

R: They (husbands) threaten her (wife).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: She (woman) thinks that after that (seeking help) the violence would increase.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 7, Block A)

R: If her (marital) family members get to know about it (her seeking help), they will beat her.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

Fear of losing respect or the family's reputation

A second obstacle that inhibited women from seeking help if they experienced violence perpetrated by their husband—discussed in four of eight FGDs with women and seven of eight with men—was the perception that violence was a family matter and should be kept confidential. They noted that women feared that revealing the experience of violence would show disrespect to the marital family or affect its reputation, and hence would not seek help. For example:

What are some of the obstacles that might prevent the woman from getting help?

R: If they (women) ask for help from an outsider, it will be disrespectful to the family.

R: They (women) are scared that the family will get insulted.

R: They (women) think that this will be disrespectful to them (marital family).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: She (woman) believes that if she tells her home-related problems (marital violence) to an outsider, it will amount to insulting her marital family. Therefore, she should not tell anyone about it.

R: She says to herself, 'Now, this is my house and my husband means everything to me; I have to live with him for the rest of my life. So, I should not insult my home or my husband.' Hence, she bears the violence silently.

R: No woman would want her house to be regarded with disrespect.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: They (women) are not able to take the help of the law because they are worried about the reputation of the family.

R: Nowadays, although they are educated, girls do not want to go against their husband. The girl knows that she has left her family for her husband. So, how can she go against him?

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

Almost identical concerns were expressed with regard to the obstacles faced by women in seeking help if they experienced violence perpetrated by other members of their husband's family, for example:

I: What could those obstacles be that would stop women from taking help?

R: (Fear). They are scared.

R: (They are afraid) that getting help can bring a bad name to them (In chorus).

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: The restriction is only that she does not want the problems in her house to leak out or for any outsider to know about them. She thinks that this would be an insult to her marital home, and, thereby, an insult to herself too.

R: Overall, a daughter-in-law treats her husband's home as her own and does not want to say anything negative about it to the outside world; this is the biggest obstacle.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Fear of abandonment and separation from children

In several FGDs, three with women and one with men, participants pointed to women's fear of being thrown out of their home or separated from their children if they sought help for the violence perpetrated by her husband. For example:

What are some of the obstacles that might prevent the woman from getting help?

R: How can she go if she has a small child?

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: (She is afraid that) he (husband) will throw her out of the house.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: They (women) are scared that if they go out to ask for help, they will be thrown out of the house.

R: She (woman) thinks that she will not get help from anyone and after that (going out to seek help), her marital family members will also not allow her to live in the house.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: Many women think to themselves: 'If I tell an outsider about the violence I suffer, my husband will leave me'. Hence, they remain silent.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

In contrast, this obstacle was not expressed as a reason for not seeking help in case of violence perpetrated by a family member.

C. Responses of families, the community and the authorities from whom help is sought: Perceptions of the married

In the course of FGDs, the discussion also focused on the opinions of married women and men regarding the extent to which families, the community and the authorities from whom help is sought are indeed supportive in cases of violence perpetrated by the husband. Responses about the supportiveness of these groups were mixed, suggesting that while family members were most likely to be approached, the nature of support received was frequently passive; at the same time, the discussions suggested that community members intervened only when the situation was extreme, and the authorities rarely intervened at all.

Responses of family members

Participants in every single FGD with the married discussed three scenarios reflecting family members' reactions. Family members were described as responding in at least three ways: advising the woman to tolerate the violence; blaming her for inciting the violence; and taking direct action with the husband, explaining to him, threatening him or calling in the authorities. While both the woman's parents and in-laws were described as advising women to tolerate the violence, counselling women and husbands to be more understanding and blaming the woman for inciting the violence, it was only the natal family that was described as taking stronger action that is, involving the authorities or supporting their daughter to leave a violent husband. Gender differences were evident.

Advice to tolerate the violence

Among women, by far the most common response reported by family members, whether natal or marital, was advice to the woman to tolerate the violence. This response was discussed in all the eight FGDs with married women, as follows:

How do other members in the marital or natal family respond to women who experience violence?

R: Some (family members) say that they (women) will have to bear that (violence).

R: Parents who are poor tell their daughters to bear the violence.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: First, her in-laws tell her that the matter can be sorted out by talking to each other (husband-wife). However, if they find that the matter cannot be resolved, they leave things as they are.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: Her in-laws and parents explain to her and make her understand (that she should bear the violence). (In chorus)

R: They (family members) tell them (women) to stay with their husband.

R: They (family members) motivate her to compromise.

(Married adult women, aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: Parents and in-laws ask them (women) to bear the violence; they say that it is right to bear the violence.

R: (Parents/In-laws advise her that) it will not be proper if she leaves her husband and remarries.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

In contrast, participants in very few FGDs with married men suggested that family members advised women to bear the violence. In several instances they denied that this was so, and in others, suggested that it was the woman's parents who were likely to express such sentiments. For example:

I: What do the members of the girl's family say or do?

R: They take their daughter to their house for a few days; they explain to her (that she should bear the violence) and then bring her back to her in-laws'.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: The girl's family tries to make sure that the girl remains settled (married); that is why they frequently (talk to her and) try to make her understand so.

R: The girl's marital family also tries to make her understand. They say to her: 'So what if your husband has hit you?'

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Blaming the victim

In almost every FGD—seven of the eight FGDs with married women—participants stated that a second response was to suggest that the woman was in some way deserving of the violence that she suffered. Notably, women's narratives indicate that both the woman's parents and her in-laws expressed these views. For example:

I: Women who are tortured or beaten up by their husbands, what do their in-laws and her parents say to her or what do they tell her to do?

R: Her in-laws think that she has left (the house) on her own wish and will return on her own.

R: They (parents, in-laws) tell her that she will have to bear it (violence).

R: They (parents, in-laws) tell her that she will have to bear it (violence).

R: The in-laws blame the girl only.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: Her parents come and try to make her understand that whatever is happening is not good, that it should not happen and she should try to avoid it (be obedient).

R: She is told to be within her limits (be compliant).

R: Mostly they say that the daughter-in-law is the culprit and they blame her.

R: When the husband does not understand her, no one else bothers to understand the woman.

I: What do the in-laws say?

R: The in-laws get their son remarried.

R: If the husband is good to her, she is respected but if he does not have good relations with her, no one bothers about her.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

I: Do they blame the woman?

R: Yes, they do.

R: Yes, they do. (In chorus)

I: Who says so, her parents or in-laws?

R: Her parents say that it is her mistake only. (Mixed responses)

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

I: What do the in-laws say?

R: They say that the girl is wrong.

R: They blame the girl, saying that she is wrong and does not know how to talk.

R: They say that the girl does not know how to adjust.

R: Both, parents and in-laws say the same thing.

R: *They think that their daughter should stay there (marital home) only and not get remarried.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

I: *What do the parents of the woman tell her?*

R: *If it is the fault of the woman, they ask her to live properly (without complaining) and because it is her fault, she will have to bear it (violence).*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: *Many a time, the girl's family and her husband's family blame her and say, 'It is your mistake'.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

Intervene with the husband

While both married women and men reported that the parents or brother of the woman would make efforts to intervene with the husband directly, wide gender differences were evident in their perceptions. By and large, narratives of women who reported that family members attempted to intervene with the husband suggest that this intervention largely comprised counselling the man to treat his wife better or to understand the situation and adjust to it. Both the woman's parents and the husband's parents were reported to intervene in this way. In three narratives, in addition, women reported that the woman's parents may take police action, approach the courts, support their daughter financially or permit her to return to her parental home. Responses included the following:

How do members of the woman's marital or natal family respond to women who experience violence?

R: *Members of her maternal home help her a lot; they tell her husband that if he commits violence against their daughter, they will sue him.*

R: *(They tell him that) if he beats their daughter, they will get him jailed.*

R: *They try to make the man understand that he should treat their daughter properly.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: *The members of her parental home sue the husband.*

R: *The members of her parental home try and make them (daughter and her husband) understand that they should live in harmony.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

I: *What do the woman's parents say or do?*

R: *They make him (their son-in-law) understand things (that it is wrong to ill-treat his wife). (Several responses)*

R: *They try to make their son-in-law understand that he should not beat his wife as it is not considered good in the society.*

R: *The (woman's) parents support their daughter's expenditure.*

I: *This is done by the members of the parental home; do her in-laws also do something?*

R: *They (in-laws) try to make their son understand things (that he should not beat his wife).*

R: *They (in-laws) try to explain things (that he should stop the violence) to their son.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: *They (in-laws) talk to both, the man and the woman and try to make them understand that they should not talk to each other in such a way (abusive) as they are husband and wife, and are expected to respect their relationship.*

R: *And (in spite of explaining to them), if nothing happens, they (in-laws) take the woman to her maternal home.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

Men's perceptions also suggested the same range of actions, but, in contrast to those of women, suggested that men's own parents (the woman's in-laws) played a key role in supporting their daughter-in-law. Indeed, a large number of narratives among men focused on the action that their parents would take and reveal that men perceived the actions of their parents far more sympathetically than did women. Here too, they suggested that it was the woman's family who intervened by involving the authorities or removing their daughter from a violent situation. For example:

I: *What do the in-laws of the woman (who bears the violence) do?*

R: *They (in-laws) try to console her (daughter-in-law) and explain to her.*

R: *They tell their son not to do this (violence) in future ever.*

R: *They try to pressurise their son.*

R: *Sometimes, the in-laws even beat their son. (In chorus)*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: *They (in-laws) try to stop the torture.*

R: *They (in-laws) try to explain and request him (their son) not do so as it will only bring him bad fortune and nothing else.*

R: *They (in-laws) tell him (their son) that family problems should remain within the family, and if this continues it will increase their problems.*

I: *Do the family members of the woman explain to their son-in-law or do they try to solve the problem?*

R: Yes, they try to explain to him.

R: They (girl's family members) tell their daughter and son-in-law that they too have a child and should think about their child; that this (violence) would have a negative impact on the child.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

I: What do members of the woman's family and husband's family do for the woman who bears this kind of violence?

R: Members of her family come to her husband's house and discuss, they make their son-in-law understand (that it is wrong to abuse his wife). If he does not change, they tell the neighbours (to counsel him), and if he still does not understand, they go to the police and the problem increases.

R: Even the members of the husband's family take the side of the woman and try and make their son understand, saying, 'Why are you doing this? She has left her entire family and come to you and if you do this to her, violate her, where will she go?'

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: The family members (natal) of the woman take her away from her husband's house.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: The members of the woman's natal family file a case against the husband's family.

R: Her (natal) family complains about or reports the girl's husband to the police.

R: First, members of both the husband's and wife's family try to make them (husband and wife) understand (that they should try to adjust and understand each other). If this does not work out, a divorce case is filed and the couple gets divorced.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Responses of the community

Although not unanimous, married FGD participants suggested, by and large, that if the violence was excessive, community members would intervene, either in order to talk the husband out of persisting with committing violence against his wife or physically intervening to separate the violent man from his wife. Gender differences were not apparent and narratives suggest that such intervention took place if the violence was very severe or if the man was beating his wife without justification; in one FGD with men, participants suggested that even in such cases, if community members were concerned that the man would turn on those who intervened, they would not get involved. For example:

Has there ever been a situation in which community members have intervened and tried to stop a husband who is very violent towards his wife? What do they do?

R: The villagers threaten him, saying that he is not supposed to do anything of this sort with his wife (beat her).

R: Yes, if the husband beats his wife, the village people tell him not to do so.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

I: Like, what happened exactly?

R: Once, when a husband and wife were fighting and the husband was beating her very badly, the villagers intervened and made him understand that it is not correct (to behave so).

R: If a man beats his wife, the people of the village ask him to stop and warn him that if he does not do so, they will call the police.

R: They (villagers) threaten him (husband).

R: They explain to him (husband).

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 14, Block B)

R: But mostly, no one goes to her (wife's) help.

R: If the villagers try to stop the husband, he starts hitting and abusing them verbally; that is why no one intervenes.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

I: Has a case like this ever happened where members of the village have tried to stop that husband who is badly violent with his wife?

R: Yes, it has happened. When a husband and wife were fighting among themselves and he was hitting his wife brutally, some people from the village pulled her husband away and separated them. Then they made him understand saying, 'Why do you do this? She is your wife; you should not hit her so much.' They also made the wife understand, saying, 'Why do you talk so much? Live with togetherness, don't hit or fight.'

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

Responses of the authorities

Noting that FGD participants did not spontaneously narrate instances of intervention by the *panchayat*, police or the legal system in cases of marital violence, participants' opinions were sought about whether such authorities should play an intervening role of protecting women suffering from violence. Responses were mixed. In several instances, participants suggested that the authorities should not intervene, and the reason provided in each of these instances was that marital

violence is a family affair and it is necessary to keep family matters within the family. For example:

I: Do you think that even after suffering from violence daily, if a woman is not asking for help from the police, then either the police or the panchayat should intervene?

R: They should not intervene. (Several responses)

R: It is their (husband and wife's) own matter and they should solve it themselves.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: No, no, they (panchayat or police) should not intervene because this is the husband and wife's personal fight, and it is good if they solve it together. If the panchayat or police intervenes, the problem will increase.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Some others, however, did believe that the authorities had a responsibility to intervene. They argued that some women lacked freedom of movement and others so feared the violent repercussions if they actively sought help that few women would approach the authorities voluntarily. They argued that as a result, and especially if the violence was excessive, authorities should intervene. For example:

I: What do you think, if women do not ask for help; in such circumstances then should the police or panchayat intervene?

R: Yes, they should intervene because women sometimes cannot go out of the house (for help). (Mixed responses)

R: The men (husbands) tell them (their wife) that they will beat them (if they seek help) and they (wives) get scared. In such situations, the police and panchayat should help.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: The panchayat and the sarpanch should help her.

R: If she is being excessively beaten, then they (panchayat or police) should intervene.

I: Why should they come?

R: If she is being beaten and no one is helping her or she is not asking for help, and if they (panchayat or police) come to know about the incident, they should certainly come to her help.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: Yes, they should. If she is not able to ask for help due to some reason then, both the panchayat and police should intervene and make the husband and wife understand (that it is in both their interests to stop marital violence).

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: The panchayat and police should get involved and help the woman so that her torture is reduced or stopped.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

D. Summary

This chapter has explored the perspectives of married women and men about the responses of women who experience violence perpetrated by their husband and other members of his family. Reports suggest that the most common response is silence and toleration of the violence, particularly in case of sexual violence. If the violence is perceived as excessive and frequent, help is sought, largely in terms of communicating the incident to marital and natal family members, neighbours and friends in the hope that they will help in convincing their husband and family members to refrain from perpetrating violence. Other options mentioned, notably in response to violence perpetrated by the husband, included women's efforts to become financially independent (albeit suggested only by adult married women); seeking help from the authorities, including the *panchayat*, police and courts; separating from the husband and leaving a violent husband or marital family, and, most disturbing, suicide.

Study participants described a number of obstacles that inhibited women who experienced violence perpetrated by their husband or other family members from taking action. Key obstacles to seeking help were women's fears that seeking help would exacerbate their risk of violence on the one hand, and disclosing the incident would be disrespectful to the marital family or damage its reputation on the other. Another reason that inhibited women from seeking help was the fear of being thrown out of their home and separated from their children.

Focus group discussions also probed the extent to which women who sought help for violence perpetrated by their husband did indeed receive support. Findings suggest that this was not always so. Parents and family members from whom help was sought would typically explain to the woman that violence was to be tolerated or blame her for precipitating the violent incident. In fewer cases, however, families were described as more proactive, counseling the husband to refrain from further violence and if all else fails, approaching the *panchayat*, police or courts. Community members were described as intervening in cases of extreme marital violence, but in case they were concerned that the violent husband would turn on them, their supportiveness was limited. Finally, support from the authorities was obtained far less frequently and study participants were ambivalent about whether the authorities should be more proactive and intervene in more cases of violence. Some participants argued that violence was a family matter and there was no place for the authorities in resolving such personal matters while others suggested that it was essential, given women's limited agency, for *panchayats* and the police to intervene in cases of domestic violence.

In order to better understand how study participants perceived the characteristics of violent and nonviolent men/husbands, we made efforts to identify the key features that distinguish violent husbands from nonviolent husbands, and more specifically, focused on identifying the characteristics of positive deviants, that is, nonviolent boyfriends (among the unmarried) and nonviolent husbands (among the married). The characteristics of nonviolent boyfriends were assessed in the course of FGDs with unmarried young women and young men. The characteristics of nonviolent husbands were assessed in two ways: first, we used FGDs with married women and men to probe participants' views about men who beat and never beat their wife, and, second, we held in-depth interviews (IDIs) with men acknowledged by their wife to be violent or nonviolent (using the screening process described in Chapter 1), to enable a comparison of the characteristics distinguishing the two groups. This chapter focuses on the insights obtained from both FGDs with married women and men, and unmarried girls and boys as well as IDIs with violent and nonviolent husbands.

A. Characteristics of a nonviolent boyfriend: insights from FGDs with the unmarried

In the course of FGDs with the unmarried, participants described their perceptions of the characteristics of positive deviants, that is, boys who were never violent with their girlfriend. Typically, boys who never perpetrated violence against their girlfriend were described as educated, intelligent, understanding and loving and, more specifically, those who did not consume alcohol. For example:

I: What kinds of boys never hit their female friend?

R: Those who do not drink alcohol.

R: Those who respect her.

R: Those who treat her (female friend) nicely.

R: Those who give her (female friend) love.

R: Those who give love.

R: Those who treat her (female friend) as their close friend.

R: Those who treat her (female friend) nicely.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

R: Those who are educated.

R: Those who belong to a good family and have good values.

R: Those who do not consume alcohol.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

As evident from the above excerpts, a nonviolent boyfriend was rarely described as weak. In just one FGD, however, perceptions were mixed, with some boys articulating the perceptions described above and others suggesting that nonviolent boys are weak or afraid of their girlfriend, as follows:

I: What kinds of boys are they who never hit their sister or girlfriend?

R: Those who really love their sister or girlfriend very much.

R: Those who are weak and are scared of their sister or girlfriend.

R: Those who are intelligent never hit their sister or girlfriend.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

B. Characteristics of a nonviolent husband: Insights from FGDs with the married

Married FGD participants, similarly, outlined their perceptions of the key characteristics of a nonviolent husband. As in the narratives of the unmarried, the narratives of both women and men too, clearly perceived non-violence as an ideal behaviour that encompassed general characteristics such as maturity, intelligence and affection for the wife. For example:

I: Who are those men who are never violent with their wife?

R: Those who are intelligent.

R: Those who are good and intelligent.

R: Those who are educated.

R: Those who are mature.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: *Those who are educated.*

R: *Those who are intelligent.*

R: *Those who love their wife.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 14, Block B)

R: *Those who are intelligent and educated.*

R: *Those who share a deep bond with their wife are never violent.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: *If both husband and wife are working, both understand each other well and both are intelligent, then the husband will never torture his wife.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

In many instances, women and men suggested that nonviolent husbands communicated with their wife, saying that they 'explained' to her rather than beat her, as follows:

R: *(Nonviolent men are) those who explain to their wife (communicate with her).*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: *Men who are educated, do not beat their wife; they just explain to her.*

R: *Those who explain to (communicate with) their wife and do everything with mutual understanding (are non-violent). Men in such relationships do not fight with their wife.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 4, Block A)

R: *If there is a good tuning (understanding) between husband and wife and they communicate with and listen to each other, such a husband will not hit his wife.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Likewise, in several discussions, women and men suggested that a nonviolent husband held more egalitarian attitudes about gender relations and women's rights. For example:

R: *They (nonviolent husbands) think that it is wrong to beat their wife.*

R: *Men who have a good mindset do not beat their wife.*

R: *Men who think that even women do a lot of work at home such as looking after the children, preparing food and doing all the other housework, do not beat their wife.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

R: *They (non-violent men) are men with different brains than violent men (they think differently than other men in the community).*

R: *They (nonviolent husbands) think that they will face nothing but problems if they beat their wife.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *Whether educated or illiterate, if the husband at least understands that she is his wife and it is his duty to keep her happy and fulfil her needs, then he would never commit violence against her.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

And finally, many drew the link between violence and the husband's alcohol consumption and argued that nonviolent husbands do not consume alcohol or take drugs; thus:

R: *They (nonviolent husbands) do not drink alcohol.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *Those who do not use drugs also do not do violence.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: *They (nonviolent husbands) do not use any kind of drugs and do not drink alcohol.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

We note, however, that in a few FGDs with married men, some participants associated nonviolent husbands with weakness and suggested that they did not display qualities of masculinity. For example:

R: *Men who are scared of their family and society (are nonviolent).*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

R: *Men who are dominated by their wives are (themselves) suppressed. How then can they beat their wife?*

R: *They (nonviolent husbands) themselves bear the torture of their wife; how then can they beat or torture their wife?*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

C. Characteristics of violent and nonviolent husbands: Insights from in-depth interviews with violent and nonviolent husbands

In order to better understand the characteristics and perceptions of a nonviolent husband or positive deviant, IDIs probed the life of both violent and nonviolent husbands. The

themes addressed included growing-up experiences; social networks and participation in community-level violence; alcohol use; gender role attitudes; and marital relations and family life. In this section, we highlight the similarities and differences in each of these dimensions of the life of the two groups of men as also the notable features that characterise a nonviolent husband. A summary of the key findings is provided in Table 8.1.

Growing-up experiences

The IDIs touched upon a number of aspects of family and peer environment of the respondent husbands. Specifically, respondents were probed about their closeness with their family members, their role models while growing up, the existence of any differences in behaviours of household members towards their sisters as compared to them, their experiences at school and with friends, including girlfriends. They were also asked about their experiences of bullying others or being bullied while growing up and whether they faced any peer pressure.

Interviews indicate that almost all the respondents (both violent and nonviolent) grew up with their parents and most reported being close to either one or both of their parents. Similarly, there were no differences between the experiences of violent and non-violent husbands at school, including of being bullied or bullying others. Almost all respondents from both groups stated that they had never been bullied and none of them reported bullying others. Both violent and nonviolent husbands agreed, moreover, that while their parents did not discriminate against their sisters in terms of distribution of food or money, their sisters faced many more restrictions on their freedom of movement than they did.

Gendered socialisation

Differences were apparent, however, in other ways in which the sisters of violent and nonviolent husbands were socialised, notably, in terms of their freedom of speech and ability to express themselves in the family. For example, nonviolent husbands were far more likely than violent husbands to suggest that their sisters had as much freedom as they had to express their opinions to their parents and other elder members of the family, and were taken as seriously in family decisions as they were. Indeed, while seven of the 11 violent husbands interviewed reported that girls in their family were more constrained than their brothers in expressing their views to any adult in the family, the opposite was true among nonviolent husbands, among whom five of the 10 husbands suggested that their sisters were as likely to express themselves and to participate in household decision-making as they were, and three others reported that their sisters were free to talk to their mother but not their father. For example, in response to a question about how they were treated in comparison with their sisters, nonviolent husbands expressed the following:

R: The freedom to talk to friends was given to me and my sister equally. She could talk to her friends in the village just as I could. Nor was there any discrimination between us regarding participation in household decision-making; as much as I was asked about any matter, she too was asked. My sister also had the same right to express her views as I had.

(Married young man, non-violent, aged 26, Village 15, Block A)

R: Both my sisters and I could talk openly to our parents on household matters.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 24, Village 14, Block B)

I: Was there any difference done with regard to talking with friends?

R: There was no restriction.

I: Your decision-making in family matters?

R: My sisters could give their opinion on family matters.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 25+, Village 7, Block A)

R: Regarding family matters, my decision was given more importance as compared to my sister's. I used to talk to my parents openly on such matters. My sister also used to talk openly but only with my mother and not in the presence of my father.

(Married man, nonviolent, aged 30, Village 13, Block B)

In contrast, violent husbands were far more categorical about the gendered socialisation they had experienced. For example:

R: My sisters did not have as much freedom as we (boys) had to express our thoughts on household matters. We used to talk openly with our parents but my sisters did not because they were scared that our parents would scold them and hence, they would remain silent.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 40, Village 15, Block A)

R: We (boys) could openly say anything regarding family matters but my sister did not have the same freedom.

(Married young man, violent, aged 26, Village 13, Block B)

R: In family matters, my sisters could not speak to our family members as openly as I could. They were not allowed to speak much on family issues.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 32, Village 14, Block B)

Table 8.1: Differences between violent and nonviolent husbands on key attitudes, beliefs and experiences

Indicator	Similarities	Differences
Socialisation experiences	Gendered socialisation, close family relations, most had witnessed community or family violence while growing up. similar schooling experiences, similar experiences with bullying and being bullied	<p>Nonviolent husbands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely than violent husbands to report that their sisters had as much freedom as they did to express themselves and participate in household matters • Less likely to report peer pressure while growing up than did violent husbands • Mildly less likely to have experienced violence as a form of discipline while growing up
Social networks and participation in community violence	Most had friends and family to whom they could turn in times of difficulty	<p>Nonviolent husbands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had a larger peer network than violent husbands • Were less likely to consume alcohol with their peers • Were less likely to be involved in physical fights in their communities than were violent husbands
Alcohol consumption		<p>Nonviolent husbands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were less likely than violent husbands to report consuming alcohol • Reported consuming alcohol less frequently than violent husbands who consumed alcohol
Gender roles and attitudes	Most reported traditional roles in the family with men taking little responsibility for housework and childcare and women participating infrequently in household decisions	<p>Nonviolent husbands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were more likely than violent husbands to perceive that a woman should have equal rights as a man • Were less likely to equate a 'real' man with aggression and control • Were less likely to perceive a 'real' woman as one who stays faithful to her husband • Were less likely to perceive marital violence as acceptable, that their wife deserved to be beaten in some circumstances, for example, if she disobeyed her husband or made a 'mistake'
Marital satisfaction	Most reported happy married lives	FGDs suggested deeper marital bonds among nonviolent than violent husbands
Spousal communication		FGDs highlight that nonviolent husbands were more likely to communicate with/explain to their wife than violent husbands
Self-confidence about rejecting traditional norms of masculinity		<p>Nonviolent husbands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placed value on peace and marital harmony as opposed to control over wife • Expressed self-confidence about their role as nonviolent husbands and the respect that their nonviolent status commanded in their communities; in comparison, violent husbands justified their violent behaviour as conforming to traditional notions of masculinity, but admitted that they were also criticised and mocked for perpetrating marital violence

R: *In my family, my sisters could not convey their views openly on household matters.*

(Married adult man, violent, aged 32, Village 14, Block B)

R: *If I said something on family matters, my parents would listen to me. My sister would not say anything because (it is assumed that) when there is a boy (in the family), there is no need for the girl to say anything.*

(Married adult man, violent, aged 26, Village 7, Block A)

Peer interactions while growing up

Also distinguishing violent and nonviolent husbands was their description of peer interaction while growing up. For example, one-half of the violent husbands interviewed (six out of 11), compared to two of the 10 nonviolent husbands reported experiencing peer pressure with regard to alcohol consumption or smoking. Although all those who had experienced peer pressure reported being able to withstand the pressure, it is notable that violent husbands were far more likely to have friends who engaged in risky behaviours than nonviolent husbands. For example:

I: *Did your friends ever put any kind of pressure on you or ask you to do things you didn't want to do?*

R: *When I was 16 years old, in the place where I used to work, the son of my boss would make me drink alcohol. He used to mix it in any drink and say to me, 'Drink it, yaar (friend), nothing will happen'.*

(Married young man, violent, aged 24, Village 7, Block A)

R: *Yes. Once when I was standing with a friend who was smoking, he offered me a cigarette, saying, 'Have it; try it once. There won't be any problem. Nothing happens with this; it feels nice.' I did not take the cigarette though he kept forcing me to do so saying, 'Smoke, nothing will happen.'*

(Married adult man, violent, aged 40, Village 15, Block A)

R: *I had a friend who used to steal. He would always pressurise me saying, 'Come with me (to steal); nothing will happen. I have stolen several times and nothing has happened to me (I have not been caught yet). Come, nothing will happen.' He would often persuade me thus but I never went with him.*

(Married young man, violent, aged 19, Village 13, Block B)

R: *Ninety-nine percent of my friends used to have non-vegetarian food and alcohol. They would pressurise me to have these things, and when I refused, they would make fun of me; but I never let it affect me and I never had those things.*

(Married adult man, violent, aged 31, Village 14, Block B)

R: *My friends never forced me to do anything.*

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 24, Village 14, Block B)

R: *No, I did not have any friends who could pressurise me to do something.*

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 24, Village 14, Block B)

Although distinctions were less evident, three violent husbands and one nonviolent husband reported that they had consumed alcohol or tobacco products while growing up.

Witnessing and experiencing violence while growing up

Respondents reported the extent to which they had witnessed family or community violence during their growing-up years and whether family members had used violence to discipline them while they were growing up. Almost all the respondents reported that they had witnessed violence while growing up; indeed, just one violent husband and three nonviolent husbands reported that they had never done so. Of those who reported witnessing violence, six violent husbands and two nonviolent husbands had witnessed their father beating their mother. Mild differences were also observed in the extent to which violent and nonviolent husbands had experienced violence as a means of discipline, with four violent and two nonviolent husbands reporting such an experience. For example:

I: *Did you experience any violence yourself when growing up?*

R: *In the family, my parents used to hit me lightly if I made a mistake but other than that, they never beat me.*

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 42, Village 6, Block A)

R: *Yes, my elder brother used to hit me. Everyone in the house used to see him hitting me whenever he saw me playing or if I did not do the work he had asked me to do.*

(Married young man, violent, aged 19, Village 13, Block B)

Social networks

In order to assess social networks and the availability of sources of support, in-depth interviews also probed study participants' social networks, that is, the number of friends they had at the time of the interview, typical activities conducted with their friends, and whether they had sources of support to whom they could turn in times of difficulty.

While almost all the husbands who took part in IDIs reported that they had family or friends to whom they could turn for help in times of difficulty, peer networks were

somewhat larger among nonviolent than violent husbands, although activities in which they engaged with their friends were about as likely to involve alcohol consumption. For example, while most nonviolent husbands suggested that they had two or more friends, most violent husbands reported that they had no friends or one friend; four of the 11 violent husbands and three of the 10 nonviolent husbands reported spending time with their friends, drinking alcohol. Narratives suggest mild differences between the two groups, as follows:

I: *Do you have friends at present?*

R: *I have many friends at present.*

I: *What type of time do you spend with your friends?*

R: *I sit and talk with my friends and discuss all that happens in my life, good or bad. They too share such matters with me. I do not know how to gamble and I have never consumed alcohol in my life.*

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 24,
Village 14, Block B)

I: *How many friends do you have presently?*

R: *I have 10–12 friends.*

I: *How do you spend time with your friends?*

R: *We talk to each other and do our work.*

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 25+,
Village 13, Block B)

I: *Do you have friends at present?*

R: *Yes, I have two or three friends.*

I: *What type of time do you spend with your friends?*

R: *I sit, talk and have tea with my friends. I do not play cards with them; I drink alcohol and sometimes, smoke cigarettes and beedis (local Indian cigarette) with them but I never gamble.*

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 42,
Village 6, Block A)

I: *Now, at present, how many friends do you have?*

R: *I have one friend.*

I: *How do you spend time with your friend?*

R: *Sometimes we eat together, chat.*

I: *Do you ever gamble with him?*

R: *No, I do not gamble.*

I: *Do you drink alcohol with him?*

R: *Yes, we do drink alcohol (taari or toddy)*

(Married adult man, violent, aged 40,
Village 15, Block A)

I: *Now, at present, do you have any friends?*

R: *Yes, I do have a friend.*

I: *How do you spend time with your friend?*

R: *I chat with my friend, we play cricket, we play cards, I sit with him and have alcohol, smoke cigarettes and eat food.*

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

Involvement in community-level violence

In-depth interviews also probed the respondents' involvement in violence in the community, that is, whether they had been involved in physical fights with others in the community. Differences were observed in terms of the extent of their involvement in such physical fights. While not a single nonviolent husband reported being involved in physical fights with other men in his community, three of 11 violent husbands so reported, as follows:

I: *Have you ever been in a physical fight (maar-peat) in your village with somebody?*

R: *Yes, I have. Once I was drunk and sitting outside my house when a man who was also drunk walked past, abusing me. I asked him who he was abusing, and gradually this led to an argument and later, to a physical fight; then, I took a laathi (stick) and hit him.*

I: *Why did you beat him (do maar-peat)?*

R: *Because I felt very hurt at being abused by him (publicly) as he walked down the street.*

I: *What did other men think about you when you hit that person?*

R: *They thought it was a good thing to do because he was abusing me publicly. In fact, some of the villagers even joined me in hitting him.*

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

I: *Have you ever been involved in any kinds of fights with anybody?*

R: *Yes, I have been involved.*

I: *What happened?*

R: *I fought with my brother for my share of the (family) property.*

I: *How many times did this happen?*

R: *About 10–12 times.*

I: *When you do all this, what do the other people think about you?*

R: *They think that I am bad.*

(Married adult man, violent, aged 25+,
Village 7, Block A)

I: *Have you ever been involved in any kind of fights in your village?*

R: *Yes, I have been involved.*

I: *Why did you do that?*

R: Somebody had borrowed certain things from my house and after six months when I went to his house to ask for those items to be returned, his family members refused to talk to me, saying that they did not have any of those things. I told them that such and such a person from your house had borrowed them from me. This resulted in a fight. This happened six years ago, about four to five times.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 29,
Village 9, Block A)

Alcohol consumption

There was sharp contrast in the reports of alcohol consumption of violent and nonviolent husbands. While only two of the ten nonviolent husbands reported consumption of alcohol, as many as eight of the eleven violent husbands reported doing so. There was also a difference in the frequency of alcohol intake between violent and nonviolent husbands who reported alcohol use, with violent husbands reporting more frequent alcohol consumption than did nonviolent husbands. For example:

I: Like you said that you drank alcohol with your friend. How many days in a week?

R: I drink two to three days in a week.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 40,
Village 15, Block A)

I: Do you consume alcohol?

R: Yes.

I: In a week, how many times do you consume alcohol?

R: I consume it daily.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 25+,
Village 7, Block A)

R: I used to drink but stopped three months ago.

I: How many days in a week did you drink?

R: What week? I only used to drink twice or thrice in a month. It never affects me; I behave just as I do right now even after I drink.

(Married young man, violent, aged 24,
Village 7, Block A)

I: You told us that you do not take alcohol?

R: Yes, I have never taken alcohol.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 27,
Village 13, Block B)

Gender role attitudes

We sought to understand married men's gender role attitudes through a range of questions. Specifically, we probed attitudes about gender equality, perceptions of a 'real' man and a 'real'

woman, roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife in the home, and attitudes about violence against women. Both violent and nonviolent husbands reported clearly demarcated gender roles, with women responsible for housework and men responsible for earning activities. Narratives about household decision-making were mixed, with most men suggesting that household decision-making typically excluded the woman. Differences between violent and nonviolent husbands were evident, however, with regard to gender role attitudes, notably perceptions of gender equality and of a 'real' man and a 'real' woman, as described below.

Perceptions of gender equality

Narratives of married men (both violent and nonviolent husbands) reveal that while almost all of them acknowledge differences between men and women in terms of their roles and responsibilities, more violent than nonviolent husbands believed that women should not have the same rights as men. For example:

I: What do you think: do men have more rights or authority than women in the house and in the village?

R: Yes, men have more rights both at home and in the village because the man does all the (outdoor) work. He goes out to earn, a woman just stays at home. All the outdoor work is done only by men.

(Married young man, violent, aged 26,
Village 14, Block B)

R: Yes, men do have more authority. This is right because they are ahead (of women) in all areas of work such as working in the fields, doing other outdoor jobs and so on.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 26,
Village 7, Block A)

R: Yes, he has more authority. The man is the head of the house. The woman is brought in at the second position. She has to stay under his control for it is because of him that she gets all the three things, namely, respect, safety and good treatment. The man also has more authority because he belongs to that village and the woman is brought from another (her natal) village. Besides, the man earns and fulfils all the household requirements. Because of these reasons, he has more authority.... I feel it is right for the man to exercise greater authority because he earns and feeds everyone.

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

R: Yes, men have more authority both at home and in the village because they have all kinds of information (about the outside world). The woman stays at home only and, therefore, she has no knowledge about (matters) outside her home. (Men also wield more authority) because

they run the family and earn. According to our village culture, this is proper because everybody thinks that if a girl is born, they will educate her till the 10th class and get her married as soon as possible. Because the women of the village are not very educated and are poorly informed, it is right for men to be given greater authority.

(Married young man, violent, aged 24,
Village 7, Block A)

In contrast, almost all nonviolent husbands believed that women should have the same rights as men; for example:

I: Do you think that a man has more rights in the family than a woman?

R: Yes, but it is not right; no matter where it happens—whether in a village or in a particular house—because both men and women should have equal rights. If the man goes out to earn money, the woman does all the household work and takes care of the family. So, both of them should have equal rights.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 34,
Village 13, Block B)

I: What do you think, are men and women equal?

R: Yes, I think men and women are equal; to start a family both of them are needed. Without either of them it would be impossible to start a family. It is not necessary that a man should have more rights than a woman. Suppose I work for three hours and my wife works the whole day in the house, then naturally, she works more than me. In that case, how can we say that men should have more rights than women? I think men do not have more rights than women, they both have equal rights. It is just that because we are husbands we are considered to have more rights than women, but from my point of view, women should have more rights than men.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 27,
Village 13, Block B)

Perceptions of a 'real' man and a 'real' woman

In-depth interviews also probed the husbands' perceptions of a 'real' man and a 'real' woman in order to understand their gender role attitudes. While the perceptions of a 'real' man were the same for almost all nonviolent respondents there was considerable variation in the responses of violent husbands. Almost all the nonviolent husbands defined a 'real' man as the one who earned for his family and took care of his wife and children. A number of nonviolent husbands also mentioned that a 'real' man was the one who ensured that his wife was happy and gave her equal rights. For example:

I: According to you, what qualities must be there in a 'real' man?

R: A 'real' man is one who gives equal rights to his wife; he takes care of his wife and her happiness.

He should fulfil the needs of his wife. He should have good thoughts and deeds. If there is a fight in the neighbourhood, he should intervene and try to stop the fight and pacify the concerned persons.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 24,
Village 14, Block B)

In contrast, responses of violent husbands were mixed and quite a few responses indicated the use of aggression and control as being the traits of a 'real' man. For example:

I: According to you who is a 'real' man?

R: (A man) who has a moustache and a stern (kadak) voice, is a 'real' man. He is one who speaks only after thinking carefully.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 26,
Village 7, Block A)

R: A man who feeds and controls his family is a 'real' man.

I: Why do you think that the man who controls his family is a 'real' man?

R: If he does so, everyone will know about him, and he and his family will be respected in the village because he controls his family.

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

I: According to you, what qualities must be there in a 'real' man?

R: A 'real' man is one who keeps his wife physically satisfied.

(Married young man, violent, aged 26,
Village 14, Block B)

Differences between violent and nonviolent husbands were even more evident with respect to their perceptions of a 'real' woman. Most of the nonviolent husbands believed that a 'real' woman took good care of the house and lived peacefully with other members of the family. One respondent also mentioned being educated as a trait of a 'real' woman. For example:

I: What all are the qualities which should be there in a 'real' woman?

R: First of all, she should be educated. She should do all the housework efficiently and if she is able to get work outside the house, she should do it to help her family financially. She should take care of the house, children and family. She should teach the children, send them to school and feed them. These are the qualities of a 'real' woman.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 42,
Village 6, Block A)

In sharp contrast to this, a number of violent husbands mentioned sexual fidelity as being an important trait of a 'real' woman. While most of them also mentioned taking proper care of the house and husband as a quality of a 'real' woman, the emphasis on sexual fidelity in the responses of a

number of violent husbands was a striking finding as this was mentioned only by two of the nonviolent respondents:

I: What all are the qualities which should be there in a 'real' woman?

R: A 'real' woman is one who has a good character, who does not keep relations with a man other than her husband and one who looks after her family.

(Married young man, violent, aged 26,
Village 14, Block B)

R: The woman who keeps physical relations only with her husband and not any other man is a 'real' woman.

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

R: A woman who has a good character and does not keep relations with any other man except her own husband is a 'real' woman.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 32,
Village 14, Block B)

Perceptions of men who commit violence against their wife

Violent and nonviolent husbands were questioned about their perceptions of men who perpetrate violence against their wife; specifically, they were asked whether such violence was acceptable, whether the wife should tolerate the violence, and whether there were any circumstances in which women deserve to be beaten. As expected, the two groups displayed differing attitudes. Most nonviolent respondents reported that violence was wrong and that there were no circumstances in which women deserved to be beaten. We note that in two narratives, non-violent husbands suggested that if the violence was mild, women should tolerate it. Typical responses included, for example:

I: According to you, should women bear violence?

R: No, they should not bear violence. Why should they bear violence?

R: No, it is not right. By committing violence a person cannot be a 'real' man. He will only be called cruel if he commits violence against a woman; not a 'real' man.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 28,
Village 13, Block B)

I: What do you think about those men who commit violence against women?

R: I feel annoyed when I think about men who commit violence against their wife. My blood boils when I see a man doing this but then I calm down and think, 'Why should I fight for someone else?'

I: When a man commits violence against a woman, should she tolerate it?

R: No, she should not tolerate it. She has a right to explain (clarify her position) to her husband if he commits violence against her; she should not tolerate it.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 34,
Village 13, Block B)

I: What do you think about those men who commit violence or torture on women?

R: It is very bad. They have no right to live.

I: Do you think that a woman should tolerate this type of behavior?

R: No, women should not tolerate it. If they bear it, then their whole life will be ruined. The woman should take help from someone; then her life will improve.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 25+,
Village 7, Block A)

I: Is there any situation where it is valid for the husband to commit violence against his wife?

R: No, violence or torture is not correct in any situation as there is no use for it. The husband should not beat his wife under any circumstances.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 42,
Village 6, Block A)

We acknowledge, however, that in narratives, nonviolent husbands who maintained that it was not right to commit violence against one's wife in any circumstance, qualified their statement by arguing that in exceptional circumstances, that is, if the wife had made 'a very big mistake', mild acts of violence—'one or two slaps'—were acceptable, thus:

I: Is there any situation where it is valid for the husband to commit violence against his wife?

R: We feel that women should suffer violence only when they have made a very big mistake; but, if they have not done anything wrong, then, for small mistakes they should not bear any kind of violence.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 27,
Village 13, Block B)

R: If the wife does not obey her husband or goes against his will, then two or three slaps are fine but beyond that it is not right.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 34,
Village 13, Block B)

Most violent husbands also believed that perpetrating violence is wrong, but six of the 11 qualified this statement, indicating that it was acceptable and that women should tolerate violence if women had 'made a mistake.' Typical responses included:

I: What are your views towards men who do violence on women?

R: One should not do violence against women because if a woman is able to understand merely by explaining (her mistake) to her, she should not be beaten up. Men generally get angry, that is why sometimes they beat their wife. But they should not do so.

I: Should a wife bear the torture if she is beaten up?

R: She should bear it because she is beaten up only if she is at fault.

(Married young man, violent, aged 26,
Village 14, Block B)

I: What do you think about those men who are violent with their wife?

R: If the wife does wrong and the husband hits her, then she should bear it; but if the husband hits her when she has not made any mistake, she should not tolerate it.

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

R: The man who hits his wife for no reason is wrong. If the wife does not obey her husband, he will get angry and it will lead to hitting. She should be beaten because the husband hits his wife only when she makes a mistake such as not obeying (his instructions) or not giving him food etc on time.

(Married young man, violent, aged 24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: It is not right because if he beats his wife without her making any mistake, it does not show his manliness.

I: Do you think that a woman should tolerate this type of behavior?

R: Yes, if the woman has made a mistake, she will have to tolerate it (being beaten).

(Married adult man, violent, aged 29,
Village 9, Block A)

Violent husbands gave examples of the kinds of transgressions for which a man is justified in beating his wife; for example, if she repeated an action that displeases her husband, if she talked to someone on the street, if she showed disrespect to her in-laws or if she had extra-marital relations, men believed it was acceptable to perpetrate violence against her. For example:

I: Are there any cases where it is correct for the husband to use violence on his wife?

R: If the wife is told to do something and she does not do so or if she does something that is just the opposite, then hitting is justified.

(Married young man, violent, aged 24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: In some situations it is right to use violence against one's wife. Sometimes, situations do arise when it becomes necessary to beat her. For example, if she does not listen to anything told to her and does not understand even after explaining once or twice, then I get angry. In such a situation, I have to beat her.

(Married young man, violent, aged 26,
Village 14, Block B)

R: If the wife makes a mistake, then first you must make her understand (why she should not do so); if she does not understand, then the husband should hit her. For example, if the wife is walking down the road and she talks to someone or winks at someone and I see it, then hitting her is right. Or, if the wife keeps relations with another man, then too hitting is justified.

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

R: If she does not talk to her husband properly or shouts at him, then it is right for him to hit her. Or, if she talks rudely to him, then too hitting her is right.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 40,
Village 15, Block A)

R: Sometimes, there are certain situations in which a husband has to beat his wife. If I am living with my parents and my wife abuses my mother, and I slap her twice or thrice for doing so, there is nothing wrong in it.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 32,
Village 14, Block B)

Married life

Questions were posed that explored the extent to which both violent and nonviolent husbands had been acquainted with their wife prior to their wedding, whether the respondents contributed to housework and childcare, the role of women and men in household decision-making, and the respondents' satisfaction with their married life. Surprisingly, no differences were observed in these aspects of married life between violent and nonviolent husbands. For example, the majority of husbands, both violent and nonviolent, reported that they had no acquaintance with their wife prior to the wedding and almost all reported that their marriage had been arranged by their parents. Hardly anyone reported that he contributed to housework or childcare; a few suggested that they did so in unusual circumstances, such as, for example, if their wife was unwell. Moreover, the large majority reported that it was the husband who made household decisions with regard to such issues as spending money, or whether the wife visits her natal home or goes outside the home; most reported, however, that if the wife was earning, she made decisions on how her earnings would be spent. And finally, all the respondents reported that they were happy in their married life.

Perceptions of the benefits of being nonviolent

Also evident from the narratives of nonviolent husbands was the value they placed on peace and marital harmony, their self-confidence about their role as nonviolent husbands and the respect that their nonviolent status commanded in their communities. Violent husbands, in contrast, appeared more mixed; several expressed traditional norms of masculinity, suggesting that their ability to 'control' their wife through violence had a positive impact on their reputation in their community but, at the same time, acknowledging that many men in their community mocked or criticised them for perpetrating marital violence.

Nonviolent husbands' priority on peace and harmony

Nonviolent husbands also discussed the benefits they perceived from being nonviolent with their wife. Almost all of the respondents stated that the lack of violence meant peace and harmony in the family. Some of them also described other advantages: stronger husband-wife bonds and a well-behaved wife, the ability to set a good example for children, and lack of tension. For example:

I: What do you think are the benefits of being a nonviolent husband?

R: There are many benefits. If the husband behaves nicely with his wife then the wife will also behave nicely with him. If the husband is violent with his wife then it is possible that she also may behave like that. By not hitting your wife, life remains joyful.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 22,
Village 15, Block A)

R: It is beneficial as our family is always happy. It increases our bonding as husband and wife. Whenever I go out to work, I do not have any tension because I am confident that my wife will take care of the household and my children properly.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 25+,
Village 13, Block B)

R: I have the benefit of being a nonviolent husband—there is peace in my home and there are no differences between me and my wife. I have respect in society and from others.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 34,
Village 13, Block B)

R: There are many benefits if no violence is committed in the house. There are no disturbances or differences in the house and the family lives peacefully. If you do not have fights in your house

you can eat on time, you can sleep on time and you can live peacefully in your own home. So, these are all the benefits of not being violent. If there are no fights or violence in the house, it will also have a good impact on the children as they will be kept away from such unpleasant things.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 42,
Village 6, Block A)

Nonviolent husbands' perceptions of the respect that marital non-violence commands

In the course of IDIs, violent and nonviolent husbands were asked whether their behaviour was common in their village and how others in the community reacted to their behaviour, that is, whether others looked up to them for their behaviour towards their wife.

All violent husbands believed that marital violence was common in their village, but were mixed about whether community members approved of their violent behaviour (six of 11 respondents) or mocked and disapproved of their behaviour (five of 11 respondents). For example, several violent husbands claimed that their communities approved of the fact that they 'kept their wife under control' as suggested by the following excerpts:

I: Like you said that you have slapped your wife or hit her, forcibly had sex with her, and insulted her; do you think that your behaviour with your wife is like that of other men in the village?

R: Yes, it is just like that.

I: What do your neighbours and other men think about you as a result of this behaviour of yours?

R: They think well of me. People say that I am right, that I keep my wife under control.

(Married young man, violent, aged 19,
Village 13, Block B)

I: Because of such behaviour, what do other men or your neighbours think about you?

R: They judge who is at fault in a particular situation. If my wife has made a mistake and I beat her or scold her for that, the villagers do not consider it to be wrong. They think that it is right to beat or scold your wife if she does something wrong.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 32,
Village 14, Block B)

Almost as many violent husbands believed that their communities disapproved or mocked their violent behaviour; for example:

I: What do your neighbours or other men think of you?

R: All this (disapproval by community) does not happen only with me, it happens with other men of the village also; it happens in most families.

R: They think. 'What kind of a man is he? He fights with his wife He shouts perpetually when he is at home.'

(Married young man, violent, aged 24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: They make fun of me.

(Married adult man, violent, aged 32,
Village 14, Block B)

In contrast, nonviolent husbands suggested that there were indeed many men who did not commit violence against their wife. Moreover, in eight of the 10 cases, nonviolent husbands believed that they had community approval for their nonviolent behaviour; indeed, that the community envied them for their harmonious marital relations and consulted them occasionally about family problems. Clearly, nonviolent husbands felt that the community supported and looked up to them for their non-violence, and did not maintain that they were in a minority. For example:

I: You told me that you haven't slapped your wife, beaten her or done violence on her. So, how many men would there be who don't beat their wives?

R: Yes; there are other men also. There are many people who are like me who do not torture their wife or beat her.

I: You haven't beaten your wife ever, what do other men and neighbours think about you?

R: They think that both I and my wife are very good because we never fight with each other. They think that we live with a lot of love and affection. They think that we understand each other well and that they should also behave like us and live harmoniously like us.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 27,
Village 13, Block B)

I: Do other members of the family and your friends think that you must keep your wife in control?

R: No, I have never heard anyone say that they think so about me. They think that here is a nice person who does not hit his wife.

I: Does anyone make fun of you for this?

R: No, nobody makes fun of me.

I: Do people take your advice for their domestic issues?

R: Yes, they do take my advice. There are some people who call me and take my advice. Sometimes when there is a fight between husband and wife, they call me to make them understand (resolve the problem).

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 22,
Village 15, Block A)

I: You haven't beaten your wife ever, what do other men and neighbours think about you?

R: They support me and they appreciate that I never fight with my wife and never beat her. They consider me a gentleman and think that they should behave like me.

(Married adult man, nonviolent, aged 34,
Village 13, Block B)

R: They think that we both (husband and wife) are very good because we do not fight with each other and have a very good life.

I: Does anyone think that you should keep your wife in control?

R: No, no one thinks like that.

I: Do they make fun of you for this?

R: Some men do make fun of me and call me a slave of my wife.

(Married young man, nonviolent, aged 24,
Village 14, Block B)

D. Summary

This chapter focuses on identifying the characteristics of positive deviants, that is, nonviolent boyfriends and husbands among unmarried and married study participants, respectively.

Unmarried youth, typically described positive deviants, that is, young men aged 15–24 who never perpetrated violence against their girlfriend, as educated, intelligent, understanding and loving, and, more specifically, those who did not consume alcohol.

The characteristics of nonviolent husbands that is, husbands who never perpetrated violence against their wife, were probed in both FGDs and IDIs. An analysis of insights from IDIs underscores the similarities and differences in attitudes, experiences and beliefs of married men in the study settings who were violent and nonviolent towards their wife. Findings suggest that, in many ways, violent and nonviolent husbands reported similar characteristics: both reported gendered socialisation and close family relations, most had witnessed community or family violence while growing up, most had friends and family to whom they could turn in times of difficulty, most reported traditional roles in the family with men taking little responsibility for housework and childcare and women participating infrequently in household decisions, and finally, most reported happy married lives.

Differences did however emerge. In terms of socialisation experiences, despite the fact that both groups had grown up in families that imposed more restrictions on girls than boys, nonviolent husbands were considerably more likely than their violent counterparts to report that while growing up their sisters had as much freedom as they did to express themselves and participate in household matters. Again, during their growing-up years, nonviolent husbands were also less likely to report peer pressure than did violent husbands, and were mildly less likely to have experienced violence as a form of discipline.

In terms of social networks and participation in community violence, nonviolent husbands appeared to have a larger peer network than violent husbands, and their interactions with their peers were less likely to include alcohol consumption. They were also less likely to be involved in physical fights in their communities than were violent husbands.

Differences in alcohol consumption clearly distinguished violent and nonviolent husbands. Indeed, not only did far more violent than nonviolent husbands report consuming alcohol, but there was also a suggestion that among those who did consume alcohol, the frequency of consumption was greater among the violent.

Gender role attitudes of violent and nonviolent husbands were also noticeable, with violent husbands far more likely than nonviolent husbands to display unequal gender attitudes including perceptions of whether a woman should have equal rights as a man, perceptions of a 'real' man and a 'real' woman, and perceptions of the acceptability of marital violence. Indeed, violent husbands were much more likely than the nonviolent to believe that their wife deserved to be beaten in some circumstances, for example, if she disobeyed her husband or made a 'mistake.'

Finally, also distinguishing the nonviolent husbands from the violent was the value they placed on peace and marital harmony, their perceptions of their role as nonviolent husbands and the respect that their nonviolent status commanded in their community. Violent husbands both justified their violent behaviour as depicting traditional notions of masculinity and recognised that they were criticised and mocked in their community for perpetrating marital violence.

Focus group discussions also shed light on perceived differences expressed by both women and men between violent and nonviolent husbands. As in IDIs, married women and men in FGDs reiterated that nonviolent husbands were more likely than violent husbands to hold egalitarian attitudes about gender relations and women's rights, and less likely to consume alcohol. In addition, they suggested that nonviolent husbands were more likely than violent husbands to display maturity and intelligence, were more educated, held deeper bonds of affection with their wife, and, finally, were more likely than violent husbands to communicate with ('explain' to) their wife.

A final objective of the study was to understand the views of study participants on the way forward to address violence against women and girls. In this endeavour we explored through FGDs with married women and men as well as unmarried girls and boys, the extent of awareness about and use of existing structures and services that support women experiencing violence such as, helplines, short-stay homes and programmes run by NGOs working on preventing violence against women and girls. We followed this by encouraging study participants to recommend programmes that should be implemented in their settings to reduce violence against women and girls. The findings from these FGDs are presented in this chapter.

A. Awareness and use of available programmes

Awareness of existing programmes, notably, helplines, short-stay homes and NGO programmes, was limited among study participants, and few reported awareness of anyone who had used any such existing service. While differences were mild, married men were more likely to have heard of such services than married women or the unmarried. Unmarried young people in all five FGDs and married women in all eight FGDs responded in a similar way; none had heard of any such programme and all reported that no such services were available to women in their settings. For example:

I: Do you have any information about any programme that is already working to reduce violence against women and girls like some NGO or helpline or short-stay home?

R: No, it (such a programme) is not there.

R: Here, we do not have any such organisations.

R: No, I do not have any such information.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

I: Is there any NGO programme to reduce violence against women and girls in your village?

R: No, there is no such programme in our village.

I: Is there any such helpline from where a woman can call and ask for help?

R: No, there is nothing like that here.

I: Do you have any information about rehabilitation centres?

R: No, we do not have any information about any such centre. (In chorus)

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

R: There is nothing (helpline, short-stay home) here. (Mixed responses)

R: We do not have any such information. (In chorus)

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

R: No, there is no programme here.

I: Is there any NGO or any other institution?

R: No, there is none. (In chorus)

I: Is there any helpline?

R: No, there is nothing like that here. (In chorus)

I: Is there any short-stay home?

R: No, there is nothing like that here. (In chorus)

R: No one has any kind of information here.

R: There is no such service here.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

In five of the eight FGDs with married men, the responses were similar to those of married women; in three, the responses were mixed with some men reporting awareness and others denying it. For example:

I: Is there any programme that is being run by some NGO or government to reduce violence against women and girls?

R: No, we do not have any information about such a programme.

I: Have you people heard about helplines?

R: Yes, we have heard about them.

R: It is a facility that helps people. It is at many places now.

R: A woman can take help from there in case she is suffering from violence.

I: Have you heard about a short-stay home or a centre that supports women?

R: No, we have not heard about it.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 3, Block A)

I: I want to ask you if you have any information about any programme that does work for women's violence?

R: No, I do not know about any such programme.

R: Manavadhikar Aayog is such an organisation working for women's violence; it puts a full stop on it (violence) but there is no such programme in our village.

R: We do not know of any NGO of this kind and no such work is going on in our village.

R: I too do not know of any helpline; there is no such facility here.

R: There is also no facility of a short-stay home where a woman who is thrown out of the house by her husband or other members of her husband's family at night, could go and stay. There is no such facility in any village around here.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

In one FGD, married men were aware of the helpline and reported efforts in their village to enable a woman to use the facility; their narratives suggest that men were threatened by these efforts and seem to have blocked its progress. For example:

I: Do you know any helpline that runs a programme to prevent violence against women?

R: There is one in Patna. (Two respondents)

R: There is a women's association that records the complaints of women and helps them.

I: Do the women of your village take help?

R: No, the women from our village do not go for help.

R: There is a woman in our village who got associated with it (a helpline) and took Rs. 20 and prepared an application card. Whenever there was a fight in the village, she used to take the matter to the District Magistrate's office and get the case registered. She once told the office about a woman who had been raped. When the village people came to know about it, they went against the helpline worker and subsequently, she stopped working here.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

B. Programming for violence against women and girls

In the FGDs, study participants discussed the kinds of programmes that may help combat violence against women and girls. A range of suggestions emerged, including alcohol

control among men, economic empowerment of women, addressing the needs of young people and particularly, girls' access to education, building women's and girls' agency, and changing norms that condone violence against women and girls through awareness-building and sensitisation programmes including about the law, and more stringent enforcement of laws protecting women and girls who suffer violence. We note that while many of the programmes recommended by all four groups (unmarried girls and boys, married women and men) were similar, the key activities suggested differed somewhat. The unmarried argued, to a significant extent, for programmes that will empower girls (education, sensitising parents and so on). Among the married, while women argued strongly for alcohol control programmes for men, men vigorously supported livelihood skills-building and employment generation programmes for women. Each recommendation is described below.

Reducing alcohol misuse among men

The need to control alcohol consumption among men was recognised as a vital programme intervention in most FGDs with both the unmarried and the married. Key ways of controlling alcohol that were discussed included controlling the sale of alcohol, sensitising men about women's rights and the law, and punishing men who abuse alcohol.

Unmarried young people described their recommendations regarding alcohol management programmes as follows:

What kind of programme would be a good thing? What might help prevent violence against girls?

R: There should be restrictions on the manufacture of alcohol.

R: Manufacture of alcohol in the village should be stopped. Fewer people will drink if less alcohol is produced (in the village).

R: Those who drink should be made to understand (the adverse effects of alcohol).

R: Medicines should be made available that dissuade people from drinking.

R: They (men who drink) should be made to understand that one can work properly only if one has a clear mind.

R: A law should be passed to punish those who get drunk and commit violence.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

R: Alcohol shops should be closed so that men do not abuse (women) after drinking.

R: By closing alcohol shops, violence against women will decrease by 50 percent.

R: Because of alcohol, there is more violence against women; by closing its sale such violence will decrease by more than 50 percent.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

Married women in every FGD highlighted the links between alcohol consumption and marital violence and suggested strong action to combat alcohol misuse. For example:

- R: Alcohol manufacturing units (bhattis) should be shut down. (Mixed responses)*
- R: Neither will anyone drink alcohol nor will there be any violence (if bhattis are closed).*
- R: Violence generally starts because of alcohol.*
- R: It (alcohol intake) should be stopped forcibly. (Mixed responses)*
- R: It should be stopped by making men understand. (Mixed responses)*
- R: An organisation should be formed that will punish men who drink; this will make them afraid to consume alcohol.*
- R: First of all, bhattis should be shut down.*
- R: Gambling should also be prohibited. (Mixed responses)*
- R: They (men who drink) should be jailed.*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

Married men in all but one FGD argued in a similar way, and several men's FGDs focused on both alcohol and drug abuse. Like women, men also argued that alcohol management must be of high priority. In one dissenting group, however, men suggested that alcohol was an effective relaxant for men and that without such a relaxant, they would be unable to work. For example, men responded as follows:

- R: You should include something in your programme to make men stop drinking and taking drugs. Violence against women occurs mostly because of intoxication; if there is no intoxication/addiction, then the man will have greater ability to control himself and will not commit violence against his wife. (Multiple responses)*
- R: Due to alcohol and drugs, men do not have the ability to tolerate the slightest thing and start hitting (their wife) on petty issues. If there is no alcohol, then, most definitely, love between husband and wife will tend to be strong and fights will not occur; in turn, violence too will not occur.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

- R: You should keep this (alcohol management) at the top of your priorities. It is of utmost importance.*
- R: If this (alcohol availability) is controlled, it would be the best solution. If this habit of men is stopped, there would not be any fights or violence of any kind (in our homes).*
- R: All intoxicating substances should be banned completely.*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: No, programmes should not be carried out to reduce alcohol use.

I: Why not?

R: For some men, alcohol is a kind of medicine. In our village, people usually go to Patna or other places outside the village to work. When they return home, they are very tired and if they do not get any alcohol, they will not be able to sleep and consequently, they will not be able to go to work the next day.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

Providing livelihood skills training and income generating opportunities for women and girls

In earlier chapters, study participants suggested that one reason for violence against women was their economic dependence on their husband and marital family. Hence, many of them argued that providing women livelihood skills and income generating opportunities may be a key strategy to reduce violence against women. The view was that a woman who earns, commands respect in her marital family; consequently, not only will her status improve but her income will protect her from violence. Thus, in all the FGDs, with the unmarried and married alike, participants called for skills training and work opportunities for women.

Unmarried participants reported as follows, highlighting traditional skills such as tailoring, weaving and crafts:

What kind of programme would be a good thing? What might help prevent violence against girls?

- R: Yes, there should be something (some programme); like a job or something.*
- R: They (government agencies, NGOs) should teach something (a livelihood skill).*
- R: One can earn by stitching and weaving.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A).

- R: They (girls) should be taught stitching, embroidery etc.*
- R: There should be a group of around 10 women who should be given information about small scale industries so that they can participate in such activities and earn some money.*
- R: They (girls) should be taught how to make fans and brooms.*
- I: Do you think, by doing this, the violence on them would reduce?*
- R: Yes, it would reduce.*
- R: When the woman earns, the man will not commit violence against her because he is aware that she brings some money home. But, if the man is earning and the woman (wife) is dependent on him, he thinks that she must conduct herself*

*according to his wishes only; (therefore, a girl/
woman must be taught a livelihood skill)*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

Married women called for training in similar skills, largely those that would enable them to generate income while working from home. In exceptional cases, they cited a desire for skills that would require work outside the home, such as, computer training and employment opportunities outside the home. For example:

R: Some institution should be opened in which they (women) can work as a peon.

R: They (women) should be taught stitching. (Several responses)

R: They should be taught how to make wool.

R: They should be taught weaving.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: Some women are very poor, they will get help (by getting livelihood training).

R: Stitching centres should be opened where they (women) can earn a living.

R: They (women) should be taught to make 'papad' (a thin, disc-shaped cracker, an accompaniment to an Indian meal).

R: They should be taught to make incense sticks.

R: There is no factory nearby (where women can get work).

R: They cannot go out; so, they have to do small things (at home) to earn money.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

Married men were less likely than married women and the unmarried to list the kinds of skills in which women may be trained; their narratives focused on the benefits of income generating opportunities for women, including freedom from marital violence. Men in several FGDs attributed violence to men's inability to meet the financial demands of their wife, and believed that a woman who earned money would be more likely to meet her own and her children's needs with her earnings and less likely to demand money from her husband. Men's responses included the following:

R: Illiterate women can be taught stitching and literate women can be taught computer skills. Apart from that, they can be taught any other small skill.

I: Do you think that if they are taught something, then the violence happening on them will decrease?

R: Yes, definitely there will be a reduction. When she learns something and earns some money herself, she will not be subjected to violence because then

she will be taking care of her family and children. Why would the husband beat her then?

R: Look, in our village there is more violence because of serious financial problems. If there are no financial problems, there will be no violence too.

R: You first try to make women self-reliant; if unemployment is low then, most definitely, the violence happening on them will also stop.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: Yes, you must give some skills training because if the woman learns a skill she will use whatever she earns from it to fulfil her children's and her own needs and also give some help to her family. Her family members will be happy and violence against her will also become less.

R: By doing this (skills training to women), 90 percent of the violence will decrease.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

R: If a woman earns something, it will be helpful for us men, and I think, because of this, violence will also reduce.

R: Because if they (women) go to work, they will not have much time at home; so, there will be no chance for any dispute or argument (with the husband). Therefore, they (husband and wife) will always have love for each other. They mostly have fights because they are together for 24 hours.

R: If she (woman) earns some money, then we (men) will tend to be less dominating because we will be aware that she is also earning. Hence, violence against women will surely reduce.

R: You can set up small cottage industries like candle making, joss stick making etc. in our village (for women).

R: You can also make them (women) learn stitching and weaving work. By starting such activities for women, violence will reduce, for sure.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: Women should be taught some small skill for self-employment which they can use at home to earn some money and help their family.

R: If women earn, they will be able to bring up their children properly and also fulfil their own needs.

R: If she herself is earning and feeding her children, then why will her husband be violent with her? There will not be any kind of violence against her.

R: Violence against the woman will decline. If she is earning, why should she suffer violence committed by anybody? (In chorus)

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

Finally, while the majority of married women and men emphasised the need to provide training and employment opportunities to women, in one-half of all married women's FGDs, women argued for the provision of skills training and employment for men, suggesting that such opportunities would reduce household poverty and related financial tensions as also men's alcohol consumption, and thereby, reduce violence against women.

Addressing the needs of young people

Unmarried young people focused, in addition, on a number of issues that would reduce violence against girls in particular, such as, for example, engaging communities and parents to understand the needs of girls and impose fewer restrictions on them, enhance educational opportunities for girls, provide a safe space for girls, and punish perpetrators of violence. Many young people also argued for higher education institutions to be located closer to girls' homes so that more girls would be permitted to complete their education, the provision of livelihood skills training that would empower girls and raise their earning potential and status in the family, and even classes in self-defence. For example:

I: What kind of programme will do good work or will be good for girls?

R: People of the village should understand the issues of girls.

R: For example, if there is a lot of hitting and beating of girls, then they should carry out an investigation.

R: They (programmes) should be undertaken that can stop it (violence). Some action should be taken; they (programmes) should make parents understand and open a centre for girls (who suffer violence).

R: We should be provided education. If we are educated, we will know everything (our rights/how to prevent violence, what action to take if violence is perpetrated).

R: A college should be constructed nearby. Now, it is very far. (Mixed responses)

R: All facilities should be available in the village—a school, college and more.

R: It will be good if stitching and weaving training centres are nearby.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 1, Block A)

R: They (programmes) should inform our guardians (about the needs and rights of girls).

R: They (programmes) should explain to them (parents/elders).

R: (Only) then will they (parents/elders) understand (our needs and rights).

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

R: There should be a group of 8–10 individuals who reside in the village itself and who have knowledge (about girls'/young people's issues). These individuals should go around the village and make people understand young people's issues.

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

For the most part, issues relating to young people were not specifically raised in FGDs among the married. However, in one FGD among married adult women, participants suggested a focus on boys' education and substance misuse, pointing to a link between these influences in adolescence with perpetration of marital violence in the future, as follows:

I: What kind of programme would be a good thing? What might help prevent violence against women?

R: Boys start having tobacco at a very young age and are not able to study. If they study, they will behave responsibly and hence, will not commit violence against women (when he grows up).

R: If a boy is educated, he will not commit violence against women when he grows up.

R: Their (educated boys') family and home will grow (prosper) because they will be involved in some work.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

Changing norms that condone violence against women and girls

In all the FGDs, participants recommended the implementation of programmes that change norms that condone violence against women and girls, and sensitise communities to acknowledge that committing violence against women and girls is wrong. Although most participants suggested that such programmes be directed at men and husbands, others suggested that women and girls must be sensitised as well. Recommendations were typically general, with both the unmarried and the married calling for meetings that would 'explain' to people. For example:

I: According to you, which kind of programme to reduce violence against women and girls will be good and effective?

R: (A programme) that would make people understand (that violence against girls and women is wrong).

R: A panchayat should be seated that makes people understand this.

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 8, Block B)

R: Meetings should be arranged (to sensitise people about this issue).

R: Programmes that explain things (that violence against girls and women is wrong).

R: *Setting up an organisation to stop this practice (violence against girls and women).*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

R: *A programme that will explain to husbands (that violence against women and girls is an offence).*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 6, Block A)

R: *A programme that will explain to society (that it is wrong to commit violence against women and girls).*

R: *A programme that will explain to people who torture or commit violence against women and girls (that doing so is an offence).*

R: *A programme that explains to husbands (that it is an offence to abuse their wife).*

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *Meetings should be conducted in which someone will talk to people about this issue (violence against women and girls).*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 6, Block A)

In two FGDs with married men, more specific suggestions were made such as to build a women's group and to change attitudes using drama; for example:

I: *What kind of programme would do nice work or would be nice to reduce violence against women and girls?*

R: *(It would be nice to) form a group of women and collectively bring about awareness that one should not commit violence against girls and women.*

R: *A programme to bring about awareness among both women and men.*

R: *An awareness programme should be started in the village to help women (who experience violence).*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 11, Block B)

R: *It (the awareness programme) should be in the form of a drama. It should aim at reducing violence against women. The drama troupe should go to all the villages and stage such dramas.*

R: *To stop women's violence, you people (interview team) should make men understand that committing violence against women is wrong because a woman is also human and has as much right to live as a man. So, why should violence be perpetrated against any woman? When men begin to understand this, then violence will stop by itself.*

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

In several instances, FGD participants used the example of the FGD to suggest the need for more 'meetings' of this nature that highlighted an issue of importance. Indeed, they noted that such FGDs represented the first occasion on which anyone had discussed issues of violence against women and girls with them, as the following narratives indicate:

R: *Now, for the first time, you people are talking about all this (violence against women and girls) here.*

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: *You are the first person who has come here to talk to us about it (violence against women and girls). Prior to this, nothing like this has ever happened.*

R: *It is our privilege to have you in our village to talk to us (about violence against women and girls).*

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

Raising awareness of the law and women's legal rights

In the FGDs, we further probed participants' perceptions of the usefulness of programmes to raise awareness of women's legal rights. In most discussions, participants suggested that equipping communities with such awareness would both empower women about their options in case of violence, and sensitise men to the potential repercussions for them of perpetrating violence against women. We note that this recommendation was not raised spontaneously in any discussion. For example:

I: *Should we also include things like awareness of the law among men and women and the punishment for such violent acts?*

R: *Yes, they should be taught this.*

R: *They should know the law. (Mixed responses)*

R: *They should be made aware of the law.*

R: *So that they can get those people (the perpetrators of violence) punished.*

(Unmarried girls aged 15–24,
Village 9, Block A)

R: *Yes, they should be made aware of the law also.*

R: *If a woman wants to take any action against the violence that she is suffering, she needs to have information about it. Without this information, she cannot speak against it.*

R: *If a woman has knowledge, only then will her confidence increase (that she can do something about her suffering).*

(Unmarried boys aged 15–24,
Village 5, Block A)

R: *They (programmes) should teach (women) about the law.*

R: They (women) should be taught about (the law in) rape cases also.

R: Then they (perpetrators) can be immediately punished for rape.

(Married young women aged 15–24,
Village 7, Block A)

I: Should we also include a programme to make men and women aware of the laws relating to punishing men who do violence to their women?

R: Yes, they should be told about the law. (In chorus)

R: Yes, they should also be educated (about the law). (In chorus)

R: It will be good if you explain it fully.

R: Yes, they should be educated. (In chorus)

R: Yes, so that the people who commit violence can be punished.

(Married adult women aged 25–50,
Village 13, Block B)

R: Yes, you must do this so that women get to know what their rights are, what they should do and from where they can get help. If a woman knows these things, then she can get the man who is violent with her punished and the violence that she has been suffering will become less.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 12, Block B)

I: Should we also give men and women education of the law in our programme so that women know how to take the help of the law?

R: Yes, they should also get education of the law.

R: Men and women should be introduced to the law so that they (women) know what their rights are and what they can do to get help.

R: A woman should know that if someone wrongs her, she can use the law. She should have all this information. I feel that if this knowledge is given to her, then definitely violence against women will stop or be reduced.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 12, Block B)

In at least three FGDs with married men, participants' views were mixed, with some arguing strongly against raising awareness of women's legal rights and options. As the narratives below suggest, men in these FGDs expressed concern that such awareness would threaten men's perceived entitlements and power over their wife; some suggested that it would only exacerbate violence. Indeed, it was apparent from these narratives that some men feared that teaching women about their rights would have repercussions for men. For example:

I: Should we give men and women education of the law so that women can punish the violent man through the law?

R: Education of any kind is not useless; that is why education may be given but, at the same time, it should not make women start taking the help of the law for small things just because she knows her rights and what she can do. Educating women about the law is not bad but if a small problem occurs at home, then one (the husband and wife) must try to solve it together with love. The wife should not run to the police (for every little problem) because this would worsen the situation at home; for then, violence against women will stop and violence against men will start!

R: Education about the law should be given, they (women) must be told about the law and the help they can take.

R: Education about the law should not be given. Instead, it is better if matters concerning the village are solved within the village. Instead of approaching the police or court, one should first take the help of the 'panchayat' or neighbours to make the (violent) man understand his fault.

R: It is alright if you give education about the law and it is also okay if you do not.

(Married young men aged 15–24,
Village 10, Block B)

R: (Everyone together) No, this should not be done; if this is done then no woman will treat her husband as a husband. She will do whatever she feels like doing. If they (women) get to know about the law, then they will go and complain about their husband; they will complain against their husband even if he does not torture them.

R: In your programme, it is not right to tell them about the law.

R: What does the law do anyway? It complicates matters; they (lawyers) take money and do not do anything.

R: If men and women are told about the law, it will not reduce violence; in fact, it will worsen the situation because if women start going to the police station, no solution will be found in 95 percent of the cases. Instead, the police will misbehave with them (women) and talk to them in a bad way.

R: Police officers in the police station do not behave properly with women.

R: I think that by making them (women) aware of the law, we will not reduce the problem; in fact, we will only increase it.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 2, Block A)

R: If women get to know about the law, then the violence on men will increase.

R: It is not good to give them (women and men) legal awareness. Instead, they should be told how to live harmoniously in the society.

R: In all the villages, people should be told about the culture of our country so that it is not spoilt. Society should be more aware of Indian culture and not the law.

(Married adult men aged 25–50,
Village 3, Block A)

C. Summary

In short, study participants reported that there were no programmes available in their villages that focused on

violence prevention or support to women who experience violence. They advocated four broad programme directions that they believe have potential for reducing violence: reducing misuse of alcohol and other intoxicating substances among men and boys; empowering women and girls through livelihood skills training and income generation opportunities; changing gender norms, including those held by parents relating to the gendered socialisation of girls and boys, and raising women's and men's awareness of women's rights and legal options. The issue of raising awareness of women's rights and legal protection was clearly a sensitive one among married men, and there was less unanimity across all the 21 FGDs about the need for programmes on these issues than on any other recommendation made.

This chapter highlights the lessons learned for programming from the findings drawn from our study on the experiences and perspectives of unmarried and married women and men with regard to gender-based violence. We summarise below the key findings and priority areas for action to reduce the incidence of violence and the perceived threat of violence among women and girls.

A. Summary

Traditional norms of masculinity and femininity persist

Wide differences exist in the perceptions of study participants regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men, and the power of men over women, displayed in terms of their perceptions of a 'real' man and 'real' woman, and a 'good' husband.

Key features of a 'real' man and a 'good' husband include exercise of power over the wife

Both women and men expressed traditional notions of masculinity, with 'real' men described as fulfilling the roles and responsibilities within the family traditionally assigned to men, endowed with physical and intellectual traits and capabilities, and fulfilling the roles and responsibilities outside the family. While most study participants agreed that a 'real' man would not perpetrate violence against his wife, many agreed that if disobeyed or provoked, a 'real' man should indeed "control" or perpetrate violence against his wife. Both women and men, albeit in somewhat different ways, perceived the characteristics of a 'good' husband to include three key features: maintaining the household and meeting his wife's basic requirements for running the household; maintaining a close and affectionate relationship with his wife; and finally, neither abusing alcohol nor perpetrating marital violence.

Key features of a 'real' woman focus on her role as a care provider and submission to her husband

In contrast to the expansive description of the myriad characteristics of a real man, the descriptions of the

characteristics of a real woman were brief, gendered and centred around the roles traditionally assigned to women as a wife, a daughter-in-law and a mother: caring for her home and children, and serving and obeying her husband and his parents. In a few cases, a 'real' woman was defined as one who is able to bear children, one who is sexually faithful to her husband, and one who can satisfy her husband sexually.

Defining violence against women and the limits of acceptability

Unmarried girls perceive violence against women and girls to be far more unacceptable than unmarried boys

Unmarried girls defined violence against girls to encompass physical violence as well as acts of gender discrimination and violation of their rights. Unmarried boys focused more directly on physical and sexual violence, articulating verbal harassment, unwanted touch, physical violence and rape as aspects of violence against girls. While girls described key perpetrators to include boys as well as parents, boys' definitions focused on the violence perpetrated by boys on girls. Attitudes about the acceptability of violence also differed considerably between girls and boys. Most girls maintained that violence—provoked or unprovoked—was not justified in any circumstances and advocated, rather, verbal resolution of conflict. In contrast, in not a single FGD with boys was this attitude expressed; indeed, in all the FGDs, boys argued that violence was an appropriate way of responding to any perceived transgression by women and girls.

Married women and men recognise the physical, emotional and sexual dimensions of violence, and acknowledge marital violence as acceptable under some conditions

In contrast to the unmarried, the married defined violence in physical, emotional and to a lesser extent, sexual terms, typically in terms of violence perpetrated by a husband against his wife. Physical violence was defined as encompassing beating, pushing and so on as well as attempts to murder, burning, choking, strangulating and poisoning of women. Slapping was not spontaneously mentioned as a form of violence against women and girls, although when probed,

many did agree that if unprovoked, it would be a form of violence. Emotional violence was described as taunting the wife, starving her, withholding money from her and deserting her. Forced sex was rarely mentioned as a form of violence against women. Among the married, just a minority maintained that violence is unacceptable under any condition, while the majority suggested that it was acceptable under three broad conditions: if the husband was provoked, that is, if the wife did not follow his instructions; if the violence was not severe; and if the violence was perpetrated occasionally.

Forced sex is defined as rape if perpetrated by a boyfriend, but not if perpetrated by a husband

With regard to the acceptability of forced sex within pre-marital relationships, the unmarried perceived, unanimously, that physically forced sex constitutes rape. Perceptions of the married about marital rape and women's right to refuse unwanted sex within marriage were mixed. In most FGDs, women and men argued that women did not have the right to reject their husband's sexual advances. In a few FGDs, particularly among married young women, some participants argued for women's right to refuse sex. Even women who argued that women had the right to refuse sex, however, suggested that this was rarely feasible in practice, given the fear of reprisal on the one hand and the husband seeking sex elsewhere on the other. Forcing sex on women on the wedding night, moreover, was seen as men's right in the majority of FGDs, although in some instances, participants did argue that women had the right to decide or that the man had the right but should be more understanding of his wife's feelings. Irrespective of whether the participants believed that forcing sex constituted violence, not a single participant agreed that forced sex within marriage constituted rape; indeed, the common perception was that rape could only be perpetrated by men other than the husband.

Experiences and fear of violence among the unmarried

Sexual harassment of girls is common and takes many forms

Findings confirm that unmarried girls (and rarely, unmarried boys) do face violence and the threat of violence. Not only did study participants acknowledge that young people grew up witnessing family violence in the form of their father beating their mother, but also that physical, sexual and emotional violence against girls was quite common. Common perpetrators included boyfriends as well as family members and others in and around the study villages. As far as intimate partner violence is concerned, although romantic relationships between girls and boys in the study villages may be rare, unmarried girls and boys were aware that violence did take place in intimate relationships. Boys

were described as perpetrating physical violence against a girlfriend if they perceived that she was unfaithful, and deceiving, threatening or blackmailing girlfriends into engaging in unwanted sexual relations. Violence perpetrated by family members included the multiple restrictions placed by parents on girls' movement and behaviour, the physical punishment received for disobedience and usually perpetrated by parents and brothers, and, more rarely, sexual violence perpetrated by a family member, usually a brother-in-law or a distant relative. Sexual violence perpetrated by others was described at length. Typically, it was perpetrated by boys and men in the neighbourhood or school, and took the form of verbal harassment, unwanted touch and, rarely, rape. Also acknowledged was boys' practice of taking girls' pictures, against their will, on their mobile phones and distributing these pictures as a way of harassing girls.

Fears of sexual harassment inhibit girls' freedom

Girls reported that they had few safe spaces. The home and the school were typically described as the only safe spaces available to girls, largely because of the presence of family members and other trusted adults. In contrast, girls were described as feeling unsafe in the streets, going to shops, in the fields and at the water source. Typically, these locations were described as unsafe because of fears of sexual harassment, and study participants reported that girls were always accompanied by a parent or at least other girls if they moved outside the home.

Girls' ability to seek help depends largely on who the perpetrator is and the extent to which girls are perceived as responsible for the incident

Responses to the experience of violence depended largely on who the perpetrator was and the extent to which the girl was considered to be responsible for precipitating the incident. Both girls and boys recognised that girls who experienced violence perpetrated by a boyfriend had few options for recourse; typically they were described as keeping silent about the incident or talking to a trusted friend, but fear of reprisal and loss of family reputation inhibited them from taking further action. Responses to family violence were similar. Study participants implied that girls passively tolerated emotional, physical and even sexual violence perpetrated by family members; in the case of sexual violence, they agreed that a girl may share the incident with a friend or her mother, but that further action in these cases was rare. Action was far more likely to be taken if the perpetrator was an outsider than if he were an intimate partner or family member because in such cases, the incident was less likely to be perceived as being the girl's fault or hurting the family's reputation. Even in such cases, though, the typical action was to inform a family member who would resolve the situation informally; access to formal mechanisms was rarely suggested.

Experience, perpetration and nature of marital violence

Marital violence against women is widespread

Marital violence against women—physical, sexual and emotional—was widespread in the study settings, and among women who experience this violence, its occurrence was frequent. Although both married women and men agreed that marital violence took place, men were far less likely to report that it occurred in large numbers of households or that it took place frequently. Indeed, wide gender disparities were evident in descriptions of levels and patterns of violence.

Three forms of violence were discussed by the married participants, namely, physical, sexual and emotional, as well as physical violence occurring during pregnancy. As far as physical violence is concerned, women agreed that the large majority of women experienced violence perpetrated by their husband and that this violence took place frequently. Men agreed that violence took place but argued that it took place relatively infrequently. Perceived risk factors for physical violence also differed among women and men. While both agreed that women's failure to obey their husband's instructions were a key reason for violence, women also noted that men's alcohol consumption, sex-related demands, and women's inability to bear children were also common factors precipitating marital violence. Sexual violence was also considered widespread by women; indeed, women in a few FGDs suggested that all women in their settings had experienced sexual violence, that it took place frequently, and that forced sex on the wedding night was almost universal. Again, men were less likely to acknowledge forced sex, with those in most FGDs arguing that it rarely happened and that sexual initiation within marriage was always consensual. Emotional violence, in women's reports, was widespread, and comprised, to a large extent, verbal abuse with sexual implications, and public humiliation. Men's responses were more mixed, with some groups suggesting that it was pervasive and others suggesting that it was rare. Finally, a similar picture emerged with regard to violence during pregnancy: women argued that it took place frequently, that is, as frequently as it did when the woman was not pregnant. They attributed violence during pregnancy to the same factors as they attributed violence in other situations—displeasing the husband, husband's alcohol misuse and the husband's sexual demands on his wife—but added one more, namely forcing women to undergo ultrasound and abort a female foetus and/or beating women who give birth to a daughter. In contrast, once again, men believed that violence during pregnancy was rare, and that, rather than committing violence against their wife, men helped her with housework and were understanding about her inability to work as she used to when she was not pregnant.

Mixed views exist about whether marital violence increases over time

Discussions also sought the views of the married on whether marital violence increased or declined with marital

duration. The majority of both women and men believed that it increased with time. Gender differences were apparent, however, in perceived reasons for this increase. Women maintained that once women have children, they have few options to leave their husband, thereby giving men more freedom to commit violence against them. They also suggested that with time, women were more likely to disobey their husband, husbands were more likely to misuse alcohol, financial stress increased with larger families and men's demands for sex increased over time, and attributed the increase in violence to all of these changes in a married couple's life as reasons for increased marital violence. Men reported fewer reasons for this increase, focusing largely on financial stress and women's growing disobedience to their husband. We note that some study participants, however, maintained that marital violence declined over time, as couples became better acquainted with each other or recognised the harm that witnessing parental violence would do to their children.

Experience, perpetration and nature of violence perpetrated by other members of the husband's family

Physical and emotional violence is widely acknowledged; sexual violence is perceived to be rare

Violence is also perpetrated towards a woman by marital family members other than her husband. Gender differences in responses were apparent and women were far more likely than men to perceive that family members perpetrated violence against women. Women indicated that the large majority of women experienced physical and emotional violence perpetrated by family members and that this violence took place frequently. Most women agreed, moreover, that violence continued to take place even during pregnancy. Men were far less likely to agree that family members perpetrated violence against women at any time, and especially during pregnancy. Leading perpetrators of physical and emotional violence were described as mothers-, fathers- and sisters-in-law. Emotional violence took the form of insults and taunts, withholding food from women and forcing them to work without rest, while physical violence ranged from beating and hitting to attempts to murder by burning or poisoning women. Although women and men held differing views about the prevalence of physical and emotional violence perpetrated on women by family members, they perceived a similar set of factors underlying such violence. Both women and men agreed that violence was committed for four broad reasons: financial issues including both a limited dowry and conflicts over control of men's wages; dissatisfaction with women's performance of their household duties; women's perceived disobedience to or lack of respect for her in-laws; and tensions resulting from the deepening bonds developing between husband and wife. In contrast to physical and emotional violence, study participants did not spontaneously mention sexual violence perpetrated by other family members. When probed, women agreed that sexual violence perpetrated

by family members against women did take place in the study settings, albeit rarely; they suggested that it was the father- and brother-in-law who were key perpetrators of sexual violence. Men, in contrast, were far more likely to deny that it took place or to suggest that such relations were typically consensual.

Mixed views prevail about whether violence perpetrated by marital family members increases over time

Discussions also sought the views of married women and men on whether violence perpetrated by marital family members increased or declined with marital duration. Gender differences were apparent: the majority of women believed that such violence increased with time, whereas men's responses were more mixed, with both views expressed. Gender differences were not apparent, however, in perceived reasons for this increase. They suggested that once women had children, they had few options to leave their husband, thereby giving her marital family members greater confidence about committing violence. A second set of reasons related to financial stress, which was perceived to increase with growing families and result in increased violence perpetrated against women by her marital family members. A third related to the perception that with time, women were more likely to reveal their negative traits and therefore become more prone to violence. Finally, study participants suggested that if husband-wife bonds became close, marital family members tended to perpetrate violence against the wife, fearing that she was causing a rift in the family. In contrast, in several FGDs with men, participants suggested a decline over time in violence perpetrated on women by family members, and attributed this decline to the greater understanding that develops over time between women and other members of their marital family.

Responses of women who experience marital violence

The leading response is silence and toleration

Study participants' perspectives about responses of women who experience violence perpetrated by their husband and other members of his family suggest that the most common response to such violence is silence and toleration of the violence, particularly in case of sexual violence. If the violence is perceived as excessive and frequent, help is sought, largely in terms of communicating the incident to marital and natal family members, neighbours and friends in the hope that they will help in convincing their husband and family members to refrain from perpetrating violence. Other options mentioned, notably in response to violence perpetrated by the husband, included women's efforts to become financially independent; seeking help from the authorities, including *panchayats*, the police and courts; separating from the husband and leaving a violent husband or marital family, and, most disturbing, suicide.

Among the unmarried, responses to the experience of violence depended largely on who the perpetrator was and the extent

to which the unmarried girl was considered to be responsible for precipitating the incident. The most common response to violence perpetrated by a boyfriend or a family member is silence and tolerance. In some cases, and if severe, a girl may communicate the incident to a trusted friend, and if sexual violence, also to her mother, but further action in these cases was rare. Action is far more likely to be taken if the perpetrator was an outsider because in such cases, the incident is less likely to be perceived as being the girl's fault or hurting the family's reputation. Even in such cases, though, action is limited to informing a family member and informal ways of resolving the situation.

Several obstacles inhibit women from taking action

Married women and men described a number of obstacles that inhibited women who experienced violence perpetrated by their husband or other members of the marital family from taking action. Key obstacles to seeking help were women's fears that seeking help would exacerbate their risk of violence on the one hand, and that disclosing the incident would be disrespectful to the marital family or damage its reputation on the other. Another reason that inhibited women from seeking help was the fear of being thrown out of their home and separated from their children.

Women seeking help receive limited support

Women who sought help for violence perpetrated by their husband do not always receive support. Parents and family members from whom help was sought would typically explain to the woman that violence was to be tolerated or blame her for precipitating the violent incident. In fewer cases, however, families were described as more proactive, counselling the husband to refrain from further violence and if all else fails, approaching the *panchayat*, police or courts. Community members were described as intervening in cases of extreme marital violence, but where community members were concerned that the perpetrating husband would turn on them, their supportiveness was limited. Finally, support from the authorities was obtained far less frequently and study participants were ambivalent about whether the authorities should be more proactive and intervene in more cases of violence. Some argued that violence was a family matter and there was no place for the authorities in resolving such personal matters; others suggested that it was essential, given women's limited agency, for *panchayats* and the police to intervene in cases of domestic violence.

Characteristics of violent and nonviolent husbands

Positive deviant husbands displayed certain unique characteristics

In many ways, violent and nonviolent husbands reported similar characteristics: both reported gendered socialisation and close family relations, most had witnessed community or family violence while growing up, most had friends and

family to whom they could turn in times of difficulty, most reported traditional roles in the family with husbands taking little responsibility for housework and childcare and women participating infrequently in household decisions, and finally, most reported happy married lives.

Differences did however emerge. In terms of socialisation experiences, despite the fact that both groups had grown up in families that imposed more restrictions on girls than boys, nonviolent husbands were considerably more likely than their violent counterparts to report that their sisters had as much freedom as they did to express themselves and participate in household matters. Nonviolent husbands were also less likely to report peer pressure while growing up than did violent husbands, and were mildly less likely to have experienced violence as a form of discipline while growing up.

In terms of social networks and participation in community violence, nonviolent husbands appeared to have a larger peer network than violent husbands, and their interactions with their peers were less likely to include alcohol consumption. They were also less likely to be involved in physical fights in their communities than were violent husbands.

Differences in alcohol consumption clearly distinguished violent and nonviolent husbands. Indeed, not only did far more violent than nonviolent husbands report consuming alcohol, but there was also a suggestion that among those who did consume alcohol, the frequency of consumption was greater among the violent.

Gender role attitudes of violent and nonviolent husbands were also noticeable, with violent husbands far more likely than nonviolent men to display unequal gender attitudes including perceptions of whether a woman should have equal rights as a man, perceptions of a 'real' man and a 'real' woman, and perceptions of the acceptability of marital violence. Indeed, violent husbands were much more likely than the nonviolent to believe that their wife deserved to be beaten in some circumstances, for example, if she disobeyed her husband or made a 'mistake.'

Also distinguishing nonviolent husbands was the value they placed on peace and marital harmony, their perceptions of their role as nonviolent men and the respect that their nonviolent status commanded in their communities. Violent husbands both justified their violent behaviour as depicting traditional notions of masculinity and recognised that they were criticised and mocked in their communities for perpetrating marital violence.

Finally, FGDs also suggested that nonviolent husbands were more likely than violent husbands to display maturity and intelligence, were more educated, held deeper bonds of affection with their wife and were more likely than violent men to communicate with ('explain' to) their wife.

Notably, both unmarried girls and boys also perceived positive deviants (boys who never perpetrate violence against their girlfriend) as educated, intelligent, understanding and loving, and, more specifically, those who did not consume alcohol.

Availability of and recommendations for programmes to end violence against women and girls

Awareness about available services for women seeking help is very limited

Study participants overwhelmingly reported that there were no programmes available in their villages that focused on violence prevention or support to women who experience violence. Indeed, information about the availability of helplines and short-stay homes had not penetrated study villages, and even the few who reported some awareness appeared to be poorly informed about these facilities.

Recommendations for ending violence range from control on alcohol to empowering women

Participants advocated four broad programme directions that they believe have potential for reducing violence against women and girls: reducing misuse of alcohol and other intoxicating substances among men and boys; empowering women through livelihood skills training and income generating opportunities; changing gender norms, including those held by parents relating to the gendered socialisation of girls and boys, and raising women's and men's awareness of women's rights and legal options. The issue of raising awareness of women's rights and legal protection was clearly a sensitive one among married men, and there was less unanimity among them about the need for programmes on these issues than on any other recommendation made.

B. Recommendations

Findings call for multiple actions, both at the level of prevention and at the level of care and support for women and girls at risk and in distress.

Prevention

Findings have reiterated that violence against women is frequently attributed to women's social isolation and economic powerlessness, that gender role attitudes of male control and female submissiveness remain deeply embedded among women, men and even unmarried adolescents and continue to entitle men to commit violence against women. Findings further reiterate that alcohol misuse among men acts as a trigger for their perpetration of violence against women. Programme actions required to address each of these findings is described in the paragraphs that follow.

Make efforts to empower, break the social isolation of and offer economic opportunities to women

Programmes are needed that aim to reverse women's powerlessness, break their social isolation and raise awareness of and respect for their rights. More specifically,

these programmes must make efforts to provide vocational skills to women; link them with income generating opportunities; provide them with opportunities, through participation in groups and other extra-familial forums, to build solidarity with other women; raise their awareness of their rights and entitlements and build the skills they require to claim their rights. At the same time, programmes must inform communities more generally about women's rights, both in general (for example, to education, to delay marriage, and to access health, vocational training and income generating programmes), and more specifically, in terms of their rights relating to violence, notably the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 in respect of the ways in which it offers protection to women, and the kinds of penalties imposed on those who violate these rights.

Implement programmes for men and women that challenge traditional norms of masculinity and femininity

Efforts are also needed that enable women and men to challenge traditional gender norms that persist in study communities. Our evidence has suggested that positive deviant men and many women's groups have indeed begun to question traditional norms, and have linked men who espouse more egalitarian gender norms with greater marital satisfaction than that experienced by men espousing traditional norms of masculinity. Also evident is that women recognise the injustice of unbalanced power relations but maintain that it is women's role to accept such injustice. Finally, both women and men believe that violence is unjustified if unprovoked.

All of these findings need to be folded into programmes intended to build new concepts of masculinity and femininity. Men must be made aware of the injustice of violence, and the benefits, in terms of marital harmony, of non-violence; and must be offered avenues (group and community platforms) to interact with role models who espouse egalitarian gender norms and practise egalitarian gender roles. Women's perceptions that they have no choice but to tolerate violence must be challenged, and opportunities and support offered to them, including through group membership, to counter such violence. Additionally, both women and men must be made aware of nonviolent conflict resolution techniques that enable them to negotiate better or resolve 'provocation' verbally.

Address alcohol misuse among men

Alcohol misuse has been recognised by both women and men to precipitate violence against women, notably the wife. Action must be taken on several fronts. As suggested by many study participants, efforts must be made to control the sale of alcohol, perhaps by controlling the number of outlets through which it is available, by making sales more responsible, that is, restricting the amount of alcohol sold, and other supply-side interventions. At the same time, men must be counselled about responsible alcohol consumption (if not abstention), and the links between alcohol misuse and ill-health, economic

hardship at household level, marital disharmony and poor outcomes for children. Finally, efforts must be made to identify men who misuse alcohol and target them for special counselling.

Build life skills among adolescent girls and boys that develop agency and foster egalitarian gender norms from an early age

Findings have underscored that gender differences are apparent from an early age. Socialisation tends to be gendered, girls' agency is highly constrained, and traditional norms of masculinity and femininity are apparent, particularly among unmarried boys and young men. Efforts are needed that build more equitable notions of male and female roles among the young, and stress that violence against women is a violation of women's rights and that neither young women nor young men should tolerate its perpetration. Life skills education programmes exist for school-going young people (for example the Adolescence Education Programme) and those out of school (for example, programmes implemented by a number of NGOs, the WCD Sabla Programme and others) and must not only be promoted widely but also include a more direct focus on violence against women and girls. Programmes must, at the same time, pay special attention to equipping girls with the skills to negotiate wanted outcomes, communicate their opinions, and build other aspects of their agency including decision-making and control over economic resources.

Encourage parents to socialise their daughters and sons in gender egalitarian ways

Disparities in the socialisation of daughters and sons, from an early age, are apparent from the narratives of study participants. Among the unmarried, girls in particular recognised as unfair, and indeed, as manifestations of violence, the restrictions placed on their life in comparison to the freedom offered to boys. Programmes are needed that focus on parents and make efforts to change traditional socialisation patterns. These programmes need to raise parental awareness of girls' abilities, opportunities and rights; enable parents to reduce inhibitions about communicating with their adolescent children, including about such issues as harassment and violence; and make efforts to treat daughters and sons equally in terms of rights and responsibilities within the family as well as opportunities for education and vocational skill development, and access to money. Parents must also be familiarised with the intergenerational transmission of violence and its negative impact on the life of subsequent generations, and encouraged to socialise their children to reject violence against women and girls.

Care and support

Women and girls who experience violence typically suffer the violence in silence, sometimes inform a friend or neighbour or friend, and, in the case of married women, if the violence is unbearable, try to end their life. Findings that women and

girls who experience violence rarely seek help from formal institutions call for programmes that offer care and support options, and that strengthen the links between women and girls and existing services to which they are entitled.

Identify, screen and counsel women at risk of violence

Our study has demonstrated that large numbers of women are at risk of experiencing violence but typically bear the violence silently. There is considerable evidence from other studies, moreover, that highlights the adverse consequences of marital violence against women's physical and mental health, and even on outcomes for their children. Given the culture of silence, it is important that efforts are made, during routine contacts with women, to screen and identify those at risk of violence. Women most typically come into contact with the health system; for example, for pregnancy-related care, for sterilisation and other contraception services and for child health services. These contacts provide a unique opportunity to identify women suffering from violence, and refer them, as needed, for more specialised health services as well as for individual or family counselling, legal aid or shelter. Similar efforts may be made for the unmarried, in school and college settings and through school health programmes for those pursuing their education, and through community based health workers, such as anganwadi workers and accredited social health activists for those out of school.

Publicise and strengthen help facilities

Services are available for women who experience violence. In Bihar, for example, every district has a helpline that women may contact for help. The helpline provides counselling to women and their husband or perpetrator of violence, legal aid services where required, referrals for shelter and so on. Likewise, short-stay homes provide shelter to women who

experience violence. While unmarried girls are theoretically eligible for these services, there is little evidence that these services reach the unmarried.

Unfortunately, as our study has shown, awareness of these services is very limited, and given the restrictions placed on the life of women and girls, those in need may not be able to access these services. Efforts are needed, on the one hand, to raise awareness about the kinds of services that are available and to ensure that these services maintain confidentiality and respond to individual women's needs and preferences (for reconciliation, for maintenance, for shelter, etc). On the other hand, programmes must be more proactive, and must work—through existing women's groups, girls' groups, schools and village level workers, for example—so that both the married and the unmarried may be reached. Services for the unmarried must be adapted to be adolescent-friendly, and efforts must be made to raise awareness about the eligibility of girls to access these services if in need.

C. Conclusion

In short, our findings suggest that violence against women and girls is widespread and widely justified, that women are perceived as having few options but to tolerate violence, and that the most common response to violence is silence. At the same time, many women and some positive deviant men recognise the injustice and unacceptability of violence against women even in this traditional patriarchal setting, and their perceptions reiterate that programmes intended to change norms and practices relating to violence against women and girls may indeed be effective. We conclude that a number of multipronged programmatic actions are required among young and adult populations, both women and men, as well as in schools, at health care facilities and among other service providers who work to eliminate violence against women and girls.

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