

Dowry, 'dowry autonomy' and domestic violence among young married women in India

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ABSTRACT

Dowry, women's autonomy to use dowry ('dowry autonomy'), and their association with domestic violence were examined using data from a survey of young married women in the age group 15-24 years in India. About three-fourth of the women reported dowry at their marriage, and about 66% reported ability to exercise autonomy to use it – 'dowry autonomy'. Dowry giving without 'dowry autonomy' had no protective value against physical domestic violence. While women's participation in paid employment increased the odds of physical domestic violence, women's education and marrying after 18 years of age reduced the likelihood of physical domestic violence.

Introduction

The most commonly accepted expression for dowry is the transfer of resources from the family of a bride to a groom or a groom's family at the time of marriage (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005; Goody, 1973). In India, the practice of dowry has long been practiced mainly by upper caste Hindus (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005; Vohra, 2003). In recent years the practice has gained prominence spreading to lower caste Hindus, Muslims, Christians and some Tribal communities (Ambrus, Field, & Torero, 2010; Ashraf, 1997; Stein, 1988; Waheed, 2009).

Marriage in India is predominantly arranged by parents. Among the Indo-Aryan-speaking population in the northern India marriages are preferred between families that are not blood related. On the other hand, among Dravidian-speaking south India preferred marriages are among blood relatives. In arranged marriages, irrespective of cultural affiliation, the onus of protecting daughters within marriage is with parents. In the recent years there has been important changes in the marriage practices in both north and south cultural zones of India. With increase in female education and employment there has been changes in marriage practices where less significance is given to parents in arranging marriages for their children (Dommaraju, 2009). Another significant changes in marriages in India is the increase in age at marriage. Broadly, age at marriage is higher in southern states compared to northern states. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) the median age at marriage for women aged 20-49 years in 2015-16 was 19.0 compared to 17.2 in 2006-07 (IIPS and Macro International, 2007; IIPS and ICF, 2017). While age at marriage for women has been

increasing in India, many families still practice child marriages. Changes in marriage practices across India are likely to have significant impact on the practice of dowry system.

Economic development in India in the last few decades, particularly the post liberalisation period, seems to have had an increasing effect on dowry practice and its inflation. According to a study carried out in Karnataka, the average value of dowry was about seven times the annual income of the bride's family (Bloch & Rao, 2002). There are many studies that report significant dowry inflation in India (Ambrus, et al., 2010; Hayer, 1992). In India over recent decades, not only the amount of money involved in dowry has increased but also the nature of dowry. For example, dowry today often consists of consumer goods such as electrical home appliances, cars and motor bikes and also land and property (Bradley & Pallikadavth, 2012). The higher the groom's wage the greater the expected dowry (Biao, 2005; Kishwar, 1993; Stein, 1988). The economic burden of arranging dowry is highlighted in many studies (Dogra, 1997).

There are several explanations on why the practice of dowry continues in India. One of the strongest arguments is that women see dowry as a form of pre-mortem inheritance. Even after the Hindu Succession Act 1956 women in India seldom inherit parental property (Carroll, 1991). Another rationale is that parents perceive that dowry can protect their daughters from potential abuse from husbands and others, particularly mothers-in-laws. However, the available evidence is non-conclusive. For example, a study carried out in Bangladesh showed that dowry did not help protect women from domestic abuse (Suran, Amin, Huq, & Chowdury, 2004). Another study carried out in Tamil Nadu gave a different picture showing that a large proportion of women supported dowry because it provided security and status to young married women in their marital households (Srinivasan & Bedi, 2007). Dowry is

regarded as a necessary part of marriage without which it is very difficult for a woman to secure a good husband both in terms of status and treatment.

A concerning negative consequence of not giving dowry or not giving adequate dowry is thought by many to be violence directed at the young wife. According to the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), in India there were 8,618 dowry deaths in 2011, about 26% increase from the 2001 level. The highest number of dowry deaths, and dowry death rates were recorded in two northern states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (NCRB, 2011). NCRB also reported a number of cases which were registered under 'cruelty by husband and relatives to women' in which 99,135 cases were recorded in 2011. A number of studies also reported dowry related violence against women in other South Asian countries. For example, a study carried out in Nepal showed that dowry acted as a key trigger for domestic violence against women (Paudel, 2007). In Bangladesh, demand for dowry represented a factor in the abuse against pregnant women (Naved & Persson, 2008). In India, research has shown that additional demand for dowry after marriage, was reported as a significant reason for physical violence against young married women in a slum population in Bangalore (Rocca, Rathod, Falle, Pande, & Krishnan, 2009). Another study carried out in seven cities in India showed that about 20% of the women reported experiencing spousal violence and those who experienced dowry harassment were three times more likely to suffer of spousal violence (Jeyaseelan, Kumar, Neelakantan, Peedicayil, & Pillai, 2007).

Dowry has many negative consequences not just for the young married woman, but also her parents, and even the wider society. For example, recent research has linked the perceived burden of dowry to an increase in female feticide in India (Ahmad, 2010; Diamond-Smith, Luke, & McGarvey, 2008) and a growing imbalance in sex ratios favouring boys. This

imbalance in the sex-ratio is leading rapidly to a critical shortage of brides in some parts of India. Recent media reports have highlighted a new phenomenon of inter-state marriages emerging to overcome the difficulties arising from a shortage of suitable brides (BBC, 2011). Finally dowry is thought to support the continuity of early marriage for girls. For example, poorer families see child marriage as a way of avoiding large or even any dowry payments (Anderson, 1995).

In India, dowry is illegal under the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 (amended in 1984 and 1986). The law seems to be ineffective not only to prevent dowry but also to avert dowry related violence and death (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005; Ghosh & Choudhuri, 2011; Shetty, Rao, & Shetty, 2012). According to the 2011 National Crime Bureau Report (NCBR) 6,619 cases were registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (NCRB, 2011). Clearly the legal provisions to protect women from dowry are too weak and other socio-cultural interventions are required (Dogra, 1997).

While there are a number of studies linking dowry and physical domestic violence there is little research on women's autonomy over dowry (we term this as 'dowry autonomy') and its association with physical domestic violence. In this paper, 'dowry autonomy' is defined as the ability of women to use dowry that they have been given to her during marriage. As most dowry related violence is likely to emerge during the first few years after marriage (Prasad, 1994) there is a need to focus research on young married women. Therefore, the focus of this paper is young married women in the age group 15-24 years. This paper conceptualises that dowry is associated contextual factors such as State and rural-urban residence; social factors such as religion and caste; household economic status; husband's characteristics such as occupation; parental characteristics such as father's education; individual characters such as

age at marriage, type of marriage (arranged or love), work before marriage, paid work before marriage, and education. And we also conceptualise that ‘dowry autonomy’ is also associated with the above set of factors. We further conceptualise that dowry and women’s ‘dowry autonomy’ are associated with physical domestic violence. Given the context, the objectives of this paper are: (1) to examine the extent of dowry practice and associated factors (2) to assess the extent to which women can exercise autonomy to use dowry- ‘dowry autonomy’ (3) to examine whether dowry and ‘dowry autonomy’ have any association with women’s experience of physical domestic violence. The paper begins with a review of the methods used, and moves into a detailed summary of the key findings. The paper concludes with a summary of the policy implications of the findings.

Methods

This paper used survey data from the “The Youth in India: Situation and Needs study” (Youth Study) carried out in six states (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu) in India during 2006-07. These states represent different geographic and socio-cultural regions in India. Bihar and Jharkhand represent the eastern region; Rajasthan represents northern region; Maharashtra represents the western region and Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu represents the southern region. Together these states represent 39% of India’s population.

Objectives of the “youth study”, among others, were to identify key transitions experienced by youth, including those pertaining to education, work, sexual activity, marriage, health and civic participation. The “youth study” survey focused on married and unmarried young women and men aged 15–24 years (15-29 years for men). The data were collected from both

rural and urban areas. The study treated rural and urban areas independently. A systematic, multistage sampling design was adopted to draw sample areas from rural and urban areas. For sample selection in rural areas, the 2001 Census list of villages was used as the sample frame. From this list, 150 villages (PSUs) were selected using probability proportional to size (PPS) methodology. Half of these villages were designated to interview young men and another half for young women. A full household listing were carried out in the villages. Households were selected using a systematic sampling procedure. In urban areas 2001 Census wards were the sampling frame. The sample was then selected in three stages. At the first stage 75 wards were selected using PPS methodology. At the second stage, Census Enumeration Blocks (CEBs), one each for male and female, containing 150-200 households were selected using PPS sampling methodology. Households were selected at the third stage using systematic sampling procedure. Further details of sampling are given in the full report (International Institute for Population Sciences and Population Council, 2010).

Data were collected using six questionnaires: a rural community questionnaire; a household questionnaire; and four individual questionnaires, one each for married young men, married young women, unmarried young men and unmarried young women. These questions were developing using information gathered from 105 focus group discussions; 231 key informant interviews and 420 in-depth interviews in the pre-survey qualitative phase from all the six states. No more than one married and one unmarried respondent was interviewed from each household. All the interviews were conducted in local languages by trained interviewers. Training was provided by principal investigators of the participating institutions and special attention was given in ethical issues involved. The survey considered a number of ethical issues while carrying out this survey which is fully explained in the full survey report (International Institute for Population Sciences and Population Council, 2010). A total of

50,848 married and unmarried young women and men were successfully interviewed in the survey (13,912 married young women; 17,362 unmarried young women; 8,052 married young men; 11, 522 unmarried young men). Response rates for individual interviews were in the range of 84-90%. Unmarried women registered the highest response rate (90%). The response rates were marginally lower among those residing in rural areas compared to those residing in urban areas. The response rates varied only marginally over the states included in the survey. A comparison of estimates based on “Youth Study” with other large-scale population based household surveys in India (e.g. National Family Health Survey; District Level Household Survey) suggests that data of the “Youth Study” are of optimal quality.. The data is available for academic use from the Population Council or the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). As no identifiable information on survey participants were included in the data set that is used in this paper no ethical approval was required for the use this publically available data set. This paper used survey data from 13,912 young married women aged 15-24 years.

Outcome variables

Table 1 provides outcome variables, relevant survey questions in its exact format, and response rates. Privacy was ensured before administering these questions and respondents were ensured of the confidentiality of information gathered. The response rate (over 97%) for each question is at acceptable level for a large scale survey that involves sensitive questions. In total eight outcome variables are included in this paper with binary responses, ‘No’ or ‘Yes’. Two of the outcome variables are related to dowry and the remaining six related to physical domestic violence. However, only four outcome variables for the physical domestic violence were included in the multivariate analysis.

Table 1 here

Independent variables

Based on available evidence on the association with dowry a number of independent variables were selected for inclusion in the analysis. Unavailability of few important variables (e.g. husband's education, amount of dowry given) in the data set prevented their inclusion in the analysis. Six main categories of variables included in the analysis are: (1) residence- state and rural/urban (2) religion- Hindu, Muslims, Other religious groups and caste - Scheduled Caste: those in the lower end the socio-economic strata and mainly were the untouchables of the Indian caste system; Scheduled Tribe: indigenous population of India, Other Backward Communities: communities who are in the middle of the socio-economic strata of the caste system and have been recognized as requiring positive discrimination, general: those mainly belonging to the upper caste, no caste: those reporting no caste (3) economic status- wealth quintiles (4) age at marriage and type of marriage (5) education of women and their father and (6) work paid work status of women and occupation of husbands (Table 2).

Statistical analysis

Exploratory bivariate analyses were carried for each outcome variable and independent variable in order to provide per cent distribution and association. All the variables included in the bivariate analysis were included in the multivariate analysis as these variables are included on a priori basis. Since the data set has a hierarchical structure, we used a multilevel

modeling technique to study factors associated with outcome variables of interest. In the analysis individuals and districts were considered as level-1 and level-2 hierarchies, respectively. Since there were only 7 states included in the survey we treated them as covariates in the multivariable model. Multilevel modeling technique offers a mechanism for measuring the influence of unobserved community effects on outcome variables. It also provides a robust method for analyzing hierarchically clustered data by accounting for non-independence of observations with the clusters (Goldstein, 2010). The two levels were included in the analysis to estimate the variance in outcome measures that remained after accounting for the factors included in the models. As all the outcome variables in the analysis were binary, we used logistic multilevel modeling using STATA 11.2 (StataCorp, 2009) “runmlwin” command for MLWin 2.26 (CMM, 2012; Leckie & Charlton, 2011). Results are presented as Odds Ratios (OR) in order to facilitate interpretation of results. Significance levels were reported at 10%, 5% and 1% levels. However, only significance levels below 5% were considered significant while interpreting the results.

Results

Dowry and ‘dowry autonomy’

Table 2 provides percentage distribution of married women (15-24 years) according to whether or not they have received cash, gift, jewellery and/or other items in dowry. Overall, about 78% of the women in this study have reported dowry at their marriage. Dowry in this study did not include dowry given at a later date after the marriage.

Place of residence

The percentage of women reporting dowry in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu was significantly higher (85-88%) compared to Bihar, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra (68-70%). About 66% of the women reported, among those who had dowry, that they can exercise 'dowry autonomy'. The percentage of women having 'dowry autonomy' was the highest in Maharashtra (92%) followed by Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Bihar (41%).

There were significant rural urban differences in both dowry and 'dowry autonomy'. Higher percentage of women from urban areas reported dowry (82%) compared to women from rural areas (78%). Similarly, significantly more women in urban areas (77%) reported 'dowry autonomy' compared to their rural counterparts (62%).

Religion and caste

Religion was significantly associated with dowry and 'dowry autonomy'. Among the religious groups, dowry was highest among Muslims (84%) followed by Hindus and other religious groups (69%). 'Dowry autonomy' was highest among 'other religious' groups (66%) followed by Hindus and Muslims (63%). Thus, although Muslims had higher dowry fewer women had the autonomy to use it.

Among the various caste groups, dowry was lowest among Scheduled Tribes (64%) followed by Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Communities, and general category (83%). More women from general categories (71%) reported 'dowry autonomy' compared to Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Communities and Scheduled Castes (63%).

Economic status

The percentage of women reporting dowry increased with husbands' household economic status. For example, women married to the poorest households, about 61% of the women reported dowry compared to 90% among women married to the richest households. A similar pattern was noted with regard to 'dowry autonomy'; with 54% of the women married to the poorest households had 'dowry autonomy' compared to 75% among women married to the richest households.

Age at marriage and type of marriage

The percentage of women reporting dowry was lower among women married below the age of 18 years (76%) compared to women married at 18 years or above (83%). 'Dowry autonomy' was also lower among women who have married at age below 18 years (60%) compared to women who have married at age 18 years or above (74%).

The percentage of women reporting dowry was higher among women who married in a traditional way (83%) compared to women who have married in non-traditional way- 'love marriage' (45%). However, the 'dowry autonomy' was higher (77%) among women who were married in a non-traditional way compared to women who have married in a traditional way (65%)

Education

The percentage of women reporting dowry increased with education. For example, among women who had 'no education' dowry was lower (71%) compared to women who had below 10 years schooling (82%) and those with more 10 or more years of schooling (85%). Further, percentage of women reporting dowry increased with 'dowry autonomy'. For example, among women who had no education, only about 46% had 'dowry autonomy' compared to 79% among those who had 10 or more years of schooling.

Overall, women whose fathers had no education reported lower dowry practice compared to women whose fathers were educated. For example, for women whose fathers' had 10 or more years of schooling about 85% reported dowry practice compared to 74% without any education. Similarly, for women whose fathers were schooling higher percentage reported 'dowry autonomy' compared to women whose fathers were uneducated.

Women's work before marriage

Among women who have never worked for pay, the percentage reporting dowry was higher (80%) compared to women who have never worked for pay before marriage (74%). Interestingly, 'dowry autonomy' was lower among those who were in paid jobs both before and after marriage (62%) compared to those who never had a paid work (66%). However, those who were in paid work before marriage had the highest 'dowry autonomy' (69%).

Husband's occupation

Dowry practice was significantly higher among women married to men who are administrators or professionals or cultivators (83%) compared to men who were not working

(75%) or working as labourers (73%). A similar pattern was observed with regard to 'dowry autonomy'. For example, among women married to administrators or professionals, about 68% had 'dowry autonomy' compared to 57% women married to men who were not working.

Table 2 here

Factors associated with practice of dowry and women's ability to use dowry ('dowry autonomy').

Table 3 provides Odds Ratios (OR) for dowry giving and 'dowry autonomy' according to women's background characteristics. OR for each of the dependent variable is discussed below.

Place of residence

There were differences in dowry practice between the states. The odds of dowry giving was significantly higher in Tamil Nadu (OR=3.01), Andhra Pradesh (OR=2.14), and Rajasthan (2.34) compared to Bihar. Maharashtra was the only state, included in the study, that had lower odds (OR=0.52) for dowry giving compared to Bihar. There was no significant difference in the odds of dowry giving between Bihar and Jharkhand. Further, there was no significant difference between rural and urban areas with regard to dowry giving.

'Dowry autonomy' too was significantly different between states. Women in Maharashtra (OR=15.75), Tamil Nadu (OR=8.14), Andhra Pradesh (OR=2.39), and Rajasthan (OR=2.16)

had higher odds of having ‘dowry autonomy’ compared to women in Bihar. There was no significant difference in odds of ‘dowry autonomy’ among women in Bihar and Jharkhand. As in the case of dowry giving, there was no significant difference in women’s ability to use dowry between rural and urban areas.

Religion and Caste

Religion and caste were significantly associated with the practice of dowry. Muslims were more likely to practice dowry (OR=1.26) compared to Hindus. Other religious groups (Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish, etc.) were less likely (OR=0.77) to observe dowry practice compared to Hindus. Scheduled Tribes (STs) were less likely to practice (OR=0.70) dowry compared to Scheduled Castes (SCs). However, the odds of dowry practice was higher (OR=1.18) among Other Backward Communities (OR=1.18) and general categories (OR=1.30) compared to SCs.

It is interesting to note that religion had no independent effect on ‘dowry autonomy’. However, caste had a significant association. For example, ST women had higher odds (OR=1.30) of ‘dowry autonomy’ compared to SC women. None of the other caste groups showed significant association.

Economic Status

The economic status of a husband’s household was associated with dowry practice. Overall, there was a steady and significant increase in the odds of dowry practice in line with the greater economic status of a husbands’ household. For example, compared to the poorest, the

likelihood of practicing dowry was almost three times higher among the richest families. (OR=3.08). However, the economic status of a husband's household did not have any independent effect on 'dowry autonomy'.

Education

An important factor that was associated with the practice of dowry was fathers' education. Fathers' education had a positive and significant association with practice of dowry. For example, fathers with below 10 years of schooling had higher odds (OR=1.23) of practicing dowry compared with women whose fathers' had no education. Further, the odds were higher (OR=1.44) among fathers' with 10 or more years of schooling. Similar associations were noted with regard to respondents' education. Respondents with below 10 years of schooling had higher odds (OR=1.38) of practicing dowry compared with respondents with no education. The odds of practicing dowry for women with 10 and more years of schooling was higher (OR=1.41) compared to women without any education.

'Dowry autonomy' was not significantly associated with fathers' education. However, women's education, particularly with more than 10 years of schooling had higher odds (OR=1.38) of 'dowry autonomy' compared to women who did not have any education.

Age at marriage and type of marriage

A woman's age at the point of marriage had significant association with the practice of dowry. Women who had married at 18 years or above had higher odds (OR=1.24) of practicing dowry compared to women who had married below 18 years of age. Also the type

of marriage was associated with dowry giving; women who chose their partners without parental involvement (known as ‘love’ marriages in India) had lower odds (OR=0.10) of practicing dowry compared to those who had married in a traditional way. Age at marriage and type of marriage did not have any significant effect on women’s ‘dowry autonomy’.

Work status of women and occupation of husband

Women’s work status, in other words whether she was in employment or not, did not have any significant association with dowry practice. However, women’s work status had significant association with her ‘dowry autonomy’. For example, women who had a paid job before marriage or even before and after marriage had significantly lower odds (OR=0.83) of ‘dowry autonomy’ compared to women who never had a paid job.

A husband’s occupation had significant association with dowry giving. For example, compared to husbands who were non-workers, administrators/professionals had higher odds (OR=1.75) of practicing dowry. Further, cultivators (OR=1.50) and labours (OR=1.35) had higher odds of receiving dowry compared to non-workers, respectively. However, a husband’s work status did not have any significant effect on ‘dowry autonomy’.

Table 3 also shows the estimated variance in dowry practice and ‘dowry autonomy’ between districts. Since the variance estimates were significantly higher than standard error, there is evidence of significant variation across districts. This suggests that district level variance remained unexplained in the model after accounting for the factors included in the models.

Table 3 here

Dowry and physical domestic violence

Table 4 provides percentage distribution of young married women in the age group 15-24 years according to whether dowry was given at marriage and whether women could exercise 'dowry autonomy' by types of physical domestic violence women ever experienced from their husbands. Six types of domestic violence are considered in the analysis. However, violence forms such as 'choke' and 'threat to kill' were excluded from the multivariate analysis as the number of cases in these categories was too small. Overall, about a quarter of women in study reported physical domestic violence. About 11% women reported only one form of violence; 5% any two forms; 3% any three forms; 2% each for any four or five forms; and 1% for all the six forms of domestic violence (not shown in table 4).

Slap

In this study about a quarter of women reported 'slap' from their husbands. This was the most common form of violence among the various physical domestic violence forms examined in this study. Among women who did not practice dowry about 28% reported 'slap' compared to 23% among those who have practiced dowry. Among women who cannot exercise 'dowry autonomy' about 28% reported 'slap' from their husbands compared to 20% among those who can exercise 'dowry autonomy'.

Twist

About 11% of the women in this survey reported 'twist' by their husbands. Among those who did not receive dowry about 13% reported 'twist' compared to 11% among those who have received dowry. Among women cannot exercise 'dowry autonomy', about 14% reported 'twist' compared to 10% women can exercise 'dowry autonomy'.

Push

About 7% of the women in this survey reported 'push' from their husbands. The percentage of women reporting this form of violence was higher (9.0%) among those who did not practice dowry compared to those who have practiced dowry (7.0%). Among women cannot exercise 'dowry autonomy' about 9% reported 'push' compared to 6% among those who can 'dowry autonomy'.

Punch

This form of domestic violence was reported by about 5% of the women in this study. Among those who practiced dowry about 5% reported 'punch' compared to 7% among those who did not practice dowry. Among those who had no 'dowry autonomy', about 7% reported punch compared to 4% among those who have 'dowry autonomy'.

Kick

This form of domestic violence was reported by about 6% women. Among those who have practiced dowry about 6% reported 'kick' compared to 8% among those who have not

practiced dowry. Similarly, among those who can exercise ‘dowry autonomy’ about 7% reported ‘kick’ compared to 5% among women who can exercise ‘dowry autonomy’.

Choke

In this study, relatively fewer women reported choke (1%). Among those who have practiced dowry about 1% reported ‘choke’ compared to about 2% among those who did not practice dowry. Among those who cannot exercise ‘dowry autonomy’, about 2% reported ‘choke’ compared to 1% among those who can exercise ‘dowry autonomy’.

Table 4 here

Factors associated with domestic violence: role of dowry and other factors

Multilevel logistic models were developed to study the role of dowry on the four types of physical domestic violence against women. In the models dowry related variable had three categories: (1) dowry given but no autonomy to use it, (2) dowry given and there is autonomy to use it, and (3) dowry not given. The results are provided in table 5.

Dowry and ‘dowry autonomy’

In the four multilevel logistic models women who had ‘dowry autonomy’ had significantly lower odds of physical domestic violence (OR=0.63-0.73) compared to women who had received dowry but no autonomy to use it. Similarly women who did not receive dowry had

significantly lower odds of physical domestic violence (OR=0.68-78) compared to women who had received dowry but did not have autonomy to use it.

Place of residence

In general, women from Rajasthan (OR= 0.59-0.67) and Andhra Pradesh (OR=0.69-0.78) had lower odds of physical domestic violence compared to Bihar. Interestingly women from Maharashtra had higher odds of physical domestic violence (OR=1.37-1.72) compared to Bihar. Women from Tamil Nadu had lower odds for 'push' (OR=0.66) and 'punch' (OR=0.64) compared to Bihar. But the odds for 'slap' and 'kick' were higher, 0.1.24 and 1.74, respectively. There was no statistically significant difference in 'twist' between the two states. There was no difference in the odds of physical domestic violence between Jharkhand and Bihar. There were reduced odds for 'twist' in rural areas compared to urban areas (20% lower) but no significant differences for other forms of violence.

Religion and caste

Religion did not show any significant association with any form of physical domestic violence. However, caste had significant association with domestic violence. Scheduled Tribes had lower odds of physical domestic violence compared to Scheduled Caste in 'slap' (OR=0.82) and 'kick' (OR=0.73). Compared to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Communities (OBC) had lower odds for 'slap' (OR=0.77), 'twist' (OR=0.83) 'push' (OR=0.81) and kick (OR=0.82). The 'general category' had lower odds (OR=24-37% lower) in all forms of domestic violence compared to SCs.

Economic status

In general, the odds of physical domestic violence decreased with the economic status of a husband's family. There was no difference in domestic violence between the poorest and second poorest groups. Among the middle income group the odds for 'slap' (OR=0.81), 'twist' (OR=0.74), and 'kick' (OR=0.72) were significantly lower compared to the poorest women. The odds of 'slap' 'push' and 'punch' were not significantly different from the poorest group. Women belonging to the fourth richest group had lower odds for 'slap' (OR=0.73) and 'twist' (OR=0.64) compared to the poorest women. There was no difference in other forms of violence. The richest group had significantly lower odds in all forms of physical domestic violence compared to the poorest (OR=0.49-0.63).

Education

A Father's education did not have any significant association with physical domestic violence. However, women's education had significant association with all forms of physical domestic violence. With education the odds of physical domestic violence showed significant decline. Women who had below 10 years of schooling, the odds of physical domestic violence in all forms was lower (OR=0.53-0.76) compared to women who never had any schooling. Women who had more than 10 years of schooling also had significantly lower odds of physical domestic violence (OR=0.35-0.62) compared to women who did not have any schooling.

Age at marriage and type of marriage

Age at marriage had significant association with physical domestic violence. Women who were married at 18 years or above had significantly lower odds in all forms of physical domestic violence compared to women who were married below 18 years of age (OR=0.65-0.72). Women who married in a non-traditional way ('love' marriages) had significantly higher odds in all forms of physical domestic violence, (OR=1.34-1.51), except punch, compared to women who were married in a traditional way.

Work status of women and occupation of husband

Women who had ever worked in a paid job had significantly increased risk of physical domestic violence compared to women who had never had a paid job. For example, women who had a paid job before marriage had higher odds of 'slap' (OR=1.29), 'twist' (OR=1.36 higher), 'push' (OR=1.48), and 'punch' (OR=1.38) compared to those who never had a paid job. There was no significant difference between the two groups with regard to 'kick'. Women who had a paid job after marriage had significantly higher odds of physical domestic violence compared to women who never had a paid job (OR=1.73-2.08%). Those who had a paid job before and after marriage also had significantly higher odds (OR=1.51-1.76) in all forms of physical domestic violence compared to those who never had a paid job. Interestingly, a husband's occupation did not have any significant association with any form of physical domestic violence, except 'push' where 'cultivators' had lower odds (OR=0.57).

Estimated variance in domestic violence between districts are given in the table 5. Except for kick, all variance estimates were more than twice the size of their standard errors. This suggests that there is significant variation in domestic violence across the districts suggesting that contextual level variance remained unexplained in the models after accounting for the

factors included in the models. For the domestic violence form ‘kick’, there was no significant variation across the districts.

Table 5 here

Conclusions

This is perhaps the first study that uses large scale data to examine the association between ‘dowry autonomy’ and domestic violence in India. A number of studies have demonstrated the link between dowry and domestic violence those are based on small scale qualitative or quantitative studies. ‘Dowry autonomy’ is an important dimension of dowry as it shows women’s ability to exercise autonomy over dowry, an aspect that has not been a subject of research in the previous studies. This paper examined prevalence of dowry, ‘dowry autonomy’ and their association with various forms of physical domestic violence among young married women in six states representing four regions and 39% of the population in India.

In this study more than three quarters of women reported that dowry was given at their marriage. Overall, dowry giving was more common in Southern states compared to Northern states. This may be attributable to geographical differences in kinship patterns and levels of female autonomy. In South India women exercise a higher degree of autonomy than their northern counterparts (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005; Dyson & Moore, 1983). This increased autonomy seems to go hand in hand with the belief that dowry represents a woman’s pre-mortem inheritance right. Women in the south seem far more proactive in demanding dowry from their parents seeing it as necessary for a good marriage of high status. (Srinivasan & Bedi, 2007); (Srinivasan & Lee, 2004).

The study clearly showed that dowry practice in India is not confined to any particular religious group. One of the striking findings of this study is the higher prevalence of dowry practice among Muslims compared to Hindus. A media report also recorded increasing dowry practice among Muslims (Mishra, 2006). Muslims traditionally followed 'mehr' or traditional Islamic brideprice. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, dowry practice has in fact replaced 'mehr' in the last 50 years (Ambrus, et al., 2010). In India, this move away from 'mehr' towards dowry is much more recent (Ashraf, 1997; Waheed, 2009). It is unclear whether the escalation of dowry practice among Muslims in India is a reflection of their economic progress or the adoption of social practices from other religious communities; this is an area where more research would be useful.

Caste and Tribe differences in dowry practice still exist in India. Dowry practice was lowest among the Scheduled Tribes compared to other castes. This may be because in many tribal communities bride-price is still observed (Xaxa, 2004). As more integration of the tribal population with mainstream India occurs it is possible that dowry will increase perhaps replacing bride-price, this is another area where further research would be helpful.

The study supported findings of other research (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005) in noting that Scheduled Castes had the lower prevalence of dowry practice compared to other caste groups. This finding could be explained by the fact that women in the lower castes contribute to the household income and hence have higher economic value deemed to compensate dowry. This trend may well shift as families no longer require wives to work. Research conducted by the authors in Kerala recorded widespread dowry practice among scheduled castes. In these households women tended not to work, therefore suggesting as the earning capacity of husbands' increases, women no longer need to work and demand for dowry increases

(Bradley & Pallikadavth, 2012). This research also recorded significant dowry inflation with huge amounts of gold being given.

This study revealed that educated women receive higher dowries, this may well be because parents will pay large dowries in order to ensure a financially secure marriage for their daughters. This interpretation is also supported by the research conducted in Uttar Pradesh (Dalmia & Lawrence, 2005). The impact of women's education on dowry is another area where further research will be needed. There is clearly a need to go further in incorporating social issues such as dowry in curriculum, healthy debates on these topics should be encouraged at school level.

This study found that the older the woman at the point of marriage the more likely she is to have a dowry. The increased expectation of dowry as a woman gets older could explain why so many parents prefer to marry their daughters at a younger age (see also Anderson, 1995). Thus, increasing the legal age of marriage in India may have significant consequences on dowry giving intensifying the pressure felt by parents as they try and meet rising expectations. These pressures will impact more on poorer families. This is a difficult issue as clearly child marriage must be eradicated.

The study further revealed that about 66% of the women who had received dowry at marriage had the autonomy to use it- 'dowry autonomy'. There were marked differences between states in this regard. While women in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra had very high 'dowry autonomy', women in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh had low 'dowry autonomy'. In Bihar, only 41% of the women had 'dowry autonomy'. Unlike, dowry, there was no clear South-North divide on 'dowry autonomy'. While women's education increased

‘dowry autonomy’, women’s participation in paid work decreased her ‘dowry autonomy’. District level factors, not included in the model, also have a significant role in shaping ‘dowry autonomy’.

This study confirmed results of other research studies carried out in India that report levels of physical domestic violence against married women ranging between 20-54% (Jeyaseelan, et al., 2007; Rocca, et al., 2009). In this study about a quarter of women reported physical domestic violence from their husbands. ‘Slap’ was the most common form of violence (24%), followed by ‘twist’ (11%), ‘push’ (7%), ‘kick’ (6%), ‘punch’ (5%), and ‘choke’ (1%). Further, about 13% of the women reported multiple forms of violence. Women who are subject to one form of physical domestic violence are more prone to experience multiple forms of physical domestic violence.

An important question that this study sought to answer was whether or not dowry is associated with physical domestic violence. We found that giving dowry without women’s autonomy to use it did not have any protective value from physical domestic violence; indeed it increased women’s vulnerability to violence. We also found not giving dowry can decrease women’s exposure to physical domestic violence. This supports findings from other studies where dowry payment did not show any decrease in domestic violence compared to those who did not pay dowry or paid less dowry (Naved & Persson, 2010; Suran, et al., 2004). Thus, the perception that dowry will protect women from potential physical domestic violence (S. Srinivasan & Bedi, 2007) is not supported by this study.

‘Dowry autonomy’ had significant association with physical domestic violence. Women who could exercise ‘dowry autonomy’ had about 27-37% lower odds of experiencing all forms of

physical domestic violence compared to women who could not exercise ‘dowry autonomy’. Marital property ownership was reported as a protective factor against domestic violence (Sinha et al., 2012). Other protective forces were women’s education and marrying beyond 18 years of age were supported by other studies conducted in India (Kimuna, Djamba, Ciciurkaite, & Cherukuri, 2012). Thus, efforts to increase women’s education and encouraging parents to marry their daughter’s beyond the minimum legal age should be supported by government and non-governmental and civil society groups.

Two important social changes that increased physical domestic violence identified in this study are women’s participation in paid employment and ‘love’ marriage. In love marriages parents seldom approve the marriage and women retain only limited or sometimes no ties with the natal home. Women who marry for love and are subsequently cut off from their natal families have reduced protection and limited exit options if violence occurs. This suggests that appropriate counselling services and support system should be focused on this group of women.

Given these findings what then is the way forward? Rao argues , “It is important that women make incremental gains within the existing social order rather than struggling for a wider transformative changes” (Rao, 2012). This seems like a sensible route, the levels of violence against women recorded in this study demonstrate an urgency to improve women’s position and security within marriage, but radical transformation is not going to happen quickly. The study also revealed unexplained community factors at district level in all forms of domestic violence. These suggest that interventions to improve women’s lives need to be responsive to different levels and contexts. Much more research is needed in trying to understand the factors that contribute to the diversity in rates and instances of domestic violence. In sum,

giving dowry does not protect women from physical violence but women's autonomy to use dowry could protect them from physical domestic violence. Not giving dowry is more protective than giving dowry that women can't use.

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Table 1

Outcome variables, questions and response rate, “Youth in India: Situation and Needs study”, India, 2006-07

Outcome variables and response category	Questions/sub questions asked in the survey	Response rate (%)
Dowry given (No-0; Yes-1)	Did you bring with you any cash, gifts, jewelry and/or other items at the time of your marriage	99.2
Can use dowry (No-0; Yes-1)	Could you use any of these if you wished so?	98.0
Did your husband ever do any of the following to you:		
Slap (No-0; Yes-1)	Slap you?	97.3
Twist (No-0; Yes-1)	Twist your arm or pull your hair?	97.4
Push (No-0; Yes-1)	Push you, shake you, or throw something at you?	97.4
Punch (No-0; Yes-1)	Punch you with his fist or with something that could y	97.4

Kick (No-0; Yes-1)	Kick you, drag you or beat you up?	97.4
Chock (No-0; Yes-1)	Try to chock you or burn you on purpose?	

Table 2

Percentage (weighted) of women reporting dowry and 'dowry autonomy' at the time of marriage according to background characteristics, selected Indian states, 2006-2007.

Background characteristics	Dowry (%)	'Dowry autonomy' (%)
State	p-value ≤ 0.001	p-value ≤ 0.001
Bihar	68.48	41.12
Rajasthan	85.61	61.77
Jharkhand	70.45	51.15
Maharashtra	69.89	92.07
Andhra Pradesh	86.30	61.05
Tamil Nadu	87.67	86.38
Urban/rural	p-value ≤ 0.001	p-value ≤ 0.001
Urban	81.45	77.26
Rural	77.50	62.06
Religion	p-value ≤ 0.001	p-value ≤ 0.003
Hindu	78.41	65.85
Muslim	83.62	63.12
Others	68.55	66.3
Caste	p-value ≤ 0.001	p-value ≤ 0.001
SC	71.82	62.96
ST	64.21	67.30
OBC	81.58	63.95
General	82.82	70.96
Household economic status	p-value ≤ 0.001	p-value ≤ 0.001
Poorest	61.65	53.76
Second	76.27	57.39
Middle	81.33	66.25

Fourth	85.30	72.67
Richest	89.80	75.08
Age at marriage	p-value =<0.001	p-value =<0.001
Below 18 years	75.57	60.09
18 years and above	82.93	73.77
Type of marriage	p-value =<0.001	p-value =<0.001
Arranged marriage	82.66	65.18
Love marriage	44.93	76.73
Work before marriage	p-value =<0.001	p-value =<0.004
Never had paid work	80.28	66.40
Paid work before marriage	74.30	69.03
Paid work after marriage	NA	65.93
Paid work before and after	NA	61.66
Father's education	p-value =<0.001	p-value =<0.001
No education	74.55	62.00
Below 10 years	81.48	68.94
10 or more years	84.56	70.29
Respondent's education	p-value =<0.001	p-value =<0.001
No education	71.75	54.43
Below 10 years	81.54	68.20
10 and above	84.51	78.83
Husband's occupation	p-value =<0.004	p-value =<0.001
Not working	75.39	57.98
Labourer	72.91	64.56
Cultivator	82.81	63.31
Admin/managerial/pro	83.00	67.77
Total	78.38	65.59
Total number of women	13,912	10,806

Note: SC=scheduled caste; ST=Scheduled Tribe; OBC=Other Backward Communities.

Table 3

Multilevel logistic regression results (adjusted odds ratios) of dowry (no, yes) and 'dowry autonomy' (no, yes), according to background characteristics, 2006-07.

Background characteristics	Dowry		'Dowry autonomy'	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
States (Bihar (R))				
Jharkhand	1.03	(0.88-1.21)	1.38	(0.90-1.67)
Rajasthan	2.34***	(1.946-2.83)	2.16***	(1.34-2.46)
Maharashtra	0.52***	(0.43-0.62)	15.75***	(8.48-19.68)
Andhra Pradesh	2.14***	(1.77-2.58)	2.39***	(1.47-2.59)
Tamil Nadu	3.01***	(2.41 -3.76)	8.14***	(4.74-9.12)
Residence (Urban(R))				
Rural	1.12*	(0.99-1.26)	0.97	(0.87-1.08)
Religion (Hindu(R))				
Muslim	1.26***	(1.05-1.50)	0.94	(0.81-1.09)
Others	0.77***	(0.63-0.94)	1.02	(0.81-1.29)
Caste (Scheduled Caste (R))				
Scheduled Tribe	0.70***	(0.59-0.84)	1.30***	(1.05-1.61)
Other Backward Communities	1.18***	(1.04-1.34)	1.10	(0.97-1.24)
General	1.30***	(1.08-1.56)	1.14	(0.97-1.35)
No caste	1.26	(0.72-2.22)	1.93	(0.63-5.95)
Wealth index (Poorest (R))				
Second	1.55***	(1.34-1.79)	0.87*	(0.74-1.02)
Middle	1.98***	(1.70-2.31)	0.96	(0.81-1.12)
Fourth	2.48***	(2.08-2.96)	1.11	(0.94-1.32)
Richest	3.08***	(2.49-3.81)	1.04*	(0.86-1.26)
Father's education (No education (R))				
Below year 9	1.23***	(1.09-1.38)	0.91*	(0.81-1.02)
Year 10 and above	1.44***	(1.23-1.69)	1.02	(0.89-1.17)
Respondent (No education (R))				

Below year 9	1.38***	(1.22-1.56)	1.00	(0.90-1.13)
Year 10 and above	1.41***	(1.16-1.70)	1.38*	(1.17-1.63)
Age at marriage (Below 18 years (R))				
18 years and above	1.24**	(1.11-1.40)	1.09*	(0.98-1.21)
Type of marriage (Arranged marriage (R))				
Love marriage (non-traditional)	0.10***	(0.09-1.12)	1.13	(0.87-1.46)
Work (Never had paid work (R))				
Paid work before marriage	0.90	(0.76-1.07)	0.83**	(0.70-0.98)
Paid work after marriage	NA	NA	0.87*	(0.74-1.01)
Paid work before and after marriage	NA	NA	0.83***	(0.72-0.95)
Work status of husband (Not working (R))				
Labourer	1.35**	(1.02-1.79)	1.15	(0.88-1.52)
Cultivator	1.50***	(1.11-2.04)	1.04	(0.77-1.38)
Admin/managerial	1.75***	(1.32-2.32)	1.08	(0.83-1.41)
Random effect	Estimate: 0.0236		Estimate: 0.1047	
	SE: 0.0110		SE: 0.0304	

Notes: OR=Odds Ratios; SE=Standard Error; CI=Confidence Interval; (R) Reference category

*Significant at 10%

**Significant at 5%

***significant at 1%

Table 4

Dowry and 'dowry autonomy' according to domestic violence among young married women aged 15-24 years, selected states, India 2006-07.

Type of domestic violence	Dowry given		'Dowry autonomy'	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Slap				
No	2014 (71.48)	8179 (76.87)	2,669 (71.79)	5,626 (79.51)
Yes	803 (28.52)	2461 (23.13)	1,048 (28.21)	1,449 (20.49)
Twist				
No	2,435(86.47)	9,487 (89.13)	3,192 (85.93)	6,429 (90.78)
Yes	381 (13.53)	1,157 (10.87)	522 (14.07)	653 (9.22)
Push				
No	2,563 (90.99)	9,930 (93.27)	3,390 (91.24)	6,678 (94.30)
Yes	253 (9.01)	716 (6.73)	325 (8.76)	403 (5.70)
Punched				
No	2,626 (93.25)	10,106 (94.92)	3,459 (93.09)	6,789 (95.85)
Yes	190 (6.75)	541 (5.08)	256 (6.91)	293 (4.15)
Kick				
No	2,597 (92.24)	10,011 (94.02)	3,441 (92.60)	6,711 (94.75)
Yes	218 (7.76)	636 (5.98)	275 (7.40)	372 (5.25)
Choked				
No	2,766 (98.28)	10,531 (98.91)	3,654 (98.34)	7,026 (99.20)
Yes	48 (1.72)	116 (1.09)	61 (1.66)	56 (0.80)

Table 5

Multilevel logistic regression results (adjusted Odds Ratios) for various forms of domestic violence, married women aged 15-24 years, India, 2006-07.

Characteristics	Type of violence				
	'Slap'	'Twist'	'Push'	'Punch'	'kick'
Dowry:					
Given, but no autonomy to use it (R)					
Given and have the autonomy to use it	0.71***	0.70***	0.73***	0.70***	0.63***
Not given	0.77***	0.72***	0.78***	0.70***	0.68***
State: (Bihar (R))					
Jharkhand	0.94	0.86	0.90	0.83	0.86
Rajasthan	0.67***	0.59***	0.62***	0.64***	0.63***
Maharashtra	1.54***	1.37***	1.38**	1.44**	1.72**
Andhra Pradesh	0.78***	0.76**	0.69***	0.73**	0.83
Tamil Nadu	1.24**	1.16	0.66***	0.64**	1.74***
Residence: (Urban (R))					
Rural	0.91*	0.80**	0.85*	0.83*	0.97
Religion: (Hindu (R))					
Muslim	1.13*	1.04	1.21	1.10	0.94
Others	0.91	1.02	0.91	1.07	1.09
Caste: (Scheduled Caste (R))					
Scheduled Tribes	0.82**	0.91	0.84	0.87	0.73*
Other Backward Communities	0.77***	0.83***	0.81**	0.92	0.82**
General	0.66***	0.73***	0.76**	0.63***	0.66**
No caste	0.43***	0.86	0.54	0.64	0.25*
Wealth index: (poorest (R))					
Second	1.03	0.99	1.02	0.94	1.07
Middle	0.86*	0.74***	0.81*	0.73**	0.72***

Fourth	0.73***	0.64***	0.82	0.76*	0.87
Richest	0.63***	0.54***	0.62***	0.49***	0.54***
Father's education: (No education (R))					
Below 9 years	0.95	0.99	0.99	0.82*	0.84*
Year 10 and above	0.88	0.95	0.93	0.78	0.90
Respondent's education: (No education (R))					
Below 9 years	0.53***	0.71***	0.71***	0.74***	0.76***
Year 10 and above	0.62***	0.37***	0.35***	0.45***	0.35***
Age at marriage: (Below 18 years (R))					
18 years and above	0.65***	0.67***	0.72***	0.69***	0.72***
Type of marriage: (Arranged marriage (R))					
Love marriage	1.51***	1.44***	1.34**	1.29	1.44***
Paid work: (Never had paid work (R))					
Paid work before marriage	1.29***	1.36***	1.48***	1.38**	1.20
Paid work after marriage	1.73***	1.79***	2.00***	2.08***	2.08***
Paid work before and after marriage	1.51***	1.66***	1.72***	1.79***	1.76***
Husband's occupation: (Not working (R))					
Labourer	1.16	0.89	0.77	0.71	0.85
Cultivator	1.01	0.68*	0.57**	0.57*	0.66
Admin/managerial/professional	1.20	0.83	0.70	0.69	0.87
	E:0.0289	E:0.0762	E: 0.0743	E: 0.0669	E: 0.0366
Random effect parameters	SE: 0.0114	SE:0.0263	SE: 0.0295	SE: 0.0310	SE: 0.02147

Note: Notes: OR=Odds Ratios; E=Estimate; SE=Standard Error; (R) Reference category

*Significant at 10%

**Significant at 5%

***significant at 1%