SJIF Impact Factor (2026): 8.863| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 11 | Issue: 6 | June 2026 - Peer Reviewed Journal

ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN GUNTUR DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra28156
DOI No: 10.36713/epra28156

ABSTRACT
The present study analyzes the economic factors that influence domestic violence against women in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh based on primary data of 440 respondents (220 each from rural and urban). Results demonstrate economic dependence as the biggest vulnerability: 67.73 percent of women have no control over the household income although 64.32 percent of them are working, and 75.23 percent do not have separate savings. A total of 64.77% of the households have an income less than ₹20,000, with more poverty in rural (75.90%) than urban (53.64%) areas. Chi-square results indicate a significant relationship between income and severity of violence ($\chi 2 = 28.34$, $p < .001$), women with low income were 2.3 times at the risk of facing higher violence. Economic variables explain 34.2% of the variation in violence according to the regression outcome. The study concludes that approaches for empowerment need to be income generation and women's control over their income and income generation process in conjunction with introduction of financial literacy, access to banking system and legal literacy for the women to translate the gains into reduction in domestic violence.

KEYWORDS: *Domestic violence, economic dependence, financial control, women empowerment, household income*

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is still rampant in Andhra Pradesh in spite of the economic development and measures for women's equalitarianism. Crimes against women were 25,503 including 2,847 cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives, the Department of Women Development and Child Welfare (2022–23) said. There were 21 dowry deaths and 398 cases of harassment reported in Guntur district, but it is said that only around 15-20% of them come out due to stigma and financial dependence. Spousal violence experienced by 29.9% ever married women: NFHS-5 (2019–21) Uneducated, unemployed women are more vulnerable to spousal violence (35.4%) than educated, employed women (18.7%). Economic abuse is found in almost two thirds of claims. Notwithstanding female literacy recording a jump to 68.14%, only 32.4% women are employed mostly in the unorganised sector. Although 71% have bank accounts, only 34% of them are active users of the accounts, indicating limited financial independence. Addressing systemic barriers A mere 14% of women own land, they make approximately 62% of men's wages, and 21% have access to formal credit. These conditions perpetuate vulnerability in patriarchal homes. Analysing domestic violence through an economic lens is important because it limits women's productive potential, imposes costs on the health care system, and contributes to poverty, the latter of which compromises agro-based, inclusive growth and gender equity aspirations in Andhra Pradesh.

Review of Literature

Visaria (1999) observed a 66% prevalence of marital violence among the women in rural Gujarat and risk was increased 2.4 times by economic dependence. Mahapatro et al. (2012) revealed that low income, (OR=2.3), unemployment, (OR=1.8) and no asset, (OR=2.1) were significant predictors of violence and these variables accounted for 28% of the variance. George et al. (2016) documented 56.7% abuse in Puducherry, where 89% of the women could not walk out because of financial constraints. Begum et al. (2015) associated low income and alcohol consumption with violence and stated the risk was 3.2 times more for the women who had no savings. Das et al. (2022) reported a prevalence of 70.5% and 78% opined that economic dependence was one of the obstacles for exit. Bramhankar et al. (2021) revealed 67% had no access to health care and 84% stayed with abusers because of financial constraints, highlighting economic instability.

Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study

One in three married woman still faces domestic violence in andhra pradesh in spite of economic growth and gender responsive laws. Current responses are focused on legal solutions and awareness raising, but do not address root economic causes. Women's

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dependence, in terms of poverty, lack of employment, control over finances, savings, and access to banking institutions means they are unable to exit abusive relationships. There is scant research on the relationship between income, work and financial autonomy and violence in Guntur. This study fills these gaps and advances district level understanding to guide focused, evidence-based responses.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the domestic violence levels among women in Guntur district in relation to their household income.
2. To explore the relationship between indicators of women's economic autonomy and their risk of experiencing different types of domestic violence.

Methodology

An analytical-descriptive cross-sectional was conducted for all married women between 18 to 55 in the district of Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. A total of 440 respondents (220 rural and 220 urban) were selected through multi stage stratified random sampling technique. Data were gathered by means of the Domestic Violence Against Women Scale (RHMJ), a socio-economic questionnaire, and an Economic Autonomy Index. From January to June 2024, in-person interviews were held in Telugu. Analysis included chi-square tests, t tests, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression (VIF < 5). Ethical considerations were upheld.

Profile of the Study Area:

The sanad area of Guntur district measures is 2442 sq.km and has population of 2,091,075 (Census 2011) with a sex ratio of 1007. It is 54.8% urbanised, having urban centers such as Guntur, Tenali, Mangalagiri and Ponnur and more than 200 villages. The literacy rate is 74.15 % (male 80.24 % and female 68.14 %). Agriculture (mainly rice and chillies) and services contribute to the economy, with 134,000 hectares under cultivation. There is still socio-economic stratification, the share of household with less than ₹20,000 income per month is 64.77%, and higher SC (23.65%) and ST (4.02%) populations which determine pattern of vulnerabilities.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics and Economic Status of Respondents

Characteristic	Rural		Urban		Total	
Monthly Household Income	**(n=220)**	**%**	**(n=220)**	**%**	**(n=440)**	**%**
Below ₹10,000	78	35.45	42	19.09	120	27.27
₹10,001-₹20,000	89	40.45	76	34.55	165	37.50
₹20,001-₹30,000	38	17.27	64	29.09	102	23.18
Above ₹30,000	15	6.82	38	17.27	53	12.05
Woman's Employment Status						
Unemployed/Housewife	87	39.55	70	31.82	157	35.68
Employed	133	60.45	150	68.18	283	64.32
Control Over Income						
Male members control	156	70.91	142	64.55	298	67.73
Woman controls	18	8.18	34	15.45	52	11.82
Joint decision	38	17.27	37	16.82	75	17.05
Others control	8	3.64	7	3.18	15	3.41
Independent Savings						
Yes	42	19.09	67	30.45	109	24.77
No	178	80.91	153	69.55	331	75.23
Banking Access						
Independent account	76	34.55	98	44.55	174	39.55
Controlled account	48	21.82	54	24.55	102	23.18
No account	96	43.64	68	30.91	164	37.27

Source: Primary Data

The socio-economic profile exposes severe poverty and the male breadwinner paradigm as key elements defining women's susceptibility. As per the data 64.77% of the households make less than ₹ 20,000 per month and there was more severe rural poverty (75.90%) than urban (53.64%) which indicates the fewer rural chances. While 64.32% of women work, that does not guarantee autonomy: Men control 67.73% of household income, and a mere 11.82% of women have any financial autonomy, revealing a 52.50 percentage-point gap between work and control. Once again precarity is revealed since 75.23% of women have no personal savings, limiting their options to flee from abusive homes. There is still substantial banking exclusion: 37.27% are unbanked and a mere 39.55% have their own accounts, exclusion is higher in rural areas. In the larger context, poverty, male control over finances, and lack of access

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to institutions intersect to create an environment wherein women's prosperity and security is closely tied to their marriage, which perpetuates domestic violence in the district of Guntur.

Table 2: Association Between Monthly Household Income and Violence Severity

Violence Level	Below ₹10,000	₹10,001-₹20,000	₹20,001-₹30,000	Above ₹30,000	Total
Low Violence	18 (15.00%)	36 (21.82%)	32 (31.37%)	19 (35.85%)	105 (23.86%)
Moderate Violence	61 (50.83%)	101 (61.21%)	61 (59.80%)	33 (62.26%)	256 (58.18%)
High Violence	41 (34.17%)	28 (16.97%)	9 (8.82%)	1 (1.89%)	79 (17.95%)
Total	**120 (100%)**	**165 (100%)**	**102 (100%)**	**53 (100%)**	**440 (100%)**

Chi-square (χ^2) = 28.34, df = 6, p < 0.001

Source: Primary Data

The chi-square test #2 suggests a strong correlation between household income and violence severity ($\chi^2 = 28.34$, $p < 0.001$). High violence among women in households with income less than ₹10,000 stands at 34.17% which is almost double the population rate of 17.95% while it is insignificant at 1.89% among the households who earns more than ₹30,000. On the other hand, low violence goes up from 15.00% among the poorest group to 35.85% for highest, suggesting a strong income-violence association. Moderate violence remained stable (50.83% to 62.26%) and this suggests that a baseline level of marital discord is present in all economic groups and that it is only among the poor that this acoustic base line of discord is shaken up into more brutal forms of abuse. The 34.17 per cent versus 1.89 per cent high-violence difference between the two extreme income groups denotes an 18-fold difference, underscoring household poverty as key structural determinant. The statistically significant finding supports a view that adequacy of income has a considerable bearing on exposure to violence and this provides an evidence-based rationale for recognition of poverty reduction as a violence prevention approach.

Table 3: Association between Women's Economic Autonomy and Violence Severity

Violence Level	No Savings, No Control (n=256)	No Savings, Has Control (n=75)	Has Savings, No Control (n=56)	Has Savings, Has Control (n=53)	Total (n=440)
Low Violence	32 (12.50%)	18 (24.00%)	16 (28.57%)	39 (73.58%)	105 (23.86%)
Moderate Violence	144 (56.25%)	48 (64.00%)	37 (66.07%)	27 (50.94%)	256 (58.18%)
High Violence	80 (31.25%)	9 (12.00%)	3 (5.36%)	0 (0.00%)	79 (17.95%)
Total	**256 (100%)**	**75 (100%)**	**56 (100%)**	**53 (100%)**	**440 (100%)**

Chi-square (χ^2) = 67.42, df = 6, p < 0.001

Note: Economic autonomy defined by combination of independent savings and financial control

Source: Primary Data

The level of significance in the link between the economic autonomy composite indicator and violence is very high ($\chi^2 = 67.42$, $p < 0.001$). Women with no access to savings and no control over their income — making up 58.18% of sample — are subjected to high violence at 31.25%, which they are significantly above the level of general population. Gradually, obtaining savings without control (5.36% high violence) or control without savings (12.00%) also helps to protect. Most dramatically, women who have both savings and control of their income do not face any high violence and have 73.58% low violence, which means that severe abuse is completely eradicated in this group of women qualified as economically independent. The slope from 31.25% high violence (no autonomy) to 0.00% (full autonomy) indicates economic empowerment as having a protective effect. Severe spouse abuse occurs with moderate persistence across groups (ranging from 50.94% to 66.07%), showing that economic factors affect the severity rather than the presence of abuse, indicating further that baseline marital conflict may need different approaches other than economic empowerment.

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Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis - Economic Predictors of Total Violence Score

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	t	p-value	95% CI
(Constant)	168.45	7.82	---	21.54	<0.001	[153.10, 183.80]
Monthly Income (₹)	-0.0012	0.0003	-0.286	-4.18	<0.001	[-0.0018, -0.0006]
Employment Status (0=No, 1=Yes)	-8.34	2.45	-0.172	-3.40	0.001	[-13.15, -3.53]
Financial Control (0=No, 1=Yes)	-14.67	3.12	-0.247	-4.70	<0.001	[-20.80, -8.54]
Independent Savings (0=No, 1=Yes)	-11.23	2.87	-0.198	-3.91	<0.001	[-16.86, -5.60]
Banking Access (0=No, 1=Yes)	-6.78	2.34	-0.145	-2.90	0.004	[-11.38, -2.18]

Model Statistics

- Multiple R = 0.585
- $R^2 = 0.342$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.334$
- $F(5, 434) = 45.12$, $p < 0.001$
- Standard Error = 24.48

Source: Primary Data

The economic variables account for a substantial 34.2% of the variance in domestic violence according to the multiple regression analysis ($R^2 = 0.342$, $F = 45.12$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting good model fit. Financial control remains the strongest predictor ($\beta = -0.247$, $p < 0.001$), with those women who exert financial control reporting 14.67 points less violence. Monthly income also significantly negatively impacts ($\beta = -0.286$) as a ₹1,000 increment decreases violence by 1.2 points. Autonomy in saving ($\beta = -0.198$) reduces violence by 11.23 points and the current working status ($\beta = -0.172$) decreases it by 8.34 points, indicating that the protection for women is not adequate without control over finances. A negative and significant but comparatively smaller effect is felt for banking access ($\beta = -0.145$). With adjusted $R^2 = 0.334$, this model can be taken as strong but the 65.8% unexplained variance is a pointer to the importance of noneconomic variables. In general, financial autonomy is more important than employment per se in reducing violence.

DISCUSSION

This study provides evidence for economic factors being the fundamental structural determinants of domestic violence in Guntur district and it may be similar in Andhra Pradesh. 64.77% of families are living on less that ₹20,000 per month, meaning shelter and food and other living standards of women are cutting them from leaving abusive homes. Although female employment comprises 64.32%, only 32.27% of the income is controlled by them which makes it clear that patriarchal financial dominance still very much persists which is the source of dependency. Increasing income levels are associated with lower levels of violence, signifying poverty alleviation as an important pathway for prevention. Still, the fact that there was ongoing violence, even among women with economic power, suggests that financial gains are not enough in themselves without legal enforcement and social change. Crucially, the influence of financial control on the severity exceeds that of employment, underscoring that it is access to and control over resources (rather than merely involvement in the labor market) that is central to security. This questions the mainstream development strategies and necessitates gendered interventions that guarantee women's economic decision making power in addition to income generation.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals economic determinants with household poverty, women's employment, financial control, saving, and access to bank were having strong predicting power of domestic violence severity. Women who are financially dependent or have few resources are at even greater risk. 75.23% of them do not have savings, 67.73% are under male control of their finances, which hinders their ability to leave abusive relationships despite having knowledge of law. The regression analysis accounts for 34.2% of the variance, indicating that economic empowerment is vital, but not sufficient. Employment but no financial independence: the imperative for multifaceted, contextually relevant policy solutions.

SUMMARY

Women in households earning below ₹10,000 face 34.17% high violence compared to 1.89% above ₹30,000, showing poverty's strong impact. Although 64.32% of women are employed, only 11.82% control income, exposing a 52.50-point autonomy gap. Independent savings reduce violence by 11.23 points, yet 75.23% lack savings, limiting escape options. Financial control is the strongest predictor ($\beta = -0.247$), more influential than income or employment. While 62.73% have bank accounts, only 39.55% control them independently. Rural women face higher vulnerability due to greater poverty and male financial dominance. Women with both savings and income control report no high violence, unlike 31.25% among those lacking both. However, moderate violence persists across groups, showing limits of economic solutions alone. Notably, 85.91% require permission for spending. Overall, economic factors explain 34.2% of violence, highlighting need for integrated interventions.

Policy Implications and Suggestions

1. Incorporate legal literacy in livelihood schemes (DWCRA), address economic abuse within PWDVA, property rights and maintenance laws, to fortify women's resistance to financial control.
2. Deepen Jan Dhan banking by giving women exclusive account management through biometrics, restricting male interference, and scaling up women-run banking in villages.
3. Target welfare for households with less than ₹10,000 a month, with cash transfers, housing, healthcare and employment schemes that build women's financial security.
4. Redesign financial literacy curricula to focus on rights to income for women, disrupt patriarchal narratives, and cultivate decision-making and negotiation capacities.

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