

**SPOUSAL VIOLENCE AND CHILD MALNUTRITION: DOES
PATRIARCHAL NORM MATTER?**

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the impact of spousal violence (intimate partner violence) on Indian children's under-nutrition with special emphasis on the role of patriarchal values as the mediator. Based on NFHS-5, 2019–21 unit-level data analysis, it is carried out among ever-married women aged between 15–49 years and their children below five years old. The child's nutritional status is contrasted with normative anthropometric outcomes—stunting, wasting, and being underweight—and wife abuse as reflected by NFHS-5 Domestic Violence Module.

The study confirms maternal health deterioration (i.e., low BMI and anemia) and inattentive childcare as the primary channels by which IPV indirectly influences child malnourishment. The study also examines the degree to which patriarchal attitudes, as quantified by proxies like spouse control attitudes and women's acceptance of IPV, explain the adverse effect of IPV on the nutritional status of the children. The findings prove that both IPV and highly internalized gender roles limit women to not enjoy autonomy in taking due care and supplying adequate nutrition to their children.

By highlighting the structural and intergenerational nature of gender inequality, this study argues the need for policy intervention that brings violence prevention, maternal care, and gender norm transformation together as core elements of national child malnutrition prevention agendas.

Key Words: Spousal violence, Child malnutrition, Patriarchal norms, Gender inequality, NFHS-5, India, Women's health, Intimate partner violence.

JEL Codes: I14, J12, J13, J16, O15.