

# Exploring Caste category, Education, and Domestic Violence Linkages: Intersectional Perspectives on Women's Vulnerability in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

The study focuses on how caste and education intersect to organize domestic violence in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh with a sample of 440 women. The findings indicate that backward caste status and high education results in dual disadvantage. Violence Scores of Scheduled Caste women are 18.4 points higher than the General category women and illiterate women score 21.94 points higher than the educated women. An interaction term of factors is significant: illiterate SC women experience 42.3% more violence than the educated women from the General category. Regression results R-squares 47.8 percent of the variations of the violence. The study demonstrates that caste and education have a combined effect on violence and knowledge of rights. Organising binaries of caste oppression and women's subjugation, it argues, are best addressed through education, feminist interventions and anti-caste strategies to reduce women's vulnerability and increase their capacity to resist violence.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, caste category, education, Scheduled Castes, women's rights, Andhra Pradesh

## Introduction:

Domestic violence in India arises from gender inequality and is underreported. Social determinants such as caste, class, and education exacerbate women's insecurity. 34.7% of Scheduled Caste (SC) and 38.2% of Scheduled Tribe (ST) women face spousal violence in Andhra Pradesh as opposed to 23.1% among the General category women. While SC/ST communities constitute 27.7% of the population, 68% of complaints to Disha helpline come from these communities, indicating greater vulnerability. The female literacy rate is 68.14% in general, while it is lower for SC (54.3%) and ST (47.8%) women. The dropout rate is also high with 32.4% of SC girls and 41.7% of ST girls dropping out before Class 10. However, only 14% and 11% of SC and ST women seek formal help, although 38% more cases are reported from SC areas. It is the notion of intersectional, first conceptualized by Kimberlé

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Crenshaw (1989) which helps explain how multiple axes of identities such as caste and gender can lead to compound marginalization. The caste also continues to be determinant of inequality – 27% of Indians still practice untouchability, and SC households have lower incomes than General ones. In Guntur district, where SC/ST population stands at 27.67%, these inequalities are quite distinct. Awareness and options Education is limited, so is An. An intersectional caste–education rearticulating of change mindsets and material conditions is necessary for realizing constitutional promises enshrined in Articles 14–17. Improved data can inform SC (17.08%) and ST (5.53%) Sub-Plans and strengthen focused intervention for violence within marital homes.

### **Review of Literature**

Sharmila Rege (2006) demonstrates how Dalit women are subject to multiple forms of subjugation — they are sexualized as subjects in a caste- based sexual violence regime, and simultaneously experience economic exploitation and social exclusion — they are made to suffer at the hands of dominant-caste men as well as within their own communities. Anupama Rao (2003) reports on institutional prejudice, commenting that SC women are frequently subjected to police harassment, 73% being so treated when they ask for assistance. Sahoo and Pradhan (2009) reveal that SC/ST women are more inclined to condone violence (OR=2.1), and more so if they are illiterate (OR=3.4), with illiterate SC women reporting the highest odds of justifying violence. Flavia Agnes (1994) describes class-caste divide: “lower caste women are more subjected to physical violence and have fewer mechanisms of support. Vishwanath and Mehrotra (2007) indicate that education protects against the risk of violence, but less suitably for SC women. Kumar et al. (2012) identify a positive association between the population share of SCs and violence, signaling the salience of intersectional analysis.

### **Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study**

Scheduled Caste women in Andhra Pradesh experience particularly high levels of domestic violence – exacerbated by low levels of education, which limits knowledge of legal rights and support structures, despite constitutional guarantees of equality, and positive action being undertaken. Widely used interventions tend to ignore how caste and education intersect to produce specific vulnerabilities among women. This paper draws attention to the nonexistence of research at the district level that examines the combined effect of caste status and education on exposure to violence, knowledge of rights, and seeking help in Guntur. It fills important gaps by looking at interaction effects rather than individual factors, provides data on the local level and assesses whether welfare schemes mitigate violence.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To investigate the association between caste, and severity of domestic violence in the context of educational and socioeconomic confounders.
2. To examine the interplay of caste and education on women's levels of exposure to violence and awareness of human rights.

### Research Methodology:

The study is also the first to employ quantitative methods in combination with other approaches and through a cross-sectional comparative design. 440 respondents were chosen among the female population of 18-55 years from Guntur district using stratified random sampling technique ensuring proportionate representation of caste (70 SC, 9 ST, 264 OBC, 97 General as per the district demographics). Baseline information on Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved survey instruments<sup>2</sup> included: (1) Domestic Violence Against Women Scale-RHMJ ( $\alpha=0.898$ ), (2) Human Rights Awareness Test developed by Sood & Anand (2012), (3) a comprehensive socio-demographic schedule recording information on caste, education, occupation, income, and housing. Data were gathered through structured interviews (January-June 2024) in Telugu using caste-sensitive protocols designed to overcome potential barriers to disclosure. Inferential statistics included chi-square for caste-education-violence relationships, one way ANOVA for mean violence scores across caste groups, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to examine the effects of caste on violence while controlling for education as the covariate, and Bonferroni for the post-hoc tests were employed for pair wise group comparisons. Ethical approval was granted by the institutional ethics committee, which guaranteed the culturally sensitive conduct of research.

### Profile of the Study Area:

Guntur district, severe caste stratification determines socioeconomic status as well as the risk of violence. The SC (23.65%) and the ST (4.02%) together constitute 27.67% which is an over head of the national average. It is said that the majority of the Madiga and Mala community are working as laborers and ST are still scattered. The disparity in literacy is still very prevalent: the overall literacy rate is 74.15%, yet SC (67.7%) and ST (68.7%) are lower, having more pronounced gender disparity (SC 60.2%, ST 58.4% as compared to 75.8% for others). SC/ST children also have the lowest rates of educational attainment. Hierarchical motives were also demonstrated in work patterns, 67.4% of SCs were in manual jobs. Housing and income disparities are stark, as almost 50 per cent of SC families live in kuccha houses and earn much less. Such structural inequalities compound susceptibility to intimate partner violence and undermine coping.

### RESULTS:

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics by Caste Category**

Characteristic	SC		ST		OBC		General	
	(n=70)	%	(n=9)	%	(n=264)	%	(n=97)	%
Illiterate	28	40.00	5	55.56	92	34.85	31	31.96
Up to 10th	38	54.29	3	33.33	151	57.20	54	55.67
Inter/UG	4	5.71	1	11.11	21	7.95	12	12.37
<b>Occupation</b>								

Unemployed/Housewife	18	25.71	4	44.44	92	34.85	43	44.33
Agriculture	12	17.14	2	22.22	19	7.20	4	4.12
Unorganized sector	34	48.57	3	33.33	89	33.71	15	15.46
Organized sector	4	5.71	0	0.00	38	14.39	26	26.80
Business	2	2.86	0	0.00	26	9.85	9	9.28
<b>Monthly Income</b>								
Below ₹10,000	31	44.29	5	55.56	67	25.38	17	17.53
₹10,001-₹20,000	28	40.00	3	33.33	108	40.91	26	26.80
₹20,001-₹30,000	9	12.86	1	11.11	64	24.24	28	28.87
Above ₹30,000	2	2.86	0	0.00	25	9.47	26	26.80
<b>Housing Status</b>								
Kachha/Temporary	34	48.57	6	66.67	78	29.55	17	17.53
Rented	18	25.71	2	22.22	67	25.38	27	27.84
Owned	18	25.71	1	11.11	119	45.08	53	54.64

**Source:** Primary Data

The socio-economic status exhibits definite caste based discrimination which further exacerbates the vulnerability on the basis of intersection of variables. It is stated that the illiteracy rate amongst SC and ST women is on the higher side which stands at 40.00% for SC and 55.56% for ST as compared to General women (31.96%), and the route to higher education for these scanted souls has always been a difficult terrain to cross. Occupational structure is also hierarchical: almost half of SC and one-third of ST women are engaged in unorganised sector which is almost negligible among General women; formal sector employment is as inaccessible to SC/ST women as it is to rural women. 44.29% of SC and 55.56% of ST families earn less than ₹10,000, as against 17.53% of General families, highlighting the income inequalities. The housing situation is another indicator of deprivation since most SC/ST families live in makeshift dwellings and have lower levels of ownership. These compounded deprivations of education, precarious employment, poverty, and inadequate housing result in structural circumstances that not only increase risk of domestic violence but also limit women’s capacity to access safety or assistance.

**Table 2: Association Between Caste Category and Violence Severity**

<b>Violence Level</b>	<b>SC (n=70)</b>	<b>ST (n=9)</b>	<b>OBC (n=264)</b>	<b>General (n=97)</b>	<b>Total (n=440)</b>
<b>Low Violence</b>	8	0	64	33	105

	(11.43%)	(0.00%)	(24.24%)	(34.02%)	(23.86%)
<b>Moderate Violence</b>	38 (54.29%)	6 (66.67%)	157 (59.47%)	55 (56.70%)	256 (58.18%)
<b>High Violence</b>	24 (34.29%)	3 (33.33%)	43 (16.29%)	9 (9.28%)	79 (17.95%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>264</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>97</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>440</b> <b>(100%)</b>

**Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 24.67, df = 6, p < 0.001**

**Source:** Primary Data

There is a significant association between caste and severity of violence as per chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 24.67, p < 0.001$ ). SC women suffer from 34.29% high violence—almost four times as high as 9.28% in the case of General women—followed by 33.33% in ST women. Under low violence, however, the numbers are higher for General women (34.02%) than for SC (11.43%) and ST (0%). OBC women are moderate violence remains high among all group, which point to baseline conflict prevalent across all groups. On the whole, not only does caste disadvantage significantly compound the risk of experiencing any violence, but it also renders women more susceptible to severe violence, underscoring the imperative of caste-sensitive interventions.

**Table 3: Intersectional Analysis - Violence Severity by Caste and Education**

<b>Caste-Education Category</b>	<b>Low Violence</b>	<b>Moderate Violence</b>	<b>High Violence</b>	<b>Total</b>
SC + Illiterate (n=28)	1 (3.57%)	15 (53.57%)	12 (42.86%)	28 (100%)
SC + Educated (n=42)	7 (16.67%)	23 (54.76%)	12 (28.57%)	42 (100%)
OBC + Illiterate (n=92)	14 (15.22%)	56 (60.87%)	22 (23.91%)	92 (100%)
OBC + Educated (n=172)	50 (29.07%)	101 (58.72%)	21 (12.21%)	172 (100%)
General + Illiterate (n=31)	6 (19.35%)	20 (64.52%)	5 (16.13%)	31 (100%)

General + Educated (n=66)	27 (40.91%)	35 (53.03%)	4 (6.06%)	66 (100%)
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**Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 52.18, df = 10, p < 0.001**

**Note:** Educated includes up to 10th and Inter/UG combined; ST excluded due to small cell sizes

**Source:** Primary Data

The intersectional chi-square indicates a significant two-way interaction between caste and education ( $\chi^2 = 52.18, p < 0.001$ ). Illiterate SC women are 42.86% more likely to be subjected to high violence - nearly seven times more so than educated General women (6.06%), demonstrating additive disadvantage. Education Reduces Risk within Groups (SC: 42.86% to 28.57%), but Educated SC women continue to experience higher violence than Illiterate General women, indicating that caste effects persist Beyond Education. Similar patterns are observed among OBC women. Reverse is the case with low violence, peaking among educated General women.

**Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) - Violence Scores by Caste Controlling Education**

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial $\eta^2$
Education (Covariate)	12,847.32	1	12,847.32	23.67	<0.001	0.052
Caste Category	15,234.89	3	5,078.30	9.36	<0.001	0.061
Error	236,458.12	435	543.58	---	---	---
Total	8,185,267.00	440	---	---	---	---

**Adjusted Means (controlling for education):**

- SC: 138.42 (SE=2.87)
- ST: 141.67 (SE=8.12)
- OBC: 132.18 (SE=1.56)
- General: 124.73 (SE=2.43)

**Pairwise Comparisons (Bonferroni adjusted):**

- SC vs General: Mean Difference = 13.69, p < 0.001
- SC vs OBC: Mean Difference = 6.24, p = 0.024
- OBC vs General: Mean Difference = 7.45, p = 0.002

**Source:** Primary Data

ANCOVA reveals that caste continues to be a significant determinant of violence controlling for education ( $F = 9.36, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.061$ ). Education is significant on its own ( $F = 23.67, p < 0.001$ ), yet caste effects remain. The adjusted means show SC women at 138.42 as opposed to 124.73 for General women – a difference of 13.69 points, whereas ST women attain the maximum. OBC women are in the median range. When it comes to the percentage of variance explained by these two predictors, effect sizes reveal that caste (6.1%) and education (5.2%) are of roughly equal importance in the prediction of violence. The important caveat is that results demonstrate that eliminating disparities in education will not equalize disparities. Caste discrimination persists in such manifestations as economic deprivation, institutional prejudice, and social shame. Hence, strategies need to include skills training, but also other caste-sensitive initiatives that challenge structural power disparities and increase access to justice and support mechanisms; education alone cannot suffice.

### **Discussion:**

The intersectional framework is that caste and education were not “additive” but “multiplicative” in determining susceptibility to violence, summarized by Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectional. 42.86 % SC women who were illiterate had to face very high violence - seven times that of educated General women - signifying double oppression. About 13.69-point gap remains even after the effect of education is controlled for, suggesting that education is not sufficient in itself to bring about equity. Discrimination based on caste is manifested through various channels: it results in caste-based occupational segregation into precarious work, bias in police response, social ostracism and stereotypes that justify violence. Education is protective within groups, but differences persist between castes: SC women with education are still at greater risk than illiterate General women. It questions the notion that education automatically equalizes outcomes, advocating for structural and same-level anti-discriminatory measures alongside educational improvement to effectively decrease violence.

### **Summary:**

In Andhra Pradesh, caste and education together determine domestic violence susceptibility, SC women are at a 34.29%% more risk of violence than General women. Illiteracy is still high among SC (40.00%) and ST (55.56%) women and their exposure to higher education is minimal. The effects of intersectional are glaringly so: An illiterate SC woman is at a 42.86% higher risk of violence compared to an educated General woman who is at 6.06%. Within groups, education decreases violence, but disparities remain: educated SC women experience more violence than illiterate General women. Income and work inequalities compound this: many SC women are employed informally, in poor households. Housing deprivation and access to few small assets makes one even more vulnerable. There are also gaps in knowledge, with SC women in particular recording poorer scores on rights knowledge. In general, while some violence—though perhaps more moderate violence—happens in all groups, the really severe violence is more likely to happen to marginalized women, so we should think about intersectional and equity-focused interventions alongside universal social change.

## **Conclusion:**

This study establishes that domestic violence vulnerability in Guntur district is shaped by the intersection of caste, education, and gender inequality. Violence is highest among multiply marginalized groups, especially illiterate SC/ST women, with a stark gap 42.86% high violence among illiterate SC women versus 6.06% among educated General women. Even after controlling for education, caste remains a significant factor, showing that education alone cannot eliminate disparities. The findings highlight how caste discrimination persists through occupational segregation, institutional bias, and social exclusion. This challenges uniform policy approaches and underscores the need for targeted, equity-focused interventions. Policy implications include aligning SC/ST Sub-Plan resources with violence prevention, expanding educational access, addressing institutional discrimination through training, and promoting economic inclusion. Achieving meaningful reduction in domestic violence requires structural transformation addressing both caste-based inequality and gender subordination together.

## **Policy Implications and Suggestions:**

1. Allocate SC/ST Sub-Plan funds (17.08% SC, 5.53% ST) for domestic violence programs, including legal aid, counseling, economic support, and caste-sensitive decision making.
2. Provide targeted scholarships for SC/ST girls, integrate violence prevention education, and ensure reserved employment in protection services and livelihood schemes.
3. Introduce mandatory caste-sensitivity training for police, judiciary, and protection officers with strict accountability for discriminatory practices.
4. Strengthen the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 by incorporating caste dimensions and aligning it with the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act for intersectional cases.
5. Promote SC/ST-focused self-help groups for awareness, legal support, land rights, and economic cooperation to empower marginalized women collectively.

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