



MASCULINITY, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND SON PREFERENCE IN INDIA – FINDINGS FROM MADHYA PRADESH*

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, in-depth research on gender, power and masculinity has made it abundantly clear that men and boys must be an integral part of efforts to promote gender equality. Recent research suggests that men's attitudes and more broadly, masculinity, perpetuate son preference and to some extent, intimate partner violence (IPV) in India. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in collaboration with UNFPA, adapted the International Men and Gender Equality Survey methodology, to deeply understand the intrinsic relationship between masculinity and son preference and intimate partner violence in seven states# of India¹. The aggregate level results show that masculinity is a key determinant of IPV and son preference in India. This research brief presents and discusses the findings of this study for the state of Madhya Pradesh.

STATE PROFILE

With 72.6 million people, Madhya Pradesh is the sixth most populous state in India and contributes to 6% of the total population of the country³. The demographic indicators for the state are presented in Table 1. The sex ratio at birth in Madhya Pradesh is higher than the national average of 909 (2011-13) and shows a significant increase over the years. The literacy rate for the population aged seven and above has also improved in the past decade from 63% to 69% but continues to be lower than the national average of 74%. The literacy rate among men is 79% compared to the national average of 82%; and female literacy rate is 59%, whereas the national average is 65% (2011 census).

Though the demographic indicators are close to the national average, the status of women in Madhya Pradesh continues to be low. According to the National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 46% ever-married women in Madhya Pradesh have experienced spousal, physical or sexual violence, which is the highest in the country after Bihar⁴. Son preference may be indicated from the fact that six out of ten women who have only daughters have a desire for more children compared to 8% of those who had only sons. Gender discrimination is apparent in the adverse sex ratio of 918 girls for 1,000 boys ages 0-6 years old. Data on the age at marriage from NFHS-3 reveal that more than half (57%) of 20- to 24-year-old women were married before attaining the age of

* Citation: Nanda Priya, Gautam Abhishek, Verma Ravi, Khanna Aarushi, Khan Nizamuddin, Brahme Dhanashri, Boyle Shobhana, Kumar Sanjay (2015). "Masculinity, Intimate Partner Violence and Son Preference in India - Findings from Madhya Pradesh". New Delhi, International Center for Research on Women.

Table 1: Demographics of Madhya Pradesh at a Glance

Indicators	Estimates (Year)	
Sex ratio at birth (SRB: girls per 1,000 boys) ²	919 (2006-08)	932 (2011-13)
Literacy rate ³	63 (2001)	69 (2011)
Male literacy rate ³	75 (2001)	79 (2011)
Female literacy rate ³	50 (2001)	59 (2011)

¹ Nanda P, Gautam A, Verma R, Khanna A, Khan N, Brahme D, Boyle S, Kumar S (2014). "Study on Masculinity, Intimate Partner Violence and Son Preference in India". New Delhi, International Center for Research on Women (Available at: www.icrw.org; india.unfpa.org)

² Sample Registration System, Office of Registrar General of India

³ Census 2011, Office of Registrar General of India

⁴ National Family Health Survey Round -2 and 3

Seven states: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra



18 in Madhya Pradesh. The prevalence of child marriage is higher in rural areas, where a significant proportion of 20- to 24-year-old women were married before 15 years of age (30%) and 18 years of age (67%). Only 31% of girls' ages 15-17 are currently in school in Madhya Pradesh. A majority of girls (77%) discontinue their schooling in rural areas at the secondary level as per NFHS-3 data. According to Census 2011, the rate of women's participation in the workforce in the state is as low as 33% and varies widely among districts.

Given the backdrop of poor indicators for women's development, this study seeks to understand men and women's attitudes and behavior around key indicators of gender equality with a focus on intimate partner violence and son preference.

OBJECTIVE

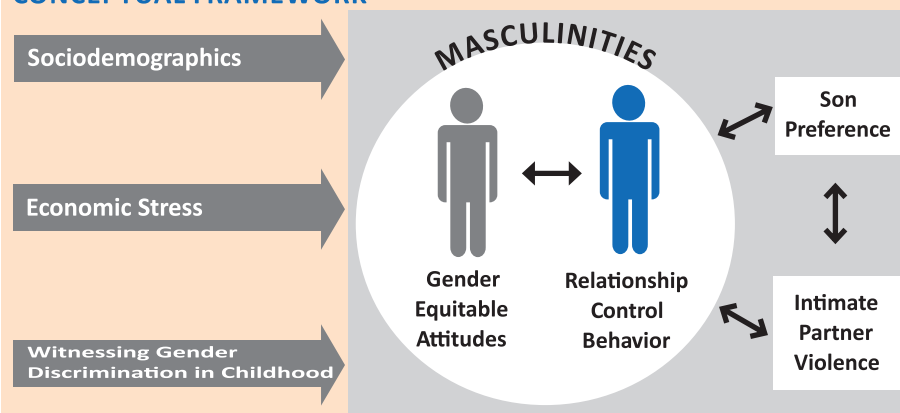
The primary objective of the study was to examine the dimensions and determinants of men's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors on issues related to gender equality, son preference and IPV. The specific objectives were to:

1. Assess men's current behaviors and attitudes on intimate partner violence.
2. Assess men's knowledge and attitudes towards son preference and gender equality.
3. Explore contributing factors that can be attributed to men's attitudes and behaviors related to IPV and son preference.
4. Explore factors that may explain variation in men's behaviors in their family lives and intimate and sexual relationships, including childhood experiences of violence, gender norms in their family of origin, stress and unemployment, among others.

FRAMEWORK

The study was conceptualized to examine the role of masculinity as a determinant of son preference and IPV. It also looks at the underlying determinants of masculinity, particularly economic stress and experience of childhood discrimination, and the role that those factors play in understanding son preference and IPV.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Methodology: The study was carried out in the following seven states of India: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. These selected states were not only fairly large in terms of population and geographical spread but also had diverse sex ratio at birth. To achieve a representative sample at the state level the sample size was fixed at 1,500 men and 500 women, ages 18-49 in each state.

A multistage cluster sampling approach was adopted to select the samples. Each state was divided into regions and samples were allocated in proportion to the size of the regions. To have representation of both rural and urban areas, samples were further distributed in the ratio of 60 to 40, respectively between rural and urban primary sample units. The primary sampling unit in urban areas was census enumeration blocks and in rural areas it was villages or a group of villages (in case of small linked villages). Appropriate weights were calculated at the state and aggregate level and applied during analysis.

Sample Size	Total All State	Madhya Pradesh
Men	9,205	1,501
Women	3,158	501

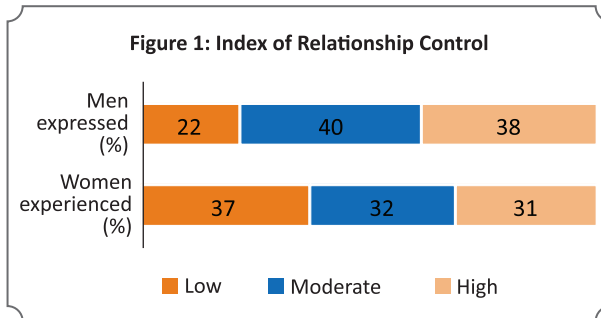
BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS IN MADHYA PRADESH

In Madhya Pradesh, the mean age of surveyed respondents for both men and women was 31 years old, with a majority of them married, living in rural areas and with limited education. Three-fifths (59%) of the men and 64% of the women in the sample were from rural areas. More than one-third (35%) of women and 12% of men in Madhya Pradesh were illiterate. Less than 10% of the respondents (9% of men and 6% of women) reported attaining higher education (graduation or above). Three in ten men (30%) and just under one-fifth of the women (19%) were unmarried at the time of the study. Among those who were married, more than half of the men (55%) and a majority (84%) of the women reported that their marriage was arranged and they had agreed willingly. One-fourth (26%) of the married men and two out of ten women (20%) reported that their marriage was arranged and they had no choice than to agree.

MASCULINITY

Masculinity is a set of socially constructed attributes, behaviors and roles generally associated with boys and men. It is influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors that create attributes of what it means to be “a real man”, although there are characteristics that may be similar across contexts. Women, too, possess attributes of masculinity, which tend to be expressed in their own attitudes towards gender equality as well as how much control is exerted over them - by an intimate partner or others - in their lives. For this study, masculinity was defined as interplay of two dimensions: “relationship control” as a behavioral dimension and “attitude towards gender norms” as an underlying value.

In terms of the former, men most commonly express power over their partners by controlling various aspects of their partners’ lives and behaviors. Nine statements such as “I want to know where my wife/partner is all the time” and “My husband/partner won’t let me wear certain things”, capturing men’s expressions and women’s experiences of relationship control were combined and a summarized score was used to develop the index of relationship control. Nearly a third of women (31%) in Madhya Pradesh reported experiencing high control in their relationship, while 38% of men reported expressing significant control over their intimate partners.

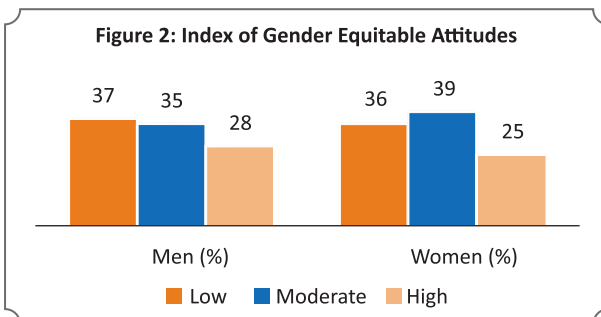


Index of Relationship Control: Average across the states		
Relationship Control Index	Men	Women
Low	30	37
Moderate	34	39
High	37	23

In terms of the attitudinal dimension of masculinity, 27 attitudinal statements capturing perceptions and attitudes on some key gender norms were used to form an index of “gender equitable attitudes.”

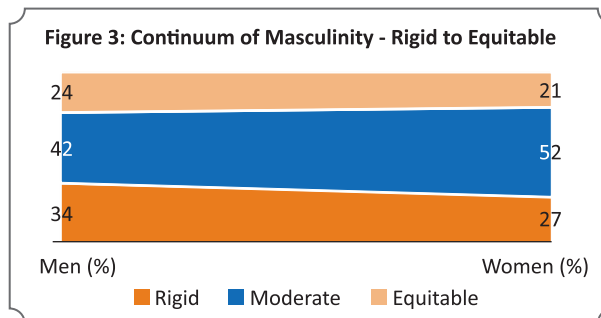
Statements included, for example, “Women’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family,” and “A woman should tolerate domestic violence in order to keep her family together.” The study found that a majority of men and women held low or moderate gender-equitable attitudes. Less than one-third of men (28%) and a quarter of women (25%) held positive and equitable attitudes towards gender equality and others were either moderate or inequitable.

The proportion of men and women who had positive equitable attitudes was not very different from that observed across other states in the study.



Index of Gender Equitable Attitude: Average across the states		
Gender Equitable Attitude	Men	Women
Low	38	39
Moderate	32	32
High	30	29

The combined scores of “relationship control” and “attitudes to gender equal norms” provided different categories of masculinity for men and women, which were further trichomatized into three categories – rigid, moderate and equitable. Rigid men are those who not only exercised excessive control in their intimate relationships but also believed that women and men are unequal and held negative attitudes about gender norms. On the other hand men who were less controlling in their intimate relationships



Continuum of Masculinity: Average across the states		
Masculinity Index	Men	Women
Rigid	32	21
Moderate	45	52
Equitable	23	27

Table 2: Odds of Equitable Men and Women		
Determinants	Odds for men	Odds for women
Type of residence		
Rural (R)		
Urban	1.56*	1.09
Current age		
18-24 years (R)		
25-34 years	0.91	1.82
35-49 years	0.73	1.70
Level of education		
Up to Primary (0-5 class)(R)		
Up to higher secondary (6-12 class)	2.85**	3.88**
Graduate and above	6.57**	27.6**
Type of family		
Nuclear (R)		
Non-Nuclear	0.83	1.68
Wealth Index		
Low (R)		
Middle	0.99	2.55
High	1.49	2.52
Economic stress		
Yes (R)		
No	5.30**	
Decision making in family		
Father (R)		
Both Together	1.05	1.31
Witnessing male participation in household chores		
Yes (R)		
No	0.27**	0.48
Witnessed/Experienced discrimination/harassment during childhood		
Yes (R)		
No	3.72**	3.05*

Note: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01

Across the states men's perpetration of any form of violence in past 12 months is 34% while reported experience of any form of violence by women is 31%.

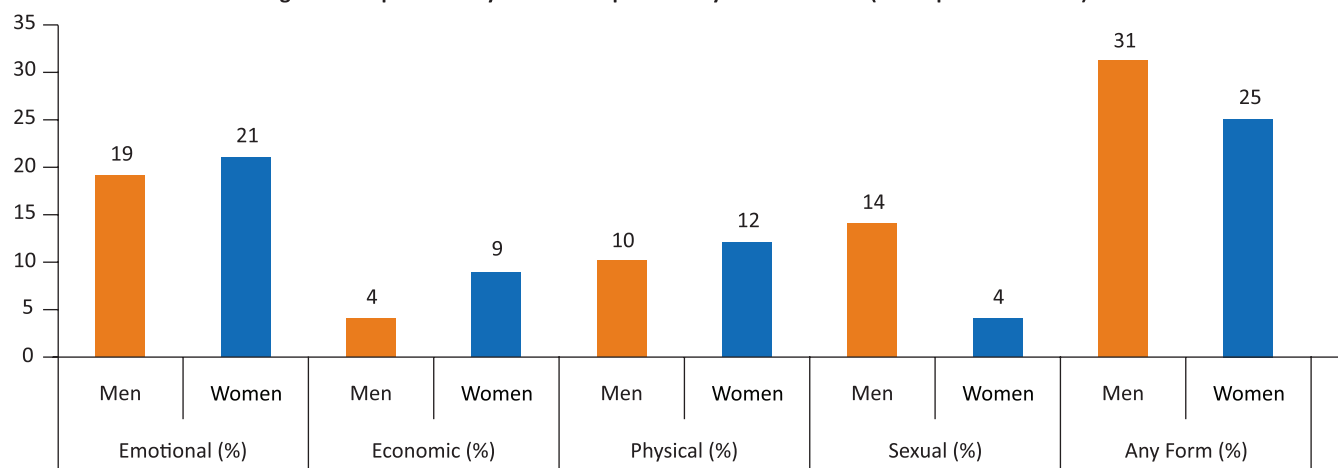
and believed in gender equality were considered as equitable. In our sample "rigid masculinity" was manifested and enacted by more than a third of the men (34%) in Madhya Pradesh, while 42% were considered moderately masculine. This was the second largest group of rigidly masculine men in the study following Uttar Pradesh. For women, masculinity was about the type of relationship that they were living in and their own attitudes about gender norms. Only one fifth (21%) of women had gender-equitable attitudes and were part of highly equitable relationships. More than half of the women had moderately equitable relationships and attitudes and 27% were in rigidly masculine relationships. This was higher than the average proportion of women in rigidly masculine relationships across all states (21%).

The multivariate analysis to decide the key determinants of equitable men and women reveals that education is a significant predictor of masculinity. Men who have attained higher education are nearly six times more likely to be equitable in their behavior and attitudes compared to their counterparts. For both men and women in Madhya Pradesh, living in urban areas has a positive effect as they are more likely to have equitable attitudes and be less controlling, although the result was statistically significant only for men. This might be due to being exposed to more gender equal norms in urban areas where most women are likely to be educated and earning alongside men. The relationship between men's internalization of the role of an economic provider of the family and their attitudes and behaviors is clearly evident from the findings. The multivariate analysis revealed that men who are not economically stressed – for example, they have sufficient work and income – are five times more likely to express gender-equitable behavior and attitudes than men who have less income or work or do not work. Men who are in conditions of economic stress possibly internalize their masculine roles more adversely and are more likely to be controlling in their relationships.

Another determinant of gender-equitable attitudes and behavior is witnessing men participating in household chores while growing up. The study found that men and women who had such an experience during childhood grew into adults who believed in gender equality, and the results were highly significant for men.

Witnessing or experiencing discrimination or harassment during childhood shapes one's attitude and behaviors as well. Men and women in Madhya Pradesh who had never experienced or witnessed any kind of discrimination or harassment during childhood were found to be more than three times likely to have equitable attitude and behavior than those who had such experiences.

Figure 4: Perpetration by Men and Experience by Women of IPV (in the past 12 months)



INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY

In the study, both men and women who have or ever had a spouse were asked a series of questions to assess the prevalence of intimate partner violence. The questions covered acts of emotional, economic, physical and sexual violence. The sample of men and women were independent of each other. The response to the series of questions for each form of violence was taken into account and a composite variable for each form of violence was created.

Nearly a third of men (31%) said they had been violent with a partner and a quarter of women (25%) had been victims of IPV in the past 12 months. Among men and women, emotional violence was most prevalent, with almost two in ten men (19%) reporting that they had engaged in this form of violence, and a similar proportion of women (21%) reported having experienced it. Interestingly, men tended to report perpetrating less violence of any form – except for sexual violence – than the abuse women said they had experienced in the past year. However comparing prevalence of violence in past 12 months with lifetime prevalence, men reports of different forms of violence are higher than women’s report. Specifically, emotional violence was perpetrated by 40% of men, versus 24.9% of women; physical, 32.6% of men and 17.8% of women; and sexual violence, 33% of men and 4.2% of women. There is a particularly striking difference between men and women’s reports of sexual violence. The tendency to under report this form of violence by women was apparent, likely due to a stigma associated with sexual violence in intimate relationships as well as the expectations around the sexual behavior of women.

The key determinants of IPV include socio-economic characteristics, economic stress, experiences of discrimination in childhood and masculinity. Education is significantly associated with the perpetration of violence by men in Madhya Pradesh, but among women it did not show any significant difference. From both the multivariate and bi-variate analysis, it is evident that as the level of education increases the perpetration of violence reported by men reduces significantly. Multivariate results demonstrate that men who have higher education (graduation or above) were 0.4 times (CI: 0.17-0.86) less likely to perpetrate any form of violence in the past 12 months. The effect of education on men may be influenced by other factors, such as being exposed to women who are also in the workforce and who are therefore more likely to be able to resist or negotiate control in their relationships.

Socio-economic status also has a significant relationship with the perpetration of violence by men, while for women it was not significant. Men belonging to higher wealth strata were less likely to report perpetrating violence, while among women there was hardly any difference in experiencing violence. It was not possible to discern whether men who are more educated or wealthier were less likely to report violence or whether the environment had a more gender equitable influence. However, going by the similar experience of violence reported by women across different wealth strata (limited significance), it is possible that with an increase in wealth, men perhaps perceive that IPV is socially unacceptable and choose not to report it.

Violence and discrimination may be internalized as normal if children observe or experience them during their formative years – and, as an adult, may likely perpetrate violence. More than two-fifths of men (45%) as well as one-fourth of women who had often witnessed or experienced discrimination or harassment during childhood said that they had perpetrated or experienced violence in the past 12 months.

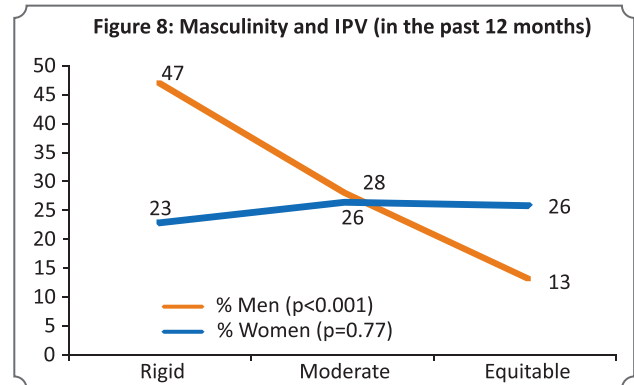
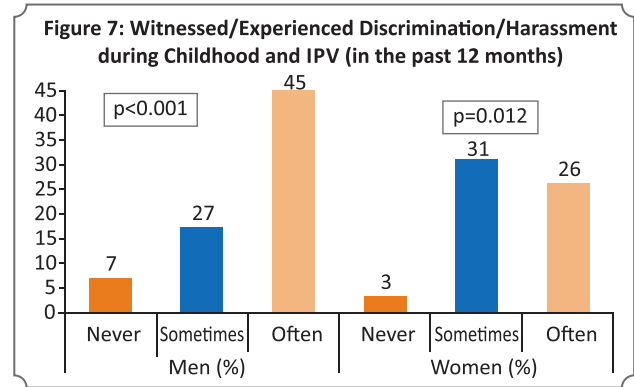
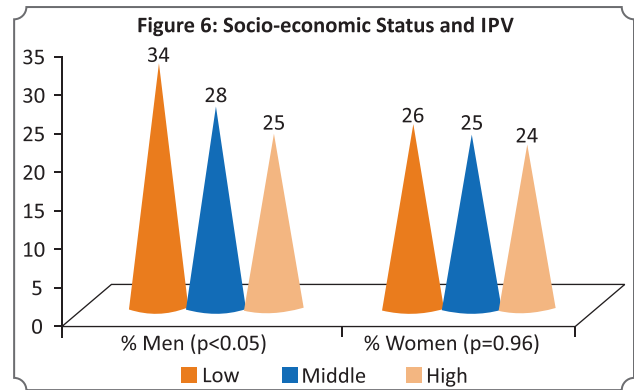
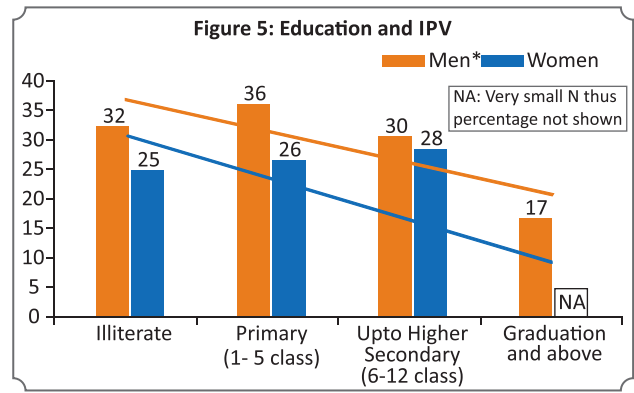
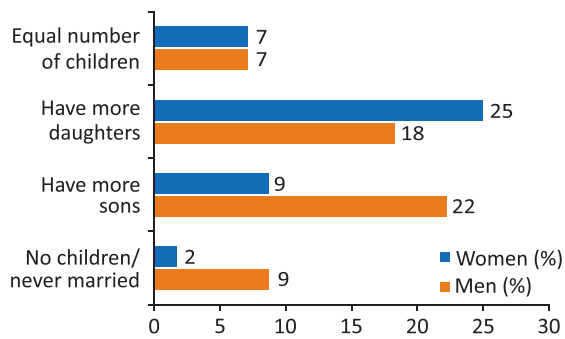


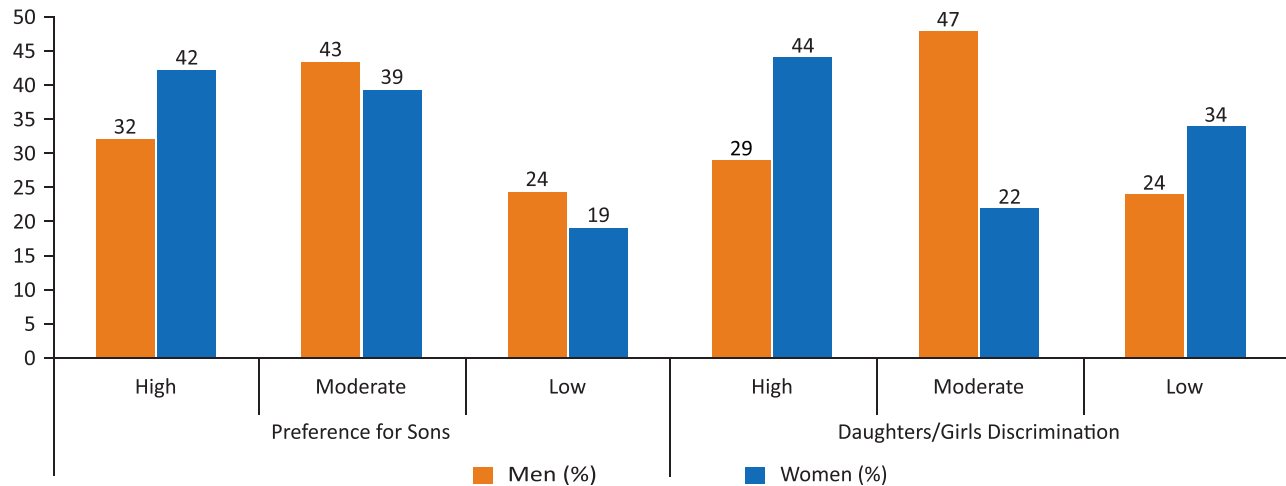
Figure 9: Actual Family Size and High Desire for Sons

Masculinity is a strong predictor of IPV. Among men it was very evident that as we move on the continuum of masculinity from rigid to equitable, men's perpetration of any form of violence reduces significantly. The multivariate findings show that men who are rigid were 1.8 times (CI: 1.12 - 2.90) more likely to be violent compared to equitable men. Among women, experience of violence was similar across the three groups that is, regardless of the kind of masculinity they experienced - rigid, moderate, equitable.

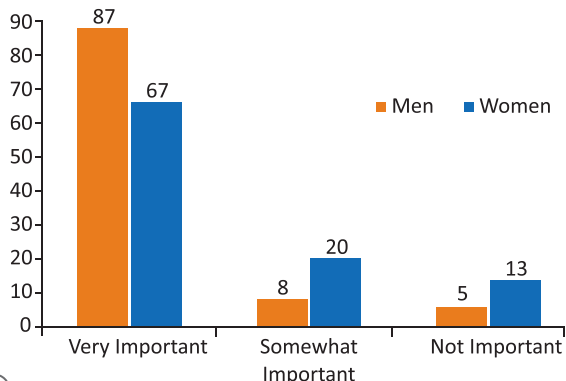
SON PREFERENCE AND MASCULINITY

Across the states, we find that the preference for sons is positively correlated with the actual number of sons a couple has. In Madhya Pradesh, more than one-fifth of the men (22%) who already have sons want more, while among women this proportion was less than 10%.

Interestingly, among men and women who have more daughters in their family, the proportion of women desiring more sons was higher. Nearly a quarter of the women (25%) had a high desire for sons while only 18% men showed such a desire, pointing to a potential group of change agents to trigger a shift in gender discriminatory attitudes. Among those men and women who have an equal number of sons and daughters, a fairly low (less than 10%) proportion of them showed a desire for more sons. These couples already had at least one son, which may be the reason there is a lesser need for another son.

Figure 10: Attitude towards Preference for Sons and Discrimination against Daughters/Girls

In the study, we also used attitudinal statements to measure men and women's preference for sons, as well as assessed the attitudes of men and women towards daughters. Different sets of statements were used to measure son-preferring attitudes and discriminatory attitudes towards daughters.

Figure 11: Importance of having at least One Son

One-third of the men and more than two-fifths of women displayed high son-preferring attitudes, while less than one-third of men (29%) in the study and more than two-fifths of women (44%) exhibited highly discriminatory attitudes towards daughters/girls. In Madhya Pradesh, discrimination against daughters/girls as well preference for sons were higher among women than men.

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING AT LEAST ONE SON

A majority of men (87%) and more than three-fifths of women (67%) in the state considered it very important to have at least one son in their family. The proportion of men who thought it was very important to have a son in Madhya Pradesh was higher than the average proportion (76%) across the states, whereas a lower proportion of women (67%) thought so

in Madhya Pradesh compared with the average across states (81%). Men and women in the study were also asked how important it is to have at least one daughter. Less than three-fifths of women (59%) and 68% of the men said this was very important. Across the states as well as in Madhya Pradesh, the proportion of men (68%) who said it is very important to have at least one daughter was nearly the same. However, among women in Madhya Pradesh, only 59% thought that having a daughter is very important, while across the states nearly three-fourths (74%) believed the same.

REASONS FOR HAVING AT LEAST ONE SON

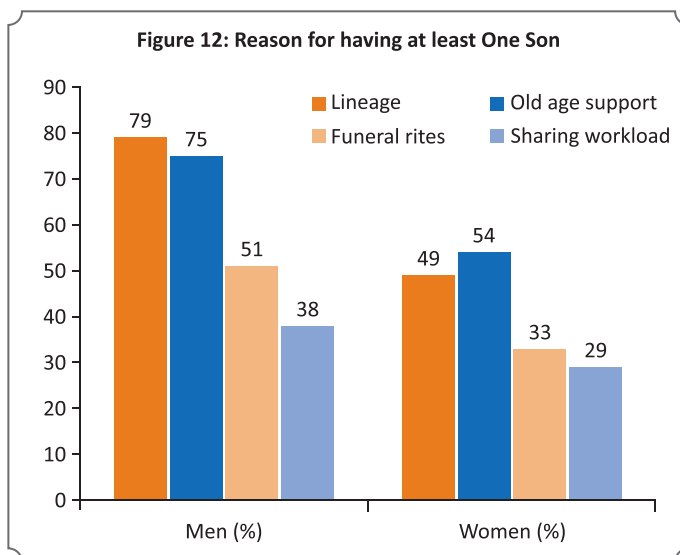
Both men and women agreed that the two most important reasons for having a son were to carry on the family name and to provide support to parents in their old age. However, 79% and 75% of men reported that lineage and old age support, respectively, were important reasons to have a son – a proportion that was higher than that for women. The third most important reason to have at least one son was to perform funeral rites, as reported by 51% of men and 33% of women in Madhya Pradesh. Finally, 38% of men and 29% of women agreed that a son is critical as they share the workload of parents.

Men and women were also asked about reasons to have at least one daughter and interestingly they were not very different. For 67% of men, the most important reason was to perform rituals such as *kanyadan/rakshabandhan*, followed by 62% of men saying that daughters are needed because they bring prosperity. Forty-two percent of women, meanwhile, said that daughters were most important to share in the household workload, followed by 40% saying that a daughter is needed to perform rituals.

DETERMINANTS OF HIGH SON-PREFERRING ATTITUDES

Education is a strong and significant predictor of son preferring attitudes, with more than two-fifths of illiterate men (44%) showing a high preference for sons, versus 20% of men with graduation or higher education. Much the same was true for women too: more than half (54%) who were illiterate had high son-preferring attitudes, while as their level of education increased such attitudes decreased. (There were very few women in the sample who had completed graduation or higher education, making it very difficult to calculate percentages).

The place of residence did not show any significant difference among men in terms of son preference, but among women, the multivariate model showed that women living in rural areas were 1.28 times (CI: 1.10 – 2.05) more likely to have a high preference for sons compared to urban dwellers. Lower-income men (36%) and women (49.8%) also had high son-preferring attitudes, compared to men (18%) and women (37%) with higher incomes. The study also found that men, who are highly inequitable in their attitudes and behavior, or show rigid masculinity, were ten times (CI: 5.4 – 18.6) more likely to have a high preference for sons (47%) compared to men who are equitable (13%). A similar pattern was observed among women, with 77% of them who are less equitable and who experience rigid, controlling relationships, demonstrating a significant preference for sons. Meanwhile, 17% of women who hold gender-equitable attitudes and who are in less controlling relationships exhibited such a preference.



Socio-Demographic Factors	Men (%)	Women (%)
Education		
Illiterate	44.2	53.7
1-5 standard	32.4	43.9
6-12 standard	31.5	33.7
13+ standard	20.1	-
p-value	<0.001	<0.001
Residence		
Rural	32.2	47.8
Urban	32.2	32.1
p-value	0.900	<0.001
Wealth Index		
Low	36.2	49.8
Middle	34.2	41.4
High	18.8	37.1
p-value	<0.001	<0.001
Masculinity Index (Gender Attitude and Relationship Control)		
Equitable	13.3	16.9
Moderate	32.4	40.6
Rigid	47.2	77.2
p-value	<0.001	<0.001

High	Uttar Pradesh
Son Preference, Intimate Partner Violence and Masculinity	Odisha
	Madhya Pradesh
	Punjab and Haryana
	Maharashtra
Low	Rajasthan
<p>Note: The states are arranged based on the aggregate ranking on prevalence of masculinity, son preference and intimate partner violence for both men and women combined.</p>	

REFLECTIONS

Overall, Madhya Pradesh is a state, which ranks closer to high levels of rigid masculinity, IPV and son preferring attitudes. Majority of the men are either rigidly masculine or moderately masculine and lower proportion of women experienced relationship control or manifested gender unequal attitudes. Economic stress faced by men is a strong predictor of masculinity and so is lack or lower levels of education for both men and women.

About a third of men and 25% of women have perpetrated and experienced IPV in the last year, respectively. Interestingly, in Madhya Pradesh, unlike other states, men's perpetration of violence is closely aligned with women's experiences of it. This may suggest that men are more aware of their behavior and this should be used as a stepping-stone to transform their awareness into more equitable attitudes and actions. There is also a striking difference between men and women's reports of sexual violence where the tendency to under report was apparent, likely due to the stigma and expectations around sexual behavior among married women. Masculinity is also a strong predictor of IPV among men although not so among women.

It is critical to create public communication campaigns that portray issues of IPV in a sensitive manner; recasting notions and images of masculinity in terms of positive and gender equitable

men. Additionally other campaigns need to signify the role of women in different aspects of their lives not just as mothers or wives but in the alternative spaces they occupy in society. Since Madhya Pradesh is a state where there is considerable activity around women's collectivization into self-help groups for purposes of poverty alleviation, it is important to use this platform to give women an economic role in their families. Women in collectives can be engaged in skill and perspective building around core issues of gender equal norms as well rights and entitlements. Other women who can act as change makers include the front line workers in the health and women and child development sectors as well as women members of panchayats.

Policies and programs that instill positive communication as a value in intimate partner relationships have an opportunity to make men and women agents of change in their own lives. This can be supplemented by community-based programs and use community radios that impart ideas around couple communication and gender equality in an effort for these issues to gain prominence and relevance in local idioms and discourse. Women's experience of violence in Madhya Pradesh is mostly consistent across wealth strata yet men's reporting of violence decreases as their income grows. Census data has indicated that women's workforce participation has not increased significantly in the state, (29.6% in 1991; 33.2% in 2001; 32.6% in 2011) which has possibly influenced their agency and ability to negotiate relationships. Because of higher prevalence of IPV and masculinity, there is a possibility that higher income men, perhaps, sense a certain social unacceptability towards negative behaviors such as violence and choose not to report it. This implies that there is a need to sensitize and engage men across all social groups as an increase in income (and the greater ability to access education) may not be sufficient to have equitable masculine attitudes and behavior.

In terms of son preference, we find that as with many other sample states, women in Madhya Pradesh had a higher desire for sons while men showed lower preference. Women's sense of self, their ability to have agency, negotiate their life circumstances and have a social standing, are often intertwined with their ability and desire to have a son. Shifting these values away from being dependent on the birth of a son to other achievements women have made in the state and get commended for, is the key to change the desire for sons among women. Shifting the understanding of expectations and responsibilities by gender, and teaching both girls and boys to engage in household care work, are important to improve women's status in families. Among men we found that the uneducated men showed higher son preferring attitudes, thus outreach also needs to focus on enhancing access to quality education and encourage school completion. Within community and school settings, it is imperative carry out reflective learning programs on gender equality to reach young boys and men.

This study also revealed that women viewed daughters as practical assets for their share in household work- while men associating larger values with them- bringing prosperity. Programs need to educate communities on the value of girls to alter the gender stereotyping of girls' and boys' roles in society. Such efforts would help counter the negative values against daughters.

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