

## The Relationship between Violence against Women and Levels of Self-Esteem in Urban Informal Settlements of Mumbai, India: A Cross-Sectional Study

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**Abstract :** Background: This study aims to investigate the relationship between experiences of violence against women in the family, and levels of self-esteem in women residing in informal settlement (slum) areas of Mumbai, India. The authors hypothesise that violence against women in Indian households extends beyond that of intimate partner violence (IPV), to include other members of the family and that experiences of violence are associated with lower levels of self-esteem. Methods: Experiences of violence were assessed through a cross-sectional survey of 598 women, including questions about specific acts of emotional, economic, physical and sexual violence across different time points, and the main perpetrator of each. Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire. A global score for self-esteem was calculated and the relationship between violence in the past year and Rosenberg self-esteem score was assessed using multivariable linear regression models, adjusted for years of education completed, and clustering using robust standard errors. Results: 482 (81%) women consented to interview. On average, they were 28.5 years old, had completed 6 years of education and had been married 9.5 years. 88% were Muslim and 46% lived in joint families. 44% of women had experienced at least one act of violence in their lifetime (33% emotional, 22% economic, 24% physical, 12% sexual). Of the women who experienced violence after marriage, 70% cited a perpetrator other than the husband for at least one of the acts. 5% had low self-esteem (Rosenberg score < 15). For women who experienced emotional violence in the past year, the Rosenberg score was 2.6 points lower ( $p < 0.001$ ). It was 1.2 points lower ( $p = 0.03$ ) for women who experienced economic violence. For physical or sexual violence in the past year, no statistically significant relationship with Rosenberg score was seen. However, for a one-unit increase in the number of different acts of each type of violence experienced in the past year, a decrease in Rosenberg score was seen (-0.62 for emotional, -0.76 for economic, -0.53 for physical and -0.47 for sexual;  $p < 0.05$  for all). Discussion: The high prevalence of violence experiences across the lifetime was likely due to the detailed assessment of violence and the inclusion of perpetrators within the family other than the husband. Experiences of emotional or economic violence in the past year were associated with lower Rosenberg scores and therefore lower self-esteem, but no relationship was seen between experiences of physical or sexual violence and Rosenberg score overall. For all types of violence in the past year, a greater number of different acts were associated with a decrease in Rosenberg score. Emotional violence showed the strongest relationship with self-esteem, but for all types of violence the more complex the pattern of perpetration with different methods used, the lower the levels of self-esteem. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the study causal directionality cannot be attributed. Further work to investigate the relationship between severity of violence and self-esteem and whether self-esteem mediates relationships between violence and poorer mental health would be beneficial.

**Keywords :** family violence, India, informal settlements, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, self-esteem, violence against women

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