

Crimes against women as a correlate of incidents of Divorce in India

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Abstract

From its erstwhile doctrine of “till death do us part” to its present maxim, “till discord do us part”, the realm of marital relationship has undergone a colossal change. Rising divorce rates has been a global phenomenon in recent decades with the more advanced countries exhibiting a greater proneness toward it. While a search for its various reasons has often taken us to factors such as enhanced status of women, greater employment among women, more access to economic resources by women and the likes, the contribution of marital violence seems somewhat neglected. This paper is an attempt at establishing a correlation between crimes against women and number of divorced women in India. Official data from Census of India – 2011 has been referred to in addition to other governmental sources such as data published by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. A high correlation between the two variables suggests that marital violence could be considered to be a major factor behind women seeking divorce. However, the hypothesis needs to be confirmed with the help of further research.

Keywords: Marriage, Divorce, Crimes Against Women, Separation, Marital Violence

Introduction

In a number of recent studies, it has been found that marital bond exists in the form of a ‘dyad’ mostly expressed with the help of Actor-Partner Independence Model (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Hence, the dynamics of interpersonal relationship between spouses does have behavioral impact on either of them. These dynamics often entail violent exchanges between marital partners that seem to have far-reaching effects on the course of their marital life, although marital conflict itself is not always detrimental to marital quality (Jeffries, 2000). Rather it depends on the strategies of conflict resolution employed by the couple, sometimes even showering some beneficial effects on marital life as a whole (Gottman, 1991; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Rands, Levinger, & Mellinger, 1981). Having recognized that, one must also pay attention to the fact that every marital dissolution occurs in the backdrop of negative affect and aggression within marital relationship in the months preceding the final decision to sever the bond (Bradbury & Karney, 2004). The United Nations Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993 defines the phrase, ‘violence against women’ in its opening article (Article 1) in the following manner:

“For the purposes of this Declaration, the term ‘violence against women’ means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

The definition seems quite indicative of the fact that women are liable to face violence in myriad forms, often within the close quarters of their private lives. Marital violence could be one such phenomenon. Although marital disruption in the form of divorce has not been a considerable social fact in the Indian society historically, in recent times a surge in the incidents of divorce has attracted the attention of media persons, government agencies, NGOs, not to mention the community of sociologists. The newly emerged concern is obviously not without reason. There has been a steep rise in cases of divorce filed in recent times. The crude divorce rate has risen from 1 in 1000 to 13 in 1000 in less than a decade’s time. There were 11,667 cases of divorce filed in Mumbai alone in the year 2014, more than two-fold increase compared to the figures of 2010. The same year, 2014 saw an even more exponential rise in the cases of divorce in Kolkata. It soared up to 8,347 from 2,388 in 2003 representing a 350% increase.¹ No sooner has the trend caught the attention of analytical minds than there were attempts to attach causes to the phenomenon. Field data attributes ‘adultery’ or ‘infidelity’ as the prime cause of divorce. It was found that out of 167 societies studied,

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adultery or infidelity was the main cause for divorce in 88 societies (Betzig, 1989). However, no such study has thrown good light on the Indian situation in particular. Most opinions on the issue, especially emanating from media reports have revolved around fancied notions such as 'women empowerment'. Nevertheless, they all agree on some sort of disharmony within marriage, often amounting to marital violence between spouses that ends in divorce. Therefore, there is a need to analyse and compare data from the field in order to establish a correlation between other variables and the phenomenon of divorce in recent times.

In order to get a better grasp of the legal aspect of 'crimes against women', one needs to take a look at the explanation provided by National Crime Records Bureau.² In its report, it classifies the whole gamut of crimes against women into two categories:

Crime heads under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which is further subdivided into nine sub-categories as enumerated below:

1. Rape;
2. Attempt to commit Rape;
3. Kidnapping & Abduction of Women
4. Dowry Deaths;
5. Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage Her Modesty;
6. Insult to the Modesty of Women;
7. Cruelty by Husband or his relatives;
8. Importation of Girls from Foreign Country (up to 21 years of age);
9. Abetment of Suicide of Women.

Crime Heads under the Special and Local Laws (SLL) with further subdivision into five types:

1. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961;
2. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986;
3. The Commission of Sati Prevention of Act, 1987;
4. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005;
5. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

Of all these types of crimes against women, one is specially attracted towards one head, namely, "Cruelty by Husband", data for which has been published in a September, 2017 report by Government of India entitled, *Selected Socio-Economic Statistics: India 2017*. It seems noteworthy that it is the only head among all forms of crimes that is solely committed within marital bond. There are other categories such as 'domestic violence' and 'dowry deaths', but both of these do not turn out to be as unique as "Cruelty by Husband". Although domestic violence is committed within domestic settings, the perpetrator could be anybody other than the husband, thus rendering it a problem other than one strictly defined to be bound by marital ties. The other crime of

dowry death ends in death, and hence, can't be considered to study its impact on divorce. Thus, "cruelty by husband" turns out to be of a unique nature that could help us establish the overall correlation between violence within marriage and the difficult step of divorce taken by women.

Literature Review

It has been found that 80 percent of Indian women seeking divorce have done so owing to 'cruelty or domestic violence in their marital homes' (Singh, 2013). Other research has also successfully established the fact that hostility in interaction does precede marital disruption (Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996; Gottman *et al.*, 1998). However, the correlation between the two variables alluded to above, that is, 'number of incidents of divorce' and 'violence against women' has traditionally, not been discussed much by field studies that have often taken issues such as class character, economic independence, social status and sexual stratification as the determining factors of divorce. One reason for the approach could be the fact that not until very recent times in which we live, people did not seem to have taken violence by their marital partners as something pretty serious (O' Leary *et al.*, 1989; Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Ehrensaft & Vivian, 1996; Fincham, 2003). Around four decades ago, most studies on American society considered an increase in employment opportunities and a rise in socioeconomic status of women as the prime cause of divorce (Glick, 1973). There were others who linked it to the Women's Liberation Movement (Olds, 1977), not sounding very different from the current Indian concern with women's empowerment as a determinant of the rising rates of divorce in India. Summing it up, some argued that divorce in general is related to the overall status of women in society (Pearson & Hendrix, 1979). But, recent studies have shown that the impact of male violence within marital relationship is a greater determinant of marital disruption without being affected by the socioeconomic resources their female partners have access to (DeMaris, 2000).

Crime against women could well be seen as a correlate of female status in society, though one could hypothesize that women's status appears to be a more passive variable when compared to the impact violence against women has on the social phenomenon called divorce. While studies on crimes against women, especially domestic violence have attracted much media attention in India in recent times, a comprehensive attempt to establish the relationship between the two social phenomena has hardly been tried at a magnified scale. Nevertheless, setting out with the assumption of some degree of universality when it comes to the structure and internal dynamics of family in societies worldwide, one could take a look at other studies conducted outside India. It has been found that violence is a primary reason for ending marriage for women (Kurz,

1996; Kalmuss & Seltzer, 1986). In another such study called California Divorce Mediation Project, it was found that 40% of all men and women considered 'severe and intense fighting' as the prime reason for divorce (Gigy & Kelly, 1992). The study also pointed towards the fact that the absence of positive affect is the most common cause of divorce (a whopping 80% of all men and women certified the fact). Thus, it could be surmised that marriages with intense fighting perhaps dissolved sooner than the ones with the absence of 'positive affect', the marital quality being somewhat bearable (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). One might ask why is it that women tend to be more sensitive to violence within marriage than men? What prompts them to take that hard step of divorce in order to get some respite? An interesting explanation came from Morse (1995) who argued that women are more likely to be injured in family fights, and hence are more likely than men to seek divorce as an exit route. With a goal to answer some of these questions, one needs to set out to discover the correlation between crime against women and divorce.

Statement of Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0): The number of divorced women in India is not dependent on the number of crimes against women.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): The number of crimes against women in India has a strong bearing on the number of divorced women.

Data, Method and Design

An effort was made to work with the most recent data available on the issue. Thus, data from 2011 census was extracted for getting the figures on the 'Number of Divorced Women' in India, sorted on the basis of various political constituent units of the Indian Union, that is, its states and union territories. It would act as the *response* variable for our linear regression model. Data on 'crimes against women', the *explanatory* variable, was taken from the government report published as "Women and Men in India – 2016". The data precisely finds mention in the sixth chapter of the document entitled, "Social Obstacles in Women's Empowerment". The data was cross-checked against more recent data published by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India under the title, "Selected Socio-Economic Statistics: India 2017" as well as the one published by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). Data for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana could not be used as the two states existed as a unified state at the time of 2011 census while the Crime data (period covered till 2015) shows the two as bifurcated.

A simple bivariate analysis of the data based on a Linear Regression Model has been attempted. The decision to apply bivariate analysis was arrived at owing

to the reason that the study looks to find out the correlation between an independent and a dependent variable. Although it can hardly be denied that an issue as complex as marital dissolution or divorce could have multiple causes behind it, the scope of this study has been restricted to bring to light its relationship with marital violence and other crimes against women. Since the data is derived from Census 2011, a normal distribution of data has been assumed. The values were plotted in order to obtain a linear curve. The data was also checked for homoskedasticity by drawing the scatter plot, and thus the decision tilted in favour of calculating Pearson product-moment Correlation coefficient in order to ascertain the nature and degree of association between the two phenomena.

Analysis and Results

In order to get a grasp of its properties of distribution, the data for Total Crimes against Women in India was represented in the form of bar chart shown below in Figure 1.⁴

Similarly, the bar graph in figure 2 shows the pattern of state-wise distribution of number of divorced women in India.

A simple comparison of the above graphical representations of the data shows that the patterns of the two variables very nearly match each other. The states with high incidence of crimes against women also have high number of divorced women with very few exceptions. In order to establish further checks, the figures for Number of Separated Women was also obtained as shown in figure 3

It's not surprising to observe that the trend for separated women matches the above patterns for crimes against women and number of divorced women in India. However, one could argue that the figures match each other owing to simple probability theory. States with large population are more likely to demonstrate high values for many social indicators and vice-versa. In order to take care of the argument, one needs to study a more comparable variable which in this case was a simple percentage of the number of crimes against women to the total number of crimes in the 34 states included here. What we found was really encouraging. The bar chart below shows that the percentage figure is more evenly distributed proving that the number of crimes against women varies in proportion to the total incidence of crimes in the states and is not likely to show high or low values solely on the basis of the crude figure of population of the states as in figure 4

The distribution of the number of crimes against women expressed as percentage of total crimes in the state shows a somewhat uniform pattern with a mean value of 8.26 and a range between 1 and 26. The standard deviation of 5.827 is not a large variation. Thus, the incidence of crimes against women is largely uniform across all states and union territories in India.

A bivariate analysis with Number of Divorced Women ($M = 24790.65$; $SD = 35932.59$) as the criterion variable and Total Crimes against Women ($M = 8715.33$; $SD = 11021.43$) as the predictor variable was carried out. The scatter plot of the data is shown in figure 5:

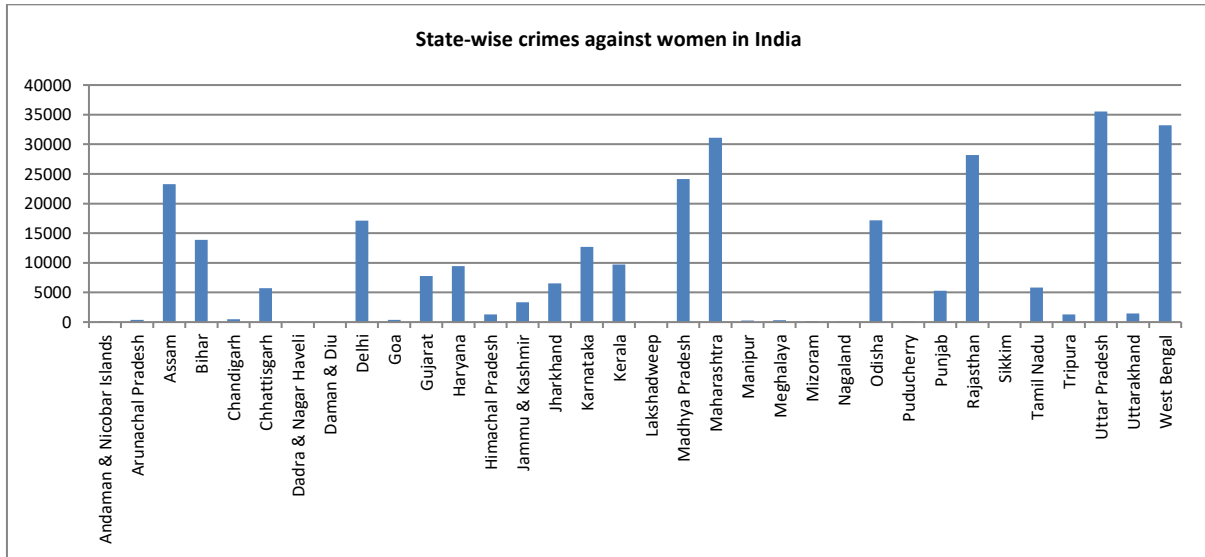


Figure 1: Bar graph showing state-wise distribution of Crimes against Women in India

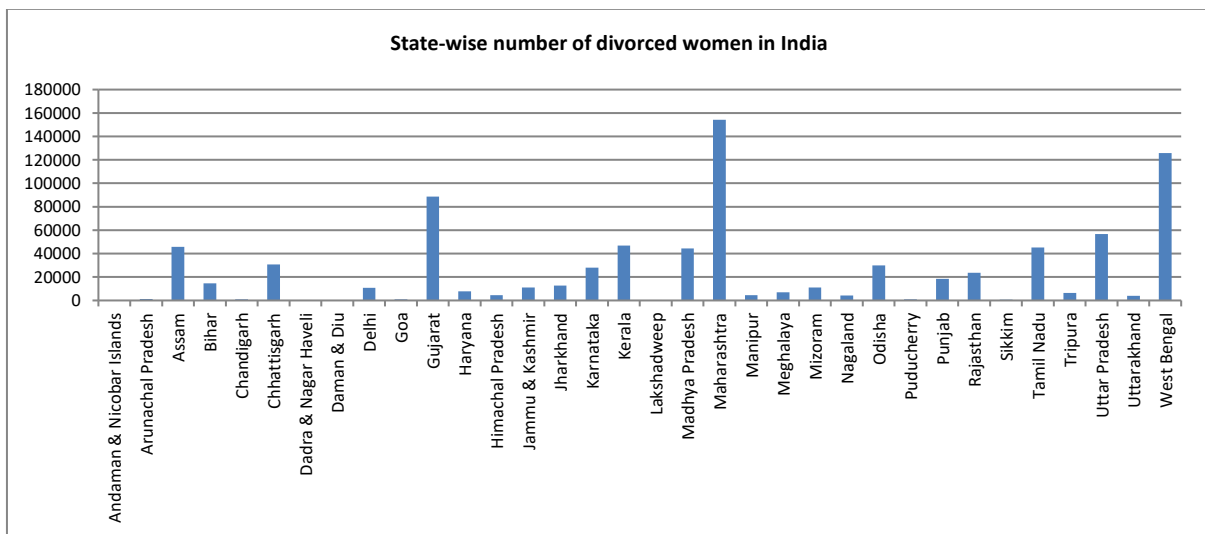


Figure 2: Bar graph showing state-wise distribution of Number of Divorced Women in India

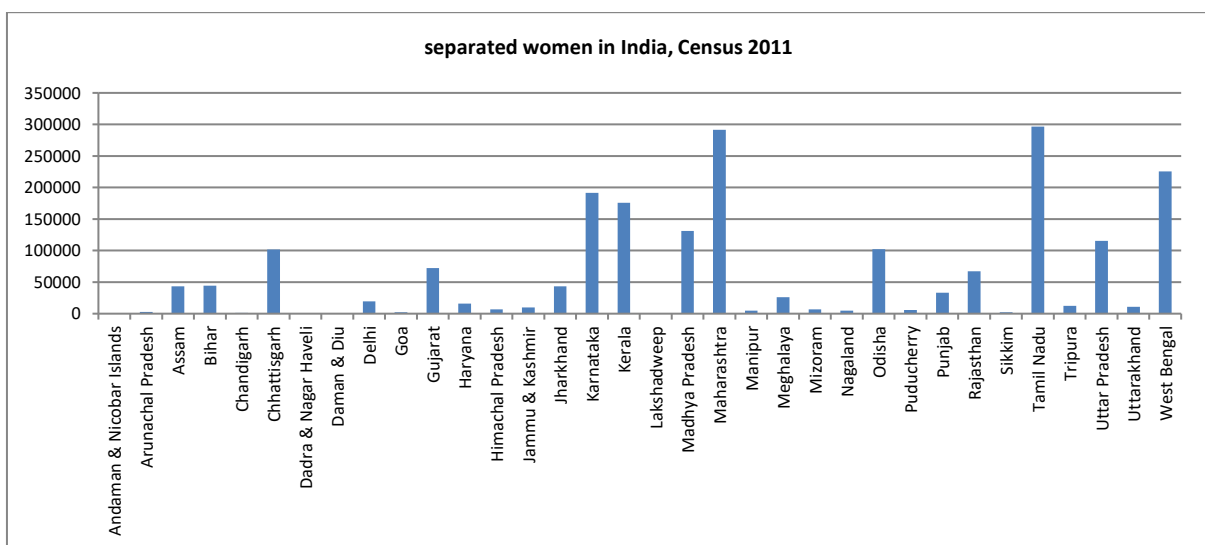


Figure 3: Bar graph showing state-wise distribution of Number of Separated Women in India

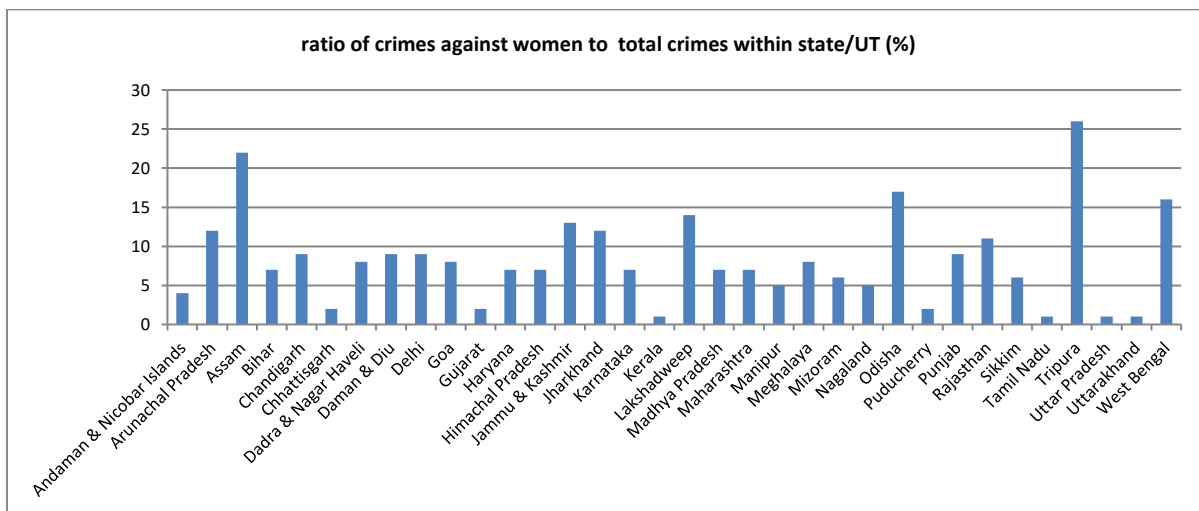


Figure 4: Bar graph showing state-wise distribution of Number of Crimes against Women in India as percentage of Total Number of all crimes in India

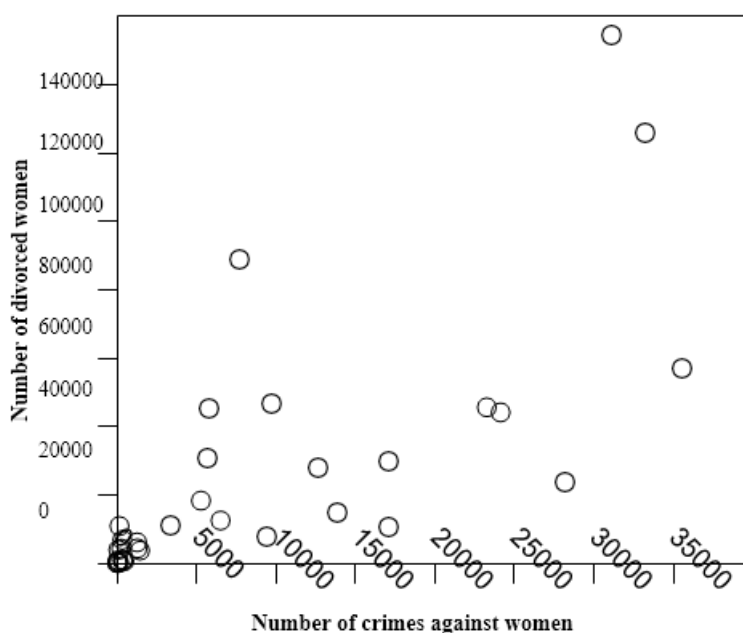


Figure 5: Scatter Plot of Number of Crimes against women vs Number of Divorced Women

A on X-axis represents “Number of Crimes against Women”;

B on Y-axis represents “Number of Divorced Women”.

The figure above served as an encouragement to apply a linear regression model to the data. The graph shows the data to be fairly linear and homoscedastic. Normality is assumed as the data we are working with has been collected on a pan-Indian basis. The figure below represents the Line of Regression of the data with Number of Crimes against women being the abscissa and representing the independent variable while Number of Divorced Women taking the ordinate values and serving as the dependent variable.

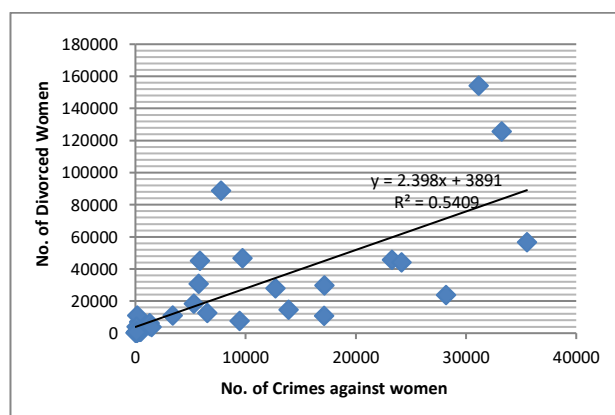


Figure 6: Linear Regression Model for Number of Crimes against Women versus Number of Divorced Women in India

It can be clearly seen that the values of Y for various values of X depict a tendency to lie close to the line of regression that ultimately gives the scatter plot an elliptical shape. Further analysis gives us the value of slope and intercept of the line. Every line of regression could be expressed in the form of a simple equation: $y = a + bx$.

The data we are concerned with has number of crimes against women as the value of x and the number of divorced women as the value of y. The values were calculated with the help of SPSS.

The values of the unstandardized coefficients of the linear regression model shown below are the values of a and b.

Table 1: Coefficients of the Line of Regression obtained from SPSS

Coefficients (Number of divorced women)					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3890.97	5437.40	.00	.72	.479
Number of crimes against women	2.40	.39	.74	6.14	.000

However, a doubt could be raised that the relationship thus observed could be the consequence of random chance. Thus, one must take a careful look at the bottommost row, "Total Crimes against Women". The value, 0.000 in the last column could be easily spotted. The value is less than 0.001 which signifies that there is less than 1 in 1000 chance that the linear relationship discovered between the two variables is a consequence of random chance.

Hence, the actual equation of the line shown above is:

$$y = 3890.97 + 2.4x.$$

Thus, for our data we have the following values of constants, 'a' and 'b':

$$a = 3890.97; b = 2.4.$$

It is known that the value of 'b' represents the slope of the line of regression and 'a' is the y intercept. Thus, a simple interpretation of these values also gives us some useful insight into the data we have. From the value of the slope, it could be said that for every unit of increase in the number of crimes against women, there is 2.4 units increase in the number of divorced women which is a significant rate of change to take note of. The y intercept, 3890.97 tells us that even if there is no crime against women, there will still be 3890.97 divorced women in India on an average. How do we interpret this figure? We know that the mean of Y, the number of divorced women in India is 24790.65 which is almost four times the value of y intercept. Thus, we can say that the current number of crimes committed against women contribute toward a four-fold increase in the number of divorced women in

India. To sum up, it could be said that the number of divorced women in India bears a fairly strong relationship with number of crimes against women which provides us with sufficient ground to accept the alternative hypothesis (H1).

Having established a linear relationship between the two variables, one must also try to find out the strength of the relationship. In this case, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient seems to be the most suitable in order to explain the relationship. The value of the coefficient, $r = +0.74$ shows a high positive correlation between number of divorced women and total crimes against women considered state-wise. Since it is a bivariate analysis, the term R-squared is obtained by simply squaring the value of the correlation coefficient which turned out to be 0.54. It reveals that 54% variability in the dependent variable is explained by variability in the independent variable. Below is the output from SPSS:

Table 2: Model Summary of the Linear Regression Model obtained from SPSS

Model Summary (Number of divorced women)			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.74	.54	.53	24724.49

Having obtained the value of R-squared, one must also make sure that there is a statistically significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables and whether the model is a good fit for the data under analysis.

The F statistic obtained by ANOVA performed by SPSS shows that the model as a whole predicts the dependent variable quite well.

Table 3: SPSS output for ANOVA

ANOVA (Number of divorced women)

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Regression</i>	23046388840.91	1	23046388840.91	37.70	.000
<i>Residual</i>	19561605360.85	32	611300167.53		
<i>Total</i>	42607994201.76	33			

The rightmost column has a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.001. Thus, the model is statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable.

A Note on the role of Cruelty by Husband

Once we got a significant correlation between the two, we attempted to narrow it down in order to move closer to finding the answer to the question we began with: Does maltreatment within family and violence against them prompt women to seek refuge in divorce? Hence, we selected another independent variable in the form of ‘Cruelty by Husband’. The reason for its selection is the fact that of all the heads that National Crime Records Bureau data cites as various categories of crimes against women, it is the only type of crime that could be committed solely within marital bond. Moreover, of all crimes committed against women, crimes under this head accounted for more than a third portion (35 percent to be precise). Moreover, it was also found that Cruelty by Husband bears a moderately high positive correlation of 0.57 with the dependent variable, Number of Divorced Women.

Therefore, it became imperative for one to check for any correlation between ‘Cruelty by Husband’ and ‘Total Crimes against Women’. What was found was really significant with regard to the line of argument pursued so far. The value of Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables is $r = +0.90$. Since it’s the value of correlation between two variables, squaring it gives us the value of R-squared which works out to be 0.81. Thus, it could be said that 81% variability in the value of ‘Total Crimes against Women’ could be explained by variability in the value of ‘Cruelty by Husband’. Hence, the contribution of violence within family to the total number of crimes against women, and hence, the phenomenon of women seeking divorce can hardly be overlooked.

Testing ‘Women Empowerment Hypothesis’

The data was analyzed to test the hypothesis that divorce rates in recent times have taken an upswing owing to women empowerment in India. While there could be multiple indicators of women empowerment, Female Literacy Rate was selected as one dimension that could be compared with other findings of this study.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of one-way ANOVA for Number of Divorced Women versus Female Literacy Rate

Descriptives

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% confidence interval for Mean</i>		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
						<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>		
<i>Number of divorced women</i>	<i>High</i>	9	8710.33	14976.92	4992.31	-2801.95	20222.61	279	46856
	<i>Low</i>	6	20046.50	19412.92	7925.29	-326.11	40419.11	1189	56819
	<i>Medium</i>	19	33905.79	44025.47	10100.14	12686.19	55125.39	249	154274
	<i>Total</i>	34	24790.65	35932.59	6162.39	12253.17	37328.12	249	154274

In order to ascertain the truth of the proposed hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using SPSS. The data for female literacy rate was taken from 2011 Census for all 34 states and union territories included in this study. Mean value of Female Literacy Rate in India came out to be 71.81% with a standard deviation of 10.38. Thus, in order to gauge the impact of female literacy rate on the number of divorced women, the female literacy rate was grouped into three categories – ‘3 = High’, ‘2 = Medium’ and ‘1 = Low’. The criterion for this decision was based on the mean of the data. Anything that was within the range of one standard

deviation greater or smaller than the mean was considered medium. Any value below was low and above was considered high.

Thus, 61.43% marked the lower threshold and 82.19% was taken to be the higher threshold. To make it more uniform and readable, the range of 60% to 80% was considered medium. The one-way ANOVA on SPSS had the following descriptive statistics for the three groups.

It showed that the means of groups based on the above criteria do not show any statistically significant difference. The ANOVA table is as shown below.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA output for Number of Divorced Women versus Female Literacy Rate in India

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Number of divorced women	Between Groups	4040860597.11	2	2020430298.55	1.62	.213
	Within Groups	38567133604.66	31	1244101084.02		
Total		42607994201.76	33			

Table 6: Value of Levene statistic for Number of Divorced Women versus Female Literacy Rate in India

Test of Homogeneity of Variances				
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Number of divorced women	3.16	2	31	.056

Table 7: Descriptive statistics as SPSS output from one-way ANOVA test of Number of divorced women versus Literacy Rate in India

		Descriptives							
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% confidence interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Number of divorced women	High	15	19165.07	40398.36	10430.81	-3206.80	41536.93	249	154274
	Low	6	20046.50	19412.92	7925.29	-326.11	40419.11	1189	56819
	Medium	13	33471.31	36839.69	10217.49	11209.31	55733.31	348	125744
	Total	34	24790.65	35932.59	6162.39	12253.17	37328.12	249	154274

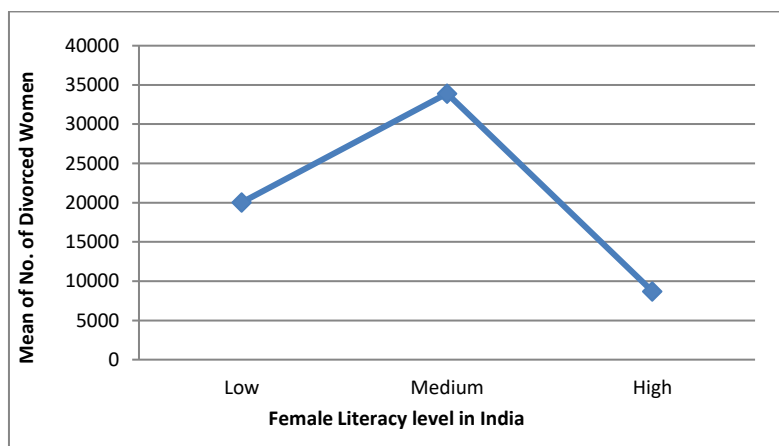


Figure 7: Plot of Means for one-way ANOVA test of Number of Divorced Women versus Female Literacy Rate in India

The value, $F_{2, 31} = 1.62$, $p = 0.213$ (Ref table 5) does not give us enough ground to reject the null hypothesis that the means of three groups with high, low and medium rates of female literacy are equal. **Table 7:** Although the comparison based on group means did not exhibit any conclusive statistical difference, Levene statistic obtained as a measure of homogeneity of variance did show some significant result with regard to variation in group variances. The value of Levene statistic could be seen in the figure 7.

A value of 3.16 at $p = 0.056$ (i.e., $p > 0.05$) is not statistically significant. Hence, it could be inferred that female literacy rate could not be a factor that is significantly related to number of divorced women in India. Finally, the plot of means from SPSS summed up the story.

The graph shows no visible pattern at all. In order to control for the impact of overall literacy rate (not female literacy rate alone) on the number of divorced women in India, the analysis of variance test was applied to the overall literacy rate as well. Mean for the literacy rate in India was 78.97% with standard deviation 8.01. To simplify the test, the range between 70% and 80% was considered medium. The numeric coding pattern was same as before (1 = low, 2 = medium, and 3 = high). The one-way ANOVA did not give us statistically significant results. The group means could be read as shown below:

It could be easily discerned that neither Levene statistic nor F value based on ANOVA (Ref table 7) furnished statistically significant results. The SPSS output is as shown below.

Table 8: SPSS output for Levene statistic for Number of Divorced Women versus Overall Literacy Rate in India

Test of Homogeneity of Variances				
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Number of divorced women	.54	2	31	.591

A p-value of 0.566 is definitely not significant and can be ignored.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Number of divorced women	Between Groups	1589349206.56	2	794674603.28	.60	.555
	Within Groups	41018644995.20	31	1323182096.62		
Total		42607994201.76	33			

Hence, there’s nothing optimistic about ANOVA as far as this test is concerned. The plot of means also told a similar tale. No pattern seemed to emerge when the means were plotted.

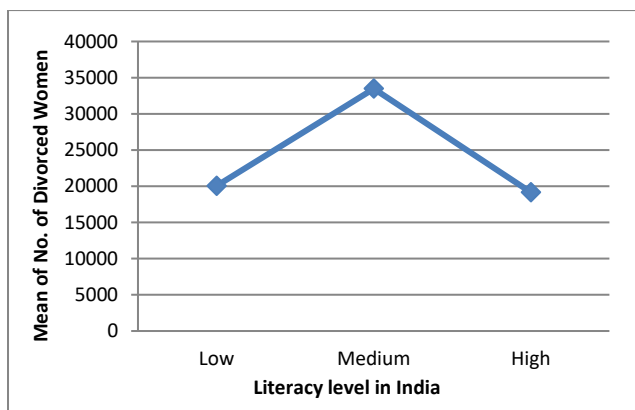


Figure 8: Plot of Means for one-way ANOVA test of Number of Divorced Women versus Literacy Rate in India

Thus, neither overall literacy rate nor female literacy rate could be said to be statistically significant when trying to explain the number of divorced women in India. Hence, the Women Empowerment Hypothesis stands rejected. However, one must admit that growing employment among women and their increased participation in public life could be a major factor in determining the threshold limit of their tendency to tolerate unhappy marriages (Hill, 2007). Hill rests her argument on data collected from the American society. Therefore, one needs to base one’s claims on empirical research in India that studies the impact of women’s employment on divorce.

Discussion

What is the sociological significance of the results and analysis cited above? It could be said that women often seek refuge in divorce owing to various facets of violence and other adverse conditions faced within family environments. Should it be viewed as a sign of decadence of the institution of family? Should the approach be supported as an emancipator of women? Both in support

of the thesis of *marital decline* as well as the thesis of *marital resilience*, arguments have emerged that present the picture of the institution of marriage as a site of conflict and one that is on the path of degeneration (Amato, 2004). However, Amato (2004) sees hope for the institution in future, especially owing to the fact that he does not find a suitable alternative to child-rearing other than parental care. On the other hand, emphasizing upon the impact of marital conflict, there are arguments that foresee an end to the institution of marriage. Andrew Cherlin (2004) proposes the ‘deinstitutionalization hypothesis’ in order to explain the social dynamics surrounding the institution of marriage in American society. But, there are others who hardly find anything that acts as a better substitute. The discovery of ‘cohabitation gap’ (Soons, Kalmijn, & Teachman, 2009) leads us to argue that marriage as an institution is not on the path of being deinstitutionalized any time soon in near future. Waite and Gallagher (2000) argue that married people are happier than the unmarried. Another research confirms the presence of ‘cohabitation effect’ wherein those who cohabit before marriage demonstrate more negative and less positive problem solving and support behaviour as compared to those who did not cohabit (Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002). In fact, some scholars also argue that the responsibility within marriage and the overall dynamics of marital life was the sole concern of the bride and the groom before 1500 AD in northwest Europe as there was too little intervention by church and state. Therefore, today’s cohabitation would have been counted as marriage some five centuries ago (Thornton, Axinn, & Xie, 2003). Thus, the tussle between cohabitation and marriage is not to be seen as a dichotomous situation. Whatever be the case it all gets clubbed into one concept called marriage (Smock, 2004).

Furthermore, it has also been established by a number of studies that both physical and mental health of divorced persons undergoes marked deterioration (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978; Berkman & Syme, 1979; Berkman & Breslow, 1983; Burman & Margolin, 1992). Hughes and Waite (2009) found that divorced people showed poor health as compared to those living within marital bond. It was also found that remarriage

sometimes carries an assuaging effect on mental health, but not as much as the effect of first marriage (Hughes & Waite, 2009). Some research also suggests that marital discord brings with itself a horde of health problems. It's not just about separated couples; rather those staying in unhappy marriages do demonstrate negative health outcomes (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). Other traumatic impact of divorce could be gauged from the symptom called 'widowhood effect' (Farr, 1858). It establishes a strong positive correlation between one's chances of mortality following the death of one's spouse (Hu & Goldman, 1990; Elwert & Christakis, 2008). Hence, while devising social policy, one must take into account the consequences of high incidence of divorce. In order to reduce it, one needs to work towards minimizing such hostile situations within family milieu that probably compel women to seek divorce.

Another aspect of 'separation' must be considered in the context. The 2011 census data shows that a large number of women lived under state of separation. It would be interesting to compare that data with data on family violence and other crimes against women in order to look out for a correlation between the two. It seems to be an exercise worth the pain owing to the fact that in India, separation is the more common form of marital disruption than divorce (Chandrashekhar & Ghosh, 2017). Almost 56 percent of all women facing marital disruption live under a state of separation according to 2011 census report because separation often comes as a state of comfort compared to the violent conditions faced within marital ties. The argument finds corroboration from a study conducted in the United States of America in 1995. A follow-up on 100 women in a battered women's shelter revealed that one-third of them did not return to their partners even after a long gap of one year (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Rusbult and Martz (1995) with the help of the application of the Investment Model argue that a line needs to be drawn between 'satisfaction level' and 'commitment level' and it is the latter that is more responsible for one's continuing with a relationship for a fairly long period of time. They also found that women with fewer alternatives and greater dependence on their spouse had more commitment and an enhanced proclivity toward returning back to their partners. The Indian scene must be seen in this light as most married women in India live as 'housewives', thus not being economically independent. Another study suggests that women's resources and constraints within marriage explain their propensity to justify domestic violence within marriage (Yount & Li, 2009). Thus, the role of resources and structural constraints can hardly be discounted in studying the given issue.

Having analyzed that bit, one must also highlight certain limitations of the method applied to this study. The study here considers crude data that goes into being classified as crime, the actual nature of the kind of violence committed remains far from detected. While research suggests that there could be various forms of

aggression – physical, verbal, psychological (Kim *et al.*, 2008), such categorization has not been captured with the help of Crime data used here. Statistics on crime hardly take into account the role of 'emotional abuse' in deciding the course of a relationship. Women have agreed to have experienced more severe mental trauma owing to emotional abuse faced (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). Furthermore, physical aggression and psychological aggression are not water-tight compartments. In fact a lot of field research points toward the latter being a precursor to the former, irrespective of gender (Schumacher & Leonard 2005). It must also be borne in mind that marital relationship is dyadic in nature and hence, the dynamics of violence within its bounds can't be studied as isolated behaviour of one of the spouses (Andrews *et al.*, 2000; Capaldi & Clark, 1998; Magdol *et al.*, 1998; Woodward, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2002). Thus, the current study needs to be supplemented by additional qualitative research in order to get a fuller understanding of the nuances and dynamics of marital violence and its impact.

Although the current study seems to establish the relationship between crimes against women and women's act of resorting to divorce, it still needs to be ascertained whether that is actually the case by investigating individual cases based on empirical research. An in-depth interview with each of those divorced women could firmly establish the causes behind their decision to seek divorce. Thus, the result of this study has successfully constructed a hypothesis that needs to be empirically tested, hence providing a lead for further research.

Conclusion

Although most discussion on divorce in India focuses on the rising level of women's empowerment and other allied dimensions of social change, the association between crime against women and the probability of their choosing divorce as an escape route has hardly been investigated. The above findings do prompt us to reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1). As a matter of social policy, the conclusion could be an imperative for applying corrective measures in the field of family and marital therapy with a high emphasis on the need to curb instances of hostility against women within wedlock. Both governmental and non-governmental agents could actively participate in working toward building family environments a safer place for women to live.

Notes

1. Data cited here has been taken from the article entitled, "How and why number of young Indian couples getting divorced has risen sharply", published Jan 04, 2015 in *Hindustan Times*, e-paper. Although the reasons cited based on five different case studies in the article are more interpersonal in nature, the

figures compel one to take up a more sociological analysis of the issue.

2. The classification of various crimes as ‘Crimes against Women’ could be found in Chapter 5 of the document entitled ‘Crime in India – 2015’ published by National Crime Records, Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government India.
3. Only offences committed against women under the Act of 1956 is included under the current classification.
4. The order of states/UTs for all data is:

Name of State/UT
1. Andaman & Nicobar Islands
2. Arunachal Pradesh
3. Assam
4. Bihar
5. Chandigarh
6. Chhattisgarh
7. Dadra & Nagar Haveli
8. Daman & Diu
9. Delhi
10. Goa
11. Gujarat
12. Haryana
13. Himachal Pradesh
14. Jammu & Kashmir
15. Jharkhand
16. Karnataka
17. Kerala
18. Lakshadweep
19. Madhya Pradesh
20. Maharashtra
21. Manipur
22. Meghalaya
23. Mizoram
24. Nagaland
25. Odisha
26. Puducherry
27. Punjab
28. Rajasthan
29. Sikkim
30. Tamil Nadu
31. Tripura
32. Uttar Pradesh
33. Uttarakhand
34. West Bengal

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