

3-2022

'They did not have to burn my sister alive': Causes and Distribution by State of Dowry Murder in India

Peter Mayer

University of Adelaide, peter.mayer@adelaide.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity>



Part of the Asian Studies Commons, Criminal Law Commons, Criminology Commons, Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Commons, Gender and Sexuality Commons, Human Rights Law Commons, Inequality and Stratification Commons, Law and Gender Commons, Law and Society Commons, Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons, Social Control, Law, Crime, and Deviance Commons, Social Justice Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Mayer, Peter (2022) "'They did not have to burn my sister alive': Causes and Distribution by State of Dowry Murder in India," *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 9. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2022.07.01.09>

This Research and Scholarly Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.

'They did not have to burn my sister alive': Causes and Distribution by State of Dowry Murder in India

Abstract

Dowry, the money, goods, property, or gifts given by the bride's family to the groom or his family at the time of marriage, is a common custom in South Asia. Although it is illegal to demand—or offer—a dowry in India, it is a nearly universal custom in many parts of the country. If, after marriage, a husband's family feels that the wife's dowry was insufficient, they may harass or inflict other forms of domestic violence on her to put pressure on her family to provide an additional dowry. At its most extreme, this violence may lead to the murder of the wife. An increase in dowry murders, commonly by immolation, in the 1980s and 1990s was reflected in important studies of the phenomenon and changes to the law to prevent the crime. Although the number of dowry murders has grown in succeeding decades, there have been few recent studies; rarer still is research from an all-India perspective. In this paper, I examine trends in and causes of murder for dowry and the related crimes of domestic violence. Prominent theories are tested for their ability to explain the incidence of murder for dowry. Dowry murders are concentrated in north India. Because the marriage alliance systems of the north differ from those of the south, the impact of Indian kinship systems is explored. The multi-generation or 'joint' family—nearly universal in India—has been found by Umar to be a common factor in many cases of dowry murder he studied. By contrast, Oldenburg has argued that changes in land tenure during British rule created individual property rights for men, leading to a preference for sons and the emergence of demands for dowry and, ultimately, dowry murder. Most case studies of dowry murder have been drawn from India's larger cities; the impact of urbanisation is also studied. Economists have suggested structural factors, such as population growth, the economic value of women's work, poverty, income inequality, and conspicuous consumption as possible causes driving domestic violence and murder for dowry. The institutional capacity of an Indian state to provide education, health, and enforcement of laws such as those prohibiting dowry is also examined. This study identifies five principal causes which explain nearly 80% of the variation in dowry murders at the level of individual Indian states: its prevailing kinship system, the prevalence of the joint family, the extent of women's workforce participation, income inequality, and the institutional performance of a state.

Keywords

India, dowry, murder, homicide, domestic violence, sexual violence

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the journal's reviewers for their perceptive and detailed comments on an earlier draft of the paper. Dignity thanks Priya R. Banerjee, The College at Brockport, The State University of New York, USA, for her time and expertise to review this article.

**“THEY DID NOT HAVE TO BURN MY SISTER ALIVE”¹:
CAUSES AND DISTRIBUTION BY STATE OF DOWRY
MURDERS IN INDIA**

Peter Mayer

University of Adelaide, Australia

 [0000-0002-2031-2920](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2031-2920)

ABSTRACT

Dowry, the money, goods, property, or gifts given by the bride’s family to the groom or his family at the time of marriage, is a common custom in South Asia. Although it is illegal to demand—or offer—a dowry in India, it is a nearly universal custom in many parts of the country. If, after marriage, a husband’s family feels that the wife’s dowry was insufficient, they may harass or inflict other forms of domestic violence on her to put pressure on her family to provide an additional dowry. At its most extreme, this violence may lead to the murder of the wife. An increase in dowry murders, commonly by immolation, in the 1980s and 1990s was reflected in important studies of the phenomenon and changes to the law to prevent the crime. Although the number of dowry murders has grown in succeeding decades, there have been few recent studies; rarer still is research from an all-India perspective. In this paper, I examine trends in and causes of murder for dowry and the related crimes of domestic violence. Prominent theories are tested for their ability to explain the incidence of murder for dowry. Dowry murders are concentrated in north India. Because the marriage alliance systems of the north differ from those of the south, the impact of Indian kinship systems is explored. The multi-generation or ‘joint’ family—nearly universal in India—has been found by Umar to be a common factor in many cases of dowry murder he studied. By contrast, Oldenburg has argued that changes in land tenure during British rule created individual property rights for men, leading to a preference for sons and the emergence of demands for dowry and, ultimately, dowry murder. Most case studies of dowry murder have been drawn from India’s larger cities; the impact of urbanisation is also studied. Economists have suggested structural factors, such as population growth, the economic value of women’s work, poverty, income inequality, and conspicuous consumption as possible causes driving domestic violence and murder for dowry. The institutional capacity of an Indian state to provide education, health, and enforcement of laws such as those prohibiting dowry is also examined. This study identifies five principal causes which explain nearly 80% of the variation in dowry murders at the level of individual Indian states: its prevailing kinship system,

¹ Quotation from Sunny (2017)

the prevalence of the joint family, the extent of women's workforce participation, income inequality, and the institutional performance of a state.

KEYWORDS

India, dowry, murder, homicide, domestic violence, sexual violence

DOWRY, THE MONEY, GOODS, PROPERTY OR GIFTS given by a bride's family to the groom or his family at the time of marriage is a common custom in South Asia. Although it has been illegal since 1961 to demand—or offer—a dowry in India, it is a nearly universal custom in many parts of the country. If, after marriage, a husband's family feels that the wife's dowry was insufficient, they may harass or inflict other forms of domestic violence on her to put pressure on her family to provide additional dowry. Under amendments to the Indian criminal code made in 1983, harassment or cruelty can result in the immediate arrest and jailing of a woman's husband and family (Arora, 2019). At its most extreme, this violence may lead to the murder of the wife. Other amendments to the criminal code provide that if a woman dies by burns or bodily injury "otherwise than under normal circumstances" or takes her own life, in the first seven years of her marriage, her husband and in-laws must prove that they were not responsible for her death (Umar, 1998, pp. 186-190).

Despite these very harsh potential penalties, reported cases of murder for dowry in India rose from 427 cases in 1983 to nearly 5,000 in 1991; by 2016, the total was 8455 but had declined to 6966 by 2020. The sharp increase in the 1980s and 1990s was reported in the English-language press (Leslie, 1999; Prasad, 1994) and was studied in important scholarly articles (Ghadially & Kumar, 1988; Hackett, 2011; Kumari, 1989; Mukerjee, 1995; Oldenburg, 2002; Rudd, 2001; Stone & James, 1995; Umar, 1998).

Although a number of studies have explored dowry murders in specific localities, with the exception of Michelle Hackett's work (2011), there appear to be no studies that seek to discover causal factors impacting dowry murders on an all-India scale. Hackett found striking differences in levels of reported domestic violence reported in cities and rural areas. Levels of domestic violence were lower in cities compared to rural towns and villages located in Indian states with higher levels of social development. The urban-rural pattern was reversed in states with lower levels of health, education, and average income (Hackett, 2011, p. 284). Hackett (2011, p. 285) argued that levels of dowry murder were lower in states with higher levels of social development.

In this paper, I examine trends in and causes of murder for dowry and the related crimes of domestic violence in India by state. In doing so, I test prominent theories for their ability to explain the incidence of murder for dowry.

METHODS

SURVEY OF REPORTED CRIME RATES

This paper is, in part, based on the official crime statistics collected and published by India's National Crime Records Bureau (National Crime Records Bureau, 2012). I have used the data for 2011, especially when examining patterns at the district level, because they can be directly correlated to the results of the Census of India for that year, without interpolation or estimation (Census of India, 2011). Where possible, I have also utilised data from 2020 (National Crime Records Bureau, 2021). These data

are analysed using various methods, including time series, ordinary least squares regression, multiple regression, and causal path analysis. The results are reported in tables, graphs, and path models.

Official statistics in India and elsewhere tend to under-report the true incidence of many crimes, especially the case of crimes against women (see, for example, Bennett & Lynch, 1990; van Dijk et al., 1990; Vigderhouse, 1978). In her study of dowry victims (both those who died and survivors) in Delhi in 1985, Ranjana Kumari found that only nine percent of 150 cases she studied were from police records. By contrast, 72% were cases recorded by women's organisations (Kumari, 1989, p. 27). However, this difference arose mainly because the police did not wish to violate the privacy of victims and possibly prejudice criminal proceedings.

Some national survey data assist us in assessing the extent to which women are reluctant to report violations of their rights. For example, a 2016 survey conducted by the Indian National Bar Association found that 69% of women who had experienced sexual harassment at work had not reported the matter to either a manager or official complaint body at work "due to fear, embarrassment, lack of confidence in the complaints mechanism, unawareness, and due to stigma attached with sexual harassment" (Indian National Bar Association & Netrika Consulting, 2017, p. 16). We must presume that a similar percentage did not take their complaint to the police.

With all their imperfections, the official criminal records are the only consistent basis we have for analysis of dowry murder; nevertheless, there are interesting insights that we can extract from them.

FINDINGS

WHAT CRIMES ARE MOST FREQUENTLY REPORTED?

The basic contours of reported crimes against women change very little from year to year. In most years, the largest number of complaints is "cruelty by husband and his relatives," that is, domestic violence. In 2011, that was followed by complaints of molestation. Kidnapping, rape, dowry murder, and sexual harassment are the next most frequently registered crimes. Table 1 presents the distribution of crimes for 2011.

CRUELTY BY HUSBAND AND HIS RELATIVES

Acts of cruelty by a woman's in-laws are the most frequently reported crimes against women. Nevertheless, Flavia (1988, np), based on experiences in Mumbai, states that "Wife-beating is the most under-reported crime in the country." Domestic violence is also the almost-invariable prelude to cases of dowry murder. Umar observed that "bride-burning is an extreme form of wife-beating and domestic violence" (Umar, 1998, p. 54), while for Hackett, whether "wife-murder is adequately described as a fatal form of domestic violence" remains an open question (Hackett, 2011, p. 286).

Table 1: Distribution of Crimes Against Women, 2011

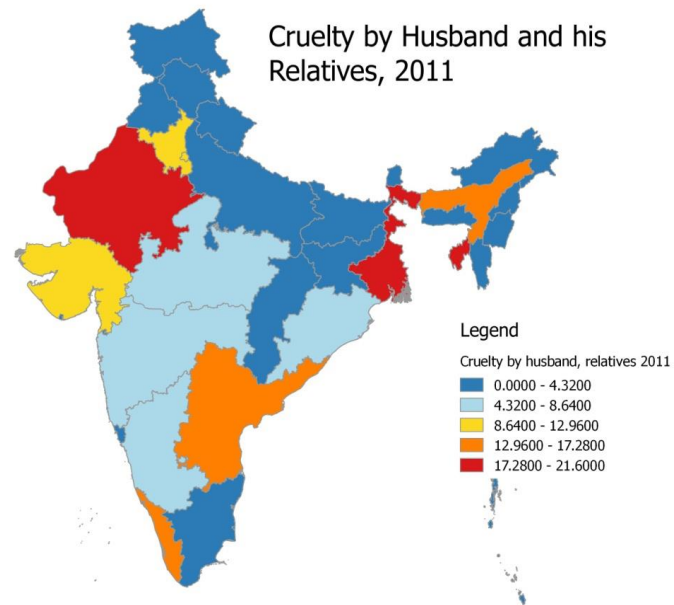
Crime	%
Cruelty by Husband and Relatives	43%
Molestation	19%
Kidnapping & Abduction	16%
Rape	11%
Dowry Death	4%
Sexual Harassment	4%
Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	3%
Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	1%
Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	0%
Importation of Girls	0%
Sati Prevention Act, 1987	0%
TOTAL	100%

Source: Compiled by the author from Crime in India, 2011

India is a federal republic whose major political subdivisions are states, often based on the language spoken by the majority of its citizens, and a small number of Union Territories such as the national capital territory, Delhi. As can be seen in Figure 1, there appears to be one major cluster of domestic abuse in northwestern India, stretching from the states of Haryana to Rajasthan to Gujarat. A second cluster is in the northeast and includes the states of West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura. Finally, rates are high in the southern states of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Each Indian state is divided into numerous administrative districts. In 2011, there were 640 districts whose populations ranged from a few with less than 10,000 to many with over 1 million. We can see the rate of domestic violence at the district level by examining Figure 2. Here we can see that cruelty is also relatively frequently reported in many districts of Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Figure 1: Cruelty by Husband and His Relative, 2011 (Rate per State)



Source: Map created by the author from Crime in India, 2011 and Census of India, 2011. One lakh is 100,000

We can partially corroborate the accuracy of the police recording of cruelty by a husband and his relatives by comparing those figures with the broader pattern of married women 15-49 who have ever experienced physical violence in marriage. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) 2005–06 asked married women if they had ever experienced either physical or sexual violence at the hands of their husbands (Table 2).

The questions asked were: Does/did your (last) husband ever do any of the following things to you?

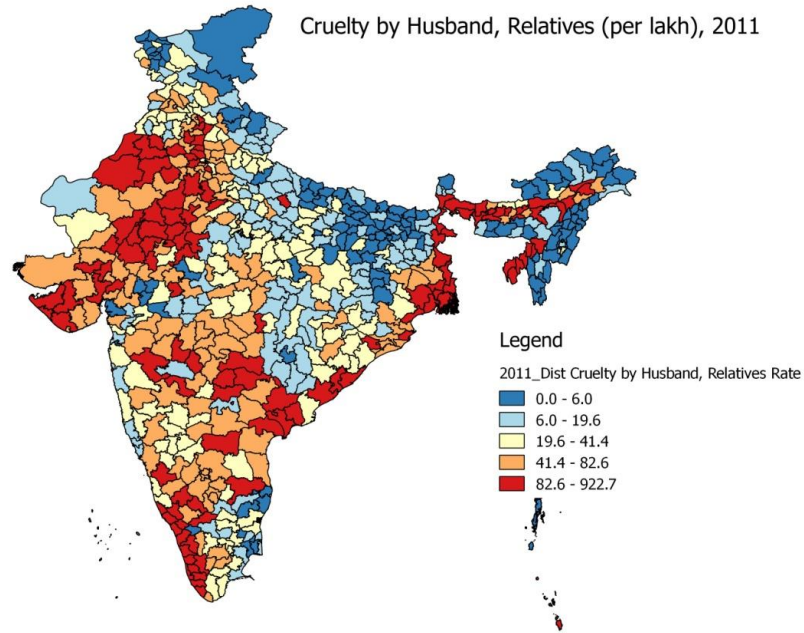
- a) Slap you?
- b) Twist your arm or pull your hair?
- c) Push you, shake you, or throw something at you?
- d) Punch you with his fist or with something that could hurt you?
- e) Kick you, drag you or beat you up?
- f) Try to choke you or burn you on purpose?
- g) Threaten or attack you with a knife, gun, or any other weapon?
- h) Physically force you to have sexual intercourse with him even when you did not want to

When we compare the survey results with the police records, we find no correlation ($r = -.023$; not significant). Inspection of a scattergram shows that states where over 30% of women reported ever having experienced domestic violence, especially

Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, are also states where few cases are registered with the police. Because these survey data appear to be more reliable than police reports, in what follows, the survey figures from the National Family Health Survey are used instead of reported cases of cruelty.

Sexual violence in marriage was highest in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal. There is a weak negative correlation with male literacy rates ($r = -.297$; not sig). The experience of sexual violence was highest in the lowest income group (13.2%), grading down to the lowest (3.7%) in the highest income group (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International, 2007, pp. Table 15.13, p. 501). Both these findings appear to be at odds with the findings of Koenig *et al.* that sexual violence in 5 districts of Uttar Pradesh was positively correlated with higher levels of education in males and household financial stress (Koenig *et al.*, 2006, p. 136.).

Figure 2: Cruelty by Husband and His Relatives, 2011 (Rate per District)



Source: Map created by the author from *Crime in India, 2011* and *Census of India, 2011*

What remains for investigation is the relationship between the experience of domestic violence and murder for dowry.

Table 2: Percentage of Women, Aged 15-49, Who Have Experienced Different Forms of Violence (2005-2006)

	Physical Violence only	Sexual Violence only	Physical or Sexual violence
North			
Delhi	14.9	0.2	16.5
Haryana	23.4	1.4	29.0
Himachal Pradesh	4.1	0.3	5.6
Jammu & Kashmir	10.1	0.9	12.9
Punjab	25.0	1.0	30.9
Rajasthan	27.5	4.6	44.6
Uttaranchal	22.1	0.4	26.8
Uttar Pradesh	30.6	1.1	38.1
Bihar	38.9	2.9	55.6
Central			
Madhya Pradesh	37.0	1.4	46.8
Chhattisgarh	24.0	0.8	30.1
Jharkhand	23.5	2.1	34.8
East			
Odisha	24.5	3.5	36.2
West Bengal	19.9	6.2	38.3
West			
Goa	12.5	0.6	15.0
Gujarat	20.7	2.2	27.8
Maharashtra	27.2	0.3	29.2
South			
Andhra Pradesh	29.9	0.5	33.8
Karnataka	16.7	0.2	19.9
Kerala	12.6	1.3	17.3
Tamil Nadu	36.1	0.0	38.7

Source: Adapted by the author from (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International, 2007, pp. Table 15.16, p. 504)

DOWRY MURDER

Murder for dowry (dowry death in police parlance) is murder for gain.

The harassment and violence against the bride revolves around the demand for more and more dowry which often culminates in the death of the bride. They are murdered for not bringing adequate dowry. (Umar, 1998, p. 1)

As an identifiable sub-category of premeditated homicide, dowry murder has been the subject of successive bodies of legislation aimed at its suppression. In 1983, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was amended to make the death of any woman in the first seven years of marriage subject to report, with the onus of proof being placed on her husband's family to show that they were not responsible for it, either directly or by abetting suicide. Belur et al. (2014) give a detailed discussion of the laws and procedures involved. In the official statistics which form the basis of this article, "homicide for dowry, dowry deaths, or their attempts" are those which fall under sections 302/304-B of the IPC. Section 302 deals with homicide, generally:

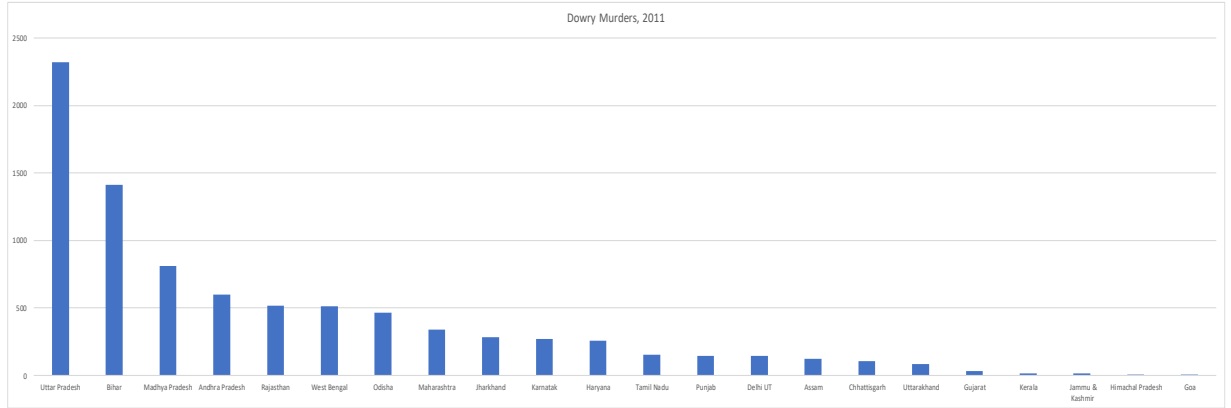
Where the death of a woman is caused by any burns or bodily injury or occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage, and it is shown that soon before her death, she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any relative of her husband for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry, such death shall be called "dowry death," and such husband or relative shall be deemed to have caused her death (Section 304B).

As the statute indicates, immolation, in the guise of a kitchen accident, is the most common form of dowry murder. Belur and colleagues (2014) offer a discussion of the literature as well as a study of burns victims admitted to hospitals in New Delhi and Mumbai in 2014.

It is not widely appreciated how significant a component of homicide in India dowry murder is: it is a major cause of homicide in a few states. In 2011, there were 8,473 reported cases of dowry murder; that number constituted about 25% of *all* recorded murders in that year. Dowry murder is concentrated in the north Indian Hindi-speaking states of Haryana, New Delhi, UP, MP, Bihar, Jharkhand, as well as in Orissa; almost 70% of dowry murders in 2011 occurred in those states (Figure 3).

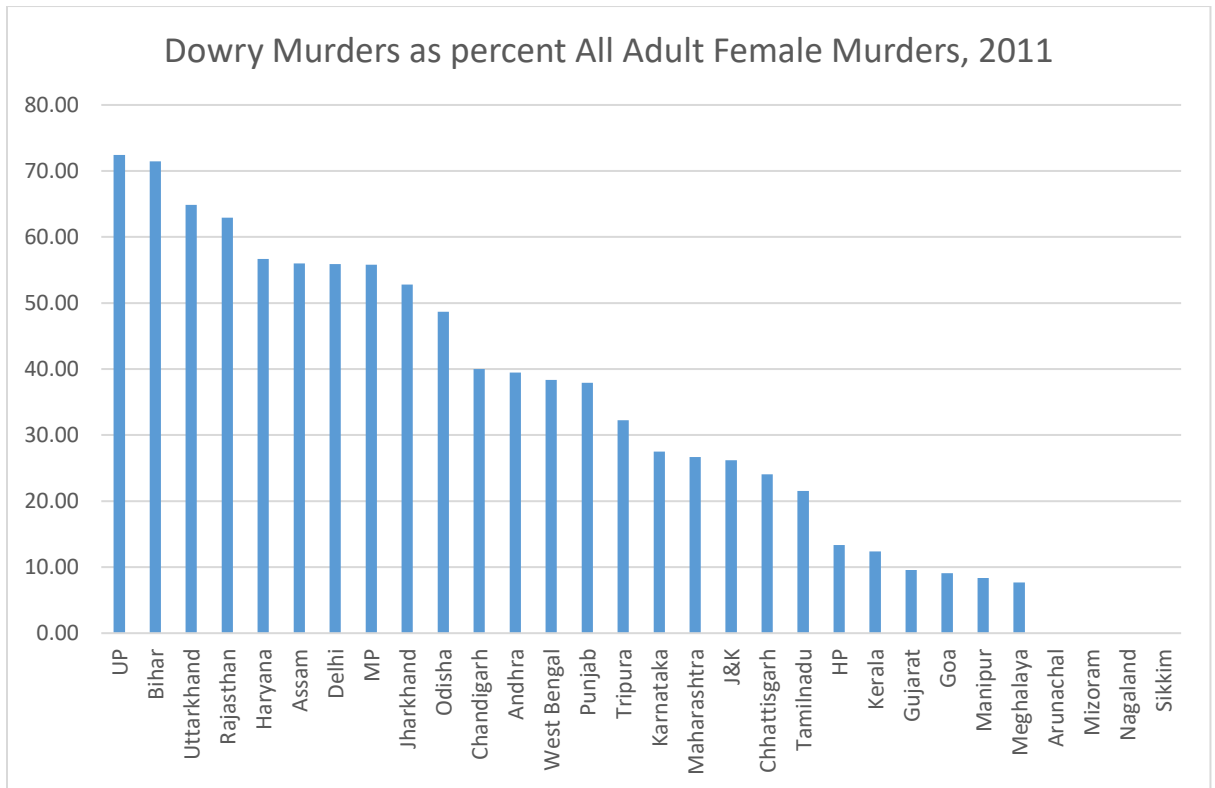
When we consider murders of adult women, the picture is even starker. In Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, Assam, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chandigarh murders for dowry were responsible for 50 to over 70% of all murders of adult women (Figure 4). In Odisha, Chandigarh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab, and Tripura, dowry murders were between 30 and 40% of all murders of adult women. Over 20% of all murders in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, and Tamil Nadu were for dowry. The rates of dowry murder were also the highest in those states (Figure 5). At the district level (Figure 6), we can see a zone of elevated dowry murder rates stretching south of Haryana, Delhi, and western UP, through most of Madhya Pradesh with concentric zones of that primary locus to the west and the northeast.

Figure 3: Dowry Murders, 2011 (by State)



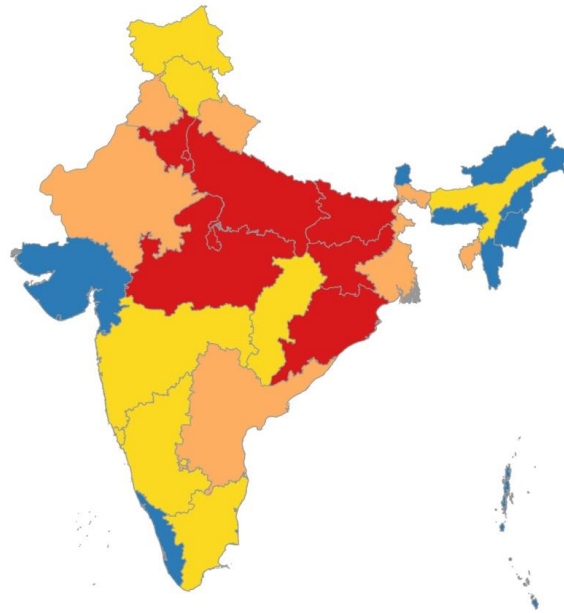
Source: Chart compiled by the author from *Crime in India, 2011*

Figure 4: Dowry Murders as a Percentage of All Female Murders, 2011



Source: Chart compiled by the author from *Crime in India, 2011*

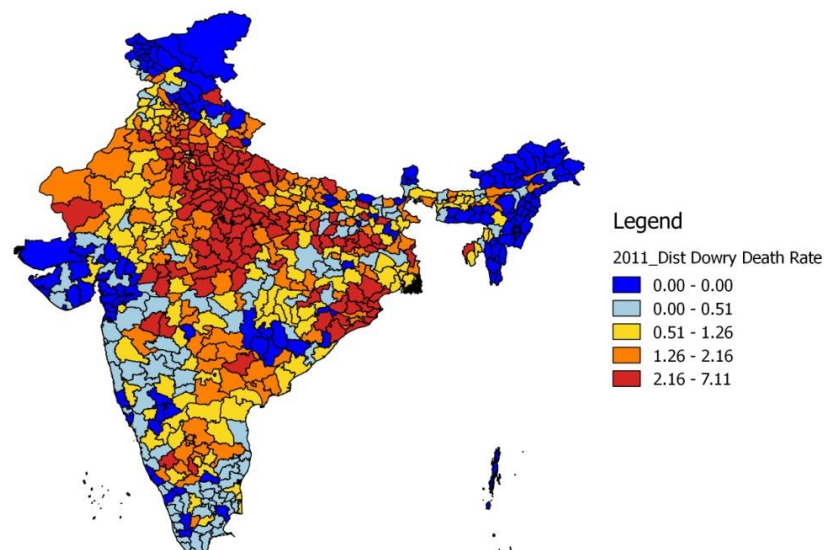
Figure 5: Dowry Murder, 2001 (Rate by State)



Source: Map created by the author from Crime in India, 2011 and Census of India, 2011

Figure 6: Dowry Murders, 2011 (Rate by District)

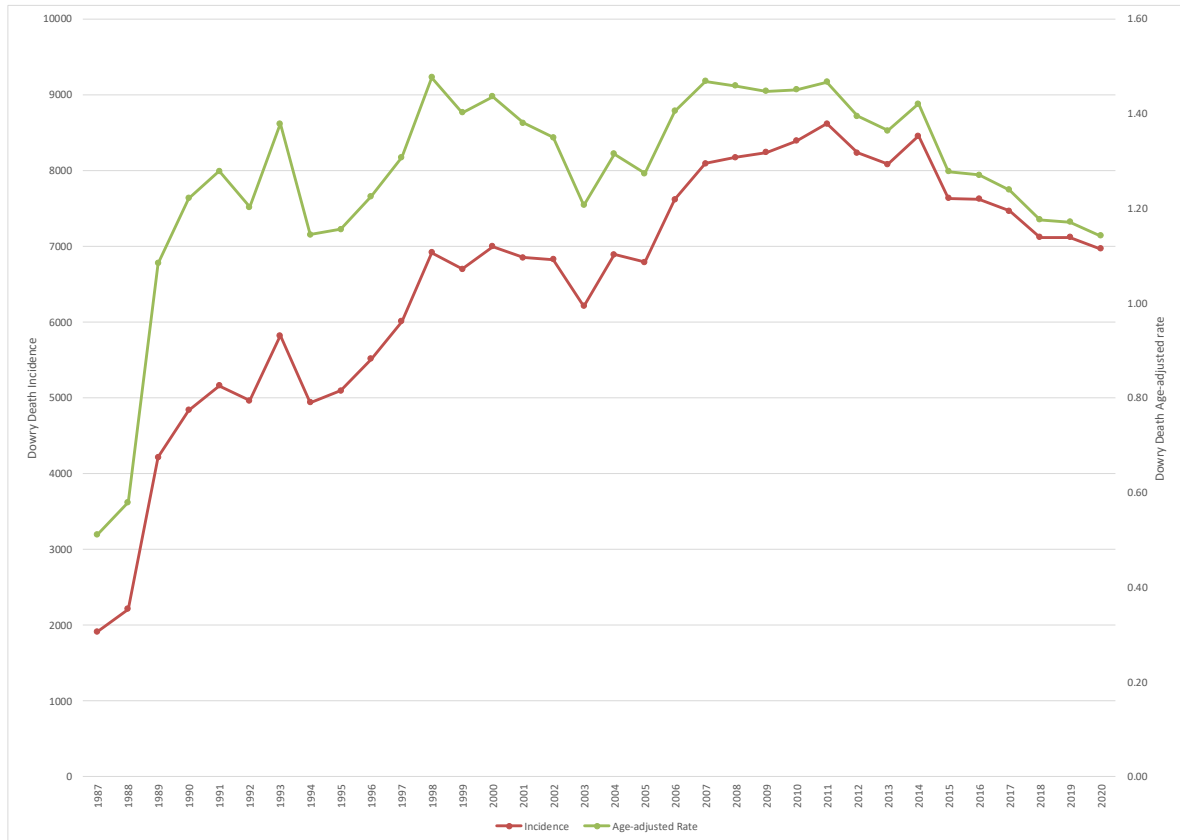
Dowry Murders (per lakh), 2011



Source: Map created by the author from *Crime in India, 2011* and *Census of India, 2011*

Across the nation, the actual number of murders for dowry appears to have risen quite sharply in the decade following the late 1980s (Figure 7). From just over 1900 murders in 1987, the total rose to 6000 by 1997. After reaching an eight-year plateau in the mid-6000s, numbers rose again after 2005 to a peak of 8600 in 2011. Since 2011 numbers and rates have fallen steadily.

Figure 7: Dowry Murders, 1987-2020, Incidence and Age-Adjusted Rate (Per Lakh)



Source: Incidence figures for 1987-1989 from (Thakur, 1998b, p. xix) and *Crime in India*. Chart and age-adjusted rates compiled by the author

In Table 3, we can see a comparison between states over nearly two decades.² As we saw with the mapping, the states with the highest rates of dowry murder in most years are Bihar, UP, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh. Some year-to-year fluctuation is visible; this is especially true of smaller states such as Mizoram and Union Territories such as Chandigarh. What is also noticeable is a general downward trend in many states that appears to have begun around 2011. Assam is a significant exception to the trend; rates there rose to a peak in 2015 but have declined subsequently.

² These rates differ from those published by the National Crime Records Bureau as they are based on female population figures, rather than total population.

Table 3: Trend in Dowry Death Rates by Indian States, 2001-2020

rate	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Andhra	1.11	1.18	1.21	1.31	1.12	1.30	1.52	1.36	1.32	1.41	1.42	1.18	1.14	0.49	0.40	0.70	0.60	0.50	0.40	0.70
Arunachal	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.20
Assam	0.46	0.53	0.45	0.54	0.72	0.75	0.70	0.71	1.15	1.16	0.79	0.90	1.08	1.18	1.33	1.00	1.10	1.00	0.90	0.40
Bihar	2.16	2.27	2.18	2.41	2.32	2.65	2.56	2.59	2.71	2.58	2.84	2.51	2.28	2.60	2.14	2.00	2.10	2.00	1.90	1.80
Chandigarh	0.77	0.25	0.25	1.44	0.71	2.31	0.23		0.44	1.07	0.42	1.03	0.20	0.40	0.98	0.50	0.10	0.50	1.10	0.20
Chhattisgarh	0.68	0.80	0.73	0.64	0.88	0.89	0.85	0.88	1.05	0.92	0.82	0.63	0.83	0.95	0.65	0.60	0.60	1.10	0.50	0.50
Delhi	1.81	2.06	1.88	1.74	1.51	1.74	1.68	1.51	1.59	1.55	1.49	1.36	1.41	1.45	1.12	1.70	1.20	1.70	1.20	1.20
Goa	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.29	0.00	0.29	0.29	0.42	0.14	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.10	0.00	0.10	0.00
Gujarat	0.28	0.25	0.21	0.23	0.18	0.19	0.16	0.10	0.09	0.07	0.10	0.07	0.10	0.08	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Haryana	2.91	2.56	2.18	2.41	2.00	2.36	2.44	2.69	2.46	2.44	2.15	2.14	2.14	2.35	1.92	2.10	1.90	1.60	1.80	1.80
HP	0.33	0.20	0.20	0.26	0.06	0.09	0.25	0.09	0.03	0.06	0.12	0.06	0.00	0.03	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.00
J&K	0.27	0.37	0.20	0.18	0.10	0.19	0.17	0.38	0.21	0.16	0.19	0.13	0.11	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
Jharkhand	1.66	2.06	1.92	1.97	1.80	1.93	2.04	1.75	1.91	1.75	1.76	1.85	1.84	2.06	1.55	1.70	1.50	1.40	1.60	0.50
Karnataka	0.85	0.88	0.72	0.95	0.94	0.87	0.88	0.90	0.90	0.83	0.89	0.71	0.89	1.00	0.80	0.80	0.70	0.60	0.60	0.50
Kerala	0.16	0.10	0.20	0.19	0.13	0.15	0.16	0.18	0.12	0.13	0.09	0.18	0.12	0.16	0.04	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.00	0.00
MP	2.11	2.28	2.15	2.44	2.36	2.39	2.28	2.43	2.54	2.59	2.32	2.09	2.14	1.99	1.77	1.70	1.70	1.40	1.40	1.50
Maharashtra	0.66	0.64	0.77	0.64	0.69	0.77	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.74	0.63	0.60	0.57	0.49	0.47	0.40	0.40	0.30	0.30	0.30
Manipur	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10
Meghalaya	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.08	0.46	0.15	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.13	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.10
Mizoram	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Nagaland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10
Odisha	1.62	1.35	1.50	1.69	1.74	2.35	2.34	2.01	1.90	1.89	2.24	2.50	1.86	2.05	1.63	1.90	1.50	1.70	1.50	1.40
Punjab	1.40	1.44	0.94	0.95	0.82	1.06	1.07	1.02	0.99	0.94	1.09	0.89	0.94	0.66	0.62	0.60	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.40
Rajasthan	1.39	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.23	1.31	1.43	1.41	1.37	1.43	1.56	1.42	1.33	1.17	1.31	1.30	1.30	1.10	1.20	1.30
Sikkim	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.35	0.00	0.34	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00	0.00
Tamilnadu	0.62	0.77	0.69	0.69	0.65	0.56	0.61	0.60	0.55	0.46	0.42	0.30	0.32	0.25	0.17	0.20	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
Telangana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.40	1.40	1.00	0.90	0.80
Tripura	1.03	1.01	1.24	1.23	2.05	2.08	2.11	0.93	1.66	1.41	1.67	2.03	1.57	1.76	1.48	1.00	2.40	0.90	1.90	1.20
UP	2.81	2.36	1.61	2.04	1.83	2.07	2.34	2.48	2.43	2.37	2.44	2.31	2.37	2.46	2.29	2.40	2.40	2.30	2.20	2.10
Uttarkhand	1.35	1.56	2.15	1.87	1.41	1.76	1.51	1.55	1.96	1.54	1.68	1.41	0.84	0.73	1.03	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.00	1.20
West Bengal	0.68	0.69	0.83	0.98	1.09	1.07	1.07	1.06	1.17	1.16	1.15	1.32	1.05	1.08	1.06	1.20	1.10	0.90	0.90	1.10

Source: compiled by the author from *Crime in India, 2011* and *Census of India, 2011*

THEORIES OF CAUSES OF DOWRY MURDERS

Dowry and its mirror-image brideprice have been the subjects of many studies, fascinating theoretical analysis, and fruitful empirical investigation, especially by economists (Anderson, 2003, 2007a, 2007b; Boserup, 1970; Chiplunkar & Weaver, 2017; Rajaraman, 1983; Rao, 1993; Sen, 1998; Sonia & Lawrence, 2005; Srinivas, 1984; Srinivasan, 2005; Tambiah, 1973). The history of dowry in India has been summarised by many authors (Banerjee, 2014; Kumari, 1989; Menski, 1998a; Oldenburg, 2002; Umar, 1998). Some of their insights are relevant for what follows.

Domestic violence in India has received less systematic investigation. Koenig *et al.* found that lower levels of education and wealth, childlessness, longer marriage, a husband’s extra-marital relationship, and a husband’s past exposure to violence were all associated with higher levels of physical violence in their study of UP (Koenig *et al.*, 2006, p. 135). Hackett reported no significant correlations between “cruelty” and three-factor variables measuring human development, gender development, and urban development. These same variables were strongly, negatively, and statistically significantly related to dowry murders (Hackett, 2011, pp. 287-280). It will be possible to incorporate only a few of the variables investigated by Koenig and Hackett in what follows.

Although many powerful descriptive accounts have been written about dowry murder (Babu & Babu, 2011; Belur *et al.*, 2014; Bundhun, 2017; Fernandez, 1997; Gangoli & Rew, 2011; Ghadially & Kumar, 1988; Kokra, 2017; Kumari, 1989; Leslie, 1999; Musa, 2012; Oldenburg, 2002; Prasad, 1994; Rastogi & Therly, 2006; Rudd, 2001; Sekhri & Storeygard, 2014; Stone & James, 1995; Umar, 1998; Vindhya, 2000), the possible causes of the crime have been only lightly theorised and have received little systematic investigation. Hackett’s study (2011) is a notable exception to this generalization.

In what follows, I will consider several prominent causes which have been suggested in both works of literature chronologically, starting with pre-colonial factors, turning next to those whose origin may lie in the colonial period, concluding with more proximate causes arising in the post-colonial era.

PRE-COLONIAL FACTORS

In her classic study of India's kinship systems, Karve identified family organisation as one of the things "absolutely necessary for the understanding of any cultural phenomenon in India" (Karve, 1965, p. 1). The family itself has two components, the structure of kinship and the joint family (Karve, 1965, pp. 8-9). Karve distinguishes between the kinship organisation of north India (the Punjab, Kashmir, UP, part of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, and Assam) (Karve, 1965, p. 104) the Adivasi dominated districts of central India (in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha (to which we must add the subsequently created states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand) (Karve, 1965, p. Chapter IV) and the southern zone (Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu) (Karve, 1965, p. Chapter V). What is relevant to our consideration of dowry murder is that in the northern kinship system, brides are sought from suitable families with which there has been no intermarriage in (commonly) seven generations (Karve, 1965, p. 117). Thus, a bride is married into a family of strangers and will but rarely return to her paternal home (Karve, 1965, p. 127ff.).

In the southern kinship systems, by contrast, the primary focus is on reinforcing existing kinship ties through mechanisms such as cross-cousin marriage. In the south,

one's own extended family is also one's family by marriage, and so the complete separation between one's family of birth and family by marriage, which is evident in the northern terminology, is absent in the Dravidian kinship terms....A girl does not enter the house of strangers on marriage as in the north, her husband is not the perfect stranger to her as he is in her northern sister....Nor does marriage symbolize separation from the father's house for a girl. A woman in the south lives and moves freely in her father-in-law's house" (Karve, 1965, pp. 241-242).

In addition to Karve's work, other useful studies of Indian kinship are those of Ashburn (1990), Oberoi (1993), and Ostor et al. (1982). Trautmann provides a useful map showing India's principal kinship systems (Trautmann, 1993, p. 85).

It is possible to view a bride in instrumental terms and thus contemplate her murder in north India than in the south. Perhaps because most of the literature on dowry murder focuses on north India, where, as we have seen, over two-thirds of dowry murders are committed, very little consideration to the possible significance of kinship systems appears in the existing literature. To measure the extent to which the northern kinship system prevails, we will use the percentage of women who report having migrated at the time of marriage (Census of India 2011, Table D05-00-Prov Migration for Marriage, etc. 2011-D05-00-Prov.xls).

The other pre-colonial factor to consider is the joint family. Although the joint family is still prevalent in many areas, it is also less universal than it once was.³ Umar notes that in his sample of nearly 200 dowry murder cases, "in almost all the cases, the victims had been living in the joint family from the date of marriage till their demise" (Umar, 1998, p. 151). To measure the impact of the joint family, we will use average household size as reported in the *India Human Development Report* (Shariff, 1999, p. Table 4.8)

³ For a discussion of the emerging desire of women to establish a "companionate" relationship with their husbands by leaving the joint family to establish a nuclear family see (Mayer, 2016b).

COLONIAL-ERA FACTORS

In her study of dowry murders in the Punjab and New Delhi, Oldenburg identifies British colonial land policies as a primary causal factor in the emergence of dowry and dowry murder. Oldenburg has argued that the *ryotwari*, which is a land settlement instituted by the British in the Punjab, “created male individual property rights in land” (Oldenburg, 2002, p. 14) with consequences which “could be disastrous in the lives of women” (Oldenburg, 2002, p. 15).⁴ Since these changes were primarily in the territories held by the British, we will explore their impact by looking at the percentage of districts in a state which was not under direct foreign control.

Changes in the legal status and ownership of property under the British plus preferential recruitment to the Army produced a “masculinization’ of the economy,” selective female infanticide, and skewed sex ratios in the Punjab (Oldenburg, 2002, pp. 15-17). To assess the impact of preference for male children, we will use information on the percentage of married women who wish their next child to be male. We must acknowledge that son preference has complex origins, some of which pre-date colonial rule. Because of Oldenburg’s strong argument, I have included it as a primarily colonial influence. The data are from (International Institute for Population Science, 2010, pp. Table 3.14, p.65).

POST-INDEPENDENCE FACTORS

Urbanisation

Oldenburg notes that in the 1990s, dowry murder was overwhelmingly an urban crime that occurred “in lower-middle-class or poor urban neighborhoods” (Oldenburg, 2002, p. 222). Most of the case studies reported focus on cities (Ghadially & Kumar, 1988; Kumari, 1989; Umar, 1998). However, it is clear from inspecting Figure 4 that high rates of dowry murder occur in essentially rural districts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha. Regrettably, the official statistics compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau do not permit us to distinguish clearly between urban and rural dowry murders.

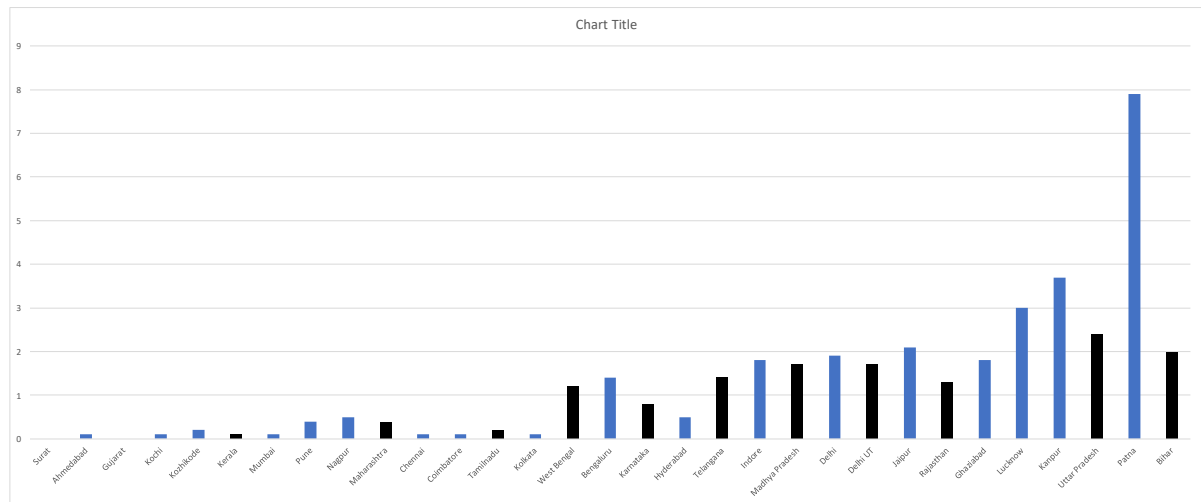
We can form at least a partial idea of the importance of urbanisation by comparing dowry murder rates in nineteen major cities with those in the states to which they belong (recognising that there is a certain degree of double-counting involved) (Figure 8). There may be two patterns visible here. In several of the largest cities with very low rates of dowry murder, urban rates are either approximately the same or lower than state-wide rates (Kochi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad).

Bengaluru is the most obvious exception to this generalisation. In the states where rates are higher, urban rates tend to be higher, sometimes much higher, than the rates for the entire state. Hackett found a similar phenomenon in her study of 2000 data. She computed a *cruelty ratio* of a city, which is the city cruelty rate compared to rural cruelty rates. She found that “in states where “human” and “gender development” are higher, the cruelty ratio is lower. This implies that in states where social development (level of health, education, and average income) is relatively advanced and cruelty crime rates are lower in the cities than in the villages. Correspondingly, in states where social development is less advanced, cruelty crime rates are higher in the cities than in the villages” (Hackett, 2011, p. 281). Unfortunately, without data that allows

⁴ Oldenburg (2002, p. 8) does note that “the south seems to be less prone to the pathological strain of the north, where the custom of virilocal marriages...cuts across caste and class lines.”

us to distinguish clearly between urban and rural dowry murder rates, we cannot take the analysis of urbanisation further.

Figure 8: Dowry Murder Rates in Selected Cities and States, 2011



Source: compiled by the author from *Crime in India, 2011* and *Census of India, 2011*

Demography

In an often-cited article, Rao suggested that demographic growth is a prime driver of the growth in the demand for dowry (Rao, 1993). During periods of growth, each successive generation is larger than that preceding it. Since older men tend to marry younger women, the larger cohort of the latter produces a ‘marriage squeeze.’ Recent studies by Anderson and Chiplunkar & Weaver (2017) have questioned the validity of Rao’s analysis. To assess the impact of population growth, we will use the rate of growth of population in the Indian states between the 2001 and 2011 censuses.

Economic Value of Women’s Work

Ester Boserup, in a classic study, argued that where women’s work in agriculture was significant (‘hoe cultures’), there tends to be a prevalence of brideprice. Where women play a lesser role in agriculture (‘plow cultures’), dowry tends to prevail (Boserup, 1970). Bardhan suggested that because women are highly involved in rice cultivation in India but are less so in the production of wheat, it was possible that “in areas with paddy agriculture, the economic value of a woman is more than in other areas” (Bardhan, 1974, p. 1304). Anderson has suggested that in traditional societies in transition where men have economic value, but women do not, it is almost inevitable that dowry will emerge (Anderson, 2007a, p. 167). It seems reasonable to hypothesise that dowry murder rates will be lower where women’s economic value is higher. We will use the Female Rural Labour Force Participation Rate 2015-16 as a proxy for women’s economic value (Labour Bureau, 2016).

Domestic Violence

We have seen earlier that domestic violence is almost always a prelude to dowry murder, though only a small fraction of instances of wife-beating proceed to the extreme. Here we will use the data on physical violence presented in Table 2.

Poverty

Although Flavia, in her 1980 study of domestic violence in Mumbai, found wife-beating in all social classes, others (Mohammad, 1984; Sinha, 1989) have suggested that it is particularly prevalent among the poor. To explore the possibility that poverty may be a factor that explains why wife-beating leads to murder in some cases, we will use the poverty rate of the Indian states 2005-5 (Nayak et al., 2010, pp. Annex Table 3, p. 156).

Westernisation, Materialism, and Inequality

Because an unsatisfied demand for increased dowry payment is usually reported in cases of dowry murder, many studies point to social and economic changes in society as causal factors. Anderson argues that inequality between males is an invariable aspect of a society in the early stages of industrialisation (Anderson, 2007a, p. 167). Kumari points to modernisation and the growth of conspicuous consumption as lying at the heart of dowry demands. He writes:

[the middle class] desire to emulate the lifestyle of the upper strata of the society without having the ready means to do so [explains their high rate of dowry deaths]. [In addition] is because the ideal target of 'consumerism' has been middle-class families. This is...because prestige and status in society is today equated with inanimate objects – TVs. Marutis, scooters, and so forth (Kumari, 1989, p. 37).

To explore this dimension, we will use the Gini coefficient for the states (Shariff, 1999, pp. Table 3.1, p. 25).⁵

Gender Development

In the concluding section of Oldenburg's study of the colonial origins of dowry and dowry murder, she offers the striking observation that:

the rising number of dowry deaths paradoxically indicates that, on the whole, Indian women are asserting themselves very early on in their stifling roles as wives...*the rising number of violent crimes can be interpreted as an index of progress in gender relations*" [italics in original] (Oldenburg, 2002, p. 222).

We will seek to test this interpretation using the Gender Development Index, 2006 (Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), 2009, pp. Table 4.5, p. 12).

Institutional Performance

Implicit in the laws which reverse the onus of proof by presuming the guilt of a family in which a bride dies of unnatural causes in the first seven years of her marriage is the assumption that the enforcement of strict penalties will prevent dowry murder. To test the impact of the different administrative capabilities of the Indian states, we will use the Institutional Performance Index (Mayer, 2001).

⁵ I have used the 1994 edition of the India Human Development Report as the volume for 2011 does not appear to report a state-wise figure for the Gini coefficient. The all-India figures indicate that inequality has risen slightly in the intervening decade.

CORRELATIONS

Simple correlations presented in Table 4 show that several of the influences proposed in the literature have a statistically significant relationship with the dowry murder rate, 2011. Of the influences which appear to have a pre-colonial origin, both women who migrated for marriage, a proxy for the north Indian kinship system, and average household size have a strong positive and statistically significant correlation coefficient.

Of the influences argued to trace their origins primarily to the colonial period, the correlation of our measure of son preference is positively correlated and statistically significant, while the percentage of districts that were predominantly under princely rule is not.

Of the post-Independence factors, the incidence of poverty, the experience of domestic violence, the Institutional Performance Index, and the Gender Development Index are strongly correlated at statistically significant levels. While poverty and domestic violence are positively correlated with the dowry murder rate, both indices have negative signs, indicating that states with higher levels of gender development and institutional capability have lower rates of dowry murder.

The picture that emerges from this first survey of the relationships is that ancient, historical, and recent factors appear to be related to contemporary rates of dowry murder.

We can explore the explanatory power of the variables attributed to each historical period using multiple regression. The results are somewhat disappointing when we include all the variables for a period (Table 5, first column). The two pre-colonial variables appear to cancel each other out, with neither being statistically significant. The same is the case with the post-Independence variables. The two colonial-era variables, by contrast, are jointly significant.

A somewhat clearer picture emerges when we repeat the exercise, eliminating the weakest variables using backward stepwise regression (Table 5, second column). Now the proxy for marriage alliance systems (Women who migrated for marriage) is strongly and significantly correlated. Both colonial-era variables, of course, remain correlated as they were in the first iteration. Two variables from the post-Independence period remain after stepwise regression: the Institutional Performance Index and the Gini Index.

Table 4: Correlations with Dowry Murder Rate, 2011

	Correlation with Dowry Murder Rate 2011	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Colonial Influences		
Women who migrated for marriage (% total Migrants) 2011	.690**	.001
A. H/h size	.694**	.004
Colonial Influences		
Percent districts under indirect rule	-.301	.185
Percentage of currently married women who desire to have next child to be a boy	.614**	.003
Post-Independence Influences		
Rural Female Labour Force Participation Rate 2015-6 (%)	-.308	.174
Decadal Growth 2001-2011 (%)	.434*	.049
Incidence of poverty, 2004-5	.653**	.001
IHDR Gini	-.351	.200
Percentage of women 15-49 who have experienced physical violence	.651**	.001
Institutional Performance Index	-.727**	.001
Gender Development Index, 2006	-.719**	.000

Correlations exclude North-east Hill states and Union Territories

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

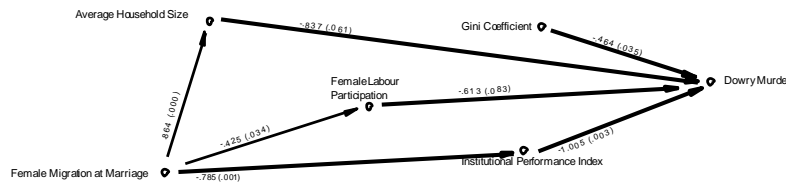
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

EXPLORING CAUSAL CONNECTIONS

We can form an even clearer picture of those relationships by considering the causal model presented in Figure 9. The model was constructed using the principles outlined by Asher (1976). It reports only those causal influences which bear directly on dowry murder. There are subsidiary causal paths that are interesting in their own right. See Figure 10.

Table 5: Regressions on Dowry Murder Rate, 2011

Pre-colonial era variables	Standardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients
	Beta	Beta
Average Household size	0.155	
	(0.681)	
Women who migrated for marriage (% total Migrants) 2011	0.626	0.76
	(0.113)	(0.001)
Colonial era variables		
Percentage of currently married women who desire to have next child to be a boy	0.669	0.669
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Percent districts under indirect rule	-0.393	-0.393
	(0.027)	(0.027)
Post-Independence variables		
Rural Female Labour Force Participation Rate 2015-6 (%)	-0.239	
	(0.475)	
Decadal Growth 2001-2011 (%)	-0.143	
	(0.685)	
Incidence of poverty, 2004-5	0.131	
	(0.549)	
IHDR Gini	-0.290	-0.415
	(0.226)	(0.011)
Percentage Women 15-49 who have experienced physical violence	0.203	
	(0.558)	
Institutional Performance Index	-0.363	-0.777
	(0.439)	(0.001)
Gender Development Index, 2006	-0.264	
	(0.619)	

Figure 9: Causal Model of Dowry Murder

The most important feature of the model is that four antecedent factors collectively and directly influence the dowry murder rate: large average Household Size, low Female Labour Participation, greater Income Inequality (Gini Index), and weak scores on the Institutional Performance Index. Collectively, these four factors explain over 78 percent of the variance in the dowry murder rate. All of these factors have their strongest impact in the states of north India. More broadly, the model indicates that many of the individual influences identified by earlier studies do, indeed exert an influence on the dowry murder rate. It also underscores the complexity

There is one significant additional but secondary feature of the model: the central causal role which kinship systems (measured here by Female Migration at Marriage) play as an indirect cause, directly influencing three of the direct causal variables (Average Household Size, Female Labour Participation, and the Institutional Performance Index). Kinship systems are also the prime antecedent of two subsidiary causal paths which ultimately lead to Domestic Violence. One proceeds via Average Household Size, through Son Preference to the Experience of Physical Violence; the second goes there via the incidence of poverty (Figure 10). Here again, the northern kinship system is most influential in these subsidiary paths.

One other feature is worthy of note. Household Size plays a significant antecedent causal role, influencing son preference, female labour participation, and the Gender Development Index, as well as exerting a direct influence on the dowry murder rate.

New Delhi

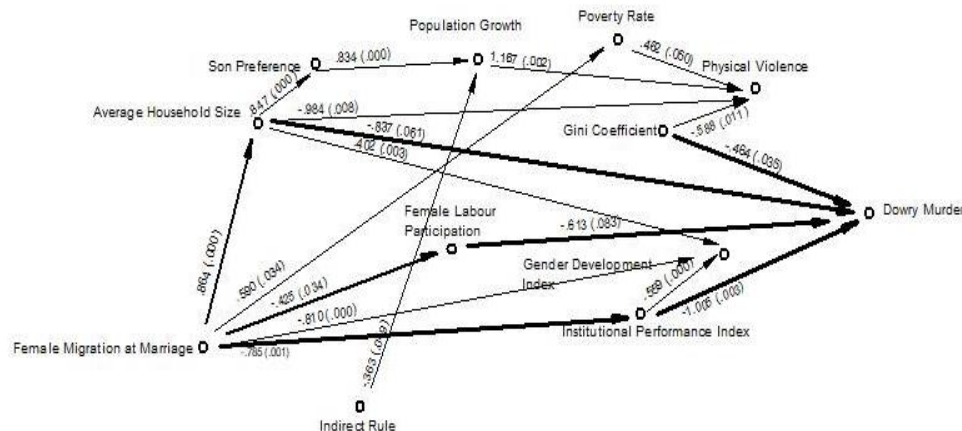
In the analysis presented above, the small states of India's northeast have been omitted, as have India's small Union Territories such as Puducherry. The major consequence of confining the investigation to the larger states is the omission of New Delhi. Delhi has been the site of several of the most important studies of dowry murder (e.g., Kumari, 1989; Oldenburg, 2002). Although the dowry murder rate in New Delhi is by no means the highest of the states presented in Figure 6, nevertheless many deaths occur there. Because it is, essentially, a city-state and the national capital, it is impossible to compare it sensibly with the other states, which are poorer, less cosmopolitan, etc.

Suicide

Several authors have noted that domestic violence and demands for dowry may be responsible for suicide deaths and murders (e.g., Kumari, 1989, pp. 64-67; Umar, 1998, pp. 120-130). Official statistics for 2011 recorded 24,596 housewife suicides. By contrast, 8,618 dowry murders were reported, roughly one-third the number of suicides. However, we must note that as a general rule, suicide rates are highest in south India and lowest in the north Indian zone, where dowry murders are most prevalent. (Madhya Pradesh is a notable exception to this generalisation. For a discussion

of housewife suicides, see Mayer (2016a, 2016b.) The correlation between suicide and dowry murder is weak and not statistically significant ($r = -.198$; not sig.).

Figure 10: Full Causal Model



CONCLUSION

There have been many proposals for legislative changes which it is hoped would eliminate the evils of dowry and dowry murder (see, for example Kumari, 1989; Menski, 1998b; Rastogi & Therly, 2006; Thakur, 1998a; Umar, 1998). In 1983, the Law Commission of India made recommendations that were later incorporated into law (Belur et al., 2014). But as Menski has noted, “neither legal reform nor social action movements by themselves” have proved adequate to end the demand for dowries or dowry murder (see also Chowdhary, 1998; Menski, 1998a, p. 38).

Roughly 7,000 cases of dowry murder are recorded each year, nearly 70 percent of them in north India. If we consider the causal model presented in Figure 9, the implications are discouraging. It indicates that northern kinship patterns, larger family size, patterns of greater income equality, and the inadequate performance of state governments all contribute to the dowry murder rate. The north Indian kinship system, greater son preference, and more rapid population growth are among the features which characterise the so-called BIMARU states of northern India. By their nature, neither kinship systems nor the joint family lends themselves to direct policy intervention. For example, while the joint family is no longer universal, especially in cities, it is still very widespread and will change only slowly over coming decades. However, in principle, the remaining factors are amenable to policy interventions. Competitive elections create pressures for improved delivery of services at the state level (Jeffrey, 1992). Rising levels of female education may promote female labour participation. Economic inequality is also amenable to policy interventions that provide social safety nets and otherwise redistribute incomes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank the journal's reviewers for their perceptive and detailed comments on an earlier draft of the paper. *Dignity* thanks Priya R. Banerjee, The College at Brockport, The State University of New York, USA, for her time and expertise to review this article.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Peter Mayer is an Associate Professor of Politics and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Adelaide, Australia. He has written on many aspects of Indian politics, international relations, economics, history, anthropology, and sociology—especially the sociology of suicide. His recent publications have examined issues including a zone of weak governance in the Indus-Ganges plains; India's engagement with economic reforms; long-term trends in the real wages of agricultural labourers in the Kaveri Delta; the foreign relations of Australia and India; why elections in India appear to defy Duverger's Law of party competition; and the declining rate of massacres of India's Dalits.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Mayer, Peter. (2022). "They did not have to burn my sister alive": Causes and distribution by state of dowry murder in India." *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*. Vol. 7, Issue 1, Article 5. Available at <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/vol7/iss1/9>
<https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2022.07.01.09>

REFERENCES

- Anderson, Siwan. (2003). Why dowry payments declined with modernization in Europe but are rising in India. *Journal of Political Economy*, 111(2), 269–310.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/367679>
- Anderson, Siwan. (2007a). The economics of dowry and brideprice. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21, 151–174. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.21.4.151>
- Anderson, Siwan. (2007b). Why the marriage squeeze cannot cause dowry inflation. *Journal of Economic Theory*, 137(1), 140–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jet.2005.09.007>
- Arora, Avneet. (2019). '80 per cent of all dowry cases in India end in acquittal' Melbourne, SBS Punjabi, Special Broadcasting Service. (Accessed 3 February 2022)
<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/80-per-cent-of-all-dowry-cases-in-india-end-in-acquittal#:~:text=%2DUnder%20the%20Dowry%20Prohibition%20Act,dowry%20given%2C%20whichever%20is%20>
- Ashburn, Ann-Maree. (1990). Dowry and social change. In Masselos, J. (Ed.), *India: Creating a modern nation* (pp. 313-331). Sterling Publishers Private Limited.
- Asher, Herbert B. (1976). *Causal modeling* (Vol. 3). Sage Publications.
- Babu, Gopalan Rethesh, & Babu, Bontha Veeraj (2011). Dowry deaths: A neglected public health issue in India. *International Health*, 3(1), 35-43.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.inhe.2010.12.002>
- Banerjee, Priya R. (2014). Dowry in 21st-century India: The sociocultural face of exploitation. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15(1), 34-40.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838013496334>
- Bardhan, Pranab. (1974). On life and death questions. *Economic and Political Weekly*, IX(32, 33, 34), 1293-1304.
- Belur, Jyoti, Tilley, Nick, Daruwalla, Nayreen, Kumar, Meena, Tiwari, Vinay, & Osrin, David. (2014). The social construction of 'dowry deaths' *Social Science & Medicine*, 119, 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.07.044>

- Bennett, R., & Lynch, J. (1990). Does difference make a difference: Comparing cross-national crime indicators. *Criminology Research Council*, 8, 153-182.
- Boserup, Ester. (1970). *Women's role in economic development*. Allen & Unwin.
- Bundhun, Rebecca (2017, 10 February). *Dowries and death continue apace in India*. The National. Retrieved 27 May from <https://www.thenational.ae/world/dowries-and-death-continue-apace-in-india-1.81522>
- Census of India. (2011). *Census of India*. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. www.censusindia.gov.in
- Chiplunkar, Gaurav, & Weaver, Jeffrey. (2017). Marriage markets and the rise of dowry in India. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3590730>
- Chowdhary, Manjaree. (1998). Miles to go: An assessment of the enforcement hurdles in the implementation of the anti-dowry law in India. In Menski, W. (Ed.), *South Asians and the dowry problem* (pp. 151-162). Trentham Books.
- Fernandez, M. (1997). Domestic violence by extended family members in India: The interplay of gender and generation. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12(3), 433-455.
- Flavia. (1988). Violence in the family: Wife beating. In Ghadially, R. (Ed.), *Women in Indian society* (pp. 151-166). Sage.
- Gangoli, Geetanjali, & Rew, Martin. (2011). Mothers-in-law against daughters-in-law: Domestic violence and legal discourses around mother-in-law violence against daughters-in-law in India. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34(5), 420-429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2011.06.006>
- Ghadially, R., & Kumar, P. (1988). Bride-burning: The psycho-social dynamics of dowry deaths. In Ghadially, R. (Ed.), *Women in Indian society* (pp. 166-177). Sage.
- Hackett, Michelle. (2011). Domestic violence against women: Statistical analysis of crimes across India. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42(2), 267-288. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.42.2.267>
- Indian National Bar Association, & Netrika Consulting. (2017). *Garima: Sexual harassment at the workplace*. Prabhat Books. <https://www.indianbarassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Garima-1INBAs-Book.pdf> Accessed 14/05/2017
- International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International. (2007). *National family health survey (nfhs-3), 2005-06: India: Volume i*. http://rchiips.org/nfhs/volume_1.shtml Accessed 12/05/2017
- International Institute for Population Science. (2010). *District level household and facility survey (dlhs-3), 2007-08* (Accessed 8/05/2017) http://rchiips.org/pdf/INDIA_REPORT_DLHS-3.pdf
- Jeffrey, Robin. (1992). *Politics, women, and well-being: How Kerala became 'a model'*. The Macmillan Press.
- Karve, Iravati. (1965). *Kinship organisation in India*. Asia Publishing House.
- Koenig, M., Stephenson, R., Ahmed, S., Jejeebhoy, J. S., & Campbell, J. (2006). Individual and contextual determinants of domestic violence in north India. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96(1), 132-138. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2004.050872>
- Kokra, Sonali. (2017, 29 August 2017). *Yet another dowry death in Delhi: 28-year-old woman allegedly beaten, strangled, and burned to death*. Huffington Post India. Retrieved 27 May from https://www.huffingtonpost.in/2017/08/29/yet-another-dowry-death-in-delhi-28-year-old-woman-allegedly-beaten-strangled-and-burned-to-death-by-in-laws_a_23189013/
- Kumari, Ranjana. (1989). *Brides are not for burning: Dowry victims in India*. Radiant Publishers.
- Labour Bureau. (2016). *Fifth annual employment - unemployment survey (2015-16)*.

- Leslie, Julia. (1999). Dowry, 'dowry deaths' and violence against women: A journey of discovery. In Menski, W. (Ed.), *South Asians and the dowry problem* (pp. 21-35). Vistaar Publications.
- Mayer, Peter. (2001). Human development and civic community in India: Making democracy perform. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXVI(8), 684-692.
- Mayer, Peter. (2016a). Thinking clearly about suicide in India i: Desperate housewives, despairing farmers. *Economic & Political Weekly*, LI(14), 44-54.
<http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/14/thinking-clearly-about-suicide-india.html>
- Mayer, Peter. (2016b). Thinking clearly about suicide in India ii : Suitable girls & companionate couples-- social change and suicide in the Indian family. *Economic & Political Weekly*, LI(41), 40-45.
- Menski, Werner. (1998a). Dowry: A survey of the issues and the literature. In Menski, W. (Ed.), *South Asians and the dowry problem* (pp. 209-220). Trentham Books.
- Menski, Werner. (1998b). Legal strategies for curbing the dowry problem. In Menski, W. (Ed.), *South Asians and the dowry problem* (pp. 97-149). Trentham Books.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). (2009). Gendering human development indices: Recasting the gender development index and gender empowerment measure for India--summary report. (Accessed 20/05/2017) <http://nlrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/GENDER-EMPOWERMENT-MEASURE.pdf>
- Mohammad, N. (1984). Battered wives: A study of socially and economically backward people in slum areas. *Indian Journal of Criminology and Criminalistics*, 12(2), 102-107.
- Mukerjee, S. K. (1995). The dowry prohibition act 1961: An experiment in socio-economic justice in India. *Lawasia*, 63-65.
- Musa, Sainabou. (2012). Dowry-murders in India: The law & its role in the continuance of the wife burning phenomenon. *Northwestern Interdisciplinary Law Review*, 5(1), 227-245. (Accessed 02/05/2017)
https://www.mitchellwilliamslaw.com/webfiles/NIR%20Vol_%205%20Musa.pdf
- National Crime Records Bureau. (2012). *Crime in India 2011*. <https://ncrb.gov.in/en/crime-india-year-2011>
- National Crime Records Bureau. (2021). *Crime in India 2020 statistics*.
<https://ncrb.gov.in/en/Crime-in-India-2020>
- Nayak, P. K., Chattopadhyay, Sadhan Kumar, Kumar, Arun Vishnu, & Dhanya, V. (2010). Inclusive growth and its regional dimension. *Reserve Bank of India Occasional Papers*, 31(3). (Accessed 26/05/2017)
https://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/bs_viewcontent.aspx?Id=2359
- Oberoi, Patricia (Ed.). (1993). *Family, kinship, and marriage in India*. Oxford University Press.
- Oldenburg, Veena Talwar. (2002). *Dowry murder: The imperial origins of a cultural crime*. Oxford University Press.
- Ostor, Akos, Fruzzetti, Lina, & Barnett, Steve (Eds.). (1982). *Concepts of person: Kinship, caste, and marriage in India*. Harvard University Press.
- Prasad, B. Devi (1994). Dowry-related violence: A content analysis of news in selected newspapers. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 25(1), 71-89.
- Rajaraman, Indira. (1983). Economics of brideprice and dowry. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18(8), 275-279.
- Rao, Vijayendra. (1993). The rising price of husbands: A hedonic analysis of dowry increases in rural India. *Journal of Political Economy*, 101(4), 666-677.
- Rastogi, Mudita, & Therly, Paul. (2006). Dowry and its link to violence against women in India: Feminist psychological perspectives. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 7(1), 66-77.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838005283927>

- Rudd, Jane. (2001). Dowry-murder: An example of violence against women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24(5), 513-522.
- Sekhri, Sheetal, & Storeygard, Adam (2014). Dowry deaths: Response to weather variability in India. *Journal of Development Economics*, 111, 212-223.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2014.09.001>
- Sen, Bisakha. (1998). Why does dowry still persist in India? An economic analysis using human capital. In Menski, W. (Ed.), *South Asians and the dowry problem* (pp. 209-220). Trentham Books.
- Shariff, Abusaleh. (1999). India human development report: A profile of Indian states in the 1990s. Oxford University Press.
- Sinha, N. (1989). Profile of marital violence: Wife battering. In Sinha, N. (Ed.), *Women and violence*. Vikas.
- Sonia, Dalmia, & Lawrence, Pareena G. (2005). The institution of dowry in India: Why it continues to prevail. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 38(2), 71-93.
- Srinivas, M.N. (1984). *Some reflections on dowry*. Oxford University Press.
- Srinivasan, Sharada. (2005). Daughters or dowries? The changing nature of dowry practices in south India. *World Development*, 33,(4), 593-615.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2004.12.003>
- Stone, Linda, & James, Caroline (1995). Dowry, bride-burning, and female power in India. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 18(2), 125-134.
- Sunny, Shiv. (2017). *Dowry death: 'They did not have to burn my sister alive for rs 10 lakh'*. Hindustan Times. Retrieved 27 May from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/dowry-death-they-did-not-have-to-burn-my-sister-alive-for-rs-10-lakh/story-5BbeIAEZdDLtQWWMm8FluO.html>
- Tambiah, S. J. (1973). Dowry and bridewealth, and the property rights of women in south Asia. In Goody, J. & S. J. Tambiah (Eds.), *Bridewealth and dowry*. Cambridge University Press.
- Thakur, Himendra. (1998a). Practical steps towards eradicating dowry and bride-burning in India. In Menski, W. (Ed.), *South Asians and the dowry problem* (pp. 209-220). Trentham Books.
- Thakur, Himendra. (1998b). Preface. In Menski, W. (Ed.), *South Asians and the dowry problem*. Trentham Books Limited.
- Trautmann, Thomas. (1993). The study of Dravidian kinship. In Oberoi, P. (Ed.), *Family, kinship, and marriage in India*. Oxford University Press.
- Umar, Mohd. (1998). *Bride burning in India: A socio legal study*. APH Publishing Corporation.
- van Dijk, J.J.M., Mayhew, Patricia, & Killias, Martin. (1990). *Experiences of crime across the world: Key findings from the 1989 international crime survey*. Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers.
- Vigderhouse, A. (1978). Methodological problems confronting cross-cultural criminological research using official data. *Human Relations*, 3, 229-247.
- Vindhya, U. (2000). 'Dowry deaths' in Andhra Pradesh, India: Response of the criminal justice system. *Violence Against Women*, 6(10), 1085-1108.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10778010022183532>