From Discord to Accord? Changing Spousal Views on Gender Norms in India

Subhapriya Chakraborty* Atif Anwar †

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Abstract

This study examines the degree and nature of spousal agreement and disagreement on gender attitudes towards domestic violence, sexual agency, and household decision-making control in Indian homes. Employing nationally representative couple-level data from three rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3, NFHS-4, and NFHS-5), we measure agreement and disagreement in gender attitudes using Yule's Q statistic and examine how these trends change over time. We additionally differentiate between progressive and regressive agreement and analyze their socio-economic and demographic correlates through regression analyses. Our results indicate that although overall spousal agreement has increased, the nature of such agreement has changed significantly toward progressive norms, especially in terms of household decision-making and attitudes toward violence. Yet, tension is still high surrounding women's sexual autonomy, with progressive consensus on this norm dipping temporarily before recovering slightly. Regression findings indicate that rural residence, lesser wealth, caste deprivation, and intergenerational IPV exposure are always linked to reduced levels of progressive consensus. This paper adds new evidence by presenting intra-household, over-time empirical examination of evolving gender norms in India and gives critical significance to understanding household dynamics as determiners of gender equity pathways.

Keywords: Spousal Agreement, Gender norms,Intra-household dynamics
JEL Classification: J12, J16, D13, Z13

*IIM Bangalore, Economics, subhapriya.chakraborty@iimb.ac.in
†IIM Bangalore, Economics, atif.anwar@iimb.ac.in

1 Introduction

The views around gender norms in intimate relationships have become an important area of research in contemporary times. The interplay of agreement and disagreement between partners, especially on topics such as sexual agency, domestic violence, and decisions about household purchases, provides deep insights into the nature of modern partnerships.

An increasing volume of research has assessed personal attitude toward gender norms like the justification of domestic violence, decision-making authority, and control over one's body—typically from the perspective of either women or men. Attitudes toward intimate partner violence (IPV) have been found to be influenced by a variety of factors such as patriarchal socialization, childhood exposure to violence, and wider socio-economic contexts (Jewkes et al., 2010; Koenig et al., 2006; Abramsky et al., 2011). For instance, feminist theory and the ecological framework have examined how IPV attitudes are influenced by gender-based power structures and community settings (Heise, 1998; Yodanis, 2004). Social learning theory has highlighted the importance of intergenerational transmission of acceptance of violence (Bandura, 1977; Hindin, 2003). Although a few studies have examined attitudes among men and women independently (Uthman et al., 2009; Rani et al., 2004), there have been fewer on spousal disagreement—where one spouse is progressive and the other is not. This situation is especially important, as conflict among couples can presage changes in societal norms, resistance, or intrahousehold negotiation processes. Previous empirical studies by Pradhan and De (2024), Shakya et al. (2016), Jayachandran (2015) have illustrated that such attitudinal divergence is essential in shaping gendered experiences, including IPV victimization.

This study adds to this scholarship by examining systematically the extent to which men's and women's perspectives converge or differ on gender scripts between three waves

of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS): NFHS-3 (2005–06), NFHS-4 (2015–16), and NFHS-5 (2019–21). Leveraging the Couples Recode data files, our analysis focuses on joint household responses to questions relating to violence at home, women's control over their bodies, and sexual autonomy. A major innovation in this research is the application of Yule's Q statistic as a measure of the level of agreement or disagreement between wives and husbands on progressive norms. We group spousal dynamics into progressive agreement, regressive agreement, and disagreement.

We start by tracking how national and subnational trends in spousal agreement and disagreement on gender norms over the years have changed. We then establish the socio economic and demographic correlates of progressive agreement and disagreement, from household and individual characteristics. The research finds that although 'disagreement' has an overall declining trend, it is still high among less- educated and poorer families.

This article contributes anew by providing the first intra-household, over-time analysis of attitudinal concord and discord on gender norms in India based on three rounds of nationally representative survey data. By establishing which kinds of households move towards progressive norms and which continue as sites of disagreement, the paper contributes to theory and policy on gender norm change in India.

2 Data and Descriptives

This analysis draws on data from Couples Recode files from the three latest rounds of India's National Family Health Survey (NFHS): NFHS-3 (2005-2006), NFHS-4 (2015-2016) and NFHS-5 (2019-2020). The NFHS is a large-scale, nationally representative household survey conducted under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,

Government of India. It offers vast data on fertility, family planning, reproductive health, nutrition, and gender attitudes, gathered from ever-married women aged 15–49 and men aged 15–54. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by field investigators trained in the conduct of interviews using standardised questionnaires and computer-aided personal interview (CAPI) methods. Documentation of the survey methods, sampling design, response rates, and field procedures is available in the corresponding survey reports.

For this analysis, we use couple-level data with matched responses for husbands and wives on domestic violence, decision-making, and body autonomy questions. In NFHS-3, 39,257 couples were interviewed. After discarding observations with missing values on important variables at the individual and household level, 35,096 couples were left in the analytical sample. Likewise, in NFHS-4, we had 63,696 couples and 58,133 couples were left after cleaning. For NFHS-5, the original 57,693 couple sample was trimmed down to 53,314 usable observations. These cleaned samples constitute the foundation of our descriptive and regression analyses.

To capture household dynamics of disagreement we have focused on three important variables from all 3 rounds of NFHS data set related to couple's questionnaire.

Question 1: 'Do you think that it is justified to beat wife if she is disrespectful towards in laws?' : The response to this question captures the perception of men and women on justification for domestic violence. Out of a host of variables on justification for domestic violence is present in NFHS survey, we focus on this particular variable due to the study's setting within a patriarchal society. Here, post-marriage, women often face control and exploitation from their in-laws, a situation normalized and with increased likelihood for both genders to rationalize domestic violence. Agreement between part-

ners on this aspect strongly signifies empowerment. This variable also has maximum variation in responses among men and women.

Question 2: 'Is it justified to refuse sex if you are not in the mood?': The response to this specific question captures the body autonomy of a woman because it gives a strong signal of sexual agency from the woman's side.

Question 3: 'Who takes major household purchase decisions?': To capture decision making agency of women the only variable available was asking the couple about decisions on major household purchases. The response to this question reflects the decision making power of women.

Next, we have noted the couples response to these three questions. For brevity we denote the variables by 'disrespectful', 'mood' and 'purchase' each of which have been converted into a dummy variable using the dichotomization policy which gives 1 to progressive answers and 0 to regressive ones. We thus have the following cases:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{disrespectful} &= (1,1) \quad \text{if both have said 'no'} \\ &= (0,1) \quad \text{if man says 'yes', woman says 'no'} \\ &= (1,0) \quad \text{if man says 'no', woman says 'yes'} \\ &= (0,0) \quad \text{if both says 'yes'} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{mood} &= (1,1) \quad \text{if both have said 'yes'} \\ &= (1,0) \quad \text{if man says 'yes', woman says 'no'} \\ &= (0,1) \quad \text{if man says 'no', woman says 'yes'} \\ &= (0,0) \quad \text{if both says 'no'} \end{aligned}$$

$$
\begin{aligned}
\text{purchase} &= (1,1) \quad \text{if both said that wife has at least some say} \\
&= (1,0) \quad \text{if only man says that wife has some say} \\
&= (0,1) \quad \text{if only woman says that wife has some say} \\
&= (0,0) \quad \text{if both say wife has no say}
\end{aligned}
$$

We say that the couples are in agreement if they have scored $(1,1)$ or $(0,0)$, otherwise they are said to be in disagreement with respect to the specific variable under consideration. Again we shall classify the agreement as 'progressive' if the score is $(1,1)$ and regressive if the score is $(0,0)$.

We explore the agreement and disagreement of the couples graphically as well as through descriptive measures. Figure 1 displays bar graphs over 3 rounds of NFHS illustrating disagreement corresponding to the variables 'disrespectful' (i.e. justification of beating wife in case wife is disrespectful to in laws), 'purchase' (i.e. say on major household purchases) and 'mood' (i.e., refusal of sex when not in mood).The bar graphs of Figure 2 display progressive agreement in the three categories on gender norms.

The two figures show trends in spousal disagreement and progressive agreement on gender norms over NFHS rounds 3, 4, and 5. Disagreement on norms surrounding justification of violence and decision making power at home is persistently high but decreases steadily over time, indicating slight improvement in cross-spousal understanding. Disagreement on sexual agency (mood), however, increases strongly from 2005–06 to 2015–16, reflecting increasing tension around this increasingly prominent progressive norm. Concurrently, progressive consensus has typically risen for justification of violence and decision power, but falls for mood between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4, before recovering in part in NFHS-5. Overall, the numbers indicate a complex picture of changing gender norms in couples — with increasing consensus across some areas, but ongoing or

re-emerging tensions across others. In the Appendix, we have graphs that show the patterns in Fig 1 and 2 are roughly similar across individuals from different socio-economic identities and educational backgrounds. Interestingly, progressive agreement on the justification of wife beating has improved over the years for all education sectors except for higher education, where it has decreased over time.

To study the association between couple's responses using descriptive measures, we prepare a 2×2 contingency table as follows.

Table 1: **Couple's responses on questions related to perception of gender norms**

man's response	woman's response	
	1	0
1	a	b
0	c	d

Note that $a + b + c + d$ indicates the total number of couples. Based on the above contingency table we propose Yule's measure to assess the extent of association between man's and woman's response. Yule's measure is defined as,

$$Y = \frac{ad - bc}{ad + bc}. \tag{1}$$

Yule's Y is bounded between -1 and +1. $Y > 0$ indicates that the two variables are in agreement, $Y < 0$ indicates disagreement between the two variables, while $Y = 0$ indicates that the two variables are not associated.

For each variable considered in the study, we have calculated Yule's measure using equation (1). The results are presented in Table 2. The results indicate that husband's and wife's views are in agreement in each of the three norms.

Gender Norms	NFHS 3	NFHS 4	NFHS 5
disrespect	0.29	0.23	0.30
mood	0.22	0.29	0.16
purchase	0.34	0.18	0.19

Table 2: Yule's Measure

Next to investigate whether the couples who are in agreement are progressive or regressive we use a simple heuristic formula given by,

$$T = \frac{P - R}{P + R}, \tag{2}$$

where P and R denote the total number of couples who are progressive and regressive respectively out of $P+R$ couples who are in agreement. Moreover T is bounded between -1 and $+1$ both inclusive. T takes the value 1 if $R = 0$, and it takes the value -1 if $P = 0$. The values of T are presented in Table 3. The results show that the couples who are in agreement are progressive also in all the three gender norms.

Gender Norms	NFHS 3	NFHS 4	NFHS 5
disrespect	0.38	0.62	0.66
mood	0.93	0.79	0.91
purchase	0.62	0.76	0.82

Table 3: Type of Agreement Measure

The patterns seen in Yule's measure of association generally match the graphical trends shown in Figures 1 and 2. For all three gender norms—justification of violence (disrespect), sexual agency (mood), and household decision-making (purchase)—Yule's Q values are positive in each NFHS round. This means that spouses tend to agree more often than they disagree. The figures illustrate this trend, as the bars for agreement are consistently taller than those for disagreement.

Importantly, the drop in Yule's Q for the mood variable from 0.29 in NFHS-4 to 0.16 in NFHS-5 (See Table 2) matches the increased disagreement and temporary decline in progressive agreement seen in the figures. In a similar way, the rise in Yule's Q for disrespect from 0.23 to 0.30 between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 corresponds with a clear upward trend in progressive consensus on violence-related norms. The alignment between the graphical representations (See figures...) and Yule's measure supports our findings on the changing nature of spousal agreement across gender norms in India.

The Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 shows the prevalence of Progressive Agreement on Disrespect, Purchase and Mood among couples with their background characteristics by Frequency and Percentage.

Table 4: Sample SocioEconomic Characteristics

	NFHS-3		**NFHS-4**		**NFHS-5**	
Household Characteristics	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Age Group						
15-19	6.06	2,127	3.14	1,823	2.47	1,319
20-24	17.76	6,232	14.66	8,525	12.86	6,855
25-29	20.65	7,247	20.61	11,982	20.04	10,683
30-34	19.62	6,886	19.33	11,236	19.66	10,484
35-39	16.86	5,918	17.71	10,295	18.55	9,890
40-49	19.05	6,686	24.55	14,271	26.42	14,083
Religion						
Hindu	84.7	29,728	84.02	48,844	84.5	45,051
Muslims	10.52	3,691	10.69	6,212	10.48	5,589

Others	4.78	1,677	5.29	3,077	5.02	2,675
Caste						
SC	19.61	6,883	20.61	11,981	22.92	12,219
ST	7.2	2,526	9.89	5,749	10.49	5,590
OBC	44.68	15,680	45.81	26,633	45.47	24,243
Others	28.51	10,007	23.69	13,770	21.12	11,262
Sector						
Urban	34.38	12,065	34.98	20,334	31.73	16,914
Rural	65.62	23,031	65.02	37,799	68.27	36,400
Wealth Categories						
Poor	35.37	12,414	34.78	20,216	37.08	19,768
Middle	21.28	7,467	21.06	12,242	21.3	11,355
Richest	43.35	15,215	44.17	25,674	41.62	22,191
Region						
North	7.77	2,726	16.55	9,172	14.81	7,897
Central	28.28	9,924	0.22	121	23.62	12,591
East	13	4,561	17.4	9,639	20.68	11,025
Northeast	1.96	689	22.09	12,241	2.91	1,549
West	17.29	6,069	1.1	611	16.16	8,617
South	31.7	11,127	42.63	23,622	21.82	11,635
Mass Media						
No	21.88	7,678	18.07	10,505	22.3	11,890
Yes	78.12	27,418	81.93	47,628	77.7	41,424
Frequency of Alchohol use						
none	60.8	21,321	63.75	37,059	70.45	37,561

almost every day	4.57	1,602	5.04	2,928	4.78	2,549
about once a week	11.04	3,872	15.28	8,885	12.98	6,922
less than once a week	23.59	8,270	15.93	9,261	11.78	6,281
Smoker						
No	34.35	12,054	44.73	26,005	48.87	26,056
Yes	65.65	23,036	55.27	32,128	51.13	27,258
Family History of IPV - Man						
No	71.05	23,017	78.6	43,581	79.07	40,464
Yes	28.95	9,381	21.4	11,863	20.93	10,709

Table 5: Socio-Economic Profile of Couples in Progressive Agreement on Disrespect

	NFHS-3		**NFHS-4**		**NFHS-5**	
Household Characteristics	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Age Group						
15–19	44.01	586	49.25	776	53.21	555
20–24	45.12	2,211	52.78	4,032	55.95	3,422
25–29	47.13	2,983	53.7	5,922	59.26	5,805
30–34	48.6	3,033	55.39	5,695	57.19	5,614
35–39	49.37	2,608	53.6	5,232	57.02	5,367
40–49	48.77	2,987	54.01	7,218	57.34	7,728
Religion						
Hindu	47.43	11,421	53.93	22,795	57.42	22,467
Muslims	47.48	1,591	52.37	2,878	54.76	2,430

Others	50.6	1,396	54.96	3,202	61.68	3,594
Caste						
SC	43.52	2,285	50.77	5,084	55.4	5,391
ST	41.67	1,225	52.44	5,137	57.78	5,980
OBC	45.33	5,248	51.97	11,506	55.22	10,948
Others	54.85	5,650	60.25	7,148	63.54	6,172
Sector						
Urban	55.87	8,327	58.66	9,631	61.95	7,469
Rural	42.75	6,081	51.16	19,244	55.2	21,022
Wealth Categories						
Poor	40.57	2,822	49.45	9,754	54.77	11,644
Middle	40.83	2,190	50.81	5,840	53.04	5,680
Richest	55.5	9,396	58.6	13,281	61.79	11,167
Region						
North	51.51	1,929	49.09	4,720	68.44	6,970
Central	51.46	4,198	62.21	714	62.33	7,149
East	57.41	1,790	54.21	4,203	59.98	4,743
Northeast	55.43	1,262	60.03	7,606	70.95	4,141
West	46.44	2,267	61.65	1,204	60.07	3,551
South	37.94	2,962	53.09	9,509	31.74	1,937
Mass Media						
No	42.36	1,874	49.39	5,191	56.33	6,829
Yes	48.94	12,534	54.79	23,684	57.67	21,662
Frequency of Alchohol use						
none	48.68	8,815	55.99	18,469	58.86	19,570

almost every day	38.36	538	47.31	1,486	48.83	1,474
about once a week	42.78	1,527	48.33	4,255	51.94	3,903
less than once a week	48.39	3,512	51.79	4,665	57.21	3,544
Smoker						
No	50.68	5,875	55.64	12,806	57.95	13,353
Yes	45.9	8,529	52.33	16,069	56.81	15,138
Family History of IPV – Man						
No	50.57	10,683	56.51	23,770	60.68	23,681
Yes	39.74	2,641	42.97	3,808	43.27	3,700

Table 6: Socio-Economic Profile of Couples in Progressive Agreement on Purchase

	NFHS-3		**NFHS-4**		**NFHS-5**	
Household Characteristics	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Religion						
Hindu	47.62	12,552	61.27	25,890	65.64	25,763
Muslims	48.26	1,602	58.92	3,079	60.33	2,812
Others	56.04	2,422	67.11	4,303	71.95	4,453
Caste						
SC	47.27	2,866	62.03	6,105	65.73	6,528
ST	46.53	2,083	60.35	6,524	65.93	7,011
OBC	47.28	6,055	60.09	13,312	64.44	13,139
Others	50.3	5,572	63.51	7,331	66.93	6,350
Sector						

Urban	55.42	8,984	65.52	10,743	69.17	8,551
Rural	44.02	7,592	59.01	22,529	63.64	24,477
Wealth Categories						
Poor	45.28	3,776	59.28	12,296	63.39	13,646
Middle	44.41	3,056	58.89	6,887	64.68	7,011
Richest	52.01	9,744	64.04	14,089	67.58	12,371
Region						
North	43.84	1,706	58.9	5,818	63.79	6,468
Central	50	4,016	75.13	967	65.86	7,620
East	46.99	1,416	62.11	5,521	66.48	5,339
Northeast	66.9	3,152	59.56	7,242	73.78	4,940
West	51.75	2,528	65.53	1,330	65.95	3,678
South	44.42	3,758	63.05	10,947	63.45	4,983
Mass Media						
No	42.31	2,152	56.36	6,069	62.04	7,464
Yes	49.64	14,424	62.39	27,203	66.37	25,564
Frequency of Alchohol use						
none	47.6	9,409	61.01	19,959	65.16	21,819
almost every day	47.82	890	61.15	1,975	65.59	1,936
about once a week	45.29	2,133	61.95	5,650	66.22	5,094
less than once a week	50.67	4,127	62.07	5,688	66.02	4,179
Smoker						
No	47.38	5,955	62.45	13,874	66.64	15,537
Yes	48.49	10,618	60.42	19,398	64.24	17,491

Table 7: Socio-Economic Profile of Couples in Progressive Agreement on Mood

	NFHS-3		NFHS-4		NFHS-5	
Household Characteristics	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Age Group						
15–19	87.82	1,232	75.51	985	78.31	803
20–24	90.15	4,400	76.89	5,272	79.8	4,685
25–29	89.72	5,605	75.9	7,384	79.8	7,470
30–34	89.76	5,463	77.43	7,005	79.19	7,221
35–39	88.44	4,644	77.18	6,398	79.41	7,063
40–49	89.41	5,225	76.84	8,832	79.54	10,017
Religion						
Hindu	89.59	20,623	76.44	28,169	79.23	29,873
Muslims	88.36	2,895	76.59	3,590	79.81	3,159
Others	88.55	3,051	82.28	4,117	83.55	4,227
Caste						
SC	88.74	4,667	76.32	6,676	78.48	7,412
ST	86.12	2,876	75.69	6,346	78.84	7,218
OBC	90.33	10,244	74.73	14,488	78.79	15,214
Others	89.27	8,782	81.37	8,366	82.46	7,415
Sector						
Urban	91.53	13,240	77.82	10,996	61.95	7,469
Rural	88.27	13,329	76.23	24,880	55.2	21,022
Wealth Categories						

Poor	87.05	6,557	75.12	13,266	78.06	15,181
Middle	88.27	5,102	74.16	7,208	79.25	7,884
Richest	91.83	14,910	79.29	15,402	80.85	14,194
Region						
North	89.95	3,061	74.53	5,962	87.35	8,058
Central	95.19	7,121	83.81	916	81	9,020
East	86.95	2,424	82.42	6,737	77.8	5,929
Northeast	93.06	3,798	73.36	7,811	81.55	4,474
West	85.43	3,591	83.09	888	83.56	4,488
South	86.36	6,574	77.29	12,115	70.38	5,290
Mass Media						
No	86.82	4,046	73.74	6,882	78.98	8,712
Yes	90.12	22,523	77.47	28,994	79.65	28,547
Frequency of Alchohol use						
none	89.34	15,459	76.93	22,086	79.86	24,972
almost every day	85.74	1,262	72.78	1,906	76.17	2,089
about once a week	86.52	3,280	75.58	5,685	77.32	5,385
less than once a week	91.59	6,545	78.49	6,199	81.09	4,813
Smoker						
No	89.8	9,519	76.64	14,737	78.97	17,399
Yes	89.21	17,045	76.9	21,139	80.02	19,860
Family History of IPV – Man						
No	89.36	18,242	77.8	28,324	80.15	29,011
Yes	89.43	6,307	73.59	5,949	77.05	6,731

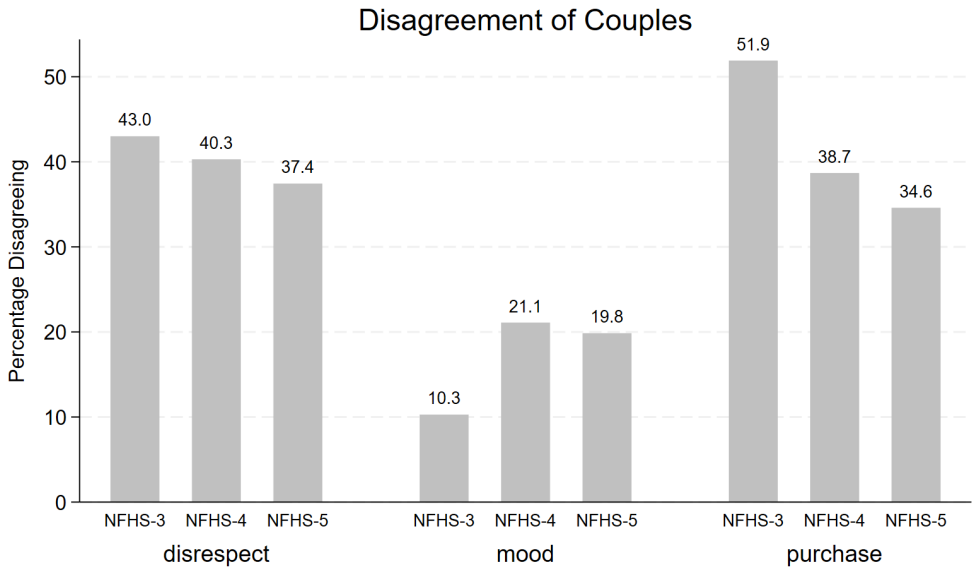

Figure 1: Percentage of Couples disagreeing on Purchase, Mood and Disrespect

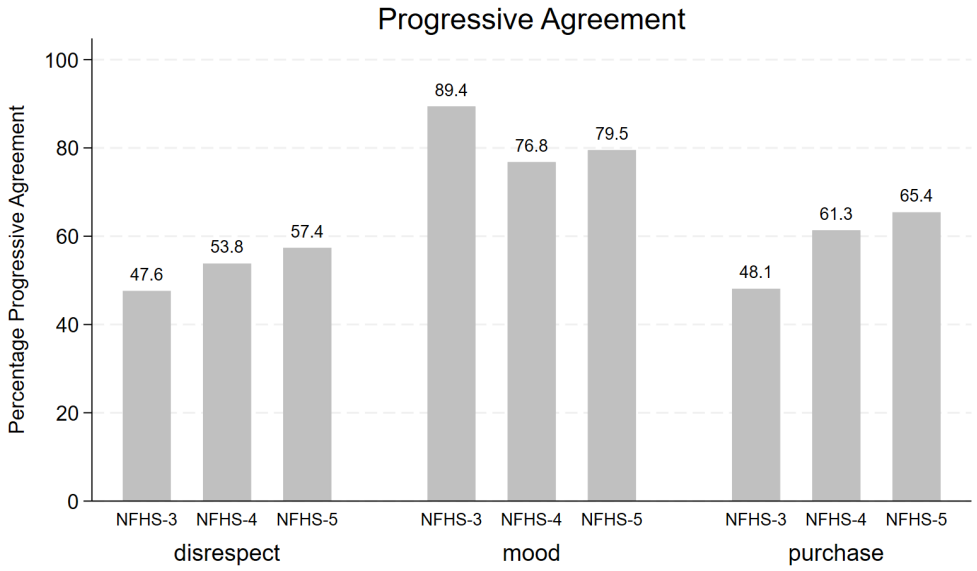

Figure 2: Percentage of Couples Progressively Agreeing on Purchase, Mood and Disrespect

3 Empirical Strategy

In this section we find out how the variables 'disrespectful', 'mood' and 'purchase' are explained by different household characteristics. Treating these as our outcome variables we run regressions using Ordinary least squares (OLS). The chief explanatory variables considered are different household characteristics listed from Table 4 to Table 6. State fixed effects are also added in the regressions. The binary response variable Y is given by,

$$\begin{aligned} Y = 1 \quad & \text{if couples who are in agreement are progressive in their response} \\ = 0 \quad & \text{if couples are in regressive agreement or disagreement} \end{aligned}$$

Thus we have data on the response Y on the variables 'disrespectful','mood' and 'purchase'. Let X denote the vector of explanatory variables and Z denote the vector of control variables. The simple linear regression model is given by,

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1^T X + \beta_2^T Z + \epsilon, \tag{3}$$

where ϵ is the random error term.

4 Results

The results of the regression presented in Table 4, indicate that there are significant socio-economic and demographic factors that closely account for progressive agreement with justification of wife beating. Those belonging to SC and OBCs are consistently less

likely to hold progressive views compared to upper castes, and people in rural areas are mostly associated negatively with progressive agreement during all rounds of the study. The richest quintile had significantly higher odds of progressive consensus, which suggests that wealth status is a determinant of gender attitudes. Difference in educational levels of spouses has a negative association with progressive agreement between NFHS-3 while its effect diminishes over time. Men who witnessed domestic violence as children are more likely to support wife beating and this points to the intergenerational transmission of norms. Regional contrasts also arise, and the South and East consistently express less progressive agreement compared to North which is a surprising result given that in various other studies the former regions (South and East) tend to have higher degree of women empowerment.

Table 8: Regression Results for Progressive Agreement on Disrespect

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	NFHS-3	NFHS-4	NFHS-5
Religion :Others			
Hindu	-0.0543***	0.0097	-0.0206
	(0.0126)	(0.0107)	(0.0106)
Muslims	-0.0929***	-0.0209	-0.0646***
	(0.0158)	(0.0131)	(0.0136)
SC	-0.0764***	-0.0308***	-0.0271***
	(0.0097)	(0.0077)	(0.0077)
Caste : Others			

ST	-0.0377**	-0.0200*	-0.0028
	(0.0135)	(0.0090)	(0.0090)
OBC	-0.0538***	-0.0250***	-0.0125
	(0.0079)	(0.0065)	(0.0068)
Sector: Urban			
Rural	-0.0764***	-0.0305***	-0.0253***
	(0.0077)	(0.0059)	(0.0062)
Age difference (in yrs.)	0.0011	0.0008	-0.0005
	(0.0008)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)
Educational difference (in yrs.)	-0.0040***	-0.0009	-0.0006
	(0.0008)	(0.0006)	(0.0005)
Wealth Categories : Poor			
Middle	0.0407***	0.0365***	0.0196**
	(0.0102)	(0.0070)	(0.0066)
Richest	0.1288***	0.0831***	0.0515***
	(0.0101)	(0.0072)	(0.0069)
Region: North			
Central	-0.0526	0.0343	0.1255***
	(0.0395)	(0.0412)	(0.0183)
East	-0.0064	-0.1801***	-0.0143
	(0.0418)	(0.0410)	(0.0198)
Northeast	0.1428**	0.0841	0.1975***

	(0.0452)	(0.0824)	(0.0201)
West	0.0429	0.4396***	-0.0583
	(0.0464)	(0.0428)	(0.0543)
South	-0.0931*	-0.1380**	-0.3102***
	(0.0385)	(0.0436)	(0.0209)
Media Exposure: No			
Yes	0.0123	0.0311***	0.0241***
	(0.0099)	(0.0069)	(0.0060)
Household Size	-0.0042***	-0.0014	-0.0014
	(0.0012)	(0.0010)	(0.0011)
Frequency of alcohol use of man	0.0034	-0.0049*	-0.0019
	(0.0025)	(0.0021)	(0.0023)
Man Smokes :No			
Yes	-0.0492***	-0.0296***	-0.0237***
	(0.0069)	(0.0052)	(0.0051)
Girls out of total child	0.0040	0.0087	0.0106
	(0.0088)	(0.0067)	(0.0066)
number of living children	-0.0130***	-0.0058**	-0.0014
	(0.0023)	(0.0019)	(0.0020)
Family history of IPV - Man	-0.0687***	-0.0853***	-0.0852***
	(0.0075)	(0.0064)	(0.0063)
Observations	23891	42549	41617

R-sq.	0.1162	0.0691	0.0975

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The regression findings indicate that individual and household traits have fairly weak and alternating correlations with progressive agreement on women's sexual agency across NFHS rounds. Religion and caste groups are overwhelmingly insignificant, except that Muslim couples are negligibly less liberal in NFHS-4. Affluent families, especially in NFHS-3, exhibit greater progressive consensus, as do Central, Eastern, and Northeastern couples in subsequent rounds. Surprisingly, men's frequent alcohol consumption is also positively correlated with progressive answers, whereas other controls such as schooling or household size have little effect. The results imply that attitudes toward sexual agency are perhaps more demographically unstratified than are those around violence, yet some economic and regional breaks persist.

Table 9: Regression Results for Progressive Agreement on Mood

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	NFHS-3	NFHS-4	NFHS-5
Religion :Others			
Hindu	-0.0027	-0.0058	-0.0155
	(0.0078)	(0.0094)	(0.0092)
Muslims	-0.0189	-0.0300**	-0.0184

	(0.0097)	(0.0115)	(0.0118)
Caste : Others			
SC	0.0010	-0.0130	-0.0166*
	(0.0060)	(0.0068)	(0.0066)
ST	0.0015	-0.0106	-0.0114
	(0.0083)	(0.0080)	(0.0077)
OBC	0.0094	0.0061	-0.0067
	(0.0049)	(0.0057)	(0.0058)
Sector: Urban			
Rural	-0.0166***	-0.0006	-0.0004
	(0.0047)	(0.0052)	(0.0053)
Age difference (in yrs.)	0.0004	-0.0006	-0.0006
	(0.0005)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)
Educational difference (in yrs.)	0.0004	0.0004	0.0011*
	(0.0005)	(0.0005)	(0.0005)
Wealth Categories : Poor			
Middle	0.0095	-0.0005	0.0190***
	(0.0061)	(0.0062)	(0.0057)
Richest	0.0352***	0.0204**	0.0164**
	(0.0062)	(0.0064)	(0.0059)
Region: North			
Central	0.0319	0.1683***	0.1553***

	(0.0242)	(0.0378)	(0.0175)
East	0.0665*	0.0300	0.1442***
	(0.0260)	(0.0369)	(0.0185)
Northeast	0.0547	0.1165	0.1698***
	(0.0284)	(0.0819)	(0.0190)
West	-0.2408***	-0.2631***	0.2639***
	(0.0296)	(0.0401)	(0.0487)
South	-0.0488*	-0.0892*	-0.0460*
	(0.0237)	(0.0382)	(0.0187)
Media Exposure: No			
Yes	0.0291***	0.0302***	0.0096
	(0.0060)	(0.0061)	(0.0052)
Household Size	-0.0002	0.0007	0.0006
	(0.0007)	(0.0009)	(0.0009)
Frequency of alcohol use of man	0.0027	0.0060**	0.0060**
	(0.0016)	(0.0019)	(0.0019)
Man Smokes :No			
Yes	-0.0084*	0.0004	0.0030
	(0.0043)	(0.0046)	(0.0044)
Girls out of total child	-0.0058	0.0078	0.0024
	(0.0055)	(0.0060)	(0.0056)
Number of living children	-0.0034*	-0.0004	-0.0010

	(0.0014)	(0.0017)	(0.0018)
Family history of IPV - Man	0.0143**	-0.0046	0.0137**
	(0.0046)	(0.0055)	(0.0052)
Observations	24650	38262	40977
R-sq.	0.0489	0.0706	0.0369

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The results of the regression show a number of similar patterns in determinants of women's decision-making authority on household expenditures. Religion is important, with Hindu and Muslim couples having lower autonomy than the base category of other religion, although the impact declines over time for Hindus but continues to be important for Muslims in NFHS-5. Rural residence is inversely related to decision-making authority across all three rounds, indicating ongoing rural-urban disparities. Wealth status has a significant positive gradient with women of the richest households being significantly more likely to have decision-making authority, and this remains strong in all survey rounds. The greater the education difference between spouses, the lower the autonomy is in NFHS-5. Larger household size reliably lowers women's decision-making authority. There are also some regional differences, in that women in the Northeast have consistently higher autonomy, whereas women in the South indicate considerably lower decision-making autonomy in NFHS-4. Lastly, women having more living children have somewhat higher decision-making autonomy in NFHS-3 and NFHS-5.

Table 10: Regression Results for Progressive Agreement on Purchase

	(1) NFHS-3	(2) NFHS-4	(3) NFHS-5
Religion :Others			
Hindu	-0.0495***	-0.0195	-0.0204*
	(0.0121)	(0.0103)	(0.0104)
Muslims	-0.1134***	-0.0561***	-0.0626***
	(0.0153)	(0.0126)	(0.0132)
Caste : Others			
SC	-0.0013	-0.0037	0.0025
	(0.0094)	(0.0076)	(0.0075)
ST	-0.0107	-0.0002	0.0056
	(0.0130)	(0.0087)	(0.0087)
OBC	-0.0054	-0.0084	-0.0003
	(0.0078)	(0.0064)	(0.0066)
Sector: Urban			
Rural	-0.0925***	-0.0262***	-0.0268***
	(0.0074)	(0.0057)	(0.0060)
Age difference (in yrs.)	0.0002	0.0010	-0.0009
	(0.0008)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)
Educational difference (in yrs.)	-0.0025***	-0.0025***	-0.0022***

	(0.0007)	(0.0005)	(0.0005)
Wealth Categories : Poor			
Middle	0.0145	0.0013	0.0175**
	(0.0097)	(0.0068)	(0.0064)
Richest	0.0516***	0.0323***	0.0196**
	(0.0097)	(0.0070)	(0.0067)
Region: North			
Central	0.0098	-0.1369***	-0.0008
	(0.0368)	(0.0384)	(0.0179)
East	0.1011*	-0.0999**	0.0702***
	(0.0393)	(0.0369)	(0.0191)
Northeast	0.2768***	-0.3088***	0.1305***
	(0.0430)	(0.0802)	(0.0195)
West	0.1329**	0.0643	0.0329
	(0.0445)	(0.0410)	(0.0529)
South	0.0250	-0.2107***	-0.0084
	(0.0357)	(0.0391)	(0.0193)
Media Exposure: No			
Yes	0.0523***	0.0455***	0.0429***
	(0.0096)	(0.0067)	(0.0059)
Household Size	-0.0287***	-0.0151***	-0.0130***
	(0.0012)	(0.0010)	(0.0011)

Frequency of alcohol use of man	0.0047	0.0022	0.0004
	(0.0025)	(0.0021)	(0.0022)
Man Smokes :No			
Yes	-0.0032	-0.0152**	-0.0087
	(0.0067)	(0.0051)	(0.0050)
Girls out of total child	0.0017	0.0009	-0.0010
	(0.0087)	(0.0066)	(0.0064)
number of living children	0.0315***	0.0094***	0.0093***
	(0.0023)	(0.0019)	(0.0020)
Family history of IPV - Man	-0.0247***	-0.0386***	-0.0228***
	(0.0072)	(0.0061)	(0.0059)
Observations	26104	44262	44071
R-sq.	0.0724	0.0336	0.0345

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

5 Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the dynamic, heterogeneous evolution of gender norm perceptions among Indian households. Firstly, while conflict between spouses on gender norms has decreased over rounds of surveys, disagreement is still non-trivial—especially concerning women's bodily autonomy. This implies that changes in gender norms are not across-the-board in all areas and sexual agency remains a space of negotiation and resist-

ance in marriages. Increased progressive consensus on violence justification and decision-making in the household is an encouraging trend, indicating that societal changes and policies increasing women's empowerment are slowly becoming entrenched in the attitude of spouses.

Our regression tests further highlight the impact of structural inequalities in determining norm convergence. Women in poorer, rural, and caste-disadvantaged families are still considerably less likely to have progressive convergence with their partners, highlighting the intersectionality of economic, social, and gender-based vulnerabilities. The impact of intergenerational IPV exposure indicates that gender attitudes are entrenched and passed down within households. Notably, the Northeast is revealed to be a region with uniformly higher progressive concord, with some surprising declines shown by southern states—a result that warrants additional qualitative and regional examination.

Together, the results demonstrate that norm change is not simply an individual-level phenomenon but is situated in household negotiations, framed by contextual and relational processes. Through the identification of households that exhibit both resistance and receptivity to change, this paper provides useful insights into the planning of targeted interventions. In doing so, it further enriches knowledge concerning the channels through which gender norms are negotiated and changed within intimate relationships in India.

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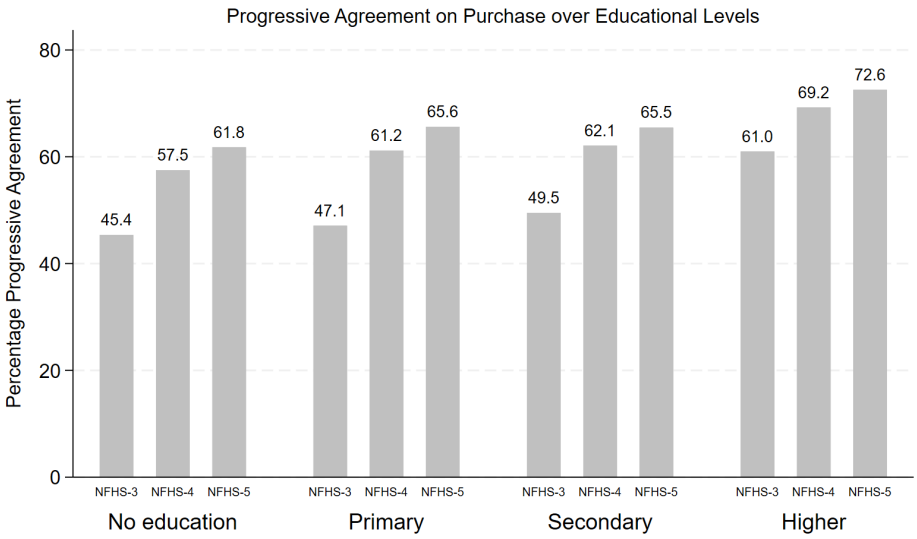
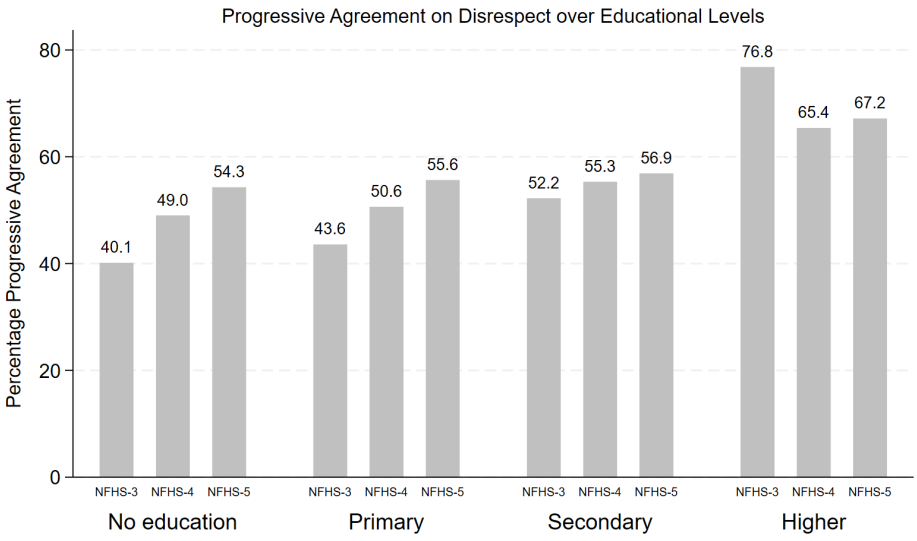
6 Appendix




Progressive Agreement on Disrespect over Educational Levels
Percentage Progressive Agreement
0
20
40
60
80
40.1
49.0
54.3
43.6
50.6
55.6
52.2
55.3
56.9
76.8
65.4
67.2
NFHS-3
NFHS-4
NFHS-5
No education
Primary
Secondary
Higher