

Abstract

Despite rapid growth, poverty reduction and improvements in many human development indicators, high levels of maternal mortality remains an ignominious reminder of the low status of women in India. Service providers frequently wring their hands about “low demand” for maternal health services and cultural and behavioral factors are often implicated. While the “classic” determinants of poor access to reproductive health services are well known, we focus on spousal violence. Using the National Family Health Survey 2005 we analyze the association between spousal violence and care during the last pregnancy. Using multivariate logistic regression, we find that spousal violence has statistically significant negative association with the woman having received antenatal care, tetanus toxoid injection, iron-folic acid tablets and positive association with ever having had a terminated pregnancy. Freedom from violence is a rights issue, but also needs to be incorporated as a key element of reproductive health, for its direct and indirect impacts on a range of outcomes.