

# **Levels and Patterns of Social Cohesion and Its Relationship with Development in India: A Woman's Perspective Approach**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

European literatures show that high level of social cohesion helps to achieve economic growth, good governance, health and social security. India's vast geographical area, huge ethnic and cultural diversity and immense economic and social inequality make her people less socially cohesive. But there are no empirical studies found that would relate the levels of social cohesion and development in India. Using data from National Family Health Survey, we constructed social cohesion index from women's perspective. Our findings reveal that women from marginalized groups like Muslim, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are found less socially cohesive. Regions with high marginalized populations are also found less socially cohesive. The developmental measures are lower among them and in these areas. As many agitations to raise social standard have been observed among these groups in these region, we conclude that our measure of social cohesion can be of very useful in India's policy making.

**KEY WORDS:** social cohesion, women's perspective, development, data

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of social cohesion has received great political and research attention at the national and supranational levels in developed countries. At the national level, Canadian Government and at the supranational level, the OECD, the World Bank and European Commission are dealing with the issues of social cohesion (Berger-Schmitt, 2002). The OECD and the World Bank, both have considered the importance of social cohesion factors in economic development and growth (Ritzen et.al., 2000). Chan et.al. (2006) rightly said that social cohesion comes from policy makers and social policy analysts. Although the concept of social cohesion is associated with developmental process, there are regrettably existences of many concepts of social cohesion (Stanley, 2001).

According to Jensen (1998), 'social cohesion is that there is no single way of even defining it. Jensen identified five dimensions of social cohesion: 1) belonging vs. isolation, 2) inclusion vs. exclusion, 3) participation vs. non-involvement, 4) recognition vs. rejection and

5) legitimacy vs. illegitimacy. McCracken (1998) conceptualized social cohesion as characteristics of a society dealing with the connections and relations between individuals, groups, and territorial units. According to the Department of Canadian Heritage (2001) defined 'a cohesive and inclusive society depends on respects for all ethnic groups and fullest participation of all citizens in civic life'.

Berger-Schmitt (2000) has adopted a means-end approach in conceptualizing social cohesion, effectively defining the concept in terms of the conditions – more social capital combined with less inequality and exclusion – more social capital combined with less inequality and exclusion. Duhaime et.al. (2004) have also provided a very detailed framework for measuring social cohesion – presence of social capital, demographic stability, social inclusion, economic inclusion, community quality of life and individual quality of life.

Beauvis and Jenson (2002) have also identified five different possible conceptions of social cohesion: 1) social cohesion as common values and a civic culture, 2) social cohesion as social order and social control; 3) social cohesion as social solidarity and reduction in wealth disparities; 4) social cohesion as social networks and social capital; and 5) social cohesion as place attachment and identity.

Lockwood's (1999) definition of the social cohesion based on a state of strong primary networks at communal level (Gough and Olofsson, 1999). According to Boyle and Hoyle (2001), social cohesion has two perspectives: objective and perceived. The former refers to some objective attribute of the group as a whole, and this involves some composite measures based on each member's self reported closeness to other members in the group. Perceived cohesion, on the other hand, is a function of each member's perception of his own standing in the group.

Recently, Chan et.al. (2006) defined social cohesion in a very different way. According to them, social cohesion 'is a state of affairs concerning both vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, sense of belongingness and the willingness to participate and help as well as their behavioural manifestations'.

But whatever the definitions of social cohesion exist, it has been found that having a high degree of social cohesion contributes measurably to economic growth and investment, to good governance, health and social security (Stanley, 2003, Maxwell, 1996).

There are no empirical studies have been found on social cohesion in India. Though there is an utmost need to consider social cohesion in policy making. India, the second most populous country in the world, consists of 29 states and seven Union Territories. This is the home for people speaking more than 200 different languages, 22 among these have been selected as scheduled languages in India. This country is abode for more than 600 scheduled tribes and Scheduled Castes and ST together comprise more than 24% of India's population. On the other hand, while India is being considered as one of the fastest growing economy in the world, majority of population does not uniformly share the benefits of development that the top decile of the population enjoys due to the presence of widespread inequality in education, income, health, power and overall development.

India's vast geographical area, huge ethnic and cultural diversity and widespread economic and social inequality make her people less socially cohesive. Political and social unrest have become common phenomena in some parts of India. It has been observed that political and social turmoil are associated with less developing regions and supported by certain groups of people who are found to be less socially cohesive in nature.

Social cohesion in India could not be achieved without overall development for all groups of people irrespective of regions, religions, castes and genders. According to United Nations (2004), women are equally important as men in the process of development. As our assimilation process into the society have been started in childhood with mother's advice, care and belief, the role of women in social cohesion and development of a country can easily be inferred. Unfortunately, in India, women are discriminated in all fields. Poor health, less education, low autonomy, minimum buying capacity, wide discrimination make them more vulnerable groups in India.

Women's overall development is linked with country's overall development which in turn is important predicting factor for different levels of social cohesion. With this hypothesis, we have defined and measured social cohesion from women's perspective, studied its levels and patterns by different social groups and regions, and examined influence of social cohesion on development.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- 1) To measure 'social cohesion' from women's perspective.
- 2) To show the levels and patterns of social cohesion by different social groups and regions in India.
- 3) To examine the role of social cohesion on three developmental indicators – women's autonomy, women's health and women's work.

## **DATA**

We have used data from the third round of National Family Health Survey which is Indian equivalent of Demographic and Health Survey. The survey was carried out during 2005-06 by International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai and Macro International, U.S.A. with a largely standardized questionnaire and collected information on mother and child's health, women's autonomy, women's fertility, household's information and other related issues. For the present study, we have used women data file with a sample size of 1,17,555 married women aged between 15 to 49.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Defining social cohesion from women's perspective is a challenging job. The indicators which are commonly used by other scholars for measuring social cohesion at regional level could not be found in NFHS in the same manner. For that reason, we have selected following proxy indicators that have been used in measuring levels of social cohesion among women in India:

1. ***Whether utilized public health facilities when any of household members gets sick.***

The use of 'utilization of public health facilities' is twofold. It helps to understand the current quality of public health infrastructures in the country as well as women's trust in the government's infrastructure. The indicator has been created on the basis of following questing:

*When member of your household get sick, where do they generally go for treatment?*

The answers obtained would be either in 'No' coded as '0' or 'Yes' coded as '1'.

2. ***Whether woman's households belongs to middle-income group.***

NFHS has computed wealth index for each sampled households on the basis of 33 assets and housing characteristics. The sample is then divided into quintiles i.e., five groups with an equal number of individuals in each. The given names for the five quintiles are as follows: lowest, second, middle, fourth and highest. For this present

study, women belong to the poorest (lowest quintile) and richest (highest quintile) households have not been considered because they are supposed to be less cohesive in the society due to their very low and very high economic status.

In the analyses, 'women do not belong to middle income group' is coded as '0' and 'those who belong to middle income group' coded as '1'.

**3. *Whether woman has bank or savings account.***

We have used this indicator from the question '*Do you have a bank or savings account that you yourself use?*'. Again this indicator is representative of women's economic freedom, stability and trust in the financial institutions. The answers obtained would be either in 'No' coded as '0' or 'Yes' coded as '1'.

**4. *Whether woman is aware of any programmes in the area that give loans to them to start or expand a business on her own.***

This indicator has been derived from the question '*Do you know of any programmes in this area that give loans to start or expand a business of their own?*'. This proxy indicator will help us to understand the regional dimension of the awareness programmes on economic activities and financial institutions among women. The answers obtained would be either in 'No' coded as '0' or 'Yes' coded as '1'.

**5. *Whether woman have education above the median value.***

NFHS has collected data on years of schooling for all sampled women asking question '*what is the highest standard you completed?*'.

In this paper, instead of including all literate women, we have selected women who have educational attainment above the median value for education that exist among women in India. As NFHS data reveals, this median value for education is very less in India; it is only below standard five. The two categories made here is either 'women below or equal to median value for education' coded as '0' or 'women above the median value for education' coded as '1'.

**6. *Whether woman has exposure to any kind of mass-media.***

Existing literatures on mass-media exposure among women show that it has a positive correlation with many developmental activities in India (Roy and Niranjana, 2005). We hypothesize that mass-media exposure among women is an important background factor that facilitates them to socially cohesive.

We have computed one variable on '*any mass media exposure*' which is a composite index, constructed on the basis of frequency of reading newspaper, listening to radio and watching television. The questions we used for this purpose are as follows:

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Coding Categories for all three questions</i>
<i>1. Do you read a news paper or magazine?</i>	<i>All most every day ----- 1</i>
<i>2. Do you listen to the radio?</i>	<i>At least once a week ----- 2</i>
<i>3. Do you watch television?</i>	<i>Less than once a week ----- 3</i>
	<i>Not at all ----- 4</i>

The composite index for any mass-media exposure has been categorized into two types: ‘No mass-media exposure’ coded as ‘0’ and ‘Have at least any mass-media exposure’ coded as ‘1’.

As all these above indicators are dichotomous in nature, the values we obtained for the composite index of social cohesion range from 0 to 6. On the basis of frequency distribution, the social cohesion thus obtained has been categorized into three levels: low (0 to 2), medium (3) and strong (4 to 6) social cohesion.

The levels of social cohesion has been studied by demographic variable like women’s age-group, social groups like religion (Hindu, Muslims and Others) and caste (Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Caste and General) and by different regions in India. Bivariate analyses with chi-square test have been carried out for this purpose.

Finally, the role of social cohesion on development has been examined. Three developmental indicators have been selected as dependent variables – women’s working status, women’s health and women’s autonomy. Women’s workings status consists of three categories women not working, women working in professional / service works and women working as agricultural/ unskilled manual labourers.

Women’s body mass index (underweight or not) has been taken as a measure of women’s health status. The height and weight measurements provide an estimate of the body mass index (BMI), a measure of nutritional status. The BMI is defined as weight in kilograms divided by height in metres squared (kg/m<sup>2</sup>). A cut-off point of 18.5 is used to define underweight condition among women, and a BMI above it indicates not-underweight condition among women.

Decision making power in the household has been taken as a proxy for autonomy which is computed on the basis of questions related to women’s ability to take decision on various activities on her own. The questions we used for computing decision making power have been given below:

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Coding Categories</i>
<i>Who usually makes the following decision: mainly you, mainly your husband, you and your husband jointly, or someone else?</i>	<i>Respondent (women) = 1</i> <i>Husband = 2</i> <i>Respondent and husband jointly = 3</i> <i>Someone else = 4</i>
<i>a. Decision about health care for yourself?</i>	<i>a    1        2        3        4</i>
<i>b. Decision about making major household purchase?</i>	<i>b    1        2        3        4</i>
<i>c. Decision about making purchases for daily households needs?</i>	<i>c    1        2        3        4</i>
<i>4. Decision about visits to your family or relatives?</i>	<i>d    1        2        3        4</i>

On the basis of the above questions, decision making power have been computed and categorized into two groups: women with a low decision making power and women with a high decision making power.

Bivariate and binary logistic regression analyses have been carried out to examine the influence of social cohesion on these three developmental indicators. All the analyses in this paper have been carried out in SPSS 15.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

## **FINDINGS**

### **A. Construction of Social Cohesion Index**

#### ***Indicators Used for Social Cohesion Index***

As discussed in the methodology, index for social cohesion has been constructed on the basis of six indicators. Table-1 gives the percentage of women belong to each category of different indicators. This table also helps in understanding the basic developmental pictures for women in India. Findings show that 66.9 percent women in India belong to the households which did not utilized public health facilities for treatment seeking. 60.1 percent women belong to middle income households. Although we have excluded richest and poorest households, but it is very important to keep in mind that this 'middle income households' also include second and fourth quintiles which may represents poor and rich households respectively. At national level, 38.7 percent women have knowledge of programmes to get loan for starting own business but only 15.1 percent women have bank or saving accounts that they themselves can use. We have found that 76.5 percent women in India have at least any mass media exposure. This is obvious because, watching television and listening to radio for entertainment have become common phenomena in India. This percentage may be lowered if questions would be asked about the type of programmes women are watching, listening or reading from media.

*Table-1: Variables used for constructing social cohesion index*

<b>Variables Used for Constructing Social Cohesion Index</b>	<b>% of Women</b>
<b><i>Utilization of Public Health Facilities</i></b>	
No	66.87
Yes	33.13
<b><i>Women Belong to Middle Income Households</i></b>	
No	39.95
Yes	60.05
<b><i>Has Bank or Saving Account</i></b>	
No	84.88
Yes	15.12
<b><i>Knowledge of Programmes to Get Loan for Starting Business</i></b>	
No	61.30
Yes	38.70
<b><i>Education Above Median Value</i></b>	
Below	50.00
Above	50.00
<b><i>Exposure to Any Mass-Media</i></b>	
No	23.48
Yes	76.52

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

### ***Composite Index for Social Cohesion***

Table-2 represents composite index for social cohesion based on above six indicators which would be used to examine the levels of social cohesion among women in India. The levels of social cohesion range from 0 to 6 where '0' indicates least social cohesiveness and '6' indicates highest social cohesiveness. We can see from the table that 4.8 percent women in India are least socially cohesive and above all, less than 1 percent women are showing the indication of high social cohesiveness.

*Table-2: Levels of social cohesion among women in India*

<b>Levels of Social Cohesion</b>	<b>Number of Women</b>	<b>Percent of Women</b>
0.0	5,677	4.83
1.0	15,370	13.07
2.0	28,015	23.83
3.0	33,928	28.86
4.0	24,422	20.77
5.0	9,041	7.69
6.0	1,103	0.94
<b>All India Sample</b>	<b>117,555</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

For the convenient of the study, we categorized the levels of social cohesion into three broad levels: low, medium and high. ‘Low’ social cohesion consists of women belong to ‘0 to 2’ levels, level ‘3’ has been categorized as ‘medium’ social cohesion and ‘4 to 6’ levels have been assigned ‘high’ level of social cohesion. Table-3 represents the percentage of women by these three categories of social cohesion.

*Table-3: Levels of social cohesion among women in India*

<b>Levels of Social Cohesion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low Social Cohesion	49,062	41.74
Medium Social Cohesion	33,928	28.86
High Social Cohesion	34,566	29.40
<b>All India Sample</b>	<b>117,555</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Authors’ analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

Around 40 percent women in India are found to be less socially cohesive whereas high social cohesion has been observed among 29.4 percent women. The low level of social cohesiveness among women observes among certain socially excluded groups, prevalent in certain specific regions with low development. In the following segment, the levels of social cohesiveness by different social groups and regions have been examined in details.

## **B. Levels and Patterns of Social Cohesion in India**

### *Socio-Demographic Differential in the Level of Social Cohesion*

In this segment, levels of social cohesion have been examined by different demographic and social background. We found the levels of social cohesion differ significantly across different demographic or social backgrounds of women.

#### *Demographic Differential*

Table-4 represents that differential exists in the level of social cohesion by sex of the household head. It has been found that the percentage of women exhibiting high social cohesiveness is higher among women belong to female headed households (31.5 percent) than women belong to male headed households (29.1 percent). Social cohesiveness is also found to be significantly associated with women’s age. Findings reveal that younger women (31.9 percent) are showing high social cohesiveness than older women (26.9 percent). A certain proportion of younger women in India are getting benefitted from recent developments whereas older women due to their poor social and economic status are deprived of benefits. These facts have been reflected in the levels of social cohesion across different age-groups.

*Table-4: Levels of social cohesion among women by demographic background*

Demographic Background	Levels of Social Cohesion among Women		
	Low	Medium	High
<b>Sex of the household head***</b>			
Male	41.84	29.06	29.09
Female	40.98	27.50	31.52
<b>Women's Current Age***</b>			
Less than 25	36.99	31.13	31.88
25 to 34	43.47	27.50	29.04
35 and above	45.50	27.57	26.93
<b>All India Average</b>	<b>41.74</b>	<b>28.86</b>	<b>29.40</b>

\*\*\*Pearson Chi-square test is significant at 1% Level

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

### Social Differential

Social cohesion has also been analyzed by different religions and castes which have been considered as social background for women. The findings have been presented in Table-5. The table shows that among Hindu women, 41.1 percent are showing low social cohesiveness and almost 30 percent are showing high social cohesiveness. Among Muslims, 31.3 and 22.8 percent women are found to less socially cohesive and high socially cohesive respectively. It is interesting to note that 36.2 percent women belong to other religions which include Christianity, Buddhism and some others exhibits the sign of high social cohesiveness which is highest among all religious groups. Among all religious groups, low social cohesiveness has been found maximum among Muslim women.

Scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and recently added other backward class in India are considered as marginalized groups in India. Other caste are considered as the higher caste and not marginalized. From the table, we can see that among all caste groups, as expected, low social cohesiveness has been found most prevalent among scheduled tribes (58.8 percent), followed by scheduled caste (46.1 percent), other backward class (43.0 percent) and others (33.8 percent). The maximum proportion of women with high social cohesion has been found among other castes (33.2 percent), followed by other backward class (29.0 percent), scheduled caste (27.6 percent) and scheduled tribe (19.7 percent).

*Table-5: Levels of social cohesion among women by social background*

Social Background	Levels of Social Cohesion among Women		
	Low	Medium	High
<b>Religion***</b>			
Hindu	41.09	28.92	29.99
Muslim	50.01	27.20	22.80
Others	31.28	31.91	36.82
<b>Caste***</b>			
Scheduled Caste	46.08	26.31	27.61
Scheduled Tribe	58.81	21.50	19.69
Other Backward Class	42.95	28.06	29.00
Others	33.75	33.01	33.24
<b>All India Average</b>	<b>41.74</b>	<b>28.86</b>	<b>29.40</b>

\*\*\*Pearson Chi-square test is significant at 1% Level

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

### *Spatial Differentials in the Levels of Social Cohesion*

Spatial differentials in the levels of social cohesion have been studied in two perspectives. One is state-level variations and the other is regional analyses.

#### State-Level Variations

State-level analysis has been carried out to show the spatial patterns of social cohesion which is presented at in Table-6. Currently India has 29 states. All these states differ from each other in social structure, economic growth, physical and population size and in other socio-cultural aspects. On the basis of percentage of high socially cohesive women in a state, a ranking has been done for all states in India. It has been found that Manipur (72.2 percent) which is located in the North-eastern region in India ranked first, followed by Kerala (69.8 percent) and Tamil Nadu (63.8 percent) which ranked third according to the percentage of women showing high social cohesiveness. Bihar with 9.2 percent of women showing high social cohesiveness ranked last (29<sup>th</sup> position), followed by Uttar Pradesh (12.5 percent – 28<sup>th</sup> position) and Jharkhand (14.7 percent – 27<sup>th</sup> position). It is interesting to note that Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand have been considered as 'Empowered Action Group (EAG)' states which lag behind in the demographic transition and have the highest infant and maternal mortality. EAG states also include Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. The overall development is very low in these states in comparison to other states. Our analyses also support that. The proportion of women who show low social cohesiveness have been found highest in 6 out of 8 EAG states. Bihar (67.6 percent) has the maximum percentage of low socially cohesive women in the state, followed by Jharkhand

(65.0 percent), Uttar Pradesh (60.7 percent), Rajasthan (58.8 percent), Madhya Pradesh (54.6 percent) and Chhattisgarh (52.6 percent).

*Table-6: State level variations in the levels of social cohesion among women*

State	Levels of Social Cohesion among Women			RANK Based on Percentage of Women Showing High Social Cohesion
	Low	Medium	High	
Manipur	5.64	22.18	72.18	1
Kerala	6.96	23.21	69.82	2
Tamil Nadu	9.32	26.84	63.84	3
Tripura	16.37	25.22	58.41	4
Himachal Pradesh	12.38	35.55	52.06	5
Goa	17.68	31.49	50.83	6
Orissa	28.07	25.21	46.73	7
Mizoram	10.28	43.93	45.79	8
Sikkim	17.33	37.33	45.33	9
Assam	28.66	27.11	44.23	10
Karnataka	27.35	29.50	43.16	11
Arunachal Pradesh	29.17	29.17	41.67	12
Meghalaya	32.18	30.91	36.91	13
Nagaland	30.00	33.13	36.88	14
Andhra Pradesh	30.05	34.68	35.27	15
Jammu and Kashmir	27.76	38.10	34.14	16
Gujarat	36.09	32.24	31.68	17
Maharashtra	36.10	33.29	30.61	18
West Bengal	41.86	31.42	26.72	19
Haryana	41.95	31.77	26.28	20
Uttaranchal	39.34	34.58	26.09	21
Delhi	36.71	37.97	25.31	22
Punjab	38.57	37.55	23.88	23
Chhattisgarh	52.58	26.80	20.62	24
Madhya Pradesh	54.58	25.52	19.90	25
Rajasthan	58.84	24.31	16.86	26
Jharkhand	65.02	20.28	14.70	27
Uttar Pradesh	60.65	26.84	12.51	28
Bihar	67.58	23.21	9.21	29

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

### Regional Variations

For examining regional patterns of social cohesion, the states have been clubbed into 6 regions which is presented in the Table-7. This classification has been done according to NFHS-regional classification.

Table-7: Regionalization of States

Region	Name of States
North	Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttaranchal
Central	Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh
East	Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal
North-East	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura
West	Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra
South	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu

Source: National Family Health Survey -3, 2005–06: India: Volume I, IIPS, Mumbai and Macro International, 2007

Table-8 displays the levels of social cohesion by place of residence and different regions in India. In urban area, 35.2 percent women are found to be high socially cohesive, on the other hand, in rural area, 26.5 percent women exhibit high social cohesiveness. The proportion of low socially cohesive women is found to be highest in rural (47.5 percent) than urban area (30.2 percent). Central (58.4 percent) and East (50.7 percent) regions of India have been found to be associated with low social cohesion. High social cohesion among women has been observed in North-East (46.4 percent), followed by South (43.2 percent).

Table-8: Levels of social cohesion among women by regional background

Regional Background	Levels of Social Cohesion among Women		
	Low	Medium	High
<b>Place of Residence***</b>			
Urban	30.24	34.48	35.29
Rural	47.45	26.07	26.48
<b>Region***</b>			
North	35.75	35.90	28.35
Central	58.35	26.51	15.15
East	50.67	26.32	23.01
North-East	25.93	27.70	46.37
West	35.90	32.92	31.17
South	28.08	28.75	43.17
<b>All India Average</b>	<b>41.74</b>	<b>28.86</b>	<b>29.40</b>

\*\*\*Pearson Chi-square test is significant at 1% Level

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

Table-9 represents ranking of six regions on the basis of percentage of women showing high social cohesiveness. This table also gives two indicators of disparity for each region. In this ranking scale, North-East region is found to be in first position, followed by South, West, North, East and Central. It is highly interesting to note that the levels of disparity go negative with higher ranking states, i.e., disparity decreases with increasing proportion of women

showing high social cohesiveness. In the next chapter, the influences of social cohesion on various facets of development have been examined statistically in details.

*Table-9: Ranking of Regions Based on High Social Cohesion*

Region	High Level of Social Cohesion among Women	RANK Based on Percentage of Women Showing High Social Cohesion	Indicators of Disparity	
			% of Households Belong to Poorest Wealth Quintile	% of Women with No Education
North-East	46.37	1	9.73	28.75
South	43.17	2	8.30	26.15
West	31.17	3	6.77	22.87
North	28.35	4	39.90	34.39
East	23.01	5	35.63	49.30
Central	15.15	6	33.93	51.17

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

### **C. Social Cohesion and Development in India**

In this chapter, relationships between levels of social cohesion and development have been examined. Women decision making power, body mass index and women's work status have been considered dependent variables in the analyses. Women decision making power has been taken as an autonomy measure among women, body mass index has been considered for women health status and women's work status is the representative of economic status of women as well as economic exclusion. Results from bivariate and multivariate analyses for the relationships between levels of social cohesion and levels of development have been discussed below.

#### *Results from Bi-variate analyses*

Table-10 shows the relationship between levels of social cohesion and three developmental indicators. It has been found that although only 27.8 percent of women at national level have high decision making power, but the percentage increases with high level of social cohesion. Similarly, the levels of social cohesion among women have been found to be negatively associated with the prevalence of underweight among women. The relationship between women's work status and level of social cohesion deserves a little more insights. Although women with not working status have been found increased with increasing levels of social cohesion, but a careful examination of other two working status holds the hypothesis true for Indian women. In India, overall work participation rate is found to be higher among women

who belong to poor households. These women are generally working in agricultures, often as marginal workers, or works as unskilled labourers. Despite the high work participation rate among them, the development is actually low. On the contrary, the women who received benefits of education and other developments are always found to be associated with better jobs. Data reveals that the percentage of women working in professional or service sectors increases with increasing levels of social cohesion.

*Table-10: Levels of Development by Levels of Social Cohesion*

Level of Social Cohesion ***	Women's Decision Making Power		Women's Health (Body Mass Index)		Women's Work Status		
	Low	High	Not-Underweight	Underweight	Not-Working	Professional/Service	Agricultural/Unskilled Labourers
Low	73.07	26.93	59.71	40.29	50.96	4.00	45.04
Medium	73.36	26.64	68.00	32.00	62.54	8.08	29.38
High	70.00	30.00	69.64	30.36	58.53	14.49	26.98
<b>All India</b>	<b>72.25</b>	<b>27.75</b>	<b>65.05</b>	<b>34.95</b>	<b>56.53</b>	<b>8.26</b>	<b>35.21</b>

\*\*\*Pearson Chi-square test is significant at 1% Level

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

### Results from Logistic Regression Analyses

Table-11 represents the findings from three logistic regression analyses, carried out to examine the influence of level of social cohesion on three developmental indicators.

#### *Decision Making Power*

Results show that decision making power among women is increasing with women's age. The women aged 35 years and above are found to be 5.9 times more likely to enjoy high decision making power than women aged less than 25 years. Muslim women are 4 percent less likely and women belong to other religions are 12 percent more likely to have high decision making power than Hindu women. Regarding caste, the likelihood of having high decision making power has been found among women belongs to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes than women belong to other caste. The justification for this may lies in the fact that women from marginalized castes don't have any prohibitions for any works. Most importantly, after controlling for all demographic and social variables, levels of social cohesion has been significantly found to be associated with high decision making power among women. The medium and high socially cohesive women are 10 and 33 percent more likely to have high decision making power than women showing less social cohesiveness.

*Table-11: Odds Ratio from Logistic Regression Analyses Predicting the Influence of Social Cohesion on three Developmental Indicators, Controlling for Other Factors*

<b>Explanatory Variables</b>	<b>Odds Ratio Predicting High Decision Making Power</b>	<b>Odds Ratio Predicting Underweight</b>	<b>Odds Ratio Predicting Working in Professional / Service Sectors</b>
<b>Women's Current Age</b>			
Less than 25 <sup>(Ref)</sup>			
25 to 34	4.531***	0.656***	1.978***
35 and above	5.932***	0.492***	2.335***
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu <sup>(Ref)</sup>			
Muslim	0.957**	1.035*	0.642***
Others	1.126***	0.584***	1.494***
<b>Caste</b>			
Scheduled Caste <sup>(Ref)</sup>			
Scheduled Tribe	1.072**	1.223***	0.560***
Other Backward Class	0.966*	0.801***	0.738***
Others	0.947*	0.638***	1.103**
<b>Level of Social Cohesion</b>			
Low <sup>(Ref)</sup>			
Medium	1.100***	0.706***	2.120***
High	1.331***	0.652***	4.092***
Constant	0.107	1.204	0.030
-2loglikelihood	127034.182	141346.495	62489.549

<sup>(Ref)</sup> – Reference Category

Significant at \*\*\* - 1% level, \*\* - 5% level and \* - 10% Level

Dependent Variables:

Decision Making Power: 0 = Low, 1 = High

Women's Body Mass Index: 0 = Not-underweight, 1 = Underweight

Women working in Professional / Service Sectors: 0 = No, 1 = Yes

Source: Authors' analyses from National Family Health Survey -3 (2005-06), IIPS, Mumbai, India

*Women's Health (Likelihood of Being Underweight)*

Prevalence of underweight is considered as an obstacle to development process. The table shows that younger women are more prone to be underweight in comparison to older women. This indicates the demographic vulnerability of women. Marginalized group like Muslim women, women belong to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe are also have more chance to be underweight than their non-marginalized counterparts, i.e., women belong to Hindu family or other castes. Odds ratio explains that women with medium social cohesion are 29 percent less likely and women exhibiting high social cohesiveness are 35 percent less likely to be underweight. The relationship between levels of social cohesion and likelihood for underweight has been found statistically significant.

### *Women's Work Status (Likelihood of Working in Professional / Service Sectors)*

The likelihood of working in these jobs is found significantly less and higher among Muslim and Christian women than Hindu women. Like other two results, scheduled tribes (44 percent) and other backward class (26 percent) are also found to be less likely to be working in these jobs than women belong to scheduled caste. But the likelihood of working in these jobs are higher (10 percent) among women belong to other caste. Controlling for these socio-demographic factors, the levels of social cohesion has been significantly positively associated with these jobs. Data show that women with high social cohesion are 4 times more likely to be working in professional / service sectors than women with low socially cohesive nature.

### **CONCLUSION**

Due to absence of other relevant dataset collected for studying social cohesion in India, we have used six questions from standardized questionnaire of NFHS (2005-06) survey as proxy indicators for measuring social cohesion. This survey is actually meant for estimating fertility, mortality and levels of health status in the country and among different demographic and socio-economic groups. NFHS are largely used by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other ministries in the country to implement relevant policies on health related issues.

As the usual respondents of NFHS survey are women, our social cohesion index is also based on women samples. In fact, the social cohesion analyses in the present paper have been carried out from women's perspective. The whole analyses are based on the hypotheses that the levels of social cohesion among women are positively related with women's overall development and this relationship is also influencing country's overall development.

We found that forth-fifth (41.7 percent) of the women in India is less socially cohesive. More than 65 percent of women are not using any public health facilities for treatment. If this indicator has been considered as the trust towards government systems as well as effectiveness of public institutions, then it can be inferred that Indian government has failed to gain trust or proved ineffective in providing proper infrastructures. Where majority of Indian population belongs to poorer households, and live in rural areas, they generally are supposed to use public health facilities because usage of these facilities is much cheaper and available than private health facilities. But this percentage of not using any public health facilities are very high and can be taken as alarming proxy for country's cohesiveness.

We have also found that women belong to scheduled tribes and scheduled caste and Muslims families are less socially cohesive than women belong to other religions or caste groups. These less socially groups are marginalized groups in India and deprived of many developmental processes. Government of India has tried to improve their conditions and want to increase their social and economic inclusions. Despite these attempts from Government, the rate of social and inclusion is much slower among these marginalized groups. There are evidences of several agitations by these groups in recent times. Among all caste groups, women belong to 'other caste' category have shown proof of strong social cohesiveness.

The regional or state level variations in the level of social cohesion are expected and these variations also support for our social cohesion index. More than half of the women population from central and eastern regions of India also belongs to less social cohesive group. These also explain the recent political and social turmoil prevalent in these regions. These regions are highly characterized by poor development and mainly dominated by different scheduled tribes and non-scheduled tribes. It is not surprising that 8 EAG states in India are showing less social cohesiveness, because as mentioned earlier these states have poor level of developments. Strong social cohesiveness has been found in the South and West region in India. These regions of India are highly developed.

Results from multivariate analyses also establish that controlling for other factors, social cohesiveness have strong significant influences on all three developmental indicators. As the recent history of India have shown the same evidences on developmental process and social cohesiveness as what our findings reveal in this paper, it can be concluded that women's perspective on social cohesiveness can be of very useful in policy making. When there is non-availability of data for studying social cohesiveness in the country and for her different parts and social groups, we would recommend using this measure of social cohesion in policy making.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There are two main limitations in this study. This study is solely based on the sample of married women who are actually interviewed for a different purpose, and not for studying social cohesion and as a result of it, the other components of social cohesion like belonging or isolation, trust or non-trust, recognition or rejection etc. have not been included in the composite index. But as we argued above that despite these limitations, our index for social cohesion can be used as a proxy.

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