

Original Research Article

A cross-sectional study on gender-based violence among adolescents attending government colleges in urban area of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh

Priyadharshini S.*, Sowmya Pallavi R., Siva Kala T., Pavan Kumari J., Ravi Prabhu G.

Department of Community Medicine, Sri Venkateswara Medical College, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

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***Correspondence:**

Dr. Priyadharshini S.,

E-mail: priyaselvarajmbbs94@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations in the world. Across the globe, women and girls-especially adolescents-face the greatest risk. Age-stratified GBV data on adolescents is lacking in India. Approximately 1 in 3 women worldwide may experience physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. In this background the present study was conducted to find out prevalence of GBV among college going adolescents in urban area of Tirupati.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among college going adolescents aged 16-19 years in four government colleges in urban area of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh from November 2021 to December 2021. Details on socio demographic characteristics and history related to GBV were collected by personal interview using a pretested, semi-structured questionnaire. Descriptive data was summarized in percentages and Chi-square test was used to test the association.

Results: A total of 263 students participated in the study with mean age of 18.15 ± 1.01 years, majority being females (54%). About 36.5% faced at least one form of GBV so far. The most common form of violence faced by study subjects was physical (28.1%) followed by psychological violence (17.5%). Physical, sexual and psychological violence was found to be 17.8%, 1.9%, 11.0% in females and 10.3%, 0.7%, 6.5% among males respectively.

Conclusion: The present study shows that both male and female are victims of GBV but little higher prevalence was found in females.

Keywords: GBV, Adolescents, Physical violence, Sexual violence, Psychological violence

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations in the world.¹ It is defined by the United Nations as any act of violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, girls, men, and boys, as well as threats of such acts, coercion, or the arbitrary deprivation of liberty.²

Various social norms prevailing in the society supports men to take control over decisions and utilisation of

resources. Across the globe, women and girls-especially adolescents-face the greatest risk. Approximately one in three women worldwide may experience physical or sexual violence in her lifetime.³ In India, risk of GBV generally increased since 1992.⁴ According to national family health survey 5 (NFHS-5) 2019-21, 30% of women in the age group of 18-49 years have ever experienced physical violence since age 15, and 6% have ever experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.²

GBV takes in various forms like intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, trafficking for

sexual exploitation, female infanticide, female genital mutilation, 'honour' crimes.³ Domestic violence is one of the most common forms of GBV.² Survivors also suffer devastating short-and long-term consequences to their physical and mental health. They may experience severe physical injuries, unwanted pregnancies and exposure to HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. Depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, limited ability to complete daily tasks, and suicidal thoughts are also common. Survivors are often subjected to victim-blaming/ rejection from their families and communities.^{3,5}

As per UNICEF report, age-stratified GBV data on adolescents is lacking in India. A recent review of evidence by the Population Council on the needs of adolescents aged 10-19 years in India found little or no published evidence of GBV among younger adolescents. Thus, there is very little information on adolescents aged 10-19 years, which is a critical age group characterised by physiological and psychological change.⁶ In this background, the present study was conducted to find out the prevalence of GBV among college going adolescents in an urban area.

Objectives

Objectives of study were to describe socio-demographic profile of college going adolescents, to estimate the prevalence of GBV and its forms among adolescents.

METHODS

Study design

A cross-sectional study design used for this study.

Study period

Study carried out from November to December 2021.

Study setting

Selected government colleges in urban area of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh State.

Study population

Adolescents of aged 16-19 years were selected for study.

Inclusion criteria

Adolescents of age 16-19 years attending selected government colleges in urban area of Tirupati were included in the study.

Exclusion criteria

Students those who couldn't be contacted even after three successive visits and those who were not willing to participate in the study were excluded from the study.

Sample size

A minimum sample size of 250 students was calculated using the formula, $N = z^2 pq / d^2$

where, prevalence of GBV taken as 30% based on NFHS-5 data and relative error of 20% and non-response rate of 10%.²

Sampling technique

Out of 12 government colleges (all with co-education), 4 different colleges across different streams namely government polytechnic college, government veterinary college, S. V. government arts college and Sri Venkateswara medical college were selected randomly by simple random sampling method. In each selected college, all the students aged 16-19 years were numbered serially and from them 65 students selected randomly by using computer generated random number method.

Study methods

Ethical approval was obtained from institutional ethical committee at Sri Venkateswara medical college, Tirupati. After getting prior permission from the principal of the respective colleges, the students were informed about the study. After taking written informed consent, the students were subjected for personal interview by using a pretested, semi-structured questionnaire which contains socio-demographic information (age, gender, family size, education of the parents, occupation of the parents, total income of the family etc.) and questions related to GBV.

Statistical analysis

Data was entered in MS excel and analysis was done by using Epi-info 7.1.3 software. Categorical variables were represented by frequencies and percentages. Chi-square test was used to test the association and p value less than 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the socio demographic characteristics of the study participants. A total of 263 students were participated in the study with a mean age of 18.15 ± 1.01 years. Majority of students were aged 19 years (52.5%) followed by 18 years (20.2%). The proportion of females (54%) was slightly higher than males (46%). About 61.6% of fathers and 42.5% of mothers had high school and above level of education. Majority of fathers (35.4%) were clerks/shop-owners/farmers by occupation and 57% of mothers were homemakers. Nearly 56% of the study subjects belongs to middle class according to modified B. G. Prasad socio-economic classification. Around 90% of students were living in the family size of 4-6 members.

Table 2 and 3 shows nearly 36.5% (96) of students faced at least one form of gender- based violence so far. The prevalence of gender- based violence was found to be

slightly higher among subjects aged 17 years (42.3%) followed by 19 years (36.3%). However, the differences were not statistically significant ($p=0.73$; NS). A significantly higher prevalence was found in females (42.0%) than males (30.0%).

Table 1: Distribution of study subjects according to socio-demographic attributes, (n=263).

Socio-demographic attributes	Number (%)
Age (Years)	
16	20 (7.6)
17	52 (19.8)
18	53 (20.2)
19	138 (52.5)
Gender	
Male	120 (46)
Female	143 (54)
Educational status of father	
High school and above	162 (61.6)
Middle school	32 (12.2)
Primary school	38 (14.4)
Illiterate	31 (11.8)
Educational status of mother	
High school and above	112 (42.5)
Middle school	35 (13.3)
Primary school	47 (17.9)
Illiterate	69 (26.2)
Occupational status of father	
Professional	50 (19.0)
Semi professional	17 (6.5)
Clerical-Shop-Farm	93 (35.4)
Skilled	29 (11.0)
Semiskilled	12 (4.6)
Unskilled	7 (2.7)
Unemployed	55 (20.9)
Occupational status of mother	
professional	26 (9.9)
semi professional	6 (2.3)
clerical-shop-farm	46 (17.5)
skilled	13 (4.9)
semiskilled	9 (3.4)
unskilled	13 (4.9)
unemployed	150 (57.0)
Socio-economic status	
Upper class	60 (22.8)
Upper middle class	64 (24.3)
Lower middle class	83 (31.6)
Upper lower class	38 (14.4)
Lower class	18 (6.8)
Family size (total no. of family members)	
Less than 4	18 (6.9)
4-6	239 (90.8)
7 and above	6 (2.3)

The overall prevalence of physical, psychological and sexual violence was found to be 28.1%, 17.5% and 2.6% respectively. Physical, sexual and psychological violence

was found to be 17.8%,1.9%,11.0% in females and 10.3%, 0.7%, 6.5% among males respectively. All three forms of violence were found to be more among females. However, the differences were not statistically significant (Table 4 and Figure 1). Among the study participants who reported GBV, majority of them faced violence in their school or college (71.8%) followed by in their house (33.3%) (Table 5).

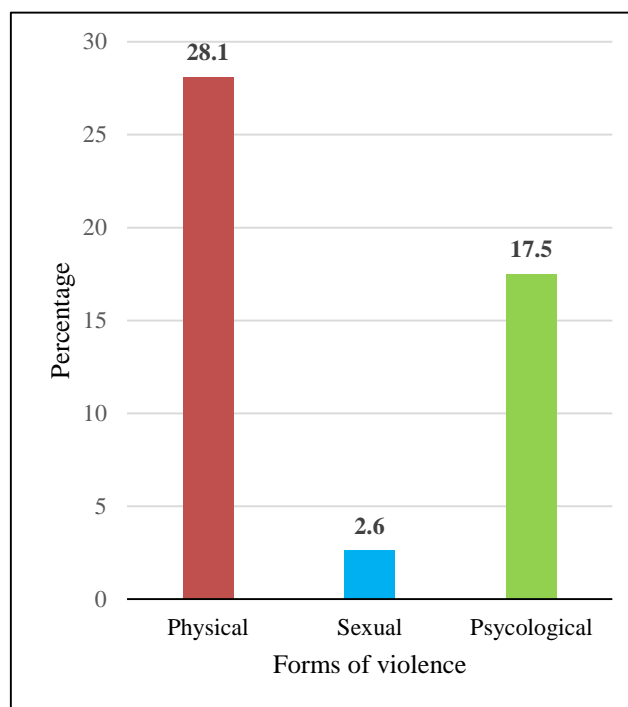


Figure 1: Forms of gender-based violence experienced by study subjects (%).

Table 2: Prevalence of gender-based violence according to age, (n=263).

Age (Years)	Gender-based violence, n (%)		Total, n (%)
	Yes	No	
16	6 (30.0)	14 (70.0)	20 (100)
17	22 (42.3)	30 (57.7)	52 (100)
18	18 (34.0)	35 (66.0)	53 (100)
19	50 (36.2)	88 (63.8)	138 (100)
Total	96 (36.5)	167 (63.5)	263 (100)

χ^2 1.27, df=3, $p=0.73$; NS

Table 3: Prevalence of gender-based violence according to gender, (n=263).

Gender	Gender-based violence, n (%)		Total, n (%)
	Yes	No	
Male	36 (30.0)	84 (70.0)	120 (100)
Female	60 (42.0)	83 (58.0)	143 (100)
Total	96 (36.5)	167 (63.5)	263 (100)

$\chi^2= 4.02$, df=1, $p=0.04$; S

Table 4: Forms of gender-based violence experienced by study subjects*, (n=263).

Form of GBV	Male, n (%)	Female, n (%)	Total, n (%)	Statistical significance
Physical	27 (10.3)	47 (17.8)	74 (28.1)	$\chi^2=3.46, p=0.06$
Sexual	2 (0.7)	5 (1.9)	7 (2.6)	$\chi^2=0.84, p=0.36$
Psychological	17 (6.5)	29 (11.0)	46 (17.5)	$\chi^2=1.69, p=0.19$

*Multiple responses. P<0.05: Significant.

Table 5: Places of gender-based violence experienced by study subjects.*

Place	N	Percent (%) (out of 96)
House	32	33.3
School and/ college	69	71.8
Other places	9	9.4

* Multiple responses.

Among the study participants who experienced violence (96), nearly 73% (70) had taken some form of action against that. Among them, 72.8% (51) have informed to their parents and 50% (35) have informed to school/college authority. The proportion of actions taken against GBV was significantly higher in males (86.1%) compared to females (65.0%) (Table 6).

In this study, 78.3% of students were aware that any form of violence against women is a punishable offence. Around 80% were aware of criminal law (amendment) Nirbhaya act 2013 and 52% of students know about POCSO act 2012 (Table 7).

Table 6: Actions taken against gender-based violence by study subjects, (n=96).

Action taken	Male, n (%)	Female, n (%)	Total, n (%)	Statistical significance
Yes	31 (86.1)	39 (65.0)	70 (72.9)	$\chi^2=5.07, p=0.02^*$
No	5 (13.9)	21 (35.0)	26 (27.1)	
Total	36 (100.0)	60 (100.0)	96 (100.0)	

*Significant

Table 7: Distribution of Knowledge regarding legislations related to violence among study subjects, (n=263).

Question	Yes, n (%)	No, n (%)
Any form of violence against women is punishable offence	206 (78.3)	57 (21.7)
Have you heard about criminal law (amendment) Nirbhaya act 2013?	212 (80.6)	51 (19.4)
Have you heard about protection of children from sexual offences act (POCSO act) 2012?	137 (52.1)	126 (47.9)

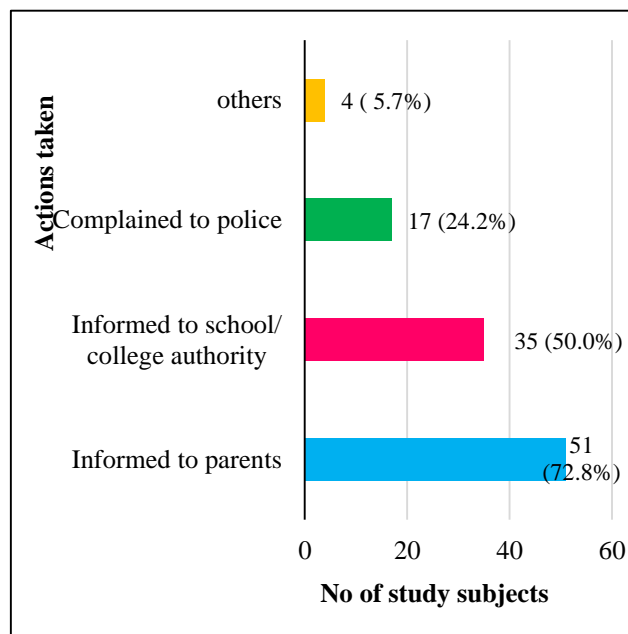


Figure 2: Various types of actions taken against gender-based violence by study subjects (out of 70).*

*Multiple responses.

DISCUSSION

Previously, various studies have examined violence against women. However, studies related to violence against unmarried college going adolescents are minimal across various settings. Hence this study was intended to estimate the prevalence of GBV and other characteristics in college going adolescents.

In the present study, mean age was 18.15±1.01 years and slightly higher proportion of study subjects were females (54%). A study done by Patel et al at Goa among higher secondary school students reported that the mean age was 16 years and 53% were males.⁷

In this study, the GBV was more prevalent among subjects aged 17 years (42.3%) followed by 19 years (36.3%). However, the differences were not statistically significant. A study done by Asgola and Kaur among rural higher secondary school going adolescent girls at Punjab reported that, physical and sexual violence was more prevalent (61.5%) in older age group (17-18) compared to the younger age (16-17) groups (46.5%).⁸

In the present study, the prevalence of GBV among females was 42%. A study done by Suryavanshi et al at

Pune observed a lesser prevalence of GBV among women (23%) whereas Michele et al study among adolescent and young adult women in eastern and southern Africa region found that 28% of adolescent girls reported lifetime physical or sexual violence.^{9,10} In contrast, higher prevalence was reported in Arnold et al study in Awassa, Ethiopia stating that the lifetime prevalence of GBV was 59.9% and in Cohen et al study, lifetime prevalence of domestic violence among married and unmarried women was found to be 66% & 67% respectively.^{11,12}

In this study, the prevalence of GBV in males was 30%. In contrast, a study done by Malik and Nadda among married men of 21-49 years in rural area of Haryana, India reported a higher prevalence of GBV among men (52.4%).¹³

The overall prevalence of physical, psychological and sexual violence was found to be 28.1%, 17.5% and 2.6% respectively and all the three forms of violence were found to be more prevalent among females. However, the differences were not statistically significant. Similar findings were observed in Amelli et al study at Malawi stating that physical violence at home and school was found to be 29.2% and 39.4% respectively, whereas psychological violence at home was seen among 23% of study participants.¹⁶ All types of violence were more prevalent in girls than boys. A study by Patel et al in Goa, reported that notable gender difference was observed in prevalence of sexual violence. However, the differences were not statistically significant.⁷

In the current study, physical, sexual and psychological violence among females was found to be 17.8%, 1.9%, 11.0% respectively. A study done by Patel et al at Bihar and Uttar Pradesh reported that physical and sexual violence was seen among 9.3% and 2.4% of adolescents respectively.¹⁵ In a study done by Bhattacharjee et al at Kenya, the life time prevalence of physical and sexual violence among adolescent girls was found to be 18.0% and 20.5% respectively.¹⁶ In contrast, Asgola and Kaur study at Punjab revealed a higher prevalence of sexual violence among adolescent girls (71.1%).⁸

In the present study, among the study participants who reported GBV, majority of them faced violence at their school or college (71.8%) followed by their house (33.3%). A study done by Das et al⁽¹⁷⁾ in urban Mumbai found that 85.1% of study subjects faced violence at their home and community whereas 80.5% of study subjects experienced violence in schools.

In this study, majority of the study participants who experienced violence (73%) had taken some form of action by informing their parents (72.8%) and or school/college authority (50%). In Patel et al study, only 7% of students had informed about the violence to their parents or friends.⁷ According to NFHS-5 data, only 14% of all women in India who have ever experienced any form of violence have sought help for the same.²

In this study, 78.3% of students were aware that any form of violence against women is punishable offence. Around 80% and 52% of students were aware about Criminal law (amendment) Nirbhaya act and POCSO act respectively. Similar observation was made in a study by Sunita in Vijayawada with 80% of students were aware about Nirbhaya act and 53% were aware about POCSO Act.¹⁸ In Neelima and Abraham study at Kottayam, Kerala, 48% students have the knowledge on POCSO act.¹⁹

Limitations

The study subjects might not have revealed the true picture either due to hesitation or fear of school / college authorities. As most of the study subjects has not revealed the details of the person responsible for violence, the data was not included in the results.

CONCLUSION

The present study shows that both adolescent male and female are victims of GBV but little higher prevalence was found in females. As majority of the study subjects experienced violence in schools and colleges and about one third of victims did not take any action against GBV, health education sessions on GBV and various legislations related to it should be carried out in school and college settings.

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Conflict of interest: None declared

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