

Original Research Article

Epidemiology of domestic violence among married women: a community based cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Domestic violence is a global issue, reaching across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distributions. Domestic violence is among the most underreported crimes worldwide for both men and women. Globally, the victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and women tend to experience more severe forms of violence.

Methods: It was a Community based Cross-sectional study. The study was carried out in the rural and urban area of Surendranagar district. Total 600 married women of 15-49 years of age were selected randomly. The information gathered was based on self-administered questionnaire. Strict confidentiality was maintained.

Results: Out of total 600 women, 38.5% were victims of domestic violence in one form or the other. Out of these 231 victims, 134 respondents were from rural area and 97 respondents were from urban area. The study results revealed that age at marriage, literacy status of women and their husband, their occupational status, type of family and socio-economic class has significant impact on prevalence of domestic violence.

Conclusions: Domestic violence is more prevalent among uneducated, backward and economically disadvantaged women.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Epidemiology, Married women, Cross - sectional

INTRODUCTION

Violence is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development, or deprivation."¹

In 1993, the United National General Assembly adopted a declaration, which for the first time offers an official UN definition of gender-based abuse. According to

Article I of declaration, violence against women includes; "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."²

National Family Health Survey (NFHS) - III carried out in 29 states of India in 2005-06 has found that, nationwide 37.2% of women experience violence after marriage. Bihar was highest with 59% and while in West Bengal, it was 40.3%.³

This research work tries to study the prevalence of domestic violence and its potential risk factors for women respondents with their background characteristics such as age, religion, education, occupation and income & its association. Thus, this study was carried out with the following objectives:

- 1) To study the prevalence of domestic violence against women in the study area.
- 2) To identify the various socio-demographic factors associated with domestic violence against women.

METHODS

The study protocol has been approved by the institutional ethical committee. The present study was carried out in the urban and rural area of Surendranagar district of Gujarat, over a period of 6 months from April to October, 2015.

All the married, divorced, separated, widowed women of 15-49 years of age were included in the study. Unmarried and non-cooperative women who refused to furnish necessary information were excluded.

The prevalence of domestic violence in India is reported around 40%.^{4,5} Assuming this, the sample size of the study as per statistical calculation ($4pq/l^2$, where $p = 40$, $q=100-p$ and $l= 10\%$ of p) came out to be 600. This sample size was then equally divided into two parts Urban and Rural. Thus 300 from rural and 300 from urban area of Surendranagar were selected for study.

The UHTC (Urban Health Training Centre) area of medical college was selected for the urban study. Anganwadi centers of this area were selected as the interview place. Ratanpar area has total 15 anganwadi centers. From the survey registers of anganwadi workers, married women of reproductive age group were enlisted and from each anganwadi area required number of sample (20 from each anganwadi area) was selected randomly to get representative sample. Similarly, PHC area (Khodu) covered under medical college was selected for the rural study. As similar to urban area, from the survey registers of total 8 anganwadis of Khodu, to get 300 women of reproductive age, 40 women were randomly selected from each anganwadi area.

Trained community staff approached potential participants through outreach activities and door to door visits. Data collection procedure was carried out among women at anganwadi/ health centre in the absence of their husbands/guardian. The purpose of the study was explained to them and initial rapport was built with the help of female community workers and the women were taken into confidence.

The information gathered was based on self-administered pre-designed, pre-tested questionnaire. Questionnaire was

made in local language (Gujarati). In case of illiterate participants questionnaire was filled up with the help of female health workers. Informed verbal consent was taken initially. They were also assured that anonymity and strict confidentiality would be maintained. No names of study participants were recorded in the questionnaire to ensure confidentiality.

Forms with complete details were taken into consideration. All the information was collected, compiled and analyzed by applying suitable tests. The Statistical software namely SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used for the analysis of the data and Microsoft Word and Excel have been used to generate graphs, tables etc.

RESULTS

The respondents covered by the study are equally spread over the urban and rural areas of the district in which the study was conducted.

The data shows that out of total 600 respondents 26.67% (160) are in the age group of 30-34 years, followed by 16.50% (99) in the age group of 35-39 years and 15.83% (95) in the age group of 25-29 years respectively. 14.17% of the respondents are in the age group of 40-44 years, 13.67% are in the age group of 45-49 years, 10% are in the age group of 20-24 years and about 3% are in the age group of 15-19 years. Majority of the respondents were in the age group of 30-39 years in both rural and urban area (Table 1).

Out of 600 respondents a large majority of about 79% were Hindu by religion and Muslims constituted about 21% (Table 2).

The statistical data shows literacy status of the respondents. Out of 600 respondents more than a half (about 60%) were either illiterate (33.83%) or educated up to primary school level (26.50%), as against about 23% who were educated up to secondary and about 10% were educated up to higher secondary level. Respondents who were graduate or more than that constitute about 6 percent only (Table 3).

Occupation wise distribution of 600 respondents shows that about 54% were housewives, 27% were working as labourers, about 10% were engaged in agricultural work and about 6% were in service (Table 4).

The data relating to marital status of respondents shows that large majority (82%) of respondents were reported as married. About 2% of the respondents were living separately, nearly 4% had taken divorce, about 5% respondents were re-married about 6% of the respondents were reported to be widows (Table 5).

Table 1: Distribution of women according to their age [n=600].

Age group (years)	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15-19	12	4.00%	7	2.33%	19	3.16%
20-24	28	9.33%	32	10.67%	60	10.00%
25-29	43	14.33%	52	17.33%	95	15.83%
30-34	78	26.00%	82	27.33%	160	26.67%
35-39	52	17.33%	47	15.67%	99	16.50%
40-44	49	16.33%	36	12.00%	85	14.17%
45-49	38	12.68%	44	14.67%	82	13.67%
Total	300 (100%)		300 (100%)		600 (100%)	

Table 2: Distribution of women according to their religion [n=600].

Religion	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Hindu	243	81.00%	229	76.33%	472	78.67%
Muslim	57	19.00%	71	23.67%	128	21.33%
Total	300 (100%)		300 (100%)		600(100%)	

Table 3: Distribution of women according to their literacy status [n=600].

Literacy status	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Illiterate	124	41.33%	79	26.33%	203	33.83%
Primary	96	32.00%	63	21.00%	159	26.50%
Secondary	52	17.33%	88	29.33%	140	23.33%
Higher secondary	21	7.00%	42	14.00%	63	10.50%
≥ Graduate	7	2.34%	28	9.34%	35	5.84%
Total	300 (100%)		300 (100%)		600(100%)	

Table 4: Distribution of women according to their occupational status [n=600].

Occupational status	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Labourer	109	36.33%	53	17.66%	162	27.00%
Service	7	2.33%	32	10.67%	39	6.50%
Agricultural	46	15.34%	17	5.67%	63	10.50%
Housewife	134	44.67%	189	63.00%	323	53.83%
Other	4	1.33%	9	3.00%	13	2.17%
Total	300 (100%)		300 (100%)		600(100%)	

Others* include vendors, maid servants, shopkeepers etc.

Table 5: Distribution of women according to their marital status [n=600].

Marital Status	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Married	239	79.67%	253	84.34%	492	82.00%
Divorced	14	4.67%	9	3.00%	23	3.83%
Separated	8	2.67%	7	2.33%	15	2.50%
Widowed	22	7.33%	19	6.33%	41	6.84%
Re-marriage	17	5.66%	12	4.00%	29	4.83%
Total	300 (100%)		300 (100%)		600 (100%)	

Table 6: Distribution of women according to their socio-economic status [n=600].¹¹

Socio-economic status	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Class i	17	5.67%	119	39.67%	136	22.67%
Class ii	26	8.67%	103	34.33%	129	21.50%
Class iii	51	17.00%	38	12.67%	89	14.83%
Class iv	82	27.33%	26	8.67%	108	18.00%
Class v	124	41.33%	14	4.66%	138	23.00%
Total	300 (100%)		300 (100%)		600(100%)	

Table 7: Distribution of women according to their type of family [n=600].

Type of Family	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Nuclear	79	26.33%	116	38.67%	195	32.50%
Joint	221	73.67%	184	61.33%	405	67.50%
Total	300 (100%)		300 (100%)		600(100%)	

Table 8: Prevalence of domestic violence [n=600].

Domestic violence	Rural		Urban		Total		Statistical Value
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Present	134	44.67%	97	32.33%	231	38.50%	$\chi^2 = 9.636$ ($p < 0.05$)
Absent	166	55.33%	203	67.67%	369	61.50%	
Total	300	100%	300	100%	600	100%	

Table 9: Socio-demographic characteristics and its association with prevalence of domestic violence [n=600].

Socio- demographic features	Experience of violence		Statist-ical Values
	Yes Number (%)	No Number (%)	
Religion			
Hindu (n=472)	179 (37.92%)	293 (62.08%)	$\chi^2 = 0.31$ ($p > 0.05$)
Muslim (n=128)	52 (40.63%)	76 (59.37%)	
TYPE OF FAMILY			
Joint (n=405)	168 (41.48%)	237(58.52%)	$\chi^2 = 4.678$ ($p < 0.05$) OR-1.49 95% CI- (1.04 to 2.13)
Nuclear (n=195)	63 (32.31%)	132(67.69%)	
Literacy status of women			
Illiterate (n=203)	89 (43.84%)	114 (56.16%)	$\chi^2 = 15.621$ ($p < 0.05$) OR-1.40 95% CI- (0.99 to 1.98)
Primary (n=159)	69 (43.40%)	90 (56.60%)	
Secondary n=140)	51 (36.43%)	89 (63.57%)	
Higher Secondary (n=63)	16 (25.40%)	47 (74.60%)	
≥ Graduate (n=35)	6 (17.14%)	29 (82.86%)	
Employment status of women			
Unemployed (n=323)	137 (42.42%)	186 (57.58%)	$\chi^2 = 4.529$ ($p < 0.05$) OR-1.43 95% CI- (1.03 to 1.99)
Employed (n=277)	94 (33.94%)	183 (66.06%)	
Employment status of husband			

Unemployed (n=39)	24 (61.54%)	15 (38.46%)	$\chi^2 = 9.35$ ($p < 0.05$) OR-2.74 95% CI- (1.40 to 5.33)
Employed (n=561)	207 (36.90)	354 (63.10%)	
Literacy status of husband			
Illiterate (n=79)	37 (46.84%)	42 (53.16%)	$\chi^2 = 11.537$ ($p < 0.05$) OR-1.48 95% CI- (0.92 to 2.39)
Primary (n=183)	78 (42.62%)	105 (57.38%)	
Secondary n=132)	52 (39.39%)	80 (60.61%)	
Higher Secondary (n=119)	43 (36.13%)	76 (63.87%)	
≥ Graduate (n=87)	21 (24.14%)	66 (75.86%)	
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS (Modified Prasad's classification)			
I (n=136)	39 (28.68%)	97 (71.32%)	$\chi^2 = 28.792$ ($p < 0.05$) OR-1.03 95% CI- (0.74 to 1.43)
II (n=129)	64 (49.61%)	65 (50.39%)	
III (n=89)	20 (22.47%)	69 (77.53%)	
IV (n=108)	40 (37.04%)	68 (62.96%)	
V (n=138)	68 (49.28%)	70 (50.72%)	
TOTAL (n=600)	231	369	

Table 10: Age at marriage and prevalence of violence [n=600].

Age at Marriage	Experience of violence		Statistical Value
	Yes Number (%)	No Number (%)	
< 18 YEARS (n=272)	119 (43.75%)	153 (56.25%)	$\chi^2 = 5.792$ ($p < 0.05$) OR-1.5 95% CI- (1.08 to 2.09)
≥ 18 YEARS (n=328)	112 (34.15%)	216 (65.85%)	

According to Modified Prasad's classification of socio-economic status of families to which respondents belong shows that about 23% of respondents belong to class I, about 21% respondents belong to class II. About 15% were of class III, 18% of the respondents belong to class IV and 23% were from class V (Table 6). Out of 600 respondents covered by the study, about 32% were living in nuclear families and the rest 67.50% in joint families (Table 7).

The analysis of data collected indicates that out of 600 respondents, 38.5% respondents were victims of domestic violence in one form or the other. Out of these 231 victims, 134 respondents were from rural area and 97 respondents were from urban area and the difference was statistically significant (Table 8).

No significant difference was found among different religions. The analysis shows that 41.48% of the respondents who are living in joint family had experienced violence as compared to 32.31% of the respondents from nuclear family and difference is statistically significant.

Significant difference was found so far as literacy of both partners was concerned. The data revealed that education had an impact on the prevalence of domestic violence.

The prevalence of domestic violence decreased as education levels of women and their husbands increased. About 44% of women with no education had experienced violence, as compared with about 17% of women who were graduated or more than that. Similarly the women whose husbands were illiterate (46.84%) faced more violence than women whose husbands had higher education (24.14%).

The analysis of data disclosed that women who were engaged to any work were less exposed to violence as compared to women who were not engaged to any outside work. Around 43% of unemployed women exposed to violence as compared to 33.94% women who were involved in any outside work. Study population with unemployed husbands reported more violence (61.54%) than their counterparts with employed husbands (36.90%) and difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Socio-economic classification revealed that as the socio-economic condition of respondents became better, prevalence of domestic violence decreased; women of lower class experienced 49.28% of violence whereas upper class women experienced 28.68% and the difference is also statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Table 9).

It was seen that as the age at marriage increased, the prevalence of domestic violence decreased. Prevalence of domestic violence was 43.75% for those who married before 18 years and 34.15% for those who married at 18 years and more. It was found statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Table 10).

DISCUSSION

Out of 600 respondents about one-third were in the age group of 30-34 years and about 17 percent in the age group of 35-39 years and about 16 percent in 25-29 years age group. About 14 percent, and 13.67 percent respondents were in the age group of 40-44 years and 45-49 years respectively. 10 percent respondents were in 20-24 years and only about 3 percent were in 15-19 years age group.

The women respondents were classified on the basis of the religions they belong to. It was observed that a large majority of about 79 percent were Hindu and about 21 percent were Muslim. The analysis of the data disclosed that there is no significant difference between the religions as far as prevalence of violence concerned. Similar result was found in a study carried out by Yugantar Education Society.⁶ A study carried out by Mahapatro M et al. found that women belonged to Muslim religion were at more risk of facing any form of domestic violence compared to women belonged to Hindu religion.⁷

The results of analysis indicate that about 67 percent of the respondents were educated and about 33 percent were illiterate. About 26 percent of the respondents had their education up to primary level and about 23 percent had up to secondary level. About 10 percent of them were educated up to higher secondary level. Only about 6 percent women were graduates or post-graduate. Significant difference was found so far as literacy of both partners was concerned. The data revealed that education had an impact on the prevalence of domestic violence. The prevalence of domestic violence decreased as education levels of women and their husbands increased. About 44 percent of women with no education had experienced violence, as compared with about 17 percent of women who were graduated or more than that. Similarly the women whose husbands were illiterate (46.84%) faced more violence than women whose husbands had higher education (24.14%). Similar result was found by another studies carried out by Martin et al.⁸, Mahapatro M et al.⁷, Mitra S et al.⁹ that women who have higher education levels are found to be substantially less likely to experience domestic violence whilst men's higher education level also reduces the likelihood of occurrence of violence.

Nearly half of the respondents were housewives and were not engaged in any occupation outside the home. About one-fourth of the total respondents were labourer by occupation. About 10 percent were engaged with

agricultural work and only about 6 percent were in service. The analysis of data disclosed that women who were engaged to any outside work were less exposed to violence. The study of Mitra S. also revealed that economically productive role of women confer some protection to them against domestic violence.⁹

Employment status of husband also made significant difference on the prevalence of domestic violence. Out of total 39 women whose husbands are unemployed, about 62 percent were victims of violence as against about 37 percent in those whose husbands were employed. Result of the study carried out by Bhattacharya A et al. also revealed that population with unemployed husbands reported more violence (81.25%) than their counterparts with employed husbands (34.65%).¹⁰

The study disclosed that out of 600 respondents 492 were married, about 6 percent were widows, about 5 percent were re-married, about 4 percent were divorced, and 2.50 percent were separated. It is observed that out of 15 separated women about 79 percent were victims of violence. Out of 23 cases divorcees and 29 cases of re-marriage, incidence of violence was reported in 80 percent cases of divorcees and 83 percent case of re-marriage. The perpetrators in these cases were members of the families with whom they were living.

The result of the present study revealed that social class background of respondents made significant difference in the prevalence of domestic violence. The analysis of data disclosed that about 23 percent respondents were belong to class I, about 21 percent were of class II, about 15 percent were from class III, 18 percent were from class IV and 23 percent were from class V. It was observed that domestic violence against women was largely seen in lower classes as compared to lower prevalence in upper classes and the difference was statistically significant. Similar result found by Bhattacharya et al. that as the socio economic condition of respondents became better, prevalence of domestic violence decreased.¹⁰

About 32 percent of the respondents were living in nuclear families and about 68 percent in joint families. Out of 195 respondents from nuclear families about 32 percent were exposed to domestic violence and out of 405 respondents living with joint families about 41 percent were victims of domestic violence. Thus the prevalence of violence appears to be higher in joint families as compared to nuclear families which was found statistically significant. Unlike the study carried out by Yugantar Education Society found that the incidence of violence appears to be higher in nuclear families as compared to joint families.⁶

The data pertaining to age of respondents at the time of marriage indicates that out of 600 respondents 272 respondents were married before 18 years of age and 328 respondents were married after 18 years of age. It is observed in the study that younger age at marriage puts a

lot of stress for adjustment, which result in violence. The data collected indicates that out of 272 women, married before 18 years, about 43 percent reported that they were abused as against about 34 percent of the respondents who married after 18 years of age and this was statistically significant. In a study of Yugantar Education Society⁶ and Bhattacharya et al¹⁰, also a positive association was observed between the age at marriage and incidence of domestic violence against women.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of data analysis and major findings, the following conclusions may be drawn-

The women who were married at a lower age were at higher risk of being abused in contrast to those who were married at later age.

The data revealed that education had a significant impact on the prevalence of domestic violence. The women who have higher education levels are found to be substantially less likely to experience domestic violence whilst men's higher education level also reduces the likelihood of occurrence of violence.

The study also revealed that economically productive role of women confer some protection to them against domestic violence. Employment status of husband also made significant difference on the prevalence of domestic violence as population with unemployed husbands reported more violence than their counterparts with employed husbands.

The social class background of victims of domestic violence revealed that women belonging to lower class families run at a higher risk of being abused as compared to women belonging to middle and upper classes. The prevalence of violence appears to be higher in joint families as compared to nuclear families. The analysis of the data disclosed that there is no significant difference between the Hindu and Muslim religions as far as prevalence of violence concerned.

Recommendations

Most of the victims of domestic violence are uneducated, backward and economically disadvantaged. Women need to be empowered through education, employment opportunities, legal literacy, and right to inheritance. It is necessary to plan a media strategy for bringing a massive awareness and education on the issue of domestic violence against women.

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