Original Research Article

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Domestic violence and related factors among ever married females in a rural area of southern India

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ABSTRACT

Background: The WHO reports that the proportion of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner ranged from 15% to 71%. According to NFHS-3 and India's NCRB, the increasing cases of any form of violence against women and also the variation in its prevalence among different sections of the society indicate that it is preventable. This has been the motivation for conducting this study. The aim of the study was to know the prevalence, different forms and associated factors of domestic violence against ever married females between 15-49 years age.

Methods: Community based cross-sectional study population included ever married females from 15 to 49 years. Sample size was calculated using openEpi online program. Simple random sampling was used. A pre-designed semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Data was analyzed using SPSS software v24. Chi-square test was used

Results: It was observed that 33.5% (n=83) suffered from any form of violence and 29.4% (n=73) experienced physical violence at least once. Emotional abuse was seen in 12.5% whereas sexual abuse was seen in 4.4%. The experience of domestic violence by women was significantly related to the consumption of alcohol by the husband, education status of the females and their husband.

Conclusions: By improving the literacy, and sensitizing about equal rights and need to look their wife as a life partner rather than a slave, an attempt can be made to break the chain of domestic violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Ever-married females

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization reports that the proportion of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner ranged from 15% to 71%, with the majority between 29% and 62%. According to NFHS-3 (2005-06), one-third of women age 15-49 years have experienced physical violence and about 1 in 10 have experienced sexual violence. In total, 35% have experienced physical or sexual violence. The prevalence of spousal physical or

sexual violence is much higher among women in the poorest households (49%) than among women in the wealthier households (18%). The prevalence of physical or sexual violence ranges from 6% in Himachal Pradesh to 59% in Bihar.² Violence against women has serious health consequences like death, physical injuries, unintended pregnancies, induced abortions, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV etc. Not only physical but her mental health is also disrupted. Also, those children who are exposed to intimate partner violence at

home are more likely to be abusive themselves and they also suffer from behavioral problems.

To add upon this information, there are different studies done country wide to understand the prevalence and nature of domestic violence against women.³⁻⁷ According to NFHS-3 data and India's National Crime Record Bureau, the increasing cases of any form of violence against women and also the variation in its prevalence among different sections of the society indicate that it is preventable.^{2,8,9} Married women are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence by husbands than by anyone else. This has been the motivation for conducting this study to understand the variation in the prevalence of domestic violence.

METHODS

Place of the study

Rural field practice area of Malla Reddy Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad.

Study design

Community based cross-sectional study.

Study period

Sept 2015 to July 2016.

Study population

Study population included ever married females from 15 to 49 years. It included currently married, widow, divorced, separated and deserted women. Widows whose husband died more than 5 years back were excluded from the study, since they may forget and move on with their life, they tend to avoid any questions related to their past.

Sample size

Sample size was calculated using openEpi online program. The total population of ever married females in age group of 15-49 years in the study area was 867. According to NFHS-3, the prevalence of domestic violence in rural India is 40.2%. With 95% of confidence interval and 1% design effect for random sample, the sample size required was 260.

Sampling technique

Simple random sampling technique was used.

Study sample

Those females in the study area who fulfill the selection criteria and willing to participate were included in the study. Accordingly, 248 females volunteered to participate in the study.

Data collection

House to house data collection was done. Oral informed consent was taken. First the purpose of the study was explained and also every participant was ensured about the anonymity of the response and that their response shall not be disclosed to any of their relative or any other person, so that they feel free to respond. Those who agreed to participate were included in the study and were interviewed. Α pre-designed semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data related to their living arrangement, relationship with their husband, and any history of emotional, physical or sexual abuse in past by husband or any other family member. These questions were derived from the NFHS-4 women's questionnaire. 12

Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional ethical committee of the Medical College.

Processing and analysis of data

Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS software v24. Chi-square test was used to determine the statistical significance of the differences observed.

RESULTS

A total of 248 ever married females eligible for the study were studied.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics.

Characteristics	Groups	Frequency (%)
Age (in years)	20-25	52 (21)
	26-30	82 (33.1)
	31-35	59 (23.8)
	36-40	28 (11.3)
	41-45	17 (6.9)
	46-49	10 (4)
Marital status	Currently married	243 (98)
	Widowed	1 (0.45)
	Divorced	3 (1.2)
	Separated	1 (0.45)
Married duration (in years)	<5	70 (28.2)
	6-10	76 (30.6)
	11-15	54 (21.8)
	16-20	23 (9.3)
	>20	25 (10.1)
Household	Nuclear	180 (72.6)
structure	Non-nuclear	68 (27.4)
Name have of	0	9 (3.6)
Number of children	1-2 children	185 (74.6)
Ciliui en	>3 children	54 (21.8)
	Hindu	221 (89.1)
Religion	Muslim	15 (6)
	Christian	8 (3.2)
	Others	4 (1.6)

Socio-demographic characteristics

Table 1 represents the study population according to the socio-demographic characteristics.

It can be seen that maximum females (33.1%, n=82) were in the age group of 26-30years followed by 31-35years group (23.8%, n=59) and maximum (89.1%, n=221) were Hindus. Out of the study population currently married females were 98% (n=243). Marital duration for most of the females was 6-10 years (30.6%, n=76) and <5years (28.2%, n=70). Most of the females (72.6%, n=180) lived in nuclear family. 74.65% of the females had 1-2 children. It was observed that 19.4% of females and 13.7% of husbands were illiterate; and 36.7% of females

and 53.2% of husbands had education more than 12 years. It was also seen that 76.2% of the females were unemployed and dependent on their husbands for their financial needs.

Forms of violence

From the present study it was observed that 60.9% (n=151) females agree that it is justifiable for husbands to beat his wife under some circumstances. 30.6% of females agree that husband is justified beating his wife when she shows disrespect for her in-laws. The next commonly agreed reason was wife going out without telling her husband (25.8%), followed by if she does not cook food properly (23.4%).

Table 2: Forms of violence.

			If yes, how often		
Form of violence	Yes (%)	Often (%)	Sometime (%)	Not in past 12 months (%)	
Emotional abuse					
Says or do something to humiliate in front of others	17 (6.9)	2 (11.76)	14 (82.4)	1 (5.9)	
Threaten to harm you or someone close to you	10 (4)	1 (10)	8 (80)	1 (10)	
Insult you or make you feel bad about yourself	24 (9.7)	4 (16.67)	14 (58.3)	6 (25)	
Physical abuse					
Push you, shake you or throw something at you	38 (15.3)	11 (28.9)	21 (55.3)	6 (15.8)	
Twist your arm or pull your hair	35 (14.1)	13 (37.1)	20 (57.1)	2 (5.71)	
Slap you	60 (24.2)	13 (21.7)	42 (70)	5 (8.3)	
Punch you with fist or something that could hurt	23 (9.3)	10 (43.5)	10 (43.5)	3 (13)	
Kick you, drag you or beat you up	21 (8.5)	5 (23.8)	13 (61.9)	3 (14.3)	
Try to choke you or burn you on purpose	11 (4.4)	2 (18.2)	5 (45.5)	4 (36.7)	
Threaten or attack with knife, gun or any other weapon	9 (3.6)	2 (22.2)	4 (44.4)	3 (33.3)	
Sexual abuse					
Physically forced to have sexual intercourse	9 (3.6)	0	4 (44.4)	5 (55.6)	
Physically forced to perform any other sexual acts	5 (2)	0	3 (60)	2 (40)	
Forced with threats or in any way for sexual acts	6 (2.4)	0	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)	

Table 2 represents the various forms of violence females had experienced. It was observed that 33.5% (n=83) of females suffered from any form of violence in the past and 29.4% (n=73) of females experienced physical violence at least once. Slapping was most commonly observed form of physical violence (24.2%). One in four females was ever slapped by their husbands. Emotional abuse was seen in 12.5% whereas sexual abuse was seen in 4.4% of females. Among those who experienced emotional violence, the most common was insult or make feel bad about herself. It was seen that only 10.1% (n=25) ever fought back physically to defend herself and 3.6% (n=9) initiated physical violence. Two percent of females (n=5) had experienced physical violence while they were pregnant.

Often this physical or sexual violence causes injuries. Almost one in three females (28.7%) who have experienced physical or sexual violence reported having injuries; including bruise, cuts or aches (27.39%) being

most common, followed by severe burns (8.21%); eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or minor burns (4.11%) and deep wounds, broken bones or teeth, or other serious injuries (2.74%). Physical violence by anyone other than husband from the time she was 15 years old was reported among 19% (n=47) females. Among those who reported such physical violence, 74.4% (n=35) were at the hands of mother-in-law, 46.8% (n=22) were by father-in-law and 48.8% (n=23) by other in-laws. Few reported violence by parents and sibling, including 6.4% by mother and sister/brother each; and 4.3% by father.

In the present study it was found that 52.05% (n=38) of females that had experienced physical violence have sought for help. Abused women most often sought help from their families (n=30, 78.9%) and only 13% (n=5) sought help from husband's family. Very few abused women sought help from police, doctor, friends and neighbors.

Association with socio-demographic factors

It was observed that 58.5% (n=145) husbands were using alcohol and 79.5% of the domestic violence was under the influence of alcohol.

From Table 3, it can be seen that the difference in the experience of domestic violence by women was significantly related to the consumption of alcohol by the

husband (χ^2 ₁df=22.765, p=0.000). It can also be seen that females who have more than 12 years of education experienced comparatively less domestic violence (18.7%) and this difference was statistically significant (χ^2 ₅df=17.029, p=0.004). Similar significant difference was observed with husband's education (χ^2 ₅df=11.276, p=0.046). Other parameters which were studied like employment of females, household structure, number of children and religion were not related to the difference in prevalence of domestic violence.

Table 3: Association with socio-demographic characteristics.

Correlates under study		Any form of	Any form of violence		χ^2 and p value	
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)	χ and p value	
Education of female	No education	17 (35.4)	31 (64.6)	48 (19.4)		
	<5 yrs completed	6 (46.2)	7 (53.8)	13 (5.2)		
	5-7 yrs completed	9 (56.2)	7 (43.8)	16 (6.5)	χ^2_{5} df=17.029 p=0.004	
	8-9 yrs completed	11 (47.8)	12 (52.2)	23 (9.3)		
	10-11 yrs completed	23 (40.4)	34 (59.6)	57 (23)		
	>12 yrs completed	17 (18.7)	74 (81.3)	91 (36.7)		
Education of husband	No education	16 (47.1)	18 (52.9)	34 (13.7)		
	<5 yrs completed	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)	6 (2.4)		
	5-7 yrs completed	2 (40)	3 (60)	5 (2)	$\chi^2_{5}df=11.276$	
	8-9 yrs completed	10 (43.5)	13 (56.5)	23 (9.3)	p=0.046	
	10-11 yrs completed	21 (43.8)	27 (56.3)	48 (19.4)		
	>12 yrs completed	32 (24.2)	100 (75.8)	132 (53.2)		
Employment of female	Not employed	65 (34.4)	124 (65.6)	189 (76.2)	2 df_0 659	
	Employed for cash	17 (29.8)	40 (70.2)	57 (23)	χ^2_2 df=0.658 p=0.720	
	Employed not for cash	1 (50)	1 (50)	2 (0.8)	p=0.720	
Alcohol use by husband	Yes	66 (45.5)	79 (54.5)	145 (58.5)	χ^2_1 df=22.765	
	No	17 (16.5)	86 (66.5)	103 (41.5)	p=0.000	

DISCUSSION

Violence against women takes many forms including intimate partner violence like physical, sexual and psychological abuse, honor killing, forced and early marriages, trafficking, female genital mutilation and sexual violence including conflict related sexual violence. The most common violence experienced by women is intimate partner violence. Domestic violence was recognized as a criminal offence in India in 1983. The offence chargeable under section 498-A of the Indian Penal Code that relates to domestic violence is any act of cruelty by a husband (or his family) towards his wife. Collecting valid, reliable and ethical data on domestic violence against women faces certain hurdles due to sensitivity of the topic, concern of the safety of the respondent and the interviewer, culture of silence for domestic violence and the variation in acceptance and what constitute domestic violence across the country, culture and individual.

It was seen that 60.9% of females agreed that it is justifiable for husbands to beat his wife under some circumstances. According to NFHS-3, 54% of women and 51% of men agree for the justification.² This shows

that it is an accepted fact by most of the section of society that a husband can beat his wife for various reasons and it is not considered wrong and even females agree to this.

In the present study, was observed that 33.5% (n=83) of females suffered from any form of violence in the past and 29.4% (n=73) of females experienced physical violence at least once. According to data available for NFHS-4 survey, it can be seen that the prevalence of domestic violence ranges from minimum of12.9% in Goa, 12.7% in Uttarakhand and 2.6% Sikkim to a maximum of 43.2% in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh both, 43% in Telangana and 40.6% in Tamil Nadu. This shows that there is a lot of variation in the prevalence. Moreover it is also observed that there is variation in the prevalence within the state when we compare NFHS-3 and NFHS-4 data. 13 Sikkim, which reported domestic violence of 16.3% in NFHS-3 survey, drastically reduced to 2.6% in NFHS-4 survey. Whereas Meghalaya, which reported 12.8% of domestic violence in NFHS-3, increased to 28.7% in NFHS-4. Also, there is rural urban variation observed. Most of the states showing more prevalence in rural area. This may be because the grow up with the thinking that it's ok for a man to beat his wife.

Parikh, Anjenaya studied the prevalence and various causes of domestic violence in Raigad district. The most common socio-cultural risk factor for domestic violence, as reported was addiction (42.11%), followed by poverty (38.55%), husband brought up with the idea that wifebeating is acceptable (36.14%) and visiting brothels (16.86%). The various causes for domestic violence were found to be conflict over cooking and household work (38.55%), wife's nagging or arguing (32.53%), children related issues (30.12%) and economic distress (26.5%). In this study, slapping was most commonly observed form of physical violence (24.2%). NFHS-3 report shows 34% females were slapped by their husband. Similar observations were made by Parikh, Anjenaya.

Emotional abuse was seen in 12.5% whereas sexual abuse was seen in 4.4% of females. According to NFHS-3 One in six (16 percent) married women have experienced emotional violence by their husband. A study done in Pakistan shows that about 31.8% of females experienced verbal insult by husband. In a study done by Shrivastava et al in a tertiary care centre, it was found that 25% had history of physical, psychiatric illness including substance abuse.

In the present study, it was observed that 58.5% (n=145) husbands were using alcohol and 79.5% of the domestic violence was under the influence of alcohol. The experience of domestic violence by women was significantly related to the consumption of alcohol by the husband, education status of the females and their husband. According to NFHS-3, nearly half (46%) of married women with no education have experienced spousal violence; similarly, nearly half of women whose husbands have no education (47%) have experienced spousal violence.² Similarly, the findings of a study done in Pakistan showed significant relationship between socio-economic status, women's age, women's educational attainment and economic dependence and their exposure to domestic violence.¹⁵ Other studies conducted in Pakistan observed multiple forms of violence that Pakistani women face which cumulatively contribute to the development or continuation of different forms of psychological stress and serious mental ill health.16

In the present study it was found that 52.05% (n=38) of females that had experienced physical violence have sought for help. Abused women most often sought help from their families (n=30, 78.9%) and only 13% (n=5) sought help from husband's family. According to NFHS-3, only one in four abused women have ever sought help to try to end the violence they have experienced. Two out of three women have not only never sought help, but have also never told anyone about the violence.²

The cycle of domestic violence is repeated across generations. Women whose mothers were beaten by their fathers are twice as likely to experience violence as women whose mothers were not beaten by their fathers: 60 percent, compared with 30 percent.² There are other studies from all around the world that shows the universal prevalence of domestic violence against females and the attitude that intimate partner violence is a private matter, usually considered a justifiable response to misbehavior on the part of the wife. These findings point to serious violations of women's rights and require the immediate attention of health professionals and policymakers.^{3-7,14-19}

CONCLUSION

It is observed that domestic violence is universally present and accepted by all sector of the society. The factors which are related to domestic violence are education of females, education of husband, alcohol abuse by husband, socio-economic status and most important, the attitude that a husband has a right to beat or verbally insult his wife, which is an accepted fact even by females. In order to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence all the related issues need to be addressed. Reduction of alcohol abuse is a must. By improving the literacy among females and males, and also sensitizing them at an early age about the equal rights of females and need to look their wife as a life partner rather than a slave, an attempt can be made to break the chain of domestic violence.

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