

Original Research Article

Violence against women: a study on nature, prevalence and extent

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ABSTRACT

Background: To study the nature, prevalence and extent of domestic violence against women in the study area.

Methods: The cross-sectional study was carried out in the urban and rural area of Surendranagar district of Gujarat. Total 600 ever married women of 15-49 years of age were selected for the study purpose. The self-administered questionnaire was used to gather all the information. Steps were taken up to maintain confidentiality.

Results: Out of total 600 women, 231 (38.5%) were victims of domestic violence in one form or the other. The analysis based on each form of violence discloses that about 83% were victims of psychological violence, about 54% of the victims had experienced physical violence, about 32% were victims of economical violence and about 24% were victims of sexual violence.

Conclusions: Husband was the frequent instigator of domestic violence. Psychological violence is the commonest form of violence experienced by the victims.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Economical violence, Physical violence, Psychological violence, Sexual violence

INTRODUCTION

Since ages, women throughout the world have been accorded lower status than men. In the 21st century even though women are educated and equally participating in employment with men, still the social conventions, traditions and restrictions control the life of women directly or indirectly.¹

The UN has specifically articulated that violence against women does not limit to acts of physical, sexual and psychological violence within the family and the community. It includes spousal battering, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in educational institutions, trafficking of women, forced prostitution and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, such as rape during war.² Recent global prevalence figures indicate that 35%

of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. On average, 30% of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their partner. Globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner.³

METHODS

Study population

This cross-sectional study was carried out in the urban and rural area of Surendranagar district of Gujarat, India during April to October 2015.

The participants were the married, divorced, separated, widowed women of 15-49 years of age. Unmarried and non-cooperative women were not included in the study.

Sample size

For sample size calculation, the standard statistical formula was used. Assuming that overall prevalence of domestic violence in India is around 40% with an allowable error of 10%, the sample size was calculated as 600.^{4,5} By equally dividing, 300 women from rural area and 300 women from urban area were selected randomly.

Sampling method: The participants for the urban study were selected from urban field practice area of medical college. Anganwadis of the same location were selected as the place of interview. List of married women of 15-49 years of age was obtained from the survey registers of anganwadi workers. To maintain simplicity and uniformity, 20 participants from each of 15 anganwadi centers were randomly selected. Similarly, for the rural study, the field practice area of PHC (Khodu) covered under medical college was selected. Total population of khodu village is 6,060.⁶ 300 women fulfilling the inclusion criterion were randomly selected from 8 anganwadis of Khodu as similar to the urban area.

Data collection: Trained anganwadi workers and ASHAs approached potential participants through personal visits. Data was collected at anganwadi centre/ health centre in the absence of their family members. After explaining the study purpose initial rapport was built up with the help of

female health workers and they were taken into confidence. The data collection was based on self-administered pre-designed, pre-tested questionnaire made in local language (Gujarati). In case of illiterate women questionnaire was filled up with the help of female health workers. Informed verbal consent was initially taken. They were assured that anonymity and strict confidentiality would be maintained. No names of participants were recorded to ensure confidentiality.

Data entry and analysis: Filled-up forms were collected and checked for completeness. Incomplete questionnaires were excluded. The analysis was done using SPSS version-24.

RESULTS

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.

Husband was the frequent instigator of domestic violence as reported by about 41% of the respondents. About 36% of victims blamed in-laws. About 15% respondents held sister-in-law and about 6% held brother-in-law responsible for instigating violence (Table 1).

Table 1: Perpetrators of domestic violence (n=231).

Perpetrator	Rural (n=134)		Urban (n=97)		Total (n=231)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Husband	58	43.28%	37	38.14%	95	41.13%
Mother-in-law Father-in-law	41	30.60%	42	43.30%	83	35.93%
Sister-in-law	22	16.42%	13	13.41%	35	15.15%
Brother-in-law	10	7.46%	4	4.12%	14	6.06%
Others*	3	2.24%	1	1.03%	4	1.73%

(Others* include relatives of husband, son, daughter-in-law etc.)

Table 2: Frequency of domestic violence (n= 231).

Frequency of violence	Respondents	
	No.	%
Daily	9	3.90
Once/twice a week	21	9.09
Once/twice in a month	36	15.58
Number of times a month	43	18.62
Occasionally	52	22.51
Uncertain	70	30.30

In response to frequency of domestic violence, the response of the participant was: daily (3.90%), weekly (9.09%), monthly (15.58%), number of times a month (18.62%), occasionally (22.51%) and uncertain (30.30%). (Table 2).

In the present study women also suffered from more than one type of violence. The analysis based on each form of violence discloses that about 83% were victims of psychological violence, about 54% of the victims had experienced physical violence, about 32% were victims of economical violence and about 24% were victims of sexual violence (Table 3).

The analysis based on each form of violence disclosed that about 54 percent of the victims had experienced physical violence. About 88 % of them reported slapping followed by kicking (68.50%), hitting (41.73%) and twisting arm (28.35%) (Table 4). About 41 percent of the victims of domestic violence reported that they were emotionally abused by blaming. About 37 percent of the victims reported that they were abused by insulting them and about 21 percent were being criticized. The study

also revealed that about 17 percent of the respondents were given threats (Table 5).

Table 3: Prevalence of various forms of violence (n=231).

Form of violence	Rural (n=134)		Urban (n=97)		Total (n=231)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Physical	84	62.69	43	44.32	127	54.98
Sexual	37	27.61	20	20.62	57	24.68
Psychological	113	84.33	79	81.44	192	83.12
Economical	52	38.81	23	23.71	75	32.47

(*Multiple answers)

Table 4: Nature of physical violence (n=127).

Nature of physical violence	Respondents	
	No.	%
Slapping	112	88.19
Hitting	53	41.73
Kicking	87	68.50
Twisting arm	36	28.35
Others*	24	18.90

(Others* includes pushing, throwing objects, pulling hair etc.).

(**Multiple answers).

Table 5: Nature of psychological violence (n=192).

Nature of psychological violence	Respondents	
	No.	%
Criticize	41	21.35
Threats	34	17.71
Insults	72	37.50
Blame	79	41.15
No involvement in decision making	43	22.39
Restricted movements	32	16.67
Isolation from social network	28	14.58
Neglecting health	21	10.94
Others*	14	7.29

(Others* includes compelling them to feel guilty, treated like servants, repeated charge of extra-marital relations etc.)

(**Multiple answers)

The study result revealed that out of total 231 victims of domestic violence about 24 percent were victims of sexual violence. It was observed that about 58 percent of them were pressurized for sex and about 49 percent of the victims reported that they were being hurt for sex (Table 6).

Table 6: Nature of sexual violence (n=57).

Nature of sexual violence	Respondents	
	No.	%
Pressure for sex	33	57.89
Hurt for sex	28	49.12
Others*	7	12.28

(Others* includes verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that affects an individual's work, passing comments etc.)

(**Multiple answers).

No control over economic resources (70.67%) and not giving money for household maintenance or personal expenses (34.67%) were the commonest forms of economical violence (Table 7).

Table 7: Nature of economical violence (n= 75).

Nature of economic violence	Respondents	
	No.	%
Not giving money for household maintenances or for personal expenses	26	34.67
Forced to leave paid work	13	17.33
Pressured to pay money to husband/in-laws	17	22.67
Little or no control over economic resources	53	70.67
Demanding money for the purpose of gambling, alcohol, smoking, etc.	8	10.67
Others*	13	17.33

(Others* includes not given freedom to make purchase of their choice, pressurized to bring money from parents) (**Multiple answers).

DISCUSSION

Nature, prevalence and extent of domestic violence

For the purpose of the present study, domestic violence has been defined as an act carried out by any member of the family against woman with the object of harassing her physically, mentally, sexually or economically. For the purpose of analysis domestic violence against women has been classified as (i) Physical (ii) Psychological (iii) Sexual and (iv) Economic. While describing the nature, prevalence and extent of domestic violence, different forms of violence used by perpetrators were considered.

Prevalence of domestic violence

Out of 600 respondents covered by the study 38.50 percent 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. WHO Multi-Country Study on

Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women found that between 13 percent and 61 percent of women experienced physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime.⁴ The most recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS III) found that in India 34% of women between the ages of 15-49 years have experienced violence at some point since they turned 15 and that 37% of married women have experienced violence.⁵

Perpetrators of domestic violence

Domestic violence is not a natural phenomenon and as such is not the outcome of natural relationship and behavior. In reality it is the effect of some precipitating factors and instigation. The study reveals that in majority of the cases (41.13%), the husband was the principal instigator of violence as against about 36 percent of the cases wherein in-laws played major role in instigating violence. About 15 percent respondents held sister-in-law as instigator as against about 6 percent as brother-in-law. Yugantar Education society's study also found that in majority of the cases (40%), the husband was the principal instigator.⁷

Frequency of violence

Violence against women, if occasionally caused, does not assume the form of a problem. However, when it is repeatedly used, for whatever reasons, it does become a cognisable issue. As a part of this study, it was, therefore enquired as to how many times the act of violence is repeated in the case of victim. The result revealed that about 4 percent of the respondents faced violence every day. Incidence of violence took place once or twice in a week in the cases of about 9 percent of the respondents and once or twice in a month in the cases of about 16 percent of the respondents. About 18 percent of the respondents faced violence a number of times in a month. About 22 percent respondents face violence occasionally and in about 30 percent of the cases frequency of violence was uncertain. No difference was noticed between the rural and urban areas in this respect. However, it was observed that frequency of violence was more in lower class as compared to families belonging to middle and upper class.

Further, as compared to nuclear families, the violence appeared to be more frequent in joint families. In the five state study, about 16% of women reported that they were facing domestic violence once or twice in a week, or once or twice in a month and the percentage of respondents against whom domestic violence was committed every day was 15%.⁷ In Singur, the study also found that 9.1% faced violence few times in a week or few times in a month where as 81.8% faced it in a year.⁸ In Bangalore study, the frequency of violence was at least once in a week in 34.21% women, once in 15 days in 31.58% women, once in a month in a month in 26.32% and once in 1-3 months in 7.89% women.⁹

Nature and extent of physical violence

The analysis based on each form of violence disclosed that about 54 percent of the victims had experienced physical violence. The most common and frequently used forms of physical violence reported by the respondents are slaps, hitting, kicking, twisting arm, throwing objects and burning with rod. About 88 % of them reported slapping followed by kicking (68.50%), hitting (41.73%) and twisting arm (28.35%). According to NFHS-III most common physical violence was slapping (34%) followed by twisting of arms or pulling of hairs (15.4%), throwing something (14%), kicking (12%) and choking (2%).¹⁰

Nature and extent of emotional violence

Domestic violence also includes any act which causes a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress. About 41 percent of the victims of domestic violence reported that they were emotionally abused by blaming them for everything that went wrong in the family. About 37 percent of the victims reported that they were abused by insulting them and about 21 percent were being criticized. The study also revealed that about 17 percent of the respondents were given threats. A number of respondents, it is observed, were not allowed to meet their friends, relatives and parents, they had no freedom to express their views on family matters, their health problems were neglected and strict watch was kept on their movements. To state precisely, a sufficiently large number of respondents (about 83 percent) were the victims of emotional abuse. Other studies found that humiliation was the most common form of emotional violence.¹¹⁻¹³ The study also revealed that the incidence and extent of emotional violence was nearly similar in urban and rural area.

Nature and extent of sexual violence

The study result revealed that out of total 231 victims of domestic violence about 24 percent were victims of sexual violence. It was observed that about 58 percent of them were pressurized for sex and about 49 percent of the victims reported that they were being hurt for sex. Other studies also reported that most common form of sexual violence was physically forced her to have sexual intercourse (58.3%).^{8,12}

Economic abuse

Economic abuse is a new concept in domestic violence. It is the result of dependency. In the present study efforts were made to find out how far dependency results in economic abuse of women. In order to maintain dependency, the women respondents were prevented from taking a job, they were forced to leave the existing job, full salary was forcefully seized from them, they were pressurized to bring money from their natal family and they were not given money for household maintenances or for personal expenses. Out of 231

victims of domestic violence about 32 percent had experienced economic abuse. The study carried out by Yugantar Education Society revealed that out of 1250 cases only 278 (11%) reported that they were not the victims of economic abuse.⁷

CONCLUSION

The most common forms of physical violence reported by the majority of the respondents were slaps, hitting, kicking, twisting arm, throwing objects and burning with rod. The perpetrators of the physical violence were mostly husbands of the victims. Majority of the victims of physical violence were from rural areas. The most common form of sexual violence had physically forced her to have sexual intercourse. Husband was the principal instigator. More prevalent in rural areas, and lower class and lower middle-class families of urban areas. A sufficiently large number of respondents were the victims of emotional abuse. The study revealed that the incidence and extent of emotional violence was nearly similar in urban and rural area. Economic abuse was executed along with other types of violence and not separately. The victims of economic abuse were more in lower class families as compared to middle class and upper-class families.

A massive awareness campaign involving the community, religious leaders, women's organizations, NGOs, and opinion makers at all levels is necessary to counter the present trend of violence against women in general and domestic violence in particular.

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