

Original Article

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MARRIED WOMEN IN RURAL AREA OF WARDHA DISTRICT: A COMMUNITY BASED CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Domestic violence against females is a serious public health concern in every community and culture. However, its actual extent is difficult to measure and may be much higher than reported. Long standing domestic violence not only affects the women physically but also has the long term impact on mental health. Domestic violence has the intergenerational cycle. As the rural women are more susceptible to domestic violence, present study would estimate the prevalence, associated vulnerability factors, and immediate reaction of women to domestic violence.

Method: A community based cross-sectional study was planned in Sawangi Village of Wardha district. All the currently married women in 15-40 yrs were interviewed for domestic violence by male intimate partner in last 30 days. Data was then analysed by descriptive statistics.

Result: One or other form of domestic violence was experienced by 68.12 % of study participants. More than two third were from nuclear family and Hindus by religion. Emotional violence was seen in 98 % of victims. Slapping was noted in all the victims of physical violence and nearly three fourth of them had sustained injuries. Alcohol was considered to be most common reason for domestic violence. Most of the victims had the feeling of revenge and powerlessness while 67 % of them resisted the act.

Conclusion: The prevalence of domestic violence by spouse in last 30 days was very high in study population and it has greatly affected their mental health.

Keyword: spousal violence, cross-sectional, rural women, physical, reaction

INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization (WHO) has defined domestic violence as "the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners".¹ Domestic violence against females is a serious public health concern in every community and culture. However, its actual extent is difficult to measure

as many goes under reported. As per NFHS 3 report nearly two in five (37 percent) married women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their husbands. This figure translates into millions of women who have suffered, and continue to suffer, at the hands of husbands and other family members.²

Domestic violence is not considered seriously unless it involves homicide or serious physical

injury to the victim. But from medical point of view long standing domestic violence results in more psychological disorders as compared with physical health problems. ³ The cycle of domestic violence is repeated across generations. It can be clearly stated from previous studies that rural women with low educational and social status are more prone for domestic violence. The study was conducted to estimate the actual prevalence, vulnerability factors and immediate reaction of study participants to domestic violence.

METHODS

A community based cross sectional study was carried out in conducted in Sawangi village, attached to tertiary rural training hospital from Oct 1 2013 to Dec 30, 2013. There were total 1564 households in village. One currently married woman 15-40 years of age group was selected from each household for study. If more than one married women were residing in one household then randomly one was selected. Since most females were reluctant to disclose information they consider confidential and intimate, only those who gave consent were included in study. A pre-designed, pre-tested and structured questionnaire containing the selected demographic data, violence experience, probable reason for it and immediate response to violence was administered to study participants by face to face interview method. During the interview, the female was alone with the interviewer to maintain the cordial environment. The anonymity of the responses was guaranteed. For the context of the present study, only the spousal violence was taken into consideration. The reference period considered was last thirty days from the date of interview. Data obtained were collated and analyzed statistically by simple proportions and percentage.

RESULT

As given in table 1 the history of domestic violence was seen in 68.89 % of family with male head while 64.86 % with female as head of family. Of the women in age of 21- 30 years 71.43 % had history of domestic violence followed by 31-40 years (65.6 %). Women in nuclear family were more exposed to domestic violence than joint family 79.51% and 37.7 % respectively. Women in Hindu family were more prone to domestic violence (77%) followed by Muslims (47.8%), closely followed by Parsi (44.29%).

Table 1: Social Determinants of respondents

	History of domestic Violence (%)		Total (%) (n=389)
	Yes (n=265)	No (n=124)	
Head of family			
Male	217(68.89)	98(31.11)	315(80.98)
Female	48(64.86)	26(35.14)	74(19.02)
Age			
< 20 yrs	8(42.11)	11(57.89)	19(4.88)
21-30 yrs	175(71.43)	70(28.57)	245(62.98)
31-40 yrs	82(65.60)	43(34.40)	125(32.13)
Type of family			
Nuclear	225(79.51)	58(20.49)	283(72.75)
Joint	40(37.74)	66(62.26)	106(27.25)
Religion			
Hindu	222(77.08)	66(22.92)	288(74.04)
Muslim	11(47.83)	12(52.17)	23(5.91)
Christian	1(12.5)	7(87.5)	8(2.06)
Parsi	31(44.29)	39(55.71)	70(17.99)
Total	265(68.12)	124(31.88)	389(100.00)

Table 2: Type of violence experience by victims

Type of violence	Victims (n=265) (%)
Physical	66 (24.9)
Slapping	66 (100)
Beating	58 (87.88)
Pushing	16 (24.24)
Throwing objects	12 (18.18)
Verbal	261 (98.49)
Financial	12 (4.53)

Table 3: Type of injuries sustained by physical violence (n=55)

Type of injuries sustained	Victims (%)
Bruising	43 (78.18)
Burns	8 (12.12)
Cuts	7 (10.61)
Contusion	3 (4.55)

During the reference period 68.12 % had experience one or other form of violence Verbal /emotional abuse was most commonly seen in 98.49 % followed by physical abuse in 25 % of victims as shown in Table 2. Slapping was reported by all cases of physical violence followed by beating (87.88 %), pushing (24 %) and throwing object in 18.18 %. Amongst these victims of physical violence, 55 women had sustained injury due to violence. A bruise was noted in 78 % while 12 % and 10.6 % had burns and cuts due to violence. (Table 3)

Alcohol abuse was the most common reason for domestic abuse as reported by 86.8 % of victims (n=230). Remaining had reported other reasons in descending order as Dowry, giving birth to

girl child and work stress. When multiple response question was asked on immediate reaction to violence 97 % (n- 257) and 95 % (n- 253) of victims had feeling of revenge and powerlessness followed by feeling of shamefulness by 88 % (n-234) while 67 % (n-179) of them resisted the act of violence in one or other way.

DISCUSSION

The prevalence of domestic violence in our study was 68 % far more than reported by other studies, ^{2,4,5} though the reference period was only last 30 days compared to others where prevalence of last one year or ever experience in lifetime is being reported. As the population in study is already most vulnerable one this difference was noted. The landmark multi country study reported the proportion of ever married women, ever experienced physical or sexual violence ranged from 15 -71 %. ⁶ But again in most of these studies the economic and emotional abuse was not considered. We suspected that with female as head of family the prevalence of spousal violence would be less but it proved to be wrong. The prevalence of domestic violence was highest in third decade while lowest in 15- 20 years of age group. A women's young age is generally thought to be risk factor for the experience of domestic violence as she is not mature to secure her marriage life. The contradictory finding in study reflects the unwillingness of young women to talk openly and honestly on this sensitive issue. It is clear from the study that joint family act as a shield against domestic violence, also reported by Visaria. ⁷ Three out of four women belonging Hindu religion had experienced the domestic violence followed by half of Muslim and Parsi respondents. The prevalence of domestic violence in Muslims may be more than reported as it is against Islam for Women to unveil themselves in public.

Almost 99 % of women had reported of verbal or emotional domestic violence, followed by physical in 24 % and economic 4.5 %. The survey done by the Lawyers Collective Women's Rights Initiative in collaboration with the International Centre for Research on Women and UN Women reported Physical violence along with emotional and verbal abuse to be the most common form of domestic violence that women experienced followed closely by economic abuse. ⁸ With regard to emotional abuse, 14% of Indian women will have experienced this at some point in their lives, ⁹ but the figure must be much more as

found in present study as acts like intimidation, constant belittling, humiliating and various controlling behaviors such as isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting their access to information or assistance is commonly seen. Thus one victim suffers from multiple forms of domestic abuse. Slapping and wife beating was commonest form of physical violence. Victims of physical violence sustain injuries. 78 % of these respondents reported of bruises and some burns and cuts. 31% of married women from Tripura, 20% from Bihar, 19% from Assam and 15% from Uttarakhand report injuries as a result of physical violence. ¹⁰ All the injuries in present study were minor and go unreported. Alcohol was considered as cause of domestic violence by 86 % of victims followed with very large gap by dowry. Husband alcohol abuse is main cause for women experiencing domestic violence. ¹¹

In the present study 67 % of victims resisted to the violence much higher than that reported by Ghosh ¹² (26 %) as the women are more empowered and aware of their rights. Most of victims had the feeling of helplessness, revenge and shame. This will lead to more chances of suffering from anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, homicides, somatic pain syndromes, phobias and panic disorder.^{5,12} This also depicts their need to get the aid to break through the intergenerational cycle of domestic violence.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of domestic violence by spouse in last 30 days was very high in study population but this may be the correct picture of society. Most common form of domestic violence was verbal or emotional abuse seen in almost all the victims followed by physical abuse in 25 %. The prevalence of domestic violence does not differ by gender of head of family and age of women but differ by type of family and religion. Victims of physical abuse reported the minor injuries. Victims consider drinking alcohol as the main cause for domestic violence. Though a large proportion of women had resisted the violence but it had large scale mental health impact.

LIMITATION

We wanted to find the prevalence of all types of domestic violence in study population but the

women were reluctant and uncomfortable to question on sexual violence, so the question was later dropped out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The experience of violence undermines the empowerment of women and certainly is a barrier to the socio-economic and demographic development of the country. In view of the high prevalence of the problem, not only girls education should be encourage but also programmes should take into account active involvement of the male community for effective as well as fruitful amelioration of the issue. As domestic violence is found to be deep rooted in the socio cultural practices and both the perpetrators as well as victim take it for granted. There is need of major transformation in the socio cultural milieu and stringent law against perpetrators. A holistic response is required where Women will get the entire spectrum of services including legal, health, counseling etc under one roof.

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