

Assessment of prevalence and risk factors for domestic violence in a rural block of North India

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Abstract

Introduction: Violence against women is a serious problem in India. There is growing recognition that violence against women has a large public health impact, in addition to being a gross violation of women's human rights.

Aim and Objectives: To find the extent of different type of domestic violence and to identify various risk factors for domestic violence against married women.

Materials and Method: Population based cross-sectional study among 170 currently married women in a rural block of North India from May to October 2016 who were selected by stratified random sampling technique.

Results: 45.9% of the total study participants had experienced domestic violence. Education, occupation, financial dependence, type of family, alcohol abuse by husband and place of residence were significantly associated with domestic violence. Common reasons were disobeying husband/elders followed by neglecting household chores.

Keywords: Violence, Physical, Emotional, Sexual.

Introduction

In Indian society, woman occupies a vital position and venerable place. The Vedas glorified women as the mother, the creator, and one who gives life and worshipped her as a 'Devi' or Goddess. But their glorification was rather mythical for at the same time, in India women found her totally suppressed and subjugated in a patriarchal society which believed in clinging on to orthodox beliefs for the brunt of violence—domestic as well as public, physical, emotional and mental.

"Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women..."⁽¹⁾ Violence against women is "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 in private life."⁽²⁾

There is growing recognition that violence against women has a large public health impact, in addition to being a gross violation of women's human rights.⁽³⁾ The term "violence against women" encompasses many forms of violence, including violence by an intimate partner (intimate partner violence) and rape/sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by someone other than a partner (non-partner sexual violence), as well as female genital mutilation, honour killings and the trafficking of women.⁽³⁾ Violence is a widespread and growing problem in practically all societies. It takes many forms, and occurs in all settings: at work, in the home, in the streets and the

community at large. Though violence against women is well understood and transcends country, class and religion, it remains strongly pronounced in developing country contexts such as India owing to factors such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of good governance, infrastructural deficit and socio-cultural norms that support discrimination against women and girls. Violence against women is a significant health and social problem affecting virtually all societies, but often it goes unrecognized and unreported and in many countries it is still accepted as part of normal behavior. Most significant is the fact that women and girls experience violence primarily at the hands of men they know and within the so-called 'safe haven' of the home and family. WHO Multi-country study reported the prevalence of physical violence among ever married women from 13% to 61% among different countries of the world.⁽⁴⁾

Violence against women is a serious problem in India. Overall, one-third of women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence and about one in ten have experienced sexual violence. In total, 35% have experienced physical or sexual violence. This figure translates into millions of women who have suffered, and continue to suffer, at the hands of husbands and other family members.⁽⁵⁾

Thus, the present study was designed with objectives of finding the extent of different type of domestic violence and to identify various risk factors for domestic violence against currently married women.

Materials and Method

The present study was a population based cross-sectional study carried out in a rural block of North India (Haryana) from May to October 2016. All

married women who were living with their husband for last one year were included. Sample size was estimated using the formula, $N=4pq/l^2$ with $p= 37%$ (NFHS4 Haryana rural⁽⁶⁾) and $l=20%$ and came out to be 170. Stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of study subjects who were interviewed by the investigator after obtaining their consent. Details of ever-experienced domestic violence and its likely reasons were obtained from the participants. Data was entered in MS Excel, analysed using SPSS v20.0 and appropriate statistical tests were applied.

Results

Table 1 shows that 78 (45.9%) women out of the total study participants had ever-experienced domestic

violence. Majority of the abused women were in the age group of 26-30 years, educated till primary, unemployed and belonged to lower socioeconomic status.

Table 2 shows that 78 participants had experienced domestic violence of which physical violence alone was the commonest.

Younger women (<30 years), lesser educated, belonging to lower SES and joint family, financially dependent, whose husbands were alcoholics and those residing away from their parent's home were more abused. (Table 3).

The commonest reason cited by study participants for domestic violence was disobeying husband/elders followed by neglecting household chores.

Table 1: Socio-demographic distribution of study participants

| Variables | Abused (%) | Not abused (%) | Total (%) |
|------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------|
| Age group (in years) | | | |
| <20 | 2(2.56) | 3(3.2) | 5(2.9) |
| 20-25 | 24(30.7) | 17(18.4) | 41(24.1) |
| 26-30 | 26(33.3) | 31(33.7) | 57(33.5) |
| 31-35 | 8(10.2) | 11(11.9) | 19(11.1) |
| 36-40 | 8(10.2) | 12(13.0) | 20(11.7) |
| >40 | 10(12.8) | 18(19.5) | 28(16.4) |
| Education | | | |
| None | 8(10.2) | 4(4.3) | 12(7.05) |
| Primary | 32(41.0) | 9(9.7) | 41(24.1) |
| Middle | 24(30.7) | 39(42.4) | 63(37.0) |
| High School | 10(12.8) | 24(26.0) | 34(20.0) |
| Higher secondary | 3(3.8) | 7(7.6) | 10(5.8) |
| Graduate & above | 1(1.2) | 9(9.7) | 10(5.8) |
| Occupation | | | |
| None | 32(41.0) | 10(10.8) | 42(24.7) |
| Labourer | 23(29.4) | 12(13.04) | 35(20.6) |
| Business | 5(6.4) | 18(19.5) | 23(13.5) |
| Cultivation | 16(20.5) | 39(42.4) | 55(32.3) |
| Service | 2(2.5) | 13(14.1) | 15(8.8) |
| Socio economic status | | | |
| Lower | 54(69.2) | 32(34.7) | 86(50.58) |
| Middle | 23(29.48) | 56(60.8) | 79(46.47) |
| Upper | 1(1.2) | 4(4.3) | 5(2.94) |
| Total | 78(100) | 92(100) | 170(100) |

Table 2: Type of domestic violence experienced

| Type of Violence | Total abused (%) |
|---|------------------|
| Physical violence alone | 31(39.7) |
| Physical violence with sexual violence | 16(20.5) |
| Physical violence with emotional violence | 16(20.5) |
| Emotional violence alone | 10(12.8) |
| Sexual violence alone | 5(6.4) |
| Total | 78(100) |

Table 3: Factors affecting domestic violence

| Variables | Abused (%) | Not abused (%) | Total | Statistical tests |
|---------------------------------|------------|----------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Age (years) | | | | |
| <30 | 52(50.5) | 51(49.5) | 103 | χ^2 -2.230, p= 0.135, df=1 |
| >30 | 26(38.8) | 41(61.2) | 67 | |
| Educational status | | | | |
| Upto middle | 64(55.2) | 52(44.8) | 116 | χ^2 -12.693, p<0.01, df=1 |
| High school and above | 14(25.9) | 40(74.1) | 54 | |
| SES | | | | |
| Lower | 54(62.8) | 32(37.2) | 86 | χ^2 - 20.197, p<0.01, df=2 |
| Middle | 23(29.1) | 56(70.9%) | 79 | |
| Upper | 1(20) | 4(80) | 5 | |
| Alcohol abuse by husband | | | | |
| Yes | 52(80) | 13(20) | 65 | χ^2 - 49.334, p<0.01,df=1 |
| No | 26(24.8) | 79(75.2) | 105 | |
| Financially dependent | | | | |
| Yes | 44(71) | 18(29) | 62 | χ^2 - 24.733, p<0.01,df=1 |
| No | 34(31.5) | 74(68.5) | 108 | |
| Type of family | | | | |
| Nuclear | 35(36.5) | 61(63.5) | 96 | χ^2 -7.888, p=0.005, df=1 |
| Joint | 43(58.1) | 31(41.9) | 74 | |
| Residence | | | | |
| Near to parents' house | 23(29.1) | 56(70.9) | 79 | χ^2 -16.712, p<0.01, df=1 |
| Away from parents' house | 55(60.4) | 36(39.6) | 91 | |

Table 4: Reasons cited for violence

| Reasons cited for violence | Women reporting violence (%) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Woman neglected household chores | 22(28.2) |
| Woman disobeyed husband/elders | 29(37.1) |
| Woman's refusal of sex | 9(11.5) |
| Arguments over money | 12(15.3) |
| Suspected infidelity by woman | 6(7.6) |
| Total | 78 (100) |

Discussion

In the study, prevalence of domestic violence was reported as 45.9%, which was in concordance to the findings of Mishra et al.⁽⁷⁾ However, our findings were higher than NFHS-3 India and NFHS-4 for rural Haryana.^(5,6) George et al from rural Puducherry reported that 56.3% of the women had experienced some form of violence.⁽⁸⁾ Commonest type of domestic violence noted in the present study was physical violence alone followed by equal proportions of combination of physical violence with sexual and emotional violence (20.5%). These findings are comparable to WHO Multi-country study, which also reported physical violence as the commonest type of violence followed by physical and sexual violence.⁽⁴⁾

NFHS-3 Haryana reported the most common type of violence among ever married women was physical violence in form of slapping (34%).⁽⁵⁾ This difference could have possibly been because our study participants might have felt hesitant in discussing sexual violence.

Women in the age group of 26-30 years followed by 20-25 years (30.7%) were most abused. This is similar to the finding of Mishra et al and Dash et al.^(5,9) In our study better educated women had less faced domestic violence in comparison to lesser educated women and a strong association between the literacy status and vulnerability to being abused was found. Dash et al and George et al had also found similar results.^(8,9) Mishra et al reported that a higher prevalence of domestic violence among illiterates.⁽⁷⁾ Thus, education can be considered as one of the protective factors from domestic violence. It was also noted in our study that the prevalence of domestic violence was higher among housewives/unemployed and financially dependent women. Mishra et al had also reported similar results.⁽⁷⁾ It may be because working women are financially independent and have a respectable position in their family. Our study reported that women belonging to lower SES were more likely to be abused as compared to upper SES which is similar to the findings of Shrivasta et al.⁽¹⁰⁾ This could be attributed to the fact that as the purchasing power of the

family decreases, more quarrels and in turn violence crops up.

Shrivastava et al had reported that wives of alcoholic husbands were more likely to be abused.⁽¹⁰⁾ Our study had also found similar result. It could probably have been because alcohol abuse not provokes irrational behaviour but also arguments over financial issues and neglecting family responsibilities. Residence nearer to parental home could be a protective factor for domestic violence because those women were less abused. Similar observations were made by Mishra et al.⁽⁷⁾ Our study reported the common reasons for domestic violence as not obeying husband/elders and neglecting household chores. Koenig et al had also reported similar reasons.⁽¹¹⁾

Conclusion

Our study reported a high prevalence of domestic violence. Physical violence was the commonest type of domestic violence experienced. Women's education and empowerment would help to uplift their status in the community and eventually reduce their vulnerability of getting abused. The solution to domestic violence rests within the social structure of the family and the community settings. A multipronged approach that includes strengthening the informal support system like neighbours and family members, as well as facilitating access to formal services building on the health care system, warrants exploration in this context.

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