Wife Battering: a Prospective Study in Sanandaj City, Iran

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Abstract

To determine the prevalence of domestic physical violence against women and its associated factors in Sanandaj city, Iran, during the year 2000, this study was conducted. Random sampling of 1000 married women resident in Sanandaj city was conducted and underwent a standard interview as well as completed a 23-part questionnaire. 15% and 38% of the women had been assaulted by their husbands during the past year or in their marriage, respectively between 1 and 11 or more occasions. Economic problems were the most frequent cause of domestic quarrel, while there was a significant association between the husband’s educational level and the violence against their wives (P=0.001).The physical violence against housewives was significantly more frequent than the employed ones. The husbands’ job was also significantly associated with their violence. The existence of child or daughter in the family had a preventive role in domestic physical violence against women. Logit Regression Model for prediction of physical violence against women (Y) during the marriage was: \( Y = 0.014 - 0.029 \text{ woman's age} + 0.199 \text{ numbers of children} - 0.238 \text{ man's education} + 0.589 \text{ woman's job} \). This study confirms for Sanandaj city of Iran, the high frequency of physical violence against women by their husbands. Cultural education and supportive measures are essential to control that. Screening protocol for the detection of domestic violence in family planning Health Care System is recommended.

Keywords: Violence, Wife battering, Iran.

Introduction

Physical violence against women is a worldwide problem that crosses all racial, economic and social strata. It is the common type of crime against women which is very seldom reported to police. According to UN declaration in Fourth World Conference on women Beijing, China, 1995, the violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Historically, Women have not been legally protected from battering. In many cultures abuse has been accepted and legally sanctioned facts of marriage. An old British saying was "a Spaniel, a woman and a hickory tree, the more ye beat them the better they be" (1). In the United States of America men had the legal right to strike his wife until year 1884 (1). By conservative estimate, 2 million American women are severely assaulted by the partners each year (2). Approximately one in five female students in high school reports being physically abused by dating partner (3). Violence influences the risk of HIV infection and other STD's directly when it interferes with women's ability to negotiate condom use (4). Iranian women suffered from many types of violence that are due to specific cultures and laws. They deny the violence because they have some traditional and special cultural views. Most of them fear from single life and have hopeless and insecurity senses from their future. They may be unable to visit their children and may also lose their rights following divorce (5). Regarding the WHO report, violence includes 14.5% and 15.2% of all disorders in developed and developing countries, respectively (6). The prevalence of domestic abuse in the USA varies widely according to the population studied and method of survey from 3.8% to 50% (6, 7). In the past few years, violence against wives has become documented.

Materials and Methods

This was a cross-sectional study of married women resident in Sanandaj city during the year 2000. The subjects were 1000 women selected by multistage cluster random sampling method. The city was divided into 16 Urban Health Centers (UHC), each of them had a health file for every individual household under its coverage. The number of subjects selected from each, was proportional to the size of the population served by each center. 

Questionnaire. A 23-part questionnaire included age, education level of wife and husband, women’s job, number of children, age of husband and wife at marriage duration of marriage, number of episodes of violence in last year, and opinion about the reason for violence and the best ways of preventing it. Subjects were interviewed by students of Faculty of Medical Sciences of Kurdistan University who had been specifically trained for the task. A total of 40 women

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in marriage
Violence
Physical
duration
TOTAL 181
25
266
the physical violence and the man's time of marriage,
P=0.025 (Table 3). There was no association between
physical violence and the age of women and
between 30 to 39 years-old (32.4%). The association
of the women. It was more frequent in the women aged
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families without child (Table 2). It is important to
that the domestic physical violence is more frequent in
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notice that the violence was occurred in all age groups
of the women. It was more frequent in the women aged
between 30 to 39 years-old (32.4%). The association
between physical violence and the age of women and
also marriage duration was statistically significant,
P=0.025 (Table 3). There was no association between
the physical violence and the man’s time of marriage,
while the physical violence against women with a
history of marriage was relatively less than the women
without it, and the association was statistically
significant, P=0.012 (Table 4). Physical violence
against housewives is more frequent compared to
employed women and the association between physical
violence and the women's job is statistically significant,
P=0.001 (Table 4). As to opinions on dealing with a
probable assault, there was a clear difference between
wives of differing educational levels: 71% of illiterate
women believed that remaining silent was the best way
of coping, whereas this figure was only 41% for those
with a higher degree. In this regard, there was a clear
difference between wives of differing jobs. 57.4% of
housewives believed that remaining silent was the best
way of coping, whereas 35.3% of employed women
believed that the enactment of law for women support
was the best way for preventing of domestic physical
violence. In considering the studied population's point
of view, the most important etiological factors for
violence were economical problems, patriarchy's law,
wrong culture (folklore) and suspicious respectively.
Man's job had a significant association with domestic
physical violence (P=0.001), and the violence was
more exercising by the piece worker and driver men.
Women with different jobs had a clear difference as to
etiological factors of physical violence, considered the
patriarchy's law was the most important factor (55%)
while housewives mentioned the economic problems as
the important cause (32%). In regression analysis the
domestic physical violence entered with the
demographic and interview variables as mentioned
before in Forward Wald Stepwise procedure model, but
only woman's age, number of children, man's education
and woman's job were remained as significant
predictors of the domestic physical violence. Logit
Regression Model of this study for prediction of
physical violence against women (Y) during the
marriage was: Y=0.014-0.029 woman's age +0.199
numbers of children -0.238 man's education +0.589
woman’s job.

Results
In the year before study 15% of women had suffered
physically violence from their husbands, and 38% at
some times during their marriage. The number of
episodes of violence varied from 1-5 (15%) to 11 or
more (1%). Eighteen percent of the husbands were
illiterate, but 10% had higher degrees of education.
These were a significant association between physical
violence and the educational level of the wife and also
the husband’s (Table 1). There were no association
between occurrence of violence and whether there were
sons in family or not, but the association between
physical violence and existence of child or daughter in
family was statistically significant (P=0.001). It seems
that the domestic physical violence is more frequent in
families without child (Table 2). It is important to
notice that the violence was occurred in all age groups
of the women. It was more frequent in the women aged
between 30 to 39 years-old (32.4%). The association
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also marriage duration was statistically significant,
P=0.025 (Table 3). There was no association between
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woman’s job.

Table 1: Physical violence against women in terms of education level of husbands.

| Physical Violence in marriage duration | Men’s education | | Women’s education | | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|
|                                      | Illiterate | Elementary | High school | Higher education | illiterate | Elementary | High school | Higher education |       |
| YES                                  | 79  | 171   | 100      | 33       | 177      | 136    | 61       | 9        | 383   |
|                                      | 20.6%  | 44.6%  | 26.1%   | 8.6%     | 46.3%    | 35.5%  | 15.9%   | 2.3%     | 100% |
| NO                                   | 102  | 186    | 194      | 135      | 190      | 187    | 181      | 59       | 617   |
|                                      | 16.6%  | 30.1%  | 31.4%   | 21.9%    | 30.8%    | 30.3%  | 29.3%   | 9.6%     | 100% |
| TOTAL                                | 181  | 357    | 294      | 168      | 367      | 323    | 242      | 68       | 1000  |
|                                      | 18.1%  | 35.7%  | 29.4%   | 16.8%    | 36.7%    | 32.3%  | 24.2%   | 14.8%    | 100%  |
Table 2: Physical violence against women in terms of existence of children in the family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical violence in marriage duration</th>
<th>Children in family</th>
<th></th>
<th>Boys in family</th>
<th></th>
<th>Girls in family</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>P-value</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>P-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>369 (39.6%)</td>
<td>14 (20.3%)</td>
<td>OR=2.579 (CI=(1.414, 4.706))</td>
<td>316 (39.6%)</td>
<td>67 (33%)</td>
<td>OR=1.334 (CI=(0.963, 1.846))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>=0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>=0.082</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Physical violence against women in terms of Age of women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical violence in marriage duration</th>
<th>Woman's age (yr)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Duration of marriage</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 20</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 (2.6%)</td>
<td>92 (24%)</td>
<td>124 (32.4%)</td>
<td>97 (25.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>75.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18 (2.9%)</td>
<td>164 (26.6%)</td>
<td>218 (25.3%)</td>
<td>103 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28 (2.8%)</td>
<td>256 (25.6%)</td>
<td>342 (34.2%)</td>
<td>200 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>90.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Physical Violence against women in terms of number of marriage in men and women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical violence in marriage duration</th>
<th>Number of woman’s marriage</th>
<th></th>
<th>Number of man’s marriage</th>
<th></th>
<th>Women’s job</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
<td>P-value</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
<td>P-value</td>
<td>housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>349 (91.1%)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>OR=1.96</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>OR=1.29</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>91.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>587 (95.1%)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>CI=1.146-1.17</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>CI=0.848-1.97</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>91.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>936 (93.6%)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>P=0.012</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>P=0.231</td>
<td>881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion
Domestic physical violence is prevalent in Sanandaj city, as it is in other communities of Iran (5). The percentage of women in this study who reported a history of physical violence (38%) was greater than that reported in South Africa's study (10) and also it is greater than the prevalence of physical violence in female medical school (9). This prevalence rate is consistent with the findings of Nicaragua (38.5%) (11). Besides, the one year prevalence of physical violence (15%) was greater than the annual rates of husband to wife violence found in a 1985 national survey in America (11.6%) (12), but this prevalence rate is consistent with the findings in South Dakota (15%) (13). The differences are probably due to different culture and population. It was found that young women were more likely to be at risk of violence from their partner than were old women and it is consistent with an Australian study in 1996 (14). The Multivariate analysis showed the significant correlation between domestic physical violence and age, which is found also in the Neuberger's study (15). Man's education emerged as independent predictors of current physical violence. Factors that aggravate the physical violence, such as illiterate unemployment, lower education for both men and women, placed our population at greater risk, so the topic of the outcome of domestic violence must be incorporated into the high school and medical education curriculum. Witnessing violence in home can be a traumatic for children as a high risk group. Our study supports the need for the development of screening protocol for the detection of domestic violence in family planning Program, besides counseling and intervention should be initiated. High prevalence rate of physical violence found in this study and also etiological factors of physical violence mentioned by women, recommend the law establish for more supporting of women's right. The major weakness of study was the potential for recall bias. Women that experience domestic violence may be reluctant to acknowledge this because of shame or embarrassment. There are several strengths of this study that our findings are consistent with the findings of some authors, but further research is necessary to explore the prevalence of domestic physical violence in other populations of Iran and enhance our understanding relationship between socioeconomic statuses of domestic physical violence.

References