

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 man 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

with increasing frequency (8). It is obvious at all social levels, though some authors have claimed that it is much more frequent in poor families (9) similarly specific cultures and laws may have important roles, and hence pattern of domestic violence may be different in non-western countries from those in western ones. Moreover, such influences may differ between the non-western countries themselves, and thus it is important to establish the pattern for individual nations, also particular attention to the phenomenon of violence and evaluation of its etiologies is essential for preventing it. For this reason in the year 2000 we conducted a prospective random study of 1000 married women living in Sanandaj city.

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

(3 % of the sample) refused to participate in the research.

Sample size. The sample size was calculated from the formula: $n = Z^2 PQ / d^2$, where $P=Q=0.5$, $d = 0.05$ and $n =520$. Given the cluster sampling method we doubled this number. The power of study was 80 %, given the beta value of 0.20. The reliability coefficient was 0.82 that was measured by a pretest on 30 women repeated after a month.

Data Analysis. Correlates of current the domestic physical violence within the previous 12 months and within their marriage period with variables: age, man and woman's education level, man and woman's job, number of children, the number of marriage for man and woman, were determined via chi square tests (univariate analyses) and Forward Stepwise Logistic Regression Analyses (Multivariate Analyses) using SPSS Ver.10.05 and STATA Ver. 6 softwares.

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. There was 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 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 copying, 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 copying, 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.

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 20.6%	171 44.6%	100 26.1%	33 8.6%	177 46.3%	136 35.5%	61 15.9%	9 2.3%	383 100%
NO	102 16.6%	186 30.1%	194 31.4%	135 21.9%	190 30.8%	187 30.3%	181 29.3%	59 9.6%	617 100%
TOTAL	181 18.1%	357 35.7%	294 29.4%	168 16.8%	367 36.7%	323 32.3%	242 24.2%	68 14.8%	1000 100%

Table 2: Physical violence against women in terms of existence of children in the family.

Physical violence in marriage duration	Children in family			Boys in family			Girls in family		
	Yes	No	P- value	Yes	No	P- value	Yes	No	P- value
Yes	369 39.6%	14 20.3%	OR=2.579 CI=(1.414, 4.706) P=0.001	316 39.6%	67 33%	OR=1.334 CI=(0.963, 1.846) P=0.082	72 27.9%	311 41.9%	OR=0.536 CI=(0.394, 0.730) P=0.0001

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

Physical violence in marriage duration	Woman's age (yr)					Duration of marriage				
	< 20	20 -29	30 -39	40 -49	50 +	< 10	10 -19	20 -29	30 -39	40 +
Yes	10 2.6%	92 24%	124 32.4%	97 25.3%	60 15.7%	85 22.3%	113 29.5%	102 26.6%	59 15.4%	24 6.2%
No	18 2.9%	164 26.6%	218 25.3%	103 16.7%	114 19.5%	192 31.1%	193 31.3%	116 18.8%	67 10.9%	49 7.9%
Total	28 2.8%	256 25.6%	342 34.2%	200 20%	174 17.4%	277 27.7%	306 30.6%	218 21.8%	126 12.6%	73 7.3%

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

Physical violence in marriage duration	Number of woman's marriage			Number of man's marriage			Women's job			Total
	1	>1	P value	1	>1	P value	housewife	Employ ed	P value	
Yes	349 91.1%	34 8.9%	OR=1.96	340 88.8%	43 11.2%	OR=1.29	360 94%	23 6%	OR=2.88	383 100%
No	587 95.1%	30 4.9%	CI= 1.146 -1.17	562 91.1%	55 8.9%	CI= 0.848- 1.97	521 84.4%	96 15.6%	CI= 1.79-4.64	617 100%
Total	936 93.6%	64 6.4%	P=0.012	902 90.2%	98 9.8%	P=0.231	881 88.1%	119 11.9%	P=0.001	1000 100%

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 Neuburger'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.

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