

Domestic Violence: A Community based cross sectional study among rural married females in North West India

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Abstract

Violence against women a social evil in the society despite a lot of talk of women empowerment. Assessment of burden in terms of prevalence will go a long way in planning the services for those affected by domestic violence. To find the prevalence of domestic violence and associated risk factors among married females in a rural area of Jammu. This community based cross-sectional study was conducted among rural married females using a structured and pretested questionnaire. Data was analysed using simple proportions, chi-square test and logistic regression. 171/301(56.6%) of the respondents reported some form of the domestic violence. Psychological, physical and sexual violence rates were found to be 32.16%, 9.9% and 2.33% respectively. A statistically significant association was found with variables like literacy, type of family, family income, sex of children etc. Relatively high levels of domestic violence in this rural setting calls for a multidisciplinary approach involving improvement of literacy levels among females, creating awareness about legal aid and screening the victims at primary health centres to mitigate this problem.

Key Words

Domestic Violence, Prevalence, Risk Factors, Rural Married Females

Introduction

Violence against women remains a common practice all over the world cutting across the boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age. It remains one of the major public and human rights problem in the world. Of particular concern is its upward trend both in developed as well as developing nations; so much so that WHO has declared domestic violence (DV) as a 'public health epidemic'.(1) Domestic violence is widely prevalent and yet relatively hidden and ignored form of violence against females. 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 intimate male partners.

As per WHO reports, population of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner ranges from 15-71% with majority between 29% and 62%.(2) In India, NFHS-3 reported a burden of domestic violence as 37% among ever married women in the reproductive age group.(3) Some of the studies conducted in India have revealed a high physical

abuse of Indian women ranging from 18% to 70%.(4-10) Even these reported figures are likely to be significantly under estimated given that violence within families continues to be a taboo subject, more so in developing countries.

Evidence has emerged linking domestic violence to a range of adverse reproductive health outcomes which include non use of contraception and unintended pregnancy, poor outcomes of pregnancy and birth, gynaecological disease including STDs and HIV. Besides a plethora of health effects due to domestic violence, it adversely affects the economic progress of a nation in the form of economic cost including loss of women labour hours and increased health care costs.(11) The global health burden from violence against women in reproductive age group is about 9.5 million disability adjusted life years.

Domestic violence may vary depending on locally prevalent social norms and literacy levels of the women. So it is important to assess the problem of domestic

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violence in a given geographic area to initiate supportive measures.(12) During the review of literature, the authors found a few studies conducted in different parts of the country but there was not much literature on the current levels of domestic violence in this part of the country. It was with this aim that the present study was conducted to find out the prevalence of domestic violence and its associated risk factors in a rural area of Jammu district.

Material and Methods

A community based cross sectional study was conducted among the ever married females in Miran sahib health zone of R.S Pura block which is RHTC (rural health training centre) of a tertiary care teaching hospital in Jammu city of J& K state. Miran Sahib Zone caters to a population of 24,811 which is scattered over 24 villages. These 24 villages were divided into four zones depending on their geographical location viz. East, West, South and North. Then using the simple random technique, one village from each of these four zones was selected for the conduct of study. The study was carried out over a period of two months viz. March-April 2016.

The current study included all the married females residing in this geographical area for at least one year. It was decided to cover all the households in the villages. All the eligible married women in a household were included in the study after obtaining informed verbal consent. The houses found locked or those in which the eligible woman was not present at the time of visit were revisited once again after one week. If the women couldn't be contacted even after the second visit, then she was excluded from the study. Also the females who refused to give informed verbal consent were also excluded.

The women were interviewed with a predesigned, pretested and structured questionnaire which was developed by public health experts from Govt Medical College, Jammu. All the women who were willing to participate were interviewed after ensuring adequate privacy. The anonymity of response was guaranteed. The questionnaire consisted of socio demographic characteristics of the respondents and questions to ascertain whether the respondent had experienced any form of domestic violence. Information on characteristics of violence and reasons of violence as per respondents' version was also collected. An affirmative response to any of these questions was considered a clear cut indication of DV irrespective of the type of violence. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Ethical Committee of the tertiary care teaching hospital.

The data was entered into the excel sheet and analysed (using SPSS 20.0) using proportions and appropriate tests

of significance.

Results

In all 315 newly married women were contacted. Out of these, 301 consented to participate and were administered the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents belonged to Hindu religion and were in 25-35 years of age. 39.18% of them had literacy level up to secondary level. 93.5% of them were married, more than half of them were having children of both sexes and 48.5% of them were having 1-2 children. 80.7% were currently not pregnant while 55.5% of them were not using any contraception. The majority (91.2%) of the respondents were housewives while 53.2% of their spouses belonged to service class. (Table 1)

Out of the total respondents, 171(56.6%) women had experienced one or the other form of domestic violence. Among the types of violence, the predominant form was psychological violence which was reported by 55(32.16%) of the respondents. Physical violence, sexual violence and more than one type of violence was reported by 9.9%, 2.33% and 55.5% respectively. 76.02% of the respondents reported that husband was the main perpetrator of the domestic violence.

55.5% of the respondents who faced domestic violence reported that their husbands were regularly using alcohol and that domestic violence was related to alcohol abuse. Regarding duration of domestic violence, 45.61% were suffering from it since last more than two years. (Table 2)

When association of various socio-demographic variables with domestic violence was assessed, the results revealed statistically significant association with literacy levels, sex of the children, type of family, family income and occupation of both husband and wife. On the other hand, the results have shown no statistical association with such variables like age, religion, number of children, marital status, current pregnancy, use of contraception and total years of marriage. (Table 3)

On the application of logistic regression analysis, only two variables viz. type of family and family income were found to be significant statistically (Table 4). Among the various reasons for domestic violence, financial problems, not having male child and disobeying elders were the most common reasons (Fig 1)

Discussion

The results of the current study have revealed that 56.6% of the respondents reported to be suffering from some form of domestic violence. The results are totally in agreement with those reported by George J et al(12) in rural Puducherry. In a similar vein, Sharma K K et al (13) in a hospital based study reported 60% controlling

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Variables in Relation to Domestic Violence

Variable	Categories	Type of violence				Total
		Physical(17) only	Psychological(56)	Sexual(4)	>1 type(94)	
AGE	<25	4(12.12)	12(36.37)	2(6.06)	15(45.45)	33(100)
	25-35	5(5.96)	32(38.09)	1(1.19)	46(54.76)	84(100)
	>35	8(14.81)	12(22.22)	1(1.86)	33(61.11)	54(100)
RELIGION	Hindu	13(11.40)	35(30.70)	3(2.63)	63(55.26)	114 (100)
	Muslim	3(9.09)	12(36.37)	0(0.00)	18(54.54)	33(100)
	Others	1(4.16)	9(37.50)	1(4.16)	13(54.18)	24(100)
Education	Illiterate	1(3.33)	4(13.33)	0(0.00)	25(83.34)	30(100)
	Primary	3(5.66)	17(32.08)	0(0.00)	33(62.26)	53(100)
	Secondary	9(13.64)	24(34.84)	2(3.03)	32(48.49)	67(100)
	Hr. Sec & above	4(18.18)	11(54.55)	2(9.09)	4(18.18)	21(100)
No. of children	0	2(11.11)	7(38.89)	0(0.00)	9(50.00)	18(100)
	1-2	10(12.19)	26(30.49)	4(4.88)	43(52.44)	83(100)
	3-4	5(7.69)	21(32.31)	0(0.00)	39(60.00)	65(100)
	>4	0(0.00)	2(33.33)	0(0.00)	3(66.67)	5(100)
Sex of children	Males	4(19.04)	5(23.8)	0(0.00)	12(57.1)	21(100)
	Females	5(10.0)	16(32.0)	3(6.00)	26(52.0)	50(100)
	Both	8(8.00)	35(35.0)	1(1.00)	56(56.0)	100(100)
Type of family	Nuclear	11(12.64)	24(27.59)	2(2.29)	50(57.48)	87(100)
	Joint	6(7.14)	32(38.09)	2(2.28)	44(52.38)	84(100)
Marital status	Married	17(10.69)	52(32.08)	4(2.52)	87(54.71)	160(100)
	Widow/Divorced	0(0.00)	4(33.33)	0(0.00)	7(66.67)	11(100)
Currently Pregnant	Yes	5(15.62)	9(25.00)	0(0.00)	19(59.38)	33(100)
	No	12(8.63)	47(34.53)	4(2.88)	75(53.96)	138(100)
Use of Contraceptives	Yes	10(13.33)	28(36.00)	4(5.33)	34(45.34)	76(100)
	No	7(7.29)	28(29.17)	0	60(62.50)	95(100)
Family Income	<10,000	2(11.76)	1(5.89)	0(0.00)	14(82.35)	17(100)
	10-25,000	7(8.75)	18(22.50)	2(2.50)	53(66.25)	80(100)
	>25,000	8(10.81)	37(48.65)	2(2.70)	27(37.84)	74(100)
Years of marriage	<1	7(13.72)	12(21.57)	2(3.92)	31(60.79)	52(100)
	1-5	4(5.64)	30(42.25)	1(1.41)	36(50.70)	71(100)
	5-10	5(17.24)	8(27.59)	1(3.45)	15(51.72)	29(100)
	>10	1(5.2)	6(31.57)	0(0.00)	12(63.1)	19(100)
Occupation of Husband	Farmer/Labourer	3(13.64)	6(27.27)	0(0.00)	13(59.09)	22(100)
	Service	6(6.67)	32(34.44)	4(4.44)	49(54.45)	91(100)
	Business	2(6.25)	12(37.50)	0(0.00)	18(56.25)	32(100)
	Unemployed	6(22.22)	6(25.93)	0(0.00)	14(51.85)	26(100)
Occupation of wife	Housewife	16(10.32)	49(30.97)	3(1.94)	88(56.77)	156(100)
	Service	1(11.11)	3(33.33)	1(11.11)	3(44.45)	8(100)
	Business	0(0.00)	2(50.00)	0(0.00)	2(50.00)	4(100)
	Labourer	0(0.00)	2(66.67)	0(0.00)	1(33.33)	3(100)

behaviour by marital partners and emotional violence reporting was 65%. In contrast, lower rates to the tune of 23.2% and 26% were reported by Kokiwar P R et al (14) and Jeyaseelam L et al (8) in their respective studies. NFHS-3 reported domestic violence prevalence at 37% whereas a multi centric study by Mahapatro M et al (15) reported a prevalence rate of 39%. Fikree FF et al (16) in a study in Pakistan reported that 34% women were ever physically abused. Vachher AS et al (6) in their study reported that 42.8% of its respondents suffered

present study, 30% and 13.5% rates of sexual violence were reported by Sharma K K et al (13) and George J et al (13) respectively. Vachher AS et al (6) also reported 34.9% of physical as well as sexual violence.

In the present study, 76% of perpetrators of domestic violence were husbands and 55.55% of them were intoxicated at that point of time. Sarkar M et al (18) also reported a similar rate of 72.7% of husbands being perpetrators of which 36% were intoxicated during the act. Kokiwar PR et al (14) reported that in 43.7% cases,

Table 2 . Characteristics of Violence Reported by the Respondents

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Type of Violence		
• Physical only	17	9.9%
• Psychological only	55	32.16%
• Sexual only	4	2.33%
• >1 type	95	55.5%
Perpetrators of violence		
• Husband	130	76.02%
• In laws	41	23.97%
Perpetrator intoxicated during the act		
• Yes	95	55.55%
• No	76	44.44%
Period of domestic violence		
• <12 months	42	24.5%
• 1-2 years	51	29.8%
• >2 years	78	45.6%
Specific acts of physical assault*		
• Slap	24	14.02%
• Fist blow	12	7.01%
• Kick	04	2.32%
• Beating with a rod	04	2.32%

one or the other type of domestic violence.

Among the types of violence, majority of the respondents in the present study were exposed to psychological violence (32.16%) followed by physical violence (9.9%). However George J et al (12) reported a higher rate (51.3%) of psychological violence as well as physical violence (40%). Sharma K K et al (13) also reported higher rates to the tune of 65% for emotional violence and 43.3% for physical violence. In a rural study in Uganda, the authors (17) reported that 30.4% of the respondents had ever experienced physical threats or violence. In contrast to 2.33% of sexual violence in the

the cause of the domestic violence was alcoholic husband. 45.6% of the respondents in the current study were facing domestic violence since last more than two years. However Sarkar M et al (18) reported that 81.82% of the respondents reported rate of violence as very few times in the last year. On the other hand, Kocacik and Dogan (19) showed that 45.2% of the women had been exposed to violence several times a month.

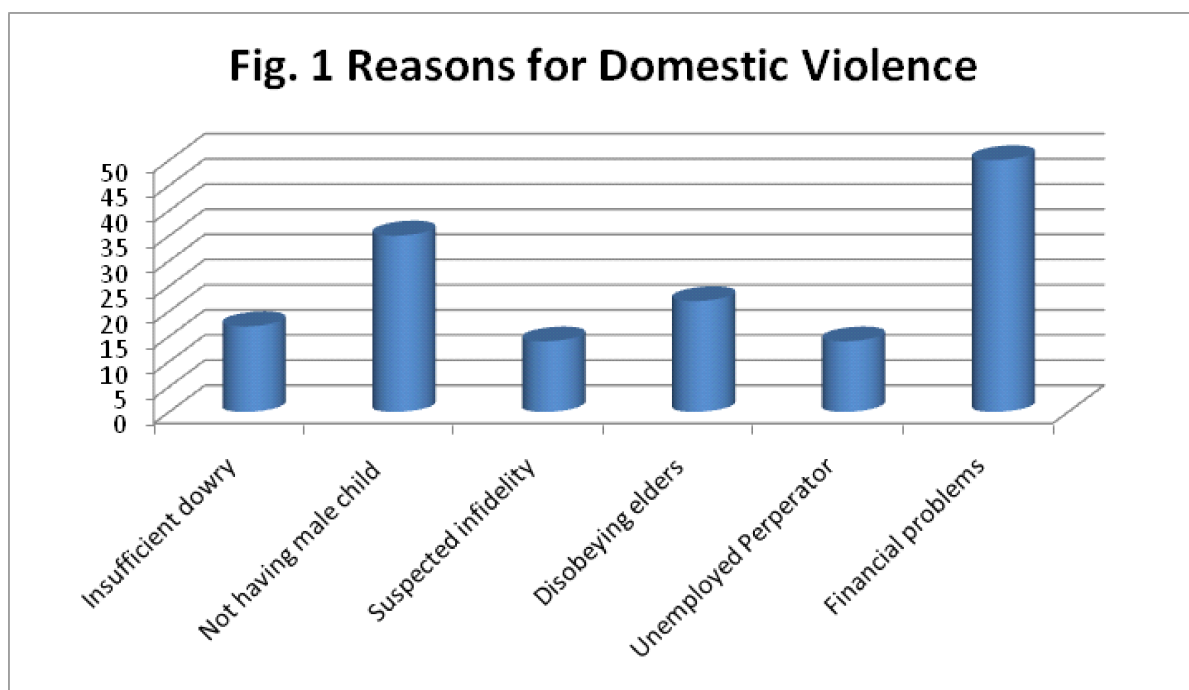
Among the specific acts of physical assault, 14% of the respondents reported slap while 7% reported fist blow. These results are much lower than those reported by Sarkar M et al. (18)

Table 3. Association of Different Variables with Domestic Violence

S.NO.	Variables	Categories	Domestic Violence		X ²	P value	Crude Odds Ratio	Confidence Intervals
			Absent	Present				
1	AGE	<25	31	33	3.129	0.209	1.00(Ref)	
		25-35	51	84			1.54	0.84-2.82
		>35	49	54			1.03	0.55-1.93
2	RELIGION	Hindu	82	114	2.953	0.228	1.00(Ref)	
		Muslim	21	33			1.13	0.61-2.09
		Others	28	24			0.61	0.33-1.14
3	Education	Illiterate	16	30	33.05	0.000	1.00(Ref)	
		Primary	16	53			1.76	0.77-4.03
		Secondary	50	67			0.71	0.35-1.45
		Hr. Sec & above	49	21			0.22	0.10-0.50
4	No. of children	0	21	18	6.66	0.08	1.00(Ref)	
		1-2	74	83			1.22	0.61-2.45
		3-4	32	65			2.24	1.06-4.76
		>4	4	5			1.38	0.32-5.91
5	Sex of children	Males	26	21	9.78	0.02	1.00(Ref)	
		Females	20	50			3.13	1.39-7.06
		Both	64	100			2.24	1.13-4.47
6	Type of family	Nuclear	82	87	4.13	0.04	1.00(Ref)	
		Joint	49	84			1.62	1.02-2.57
7	Marital status	Married	126	160	1.01	0.31	1.00(Ref)	
		Widow/Divorced	5	11			1.73	0.58-5.11
8	Currently Pregnant	Yes	39	33	4.48	0.03	1.00(Ref)	
		No	92	138			1.77	1.04-3.02
9	Use of Contraceptives	Yes	82	76	9.79	0.002	1.00(Ref)	
		No	49	95			2.09	1.31-3.33
10	Family Income	<10,000	3	17	65.19	0.000	1.00(Ref)	
		10-25,000	12	80			1.17	0.29-4.63
		>25,000	116	74			0.11	0.03-0.39
11	Years of marriage	<1	56	52	6.17	0.10	1.00(Ref)	
		1-5	39	71			1.96	1.13-3.37
		5-10	20	29			1.56	0.78-3.09
		>10	16	19			1.27	0.59-2.75
12	Occupation of Husband	Farmer/Labourer	14	22	13.22	0.004	1.00(Ref)	
		Service	91	91			0.63	0.31-1.32
		Business	21	32			0.97	0.41-2.31
		Unemployed	5	26			3.31	1.03-10.64
13	Occupation of wife	Housewife	101	156	17.17	0.001	1.00(Ref)	
		Service	26	8			0.19	0.08-0.45
		Business	2	4			1.29	0.23-7.20
		Labourer	2	3			0.97	0.16-5.91

Table 4: Logistic Regression Analysis depicting association of variables with Domestic Violence

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig	Exp(B)
Education	-.299	.153	3.802	1	.051	.741
Sex of children	.248	.133	3.486	1	.062	1.282
Type of family	.766	.278	7.576	1	.006	2.151
Current pregnancy	.358	.332	1.162	1	.281	1.431
Use of contraceptives	.054	.287	.036	1	.850	1.056
Family income	-1.728	.298	33.681	1	.000	.178
Occupation of husband	.277	.189	2.143	1	.143	1.319
Occupation of wife	-.323	.261	1.534	1	.216	.724
Constant	2.261	.817	7.670	1	.006	9.597



Financial problems in the family and not having a male child were the main reasons of the domestic violence faced by the respondents in the present study. However Sarkar M et al(18) reported disobeying elders/perpetrators, not having a male child and unemployment of the perpetrator as the underlying reasons of the domestic

violence.

Among the various risk factors, literacy levels and occupation of the husband/ wife were found to be statistically significant which concur with the results reported by Kocacik F et al.(19) However Sarkar M et al(18) reported age and marital status among the socio-demographic variables which were significant although

the same were found to be insignificant in the present study. But education was also reported to be a significant variable for domestic violence by Sarkar M et al (18) also which is in line of agreement with the current results.

Conclusions

High rates of domestic violence found in the current study reflect that it still remains a major social as well as public health problem. Lack of awareness about their rights, low literacy levels, accepting violence as something normal and patriarchal society are some of the predominant reasons for this evil despite a stringent law in place. Different socio cultural norms in India like acceptability of physical violence at the hands of husband could be another reason for continuation of this social evil. Female empowerment especially enhancing literacy levels and economic productivity, would go a long way in curbing this evil. 'Beti Bachao, Beti Pado' is a right step and should be encouraged at every level, more so in the vast rural hinterlands of India.

It would be pertinent to add that village level workers like ASHA and AWW can be used to screen potential domestic violence prone women in their respective areas. Women self help groups should create awareness among females about availability of legal options including Domestic violence Act 2005. Further availability of mental health professionals and social workers at PHC level may ameliorate the problem to a greater extent. Even identification of domestic violence victims at PHC level using opportunistic screening needs a dire consideration.

Strengths & Limitations

The response rate was more than 96% which is an obvious strength of the current study. Underreporting due to fear of stigma and lack of generalization due to the study being conducted in a small geographical area are some of the limitations.

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