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WOMEN SURVIVING UNDER THE MENACE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT:

Objective: The study aims to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence against women.
Material aand Method: This was a cross sectional study conducted in gynae unit 4 from 1st January to 31st June 2010 at Sindh govt. Lyari general hospital, Karachi in which 500 married women were included of 15-64years old attending obstetric and gynecologic clinic and admitted patients in ward of obstetrics and gynecology. Data was collected with the use of questionnaire by interview.
Results: In the study the prevalence of lifetime domestic violence was 61.8%, physical abuse was 64%, sexual violence was 14.5% and emotional violence was 26.1% The factors which are frequently found to be associated with violence are substance abuse especially use of tobacco, alcohol and habituating drugs by husband, socioeconomic support, chronic illnesses, low level of education and younger age women. The significant association was seen between violence and drug abuse in women and their husbands. More than 94% of the cases the perpetrator was husband and his mother.
Conclusion: The prevalence of domestic violence in women is noted at a level that should raise concern for health professionals. Health services are the best place for routine inquiry and doctors need to be aware of the many potential indicators of domestic violence and that must be eliminated through political, legal and civil actions in all sectors of society.

Key words: Domestic violence, lifetime prevalence, risk factors.

INTRODUCTION:

"Domestic violence is an abuse of power. It is the domination, coercion, intimidation and victimization of one person by another by physical, sexual or emotional means within intimate relationships"[1]. According to United Nations Declaration, "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". In December 1993 United Nations General Assembly, adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women[2].

Domestic violence has been recognized as a major public health problem. It affects all people, irrespective of economic, educational, social, geographic or racial background, [1] resulting in significant morbidity and mortality. [3] According to WHO Multi-country study in 10 countries.15% and 71% of women reported being physically and / or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner, across all countries, between 20% and 75% of women had experienced one or more acts of emotional abuse, most within the past 12 months [4] One Canadian study outlined three groups of factors associated with physical abuse: 'social instability' (young, poor education, unmarried, unplanned pregnancy), 'unhealthy life style' (poor diet, drug and alcohol use and emotional problems) and 'physical health problems' (medical problems and prescription drug use)[5].

Around the world, mental health problems, emotional distress, and suicidal behavior are common among women who have suffered partner violence [4]. The World Bank estimates that rape and domestic violence accounts for 19% of the total disease burden among women in industrialized countries. [6]

In a study from Pakistan approximately 70 to 90% of Pakistani women are subjected to domestic violence.[7] Another study from Pakistan coded the percentage of 65% (physical violence), and almost one third (30.4%) of those reported sexual violence both often leading to serious injuries, which required emergency medical attention.[8] The violence against women is an enormous public health and social problem in Pakistan, which has never been appropriately responded and dealt by the government. [9] The rationale of our study was to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence against women and its predisposing factors.

AIM OF STUDY:

The study aims to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence against women

PATIENTS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in gynae unit 4 from 1st January 2010 to 31st June 2010 at Sindh govt.Lyari general hospital, Karachi which is a tertiary care teaching hospital. This was a cross sectional study in which 500 married women was included of 15-64years of age attending obstetric and gynecologic clinic to sought medical care for any problem and admitted patients in wards of obstetrics and gynecology. A questionnaire was designed on the basis of findings from the literature. Data was collected with the use of questionnaire by interview from the women in the waiting area (who were not accompanied by their partners). Verbal consent was taken and ambiguity guaranteed. Study variables included were demographic characteristics of the women and her husband i.e. age, level of education, monthly income and employment status of husband, history of addiction and chronic illness.

Violence occurrence was assessed by types: verbal, physical, sexual and psychological. Verbal abuse was defined as shouting, yelling, cursed, insulted, talked down to her. Physical abuse was defined as slapped or hit, hair pulled, pushed, choked, burned or use of any weapon and sexual being doing sexual intercourse against her will or using physical force for sexual intercourse , and psychological being undermining her sense of self esteem or self worth insulted or talked down to her.

STASTICAL METHODS:

The data was analyzed using SPSS version16.0.Test of significance used was Chi-square test. Odds ratio (OR) and 95% confidence interval (CI) was calculated.

RESULTS:

500 married women were interviewed and all replied thus response rate was 100%. The majority of participating women (75.6%) were 15 –30 years old and 20.6% were 31 –45 years. The mean duration of marriage was 12.78(±5) years, ranging from one to 50 years. The number of children showed no relation with the occurrence of violence 42% of women had 2 children and 56.4% had > 3 children in violence group while in the nonviolence group 53.6% had 2 children and 39.4%had >3 children.

The monthly income of 62.9% (n=195) from the study population was below 6000 rupees and was extremely poor and 32.9% (n=102) were earning Rs 6000 to.12000 per month. The majority of the women was housewives and was rarely employed.

Out of the 500 women, 62% (n=310) had been subjected to some form of violence (verbal, physical, sexual and psychological) in their lifetime. All women of study population was verbally abused and does not considered it abnormal 64% (n=203) women faced physical violence out of which 86.2% (n=175) had level II abuse like slapping hitting pushing and pulling hair and 11.8% (n=24) had level III abuse like choking, burning ,acid throwing and use of any weapon. 14.5% (n=45).of women experiencing domestic violence reported forced sexual activity.

With regard to education level of the women where there was violence 64.5% (n=200) were uneducated and only 5.4% reached high school whereas in non abuse group 40% were uneducated and 21% reached high school which made statistically significant difference. However in both groups most of their husbands (62.6%) had received some formal education.

There was no significant relation seen between husband's education and job with occurrence of violence whereas a considerable relation observed with husband's drug addiction (cigarette smoking, tobacco chewing or alcohol, etc.) i.e. 72.9%.

Abuse was more where the woman was seen to be without social support (i.e. parents, brothers and sisters who could support her economically in time of need).

There was history of drug addiction in 33.2% (n=103) women in violence group and 26.8 % (n=51) women were addicted in non-violence group.

More than 94% of the cases the perpetrator of the abuse was husband and his mother.

The psychological effect of abuse was also studied which is about 26.1%. In 81 women there was mild depression and anxiety, 68 women had suicidal thoughts and 13 had attempt suicide.

There were 84 pregnant patients in study, out of which three women had physical violence and one had a miscarriage.

DISCUSSION

In the study the prevalence of lifetime domestic violence was 62%, physical abuse was 64%, sexual violence was 14.5% and psychological was 26.1% and as illustrated by WHO Multi-country study in 10 countries representing diverse cultural settings, 15% and 71% of women reported being physically and / or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner [4].

As per WHO Multi-country study, overall reported sexual abuse by a partner ranged between 10% and 50% [4] and it is 14.5% in our study. Across all countries, between 20% and 75% of women had experienced one or more acts of emotional abuse, mostly within past 12 months [4].

According to one study from Pakistan approximately 70 to 90% of Pakistani women are subjected to domestic violence[14]. In a study conducted in Pakistan, domestic violence emerged as an important public health concern, with 100% of men respondents admitting to verbal abuse, 33% to physical abuse and 78% to sexual abuse of their wives [23]. Marital rape or nonconsensual sex was reported by 46% of the women interviewed [25]. A previous study from Pakistan, reported that 77.1% of men engaged in the nonconsensual sex with their wives [24].

In a study from Iran on domestic violence against women attending gynecologic outpatient clinics, the prevalence of lifetime domestic violence was 59%[10]. In population of women attending general practice in UK the life time prevalence of physical and sexual violence ranges from 21 to 55%.[11] and it is 44% prevalent in United States[12].

The percentage in our study is in the range of the results found in other surveys. When researching such a sensitive matter as violence within the family, it is not easy to calculate approximately the prevalence of violence due to inconsistencies in definitions, underreporting, and lack of epidemiological studies [13]. In our study more than 94% of cases husband was perpetrator which is in the range of studies from many other countries [15]. The factors which

TABLE: 1

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN AND THEIR HUSBANDS

Characteristics of the women	Number (500)	Percentage	Characteristics of the women	Number (500)	Percentage
Age groups			**Chronic disease**		
15-30	308	61.6	Yes	51	10.2
31-45	151	30.2	No	447	89.0
46-65	41	8.2	**Violence history**		
Education			Yes	310	61.8
High	41	8.2	No	190	37.8
Middle	57	11.4	No	196	39.0
Primary	96	19.1	**Socioeconomic support**		
Uneducated	306	61.0	Yes	94	18.7
No. of children			No	406	80.9
No children	39	7.8	**Characteristics of the Husbands Education**		
1-2 children	175	35.0	High	80	15.9
3-5 children	153	30.6	Middle	79	15.7
>5 children	133	26.6	Primary	84	16.7
Monthly income			uneducated	257	51.2
Below 6000 PKR	331	66.2	**Occupation**		
6000-12000 PKR	146	29.2	Governmental job	30	6.0
12000-20000 PKR	15	3.0	Nongovernmental job	427	85.1
Above 20000 PKR	8	1.6	unemployed	43	8.6
Pregnancy status			**Drug use**		
Yes	158	31.5	Yes	304	60.6
No	342	68.1	No	196	39.0
Drug use					
Yes	151	30.1			
No	349	69.5			

are frequently found to be associated with violence i.e. substance abuse are especially use of tobacco , alcohol and habituating drugs.[16,17] Chronic illnesses in women and susceptibility of younger women towards violence are same as in other studies [18]. In this study the significant association was seen between violence and drug abuse in women and their husbands as described in other surveys [19].

The low level of education in women is an important factor as it is associated with increased risk of violence; education enables her to be confident in struggling for their rights and relationships [20]. In the study no significant relation was seen between husband's job and education with occurrence of violence which was same in both groups, thus it is surprising because both variables are considered as risk factors.

The 62.9% of study population was extremely poor and this is also evident that women from low socioeconomic groups have exceptionally high lifetime and recent intimate partner violence [21]. Women due to her socioeconomic status or financial problems, cannot leave the relationship.

CONCLUSION:

The prevalence of domestic violence in women is noted at a level that should raise concern. Health services are the best place for routine inquiry because they have the most frequent and widest contact with the population of all public services. In addition, women experiencing domestic violence access health services more frequently. Doctors need to be aware of the many potential indicators of domestic violence and should ask about abuse in an empathic, non-judgmental way. Violence against women is a violation of basic human rights that must be eliminated through political will, and by legal and civil action in all sectors of society.

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TABLE: 2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN AND THEIR HUSBANDS WITH VIOLENCE

Characteristics of the women	With violence (n=310)	Without violence (n=190)	P value
Age groups			
15-30	193(62.2)	115 (60.5)	1.000
31-45	95(30.6)	56 (29.4)	0.000
46-65	22(7.0)	19(10)	0.000
Education			
High	20(6.45)	21(11)	1.000
Middle	34(17.8)	23(12.1)	0.000
Primary	58(18.7)	38 (20)	0.000
uneducated	198 (63.8)	108 (56.8)	0.000
No. of children			
No children	21(6.7)	18(9.4)	1.000
1-2 children	100(32.2)	75(39.4)	0.000
3-5 children	106(34.1)	47(24.7)	0.000
>5 children	83(26.7)	50(26.3)	0.000
Monthly income			
Below 6000 PKR	215(69.3)	116(61)	1.000
6000-12000 PKR	83(26.7)	63(33.1)	0.000
12000-20000 PKR	8(2.5)	7(3.6)	0.000
Above 20000 PKR	4(1.2)	4(2.1)	0.000
Drug use			
yes	104(33.5)	47(8.9)	
no	206(66.4)	143(75.2)	
Chronic disease			
yes	34(10.9)	17(8.9)	1.000
no	275(88.7)	172(90.5)	0.000
Characteristics of the Husbands			
Education			
High	38(12.2)	42(22.1)	1.000
middle	44(14.1)	35(18.4)	0.000
primary	46(14.8)	38(20)	0.000
uneducated	182(58.7)	75(39.4)	0.000
Occupation			
Governmental job	17 (5.4)	13(6.8)	1.000
Nongovernmental job	268 (86.4)	159(83.6)	0.000
unemployed	25(8.0)	18(9.4)	0.000
Drug use			
yes	195 (62.9)	115 (60.5)	1.000
no	109 (35.1)	81 (42.6)	0.000
Characteristics of the Husbands			
Education			
High	38(12.2)	42(22.1)	1.000
middle	44(14.1)	35(18.4)	0.000
primary	46(14.8)	38(20)	0.000
uneducated	182(58.7)	75(39.4)	0.000
Occupation			
Governmental job	17 (5.4)	13(6.8)	1.000
Nongovernmental job	268 (86.4)	159(83.6)	0.000
unemployed	25(8.0)	18(9.4)	0.000
Drug use			
yes	195 (62.9)	115 (60.5)	1.000
no	109 (35.1)	81 (42.6)	0.000

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