

Domestic Abuse in Behshahr, Iran

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Abstract

Background: The United Nations in a resolution defined abuse as any violent act that is primarily or exclusively committed against females and results in physical, sexual and psychological harm.

Objectives: The aim of this research was to study the contributing factors of husband's violence against females residing in the city of Behshahr, Iran.

Materials and Methods: We distributed a specifically designed questionnaire among 380 married females aged between 15 and 65 years. According to the Morgan table, the subjects were randomly selected from a list of 301000 females. Demographic data and data on spouse abuse were then analyzed using the SPSS software, Spearman and Pearson correlation coefficients. According to Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.96.

Results: All of the females reported at least one form of violence within the past year, with R square 0.20, indicating that the independent variable can explain 20% of the violence against females. years of marriage, female's education, male's addiction and the number of children each had their share in the explanation of violence against females.

Conclusions: This study revealed a high prevalence of domestic violence in the sample population. Violence existed among all ages, social categories and male occupational groups, and also involved both employed and unemployed females. The situation regarding domestic abuse is similar worldwide.

Keywords: Behshahr, Domestic Violence, Iran

1. Background

The United Nations in a resolution defined abuse as any violent act that is primarily or exclusively committed against females and results in physical, sexual and psychological harm (1). This can be done by threat, force, lack of absolute discretion and freedom, which can be hidden or obvious (1). Abuse against females has various dimensions such as physical (pushing and hitting with a stick), sexual (ignoring and using force for sexual intercourse), economic (no financial support and taking away the female's income) and psychological (frightening by using the threat of divorce and depriving the female to have relationships with others). Battering is a pattern of behavior that functions to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation. It often includes the threat or use of violence (2-4).

Domestic abuse significantly increases the risk of psychological distress and physical illness among females (2). Moreover, the association of psychological distress and physical abuse indicates that the effects of domestic violence may remain for a long period after the actual abuse has ended (3). A female is physically abused

every nine seconds in America and an estimated three to four million American females are battered each year by their husbands or partners (4). One out of two marriages has at least one episode of domestic violence. A consistent finding running through years of research is that females are much more likely to be harmed by an intimate partner than by a stranger. The federal bureau of investigation (FBI) of America has reported that 30% of female homicide victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends and 25% of all police calls are for domestic violence. In the USA, with an estimated national prevalence of eight to 15 million and an annual incidence of approximately 1.8 million, domestic violence is a major cause of injury, disability, homicide, homelessness, addiction, attempted of suicide and child abuse. Nowadays, domestic abuse is a major worldwide social and health concern (5, 6). The prevalence of domestic violence is believed to be higher in developing countries (7, 8). According to the United Nation's report, 27% to 60% of females are injured or maltreated by their husbands (9). In Chilli, one in four females has experienced physical and one in three, emotional maltreatment from their

husbands or partners (10). The situation is similar in Turkey (11) and Taiwan (12).

In the USA, with a national sample of 2143 respondents from intact families, Aminjafari et al. showed that family violence was not specific to any one race, social class, or neighborhood. In about 24% of families, one spouse has pushed, grabbed or shoved the other at some point in the marriage, 10% have kicked, bit or punched their spouses, and 6% have beaten up their spouses (13).

Research by Rabani in Isfahan reported that there was no positive relationship between female and male's religious beliefs, degree of education and incidents of abuse (14). Malekafzali et al. showed that in Esfahan 28% of females have been beaten one to four times by their spouses (15). Daly et al. demonstrated that the most prevalent type of abuse was verbal and psychological (34% to 63%), and in Iran, a national research conducted in 30 States by the Interior Ministry reported the prevalence of female abuse as 66% (16).

2. Objectives

The present research was an attempt to study effective elements on the degree of husband's abuse against females of Behshahr and their influence on socio-economic factors.

3. Materials and Methods

In order to collect data on demographic characteristics of the population under study, the researchers distributed a questionnaire among 380 married females aged 15 to 65, to complete for the past year.

According to Morgan's table, the subjects were selected from a target population of 30100 married females aged

16 to 60 years (the target population was those included in a national survey performed during 2011) residing in Behshahr within the last year. The sampling method used was cluster random sampling, and using this sampling technique, the researchers selected five regions or neighborhoods of Behshahr through maps. The time of study was the second half of 2012. The subject's addresses were found via their postcode and housing population census. The educated females completed the questionnaire themselves while interviewers filled the questionnaire for the illiterate subjects. The questionnaire used in this research was produced and adapted from the study of Straus (4), and included 10 general and 50 particular questions. We studied six types of abuse namely physical, economic, social, sexual, psychological and verbal, within the past year. For confidentiality, the respondents' names were not recorded on the questionnaire. The demographic data and data on spouse abuse were analyzed using the SPSS software version 17 with the Spearman, Kendal and Pearson tests and Regression analysis. According to Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated as 0.96, indicating good internal consistency. Moreover, the researchers, who analyzed the component items of this questionnaire in different experiments, confirmed its validity.

4. Results

According to the obtained results based on Table 1, the females had experienced abuse at all degrees. Furthermore, 83.1% of females experienced one type of abuse in the minimum range, while 13.3% in the medium range, and 3.4% experienced a higher range of abuse in the past year.

Table 1. The Rate and Percentage of Domestic Abuse Against Females by Husbands Within the Past Year^a

Rate and Percentage of Abuse Against Females	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Number	1 (0.3)	320 (83.1)	51 (13.3)	10 (2.6)	3 (0.8)

^aValues are presented as No. (%).

Table 2. Forms of Abuse Within the Past Year^a

Rate of Violence	Types of Violence					
	Physical	Economic	Social	Sexual	Psychological	Verbal
Never	222 (57.7)	209 (54.3)	152 (39.5)	109 (28.3)	67 (17.4)	2 (0.5)
Seldom	132 (34.3)	97 (25.2)	137 (35.6)	107 (27.8)	156 (40.5)	272 (70.6)
Sometimes	20 (5.2)	65 (16.9)	83 (21.6)	149 (38.7)	136 (35.3)	96 (25)
Usually	9 (2.3)	11 (2.9)	7 (1.8)	12 (3.2)	23 (6)	12 (3.1)
Always	2 (0.6)	3 (0.8)	6 (1.6)	8 (2.1)	3 (0.8)	3 (0.8)
Total	385 (100)	385 (100)	385 (100)	385 (100)	385 (100)	385 (100)

^aValues are presented as No. (%).

Table 3. Comparison of the Rate of Abuse Regarding Female's Employment, Close Relationship Between Couples, and Husband's Addiction

Variables	Frequency	Mean	STD. Deviation	T	df	P Value
Female's employment status				0.094	279	.92
Employed	132	66	41.4			
Unemployed	252	34.24	43.3			
Existence of a close relationship between the subject and her husband				-1.23	314	.97
Yes	165	31.2	47			
No	220	36.7	39			
Existence of addiction in the subject's husband				5.7	383	.00
Yes	80	57.8	68.9			
No	305	28.2	29.6			

Table 4. The Relationship Between the Socioeconomic Variables of Couples and the Rate of Abuse Against Females

Independent	Dependent		
	Test	Relationship	P Value
Female's education	Kendall	-0.26 ^a	.001
Male's education	Kendall	-0.58	.25
Status of male's employment	Spearman	0.19	.74
Male's income	Pearson	-0.012	.81
Family's socioeconomic status	Spearman	-0.81	.86
Violence experienced by females in the family	Pearson	0.29 ^a	.001

^aCorrelation is significant at 0.001 levels.

Table 5. Results of Multiple Regression Among Variables and Rate of Abuse^a

Model	Un-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P Value
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant^b	89.081	22.468		3.965	.000
Female's age	-0.908	0.553	-0.190	-1.642	.102
Years of marriage	1.216	0.476	0.260	2.557	.011
Male's age	0.504	0.424	0.116	1.187	.236
Number of children	-5.653	2.580	-0.173	-2.191	.029
Family's social status	-1.117	2.152	-0.025	-5.19	.604
Male's education	0.134	0.112	0.071	1.197	.232
Female's education	-0.461	0.112	-0.228	-4.104	.000
Couple's relationship	-5.302	4.103	-0.062	-1.292	.197
Male's addiction	-25.403	5.100	-0.242	-4.981	.000
Violence experienced by the female before marriage	2.496	0.500	0.242	4.989	.000

^aStatistical values: R = 0.452 (multiple correlation coefficient), R Square = 0.204, F = 9.594, Sig. = 0.000.

^bConstant = A fixed number, a variable whose value cannot be changed once it has been assigned a value.

5. Discussion

The results of our study indicate that all of the females have experienced one type of abuse in the past year. In our sample, 70.6% of the females reported verbal abuse in the low range (70.6%), medium range (25%) and high range (3.9%). Concerning psychological abuse, the violence range for the low, medium and high categories was 40.5%, 35.3% and 6.8%, respectively. As for sexual abuse, 71.8% of females experienced this in the past year, while 9.5% of females experienced social abuse. Economic abuse was experienced by 45.7% of females, while physical abuse was experienced by 34.3% at the lower range and 7.5% at the high range. Physical abuse occurs more in Iran as well as the world (17). This is in agreement with the results of some other studies. According to Ghahhri et al. in Sari, Ghahhari et al. in Tonekabon, Musavi and Fatemi in Rasht, and Poorghaz and Raghbi in Gorgan, as well as in our study, the degree of violence against females in the Northern area of Iran is higher (18-21). Narimani and Mohammadian studied the rate of male's abuse against females in the city of Ardebil. Their results indicated that the rate of psychological violence was 55.5%, social violence 30%, and physical violence was 28.5% in the studied families. Moreover, male's frustration had a significant correlation with violence against females (21). Amanoolahifard et al. (2009) in the city of Ahvaz indicated that 83% of their sample experienced psychological and physical abuse, 72.5% psychological and 27% physical abuses (22).

This problem can be explained by Durkheim's viewpoint, because the Northern areas of Iran are developing from a traditional society (mechanical) to a modern one (organic). In this situation, as Durkheim suggests, a kind of abnormality in the social institution such as family and couple's roles exist that can contribute to their conflict. Moreover, violence against females is widespread among all age groups, social and economic categories (23-25). Females of all ages have experienced violence, however, it is more evident within the 20 - 29 age group, while males aged between 25 and 39 have been shown to use more violence toward females.

The correlation between years of marriage and violence indicates that when years of marriage increase, the degree of violence against females decreases. This study demonstrated that there is more violence among young and newly married couples. Younger females and females with low level of education have been shown to be vulnerable to more physical and emotional abuse (26). Similar to other studies (18, 20, 21) we found such association with husband's younger age and lower level of education.

Since early prevention will reduce the incident of domestic violence, females and children will benefit from intervention strategies, improving victim's awareness. Furthermore, training of police officers and public health services regarding domestic violence will be an asset to the wellbeing of females, children and their families. The type of risk factors for domestic violence appears to be

similar in various societies around the world, regardless of their religious and cultural backgrounds.

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Authors' Contributions

Ali Akbar Rahmatian evaluated and interpreted the clinical data, and helped in drafting of the manuscript. Seyyed Ali Asghar Hosseini participated in the evaluation and performed the statistical analysis, and revised the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Declaration of Interest

Non-declared.

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