

Original Research Article

ESTIMATING THE PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG WOMEN AND ITS IMPACT AND BARRIERS IN SEEKING HELP IN URBAN FIELD SERVICE AREA CHENNAI-A DESCRIPTIVE CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Domestic violence which includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse can lead to fatal outcomes like homicide or suicide, lead to mental health problems like depression, anxiety disorders, unintended pregnancies, induced abortions and risk of getting STDs and HIV especially among women. This study was conducted to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence in Chennai and how domestic violence impacts the women and what barriers are present while seeking help.

Material and Methods: This was a Descriptive cross sectional study conducted among women who were married for at least one year period in an Urban field practice area of a Medical college in Chennai. Sample size was calculated to be 385 and Simple random sampling with lottery method was used to select study participants. Data was collected by interview method using structured interview schedule.

Results: About 65.7% of the women have experienced domestic violence. 65.5% of women have said that they are unable to spend money. 35.6% of women reported that they have experienced emotional distress, Loss of appetite and reduced sleep. 29.4 % of women have told that violence at home affected their children's academics. Only 24.2 % of participants have asked for help from their family and friends.

Conclusion: In spite of many advancements, the high prevalence of domestic abuse and low help seeking behaviour among our participants suggests a high need of awareness on women's rights.

Keywords: Domestic violence, abuse, help seeking, married women.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic Violence refers to any act that harms or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of a person. Domestic violence can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse.^[1] Domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together or dating.

Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.^[2] However, researches indicate that the burden of domestic violence is disproportionately higher among women than men.^[3] Though domestic violence is mostly thought to be due to the partner, it can also involve other members of the family as well. WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 of women worldwide have experienced partner or non-partner violence.^[4] Domestic violence can lead to fatal outcomes like homicide or suicide, lead to mental health problems

like depression, anxiety disorders. Sexual violence can also lead to unintended pregnancies, induced abortions and risk of getting STDs and HIV. Children exposed to domestic violence experience significant negative impact on their psychological, physical and emotional well being. The global burden of domestic violence is highlighted by the SDG target 5.2 “End all violence against and exploitation of women and girls”. Global statistics also reveal that less than 40% of women seek any form of help against domestic violence.^[5] African and South east regions have the highest prevalence of Domestic violence.^[6] This study aims to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence in Chennai and how domestic violence impacts the women and what barriers are present while seeking help.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design: Descriptive cross sectional study

Study Population: Married women in an Urban field practice area of a Medical college in Chennai.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: Women who were married for at least one-year period and have given consent for the study were included and women with history of mental illness were excluded from the study

Sample Size: Based on previous study,^[2] where prevalence of domestic violence was 35%, with 95% confidence level and absolute precision of 5, and 10% non-response rate, sample size was calculated to be 385.

Data collection Procedure: Using simple random sampling, houses to be interviewed were selected. In cases of houses with multiple married women, the subject was chosen by lot method. After obtaining explicitly written informed consent from the women in the study population, the data was collected using structured interview schedule applied by the investigator in an interview method. The interview was done in such a way the privacy of the subject was ensured and their confidentiality was maintained.

Data Analysis: The data collected was entered in MS Excel and analysed using SPSS software version 22.

RESULTS

385 participants were interviewed and the mean age of the participants was 35yrs (+/-10.3).

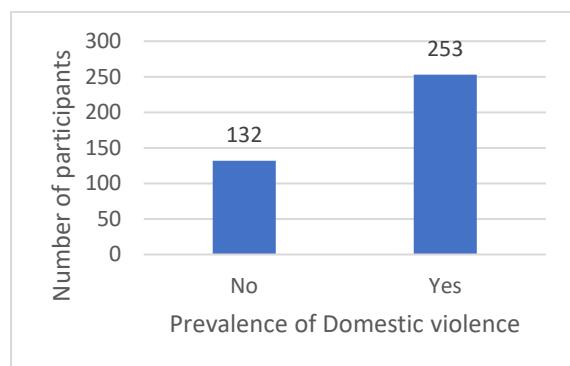
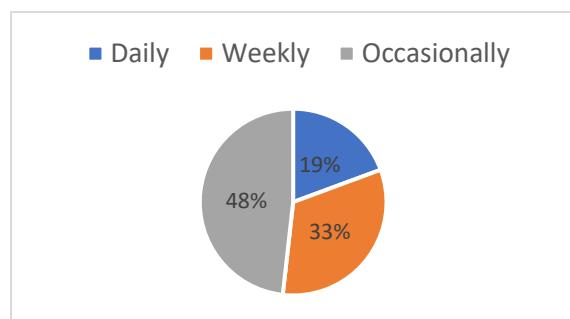
56.4% (n-217) of the participants were unemployed, and 58.7% (n- 226) of the participants were coming from a nuclear family. The sociodemographic details of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Sociodemographic details of the participants

VARIABLE	N	%
AGE		
i)<25 yrs	75	19.5
ii) 25-35 yrs	167	43.4
iii) 35-45 yrs	85	22.1
iv) >45 yrs	58	15.1
OCCUPATION		
i) Unemployed	217	56.4
ii) Employed	168	43.6
EDUCATION		
i) Illiterate	10	2.6
ii) Primary School	44	11.4
iii) Middle School	83	21.6
iv) High School	118	30.6
v) Undergraduate	110	28.6
vi) Postgraduate	20	5.2
YEARS OF MARRIAGE		
i)< 10 yrs	215	55.8
ii) 11-20 yrs	91	23.6
iii)>20 yrs	79	20.5
TYPE OF FAMILY		
i) Nuclear	226	58.7
ii) Joint	137	35.6
iii) Extended	22	5.7
SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS		
i) Upper	9	2.3
ii) Upper middle	73	19.0
iii) Lower middle	211	54.8
iv) Upper Lower	67	17.4
v) Lower	25	6.5
NO OF CHILDREN		
i) zero	57	14.8
ii) one	134	34.8
ii) two	147	38.2
iii) more than two	47	12.2

Table 2: Prevalence of Physical, Sexual and emotional violence among study participants

	n	%
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE		
-Pushed, shoved, shaken, hurt	172	44.7
-Twisted arm, banged head, pulled hair	118	30.6
-Slapped, pinched, bitten	168	43.6
-Hit, punched	112	29.1
-Kicked, dragged, beaten	61	15.8
-Things thrown at, burned	62	16.1
-Attacked or threatened with sharp object	41	10.6
-Attacked or threatened with blunt object	78	20.3
-Suffocated, choked, hung, poisoned	33	8.6
SEXUAL VIOLENCE		
-Forced intercourse	47	12.2
EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE		
-Insulted, made to feel bad about herself	233	60.5
-Belittled, humiliated in front of others	205	53.2
-Ignored, treated indifferently		
-Scared or intimidated on purpose	149	38.7
-Threatened to hurt her, someone close, or take child away	106	27.5
-Insulted for not having a baby	86	22.3
-Insulted for not having a son	99	25.7

**Figure 1: Prevalence of domestic violence among Study participants****Figure 2: Frequency of Domestic Violence among participants (n=253)**

About 65.7% of the women have experienced domestic violence. (Figure1)

Economic abuse: 65.5%(n-252) of women have said that they are unable to spend money and 29.9% (n-115) of women have said that they were not allowed to work.

Health Issues: 35.6% (n-136) of women reported that they have experienced emotional distress, Loss of appetite and reduced sleep.

Effect on Kids: 29.4 %(n-113) of women have told that violence at home affected their children's academic activities and 10.1% (n-39) of women have told that their child engages in anti social activity.

Substance Abuse: 31.9% (n-123) of participants said that the act of domestic violence occurred under the influence of alcohol.

Asking for Help: Only 24.2 %(n-93) of participants have asked for help from their family and friends and only 21.6% (n-83) were aware of helpline services. (Figure 3)

DISCUSSION

A systematic review conducted in India have shown that 41% of women have experienced domestic in their lifetime at least once and 30% have experienced it in past one year,^[7] which is below our prevalence which may be due to the fact that our population mainly consists of unemployed and lower class women.

In a study conducted in Mumbai, the most common type of spousal violence, in India, is physical (28%), followed by emotional (14%), and sexual (6%).^[8] whereas in our study emotional violence was more common than physical violence.

While a recent pan-India survey reported a drop, from 31% to 29% (in a period of 5 years) in physical and sexual violence combined, nonetheless, the magnitude is still unacceptably high.^[8]

Data from NFHS-5 shows that, alcohol consumption by a partner seems to be a contributing factor for Domestic violence,^[9] which is similar to our study findings suggesting that 31.9% of domestic violence acts occur under influence of alcohol.

Previous study by data from annual reports of National Crimes Record beaureau, rate of self reported cases were only 28.3%,^[7] whereas in our study, only 21.6% were even aware of the helpline services.

A systematic review conducted by collecting 339 articles based on Domestic violence screening in ED, suggests that, because of the high burden of suffering caused by DV, health care providers should strongly consider routinely inquiring about DV as part of the

history, at a minimum for all female adolescent and adult patients.^[10]

CONCLUSION

In spite of many advancements, the high prevalence of domestic abuse among our participants suggests a high need of awareness on women's rights. Domestic violence is a major public health issue, as it may lead to poor mother and child health. Empowering women, promoting gender equality, and enforcing strict laws against domestic violence may help us in reducing domestic violence. More awareness regarding helpline services, and including questions pertaining to domestic violence in ED may help in identifying women suffering from domestic violence.

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