



RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG WOMEN IN A SELECTED RURAL COMMUNITY, ERNAKULAM DISTRICT, KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Back ground of the study: A study undertaken by Sakhi in Kerala in 2004 revealed that 40% of respondents had experienced violence in the home at some point in their lives.

Need for the study: The studies done in Kerala regarding domestic violence are very few in number, for taking necessary actions in this field we need the current status of women experiencing domestic violence.

Purpose: The study explored the experience of domestic violence among women and assessed the knowledge of them regarding domestic violence. Design: Descriptive survey design was used.

Sample: Comprised of 200 women between the age of 18-60 years selected by proportionate stratified random sampling.

Method: Data was collected using two tools developed by the researcher. The data then obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage and frequency distribution) and inferential statistics (Chi-Square).

Major findings: Fourty three percentage of the subjects were experiencing domestic violence at the time of the study. Majority of the subjects (49%) had poor knowledge regarding domestic violence, 18% had good knowledge regarding domestic violence. Association found between physical violence and age ($\chi^2(2)=12.5$, $p=0.002$), education ($\chi^2(3)=10.94$, $p=0.012$), and duration of marital life ($\chi^2(2)=24$, $p<0.001$). Significant association noticed between emotional violence and age ($\chi^2(2)=8.28$, $p=0.016$), education ($\chi^2(3)=10.94$, $p=0.012$) and duration of marital life ($\chi^2(2)=20.09$, $p<0.001$). Association found between economic violence and duration of marital life ($\chi^2(2)=9.47$, $p=0.002$). Association was noticed between knowledge level and age ($\chi^2(4)=13.87$, $p=0.008$), education ($\chi^2(6)=12.95$, $p=0.004$), occupation ($\chi^2(6)=13.22$, $p=0.04$).

Conclusion: The findings of the study show that this evil is still growing in our society. Also the knowledge of the women about domestic violence is found to be poor. It shows the need for gender sensitization and empowerment programmes.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Constitution of India, men and women are equal before law (<http://www.preservearticles.com/201104306065/essay-on-status-of-women-in-india.html>). The sex ratio of India shows that the Indian society is still prejudiced against female. There are 940 females per thousand males in India according to the census of 2011 (<http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/kerala.html>). Sex Ratio of Kerala is 1084 females for each 1000 males as per census 2011 (<http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/kerala.html>). If on one hand she is at the peak of ladder of success, on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence afflicted on her by her own family members.

It is highly commendable that an act of domestic violence is reported every day in the national dailies

These are all what we come to know through different forms of media. There are more such cases which go unreported every day. Domestic violence is to be perceived not as a law and order problem alone. Primarily it is a socio cultural problem. The present study will help to explore the experience of domestic violence among women, assess the knowledge of women regarding domestic violence and the services offered to them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design used in the study was descriptive survey design and was conducted in ward number 15 of Njarackal Panchayat of Ernakulam District, Kerala using a population of

women between 18-60 years of age. Sample size of the study was 200. Samples were recruited using proportionate stratified random sampling. The researcher divided the total subjects in to 3 strata based on the age group. The strata formed were; 18-32 years, 33-46 years and 47-60 years. Data collection instruments are:

Tool I- Semi-structured interview schedule to explore the experience of domestic violence among women. Reliability coefficient of the Tool-I was tested by Test-retest method it was estimated as 0.78.

Tool II- Structured Questionnaire to assess the knowledge of women regarding domestic violence. Reliability coefficient It was estimated as 0.88 and found to be reliable.

Procedure for data collection

Out of 16 wards of Njarackal Panchayat, the researcher selected ward No: 15 randomly. The researcher kept the voters list of ward 15 as the sampling frame. The total population of women is classified according to the age and made three strata, and random sampling is done to recruit the subjects in to these strata. The researcher personally visited the house of each subject who met the inclusion criteria. After building rapport with the subject, researcher obtained informed consent and, the data was collected using semi-structured interview schedule and self-administered knowledge questionnaire.

FINDINGS

- Forty three percentage of the subjects were experiencing domestic violence at the time of the study and 57% were not experiencing domestic violence
- Of the total subjects 39% were experiencing emotional violence, 30% were experiencing physical violence, 8% subjects were experiencing economic violence and 2% subjects were the victims of sexual violence
- The most common mode of physical violence was beating. Forcing the women to have sex when she was not prepared was the commonest mode of sexual violence. The most common mode of emotional violence was in the form of verbal abuse. Forcing the women out of the house was the most common mode of economic violence they experience
- Of the subjects experienced domestic violence, 57.4% experienced the physical consequences of it in the form of bruises and wounds, 30% subjects reported feelings of anger as the most common psychological consequences
- About 93.1% of women were experiencing domestic violence from their husbands. Most of the perpetrators (45.9%) were between 36-45 years of age. More than half of the perpetrators had secondary education (52.8%). Majority of the perpetrators ie.94.25% had the habit of alcoholism.
- Of the 200 subjects, 14% had experienced physical violence and 20% subjects had experienced emotional violence in the past
- Majority of the subjects (49%) had poor knowledge regarding domestic violence and only 18% had good knowledge regarding domestic violence and rest of them (33%) had average knowledge regarding domestic violence

- Significant association was found between current experience of physical violence and subjects age ($\chi^2_{(2)}=12.5$, $p=0.002$), education ($\chi^2_{(3)}=10.94$, $p=0.012$), duration of marital life ($\chi^2_{(2)}=24$, $p<0.001$)
- Significant association noticed between current experience of emotional violence and subjects age ($\chi^2_{(2)}=8.28$, $p=0.016$), education ($\chi^2_{(3)}=10.94$, $p=0.012$), duration of marital life ($\chi^2_{(2)}=20.09$, $p<0.001$)
- There was significant association between current experience of economic violence and duration of marital life ($\chi^2_{(2)}=9.47$, $p=0.002$)
- Association was found between subjects knowledge level on domestic violence and age ($\chi^2_{(4)}=13.87$, $p=0.008$), education ($\chi^2_{(6)}=12.95$, $p=0.004$), and occupation ($\chi^2_{(6)}=13.22$, $p=0.040$).

DISCUSSION

The cross-sectional study conducted by Sarkar S (Purwar, 1999) in a village of West Bengal using interview schedule shows that 23.4% adult and adolescent females were exposed to domestic violence. Most of the females reported slapping as a specific act of physical assault (72.73%). The current study revealed that 43% of women experience domestic violence and the contributing factors for this increase can be attributed to excessive substance abuse especially the alcohol consumption among the males in rural communities of Kerala, also it is advised to the newly wedded bride to adjust with the problems that may arise at her in-laws home. National Family Health Survey-3 shown that 35% of women experienced physical violence in India. Sixteen percentage of ever married women report having experienced emotional violence. Ten percentage of married women and one percentage unmarried women have experienced sexual violence. Slapping was the most commonly reported act of physical violence (20%). Being physically forced to have sexual intercourse is more common mode of attack in the case of sexual violence (10%). Psychological violence was mainly in the form of saying or doing something to humiliate the women in front of others (13%), (Reingle, 2011). The result of above study is congruent with present study in identifying most common mode of sexual violence and physical violence. In the present study, the percentage of women experiencing emotional violence (39%) is higher than the physical violence (31%), but in the National Family Survey it is found that the physical violence (35%) is comparatively more than emotional violence (16%). Slapping was the most commonly reported act of physical violence in NFHS-3 (Reingle, 2011), but in the current study it was beating. Another finding which is found out similarly by both studies was the common mode of sexual violence, ie. forcing the women to have sex.

A situational analysis of domestic violence against women in Kerala undertaken by Centre for women studies and development in Ernakulam performed among 100 women affected by domestic violence shows that beating is the most common physical violence suffered by 27% of the victims. In the case of psychological violence 38.6% of the respondents were the victims of demeaning (Shubhodaya, 2004). The current study shows that, of the 87 women experiencing domestic violence, 93.1% are experiencing the domestic violence from their husband and only 4.6% are experiencing it from the mother-in-law. Regarding the demographic characteristics of the perpetrators, 45.9% are between the age

of 36-45 years. Most of the perpetrators (52.8%) have secondary educational qualification. Of the 87 perpetrators 78 have the habit of alcoholism. Various other studies show relatively same findings. According to National Family Health Survey-3, 85% of ever married women who have experienced violence experienced it from their current husband. Only 2% mention mother-in-law as the perpetrator (Reingle, 2011). The situational analysis of domestic violence performed in victims of domestic violence shows that 75.4% of the victim's husbands were alcoholic. Characteristics of perpetrators examined in a multi-country study by Kishor S (Vachher, 2010), shows that, in India 12.1% and 7.1% of perpetrator had primary and secondary or higher education respectively. All these findings are at par with the present study by pointing out the same fact that husbands are the most common perpetrators and also most of the male perpetrators have the habit of alcoholism.

The present study also examined the percentage of domestic violence experienced by the women in the past. It shows that 15%, 14%, 8.5% and 2% of total subjects had experienced emotional violence, physical violence, economic violence and sexual violence respectively in the past. A similar study conducted by Sakhi women's resource centre working for welfare of women using 900 subjects from general female population in Ernakulam, Kozhoikode and Palakkad also revealed different findings. According to that study the forms of violence 'ever' experienced by respondents seemed to be high, ie, physical violence (30%), psychological violence (21%), economic abuse (17.1%) and sexual violence (5%). The proportion of women experiencing any kind of violence during 12 months preceding the survey is much lower than the proportions 'ever' experiencing violence in their life time (Sakhi women's resource centre, 2008).

According to study conducted by Sakhi, the percentage of women currently experiencing domestic violence is lower than the percentage of women who experienced violence in the past, also the percentage of women experienced physical violence in the past (30%) is higher than the percentage of women experienced emotional violence in the past (21%) (Sakhi women's resource centre, 2008). This finding of the study is contradictory to the findings of the present study as the present study shows drastic increase in the percentage of women experiencing physical and emotional violence from the past. This difference may be due to the limited sample size and setting adopted in the present study. This is surprising because in this modern era due to the increased awareness programs in various medias about gender sensitization, and violence prevention, the percentage of domestic violence against women is expected to decrease compared to the past. The most common mode of physical as well as sexual violence is same in both studies.

The current study shows that emotional violence (15%) is the type of domestic violence experienced by women than physical violence (14%) in the past. Although the percentage, types of violence experiencing, frequency of violence by the women varies with different studies, the common mode of domestic violence in the present study and other studies are relatively same, also in all the studies the majority of the perpetrators are husband and they have the habit of alcoholism. In the study conducted by Sakhi resource centre point out that more than 90% of the respondents in Ernakulam do not know of any organizations or individuals in the district who could help the

women to face violence. All the same 74% believed that it was the right of the women to react to the domestic violence (Sakhi women's resource centre, 2008). This study finding is contradictory to the current study, as the current study shows that 75% of the total interviewed subjects are aware about the authorized organization (Kerala Women's Commission) to protect the women from the act of violence. The current study also shows that, when assessed the attitude of the women regarding beatings from their husbands in the knowledge questionnaire, 91% responded that husband does not have the right to beat the wife. This finding has equal footing with the study conducted by Sakhi as it shows that eighty three percentage of the respondents in Ernakulam believed that husbands did not have a right to beat their wives (Sakhi women's resource centre, 2008). Centre for women studies and development as a part of their study assessed the knowledge of victims of domestic violence in Ernakulam. About 53.1% of the total subjects were ignorant about organizations or individuals addressing the domestic violence. One fourth of the total victims knew about the counselling centres and services that they provide (<http://www.sosrac.org/sosrac.pdf>). In general, all the above studies show that women do not have good knowledge regarding domestic violence and ways to seek help. This is consistent with current study findings that are majority of the subjects (49%) had poor knowledge regarding domestic violence and 33% had average knowledge regarding domestic violence. Only a minimum percentage (18%) had good knowledge regarding domestic violence.

Unfortunately, the results shows the need for sensitization and awareness generation programs among women with regard to domestic violence and services available to them and the constant efforts form the part of Government as well as other voluntary social workers help to reach these services at the grass root level. A cross-sectional study conducted by Sarkar S¹⁶ in rural Bengal supports the findings in the current study by pointing out an association between domestic violence and age of subjects ($p < 0.001$), education of subjects ($p < 0.01$). Both the studies didn't demonstrate an association between domestic violence and demographic variables such as religion, number of children, type of family and also the monthly family income. The study conducted by Sarkar S¹⁶ also found an association between domestic violence and marital status where as the current study did not. Adding to this, the present study shown an association between domestic violence and duration of marital life which is not assessed in the above mentioned study. The multi-country study done in 9 countries including India also hypothesised that young women are more at risk of being currently abused than older women (Vachher, 2010). These all means that the experience of physical and emotional violence are more reported in younger women, women with low educational status and in women with less duration of marital life. The researcher thinks that the reason for this association may be that as age advances or the educational level goes high, women become more mature and have greater resources to draw upon in times of need, such as dealing with a violent partner. Also as the duration of martial life increases, women learn more preventive or adaptive measures to overcome the experience of domestic violence.

Ethical clearance

After getting permission from the Institutional Ethical Committee, formal permission was obtained from President of Njarackal Panchayat before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the study.

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