

Epidemiological Study on the Prevalence of Violence Among employed Women in Kufa University and some associated Factors

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Abstract:

Objective: This study was conducted to determine the prevalence of violence against women (VAW) and some associated factors in a sample of employed women in Kufa university.

Design and methods: A cross sectional study of VAW covering 110 employed married women in 6 colleges in Kufa university was carried out during the period of 1st of March to the 1st of May 2011, data collection was done by using questionnaire forms containing demographic and violence related questions as well as questions related to husbands of participants.

Results: Results showed that about 37.3 % of the sample were ever exposed to violence by their husbands both physical and sexual violence. Thirty six women (32.7 %) exposed to physical violence and 15 women (13.6%) exposed to sexual violence.

No significant statistical association ($p=0.37$) was found between violence and if the husband is relative or not as well as no significant statistical association ($p=1$) was found between violence and husband's work.

This study showed a significant statistical association found between husband's satisfaction with women's work and the violence ($p=0.03$). The study also showed that 14 (12.7 %) women subjected to violence reported that they cannot complete their lives with violent

husbands compared with 27 (24.5 %) who reported that they will complete their lives with violence with significant statistical association ($p= 0.005$).

No significant association between women's level of education and exposure to violence ($p= 0.39$), also there was no significant association between the number of children and exposure to violence ($p=0.383$) as well as there was no significant statistical association between the age of women and the exposure to violence ($p= 0.07$).

Conclusion: These results indicate the need for more attention to be given in order to prevent this problem by the governments, ministries (especially ministries of women, human right and justice) , international organizations, religious leaders and NGOs through education about this problem and reactivation of laws in the constitution regarding women's rights.

Introduction

The United Nations defines violence against women (VAW) as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.^[1]

Violence against women has been described as “perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and the most pervasive.”^[2] Addressing violence against women is central to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 on women's empowerment and gender equality, as well as MDGs 4, 5 and 6.^[3]

Women are more likely to be **victimized** by someone that they are intimate with, commonly called "Intimate Partner Violence" or (IPV). The impact of domestic violence in the sphere of total violence against

women can be understood through the example that 40-70% of murders of women are committed by their husband or boyfriend.^[4]

Researches on violence against women – especially male partner violence – had been increased. Since 2005, when the first results of the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence were launched, the number of intimate partner violence prevalence studies increased fourfold, from 80 to more than 300, in 2008.^[5]

Women suffer violent deaths either directly – through homicide – or indirectly, through suicide, maternal causes and AIDS. Violence is also an important cause of morbidity from multiple mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health outcomes, and it is also linked with known risk factors for poor health, such as alcohol and drug use, smoking and unsafe sex.^[6,7] Violence during pregnancy has also been associated with an increased risk of miscarriage, premature delivery and low birth weight.^[8,9]

In addition to the human costs, research also shows that violence has huge economic costs, including the direct costs to health, legal, police and other services. In 2002, Health Canada estimated that the direct medical costs of all forms of violence against women was 1.1 billion Canadian dollars.^[10] In low-resource settings, relatively few women may seek help from formal services, but because of the high prevalence of violence, the overall costs are substantial. In Uganda, for example, the cost of domestic violence was estimated at 2.5 million United States dollars in 2007.^[11]

Factors that protect women or put them at risk

- **Individual** factors included the woman's level of education, financial autonomy, previous victimization, level of empowerment and social support, and whether there was a history of violence in her family as she was growing up.

- **Partner** factors included the male partner's level of communication with her, use of alcohol and drugs, employment status, whether he had witnessed violence between his parents as a child, and whether he was physically aggressive towards other men.
- Factors related to the **immediate social context** included the degree of economic inequality between men and women, levels of female mobility and autonomy, attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women, the extent to which extended family, neighbors, and friends intervene in domestic violence incidents, levels of male-male aggression and crime, and some measure of social capital.^[12,13]

Aims of the study:

1. To obtain information about the prevalence of violence among a sample employed women in Kufa university.
2. To identify some factors associated with the violence.

Subjects and methods:

A cross sectional study of VAW covering 110 employed married women in 6 colleges in university of Kufa was carried out during the period of 1st of March to the 1st of May 2011. There are 17 colleges in Kufa university and 1053 women employed in these colleges (married and single according to the statistic unit in the university, the exact number of married women is difficult to be known since there are no such data in the statistical unit). The colleges had been selected randomly by random digit table and questionnaire form containing demographic data for both the woman and her husband and question related to the violence was distributed to all married women in that college. Thirty four (20%) of the proposed sample (170) was non responder, leaving behind 136 participants. In addition to the twenty six that included in the pilot study were excluded so the final number was 110 participants.

A pilot study was done on 26 women to check the women's understanding of the questions and some adjustment by omitting some embarrassing questions and translating them into most acceptable words, those 26 women were not included in the study.

Results:

The current sample consisted of 110 married women working in different colleges in Kufa university. The age of participants ranges from 20-56 years (34.7 ± 7.3) and their number of children ranges from 0-10 (2.5 ± 1.65). 96.4% were living in urban area and 3.6% in rural. 45.5% of women had a college level of education, 34.5% had completed secondary school, and 9.1% for higher degree, 9.1% for primary school and 1.8% of the women cannot read and write.

Forty one of the women (37.3 % of the sample) gave history of being ever exposed to violence by their husbands both physical and sexual violence.

Thirty six women (32.7 %) exposed to physical violence and 15 women (13.6%) exposed to sexual violence.

The commonest forms of the physical and sexual with their frequencies and percentages are shown in the tables 1,2 respectively

Table 1: the percentages of the different types of physical violence in the sample

Type	No.	%
Slapping	32	29.1
Pushing	27	24.5
Fist	15	13.8
Kicking	11	10
Chocking and burn	4	3.6
Threatening by a weapon	3	2.7

Table 2: the percentages of the different types of sexual violence in the sample

Type	No.	%
Forced sex	13	11.8
Afraid	17	15.5

Dehumanized sex	5	4.5
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Of the sample 20 women 18.2% were left home (kicking outside home by husband) while 90 women (81.8%) were not left their home as shown in the figure 1

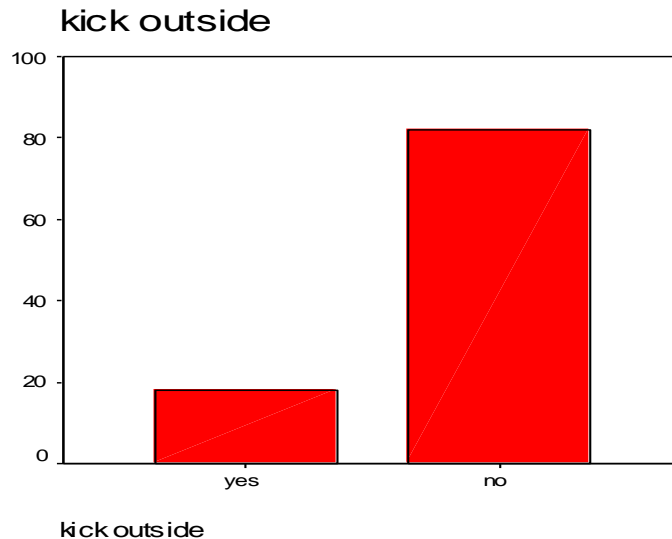


Fig.1: the percentage of women that kicked outside house

No significant statistical association ($X^2= 0.89$, $df= 1$, $p=0.37$) found between violence and if the husband is relative or not in the studied sample as 8 (7.3 %) of the women married to a relatives compared to 33 (30 %) who are not as shown in the table 3

Table 3: the distribution of the sample according to whether husband is relative or not

Violence	Relative husbands				Total	
	Yes		No		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Yes	8	29.6	33	39.8	41	37.3
No	19	70.4	50	60.2	69	62.7
Total	27	24.5	83	75.5	110	100

Twenty nine (26.4 %) women subjected to violence reported husbands' work compared to 12(10.9 %) whom husbands did not work with no significant statistical association ($X^2 =0.04$, $df=1$, $p=1$) as shown in table 4

Table 4: the distribution of the sample according to husband's work

Violence	Husbands' work				Total	
	Yes		No		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Yes	29	36.7	12	38.7	41	37.3
No	50	63.3	19	61.3	69	62.7
Total	79	71.8	31	28.2	110	100

A significant statistical association found between husband's satisfaction with women's work and the violence as 31(28.2%) women subjected to violence reported husband's satisfaction with work compared to 10 (9.1%) who reported no satisfaction ($\chi^2= 5.1, df=1, p=0.03$) as shown in table 5

Table5: the distribution of the sample according Husbands' satisfaction with women's work

Violence	Husbands' satisfaction with women's work				Total	
	Yes		No			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	31	33	10	62.5	41	37.3
No	63	67	6	37.5	69	62.7
Total	94	85.5	16	14.5	110	100

Of the sample 14 (12.7 %) women subjected to violence reported that they cannot complete their lives with violent husbands compared with 27 (24.5 %) who reported that they will complete their lives with violence with significant statistical association ($\chi^2= 9.6, df=1, p= 0.005$) as shown in the table 6

Table 6: the distribution of the sample according to women's attitude to the violence

Violence	Complete life				Total	
	Yes		No			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	14	66.7	27	30.3	41	37.3
No	7	33.3	62	69.7	69	62.7
Total	21	19.1	89	80.9	110	100

No significant association between women's level of education and exposure to violence ($\chi^2=4.2, df=4, p= 0.39$) as shown in table 7

Table 7: the distribution of the sample according to women's level of education

Violence	Level of women education										Total	
	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		College		Higher education			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	1	50	5	50	14	36.8	20	40	1	10	41	37.3
No	1	50	5	50	24	63.2	30	60	9	90	69	62.7
Total	2	1.9	10	9.1	38	45.5	50	34.5	10	9.1	110	100

There was no significant association between the number of children and exposure to violence ($X^2=4.175, df=4, p=0.383$) as well as

there was no significant statistical association between the age of women and the exposure to violence (t test=1.8,df=108, p= 0.07)

Discussion:

Violence against women is a major public health problem and a violation of human rights. Lack of access to education and opportunity, and low social status in communities are linked to violence against women. Violence by an intimate partner is one of the most common forms of violence against women. A wide range of physical, mental, sexual and reproductive, and maternal health problems can result from violence against women.^[1]

The present study found that the prevalence of violence was 37.3% of 110 employed women in Kufa university, the prevalence of physical violence was 32.7 % while the prevalence of sexual violence was 13.6% there was an overlapping between physical and sexual violence. In a 10-country study on women's health and domestic violence conducted by WHO, Between 15% and 71% of women reported physical or sexual violence by a husband or partner.^[1]

In a study of Sexual Violence among female in Colombia,13% report experiencing sexual violence during their lifetime.^[14]

Another study in Ibadan, Nigeria 2010 found that the prevalence of violence a year before current pregnancy was 41.5% compared to 17.7% during pregnancy.^[15]

In 2008 in Brazil 504 women aged 15 to 49 had been surveyed for domestic violence, more than a third of the women reported intimate partner violence.^[16]

In USA 2000, the prevalence of intimate partner violence was 22.1% according to the result of national violence against women survey.^[17]

The present study found that slapping was the most common form of physical violence 29.1% followed by kicking and fisting 24.5%, 13.8

respectively, while in the national violence against women survey in USA pushing was the frequent form followed by slapping 18.1%, 16% respectively.^[17]

Although many studies had been shown that the higher educated women were less subjected to violence less educated^[18] the results from the present study was not consistent with such findings. In addition, research shows that wife assault is more common in families where power is concentrated in the hands of the husband or male partner and the husband makes most of the decisions regarding family finances and strictly controls when and where his wife or female partner goes.^[19] and this is most common in our society.

Many studies showed that lower income women have higher rates of intimate partner violence than do higher income women and couples with income, educational, or occupational status disparities have higher rates of intimate partner violence than do couples with no status disparity.^[20] in the present study no such association was found.

In the present study no association found between the number of children and the violence, however associations had been found between parity and violence by an intimate partner in studies in Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, India, Nicaragua, and Peru.^[21-24] Because of the cross-sectional design of the WHO Study, it is difficult to determine the directionality of the relationship, although other international studies have suggested that high parity is a consequence, rather than a risk factor for violence. For example, a study in Nicaragua found that in 80% of cases violence began in the first 4 years of marriage, often before the couple had their first child.^[25]

Conclusions:

The prevalence of violence against women among the sample was 37.3%. Thirty six women (32.7 %) exposed to physical violence and 15 women

(13.6%) exposed to sexual violence. There was no association with the woman's level of education, parity, age of the woman and whether the husband is relative or not (cognition). There was association between husband's satisfaction with woman's work. Women who are exposed to violence significantly reported that they wouldn't complete their lives with their violent husbands.

Recommendations:

1. Although the women's work is a protective factor against being a victim of violence, the high prevalence of violence among the sample suggest that it is an alarming problem in the community therefore prevention efforts must concentrate not only on reducing the perpetration of violence against women, in particular IPV, but also on developing and sustaining appropriate responses to victims of violence within the society, health system and justice system.
2. Primary prevention of intimate partner violence and sexual violence.
Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence is an important new tool for violence prevention researchers, practitioners and advocates provides a planning framework for developing policies and programs for the prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence.
3. In 1999, the UN General Assembly designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women so governments, ministries (especially ministries of women, human right and justice) , international organizations, religious leaders and NGOs are invited to organize activities to raise public awareness of the problem during the year and especially at this day.
4. More studies are needed to determine the prevalence of intimate partner violence among women of different socioeconomic classes,

among housewives and among non-educated women. Also studies regarding children abuse within the families are needed.

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