

Prevalence of Domestic Violence against Married Women in Baghdad

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Abstract: Introduction: Domestic violence (DV) is the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current male intimate partners. It includes 6 types: physical, psychological, controlling behaviour, sexual, economic, & verbal. **Aim:** To estimate prevalence of DV in Baghdad and identify some related factors. **Methods:** A cross sectional study done in Baghdad by selecting the married women who attended health center and asked about personal, socio-demographic characteristics and possible exposure to DV, which was determined and classified into: no (if score= 0-7), mild (8-14), or severe (15-29). **Results:** The number of participants was 211. 63.5% of them were not facing a DV, 25.1% had a mild type and 11.4% had a severe DV. The main age of the women was 20-29 years, while that of husbands was 30-39 years. 94.3% of women had children (of them 53.7% had 1-2 children). 59.2% get married for 1-10 years duration. 85.8% of the husbands were not previously divorced and 94.8% had only 1 wife. 96.2% of the women had no previous divorce. 50.2% of women and 47.4% of husbands were graduated from a university. 56.9% of women and 51.7% of husbands had a governmental job. 94.8% and 91.9% of husbands did not take calming drugs or alcohol respectively. 77.3% of women thought it's important to constitute and apply special women-protecting laws. **Conclusions:** (1) The DV prevalence in Baghdad was 36.5%; about quarter had a mild form and smaller percent had a severe form. (2) Factors appeared to have a significant association with DV: age of wife and husband, previous husband divorce, husband multi marriage, wife and husband education, wife job, taking calming drugs or alcohol by husband, and the opinion of wife about importance of women-protecting laws. **Recommendations:** (1) Iraqi health institutions should establish and encourage women care centers for management of victims. (2) A new law against DV should be adopted by Iraqi parliament and applied properly. (3) Encourage Iraqi media to spotlight on DV.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Partner Violence, Married Women

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) is defined as: the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current male intimate partners, as WHO stated. ⁽¹⁾ There are six types of DV against married women by their husbands, which are: (1) Physical violence: includes slapped her, or thrown something at her that could hurt her; pushed or shoved her; hit her with a fist or something else that could hurt; kicked, dragged or beaten her up; choked or burnt her on purpose; threatened her or actually used a gun, knife or other weapons against her. (2) Psychological violence: includes being insulted or made to feel bad about oneself, being humiliated or belittled in front of others; being purposely intimidated or frightened (e.g., through yelling and smashing things); and being threatened with harm (directly or indirectly through a threat to hurt someone the respondent cared for). (3) Controlling behaviour: includes keeping a woman from her friends; restricting contact with her family of birth; insisting on knowing where she is at all times; ignoring or treating her indifferently; getting angry if she speaks with other men; often accusing her of being not faithful; and controlling her access to health care. (4) Sexual violence: includes being forced to have sexual intercourse against her will; having sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do; or being forced to do some sexual acts that she found humiliating or degrading. (5) Economic violence: includes preventing her from working or causing her to quit her job; not giving money for household expenses; He seizes her salary. (6) Verbal

violence: is the use of bad or abusive language, loud tone, bullying, oral threats, gestures, and intimidating behaviour.

⁽²⁾ Domestic violence is the most frequent cause of serious injuries to women, more than car accidents, muggings, and stranger raps combined. ⁽³⁾ Worldwide, at least 1 in 5 of the world's female population has been physically or sexually abused by a man or men at some time in their life. It has been estimated that violence against women is as serious cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive ages as cancer, and a greater cause of ill health than traffic accidents. ⁽⁴⁾ In Iraq, DV has been increased especially after 2003 war, as appeared through many studies. ⁽⁵⁻⁷⁾ This study aims to estimate prevalence of domestic violence of married women in Baghdad and to identify some factors that might be related with it.

METHODOLOGY

It is a cross sectional study carried out by selecting married women (for >6 months) who were attending two randomly-chosen primary health care centers in Baghdad, Iraq throughout the months November 2023 to January 2024 by visiting these centers 3 working days per a week. A special questionnaire was distributed among the participants and filled either by them or by the researcher, which included questions about personal and socio-demographic characteristics of the wife and her husband, and questions about possible exposure to violence during the last month. Their total scores of violence were determined (yes answer took 1 score, and no answer took 0 score), then the domestic violence was classified into: no (if score= 0-7), mild (if

score= 8-14), or severe violence (if score= 15-29).⁽⁸⁾ Both the qualitative and quantitative data were summarized and analyzed.

RESULTS

The total number of the participants was 211. It is shown by this study that 63.5% of the enrolled women were not facing a domestic violence (DV), 25.1% of them had a mild type of domestic violence, and 11.4% were exposed to a severe violence by their husbands, as appeared by Figure 1, thus the overall prevalence of DV in Baghdad by our work is appeared to be 36.5%.

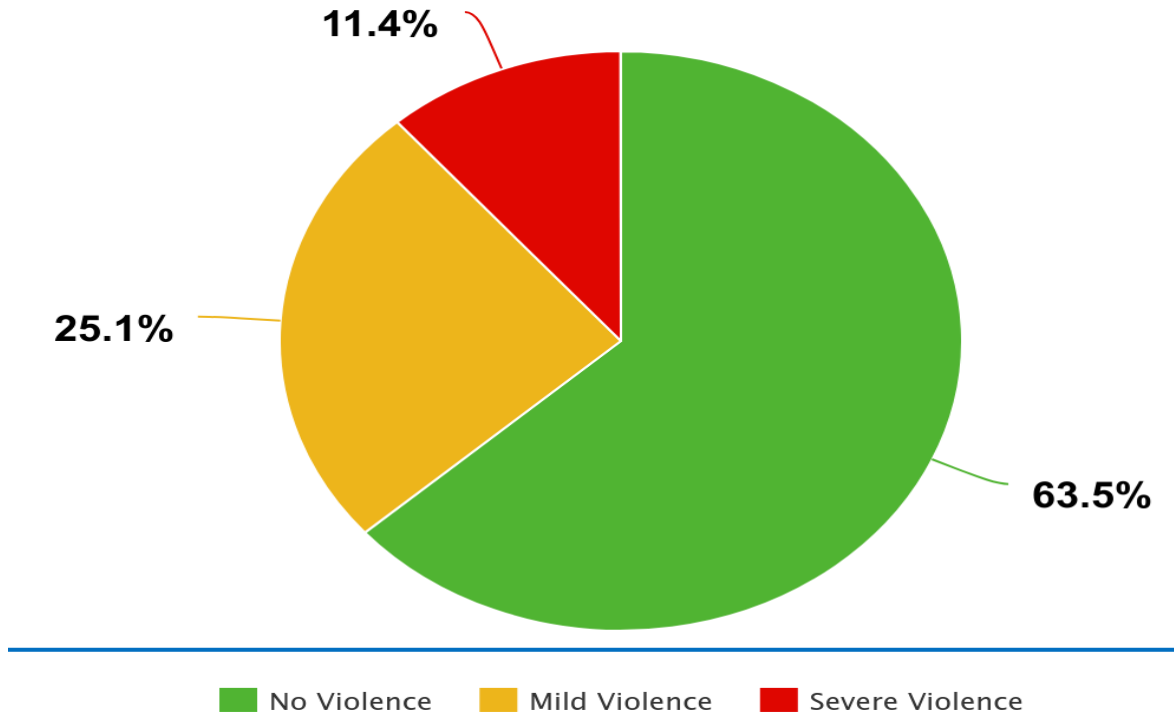


Figure 1: The distribution of the studied women regarding their score-grading of domestic violence

The frequency distribution of the characteristics among the participants and their husbands according to the type of domestic violence and their association were summarized by Table 1.

Table 1: The frequency distribution of the participants' characteristics according to their type of domestic violence and their association

	Score Grading of Domestic Violence (DV)								χ^2 p-value
		No DV		Mild DV		Severe DV		Total no.	
		no.	%	no.	%	no.	%		
Age of wife	<20 years	3	25%	6	50%	3	25%	12	21.43 0.002 *
	20-29	52	69.3%	20	26.7%	3	4%	75	
	30-39	44	61.9%	12	16.9%	15	21.2%	71	
	≥40 years	35	66%	15	28.3%	3	5.7%	53	
Age of husband	<20 years	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3	15.2 0.005 *
	20-29	18	75%	3	12.5%	3	12.5%	24	
	30-39	76	72.4%	23	21.9%	6	5.7%	105	
	≥40 years	37	46.9%	27	34.2%	15	18.9%	79	
Having children	Yes	128	64.3%	47	23.6%	24	12.1%	199	4.9 0.08
	No	6	50%	6	50%	0	0%	12	
Number of children	1-2	69	64.5%	29	27.1%	9	8.4%	107	3.7 0.15
	>2children	59	64%	18	19.5%	15	16.3%	92	
Duration of marriage	1-10 years	81	64.8%	32	25.6%	12	9.6%	125	0.95 0.61
	>10years	53	61.7%	21	24.4%	12	13.9%	86	
Previous husband divorce	Yes	9	30%	15	50%	6	20%	30	17 0.00 *
	No	125	69.1%	38	21%	18	9.9%	181	

Previous wife divorce	Yes	5	62.5%	3	37.5%	0	0%	8	1.45
	No	129	63.5%	50	24.7%	24	11.8%	203	0.48
Husband multi marriage	Yes	2	18.1%	3	27.3%	6	54.6%	11	22.7
	No	132	66%	50	25%	18	9%	200	0.00 *
Wife educational status	Illiterate	6	100%	0	0%	0	0%	6	58.5 0.00 *
	Read & write	3	14.2%	9	42.9%	9	42.9%	21	
	Primary school	16	72.8%	3	13.6%	3	13.6%	22	
	Secondary school	21	42%	20	40%	9	18%	50	
	University	82	77.3%	21	19.8%	3	2.9%	106	
	Others	6	100%	0	0%	0	0%	6	
Husband educational status	Illiterate	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3	53.6 0.00 *
	Read and write	0	0%	3	33.3%	6	66.7%	9	
	Primary school	25	59.5%	14	33.4%	3	7.1%	42	
	Secondary school	21	43.8%	18	37.5%	9	18.7%	48	
	University	79	79%	15	15%	6	6%	100	
	Others	6	66.7%	3	33.3%	0	0%	9	
Wife occupational status	Governmental	82	68.4%	29	24.1%	9	7.5%	120	29.8 0.00 *
	Monthly/weekly pay	5	35.7%	9	64.3%	0	0%	14	
	Daily payment	7	36.8%	9	47.4%	3	15.8%	19	
	No job	40	68.9%	6	10.4%	12	20.7%	58	
Husband occupational status	Governmental	74	67.9%	23	21.1%	12	11%	109	11.5 0.07
	Monthly/ weekly pay	22	70.9%	9	29.1%	0	0%	31	
	Daily payment	35	51.5%	21	30.9%	12	17.6%	68	
	No job	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3	
Husband taking calming drugs	Yes	3	27.3%	2	18.2%	6	54.5%	11	21.6
	No	131	65.5%	51	25.5%	18	9%	200	0.00 *
Husband drinking alcohol	Yes	0	0%	11	64.7%	6	35.3%	17	32.5
	No	134	69%	42	21.7%	18	9.3%	194	0.00 *
Wife idea about importance of women protecting laws	Yes	113	69.4%	44	26.9%	6	3.7%	163	42.1
	No	21	43.8%	9	18.7%	18	37.5%	48	0.00 *

*: Significant

DISCUSSION

The current study manifests that the prevalence of domestic violence (DV) of married women by their husbands in Baghdad, Iraq was 36.5%, where about one quarter of them (25.1%) faced a mild type of violence and smaller percent (11.4%) faced a severe form of DV, while more than half of the enrolled participants (63.5%) were not exposed to any type of violence. This percent goes with that of another previous study carried out in 2012 in Baghdad and revealed that more than one third (39.9%) of women were exposed to DV. ⁽⁵⁾ The main age group for the sampled women in our study was located within 20 and 29 years, while that for the husbands was between 30 and 39 years. This could be due to the common age of women who are usually attending the primary health care centers in Baghdad that are relatively young women. The age of both wife and husband was appeared to be significantly associated with domestic violence. If the age of wife is less than 20 years, she has more chance to be exposed to violence by her husband. While the age group 30-39 years of the husbands is considered the lesser group that is related to an exposure of their wives to violence. A study done in Ghana stated that the age is not related to domestic violence ⁽⁹⁾, whereas on the contrary another one achieved in Ethiopia stated that age is related too. ⁽¹⁰⁾ The vast majority of the studied women

(94.3%) had children (slightly more than half among them (53.7%) had number of 1-2 children). Most of the enrolled women (59.2%) were get married for 1-10 years duration. It is appeared by our work that both the status of having children and the number of children had no significant relation with DV, also the marital duration. The above-mentioned study from Ghana agrees with those findings and showed that neither the marital duration nor the number of children had a relation with domestic violence. ⁽⁹⁾ Concerning some social variables of the husbands, it was appeared by the current work that most of them (85.8%) were not previously divorced, and the majority (94.8%) had only one wife. These two variables had a significant association with domestic violence; the wife may be exposed more to violence by her husband if he had a previous divorce or if he had more than one wife. While the status of the wife to be previously divorced or not, was appeared to have no significant relation with DV, where the vast majority of the enrolled women in this study (96.2%) had no previous divorce before the current marriage. Regarding education, it is showed by our study that the educational status of the wife or her husband is significantly associated with DV; the violence was less if the wife or her husband was graduated from a university, where about half of the studied women in the current work (50.2%) and slightly less than half of their husbands (47.4%) appeared to

be graduated from a university. This finding goes with a study done in Saudi Arabia and revealed that the educational status decreases the violence⁽¹¹⁾, and also with another one carried out in Bangladesh and found that the increased education was associated with lower risks of violence.⁽¹²⁾ Economically, more than half (56.9%) of the studied women and about half (51.7%) of their husbands had a governmental job. DV in the current study appeared to have no significant relation with job of husband, but it was associated with the occupational status of the wife; if she worked in a governmental job she might be exposed to violence less. Although a similar study in Iran showed no relation between DV and job of wife⁽¹³⁾, and another one in Nepal found no relation of DV neither with job of the wife nor the husband⁽¹⁴⁾. The present research showed that the majority (94.8%) of the enrolled women said that their husbands did not take calming drugs, and also the majority of them (91.9%) said that their husbands did not drink alcohol. These results appeared to be associated significantly with DV among wives that would be less if their husbands were not taking calming drugs or not drinking alcohol. An Indian study also found that husband's alcoholism was related with domestic violence.⁽¹⁵⁾ Most of the enrolled women (77.3%) in our work thought that it is important to constitute and apply special women-protecting laws, this opinion was significantly associated with DV that appeared to be less if women considered those laws are important.

CONCLUSION

(1) The prevalence of domestic violence among married women by their husbands in Baghdad was 36.5%; about one quarter had a mild form of violence and smaller percent had a severe form. (2) Some factors appeared to have a significant association with domestic violence among the enrolled women, which are: age of both wife and husband, previous husband divorce, husband multi marriage status, education of both wife and husband, wife job, status of husband in taking calming drugs or drinking alcohol, and the opinion of wife about importance of women-protecting laws.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) Iraqi hospitals and health centers should establish and encourage women care centers in order to give the required psychological support and to detect and manage the victims properly, and also to give the right education and counseling for them. (2) A new law against domestic violence should be adopted by Iraqi parliament and to be implemented and applied properly. (3) Encourage Iraqi media (television, radio, and social media) to spotlight on domestic violence and to give continuous messages and programmes against it.

Limitations of the study

Although the answers of the questionnaire were done confidentially, some women might give the better answers.

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