

# Domestic Violence and its Socio-Demographic Determinants among Women in Rawalpindi

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** To determine the frequency of physical and psychological domestic violence among women reporting to the Gynecology and Obstetrics outpatient department of Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi. Instigating factors and the relationship of domestic violence with different demographic characteristics was also studied.

**Study Design:** Cross-sectional study.

**Place and Duration:** OPD clinics of Obstetrics and Gynecology Department, Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi between 15<sup>th</sup> February to 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2015.

**Methodology:** Two hundred and ten married women were selected in the study. The data was obtained through structured interviews based on questionnaire used in WHO Multi-Country study on Women's Health and Life Experiences.

**Outcome Measures:** Physical violence, Psychological Violence, demographic characteristics.

**Results:** In our study, the prevalence of physical domestic violence was found to be 15.7% while prevalence of psychological violence was 23.5%. The factors significantly related to physical violence included respondent's husband's age ( $p = .002$ ), unemployment of husband ( $p = .034$ ), wife's non-participation in decision making ( $p = .001$ ), husband's addiction to drugs/ alcohol ( $p = .001$ ), and husband's smoking status ( $p = .044$ ). Women witnessing IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) between parents tolerated physical violence more than those who had never witnessed it ( $p = .001$ ). The most common instigating factor was disliking by in-laws (9.1%) followed by argumentation by the wife (8.2%) and economic instability (6.7%).

**Conclusion:** Domestic violence was commoner if husbands were un-employed, smokers/addicts and also if women are exposed to domestic violence between parents early in childhood. Efforts must be made to modify the social determinants of domestic violence to improve the lives of the female segment of the population.

**Key Words:** Domestic Violence, Instigating factors, demographic characteristics.

## Introduction

Domestic violence against women is prevalent in all cultures, countries and societies, in some even reaching epidemic proportions. The most common form of domestic violence is the one inflicted by the intimate partner or husband affecting almost 30% of women

worldwide.<sup>1</sup> According to United Nations, domestic violence is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results 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".<sup>2</sup>

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the prevalence of

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Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is found to be as high as 37.0% in comparison with 37.7% in South-East Asia Region, 36.6% in Africa, 29.8% in Americas, 25.4% in Europe and 24.6% in Western Pacific Region.<sup>3</sup> According to analysis of data from 44 countries, it was concluded that although the worldwide prevalence of intimate partner violence hovers around one in three women, rates may vary greatly i.e. from 4% in low-income countries over the last 12 months to 40% in high-income countries.<sup>4</sup>

In Pakistan, the prevalence of physical violence also varies considerably from one area to another according to Pakistan Demographic and Household survey 2012-13. From a country-wide average of 32%, the prevalence of physical violence varies from 57% in Khyberpakhtunkhwa, 25% in Sindh and 29% in Punjab. Despite its high prevalence, domestic violence is one of the most underreported forms of violence against women residing in Pakistan. Among those experiencing physical violence, only 35% reported the violence in order to seek help. 52% never told anyone about the physical violence and only 10% disclosed but never sought help.<sup>5</sup> The silence of the victims is attributed to several reasons: for the sake of children, family honour, fear of divorce and lack of parental support. This leads to perpetuation of the violence resulting in lifelong suffering for many such innocent victims.<sup>6</sup>

Among the risk factors augmenting domestic violence against women, there were factors related both to the victim and to the perpetrator. Women who belonged to a rural background, had more children, lived in a joint family system and who justified wife beating were more likely to experience domestic violence.<sup>7</sup> Men who indulged in drinking alcohol and were inferior to their female counterparts in income, education or employment were more likely to resort to violent means to assert power.<sup>8</sup> Individuals who had witnessed parental violence as children were also more likely to exhibit violent behaviour towards partners or tolerate violence in their intimate relationships.<sup>9-11</sup>

Domestic violence can lead to serious health effects on both physical and mental health of women and it adversely affects family stability as well as social cohesion.<sup>12-14</sup> Female victims of domestic violence have a greater likelihood of having unintended pregnancies, abortions and limited use of contraceptives.<sup>15, 16</sup> In children, the effects of witnessing violence between parents extend into their adult lives affecting their mental and psychological health.<sup>17</sup>

In Pakistan, few studies have been conducted to investigate violence against women. This study aims to

determine the prevalence of domestic violence among women coming to Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi and to investigate the socio-demographic features that determine domestic violence experienced by women in the city of Rawalpindi and its adjoining localities.

## Methodology

It was a cross-sectional study carried out on 210 females selected by systematic random sampling from women attending the Obstetrics and Gynecology outpatient clinics between 15<sup>th</sup> February and 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2015. Holy family Hospital is located in a thickly populated urban area in the province of Punjab. It is 850-bedded facility that caters to the needs of low to medium-income population coming from a wide catchment area.

The questionnaire used for this research was adopted from the Questionnaire designed for the WHO Multi-country study on Women's Health and Life Experiences.

Experience of violence during marital life referred to physical and psychological violence inflicted by current or former husband. Physical violence was categorized as moderate or severe. Moderate violence consisted of slapping, shoving, pushing while severe violence was being punched, kicked, dragged, hit with an object or banged against wall, etc. Lifetime prevalence meant a woman having experienced moderate/severe physical violence at any point during her married life. Last year prevalence referred to experience of physical violence during the last 12 months.

Psychological violence was defined as being insulted or made to feel bad about herself, humiliated in front of others, scared or intimidated on purpose or threatened to hurt with an object.

The husband's psychosocial and behavioral characteristics that were enquired about in the questionnaire were smoking status, willingness to share his income with wife, alcohol/drug addiction, having extra-marital affairs and having angry temperament/ psychological problems.

Demographic characteristics and instigating factors for domestic violence were also recorded. The woman's response to the violence (remained silent/told family or friends/ reported to police or NGOs) and in case she remained silent, the reason for her silence was also enquired about.

The women attending the clinic were selected using systematic random sampling technique. After explaining the purpose of the research to the study subject and obtaining written consent, the interviewer

made it clear that she could stop and leave at any point during the interview if she wanted. Regarding the sensitive nature of the subject under discussion, the interviews were conducted in complete privacy and confidentiality and anonymity was ensured. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. The relationship between domestic violence and socio-demographic characteristics was determined using the chi-square test (using 95% CI, p value<0.05).

## Results

Among the study population, 57.6% (n=121) were 25-35 years of age. 19% (n=40) were illiterate whereas 23.3% (n=49) had received Higher Secondary School education (i.e.9-10 years of formal schooling). 91 % (n=191) had no personal income. Majority of them (79%, n=166) had been married for less than 10 years. The prevalence of physical domestic violence during the past year was 6.7% while lifetime physical violence was 15.7%. On the other hand 23.5% of the study population reported being subjected to psychological violence at the hands of their husbands (Table I).

**Table I. Percentage of women having experienced physical and psychological violence**

<b>Lifetime Physical violence</b>	15.7%
Moderate (slapping, pushing, shoving)	12.4%
Severe ( kicking, punching, banging, etc)	2.9%
<b>Last year Physical violence</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
Moderate (slapping, pushing, shoving)	6.2%
Severe ( kicking, punching, banging, etc)	0.5%
<b>Psychological Violence</b>	<b>23.5%</b>
Insulted/made you feel bad about yourself	21.5%
Humiliated you in front of others	11.9%
Scared/intimidated you on purpose	4.3%
Threatened to hurt you or someone you care about	0.5%

Socio-demographic Characteristics showing significant relationship with Lifetime Physical violence are shown in Table II.

The most common instigating factor was disliking by in-laws (9.1%) followed by argumentation or disobedience by the wife (8.2%) and economic problems (6.7%). Apart from these, having a second wife or extra-marital affairs of the husband (4.4%), suspicious attitude/short-tempered behavior by the husband (3.9%), husband's addiction (1.5%) and infertility (1%) were also identified by the participants as instigating factors. Factors found to have significant relationship with Physical domestic violence are summarized in Table III.

**Table II. Demographic Characteristics having significant relationship with Experience of domestic violence**

Respondent's Age Groups	Experienced Physical Violence n(%)	Total N=210	P Value*
<25 years	8(12.3%)	65(30.95%)	.05
25-35 years	14(11.6%)	121(57.62%)	
36-45 years	7(53.8%)	13(6.2%)	
46-55 years	4(40%)	10(4.76%)	
56-65 years	0(0%)	1(0.47%)	
<b>Respondent's Husband's Age groups</b>			
<25 years	2(9.1%)	22(10.48%)	.002
25-35 years	14(11%)	127(60.47%)	
36-45 years	10(22.2%)	45(21.43%)	
46-55 years	3(50%)	6(2.86%)	
56-65 years	2(25%)	8(3.81%)	
>65 years	2 (100%)	2(0.95%)	
<b>Employment status</b>			
Employed	25(13.2%)	190(90.5%)	.034
Un employed	6(37.5%)	16(7.6%)	
Retired	2(50%)	4(1.9%)	
<b>Smoking Status</b>			
Non-Smoker	19(14.1%)	135(64.3%)	.044
Current	11(15.7%)	70(33.33%)	
Ex-smoker	3(60%)	5(2.37%)	

\*pvalue<0.05 is considered statistically significant.

**Table III. Other factors significantly related with Experience of Domestic Violence**

Respondent's Age Groups	Experienced Physical Violence n(%)	Total N=210
<25 years	8(12.3%)	65(30.95%)
25-35 years	14(11.6%)	121(57.62%)
36-45 years	7(53.8%)	13(6.2%)
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Non-Smoker	19(14.1%)	135(64.3%)
Current Smoker	11(15.7%)	70(33.33%)
Ex-smoker	3(60%)	5(2.37%)

\*P value<0.05 is considered statistically significant.

## Discussion

In our study, the prevalence of lifetime physical violence was 15.7%, while that of psychological violence was 23.5%. In a study by Bibi et al among the married women of Hyderabad, Sindh the prevalence of lifetime domestic physical violence was found to be 31%.<sup>18</sup> Another study conducted in eight hospitals of Lahore and Sialkot by Zakar et al reports that physical domestic violence was experienced at least once by 31.9% of women during their marital life.<sup>19</sup> Karmaliani et al report that among women in the urban community of Hyderabad, Sindh the prevalence of physical or sexual violence before and/or during pregnancy was about 20%. According to a statistical analysis of the data collected in the Pakistan Demographic and Household Survey 2012-13, it was found that as many as 37.9% Pakistani women are victims of physical violence at the hands of their husbands.<sup>20</sup> In Karachi, Ali et al reported that the prevalence of physical domestic violence was 57.6%. The authors of this last study have claimed that the high frequency reported by them is due to the use of community mid-wives as the data collectors, who had already gained the confidence of the participants by frequent meetings in the past.<sup>21</sup> This disparity in the prevalence of domestic violence from one place to another and between our study and other studies may exist due to the differences in the demographic characteristics such as age structure of the population, the regional cultural values and attitudes towards gender roles as well as willingness to disclose violence. Moreover, the sensitivity of the issue also demands privacy and complete confidence in the interviewer.

In our study, the prevalence is much lower than in other studies. The reason might be that although arrangements were made to provide privacy, the setting was Holy family Hospital and not a homely surrounding. Many a time the study subjects were afraid of their husbands and reluctant to confide in the interviewer and some even broke into tears.

In our study, we did not find a significant relationship between increasing age of women and an increase in the experience of violence ( $p=0.05$ ). However, Ali et al found that older women reported domestic violence more often since they were repeatedly exposed to domestic violence year after year.<sup>21</sup> In our study population, only 24 women belonged to the age groups above 35 years of age and the remainder belonged to younger age groups which explains the above-mentioned disparity in results.

Also with increasing age of respondent's husband, we found that the prevalence of IPV also increases ( $p=0.002$ ). This is in keeping with the findings of Ali et al who reported an increase in both physical and sexual violence with increasing age of the husband.<sup>21</sup>

Physical domestic violence also has a significant relationship with unwillingness on the part of husband to share his income ( $p$  value=0.001) and to take advice from the wife in household affairs ( $p$  value=0.001). Significant relationship between spousal violence and women's empowerment status has also been reported by Aslam et al on analysis of the data provided by the Pakistan Demographic and Household Survey 2012-13 with  $p$  value <0.01.<sup>22</sup>

Husband's addiction to alcohol /other addictive substances and smoking status have been found to be significantly related to physical domestic violence ( $p$  value=0.001). This finding is endorsed by several studies in many countries.<sup>16, 22</sup>

Women who reported that they had witnessed violence between their parents at a young age were found to suffer more from physical domestic violence ( $p$  value=0.001) since they tend to accept it as a normal part of married life. In the data analysis of PDHS 2012-13, Aslam et al found that intergenerational transmission of spousal violence is another characteristic leading to high prevalence of domestic violence in the Pakistani population.<sup>20</sup>

Our study has the advantage that it was conducted using a standardized questionnaire and that all efforts were made to provide adequate privacy and confidentiality keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the issue as well as the safety of the participant and the interviewer. The disadvantage was that since the interviews were conducted by trained doctors who were meeting the participants for the first time the disclosure of intimate information was not always complete. The data we collected was only from low to middle class population and upper class population was not included.

## Conclusion

Our research has shown that the prevalence of domestic violence is considerably high among women in Rawalpindi and measures must be taken to reduce it in order to improve the quality of life of the female population. More extensive research including upper class population should be undertaken to complete the picture.

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