

A STUDY OF THE SPREAD OF SPOUSAL ABUSE AND AFFECTING FACTORS IN ISFAHAN IN 2011

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women is, despite increasing developments of the 21st century, still one of the most important violations of human rights, and one of the most essential problems of millions of women, who are harassed because of their gender. This research aims to study the spread of spousal abuse and affecting factors in the city of Isfahan in 2011. This study is based on cross-sectional descriptive analytical design. The statistical population includes all women referred to the medical health centers of the city of Isfahan in 2011. A self-administered questionnaire was prepared by the researchers based on the valid domestic or foreign sources, and assimilated based on social and cultural conditions of Iranian society. In conclusion, the obtained data were analyzed using SPSS software at the significance level less than 0.05. According to the results of this research, the most common violence against women of the target group is affective misbehavior (206 women = 52.82%). Moreover, 47.69% (186 women), 35.38% (138 women) and 24.87% (97 women) were misbehaved by verbal, financial, and physical violent acts respectively. The results of chi-squared test show that housewives are more exposed to affective, verbal, financial, and physical violent acts. Moreover, the results indicate that violence against women differs depending on education, and there is a significant difference in terms of the relation between education and violence. Moreover, there is a relation between residence and violence. The results also show that the wives of unemployed men are more subject to violence ($p= 0.031$). Moreover, the average score of verbal, affective, and physical violent acts are related to age, age of husband, and period of marital life. The most important factor of misbehavior are the tiredness and impatience of their husbands (37.38%), nit-picking of their husbands (30.14%), mistrust of their husbands (16.54%), the interference of relatives and friends (9.9%), and the act of repartee

of the wives (6.04%). According to the results of this research, spousal abuse is of high rate and affective violence is the most common type. It seems that trainings of life skills in schools, medical and health centers, and media as well as focusing on the role of consulting centers and spread of consulting culture among couples as the main solution of reducing spousal abuse.

KEYWORDS: Spousal Abuse, Physical Violence, Affective Violence, Isfahan

INTRODUCTION

Spousal abuse is according to the definition of WHO any violent act of a husband against his wife that lead to or may lead overtly or covertly to affective, psychological, physical, or sexual damages to her or her health (1, 2). Despite increasing developments of the 21st century, violence against women is still one of the most important violations of human rights, and one of the most essential problems of millions of women, who are harassed because of their gender (3, 4). Ignoring women's rights and spousal abuse have such adverse consequences on personal, social, legal, and health life of the people suffering from violence that they may irreparable damages to families and society (5). Several studies have been conducted on the spread of spousal abuse and related factors in Iran and throughout the world. According to the statistics issued by WHO, the spread of spousal abuse in different countries of the world varied from 15 to 75 percent in 2006. Some researches show that one out of four women is exposed to violence (6), and approximately one third of the women of the world have experienced violence (7). For example, 8 to 12 million individuals are exposed to violence and abuse annually in the US (8, 9). According to the report of the UN, in Belgium, USA, Norway, New Zealand, Korea, Colombia, and New Guinea, 25%, 28%, 25%, 17%, 38%, 20%, and 58 to 67% of women are abused and harassed by their husbands

respectively (10). The official statistics of Iran nothing is reported about violence against women or spousal abuse. However, the studies show that violence against women and spousal abuse are committed in Iran in different respects. Ahmadi *et al* showed that more than 35 women out of the total studied 1189 women were subject to the different types of domestic violence including physical violence (30%), mental violence (29%), and sexual violence (10%) (11). Moreover, the study of Baboli Meibodi *et al* conducted on 400 married women from Kerman showed that 46% of the studied women were abused mentally, physically, sexually, and economically (12). The percent of spousal abuse in the cities of Babol and Tonekabon was reported equal to 36% and 83.3% by the study of Bakhtiari and Omidbakhsh (13) and Ghahari *et al* (14). According to the above-mentioned percentages, violence against women and spousal abuse are spread in the different provinces of Iran differently, and the statistics differs even in small geographical areas. The present study was conducted to study the spread of spousal abuse and effective factors in the city of Isfahan in 2011.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is based on cross-sectional descriptive analytical design. The statistical population includes all women referred to the medical health centers of the city of Isfahan in 2011. According to the previous studies on spousal abuse in Isfahan conducted in 2002, in which the spread of spousal abuse was reported equal to 36%, the size of the sample taken from the statistical population was calculated by the following formula with the accuracy of 0.05.

$$n = \frac{(z_{1-\alpha/2})^2 p (1-p)}{d^2}$$

The result equal to 354 was increased to 390 to compensate 10 percent of contingent decrease. For correct sampling, all urban medical health centers of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences were listed at first, and a quota was allocated to each center based on the population covered by the related health center. Thereafter, a sample was taken from the cases referred to these centers. The criteria of participating in this research was to hold medical file in any urban medical health center listed for this research, have in minimum a one-year marriage, and satisfy to attend the study. The women, who divorced from their husbands, whose spouses were passed away at the time of the study, lived separately from their husbands, or were pregnant, were excluded from the statistical population. A self-administered questionnaire was prepared by the researchers based on the valid domestic or foreign sources, and assimilated based on social and cultural conditions of Iranian society. The questionnaire was divided into 4 parts: 13 questions on the demographic information of the

studied women (including age, period of marital life, previous marriage, age difference between wife and husband, number of children, occupation, education, mental or physical disease, independent life or life together with the family, conditions of residence, etc), 10 questions on the demographics information of their husbands (including age, period of marital life, occupation, smoking, addition to drug or alcohol, etc), 33 questions on domestic violence based on the similar studies including 10 questions about physical violence, 6 questions about verbal violence, 12 questions about affective violence, 5 questions about financial violence, and 12 questions about the factors affecting such violent acts. The answers were categories to 6 items of never, very rare, rare, sometimes, often, very often. They were scored from zero to five. The scores of physical violence varied from 0 to 50, verbal violence from 0 to 30, affective violence from 0 to 60, and financial one from 0 to 25. To equalize the scores of each part, the total score 100 was used as the basis of calculation. The questionnaires were distributed among the studied women by trained inquirers, who received required trainings about introducing themselves, effective interaction, and gain the confidence of the referred cases. They explained the studied women about the objectives of this research, and ensured them that their information would be remained confidential. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires confidentially and put them in a closed box. The participation in this research was optional for all sampled respondents.

For the purpose of this research, affective violence means any act, policy, or attitude of the husband that causes mental or psychic damages to the wife. Making decisions without consult with the wife, domination, being unkind and ill tempered, preventing the wife to associate with her friends. Moreover, any intentional act of the husband to put financial pressure on his wife including paying money reluctantly, making financial decisions without consulting with the wife, preventing the wife to possess or decide on the money earned by her in case the wife is employed are defined as financial violence. Physical violence include slapping, punching, kicking, pushing, throwing objects, choking, and burning are called physical violence. Humiliation, insulting, calling names, and offending are examples of verbal violence.

The data were analyzed using SPSS statistic software (version 18) and single t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), chi-squared test, Pearson-Spearman correlation coefficient, and other non-parametric tests at the significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS

The average age of the target group was equal to 28.6 ± 5.4 , and that of their husbands equal to 33.2

± 6.4. The age difference between the spouses was equal to 4.6 ± 5.4, and 7.3 ± 7.8 years passed averagely from their marriage. 46.92 percent (183 respondents) lived in their own house, 39.49 percent (154 respondents) in rental houses, and 13.59 percent (53 respondents) together with their

parents or parents-in-law. Moreover, 99.23 percent (387 respondents) reported that their husband had no smoking habit. In the following table 1, other demographic information of studied women are provided:

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Demographic Information of the Women of the Target Group

Demographic Information		Number	Percent
Education	illiterate	4	1.03
	Primary school	23	5.90
	Junior high school	39	10
	Secondary high school	211	54.1
	Higher education	113	28.97
Employment	Employed	76	19.49
	Housewife	314	80.51
Number of children	0	58	14.87
	1	109	27.95
	2	135	34.62
	3 or more	88	22.56

The education of the husbands was as follows: 0.77 percent were (3 persons) illiterate, 8.72 percent (34 persons) attended primary school, 3.58 percent (14 persons) junior high school, 55.9 percent (218 persons) secondary high school, and 31.03 percent (121 persons) university. 6.93 percent of the husbands of the target group were unemployed, and the remaining part had steady job. Moreover, 39.23 percent (153 husbands) got used to smoke cigarettes. The most common violence against the women of the target group was of affective type. That is 52.82 percent (206 wives) were subject to

affective violence. 47.69% (186 wives), 35.38% (138 wives), and 24.87 (97 wives) were subject to verbal, financial, and physical violent acts respectively. The results of chi-squared test show that housewives are more subject to affective, verbal, financial, and physical violent acts (table 2). Moreover, the results show that violence against women differs based on education, and there is a significant difference between education and violence (table 2).

Table 2: Domestic Violence against Women based on Employment, Education, and Number of Children in the Women of the Target Group

Demographic Information			Domestic Violence								
			Affective		Verbal		Financial		Physical		
			Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Employment	Housewife	Number	179	135	173	141	129	185	88	226	
		Percent	86.89	73.4	93	69.1	93.5	73.4	90.7	77.1	
	Employed	Number	27	49	13	63	9	67	9	67	
		Percent	13.11	26.6	7	30.9	6.5	26.6	9.3	22.9	
P value			0.001		<0.001		<0.001		0.003		
Education	Illiterate	Number	3	1	4	0	4	0	4	0	
		Percent	1.5	0.5	2.2	0	2.9	0	4.1	0	
	Primary School	Number	22	1	23	0	22	1	23	0	
		Percent	10.7	0.5	12.4	0	15.9	0.4	23.1	0	
	Junior High School	Number	36	3	37	2	35	4	38	1	
		Percent	17.5	1.6	19.9	1	38.4	62.7	39.2	0.3	
	Senior High School	Number	105	106	92	119	53	158	27	184	
		Percent	51	57.6	49.5	58.3	38.4	62.7	27.8	62.8	
	Higher Education	Number	40	73	30	83	24	89	5	108	
		Percent	19.3	39.8	16.1	40.7	17.4	35.3	5.2	36.9	
P value			<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		
Number of Children	0	Number	34	24	31	27	15	43	14	44	
		Percent	16.5	13	16.7	13.2	10.9	17.1	14.4	15	
	1	Number	59	50	50	59	26	83	19	90	
		Percent	28.6	27.2	26.9	28.9	18.8	32.9	19.6	30.7	
	2	Number	71	64	68	67	46	89	30	105	
		Percent	34.5	34.8	36.6	32.8	33.3	35.3	30.9	35.8	
	3 and more	Number	42	46	37	51	51	37	34	54	
		Percent	20.4	25	19.9	25	37	14.7	35.1	18.4	
	P value			0.620		0.448		0.011		0.062	

In this research, the women of the target group reacted to the verbal misbehavior mutually. However, they reacted to affective, financial, and

physical misbehaviors by isolation and seclusion (table 3).

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Reactions of the Women of Target Group to Verbal, Affective, Financial and Physical Violent Acts

Reactions	Domestic Violence							
	Affective		Verbal		Financial		Physical	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Isolation and seclusion	42	22.58	93	45.15	93	67.39	41	42.27
Depression	35	18.82	75	36.41	45	32.61	21	21.65
Counteraction	103	55.38	37	17.96	0	0	7	7.22
Abandoning home	6	3.22	1	0.48	0	0	25	25.77
Resort to judicial authorities	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3.09
Total	186	100	206	100	138	100	97	100

The results show that there is a relation between the place of residence and violence against women. The women living with their parents in a common house were less misbehaved ($p = 0.026$). The results show that the women, whose husbands were unemployed, were significantly more exposed to violence ($p = 0.031$). On the other hand, the

husbands had the habit of smoking misbehaved more than others did ($p = 0.042$). The results show that age, age of the husband, and period of marital life are related to the scores of verbal, affective, and physical violent acts (table 4).

Table 4: The Coefficient of Correlation of Age, Husbands' Age, and Period of marital life with the Average Score of different Violent Acts

		Age	Husband's Age	Period of marital life	Verbal Violence	Affective Violence	Financial Violence	Physical Violence
Age	r	-	0.510	0.212	-0.456	-0.212	-0.128	-0.617
	p	-	0.013	0.045	0.021	0.023	0.112	0.011
Husband's Age	r	0.510	-	0.225	-0.328	-0.318	-0.239	-0.657
	p	0.013	-	0.042	0.034	0.031	0.210	0.001
Period of marital life	r	0.212	0.225	-	-0.417	-0.237	-0.223	-0.647
	p	0.045	0.042	-	0.028	0.038	0.118	0.001
Verbal violence	r	-0.456	-0.328	-0.417	-	0.521	0.411	0.664
	p	0.021	0.034	0.028	-	<0.001	0.123	<0.001
Affective violence	r	-0.212	-0.318	-0.237	0.521	-	0.364	0.547
	p	0.023	0.031	0.038	<0.001	-	0.014	0.006
Financial violence	r	-0.128	-0.239	-0.223	0.123	0.364	-	0.267
	p	0.112	0.210	0.118	0.364	0.014	-	0.212
Physical violence	r	-0.617	-0.657	-0.647	0.664	0.547	0.267	-
	p	0.011	0.001	0.001	<0.001	0.006	0.212	-

The women of the target group, who were exposed to violence, the most important causes of such misbehaviors were the tiredness and impatience of their husbands (37.38%), nit-picking of their husbands (30.14%), mistrust of their husbands (16.54%), the interference of relatives and friends (9.9%), and the act of repartee of the wives (6.04%).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the most essential problems of public health and human rights in all countries is violence against women, which is observed in all cultures and social classes, and has adverse effects on the health of women and their children. Therefore, lack of attention to this gender threatens not only the generation of women and mothers, but also the next generations (15). Although it is difficult to separate different types of violence, it seems that cultural changes in the societies have reduced physical violent acts (14, 16), but, increased mental and

affective misbehaviors (17). According to the results of this research, the most common violence against women of the target group is affective misbehavior (206 women = 52.82%). Moreover, 47.69% (186 women), 35.38 % (138 women) and 24.87% (97 women) were misbehaved by verbal, financial, and physical violent acts respectively. These results are in accordance with those of other studies conducted in Iran, as they reported that mental and affective misbehaviors are more common (18 – 21). In the study of Duggan *et al*, the most common violence was verbal violence (22). The results of our research show that physical violence is committed statistically less than other types and this is in according with the results obtained by Razzaghi *et al* in his study conducted in the city of Sabzevar (21). Physical violence is however, one of the most overt violent acts against women in the world, and it is influenced by cultural and social conditions of societies. The reason that physical violence is committed less than other types

is that physical harassment are judicially more explicit and legal rules and regulations are very strict in such cases. In addition, most men evaluate physical violence against women as an indecent act, and women are reluctant to report physical misbehavior committed against them (21). It seems that most men resort to mental and affective violent acts instead of committing physical violence. Some studies provide however considerable statistics of serious violence against women (12). In the study of Atef Vahid conducted in 2010 on the prediction of violence against the victims of spousal abuse, addition to drugs, considerable number of children, low educational level and unemployment of wives were introduced as predictor factors of adverse physical misbehaviors (16).

In the present research, most women of the target group reacted to verbal misbehavior by counter actions. Moreover, their reaction to affective, financial and physical violent acts was to isolate and flee to seclusion. Taken into account the cultural conditions governing the society, leaving home, and resorting to the judicial authorities in all violence types are happened never or very rarely. This shows that women are very restrained for abandoning home, and they feel responsible to protect the safety and integration of their family (23, 24). Therefore, these wives have to endeavor to live under violent living conditions in order to protect the appearance of their family life because of the prevailing social values, their marital commitments, and social stability (25).

As the study of background variables such as age, education, and employment are important because of their effects on the social roles leading to spousal abuse, they have been studied in this research. According to the results of this research, the age of women and their husbands, the period of their marital life, place of residence, employment of women and their husbands, and smoking habit of the husbands are related significantly to the violence against women. The results of the study of Forouzan (26) show that there is a significant relation between women's age and violence against them. The findings of the study of Razzaghi show a significant relation of spousal abuse with the educational level of spouses, employment, smoking habit, period of marital life, and number of children (21).

The results of this research show that housewives are more exposed to different types of violence including affective, verbal, financial, and physical ones. The results of other studies confirm this result (8, 14, 16, and 27). However, the findings of the study of Soleimani *et al* (2011) show that employed women are more exposed to spousal abuse that housewives are, and this is because of the tensions and tiredness of work environment (15). On the other hand, the employment conditions of husbands have effects on violence against their wives, in such

a way that economic instability and psychological stresses arising out of such instabilities can lead to misbehaviors (12, 16), and the husband having insufficient income or appropriate job may recourse to violence to preserve his status (28).

The results of this research also show that women with lower educational levels are more exposed to violence (12, 14, 13, 17, 18, and 28). It seems that the awareness of women of their personal and family rights, and the participation in social activities and interactions by women having higher education, as well as their studies and application of different techniques of life skills such as anger management and problem solving skills can improve marital conditions, and this is why violence is rare among women with higher educational levels. However, some studies have reported no significant relation between spousal abuse and education (15, 29).

The results also show that violence types differ based on the employment conditions of women, and there is a significant difference between employed women and housewives in terms of exposure to domestic violence. That is, housewives are exposed to all types of violence committed against women, and this difference is of significance. It seems that financial independence of women and their skill to associate with others, which is enhanced in employed women, play an important role in the reduction of violence against employed women.

There is a significant relation between the period of marital life and spousal abuse. The results of this research show that by the increase in the period of marital life, spousal abuse increases. Razzaghi *et al* suggest that this is because of the inability of the wives to face the spousal abuses of their husbands, and this inability increases and enhances such misbehaviors with time (21). Several studies show that age of marriage and period of marital life have significant relation with spousal abuse. However, the study of Mohammadi show that although there is a significant relation between age of marriage and spousal abuse, but the period of marital life has no effect on such an abuse (30). The studies of Panaghi (19), Salehi and Mehralian (8), and Ghahari (14) show that the period of marital life less than five years have a positive effect on spousal abuse.

The results show that violence against women differs based on the number of children, and there is a significant relation between the number of children and violence. In general, violence is related to the increase in the number of children that may be due to the increase in the expectations of the children and economic problems, which cause stress in parents. For instance, the high percent of the families in the target group do not have their own house. This result is in accordance with the results of other researches (11, 21, and 16).

In contrast, the findings of the study conducted by Duggan *et al* (22) are different from the above-mentioned result (21). However different reports confirm the abundance of spousal abuse in different countries and the difference of such violent acts due to cultural, social, economic and family differences and even the tools used for the collection of data and the samples of researches (15).

Most studies focus on the role of education and trainings on the reduction of violence against women. The results of the study of London and Burger suggest that teaching of life skills in schools can reduce spousal abuse in husbands (15). This study focuses on the appropriate training of men even male children during their childhood (27), training of couples before marriage (12), training of married men and women (30).

Preventing from broadcasting violent pictures and movies in media (11), violent computer games, passing explicit laws and regulations on women's rights against violence (15) can be effective in addition to the elimination of economic problems and unemployment (27). Some sources have suggested the screening of violence against women as the first step to iron out this problem (11). Appropriate training of men and even male children during childhood can prevent misbehaviors. Training, elimination of economic problem and eradication of unemployment, as well as the enactment of legal laws and regulations on family matters (21), and prevention of broadcasting violence in media can prevent violence and spread of misbehaviors. Educating married men and women as regards observing their mutual rights, respecting each other in marital life, accepting sexual responsibility are vitally necessary (30). Considering the above-mentioned facts, the researchers of this study suggest trainings of life skills in schools, medical and health centers, and media as well as focusing on the role of consulting centers and spread of consulting culture among couples as the main solution of reducing spousal abuse.

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