

# PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG WOMEN SEEKING ABORTION

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To determine the prevalence of domestic violence in women seeking abortion.

**Methodology:** This cross-sectional study was conducted in outpatient department of Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar, family planning Centre, Marie Stoop's society Peshawar and a private clinic from April 2012 to March 2013. Approval was taken from the ethical committee of the hospital before starting the study. A Proforma made and women seeking induced abortion that volunteered to answer the questions were included in the study. Confidentiality was maintained to avoid potential retaliation from disclosure.

**Results:** Domestic violence was reported by 40 (38.9%) women out of 105 women seeking induced abortion, who were interviewed consecutively. Majority of them were in stable relationship being married for more than a year (n=38, 95%). Physical & sexual violence both were reported by 10 (25%) women each while all three types of violence i.e., verbal; physical; and sexual, were reported by 16 (40%) women. Domestic violence was reported more in spouses with lower educational status (n=22, 55%). Violence by intimate partner was reported in 23 (57.5%) and by other family members in 7 (17.5%) cases.

**Conclusion:** More than one third of the women of the sample were faced with the problem of domestic violence. Level of education was inversely related to domestic violence as it was reported more in spouses with lower educational status.

**Key words:** Abortion, Domestic violence, Physical abuse, Sexual abuse.

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## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is everybody's business but it should not happen to anybody. It is also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse, and intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV is a pattern of behavior which involve the abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family.

Domestic violence can take many forms including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects, battery), or threats thereof, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive/covert abuse (e.g., neglect) and economic deprivation<sup>1, 2</sup>.

National statistic of USA 2012 showed that one in

four women (25%) has experienced domestic violence in her life time. A study conducted in 2005 at Karachi showed that the lifetime prevalence of marital physical abuse in Pakistani population was 49.4%; slapping, hitting or punching was most often reported (47.7%). The study further elaborated that 55% of those involved in domestic violence were victims of physical violence during childhood and 65% had observed their mother being beaten, as children. Half of the subjects thought that husbands have a right to hit their wives which shows their attitude<sup>3</sup>.

Reporting domestic violence is a challenge for most women in Pakistan. The societal norms and the lack of social and economic empowerment means that most women prefer to suffer in silence rather than reporting any kind of domestic violence<sup>4</sup>. This study was thus conducted to determine the prevalence of domestic violence in women seeking abortion.

## METHODOLOGY

This Cross-sectional study was carried out at the out-patient department of obstetrics and Gynaecology, Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar, Family planning Centre and Marie Stoop's society Peshawar and a private clinic from April 2012 to March 2013.

All married women with the age of 16 years and above, seeking induced abortion and willing to fill Performa or answer the questionnaire were included in the study. The questionnaire was printed in local and national languages for better understanding. Questionnaire was anonymous and self-administered to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 16 and was presented as mean

( $\pm$ SD) for numerical variables and number and percentage for categorical variables in the forms of tables.

## RESULTS

During the period of study, 105 women seeking induced abortion visited the study centers (Table 1). The demographic characteristics of women reporting domestic violence is given in Table 2. The analysis of questionnaire indicates that 40 (38.9%) women reported to be victim of domestic violence. Out of these, 95% (n=38) of women had marital relation over a period of one year. Only two (5%) had the marriage span of less than a year (Table 3).

Twenty-eight victims of violence (70%) were hailing from urban area while twelve (30%) were from rural origin (Table 2).

**Table 1: Domestic Violence in women seeking abortion (n= 105)**

		Number	%
Domestic Violence not reported		65	61.90
Domestic Violence reported		40	38.09
Perpetrator	Abuse by husband only	23	57.5%
	Abuse by family	7	17.5%
	Abuse by family members including husband	10	25%
Type of violence	Verbal abuse	4	10%
	Physical abuse	10	25%
	Sexual abuse	10	25%
	Physical, verbal & sexual abuse	16	40%

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of women reporting domestic violence (n=40)**

		Number	percentage
<b>Age</b>			
	16-30	27	67.5%
	31-45	13	32.5%
<b>Residence</b>			
	Rural	12	30%
	Urban	28	70%
<b>Number of Children</b>			
	No child	01	2.5%
	One child	04	10%
	Two children	10	25%
	Three or more children	25	62.5%
<b>Previous history of abortion</b>			
	Yes	15	37.5%
	No	25	62.5%

**Table 3: Education Level and Length of Marriage (n= 40)**

			Number	%
Education	Respondent	Elementary or less	20	50%
		Intermediate or secondary	18	45%
		University	2	5%
	Perpetrator	Elementary or less	12	30%
		Intermediate or secondary	22	55%
		University	6	15%
Length of Marriage	Less than one year		2	5%
	More than one year		38	95%

Twenty-five (62.2%) victims of violence had three or more than three children (Table 2). Negligible use of contraceptive at the time of pregnancy was reported (n=5, 12.5%). The result further show that those women whose age were 30 or less were facing more violence and demanding for termination of pregnancy (n=27, 67.5%). Thirteen victims of violence (32.5%) were over thirty years. In most of cases, the husbands were the perpetrator of domestic violence (n=23, 57.5%) while the share of domestic violence attributed to the family were reported by seven victim (17.5%) [Table 1]. However, very few cases reported verbal abuse (n=4, 10%). All the three types of violence i.e., Verbal, physical and sexual was reported in 16 cases (40%). In 15 cases (37.5%) women revealed repeated abortion while 25 (62.5%) reported no previous history of abortion.

## DISCUSSION

Domestic violence can happen to anyone, yet it is often overlooked, excused or denied. This is true when the abuse is psychological rather than physical. Noticing or acknowledging the sign of an abuse is the first step toward ending. According to world statistics it is estimated that annually there are 1.3 millions of victim of physical assault by intimate partner out of which 85% are women<sup>5</sup>. In the instant study, the result show that the prevalence of abortion is very high amongst the victim of violence and is a risk factor leading to unsafe abortion and more complication to the reproductive health of women (40/ 38%).

A study published in 2012 showed relationship between domestic violence and homicide among women in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, majority of them were in the reproductive age<sup>6</sup>. The study stress that females of our province are susceptible to homicidal deaths due to domestic violence through firearm injuries<sup>6</sup>.

The finding of a study conducted by University of Iowa and Planned Parenthood of Heartland explained that 14% of women demanding abortion had an experi-

ence of domestic violence in the past 12 months<sup>7</sup> while the ratio of induced abortion in another study is 38.09% which is more than double of the Iowa study. In a multicenter study conducted by World Health Organization in 2012, findings clearly demarcated that intimate partner violence is associated with unintended pregnancy and abortion specifically in lower and middle income countries<sup>8</sup>. Pooled estimates showed increased odds of unintended pregnancy and abortion, after adjusting for confounding factor<sup>8</sup>. The study indicates that 65.5% of victims are financially dependent while only 20% who are economically independent are victims. Level of literacy is also associated with the domestic violence, 50% violence is reported amongst the victims who level of education is below matriculation including illiterate, while 45 % of violence is reported in the victims who literacy level is between matriculation and bachelor and lastly only 5% has reported level of literacy is postgraduate. The percentage amongst the actors of violence/ husbands is high 55% whose literacy level is between matriculation and bachelor while it stands at 30% below matriculation while 15% amongst the perpetrator whose are post graduates.

In England and Wales, 20% of women report being physically assaulted by a current or former partner at some point in their lives. A recent English study found that more than one in three women seeking abortion had experienced lifetime domestic violence. In the previous year, 19.5% had been physically assaulted and 3.7% had had forced sexual intercourse. A link was also found between domestic violence and women seeking repeat abortions. 30% of women having a second abortion reported relationship violence and women having a third or subsequent abortion were over 2.5 times as likely to report a history of physical or sexual abuse by a male partner<sup>9,10</sup>. Likewise, the current study also proves positive history of repeat abortion as it stands at 37.5% which is comparable to the above mentioned study.

There is high prevalence of violence during pregnan-

cy which is well recognized. . The 2003-2005 Confidential Enquiries into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) reported that 19 pregnant or recently delivered women were murdered by their partner. 70 out of 295 women who died from all causes had information consistent with experience of domestic violence documented in their maternity records<sup>11</sup>.

Archer's meta-analysis found that women in the United States suffer 65% of domestic violence injuries<sup>12</sup>. A Canadian study showed that 7% of women and 6% of men were abused by their current or former partners, but female victims of spousal violence were more than twice as likely to be injured as male victims<sup>1, 13</sup>. Seven percent of the women surveyed by Guttmacher after seeking an abortion reported that they had been physically or sexually abused by the man with whom they became pregnant. Again this is low in comparison to our study. National surveys have found that slightly more than one percent of US women report abuses at the hands of their partners, Poor women, meanwhile, were twice as likely to say they had been physically or sexually abused by the man who impregnated them than abortion-seekers with higher incomes (9.3 vs. 4.4%).

The Abortion and Domestic Violence Closely Linked a Canadian Study also revealed that a significant percentage of the women who were seeking second or repeated abortions were using artificial contraception at the time they became pregnant. 90% of women seeking repeat abortions had used contraception sometime in their lives and at the time of the current conception 60% were using condoms and 40% were using an oral contraceptive while in our study only 12.5 were in the habit of using contraceptive which is also a risk behavior toward avoiding an unwanted pregnancy<sup>14</sup>. In India around 70% of women are victim of domestic violence<sup>15, 16</sup>. In general domestic violence is at the peak especially on this part of world where we live or where women are poor, less educated and less aware of her rights

## CONCLUSION

Women in abusive relationship when pregnant are more likely inclined to terminate pregnancy. Husbands' violence is a consistent and strong risk factor for unintended pregnancy and abortion across a variety of setting. Unintended pregnancy terminated through unsafe abortion can result in maternal deaths and serious obstetric complications. Therefore reducing partner violence can significantly reduce risk to maternal and reproductive health

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The government or non-government organization does not fund the study.

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### CONTRIBUTORS

NU conceived the idea, planned and wrote the manuscript of the study. SY and MR helped in the data analysis and write up of the manuscript. All the authors contributed significantly to the research that resulted in the submitted manuscript.