

Domestic violence in consanguineous marriages — findings from Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-13

Masood Ali Shaikh

Abstract

Domestic violence is a pandemic and estimated to affect one in three women globally, in their lifetime. Marriages within blood relations in Pakistan are common. In this study a secondary analysis of Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-13 was done to study the prevalence and profile of domestic violence in the context of consanguineous marriages in Pakistan. Almost 65% of women had some kind of blood relationship with their husbands. Women having a blood relationship with husbands were more likely to report having ever been subjected to marital control behaviours, emotional and physical violence by their husbands, compared to ones without such relationship. However, these associations fail to reach statistical significance; underscoring the ubiquitous nature of marital control and violence. More effective public health education campaigns for just and equal treatment of wives by their husbands to speedily curb the scourge of domestic violence in the country are needed.

Keywords: Domestic, Violence, Abuse, Pakistan.

Introduction

Domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, is defined as "behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours."¹ It is a pandemic and estimated to affect one in three women globally in their lifetime.² A national household survey in Pakistan on domestic violence reported that one third of 23,430 women reported having experienced some type of physical violence.³

Marriages between first and second cousins or among other blood relations in Pakistan are described as within 'Biraderi'; a term that is used in many local languages of Pakistan and literally translates into membership in 'brotherhood'. Wikipedia defines consanguinity as "the property of being from the same kinship as another

person. In that aspect, consanguinity is the quality of being descended from the same ancestor as another person."⁴ Consanguineous marriages are widely practiced in Pakistan and Muslim world.^{5,6} One study on relationship between domestic violence and consanguineous marriage, based on a sample of 1010 married women, reported that being married to one's cousin did not bestow protection from being either emotionally or physically abused.⁷

In this study a secondary analysis of a recently conducted nationally representative survey was done to study the prevalence and profile of domestic violence in the context of consanguineous marriages in Pakistan.

Methods and Results

Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-13 was conducted by the Pakistan's National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) and the Measure DHS of the United States to collect data on demographic and select health indices. The data and detailed report on methodology and results are available at the NIPS and Measure DHS website.^{8,9} Data were analyzed in terms of weighted prevalence (proportions), their 95% confidence intervals, and design-based statistical associations between blood relationship with husband and various violent behaviours using Pearson Chi-Square test using STATA 14.

A subsample of 3743 ever-married women between the ages of 15-45 years were selected for administering the domestic violence (DV) module, out of which 3687 (98.5%) were successfully interviewed. Type of blood relationship with husband was determined in terms of being a first cousin from mother's/father's side, second cousin, other blood relationship, or no blood relationship. For one record, exact type of blood relationship with husband was missing and was recoded as having 'other relationship' with husband. For the question on whether a woman had a say in choosing her husband, three records were coded as either 'don't know' or 'missing information'; these records were recoded as not having had a say. Similarly, for the six marital control, seven physical violence, three emotional violence, and three physical consequences of physical violence questions, responses

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Independent Consultant, Karachi.

Correspondence: Email: masoodali1@yahoo.com

Table-1: Frequency and type of blood relationship with husband, and having had a say in choosing husband.

(Weighted)	Un-weighted	count
	percentage and 95% CI N = 3867	
Relationship with husband		
Husband is 1st cousin on father's side	971 (29.3%: CI 26.9, 31.8)	
Husband is 1st cousin on mother's side	697 (20.1%: CI 18.1, 22.3)	
Second cousin	298 (6.2%: CI 5.3, 7.3)	
Other relationship	278 (9.3%: CI 8.0, 10.6)	
Relationship status missing	1443 (35.1%: CI 32.7, 37.7)	
Blood relation with husband		
Yes	2244 (64.9%: CI 62.3, 67.3)	
No	1443 (35.1%: CI 32.7, 37.7)	
Woman had say in choosing husband		
Yes	2979 (79.0%: CI 76.8, 81.0)	
No	708 (21.0%: CI 19.0, 23.2)	
Women had a blood relationship with husband and had a say in choosing husband		
Yes	1847 (53.0%: CI 50.4%, 55.5%)	
No	1840 (47.0%: CI 44.5%, 49.6%)	

coded as either 'don't know' or 'missing information' were recorded as not having these behaviours exhibited by husbands.

Table-1 shows the unweighted frequencies, weighted prevalence and their 95% confidence intervals of blood relationship status with husband as well as whether

women had a say in choosing their husband. Almost 65% of women had some kind of blood relationship with their husbands, and the most commonly reported relationship was the husband being a first cousin from the father's side, while 53% women had some kind of blood relationship with their husband and also had a say in choosing their husband. Table-2 shows the weighted proportion of wives who had ever experienced marital control, emotional, or physical abuse by current or former husbands. Husbands being jealous or angry if wives talk to other men was reported by 25% of women and was the most common type of marital control behaviour, while 31.5% of women reported having ever experienced any of the five marital controls behaviours. Husband ever saying or doing something to humiliate her in front of others was reported by 25.9% of women and was the most common type of emotional abuse, while 32.2% of women reported having ever experienced any of the three emotional abuses inquired about. Husband having ever slapped her was reported by 25.2% of women and was the most common type of physical violence, while 26.8% of women reported having ever experienced any of the seven physical violence inquired about.

Table-3 shows the prevalence of ever having experienced marital control, disaggregated by blood relationship with, and having had a say in choosing husband. Women having a blood relationship with husbands or having had a say in choosing their husbands were more likely to

Table-2: Prevalence of ever having experienced marital control, emotional, or physical abuse by current or former husbands.

Behaviour	Weighted Proportion	95% Confidence Interval
Marital Control		
Is jealous or angry if she talks to other men	25.0	22.7, 27.4
Frequently accuses her of being unfaithful	5.5	4.4, 6.9
Does not permit to meet her female friends	8.1	6.8, 9.7
Tries to limit her contact with her family	6.5	5.5, 7.8
Insists knowing where she is at all times	16.1	14.3, 18.1
Any type of marital control	31.5	29.0, 34.1
Emotional abuse		
Said or did something to humiliate her in front of others	25.9	23.8, 28.0
Threatened to hurt or harm her or someone she cared about	4.8	3.8, 5.9
Insulted her or made her feel bad about herself	27.3	24.9, 29.8
Any type of emotional abuse	32.2	29.8, 34.7
Physical abuse		
Pushed her, shook her, or threw things at her	16.0	14.3, 17.9
Slapped her	25.2	23.0, 27.5
Twisted her arm or pulled her hair	10.9	9.5, 12.6
Punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her	8.7	7.3, 10.3
Kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up	5.3	4.4, 6.4
Tried to choke her or burn her on purpose	2.1	1.5, 3.1
Threatened her or attacked her with a knife, gun, or other weapon	1.7	1.2, 2.4
Any type of physical abuse	26.8	24.7, 29.1

Table-3: Prevalence of ever having experienced marital control, by blood relationship with, and having had a say in choosing husband.

	Weighted proportion of women whose husband:				
	Is jealous or angry if she talks to other men	Frequently accuses her of being unfaithful	Does not permit her to meet her female friends	Tries to limit her contact with her family	Insists on knowing where she is at all times
Relationship with husband					
Husband is first cousin on father's side	6.8	1.6	2.5	1.9	4.6
Husband is first cousin on mother's side	4.8	0.9	1.3	1.2	2.8
Second cousin	1.9	0.3	0.5	0.4	1.2
Other relationship	2.7	0.6	0.8	0.4	1.9
No relationship	8.8	2.1	3.0	2.5	5.6
Blood relation with husband					
Yes	16.2	3.4	5.1	4.0	10.5
No	8.8	2.1	3.0	2.5	5.6
Woman had say in choosing husband					
Yes	18.7	4.1	5.9	4.7	12.5
No	6.3	1.5	2.3	1.9	3.5

Owing to rounding to the nearest number after decimal, the totals in relationship with husband, do not add up to total for blood relation with husband and/or woman had a say in choosing husband.

Table-4: Prevalence of ever having experienced physical or emotional abuse, by blood relationship with, and having had a say in choosing husband.

	Husband first cousin on father's side	Husband first cousin on mother's side	Second Cousin	Other relationship	No blood relationship	Blood relation with husband		Woman had say in choosing husband	
						Yes	No	Yes	No
Physical violence									
Pushed her, shook her, or threw things at her	4.0	3.1	1.3	1.7	6.0	10.1	6.0	12.1	4.0
Slapped her	6.6	5.1	2.0	2.5	9.0	16.2	9.0	19.1	6.1
Twisted her arm or pulled her hair	2.6	2.3	0.8	1.1	4.1	6.9	4.1	8.2	2.7
Punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her	2.1	1.6	0.8	0.9	3.3	5.4	3.3	6.1	2.5
Kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up	1.4	0.8	0.4	0.6	2.2	3.2	2.2	4.0	1.4
Tried to choke her or burn her on purpose	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.5	0.7
Threatened her or attacked her with a knife, gun, or other weapon	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.2	0.5
Emotional violence									
Said or did something to humiliate her in front of others	6.3	5.8	1.5	3.1	9.2	16.7	9.2	20.1	5.7
Threatened to hurt or harm her or someone she cared about	1.1	0.7	0.2	0.8	2.0	2.7	2.0	3.0	1.7
Insulted her or made her feel bad about herself	6.8	6.0	1.5	3.1	10.0	17.3	10.0	21.4	5.8

Owing to rounding to the nearest number after decimal, the totals in relationship with husband, do not add up to total for blood relation with husband and/or woman had a say in choosing husband.

report having ever been subjected to marital control behaviours by their husbands, compared to ones without such relationship or having had no say in choosing their husbands, for all five controlling behaviours studied. Among women having a blood relation with their husbands, those who were married to their first cousins from their father's side reported highest proportion of ever having been subjected to all marital control behaviours studied. However, using design-based

Pearson chi-square test, statistically significant association was found only between having ever experienced any kind of marital control behaviour and having had a say in choosing a husband (p -value = 0.015). The relationship between having ever experienced any kind of marital control behaviour and having any blood relationship with husband was not statistically significant. Table-4 shows the prevalence of ever having experienced physical or emotional violence, disaggregated by blood relationship,

Table-5: Prevalence and type of sequel following physical violence perpetrated by husbands, by blood relationship with, and having had a say in choosing husband.

	Weighted percentage of women who reported having ever had:		
	Cuts, bruises or aches	Eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or burns	Deep wounds, broken bones broken teeth, or any other serious injury
Relationship with husband			
Husband is first cousin on father's side	6.6	2.4	0.8
Husband is first cousin on mother's side	5.2	1.2	0.6
Second cousin	2.1	0.6	0.3
Other relationship	2.3	1.0	1.1
No blood relationship	12.7	4.3	2.6
Blood relation with husband			
Yes	16.2	5.3	2.9
No	12.7	4.3	2.6
Woman had say in choosing husband			
Yes	23.5	5.9	2.9
No	5.5	3.8	2.5

Owing to rounding to the nearest number after decimal, the totals in relationship with husband, do not add up to total for blood relation with husband and/or woman had a say in choosing husband.

and having had a say in choosing a husband. Women having a blood relationship with husbands or having had a say in choosing their husbands were more likely to report having ever been subjected to physical or emotional abuse from their husbands, compared to ones without such relationship or having had no say in choosing their husbands for all physical and emotional abuse behaviours studied. Among women having had a blood relation with their husbands, those who were married to their first cousins from their father's side reported highest proportion of ever having been subjected to all physical or emotional abuse behaviours studied; only exception being two physical abuse behaviours i.e. husband having ever tried to choke or burn on purpose, and husband ever threatened or attacked with a knife, gun, or some other weapon. For these two physically abusive behaviours, women married to their first cousins from mother's side reported highest proportions. However, no statistically significant association was found between having ever experienced any kind of physical or emotional abuse and either having any kind of blood relationship with husband or having had a say in choosing a husband. Table-5 shows the prevalence and type of sequel following physical violence perpetrated by husbands, by blood relationship and having had a say in choosing a husband. Women having a blood relationship with husbands or having had a say in choosing their husbands were more likely to report having ever had three types of physical violence sequel studied compared to ones without such relationship or having had no say in choosing their husbands. Among women having had a blood relation with their husbands, those who were married to their first cousins from their

father's side reported highest proportions of physical violence sequel with the exception of serious injuries, in which case women having 'other' type of blood relationship reported highest proportion of physical violence sequel. However, statistically significant association was found only between having ever experienced any kind of sequel following physical violence and having had some kind of blood relationship with husband (p -value = 0.011).

Discussion

Almost two-third marriages in Pakistan involved blood relations between spouses based on PDHS 2012-13 data. Encouragingly, a whopping 79% women reported that they had a say in choosing their husband. Among consanguineous marriages, marriages with husband being a first cousin from the father's side were the most common, closely followed by husband being the first cousin from the mother's side. In about half of marriages, women reported to have had a say in choosing their husband with whom they had a blood relationship as well. However, marrying a first cousin, or for that matter anyone with whom a woman had any blood relationship, did not confer protection from physical, emotional abuse, or marital controlling behaviours. If anything, such abusive practices were more common against the backdrop of consanguinity. Though the relationship between consanguinity and abuse did not always reach the level of statistical significance, it nonetheless underscores the importance of discerning practical significance, which in this case trumps the statistical significance. More importantly, even though most women had some say in choosing a husband, it also did not

provide immunity from marital control and/or abuse.

The fact that consanguinity and having a say in choosing one's husband did not particularly protect women from domestic violence and abuse, coupled with results from this analyses that cumulatively 31.5% women reported ever been subjected to any one of the marital control behaviours studied; 32.2% and 26.8% reported having ever endured some kind of emotional or physical abuse, respectively, from their husband clearly delineates the endemic nature of violence, control, and abuse in the context of marriage for women in Pakistan. Blood relationships and having a say in choosing one's husband does not guarantee any escape from this menace either. If anything the closer the blood relationship with husband, the more experience of violence.

There is a clear and present need to realign the status of married women in the country and bring it in conformity with the times to realize the full potential of half of the country's population. Better laws to protect and provide safety nets for married women from abuse and violence are a good beginning in the country.¹⁰ One of modern history's recurring themes is the inadequacy of laws alone in changing the deeply ingrained cultural and social practices and norms. Education and involvement of religious leaders in the public health education campaigns for fair, just, and equal treatment of wives by their husbands hold promising potential in the country to more effectively and speedily curb the scourge of domestic violence in Pakistan.

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