

## Violence against women: Affecting factors and coping methods for women

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To determine women's exposure to domestic violence, its affecting factors and coping methods.

**Methods:** The descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted from September to December 2017 and comprised married women living in Kesan, a district in the Turkish province of Edirne. A self-generated questionnaire was used to gather sociodemographic data and women's exposure to domestic violence. SPSS 16 was used to analyse data.

**Results:** Of the 586 subjects, 321(55%) were aged up to 40 years, while 265(45%) were aged 41 years or more. Domestic violence was reported by 156(26.6%) women. Beating ranked first among physical violence behaviour reported by 83(14.2%) subjects. Name-calling and yelling ranked first among verbal violence behaviour reported by 118(20.1%). Keeping women at a certain distance ranked first among emotional violence behaviour, reported by 95(16.2%). Not purchasing the fundamental needs of the home ranked first among the economic violence behaviour, reported by 38(6.5%). Finally, 14(2.4%) reported being physically forced to engage in a sexual act, which ranked first among sexual violence behaviour. From among the women abused, 114(66.7%) women said violence occurred because of the instant anger of their partners, and 69(44.2%) said they did not apply to any official institution for help.

**Conclusion:** Women preferred to remain silent about domestic violence. There is a need to introduce urgent prevention programmes to end domestic violence.

**Keywords:** Women, Violence, Domestic violence. (JPMA 69: 53; 2019)

### Introduction

Violence against women includes all verbal, physical, and sexual assaults which violate a woman's physical body, sense of self respect, and sense of trust, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or country.<sup>1</sup> Intimate partner violence is the most common type of violence against women.<sup>2</sup> According to a 2013 report released by the World Health Organisation (WHO), worldwide 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence.<sup>3</sup> According to studies conducted in Turkey, intimate partner violence rates against women range between 8.6% and 53.9% for sexual violence, 20.3% and 71.6% for physical violence, and 53.0% and 89.0% for verbal violence.<sup>4</sup> According to WHO statistics from 2000, 57.9% women living in Turkey have been attacked by their boyfriends or husbands. This ratio was the highest in the world.<sup>5</sup>

Violence against women affects women's lives and health in each phase of life in different aspects.<sup>6</sup> The extent of domestic violence against women, its impact on their physical and mental health, both in the short and long terms, and the wider outcomes of this violence for families, communities and society makes it a public health priority.<sup>7</sup> Intimate partner violence is a risk factor for

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women's suicide attempts,<sup>8</sup> may cause women to be murder victims, and may accelerate the spread of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).<sup>9</sup> Victims of violence in intimate relationships are more likely to report physical injuries, loss of consciousness, disorders such as drug and alcohol use, depression, seeing incubus, lack of confidence, insomnia, suicidal thoughts and attempts, social isolation, complicated headaches, and they are less likely to have self-respect.<sup>10-12</sup> Besides, job loss or unemployment is another non-physical consequence experienced by intimate partner violence survivors.<sup>13</sup> One of the major roles of healthcare professionals is to identify violence, provide care for victims, and provide proper services. The roles of nurses in preventing violence and pre-empting possible future injuries are to survey and define violence, identify domestic violence cases, provide medical treatment and care, interview domestic violence victims in a safe environment, inform them and provide counselling, prepare a security plan, keep records, and use multidisciplinary approaches to refer them to other services.<sup>14,15</sup>

It is important to know the extent of the problem and the groups at risk to end domestic violence against women.<sup>16</sup> The determination of the current situation is important to provide protection, care and rehabilitation. Therefore, the current study was planned to determine women's exposure to domestic violence, the factors of domestic

violence, and women's coping methods.

## Subjects and Methods

The descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted in the Kesan district of the Turkish province of Edirne from September to December 2017, and comprised married women aged 15 years or more who had no communication or mental problems and volunteered to participate. Those who had any perception and/or mental disorder or were not willing to participate were excluded.

Previously in Turkey, domestic violence against women was determined as 40% with a 0.01 error and 5% variance level using 643 people.<sup>18</sup> According to the 2013 Turkey Statistical Institute data; 32,317 women aged 15 and above were living in the study area.<sup>17</sup> Sample size was calculated on the basis of the known elements of the universe using the formula:<sup>19</sup>

$$n = N \times t^2 \times (pq)$$

$$(N-1) + t^2 \times (pq)$$

Where p = Frequency of occurrence (probability) (0.5); q = frequency of non occurrence (1 - p= 0.5); d = (standard error)=0.04; t (The theoretical value in the t table at a certain degree of freedom and at a determined level of error= 1.96; N (universe)= 32317;  $N = 32317 \cdot (1.96 \times 1.96) \cdot (0.50 \cdot 0.50) / (0.04 \times 0.04)$ ;  $32316 + (1.96 \times 1.96) \cdot (0.50 \cdot 0.50)$ ; n= 31037/53; and n= 586.

A questionnaire was prepared in the light of literature<sup>8,10,11,13-16,18</sup> and consisted of 15 questions regarding sociodemographic of the subjects and 7 questions regarding exposure to violence and coping methods.

Permission for the study was granted by Kesan District Governorship, while approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the Deanery of Trakya University School of Medicine. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all the participants. Data was collected through the questionnaire. It took approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire form per individual.

SPSS 16 was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test were used and p<0.05 was defined as statistically significant.

## Results

Of the 586 subjects, 321(55%) were aged up to 40 years, while 265(45%) were aged 41 years or more. Overall mean age of the sample was  $40.01 \pm 11.71$  years. Of the participants, 261(44.5%) were primary school graduates, 382(65.2%) were not employed, and the husbands of

**Table-1:** Distribution of participants according to socio-demographic characteristics.

Socio-demographic characteristics	n	%
<b>Age</b>		
40 years old and younger	321	54.8
41 years old and older	265	45.2
<b>Education level</b>		
Primary school graduate	261	44.5
Secondary school graduate	87	14.8
High school graduate	144	24.6
Associate's degree graduate and upper	94	16
<b>Working status</b>		
Unemployed	382	65.2
Employed	204	34.8
<b>Education status of spouses</b>		
Primary school graduate	204	34.8
Secondary school graduate	100	17.1
High school graduate	159	27.1
Associate degree and above	123	27
Total	586	100

**Table-2:** Some characteristics of participants' violence exposure situations.

Characteristics	n	%
<b>Exposure to violence (n= 586)</b>		
Yes	156	26.6
No	430	73.4
<b>Frequency of violence (n= 586)*</b>		
At least 1-2 times a week	45	7.7
At least 1-2 times a month	67	11.4
At least 1-2 times a year	42	7.2
<b>Types of physical violence exposed *</b>		
Beating	83	14.2
Throwing objects	39	6.7
Damaging by cutting / drilling tools	16	2.7
Other	7	1.2
Total	145	100
<b>Types of verbal violence exposed *</b>		
Calling by name and yelling	118	20.1
Scaring by shouting	113	19.3
Insulting/swearing	116	19.8
Verbal aggression/threatening	105	17.9
Other	17	2.9
<b>Types of emotional violence exposed*</b>		
Mocking/disdaining	54	9.2
Keeping women at a certain distance	95	16.2
Trampling on	85	14.5
Banning to go out of the house	55	9.4
Restrict or control every behavior of a woman	55	9.4
Other	10	1.7
<b>Types of economic violence exposed*</b>		
Dispossession of her money forcibly	29	4.9
Prevention of her to work	28	4.8
Not purchasing the fundamental needs of the home	38	6.5
<b>Types of sexual violence exposed*</b>		
Physically forced to engage in a sexual act	14	2.4
Impregnation unintentionally	8	1.4
Mocking her sexuality	8	1.4

\*Percentage values are taken over n since there are statements more than one.

204(34.8%) were primary school graduates (Table-1). Domestic violence was reported by 156(26.6%) women and 67 (11.4%) said they were exposed to domestic violence at least 1-2 times a month. Beating ranked first among physical violence behaviour against women, reported by 83(14.2%). Exposure to name calling and yelling by their partners ranked first among verbal violence behaviour, reported by 118(20.1%). Keeping women at a certain distance ranked first among emotional violence behaviour, reported by 95(16.2%). Not purchasing the fundamental needs of the home ranked first among economic violence behaviour, reported by 29(6.5%) women. Finally, 14 (2.4%) were physically forced to engage in a sexual act, which ranked first among sexual violence behaviour (Table-2).

As the reasons for intimate partner violence, 114(66.7%) women cited instant anger of their partners, 91(58.3%) reported financial problems, 79(50.7%) reported bad

**Table-3:** Definitions for the cause of violence and attitudes towards violence of the women exposed to violence (n = 156)\*.

Characteristics	n	%
<b>Women's definitions for the cause of violence</b>		
Financial problems	91	58.3
Bad habits of their partners	79	50.7
Instant anger of their partner	114	66.7
Jealousy of their partners	74	47.4
Mental disorders of their partners	36	23
Questioning spouse's coming home late	44	28.3
Familial problems	85	54.5
<b>Women's attitude towards violence</b>		
Never react	94	60.3
Crying and were broken	89	57.1
Responding verbally	86	55.1
Calling police	9	5.8
<b>Reasons of women exposed to violence to continue to marriage</b>		
For the children not to be fatherless	118	75.6
Loving their partners	91	58.3
Lack of financial income	66	42.3
Hoping for the spouse to change his behaviour	75	48.1
<b>Post-violence injury</b>		
Purpura in the body	38	24.3
Scratches	5	3.2
Breakage	3	2
<b>Institution applied when violence occurs</b>		
Prosecutor, lawyer	7	4.5
Police, gendarmerie	5	3.2
Hospital, health institution	3	2
<b>Her reaction to violence when she was exposed to</b>		
Talk with her husband	65	41.7
Stay away from her husband	27	17.3
Remain silent	69	44.2

\*Percentage values are taken over n since there are statements more than one. n was calculated only for the ones expose.

habits of their partners, 74(47.4%) reported jealousy of their partners, and 36(23%) reported mental disorders of their partners. Regarding women's reactions, 94(60.3%) said they did not react against partner violence, 89(57.1%) cried and were broken, 86(55.1%) verbally responded, and 9 (5.8%) said they called the police.

Although exposed to domestic violence from their partners, 118(75.6%) subjects said they maintained their marriage to ensure their children did not grow up in a fatherless household, 91(58.3%) said they loved their partners, and 66(42.3%) cited a lack of financial resources as the reason to continue their marriage.

After experiencing violence, 35(24.3%) women had purpura on their bodies. Only 15(9.7%) women said they had applied to an official institution, while 69(44.25%) women did not do anything (Table-3).

No statistically significant relationship was determined between women's exposure to violence and the variables of education status, women's employment status, income status, education status of the spouse, and number of children ( $p > 0.05$  each).

## Discussion

Between 20% and 50% of women in developed countries are victims of physical violence.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in this study, 26.6% women reported that they experienced domestic violence. A study found 27.8% women were exposed to some type of domestic violence.<sup>16</sup> Another study stated 34% women experience physical violence at least once.<sup>20</sup> In a study conducted in South Africa, the lifetime prevalence of experiencing physical violence from a partner was 24.6% for women.<sup>21</sup> In our study, 11.4% participants experienced violence at least 1-2 times a month. One study determined that the frequency of violence was "more than once a week" for 43% of their participants.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, domestic violence is frequent, and intervention is urgently needed. It is recommended that psychiatric, forensic and public health nurses should conduct public surveys to determine social violence rates as well as to protect and educate women regarding domestic violence. Finally, preventative legal regulations and enforcements should be implemented and male-oriented anger management should be available.

The study findings indicated that beating ranked first among the physical violence behaviour against women, name calling and yelling ranked first among verbal violence behaviour, keeping women at a certain distance ranked first among emotional violence behaviour, being physically forced to engage in a sexual act ranked first among sexual violence behaviour, and not purchasing

the fundamental needs of the home ranked first among economic violence behaviour. One study<sup>11</sup> stated that 34% women were beaten by their partners. Another study found 25.1% women were exposed to verbal violence via name calling and yelling by their partners, 15% women stated that their partners kept them at a certain distance, 5.4% were exposed to sexual abuse, and among the economic violence, they were prevented from working (7.8%).<sup>23</sup> In line with literature,<sup>23</sup> it was observed that verbal and emotional violence were most prevalent, whereas sexual and economic violence were less prevalent. The higher prevalence of verbal and emotional violence may occur because it is easier for women to express these types of violence.<sup>23</sup> The sexual violence rate found was lower than that in the literature, which may be because sexuality was seen private and women might have kept that information private. Because women do not know or talk about their experiences of domestic violence, education should be provided to introduce them to domestic violence, offer information regarding where they may apply for help, and explain their rights.

In the current study, 66.7% women said violence occurred because of the instant anger of their partners. Similarly, a study found that 22.5% of women reported the reason of violence as the instant anger of their partners.<sup>23</sup> It is suggested that education programmes be introduced for establishing effective communication strategies among partners.

In this study, 75.6% women maintained their marriage to ensure their children did not grow up in a fatherless household. Similar to this finding, a study reported 43% women maintained their marriage for the same reason.<sup>24</sup> A 2016 study stated that divorce alone does not have a negative effect on children's psychological adaptation; instead, the conflict-filled environment children are exposed to during the marriage has a significant effect on children. Thus, it is important to make the right decision, rather than maintaining the marriage for the sake of children.<sup>25</sup> It may be useful to provide consultation for parents regarding this issue.

Violence from partners induced purpura in 24.3% of the women. However, only 9.7% of the women exposed to violence stated that they applied to an official institution for help, whereas 44.2% stated that they did nothing/kept silent. A study found that 54.3% of women kept quiet and cried during their exposure to violence and 24.5% of women did nothing.<sup>26</sup> It is considered that social enforcements on women to ensure family unity and not to disturb the family order cause women to keep their silence despite exposure to violence. Thus, nurses should provide education to increase women's knowledge

regarding what they should do against violence, how they can receive support, and consultancy services.

This study was carried out in one district alone, which constitutes its limitation. It is recommended to conduct similar studies with wider samples.

## Conclusion

Among the 26.6% women exposed to domestic violence, most suffered verbal and emotional violence. Most of the abused women stated the violence occurred because of the instant anger of their partners. The majority of women maintained their marriage to ensure their children did not grow up in a fatherless household. The majority of the subjects did not do anything against violence and did not apply to any official institution.

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