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## Research Article

### TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN A SAMPLE OF IRAQI WOMEN

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#### ABSTRACT

A descriptive, multistage cross-sectional study in 40 randomly selected primary health care centers. Data collection started from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 through 30<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Research found that more than three quarters of the study sample were married, Nearly three quarter of women were working More than half of the women live in families with 2-5 members. Verbal violence was the highest type of violence women exposed to at a rate of 79.2%, followed by psychological at a rate of 65.1% and at the end of the list came the sexual violence at a rate of 22.4%. Women submitted to more than one type of violence forming 61.2% of the total sample. A multi-sectorial action is needed for ending violence against women and to address the types and sequences of this violence. There is a demand for national policy to advocate this problem and forward an action plan to prevent violence.

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#### INTRODUCTION

The United Nations defines violence against women (VAW) as “any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result 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.” (UNGA, 1993). Physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual violence are among the common types of violence, which practiced against women in various public and private settings (UNGA, 2012). Violence in families was not considered a problematic issue until the 1960s, due to cultural norms (Hotaling GT *et al*, 1989). Hence, intimate partner violence as a social or legal phenomenon was acknowledged only recently (Tjaden P, 2005). In the beginning of the 1980s, violence against women began to be addressed as a public health issue (Carlson BE *et al*, 2000).

There were many differences in the way of defining, measuring and presenting violence (Koss MP, 1993; Ellsberg M. *et al*, 2001). Researches have consistently documented that violence against women is a gendered occurrence and a gendered crime (Garcia-Moreno and Watts 2011; Reed E, 2010). It is found that one in three women throughout the world will experience violence at a time in their lives (WHO, 2005). The relationship

between gender and violence is complex. Often inequalities in gender increase the risk of acts of violence by men against women. For instance, traditional beliefs that men have a right to control women make women and girls vulnerable to physical, emotional and sexual violence by men (WHO, 2009). VAW and their children can significantly impact on women’s financial position. It clearly imposes costs on the wider society in terms of lower worker productivity and income (Kabeer N, 2014). Social norms, beliefs and attitudes participate in all shapes of VAW. These beliefs can result in violence being justified, excused or hidden from view (WHO, 2009). Medical professionals have a role to play in providing care and identifying women who have experienced domestic violence or at risk of it (WHO, 2013).

This study aimed at exploring the types of VAW among a sample of Iraqi women

#### Subjects and Methods

A descriptive, multistage cross-sectional study conducted in 40 randomly selected primary health care centers (PHCs) in center of Baghdad the capital of Iraq. Data collection started from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 through 30<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Two workdays were spent in each center, four workdays per week. There are 14 Health Sectors in center sectors were in Al-Rusafa the

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second side of the city linked to Al-Rusafa directorate of health with 50 PHCs attached to them. Half of the health medical sectors from each side were chosen on random base, again half of the number of the PHCs randomly selected to be included in the study.

A data collection instrument was constructed for the purpose of the study after reviewing some of other instruments. A committee of expert revised it. The questionnaire was filled in by direct interview with the participant women.

A pilot study was conducted in two PHCs. Ten women were interviewed; they were not included in the study. The pilot study aid in training of the researcher, find the time needed to accomplish the filling in the instrument, and restyling of checklist to simplify and improve the final form.

**Statistical Analysis**

Using of available Statistical Packages for Social Sciences-version 20 (SPSS v20) for simple descriptive statistical analysis of the collected data for measuring frequency, percentage, and mean. Pearson chi-square test used to explore the relationship between variables, P-value ≤ 0.05 was considered as significant.

**Limitations of the study**

Among the limitations to the present study were: long questionnaire which was time consuming; difficulties in asked critical questions about sexual violence.

**Ethical Issue**

A written approval from MOH, Al-Kurkh DH, and Al-Rusafa DH were obtained prior to starting the work. Verbal consents from each participant were taken after declaration of the nature of the study. The data will not be used except for the purpose of the study to ensure confidentiality.

**RESULTS**

Table-1 showed that 33.8% of the sample was in the age group (25-34), while the old age group (55 and more) was the lowest group 5.3% in the study sample. Married women were the majority, they were 81.5%, and the remaining 18.5% were single. More than half of the women in the sample were not working 69.8% while the remaining 30.2% were working (employed 19.8% and unemployed 10.4%). The highest rate of women lived in 2-3 rooms constitute 59.3%. Women lived in small family size 2-5 members forming the highest group at a rate of 60.3%. Living in owned houses and rented ones were about equal (50.7%, 49.3% respectively).

**Table 1** Distribution of study sample according to sociodemographic variables.

Variables (N=400)	No	%
Age group		
15-24	126	31.5
25-34	135	33.7
35-44	75	18.7
45-54	43	10.7
55-	21	5.4
Marital status		
Single	74	18.5
Married	326	81.5
Working status		
Employed	79	19.8
Unemployed	42	10.4

Not working	279	69.8
No. of rooms		
2-3	237	59.3
4-6	163	40.7
Family size		
2-5	241	60.2
6-10	135	33.8
11-15	24	6.0
Property of the house		
Owner	203	50.7
Rent	197	49.3
Residency		
Urban	389	97.2
Rural	11	2.8

Regarding education status of the women, the highest rate 32.3% were women with secondary level, while the lowest rate 1.3% were illiterate. Concerning women’s husbands the highest rate 34.3% were men with college & higher level of education, while the lowest rate 2.4% was illiterate as shown in (Table-2).

**Table 2** Education status of the women and their husbands

Education status	n	%
Education status of women		
Illiterate	11	2.75
Read & write	23	5.8
Primary	69	17.25
Intermediate	58	14.5
Secondary	129	32.3
College & Higher	110	27.5
Total	400	100
Education status of men		
Illiterate	8	2.4
Read & write	17	5.1
Primary	33	9.9
Intermediate	60	18.1
Secondary	100	30.1
College & Higher	114	34.3
Total	400	100

Table-3 revealed that exposure to more than one type of violence was higher in those who live in houses with 2-3 rooms, higher in those who lived in owner houses, and among those who lived in urban area (64.2%, 66.7%, and 61.0% respectively), p-value was not significant for all.

**Table 3** Distribution of violence according to the residency, No. of rooms, and property of house of the participants.

Variable N=255	Type of violence										Total	
	Verbal alone		Physical alone		Psychological alone		Sexual alone		More than one			
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)		
No. of rooms*												
2-3	32	22.7	7	5.0	14	9.9	6	4.3	82	58.2	141	100
4-6	20	17.5	4	3.5	11	9.6	5	4.4	74	64.9	114	100
Property of house**												
Owner	23	16.9	6	4.4	16	11.8	7	5.1	84	61.8	136	100
Rent	29	24.4	5	4.2	9	7.6	4	3.4	72	60.5	119	100
Residency ***												
Urban	52	21.1	9	3.7	24	8.9	11	4.5	150	61.0	246	100
Rural	0	0	2	22.2	1	11.1	0	0	6	66.7	9	100
Chi-sq and P value *(1.608, 0.807) ***(3.366, 0.499) ***(not applicable)												

The four main categories of violence against women were graphed in figure-1), where the psychological violence came at the top by a rate of 64.7% and the sexual violence at the button with a rate of 22.8%.

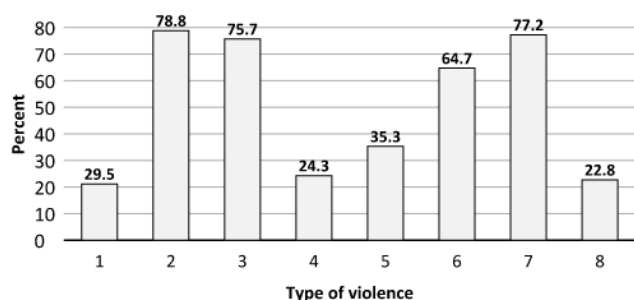


Figure 1 Rate of the types of violence against women

The violent practices that shape each category of the violence were listed in (Table-4). Regarding verbal violence insult was at the top of the list (28.2%) while threats came at the bottom (9.9%). Pushing is the commonest type in physical violence forming 41.9% followed by beating at a rate of 24.3%. Shouting constitute 20.8 % at the top of the psychological violence list while lack spending on his wife 0.8 % at the bottom of the list. Forced intercourse at a rate of 84.5% was the main violent practice shaping the sexual violence.

Table 4 Distribution of study sample according to type of violence

Type of violence	No.	%	
verbal (n=201)	Insult	57	28.2
	Improper speech	54	26.7
	Reprimand	41	20.3
	Insult and improper speech	29	14.9
	Threats	20	9.9
Physical (n=193)	Pushing	26	41.9
	Beating	15	24.3
	Beating and pushing	9	14.5
	Punching	6	9.7
	Kicking	2	3.2
	Choking	2	3.2
	Stabbing	2	3.2
Psychological (n=165)	Shouting	53	20.8
	Shouting and pursuing	36	14.1
	Pursuing	28	11.4
	Criticizing	18	7.1
	Inquiring	14	5.5
	making threats	5	2.0
	Ridiculing in public	5	2.0
Sexual (n=58)	Prevent women leaving house	4	2.0
	lack spending on his wife	2	.8
	forced intercourse	49	84.5
Other *	9	15.5	

\* (do something she did not want it, found degrading or humiliating)

Table-5 showed that the highest persons who practice violence against women at a highest rate 40.8% were the husband, followed by the brother 14.1%, while the grandfather was the least person practice violence at a rate of 10.2%.

Table 5 persons who practice violence against women

The one who practice violence against women	n	%
Husband	104	40.8
Brother the	36	14.1
Father	33	12.9
Mother in law	15	5.9
Sons	12	4.7
Father and brother	9	3.5
Work colleague	9	3.5
Friends	8	3.1
Grandfather	3	1.2
Others	26	10.2

## DISCUSSION

The age range at the time of the study was between 15-71 years. In comparison with some studies, this range is similar to what was reported in Iraq by Al-Saadi & Al-Giboori, 2015 study, the age range was 20-64, by Grose *et al*, 2014 study, the range was 15 - <50 and by Abdul-hameed, 2011 study in Iraq/Al-kharkh 15-55. The highest rate 33.8% of the violence against women was in the age group 25-34 years old; this is similar to what was reported by Khairi, 2007 in Iraq/Baghdad where the highest percentage 26% was in age group 30-34.

More than three quarters of the study sample was married; this is close to what had been found by Lafta *et.al*, 2009 in his study in Iraq, that the married women constitute 74.85%. This high rate of married women could be explained by that the study conducted in PHCs where women constitute the majority of the attendees for themselves and for their children as they are the main careers for the children, and due to the engagement of men in works.

Nearly three quarter of women were not working, Ghazizadeh, 2005 in Iran 2005 found that 94.05% of the women exposed to violence were not working [19], while the result of Mousavi *et al*, 2002 in Iran was closer to our study with a rate of 73.1% . This result may be attributed to: firstly working women cannot attend the PHCs with ease because it's working time at morning with the due time of the PHCs; Secondly working women prefer private sector since they can pay for the private health services.

More than half of the women live in families with 2-5 members this can be related to the nature of the study that was conducted in the city where the trend is to have smaller family size. This finding is similar to what was reported by Zakar *et al*, 2013 in Germany where 53.6% of their samples live in families with lower than 5 members. Mousavi, 2002 found that 44.3% of women in his sample lived in families with 3-5 members.

The highest percentage of studied sample was from women lived in urban (97.3%) this is because the study sample was drawn from the city. This is similar to what had been reported by Fahmy *et al*, 2008 and different to what had been found by Marine *et al*, 2010 were the highest percentage of women lived in rural area (19.9%).

Regarding women education it was found that about one third of them were of secondary education. In Germany a study conducted by Zakar *et al*, 2013 found 44.2% of the women were up to secondary education, In Nigeria a study done by Adika *et al*, 2013 reported that 36% women were of tertiary education, while 27.7% of women in Abdul Khaleq, 2012 study were of higher education. This results may be explained by that most of the women in the study sample were married without completing their education, poor economic status, security factors, and internal displacement all these forced most of the women not to complete their education. On the other hand men affected by these factors to much less extent, that is why one third of them have higher education.

Among verbal violence insult is the main miss practice against women. This is due to lack of health education, customs and false conception of religion's principles, which gave man more than women the rights of practicing violence against women. Another point is that, lack of specialized centers to support the

women and protect them from such kinds of violence. Oladepo *et al*, 2011 in Nigeria found that male practice verbal violence against women at a rate of 56.6% which is the highest type of violence in his study.

Pushing is the commonest type in physical violence forming 41.9% followed by beating. Khairi, 2007 found beating is the commonest type in this category of violence 84%. Man inside the house playing leadership role reflected negatively on the house and on the women inside the house.

This study showed that more than half of the sample was exposed to psychological violence; shouting is more frequently practiced against women. This result is inconsistent with what had been reported by Khairi, 2007 as criticizing constitute 95% of the psychological violent practice against women. This result probably related to either social and religious factors, or to the difficulties in living conditions, and/or in the work that might reflected negatively on the behavior of the man toward his family and in particular toward women.

This study revealed that women who exposed to sexual violence were only small group; this could be related to the nature of the society and its norm making women feel embarrassed and shy to talk about these subjects. The main form is forced intercourse this is in agreement with Khairi, 2007 study.

This study showed that husband is the one who practice violence against women more than other related peoples: this is probably married women constitute large proportion of the sample. One of the results in Lafta *et al*, 2009 study was that VAW is principally carried out by their husbands and by brothers. Harris /decimal, 2009 said parents were the highest percentage who practices violence against women.

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