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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL WIFE ABUSE AMONG FEMALE IN SAUDI ARABIA.

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Key words:-

Wife, Abuse, Physical, KSA

Abstract

Background: The wife abuse is considered as an abnormal behavior but in certain countries its prevalence reaches 59%.

Objectives: To study the prevalence of physical wife abuse among teachers of intermediate schools in KSA.

Methods: A community based study among female teachers of KSA. A questionnaire was distributed among 322 female teachers of intermediate schools that consists of two parts including socioeconomic status and the issue of wife beating through questions about the methods, tools and causes of the beat.

Results: The majority of abused women were divorced, widowed, their husbands have more than one wife and living with husband only. The duration of marriage was 10.1 ± 5.7 in abused group and 11.4 ± 6 years in non-abused group. The overall prevalence of physical abuse was 21.6% with higher prevalence during the first year of marriage. The most common factors for physical abuse is jealous, followed by taking his mother opinion. About 51% of abused women thought that abuse is a way for improving the wife behavior. Most of subjects in both groups thought that abuse is pushing for divorce in 97.1% of abused group and 91.2% of non-abused group.

Conclusion: The overall prevalence of physical wives abuse was 21.6% indicating a sizable prevalence especially during the first year of marriage. The abuse was significantly associated with being educated, divorced, working or living with husband alone in addition to low education of husband. Also, being jealous was the most common factor for being abused. The women perception about divorce after abuse was very high.

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Introduction:-

Physical violence is a worldwide problem that impacts the women's physical and mental health status⁽¹⁻³⁾. The rates of physical abuse that recorded from hospital emergency departments, police records and community based surveys as reports by international organizations ranged from 10% -50% from developing and developed countries⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾.

Despite high prevalence of physical abuse in Arab countries, researchers didn't focus on studying its prevalence and social and psychological impacts⁽⁷⁾. It is also difficult to estimate the financial impact on health care systems however in USA, every year physical abuse costs them from 1.7 to 10 billion US\$⁽⁸⁾ and about 400 million Swiss Francs in Switzerland^(9, 10). Risk factors for high prevalence of abuse are many including being jealous, young with

marital conflicts and low socioeconomic status. Also, witnessing violence against mother during childhood, stress and addiction on drug as well as alcohol are contributing factors for abuse⁽⁸⁾.

In KSA, violence against women is a hidden problem as the majority of women didn't report being abused due to cultural norms of the fear of cultural norms⁽¹⁾. Only few studies were conducted among Saudi females with different prevalence rates from 39.3% - 57.7%^(5, 6). Thus, this study aimed to study the prevalence of physical wife abuse among teachers of intermediate schools in KSA.

Methods:-

A written or verbal consent was obtained from each teacher and the General Presidency of Girl's Education. This study was conducted during the period from December 2016 to May 2017 on 322 female teachers from all nationalities and those currently working in a governmental intermediate schools. Teachers from private, Quran schools, deaf, mute, blind and mentally retarded schools, as well as governmental primary and secondary schools were excluded from the study. The included subjects were divided into 2 groups as 70 were abused and 252 were non-abused.

Sample:-

The questionnaire was distributed among all teachers of intermediate female schools and only 322 participated in this study.

Study tool:-

A self-administrated questionnaire was distributed among the included subjects. This questionnaire consists of two parts including epidemiological factors of teachers and the issue of wife beating through questions about the methods, tools and causes of the beat.

Statistical analysis:-

Data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 24, SPSS, Chicago, IL, U.S.A.) and descriptive analysis conducted. Chi square, Fisher exact and ANOVA were used. Statistical significance was accepted at $p < 0.05$.

Results:-

Demographics of the studied subjects:-

The demographics of included subjects were shown in Table. 1. Most of abused women were living with their husband only. The majority of abused women were divorced and widowed and their husbands have more than one wife. The duration of marriage was 10.1 ± 5.7 in abused group and 11.4 ± 6 years in non-abused group. The abuse was significantly associated with being educated, divorced, working or living with husband alone. As for the husband, the majority of abused women were related to low educated husband (Table. 2).

Table 1:- Socio-Demographic Characteristics of females

	Physical abused 70	Non-abused 252
N.	70	252
Mean±SD	35.4±5.9	34.7±6.4
Saudi	70 (21.9%)	249 (78.1%)
Non-Saudi	0	3 (100%)
With husband only	64 (91.4%)	236 (93.7%)
With husband family	6 (8.6%)	8 (3.15%)
With her family	0	8 (3.15%)
Married	20 (8.3%)	222 (91.7%)
Divorced	34 (65.4%)	18 (34.6%)
Widowed	16 (57%)	12 (43%)
Mean±SD	10.1±5.7	11.4±6
(%)	31.3%	21.1%
Mean±SD	3.14±1.9	3.24±1.7

Table 2:-Socio-Demographic Characteristics of husband

	Physical abused	Non-abused
N.	70	252
Mean±SD	38.6±7.7	39.7±7.5
Non-educated	6(100%)	0
Primary	8 (28.5%)	20 (71.5%)
Intermediate	4 (10%)	36 (90%)
Secondary	18 (22.5%)	62 (77.5%)
University	30 (21.7%)	108 (78.3%)
Higher studies	4 (13.3%)	26 (86.7%)

Prevalence of physical wife abuse:-

The overall prevalence of physical abuse was 21.6% (Fig. 1). The prevalence of physical abuse by onset of beat was shown in Table. 1 as the majority of wives were abused during the first year of marriage (34.2%) followed by 31.4% after the 2nd year (Table. 3). Also, the higher frequency of beat was once a year (42.8%) followed by once a month (34.3%). But the least of them (8.6%) were beaten every day (Table. 4)

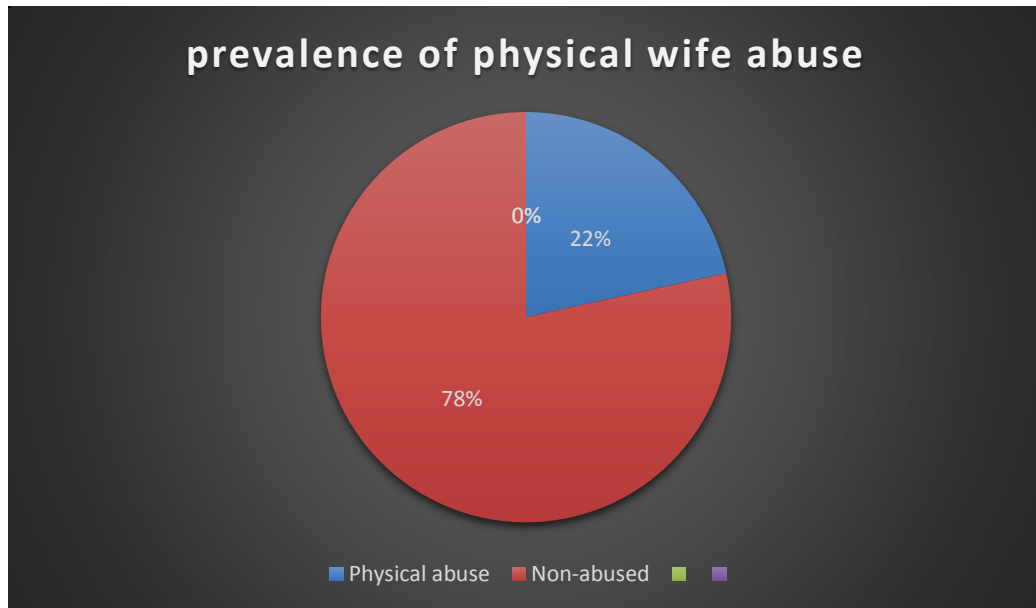


Fig. 1:- Prevalence of physical abuse among included subjects

Table:- 3:-Prevalence of physical abuse by onset of beat

Onset of beat	Physical abused	
	N	%
	13	18.6
	24	34.2
	9	12.9
	22	31.4
	2	2.9

Table:- 4:-Prevalence of physical abuse by frequency of beat

Frequency of beat	Physical abused	
	N	%
	6	8.6
	10	14.3
	24	34.3
	30	42.8

Factors affecting physical abuse:-

As perceived by women, husband's jealous was the most predominant factor resulting in wife abuse (40%) (Table. 5). Also, the effect of mother on husband and wife's refusal to give her husband from her salary were 37.1% and 31.4%, respectively.

Table:- 5:-Factors associated with physical wife abuse

Factors	N	%
Husband's jealous	28	40
Husband affected by his mother opinion	26	37.1
Wife refuses to give her husband from her salary	22	31.4
Stressors at husband's work	19	27.1
Level of husband's family less than wife's family	17	24.3
Husband income less than wife	8	22.9
Husband education less than wife	14	20
Wife refuses to give her husband his duties	10	14.2
Going out from home without husband's permission	3	4.3

Methods of physical abuse:-

The methods and sites of physical abuse were shown in Table. 6.

Table:- 6:-Methods of physical wife abuse

Methods	N	%
Beat on face	25	69.4
Hit with a fist	21	58.3
Throw objects	21	58.3
Kicking	14	38.8
Strangle	10	27.7
Threaten with knife or gun	6	27.7
Sites		
Face	18	50
Extremities	16	44.4
Head	11	30.5
Back	8	22.2
Chest	6	20
Abdomen	5	13.8

Perception of wife and husband after abuse as supposed by abused females:-

As for husband's action after abuse, more than half (52.9%) of husbands conciliate their wives after abuse while 47.1% of them neglect their wives after abuse. On the other hand, about 51% of abused women thought that abuse is a way for improving the wife behavior compared with only 28% from non-abused group with a statistically significant difference. Most of subjects in both groups thought that abuse is pushing for divorce in 97.1% of abused group and 91.2% of non-abused group.

Discussion and conclusion:-

According to our knowledge, this study is one of a limited number of studies that was conducted to examine the prevalence of wife abuse in KSA. However, the results of the study can't be generalized as the study group doesn't represent all Saudi women and limitation of time and sample size.

The overall prevalence of physical wives abuse was 21.6% and this represents a sizable public health problems. In consistence, the lifetime prevalence of abuse was 28.5% in a community-based study among middle aged women in Australia ⁽¹¹⁾. Also, a close rates of prevalence were found in USA among 22.1% of American women as supposed by the National Violence Against Women Survey from 18 years old ⁽¹²⁾. But a recent study in Taif, KSA showed lower levels (11.9%) of physical wife abuse ⁽¹³⁾. However, higher levels were found in another study in Saudi Arabia (57.7%) ⁽¹⁾. In addition, a life time prevalence of abuse that ranged from 31-51% was reported in different regions in KSA and Canada which was higher than our study ^(5,6).

This study showed that, the abuse was significantly associated with being educated, divorced, widowed, working or living with husband alone. In addition to low education of husband relation to abuse. Consistence results showed that divorced women reported higher levels of abuse than widowed and married women and the age doesn't significantly differ between abused and non-abused women^(13, 14). Also, low levels of husband education is associated with abuse toward women⁽¹³⁻¹⁵⁾. Contrast studies showed that the level of education didn't significantly differ between studied groups, however females higher education is a risk factor of abuse if husband is less educated^(13, 16). In agreement, working women were found to be significantly abused than non-working and this could be attributed to husband's feeling of dependence and inferiority⁽¹⁵⁾.

The onset of physical abuse was more prevalent in first year of marriage and the least was more in second year and this could be attributed to that the partners didn't have much time to know each other and decrease the causes of conflicts. Also, the beat was higher once a year and once a month indicating low frequency of abuse in our Islamic society.

The most common precipitating factors for physical abuse is jealous, followed by taking his mother opinion where the least was when the wife leaves the home without permission of the husband. Also, a high number of husbands neglect their wife after abusing them indicating low knowledge of women rights in Islam and recommend highlighting them with women rights.

About 51% of abused women thought that abuse is a way for improving the wife behavior compared with only 28% from non-abused group with a statistically significant difference. This could be attributed to women have fears of being insulted more and the thoughts in our society about the husband's being the head of family and the wife must be submissive to him⁽¹⁷⁾. Also, the acceptance of wife abuse was identified in Bangladeshi married men as the majority of males and females thought that man is superior than women and have the rights to abuse her⁽¹⁸⁾.

Most of subjects in both groups thought that abuse is pushing for divorce in 97.1% of abused group and 91.2% of non-abused group. This was in the same respect with other studies indicating high levels of divorce in abused females⁽¹⁹⁻²²⁾.

In conclusion, the overall prevalence of physical wives abuse was 21.6% indicating a sizable prevalence. The abuse was significantly associated with being educated, divorced, working or living with husband alone in addition to low education of husband. Also, being jealous was the most common factor for being abused. The women perception about divorce after abuse was very high.

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