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Original Research Article

Characteristics of women who have suffered from violence during pregnancy



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The problem of violence is an important issue for public health. The literature reports that the incidence of violence during the pregnancy is about 1%–25%. Forms of violence that are most often used against pregnant women include physical, psychological and sexual violence.

Aim: To determine characteristics of women experiencing violence during pregnancy.

Material and methods: One hundred and fourteen women, residents of the province of Lublin, were examined for characteristics of pregnant women experiencing violence. The method used in the study was diagnostic sounding. The technique used was a questionnaire developed by the authors. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The results were statistically analyzed.

Results and discussion: The analysis showed that 59.7% of the women studied experienced violence during pregnancy. The most common form of violence against the pregnant women was psychological violence (72.5%) and the rarest one was economic violence (26.7%). These percentage differences reached statistical significance ($p=.02$). Moreover, the statistically significant correlation was found between experiencing violence and age ($p=.008$), level of education ($p=.0001$), marital status ($p=.03$) and the occupational activity of examined women ($p=.0001$).

Conclusions: Psychological and physical violence are the most common forms of violence used against the pregnant women. Unmarried, young women with a low level of education are the group of women who most often experience violence and due to this fact they should be taken into specialist care.

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1. Introduction

The problem of violence is an important issue for public health.^{6,17} Violence is all deliberate acts threatening personal liberty or causing both physical and psychological damage of the person, beyond the social rules of relationships.¹⁹

Forms of violence that can be used against the pregnant women are physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence.^{9,21,24} Using violence against pregnant women carries the risk of many complications in both the mother and child.^{2,5,15}

Determination of characteristics of women experiencing violence is very important due to the serious consequences for both pregnant woman and her child, to allow early detection of violence victims and to take special care of them.^{6,15,24}

2. Aim

The aim of the study was to determine the characteristics of women experiencing violence during pregnancy.

3. Material and methods

The study regarding the characteristics of pregnant women experiencing violence was conducted on 114 women, residents of the province of Lublin, coming to control visits to gynecologists in public, non-public and private gynecological and obstetric consulting rooms. This group included 29 (25.4%) women aged 18–20, 25 (21.9%) aged 21–25, 37 (32.5%) aged 26–30 and 23 (20.2%) over 30. There were 98 (85.9%) married women. In total, 46 women (40.4%) had a primary/vocational level of education, 34 (29.8%) – secondary and 34 (29.8%) high level of education. In the studied group 68 (59.6%) women had a job.

The method that was used in the work was diagnostic sounding. The questionnaire developed by the authors was the research tool used in the work. This questionnaire included closed-ended questions with both single and multiple choice answers, regarding the use of violence and forms of violence (sexual, economic, physical and mental) and characteristics of the group (age, level of education, marital status and occupational activity). Any questionnaire could be taken into account only if it was fully completed.

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

The results were statistically analyzed. The level of significance of $p < .05$ was assumed. Database and statistical analyses were performed based on Statistica 9.0 software (StatSoft, Poland).

4. Results

Table 1 shows correlations between experiencing of violence during the pregnancy and form of violence used. Based on the analysis of the results it was found that 59.7% of the women experienced violence during their pregnancy and 40.3% did not experience it. The most common type of violence against the pregnant women was psychological violence (72.5%), the

Table 1 – Women experiencing violence during pregnancy and form of violence used.

| Form of violence | Women experiencing violence | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------|-----|------|-------|-------|
| | No | | Yes | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Sexual | 9 | 42.9 | 12 | 57.1 | 21 | 100.0 |
| Economic | 11 | 73.3 | 4 | 26.7 | 15 | 100.0 |
| Psychological | 11 | 27.5 | 29 | 72.5 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Physical | 15 | 39.4 | 23 | 60.6 | 38 | 100.0 |
| Total | 46 | 40.3 | 68 | 59.7 | 114 | 100.7 |

$\chi^2 = 9.591, p = .02.$

Table 2 – Women experiencing violence and age of examined women.

| Age | Experiencing of violence | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| | No | | Yes | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 18–20 years | 0 | 0.0 | 29 | 100.0 | 29 | 100.0 |
| 21–25 years | 4 | 16.0 | 21 | 84.0 | 25 | 100.0 |
| 26–30 years | 6 | 16.2 | 31 | 83.8 | 37 | 100.0 |
| > 30 years | 8 | 34.8 | 15 | 65.2 | 23 | 100.0 |
| Total | 18 | 15.8 | 96 | 84.2 | 114 | 100.0 |

$\chi^2 = 11.683, p = .008.$

Table 3 – Women experiencing violence and level of education of pregnant women.

| Education | Experiencing violence | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------|-----|------|-------|-------|
| | No | | Yes | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Primary/vocational | 19 | 41.3 | 27 | 58.7 | 46 | 100.0 |
| Secondary | 25 | 73.5 | 9 | 26.5 | 34 | 100.0 |
| Higher | 26 | 76.5 | 8 | 23.5 | 34 | 100.0 |
| Total | 70 | 61.4 | 44 | 38.6 | 114 | 100.0 |

$\chi^2 = 13.207, p = .001.$

rarest one was economical violence (26.7%). The percentage differences reached statistical significance ($p = .02$).

The experiencing of violence according to the age of the examined pregnant women was shown in Table 2.

It was found that 100% of pregnant women aged 18–20 suffered from various forms of violence. A statistically important correlation ($p = .008$) between age and experience of violence during pregnancy was found. Pregnant women aged 18–20 were more often victims of violence in comparison with women aged over 30 (34.8%) who had not suffered from violence during pregnancy.

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