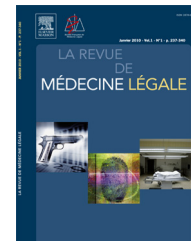




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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# The profile of women victims of domestic violence in Morocco

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## KEYWORDS

Violence;  
Partner violence;  
Domestic violence;  
Physical aggression;  
Sexual coercion;  
Psychological abuse

## Summary

**Introduction.** – Violence against women by an intimate partner is a real public health problem. Its prevalence is alarming.

**Purpose.** – To determine the profile of both the women victims of violence and their partners, and to describe the characteristics of violence against them.

**Materials and methods.** – Two hundred and fifty-four women were received during the study's period in our forensic unit for a forensic certificate. A pre-questionnaire was led by the authors. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The results were statistically analyzed.  
**Results.** – Most of the victims were young and had an average educational and economic level. They were beaten by a partner who takes toxic in more than three quarter of the cases. Physical violence was one of act reported by most women.

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## Introduction

Violence against women is considered a main public health problem in most countries of the world. It can have serious consequences on women's health [1,2]. Among violence forms practiced against women, domestic violence or spousal violence that was highlighted in all countries and in all socio-economic backgrounds, supporting documents, and available evidence shows that it is much more widespread than imagined. In different regions of the world, between 16 and 52% of women are victims of physical violence by their partner [3].

This conjugal violence (CV) is a complex set of behaviors. It may include, in addition to physical violence, sexual, psychological, emotional or verbal [4].

The awareness of the problem's extent is complex, even in communities that are highly aware of the phenomenon, most published studies on the CV were held in medical community. Around the world, the number of women victims of CV is alarming. In Europe, the prevalence is between 20 and 55% [1]. Studies in the United States of America have shown that the prevalence of physical violence against women by an intimate partner is between 28 and 54.2% annually [4]. In a multicenter study held in several countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America, the prevalence of intraconjugal violence was 15 to 71% [5].

On the other hand, several studies support that there are a combination of other factors with this violence and that their understanding is much more important because it will

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help to better understand the phenomenon of violence against women and so to treat and prevent it [2]. Several factors have been described in the literature as risk factors for this phenomenon namely: the young age of the woman and her partner, the low socio-economic and intellectual level, drug and ethyl liquor use by woman or her partner, psychiatric disease with personality problems, criminal history, cultural dynamics and many other factors. . . Besides, it should be noted that any woman regardless of her educational and socio-economic level can suffer from domestic violence [2].

In Morocco, the official information on the number of beaten women are mainly provided by the police, justice and non-governmental organizations across the cases treated and the toll free number available to women victims of violence based on genre. A recent report by the High Planning Commission in 2011 showed that the prevalence of domestic violence was 55% [6].

Aware of the problem of violence against women, Morocco has set up a national strategy to struggle with violence against women in 2002 with an operational schedule (2005) which has set as the main objective the creation of medico-psychological and forensic unit care of women victims of violence in hospitals. Women victims of violence management is part of an integrated network management involving four partners: health sector, judicial system (courts, police and royal police force), civil society by associations and listening centers for psychological support and legal assistance to women victims of violence and child protection units.

In the same time, the Moroccan legislator set on several arrangements concerning the struggle against all discrimination types, including that based on gender. Indeed, if national legislation does not have a clear definition of discrimination, the fact remains that many prescriptive arrangements recognize the equal rights of men and women to have their human rights and basic freedoms, and that, regardless of their social status. Equality establishment is becoming the rule. Testify towards this, the hole redesign of the Family Code, the new legislation governing civil status, the penal code arrangements and work against discrimination, whatever its origins.

Hence to protect more women victims of violence, the legislator gave permission - without obligation - to the doctor to report to the competent judicial or administrative authorities, the criminal and abuse acts or deprivation perpetrated against a woman; by exempting from proceeding for violation of professional secret (Article 446 of the Criminal Code in its second paragraph) [7].

This work's main purpose is to determine the profile of both women victims of violence and their partners, and to describe the characteristics of violence against women.

## Materials and methods

This is a prospective study held along a period of six months in the forensic department of the University Hospital Ibn Rochd Casablanca on women victims of domestic violence who seek the management unit for women and children victims of violence.

The study variables were collected on a survey sheet made for this purpose. It included questions on sociodemographic characteristics of the woman and her partner (age, education, occupation); the couple's income (<or> 3000 Dh the guaranteed minimum wage (GMW) "260 euro"); marital status (married, divorced, fiancée); the children's number, toxic habits, psychiatric and criminal history; as well as the variables related to the characteristics of marriage (ground, length) and lived violent episode. Domestic violence has been classified as physical, sexual or psychological. Physical violence was defined as any positive response any time the woman reported the following actions: "be dragged or beaten by blows or object/instrument, pushed, choked, burned, shaken. . .". About sexual violence, it was defined as any positive response to the following questions "being forced to have degrading or humiliating sex (sodomy for example)", "it is subject to sex for fear" or "he forces her to have sex".

Finally, psychological violence was defined as a positive response if the woman was already being threatened, intimidated, humiliated or belittled, insulted by her partner.

After anonymisation, data were collected in a Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> table. Statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS<sup>®</sup> 13.0 software. Quantitative variables were expressed as average  $\pm$  standard deviation or median and quartiles and categorical variables were expressed as numbers and percentages. Comparisons were made by Student's t test or Mann Whitney and in the case of quantitative variables. The chi 2 test or exact test in the case of qualitative variables. The significance level was set at 5%.

Each woman who participated in our work was informed about the study and its objectives and has written consent.

## Results

During the study period, 254 women were identified. The average age was  $34 \pm 9$  years. Regarding the studies level, 140 patients (57.4%) had the secondary level and 48 (19.7%) were illiterate. Ninety-nine patients (40%) had a professional activity and 8 (3%) had toxic habits. One hundred and ten (63%) couples had incomes above the minimum wage. It was noted that 187 (75.1%) of the couples had at least 2 children (Table 1). As for the aggressor, he was the husband in 249 (98%) of the cases, the ex-spouse in 3 cases (1.2%) and the engaged in 2 (0.8%) with a median age of 40 and interquartile range [33–47]. Twenty-seven (18.5%) of the aggressors were illiterate. He had a job in 199 (80.6%) of the cases, toxic habits in 196 (78%) of the cases, psychiatric history in 15 (6%) of the cases and criminal history in 60 (24.7%) of the cases. At the time of the attack reported by the victim, 196 (82%) of the attackers were taking drugs or alcohol (Table 1).

For married couples, their marriage was by love in 78 (53%) of the cases, by family arrangement in 61 of the cases (41.5%) and in 8 of the cases out of necessity or 5.4%. The median number of years of marriage was 7 years with an interquartile range [4–14].

All women have suffered from physical violence that was unique in 129 (51%) of the cases. In 190 of the cases (88%), violence has occurred in the family home from one to several times a month in 191 (84.5%) of the cases. Abused women

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