



Review

Violence towards women is a public health problem



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ABSTRACT

Background: Violence within the family is a significant health problem which threatens the health of the community. The global rates of domestic violence directed at women have been reported as 10%–69% and in Turkey as 25%–30%.

Materials and Methods: The data of our study were obtained from the database of the official internet website of the Turkish Statistics Institute as the data related to violence between 2007 and 2012. In the evaluation of the data, SPSS 11.0 statistics software was used.

Results: Although it was determined that women from all groups experienced sexual, physical and emotional violence, higher rates were observed in those living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas, in the eastern region compared to all other regions, in the 45–59 years age group, those with low level of income and with a low level of education.

Conclusion: When physicians encounter women who have experienced violence, by evaluating the violence in the context of a legal case, violence is identified and not allowed to become a cycle passed from generation to generation, and in addition to the medical intervention, without forgetting that violence is a public health problem, it is necessary to find a way to provide psychosocial and legal support for the victim.

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1. Introduction

Violence is a societal problem throughout the world to which individuals of both genders and every age and race may be exposed. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines violence as behaviour or potential behaviour of the actual or threatening application of the physical force of an individual against another or a group or community which results in death, psychological damage, deprivation or inhibited development.¹ Violence may be manifested physically, most often as punching, slapping, biting, injuring with sharp or penetrative items and even death or it may be in the form of psychological violence when the victim is constantly criticised,

humiliated, threatened, rejected and emotional needs are not met and with the forbidding of communication with family, freedom of behaviour is restricted and mistreatment is not reported. Violence can also be sexual violence such as abuse, rape, forced sodomy or it can be economic violence.^{2–6}

Domestic violence is the application of violence by one member of a family against another or others. The most widespread form of domestic violence is perpetrated by men against women.⁷ In a WHO study of 24,000 women in 11 countries, the rates of women exposed to physical violence at some point throughout their life were reported to be 13%–61% and the rates of sexual violence were seen to be 6%–59%.⁸ In Turkey, it has been recorded that 50.9% of women are exposed to physical violence at least once in their lifetime and 41.1% of married women suffer violence from their husband.⁹ The rates of women exposed to physical violence in Turkey show regional differences.¹⁰

According to the 'Research into Domestic Violence against

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Women in Turkey -2008' report, women in the 45–59 years age group had higher cumulative rates of exposure to violence at any time in their life in terms of sexual, emotional, physical and combined sexual and physical violence than the other age groups. However, when the previous 12-month period was examined, the rates of exposure to violence were higher at a younger age. In a study by Arat and Altınay, it was reported that 1 in 3 women experienced violence and as women earned more money, the risk of violence doubled and thus it was shown that 2 in 3 women were exposed to violence.¹¹

In a study by İçli in 1995, it was reported that economically independent women were seen as a threat by men, which could leave them exposed to violence.¹² As the level of income of the family increased, so the rate of women stating that they had suffered physical violence fell. With an increase in the educational level of women, the rate of physical violence experienced fell, with a rate of 43% for illiterate women and 12% for those who had received higher education having suffered violence at least once in their lifetime.¹¹ In the central and western regions of Turkey, the rate of illiterate women is 16% while in the east of the country this rate is 3 times higher at 42%. This could explain the higher rates of violence seen in the east.

In this study, our aim was to research thoroughly violence towards women which is a public health problem.

2. Materials and methods

The data obtained in the study were obtained from the database of the official internet website of the Turkish Statistics Institute as the data related to violence recorded between 2007 and 2012.

A comparison was made according to various descriptive variables of exposure to sexual, psychological and physical violence at any time in their life and in the previous 12 months. In the study, the status of exposure to violence of the women was evaluated in terms of socio-demographic variables such as, place of residence, geographical region of Turkey, age group, educational level, employment status and income level.

In the evaluation of the study data, SPSS 11.0 statistics software was used. Categorical data were stated with descriptive statistics of number (n) and percentage (%). In the comparison of qualitative data, the Chi-square test was used. A value of $p < 0.05$ was accepted as statistically significant.

3. Results

In the study, an evaluation was made of the data related to violence of 10,798 women recorded in the database of the Turkish Statistics Institute between 2007 and 2012. The place of residence was determined as an urban area in 73.9% and rural in 26.1%. The geographical regions of residence were West in 26.3%, South in 8.9%, Central in 23.2%, North in 12.3% and East in 29.3%. The distribution of age groups was 15–23 years in 11.1%, 24–34 years in 33.8%, 35–44 years in 27.9% and 45–59 years in 27.3%. Education levels were reported as illiterate in 25.4%, primary school in 48.5%, middle school in 8.1% and high school and above in 18%. Of the total sample, 26.7% were in paid employment and 73.3% were not in paid employment. The level of family income was reported as low in 38.8%, average in 42.9% and high in 18.3%.

The socio-demographic variables according to whether women had been exposed to sexual violence at any time in their life are presented in Table 1.

Statistically significantly higher rates were determined of sexual violence experienced at any time in their life by women living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas, in the eastern region compared to other geographical regions, in the 45–59 age group

compared to those in younger age groups, and in those with a low level of income.

At the same time it was determined that rates of sexual violence experienced at any time in their life increased with increasing age ($p < 0.001$) and decreased with increasing level of education and level of income ($p < 0.001$).

The socio-demographic variables according to whether women had been exposed to sexual violence in the previous 12 months are presented in Table 2.

Statistically significantly higher rates were determined of sexual violence experienced in the last 12 months by women living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas ($p < 0.05$), in the eastern region compared to other geographical regions, in the 15–23 age group compared to those in older age groups, in those who were illiterate compared to those who were educated, and in those with a low level of income ($p < 0.001$). No statistically significant effect was determined of whether or not the woman was employed on the rates of experiencing sexual violence in the previous 12 months ($p = 0.582$).

At the same time it was determined that rates of sexual violence experienced in the previous 12 months decreased with increasing age, increasing level of education and level of income ($p < 0.001$).

The socio-demographic variables according to whether women had been exposed to emotional violence at any time in their life are presented in Table 3.

Statistically significantly higher rates were determined of emotional violence experienced at any time in their life by women living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas, in the eastern region compared to other geographical regions, in the 45–59 age group compared to those in younger age groups, and in those with a low level of income ($p < 0.001$).

At the same time it was determined that rates of emotional violence experienced at any time in their life increased with increasing age ($p < 0.001$) and decreased with increasing level of income ($p < 0.001$).

The socio-demographic variables according to whether women had been exposed to emotional violence in the previous 12 months are presented in Table 4.

No statistically significant difference was determined between those in rural areas and those in urban areas in the rates of emotional violence experienced in the previous 12 months ($p = 0.591$). Statistically significantly higher rates were determined of emotional violence experienced in the last 12 months by women living in the eastern region compared to other geographical regions, in the 15–23 age group compared to those in older age groups, and in those with a low level of income ($p < 0.001$).

At the same time it was determined that rates of emotional violence experienced in the previous 12 months decreased with increasing age and level of income ($p < 0.001$).

The socio-demographic variables according to whether women had been exposed to physical violence at any time in their life are presented in Table 5.

Statistically significantly higher rates were determined of physical violence experienced at any time in their life by women living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas, in the eastern region compared to other geographical regions, in the 45–59 age group compared to those in younger age groups, in those who were illiterate compared to those who were educated and in those with low level of income ($p < 0.001$).

No statistically significant effect was determined of the employment status of the woman on the rates of experiencing physical violence at any time in their life ($p = 0.061$).

At the same time it was determined that rates of physical violence experienced at any time in their life increased with increasing age ($p < 0.001$) and decreased with increasing level of

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