



Domestic violence in Iran: A literature review

Said Pournaghash-Tehrani*

Department of Psychology, University of Tehran, Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 July 2010
 Received in revised form 14 September 2010
 Accepted 9 October 2010
 Available online 13 December 2010

Keywords:

Domestic violence
 Iran
 Literature review

ABSTRACT

While there is a growing concern about the rise of violence on the streets and the media around the world, the possibility of an individual to be affected by violence at home is an undeniable reality facing most families around the globe. Domestic violence can take many forms including physical, psychological, sexual, and economic. It not only has devastating physical and psychological consequences on its victims, but can seriously damage the foundations of the family leading to its disintegration. Although domestic violence is a worldwide phenomenon, it can have various definitions and rate of incidence according to the culture in which it occurs. Furthermore, unlike Western countries, where for researchers obtaining and accessing information regarding different aspects of family violence is rather straightforward, in non-Western countries it is a formidable challenge because of faulty dissemination of information. Therefore, any attempts by researchers in these countries to address this issue and gather existing data can be of great merit. The purpose of the present paper is to review and to discuss the existing literature on domestic violence in Iran.

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Psychological profile of perpetrators and victims	1
2. Types and prevalence of domestic violence	2
3. Consequences and attributions	2
4. Demographic characteristics	4
5. Discussion	4
References	5

Defining domestic violence is inherently difficult given the fact that it is constantly changing according to the culture in which it is taking place. In fact, in some cultures this term does not even exist, a discussion that I will reserve for another time. Although the preferred term to denote aggressive behaviors towards a spouse is domestic violence, (after all, it is a violence that happens inside the home), this topic is also referred to as “wife abuse”, “spousal abuse”, “intimate partner abuse”, “marital abuse”, “family maltreatment”, “family violence”, “conjugal violence” and “assault”. In this paper, however, I will use these terms interchangeably in order to avoid different implications they might have in various cultures.

Gathering good information and searching for studies in the family violence field and the extent to which it exists, is a rather difficult task given the varying definitions, samples, methodology, and so on from

one study to another. As a result of these differences, the interpretation of results becomes difficult when trying to compare studies conducted in different countries. Also carrying out research in the field of domestic violence in Iran is a challenging task due to extensive bureaucracy and general lack of cooperation of some organizations responsible for addressing this issue. Furthermore, finding studies that are scientifically sound is difficult. Despite this, I have tried to report those studies that had control groups and used appropriate statistical methods. Further, I will attempt to present the studies that are actually reported (in spite of knowing that only a fraction of domestic violence is ever reported) in the field of domestic violence in Iran. It should also be noted that my literature search is by no means an inclusive one, and does not include the legal (civil and religious) aspects of the issue since they are outside the scope of my expertise.

1. Psychological profile of perpetrators and victims

Providing a single profile of domestic violence perpetrators and its victims has always been a great challenge to researchers in this field

* Corresponding author. Psychology Department, University of Tehran, Jalal Al Ahmad-Kooye Nasr, P.O. Box 14454, Tehran, Iran. Tel.: +98 21 88250062 5.
 E-mail address: spournaghash@yahoo.com.

since it encompasses a diverse population. Presenting such a profile of Iranian perpetrators is no exception to this. However, the perception that specific patterns exist among these individuals has prompted many investigators to try to portray a clearer picture of them. In a study examining the psychological characteristics of perpetrators of violence, Mafi and Akbarzadeh (2005) showed that there was a strong association between men's personality characteristics and their perpetration of violence towards their wives. Specifically, they showed that personality traits, such as depression, hysteria, paranoia, hypomania and schizophrenia, were positively and significantly associated with spousal abuse. Also, Mohammadkhani, Mohammadi, Rezaidoganeh, and Azadmehr (2006) evaluated 230 married men who perpetrated violence against their wives using the Conflict Tactic Scale. Their results showed that wife abusers generally suffered from a range of psychological (bipolar disorder), personal (family problems) and social problems (inability to interact with peers) compared to non-abusers. Also, Narimani and Aghamohamadian (2005), in an attempt to demarcate the psychological risk markers of perpetrators of violence, categorized violence into four categories: physical, psychological, social, and sexual and administered various tests measuring assertiveness, anxiety, depression, and personality disorders to 400 randomly selected families. Results showed that high levels of anxiety and depression were positively associated with abuse in the family; and high levels of assertiveness on the part of the husbands were correlated with domestic abuse.

Victims of assault may also suffer from a wide range of psychological disorders. For example, Moezi, Azami, Shakeri, and Pourheidari (2005), administering the SCL-90 questionnaire to 380 women victims of violence, found that the majority of them were suffering from physical problems (shoulder, hand and neck pain), depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

A similar study was conducted on female victims by Azadmaher and Mohammadkhani (2007). In this investigation 230 married women were chosen and relevant questionnaires were administered. Results indicated that the participants mainly suffered from psychological (including depression, borderline personality, and drug abuse) and behavioral disorders (inability to control anger), had a history of delinquent behaviors, and demonstrated an inability to communicate with peers. The authors concluded that the rate of incidence of domestic violence is particularly high in families whose mothers have been the victim of violence and suffered from psychological and personal impairments

Further, Pashasharifi and Eghlimia (2003), in a study addressing the issue of drug abuse and its impact on domestic violence, showed that in 63.6% of families whose fathers were drug addicts, both physical and psychological violence occurred. However, in 17.2% of these families, no violence was noted while in 18.2% and 1% of them either psychological or physical violence was evident, respectively.

Given that batterers often engage in other types of violent and criminal behaviors, there is a great need for increased research in the criminal justice field as my search revealed no such investigative efforts.

2. Types and prevalence of domestic violence

In assessing the types of domestic violence, my search uncovered a number of studies. The first investigated different types of domestic violence against women; specifically, physical, verbal-psychological, and sexual. The findings indicated that verbal-psychological violence was the most common type in the sample followed by physical, economic, and sexual. It was concluded that the types of domestic violence, generally thought to be of the physical type, are transforming to the psychological form which the authors believe is the result of socio-cultural changes taking place in Iran (Mehdizadeh, Zamani, Farajzadegan, & Malekafzale, 2004). Although an interesting finding, the authors did not specify the types of violence in each category, and

failed to pinpoint exactly which type of psychological (e.g., cursing and ignoring) or physical (e.g., hitting, slapping, and kicking) violence frequently took place. Another flaw of this study was that the "verbal-psychological" category was considered as a type of violence, ignoring the fact that verbal abuse is viewed as one of the many types of psychological violence.

Results of another study carried out on 386 domestic violence victims revealed that rates of physical, psychological, economic, and sexual assault perpetrated against these women were 95.3%, 100%, 81.6%, and 95.3%, respectively. Furthermore, it was shown that variables, such as being the victim of violence, family problems, belonging to a patriarchic family, accepting the act of violence, and the types of reactions towards husband's violence, were significantly correlated with the act of wife battering.

In terms of the severity of different types of violence, the findings of this study were similar to those of Kazemian, Razaghi, Toufani, and Nemati (2005) who showed that 93% of domestic violence victims experienced physical violence while 88% and 8% experienced psychological and sexual maltreatment, respectively. The investigators also reported that the majority of the victims were housewives whose husbands were either alcoholic or had drug-dependency problems. Given such distressing results, the authors suggested that government and non-governmental agencies, as well as the media, should take drastic measures to inform appropriate authorities of these findings so that measures can be taken to curb such unacceptable behaviors of men towards their spouses.

3. Consequences and attributions

One of the consequences of wife abuse that has been much discussed in the literature is its detrimental effect on pregnant women. For example, Nojumi and Akrami (2002) reported a relationship between physical violence and its deleterious consequences on the ability of women to carry out their childcare activities. Specifically, they examined 406 women in labor and collected data, including their method of delivery, the length of their hospitalization during their pregnancy period, premature delivery and the general health status of their infant. Their findings revealed that being the victim of domestic violence, specifically, repeated exposure to physical violence perpetrated by their husbands, resulted in their longer hospitalization due to kidney infection, higher rates of premature births and underweight infants, and higher rates of unwanted pregnancy and nausea, compared to non-abused women.

In another study of 102 pregnant women who had experienced physical abuse by their husbands during their pregnancy, Jafarzadeh, Moghadam-Hosseini, Soltanifar, and Ebrahimzadeh (2009) examined the relationship between the intensity of domestic violence during pregnancy and mother's empathy towards her infant. The authors measured mother's empathy towards her infant 4–5 weeks following the birth of the newborn and found an inverse relationship between mother's enduring verbal and physical abuse and her empathy towards her newborn. Specifically, their results showed that, 89.2%; 9.8%, and 1% of women, during their pregnancy, experienced medium, low, and very low levels of abuse, respectively, demonstrating the detrimental effects of domestic abuse on the emotional bonding between mother and infant. Also, rates of husband's verbal and physical abuse were higher among husbands who disapproved of their wives' pregnancy.

In a similar study of 290 pregnant women Behnam, Moghadam-Hosseini, and Soltanifar (2007) noted the harmful effects of domestic violence on pregnant mothers and their giving birth to underweight infants. Furthermore, Dehghani and Riazzi-Kermani (2003) reported that factors, such as the history of domestic violence a year before pregnancy, husbands' history of drug abuse, religious commitment, level of couples' education, willingness of pregnancy, and women's

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/94757>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/94757>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)