

Prevalence and Risk Factors of Intimate Partner Abuse Among Women in Al-Madinah City, Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Intimate partner violence (IPV) is an important public health problem. However, its prevalence varies by country and culture.

Aims: To estimate the prevalence of IPV, determine its types and risk factors, and to assess attitude of women towards IPV in Al-Madinah City, Saudi Arabia.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted. A convenience sample included 450 ever-married women aged 18- 65 years and lived in Al-Madinah city, Saudi Arabia in 2021 was used. The data were collected online through Social media using Arabic validated version of the WHO questionnaire on women's health and domestic violence against women. Data about socio-demographic and violence-related factors were collected. The prevalence of IPV was assessed and its associated risk factors were examined using multivariate logistic regression analysis.

Results: The prevalence of IPV against women was 37.6%. The prevalence was significantly higher among older, divorced, and less educated women, and presence of another husband's wife. The main types of violence reported by abused women were "pull hair up" (47.3%) and "throw household items" (41.4%). The higher significant risk of IPV was found among women with husbands' aged > 50 years (OR= 4.6), divorced women (OR= 12.5), and presence of another husband's wife (OR 4.1). The agree attitude of the studied women towards violence causes was the highest for "Betrayal" (23.5%).

Conclusion: The prevalence of IPV against women is relatively high in Al-Madinah city. Age and education of women and husbands, marital status, and presence of another husband's wife were the most important risk factors.

Key Words: Abuse, Attitude, Prevalence, Violence, Women, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is now considered as the commonest form of violence against women and take place amongst all socio-economical and cultural classes.¹ IPV is found to have dangerous physical and psychological effects on women health and it may result in other health issues including mental, sexual and reproductive health issues and also may have fatal outcomes like for example homicide or suicide.¹⁻⁴ The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary

deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life".⁵ The Saudi Law of Protection from Abuse defines the abuse as: "any form of exploitation; physical, psychological or sexual, or the threat thereof committed by an individual against another exceeding the limits of powers and responsibilities derived from guardianship, dependency, sponsorship, trusteeship or livelihood relationship. The term "abuse" shall include the omission or negligence of an individual in the performance of his duties or responsibilities in providing basic needs for a family member or an individual for whom he is legally responsible".⁶ Types of IPV include: Physical harming: like for example beating, arm twisting, slapping, kicking and murders.³ Psychological harming: like for example underestimation, insults, continual humiliation, intimidations.

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tion, threats to take the children away.³ WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence presents the lifetime prevalence of ever partnered women who reported having physical abuse is extend from 13% in Japan city to 61% in Peru province and the percentage of women reporting either sexual or physical abuse, or both, extend from 15% in Japan city to 71% in Ethiopia province.⁷ In Saudi Arabia, systematic review included 11 studies from different cities in Saudi Arabia found that the prevalence of IPV to vary from 39.3% to 44.5%.⁸ The higher prevalence of IPV among Saudi women was reported in Al-Madinah city⁹, Jeddah city¹⁰ Riyadh city¹¹ with the reported prevalence was 57.7%, 44.5% and 44.8%, respectively. The lowest prevalence, however, was reported in Taif city where the reported prevalence of IPV against women 11.9%.¹² Considering the importance of this serious problem and its effect on Saudi society and the presence of small number of studies about this problem all over the Kingdom, and particularly in Al-Madinah City, the current study was carried out to estimate the prevalence of IPV, determine its types and risk factors, and to assess attitude of women towards IPV in Al-Madinah City, Saudi Arabia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted. A convenience sample included 450 ever-married women aged from 18 to 65 years and who lived in Al-Madinah city, Saudi Arabia during the year 2021 was used. According to the prevalence of intimate partner violence worldwide (average of 35%) and by using the sample size equation $N = Z^2_{(1-\alpha)} p(1-p) / d^2$, where $p = 0.35$, $d = 0.05$, $(1-\alpha) = 0.95$, $Z_{(1-\alpha)} = 1.96$ using 95% confidence level. The estimated sample size was 350 women. Because of fair of non-response and/or drop out, the data were collected. The Arabic validated version of the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women instrument was used in this study. The questionnaire included sections on demographic data of the woman and her husband (age, education, occupation, income, etc.); the relationship between woman and her husband (consanguinity, duration of marriage, remarriage, living with another wife in same house and other children from another wife), intimate partner abuse risk factors, and injuries for both the women and their partners. The questionnaire covers physical abuse and psychological abuse, but not the sexual and economic abuse because of the sensitivity of these topics and the social constraints in the studied community. The study questionnaire was distributed online through Social media for more privacy and confidentiality of participants.

The data were analyzed using SPSS software, version 22.0, for Windows (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL). Chi-square and independent t-tests were used to compare the distribution of

the studied factors among women according to the presence of intimate partner violence against them as appropriate. The level of statistical significance was defined as $p \leq 0.05$. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to estimate odds ratios (OR) and their 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) for the association of the studied factors with the risk of IPV in the studied women.

RESULTS

The present study revealed the prevalence of intimate partner violence against women to be 37.6% (169/450 (95% CI= 33.1- 42.2)). (Figure 1).

Table 1 presents the distribution of violence among the studied women by women's socio-demographic factors. The prevalence of violence was significantly higher among women aged 30-50 years and older where the prevalence was 41.5% and 39.5%, respectively. Also, the mean age of women who reported violence was significantly higher (42.7 ± 9.5 years) compared with those who reported no violence (40.1 ± 10.9 years). The prevalence was found significantly higher among women with a low level of education. The prevalence was 55.6% among women with less than secondary education. A significantly higher prevalence of violence among the studied women was also detected among women with 3-5 children (44.4%), divorced (86.3%), and among women who reported the presence of another wife for her husband (67.9%).

Table 2 presents the distribution of violence among the studied women by husband's socio-demographic factors. The prevalence of violence was significantly higher among older husband aged > 50 years where the prevalence was 39.5% compared with those less than 30 years (11.1%). Also, the mean age of husband among the studied women reported violence was significantly higher (49.3 ± 11.7 years) compared with mean age of husband of women reported no violence (45.9 ± 11.7 years). A significant higher prevalence of violence against was found among husband with low level of education (58.2%). A significant higher prevalence of violence was also found among women where their husband retired and not working where the prevalence was 46.1%.

Table 3 presents the multivariate regression analysis of factors associated with intimate partner violence among the studied women. The risk of violence among the studied women was significantly increased among women aged 30-50 years and older where the adjusted odds ratio was 1.95 and 2.10, respectively. The risk of violence was significantly increased among women with husband's age 30-50 years (OR= 2.70) and > 50 years (OR= 4.60). The presence of 3-5 children, divorced women, and presence of another husband's wife was also associated with a high risk of violence with the estimated OR being 2.0, 12.5, and 4.1, respectively. The risk of

violence, however, was markedly and significantly reduced by 60% and 70% among highly educated women and those with a highly educated husband, respectively.

Table 4 presents types of intimate partner violence among the studied abused women in Madinah, Saudi Arabia (n= 169). The main types of violence reported by the studied abuse women were “pull hair up” and “throw household items” where they were reported by 47.3% and 41.4%, respectively. “Kicking”, “hit the face”, and “punch the body” as types of violence were reported by 32.5%, 29.6%, and 26.6% of the studied women, respectively.

Table 5 presents the attitude scale of the studied women towards causes of intimate partner violence. The percent of agree attitude was very low for most of the studied item causes of violence. it was ranged from 0.2% to 7.8%. However, the agree attitude was the highest (23.5%) for the reason “Betrayal”. “Ask husband for money” and “late in preparing food” as causes of violence were only represented 0.2% of the agreement attitude of the studied women.

DISCUSSION

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is an important public health problem and its prevalence was found to vary by country and culture. The present study revealed the prevalence of IPV among Saudi women lived in Al-Madinah city to be 37.6% (169/450 (95% CI= 33.1- 42.2)). This prevalence, however, showed variation when studied by women’s and their husband’s socio-demographic characteristics with the prevalence was higher among older, less educated and divorced women, less educated husbands, presence of another husband’s wife and among women with retired and not working husband. A similarly high prevalence was also observed in similar national, regional, and international studies. In Saudi Arabia, Kazzaz et al.⁸ conducted a systematic review about the epidemiology of domestic violence. The review included 11 studies from different cities in Saudi Arabia and found that the prevalence of domestic violence to varying from 39.3% to 44.5% and concluded that one in every three women is exposed to violence in Saudi Arabia.⁸ Similarly, Tashkandi and Rasheed⁹ reported in the previous and only study conducted in Al-Madinah city, Saudi Arabia that the prevalence of abused women was 57.7%. In Jeddah city, the prevalence of violence against women was as high as 44.5%.¹⁰ The same finding was reported by Abolfotouh et al.¹¹ in their study on 400 women attending primary health care clinics in Riyadh where the overall prevalence of violence among the studied women was 44.8%.

A lower prevalence of violence against women, however, was reported by Alzahrani et al.¹² found that the prevalence of abused women in Taif city is 11.9 %, and they concluded that one in every 10 women in Taif city was abused. The

discrepancy in the rate between Taif study and the rate in that other similar studies might be attributed to methodological differences as well as the cultural traditional differences between these studied cities.

Regionally, the prevalence of violence against women was similar in regional countries. Violence against women in Egypt is high and nearly half of ever-married women age 15-49 reported that they had been hit, slapped, kicked, or subjected to some other form of physical violence at some point after their fifteenth birthday.¹³ In Jordan, Haddad et al.¹⁴ reported in their cross-sectional study that the overall prevalence of physically abused women was 30% and psychologically abused women was 39%.

Similar to the present study findings, a woman’s marital status was strongly related to the likelihood that she had ever experienced physical violence; 75 % of divorced or separated women reported at least one episode of physical violence after age 15 compared to 43 % of women who were widowed and 47 % of currently married women.¹² In the present study, the prevalence was also significantly higher (86.3%) among divorced women. Working women with higher income experienced significantly more IPV than non-working ones and explained by husbands’ feelings of inferiority and dependence. in that study, the prevalence was 41.3% among working women in governmental institutions.¹³ The prevalence of IPV in that study was also significantly higher (58.2%) as women married to a partner with a low educational level experienced significantly more IPV, similar to what was reported in a similar study.¹⁵ Although the prevalence of IPV was high (46.5%) among polygamy, the number and order of wives were not significantly associated with IPV, which was supported by a previous study.^{16,17}

The risk of IPV was found in this study to increase with some socio-demographic characteristics of the studied women and their husbands For example, in terms of educational level, in a study done in West Bengal, the highest risk of IPV was in the illiterate group,¹⁸ and a similar finding was also reported in studies from different countries, where the highest risk of IPV was found in the illiterate low educated group.^{19,20} Possible explanation is that the lower education level is associated with financial independence, and which in turn affects the prevalence and types of violence directed against women.¹⁹

The risk of violence, however, was markedly and significantly reduced by 60% and 70% among highly educated women and those women with a highly educated husband with OR of 0.4, and 0.3, respectively. Secondary and higher levels of education were reported in some studied to be significantly less likely to experience violence than women with less than 5 years of education.²¹

The main types of physical violence reported by the studied abuse women in the current study were “pulled the hair

up” and “throw household items” with prevalence of 47.3% and 41.4%, respectively. “Kicking”, “hitting the face”, and “punching the body” as types of violence were reported by 32.5%, 29.6%, and 26.6% of the studied women, respectively. Specifying the type of physical violence and hurt against women was not previously determined; however, some Saudi studies estimated the prevalence of physical violence to be 34.77%, psychological (48.47%), and sexual abuse to be 16.75%.²² Sexual abuse in other Saudi studies had a lower prevalence, but physical and psychological abuse was more prevalent.

The present study has also assessed the attitude scale of the studied women towards IPV. The percent of agree with attitude towards IPV was ranged from 0.2% to 7.8%. However, the agree attitude was the highest (23.5%) for the reason of “Betrayal”. In healthy intimate relationships, partners trust one another with their emotional and physical well-being. However, betrayal and IPV result in a violation of that trust.²³ Attitudes to and beliefs about IPV are therefore related not only to its prevalence but also to community responses to the violence. The attitude of women towards IPV was showed a considerable variation of the attitudes toward IPV against women at country and regional levels.²⁴ The very low attitude towards IPV among the studied women in the current study was consistent with those found by the Multi-Country Study of Violence Against Women that the prevalence of attitudes accepting of IPV against women is lower in Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe than in South Asia and West and Central Africa.²⁵ In the current study, the overall attitude of the studied women towards IPV, except for attitude towards betrayal was not exceeded 2%.

The present study appeared to have several strengths that include being the study used an anonymous self-administered questionnaire to collect relatively embarrassing, with a relatively high response rate, which consolidate the study findings. According to available knowledge, this study is the first to determine the prevalence of IPV, its types, reasons, its associated risk and to estimate the attitude scale of women towards IPV in one setting, not only in Madinah city but also all over the Kingdom. The use of a validated Arabic questionnaire has added to the study accuracy and the precisions of its results

Limitations of this study should not also be overlooked. Because of the cross-sectional nature, the causal influences of the risk factors cannot be determined in this study. However, the consistent strength and significant results obtained in this and other similar studies endorse both the role of these factors in the IPV against women. Because of tradition and cultures of the studied area, psychological and sexual violence data can be difficult to measure and may be underestimated, and the study did not use relative due to perceived cultural

sensitivity

CONCLUSION

This study revealed a considerable high prevalence rate of IPV against women in Al-Madinah city, Saudi Arabia. The observed high prevalence of IPV among the Saudi population in this and other similar studies should raise the awareness of public health and administrative authorities about this problem and apply their regulatory policies to take sound action to reduce its occurrence.

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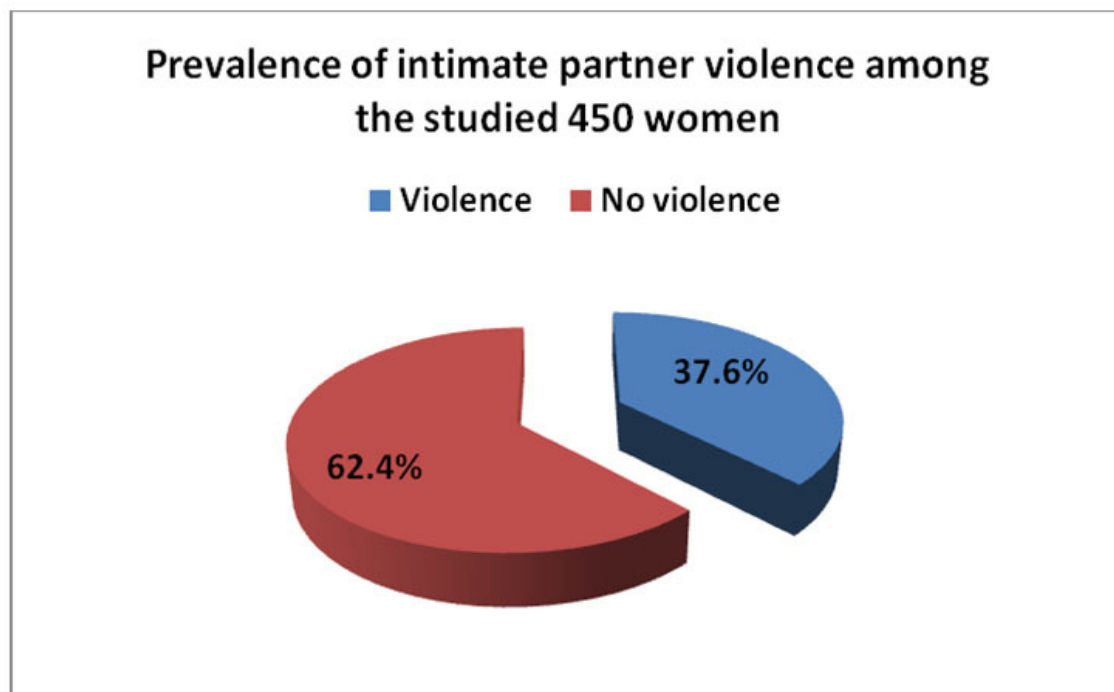


Figure 1: Pie chart for the prevalence of intimate partner violence among the studied 450 women.

Table 1: Distribution of intimate partner violence against women by women's socio-demographic characteristics in Madinah, Saudi Arabia (n= 450)

Characteristics	Violence (n= 169)		No violence (n= 281)		P value
	No.	%	No.	%	
Age in years; mean ± SD	42.7 ± 9.5		40.1 ± 10.9		0.01*
Age in years (groups)					
< 30	15	20.5	58	79.5	0.004*
30-50	110	41.5	155	58.5	
> 50	44	39.3	68	60.7	
Education					
Less than secondary	20	55.6	16	44.4	0.04*
Secondary	43	37.7	71	62.3	
University and higher	106	35.3	194	74.7	
Job					
Student	6	66.7	12	33.3	0.21
Housewife	92	65.7	154	34.3	
Governmental employer	62	41.3	88	58.7	
Private work	9	25.0	27	0.75	
Number of children					
< 3	14	23.7	45	76.3	0.01*
3-5	92	44.4	115	55.6	
> 5	63	34.2	121	65.8	
Number of male children					
0	25	28.4	63	71.6	0.06
1-2	93	42.7	125	57.3	
> 2	51	35.4	93	64.6	
Number of female children					
0	41	36.0	73	64.0	0.12
1-2	78	34.4	149	65.6	
> 3	50	45.9	59	54.1	
Family relation to husband					
Yes	36	36.3	63	63.7	0.20
No	133	37.9	218	62.1	
Marital status					
Married	121	31.3	263	68.7	<.0001*
Divorced	45	86.3	7	13.7	
Widow	3	21.4	11	78.6	
First marriage					
Yes	154	37.3	259	62.7	0.41
No	15	46.5	22	53.5	
Presence of another wife					
Yes	38	67.9	18	32.1	<.0001*
No	131	33.2	263	66.8	

*Significant

Table 2: Distribution of intimate partner violence against women by husband's socio-demographic characteristics in Madinah, Saudi Arabia (n= 450)

Characteristics	Violence (n= 169)		No violence (n= 281)		P value
	No.	%	No.	%	
Age in years; mean ± SD	49.3 ± 11.7		45.9 ± 11.7		0.004*

Table 2: (Continued)

Characteristics	Violence (n= 169)		No violence (n= 281)		P value
	No.	%	No.	%	
Age in years (groups)					
< 30	3	11.1	24	88.9	0.01*
30-50	87	39.0	136	61.0	
> 50	79	39.5	121	60.5	
Education					
Less than secondary	46	58.2	33	41.8	<.0001*
Secondary	41	19.9	166	80.1	
University and higher	82	31.1	182	68.9	
Job					
Student	1	25.0	3	0.75	0.01*
Not working/Retired	60	46.1	70	53.9	
Governmental employer	73	38.2	118	61.8	
Private work	35	28.0	90	72.0	
Residence					
Own house	87	36.6	151	63.4	0.64
Hired house	82	38.7	130	61.3	
Number of rooms					
< 3	3	23.1	10	76.9	0.27
≥ 3	166	38.0	271	72.0	

*Significant

Table 3: Multivariate regression analysis of factors associated with intimate partner violence against women in Madinah, Saudi Arabia (n= 450)

Factors	Violence (n= 169)	No violence (n= 281)	OR	95% CI
Age of women in years				
< 30	15	58	1.00	Ref.
30-50	110	155	1.95	1.01-4.10*
> 50	44	68	2.10	1.03-5.01*
Education of women				
Less than secondary	20	16	1.00	Ref.
Secondary	43	71	0.50	0.07-1.10
University and higher	106	194	0.40	0.03-0.98*
Age of husband in years				
< 30	3	24	1.00	Ref.
30-50	87	136	2.70	1.05-10.7*
> 50	79	121	4.60	1.01-11.3*
Education of husband				
Less than secondary	46	33	1.00	Ref.
Secondary	41	166	0.20	0.02-1.68
University and higher	82	182	0.30	0.03-0.95*
Job of husband				
Student	1	3	1.00	Ref.
Not working/Retired	60	70	2.50	0.65-12.7
Governmental employer	73	118	1.80	0.32-8.45
Private work	35	90	1.14	0.64-6.50

Table 3: (Continued)

Factors	Violence (n= 169)	No violence (n= 281)	OR	95% CI
Number of children				
< 3	41	73	1.00	Ref.
3-5	78	149	2.00	1.01-3.91*
> 5	50	59	1.15	0.55-2.40
Marital status				
Married	121	263	1.00	Ref.
Divorced	45	7	12.5	3.45-28.5*
Widow	3	11	0.60	0.12-3.40
Presence of another wife				
Yes	38	18	4.10	1.12-14.7*
No	131	263	1.00	Ref.

*Significant

Table 4: Types of intimate partner abuse among the studied abused women in Madinah, Saudi Arabia (n= 169)

N (%)*	Types of abuse
50 (29.6)	1. Hit the face (slapped)
45 (26.6)	2. Punch the body
80 (47.3)	3. Pull hair up
55 (32.5)	4. kicking (kicked you with his leg)
40 (23.6)	5. Biting
20 (11.8)	6. Twist arm
70 (41.4)	7. Throw household items
4 (2.4)	8. Try to suffocate you
2 (1.2)	9. Try to burn you
3 (1.8)	10. Hit you with machines

*Total percent is more than 100% as abused women reported more than one type of abuse

Table 5: Attitude of the studied women towards causes of intimate partner violence (n 450)

Attitude scale*			Items
n (%)			
Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
296 (65.8)	48 (10.7)	106 (23.5)	1- Betrayal
436 (95.9)	9 (2.0)	5 (1.1)	2- If you answer him out loud
448 (99.6)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	3- If you ask him for money
447 (99.4)	2 (0.4)	1 (0.2)	4- If you are late in cooking or preparing food
412 (91.5)	16 (3.6)	22 (4.9)	5- If she neglects raising her children
389 (86.4)	34 (7.6)	27 (6.0)	6- If you leave the house without his knowledge/consent
378 (84.0)	37 (8.2)	35 (7.8)	7- If you talk to non-mahram men (foreigners)
395 (87.8)	37 (8.2)	18 (4.0)	8- If you refuse to sleep with him
406 (90.2)	27 (6.0)	17 (3.8)	9- The legal husband's right to discipline his wife

*Agree attitude including those answered by agree and strongly agree, and disagree attitude including those answered by disagree and strongly disagree.