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Domestic violence and its impact on stress levels of rural women in Krishna district: A sociological perspective

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Abstract

Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women. Women from all kinds of family backgrounds are being affected by the violence every day. Domestic violence against women is a matter of serious public health concern in most of the communities and culture. This paper aims to examine the stress levels among the victims of domestic violence and it analyzes the behavioral, physical and psychological signs of stress among the victims of domestic violence. The study further aims to measure the association between the stress levels of the respondents and the attributes of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The present study adopts Descriptive Research design. Both primary and secondary data were analyzed for drawing the conclusive inferences from this study. The sampling area selected for the study is Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. The study identified the nature of domestic violence under three attributes namely physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Selective Random sampling technique was applied to draw the sample respondents from sampling area and the sample size of the study is 140. The responses from the sample respondent were recorded through interview schedule method. In order to draw the inferences from the study, statistical tools like percentages, mean, standard deviation and Chi-square test were applied. The study concludes that there exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of physical and sexual abuse and the study further concludes that there exists a significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of emotional abuse.

Keywords: Domestic violence, attributes of violence, stress levels, rural women

Introduction

Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the disruption of the full development of women. Violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic that kills, as well as tortures and mutilates - physically, psychologically, sexually and economically. It is one of the most pervasive ways of human rights violation, denying to women and girls equality, security, dignity, worth, and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms.

Violence against women is present in every country, crossing cultural, social, educational, income, ethnicity and age boundaries. Even though most companies prohibit violence against women, the reality is that violations against women rights are often sanctioned. While the effects of physical abuse are more visible than the psychological "scars", repeated insults and humiliations can lead to isolation, limiting the social mobility. Also, the denial of access to economic resources is a much more subtle and insidious form of violence against women. The fact that the psychological abuse is not visible at the level of body makes it difficult to define and report it, leaving the woman in a situation where she often feels destabilized and powerless.

Lawyers and human rights experts have argued that physical, sexual and psychological abuse, sometimes fatal, is comparable to torture both in terms of nature and severity. This may be intentional, with the purpose of intimidating, punishing and controlling the identity and behaviour of women. The validity and reliability of the available data are critical in determining the magnitude of the problem and in identifying the priority areas of intervention.

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On the other hand, shame, fear of the existence of side effects, lack of information on legal rights, lack of confidence or fear of the legal system and the legal costs involved make women reluctant to report incidents of domestic violence. In this context, it was proposed to conduct a research study on domestic violence and its effect on stress levels of rural women in the selected area.

Review of literature

Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women. It affects women across the life span from sex selective abortion of female fetuses to forced suicide and abuse, and is evident, to some degree, in every society in the world.

Kaur *et al.*, (2008) [3]; Domestic violence encompasses violence against women within the family, i.e, physical and mental assault of women, usually by their husbands, male partners or relatives.

Mitra, (2006) [4]; It is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socio economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. His study in ten countries in women age reported a lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual partner violence, or both, as 15% to 71%

India's National Family Health Survey-III carried out in 29 states during 2005-06 has found that 37.2% of married women have been physically or sexually abused by their husbands at some time in their lives (NFHS, 2006) [1].

Jejeebhoy *et al.*, (1997) [2]. Apart from the inadequate recognition of the aggression directed against women, domestic violence appears to be a widely accepted form of behavior

Domestic violence is widespread, deeply ingrained and has serious impacts on women's health and well-being. Its cost to the individuals, to health systems and to society is enormous. Yet no other major public health problem has been so widely ignored and so little understood (WHO, 1997) [7]. Sarkar, (2010) [5]. It is important to note here that because of the sensitivity of the subject, violence against women is almost universally under gender-based studies on women have concentrated mostly on causes of maternal morbidity and mortality paucity of data on violence in women. It is often difficult to conduct research on violence against females, since most females are reluctant to disclose information that they consider confidential and intimate. For eliminating domestic violence against women, it is critical to understand the context of violence and social constructs which support its perpetuation

Vachher *et al.*, (2010) [6]. One of the important obstacles in the prevention of violence against women is the lack of gender sensitive health research and reliable data on the magnitude of problem and its consequences

Objectives of study

1. To examine the stress levels among the victims of domestic violence in the study area
2. To analyze the behavioral, physical and psychological signs of stress among the victims of domestic violence
3. To measure the association between the stress levels of the respondents and the attributes of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Null hypotheses

Ho1: There exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of physical abuse

Ho2: There exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of emotional abuse

Ho3: There exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of sexual abuse

Research methodology

The present study adopts Descriptive Research design. Both primary and secondary data were analyzed for drawing the conclusive inferences from this study. The sampling area selected for the study is Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. The sample respondents are identified from the women police stations and family courts located at various jurisdictions within the identified study area. The sample respondents were selected on the basis of their marital status and only the married victims were included in the sampling frames. The study identified the nature of domestic violence under three attributes namely physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Selective Random sampling technique was applied to draw the sample respondents from sampling area and 140 respondents were selected on random basis. Thus, the sample size of the study is 140. In order to record the responses from the sampling respondents, the researcher had applied interview schedule method. In order to draw the inferences from the study, statistical tools like percentages, mean, standard deviation and Chi-square test were applied.

Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1: Physical stress levels among the respondents

Stress level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	55	39.3
Medium	72	51.4
High	13	9.3
Total	140	100

Source: Primary Data

The table no.1 shows the physical stress levels among the respondents. It shows that 39.3 percent of the respondents have low physical stress levels, 51.4 percent of the respondents are having medium physical stress levels and 9.3 percent of the respondents are having high physical stress levels.

Table 2: Psychological stress levels among the respondents

Stress level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	9	6.4
Medium	96	68.6
High	35	25.0
Total	140	100

Source: Primary Data

The Table no.2 shows the psychological stress levels among the respondents. It shows that 6.4 percent of the respondents have low stress levels, 68.6 percent of the respondents are having medium stress levels and 25 percent of the respondents are having high psychological stress levels.

Table 3: Behavioral stress levels among the respondents

Stress level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	13	9.3
Medium	110	78.6
High	17	12.1
Total	140	100

Source: Primary Data

The table no.3 shows the behavioral stress levels among the respondents. It shows that 9.3 percent of the respondents has low stress levels, 78.6 percent of the respondents are having medium stress levels and 12.1 percent of the respondents are having high behavioral stress levels.

Verification of Hypothesis – Ho1

Ho1: There exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of physical abuse

Test applied: Chi-square

Table 4: Association between the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of physical abuse

Physical abuse		Result
Yes	Frequency	122
	Mean	67.48
	SD	13.54
No	Frequency	18
	Mean	64.86
	SD	19.68
P value		0.27
Significance		Not significant

Source: Computed

The table no .4 shows the association between the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of physical abuse. It shows that out of the total 140 sample respondents, 122 respondents were subjected to physical abuse and 18 respondents are not subjected to physical abuse. The statistical relationship among these two categories of respondents was verified with the help of chi-square test. The mean values for these two groups were found to be 67.48 and 64.86 with the standard deviation scores of 13.54 and 19.68.

The test result shows that the resultant values are not significant and hence the proposed null hypothesis (Ho1) is accepted. Thus, it can be inferred from the study that there exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of physical abuse

Verification of Hypothesis – Ho2

Ho2: There exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of emotional abuse

Test applied: Chi-square

Table 5: Association between the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse		Result
Yes	Frequency	115
	Mean	66.28
	SD	13.24
No	Frequency	25
	Mean	62.16
	SD	15.79
P value		0.02
Significance		Significant

Source: Computed

The table no.5 shows the association between the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of

emotional abuse. It shows that out of the total 140 sample respondents, 115 respondents were subjected to emotional abuse and 25 respondents are not subjected to emotional abuse. The statistical relationship among these two categories of respondents was verified with the help of chi-square test. The mean values for these two groups were found to be 66.28 and 62.16 with the standard deviation scores of 13.24 and 15.79.

The test result shows that the resultant values are significant and hence the proposed null hypothesis (Ho2) is rejected. Thus, it can be inferred from the study that there exists a significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of emotional abuse

Verification of Hypothesis – Ho3

Ho3: There exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of sexual abuse

Test applied: Chi-square

Table 6: Association between the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse		Result
Yes	Frequency	66
	Mean	64.32
	SD	11.62
No	Frequency	74
	Mean	62.18
	SD	15.94
P value		0.58
Significance		Not significant

Source: Computed

The table no .6 shows the association between the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of sexual abuse. It shows that out of the total 140 sample respondents, 66 respondents were subjected to sexual abuse and 74 respondents are not subjected to sexual abuse. The statistical relationship among these two categories of respondents was verified with the help of chi-square test. The mean values for these two groups were found to be 64.32 and 62.18 with the standard deviation scores of 11.62 and 15.94.

The test result shows that the resultant values are not significant and hence the proposed null hypothesis (Ho3) is accepted. Thus, it can be inferred from the study that there exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of sexual abuse

Conclusion

The study examines the impact of domestic violence on the stress levels of the victims in the rural study area. It study reveals that majority of the respondents are having medium range of physical, emotional and behavioral stress levels. The study further examines the relationship between the stress levels of the respondents and their attributes towards physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

The study concludes that there exists no significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of physical and sexual abuse and the study further concludes that there exists a significant association among the stress levels of the respondents with regard to the attributes of emotional abuse.

Suggestions

In order to counter balance the impact of domestic violence on the stress levels of the victims, the following suggestions are herewith postulated.

- Psychological counseling sessions for the victims are to be conducted by the corresponding health authorities at the local areas.
- Skills development programs and employment generation schemes are to be provided for the victims of domestic violence in order to empower them in terms of socio-economic nature.
- Literacy levels among the rural women are to be developed and awareness is to be created among them on their rights of protection, privacy and other women welfare policies.
- The rural women are to be educated on the aspects of human rights, civil rights and they are to be updated on the provisions of Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

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