Sought Help for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against Women: Does it Actually Reflect Women’s Experience of IPV? A Study of National Bangladeshi Sample

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Introduction

• Nearly one-half of ever-married Bangladeshi women (49%) have ever experienced physical violence1
• 18% report ever having been physically forced to have sex by their husbands when they did not want to2
• More than half of all ever-married women (53%) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, while 13% have experienced both types of violence3
• Most of the women abused physically by their spouses (66%) never told anyone about their experience (75%) of the moderately abused women in the urban areas and 86% in the rural areas4

Objectives

This cross-sectional study focuses on help-seeking behavior of abused women and also assesses whether this help-seeking reflects women’s actual experience of IPV among Bangladeshi women

Method and Materials

• This study utilized data from Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey (BDHS) 2007
• Women aged 15-49 years, living with husbands, selected for domestic violence schedule were included in this study
• Descriptive and logistic regression analysis were used to analyze the data
• SPSS 17 was used to conduct statistical analyses

Selection of Samples

11,179 ever-married women deemed eligible to participate (25-49 yrs)
182 declined to participate
10,996 participated
852 missing
10,144 available for domestic violence selection
9,021 husband living with her
1123 husband not living with her
5,778 not selected for DV; 6 selected but privacy not possible; 12 selected but not interviewed
3,825 currently married women selected for DV interview and living with husband
770 seek help and living with husband

Measures of IPV

Each married woman was asked, (Does/do) your (last) husband ever do any of the things to you:
(i) push you, shake you, or throw something at you;
(ii) slap you;
(iii) twist your arm or pull your hair;
(iv) punch you with his fist or with something that could hurt you;
(v) kick you, drag you, or beat you up;
(vi) try to choke you or burn you on purpose;
(vii) threaten or attack you with a knife, gun, or any other weapon;
(viii) physically force you to have sexual intercourse with him even when you did not want to.

The survey measured IPV with a shortened and Modified Conflict Tactics Scale5.

Results

Figure 2 Forms of IPV Experienced by Ever-married Bangladesh Women

1. Physical force
2. Threatened
3. Tried to choke
4. Kicked
5. Dragged
6. Threw
7. Twisted
8. Pulled
9. Pushed
10. Shook

Table 1 Socio demographic characteristics and IPV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio demographic characteristics</th>
<th>Sexual IPV</th>
<th>Minor physical IPV</th>
<th>Severe physical IPV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (15-49)</td>
<td>27.28 (7.98)</td>
<td>14.95 (2.21)</td>
<td>2.69 (1.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at first marriage (10-29)</td>
<td>14.95 (2.21)</td>
<td>14.95 (2.21)</td>
<td>2.69 (1.91)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Discussion

• A very little number of IPV victimized women ever report their experience and only a few among them seek any kind of help
• Help-seeking is likely to be influenced by a wide range of factors such as socio-economic status, the presence of children, cultural norms about marriage and the family, and cultural norms about help-seeking more generally
• Women may be reluctant to disclose the abuse due to fear of jeopardizing family honor, stigma that will damage women’s reputation, securing child future, fear of repercussions from husband, hopelessness, expectations that things would change, threat of murder, and belief that violence is husband’s right
• Most of such informal sources might not even provide any sort of help to the victims
• Although there are limited provisions for women to go to formal institutions in Bangladesh, almost none of them go to these sources for the same reasons they do not reveal their experiences of abuse in the first place and also because they are rarely encouraged by the family members or friends or the community to seek help stepping outside the home
• Continued availability of wide range of services and programs are needed to ensure the safety of these women and their children and to help address their long-term economic and health needs

References

1. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007