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Assessment of the Awareness of Domestic Violence Against Women and Children

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Domestic violence is a serious, preventable public health problem which has many forms. Awareness, perception and documentation of domestic violence differ from country to country and from era to era.

Aim of the Work: This study is done in a foundation for protecting and keeping the rights of women and children in a country in a Gulf region since November 2002, besides participation in social awareness in regards to rights. It is a retrospective study to analyze the epidemiological studies of child and women abuse which was recorded from 2004 to 2008.

Subject and Method: Data was recorded from the Foundation for child and woman protection (FCWP) including 1050 record for children and 926 for women. Each case was interviewed and evaluated by a team work consisting of psychiatrist, psychologists, social workers and loyalist. They were diagnosed according to the international classification of diseases (ICD 10). Data are collected and analyzed using SPSS 15.0. Chi-square was used to analyze observed frequency or dichotomous data.

Results: The total number of abused victims consists of 184 children and 353 women. The most common form of abuse in children is physical abuse followed by sexual abuse. Physical and psychological abuses are the most common form of abuse in women.

Conclusion: These findings will be used to form a more effective response from the government, including the health, justice and social service sectors, as a step towards fulfilling the state's obligation to eliminate violence against women and children under international human rights laws.

Key Words: Women abuse, child abuse, Abuse in gulf area, domestic violence.

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INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a type of abuse by one or both partners in marriage, friends, family, dating or cohabitation. There is many form of abuse; it often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to violence. The US Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) defines domestic violence as a "pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner". The definition adds that domestic violence "can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender" and that it can take many forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, economic and psychological abuse[1]. Domestic violence can be divided into two types: reciprocal violence, in which both partners are violent and non-reciprocal violence, in which one partner is violent[2].

While physical injury may be the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe. Sexual abuse is any type of behavior to force the victim to participate in unwanted, degrading or unsafe sexual activity. Forced sex is an act of aggression and violence even by a spouse or intimate partner. Economic deprivation, threats thereof and intimidation are common forms of domestic violence[3]. Emotional abuse can lead to mental illness, depression, anxiety, destroy self-worth and even attempts at suicide[4]. Domestic violence is also known as spousal abuse, child abuse or intimate partner violence[5]. The most telling sign of domestic abuse is fear of the other partner and that one partners feels like he is walking on eggshells around the other partner or he feels that the other partners tries to control or belittles him so he has the feeling of self-loathing, helplessness and desperation[6].

The first step of awareness, breaking free, perception and documentation of domestic violence is to recognize that the situation is abusive. Once one partner acknowledges the reality of the abusive situation, then he can get the help he needs. Domestic violence differ from era to era, it occurs in all economic levels, ethnic backgrounds and age ranges. Domestic violence is a serious, preventable public health problem affecting more than 32 million Americans, or over 10% of the US population[7]. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds and economic levels. Not only women are more commonly victimized, but also men are abused especially emotionally and verbally. Estimates show that 30 of every 1,000 female and 45 of every 1,000 male are victims

of severe violence committed by their spouses[3]. There is current considerable controversy over whether male-to-female marital violence is best regarded as a reflection of male psycho-pathology and control or whether there is an empirical base and clinical utility for conceptualizing these patterns as relational[8].

Marital conflict disorder with violence is a series of new relational disorders included in the American Psychiatric Association planning and research committees for the forthcoming DSM-V (2012)[9]. The bottom line is that abusive behavior is never acceptable, whether it's coming from a man, a woman, a teenager, or an older adult. Everyone deserves to feel valued, respected and safe.

AIM OF THE WORK

The aim of this is study to assess the awareness of domestic violence against children and women by analyzing results of recorded cases in a foundation for protecting and keeping the rights of women and children in the Gulf region since November 2002. This foundation protects children and women from any type of abuse besides participation in social awareness regarding their rights. It offers consultation, awareness, facilitation of procedures in case for help at courts, police, etc. To render Dar Al-Amaan service, facilitation of the rehabilitation process and sheltering has been prepared to safety and secretly receive and shelter any children or women suffering from abuse. Dar al-Amaan was opened on October 2007 in order to provide practical solution to lodge victims of abuse until it becomes possible for the foundation

to reintegrate them into society.

SUBJECT AND METHOD

It is a retrospective study to analyze the epidemiological studies of child and women abuse recorded since 2004 to 2008. This study helps us to estimate the awareness of women and child with their rights of protection in the Arabian Gulf area. The foundation has adopted an ambitious program in the sphere of child and women protection through directly confronting problems which either the child or women are exposed to. The consultancy department plays an active role in this regard. Data was recorded from the Foundation for child and woman protection (FCWP). There are three telephone hotlines working morning and evening to receive complains submitted by citizens and residents. This service is covered by media to be known to most families in this country. The consultancy Department receives complaints from those exposed to harm or violence; treat them in coordination with the state official departments and the civil society's organization within strict secrecy, office in police-station and another office in a hospital to record cases of abuse referred to emergency department. The procedures followed in dealing with cases are transferred to the foundation; drafting information about the case in the foundation's general register. Psychologists and social worker open a case file to draft all necessary information and remarks. According to the international classification of diseases (ICD 10) diagnostic criteria, each case was interviewed and evaluated by a psychiatrist. A report including legal report prepared by the legal workers was also included. In this period 1050 record for children and 926 for women who receive many services was reported. Informed consent was obtained from all subjects included in the study and each case was interviewed and evaluated by a team work consisting of psychiatrist, psychologists, social workers and loyalist. Data are collected and analyzed using SPSS 15.0. Chi-square was used to analyze observed frequency or dichotomous data. Analysis of variance was used to test mean difference among continuous variables. Significant p

values were set equal to or less than 0.05.

RESULTS

Table (1) shows the number of children who received different services from QFCWP from 2004 to 2008.

Types of services	Social	Legal	Economic	Learning	Medical	The summation
2004	29	47	28	24	17	145
2005	74	151	137	72	25	459
2006	42	76	11	50	11	190
2007	52	26	1	59	7	145
2008	54	6	39	12	0	111
Summation	251	306	216	217	60	1050

(Table 2) Shows the classification of the children according to the Sex and Nationalities

Years	Sex		Nationalities	
	Male	Female	Arabic	Non Arabic
2004	60 (41.3%)	85(58.7%) $	95(65.5%)	50 (34.5%) #
2005	202(44.0%)	257(56%)	305(66.4%)	154(33.6%)
2006	99(52.1%)	91(47.9%)	111(58.4%)	79(41.6%)
2007	62(42.7%)	83(57.3%)	95(65.5%)	50(34.5%)
2008	61(54.9%)	50(54.1%)	51(45.9%)	60(54.1%)

#,$= P value is highly significant.

Showing that 184 (17.5%) of children were exposed to abuse. (Table 3) shows the epidemiological record of abused children. Classifying the cases into the different types of abuse that were recorded every year since this period. The most common causes of abuse is physical followed by sexual.

(Table 3)

Type of abuse	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	The sum.	P value
Physical	17 (11.7%)	47 (10.2%)	13 (6.8%)	15 (10.3%)	22 (19.8%)	114 (62.0%)	Significant
Sexual	4 (2.7%)	10 (2.1%)	5 (2.6%)	4 (2.7%)	4 (3.6%)	27 (14.7%)	Highly significant
Psychological	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (2.6%)	10 (6.89%)	6 (5.4%)	21 (11.3%)	Highly significant
Negligence	0 (0%)	7 (1.5)	5 (2.6%)	3 (2.06%)	7 (6.3%)	22 (12.0%)	Highly significant
The summation	21 (14.4%)	64 (13.9)	28 (14.7%)	32 (22.06%)	39 (35.1%)	184 (100%)	Highly significant

Table (4) shows the number of women who received different services from QFCWP.

Table (4):

Types of services	Social	Legal	Economic	Learning	Medical	Summation
2004	13	10	0	0	2	25
2005	54	49	19	2	15	139
2006	78	64	50	1	4	197
2007	157	61	43	3	2	266
2008	241	34	16	1	7	299
Summation	543	218	128	7	30	926

Tables (5) shows the classification of women according to their nationalities (Arabic and Non Arabic).

Table (5):

Years	Arabic	Non Arabic
2004	15 (60%)	10 (40%) #
2005	70 (50.3%)	69 (49.7%)
2006	111 (56.3%)	86 (43.7%)
2007	200 (75.1%)	66 (24.9%)
2008	155 (51.83%)	144 (48.17%)

#=P value is significant.

Table (6) shows the epidemiological record of abused women. It classified the cases (38%) which receives different services from QFCWP into the different types of abuses that were recorded every year from 2004 to 2008. The most common type of abuse is physical followed by psychological abuse. This result is different from Child abuse as the most common causes of abuse in child is physical followed by sexual abuse.

Table (6):

Type of abuse	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	The summation	P value
Physical	4 (16%)	14 (10.0%)	5 (2.5%)	82 (30.8)	181 (60.5%)	286 (81.0%)	Highly significant
Sexual	0 (0%)	1 (0.71)	2 (1.0%)	2 (0.75%)	8 (2.6%)	13 (3.7%)	Significant
Psychological	5 (2.0%)	6 (4.3%)	10 (5.0%)	24 (9.0)	9 (3.0%)	54 (15.3%)	Significant
The summation	9 (36%)	21 (15.1%)	17 (8.6%)	108 (40.6)	198 (63.5%)	353 (100%)	Highly significant

DISCUSSION

Domestic abuse falls into a common pattern, the first is aggression or violent behavior which is designed to show who is the boss, then guilt feeling of the abuser not over what he is done but fear of being facing the results of his abusive behavior so his normal behavior to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship is to act as if nothing has happened or he may turn on the charm to give the hope that he has really changed this time. After that he begins to spend a lot of time thinking of what the other partner has done wrong and how he will make the victim pay, so he sets him up putting his plan in motion, creating a situation where he can justify his abuse to the victim. In between these episode of abuse the abuser apologies and may make the victim believe that he is the only person who can help him and he is truly loving the victim, although the dangers of staying are real[10].

Domestic violence occurs across the world, in various cultures and affects people across societies, irrespective of economic status. Without exception, family conflict studies found approximately equal rates of assaults by women and men[1]. Domestic violence is a health, legal, economic, educational, developmental and above all, a human rights issues. As regards abused children and women in this study, rates increased in the period from 2004 to 2009 from 21 to 184 recorded cases for children and from 9 to 198 for women. Although the number is very small in comparison with the population, many factors contribute to this small number, as the actual occurrence rates are likely to be higher than these estimates as many maltreated women and children go unrecognized and many are reluctant to report the abuse. The most common form of abuse in children is physical followed by sexual and this results is statistically significant. In comparing these results with a research study of 8th and 9th graders, 25 % were victims of dating violence, including 8% who disclosed being sexually abused[11]. Also, in a study of 724 adolescent mothers between the ages of 12-18, 1 of every 8 pregnant adolescents reported having been physically assaulted by the father of their baby during the preceding 12 months. Of these, 40 % also reported experiencing violence on the hands of a family member or relative[12]. The majority of violence was committed by a boyfriend or girlfriend[13]. Also the US Department of Health and Human Services reports that for each year between 2000 and 2005, the most common perpetrators of child abuse were "female parents acting alone"[14]. Also a UK research for domestic violence towards children found the severest violent occurred at home involving physical abuse (78%)[15,16]. Girls whose fathers batter their mothers are 6.5 times more likely to be sexually abused by their fathers than are girls from non-violent homes[17]. As regards abused women in this study, physical abuse is the most common cause of abuse followed by psychological abuse. The percentage of physically abused women is 16% and 60.5% in 2004 and 2008, respectively, in comparison to 2% and 3 % in 2004 and 2008, respectively, for psychological abuse. These results are highly significant. In comparing our results to the National Violence Against Women Survey, women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence than men: 78% of rape victims and sexual assault are women and 22% are men. Most perpetrators of sexual violence are men. Among acts of sexual violence committed against women since the age of 18, 100% are rapes, 92% are physical assaults and 97% are stalking acts perpetrated by men. Sexual violence against men is also mainly male violence: 70% rapes, 86% physical assaults and 65% stalking acts perpetrated by men. In 8 out of 10 rape cases, the victim knows the perpetrator. Of people who report sexual violence, 64% of women and 16% of men were raped, physically assaulted, or stalked by an intimate partner. This includes a current or former spouse, cohabitating partner, boyfriend/girlfriend, or date[18].

Also in a study done between 1994 and 1998 in 10 US cities, 76% of femicide victims had been stalked by the person who killed them, 67% had been physically abused by their intimate partner, 89% had also been stalked in the 12 months before the murder, 79% of abused femicide victims reported stalking during the same period t they reported abuse, 85% of attempted femicide cases involved at least one episode of stalking within 12 months prior to the attempted femicide, 54% reported stalking to police before they were killed by their stalkers[19]. The percentage of women surveyed (national surveys) who were ever physically assaulted by an intimate partner: Barbados (30%), Canada (29%), Egypt (34%), New Zealand (35%), Switzerland (21%), United States (22%)[2]. Also, the National Women's Study, a 3-year longitudinal study of a national probability sample of 4,008 adult women (2,008 represent a cross section of all adult women and 2,000 are an over sample of younger women between the age of 18 and 34), found: 13% of adult women had been victims of completed rape during their lifetime, 22% of rape victims were assaulted by someone they had never seen before or did not know well, 9% were raped by husbands or ex-husbands, 11% raped by fathers or stepfathers, 10% raped by boyfriends or ex-boyfriends, 16% raped by other relatives and 29% raped by other non-relatives, such as friends and neighbors[20]. Also many studies were done to show the relationship between domestic violence, race and ethnicity. Results show that Native Americans are victims of rape or sexual assault at more than double the rate of other racial groups[21] and African-American women experience significantly more domestic violence than White women in the age group of 20-24. Generally, black women experience similar levels of intimate partner victimization in all other age categories as compared to White women, but experience slightly more domestic violence[22]. Also 12.8% of Asian and Pacific Islander women reported experiencing physical assault by an intimate partner at least once during their lifetime and 3.8% reported having been raped. The rate of physical assault was lower than those reported by Whites (21.3%); African-Americans (26.3%); Hispanic, of any race, (21.2%); mixed race (27.0%); and American Indians and Alaskan Natives (30.7%). The low rate for Asian and Pacific Islander women may be attributed to underreporting[18]. In Japan, 61% reported some form of physical, emotional, or sexual partner violence that they considered abusive

including culturally demeaning practices such as overturning a dining table, or throwing liquid at a woman. Also, 52% reported physical violence during their lifetime. When the probability that some women who have not been victimized at the time of the interview, but may be abused at a later date is calculated, 57% of women experienced a partner's physical violence by age 49[23]. The highest statistics of gender-based violence in the world was found in South Africa including rape and domestic violence[24]. In rural Egypt 80% of women were commonly beaten, particularly if the woman refused to have sex with her husband[25]. Around 70% of Indian women are victims of domestic violence[26] and in Pakistan, The Human Rights Watch found that up to 90% of women was subject to verbal, sexual, emotional or physical abuse, within their own homes[27]. Again in comparison to other countries studies, the number is very small. The causes of the small number of record may be the same for child abuse in addition to other factor as the social and high economic level of families in this country. In addition we must not neglect that Arabic community is characterized by honoring children and women, also availing protection for them through its belief in the principles of the great Islamic Sharia which assure their human rights.

Limitations of the study:

Unfortunately, there were some limitations of this study. First of all, the number of people who participated in the research is small and we may need more data to be collected to generalize the data to the whole population. The cause of the small number recorded in this study may be the hesitation of victims to report the violence or seek help. Reasons given for non-reporting were that they (1) may be ashamed to come forward; (2) may not be believed; and (3) may be accused of being a batterer when they do come forward, (4) the willingness or unwillingness of victims to admit that they have been abused and other factors. Second: work in this area has resulted in the establishment of international standards, but the task of documenting the magnitude of violence against women and producing reliable, comparative data to guide policy and monitor implementation has been exceedingly difficult. It seeks to look at violence against women a public health policy perspective. Third: the form and characteristics of domestic violence and abuse may vary in other ways; distinctions need to be made regarding types of violence, motives of perpetrators and social and cultural context.

CONCLUSION

There are strong associations between exposure to domestic violence and abuse in all their forms and higher rates of many chronic conditions. The strongest evidence comes from the Adverse Childhood Experiences' series of studies which show correlations between exposure to abuse or neglect and higher rates in adulthood of chronic conditions, high risk health behaviors and shortened life span[28]. Researchers have begun to quantify the economic impact of exposure to violence and abuse[29]. A recent publication makes the case that such exposure represents a serious and costly public health issue that should be addressed by the health care system[30]. For some children and adolescents, questions about home life may be difficult to answer, especially if the individual has been "warned" or threatened by a family member to refrain from "talking to strangers" about events that have taken place in the family. Referrals to the appropriate school personnel could be the first step in assisting the child or teen in need of support. When there is suggestion of domestic violence with a student, consider involving the school psychologist, social worker, guidance counselor and/or a school administrator (when indicated). Although the circumstances surrounding each case may vary, suspicion of child abuse is required to be reported to the local child protection agency by teachers and other school personnel. In some cases, a contact with the local police department may also be necessary. When in doubt, consult with school team members. The idea of establishing this foundation for child and women protection in this country is a promising project which will enable the responsible organizations to evaluate the present problem of domestic violence and comparing it with other Arabic and foreign countries. The findings will be used to form a more effective response from government, including the health, justice and social service sectors, as a step towards fulfilling the state's obligation to eliminate violence against women and children under international human rights laws.

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