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Comparing Demographic Characteristics of Male Victims of Domestic Violence

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Abstract: The present study investigated the demographic characteristics of male victims of domestic violence. These demographic characteristics were men's age, level of education and level of income. To do this, an author-made questionnaire regarding victimization of domestic violence, both, physical and psychological, was administered to 120 randomly chosen men, referred to family courts by their councilors to seek divorce because of experiencing domestic violence. The results showed that age had significant effect on physical violence; specifically, hitting and psychological violence; specifically, denying choices and cessation of intermarital intercourse. Also, the level of education had significant effect on the physical (e.g., throwing objects) and psychological (e.g., Cessation of marital intercourse and denying choices). Finally, present results indicated that the level of income, by itself, did not have any effects on experiencing any types of violence by men but its effect was visible and significant in the presence of the other two factors, the age and the level of education. The results in the present study are, in fact, only of their kinds in that the characteristics of abused men by their wives are assessed in male victims of domestic violence and can contribute to further understanding of the types of men susceptible to victimization by their wives. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that other demographic variables such as the number of children, the type of housing (ownership of the house or renting) and so on, were also determined in this study, but given their lack of any significant effects on the occurrence of violence of any kind against men, were not mentioned in the study.

Key words: Male victims, domestic violence, demographic variables, characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence includes all physical, sexual, verbal and psychological abuses committed by an adult individual towards his/her partner (Weinbaum *et al.*, 2001). Given the wide spread occurrence of these types of violence, almost, in all parts of the world and the fact that they are considered as serious threats to individuals health, assessment of the perpetrator's psychological, social and individual's characteristics as well as their victims have been the focus of many studies. Some of these studies take account of the relationship between the types of domestic violence (e.g., psychological or physical) and demographic variables such as the level of income, socio-economic status, age and the level of education. For example, the results of some of the aforementioned studies have shown that factors such as low socioeconomic level, low education, low income (Hindin and Adair, 2002), age, unstable employment status, number of children at home, women's acceptance of wife-beating (Gage, 2005), drug and alcohol abuse (Gross *et al.*, 2001; Jeyaseelan *et al.*, 2004; Perez *et al.*, 2006), being the victim or the victimizers of domestic

violence (Wekerle and Wolf, 1999) and poor environmental level (Wen *et al.*, 2003) can all, among other factors, contribute to the occurrence of domestic violence.

Some of the research on domestic violence towards women has shown that one of the reasons for their victimization is their low level of education (Jeyaseelan *et al.*, 2004). Although this finding is very important, it appears that it can apply to both genders; i.e., low level of education can contribute to the high rate of victimization of domestic violence regardless of the gender (Perez *et al.*, 2006; Hindin and Adair, 2002; Jeyaseelan *et al.*, 2004). In fact, this could be the reason for the development of this belief that by increasing the level of education, the ability of the individuals' to think rationally, which could in turn lead to resorting less to aggressive behaviors for resolving disputes among couples, will improve.

Although a large body of evidence in the domestic violence literature has pointed out that violence towards spouse is not limited to a specific social class, yet, there are many reports indicating that the prevalence of domestic violence is amongst the poor (Jeyaseelan *et al.*, 2004) since it provides fertile grounds for the development

of many disputes and increases the rate of physical encounter between couples regardless of their gender. Also, it has been shown that family violence can occur within a large range of ages, though, its highest rate is between the ages of 18 and 30 and tends to decline as the age increases (Straus, 1980). Furthermore, Perez *et al.* (2006) have reported that in younger couples the incidence of, both, physical and psychological (emotional) violence is more common than in older couples where either physical or psychological violence takes place more often. Therefore, it can be seen that age can be a factor in the types of violence that occur amongst couples.

When speaking of domestic violence, most of the times, men are perceived to be the perpetrators and women to be the victims; which we now know is not the case (for a review on women's violence towards men; Straus, 1997). Current statistics show that in Western nations 20 to 30% of domestic violence; specifically throwing objects, slapping, kicking, biting and punching are committed by women towards their husbands (partners) (Corry *et al.*, 2002). Furthermore, Archer (2000 and 2002), in a meta-analysis review on 85 studies pertaining to marital conflicts showed that women, more than men, resort to physical violence towards their husbands when stress levels were high (Pournaghash-Tehrani, 2007; Mechem *et al.*, 1999). In addition to physical, women can also commit psychological violence in their relationship with their spouses, namely, cutting off verbal relationships and cursing, to name a few (Pournaghash-Tehrani, 2007). In this regard, Straus and Gelles (1986) have reported men and women resort to psychological violence equally (Sugarman *et al.*, 1996).

Given the common perception regarding domestic violence that men, mostly, are the perpetrators of domestic violence, there is growing and a large body of evidence indicating that women can and in fact do equally, commit different types of violence towards their husbands, no study has examined the demographic characteristics of men exposed to violence by their wives. Therefore, the present study attempts to determine the demographic characteristics (e.g., age, level of education, level of income) of male victims of domestic violence. To do this, the following questions are proposed:

- Are men with regard to differences in age, level of education and level of income different in terms of experiencing physical violence?
- Are men with regard to differences in age, level of education and level of income different in terms of experiencing psychological violence?

- Is the effect of interaction between age and level of education, age and level of income, level of education and level of income and, finally age, level of education and level of income significant in experiencing physical violence?
- Is the effect of interaction between age and level of education, age and level of income, level of education and level of income and, finally age, level of education and level of income significant in experiencing psychological violence?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: One hundred twenty men, seeking divorce due to wife abuse, were randomly drawn from those referred to family courts in Tehran by marriage councilors. The range of the men's age was between 25 to 80 years old ($M = 35.8$, $SD = 7.21$). Twenty five percent of the men had less than a high school diploma, fifteen percent had a high school diploma, forty percent had education above a high school diploma and twenty percent had above high school diploma. Regarding the men's level of income, six percent had an income level below \$160 per month, thirty five percent had an income level of \$160-380 per month, twenty nine percent had an income level of \$380-590 per month, thirty percent had an income level of above \$590 per month. All couples were informed of the purpose of the study and were told that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time during the study, should they decide to do so. Also, they were told that their information would be kept confidential.

Procedure

Material: The questionnaire pertaining to the types of violence included 37 items (13 items assessing psychological and 24 items assessing physical violence), the content of which was drawn from the available literature (Schechter and Ganley, 1995) assessing the types of violence on a 5 item Likert-type scale with anchors of 5 = Always and 1 = Never. The validity of this questionnaire was assessed by co-administering it with the Conflict Tactic Scale (Straus, 1997) in a group of 100 couples and the obtained correlation between the two tests was +0.89, which is an indicative of high validity of the self-constructed questionnaire. Consistency of the self-constructed questionnaire measured by Cronbach's Alpha was +0.81 (Pournaghash-Tehrani, 2007).

The study was conducted in four family courts in Tehran in 2006 and each participant was asked to voluntarily participate in the study and to fill out the questionnaires.

RESULTS

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and Scheffe test were used to analyze the effects of independent variables (age, level of education and level of income) and their interactions, in men, on different physical and psychological violence experienced by them in their families.

Present results showed that the variable of age had significant effect on physical violence, such as, hitting. Comparison of the means using the Scheffe test showed that, in relation to other groups, the highest rate of experiencing physical violence, such as, hitting, was among men between the ages of 35-50 (M = 1.21, SD = 0.57) years old (Table 1).

Regarding the effects of age on psychological violence, the results of multivariate analyses of variance showed that age had significant effect on psychological violence, such as, cutting off marital intercourse and denying choices. This variable had no effects on other types of psychological violence. Comparison of the means using the Scheffe test showed that psychological violence, such as, cessation of marital intercourse, was mainly observed among men between the ages of 35-50 (M = 2.38, SD = 1.30) and 50-65 (M = 2.56, SD = 1.29) years old, compared to men in other age groups. Psychological violence, such as, denying to make some choices, was mainly observed in men between the ages of 65-80 (M = 1.77, SD = 1.15), compared to other age groups (Table 2).

Regarding the effects of the level of education on physical violence against men, the results of MANOVA test showed that the level of education had significant effect on throwing objects. Comparison of the means using the Scheffe test showed that physical violence, such as, throwing objects, had a higher mean (M = 1.03, SD = 0.20) among men with Bachelor's degree compared to men with other levels of education (Table 3).

Regarding the effects of the level of education on psychological violence, present results showed that the level of education had significant effects on Cessation of marital intercourse, devaluation of your work and denying choices. Furthermore, performance of the Scheffe test revealed that the mean of scores in psychological violence, such as, Cessation of marital intercourse in men with low education (under high school diploma) (M = 2.35, SD = 0.95); devaluation of your work in men with diploma (M = 1.69, SD = 1.23) and denying choices in men with Bachelor's degree (M = 1.45, SD = 1.50), was higher, respectively, compared to other groups (Table 4).

Table 1: Multivariate analysis of the effect of age on the types of physical violence

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Pushing	0.30	3	0.54	0.60
Hitting	0.30	3	2.85	0.04*
Kicking	0.10	3	0.09	0.96
Throwing things	0.10	3	2.13	0.10

***: p*<0.01, **: p*<0.05

Table 2: Multivariate analysis of the effect of age on the types of psychological violence in men

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Controlling phone calls	0.37	3	0.24	0.86
Cursing	0.42	3	0.36	0.77
Cessation of marital intercourse	1.30	3	3.46	0.02*
Lack of verbal communication	1.01	3	0.68	0.56
Private humiliation	0.95	3	0.50	0.67
Public humiliation	0.35	3	0.24	0.86
Devaluation of your work	1.47	3	1.07	0.36
Denying choices	1.81	3	3.91	0.01**
Forcing to do house chores	0.10	3	0.03	0.99
Inappropriate expectancy	0.76	3	0.42	0.77
Pulling children towards yourself	0.10	3	0.03	0.99
Being neglected due to preoccupation	1.07	3	0.70	0.55

***: p*<0.01, **: p*<0.05

Table 3: Multivariate analysis of the effect of education on the types of physical violence in men

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Pushing	0.12	3	0.21	0.88
Hitting	0.19	3	1.86	0.14
Kicking	0.10	3	0.77	0.51
Throwing things	0.11	3	4.36	0.00**

***: p*<0.01

Table 4: Multivariate analysis of the effect of education on the types of psychological violence in men

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Controlling phone calls	1.26	3	0.82	0.480
Confinement	0.10	3	0.23	0.870
Cursing	1.49	3	1.29	0.280
Cessation of marital intercourse	1.89	3	3.61	0.010**
Lack of verbal communication	1.87	3	1.25	0.290
Private humiliation	2.05	3	1.09	0.350
Public humiliation	1.66	3	1.13	0.330
Devaluation of your work	4.00	3	2.91	0.030*
Denying choices	2.41	3	5.20	0.000**
Forcing to do house chores	1.19	3	2.61	0.057
Inappropriate expectancy	0.97	3	0.54	0.650
Pulling children towards yourself	1.76	3	0.69	0.550
Being neglected due to preoccupation	2.40	3	1.57	0.200

***: p*<0.01, **: p*<0.05

Present results showed that the level of income, alone, did not have any significant effects on any types of domestic violence. However, the interactive effects of the three independent variables of age, level of income and level of education, was significant on experiencing physical violence, such as, hitting. Comparison of the

Table 5: Multivariate analysis of the interactive effects of Age, the level of education and the level of income on different types of physical violence in men

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Pushing	0.18	1	0.97	0.32
Hitting	0.72	1	2.64	0.00**
Kicking	0.08	1	0.13	0.13

** : p<0.01, * : p<0.05

Table 6: Multivariate analysis of the interactive effects of age and the level of education on different types of psychological violence in men

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Controlling phone calls	1.26	4	0.60	0.660
Cursing	2.05	4	1.34	0.260
Cessation of marital intercourse	9.04	4	1.90	0.110
Lack of verbal communication	1.30	4	0.65	0.620
Private humiliation	1.68	4	0.67	0.600
Public humiliation	1.88	4	0.96	0.430
Devaluation of your work	4.41	4	2.41	0.055
Denying choices	3.24	4	5.25	0.000**
Forcing to do house chores	0.88	4	1.44	0.220
Inappropriate expectancy	0.75	4	0.31	0.860
Pulling children towards yourself	1.26	4	0.37	0.820
Being neglected due to preoccupation	2.00	4	0.98	0.420

** : p<0.01, * : p<0.05

means indicated that physical violence, in general, was experienced by men between the ages of 35-50 years old with Master's level of education and the level of income above \$590 per month (M = 2.00, SD = 0.70) (Table 5).

The interactive effects of independent variables on experiencing psychological violence showed that the interactive effect of age and level of education on denying choices was significant. Also, comparison of the means indicated this type of violence occurred more in men above 60 years of age with Bachelor's degree and above (M = 3.00, SD = 00) compared to other groups (Table 6).

Results showed that the interactive effects of age and level of income was significant on experiencing psychological violence, such as, devaluation of your work, denying choices and forcing to do house chores. Comparison of the means indicated that Devaluation of your work, was more prevalent in men between the ages of 20-35 with average income of \$380-590 per month (M = 2.33, SD= 0.4); denying choices was more prevalent in men with the ages of 50-65 with an average income of \$160-380 per month; and forcing to do house chores was more prevalent in men with the ages 35-50 years old with an average income of \$380-590 per month, respectively (Table 7).

The interactive effects of the three independent variables of age, level of education and level of income on psychological violence, such as, forcing to do house chores was significant. Comparison of the mean scores of

Table 7: Multivariate analysis of the interactive effects of age and the level of income on different types of psychological violence in men

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Controlling phone calls	0.42	2	0.40	0.67
Cursing	0.73	2	0.95	0.38
Cessation of marital intercourse	5.38	2	2.26	0.11
Lack of verbal communication	0.80	2	0.80	0.44
Private humiliation	0.10	2	0.03	0.96
Public humiliation	1.19	2	1.22	0.30
Devaluation of your work	3.98	2	4.34	0.01**
Denying choices	1.30	2	4.23	0.01**
Forcing to do house chores	1.82	2	5.96	0.00**
Inappropriate expectancy	0.10	2	0.00	0.99
Pulling children towards yourself	0.11	2	0.06	0.93
Being neglected due to preoccupation	0.65	2	0.64	0.52

**p<0.01, *p<0.05

Table 8: Multivariate analysis of the interactive effects of age, the level of education and the level of income on different types of psychological violence in men

Dependent variable	Sum of square	df	F	Level of significance
Forcing to do house chores	1.62	1	10.6	0.00**

** : p<0.01, * : p<0.05

different age groups with level of education and different levels of income revealed that this type of psychological violence was more prevalent among men with the ages of 35-50 with Bachelors level degrees and an average income level of \$380-590 per month, than other groups (Table 8).

DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, the focus of literature on domestic violence has been mainly on the violence against women and it has been only in recent years that some researchers (Straus, 2006; Carney *et al.*, 2006) have underlined the occurrence of violence against men, by their wives, at home. For example, Carney *et al.* (2006) in a study performed over a 13 week period found that male victims of domestic violence who referred to an emergency clinic reported that they were kicked, bitten, punched or choked by their female companions and more severe types of violence, such as the use of weapon against them, was reported in 37% of cases (Mechem *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, Douglas and Straus (2003) conducted a large scale and comprehensive study in dating violence in a sample of 6900 university students from 17 countries and found that the possibility of adolescent girls committing assault against their partners was an astonishing 115% times more likely than adolescent boys doing the same to their female partners. All in all, the results of a number of large sample studies with different demographic compositions indicate that domestic violence (dating violence) are perpetrated more

frequently by females than by males. Therefore, these studies are clearly against the common notion that women are always the victims of domestic violence and that men are mainly the perpetrators of it. As such, it is important to determine the demographics of those men who tend to become victims of assault; both physically and psychologically, by their wives; a study that has never been done in Tehran before. Hence, the present study has embarked on assessing the demographics of male victims of domestic violence.

Present results showed that with aging some types of physical and psychological violence against men increase, such as, Hitting (physical), Cessation of marital intercourse, Denying Choices (psychological). While these results are consistent with those of Archer (2000 and 2002), Pournaghash-Tehrani's (2007) and Mechem *et al.* (1999) who reported that women, more than men, resort to physical violence towards their husbands when stress levels were high, it needs to be kept in mind that none of these reports studied the factor of age per se and its effect on either types of violence. Furthermore, Perez *et al.* (2006) reported that both, physical and psychological (emotional), violence is more common in older couples where either physical or psychological violence takes place more often. However, it should be noted that their studies were conducted in couples and not in men only. As such, our findings tend to be unique in terms of determining, solely, the effects of age on the occurrence of domestic violence against men.

The present findings are mostly indicative of a relationship between the levels of education with psychological violence experienced by men. Yet, the types of psychological violence were different with regards to the level of education. For instance, Cessation of marital intercourse occurred in men with less than high school diploma, devaluation of your work happened in men with diploma and denying choices occurred in men with Bachelor's degree and higher. These findings are consistent with the findings in the literature regarding the relationship between low levels of education and the occurrence of domestic violence (Jeyaseelan *et al.*, 2004) however, our findings report a relationship between all levels of education and the occurrence of domestic violence. Again, here our results are exclusive to violence against men which no other study has addressed.

In terms of the level of income, the results did not show a significant effect of income level on the occurrence of domestic violence against men. However, when combined with the other two variables such as age and the level of education, it tended to have a significant effect on experiencing physical violence; specifically,

hitting had the highest rate of incidence amongst men between the ages of 35-50 with higher level of education.

As mentioned earlier, most studies conducted in the area of domestic violence have been with regard to women who have shown that assault against women is directly related to a number of demographic variables; namely, low levels of education, low levels of socioeconomic status and inadequate income (Gage, 2005; Perez *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, the results in the present study are, in fact, only of their kinds in that they are assessed in male victims of domestic violence which can contribute to further understanding of the types of men susceptible to victimization by their wives. Finally, it is essential to note that other demographic variables such as the number of children, the type of housing (ownership of the house or renting) and so on, were also assessed in this study, but given their lack of any significant effects on the occurrence of violence of any kind against men, were not mentioned in the study.

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