Self-esteem of Kurdish women faced domestic violence in Erbil city

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Abstract

Background and objective: In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in studying domestic abuse against women and its impact on self-esteem and coping style. The aim of this study was to make inquiries about types of domestic abuses among a sample of Kurdish women in addition to looking into the level of self-esteem of those who faced domestic violence.

Methods: 120 women who were victims of domestic abuse living in Erbil rural and urban surroundings were recruited from July 15th to October 23rd, 2014. Two scale questionnaires were implemented in this study; domestic abuse questionnaire was taken from Iman and Ahmadi and self-esteem questionnaire by Rosenberg. The data were analyzed through the use of the statistical package for the social sciences (version 11). The analysis systems used for the data management procedures were Pearson correlation coefficients, descriptive statistics, frequencies, and One-sample t-test.

Results: Physical abuse is the most frequently occurring domestic abuse type among Kurdish women, while the psychological abuse was reported to a lesser extent (mean 24.6167 and 13.2417 respectively). The levels of the study participant's self-esteems were found to be relatively high (mean score 17.64), while there was a positive correlation between self-esteem and psychological abuse detected (person correlation = 0.091) which was not statistically significant at the level of (P = 0.326).

Conclusion: Study participants encountered physical domestic abuse more than other types of abuse; still the participant's mean score for their self-esteem is relatively higher than the hypothetical one.

Keywords: Self-esteem; Domestic abuse; Erbil; Kurdistan.

Introduction

Domestic abuse is regarded as battering or intimate partner violence occurs between people in an intimate relationship. Domestic abuse can take many forms, including emotional, sexual, and physical abuse. Men are sometimes abused by partners, but domestic abuse is most often directed toward women. Domestic abuse is a gender-oriented crime with women being more likely to encounter than men.[1] According to the National Violence against Women Survey, about 1.5 million women are raped and/or physically attacked by an intimate partner annually. Most often, the abuser is a member of her own family.[2] Self-esteem is the feeling of being satisfied with the persons own abilities, and that he or (she) deserve to be liked or respected.[3] Furthermore, self-esteem refers most generally to an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self.[4,5] It is composed of two distinct dimensions, competence and worth. The competence dimension (efficacy-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which people see themselves as capable and efficacious. The worth dimension (worth-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which individuals feel they are persons of value.[6,7] Self-esteem is often discussed in a clinical context, both as an explanation for and consequence of psychological disorder and clinicians may feel they have a simple

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understanding of the meaning and significance of the term. However, they might be surprised to discover that this hypothetical concept has attracted a number of different definitions, each reflecting the theoretical stance of the writer. Maslow[8] categorized it as a need. Hayakawa[9] established that self-esteem is the main purpose of all human activity. Moreover, White[10] defined it as a consequence of competence. In another place, it is a necessary condition for achievement, in another place, it is an attitude[11,12] stated that it is an index of mental health, and Ziller[13] defined it as a moderating variable. In the studies of coping looking specifically at how people respond to harmful, threatening, traumatic, or otherwise unpleasant events, there is a hypothesis favored by most theorists is that high self-esteem operates as a kind of resource that enables people to suffer less or to recover more rapidly from such events.[14] Moreover, in Iraq, domestic abuse has received considerable attention as a threatening social problem. Although Kurdish people have good social network and development, domestic violence can be seen in media as a daily problem in which it is reported that a woman has been abused by her husband or relatives in that area to the extent that she may face death. This study aimed to (1) determine the types of domestic abuse encountered by a sample of Kurdish women and to present the relationship between various types of domestic abuse, (2) estimate self-esteem among a sample of Kurdish women encountering domestic abuse, and (3) investigate the relationship between self-esteem and types of domestic abuse.

Methods

Study Sample: In this cross-sectional study, the participants included only women faced domestic abuse in Erbil city. 120 participants were included in this study. They were chosen from different places from the rural and the urban part of Erbil city governorate. The sample comprised almost all women registered and faced domestic violence at Hawler women's shelter and Kurdistan women's Union during the period of data collection who accepts to participate in the study.

Instruments: Two scale questionnaires were used in this study. The first one was domestic abuse questionnaire taken from Iman and Ahmadi.[15] The questionnaire includes four categories of domestic abuse which are economical, psychological, social, and physical. The questionnaire was originally comprised of 26 items and then adopted to 29 items. Its scales were divided into 5 figures including (never = 0), (seldom = 1), (sometimes = 2) (often = 3), and (always = 4). The second one is self-esteem questionnaire by Rosenberg.[16] The questionnaire is comprised of 10 items which are classified into negative and positive orientations of one's self-esteem; the mean score for self-esteem is compared to 15. If the mean score of self-esteem is higher than this hypothetical (mean = 15), then the participant's self-esteem is high. However, if the score of the participant's self-esteem is lower than this hypothetical mean, then they have low self-esteem. Moreover, the domestic abuse and self-esteem questionnaires were later translated into Kurdish language and backward translated into the English language to find out the validity of the translated versions. Two English language instructors translated the questionnaires into the Kurdish language, and then two others did the back-translation. Afterward, another two instructors compared the original version of each questionnaire with the translated versions. For the validity of the questionnaires, the researcher designed a survey questionnaire including the current study's questionnaires, and then the questionnaires were given to some experts in the field of education and psychology as well as in psychiatry. The experts evaluated the questionnaires in terms of the validity of each questionnaire items and checked for possibilities to modify, delete,

or add any necessary items. The criterion was to delete any item if any two of the evaluators did not agree on. Three items were added to the domestic abuse questionnaire, and no changes were made to the self-esteem questionnaire. With regard to the reliability analysis of the questionnaires, 30 nonactual participants were given handouts and then the researcher collected their answers and analyzed them using Cronbach's Alpha test. The results of each questionnaire are shown in Table 1. According to the Cronbach's Alpha standardized system, any figure lower than 0.6 was unreliable. Based on this, the reliability scores for the present study questionnaires show figures higher than 0.6 indicating that the questionnaires used were all reliable.

Data Collection Procedures

The data for the present study were collected from the July 15th to October 23rd, 2014. During this period, the researcher visited the intended places where the data was gathered from 120 participants. The participants were interviewed and given instructions to answer the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered in the Kurdish language since it is the mother-tongue for all the participants.

Ethics and Informed Consent

During the data collection, after taking verbal consent from clients, the researcher tried to sit alone with each participant to maintain the privacy and confidentiality. The participants were informed that their personal data would remain anonymous. All questions were explained to the participants according to their levels of educations.

Data Analysis

The researcher used the statistical package for the social sciences (version 11) to conduct the statistical analysis part of the study. The analysis systems used for the data management procedures were Pearson correlation coefficients, descriptive statistics, frequencies, and One-sample t-test. The significance of association between various variables and substance use was tested using the Chi square test statistic (X^2) and a finding of p ≤0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

The age of the participants was mixed, as 17.5% aged from 15 to 20 years old, 51.7% were 21 to 30 year old, and 30.8% were above 31 years old. The social status of the participants was also different showing that 26% were single. About 59% of participants were married, while widowed participants were only 5.8% and divorced women were 8.3%. As for the participant's employment status, 70.2% were housewives, while 29.2% were employed. Among the participants, 29.2% were satisfied with their monthly earnings and those with partial satisfaction were 40.8%, while the remaining 30% were not satisfied with their monthly earnings. As far as the residences status is concerned, 73.3% were living in urban areas, while those who live in rural areas were 26.7%. These findings are demonstrated in Table 2. After analyzing the data of domestic abuse encountered toward participants, the mean of each category was compared to another. The physical abuse category mean was higher than others (mean=24.61) and (SD=7.22). The second higher figure was the social abuse category (mean=16.89) and (SD=6.64). The third figure is economic abuse (mean=16.47) and (SD=6.41) and the last figure is psychological abuse

Table 1: Reliability Analysis.

Questionnaires	Cronbach's Alpha
Domestic abuse	0.695
Self-esteem	0.684

(mean=13.24) and (SD=5.09), which is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 2: Demographic data of the study sample.

Demographic data	Frequency	Percent
Age		
15-20 years	21	17.5
21-30 years	62	51.7
31 >	37	30.8
Marital status		
Single	32	26.7
Married	71	59.1
Widow	7	5.8
Divorced	10	8.3
Educational status		
Illiterate	35	28.3
Can write and read	30	25.0
Finished elementary school	13	10.8
Finished secondary	23	19.2
Undergraduate	19	15.8
Job		
House wife	85	70.2
Having job	35	29.2
Monthly earning		
Satisfied	35	29.2
Partially satisfied	49	40.8
Not satisfied	36	30.0
Residence		
Urban areas	88	73.3
Rural areas	32	26.7

Table 3: Domestic abuses mean scores of the study sample.

Type of abuse	Mean	Standard Deviation(SD)
Physical abuse	24.6167	7.2276
Social abuse	16.8917	6.6469
Economic abuse	16.4750	6.4102
Psychological abuse	13.2417	5.0907

Table 4 shows using Pearson correlation coefficient statistics; there was a statistically significant correlation between social and economic abuse (Pearson correlation = 0.355), which was statistically significant (P <0.001). Moreover, there was a statistically significant correlation between social abuse and psychological abuse (Pearson correlation = 0.334), which was statistically significant (P <0.001). Similarly, statistically significant correlation was also found between social abuse and physical abuse (Pearson correlation = 0.242), which was statistically significant (P = 0.008), in addition to a statistically significant correlation between psychological abuse and physical abuse (Pearson correlation = 0.203), which was statistically significant (P = 0.026). Regarding the self-esteem questionnaire, the mean score was 17.64 (SD = 4.93).

In comparing this self-esteem score to the hypothetical (mean=15), it can be concluded that the participant's mean score for their self-esteem is higher than the hypothetical (mean=15). Using One–sample t-test, there was a statistically significant difference (P <0.001) between the hypothetical mean 15 and participant's self-esteem mean score (mean = 17.64) suggesting that the participant's self-esteems were high (Table 5). There was a negative correlation between self-esteem and economic abuse (person correlation = -0.015), which was not significant at the level of (0.873, P >0.05). Whereas, a positive correlation between self-esteem and psychological abuse were detected (person correlation = 0.090), which was again not significant (P = 0.326) as shown in Table 6.

Table 4: Domestic abuse correlations among the study group.

Variables		Physical abuse	Social abuse	Economic abuse
Social abuse	Pearson correlation	0.242		
	P. value	0.008		
	No.	120		
Economic abuse	Pearson correlation	-0.015	0.355	
	P. value	0.872	<0.001	
	No.	120	120	
Psychological abuse	Pearson correlation	0.203	0.334	0.148
	P. value	0.026	<0.001	0.106
	No.	120	120	120

Table 5: Self-esteem mean score of the study sample.

Variable	Mean score	Standard deviation	Hypothetical Mean	Df	t-test	*P* value
Self –esteem	17.64	4.93	15	199	39.17	<0.001

Table 6: Correlation between self-esteem and domestic abuse among the study group.

Self-esteem	Physical abuse	Social abuse	Economic abuse	Psychological abuse
Pearson correlation	0.091	0.126	-0.015	0.090
P. value	0.324	0.875	0.873	0.326
No.	120	120	120	120

Discussion

Domestic abuse is a serious threat to many women. It can happen to anyone at any time. Moreover, the victims encounter different types of domestic abuse; one might face physical abuse, or psychological, while another might experience all types. In the present study, it is worth noting that the mean score difference among the domestic abuse categories is observable and can be recognized as following; the mean of physical abuse category is higher than others (mean = 24.61). This indicates that the majority of the victims participated in the present study reported that they were physically abused. In addition, it can be implied that the physical abuse in the Kurdish society was more common than the other types of abuse. For example, the victims were abused by being kicked, slapped, punched, pushed, thrown things at, and beaten by the belt. Khan[17] supported this result. Khan confirmed that a growing body of research studies assures the prevalence of physical violence in all parts of the globe, including approximately 20-50% of women from country to country who have encountered domestic abuse. The lowest mean score (mean = 13.24) among the domestic abuse category is psychological abuse. This suggests that most of the participants did not face psychological abuse as much as other types. However, this might not reflect the reality as participants avoided disclosing this form of abuse fearing stigmatization. Moreover, psychological abuse is not objective and physical abuse is rather subjective, because the participant's tendency is not based on real facts but rather being influenced by their personal beliefs or feelings. Additionally, the setting of the interview and the tool used probably may support the low rate of psychological abuse among the studied population. However, according to the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS), psychological abuse was 2.5 times more common between partners than physical abuse in Canadian society.[18] Furthermore,

there is a statistically significant correlation between social abuse and the other types of abuse including, economic, physical, and psychological abuse. Despite the fact that our society is developing, men are superior to their women counterpart and control their economic, and to somewhat social, psychological, and physical aspects of life. As a result, there was an association between social abuses with other types of abuse. For instance, with in the Kurdish society, males are responsible financially and usually they are the sole earner in the family. Moreover, women are generally house wives and not earning any form of income, and this will usually provide an opportunity for men to have more control over the family and probably abuse their spouses economically. As it is shown in the study demography, the majority of the participants (62.2%) were housewives. Similarly, Watson and Parsons[19] claimed that among women, the risk of encountering economic abuse is clearly highest for those who are unemployed or prevented from working. With reference to self-esteem, it is a concept which has been used in diverse disciplines, and it denotes distinct things to different people. In addition, it affects many things, and it can also be influenced by different things. In the present study, the mean score was 17.64 indicating that the study participants showed a high level of self-esteem. This suggests that the victims who encountered domestic abuse their self-esteems are still high. This might be stemmed from the fact that most of the victims and the clients participated in this study were sheltered and visited by women related organizations, or psychologists assisting them via support and psychological treatments. On the other hand, as domestic abuse is not a rare event in our culture, women could potentially accept this attitude normalize it. Moreover, the family bound and social cohesion still are high in our culture not letting the victim to face her difficulties alone and this will sometime may dilute the

impact of stress and probably enhance her to act positively. In spite of that, Dutton and Painter[20] found an association between domestic abuse victims and their self-esteem levels; the abused women have lower levels of self-esteem than women who are not abused. Data were collected on 50 battered women in the USA. Correspondingly, Logan et al.[21,22] revealed that 63% of the women due to diminished self-confidence and negative self-perception. But the tool used by them, the sample size and the culture of the studied population were different which probably gave different outcomes. On the other hand, we found that there is a negative correlation between economic abuse and self-esteem.[23] This may indicate that when the frequency of economic abuse increases the self-esteem of the victims decreases. In other words, economy influences everything in one's life for instance, a woman abused economically cannot buy things she wants and travel to anywhere, dress as she likes, or do ordinary women related things affecting various aspect of the daily life. Thus, negatively impacting on the victim's self-esteem.[24] Finally, a population sample from our society with its specific cultural and religious background had a pronounced effect on the study results. Particularly, for this topic being a sensitive one for disclosure to the interviewer. That is why it needs further comprehensive efforts to highlight such important phenomenon in Kurdish society. A number of limitations were recognized in this study. The participants of the study included only victims from Erbil city and their numbers were not sufficient as the researcher could only obtain 120 actual participants for the study and 30 non-actual individuals for the pilot study. The timing of the study was another limitation of the study, because the period for carrying out the study was too short. Local data were scarce and limited. Further studies are needed in relation to this issue and preferably implying different tools of assessment to shade more light on the subject.

Conclusion

The victims mainly reported that they encountered physical domestic abuse more than the other types. The levels of the study participant's self-esteems were relatively high.

Conflicts of interest

The author reports no conflicts of interest.

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