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Domestic Violence Against Women: A Cross-Sectional Study

Kadına Yönelik Aile İçi Şiddet: Kesitsel Bir Çalışma

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Domestic violence against women is an important public health problem worldwide and in Türkiye. This study aimed to analyze participants' demographic characteristics, violence levels, and relations between the two.

Materials and Methods: 308 women participated in the study online via "Google Forms". Participants answered "Sociodemographic Characteristics and Data Form" and "The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale". As a method inside SPSS, descriptive statistical analysis and nonparametric tests were used in analysis of the data.

Results: It has been determined that demographic characteristics of participants are better than average for Türkiye. Proportion of women who have been subjected to violence in at least one sub-category by not answering "never" to all questions is 43.8%. 41.6% of participating women did not answer "never" to all questions about the threat dimension, 14% about the actual violence dimension, and 7.5% about the sexual violence dimension. In comparative analyzes, a significant difference or a significant correlation couldn't be detected for most part.

Conclusion: Frequency of not answering "never" to all questions in the violence dimensions except the "threat dimension" was low. Level of violence was found low in all sizes. It is recommended that the study be repeated under better conditions.

Keywords: Domestic violence, domestic violence against women, public health

ÖZ

Amaç: Dünyada ve Türkiye’de kadına yönelik aile içi şiddet önemli bir halk sağlığı sorunudur. Bu çalışmada çalışmaya katılan katılımcıların demografik özelliklerini, şiddet görme düzeylerini ve ikisi arasındaki ilişkileri analiz etmek amaçlanmıştır.

Materyal ve Metot: Araştırmaya 308 kadın “Google Forms” üzerinden çevrimiçi bir şekilde katılmıştır. Katılımcılar “Sosyodemografik Özellikler ve Veri Formunu” ve “Kadına Yönelik Şiddet Derecelendirme Ölçeğini” cevaplamışlardır. Yöntem olarak verilerin analizinde SPSS içerisinde tanımlayıcı istatistiksel analiz ve nonparametrik testler kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Katılımcıların Türkiye ortalamasına göre demografik özelliklerinin daha olumlu olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bütün sorulara “asla” cevabını vermeyerek en az 1 alt kategoride şiddet gören kadınların oranı %43,8’dir. Katılımcı kadınların %41,6’sı tehdit boyutunu ele alan, %14’ü eylem boyutunu ele alan ve %7,5’i cinsel şiddet boyutunu ele alan bütün sorulara “asla” cevabını vermemiştir. Karşılaştırmalı analizlerde ise büyük çoğunlukla anlamlı bir farklılık ya da anlamlı bir ilişki tespit edilememiştir.

Sonuç: “Tehdit boyutu” dışındaki şiddet boyutlarında bütün sorulara “asla” cevabını vermeme sıklığı düşük olarak bulunmuştur. Şiddet görme düzeyi ise bütün boyutlarda düşük bulunmuştur. Çalışmanın daha uygun şartlar içerisinde tekrarlanması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aile içi şiddet, halk sağlığı, kadına yönelik aile içi şiddet

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INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence against women is a major public health problem in Türkiye and the world. In the research conducted by the Ministry of Family and Social Services General Directorate of Women's Status (KSGM) and carried out by Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies in 2013-2014, the proportion of women who have been subjected to physical violence at least once by their spouses was found to be 36%. The ratio of women who have experienced sexual violence at least once and have been married is 12%. Those exposed to physical and/or sexual violence at least once were determined as 38%. This shows that domestic violence against women is an ongoing and crucial public health problem in Türkiye.¹

In the World Health Organization report in 2013, it was determined that 35% of women worldwide had been subjected to either physical and/or sexual violence by their partner or sexual violence by a person who is not their partner.²⁻⁶

There are economic, legal, political, mediatic, religious, psychiatric, biological, and sociological situations that pave the way for violence. Behaviors involving domestic violence are transmitted as a behavior pattern from generation to generation through observation and imitation.⁷

This study aimed to analyze the participants' demographic characteristics, violence levels, and the relations between them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ethics Committee Approval: This project was submitted to and approved by the University of Health Sciences Hamidiye Scientific Research Ethics Committee (Date: 01.10.2021, decision no: 30/7). This study was carried out by the international declaration, guidelines, etc.

Patient Selection: There is an online participation in this cross-sectional research from all over Türkiye, mainly from Istanbul and other metropolitan cities. "Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Türkiye" conducted by KSGM in 2013-2014 is the most up-to-date and comprehensive research. This study was used as a reference for the expected prevalence value. According to the data of this study, the proportion of women subjected to physical violence at least once by their spouses was 36% throughout Türkiye. The ratio of women who have experienced sexual violence at least once and have been married is 12%. Those who have been exposed to physical and/or sexual violence at least once is 38% (KSGM 2014). The sample size was found to be 451 using the sample size calculation for cross-sectional studies with the OpenEpi program, with an expected prevalence value of 12% (frequency of sexual vio-

lence) and a 95% confidence level with a 3% margin of error. Although the sample size was 451, 308 women could participate in this study. Women who have completed 18 and have spent the last year (wholly or partially) living with their family or partner participated.

Study Protocol: Women participated in this study online. In this study, the "The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale" consisting of 46 questions was used. The "The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale", which is used to evaluate the participants in terms of physical violence (threat of violence dimension and actual violence dimension) and exposure to sexual violence, was prepared by 'Marshall' in 1992 under the name of "Severity of Violence Against Women".⁸ This scale was adapted to Turkish by Tuz et al.⁹ The scale consists of 46 items with short sentences, cases with physical violence (threat of violence dimension and actual violence dimension) and sexual violence, and has a 4-point Likert-type scale as 1: Never, 2: Once, 3: A few times and 4: Many times. The scale is based on individuals' feedback. The degree of severity increases as the scale and subscales score increases. It is used to evaluate the physical and sexual aspects of violence scientifically. The internal reliability coefficient of the scale, Cronbach's alpha, was found to be 0.979 with high reliability and 0.738 with excellent reliability, respectively. The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale with nine sub-domains explains 88.1% of the variance. There are subscales to distinguish the severity of the violence. The nine sub-domains of the scale are: threat (symbolic), threat (mild), threat (moderate), and threat (severe) of violence; actual (mild), actual (minor), actual (moderate), actual (severe) violence, and sexual violence. The threat dimension ranges from symbolic to mild, medium and severe; in the actual violence dimension, the effectiveness of violence increases, respectively, from mild to minor, moderate and severe. The first 4 questions are related to a symbolic threat, questions 5-8 are about a mild threat, questions 9-12 are about a moderate threat, and questions 13-19 are about a severe threat. Questions 20-23 are related to actual mild, questions 24-28 are about actual minor, questions 29-31 are about actual moderate and questions 32-40 are about actual severe violence. Questions 41-46 are about sexual violence. In the first 19 questions, the threat dimension of physical violence and psychological violence (due to the emotional stress created by the threat) are discussed. The questions 20-40 address the actual violence dimension. Sexual violence is discussed in the questions 41-46. All groups are completely independent of each other. For this reason, for an example, someone who gets a low score on the "mild act"

questions may get a higher score on the "severe act" questions. In addition to this scale, a questionnaire related to demographic information named "Sociodemographic Characteristics and Data Form" was used to obtain demographic information. The demographic characteristics of the participants and their partners and their habits towards harmful substances were questioned. It consists of 46 questions.

Data Collection: The data obtained in the research were filled by the participating women online through the "Google Forms" application from 20 January 2022 to 3 February 2022. Participants answered the "Sociodemographic Characteristics and Data Form" and the "The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale", respectively. Those living with their partner answered the questions on the scale for their partners, while those living with their families answered the questions on the scale for their families.

Statistical Analysis: The research data were evaluated with the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows 22.0 statistical analysis program (SPSS 2013). Count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values were used as descriptive statistics. According to the results obtained, the exposure of women participating in the study to domestic violence was analyzed by descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistical analysis was made for both "Sociodemographic Characteristics and Data Form" and "The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale". While the Mann-Whitney U

Test was used for the comparative analysis of nominal independent variables consisting of two groups with the dependent variable containing the means of the scale responses, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was used for the comparative analysis of the nominal and ordinal independent variables consisting of three or more groups with the dependent variable including the means of the scale responses. While performing the Post Hoc Test (as there is no normal distribution), analyzes were made over the Tamhane option. Spearman correlation analysis was performed to compare the independent numerical variables with the dependent variable, including the scale responses' means. The cut-off value for statistical significance in all test results was taken as $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Regarding marital status, 31.8% of women are single, 62% are married, 5.5% are widowed or divorced, and 0.6% live together. 1.4% of women with a partner have lived together under 18 for the first time (except unanswered). It has been found that 77.9% of women have undergraduate or higher education in terms of educational status and 68% of women's (except unanswered) partners have undergraduate or higher education. 59.1% of women (except unanswered) stated that their families have a sufficient income. Regarding family structure, 7.9% of women (except unanswered) have an extended family, while 92.1% have a nuclear family (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.

Demographic Characteristics		n (%)
Marital Status	Single	98 (31.8)
	Married	191 (62.0)
	Widowed or Divorced	17 (5.6)
	Living together	2 (0.6)
	Total	308 (100.0)
First Living Together Age	Before the 18	3 (1.4)
	After the 18	209 (98.6)
	Total	212 (100.0)
Education	High school and below	48 (15.6)
	Associate degree	20 (6.5)
	Undergraduate	215 (69.8)
	Graduate	25 (8.1)
	Total	308 (100.0)
Family Income Status	Hunger threshold or below	38 (13.8)
	Poverty threshold or below	75 (27.1)
	Quite enough	163 (59.1)
	Total	276 (100.0)
Family Structure	Extended family	19 (7.9)
	Nuclear family	222 (92.1)
	Total	241 (100.0)
Partner's Education	High school and below	58 (25.1)
	Associate degree	16 (6.9)
	Undergraduate	130 (56.3)
	Graduate	27 (11.7)
	Total	231 (100.0)

It was found that 65.6% of the women never smoked and 13% of them used more than half a pack. It was determined that 60.2% of the women's (except unanswered) partners never smoked and 19.9% of them used more than half a pack a day. It was found that 63.3% of the women never used alcohol. It was determined that 56.7% of the women's (except

unanswered) partners never used alcohol and 2.6% of them consumed more than 2 drinks a day (Table 2).

The mean score of the participants for the questions that measure all subscale types one by one were calculated along with their related median scores (Table 3).

Table 2. The use of harmful substances by the participants.

Harmful Substances		n (%)
Tobacco use	Non-user	202 (65.6)
	Less than 5 a day	37 (12.0)
	Less than 10 a day	29 (9.4)
	More than 10 a day	40 (13.0)
	Total	308 (100.0)
Alcohol use	Non-user	195 (63.3)
	Less than 1 drink a day	111 (36.1)
	Less than 2 drinks a day	2 (0.6)
	Total	308 (100.0)
Partner's Tobacco use	Non-user	139 (60.2)
	Less than 5 a day	32 (13.8)
	Less than 10 a day	14 (6.1)
	More than 10 a day	46 (19.9)
	Total	231 (100.0)
Partner's Alcohol use	Non-user	131 (56.7)
	Less than 1 drink a day	86 (37.2)
	Less than 2 drinks a day	8 (3.5)
	More than 2 drinks a day	6 (2.6)
	Total	231 (100.0)

Table 3. Evaluation of the scores of the participants from The Severity of Violence Against Women Scale.

Sub-domains of the scale	Mean±SD	Median(Min-Max)
Symbolic Threat	1.2078±0.46568	2.25 (1.00-4.00)
Mild Threat	1.2995±0.57728	2.375 (1.00-3.75)
Moderate Threat	1.1023±0.35311	2.125 (1.00-4.00)
Severe Threat	1.0533±0.21137	1.57 (1.00-3.57)
Actual Mild Violence	1.0698±0.23875	1.75 (1.00-2.75)
Actual Minor Violence	1.0442±0.18227	1.60 (1.00-3.00)
Actual Moderate Violence	1.0444±0.20626	1.835 (1.00-2.67)
Actual Severe Violence	1.0188±0.14310	1.275 (1.00-3.33)
Sexual Violence	1.0319±0.13170	1.33 (1.00-2.00)

In the research, by not answering all questions as "never", the frequency of women exposed to violence in at least one sub-form, even if at a minimum level, was 43.8%. On the other hand, 56.2% of women answered "never" to all questions on the scale. This situation was determined through the analysis of the variable covering the mean scores per question of all scale questions (1-46). 58.4% of the participants marked the "never" option for the questions (1-19) addressing all of the threat sub-domain. In contrast, 41.6% of them did not mark that option. The mean score of 4.5% of the participants from the questions about the threat sub-domain is above 2, while 95.5% of the participants' scores are below 2.

This situation was determined through the analysis of the variable covering the mean scores per question of the threat questions (1-19). 86% of the participants marked "never" for the questions (20-40) addressing all of the actual violence sub. In contrast, 14% of them did not mark that option. The mean score of 1% of the participants from the questions about this sub-domain is above 2, while 99% of the participants' scores are below 2. This situation was determined through the analysis of the variable covering the mean scores per question of the actual violence questions (20-40). 92.5% of the participants marked the "never" option for the questions (41-46) addressing all of the sexual violence sub. In contrast,

7.5% of them did not mark that option. The mean score of 1% of the participants from the questions related to the sub-domain of sexual violence is above 2, while 99% of the participants' scores are below 2. This situation was determined through the analysis of the variable covering the mean scores per question of the sexual violence questions (41-46).

According to the Post Hoc Test analysis results, there was no significant difference in marital status between the groups ($p>0.05$ for all). But there are significant differences in the "living together" group, which is the 4th group, compared to the "single" and "married" groups, but there are only two individuals in this group ($p<0.05$). According to the Post Hoc Test analysis results about alcohol, there was a statistically significant difference in the "less than two drinks per day" group, which included only two people, compared to the other groups ($p<0.05$ for all). However, there was no significant difference between the other groups ($p>0.05$ for all). Apart from these minor exceptions, no significant difference or a significant correlation could be detected in all other demographic characteristics, such as family income and education level among their subgroups or with the scale score ($p>0.05$ for all).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

1.4% of women with a partner have lived together under 18 for the first time, which is lower than the 2021 Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) data on marriage for the first time under 18 (24.2%).¹⁰ 84.4% of women have at least an associate degree or more. This is higher than the proportion of the female population over the age of 25 who are higher education graduates, which is 17.3%, according to 2021 TUIK data. 74.9% of women's partners have at least an associate degree or more. This is higher than the proportion of the male population over the age of 25 who are higher education graduates, which is 21.1% according to 2021 TUIK data.¹¹ Regarding family structure, 7.9% of women have an extended family, while 92.1% have a nuclear family. In terms of a nuclear family, this is higher than the proportions of 64.4% nuclear family and 13.5% extended family, according to 2021 TUIK data.¹²

14% of women subjected to actual physical violence at least once (even if at a minimum level) and 7.5% of women subjected to sexual violence at least once (even if at a minimum level) in this study. Unlike this study, there are higher available physical and sexual violence ratios in other literature studies. In the literature, it is reported that 35-39% of women have been exposed to physical violence at least once by their partner, and 12-15% of them have been exposed to sexual violence at least once by their partner.^{1,13-14} According to "Domestic violence against women in Türkiye" study in 2018, 41.3% of the

women were exposed to general domestic violence. Of the women subjected to general domestic violence, 44.8% were subjected to physical violence, and 13.4% to sexual violence.¹⁵ The general domestic violence ratio (41.3%) shows similarity with this research. Because the frequency of women exposed to violence in at least one sub-form, even if at a minimum level, was 43.8% in this study. According to World Health Organization (WHO) in 2019, 35% of worldwide women were subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by any people in their whole life. In addition, according to WHO in 2018, 26% of worldwide ever-married/partnered women aged 15 years and older have been exposed to physical and/or sexual violence from the current or divorced husband or intimate male partner at least once in their whole life (after the age of 15). However, in the last 12 months only 10% of them have been exposed to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence. That situation shows more similarity with this study. Because both of them only contain the last 12 months only and 10% is close to this study's 14% and 7.5% ratios.¹⁶⁻¹⁷

The people participating in the study mostly have positive characteristics compared to the average for Türkiye in terms of sociodemographic factors such as income level, education level and bad habits. It is thought that this situation causes the level of exposure to violence to be lower in the results of the study compared to other studies.

In the comparative analyzes in this study, no significant difference or correlation was found in terms of violence scores (apart from very minor exceptions). Since the women who participated in the study have a positive profile compared to the average for Türkiye in terms of demographic characteristics, there is a numerical disproportion between the subgroups of the grouped independent variables. Subgroups with positive traits have more people, while subgroups with negative traits have fewer people. However, the people participating in the research either have never been subjected to violence in any way or have experienced mild acts of violence because they have positive demographic characteristics. Since the number of people who have suffered severe acts of violence is limited, it is thought that obtaining meaningful data in comparative analysis is difficult.

It can be considered as an indication that when the demographic characteristics are positive, the level of violence can be low. The frequency of women not choosing "never" for all answers is high for "threat dimension" but low for "actual violence dimension" and "sexual violence dimension". When we look at the frequency of not selecting the "never" option in all answers, women are most exposed to the threat dimension. The actual violence dimension and the sexual violence dimension, respectively, follow this.

As a primary prevention against violence, people are informed about issues such as domestic violence, anger management and resolving disputes using non-violent methods, and mechanisms to which victims of violence can resort. Secondary preventions are programs for people who show the first symptoms and have the potential to commit acts of violence. Tertiary preventions are programs in which sanctions and penalties are applied to perpetrators and the support to be received by victims of violence is determined.¹⁸

It is necessary for the state to make legal and practical arrangements on violence and gender equality, to create programs and campaigns that raise people's awareness about violence, to develop a national policy in cooperation with various sectors, and to provide socio-economic support and health services support for women and children who are exposed or have the potential to be subjected to violence.¹⁹

The state's positive discrimination for women in necessary matters, establishment of a helpline for victims of violence, social services support, communication support, health services support, shelter support, legal consultancy support, law enforcement support, rehabilitation service, and financial support are also seen as important.²⁰

In conclusion, because the participants mostly have positive demographic characteristics presence of a numerical disproportion between the subgroups of the grouped independent variables, the research is mainly attended by the close circle of the researcher, and the investigation is online and cross-sectional, it is recommended that this research be re-conducted by eliminating the limitations. If the research is done again, it is recommended to represent all demographic subgroups in sufficient numbers, to provide participants from all over Türkiye in a more randomized manner, and to ensure that the demographic characteristics of the participants are closer to the TUIK data. As for the importance of the study, in the descriptive statistical analyses, demographic characteristics drew a positive profile compared to the average for Türkiye, while the level of experiencing forms of violence in the 9 subscales was lower than the average for Türkiye. Despite the sample size is calculated as 451 only 308 women were able to join the study (that may weaken the study's power). Mostly, the women in the researcher's family, friends and relatives were able to participate in the study. It is thought that the cross-sectional type of the study and the fact that mostly women in the researcher's family, friends and relatives participated in the study create a limitation in evaluating the cause-effect relationship and generalizing the results. Since the research was conducted online because of the pandemic, there is also the possibility of giving incomplete or incorrect answers as a choice or error among the participating women.

Ethics Committee Approval: The study was approved by the University of Health Sciences Hamidiye Scientific Research Ethics Committee (Date: 01.10.2021, decision no. 30/7). The study was carried out by the international declaration, guidelines,

etc.

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