

Evaluating Iranian and Indian victims' beliefs about wife beating

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Abstract

The present study wants to explore the evaluation of wife beating phenomenon among Iranian and Indian victims of domestic violence. For this purpose, 400 samples including 200 Indian women and 200 Iranian women were randomly selected from Iran and India. First, the inventory of beliefs about wife beating including 4 components- wife beating is justified, wives gain from beatings, help should be given, offender should be punished and offender is responsible, was answered by the participants. Then, the collected data were subjected to Multi-variate Analysis of variance. Iranian sample had high scores on justification of beating wife, gain for wives and responsibility and punishment for husband. Indian sample had high scores on rendering help for the victims of domestic violence. Unemployed victims had high scores on gain and rendering help.

Keywords: partner violence, beliefs about wife beating, justification, Iran and India.

Introduction

Prevalence of permissive attitudes towards intimate partner violence in many developing country settings intimate partner violence is viewed as an acceptable practice and recent research has found, in some developing settings, remarkably high estimates of permissive attitudes towards intimate partner violence. For example, more than half of all women

in a recent study in Zimbabwe reported believing that, in at least some circumstances, wife beating is justified (Hindan, 2003). In a study in Uganda, 90 percent of women reported believing intimate partner violence is justified in at least one circumstance (Koenig *et al.*, 2003b). Likewise, a study of a number of sub-Saharan African countries found that acceptance of wife-beating ranged from 36 percent among women in Malawi to 89 percent among women in Mali (Rani *et al.*, 2004). A study from South Africa among nurses also found wife beating to be a justifiable practice (Kim & Motsei, 2002). Research from Latin America indicates that between 8 and 32 percent of individual believe wife beating is justified in cases of suspected infidelity (Heise *et al.*, 1999).

Evidence from South Asia also suggests that intimate partner violence is viewed as an acceptable practice. For example, one study from India found that a majority, greater than 76 percent, of women consider wife – beating justifiable (Jejeebhoy & Cook, 1997). Another study in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu found that intimate partner violence is broadly accepted (Jejeebhoy, 1998). And a study from Bangladesh indicated that a husband's beating of his wife is viewed as acceptable in a range of situations, such as the failure to perform domestic chores and suspected infidelity (Schuler *et al.*, 1996).

Intimate partner violence threatens the health and well-being of women. As reflected in a number of studies both in the US and globally, the consequences of intimate partner violence are varied and can adversely affect, among other things, women's

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physical, mental, and reproductive health (Heise *et al.*, 1999; Moore, 1999). As a general matter, research suggests that women with a history of intimate partner violence are more likely to report poor health than women who have never experienced intimate partner violence (Garcia-Moreno *et al.*, 2005). Empirical evidence also supports an association between intimate partner violence and poor reproductive health among women. Research has documented an association between intimate partner violence and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS (Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2000; Dunkley *et al.*, 2004). Research has also documented an association between intimate partner violence and an increased likelihood of unintended pregnancy (Goodwin *et al.*, 2000).

Partner violence not only affects the health, it has also impact of economy. The economic costs of violence to women and to society are substantial as well. Research on the total costs of intimate partner violence in the United States, for example, found annual losses of \$12.6 billion (Women's Advocates Inc, 2002). This is particularly significant given a recent report that found that, as a percentage of the gross domestic product, estimates of the costs of intimate partner violence were considerably higher in low- and middle – income countries than in high – income countries (WHO, 2004).

From the preceding paragraphs, it is evident that partner violence is very high in some of the countries and there are intriguing effects of this. But actually what is the belief of the victim regarding beating. Present study explores such options in both India and Iran, to see a cultural impact where Iran is predominantly a single religion country and India with much religious and diverse culture.

Beliefs about wife beating

This is such an important topic – important because there are just so many women out there who face domestic violence constantly, mostly at the hands of their husbands. It is so difficult for women to handle this situation because they just can't walk away and leave (especially those who are married and have kids and have no substantial or no income). Also, some women are just too scared to report the abuser to the police for fear of more harm coming their way from the perpetrator. However, status quo is dangerous and it may cost the victim much too dearly to be risked. So, what should women do to protect themselves from domestic violence?

Especially if you've been threatened with murder or bodily harm (but even otherwise), you need to take immediate measures to safeguard yourself. You could call one of the domestic violence hotlines and seek their support. They would provide you valuable advice on what specific measures can be taken to protect yourself. Also, you can consider obtaining a restraining order after informing the local law enforcement authority. However, it is better to get away from your abuser before taking any measures that could be viewed by the abuser in a hostile manner. Also, restraining orders would be of no use in offering you immediate protection - hence the better option would be to leave this abuser ASAP and thereby put yourself out of harm's way.

Another important thing is to know what gets your husband (abuser) dangerously angry. The kinds of anger that threatens you and makes you fear for your life. Try and not argue with the abuser when they are in that angry frame of mind. Just soak it all up. You don't want them to get angrier and trip; they might end up doing you bodily harm or worse. So, try and control the urge to debate back.

Be prepared to leave – always. In order to leave, you need to keep your essential items ready. You need to ensure you have a place to go, that you have adequate cash with you at all times, that you take all your important documents. You can keep all of this ready in a bag that can be taken with you at a moment's notice. You need to ensure though that the abuser has no clue as to the existence of this bag and your intentions.

Intimate partner violence is common in many societies and affects millions of women globally each year. According to recent research, between 10 and 70 percent of women around the world report having been physically abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives (Krug *et al.*, 2002, Garcia-Moreno *et al.*, 2005). High rates of intimate partner violence in developing countries are well documented. 67 percent of women in a study from Bangladesh reported having ever experienced intimate partner violence (Bates *et al.*, 2004); 52 percent of women in a study conducted in Nicaragua reported ever being abused (Ellsberg *et al.*, 1999a); 47 percent of reproductive aged women in a survey in rural Bangladesh reported having ever been beaten by their husbands (Schuler *et al.*, 1996); 38 percent of women in a study from Korea had been physically abused by their husbands in the past 12 months (Kim & Cho, 1992); 29 percent of women in a study con-

ducted in Haiti reported some form of physical violence in the past 12 months 13 percent of married women in a recent study from the Philippines reported having experienced physical violence from their husbands (Hindin & Adair, 2002); and in one of the only surveys of men on intimate partner violence, 20 percent of men surveyed in Bangkok reported physically abusing their wives (Hoffman *et al.*, 1994).

Purpose of the study

This study aims to look into the attitudes and experiences of domestic violence among women in Mysore, India and Esfahan, Iran.

The present research is an attempt to study this unpleasant phenomena and its relationship with certain demographic characteristics to pave the way for implementing preventive measures, early recognition and appropriate management strategies to ensure the safety of women and children in the family

- It is important to explore and identify attitudes and experiences of domestic violence in the lives of couples. This may aid in the early exposure and prevention of future domestic violence in society.

- Furthermore, this study aims at providing future research in the area a more defined direction, and a help guide to women, thus preventing violence against women and aiding policy makers in devising public policies related to the rights of women.

- It is very important for government agencies to be aware of the prevalence of intimate partner violence among married couples in India and Iran as well and assign them to allocate resources for further research in the field.

- Such research, in turn would be very useful to the development and implementation of community level awareness and intervention programs.

Research question and Hypothesis

Regarding the objectives of the study, the following research question was raised:

Q: Is there any significant difference in perception about wife beating of domestic violence victims in Mysore (India) and Isfahan (Iran)?

H01: There is no significant difference in perception about wife beating of domestic violence victims in Mysore (India) and Isfahan (Iran)?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 400 respondents included in this study, where 200 each from Iran and India. The sample

from Iran was selected at the City of Esfahan and sample from India was drawn from Mysore. Stratified Random sampling method was adapted to arrive at the number of respondents for the study. In both cities, the cases which have been referred to family courts were considered for the selection of sample.

Instruments

The Inventory of Beliefs about Wife Beating (Saunders *et al.*, 1987) was used to understand the participant's attitudes towards domestic violence. This measure contains 24 items in four subscales: wife beating is justified; wives gain from beatings; help should be given; offender should be punished and offender is responsible. This measure was used as a gauge to understand the prevalent attitudes about violence against women among the participants irrespective of their status. Some examples of the items under each subscale are «occasional violence by a husband towards his wife can help maintain the marriage» (wife beating is justified); «social agencies should do more to help battered women» (help should be given); (offender should be punished); «cases of wife beating are the fault of the husband» (offender is responsible). Respondents are asked to answer the questions based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from «Strongly Agree» (coded as «1») to «Strongly Disagree» (coded as «5»). For this analysis only the Wife Beating Is Justified subscale was used.

Apart from the above, the respondent's employment status was also considered either employed or unemployed.

Procedure

All participants were given an orientation before the questionnaire was handed out to the respective respondents. Orientation included a brief description of the nature, scope, purpose and importance of the study, role of the participants, their choice whether to participate or not, issues related to participant confidentiality and the resources to contact in any case where the participants felt the need to talk to someone about their thoughts or feelings as a results of answering question in the survey. They were also informed about the importance of this study. Once completed, the questionnaires were collected and placed in envelopes that were sealed to preserve confidentiality. All the questionnaires were reviewed to make sure all information was correctly completed.

Once the data were collected, they were coded

and fed to computer using SPSS for Windows (version 16.0). Multi-variate ANOVA was employed to

see the difference between countries, employment status and interaction for all the 4 components.

Table 1. Mean scores on various components of 'Beliefs about wife beating inventory' for Iranian and Indian domestic victims.

Components	Country	Mean	S.D.	t	p
C1: Wife beating is justified	Iran	19.51	2.21	5.987	.000
	India	18.45	1.17		
C2 : Wives gain from beating	Iran	23.04	1.46	7.401	.000
	India	21.86	1.72		
C3 : Help should be given	Iran	10.71	1.12	12.926	.000
	India	12.24	1.25		
C4 : Offender should be punished and is responsible	Iran	12.52	0.91	2.47	.014
	India	12.25	1.25		
Total	Iran	65.78	3.17	3.181	.002
	India	64.80	2.99		

Results and discussion

In order to see whether there is any significant difference in perception about wife beating of domestic violence victims in Mysore (India) and Isfahan (Iran), the collected data were analyzed as the results were shown in Table 1.

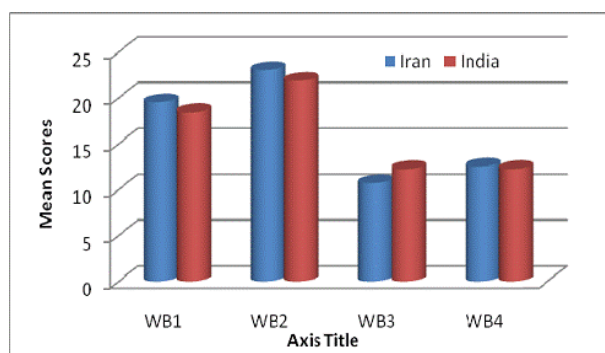


Figure 1. Mean scores on various components of 'Beliefs about wife beating inventory' for Iranian and Indian domestic victims.

All the components of «t» tests revealed that significant differences existed between domestic violence victims of Iran and India. In most of the components –Wife beating is justified, Wives gain from beatings, Offender should be punished and is responsible and in total scores Iranian domestic violence victims had higher scores than Indian domestic violence victims. Only under in one component –‘help should be given’ Indian domestic violence

victims had higher scores than Iranian domestic violence victims.

Wife beating justified: A significant difference was observed between Iranian and Indian respondents in this component where F value of 36.41 was found to be highly significant ($P=.000$). From the mean values it is clear that Iranian sample had significantly higher score (mean 19.51) than Indian sample. However, it was found that employment status did not have significant influence over the mean scores ($F=2.54$; $P=.112$). The interaction between country and employment was found to be significant ($F=5.72$; $P=.017$), where we find that in Iran unemployed sample had high scores and in India employed had high scores.

Wives gain from beatings: In this component, again Iranian sample had high scores (mean 23.04) than Indian sample (mean 21.86), which was statistically found to be significant ($F=60.73$; $P=.000$). Those who were unemployed (mean 22.82) had significantly ($F=23.88$; $P=.000$) high scores than employed once (mean 22.08). The interaction effect between country and employment status was also found to be significant ($F=21.37$; $P=.000$), where in Iran we don't see much difference between employed and unemployed, but in India, unemployed sample had higher scores than the employed sample.

Help should be given: A significant difference was observed between Iranian and Indian respondents in this component where F value of 177.71 was found to be highly significant ($P=.000$). From the mean values it is clear that Indian sample had sig-

nificantly higher score (mean 12.24) than Iranian sample (mean 10.71). Those who were unemployed (mean 11.77) had significantly ($F=26.43$; $P=.000$) high scores than employed once (mean 11.18). The interaction between country and employment was found to be non-significant.

Offender should be punished and is responsible: In this component, Iranian sample had high scores (mean 12.52) than Indian sample (mean 12.25), which was statistically found to be significant ($F=6.13$; $P=.014$). Employment status ($F=1.02$; $P=.314$) and the interaction between country and employment status ($F=3.04$; $P=.082$) were found to be statistically non-significant.

Conclusions

Regarding the results of the study, we can summarize the main findings of the study as follows:

- Iranian sample had high scores on justification of beating wife, gain for wives and responsibility and punishment for husband
- Indian sample had high scores on rendering help for the victims of domestic violence
- Unemployed victims had high scores on gain and rendering help

In the present study, it was found that more justification, gain as well as punishment were found for Iranian sample than Indian sample. Rendering help was the only component where Indian sample had high scores than their counterparts in Iran. For reasons unknown, Iran predominantly a country with Islam followers tend to be more rigid, traditional and rule bounded. This may be one of the reasons to have high scores by the Iranian sample. Since last few years awareness regarding domestic and partner violence is increasing and accordingly many NGO and government agencies are working for women victims. This naturally increases support systems among Indian sample.

Intimate partner violence is common in many societies and affects millions of women globally each year. According to recent research, between 10 and 70 percent of women around the world report having been physically abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives (Krug *et al.*, 2002, Garcia-Moreno *et al.*, 2005). High rates of intimate partner violence in developing countries are well documented. 67 percent of women in a study from Bangladesh reported having ever experienced intimate partner violence (Bates *et al.*, 2004); 52 percent of women in a study conducted in Nicaragua reported

ever being abused (Ellsberg *et al.*, 1999a); 47 percent of reproductive aged women in a survey in rural Bangladesh reported having ever been beaten by their husbands (Schuler *et al.*, 1996); 38 percent of women in a study from Korea had been physically abused by their husbands in the past 12 months (Kim & Cho, 1992); 29 percent of women in a study conducted in Haiti reported some form of physical violence in the past 12 months (Gage, 2005); 13 percent of married women in a recent study from the Philippines reported having experienced physical violence from their husbands (Hindan & Adair, 2002); and in one of the only surveys of men on intimate partner violence, 20 percent of men surveyed in Bangkok reported physically abusing their wives (Hoffman *et al.*, 1994). Also, women experiencing intimate partner violence have a higher risk of poor mental health, including issues such as sociality, anxiety, and substance abuse (Campbell *et al.*, 1997; Golding 1999). Similarly, women who have ever experienced violence are more likely to report symptoms of mental distress (Garcia-Moreno *et al.*, 2005), emotional distress (Ellsberg *et al.*, 1999b).

In India, violence against women is also pervasive. Forty percent of women in a six state survey in India reported experiencing physical abuse (Ahuja, 2000). In a study of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, 40 percent women reported having ever been beaten by their husbands (Jejeebhoy & Cook, 1997). Between 22 and 45 percent of women reported being hit by their husband is a study conducted in South India (Rao, 1997), 34 percent of women reported marital violence in a more recent study (Krishnan, 2005), and 25 percent of husbands reported one or more episodes of physical violence against their wives in North India (Koenig *et al.*, 2006). Still other recent research in India found the prevalence of reported intimate partner violence to be approximately 22 percent (IIPS & ORC Macro, 2001, as cited in Koenig *et al.*, 2006). Although these and other prevalence estimates do vary considerably, they none the less clearly demonstrate that the practice of intimate partner violence in India is widespread and frequent.

As far as violence prevention strategies for women is concerned, the followings can be recommended:

- Constitution of more Women's committees to keep vigil on violence against women.
- Effective functioning of women's committees' proactive support from police to victimizes women.
- To support social workers committee and justice consultant in family's courts.

- To provide employment opportunities for women.
- Focus on information, education communication (IEC) Campaigns against violence.
- To make specific courts to deal with violence against women.
- Women's rights activities can make informal groups of formal committees with in changes to forces that is pressed legislators committee also they hold legal conference public legal criticisms and aware from legal obstacle that is decreased violence against women's.

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