

Does Women's Perception of Domestic Violence have a bearing on Reproductive Health and health seeking practice in India? - An exploration based on NFHS-2 Data

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Abstract:

Background:

The domestic violence until recently was a taboo subject, which has of late being held a major social problem to have implications on the health status of women. Family is believed to be sacrosanct and its functioning are beyond the purview of public debate and questioning. However, recent spurt in literature shows that family is increasingly becoming a ground for intense violence. Domestic violence is deep rooted in the patriarchal system which reflects a pattern of coercive control that one-person exercises over another and the abuse includes physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, economic abuse. The World Bank approximation is that rape and domestic violence accounts for 5 % of the healthy years of life lost to women of reproductive age especially among women from developing countries. This coercive behaviour or abuse continues as society accepts it a norm and women perceive to justify them. The paper examines the association between women's perception of domestic violence and utilization of health services. Besides, the pattern of experience of domestic violence is also studied to gauge the prevalence of domestic violence.

Study design:

The NFHS-2 has asked questions on women's attitude towards wife beating, i.e., whether husband is justified in beating his wife for six reasons. These reasons are (i) if husband suspects her of being unfaithful, (ii) her natal family does not give expected money, jewellery or other items, (iii) if she disrespects her in-laws, (iv) if she goes out without telling him, (v) if she neglects the house or children or (vi) if she does not cook food properly.

The NFHS-2 asked women if they had been beaten or mistreated physically since age 15 years. The study makes a caution attempt to understand whether there is a relationship between domestic violence and utilization of health services.

Hypothesis: It is assumed that women who undergo domestic violence are less likely to utilize health services. Similarly, women who perceive to justify beating by husband and other family members tend to utilize less health services.

Data and Methodology:

The National Family Health Survey-2 (1998-99), India has collected information on women's perception on domestic violence. Bi-variate analysis followed with logistic regression has been used to examine the association between domestic violence and utilization of RCH services.

Preliminary findings:

In India, a little more than half of the women accept at least one reason as justification of wife beating. As expected, proportion of women who agree that wife beating is justified declines with the increase in standard of living of the household. About one-fourth of

women reported to have experienced violence since age 15 and majority reported husband to be the person who has inflicted violence on them. It is expected that women who have experienced violence at home tend to utilize less health services even after controlling for socio-economic and demographic factors. Such as (1) education of women (2) education of spouse (3) work status of women (4) occupation of spouse (5) standard of living index (6) availability of health services (7) age of the women (8) marital duration (9) family status (10) residential status (11) parity and (12) sex composition of living children.