

Spousal Violence in the Balkan Countries

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BACKGROUND (1)

- Intimate partner violence is present in almost **all societies** and is associated with considerable morbidity.
- Little is known about the magnitude of intimate partner violence and the factors associated with it in **post-communist countries**.

BACKGROUND (2)

- Intimate partner violence is more common in **patriarchal societies** and settings where violence is commonly used in conflict or to gain ascendance.
- Thus, there has been particular concern about its prevalence in **patriarchal transitional countries**, where violence has become commonplace and social relations have been disrupted.

BACKGROUND (3)

- Intimate partner violence is integrally linked to ideas of male superiority over women. These are manifest in different ways in different societies, but violence is usually used:
 - To create and enforce gender hierarchy and punish transgressions;
 - To resolve relationship conflict, and;
 - To seek resolution of crisis of masculinity by providing an (often transient) sense of powerfulness.

BACKGROUND (4)

- Different factors influence, and indicate, the status of women and men in a society:
 - **Social and demographic characteristics** (of the women and men);
 - **Economic** circumstances, and;
 - The characteristics of their **relationship**.

BACKGROUND (5)

- The following factors may additionally influence responses to conflict and a perception of emotional insecurity:
 - Alcohol consumption;
 - Depression;
 - Experience of abuse in childhood, and;
 - The strength of family and social networks.

BACKGROUND (6)

- Albania is a small country, and 58% of the population lives in rural areas.
- After the collapse of the communist regime in 1990 many people migrated from rural to urban areas. The population of Tirana, the capital city, increased rapidly from 150,000 in 1991 to more than 500,000 a decade later.
- Albania has been described as a particularly patriarchal society.

STUDY AIM

- To describe the magnitude of the problem of physical violence among married women in Tirana and the demographic and social factors associated with it.

DESIGN & STUDY POPULATION

- A cross sectional study was carried out in Tirana in July-October 2003.
- A representative sample of 1039 married women aged 25-65 living in Tirana and recorded in the 2001 census.
- Response rate: 87% (1039 of 1196).

DATA COLLECTION

- A structured questionnaire asking each woman about:
 - Age, education, religion, occupation/profession, employment status, place of birth (rural or urban) and age of move to Tirana (if any) of the woman and of her husband;
 - Number of children, household size, household disposable income (from all sources, after rent is paid);
 - Whether the husband was “violent and constantly jealous,” was drunk (almost) every day, and whether the woman knew if he had been abused by his parents during childhood or had witnessed violence between his parents.

OUTCOME MEASURE

- Women's recent experience of spousal violence was measured by a question asking whether in the past year she had been "*hit, slapped, kicked, or physically hurt*" by her husband.
- Those answering "Yes" were asked how many times this had happened.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (1)

- **Descriptive statistics** for the prevalence of physical spousal violence and social and demographic variables.
- **Bivariate logistic regression** to examine the associations between these variables and **Student's *t* test** to compare the mean number of children in a household and number of household members in the two abuse categories.
- **Multiple variable logistic regression** to examine the independent associations of covariates with women's experience of physical abuse.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (2)

- The fit of the logistic regression models was tested by likelihood ratio and Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness of fit tests.
- All statistical analyses were done with SPSS 10.0 for Windows.

Episodes of past year physical abuse

None	1	2	3	4	5-9	10+	Total
655 (63%)	72 (7%)	45 (4%)	97 (9%)	39 (4%)	104 (10%)	27 (3%)	1039 (100%)



37%

Wife's characteristics	Abused (N=384)	Not abused (N=655)	OR (95%CI)
Age			
46-65 y.	121 (31.5)	258 (39.4)	1.00
35-45 y.	112 (29.2)	202 (30.8)	1.18 (0.86-1.62)
25-34 y.	151 (39.3)	195 (29.8)	1.65 (1.22-2.23)
Education			
>12 y.	131 (34.7)	140 (21.5)	1.00
9-12 y.	178 (47.2)	350 (53.7)	0.54 (0.40-0.73)
0-8 y.	68 (18.0)	162 (24.8)	0.45 (0.31-0.65)
Employment			
White collar	130 (34.4)	146 (22.6)	1.00
Housekeepers	47 (12.4)	86 (13.3)	0.61 (0.40-0.94)
Blue collar	105 (27.8)	229 (35.5)	0.51 (0.37-0.72)
Unemployed	96 (25.4)	184 (28.5)	0.59 (0.42-0.82)

Wife's characteristics	Abused (N=384)	Not abused (N=655)	OR (95%CI)
Origin			
Urban area	166 (44.4)	329 (51.4)	1.00
Rural area (<10y.)	126 (33.7)	192 (30.0)	1.30 (0.97-1.74)
Rural area (≥10y.)	82 (21.9)	119 (18.6)	1.37 (0.97-1.91)
Income			
High	61 (16.6)	92 (14.6)	1.00
Middle	155 (42.2)	267 (42.2)	0.88 (0.60-1.28)
Low	151 (41.1)	273 (43.2)	0.83 (0.57-1.22)
Educat. discrep.			
Women > educ.	105 (27.9)	71 (10.9)	1.00
Equally educ.	249 (66.2)	494 (75.9)	0.34 (0.24-0.48)
Men > educ.	22 (5.9)	86 (13.2)	0.17 (0.10-0.30)

Husband's characteristics	Committed violence	Not committed	OR (95%CI)
Age			
46-69 y.	152 (40.0)	304 (46.7)	1.00
35-45 y.	137 (36.1)	248 (38.1)	1.10 (0.83-1.47)
25-34 y.	91 (23.9)	99 (15.2)	1.84 (1.30-2.60)
Education			
>12 y.	74 (19.6)	152 (23.3)	1.00
9-12 y.	181 (48.0)	361 (55.3)	1.03 (0.74-1.43)
0-8 y.	122 (32.4)	140 (21.4)	1.79 (1.24-2.59)
Employment			
White collar	100 (26.5)	153 (23.8)	1.00
Blue collar	189 (50.1)	322 (50.0)	0.90 (0.66-1.22)
Unemployed	88 (23.3)	169 (26.2)	0.80 (0.56-1.14)

Husband's characteristics	Committed violence	Not committed	OR (95%CI)
Origin			
Urban area	149 (38.8)	368 (56.4)	1.00
Rural area <10y.)	116 (30.2)	196 (30.0)	1.46 (1.08-1.97)
Rural area (≥10y.)	119 (31.0)	89 (13.6)	3.30 (2.36-4.61)
Jealous			
No	257 (68.4)	468 (72.2)	1.00
Yes	119 (31.6)	180 (27.8)	1.20 (0.91-1.59)
Drunk everyday			
No	333 (88.1)	578 (89.3)	1.00
Yes	45 (11.9)	69 (10.7)	1.13 (0.76-1.69)

Multivariable-adjusted logistic regression: Model 1

(with educational level of women and men)

Variable	OR	95%CI	P value
Age of women			
46-65 y.	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
35-45 y.	1.31	0.92-1.88	0.13
25-34 y.	1.47	1.04-2.09	0.03
Educational level of women			
High	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Middle	0.45	0.27-0.74	<0.01
Low	0.27	0.15-0.49	<0.01
Employment status of women			
White collar	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Blue collar	0.64	0.41-1.00	0.05
Housekeepers	0.36	0.14-0.96	0.04
Unemployed	0.25	0.10-0.63	<0.01
Educational level of men			
High	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Middle	1.90	1.17-3.08	0.01
Low	5.01	2.91-8.64	<0.01
Origin of men			
Urban	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Rural (<10y.)	1.43	1.03-2.00	0.03
Rural (\geq 10y.)	3.31	2.29-4.80	<0.01

Multivariable-adjusted logistic regression: Model 2 (with educational discrepancy)

Variable	OR	95%CI	P value
Employment status of women			
White collar	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Blue collar	0.97	0.52-1.80	0.92
Housekeepers	0.89	0.52-1.50	0.65
Unemployed	0.55	0.36-0.86	0.01
Origin of men			
Urban	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Rural (<10y.)	1.39	1.01-1.94	0.05
Rural (≥ 10y.)	3.25	2.25-4.69	<0.01
Educational discrepancy			
Women more educated	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Equal	0.40	0.28-0.58	<0.01
Men more educated	0.21	0.11-0.39	<0.01
Employment status of men			
White collar	1.00	<i>reference</i>	-
Blue collar	1.27	0.84-1.92	0.26
Unemployed	3.36	1.41-8.00	0.01

DISCUSSION (1)

- Spousal violence is highly prevalent in Tirana, and, indeed, the prevalence of intimate partner violence in the past year is one of the highest reported internationally.
- Women with higher status (those best educated, with higher status employment, and those more educated than their spouses) were most likely to report violence.

DISCUSSION (2)

- Less powerful men (those less educated and unemployed) were more likely to be violent.
- Men who came from rural areas, especially those who had lived in rural areas longer, were more likely to be violent.
- Younger women were more likely to experience physical abuse.

DISCUSSION (3)

- These findings related to women's and men's status are in keeping with theories of causes of intimate partner violence that argue that violence is used to enforce gender hierarchies and, particularly, used when men have a sense of powerlessness because their social position makes them feel “unsuccessful” as men.
- Research from other countries has often also shown, however, that the most educationally and socially empowered women gain a level of protection.
- Such protection is not seen in among the women of Tirana, possibly because Albania is known to be a country with particularly conservative ideas about sex roles.

DISCUSSION (4)

- The finding that men of rural origin were independently at greater risk of abusing women than those of urban origin has not been reported often.
- The explanation may be cultural or could be due to an unmeasured confounder. In rural areas there may be different norms about a man's right to exert control over his wife, and weaker sanctions against violent behaviour.

DISCUSSION (5)

- It is interesting to consider the extent to which these findings have been influenced by the transition in Albania.
- In the past 15 years, rapid movement of people to cities has occurred, economic inequality has increased, the position of women has changed (albeit slowly), and unemployment has become very high.

DISCUSSION (6)

- This has brought rapid changes to many Albanian families, and many women are more independent and have greater economic responsibility whereas men are less able to fulfil their culturally expected roles as (family) protectors and providers.
- The tension this has created may have led to an increase in intimate partner violence, especially among the groups of women who have been in the forefront of these changes.

STUDY LIMITATIONS (1)

- Under-reporting of intimate partner violence in research is common, especially when exposure is assessed with one question.
- Sexual violence and emotional violence were not measured.
- Lifetime exposure was not measured, so we cannot discount the possibility that differences in prevalence between higher and lower status women were due to differences in duration of violence in marriage.

STUDY LIMITATIONS (2)

- Some risk factors for violence, such as alcohol consumption and relationship dynamics or conflict, were not assessed comprehensively, and this may explain why they were not shown to be associated with violence in the final models.
- Relationships found in one study of this nature cannot be assumed to be causal.

CONCLUSIONS (1)

- Intimate partner physical violence is highly prevalent in transitional Albania.
- The most empowered women are most likely to experience it and the least powerful men are most likely to perpetrate it.
- Men of rural origin are at increased risk of abusing their spouse in this country, which has experienced considerable internal migration in the past few years.

CONCLUSIONS (2)

- Among the challenges for post-communist Albania, and its health professionals, is the need to reduce the prevalence of intimate partner violence, as well as to provide support for women who are in, or have been in, violent relationships and to be aware of the ways in which intimate partner violence influences psychological and physical health.

Factors associated with spousal physical violence in Albania: cross sectional study

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