ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Effects of Domestic Violence on Academic Achievement among University Students in Selangor, Malaysia

Sohayla M Attalla[1,2], Abby Amira Bt Rome[1]

[1] Forensic Medicine Unit, International Medical School (IMS), Management and Science University (MSU), 40100 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
[2] Forensic Medicine and Clinical Toxicology department, Faculty of Medicine, Mansoura University, 35516, Mansoura, Egypt.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Domestic violence is a serious issue that has often been overlooked by the society. It includes any physical, emotional or sexual violence that occurs between family members. Year after year, many cases of domestic violence have been reported in news and the numbers keep increasing from time to time. Experiencing this violence may give negative impacts on the victim. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of domestic violence among university students in Selangor, Malaysia and to discover its effects on their academic achievement. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was implemented in a form of questionnaire that was distributed to 368 university students at Selangor, Malaysia in the period from June 2018 to December 2018. **Results:** Results showed that 69 respondents (18.7%) had experienced DV throughout their life; all of them suffered physical violence, 95.7% had suffered emotional violence while 14.5% had suffered sexual violence. Age, gender, residence, family income, institution's type and speciality of study has no significant association with DV while, race, religion and parents' status were significantly associated with DV. Also it was noticed that out of these 69 respondents that had experience of domestic violence, 36 of them were studying in private universities and 33 of them were studying in public universities. Most of those experienced domestic violence showed low CGPA. **Conclusion:** It is concluded that there is low prevalence of DV among university students in Selangor. Experiencing DV during childhood has an impact on the academic achievement of the victim in the future university life.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Physical violence, Sexual violence, Emotional violence, Academic achievements

Corresponding Author:
Sohayla M Attalla, PhD
Email: sohayla@msu.edu.my
Tel: +603 5521 6515

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) has been outlined in the Malaysian Domestic Violence Act (DVA) as any act against a partner, former partner, a child, an incapable adult or any other having family relationship (1). Such as putting or attempting to put the victim in concern of physical injury or inflicting physical injury to the victim. Additionally, it includes compelling the victim to be engaged in any conduct/act, confining the victim unwillingly, or inflicting intentional mischief or injury to property so as to distress or nettle the victim (2). In majority of cases, the perpetrators are those who have been in positions of trust, intimacy and power. Meanwhile, the victims are from any gender, residence, age or even income level (3). However, women victims were more common than men (1).

Experiencing DV has been shown to result in many problems such as running away from home, anxiety, depression and suicide (4). Other than that, it might result in prolonged posttraumatic physical and psychological disorders (3). These occurred due to the victims' silence that refused to disclose the domestic violence that they have gone through (5). The effects on academic achievement of the victims could be due to the associated effects of DV as poor concentration in class, low learning abilities, low participation and truancy (6).

Domestic violence is a common issue in all countries, including Malaysia. It was one of the major challenges that we had to face in this era of modernization and urbanization. Year after year, many cases of domestic violence have been reported in news, no matter through the television, social media, newspaper and radio. In Malaysia, domestic violence cases have increased 66% in the period from 2012 to 2016 (7).

Previous study showed that children who experienced domestic violence might have negative effects on their cognitive, emotions and behaviour that gave impact on their future academic achievement (6). Therefore, the current research aimed to identify the incidence and types of DV experienced among university students and

to study its effects on their academic achievement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study design has been used through a questionnaire that was distributed among university students from various universities in Selangor, including both public and private universities. The questionnaire has consisted of two sections. Section A was used to obtain the socio-demographic data e.g., age, gender, race, religion, institutions, field of study, monthly income, residence and parent status as well as CGPA. Meanwhile, Section B was designed by the researchers to obtain the data needed for the details of violence experienced and its effects on their life including its effects on their academic achievements. For content validation, the questionnaire was checked by five faculty members for the simplicity, relevance, and clarity of each statement. For reliability, the test–retest method was used. The questionnaire was provided to a group of 30 subjects twice with an interval of 15 days, then the results were rechecked.

The questionnaire was distributed to 368 university students at Selangor, Malaysia in the period from June 2018 to December 2018. All information given by respondents was keep as confidential and the data collected were only used for research purpose. Written informed consents were also obtained from all respondents for their involvements in this research to prove the facts that their participations were voluntary. Analysis of the collected data was done by the statistical package for the social science (SPSS 25.0). Frequency test was used to determine the incidence of DV among the respondents and chi square test was used to determine the association between DV and different characteristics of the victim.

RESULTS

Results showed that 69 (18.7%) respondents had experienced domestic violence throughout their life while, the remaining 299 (81.3%) respondents did not have any experience of domestic violence. The types of domestic violence encountered by the respondents are illustrated in Table 1 and show that all those experienced DV had suffered physical violence (69 respondents), 95.7% had suffered emotional violence while 14.5% had suffered sexual violence. Most of the respondents had experienced more than one type of domestic violence, mainly physical and emotional violence (n=56) while, 10 respondents had experienced all types of domestic violence (physical, sexual and emotional) and only a minority of them experienced one type of domestic violence, which was physical violence (n=3) (Table I).

Regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of DV victims, Table II is showing that age, gender, residence, family income, institution's type and speciality of study

Table I: Prevalence of domestic violence among the studied sample and the distribution of the types of domestic violence experienced by the respondents

Types of domestic violence	n	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
No violence	299	81.3	81.3	81.3
Domestic violence	69	18.7	18.7	18.7
Physical violence	3	0.8	0.8	82.1
Physical and emotional violence	56	15.2	15.2	97.3
Physical, sexual and emotional violence	10	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	368	100.0	100.0	

Table II: the relationship between the domestic violence and the socio-demographic characteristics of victims

Socio-demographic characteristics		Total No. of DV	Types of DV			Chi-square (χ^2)	P
			Physical	Sexual	Emotional		
Age "year"	18-20	26	26	5	25	0.161	0.688
	21-25	43	43	5	41		
Gender	Femal	50	50	7	47	0.036	0.850
	Male	19	19	3	19		
Race	Chinese	11	11	0	10	9.580	0.022
	Indian	11	11	3	11		
	Malay	46	46	7	44		
	Other	1	1	0	1		
Religion	Buddha	8	8	0	8	15.30	0.002
	Christian	2	2	0	1		
	Hindu	11	11	3	11		
	Islam	48	48	7	46		
Residence	Rural	16	16	2	15	0.515	0.470
	Urban	53	53	8	51		
Family income	High	7	7	2	7	0.887	0.642
	Moderate	18	18	4	17		
	Low	44	44	4	42		
Parent status	Divorced	23	23	3	22	44.60	0.000
	Married	42	42	7	40		
	Widow	4	4	0	4		
Institution	Private	36	36	6	35	0.161	0.689
	Public	33	33	4	31		
Course	Medical	27	27	1	24	0.790	0.374
	Non-medical	42	42	9	42		

has no significant effect while, only 3 characteristics had significant effect that include race (DV was higher in

Malay), religion (DV was most prevalent among Muslim) and parents' status (DV was higher with married parents) (p value of less than 0.05, specifically 0.022, 0.002 and 0.0001 respectively). Out of these 69 respondents that had experience of domestic violence, 36 of them were studying in private universities and 33 of them were studying in public universities (Table II).

Table III: the associations between demographic characteristics and academic achievement of the victim

Demographic characteristics		CGPA			Chi-square (χ^2)	p
		High	Low	Total		
Occurrence of DV	Yes	4	65	69	184.729	0.000
	No	261	38	299		
Age of occurrence of DV	< 6 y	0	11	11	185.032	0.000
	6-12 y	2	34	36		
	>12 y	2	20	22		
Age of the victim	18-20 years old	93	38	131	0.105	0.746
	21-25 years old	172	65	237		
Gender	Female	196	74	270	0.170	0.680
	Male	69	29	98		
Race	Chinese	76	14	90	19.085	0.000
	Indian	14	16	30		
	Malay	165	72	237		
	Others	10	1	11		
Religion	Buddha	51	9	60	19.660	0.000
	Christian	32	6	38		
	Hindu	11	15	26		
	Islam	171	73	244		
Residence	Rural	72	26	98	0.141	0.707
	Urban	193	77	270		
Family income	High	36	10	46	1.520	0.468
	Moderate	72	33	105		
	Low	157	60	217		
Parents' status	Divorced	16	24	40	26.739	0.000
	Married	237	70	307		
	Widow/widower	12	9	21		
Institution	Private	138	46	184	1.631	0.202
	Public	127	57	184		
Course	Medical	125	42	167	1.223	0.269
	Non-medical	140	61	201		

The most frequent reported perpetrators of DV were victims' own fathers (42%). Meanwhile, 29% of the victims said that their siblings were the perpetrator,

followed by uncles (15%). The least ones reported as perpetrator were mothers either alone or with the father as parents.

Most of the respondents who did not experience any domestic violence showed high CGPA (p <0.01) (CGPA of 3.00 and below was considered as low CGPA while, 3.01 and above was considered as high CGPA). Moreover there is a significant association between the age of occurrence of DV and CGPA during university life of the respondents ($x2$=185.032, p=0.000) and unfortunately majority of the victims (n=36) had experienced DV during the age of 6-12 years old (childhood stage) and most of them (n=34) had lower CGPA compared to other victims, who experienced domestic violence during the age below 6 years old and above 12 years old (Table III). Table IV showed the effects of DV on the victim in class. More than half of the victims reported to feel mentally unstable but, only 28.9% of them received psychiatric consultations. Majority of the victims said that they were unable to concentrate and participate actively in class. In addition, 81.2% of them had been absent to class while, 76.8% said that they were unable to submit their homework or assignments on time.

Table IV: Distribution on the effects of domestic violence on the victim's behaviour in class

Effects on psychological and behaviour in class	Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently		Total %
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Feeling mentally unstable	16	23.2	30	43.5	17	24.6	91.3
Receive psychiatric consultation	9	13.0	11	15.9	0	0.0	28.9
Absent to class	22	31.9	28	40.6	6	8.7	81.2
Unable to participate actively in class	19	27.5	30	43.5	9	13.0	84.0
Unable to concentrate in class	24	34.8	23	33.3	18	26.1	94.2
Unable to submit assignments on time	27	39.1	20	29.0	6	8.7	76.8

On studying the types of DV, the most frequent physical violence behaviors experienced by the victims was being pushed by the perpetrator that occurred in all victims (n=50), followed by being slapped or punched by the perpetrator, followed by being pulled at hair and kicked by the perpetrator. Other physical violence behaviors such as using an object to hit the victims, using hot water, cigarette, iron or others to cause burn on victims and tried to strangle the victims were experienced by less than half of the victims (Figure 1).

Sexual violence was the least type of DV experienced, where only a quarter of the victims experienced it. The highest behavior of sexual violence reported was being forced to be involved in prostitution and watching pornography then was taking sexually explicit photos of themselves and being forced to expose their bodies. The least was being forced to have sex with the perpetrator
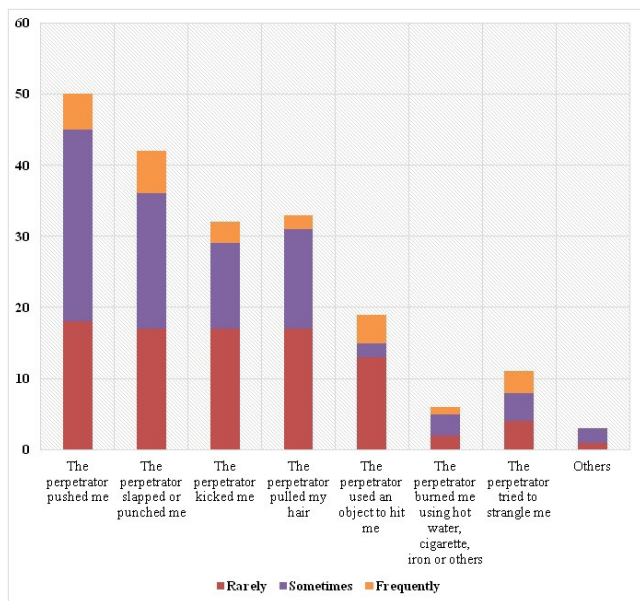
Figure 1: Physical violence behaviors

and other behaviors such as touching private parts of the victims and asking the victims to touch the perpetrator's private parts (Figure 2).

Emotional violence behaviors reported by majority of the victims were that the perpetrator always angry and shouting to the victim (n=58), followed by saying bad things to humiliate the victim (n=50). Other than that, a total of 44 victims reported that the perpetrator treated them like someone who was not valuable. The perpetrator had also threatened to harm the victim (n=44). Next, 35 out of the 69 victims reported that they never been complimented and 34 victims were being prohibited by the perpetrator to socialize with others such as neighbors, friends and family. Other emotional violence behaviors such as humiliating the victims in public and refusal to communicate had also been reported by the victims, but only a minority of them (Figure 3).

DISCUSSION

This study has been applied on university students in Selangor Malaysia to explore the incidence of DV, the characteristics of the victims, and to check the effects of DV on their academic achievement. Results showed that 18.8% of the respondents are victims of DV. The low prevalence found in this study was contrary to the police statistics, which stated Selangor as the top place for having the highest number of domestic violence cases in Malaysia. Selangor also recorded a total of 4064 cases of domestic violence from 2013 to September 2018 (8). This can be explained either due to the inability of the victims to admit that they were actually a victim of domestic violence as they might feel embarrassed or scared to do so. It could also meant that the only a minority of the victims were university students. Previous research also proved that some of the domestic violence
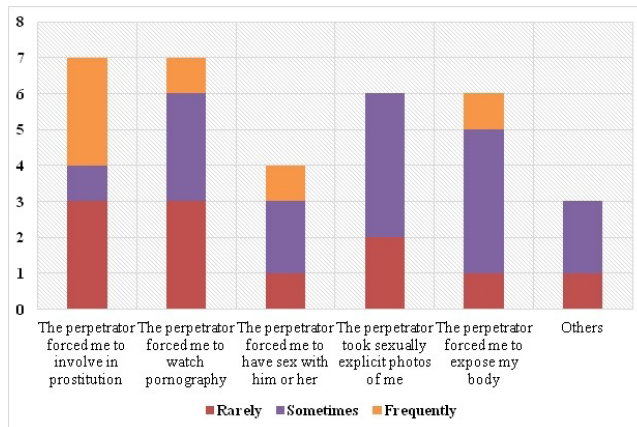

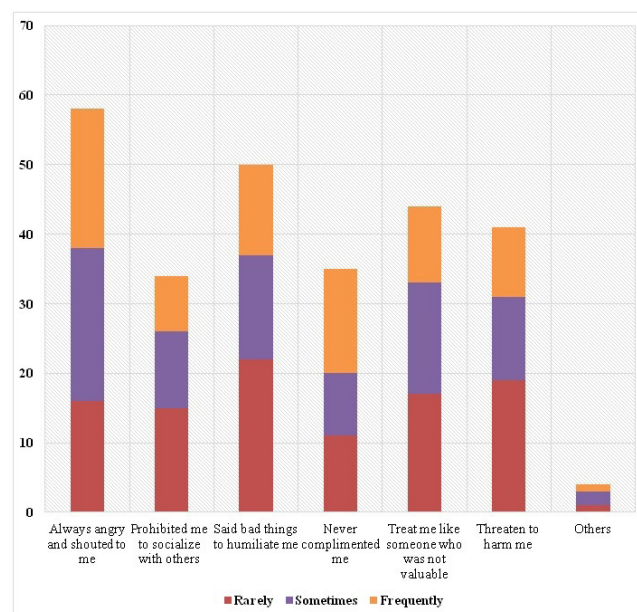**Figure 2: Sexual violence behavior**

Figure 3: Emotional violence behaviors

victims refused to report it (9).

There was only a slight difference regarding the prevalence of domestic violence based on institutions. Out of the 69 victim of DV, 36 were studied in private universities. This might be due to the living environment of the students. Physical violence was the most common encountered type of DV then the emotional violence (95.7%) and lastly, sexual violence (14.5%). This could be due to incorporation of corporal punishments among parents in educating their children (10). This finding was in line with some researches that reported the commonest DV is the physical violence then the emotional violence and lastly, sexual violence (9 , 11). However, other studies showed that emotional violence recorded as the highest among other types of DV (10, 12, 13, 14). Sexual violence had the least prevalence that may be due to non reporting (15). There were also many evidences for co-occurrence of different types of DV (10 , 16).

Most of the victims (42%) reported their own fathers as

the perpetrators of the DV, followed by siblings (29%) and uncles (15%). Meanwhile, the least ones that were reported as perpetrator were mothers. This was also shown in previous studies that fathers or any male relatives were more likely to be the DV perpetrators than females (13, 17).

Physical violence behaviors experienced by the victims involved in the current research are previously reported and also recorded to be combined with all other types of DV either emotional or sexual (13).

The Malays were the most frequent DV victims compared to other races. This was explained by the existence of gender bias among the Malays culture (18) or may be due to the high percentage of the Malay in the studied sample and in the Malaysian community generally, same concept can be also applied to Muslims being the high percentage in the studied sample and in the Malaysian community generally. In contrary some other studies stated that DV could occur to anyone, regardless of their age, gender, race, religion, economic status or even nationality (13).

Majority of the victims (n=36) reported that they were at the age of 6-12 years old during the occurrence of DV and the results showed them to have low CGPA compared to other victims, who experienced DV during the age of below 6 years old and above 12 years old. Most of the respondents who did not experience any DV showed high CGPA. This finding was in line with a study done previously (14). A research done previously stated that a number of factors outside the classroom, including home environments could affect the individual academic achievement (19). Positive home environments enriched school experiences, while negative environments could result in negative effects towards academic achievement and behaviours in class (14). The most common effect reported was loss of interest in learning as confirmed in previous study (13). Also, this might happened subconsciously because of the feeling of insecure that caused them to be on lookout for danger. Lack of concentration could also be due to sleep disturbances that might be experienced by the victims that usually include nightmares and insomnia, which indirectly affecting their concentrations in class (20).

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there is low prevalence of DV among university students in Selangor. Experiencing DV during childhood has an impact on the academic achievement of the victim in the future university life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

1. Awang H. and Hariharan S. Determinants of Domestic Violence: Evidence from Malaysia. Journal of Family Violence. 2011; 26 (6): 459 - 464.

2. Nor Azilah, J. Country Report - Malaysia. Annual Report by United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI), Fuchu, Tokyo, Japan. 2005. PP. 118–130.

3. Wright M O, Crawford E, Del Castillo D. Childhood emotional maltreatment and later psychological distress among college students: The mediating role of maladaptive schemas. Child Abuse and Neglect. 2009; 33 (1).

4. Aghakhani N, Nia H S, Moosavi E, Eftekhari A, Zarei A, Bahrami N, Nikoonejad A R. Study of the Types of Domestic Violence Committed Against Women Referred to the Legal Medical Organization in Urmia - Iran. Iranian Journal of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. 2015; 9 (4).

5. Zambon M P, De Бvila A C, De Medeiros M M, Guglielminetti R, Marmo D B. Domestic violence against children and adolescents: a challenge. Rev Assoc Med Bras. 2012; 58 (4): 465-471

6. Tambawal M U. Effect of Violence in the Home, Society and Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto Metropolis. Presented at the 36th Annual International Conference of the Counselling Association of Nigeria (Casson), Obafemi Awolowo University. 2012

7. Chow MD. Domestic violence cases on the rise, 5,796 cases recorded last year. New Straits Times, 2017. Retrieved from https://www.nst.com.my/ news/nation/2017/04/233984/ domestic-violence-cases-rise-5796-cases-recorded-last-year

8. The Sun Daily. Johor is second highest in domestic violence in Malaysia. The Sun Daily, 2018. Retrieved from https://www.thesundaily.my/ archive/johor-second-highest-domestic-violence-malaysia-XUARCH580484

9. Dlamini S L, and Makondo D. Effects of Child Abuse on the Academic Performance of Primary School Learners in the Manzini Region, Swaziland. World Journal of Education, 2017; 7 (5), 58.

10. Mehlhausen-Hassoen D, Winstok Z. The Association Between Family Violence in Childhood and Mental Health in Adulthood as Mediated by the Experience of Childhood. Child Indicators Research. 2018; 1 – 20.

11. Fageeh W M K. Factors associated with domestic violence: A cross-sectional survey among women in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. BMJ Open. 2014; 4 (2), 1 – 8.

12. Finkelhor D. Prevalence of child victimization, abuse, crime, and violence exposure. In White JW, Koss M P, and Kazdin AE (Eds.). Violence

against women and children: Mapping the terrain. 2011. Pp: 9 – 29. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

13. Kanchiputu P G, Mwale M. Effects of Domestic Violence on Children's Education: The Case Study of Mpemba, in Blantyre District [Malawi]. Journal of Psychological Abnormalities. 2017; 05 (02): 1-5.

14. Ngisa F S, Muriungi P, Mwenda E. Impact of Child Abuse on Academic Performance of Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Kieni West Sub-County , Nyeri County . International Journal of Business and Management Invention. 2017; 6 (9): 62–72.

15. Shuib R, Endut N, Ali S H, Osman I, Abdullah S, Oon S W, … Shahrudin S S H. Domestic Violence and Women's Well-being in Malaysia: Issues and Challenges Conducting a National Study Using the WHO Multi-country Questionnaire on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences; 2013: 91, 475 – 488.

16. Lyons J, Bell T, Frĭchette S, Romano E. Child-to-parent violence: Frequency and family correlates. Journal of Family Violence. 2015; 30 (6), 729 – 742.

17. Knight L, Hester M. Domestic violence and mental health in older adults. International Review of Psychiatry. 2016; 28 (5), 464 – 474.

18. Sajaratulnisah O, Chris G, Leon P. Victims' barriers to discussing domestic violence in clinical consultations: A qualitative enquiry. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 2014; 29 (8), 1497 – 1513.

19. Ramez G, Widom S, Browne C, Fergusson D, Webb E, Sinow J. Burden and consequences of child maltreatment in high-income countries. The Lancet. 2009; 373 (9657): 68 – 81.

20. Kithonga F, Mbogo R W. The Impact of Domestic Violence on The Learning Process of High School Students. Social Sciences Research Journal. 2018; 5 (8), 544 – 554.