

## VIOLENCE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS: THE PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND UNDERREPORTED CASES TO JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

**Umut Türk**

*Department of Medical Pharmacology, Faculty of Medicine, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Türkiye*

**BACKGROUND AND AIM:** Based on observations, domestic violence is becoming normalized and underreported to judicial authorities, thus going unpunished. This study aimed to determine the rate of women presenting to the psychiatry outpatient clinic who have been exposed to (verbal and/or physical) violence.

**METHODS:** (Ethics Committee Approval must be obtained and the number should be specified). The study was approved by the Iğdır University Ethics Committee (February 28, 2024; No. 6/8). Written consent was obtained from participants. Literate women aged 18-65 who consecutively visited the outpatient clinic at Iğdır State Hospital for psychiatric symptoms were included. Patients with psychotic or bipolar disorders were excluded. Sociodemographic data was collected, and a 5-question survey was administered. Fifty participants were included.

**RESULTS:** The mean age was  $35.56 \pm 11.64$  years. 60% (n=30) were married. Depressive symptoms were reported by 40% (n=20) and anxiety symptoms by 56% (n=28).

Twenty participants (40%) reported the presence of domestic violence (verbal and/or physical) in the family during childhood, and 17 (34%) reported direct exposure to violence by in childhood. Nineteen participants (38%) reported exposure to verbal and/or

physical violence within the past three months; only three (6%) reported this to the police.

Half of married participants (n=15) (p=0.032); 55% of participants with depressive symptoms (n=11) (p=0.043); 55% of participants who reported the presence of domestic violence during childhood (n=11) (p=0.043); 58.8% of participants exposed to violence in childhood (n=10) (p=0.029) reported being exposed to violence in the last 3 months.

In binary logistic regression analysis, it was observed that married individuals (Odds Ratio-OR: 118.7; p=0.003) had an increased risk of experiencing violence, and that this risk decreased with age (OR: 0.88; p=0.021). The effect of depressive symptoms approached statistical significance (OR: 5.9; p=0.06).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Young women presenting with depressive symptoms, particularly those who are married, should be routinely assessed for domestic violence risk. Despite a high prevalence of recent violence, the low reporting rate suggests that violence remains hidden and unpunished. Future studies should investigate why violence victims do not report to judicial authorities.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, failure to report, intimate partner violence, law enforcement