

Perception of Students Regarding Gender based Violence

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Abstract

Objectives: The study is undertaken to explore perception of students regarding violence against women with specific reference to domestic violence and sexual violence.

Method: This is a descriptive cross-sectional questionnaire based exploratory study conducted in Mangalore, Karnataka, India. 220 participants consisting of age group between 18 to 25 years were included. Responses were obtained from the study participants through open and close ended questionnaires. **Results:** More than half (60%) of medical students and (56%) of engineering students disagree that in modern India women are enjoying equal rights to men. Three fourth (77% male, 82% female) of students believe and disagree that it is alright for a man to beat his wife in order to make her obedient. Two fourth (61%) of medical students and (63%) of engineering students agree that throwing acid on a woman to cause disfigurement is an example of gender based violence. **Conclusion:** The perception of medical and engineering students regarding gender based violence is quite similar. This study brought out issues of increased violence against women. A significant number still felt that dressing of a woman may be a factor for sexual assault. Women are still facing gender inequality and are not getting equal rights to men. Even though incidence of harassment, domestic violence are on the rise, women are not ready to report about their suffering because of social and family pressure. There is also need for awareness to be brought in gender mainstreaming for educating all sectors of the society.

Key Word: Sexual harassment, Crime against women, Domestic violence.

Introduction

Women are important part of our society and play vital roles in all aspects of life but their identity is restricted to being mother, sister, wife, or daughter¹. In ancient Indian time's as mentioned in Rigveda and other scriptures women held the most prestigious and honoured place in society². The status of women in society over the period of time seems to be controversial, violence against women has been increasing and a universal concern too as men hold themselves superior and believes that women are mediocre. Women are given low status at work place and home. In last few decades there has been increase in the incidence of violence against women³. Globally violence against women has increased, it has

been reported that more the one in three women (35.6%) have been subjected to sexual or physical violence by their friends or relatives and 38% of all murders are committed by their spouse^{4,1}. 05% of murder of men is committed by their spouse. A woman has been subjected from verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical and sexual exploitation leading to femicide. Worldwide 5000 murders in the name of honour killing and 25000 in the name of dowry death have been reported every year. There are also reports that the women are victim of sexual violence in wars and mostly prone to human right violation⁵. Unwanted pregnancy, child birth and child abuse may be a sign of violence against women. India is the second densely inhabited democratic country and seventh largest country in the world with 1.3 billion people, 48.4% are females and 51.6% are males⁶. Developing India is emerging as a global power but still women have to struggle for their position and status in the society. Women are subjected to violence irrespective of their cast, educational status, class and

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their subjugation adds to their suffering by physical, emotional, mental and economical deprivation^{7,8}.

In India women have been subjected to violence and they are suffering from various causes such as cheating, rape, torture, abduction, violent pornography, immoral trafficking and so on. A total of 3,27,394 cases of crime against women were reported in year 2015, 29.9% of sexual harassments, 10.4% physical assault, 7.6% stalking, 1.0% voyeurism, and 51.8% other cases. Human trafficking has increased from 0.4% in year 2014 to 0.5% in year 2015. According to NCBR “head wise percentage of crime against women” during year 2015 there were 34.6% cases of domestic violence, 25.2% cases of assault on women with intend to outrage her modesty, 18.1% cases of kidnapping and abduction of women, 10.6% of rape cases, 3.05% cases of dowry prohibition, 2.35% cases of dowry death, 2.7% cases of insult of modesty of women, 1.4% cases of attempt to rape, 1.2% cases of abetment of suicide by women, 0.7% cases of immoral trafficking of women, 0.25% other crimes.⁸

Women have to suffer from gender violence throughout their life. As a child her father is in charge of her, as an adult her husband is in charge of her and after death of husband, her son takes over charge of her⁹.

Rafique vs state of U.P 1980, Justice Krishna Iyer said “when a woman is raped, what is inflicted is not mere physical injury but a sense of some deathless shame” and judiciary response could not be muted to such grave human right violation¹⁰. The implementation of preliminary measures gives a perception that the present criminal justice system India is not robust to protect women¹⁰.

Women who suffer from sexual assault have physical and mental issues, poor sleep, irritable bowel, diabetes, post-traumatic stress disorder and various studies has shown that they were benefited with screening and discussing sexual assault with health care provider and all this helped in their recovery.¹²

Gender based violence is a serious issue all the students undergoing medical education should be taught about the importance of the issue and how to address such cases¹³.

The study was undertaken with the objective to explore perception of students regarding violence against women with specific reference to domestic violence and

sexual violence.

Material and Method

This is a descriptive cross-sectional questionnaire based exploratory study conducted in Engineering and Medical Colleges of Mangalore, Karnataka, India. Questionnaire was externally validated by two subject experts. After obtaining institutional ethical clearance and due necessary permissions study was conducted and data were collected from the study area. The study was conducted in October 2018 to November 2018. 220 participants between ages 18 to 25 years were included. Responses were obtained from the study participants through close and open ended 25 items questionnaires. The data was analysed using SPSS version 20.0 software. Chi – square test was applied.

Result

In the present study, out of 220 participants, 110 (50%) were Medical students and 110 (50%) were engineering students of which 119 males and 101 females. There is no significant difference noted on various issues amongst the students from medical and engineering streams. 59.1% of medical students and 55.4% of engineering students did not agree that in modern India women are enjoying equal rights as men. Nearly half of medical and engineering students agreed that domestic violence in women is common and wide spread issue. More than 80% of medical and engineering students disagree that women feel safe while travelling alone and going out at night. More than 70% of medical and engineering students agree that vulnerable group such as minors and women with disabilities are more prone for sexual violence.

More than 70% of medical and engineering students agree that most of women hesitate to report about crime against them because of social and family pressure. Nearly 30% of male and 20% of females agreed that man can beat his wife to make her disciplined.

51% of medical students and 50% of engineering students (24% of male and 19 % female) believe that dressing style of a woman is be a factor for sexual assaults. More than 60% of medical engineering students agree that throwing acid on a woman to cause disfigurement is an example of gender based violence. 59.1% of medical students and 69.1% of engineering students agree that if a person with political background or influence is named as perpetrator of sexual violence, they are protected

by investigating officer. 77.31% of medical students and 80% of engineering students agree that there is a stigma regarding sexual assault survivor in India. 78.2% of medical students and 91.1% of engineering students agree that domestic violence is preventable.

Medical students perceive that percentage of perpetrators on violence against women are strangers 46.4%, family 30.9%, relatives 21.8%, friends 0.9% and engineering students report that perpetrators of violence on women are strangers 69.1%, relatives 20.9%, family 8.2% friends 1.8%. Medical students perceive that the place where women is commonly assaulted are public transport 44.55%, work place 30.0%, home 15.5%, market place 10%. Engineering students report that the place where women are commonly assaulted were public transport 60.9%, work place 30%, market place 6.4% and home 2.7%.

Medical and engineering students report that information on violence against women comes largely from Internet more than 50%, TV and Radio more than 40%, newspaper more than 10%, and others.

Medical students report that place where a victim of sexual assault more likely to visit is first to Primary health centre, second to Community health centre, then so on Secondary Hospital, District Hospital, Tertiary Hospital and engineering students report that place where a victim of sexual assault more likely to visit first to Primary health centre, second to Community health centre, then so on Secondary Hospital, Tertiary Hospital, District Hospital.

More than 90% of medical and engineering students agree that workshop and continued hands on training in Forensic Medicine is important to deal with cases in rural areas. 78.2% of medical students and 89.1% of engineering students agree that the attitude of people in India can be changed regarding sexual assault victim.

Discussion

In the present study, results did not indicate that Medical and Engineering stream students significantly differed in their perceptions regarding gender based violence. Mangali RN et al conducted a study in year 2007, women are considered lower compared then men in society and women suffer from gender discrimination in all aspects of life¹⁷. Similarly, in the present study It was observed that more than half of total number of participants (m=60, e=56) disagree that in modern India

women are getting equal rights to men.

Watts C et al in year 2002 reported that child sexual abuse is common and under reported because most of times they are threatened or the perpetrators is family member¹⁶. Similarly, in the present study three forth of students (73%) believe that vulnerable group such as minors are more prone for sexual violence.

Imran M et al 2010, has reported crime against women is increasing, sexual violence cases are often under reported because of stigma and shame related to the survivor of sexual assault¹⁹. Similarly, three forth of students (79%) believe that there is a stigma regarding sexual assault survivor in India. In the same study Imran in 2010 has reported that, domestic violence so common in our society, that six out of every ten husbands have beaten their wives. Sexual harassment is often not reported due to fear of family and fear of isolation from society¹⁸. Similarly, in the present study majority of students (85%) believe that domestic violence is a wide spread issue and at least, one fourth of the students (26%) still believe that it is alright for a man to beat his wife in order to make her obedient. This is not only a perception prevalent in male (25%) but also shared by females (20%). This is a concerning fact as violence against women cannot be stopped if the belief by disciplining a woman by physical force continues. Similarly, if this is deep rooted in females, the inflicted violence on self gets justified and she may not access the health care or report to police.

Naskar G et al in year 2015, reports of wife battering and violence against widows are also on rise and legal measures should be taken for elimination of violence against women. The Indian cultural system is not open for wife reporting to the police of having been battered by her husband¹. Similarly, in the present study three forth (79%) of students believe that women hesitate to report about crime against them because of social and family pressure.

Nagindrappa M et al 2013, reports that women in India are not given equal rights to men irrespective of their cast, class, educational status. They are physically, socially, mentally and economically exploited since long⁷. Bhawana D et al reported that various crime against women that occur in India such as sexual assault, kidnapping, abduction, dowry death, torture, molestation has been increased 59% since year 2011². Similarly, in present study three forth (78%) of students believe that

violence against women in our society is common and is on rise.

Waghmoda R.H 2013, conducted a study on domestic violence where women were the victims which is similar to the study by Badiadka 2017 where much of the public assault was on males and domestic violence in females¹⁴. The World Human Rights Conference in Vienna, recognised gender based violence as human right violence in 1993. Article 14, 15 and 21 of Indian Constitution provides protection of women from domestic violence (domestic violence Act, 2005). There is cultural gender inequality, economic dependence on men, political under representation, less education and awareness among women and they are facing domestic violence by men because of all these reasons³. Present study students perceived that domestic violence is preventable (85%).

T.K.K Naidu et al 2007, reported that Forensic Medicine has an important role in detection and help in administration of justice, forensic training must be given to Medical and Para Medical students to deal with cases in rural and semi urban areas. Proper Medicolegal investigation will help in solving of cases so that cases will not be undetected and unconvicted¹⁵. Similarly, in present study majority (95%) of students reported there is requirement of specialized nursing training “Forensic nursing” as it is in developed countries and majority (93%) reported that workshop and continue hands on training in Forensic Medicine is important to deal with cases in rural areas.

Hossain N 2015, reported that gender based violence is a serious issue all the students undergoing medical education should be taught about the importance of the issue and how to address such cases¹³.

Watts C 2002, reported that some of the most common and severe forms of violence against women by intimate partner are physical abuse, psychological abuse, acid throwing, sexual abuse, trafficking for sex, forced prostitution, exploitation of labour¹⁷. Similarly, in the present study more than half (61%) of students agree that throwing acid on a woman to cause disfigurement is an example of gender based violence.

In the present study more than half of students believe that the perpetrators of violence on women are mostly strangers (58%). This is contrary to the study done by Madeswarana et al 2013, majority of cases perpetrators of violence on women were acquaintances

such as family member, friends and relatives²⁰.

Conclusion

The perception of medical and engineering students regarding gender based violence is quite similar. This study brought out issues of increased violence against women. One third of the students still believe that it is alright for a man to beat his wife to make her obedient. More awareness programs should be conducted in gender mainstreaming. Women are still facing gender inequality and are not getting equal rights to men. Even though incidence of domestic violence is on the rise, it may not get reported because of social and family pressure. There should be sensitization program for every stream of students on gender related issues. Registered medical practitioner and Forensic nursing should be available so that when a woman accesses a health centre at any level, be it primary or tertiary, she gets appropriate care and medicolegal service. Investigating agencies, medical and paramedical staff should be sensitized and trained in this regard.

Limitations of Study: Only medical and engineering students from select colleges are considered for study. They do not represent population of India.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest.

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