

# Prevalence and Consequences of Domestic Violence among Married Women in Sheybench Town, Bench Maji Zone, Southwest Ethiopia, 2015

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## Abstract

**Background:** Domestic violence is one type of gender based violence defined by the World Health Organization as “the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners. The main objective of the study was to assess the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence among married woman.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional community based study was conducted on selected married women in Sheybench town, South west Ethiopia which is 510kms far from Addis Ababa. Sheybench town has a total population of 7037 among these there are 1438 households. Using Systematic random sampling 333 samples were selected out of 1438 households. A pretested Amharic version questionnaire was administered for data collection. The data was entered to Epidata and analyzed by SPSS statistical package. The study was conducted from December 2014 to May 2015.

**Result:** From 324 respondents 47.83% were physically abused, among these bruising and laceration accounts for 42.22% and 6.66% had permanent physical injury. Of all the participants 38.58% were sexually abused, among these 33.60% had unwanted pregnancy. In this study the prevalence of psychological abuse was 72.22%. The study noted that nearly three in four women were experienced at least one incident of domestic violence in their lifetime.

**Conclusion:** Alarmingly, more than three quarter of women who experienced any physical violence had severe acts that could threaten them in their lifetime. This needs an urgent attention at all levels of societal hierarchy including policymakers, stakeholders and professionals to alleviate the situation.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, prevalence, consequences, Ethiopia

## 1. Introduction

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is defined by the United Nations (UN) in the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as any act that is likely to or results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats or acts of coercion, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, private or public, in the family or community (UN, 2010).

Domestic violence is one type of GBV defined by the World Health Organization as “the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners. It includes physical, sexual or psychological aggression or coercion and is a pattern of behavior employed by one person in a relationship to control the other. It can create health, social and economic costs for the individual, family and the society (Women Report, 2000).

Domestic violence can be found in all age groups and socioeconomic strata and occurs in homosexual as well as heterosexual relationships. Historically most of those oppressed by domestic violence are women (Christina, 1994). Physical violence is any violent act using force that may cause physical harm to a woman. It includes pinching, sapping, kicking with legs, biting or using any material like stick, belt, knife and gun to hurt the woman. A woman said to have physically abused if she had experienced one of the above violent acts (Amare D, 2005).

A woman is said to have sexual violence if she had experienced one of the following: being forced to have sexual intercourse against her will, having sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do if she did not, or being forced to do something sexual that she thought she was degrading or humiliating (WHO, 1997). Psychological or emotional abuse includes uttering humiliating words like insulting, physical intimidation and threats to hurt the woman or someone she likes (Amare D, 2005).

Violence (physical, sexual or emotional abuse) against women is found at a higher rate globally and is given a health priority for intervention by the WHO (Garcia-Moreno, 2006, UN, 2004, WHO, 1997).

Studies from around the world demonstrate that violence during pregnancy is common in developing countries where it is as high as 32%, but in industrialized countries the prevalence is less than 12% (Peterson, 1997, Cambel J, 2004).

Violence against women often goes unnoticed and undocumented partly due to its taboo nature. Due to the sensitive nature of the problem accurate statistics on violence against women represents a great challenge. The health consequence on woman due to GBV is a serious problem worldwide which has devoid women from

participating in socio economic development (Hiese L, 1993).

Women who suffered from physical or sexual abuse or both were more likely to report poor or very poor physical and mental health. They were also more likely to have had problems of walking, carrying out daily activities, pain, memory loss, dizziness, a reduced likelihood of contraceptive use, vaginal discharge, vaginal bleeding, pain during intercourse, chronic pelvic pain, urinary tract infection and medically treated pelvic inflammatory disease. Studies on the physical health consequences of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in developing countries like Ethiopia are rare (WHO, 2005, ANN L, 2002).

In Ethiopian context, although women represent 49.8% of the population and highly contribute to socioeconomic development, they occupy lower status than men. They experience longer working days, low levels of education, and lack of adequate assignments in leadership and decision making positions (Women Affair, 2004).

Even though Domestic violence is highly prevalent in Ethiopia there are no researches conducted in the study area regarding the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence. Thus, this study was aimed at assessing the prevalence of domestic violence and consequences associated with intimate partner violence. Based on findings of the study different stakeholders and institutions will be able to avert the problem of domestic violence by doing the appropriate intervention using the available resource.

## **2. Methods & subjects**

### **2.1. Study design, area and period**

A cross-sectional community based study was conducted among married woman of Sheybench town, Bench Maji zone, South West Ethiopia. Sheybench is 510 kms far from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. It has a total population of 7037 among these 3589 are females and totally there are 1438 households.

### **2.2. Source and study population**

The source population for our study was all child bearing age female population of Sheybench town. The study population was all married females of Sheybench town.

### **2.3. Sample size and sampling**

The sample size was determined by using single population proportion formula to estimate sample size. In similar study conducted in Gondar the prevalence of domestic violence was 50.8% (Tegbar Y, 2004). Error allowed, 5 % the z-score associated at 95% degree of confidence=1.96, n=384

Using correction formula for total population less than 10,000 and considering 10 % non-response rate the final sample was 333

There are three kebeles in Sheybench Town one kebele was selected randomly and on the selected kebele a systematic random sampling was used after numbering households with married women to select the sampled households for the collection of our data. When there was more than one married women in a single household a woman was selected randomly.

### **2.4. Data collection procedures**

The questionnaire was adopted from WHO multi country study on women health and life events. It was translated in to Amharic and back to English by instructors of MizanTepi University to ensure consistency. The variables included socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent and her partner, direct questions about the lifetime experience of different forms of violence like if she was ever beaten by her partner, questions of perceived outcomes of abuse and suggestions to ameliorate the problem. Data was collected using interviewer administered questionnaire of the Amharic version.

### **2.5. Data quality management**

The data quality was assured by pretesting five percent of the samples selected from Kusha kebele (15 k.m. away from study area) using WHO multi country study adopted questionnaires. On pretesting each questionnaire was evaluated for its acceptance, completeness and being understood by the interviewee. After data collection each questionnaire was checked for its completeness and those which were not filled completely were discarded.

### **2.6. Data analysis procedure**

After data collection questionnaire was cleaned for completeness and entered in to Epidata software version 3.1 and transported to SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software version 17 for analysis. Frequencies and their percentages were calculated and finally data was presented using different data presentation methods like tables and pie charts.

## 2.7. Operational Definition

**Sexual violence:** forced sex without the consent of the woman.

**Physical violence:** any form of violent act which can result in physical harm including slapping, punching, kicking, beating with any object, twisting the arms, strangulation, using a knife or a gun against a woman.

**Psychological:** includes such acts as physical intimidation, threats of abandonment, uttering humiliating things (insulting) confinement to home and withholding money.

**Intimate Partner violence:** Any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to a partner in the relationship (Hiese L, 1998).

## 2.8. Ethical consideration

Informed consent was obtained from the study participants after a brief explanation of the benefit of the study. Participants' confidentiality of information was assured by excluding names as identification in the questionnaire. The data collection was conducted using WHO suggested alternatives to minimize harm to respondents.

## 3. RESULT

### 3.1. Socio-demographic characteristics

From the total 333 study subjects, 324 (97.3%) were interviewed successfully. The mean age of the respondents was 29.7 years, the majority (38.3%) being in the age group of 25-29 years. Protestants and Bench ethnicity constituted 135 (41.7%) and 117(36.1%) of the study population respectively. Literate respondents accounted for 198 (61.11%) of the study population. Among the respondents most of them were house wives 112(34.56%) and has monthly income of less than 500 birr 152(46.9%). Most of the respondents' husbands completed grade twelve (29.62%) and majority of the respondents' husbands were civil servants (36.72%). About 38.89% of the respondents have been married for two up to five years and 37.65% of the respondents have three or more children (Table 1).

**Table 1 Socio demographic characteristics of married women in Sheybench town, South West Ethiopia, 2015 (n =324 )**

Variables	Frequency	%
<b>Age group</b>		
15-19 years	5	1.54
20-24years	44	13.60
25-29years	124	38.31
30-34years	98	30.20
35-39years	30	9.34
>40years	23	7.11
Total	324	100
<b>Religion</b>		
Orthodox	129	39.80
Catholic	21	6.52
Protestant	135	41.73
Muslim	38	11.73
Others	1	0.31
Total	324	100
<b>Educational status</b>		
Literate	198	61.11
Illiterate	126	38.88
Total	324	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
House wife	112	34.56
Civil servant	91	28.05
Farmer	31	9.16
Others	90	27.37
Total	324	100
<b>Monthly income</b>		
<500 birr	152	46.90
500-1500	101	31.17
1500-3000	52	16.04
>3000	19	5.86
Total	324	100

### 3.2. Physical abuse

About 47.8% of the respondents were physically abused by their husband. Among them, 60.64% have been

physically abused two to five times per year. Of 155 respondents 67(43.22%) were kicked and 20% of them were injured by sharp materials (Table 2).

**Table 2 Prevalence of physical abuse among married women in Sheybench town, South West Ethiopia, 2015**

Variables	Frequency	%
Ever been bitten by her husband		
Yes	155	47.84
No	169	52.16
Total	324	100
Duration of physical abuse		
Once	40	25.81
2 -5 times	94	60.65
>5 times	21	13.54
Total	155	100
Materials used for beating		
Sticks	46	29.68
Belt	10	6.45
Hands and legs	67	43.23
Others	32	20.64
Total	155	100
Ever been harmed with sharp materials		
Yes	31	20
No	124	80
Total	155	100

### 3.3. Sexual abuse

Of 324 respondents 125 (38.58%) have encountered unwanted sex. Among these 48.80% had sexual intercourse against their will two to five times per year. Out of 125 respondents who faced forced sex 47(37.60%) disclosed the situation to others, of them 30(63.82%) open up to their close friends. Among 78 respondents who did not disclose the situation, 31(34.06%) were ashamed to talk about the situation to others (Table 3).

**Table 3 Prevalence of sexual abuse among married woman in Sheybench town, South West Ethiopia, 2015**

Variables	Frequency	%
Ever been forced to have sex		
Yes	125	38.58
No	199	61.42
Total	324	100
Frequencies of forced sex		
Once	40	32
2-5 times	61	48.80
>5 times	24	19.20
Total	125	100
Ever told to others		
Yes	47	37.60
No	78	62.40
Total	125	100
To whom ever told		
Close friends	30	63.83
Family	12	25.53
Police	5	10.63
Elders	0	0
Others	0	0
Total	47	100
The reason not tell to anybody		
Didn't know what to do	12	13.18
Feeling of shame	31	34.07
Afraid of the public reaction	25	27.47
Afraid of my husband	15	16.29
Others	8	8.79
Total	91	100

### 3.4. Psychological abuse

From the total of 324 respondents majority of them (72.22%) were insulted by their husband. Among these,

49.57% have been insulted two to five times per year. Out of 234 respondents 62 (26.16%) were humiliated by their husbands in public areas. Sixty-eight (29.05%) of the respondents' beloved ones were insulted by their husband. Regarding their work 72(22.22%) of the interviewees were undermined by their husbands. Among 324 participants 124(38.27%), 182(56.20%) and 145(44.75%); their husbands controls their daily activity, had no freedom to decide on important issues and business issues respectively (Table 4).

**Table 4 Prevalence of Psychological violence among married women in Sheybench town, South West Ethiopia, 2015**

Variables	Frequency	%
Ever been insulted		
Yes	234	72.22
No	90	27.78
Total	324	100
Frequencies of been insulted		
Once	31	13.26
2-5 times	116	49.57
> 5 times	87	37.17
Total	234	100
Ever been insulted in front of others		
Yes	62	26.49
No	172	73.51
Total	234	100
Relatives ever been insulted by husband		
Yes	68	29.06
No	166	70.94
Total	234	100
Your work ever been undermined by your husband		
Yes	72	22.22
No	252	77.78
Total	324	100
Ever got freedom to work		
Yes	218	67.30
No	106	32.70
Total	324	100
Allowed to have social participation		
Yes	278	85.80
No	46	14.20
Total	324	100
Daily activities ever controlled by husband		
Yes	124	38.27
No	200	61.73
Total	324	100
Women who have freedom to decide on things		
Yes	182	56.21
No	142	43.79
Total	324	100

### 3.5. Consequences of domestic violence

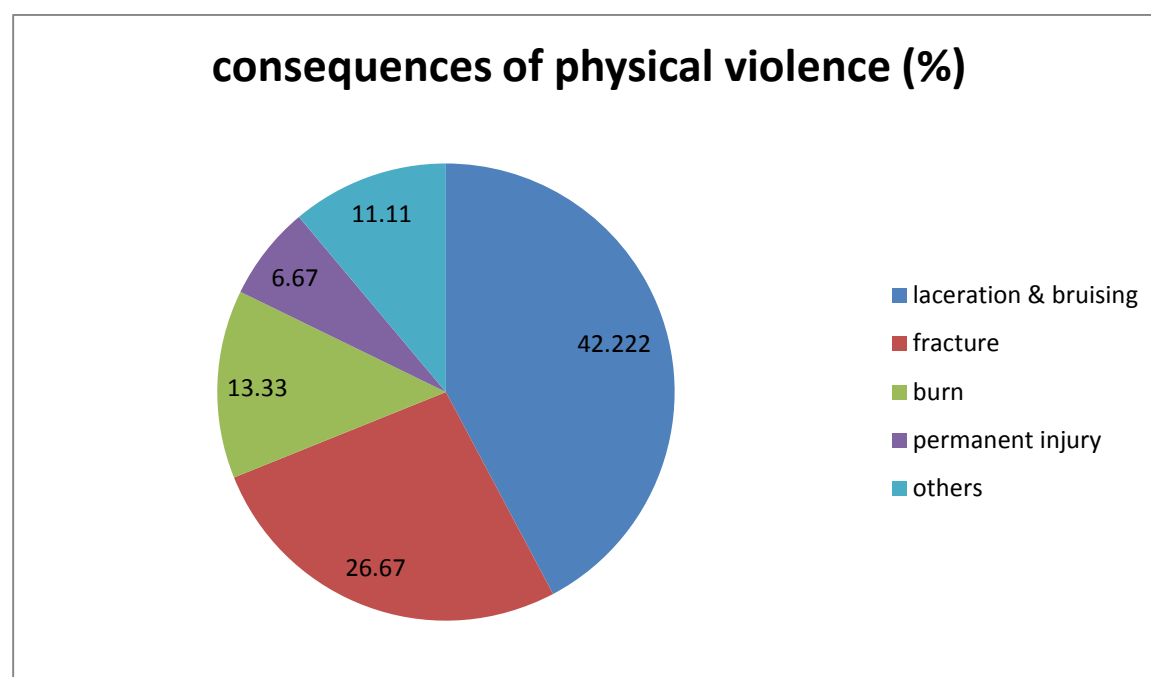
From the total of 155 informants who have been victims of physical abuse 90(58.06%) of them faced different types of physical injury following the abuse. Among these informants majority of them 38(42.22%) have encountered laceration and bruises and the rest of them were found to be exposed to permanent physical injury (6.66%), fracture (26.67%) and burn (13.33%) (Fig 1).Of these physically abused women 67 (74.44%) didn't seek medical care.

Unwanted pregnancy 42 (33.6%) is the commonest problem associated with forced sex (fig 2). Stress was the commonest psychological consequence following domestic violence which accounts for 94(31.13%) followed by depression 91(30.13%). Women, who left their home after facing domestic violence accounts for 28.09 %. Far from those who experience drinking, smoking and chewing 'chat' 206 (85.12%) are free from such acts to forget the violence. Finally about 100 (41.32%) and 84 (39.62%) were unable to do their day to day activities and absent from work from a total of 242 and 212 women respectively (Table5)

**Table 5 Consequences of domestic violence among married women of Sheybench town, South West**

**Ethiopia, 2015**

Variables	Frequency	%
Any injury following physical abuse		
Yes	90	58.06
No	65	41.94
Total	155	100
Ever got medical care for the injury		
Yes	23	25.56
No	67	74.44
Total	90	100
Ever left home in fear of the abuse		
Yes	68	28.09
No	174	71.91
Total	242	100.
Ever smoke, chew chat or drunk to forget the abuse		
Yes	36	14.87
No	206	85.13
Total	242	100
Ever failed to do daily activities following the abuse		
Yes	100	41.33
No	142	58.67
Total	242	100
Absent from work following the abuse		
Yes	84	39.63
No	128	60.37
Total	212	100



**Fig 1 Consequences of physical violence among married women in Sheybench town , 2015**

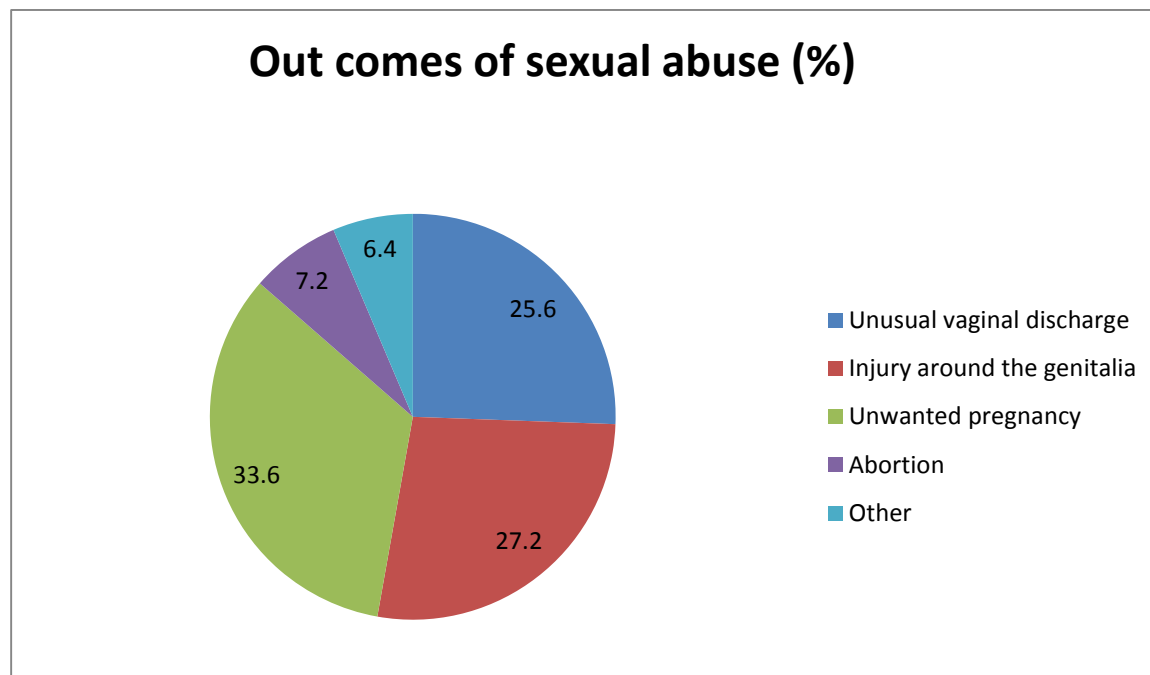


Fig 2 Consequences of sexual violence among married women of Shey bench town 2015

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this paper we have incorporated domestic violence with the prevalence and their respective consequences of physical, sexual and psychological violence. This study assessed lifetime prevalence of domestic violence which was found to be 75.6 %, which is greater than the report from Gondar Zuria 50.8% and also higher than the result conducted by WHO (13%-61%) in ten countries representing diverse cultural settings including Ethiopia (Tegbar Y, 2004, Garcia-Moreno, 2006). Although WHO report states that at least one in every three women is beaten, coerced in to sex or otherwise abused in her life time, we found that about three fourth of women had domestic violence in their life time (Women Affair, 2004). However, previous studies from Northern and Southern Ethiopia show that the lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence varies from 50 to 71% which is nearly comparable with our finding (Garcia-Moreno, 2006).

Our result shows that the prevalence of physical violence is 47.83% which is comparable with the finding from research around Butajira (49%) but higher than the result of the study conducted in Gondar (32.2%) (Tegbar Y, 2004, Gossaye Y, 2003). The fact that 43.22% of the victims of physical abuse were kicked by hands or legs and 20% were attacked by sharp materials shows that women are suffering from severe forms of violence. The study conducted around Agaro, West Ethiopia in 2005 showed that the prevalence of physical injury among victims of IPV was 37.3% which is less than our finding (Amare D, 2005).

The study conducted in West Ethiopia revealed that about two third (66.9%) of the participating women were verbally insulted and made feel bad about themselves for at least once in their life time. One for every three (34.8%) women was ever humiliated in front of other persons. Whereas our study reveals that 72.22 % of respondents were insulted and 26.49% of participants were humiliated in front of others (Sileshi G, 2012).

The magnitude of emotional abuse is also high with more than a third of the women living with physical intimidation while 38.27% were deprived of the liberty to go out and do what they need This goes in line with research reports that psychological abuse almost always accompanies physical abuse.

We have found that prevalence of sexual violence was (38.58 %), which is less than the study conducted in Butajira (59%); But more than the result showed in Gondar Zuria (19.5%) (Tegbar Y, 2004, Gossaye Y, 2003).

Although the penal codes in defining and prosecuting rape vary from country to country and Ethiopian family code does not address it when it occurs in a marital context (Christina, 1994, Hiese L, 1993), there was a lot of non-consensual sex in consensual relationships.

Domestic violence against women is widely observed in the study area with the prevalence of psychological abuse 72.22%, physical abuse 58.06% and sexual abuse 48.80%. The study noted that nearly three in four women were experienced at least one incident of domestic violence in their lifetime.

Alarmingly, more than three quarter of women who experienced any physical violence had severe acts that could threaten them in their lifetime. This study reveals that among 58.06% of women who were victims of



physical abuse 38(42.22%) reported to have laceration and bruising. As limitation since we assessed lifetime prevalence, there was a risk of recall bias.

Based on these findings we recommend concerned bodies to increase the awareness of the society about the impacts of domestic violence through IEC (Information, Education and Communication) provide the needs of victims and implement the existing legal punishment policies by raising the awareness of policy-making bodies about the prevalence and consequence of domestic violence.

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### **Authors' contributions**

AH, AT, MN, SN carried out the research from conception to the writeup of the final draft of the article. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### **Authors' information**

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### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

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