

## **Marital Abuse and Suicide Ideation among Abused Women**

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### **Abstract**

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The present investigation was conducted to gain insight into women going through abuse in marriage and suicide ideation amongst abused women from middle income group belonging to Chandigarh. The study was conducted on 100 abused women out of which 50 were with children and 50 were without children. Standardized tool namely, t-test was used to compare suicide ideation amongst abused women with children and abused women without children. Percentages were used to assess the number of women going through physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect. The objectives of the research were to examine the percentage of women going through physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect and compare suicide ideation amongst abused women with children and abused women without children. The results showed that majority of the sample population was a victim of physical abuse and emotional abuse, it was also found that there were significant differences in suicide ideation among abused women with and without children. Abused women without children reported higher suicidal ideation.

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#### **Keywords:**

Suicide ideation;  
Abused women.

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### **1. Introduction**

Spousal abuse is a serious social problem, which includes a variety of physical, emotional, and sexual violence. Twenty years ago, violence against women was not considered an issue worthy of international attention, but this began to change in the 1980s, as women's groups were organized locally and internationally to demand attention to the physical, psychological, and economic abuse of women (Alhabib et al., 2010). Gradually, violence against women has come to be recognized as a legitimate human rights issue and a significant threat to women's health and well-being (Alhabib et al., 2010). In particular, the landmark report published by the World Health Organization in 2005 gave global relevance to the epidemic rates and serious and long-term impacts of violence by positioning it as a leading worldwide public health concern.

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Abuse is of several types namely, physical abuse; in which the victim is physically harmed by slapping, pushing, biting, burning, kicking etc., emotional abuse; which includes humiliating, shaming, threatening, yelling etc., sexual abuse in marital relationship includes non consensual sex or anything from unwanted touching to forced coitus or forced sexual contact with another person, and neglect; which is another form of abuse which is generally overlooked, it may include ignoring the physical, emotional, financial, sexual needs of a person.

Population-level surveys based on reports from victims provide the most accurate estimates of the prevalence of intimate partner violence and sexual violence in non-conflict settings. The first report of the "WHO Multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women" (2005) in 10 mainly low- and middle-income countries found that, among women aged 15-49:

- Between 15% of women in Japan and 71% of women in Ethiopia reported physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime;
- Between 0.3–11.5% of women reported experiencing sexual violence by someone other than a partner since the age of 15 years;
- The first sexual experience for many women was reported as forced – 17% of women in rural Tanzania, 24% in rural Peru, and 30% in rural Bangladesh reported that their first sexual experience was forced.

Suicide on the other hand has been identified as a complex human behavior and the final common pathway for many human problems (Fawcett, et al., 1987). The self-destructive act of suicide has reflected many motivational determinants: personal and interpersonal, biological, familial, and cultural (Blumenthal, 1990). It is a common medical term for thoughts about suicide, which may be as detailed as a formulated plan, without the suicidal act itself. Although most people who undergo suicidal ideation do not commit suicide, significant proportions go on to make suicide attempts. The range of suicidal ideation varies greatly from fleeting to detailed planning, role playing, self-harm and unsuccessful attempts, which may be deliberately constructed to fail or be discovered, or may be fully intended to succeed. (Garlow 2012). Beck et al.(1979) defined individuals with suicide ideation as individuals who currently had plans or wishes to commit suicide but had not made any recent overt suicide attempts or incidents of deliberate self-harm. O'Carroll et al. (1996) in a review of current terminology and definitions of suicidal behaviors recommended a standard definition of suicide ideation to mean: "any self-reported thoughts of engaging in suicide related behavior. In India, more than one lakh persons lost their lives by committing suicide in a year 2012 (National Crime Record Bureau, India).

However, a number of risk factors, correlations, cognitive patterns and indicators that may lead to suicidal behaviors' have been explored in recent times. Suicide research has drawn a number of conclusions that have been useful for identifying those at risk, psychiatric illness, personality traits, cognitive factors, behavior, life events, social characteristics, genetics, and a number of other factors associated with suicide and deliberate self-harm have been important for researchers to consider in understanding suicidal behavior.

Keeping these factors in mind the present study was taken up with the following objectives:

#### **Objective**

- To assess the percentage of women going through physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect.
- To study the difference between suicide ideation in abused women with children and without children

## **2. Research Method**

The present study was conducted on 100 abused women (50 with children & 50 without children). The respondents were selected randomly. Care was taken to see that the abused women were married and also that sample included women with and without children. It was taken care that the respondent belonged to middle class income group. None of the respondents were divorced or widowed.

**Tool used:** Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire, by Reynolds (1991) was used to assess suicide ideation among abused women with and without children.

### 3. Results and Analysis

#### 3.1 Percentage Analysis

The percentage distribution of abused women with children and without children, according to their demographic variables has been given in Table-1.

Table 1. Type of abuse experienced by women with children and without children

Variables	Categories	Abused women with children		Abused women without children	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Type of abuse	Physical abuse	43	86	40	80
	Sexual abuse	12	24	25	50
	Emotional abuse	46	92	35	70
	Neglect abuse	17	34	20	40

The diagrammatic presentation of percentage distribution of the respondents with regard to the type of abuse faced by the abused women has been given in the following figure:

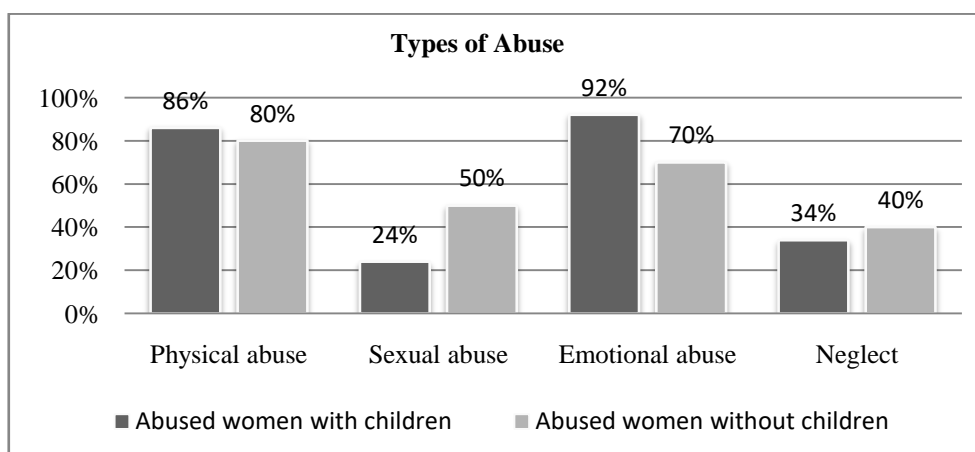


Figure 1. Bar graph showing type of abuse experienced by women

Table-1 revealed that 86% of women with children and 80% of women without children were a victim of physical abuse, 24% of the women with children were sexually exploited, whereas half of the sample population of women without children were sexually abused, 92% and 70% of the abused women with and without children were facing emotional abuse and 34% and 40% of abused women with and without children were neglected by their spouse, all of them faced more than one form of abuse by their husband as shown in figure 1.

#### 3.2 t-ratio comparisons

In this section, the significance of differences between means (t-ratios) were worked out between the two groups. The value of t-ratios along with the means and standard deviations of suicide ideation and depression in abused women with and without children is presented in table-2

Table 2. t-values for Differences of Means of Suicide Ideation and Depression in Abused Women

Variables	Sample	Mean	SD	t-value
Suicidal Ideation	Abused women with children	68.14	24.75	4.5578**
	Abused women without children	91.34	26.12	

\*\* Significant at .01 level

Analysis of the data was carried out to compare suicide ideation in abused women with and without children. As seen from the table 1, significant differences were seen between abused women with children (M=68.14) and abused women without children (M=91.34), with abused women without children reporting higher suicidal ideation.

#### 4. Conclusion

##### From the above results it can be concluded that

- Majority of the sample population was a victim of physical abuse and emotional abuse.
- Significant differences in suicide ideation were found among abused women with and without children.
- Abused women without children reported higher suicidal ideation.

The possible reasons for higher level of suicidal ideation in abused women without children might be the lack of love, security and support from the partner, which is there in case of women who have children, as they tend to find happiness, security, love and support from their children. Abused women without children might not be able to find any possible reason to stay in the marriage, which in turn would make her feel hopeless and helpless in the Indian cultural setting. The worries limit the problem solving capabilities.

A study by Glowinski et al., 2001 supports the findings, which state that both physical and sexual abuse has been significantly associated with suicidal ideation and behaviors (Glowinski et al., 2001).

Whereas, Bosch (2000), supports the findings by mentioning that, psychological pain, certain personal characteristics, problem-solving strategies, hopelessness, helplessness and suicidal ideation as significant predictors of suicide.

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