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PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST PREGNANT WOMEN AND EFFECTS ON MATERNAL AND BIRTH OUTCOMES

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Abstract:

Violence and the threat of violence against pregnant women are main barriers to women's empowerment and equal participation in society. When stress and violence increase in developing societies, women's safety in the home, workplace and community is often seriously affected. To determine the prevalence of physical abuse in pregnant women and to assess association between physical violence during pregnancy and maternal complications and birth outcomes, we used clinicbased data from a sample of 403 women who delivered live born infants during the summer of 2002 in our hospital. Data of physical violence against women's during pregnancy and 3 months before that were based on questionnaire and interview. Outcomes data including antenatal hospitalization, labor and delivery complications were obtained from the records. Prevalence of physical violence during pregnancy was reported as 10.7%. Prevalence of experience of physical abuse 3 months before pregnancy was 11.9%. Women who experienced physical violence compared with those not reporting abuse were more likely to be smoker and hospitalized before delivery for maternal complications such as preterm labor, kidney infections, premature rupture of membranes and vaginal bleeding with pain. There was a significant association between physical violence and low birth weight and mother's education. Physical violence during pregnancy is common and is associated with maternal complications and adverse birth outcomes. We suggest including methods to determine frequency of violence during pregnancy and assessment of violence in pregnancy by a screening program integrated in prenatal care.

Keywords:

[Physical violence](#) . [maternal outcomes](#) . [birth outcome](#)

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