

Demographics and family structure of the victims of Violence against women: A Field Study in Women's Shelters in the KRI

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a worldwide problem, especially where cultural and societal norms contribute meaningfully to its perseverance. In the Kurdistan region, the shelters serve as a safe place for those women fleeing violence, but so far, the social, economic, cultural factors leading them to search for protection and remain unexplored. The study examines the social and demographic influences that prompt women in Kurdish Region to seek shelter. The study is based on a quantitative method, using questionnaire in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimani Shelters. Research questionnaires were conducted with 69 females who reside in shelters from June 4 to August 28, 2022, with analysis performed using SPSS software. The study revealed socio-economic and demographic factors contributing to domestic violence against women in the KRI. Explicitly, young women, who have limited or low level of educational backgrounds, are housewives, come from moderate-income households, or come from rural background, or from a migrated family, are more vulnerable to domestic violence. The study emphasized how personal identity, social control, educational achievement, and financial independence show key roles in women's exposure to violence. The findings indicate that social and cultural pressures are the main causes to domestic violence in the KRI. The study calls on the Kurdistan Regional Government to focus on education, family intervention, implementing law, and providing the necessary support for women in need.

Keyword: Violence, Domestic violence, Shelter, Family structure, Kurdistan Region.

Demographics and family structure of the victims of Violence against women:

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Introduction

Systemic social discriminations are emphasized by gender-based violence. This worldwide human rights problem includes several kinds of abusive behaviors that disproportionately affect women, particularly those whose work becomes excluded or disadvantaged. These behaviors consist of family, emotional, physical, sexual, economic, and psychological forms of maltreatment (UN Women, 2020).

Domestic violence transcends individual skills, representing a complex systemic problem deeply embedded in family or social structures and cultural norms contexts. Understanding these multilayered dynamics is critical for developing battered, traditionally sensitive interference strategies that address the basic reasons for gender-based violence. Within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the incidence of violence against women reflects multipart interactions between socio-cultural dynamics and economic uncertainty. Notwithstanding recent policy reforms and the implementation of protective actions, including shelter classifications, significant obstacles persist, particularly entrenched patriarchal values, social stigmatization, and limited shelter or institutional capacity (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009). These multifaceted dynamics highlight the

requirement for efficient study into the demographic characteristics and family circumstances of women impacted by domestic violence.

This quantitative examination ponders the statistic profiles and family settings of ladies looking for shield assurance within the KRI. The study analyzes how family structure and socio-economic insecurity impact shapes viciousness whereas surveying the adequacy of current regulation-backed instruments. The researcher finds basic information holes surrounding violence against females within the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI), observing to create a focus on mediations and legal changes. Impressive of the scholarly investigation and down to earth back offices for residential viciousness casualties tends to accentuate on a central address: what makes somebody select to stay in or exit an injurious relationship (Aureala, 2001). It is coming about point to back continuous cases of survivors as of now dwelling in covers, with an accentuation on encouraging determination of their familial and individual challenges through comprehensive inquiry about and arranged suggestions.

-Research Questions

The current study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What are the main demographic features of women exist in in shelters across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)?
2. How are the family lives of these women similar to or different from others in their community?
3. How does violence against women change during times of conflict or economic crisis?

-Research Objectives

1. To examine the familial structures and demographic profiles of women seeking refuge in shelters.

- 2-To compare these findings with broader demographic figures for the region.
- 3-To assess the extent to which economic uncertainty and conflict incite violence against women.
- 4-To provide feasible recommendations for enhancing legislation, legal protections, and support systems for survivors.

-Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the personal and social factors that force women in the KRI to seek refuge in shelters from domestic abuse. The study provides essential insights for legislators, social workers, and advocacy organizations by emphasizing the intersection of family dynamics, economic challenges, and conflict-related barriers. The outcomes will facilitate the enhancement of support services, inform legislative modifications, and elevate knowledge regarding the enduring impacts of instability on women's security and welfare.

1. Theoretical Framework

The results of researchers Renzetti (2009) economic stress can lead to increase the risk of domestic violence. However, domestic violence also can cause financial problems for DV survivors and capture them in poverty. This study yields mixed results. Usually, lack of resources aggravates family issues inside the house. Conventional support systems are tested in terms of their capacity to handle the limitations influencing the economy.

1. 1. Demographics and Family Structures

Most often, women residing in shelters come from low-income households with limited access to resources and educational possibilities outside

of their homes (Yodanis, 2004). This happens rather often. Mirzaei Damabi et al., (2024) claims that this increases their vulnerability to the social and financial problems resulting from men-centric viewpoints.

1.2.Conflict and Economic Crises

The protracted conflict and the economic uncertainty have led to an increase in domestic violence cases in the KRI. Eslava et al., (2023) note that a range of factors, including but not limited to evictions, unemployment, and financial challenges, can help to explain the increase in family conflict. These surroundings help to raise the frequency and intensity of aggressive behavior (True, 2012).

1.3.Prevalence and Forms of Violence

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2017) claims that approximately 40% of women suffering with KRI have said their spouses have mistreated them either physically or sexually. Amnesty International (2025) claims that women in rural areas often find it difficult to get help, which leads to a predominance of emotional abuse and financial control based on society expectations. Furthermore, highly common is socio-psychological violence in addition to this. Amnesty reported women forced into pre-mature occurs were showing to further violence or killed by their family members or abusers.

1.4.Reactions from Legal Systems and Institutions

Legal systems and institutions have responded along to these lines: The passing of the Kurdistan Region Domestic Violence Law in 2011 greatly advanced both the criminalizing of gender-based violence and the creation of victim care programs. This legislation passed in 2011. Three elements influence

the way laws are enforced: cultural opposition, a lack of court resources, and poor government-nongovernmental organization communication (Aristyan and Harahap, 2024). UN Women (2020) has highlighted that shelters offer vital services. Nevertheless, the cultural stigma connected with them and the inadequate resources available to them make them less accessible and effective, therefore limiting their usefulness.

1.5. Awareness and education

Initiatives driven by groups like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have helped to raise public knowledge of women's legal rights (UNFPA, 2017) and gender-based violence (GBV). To enable a long-lasting change in society, these events should be more completely included into educational institutions and community projects (Datnow et al., 2023). A major worldwide problem with effects on psychological as well as social spheres is intimate partner abuse. Legal systems exist to handle abuse carried out by intimate partners; nonetheless, enforcement and society views still provide great difficulties. To properly handle this aggression, one needs a whole strategy. This approach should call for public awareness campaigns, legislative changes, and large support systems.

2-Theoretical Framework for Understanding Violence against Women in the KRI

For the purpose of providing comprehensive knowledge of gender-based violence, the research incorporates two theoretical views that complement one another:

2.1. The Theory of Structural Violence: Gaining an Understanding of Oppression in Systems

The standard notion of violence is expanded by Galtung's core concept of structural violence, which places an emphasis on the ways in which social structures and institutions contribute to harm by institutionalizing inequality (Galtung, 1969). This theory reveals the following hidden types of violence that institutional mechanisms cause:

One key aspect of structural violence is the presence of Institutionalized **forms of oppression and suppression**: Investigates the ways in which social institutions contribute to and maintain inequality among individuals. Brings to light covert forms of aggression that extend beyond the realm of physical injury. As stated by Galtung (1969), this article sheds light on the systemic limitations that inhibit individual and communal empowerment.

Another critical element is the role of power structures and the process of normalization: Ray (2019) conducts research into the conditions under which discriminatory behaviors become accepted within social structures. This study investigates the unconscious mechanisms of control and marginalization. The researcher investigates the way cultural, economic, and social power dynamics intersect with one another.

Finally, the concept of Vulnerability from Multiple Perspectives: Emphasis is placed on the interaction of various social systems that work together to create vulnerability. It investigates the ways in which economic, educational, and social factors interact to produce oppression based on gender. According to Segal (2022), this framework offers a lens that can be utilized to comprehend the systemic inequalities that exist in many contexts.

2.2. The Social Ecological Model: An Approach to Violence Considering Multiple Levels

2.2.1. The Theoretical Structure and Plan

At the individual level the role involves conducting an analysis of personal aspects, including things like a person's biographical background and individual qualities. Heise (1998) conducts research into the psychological and socioeconomic dimensions that have an impact on the individual. This article investigates the ways in which personal agency functions within the framework of systemic restrictions.

Moving to the Dynamics of Relationships: Jewkes (2002) conducts research on the power dynamics that exist within intimate partner relationships. This article investigates the impact that interpersonal interactions have on violent behavior. This study investigates the impact that social networks and familial relationships have on violent behavior. These findings highlight how the interconnectedness of social environments can either perpetuate or mitigate violent tendencies. By understanding these dynamics, one can better address the root causes of violence and develop more effective intervention strategies.

At the Community-Level Structures:

- Investigates cultural norms and traditions at the community level.
- Examines community support systems and social capital.
- Analyzes collective mechanisms of control within the community (Connell, 2020).

2.2.2. The Societal Institutional Framework:

- Studies legal and policy structures that influence gender-based violence.

- Examines institutional responses to violence against women.
- Investigates governance mechanisms at both the national and regional levels (Lomazzi, 2023).

2.2.3. Theoretical Integration

By combining Structural Violence. Theory with the Social Ecological Model, this framework offers a comprehensive approach that:

- Unpacks the multi-layered mechanisms through which violence operates.
- Provides a nuanced understanding of gender-based oppression.
- Suggests practical intervention strategies for addressing violence.
- Connects individual experiences with broader social and institutional structures.

2.2.4. Epistemological Contributions

- Challenges conventional linear perspectives on violence.
- Emphasizes an intersectional approach in research.
- Offers a robust methodological framework for studying systemic violence against women (Crenshaw, 1991).

This theoretical framework presents a thorough and multi-dimensional approach to understanding violence against women in the Kurdistan Region. It offers critical insights into the intricate mechanisms of systemic oppression and gender-based violence.

3.Methodology

Quantitative research involves scientifically analyzing data via statistical or computer programs like SPSS method to classify forms and test hypothesis. The quantitative method tries to find relationships between variables and generalizing findings to the population study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The strong point of the method is making objective, numerical data via research questionnaire, detailed secondary data examination, systematic content analysis and statistical dataset allowing the identification of contributing links and finding correlations (De Vaus and De Vaus, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Bryman, 2016 and Babbie, 2020). The design of the quantitative research begins with hypotheses and agrees to test reliability, validity, statistical accuracy to ensure strong findings and understand numerical data on social phenomenon (Kumar, 2019 and Punch, 2014).

The research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing questionnaires to gather data from 69 women in shelters located across three cities: Hawler, Dohuk, and Sulaimani. The main data collected on the phenomenon of domestic violence in shelters between June and August 2022. with case distributions as follows: 23 cases in Hawler, 30 cases in Sulaimani, and 16 cases in Dohuk. The higher number of cases in Sulaimani can be attributed to the presence of two shelters- one operated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the other by the PUK political party. The data were analyzed by SPSS program.

4.Results

Domestic violence in Shelters Analysis

1- Participations' Background

Table 1: The background of the respondents

Variables	Answers	Frequency	Percent
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Age	14-18	16	%23.2
	19-23	15	%21.7
	24-28	16	%23.2
	29-33	9	%13
	34-38	8	%11.6
	39+	5	%7.2
Literacy (Reading and Writing)	Yes	46	66.7%
	No	23	33.3%
Level of education	Not Educated	15	15.50%
	Basic Education	26	26.80%
	High School	3	3.10%
	Diploma	2	2.10%
	University	0	0.00%
	Post graduate	0	0.00%
Economic Status	High	7	7.20%
	Middle	42	43.30%
	Low	20	20.60%
	Total	69	100.00%

Based on the questionnaire responses, the highest frequency of domestic violence against women was in the age group between (14-28/ 68.1%) years old, and the lowest rate was in the age group of (34/ 18.8%) years and higher.

About 66.07% of the respondents said they could read and write, but with low-level educational qualifications; and 33.3.% could not read and write, as seen in Table 1.

Approximately 15.50% of the participants are uneducated, while 26.80% possess a basic level of education. The lowest percentage, 2.10%, have a low level of

education, and none of the participants hold a university degree or postgraduate qualification. We consider the economic status of the respondents according to three strata.

A significant proportion of the respondents, specifically 43.30 percent, belonged to the middle economic class, while 20.60 percent were classified as belonging to the lower economic standing. As can be seen in Table 1, only a small percentage of the population, seven percent, had a high economic standing. When compared to other female groups, the data showed that young women, those with low or no degree of education, those with intermediate incomes, and housewives are more likely to experience domestic violence from their family members. This issue may be caused by several circumstances, including misunderstandings between members of the family and couples, difficulties in the dynamics and expectations of the family, and economic issues that arise when the family source is unable to meet the requirements or expectations of the family.

2. Living situation

Table (2) Living situation before coming to the Shelter

Residence before coming to shelter	Frequency	Percent
City	23	33.3
Town	28	40.6
Settlement	13	18.8
Village	5	7.2
Total	69	100

As shown in above table the majority (40.6%) lived in town, followed by city residents (33.3%), (18.8%) lived in settlement. The smallest portion (7.2%) of the victims lived in villages.

3.Place of residence

Table (3) Place of Residence

Place of Residence	Frequency	Percent
City	36	52.2
Town	20	29
Settlement	6	8.7
Village	7	10.1
Total	69	100

As shown in Table (3) four categories of residence, namely city, town, settlement and village are used, more than half of the respondents (52.2%) lived in a city, 29% lived in a town, 10.1% lived in a village. The smallest proportion (8.1%) of the victims came from settlement.

From the table, it becomes clear that most of the participants have lived in town, and currently, a large proportion of them reside in cities. From this, we conclude that most participants do not have an urban background, and a significant number of them have low levels of education. This reveals that they lack comprehensive knowledge about their rights and solving their problems, or they have been unable to adapt to their family environments.

4.Nuamber and age of children

Table (4) Number and Age of Children of the respondents

Variables	Answers	Frequency	Percent
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Do you have children?	Yes	33	47.8
	No	36	52.2
	Total	69	100
Number of children	1-2	16	48.48
	3-4	16	48.48
	5-6	1	3.03
	Total	33	100
Age of children	1-3	18	22.2
	4-6	20	24.7
	7-9	7	8.6
	10-12	14	17.3
	13-15	12	14.8
	16-18	8	9.9
	19-21	2	2.5
	Total	81	100

Table (4) shows, nearly half (47.8%) of the respondents who were married had children, and within that group the majority (36 respondents) do not have children.

Those respondents who had children were likely to be young mothers, without much age gap between the children. This entails significant demands of treatment, childcare and managing of the children. More than half had one male and female child (see Tables 4). Just one respondent had 5-6 children. In addition, according to the same table the highest rate (24.7%) of the respondents have children aged between (4-6 years old). However, the lowest rate (2.5%) have children aged between (19-21) years old.

5.Occupation

Table (5) Occupation of the participants

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Unemployed	17	24.6
Housewife	39	56.5
Student	9	13
Supermarket	1	1.4
Teacher	1	1.4
Employee	2	2.9
Total	69	100

The table examines women's level of participation in the labour market. The data shows that out of the total number of research participants, 56.5% were housewives.

This agrees with studies showing that housewives make up a significant proportion of domestic violence. These and other studies show a significant positive correlation between low levels of participation in the labour market, low levels of literacy and education, and the rate of domestic violence, as illustrated in Table 5.

6.Father's occupation

Table (6) Father's occupation

Father's occupation	Frequency	Percent
Peshmerga	12	17.4
Jobless	9	13
Died	18	26.1
Workman	20	29
Employee	5	7.2

Retirement	2	2.9
Police	2	2.9
Teacher	1	1.4
Total	69	100

Most of the people who are taking part are from the working class, and they have trouble getting an education and achieving their career goals. For example, only 1.4% of fathers are teachers, while 29% of fathers are employed. There may be a higher rate of men dying (26.1%) because of past violence in the area, bad health care, or hard work conditions. Peshmerga soldiers (17.4%) say it's because they are in a military area and there aren't many civilian jobs in the area.

In professional jobs, low participation is a sign of systemic issues like an unstable economy, limited access to education, and not enough public support. The fact that 13% of fathers are unemployed shows that there aren't enough steady job options, which leads to more poverty and inequality in society.

7.Mother's occupation

Table (7) Mother's occupation

Mother's occupation	Frequency	Percent
Housewife	51	73.9
Died	12	17.4
Teacher	1	1.4
Employee	3	4.3
Peshmerga	1	1.4
Retirement	1	1.4
Total	69	100

The data in table 7 show that most mothers (73.9%) were housewives. This is because of traditional gender roles and the fact that women have less access to work, school, and public life. They probably faced big cultural and structural problems because only 1.4% of the people there were teachers, workers, or Peshmerga. The 17.4% number of mother deaths could be a sign of bad health care and poverty. The table shows that social norms and restricted options lead to inequality between men and women.

8. Father's educational level

Table (8) Father's educational level

Father's education	Frequency	Percent
Not Educated	26	52
Basic Education	15	30
High School	4	8
Diploma	2	4
University	3	6
Total	50	100

The table above shows that more than half (52%) of the participants' fathers had no formal education (not educated). Around 30% of the participants had fathers with a basic level of education. A smaller percentage, 8%, had fathers who had completed high school, while 6% had fathers with a university-level education. The smallest group, at 4%, had fathers who held a diploma-level qualification.

9. Mother's educational level

Table (9) Mother's educational level

Mothers educational level	Frequency	Percent
Not Educated	41	73.21
Basic Education	11	19.64
Diploma	3	5.35
University	1	1.78
Total	56	100.0

The majority (73.21%) of the participants' mothers had no formal education. Approximately 19.64% of the participants had mothers with a basic level of education. A smaller percentage, 5.35%, had mothers who held a diploma-level qualification. The smallest group, at 1.78%, had mothers with a university-level education.

10. Tried elope

Table (10) Have you tried Elope (Radu Kauten)

Try Elope (Radu Kauten)	Frequency	Percent
Not Radu Kauten	50	72.5
Radu Kauten	19	27.5
Total	69	100

The table indicates that most participants (72.5%) did not elope, while a minority (27.5%) did elope.

11. Escaping form forced marriage

Table (11) Escaping from forced marriage

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	16	23.2
No	53	76.8
Total	69	100

Table 11 show that the highest percentage (76.8%) of the respondents do not escaped from forced marriage, while the lowest percentage (23.2%) succeeded to escape from forced marriages.

12. Types of forced marriage

Table (12) Kinds of marriage being forced upon the participants

Types of forced marriage	Frequency	Percent
A marriage with someone from outside the family	11	68.8
A marriage with my cousin	2	12.5
Other (please specify)	3	18.8
Total	16	100

Table above indicate that the highest percentage (68.8%) of the respondent are married to non- family members, while the lowest percentage (12.5%) are married to their cousins.

13.Marriage process

Table (13) Describe marriage process of the participants

The ways of marriage	Frequency	Percent
Married a non-relative	28	65.1

Married my cousin	7	16.3
Married in a arrangement marriage (jin be jine)	1	2.3
I eloped (radu kauten)	5	11.6
Other (please specify)	2	4.7
Total	43	100.0

Also, more than half (65.1%) married non-relatives, 16.3% married cousins, 11.6% married by eloping (Radu Kauten), and 4.7% married through other ways than mentioned, while a small minority (2.3%) married in exchange marriages (*Jin be Jin*). The outcomes are consistent with previous research findings in non-western countries which show that being married according to “traditional” marriage processes increases the risk of family conflict and domestic violence.

14. Marriage decision

Table (14) marriage decided

The decision of marriage	Frequency	Percent
Arranged entirely by the family	11	27.5
Arranged jointly by my family and me	7	17.5
Own choice	14	35
Against my will	8	20
Total	40	100

The table indicates that the highest rate (35%) chose their own spouse independently, while 27.5% arranged their marriage entirely through their

families and themselves. In addition, 20% of the respondents being married against their wishes. In contrast, the minority (17.5%) married through a combined method both they and their families were in arranging their marriage.

15. Arranged marriage

Table (15) Arranging the marriage

People who arrange marriage	Frequency	Percent
Father	7	15.9
Mother	4	9.1
Brother	4	9.1
Sister	2	4.5
Uncle (on the father's side)	3	6.8
Uncle (on the mother's side)	1	2.3
Grandfather (on the father's side)	1	2.3
Grandmother (on the father's side)	1	2.3
Another relative	6	13.6
Someone from outside the family	1	2.3
Other (please specify)	14	31.8
Total	44	100

The table show that the highest rate (31.8%) of respondents described that their marriages were arranged due to other factors not explicitly listed in the table. In contrast, the lowest percentage (2.3%) of respondents indicated that their

marriages were arranged by relatives such as their uncle (from the mother's side), grandfather (from the father's side), grandmother (from the father's side), or individuals from outside the family.

16. Place after marriage

Table (16) Living place after marriage

The residence after marriage	Frequency	Percent
I moved into my husband's house with his family	20	46.5
He moved in with my family	1	2.3
We moved into a house close to his family	6	14
We moved into a house close to my family	1	2.3
We moved into a house which was not close to either family	15	34.9
Total	43	100

The table indicates that almost half of the respondents (46.5%) moved into their husband's family home after marriage, while a small percentage (2.3%) moved either to the wife's family home or a house near the husband's family.

17. Seeking shelter

Table (17) The ways for coming to the shelter

The ways to come to shelter	Frequency	Percent
The police or social services placed me here	48	69.6
I came here on my own	19	27.5
Women's Organization-NGO	2	2.9
Total	69	100

The findings indicate that most of the victims (69.6%) reached the shelter through referrals from law enforcement or social service agencies. In contrast, the smallest percentage (2.9%) referred from Women's organization- NGO.

18. Types of abuse

Table (18) types of abuse that the victims experienced

Types of abuse	Frequency	Percent
Physical violence	38	44.2
Emotional violence	14	16.3
Sexual violence	6	7
Financial abuse	9	10.5
Threats against your reputation	5	5.8
Spiritual violence	10	11.6
No abused	4	4.7
Total	86	100

The table show that nearly half (44.2%) of the respondents reveal that was abused physically, 16.3% having experience emotional violence, 11.6% having experience spiritual abuse, 10.5% of the respondents having experience financial violence, sexual abuse at 7%, and threats to reputation at 5.8%. Remarkably, a small minority (4.7%) of the participants mentioned that no experience any kind of violence.

19. Perpetrators

Table (19) Who is/are the perpetrators of their abuse

The perpetrators of the abuse	Frequency	Percent
Husband	31	32
Father	14	14.4
Mother	6	6.2
Brother	18	18.6
Sister	2	2.1
Uncle (on the father's side)	9	9.3
Grandmother (on the father's side)	1	1
Someone from outside the family	1	1
I do not know	1	1
Other (please specify)	11	11.3
No one	3	3.1
Total	97	100

According to the data, husbands were identified as the primary perpetrators of abuse, accounting for 32% of cases. In contrast, only 1% of participants reported abuse from each of the following sources: paternal grandmother, non-family members, and cases where the victim was unable to identify their abuser.

20. Fear of life

Table (20) Fear of their life when/if they leave the shelter

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	33	47.8
No	36	52.2
Total	69	100.0

The table shows that more than half (52.2%) of the residents of the shelters feel safe when they leave the shelter. In contrast, less than half (47.8%) expressed fears for their lives when they leave the shelter.

21. Causes of Fear

Table (21) The causes of fear when leaving the shelter

Answer	Frequency	Percent
They threatened to kill me	30	90.9
I do not believe them, and they threaten me to kill me	1	3.0
Afraid of forced marriage	1	3.0
cannot look after her	1	3.0
Total	33	100

The finding indicates that more a than third (90.9%) of the participants face threats to kill them by the members of their families. Also, a small minority (3%) revealed post-shelter fears related to a variety of reasons, including a continued death threat, potential forced marriage, and lack of family and social support system.

22. Survival Response

Table (22) The victim's primary defensive response to the threat

The first response to the threat that they faced	Frequency	Percent
Crying	23	33.3
Escaping	13	18.8
Crying and committing suicide	1	1.4
I have not faced threat	9	13
Contact her family	5	7.2
Contact women's organization	3	4.3
Contacting police	8	11.6
No response, silent and crying	7	10.1
Total	69	100

Table (22) shows that the participants when they faced threats showed several coping responses. One-third (33.3%) of the respondents were crying as a reaction to the threat, (18.8%) were escaping, (13%) of respondents specified they had not experienced any threats, (11.6%) were contacting Law enforcement, while (10.1%) responded with a combination of silence and crying. Family outreach was utilized by 7.2% of respondents, and 4.3% sought help from women's organizations. The least common response, reported by only 1.4% of participants, was a combination of crying and attempted suicide.

23. Seeking Help First

Table (23) Seek assistance prior to arriving at the Shelter

Going for help before coming to Shelter	Frequency	Percent
Family	29	42
Friend	3	4.3

Police	20	29
Women's organization	6	8.7
Other	11	15.9
Total	69	100

The Table shows that nearly half (42%) of participants wanted assistance from family before coming to the shelter, (29%) asked for help from the police before arriving at the shelter. This was followed by other methods at (15.9%) and women's organizations at (8.7%). Remarkably, a small ratio (4.3%) of participants turned to friends for help before coming to the shelters.

24. The hardest part about seeking help

Table (24) The hardest part about seeking help

The hardest part about seeking help	Frequency	Percent
They did not know where to go	24	31.6
They were scared	28	36.8
They were upset	3	3.9
They felt shameful	3	3.9
They thought none would take them seriously	15	19.7
Other (please specify)	3	3.9
Total	76	100

The table indicate that less than half (36.8%) of participants revealed fear as the most exciting aspect of seeking help. (31.6%) uncertainly where to go, mentioned by 19.7% of respondents fears that no one would take them seriously. Notably, a small minority (3.9%) showed that post shelter problems were the hardest part of seeking help, including feelings of upset, shame, and other reasons.

5. Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of violence against women, focusing on the demographic, social, and structural dimensions of gender-based violence in shelters located in the KRI.

1. Numerous studies have extensively demonstrated how domestic abuse disproportionately affects young women (Akar et al, 2010). According to a thorough analysis, women between the ages of 14 to 30 (See table 1) are particularly susceptible to domestic abuse. In addition, Akar et al., (2010) observed that 62.4% of victims were between the ages of 15 and 29.

2- Results also show that most participants were from villages before living in shelters, and later moved to cities. Domestic violence manifests differently across rural-urban contexts. Rural women are more vulnerable due to educational, economic and social challenges. Violence is even misunderstood as an appropriate form of discipline in some societies that adhere to liberal values. Underreporting of abuses, silencing of victims, and the continuation of violence are all consequences of these deeply ingrained ideas. Several factors, such as gender inequity, economic stresses, and cultural norms that tacitly tolerate or normalize violence, as important drivers of violence in intimate partner relationships (Brunton and & Dryer, 2024). Patriarchy emerges as a mechanism of supporting male dominance. Hence, Flood (2015) examines cultural reinforcement of male power which position women in subservient roles, merely as wives and mothers. This subordination significantly increases women's vulnerability to abuses.

3-Demographic Vulnerability: in line with Kishor & Johnson (2005), findings of this study reveal a critical intersection of socioeconomic and educational factors

contributing to women's vulnerability, with 52% fathers and 73.21% mothers lack formal education. There are certain cultures who are so conservative that they even have the misconception that violence is an appropriate form of discipline. The perpetuation of violence and the underreporting of abuses are both caused by these deeply ingrained ideas, which also serve to silence victims. There are several factors that contribute to intimate partner violence, as highlighted by Gerino et al., (2018). These factors include gender inequity, economic difficulties, and cultural norms that implicitly tolerate or normalize violence.

4-Majority of participants' mothers (73.9%) were housewives, while minority (1.4%) were teachers, peshmerga, or retirees. Financial challenges though not limited to disadvantaged households, intensify abusive behaviors. Such that some men use violence to reiterate their threatened masculine provider role (Dugan, 2018 and Jewkes et al., 2015). Financial stress impacts individuals across all income levels and contributes to violence, rather than being the only cause. Women in rural areas face barriers to employment and education, leading to dependency that can entrap them in abusive relationships. According to Bent-Goodley (2005) A inadequate legal and social protections increase their vulnerabilities. The great proportion of less educated women from low-income families living in shelters emphasizes the need for specific actions to be taken (UNHCR, 2022).

There is a new trend in marriage: 35% of women select a partner, 20% are married to a partner, and 68.8% marry non-relatives. These trends are consistent with what Moghadam (2003) was describing social changes in the Middle East, which are characterized by an ongoing struggle between traditional patriarchal systems and emerging individualistic cultures.

Further, cultural norms are one of the leading causes of domestic violence. While stressing the family reputation and power of men. These patterns correspond with Moghadam's (2003) transforming social patterns in Middle East which has to do with continuous interplay between traditional patriarchal order and modern individualistic order. Cultural patterns greatly contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence. Brown et al., (2018) emphasizes the role of family honor and male power to illustrate how domestic violence is often permitted within traditions.

Legal systems failing to sufficiently address gender-based violence in Middle East feed it via social attitudes toward women (UN Women, 2020). Domestic violence is sometimes linked in KRI to honor-based violence and domestic abuse (Alliance, 2017). Furthermore, cultural stigma of survivors hinders other victims from disclosing abuse or getting treatment, therefore compromising the efficacy of current inadequate support systems (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009). In a Turkish survey, almost 90% of respondents denounced wife-beating, backed court action, and disapproved of domestic violence as a family issue (Altinay and Arat, 2009). Women's financial contributions significantly affect vulnerability to violence; those who contribute more to home income suffered more physical abuse (63%), compared to those with equal (35%) or no contribution (20%). research conducted in non-Western settings shows that conventional marital practices raise suicide risk and link with domestic violence risk (Haarr, 2010 and Moscicki, 1995). Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Erez (2002) explain this via the prism of collectivist countries, where kinship-based systems give family privacy priority over women safety, therefore preventing victims from seeking outside help.

6-According to the data, husbands were identified by 32% of participants as the primary perpetrators of abuse. In contrast, only 1% of participants reported abuse from each of the following sources; paternal grandmother, non-family members, and cases where the victim was unable to identify their abuser.

7-Violence Prevalence and Characteristics: These findings on violence are particularly significant; 44.2% of women had experienced violence, 32% mentioned husbands as perpetrators, and 90.9% faced safety threats. These findings align with Rasool (2013), who reported that 57% of respondents identified themselves as victims of domestic violence, primarily in the hands of family members or spouses.

However one-third of women worldwide claim to have experienced gender-based violence (GBV) at some point in their life; so, gender-based violence (GBV) causes major issues about public health and socioeconomic situations. Research by Heise et al., (2019) shows that in addition to other elements, sexism, economic concerns, and cultural norms intensify the susceptibility of women in nations that have gone through violence. According to Kareem's (2008) analysis on domestic violence in KRI, the numbers are alarming: While 61.32% of respondents said their conviction in male superiority over women explained their fondness for male family members, 27.5% of respondents indicated this. According to 70.45% of respondents, men make decisions on marriage, therefore depriving women of options. Of the ladies questioned, almost 49.5% said they were married without permission. While 90.5% of respondents identified as victims of domestic abuse, 75.5% of respondents said they have witnessed violence inside families.

The figures illustrate the widespread problem of gender-based violence (WHO, 2021 and Jewkes, 2002) to be in line with worldwide patterns in intimate

partner abuse. According to Berkowitz (2016), victims suffer major consequences including injuries, medical problems, and more vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases. Women deal with mental health problems including post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and despair that raise their chance of suicide. Emphasizing the intergenerational consequences, Lünemann et al., (2019) note that children who witness domestic violence often suffer with mental and behavioral problems, therefore raising their chances of either being future offenders or victims of violence.

Working to better the situation for women in KRI, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been aggressively active. KRG unveiled legislation in 2008 allowing women to fight for their rights. Different from Iraq, where regulations have mostly stayed the same, significant legal changes have been carried out in the area since 1992. For women in KRI, these changes have improved their situation relative to Iraq and other Arab nations. For example, whereas women account for 25% of Iraqi Parliament, they make 30% of Kurdish National Assembly (Al-Ali and Pratt, 2011; Enloe, 2010 and Natali, 2010). Still, a crucial question begs itself: Are these legislative reforms really carried out in societies? According to the author, they are more commonly political propaganda than actual society transformation. Amnesty clauses free those who commit violent crimes, even when occasionally offenders are captured and sentenced. Furthermore, enforcement usually targets underprivileged people without government influence. In addition, often, customs are chosen to settle problems instead of legal procedures.

The survey also revealed that 50.92% of the participants turned to poor coping mechanisms include sulking, sobbing, or maintaining their situation. Moreover, 68.87% of women said they went back to their parents' houses following spouse violence.

All things considered; this section emphasizes Kurdistan's sociopolitical development. Particularly in social structures and personal interactions, societies in the area have experienced notable transformation.

8- Support Systems and institutional Mechanisms Key observations: typically, there is inadequate pre-shelter support; 69.6% of women attended shelters through official referrals; 52.2% were feeling safe post-shelters. This exposes weaknesses in thorough support systems and emphasizes the vital need of institutional changes (Htun & Weldon, 2018). According to UNFPA (2017), KRI has seen horrific gender-based violence; almost 40% of women reported physical or sexual abuse from close partners. Physical attack, emotional manipulation, sexual violence, psychological abuse, and economic control all help to show violence in several dimensions.

Laws passed by nations to prohibit domestic abuse, create protection programs, and offer victim shelters have many fields have seen expansion in support services including hotlines, shelters, and counseling. Particularly in lower-income countries, Barker et al., (2019) underline that resources are often insufficient and fail to fulfill demand. Herrero-Arias et al., (2021) advocates a comprehensive strategy that addresses social, cultural, and financial elements against intimate partner violence going beyond legislative protections. His strategy calls for stressing women's empowerment, males engaged in violence prevention, and challenging cultural norms allowing or supporting abuse. Nevertheless, Htun and Weldon (2018) point out that inadequate resources, poor enforcement, and cultural standards that view domestic abuse as private rather than a public issue often make such policies useless. Legal involvement is hardly relevant when shaky government combined with ingrained patriarchal attitudes results in unreported intimate partner violence.

Mojab (2004) argued that laws in KRI are ineffective and the concept of ‘honour’ constrains women's freedom, such that they become reluctant to discuss honour-related issues. Accordingly, honour protection and domestic violence vary among Kurdish communities in different countries, with higher rates in Iraq and Turkey than in Iran and Syria. Likewise, Kogacioglu (2004) argues that Turkish judicial authorities deflect responsibility for addressing domestic violence, honour killings, and suicide in Kurdish regions by dismissing them as inherent to Kurdish culture. This approach portrays Kurds as culturally backward and obscuring own state role in the region's systemic underdevelopment.

Its underreporting persists due to complex social dynamics, fears of societal stigma, and other anticipated social consequences. Shelters usually play vital role in supporting survivors. However, in KRI, these facilities encounter obstacles like insufficient capacity, funding, and social hostility of their presence (UNHCR, 2022). Studies emphasize the importance of offering legal, psychological, and economic assistance, to help survivors effectively rebuild their lives (UN Women, 2020).

Among Asians who tried suicide, Bhugra et al., (1999) found that assaults verbal or physical were more common, but psychiatric disorders and alcohol consumption were less common. Suicide attempts were similar across cultures. However, Asians used less pills than their Western counterparts (Bhugra and Desai, 2002:4 reported in Bhugra et al., 1999). Previous studies on Asian women have shown similar outcomes. Given the prevalence of this violence, it is necessary to implement cultural interventions and extensive support networks to ensure the protection and dignity of women.

Conceptual Plan: Two theoretical frameworks provide the groundwork for the study: cultural norm analysis and the structural violence viewpoint.

Galtung's concept of structural violence, further developed by modern scholars (Confortini, 2006), offers perspective for analyzing institutional frameworks and social structures sustaining violence. This approach highlights systemic obstacles that hinder access to justice, reinforcement of gender inequality, and the impact of economic and political instability on the effectiveness of support networks.

In the (KRI), violence against women is more likely influenced by the complex of social interaction such as family dynamics, educational system, and low income. The main objectives of this current study was to investigate the ideas of social ecology and structural violence in order to get a better understanding of the ways in which people, interpersonal interactions, and society as a whole all contribute to the vulnerability of women to violence. With the purpose of demonstrating that violence against women is not a singular occurrence but rather a significant manifestation of the power relations that already exist.

6.Conclusions

The findings of the study make it abundantly evident that violence directed at women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is not a random occurrence. Deep-rooted structural, cultural, and social inequality instead drives it. Among the demographic patterns revealing how women are set up to be susceptible long before they are abused include high rates of early marriage, poor parental education, and traditional gender roles. Few employment prospects, few institutional protections, and prevailing patriarchal beliefs that regard women's primary duties as subordinates and caregivers aggravate these shortcomings.

The great significance of honor-based social standards and the general acceptance of male power help people to justify, underreport, or even excuse violence. Though they are encouraging indicators, recent legislative improvements and the expansion of support services in KRI are insufficient to address the issues causing gender-based violence. Along with legislative improvements, cultural and educational initiatives challenging negative gender stereotypes and supporting equality must be undertaken in schools. Women's lack of sufficient assistance prior to seeking refuge, their lack of numerous coping mechanisms for their difficulties, and their continued vulnerability when receiving aid also point to a malfunctioning system for safeguarding them. The fact that violence continues despite governmental initiatives emphasizes the need of having a multi-level strategy including community involvement, support aimed on survivors, and means of accountability.

This study essentially indicates that violence directed to women is a reflection of more general social issues. From the level of the person and family to the level of the community and institutions, everyone must cooperate to modify the social ecology if one is truly fighting it. We have to reassess how men and women interact, how power functions, and what our social ideals are in the area in addition to changing the legislation. If one ignores these more fundamental cultural and structural problems, any intervention will most likely have a negligible impact.

7. Recommendations

Apply gender-based violence laws.

- Enhance Shelters: Increase capacity of shelters and offer complete support services including legal help and counselling.

- Advocate education by including gender equality into courses and starting public awareness initiatives.
- Empower women especially in rural regions by helping them to access financial resources, employment, and education.
- Involve society: Work with local leaders to help survivors and question damaging cultural standards.
- Enhance early intervention and long-term support for survivors both prior to and after their use of shelter services.
- Improve Data & Research: Get correct data and back-up research to direct programs and policies.
- Centre Survivors: Create policies safeguarding their privacy and safety and around their needs.

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دیموگرافیا و بونیادی خیزانی قوربانانی توندوتیژی خیزانی: توژیینهوهیهکی مهیدانییه له شیلتههرهکانی ئافرهتانی ههریمی کوردستانی ئێراق

پوخته

توندوتیژی خیزانی گرافتیکی جیهانییه، بهتایبته له شوینانهی که نۆرمه کولتووری و کۆمه‌لایهتییهکان بهشدارییهکی کارایان ههیه له بهردهوامبوونی. له ههریمی کوردستان، شیلتههرهکان وهک پهناگهیهکی ئارامن بو ئهو ئافرهتانهی له توندوتیژی رزگاریان بووه، بهلام تاكو ئیستا، هۆکاره کۆمه‌لایهتی، ئابووری و کولتوورییهکان وایان لندهکات بهدوای شوینیکی پارێزراو بگهرین. ئامانجی ئهم توژیینهوهیه بریتییه له تاقیکردنهوهی کاریگهری هۆکاره کۆمه‌لایهتی و دیموگرافیهکان که هانی ئافرهتان دهدات پهنا بو شیلتههرهکان بهرن. ئهم توژیینهوهیه میتودی چهندایهتی بهکارهێناوه و پشتی به فورمی راپرسی بهستوه که لهگهڵ 69 ئافرهت له شیلتههرهکانی ههولێر، دهوک و سلیمانی له نیوان ریکهوتی 6/4 / 2022 تا 2022/8/28 ههجمادراوه. داتاكان بهبهرنامهی ههگبهی ئاماری بو زانسته کۆمه‌لایهتییهکان (SPSS) شیکردنهوهی بو کراوه. ههجمههکانی توژیینهوهکه ئهوه دهردهخهن، که هۆکارهکانی دیموگرافیا، کۆمه‌لایهتی- ئابوورییهکان بهشداری له توندوتیژی دژی ئافرهتان له ههریمی کوردستانی ئێراق. بهتایبته، ئافرهتانی گهنج، که ئاستی خۆندههواریان سنوورداره یان نزمه، ئافرهتانی مالهوه، ئاستی ئابووریان مامناوهنده، خاوهن باکگراوندیکی لادیی یاخود خیزانی کۆچکردوه زیاتر تووشی توندوتیژی خیزانی دهبنهوه. ئهم توژیینهوهیه جهخت لهسهه ئهوه دهکاتهوه که چون شوناسی کهسی، کۆنترۆلی کۆمه‌لایهتی، بهدهستهینانی بڕوانامه و خاوهن ئابووری سهربهخۆ ڕۆلی سههرهکیان ههیه لهبههرکهوتنی ئافرهتان به توندوتیژی خیزانی. ههجمههکان نیشانی دهدهن که فشاری کۆمه‌لایهتی و کولتووری هۆکاری سههرهکین بو توندوتیژی خیزانی له ههریمی کوردستانی ئێراق. توژیینهوهکه بانگهوازی حکومهتی ههریمی کوردستان دهکات بو جهختکردنهوه لهسهه پهروه‌رده، دهستیوه‌ردانی

خيزان، جي به جيكردي ياسا و دابينكردي ههموو پالپشتييهك بو ئافرهتان كه بتوانن پشت بهخويان بيهستن بو پاريزگاري له خويان له توندوتيزيي خيزاني.

كليلهكاني تويژينهوه: توندوتيزيي، توندوتيزيي خيزاني، شيلتەر، بونيادي خيزاني، هريمي كوردستان.

الخصائص الديموغرافية والهيكل الأسري لضحايا العنف ضد المرأة: دراسة ميدانية في مأوى النساء في إقليم كردستان العراق

الخلاصة

تعد العنف الأسري مشكلة عالمية، خاصة حيث تساهم المعايير الثقافية والمجتمعية بشكل كبير في استمراره. في إقليم كردستان العراق، تقدم دور الإيواء مكاناً آمناً للنساء الناجيات من العنف، لكن حتى الآن، لم يتم استكشاف العوامل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والثقافية التي تدفعهن للبحث عن الحماية بشكل كافٍ. تهدف هذه الدراسة البحث عن التأثيرات الاجتماعية والديموغرافية التي تدفع نساء إقليم كردستان إلى اللجوء لدور الإيواء. تعتمد الدراسة على البحث الكمي، وتم استخدام استبيان في دور إيواء المدن الثلاثة في اربيل، دهوك والسليمانية. شاركت في الدراسة (٦٩) امرأة مقيمة في دور الإيواء من ٤ حزيران إلى ٢٨ آب ٢٠٢٢، وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج (SPSS). كشفت نتائج الدراسة عن العوامل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والديموغرافية التي تساهم في العنف الأسري ضد المرأة في إقليم كردستان العراق، خاصة، النساء الشابات، اللواتي لديهن خلفيات تعليمية محدودة أو منخفضة المستوى، وربات البيوت، أو اللواتي يأتين من أسر ذات دخل متوسط، أو ذوات الخلفية الريفية، أو هن من عائلة مهاجرة، هن أكثر عرضة للعنف الأسري. أكدت الدراسة على كيفية تأثير الهوية الشخصية، والسيطرة الاجتماعية، والتحصيل التعليمي، والاستقلال المالي على تعرض المرأة للعنف. تشير النتائج إلى أن الضغوط الاجتماعية والثقافية هي من الأسباب الرئيسية للعنف الأسري في إقليم كردستان العراق. تقترح الدراسة على حكومة إقليم كردستان العراق على التركيز على التعليم، والتدخل الأسري، وتطبيق القانون، وتوفير الدعم اللازم للنساء حتي يعتمدن على انفسهن و كذلك لحمايتهن من العنف الاسري.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: العنف، العنف العائلي، المأوى، الهيكل الاسري، اقليم كردستان