A Qualitative Study on Violence Against Women and the Impact of Printed Media in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

ABSTRACT

Background: Violence is a universal health problem that is encountered in all segments of society and is increasing. In TRNC The attitude of violence against women is increasing day by day, this behavior is not only in the home, it can also be seen in social settings. The aim of this study is to examine the attitude of adults living in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) about violence against women and the effect of print press on the attitude against violence.

Methods: The study was carried out in 6 districts of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, with a total number of 84 participants. The questionnaire used in the study consisted of 48 questions, 8 of which were demographic, 40 of which were open-ended questions that queried the attitude towards violence against women and the effect of print press. The study was done using the qualitative research method, and Nvivo program was used in the analysis of the data obtained. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed under 6 themes: violence definition theme, theme of victims exposed to violence, prevalence theme, prevention theme, theme of media effect and expectations from media, and education theme in the last section.

Results: It has been observed that children as well as women are affected by these violent incidents. It has been revealed that there is a need for public health policies on violence against women in society. It has been determined that the police behave insufficiently in terms of violence against women and in the implementation stages and many incidents are not reflected in the judiciary. It has been observed that the relevant field experts, especially the police, print press members, lawyers, doctors, and educators, need education and public awareness programs.

Conclusion: In our study, it has been revealed that violence against women is common in the TRNC, and children as well as women are affected by these acts of violence.

Keywords: Violence against women, violence attitude, print press, qualitative research.

Introduction

Violence is a phenomenon experienced in many dimensions in society. Violence is explained as a behavior that exists instinctively and can be caused by social factors. The individuals most exposed to violence in societies are generally women and children. Violence against women has reached a wide scale in the world in recent years and has become an extremely common problem in developed countries. In addition to the social and economic consequences of violence against women, there can also be lifelong psychiatric traces that affect the mental health of the individual, resulting in deep wounds.

Violence against women can be physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. In their study, Kishor and Johnson investigated the levels of domestic violence in 9 countries, including the Dominican Republic, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Colombia, Zambia, Egypt, Haiti, India, and Peru. They reported that at least 1 out of 6 women experienced 1 of the types...
of physical, psychological, and sexual violence and determined that physical violence perpetrated by spouses was most common in 5 of these countries.9

In Egypt and Nicaragua, at least 1 in 3 married women was found to have experienced domestic violence, and it was determined that 11% of women in Colombia and Nicaragua, 1% in Cambodia, and 5% in Haiti and the Dominican Republic were subjected to violence by their spouses during pregnancy. In the study of “Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey,” Zorlu10 stated that 43.9% of women have been subjected to emotional violence, 35.5% to physical violence, and 30% to economic violence at some time in their lives in the last year.

Violence occurs all over the world and can be the subject of news in the media. The news about violence in the print media can have behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and physiological effects on individuals.11 It is seen that the news of violence against women in the press in Turkey is given on the third page, and the subject of domestic violence is mostly covered as forensic cases and magazine news.3

It has been reported that incidents involving violence against women, the attitude of violence, and the coverage of these incidents in the written media and the details of what happened cause serious negative effects on people.4 The print media has 2 roles in the prevention of violence through broadcasts, and the second as its “active” role in the reproduction of violence and the legitimation of violence by the society.12 The increase in violence against women in recent years has enabled the media to bring up this issue to the agenda more. While this has helped to increase the awareness of the issue, it has been a tool of profit margin to increase the circulation and click rate rather than investigating the cause of the violence in order to attract the attention of the readers.

Violence is a universal health problem that is encountered in all segments of society and is increasing. Violence against women is increasing day by day in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and this behavior is seen not only at home but also in social environments.13

These events are reflected in the print media and in the society from the print media either positively or negatively. Therefore, with this study, it was aimed to investigate the attitude toward violence against women in the TRNC and the effect of the print media on violence against women.

Main Points

- It has been revealed that violence against women is common in the TRNC, and children as well as women are affected by these acts of violence.
- The print media in the TRNC is effective in the attitude toward violence against women.
- There is a need for training and awareness-raising programs for relevant field experts, especially policemen, members of the press, lawyers, doctors, and educators.

Methods

Sampling

The population of the study includes Turkish-speaking individuals between the ages of 25 and 55 years living in Northern Cyprus. Of the individuals included in the study, 50% were female. Population characteristics of Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, Güzelyurt, Lefke, and İskele regions (14 people from each region, 16.7%) were taken into account as the places where they lived. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were performed with individuals including 14.3% ESK, KSK, police, 14.3% ESK, K7K, lawyers, 14.3% E6K, K6K, academicians, 14.3% E8K, K4K psychologists/psychiatrists, 7.1% E1K, K5K doctors, and 7.1% E2K, K4K journalists, who lived in these 6 main regions, had a socioeconomic status, and had more information on violence. An informed consent form was obtained from the participants. Approval was received from Near East University Scientific Research Ethics Committee with the Project number YDÜ/SB/2020/772.

Data Collection Tools

A fully structured individual interview method was used in the study. In the research, by using in-depth interview technique, the Violence Against Women Form, which consisted of a total of 48 items including 8 demographic and 40 open-ended questions and questioned the attitude of violence against women and the effect of the print media in TRNC, was applied. In the research, in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with 14 people from each region, including individuals with a certain socioeconomic status, living in the TRNC’s Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, Güzelyurt, Lefke, and İskele districts between June and September 2020.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, and the interviews were audio-recorded. The study was conducted with the qualitative research method, and the NVivo program was used in the analysis of the data obtained. In order to make the analysis easy, the participants were given numbers from G1 to G84. Qualitative research includes methods that seek to gain an in-depth understanding of perceptions, behaviors, and interpretations, rather than measuring quantity, frequency, or severity. Changes in a behavior pattern over time can be detected by qualitative research. Culture-specific differences can be revealed more easily than other methods.14

Sociodemographic Information Form

All participants were asked to fill out the Sociodemographic Information Form, which was prepared by the researchers and consisted of 8 items related to age, nationality, marital status, place of residence, employment, occupation, education, and income.

Violence Against Women Form

The interview form was prepared by the author by taking the opinions of 2 professors and an associate professor who were experts in their fields, and it was rearranged according to these opinions. The questionnaire form consisted of 40 questions. The questions numbered 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 24 defined the theme of violence; the questions numbered 2, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 covered the theme of the victims of violence; the questions 1, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 23 covered the prevalence theme; the questions numbered 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31 covered the theme of prevention; the questions numbered 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37 were about the influence of the media.
and expectations from the media; the questions 32, 38, 39, and 40 constituted the theme of education and media education.

Data Analysis
For the analysis of the data, the recorded interviews were transcribed and transferred to the Nvivo for Windows program, and coding and theme groups were made within the program. The data were organized according to common/similar themes by content analysis. The Nvivo software assists researchers in organizing and coding the collected data, comparing the answers of the participants, and making various inquiries on the text.\(^\text{15}\) Content analysis is a technique in which inferences are made for the objective and systematic recognition of certain features of a message\(^\text{16}\) (Table 1).

Results
Demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 2. The participants mostly defined violence as physical, sexual, and psychological harm and pressure in and out of the home. Participants reported that women and children were mostly the victims of violence. In the study, the prevalence of violence against women in Nicosia, Kyrenia, Güzelyurt, Lefke, Iskele, and Famagusta regions was examined.

The participants specified that the society, the police, the print media, and the government should take measures to prevent violence.

Participants stated that the media had a positive and negative effect on violence, and the media should not reflect news in an encouraging way. The participants answered that the police and the print media should receive training (Figure 1).

The participants stated that violence increased in society, negatively affected the environment of the victim as well as the victim, and became an element of pressure by creating an intense effect on the victim. Violence is all of the behaviors that result in an individual’s being harmed physically, sexually, psychologically or economically or suffering (G71). Violence is all of the acts intended to injure, harm or affect the individual and society. Uneducated and weak people resort to violence (G59). Violence is physical or psychological harm to an individual. (G58)

Table 1. Qualitative Data Codes for Attitude of Violence Against Women and the Effects of the Written Media and Most Distinctive Responses

| Question Number | Questions                                                                 | Most Distinctive Responses          |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2.              | Have you ever been exposed to violence?                                   | Yes                                 |
| 3.              | If yes, what kind of violence have you experienced?                       | Physical and psychological          |
| 5.              | Do you agree with the idea that children and young people take the lead actors of the news in newspapers containing violent elements as “role-models”? | Yes                                 |
| 10.             | How do you think people become violent?                                   | Jealousy, self-righteousness        |
| 13.             | Which type of violence do you think people inflict on their partner more? | Physical and psychological          |
| 20.             | Who is affected by domestic violence more in the family?                  | Women and children                  |
| 22.             | Do you think about spousal violence?                                     | Helplessness, sickness, jealousy     |
| 24.             | Do you think violence is a cultural problem?                              | No                                  |
| 25.             | Is the society aware of these violent events?                             | Yes                                 |
| 27.             | Do you think violence is a normal phenomenon that can be seen in every family? | Yes                                 |
| 28.             | Is the state sensitive to violence against women?                         | Yes, but not enough                 |
| 31.             | To what extent does the state support violence against women?             | Not enough                          |
| 32.             | Do you agree with the idea that people who are prone to crime take the way of the crimes in the news, such as rape and violence against women, as an example for the crimes they will commit? | Yes                                 |
| 33.             | Do you agree with the idea that newspapers including violence lead children and young people to crime and violence? | Yes                                 |
| 34.             | Do you think that newspapers including violence lead children and young people to crime and violence? | Yes                                 |
| 35.             | Do you agree with the idea that newspapers containing violent elements as “role-models”? | Yes                                 |
| 36.             | Should the police, media, and state be educated on violence?              | Yes                                 |
| 39.             | Which functional situation should be highlighted in the presentation of news on violence against women (Educational, Informative, Awareness Raising, Entertainment, and Public Opinion)? | Educational and awareness raising |
| 40.             | Should the police, media, and state be educated on violence?              | Yes                                 |

Theme of Victims Exposed to Violence
Mostly women in the society have been reported to be exposed to psychological violence. It has been stated that although violence negatively affects women in society and the family, children are also heavily affected and their mental health deteriorates. It has been reported that women lose their self-esteem due to violence, which is reflected negatively on their behavior in the society and family. It has been revealed that children take their fathers as role models by normalizing their tendency to resort to violence.
their children in the future when they face violence because boys sometimes imitate their fathers, which can cause great harm to the children’s lives. (G55)

Prevalence Theme
Participants have reported that psychological and physical violence types are common in the TRNC, and that violence starts especially with psychological pressure and ends with physical violence. It has been reported that women and children are exposed to physical and psychological violence more frequently in Famagusta and İskele regions compared to other regions, psychological violence is more common in Nicosia, domestic physical violence is more common in Kyrenia, and psychological violence is more frequent in Güzelyurt and Lefke regions. It has been stated that sex workers in the TRNC are put under psychological pressure in order for men to realize their fantasies, and they are subjected to physical violence, which is prevented from being reflected to the police.

Yes, I was subjected to psychological violence. My spouse is constantly being extremely rude and oppressive towards me. Constantly criticizing what I do (G11). They put psychological pressure on us especially to do their sexual fantasies. The men who try to appear polite at the beginning of the interview, unfortunately, make different offers to us as. they finish their work. The way they speak changes and this affects us psychologically (G43). My husband is currently not working. He is not trying to work. He constantly drinks alcohol and makes us uneasy, and when we call the police they don’t help us because they are my husband’s acquaintances. (G21)

Prevention Theme
It has been stated that although the society, the police, the print media, and the state are sensitive to violence, the rules are not applied because many people in the TRNC know each other, the police do not fully fulfill their duty by considering it as a family problem, and violence against women is mostly not reflected to the judgment and reduces its deterrence. For the matters that are reflected in the judiciary, it has been reported that the slow work of the courts in the implementation phase causes the judicial process to prolong and the events to fall off the agenda.

Both the society and the police in the TRNC are sensitive to violence against women. However, I think that the state, especially the courts, work clumsily in this regard (G32). The courts are insufficient and results are obtained in a long time. The result obtained is also not satisfactory (G44). Our police are sensitive to violence. But police officers sometimes act biased because the TRNC is a small country. (G31)

Theme of Media Effect and Expectations From Media
It has been reported that all segments of the society are affected by the news of violence in the print media, and that these effects have positive and negative effects especially on children and youth. It has been revealed that the reflection of the identities of the women who have been subjected to violence in the press causes them to have embarrassment and inability to continue their complaints since the TRNC is a small place. It has been stated that especially according to the way the media reflects violence, young people perceive violence as a necessary behavior and do not hesitate to resort to violence. On the other hand, it has been stated that the way in which the news of violence in the print media is reflected should not be encouraging.

Children, the old, the young, everyone is affected by the news made by the print media. Some of these news are affected positively and some negatively (G56). The society is greatly affected, and even the increasing violence today shows how it encourages the society for violence (G3). Actually, this is a bit about the person, it is very possible that a child who grows up with violence at home will commit violence in the future. (G24)
Theme of Education and Media Education

The necessity of training the police and the print media on violence in general and violence against women in particular has been demonstrated in this study. It has been stated especially that journalists should receive education in the departments of journalism in universities, and that policemen should receive detailed education on violence against women in police schools. It has been reported that there is a need for the development of awareness-raising programs for the society as well.

Yes, they should be educated (G9). Before presenting news of violence in the print media, they should learn how to present it so that the society is not affected (G62). It is imperative that the police be trained. These subjects should be taught in police schools. When they encounter a victim of violence, they need to know how to ask questions without offending the woman. There is a need to develop awareness raising programs throughout the society. (G14)

Discussion

In this study, the attitude of violence against women and the effect of the printed media in the TRNC were examined with a qualitative study. It has been stated that violence includes behaviors that negatively affect human life and harm individuals physically, psychologically, and economically.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as “the physical force and intentional threat causing injury, death and psychological harm in the victim.”17,18 According to Çakıcı et al,13 violence is a gender-based behavior that hurts or harms women, has the potential to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm, and causes pressure in public or private life.

It has been stated that women who have been subjected to violence lose their self-esteem, their behaviors in society and family are negatively affected, and mostly their children are affected in this process. In a study, it was reported that physical injuries, loss of consciousness, drug and alcohol use, depression, nightmares, feeling of insecurity, insomnia, suicide attempts, and social isolation were seen at high rates in women who were subjected to violence.19-21 It has been observed that the closest witnesses of violence in homes where violence is experienced are often children and they are affected. Children who witness violence may experience withdrawal, fears, communication problems, and failure in education.22

It has been reported that with the emergence of common types of psychological and physical violence in the TRNC, violence begins especially with psychological pressure and ends with physical violence. It has been reported that women and children in Famagusta and İskele regions are generally exposed to physical and psychological violence more frequently than in other regions. These regions are the regions that receive immigration intensively in the TRNC.23 Violence against women has been reported to be more common among immigrants.13 In the studies of Çakıcı et al13 on violence against women in the TRNC, it has been revealed that physical violence is experienced at an equal rate in Güzelyurt and Karpaz regions, violence against women is common in Famagusta and Nicosia regions, and violence is more frequently observed among immigrants. According to WHO data, 35% of women in the world experience physical and sexual violence.24 In the study of T.R. Prime Ministry Family Research Institute on domestic violence, it was found that 34% of each family experienced physical violence and 53% verbal violence against women.25 It has been stated that sex workers in the TRNC are psychologically pressured and subjected to violence in order for men to realize their fantasies. In a study in the TRNC, it was determined that women working in nightclubs could be subjected
to violence and that these incidents of violence were not reflected in the police and the judiciary.\textsuperscript{13,26}

In this study, it has been revealed that although the society, the police, the print media, and the state are sensitive to violence, there are not enough deterrent penalties. The slow work of the courts, especially during the implementation of the laws, causes the process to be prolonged and the events to fall off the agenda. According to a study conducted in the TRNC Central Prison, it has been determined that the penalties prescribed by law against violence in the TRNC are not deterrent. Courts impose fines rather than imprisonment. The continuous implementation of this bail system reduces the deterrence of laws and penalties.\textsuperscript{27} In a study, it has been revealed that although there are positive legal studies on preventing violence against women in the family, there are deficiencies in the implementation phase and the penalties to be imposed for violence against women are not sufficient to solve all the problems.\textsuperscript{28}

It has been reported that the society is affected by the news of violence in the print media, and that these effects have positive and negative effects especially on children and young individuals. In addition, it has been stated that the way in which the news of violence in the print media is reflected should not be encouraging. The media reports the acts of violence in the society\textsuperscript{29} because they create tension\textsuperscript{29} and negativity,\textsuperscript{30} an extraordinary event and a possible emotional impact on individuals.\textsuperscript{31} Studies show that news reporters, while reporting violence, focus on the striking aspect of the event, which is different from normal, and act without thinking about the different consequences that the news will create on society.\textsuperscript{32}

It has been observed that the police and the print media have insufficient training on violence in general and violence against women in particular. It has been determined that the issues of violence against women are not adequately covered in the journalism and press departments of universities and in police schools. In a study, it has been revealed that it is necessary to support the legal rights of the victims by sharing general information about the effects of violence against women and that the police should receive training on violence.\textsuperscript{33}

In our study, it has been revealed that violence against women is common in the TRNC, and children as well as women are affected by these acts of violence. It has been determined that the police and the society are sensitive to violence against women but there are deficiencies in the implementation stages in terms of laws. It has been determined that the print media in the TRNC is effective in the attitude toward violence against women. It has been observed that there is a need for training and awareness-raising programs for relevant field experts, especially policemen, members of the press, lawyers, doctors, and educators.

It has emerged that there is a need for public health policies on violence against women in society. The findings of this study may guide future research.

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\textbf{Informed Consent:} An informed consent form was obtained from the participants.

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