

Original Article

Assessing the Effectiveness of Training Given to Teachers for the Prevention of Domestic Violence towards Women

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to assess the effectiveness of planned training regarding domestic violence, given to class teachers.

Study design: The study is conducted as a semi-experimental study on class teachers from 9 elementary schools in Giresun province of Turkey, between June 1, 2013 and June 1, 2014.

Methods: A total of 176 teachers have participated in this study where 117 of them are in the test group and 59 of them are in the control group. Pretest-posttest measurements applied to test and control groups are used within the study.

Results: After the intervention, the opinion that gender discrimination, men's struggle to defeat weakness and inability, and intolerance to individual differences are among the causes of violence becomes significantly more widespread ($p < 0.01$). The awareness on the determination of risk factors and the contribution of increased social support for preventing violence have also increased significantly ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusion: It is determined that the training given to teachers on the prevention of domestic violence towards women can be considered effective.

Keywords: women's health, domestic violence, teacher, training

Introduction

Domestic violence against women is an important public health problem due to its prevalence all over the world and its implications on women's health. Though in different forms among different societies and cultures; domestic violence against women is observed among the members of all social classes, regions, religions, cultures, and economical classes (Fonseca, Egry, Guedes, Gutierrez & Tezzei, 2011).

Violence towards women comprises all types of conduct based on gender discrimination

which harms women physically, sexually, and psychologically, putting women under pressure in society and in their personal lives, and limiting their freedom and preventing their progress, which is usually perpetrated by the intimate partners of the women (World Health Organization (WHO), 2005).

Women are deeply affected by the physical, sexual, and psychological negative behaviors that they experience. Violence against women may lead to physical injuries and mutilation, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections,

depression, anxiety, chronic pain, eating and sleeping disorders, low self-esteem and may even cause death (Romito, Molza & Marchi, 2005; Güler & Akin, 2012; Campbell, 2002).

Violence against women not only affects women, but also children, families, and societies that they live in. The children are usually the closest witnesses and sometimes the direct subjects of the violence at the houses where the violence is conducted. The children may experience violence when they try to prevent the father who perpetrates the violence on the mother or may be subject to the violence of the mother due to her anger after being subject to violence. At the places where violence is perpetrated, the children may experience verbal, physical and emotional violence. It is reported that these children become introverted, have phobias, suffer from communication problems, and become unsuccessful at their schools (Jansen et al., 2009).

According to a study published by World Health Organization (WHO, 2005) which involves 24,000 women from different cultures, locations, and rural/urban regions in 10 countries; in a lifetime, the frequency of physical violence ranges between 13% and 61%, the frequency of sexual violence ranges between 6% and 59%, and the frequency of physical or sexual violence ranges between 15% and 71% (Garcia, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2005).

The frequency of perpetration to physical violence in Turkey in a lifetime is reported to range between 25% and 53%, the frequency of the perpetration to sexual violence ranges between 9% and 23%, and the frequency of the perpetration to physical or sexual violence is 42% (Jansen et al., 2009). The prevention of violence towards women is a human rights approach which relies on compliance with, protection, and respecting human rights and therefore is built upon the necessity to prevent and eradicate violence, and punish those who perpetrate it. This approach considers violence towards women as the violation of several human rights including the right to live, freedom, autonomy, personal safety, equality, not being subject to discrimination or mistreatment, and respect to personality (WHO, 2010).

It is pointed out in the literature that the training of the school staff is very important for the success of violence prevention programs. The teachers and nurses should learn how to help students on handling violence. The education should include group work, role playing, and practices. How to respond without violence, conflict management, developing self-esteem, and prevention of crimes should also be included in the education. The main idea of the education should be to help students become independent problem solvers. It should be emphasized during the education that all students from different cultures deserve kindness and respect (Potts & Mandleco, 2011). The teachers achieve these with their attitudes towards violence and with their conducts to prevent violence. As they are teachers who interact with the students directly in most cases and hence know them best, raising the awareness of teachers on violence prevention, their sensitivity to the topic, and their acting as role models while teaching students will help improve the violence prevention programs. Formal policies, procedures, curricula, and teaching strategies also have considerable impact on violence prevention (National Campaign Against Violence and Crime (NCAVAC), 1998).

Based on the above information on violence prevention, this study, planned as a semi-experimental one, aims at the assessment and improvement of teachers' knowledge on domestic violence, as teachers have important roles on the identification and prevention of violence.

Methods

This study is conducted as an intervention study on combating domestic violence towards women and children. Pretest-posttest research pattern is used in the study which is carried out between June 1, 2013 and June 1, 2014. The universe of the study comprises class teachers working at 9 elementary schools in Giresun province of Turkey. Before the study is conducted, a written permission is obtained from the Directorate of National Education of the province and verbal permissions are obtained from the teachers. A total of 176 teachers, 117 of them forming the intervention group and 59 of

them forming the control group, voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

During data collection, “personal information form” and “assessment form on information regarding domestic violence” are used. The assessment form includes questions on the definition of domestic violence and the reasons of domestic violence, on physical, sexual, and psychological violence types, on the effects of violence on women, and lastly, questions on the prevention of violence.

The content of the training includes topics on the determination of the goals and objectives of the training, social gender equality, legal regulations regarding domestic violence towards women, services provided to women who experienced violence, the impact of violence on the health of women, and the program to combat domestic violence. Five and a half months after the training, the teachers in the intervention group are requested to fill in the same forms again. Due to reasons such as that the assessment is performed after 5,5 months and the time coincides with the course period, the number of teachers who participate in the second assessment phase is 81. Percentages, frequency distributions, means, and chi-square test are used for the evaluation of the data while McNemar’s chi-square test is used for the comparison of the categorical variables.

Results

The socio-demographic information of the teachers participating in the study is provided in Table 1. The mean of the ages of the participating teachers is 46.9 ± 8.2 . 44.9% of the teachers within the test group are women and 45.7% of those in the control group are women. No significant finding is observed with respect to gender differences within the groups. The marital status statistics within the test and control groups are similar and the majority of them are married. The majority of the test group (93.1%) and control group (89.8%) have undergraduate degrees. In both groups of the study, the majority of the teachers have a professional experience of six years or more. No significant finding is observed within the groups with respect to the duration of professional experience. 96% of the

participating teachers have nuclear families and 90.3% of them have children.

A 88.1% of the participating teachers had not been previously given any training on domestic violence and 50.3% of them indicated that they had encountered domestic violence as related to their students or the families of the students. Among the latter group of teachers, 31% of them indicated that they had talked to the students and 40% of them indicated that they had talked to the families on this issue. 79.7% of the teachers indicated that they notified related people of this issue when they encountered or suspected an act of violence. It is determined that the rate of notifying teachers in such cases is higher within the test group and the difference between the groups is significant ($p < 0.05$). 12.6% of the participating teachers indicated that they had been subject to domestic violence.

Findings related to the causes of domestic violence are provided in Table 2. According to these results, the percentage of the participants who think that gender discrimination in society causes violence has increased after the training and this difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The percentage of participants who think that men’s struggle to defeat the emotions of weakness and inability is also one of the causes of domestic violence has also increased after the training and the difference is again statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

The intolerance to individual differences has already been considered as one of the causes of domestic violence before the training and the percentage of the participants who consider it as a cause has increased after the training and the difference between the percentages is found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). No significant difference is observed between the percentages of participants who think that the lack of social skills, unemployment, alienation and solitude may lead to violence, before and after the training ($p > 0.05$). The statistics as related to perceptions of domestic physical violence types by the participants are presented in Table 3. While ‘depriving someone of health services’ was not mostly considered as a type of domestic violence before the training, after the training

it is perceived as a type of violence and the difference is found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, 'attempt to poison' was not considered as domestic violence before the training, and the percentage of the participants who consider is as a case of domestic violence has increased after the training where this increase is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Again, 'attempt to smother' was not considered as a violence type before the training and the percentage of those who

consider it so has increased significantly after the training ($p < 0.01$).

Lastly, though 'attempt to burn someone with a substance' was not perceived as an incident of physical violence before the training, after the training it is commonly considered as a violence incident and the difference between the related percentages before and after the training is significant ($p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Individual characteristics	Groups				Analysis*
	Test		Control		
	Number	%	Number	%	
Age					
25-35	21	18,1	13	22	$x^2 = 2,478$ $p = 0,290$, $sd = 0,794$
36-45	22	19	16	27,2	
46-58	73	62,9	30	50,8	
Gender					
Male	64	55,1	32	54,3	$x^2 = 0,014$ $p = 0,906$, $sd = 0,499$
Female	52	44,9	27	45,7	
Marital status					
Married	110	94,8	57	96,6	$x^2 = 0,285$ $p = 0,594$, $sd = 0,209$
Single	6	5,2	2	0,4	
Education					
High school	3	2,5	1	1,6	$x^2 = 1,233$ $p = 0,540$, $sd = 0,285$
Undergraduate	107	93,1	53	89,8	
Graduate	6	5,1	5	8,4	
Duration of professional experience					
1-2 years	2	1,8	-	-	$x^2 = 3,709$ $p = 0,157$, $sd = 0,268$
3-5 years	5	5,1	-	-	
6 years or more	109	93,1	59	100	

Table 2. Causes of Domestic Violence

	Test	N	%	X	p
Gender discrimination in society	Pretest	66	35.7	8.50	0.004
	Posttest	53	82.7		
Men's struggle to defeat the emotions of weakness and inability	Pretest	102	58.0	4.97	0.026
	Posttest	55	67.9		
Intolerance to individual differences	Pretest	82	46.6	6.03	0.014
	Posttest	50	61.7		
Lack of social skills	Pretest	89	48.1	3.02	0.082
	Posttest	50	27.0		
The emotions of alienation and solitude	Pretest	104	56.2	3.78	0.052
	Posttest	60	32.4		
Unemployment	Pretest	144	77.8	0.14	0.700
	Posttest	59	31.9		

Table 3. The Perceptions of Different Physical Violence Types

	Test	N	%	X	p
Depriving someone of health services	Pretest	78	44.3	10.61	0.001
	Posttest	49	60.5		
Attempt to poison	Pretest	80	45.5	11.25	0.001
	Posttest	54	66.7		
Attempt to smother	Pretest	107	61.1	24.32	0.000
	Posttest	72	88.9		
Attempt to burn with a substance	Pretest	120	68.2	18.58	0.000
	Posttest	75	92.6		
Beating	Pretest	172	97.7	0.052	0.820
	Posttest	79	97.5		
Injuring	Pretest	123	69.9	1.739	0.187
	Posttest	68	84.0		

Discussion

The school programs have important roles in preventing violence towards women. These programs help children learn gender norms and attitudes before they are ingrained (WHO, 2009). The class teachers should be the main actors in these programs and the other school staff should have supporting roles (Potts & Mandleco, 2011).

Among the participating teachers of our study, 88.1% of them indicated that they had not previously been given any training on domestic violence, while 50.3% of them declared that they had encountered domestic violence issues as related to their students and the families of the students. Previous related work emphasizes that primary school teachers have an important role in the identification of violence and its related issues, and that they should provide the people who suffered from violence with pointers to related organizations so that they can get the necessary support (Walsh et al., 2008). Since teachers are in close proximity to students and hence they can observe the students, they are able to identify even the slightest differences in their appearances and behaviors, possibly with the causes of these differences. If the teachers suspect incidents of child exploitation or neglect, they should contact the related social services agencies and, when necessary, they should inform the judicial authorities about the incidents. This ensures that the involved children are freed from the exploitation and the perpetrators are punished and treated if possible (Şahin & Beyazova, 2001). However, it is observed that many teachers do not know how they may notify the related authorities and also they do not know how they can understand that the children have been exposed to violence in the first place. Moreover, many of them are inclined to think that they do not have the responsibility to make notifications to the authorities or agencies. Additionally, it is reported that many teachers commonly agree that they should be given the right to apply corporal punishment to students when required (Kenny, 2004).

Two of the important causes of domestic violence against women are gender discrimination and the perception that men are superior to women (Jewkes, 2002). The

percentage of the teachers who think that gender discrimination is one of the causes of domestic violence has increased significantly at the end of the current study. Before the children and adolescents acquire gender-related stereotypical ideas and behaviors, school-based interventions promote gender standards and equality (Hickman, Jaycox & Aronoff, 2004).

Violence against women perpetrated by their intimate partners is mostly related to the structure of the society that the women live in. The low education level of women, men's struggle to defeat the emotions of weakness and inability, the economic dependence of the women on men, and the idea of men's control over women are all related to the social structure (Jewkes, 2002). In our study, the percentage of teachers who perceive the men's struggle to defeat the emotions of weakness and inability, and their intolerance to individual differences among the causes of violence has increased significantly.

According to the results of the study, the percentage of the participants' considering the act of depriving someone of health services, and attempts to poison, to smother, and to burn with a substance as incidents of physical violence has increased after the training. The corresponding lower percentage prior to the training may be a consequence of being accustomed to this within the society. The frequency of women's perpetration to physical violence during their lifetimes is reported to range between 25% and 53% (Jansen et al., 2009).

The percentage of the participants who consider sexual violence types like forcing to deliver children, forcing for abortion, and comparing the sexual characteristics with other women as incidents of sexual violence has also significantly increased after the training. This implies that the awareness of the participating teachers has raised with the training. As previously pointed out, a study conducted by WHO in several different countries in 2005 shows that the frequency of women who are exposed to sexual violence ranges between 6% and 59% (Garcia et al., 2005).

Violence towards women is known to lead to physiological and psychological health problems and also to reproductive health

problems (Elsberg et al., 2005). In this study, regarding the effects of domestic violence on women; the participants' knowledge on the fact that the violence can lead to women's smoking and deliveries with low birth weights has increased significantly after the intervention ($p < 0.05$).

Considering the prevention of domestic violence towards women, in the current study, the participants' considerations on the determination of the risk factors for domestic violence and on increasing the corresponding social support have changed significantly ($p < 0.05$). The determination of the causes of domestic violence also reveals the risk factors. The factors like the society's view of women, women's low education levels, and their economic dependence on men are reported to lead to frequent exposure of women to domestic violence (Grown, Gupta & Kes, 2005). In a study conducted by Deveci, Açık, Gülbayrak, Tokdemir & Ayar (2007), it is determined that those women who had been exposed to violence during their childhood, who have low education levels, who do not work and have low economic levels, and who had an arranged marriage are exposed to domestic violence more (Deveci et al., 2007).

Domestic violence towards women is a multi-dimensional and universal public health problem which increases gradually. There are several primary, secondary, and tertiary violence prevention programs. The primary prevention should deal with the violence-inclined thoughts and behaviors of the children at their early ages (Garcia, 2000). The planned trainings given to teachers and school-based studies on domestic violence towards women are particularly important for the prevention of gender discrimination within society, the determination of the risks with the corresponding countermeasures, and empowering women with societal studies (WHO, 2009). An important finding of the current study is that most of the participating teachers (88.1%) had not been previously given any training on violence and that 50.3% of them indicated that they had previously encountered violence as related to their students or the families of the students.

In conclusion, we can confirm that the training program, applied to teachers, on domestic violence towards women leads to positive differences on the knowledge and the behaviors of these teachers.

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