

(256/282) of women experiencing domestic violence had a secondary school or higher education and 64.9% (183/282) of them were living in a house with five or more family members. Table 1 shows the baseline characteristics of our sample according to experience of domestic violence.

The prevalence of overall and type of life-long domestic violence based on the Arabic NorVold Domestic Abuse Questionnaire (NORAQ) is shown in Table 2. The overall prevalence of domestic violence was 28.8% (282/978). Emotional domestic violence was more common than physical domestic violence, prevalence 21.0% and 18.0%, respectively. Ninety-nine women (10.1%) reported being experiencing both emotional and physical domestic violence.

The univariate analysis showed that being divorced ($P < 0.001$), having a low income ($P < 0.001$) and alcohol consumption of the husband ($P < 0.001$) were significant predictors of domestic violence (Table 1). More women who had experienced domestic violence than those who had not reported feeling sad with loss of interest ($P < 0.001$), having sleep problems ($P < 0.001$) and suffering from somatic symptoms such as abdominal pain and headache ($P < 0.001$) (Table 1).

The logistic regression analysis showed that alcohol consumption of the husband (OR = 9.85 95% CI: 1.00–96.94; $P = 0.050$), feeling sad with loss of interest (OR = 2.90, 95% CI: 1.75–4.81; $P < 0.001$), sleep disturbance (OR = 2.54, 95% CI: 1.57–4.10; $P < 0.001$) and somatic symptoms (OR = 1.73, 95% CI: 1.08–2.78, $P = 0.022$) were significantly associated with domestic violence (Table 3).

Regarding the perpetrators of the domestic violence, 30.5% (86/282) of the women reported that the abuser was their father, 28.4% (80/282) said it was their husband or ex-husband and 27.3% (77/282) said it was their brother(s) (Figure 1). The rest of the participants reported that the perpetrators were other family members. Only 11 (5.4%) women who had experienced emotional violence and 11 (6.3%) women who had experienced physical violence had ever sought help from their doctors. In addition, only 15 (5.3%) women who had experienced domestic violence had ever filed a complaint to the police (Table 4).

Discussion

Our analysis showed that domestic violence against women is a common problem in Oman. Detrimental effects on health and well-being, such as depression, anxiety and insomnia, were more commonly reported by women who had ever experienced domestic violence. Notably, alcohol consumption by the woman’s husband was a significant predictor of the occurrence of domestic violence, although the precision of this result is low because few women’s husbands drank alcohol. Despite the serious consequences of domestic violence, only a small proportion of women had ever sought help from health service providers or others.

In Oman, women play a substantial role in advancing various areas of the country’s development, including participation in education, the economy and politics.

Table 1 Characteristics of the women according to experience of domestic violence (n = 978), Oman, 2019

Characteristic	Experienced domestic violence		P-value ^a
	Yes	No	
	No. (%)	No. (%)	
Age group (years)			
18–30	153 (29.5)	365 (70.5)	0.7
≥ 30	129 (28.4)	325 (71.6)	
Marital status			
Single	51 (38.1)	83 (61.9)	< 0.001
Married	219 (26.7)	602 (73.3)	
Widowed	2 (28.6)	5 (71.4)	
Divorced	10 (66.7)	5 (33.3)	
Years of marriage			
< 5	77 (26.5)	214 (73.5)	0.7
5–10	81 (26.8)	221 (73.2)	
11–15	34 (24.6)	104 (75.4)	
16–20	15 (30.6)	34 (69.4)	
> 20	13 (29.5)	31 (70.5)	
Number of children			
0–2	135 (25.3)	398 (74.7)	0.7
3–4	59 (29.2)	143 (70.8)	
≥ 5	16 (34.0)	31 (66.0)	
Number of people in household			
0–2	44 (26.0)	125 (74.0)	0.7
3–4	55 (26.4)	153 (73.6)	
≥ 5	183 (30.4)	418 (69.6)	
Monthly family income (US\$)			
< 1298	84 (36.7)	145 (63.3)	< 0.001
1298–2597	124 (25.6)	361 (74.4)	
≥ 2597	74 (28.0)	190 (72.0)	
Educational level (participant)			
Read and write	0 (0.0)	2 (100.0)	0.7
Up to preparatory	26 (31.7)	56 (68.3)	
Secondary and higher	256 (28.6)	638 (71.4)	
Educational level (mother)			
Illiterate	131 (27.1)	352 (72.9)	0.7
Up to preparatory	109 (30.9)	244 (69.9)	
Secondary and higher	42 (30.0)	98 (70.0)	
Educational level (father)			
Illiterate	103 (27.0)	279 (73.0)	0.7
Up to preparatory	113 (32.8)	231 (67.2)	
Secondary and higher	66 (26.5)	183 (73.5)	
Educational level (husband)			
Illiterate	5 (50.0)	5 (50.0)	0.7
Up to preparatory	28 (33.7)	55 (66.3)	
Secondary and higher	195 (26.2)	550 (73.8)	
Employment (participant)			
Unemployed	152 (27.1)	409 (72.9)	0.7
Employed	129 (31.2)	285 (68.8)	

Table 1 Characteristics of the women according to experience of domestic violence (n = 978), Oman, 2019 (Concluded)

Characteristic	Experienced domestic violence		P-value ^a
	Yes	No	
	No. (%)	No. (%)	
Employment (husband)			
Unemployed	6 (19.4)	25 (80.6)	0.7
Employed	217 (27.2)	581 (72.8)	
Smokes (participant)			
Yes	2 (66.7)	1 (33.3)	0.7
No	280 (28.7)	694 (71.3)	
Smokes (husband)			
Yes	23 (35.9)	41 (64.1)	0.7
No	199 (26.0)	566 (74.0)	
Drinks alcohol (participant)			
Yes	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	0.7
No	282 (28.9)	695 (71.1)	
Drinks alcohol (husband)			
Yes	6 (85.7)	1 (14.3)	< 0.001
No	216 (26.2)	607 (73.8)	
In the past year, have you felt sad, with loss of interest?			
No	118 (18.8)	509 (81.2)	< 0.001
Yes, sometimes	88 (41.7)	123 (58.3)	
Yes, most of the time	76 (54.3)	64 (45.7)	
In the past year, have you had difficulties sleeping which affected your daily activities?			
No	77 (16.8)	381 (83.2)	< 0.001
Yes, sometimes	99 (33.2)	199 (66.8)	
Yes, most of the time	106 (47.7)	116 (52.3)	
In the past year, have you had symptoms such as abdominal pain, headache, dizziness, muscle pain that affected your daily activities?			
No	54 (15.3)	298 (84.7)	< 0.001
Yes, sometimes	96 (30.1)	223 (69.9)	
Yes, most of the time	132 (43.0)	175 (57.0)	

US\$ = United States dollars.

^aChi squared test.

For instance, the percentage of women pursuing higher education exceeds that of men, and nearly 60% of jobs in the education and health sectors are held by women (18,19). Moreover, Oman has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and embraced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to eliminate all forms of violence against women (20). Oman has made marked improvement and progress in this field as indicated by a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.348, which outperforms the average score of other Arab states (0.545) (21). However, currently, there

is no screening programme or population-based survey to identify domestic violence against women in Oman. Furthermore, there is no specific legislation or policy that addresses domestic violence against women (22). In 2012, a shelter to protect women, who had experienced violence or abuse, was established, but access was limited only to individuals who were referred by the Prosecutor General or other law agencies (22). Some women who experience domestic violence (especially physical) report to the Ministry of Social Development directly, while others report to primary health care institutions, where their doctors will examine them and then the cases are referred to the police upon victim's request .

Our study identified an overall prevalence rate of lifetime domestic violence of 29%, which lies within the range of the prevalence in other Arabic countries (4–7,23). A recent systematic review of the prevalence of intimate-partner violence in Arab countries found the prevalence ranged from 6% to 59% for physical violence and 5% to 91% for emotional violence, although the evidence was fragmented (24). The reported prevalence in our study is lower than the prevalence in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Sudan (4,7,25). On the other hand, our reported prevalence is slightly higher than that of Jordan and Egypt (5,6). The explanation for such a variation in the prevalence of domestic violence among Middle Eastern countries could be attributed to heterogeneity in the research methodologies used and the influence of cultural differences.

Emotional domestic violence was the most common type reported by our Omani participants, which is consistent with other studies (4,26). A recent study in the Islamic Republic of Iran, corroborated emotional domestic violence as the most prevalent type of violence among abused women, with more than half of the participants suffering from it (27). The reasons for such a common

Table 2 Prevalence of overall and subtypes of domestic violence, Oman, 2019

Variable	No. (%) (n = 978)
Overall domestic violence	
Yes	282 (28.8)
No	696 (71.2)
Emotional domestic violence	
Mild	102 (10.4)
Moderate	38 (3.9)
Severe	65 (6.6)
Subtotal	205 (21.0)
Physical domestic violence	
Mild	18 (1.8)
Moderate	138 (14.1)
Severe	20 (2.0)
Subtotal	176 (18.0)
Mixed domestic violence (emotional and physical)	
	99 (10.1)

Based on the Arabic NorVold Domestic Abuse Questionnaire (16).