

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Factors associated with domestic violence among women of reproductive age (15-49 years) in Quetta, Balochistan- A mix-method protocol.
AUTHORS	Soomar, Salman; Soomar, Sarmad

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Fernanda Surita University of Campinas, Obstetrics & Gynecology
REVIEW RETURNED	18-Oct-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>I appreciate the opportunity to review this manuscript. The topic in question is very important and addressing it in the most diverse countries is essential. VAW is a public health problem and all academic studies in this regard are important for the long-term reduction of gender inequities, one of the SDG's goals.</p> <p>I congratulate the authors for the initiative, especially for being in a country where, for cultural reasons, the denunciation of DV is so low. We know that underreporting is one of the faces of the problem, linked to the structural violence of society, which does not allow women to have a voice.</p> <p>The choice of the mix-method brings some difficulties in carrying out the study, on the other hand it adds content that would not be reached only with quantitative research, so it is a great option for the topic</p> <p>Being the first study on the subject in the region and involving community leaders to somehow work on the prevention of VAW is also a great merit</p> <p>Some doubts:</p> <p>Age of participants: Why over 15 years old? Are there no child marriages, pregnancy or VAW cases in 10-14 year old girls? Why was the reproductive age of 10-49 years not considered?</p> <p>Exclusion criteria: the term "mentally retarded" is inappropriate and stigmatizing, please adapt. And it also needs to be better defined. Why were women living alone excluded? Even living alone they can have an intimate partner, which does not spare them from the DV process.</p> <p>Selection of interviewees: the selection process is very well designed, however I keep thinking about the risk that a woman who suffers from DV may be exposed if her house is "sorted" for the study. The fact that they go to the residence can expose the woman to greater risks. What are the strategies for not exposing the woman to this risk? If she is afraid, she won't admit the violence has occurred, it's the same reason she doesn't report it and VAW rates in the country are so underreported. How will this be addressed? Please explain why "Age of the participant, level of education, occupation and geographical location are categorized as a-priori</p>
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	<p>confounders in this research”</p> <p>*Major Review: The qualitative part of the study needs to be better described. Who and where the focus groups will be held and what is the theoretical framework used for content analysis. What is the background and experience of the professionals who will lead the focus group. The use of software helps a lot, but it is only a validation of the content analysis carried out from a specific theoretical reference, chosen based on the theme and professional training of the interviewers.</p> <p>The issue of the support of an NGO to women victims and survivors of VAW is essential, but in addition it is necessary to describe something more about the care of the team so that participation or even the invitation to participate is not a triggering factor for any type of violence. And all the precautions that will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of interviews within the woman's home I conclude by congratulating the authors for the initiative and I await the answers to the above clarifications</p>
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REVIEWER	Mohiuddin Ahsanul Kabir Chowdhury University of South Carolina
REVIEW RETURNED	28-Oct-2021

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Thank you for choosing an interesting topic and I agree that this is an under researched area, especially for the regions like Quetta, Balochistan. My comments for different sections are provided below:</p> <p>ABSTRACT: Abstract is constructed nicely. However, the methods section needs revision. Lines 45-52 of page 1 seem unclear. This is a compound sentence. In the first part, you mentioned, “A structured questionnaire will be used to identify associated factors with domestic violence and type of violence among women of reproductive age.” Though, as per syntax, this is a correct sentence, but it does not sound well. You could just mention that structured questionnaire will be used as the quantitative tool. The second part of the sentence is very poorly constructed, and I believe that is from a “copy-paste” error. Finally, the authors could be more specific about qualitative data analysis and could mention of thematic analysis directly.</p> <p>INTRODUCTION: A logical flow is required in the introduction. The opening paragraph seems not to be coherent between the sentences. I would suggest the authors to revise the introduction in such a way that the readers can link one paragraph to other.</p> <p>HYPOTHESIS: Both the hypotheses should be revisited. I am not sure how the authors are planning to test these hypotheses of OR 2.0. Suppose if the OR is 2.5, are they going to reject the hypothesis? And, if it is 11.95, then?</p> <p>METHODS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the qualitative component, the authors should mention which theory they will follow, i.e., grounded theory or phenomenology, or anything else? • In the inclusion and exclusion criteria, it is better to avoid the ethical part • You mentioned about 1500 households, i.e., 1500 women, who do not match with the calculated sample size of 770 dyads. • For the qualitative component, I am not sure whether two FGDs are sufficient to reach the data saturation. I would suggest the researchers have some more IDIs, and KIIIs • Qualitative component is missed in sampling strategy • I did not understand why the discussion about factors went under
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	<p>outcome variable. This should have been in covariates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualitative coding is under-described. <p>OVERALL: There has been a number of grammatical errors and typos. The authors should consider efficient proofreading.</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Comments to the Author:

Some doubts:

Age of participants: Why over 15 years old? Are there no child marriages, pregnancy or VAW cases in 10-14 year old girls? Why was the reproductive age of 10-49 years not considered?

Response: Women of reproductive age are included which is 15-49, not 10-49 years as per the WHO guidelines. The reason to include this age group is that literature has suggested violence more among this group. Moreover, culturally there are under-reported child marriages.

Exclusion criteria: the term “mentally retarded” is inappropriate and stigmatizing, please adapt. And it also needs to be better defined. Why were women living alone excluded? Even living alone, they can have an intimate partner, which does not spare them from the DV process.

Response: thank you for your comments. I have amended the exclusion criteria.

Selection of interviewees: the selection process is very well designed; however, I keep thinking about the risk that a woman who suffers from DV may be exposed if her house is “sorted” for the study. The fact that they go to the residence can expose the woman to greater risks. What are the strategies for not exposing the woman to this risk? If she is afraid, she won't admit the violence has occurred, it's the same reason she doesn't report it and VAW rates in the country are so underreported. How will this be addressed?

Response: Risk mitigation strategies will be taken care of to handle the situation better. It will be made sure that the participating women have no risk or harm of violence due to this study. The neighborhoods will be identified with the help of community leaders, and it will be made sure to collect data in the nearby basic health units, otherwise in the absence of a male or house head. This is how females will respond without any fear.

Please explain why “Age of the participant, level of education, occupation and geographical location are categorized as a-priori confounders in this research”

Response: Literature reports lower age groups have more chances of violence compared to senior, the difference in education can be a confounder, as more educated women is an empowered woman. Moreover, a working woman faces less violence compared to a housewife. There is a significant difference in urban and rural areas population which affects the violence rates.

*Major Review: The qualitative part of the study needs to be better described. Who and where the focus groups will be held and what is the theoretical framework used for content analysis? What is the background and experience of the professionals who will lead the focus group? The use of software helps a lot, but it is only a validation of the content analysis carried out from a specific theoretical reference, chosen based on the theme and professional training of the interviewers.

Response: FGD will be led by the Principal Investigator with the team at community centers/ halls. A phenomenological approach will be used in qualitative part as we will be knowing the lived

experiences. The strong through every mile (STEM) theoretical framework will be used which focuses on tertiary prevention, coping, and recovery from domestic violence. STEM's expected outcomes are supported by four main theoretical frameworks: self-determination theory, self-efficacy theory, locus of control, and social capital theory. Additionally, the empowerment, happiness, and mindfulness literature provide support for STEM's anticipated outcomes.

The issue of the support of an NGO to women victims and survivors of VAW is essential, but in addition it is necessary to describe something more about the care of the team so that participation or even the invitation to participate is not a triggering factor for any type of violence. And all the precautions that will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of interviews within the woman's home

I conclude by congratulating the authors for the initiative and I await the answers to the above clarifications.

Reviewer: 2

Comments to the Author:

Thank you for choosing an interesting topic and I agree that this is an under researched area, especially for the regions like Quetta, Balochistan. My comments for different sections are provided below:

ABSTRACT: Abstract is constructed nicely. However, the methods section needs revision. Lines 45-52 of page 1 seem unclear. This is a compound sentence. In the first part, you mentioned, "A structured questionnaire will be used to identify associated factors with domestic violence and type of violence among women of reproductive age." Though, as per syntax, this is a correct sentence, it does not sound well. You could just mention that a structured questionnaire will be used as a quantitative tool. The second part of the sentence is very poorly constructed, and I believe that is from a "copy-paste" error. Finally, the authors could be more specific about qualitative data analysis and could mention thematic analysis directly.

Response: Changes made in the abstract as per the suggestion.

INTRODUCTION: A logical flow is required in the introduction. The opening paragraph seems not to be coherent between the sentences. I would suggest the authors to revise the introduction in such a way that the readers can link one paragraph to other.

Response: Changes made in the introduction as per the suggestion.

HYPOTHESIS: Both the hypotheses should be revisited. I am not sure how the authors are planning to test these hypotheses of OR 2.0. Suppose if the OR is 2.5, are they going to reject the hypothesis? And, if it is 11.95, then?

Response: usually the literature decides the hypothesis so we mentioned two times but your point is valid. Rephrased and just mentioned it will be higher. "The odds of domestic violence among non-married women of reproductive age (both ever married and never married) group will be higher than married women of reproductive age groups."

METHODS:

- For the qualitative component, the authors should mention which theory they will follow, i.e., grounded theory or phenomenology, or anything else?

Response: A phenomenological approach will be used in qualitative part as we will be knowing the lived experiences.

- In the inclusion and exclusion criteria, it is better to avoid the ethical part

Response: Changes made, ethical part removed.

- You mentioned about 1500 households, i.e., 1500 women, who do not match with the calculated sample size of 770 dyads.

Response: 1500 was an error. It its rectified.

- For the qualitative component, I am not sure whether two FGDs are sufficient to reach the data saturation. I would suggest the researchers have some more IDIs and KIIs

Response: the data collection time is short and it's a student thesis research so looking at the timelines we have kept only 2 FGDs which will have 25 in each which is fine for saturation point.

- Qualitative component is missed in sampling strategy

Response: For the qualitative part non-probability purposive sampling strategy will be used.

- I did not understand why the discussion about factors went under outcome variable. This should have been in covariates

Response: Changes made. Added in covariates.

- The qualitative coding is under-described.

Response: Themes and sub-themes will be created, and coding will be done accordingly. See data analysis part.

OVERALL: There has been a number of grammatical errors and typos. The authors should consider efficient proofreading.

Response: Proofreading is done. Grammatical errors are rectified.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Mohiuddin Ahsanul Kabir Chowdhury University of South Carolina
REVIEW RETURNED	12-Mar-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	Abstract: A couple of sentences are incomplete in the abstract, e.g. ". Moreover, to understand the perspective of community leaders and HCWs for developing prevention of domestic violence against women of reproductive age at Quetta Balochistan.", and "Focus group discussions using a semi-structured guide will provide for the data collection." Hence, a thorough revision is required and would be better if it is copy-edited by a professional. Secondly, the design is mixed method, not mix-method. Please revise it in all instances.
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	<p>Introduction: The second paragraph seems to have one sentence only. Please recheck. It would be great if authors could provide a few data from the countries with similar background or environment as Pakistan. Grammatical check is required</p> <p>Rationale: The first few sentences in the rationale are unclear and requires revision.</p> <p>Objectives: These would look better if presented in narratives</p> <p>Hypothesis: I would advise the authors to recheck their hypothesis once again</p> <p>Methods: Methods have some structural and grammatical problems. In the study design segment, the quan and qual component overlapped. "A cross-sectional study design will be used to identify associated factors with domestic violence and type of violence among women of reproductive age in Quetta, Balochistan, using a structured questionnaire followed with phenomenological approach as we will be knowing the lived experiences. a qualitative Focused group discussions (FGDs) with community leaders and community health care workers (HCWs) to understand their perspective on domestic violence and developed a preventable measure to stop it." - This sentence is really long. Description of the design in simpler sentences is suggested</p> <p>Study participants: problem in syntax</p> <p>Study duration: April-November is 8 months, not 7 months</p> <p>Eligibility criteria: Incomplete sentences were noted The data collection tools and description of the variables before data collection procedure The operational definitions should come before methods. However, in operational definitions, I could not find definition for verbal and psychological violence that were mentioned in the aims earlier</p> <p>Recall bias: It would be good if the authors could mention any bias mitigation strategy here</p> <p>External validity: Will this study be generalizable to all women of reproductive age, or women in Balochistan only?</p>
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VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 2

Abstract:

A couple of sentences are incomplete in the abstract, e.g., ". Moreover, to understand the perspective of community leaders and HCWs for developing prevention of domestic violence against women of reproductive age at Quetta Baluchistan.", and "Focus group discussions using a semi-structured guide will provide for the data collection." Hence, a thorough revision is required, and would be better if it is copy-edited by a professional. Secondly, the design is mixed-method, not a mix-method. Please revise it in all instances

Response: Sentences are completed as per the suggestion. Design is changed to mixed-method.

Introduction:

The second paragraph seems to have one sentence only. Please recheck. It would be great if authors could provide a few data from the countries with similar background or environment as Pakistan. Grammatical check is required

Response: The introduction is revised. The second paragraph has facts and stats relevant to DV.

Rationale:

The first few sentences in the rationale are unclear and requires revision.

Response: Removed the lines creating confusion. Improved rationale.

Objectives:

These would look better if presented in narratives

Response: The objectives are presented in narration.

Hypothesis:

I would advise the authors to recheck their hypothesis once again

Response: quantified the hypothesis

Methods:

Methods have some structural and grammatical problems. In the study design segment, the quan and qual component overlapped. "A cross-sectional study design will be used to identify associated factors with domestic violence and type of violence among women of reproductive age in Quetta, Balochistan, using a structured questionnaire followed with phenomenological approach as we will be knowing the lived experiences. a qualitative Focused group discussions (FGDs) with community leaders and community health care workers (HCWs) to understand their perspective on domestic violence and developed a preventable measure to stop it." - This sentence is really long. Description of the design in simpler sentences is suggested

Response: Simplified the sentence

Study participants:

problem in syntax

Response: rephrased

Study duration:

April-November is 8 months, not 7 months

Response: Changed

Eligibility criteria:

Incomplete sentences were noted The data collection tools and description of the variables before data collection procedure

Response: Completed

The operational definitions should come before methods. However, in operational definitions, I could not find definition for verbal and psychological violence that were mentioned in the aims earlier

Response: Operational definitions are shifted before methods. Mentioned verbal and psychological violence too

Recall bias:

It would be good if the authors could mention any bias mitigation strategy here

Response: Appropriate data collection measures will be taken to mitigate the risk of recall. Hospital records for violence can be checked if available to avoid recall bias. Page 3 15 line #10-11

External validity:

Will this study be generalizable to all women of reproductive age, or women in Balochistan only?

Response: The results will be generalized to all women of reproductive age (15-49 years).

VERSION 3 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Mohiuddin Ahsanul Kabir Chowdhury University of South Carolina
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Apr-2022
GENERAL COMMENTS	The authors did a great job in revisiting the manuscript