

The Impact of Female Abuse on Social Anxiety Among Females of Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Objective: This pilot study is a small endeavor to estimate the prevalence of social anxiety and female abuse among females of Al Ahsa population, examine the relationship between social anxiety and female abuse and to find out the impact of female abuse on social anxiety.

Material and Methods: A cross sectional study conducted in Al Ahsa, KSA, from April to July 2017. Female participants > 18-year-old from Al Ahsa were included in the study. The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale and Woman Abuse Screening Tool were used as a self-administered questionnaire.

Results: Total of 511 participants were included in the study. Almost all of the sample (99.9%) were educated with different education levels. Basic education levels (primary and intermediate) forms 2.4% and high education levels (high school, bachelor, and postgraduate degrees) forms 97.5%. The prevalence of social anxiety is nearly 30.3% among the participants and female abuse was 62.8%. There is significant relationship between social anxiety and female abuse ($p = 0.0001$). Also, the correlation test reveals a positive relationship between those two variables was found ($r = 0.258, p = 0.0001$).

Conclusion: Social anxiety and female abuse is highly prevalent among female in Al Ahsa and there is a significant relationship between female abuse and social anxiety.

Keywords: Female Abuse; Social Anxiety; Al Ahsa; Saudi Arabia; The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale; Woman Abuse Screening Tool

Introduction

Social anxiety is considered as the third most prevalent psychological disorder in the world [1]. It is a chronic mental disorder characterized by fear of interaction with other people and as a result, it can severely affect the person's confidence and self-esteem, interfere with relationships and impair performance at work or school [2,3]. Several factors can cause social anxiety such as genetics, behavioral inhibition, or psychological factors [4]. Also low socioeconomic status can increase social anxiety [5]. People with untreated social anxiety are at higher risk of alcohol abuse, depression, poor academic performance and suicide [4].

Anxiety disorders affect 40 million adults in the US who represent 18% of the total population [6]. 64.6% of female high school students in Al Madinah, KSA have shown the symptoms of social anxiety while 25.5% is have shown high morbid anxiety [7].

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Female abuse is using any type of force against the women in a relationship [8]. There are many types of female abuse including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and social abuse [9]. Abused women are at high risk to develop medical or behavioral problems (72%) and psychiatric problems (58%) [10]. Also, they are at a high risk of many diseases such as infections, abdominal pain, and chest pain [10]. According to WHO, 35.6 of% women in the world have experienced one or more type of female abuse (either non-partner abuse or physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner, or both) [11]. A study has done in Riyadh; Saudi Arabia (2011) found that 20% of women have experienced a type of female abuse. The most prevalent type of abuse was emotional abuse (69%), then, social abuse (34%) [6]. A study has done in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia found that the prevalence of female abuse in Al-Ahsa was 39.3%, 35.9% for mental abuse, 17.9% for physical abuse, and 6.9% for sexual abuse [12].

To our knowledge, there are no studies on the impact of female abuse on social anxiety in our region. This pilot study is a small endeavor to estimate the prevalence of social anxiety and female abuse among females of Al Ahsa population, find the relationship between social anxiety and female abuse and how the high and low level of female abuse can affect the severity of social anxiety.

Method

Participants and Procedures

This is a cross sectional study conducted in Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia from April to August 2017. It is one of the biggest cities in the Eastern Province of KSA. Al Ahsa is considered one of the most important cities of Saudi Arabia because it has different natural resources such as oil, water springs and rocks.

Sample size of this cross sectional study was estimated by applying the formula of qualitative variables [13]. The convenience sample technique was adopted for collecting the samples. The study had been submitted and approved by the Research and Ethical Committee at the College of Medicine, King Faisal University. Female participants older than 18 years from all different regions in Al Ahsa and who gave their verbal consent after receiving an explanation of the purpose of the study were included in the study. Any female younger than 18 years or not a resident of Al Ahsa were excluded from the study.

Measures

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale

The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) is a short questionnaire developed by Michael Liebowitz (1987), was used to assess the social anxiety. The survey contains 24 items scored from 0 = Never, 1 = Mild, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Often and 4 = Severe. 12 items out of the 24 were chosen due to cultural and religious factors. The scaling of this questionnaire is: unlikely for < 27, moderate for 27 - 32, marked social anxiety for 33 - 40, severe social anxiety for 41 - 47 and finally very severe social anxiety for > 47. The reliability of this questionnaire in our society is high, Cronbach's ALFA = 0.85, spilt-half = 0.68 [14].

Abuse Test: Woman Abuse Screening Tool

Woman Abuse Screening Tool (WAST) is used primarily in doctor's offices to help determine if the woman is in an abusive relationship. The WAST specifically screens for verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual and is considered by researchers to be fairly reliable in assessing domestic violence. The survey has been made of 8 questions. the basis of frequency of occurrence using a 4-point scale ranging from "rarely or never" to "always." This abuse test was done to assess the intimate partner violence (IPV). But we have done some changes to make it appropriate for all kinds of relationships. The scaling was: unlikely for 0-5, has a probability to be abused for 6-10, likely for 11-16. The reliability of this questionnaire in our society is high, Cronbach's ALFA = 0.81, spilt-half = 0.54 [15].

Data analysis

Statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 22.0 software (SPSS/IBM, Chicago, IL). The hypothesis was testing if there is a relationship between being abused and having social anxiety. The suitable test is chi-square test. By using

SPSS, first the calculation of how many subjects are being abused and how many subjects are having social anxiety. The second important thing is to find out chi-square test table using SPSS. From the table, we will get the test value, the degree of freedom and P-value. The final step is comparing P-value with 0.05 with represent 95% of confidence. If P-value was less than 0.05 then there is a significant relationship between being abuse and social anxiety and vice versa.

Results

Out of 610 responses, 99 of them was excluded due to the mismatch of the criteria of inclusion. The final sample was 511. After controlling for covariates (economic state, educational level, social state and health state), the results have showed that most participants have moderate economic state, they have formed 51% of the sample size. Almost all of the sample (99.9%) were educated with different levels. Basic education levels (primary and intermediate) forms 2.4% and high education levels (high school, bachelor, and postgraduate degrees) forms 97.5%. Social and health states show that 36.79% of the sample were single and 59.88% of them were married. 89.63% were healthy, no chronic diseases and no special needs. 8.81% were having chronic diseases (Table 1).

Variable	No.	(%)
Education level		
Illiterate	1	0.1
Basic Education (Primary and Intermediate school)	12	2.4
High Education (High school, Bachelor, and postgraduate degrees)	498	97.5
Monthly Income		
< 10,000 SR (< 2666USD)	355	69.5
> 10,000 SR (>2666USD)	156	30.5
Social state		
Single	188	36.8
Married	306	59.9
Divorced	12	2.3
Widow	3	0.6
Missed	3	0.4
Health state		
Healthy	458	89.6
Chronic disease		
Special needs (handicapped)	3	0.6
Missed	5	1

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of participants (n = 511).

The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale shows that 11.2 % have marked social anxiety and 1.8% have severe social anxiety while Woman Abuse Screening Tool showed that 44 % of the participants had abused in their life (Table 2).

Variable	No.	(%)
Social Anxiety		
Unlikely	356	69.7
Moderate	88	17.2
Marked	57	11.2
Severe	9	1.8
Very Severe	1	0.2
Female Abuse		
Not Abused	190	37.2
Abused	225	44.0
Severe abused	87	17.0
Missing	9	1.8

Table 2: The Prevalence of Social Anxiety & Female Abuse (n = 511).

After controlling those covariates, a significant relationship between social anxiety and female abuse was found, chi-square test value = 65.89, p = 0.0001. By using SPSS for data analysis, chi-square test has showed that there is a significant relationship between social anxiety and female abuse (Table 3).

		Female Abuse			P-Value
Variable		Not Abused	Abused	Severe Abused	
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Social Anxiety	Unlikely	162 (46.0)	141 (40.1)	49 (13.9)	0.0001*
	Moderate	19 (21.8)	52 (59.8)	16 (18.4)	
	Marked	8 (14.5)	27 (49.1)	20 (36.4)	
	Severe	1 (12.5)	5 (62.5)	2 (25.0)	

Table 3: The Relationship between social anxiety and female abuse (n = 511).

* Significant relationship P-value < 0.05

By the application of correlation test on the collected data, a positive relationship between those two variables was found, r = 0.258, p-value = 0.0001 (Table 4).

		Social Anxiety	Female Abuse
Social Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	0.258
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.0001*
	N	511	502
Female Abuse	Pearson Correlation	0.258	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.0001*	
	N	502	502

Table 4: Correlation test between social anxiety and female abuse (n = 511).

*Significant relationship P-value < 0.01

Discussion

Referring to the learning questions which ask if there is a relationship between women abuse and social anxiety, on the one hand, and the impact of low and high women abuse on social anxiety, on the other hand. It turns out from the chi-square test that women abuse has a significant relationship with social anxiety and from the correlation test, it turns that there is a significant positive relationship between

women abuse and social anxiety. That was the expectations of this research at the beginning as inferred from the readings of other studies. Logistic regression analysis provides that lower education level, marriage at a younger age, shorter duration of the marriage, fewer children, being a housewife, and husband's unemployment had a significant relationship with domestic violence against women. The prevalence rate of domestic abuse against women is very high reaching up to 59% in certain communities, even though, it is considered an abnormal department [16]. In this research, almost most of the participants are educated, it was found that women with higher educational level are less abused than the uneducated or women with low educational level [17]. That is because such women now tend to ken their rights so they will be more conservative and won't accept any indignation against them [17]. Moreover, women with physical disabilities are more prone to be abused [18].

The prevalence of women abuse in both Al-Dammam and Al Ahsa cities of Saudi Arabia was found to be around 19%, but when added to it the response of women to the abuse cognate questions, it reached to 33%. Women among aged 40 years and older were the highest rates. On the other hand, the most mundane type of abuse was that of multiple types, which included verbal, physical and others, which accounted for 49%. Abuse accounted for 35.8% physical, emotional, and psychological accounted for 7.5% each. Also, abuse was higher among lower educated couples and in families with poor economic status [19]. Economic difficulties put the family under an abundance of pressure and stress, which increases the likelihood of conflict between couples and ultimately abuse [20]. This decrease in the prevalence might be cognate generally to the fast change and development of the Arab communities. In advisement, during the past few years, there has been an expeditious amendment in the socioeconomic status of the people in KSA, which has led to the improvement of the living standard of the individual and the community. Hence, reducing the economic burden on the family and specifically on the husbands, which is one of the main reasons for female abuse. Moreover, increasing the standard of inculcation in particular of a woman played a major role in decreasing the chances of women to being abused. There has been withal expeditious development of women's rights organizations that availed in incrementing the women's vigilance and offering bulwark [21].

All types of abuse have consequences on the victim. It has huge physical, physiological, well-being or even severe organic complication on the victim. It was reported that women have 50% to 70% increase chances of obtaining gynecological, central nervous system, and or stress-cognate quandaries if she is sexually and physically abused [21]. The side effects of violence against women are well documented. The present study showed that domestic violence affected all aspects of the health of the studied women. Women exposed to lifetime violence were more at risk of injuries, perceived ill health, and positive history of a disease, abortion, and hemorrhage. Violence significantly increased the possibility of suffering pain, stress, dizziness, taking drugs, and visiting doctors frequently. Similar effects were experienced by most women in the WHO multi-country study [22]. Such impacts are expected to affect the lifestyle of women and are associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression [23-25]. One of the influential implements in early discovery and revelation of assistance to the abused female is educating current and future couples and opportune training of health care providers [19]. Also, society's acceptability for gender violence and the privacy of the act of violence when it takes place within the home can make it invisible or hard to detect leading to under estimation of its prevalence [26].

The data suggest that the high rate of social anxiety may be due to higher levels of women abuse. According to this study, there are some factors that increase the women abuse and social anxiety, for example, education level and family income. To control this problem, clinicians may consider including therapeutic techniques that promote the importance of maintaining social connections and social contributions among socially anxious patient.

There are several limitations of this study. First, most of the participants were university students and this explains why most of the participants have high educational degrees. Second, teenagers are not included in this research and this research did not find that in which age specifically the woman becomes more abused. Third, the data were based on self-reports, which might underestimate the actual prevalence. Moreover, this study did not identify which type of women abuse increases the chances of social anxiety comparing with others. Finally, a cross-sectional study was unable to measure the incidence and limit the variations between the participants. However, the

results from this study provide important information about the relationship between women abuse and social anxiety, and these limitations can be avoided in future studies, yet the results can reasonably be generalized to the targeted women of AlAhsa city.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study revealed that social anxiety and female abuse are highly prevalent among female in Al Ahsa and there is a significant positive relationship between female abuse and social anxiety. Government and private authorities should manage it by establishing rehabilitation centers for social anxiety patients and female abuse centers. Also, a training programs to the health care providers should be conducted to increase the awareness of these problems. Finally, making health campaigns and seminars to aware the society about the consequences of these issues. Further researches are needed to discover other causes of social anxiety and female abuse in order to manage and prevent the occurrence of it.

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