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EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT: EDUCATING GIRLS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Growing up in the families where domestic violence exists, young girls after a while conceive violence as normal and accept it when they become the victims. If there is not much to save the mothers from abuse then there should be something to be done to save young girls from violence. Being aware of what domestic violence is and how they can protect themselves and even how they can react when they experience violence, can save the lives of many young girls. These girls' empowerment against violence can be a sign for empowerment for their abused mothers and sisters as well. The main goal of this study is to train high school girls aged between 15-18 about domestic violence and to equip them with knowledge about their rights in the fields of law, health and social life. In this quasi-experimental study, the participants were given a pre-test before the 10 sessions of training and the same test was given as a post-test after the trainings. Apart from that, the study employs focus group interviews with a selected group of participants where the idea was to collect more insights from some of the participants about violence. Results show that these girls have significantly changed their attitudes or beliefs towards violence. According to the results of the focus group interviews, it is evident that there is a growing awareness of and decreasing tolerance towards domestic violence by the participants.

Keywords

Domestic Violence, Educating Girls, Empowerment, Effects of Training

1. Introduction

Turkey is not the only country where domestic violence exists behind closed doors. Violence against women is one of the most important social problems in Turkey; however, it is an accepted fact that no matter what their religion is, where they live and what their income is women all over the world face the risk of being exposed to gender-based violence (Garcia-Moreno et. al. 2005; Krantz & Garcia-Moreno 2005; Liu 2017; Tolman & Rosen 2001). According to the World Health Organization's report published in 2013, nearly one out of every three women is being subjected to physical or sexual violence (Pallitto, Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, C. 2013). Violence can come in many different forms. In order to find out how much stalking is there in the United States and who stalks whom, U. S Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) launched a partnership to study violence against women, on stalking and its impact. Also, Freid (2003) emphasizes that women's organizations have changed their understanding and interpretation of violence against women over the past three decades. It is stated that gender-based violence, which was done and hide behind closed doors, is now part of the public agenda.

In Turkey, according to the results of Domestic Violence against Women Research (2008), four in every ten women had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence. Maybe this is what makes Turkey different than the other countries. The numbers. According to the recent study entitled "Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey" (Hacettepe University, 2014) every four women out of 10 are subject to violence by their husbands, and the importance of this study is that it is the first study to collect official statistics on this topic in Turkey. What is more disturbing about these numbers is that, according to the results of the study, almost 90 percent of women, when they encounter violence do not seek help from any organization.

Raised by an abused mother, unfortunately, the girls aged between 15-18 also do not seek for a solution when they experience abuse either. This basically shows that these girls have somehow internalized the violence and consider it as normal when their friends/boyfriends abuse them. Therefore; this project is a basic attempt to train high school girls aged between 15-18 about domestic violence. The main goal of this small-scale project is to educate and empower girls so they can stand up against violence. If we can educate girls about violence and their rights, then they will be less tolerant towards violence which may increase their self-esteem and as a result reduce their willingness to continue potentially violent relationships. Because women

who had a personal history of violence in childhood, when grow up and get married, they would perceive violence as a normal behaviour in punishment and conflict situations.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This is a quasi-experimental study in the sense that the participants were given a pre-test before the 10 sessions of training and the same test was given as a post-test after the trainings. Apart from that, the study employs focus group interviews with a selected group of participants where the idea was to collect more insights from some of the participants about violence. The researcher was the moderator and asked questions which participants can talk freely with other group members.

The survey instrument used as pre-post-test was designed to gather information about participants' opinions on violence against women and draws upon items found in the literature relevant to the topic. The instrument was adapted from Kanbay, Y., Işık, E., Yavuzaslan, E. & Keleş, S. (2012) and had 34 Likert scale items apart from the 6 demographic items.

2.2 Research Question

The research aims to gain insight about the effectiveness of the trainings given to the girls; therefore, the following research question has been formulated:

Is there a difference in girls' attitude towards violence against women following the training sessions?

2.3 Participants

The participants of the study consisted of two groups, namely students and teachers. The students were 3rd grade students of Salih Dede Anatolian High School, İzmir and aged between 15-18. In order to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test, girls were required to take all the ten sessions of the training. However, there were girls who missed one or two sessions of trainings so they were excluded from the study. They were given the post-tests but their results were not included. This, as a result decreased the total number of the participants from 67 to 20 who attended all sessions.

The second group of participants was the teachers. Working with İzmir Directory of Education as a partner, the directory assigned 43 teachers from different branches to attend the workshop. All the teachers were newly graduated and aged between 23-27. 28 of the teachers were female and the remaining 15 were males. All were graduates of Education Faculties from different regions of Turkey.

2.4 Training Sessions

2.4.1 Training Sessions for Students

The project started with the idea that girls should be trained against violence so that they can stand for their rights. Young girls, who are not aware of their own rights not just as a woman but as a human as well, cannot grow healthy children in the future. Training these girls for their own rights about different aspects of violence, such as; law, psychology and health would save the future of our society as well. Therefore, the sessions were designed to meet this goal. 10 student sessions were held between December 2-11 2015 and each lasted 50 minutes.

The content of the training sessions were designed according to the following:

- To increase girls' capacity to understand the concept of "human rights";
- To make girls understand systems for understanding and dealing with violence in terms of reporting and follow up cases;
- To develop girls' forums in their school;
- To start campaigns against violence in schools;
- To make girls understand gender issues.

The first two sessions were given by the researcher in which the girls were informed about the project in the first session and some basic concepts such as violence, domestic violence, and rights were introduced in the second hour so that they could follow the following sessions easily. In the first session on law it was tried to explain "Legal Rights of Women against Violence" to students in an hour by a professor from İzmir University of Economics, Faculty of Law. The aim of the presentation was providing a basic understanding about the rights they had as a legal subject, and the legal ways they could apply against violence. At first, a brief explanation was given to them about the concepts of "right" and "violence against women", and the physical and moral behaviors which could be accepted as violence by law, and international and national legal sources to protect women against violence. The specific act on this subject, named as; "The Law about Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women No.6284" was simply explained. The students have been informed about the public institutions they could ask for help in the case of violence, including the emergency number "ALO 183". Legal precautions which should be taken by police and courts have been told, besides sanctions for perpetrator. "What to do plan" for a woman who faced with violence was presented at last, for making it clear and easy to them.

The next two sessions were about gender roles. Violence against women is a universal problem in today's societies therefore in this presentation it was aimed to teach students how to protect themselves from gender-related violence through learning the gender roles. For this purpose, basic concepts related to gender roles, which include the concepts of gender, social gender equality and social gender inequality, have been introduced. Students have been provided with examples regarding the way gender roles are being shaped and developed in families and in the society. They have been informed about the use of violence through the social gender roles of women.

The other session was named "Violence against Women and Effects on Women's Health". This session was given by a professor from Department of Nursing and informed the girls basically on health issues. It was emphasized during the session that violence against women is a global health problem and it is very common. There are many women in the world who are subject to a range of physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health problems as a result of domestic violence. And studies show that 40% of the injured women have to seek hospital for medical treatment. The impact of violence on health of women not only results in depression but also can be concluded as alcohol use problem, sexually transmitted infections, injury, or death. Health services are one of the main and priority services to help for women who experienced or at risk of violence. So, health services should be accessible for every woman on time, on the other hand women exposed to violence can be detected during health services.

2.4.2 Training Session for Teachers

As a second component of the project, the teachers were trained on Language and Gender Equality. During the workshop the teachers were trained in a separate session on May, 2, 2016 on how to protect girls' rights in schools. 43 teachers attended the workshop and during the workshop the teachers were given a session on how to use the appropriate language in the classroom and what to do to stop violence against women either in their own classrooms or outside the school.

Topics that are covered included:

- Violence and types of violence (Physical, psychological, sexual, economic and social);
- Interaction between culture and language and the role of language in the formation of gender inequality;
- Reflections of gender inequality in Turkish language (euphemisms, idioms, expressions and proverbs);

- Suggestions to avoid gender inequality in language
- General suggestions for intern teachers to avoid gender inequality in their classrooms considering settings, course books, the language they use, assigning roles, pictures on walls, their expectations of male and female students.

2.5 Data Collection and Analysis

2.5.1 Pre-Post Test

In order to analyze if the difference between the pre- and post-test is significant we used paired-sampled t-Test. Zar (2009) states that if your group of participants is small the frequencies and mean scores of the pre and post data can be compared without using statistical tests. Then, it is possible to tell if the participants' knowledge has increased or decreased for the whole group according to the results of the pre-test and post-test. However, since it was decided to give the post-test to the students who attended all 10 sessions of the training, the total number of the students who were given the post- test decreased dramatically. Out of 67 students who took the pre-test, only 20 attended all 10 sessions so they were given the post-test.

2.5.2 Focus Group Interviews

Giving workshops in December, 2015, the researcher waited for the next academic year for the focus group interviews. As it is clearly impossible to include all the participants who have joined the workshops in the interviews, 10 students were chosen for the focus group interview. These 10 girls were asked about their behavioral changes after 6 months (after attending the workshops). The focus group interviews were conducted in April 2016, to reflect the themes that emerged in the survey. A guide built from existing theory and the researchers' experiences in the field were used for the semi-structured interviews. The interview was conducted by the researcher, and it was stressed that anonymity would be maintained. The results of the focus group gave the researcher the chance to evaluate the achievement of the project.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Comments were selected for inclusion in the discussion section based on two criteria: firstly their representativeness, i.e. opinions mentioned by two or more participants was included, and secondly, their potential to shed light on the survey results, especially where these were unexpected.

3. Results

The first part of the survey elicited personal information, under the name "Personal Information and Preferences" where the girls were asked to answer the following questions as "Yes" or "No".

Table 1: Mean scores of Personal Information and Preferences

	YES	NO
Have you ever attended to any training on violence against women?	1	19
If you've had the chance, would you prefer to be the other sex?	5	15
If you'd have the chance, would you prefer your child to be a girl?	6	14
For any reason, have you ever practiced any violence to anybody?	7	13
Have you ever experienced violence from your parents?	9	11
Have you ever witnessed violence among your parents?	11	9

It is evident even from the results of the first part of the survey that these girls are familiar with violence. Almost all have either experienced or practiced violence in their lives. Especially, the ones who have witnessed violence at home are among the ones who have practiced violence to anyone for any reason. But at the same time, it is also evident that these participants -except for one girl- have not attended to any training on violence against women. The most striking result of that part is the answer given to the third question. Only six of the girls stated that they would prefer their child to be a girl. The other 14 do not want to have a girl. This was asked during the focus group interview and the responses are discussed below. Table 2 and 3 below show the results for paired-sampled t-Test.

Table 2: Paired Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	20.45	20	4.058	.907
	Post-test	18.40	20	3.152	.705

There is strong evidence ($t = 3.23$, $p = 0.004$) that the training sessions that the participants have attended has an impact on their attitudes towards violence. The mean score of their pre and post-test results are significant (.004).

Table 3: Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-t)
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	%95 Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre-test	2.050	2.837	.634	.722	3.378	3.23	19	.004
Post-test								

Some of the girls, who in pre-test stated that they agree with the statements:

- Women should arrive home before their husband
- Men do not need to do housework
- Men need to have more education than women

changed their minds after the training and stated their preferences as “do not agree”. Even this can be considered a change in attitude towards violence against women.

The second part of the study collected data from the focus group interviews. When the selected interviewee comments are analyzed it is easy to see that the participants have made relevant comments on the same factors. Sevgi (16) stated that even though she knew that it was not fair to say it, she believed that the child care is predominantly a woman’s job. “This is how we have seen it so far in our families. Can you think of a man taking care of his children, No, no! He would most probably spoil the child” she said.

Another important point that arose during the interviews was the idea that violence in any shape and form cannot be accepted. All the girls stated that men under no condition have the right to beat their wives/girlfriends and so on. However, some of the girls indirectly implied that if a woman is beaten by her husband there must be a reason for that. Almost all of the girls, even after the training, stated that they were against all types of violence but if a woman is subject to violence she must think for a while and search for the reason. This is not very different from the results of the study conducted by Altınay & Arat (2009). According to the results of the Violence Against Women in Turkey survey, nine out of every ten women state that “there is never a valid justification for beating.” When the whole sample for all of Turkey is analyzed, it can be seen

that, the percentage of women who think “men can justifiably beat their wives under certain circumstances” is 11%, however, the same figure for women in the East was 14%.

Some of the interview questions were shaped according to the responses that the participants have given to the pre-post test questions. One of these was the majority of the girls who did not want to have a daughter but a son. When they were asked about the reasons of that, the answer was simple. Solin (pseudonym, 16) stated that:

“Because boys are freer. They can do a lot of things that I cannot do. I have a cousin here in the same school and last year we both wanted to go to a school camp, he was sent but I was not sent just because he is a boy and just because I am a girl. So, I would not like my girl to experience such things.”

4. Discussion

In order to evaluate whether our project has achieved its goals, a pre-posttest design was used. Girls were given a survey before the workshops and the same survey was given at the end of the semester as a posttest to investigate if there has been a change in terms of attitude among the participants.

It was expected that having training for a semester on domestic violence will first of all change the understanding of these girls in the way that they perceive violence. After the training they would not accept or see abuse and violence as a right of the male. Apart from that, the training they receive would also give them the chance to enlighten the others around. These others could be their sisters, mothers and/or friends who are also victims of violence. Also, enlightening these others may help them prevent cases of violence against women.

Results show that these girls have significantly changed their attitudes or beliefs towards violence. According to the results of the focus group interviews, it is evident that participants are more aware and less tolerant towards domestic violence. As supported by the results of the study conducted by (Altınay & Arat, 2009) women did not regard domestic violence as a “private affair” that needs to be solved “within the family.” They state that since their findings are against the findings of earlier surveys, they interpreted this as an encouraging result of 20 years of successful struggle by feminists.

In recent years, like in many other parts of the world, in Turkey as well, some important legislative steps towards addressing violence against women have been taken. But despite these impressive advances, most notably Law 4320 on the Protection of the Family (“Law 4320” or “protection law”), there are still gaps in the law and failures of implementation. One of the aims

of this project was therefore to inform girls about these reporting mechanisms. What to do, where to go and whom to talk when they experience violence or when they witness it.

The second group who were trained on violence was the teachers. Facing hundreds of students every semester, the training of the teachers was maybe even more important than the girls' training since these teachers could affect many more students during their career. Apart from that, teachers can ensure that community-level prevention and response mechanisms are active and effective. Because this is a key output in tackling violence against women and girls and the teachers' awareness on that issue is vital.

Evidence shows that the traditions, beliefs, norms and practices that operate within communities are a major barrier to women's access to justice, protection and freedom from violence. Considering that the teachers are the ones who can fight against ignorance in the community, they have a critical role in tackling the barriers that exist within communities. Sometimes, for example, even where laws have been reformed and police are trained to process violence against women cases appropriately, localized social norms and practices can make it difficult for women to formally report violence and seek justice.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that enacting and enforcing legislation to protect the safety and security of girls and to eliminate incidents of sexual harassment of girls at work and in educational and other institutional settings is a must. Apart from that, legislative, law enforcement, administrative, social and educational measures should be taken to protect the girl child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse and in order to do that gender-sensitivity education and training for all males and females at all levels of schooling is required.

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