



Domestic violence against people with disabilities: Prevalence and trend analyses

Jin-Ding Lin^{a,*}, Lan-Ping Lin^b, Pei-Ying Lin^a, Jia-Lin Wu^c, Chien-De Li^a, Fang-Yu Kuo^a

^a School of Public Health, National Defense Medical Center, No. 161, Min-Chun East Road, Section 6, Nei-Hu, Taipei, Taiwan

^b Graduate Institute of Life Sciences, National Defense Medical Center, Taipei, Taiwan

^c Research Center for Intellectual Disabilities Taiwan, Chung-Hua Foundation for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, Taipei County, Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyzed national data from “*Domestic Violence Report System*” derived primarily from the Council of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assaults Prevention, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan, to describe the reported prevalence of domestic violence in people with disabilities and to examine the time-effect on the prevalence from years 2006 to 2009. The annual reported prevalence of domestic violence victims in people with disabilities was slightly lower than the general population. However, the reported rate changed significantly in people with disabilities over the period of 2006–2009, the victim number and rate (per ten-thousand) of reported cases in different years were 1260 (12.84), 1725 (16.90), 2163 (20.79) and 3157 (29.48). People with voice or speech disability, chronic psychosis and intellectual disability were the most domestic violence reported prevalence among the disabilities in the study. Those disabilities, such as chronic psychosis, intellectual disability, vision disability, hearing disability and multi-disabilities show increased significantly in annual reported rate in curve estimation for linear model over the period of 2006–2009. Finally, we found the average increase rate of annual reported prevalence in people of disabilities was 3.7 times of the general population (9.79% vs. 36.08%). Intellectual disability (41.52%), vision or speech disability (38.59%) and chronic psychosis (37.96%) were the most increasing disability type in average of annual reported prevalence of domestic violence among disabilities during the period of 2006–2009. The present study suggests health and welfare authorities should play vital roles in identifying and providing appropriate services for people with disabilities who encounter domestic violence.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, questions about violence have not been included in health surveys; hence, little is known about the precise prevalence and the consequences for health in the general population (Nerøien & Schei, 2008). McCauley et al. (1995) surveyed that domestic violence prevalence among female patients in U.S. found that 1 of every 20 women had experienced domestic violence in the previous year; 1 of every 5 had experienced violence in their adult life; and 1 of every 3 had experienced violence as either a child or an adult. In South Africa, Jewkes, Levin, and Penn-Kekana (2002) found the lifetime prevalence of experiencing physical violence from a current or ex-husband or boyfriend was 24.6%, and 9.5% had been assaulted in the previous year. Grande, Hickling, Taylor, and Woollacott (2003) found that 17.8% of adults in South Australia

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +886 2 87923100x18447; fax: +886 2 87923147.

E-mail address: a530706@ndmctsgh.edu.tw (J.-D. Lin).

reported some form of domestic violence by a current or an ex-partner. They concluded that demographic factors such as low household income, unemployment or part-time employment and ill-health status and alcohol abuse problems were found to have a significant relationship with domestic violence. Other countries, such as Ergin, Bayram, Alper, Selimoglu, and Bilgel (2005) interviewed Turkish women found the most frequently reported type of violence was physical, followed by psychological. They pointed out that domestic violence was statistically significantly associated with educational level, illiterate women reported marital abuse 2.6 times more than university or more educated women.

Among the women, analysis indicated that 69% of the women reported some type of past physical, sexual, or psychological abuse (McNamara & Fields, 2002). Nerøien and Schei (2008) conducted a survey of 2143 women (aged 20–55) who were ever-partnered in Norway, they found 26.8% had experienced any violence by their partner during their lifetime. The factors of low educational level, being unmarried, separated or divorced, currently being unemployed, receiving social security benefits and having no children were significantly associated with reporting partner violence.

Domestic violence can have a profound adverse effect on the health of individuals with disabilities, it is a serious public health concern as well as a violation of human rights (Grande et al., 2003; Uno, Ui, & Aoyama, 2004). Rosen (2006) explored the literature suggests that violence and exploitation against women and girls with disability occur at a rate 50% higher than in the rest of society. Data also showed that more boys were physically abused and neglected, but more girls were sexually abused (Sobsey, Randall, & Parrila, 1997). Although violence against people with disabilities has long been considered a hidden health burden in the society, the evidence base for an association of disability with abuse and neglect is weak (Benedict, Zuravin, Somerfield, & Brandt, 1996; Govindshenoy & Spencer, 2007). Public health approaches the primary prevention of domestic violence by focusing on surveillance, the identification of risk factors, and the development, evaluation, and dissemination of interventions (Rosenberg, Fenley, Johnson, & Short, 1997). Therefore, the purpose of this article is to provide a provisional profile of a national report on people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence, and to examine the time-effect on the prevalence.

2. Methods

According to The Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2009) in Taiwan, domestic violence refers to any act of exercising infringement, mentally or physically, among family members, including partners (such as spouses, ex-spouses, cohabiters, boyfriends and girlfriends, partners of the same sex), sons, brothers, all blood relatives, etc. The Act regulates the central government shall set up an integrated data base of domestic violence offenders for mutual reference among different government agencies. The present study analyzed national data from the 2006 to 2009 “Domestic Violence Report System” derived primarily from the Council of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assaults Prevention, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan (Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Committee, 2010). The data took into account the cases number and disability type of the reported domestic violence victims. We also used other data such as from the general and disability population to analyze the reported rate of domestic violence in Taiwan (Lin, Yen, Wu, & Kang, 2009; Lin, 2009; Statistical Yearbook of the Interior, 2010a, 2010b). Finally, this study calculated the annual increase rate and used linear estimation model to examine the time-effect of domestic violence reported rate against people with disabilities.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the general population and disability population in different years, the data revealed that the registered number of people with disabilities slightly increased from 981,015 to 1,071,073 and the general population was increasing from 22,876,527 to 23,119,772 in the year of 2006 and 2009 in Taiwan. The increasing rate of disability number (9.18%) was 8.66 times of general population (1.06%) at the same period.

Table 2 shows the official reported cases and rate (per ten-thousand) of domestic violence by disability type from 2006 to 2009 in Taiwan. The victim number and rate of reported cases in different years were 63,274 (27.66), 68,421 (29.80), 75,438

Table 1
General population and disability population in different years.

Populations	Year; N (%)			
	2006; N (%)	2007; N (%)	2008; N (%)	2009; N (%)
General population	22,876,527	22,958,360	23,037,031	23,119,772
All disabilities	981,015 (4.28)	1,020,760 (4.45)	1,040,585 (4.52)	1,071,073 (4.63)
Intellectual disability	87,160 (0.38)	91,004 (0.40)	93,346 (0.41)	95,375 (0.41)
Chronic psychosis	91,160 (0.40)	97,127 (0.42)	101,846 (0.44)	107,663 (0.47)
Vision disability	51,759 (0.23)	54,319 (0.24)	55,569 (0.24)	56,928 (0.25)
Voice or speech Disability	12,251 (0.05)	12,892 (0.06)	13,154 (0.06)	13,318 (0.06)
Hearing disability	103,946 (0.45)	108,856 (0.47)	111,623 (0.48)	115,322 (0.50)
Limbs disability	400,254 (1.75)	402,983 (1.76)	397,920 (1.73)	396,652 (1.72)
Multi-disabilities	93,816 (0.41)	98,999 (0.43)	101,827 (0.44)	107,317 (0.46)
Other disabilities	140,669 (0.61)	154,580 (0.67)	165,300 (0.72)	178,498 (0.77)

Sources: Statistical Yearbook of the Interior (2010a, 2010b), Lin (2009) and Lin, Yen, et al. (2009).

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