

Intimate Partner Violence and Common Mental Disorders among Pregnant Women in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

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Background: Intimate partner violence (IPV) against women and its health consequences are major public health problems and human right violation worldwide. In Laos, little is known about IPV against pregnant women and its adverse health outcomes.

Objective: The primary objective of this study was to examine the dimension of the IPV among pregnant women in Vientiane Capital and the extent to which their IPV experience was related to CMDs (common mental disorders).

Method: The participants were a total of 208 pregnant women who attended antenatal care clinics in two national and two district hospitals between August and September 2011. Experiences of IPV were assessed with the questionnaire derived from the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Life Events. CMDs were assessed using the Self-Reporting Questionnaire 20 (SRQ-20).

Results: Approximately 15% of 208 pregnant women had experienced violence at least once by their husbands/partners at some points during their marital lives. The types of the violence reported by the respondents were psychological violence (9%), physical or/and sexual violence (2%), physical or/and sexual violence plus psychological violence (4%). The prevalence of CMDs during pregnancy was 41% among the participants who reported experiences of IPV. IPV was significantly associated with CMDs (OR=3.1; 95% CI = 1.4-6.9). Pregnant women with experiences of IPV were more likely to drink alcohol during their current pregnancies.

Conclusion: IPV among Lao pregnant women in Vientiane Capital is common and adversely affected pregnant women's mental health, which remain unrecognized and untreated at the hospitals in Laos. More attention of policy makers and health providers in providing sufficient support and health education should be paid and acted to reduce and prevent mental health problems.

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