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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Intimate Partner Violence: The Dark Memories of the Survivors at Shelter Homes

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ABSTRACT

Background: In Malaysia, police statistics indicate a concerning prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) each year. Despite the detrimental effects of such violence, there is limited local research investigating the associations between various types of IPV and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among survivors. Hence, the objectives of the study are to determine the prevalence of prior physical, emotional and sexual abuse and the risk for PTSD among female survivors of IPV at shelter homes.

Methods: This study was cross-sectional, using convenient sampling among girls and women aged 16 years and above seeking shelter at four private or public shelter homes in Malaysia. Participants who fulfilled the selection criteria and gave informed consent were assessed using the i) Women Abuse Screening Tools (WAST) and ii) WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Life Events Questionnaire to screen for physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and assess for sociodemographic background, and experiences of IPV respectively. The PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5) was used to determine the presence of PTSD.

Results: Among the 91 participants, 79 (86.8%) had experienced any form of IPV; 75 (82.4%) reported having a partner with controlling behaviour; 54 (59.3%) experienced emotional violence;



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53 (58.2%) sexual violence and 27 (29.7%) physical violence. The prevalence of PTSD among them was 67.0%. Participants who experienced emotional violence (OR=5.176, $p<0.001$) and sexual violence (OR=2.491, $p=0.046$) have increased odds for PTSD respectively.

Conclusion: Girls and women residing in shelter homes have experienced multiple forms of abuse, resulting in a heightened risk for PTSD. It is essential to provide optimal mental health support and counselling for these vulnerable groups to address their PTSD and enhance their psychological empowerment and quality of life.

Keywords: Intimate Partner Violence; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; Shelter Homes; Women; Girls

Biodata:

Dr. Nabihah Ahamad Fouzi is a psychiatry postgraduate trainee in her final year at Universiti Teknologi MARA. Passionate about advocating for mental health awareness in Malaysia, she focuses on issues affecting women. Currently, she is actively involved in projects to enhance her experience in mental health care for women, striving to make a positive impact in her community.