

Vanuatu Health Research Symposium
22-24 September 2021
Port Vila, Vanuatu
Hosted by the Vanuatu Medical and Dental Association



Research Summary

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Category (clinical/public health): Clinical
Data focus: SANMA

Title Intimate partner violence and health outcomes experienced by women who are pregnant: a cross-sectional survey in Sanma Province, Vanuatu

Abstract

Background: We aimed to describe the association between ni-Vanuatu women's experiences of violence perpetrated by their intimate partner (IPV) during pregnancy, and health outcomes, including self-reported general health, antenatal care attendance, psychological distress and suicidal thoughts/behaviours.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey of a consecutive cohort of women attending the antenatal clinic at Northern Provincial Hospital, Vanuatu from May to July 2019. Psychological, physical and sexual IPV were measured using the WHO Violence Against Women Instrument. Psychological distress was measured using the 20-item WHO Self-Reporting Questionnaire. Data were collected in confidential individual interviews with a trained local interviewer. Logistic regression models were used to investigate the relationship between IPV and health outcomes while controlling for confounding variables.

Findings: 192 women contributed data, among whom 188 answered the questions about IPV. Of these, 80 women had experienced any form of IPV during the current pregnancy. Women who experienced IPV were more likely than those who did not to report poorer general health (aOR:2.97, 95%CI:1.42-6.22), higher levels of psychological distress (aOR:4.77, 95%CI:2.02-11.24) and suicidal thoughts (aOR:3.78, 95%CI:1.71-8.33) and/or behaviours (aOR:1.98, 95%CI:0.69-5.64) in the previous four weeks. Late antenatal attendance was widespread, but not related to IPV.

Interpretation: IPV perpetrated against women who are pregnant is a serious public health problem in Vanuatu and is related to worse antenatal physical and psychological health.

Funding: JF is supported by the Finkel Professorial Fellowship, funded by the Finkel Family Foundation; TT is supported by a Monash Strategic Bridging Fellowship. Monash University provided a student research grant to SMcK. Soroptimist International Gippsland provided a grant to fund small gifts for the participants.