Effects of Intimate Partner Physical Violence on Newborns’ Birth Outcomes Among Jordanian Birthing Women

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Abstract

Intimate partner physical violence against women (VAW) during pregnancy is a common experience all over the world. In Jordan, the number is double the reported international average. Data on effect of violence on birth outcomes are important for planning, implementing, and evaluating maternal health programs. The research question was, “Does intimate partner physical VAW during pregnancy increase the risk of negative birth outcomes for newborns among birthing women in Jordan?” Natural experiment design was used for this study. A consecutive sampling technique was used for selecting the victims of physical violence (n = 79) and a simple random sampling for selecting non-victims (n = 79). Intimate partner physical violence was measured by using the Arabic version of World Health Organization’s (WHO) domestic violence questionnaire, which has an accepted interrater validity. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and chi-square were used to detect the differences in birth outcomes between the victims and non-victims of physical violence. The results showed that there is a significant difference in newborn’s birth weight between the victims of violence and non-victims with a small effect size. However, there were no significant differences between the two groups in preterm birth and assisted newborn ventilation. The non-significant effect of violence on the incidence of preterm birth contradicts the published literature. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is rooted in Jordanian culture and widely accepted among married Jordanian women. Midwives, doctors, educators, and policy makers should work
together to eradicate violence and detect victims of it, to improve birth outcomes and decrease newborn morbidity and mortality rates.