

# Violence Against Women : A Transversal Study About 142 Cases in Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria

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## ABSTRACT

A recent study in Sidi Bel Abbès highlights the alarming prevalence of domestic violence, with 142 cases analyzed. The majority of victims endure physical violence, particularly targeting the head, inflicted predominantly by their spouses. Socio-economic vulnerability, including financial dependence, significantly limits women's ability to escape abusive situations. Seasonal and cultural factors, such as the back-to-school period and Ramadan, exacerbate household tensions and increase the likelihood of violence.

The assaults, often involving slaps and severe blows, leave both physical injuries and lasting psychological trauma. This violence serves as a mechanism of control and reflects the patriarchal dynamics of society. The findings underscore the urgent need for interventions, including financial and psychological support for victims, alongside awareness campaigns to challenge societal norms. Collaborative efforts between community initiatives and public policies are essential to effectively combat domestic violence and support survivors.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, intentional assault and battery, psychological and physical complications.

## INTRODUCTION

In Sidi Bel Abbès, a symbolic city in western Algeria, a recent study has highlighted a pressing societal issue: domestic violence. This phenomenon, although widespread, often remains under-documented, making it a major concern for researchers, policymakers, and human rights advocates. Conducted on a sample of 142 cases involving women victims of domestic violence, the study revealed alarming data reflecting the extent and severity of the problem.

Among the women studied, a significant majority reported experiencing physical violence, with a notable prevalence of assaults frequently targeting the head. This specific localization of injuries is far from incidental, as it reflects the brutality and the clear intent to inflict severe harm, both physically and psychologically. These acts of violence, committed within a space meant to serve as a sanctuary—the marital home—underscore a grim reality that persists despite ongoing efforts to raise awareness and protect victims.

The primary perpetrators identified in this study are none other than the spouses themselves, highlighting a power dynamic and domination within the marital relationship. This also reflects deeply rooted cultural and social norms, where gender inequalities play a central role. In many cases, these acts of violence are not limited to physical abuse but are accompanied by psychological pressure, verbal violence, and sometimes even economic abuse, further exacerbating the victims' suffering.

These findings highlight the urgency of taking concrete measures to prevent and combat this scourge. It is not merely an individual issue but a societal problem requiring the coordinated intervention of authorities, women's support organizations, judicial structures, and civil society as a whole. Special attention must also be given to raising public awareness about women's rights and the consequences of domestic violence to break the silence that often surrounds these acts.

In summary, this study reveals far more than a set of statistics. It uncovers a silent yet deeply entrenched crisis that demands an immediate and comprehensive response. Sidi Bel Abbès is not an isolated case but a telling example of a problem that affects many communities across the country and beyond. Raising awareness is a crucial first step toward the necessary change to ensure the safety and dignity of women, both locally and nationally.

## **Objectives**

### **Identify the Profile of Perpetrators and Victims**

The second objective is to specify the characteristics of the main perpetrators of this violence, namely the spouses, and to examine the contexts in which such violence occurs. This analysis aims to better understand the relational and social dynamics that contribute to these abusive behaviors.

### **Highlight the Urgency of a Societal Response**

This objective emphasizes the need for immediate and coordinated intervention to address the issue. This includes legislative, social, and educational measures aimed at protecting victims and preventing recurrence.

### **Highlight the Localization of Physical Violence**

By identifying that the head is frequently targeted in assaults, the study paves the way for specific medical and psychological investigations. This finding also illustrates the intentional brutality of these assaults, which can guide healthcare services in providing appropriate care for victims.

## **METHODS**

The methodology is based on a cross-sectional study conducted on a sample of 142 cases of women victims of domestic violence. These cases were documented through consultations at the medico-legal emergency unit and expertise department of the Forensic Medicine Division at the Hassani Abdelkader University Hospital in Sidi Bel Abbès. The study was conducted over a period of three months, from April to November 2024.

Data were collected directly from the patients during their medico-legal care. These consultations included a detailed clinical examination to identify the injuries, their nature, location, and severity. Additionally, an interview was conducted to gather information on the circumstances of the violence, the profile of the perpetrator it's impossible to make it, and the history of abuse.

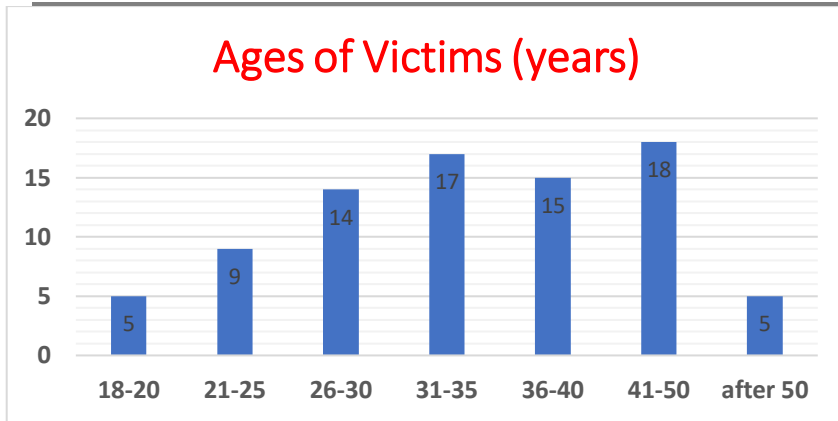
This methodological framework was chosen for its relevance in providing an accurate and immediate snapshot of the issue at a given point in time. The selection of the medico-legal unit as the study site is justified by its strategic position: it serves as an access point for women seeking essential medico-legal evidence for legal proceedings.

Finally, this methodology ensures both scientific rigor and adherence to ethical principles, with strict confidentiality and informed consent from the participants.

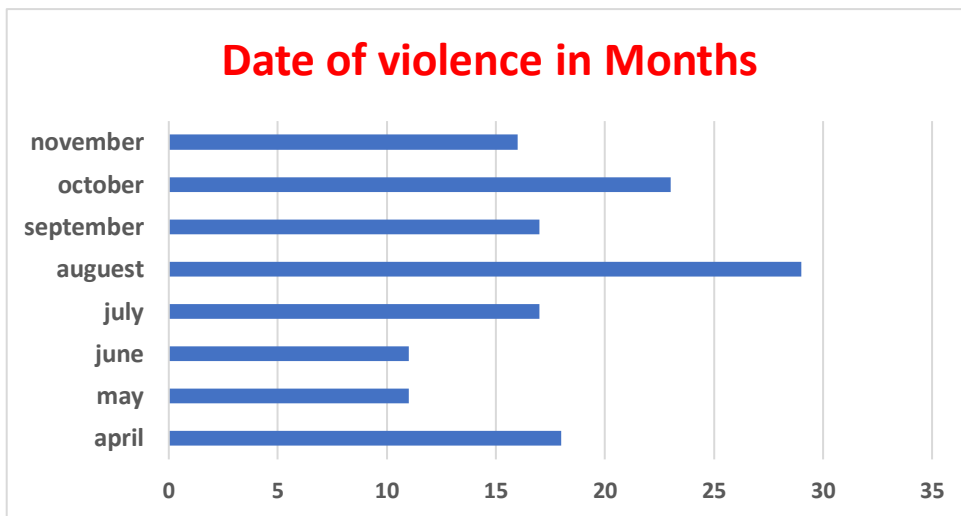
## **RESULTS**

### **Ages of Victims**

The women who were victims of domestic violence had an average age of 30 to 40 years, with the majority falling within the young adult age group (20 to 35 years). Most of them were married, although a minority included women who were separated or in common-law relationships. Economically, these women demonstrated a high level of financial dependence on their spouses, which significantly restricted their ability to leave the marital home.



### Date of Months Violence



The graph shows that violence is most prevalent during the months of August, October and April, with August recording the highest number of incidents. These months have significantly higher activity than others, indicating that seasonal or situational factors may be influencing the increase in violence. Conversely, months such as November and June show a relative

### Types of lesions

Most of the womens (95%) reported physical violence, characterized by injuries such as contusions, bruises, and localized wounds, with head injuries being the most prevalent (60%). Additionally, 70% of the victims experienced psychological violence, including frequent insults, threats, and humiliation. Some victims also reported economic violence, such as strict financial control or denial of access to household resources.



Photo 01: Bruise on the arm caused by defensive struggle, resulting from blunt object violence (Forensic Medicine Department, CHU Sidi Bel Abbès, May 2024).

## Injury Localization

The most affected areas were the head and face (60%), with severe injuries such as cranial trauma or ocular damage. The upper limbs were also frequently involved, often as a result of defensive actions, while injuries to the abdomen and back indicated repeated assaults.

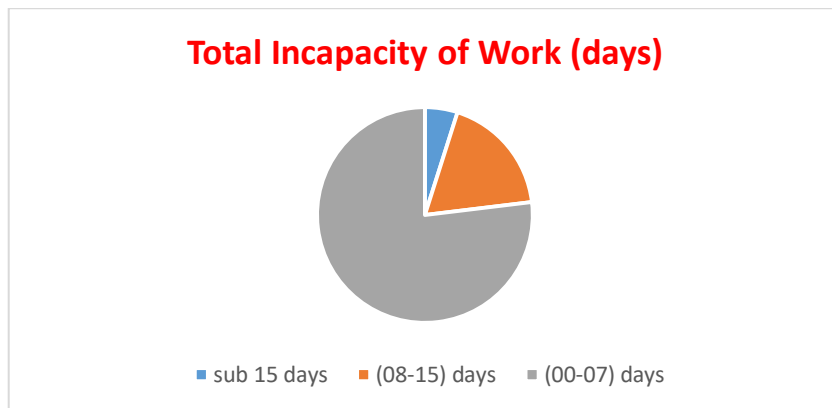


Photo 02: Bruise on the left knee (Forensic Medicine Department, CHU Sidi Bel Abbès, September 2024).

## Profile of Perpetrators

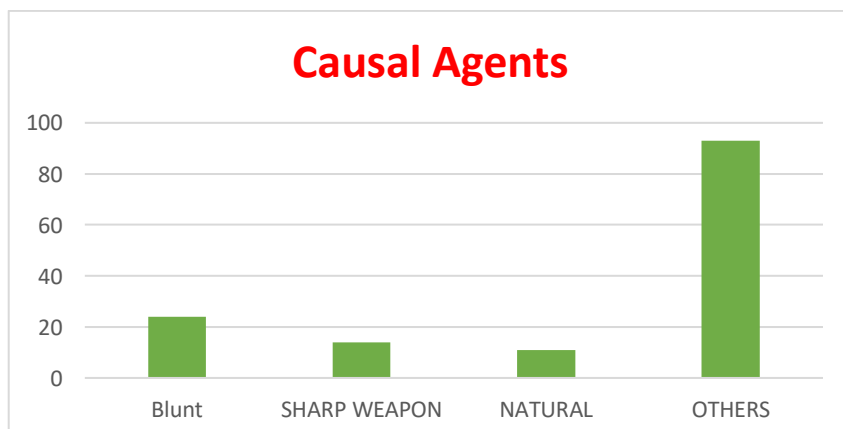
In 90% of cases, the perpetrator was the primary spouse. Their average age ranged from 35 to 50 years, and many had a history of violent behavior, often exacerbated by alcohol or drug consumption. Triggers for the violence included marital conflicts, episodes of jealousy, and economic tensions.

## Total Incapacity of Work



3/4 of the victims had between 00 and 07 days, and 1/5 of the victims had between 08 and 15 days and the rest of the victims had more than 15 days which is the penal barrier in Algeria.

## Causals Agents



All victims declare that males are the causal agent of the violence, while the groups are summed up by bladed or blunt weapons.

### **Medical and Psychological Consequences**

The violence resulted in physical consequences requiring urgent care in over 50% of the cases. Psychologically, the majority of women suffered from depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorders, exacerbating their suffering and isolation.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study are consistent with findings from other research in the field of domestic violence, thereby enhancing the overall understanding of this complex phenomenon.

### **Profile of the Victims**

A study conducted in 2023 in Oran (Algeria) by Kherbouche et al. also found that women victims of domestic violence are predominantly young, within a similar age range (20 to 40 years). Like in our study, a strong economic dependency of victims on their spouses was identified as a major factor limiting their ability to leave the abusive household. This aligns with WHO findings (2021) which emphasize that financial independence is a significant exacerbating factor for domestic violence.

### **Types and Localization of Violence**

Research conducted in Morocco by El Khayati et al. (2022) revealed that physical violence is the most reported, accounting for 85% of cases. Injuries to the head and face were also predominant, confirming a similar trend observed in our study (60%). These injuries are particularly concerning as they often involve an intention to cause severe harm, exacerbating long-term physical and psychological consequences.

### **Profile of the Perpetrators**

In general, battered women do not report the characteristics of the alleged aggressors, in which case they are either their husbands or another member of the married couple's family, which is a bit very difficult to do in our Algerian, Arab and Muslim society..

### **Frequency of Violence**

A study conducted in France by Perrin et al. (2020) showed that more than 75% of women victims of domestic violence experienced repeated assaults. The frequency of violence in our study (80%) confirms this observation and highlights the cumulative effect of these assaults on victims.

Prevalence among the number of victims coming for medico-legal consultation was: 3.12%, and in the general population was 0.026%

### **Medical and Psychological Consequences**

The results regarding psychological impacts, such as anxiety and depression, are similar to those reported in a South African study by Jewkes et al. (2022). This study found that 68% of women victims of domestic violence suffer from severe mental health issues, reflecting the long-term consequences of physical and emotional trauma.

These comparisons between studies show that the trends observed in our study in Sidi Bel Abbès align with a consistent global pattern, while also highlighting specificities related to the local socio-economic and cultural context. These findings underscore the need for both global and locally tailored approaches to effectively combat domestic violence.

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

The 142 cases of battered women in Sidi Bel Abbès highlight an urgent issue of domestic violence, exacerbated by socio-economic and cultural factors. The financial dependency of women and periods of family tension, such as Ramadan or the school year, increase their vulnerability, making it difficult to escape a cycle of violence. These findings call for a multi-sectoral and coordinated response to effectively address this issue.

### Recommendations

- **Strengthening Women's Economic Independence:**
  - Create employment integration programs and access to microcredits for women who are victims or vulnerable.
  - Promote training to encourage financial independence and reduce dependency on a spouse.
- **Psychological and Legal Support:**
  - Establish welcoming structures providing free psychological support for victims.
  - Facilitate access to legal services to support the judicial processes against perpetrators.
- **Awareness and Education:**
  - Launch awareness campaigns to denounce domestic violence and promote egalitarian relationships.
  - Integrate educational programs in schools and the media to change attitudes and deconstruct patriarchal norms.
- **Collaboration between Stakeholders:**
  - Encourage active cooperation between associations, health services, law enforcement, and policymakers.
  - Develop robust public policies to strengthen the fight against domestic violence.

By combining prevention, support, and empowerment, it is possible to break the cycle of violence and build a more equal society where women's rights are fully respected.

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