

# Turkish Journal of Medical Sciences

Turkish Journal

of



Medical Sciences

The Effect of Pregnancy on the Physical and Sexual Abuse of Women That Presented to a State Hospital in Trabzon, Turkey

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 [Keywords](#)  
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**Abstract:** Aim: To investigate the prevalence of the physical and sexual abuse of women before and during pregnancy, and to determine whether pregnancy affected the abuse of women. Materials and Methods: This study was performed at a state hospital in the Turkish city of Trabzon and included 762 women that gave birth between July and September 2004. A questionnaire was administered during a face-to-face interview to collect data on sociodemographic factors, exposure to abuse before and during pregnancy, and the women's post-abuse attitudes. Data were analyzed using the McNemar and chi-square tests. Results: It was determined that 8.8% of the women before pregnancy and 1.6% of the women during pregnancy were subjected to physical and/or sexual abuse by their husbands, and the difference was statistically significant ( $P < 0.0005$ ). While 17.9% of the women subjected to abuse before pregnancy also suffered similar abuse during pregnancy, 0.3% of the women that were not subjected to abuse prior to pregnancy were exposed to abuse during pregnancy ( $P < 0.0005$ ). It was also determined that following sexual abuse 46.5% "accepted" what had happened to them, and regarded it as "unimportant and normal", and that 20.9% were "pleased because it had made their husbands happy". No relationships between abuse and sociodemographic factors were found. Conclusions: During pregnancy, Turkish women are generally less frequently exposed to abuse; however, there is a high probability that those women exposed to abuse prior to pregnancy will also be abused during pregnancy. Another finding of note is that so many women in the study accepted physical and sexual abuse.

**Key Words:** Women, physical, sexual, abuse, pregnancy, violence, Trabzon

Turk J Med Sci 2008; **38**(4): 335-342.

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Other articles published in the same issue: [Turk J Med Sci, vol.38, iss.4.](#)