

Factors Associated with Women's Attitude towards Spousal Abuse: The Case of Zambia

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Abstract: Gender based violence (GBV) is a worldwide scourge and spousal battering has been found to be a common form of GBV. The objective of this paper was to examine the attitudes of women towards spousal battering and to assess the association between women's attitudes and the likelihood of being abused. The paper utilizes secondary data from the 2007 Zambia Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS). Results show that the younger women were more likely to justify wife beating when compared to older women ($P < 0.05$). Women from urban areas (68%) with middle income background (71%) were more likely to agree that wife beating is justified compared to rural women (56%) and women with a higher income background (51%). Women who had attained secondary level of education were 1.3 times more likely to report that wife beating was justified compared to those from higher levels of education. Women whose husbands drunk alcohol were 1.2 times more likely to report that wife beating was justified compared to those women whose husbands never drunk alcohol. The results from the analysis suggests that age, marital duration, place of residence, wealth index, partner's wife and husband's educational level, number of children and husband's alcohol consumption contributed to justification of spousal battering.

Key words: Domestic violence, wife beating, spousal battering, wife justification.

1. Introduction

Gender based violence (GBV) is a worldwide scourge which literally happens everywhere, including in the Western world, where human rights are exercised more widely than in the non-Western countries. The World Health Organization [1] reports that "violence is the result of the complex interplay of individual, social, cultural and environmental factors". Social norms and the environment may condone or help perpetuate violence. Studies show that the acceptance rates of wife-beating range from 70% of men and 90% of women in rural Uganda [2], to 53% of women in Zimbabwe [3], 56% of women in India [4], 66.4% of women in Nigeria [5] and 60% of Palestinian men and 61% of Palestinian women living in Jordan [6]. In a study of men and women in Uganda, younger age was associated with the acceptance of wife beating, and in all situations, women were more

likely than men to justify beating [2]. Another study examined women's attitudes towards wife-beating in Zimbabwe and noted that younger age, residency in rural areas, lower household wealth, lower job status and less than secondary education were all associated with justifying wife-beating [3]. Similarly, association between acceptance of intimate partner violence (IPV) and a number of demographic, social and empowerment factors were examined among women in Zambia. It was found that a history of IPV was significantly associated to acceptance of this violence [7].

According to United Nation Reports [9] one in three women experience some form of gender-based violence mostly perpetrated by male partners or husbands. In Zambia one in five women have experienced sexual violence at some point in their life while 46.8 percent of women have experienced physical violence at some point since the age of 15 [9]. Both in developed and developing countries, concerns have continued to be raised about violence against women especially intimate partner violence [10]. It has

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been documented that gender based violence is a health burden and its adverse intergenerational, demographic and socio-economic consequences cannot be overemphasized [1, 11-14]. Furthermore more information is now available showing the evidence of a relationship between intimate partner violence and the spread of HIV and AIDS [15].

In several parts of the world there is a tacit social and cultural acceptance of wife beating as a means of physical reprimand of women and a husband's right to correct an erring wife [16, 17]. The notion of men having the right to discipline their wives by use of force as being accepted by both women and men has been documented in Egypt, Brazil, Ghana and Chile [13]. Normally, any wrong doing by women with regard to gender and social norms about the proper roles and responsibility is considered a just cause for wife beating [17]. It is the range of abuses committed against women that stem from gender inequality and women's subordinate status in a society relative to men [18]. In some extreme cases, the state laws have even legitimized wife-beating such as in Kenya where the law permits husbands to 'discipline' their wives [19]. Young girls with lower levels of education, financial dependence on partner, alcohol use, sexual problems, and unstable employment are individual risk factors for being a victim of intimate partner violence [20-23]. Hindin [3] reports that among the top reasons for IPV wife abuse in society is, refusing to have sex and neglecting the children. Studies in South Africa [24] Uganda [2] and India [25] show that IPV is considered to be a normal part of the marital relationship.

In Zambia, Plan International [26] indicated that male supremacy is a cause of domestic violence. There is also a universal cause of violence springing from traditional norms which teach men that it is a normal and important practice to beat one's wife. Violence has a vicious cycle because victims of violence depend on their abusers for economic survival. Another cause of violence comes from socialization from initiation ceremonies. In rural areas, young girls lose interest in

formal education after undergoing initiation ceremonies. This results in dropping out of school to seek marriage [27].

Most of the studies on wife beating have focused on the actual prevalence and examine different contributing factors of wife beating in the low-income countries [2, 11, 24, 25] but less attention has been given to the underlying attitudes toward wife beating and extent of marital control by husbands. This paper thus examines the specific factors and attitudes associated with justification and acceptance of spousal battering by Zambian men. The overall objective of this paper was to examine the attitudes of women towards spousal battering and to assess whether there is an association between women's attitudes and the likelihood of being abused.

2. Materials and Methods

This paper utilized secondary data from the 2007 Zambia Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) carried out by Central Statistical Office [9] with the technical assistance from Macro International through MEASURE DHS programme. ZDHS is carried out every four years and although the most recent report [9] has been released recently, the data is not yet available for analysis. The ZDHS was designed to provide reliable estimates on demographic and health parameters at the national and provincial level. The 2007 ZDHS is based on a nationally representative sample of 7,146 ever married women aged 15-49.

A three stage stratified cluster sampling procedure was used to select 7,146 households in the 2007 ZDHS. At first, about 320 Standard Enumeration Areas (SEAs) were randomly selected. A sampling interval of the SEAs was calculated by dividing the total number of households in each community by the number of SEAs to be selected in each stratum. The selection of the sample in each stratum employed Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) sampling scheme, where the measure of size was taken to be the household count in each SEA. A random number was generated to select

the first SEA in each stratum. To select the next SEA in a stratum, the random number generated was added to the sampling interval and this process was repeated until all the required numbers of SEAs in each stratum were selected. Detailed descriptions of the survey design are available in the national report [9].

The 2007 ZDHS included a special module designed to collect information on the extent to which women experienced domestic violence in Zambia. The questionnaire included detailed questions on the type of physical violence experienced by women in the households. The household questionnaires collected information on the demographic and economic characteristics of all household members. The women's module which is applied to all women between 15-49 years of age includes data on the marital status, education, employment, as well as their partners' education and occupation. The wealth index used in this survey is a measure that has been used in order to find out inequalities in household characteristic. It is a proxy indicator for measuring living standards of households. For purpose of the data analysis, the study restricted to only 4,351 currently married women.

2.1 Data Analysis

In this paper, data analysis was only restricted to 4351 married women aged 15-49. The analysis of data was carried out at two stages using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 12 (SPSS v 12); Firstly, cross tabulations were used to examine the relationship between the attitudes of women towards spouse battering taking into consideration their, socio-economic, demographic, and sexual health variables. For the statistical analysis, chi-square tests of independence were conducted at the bivariate level, and the differences were determined at $P < 0.05$ and $P < 0.01$ significance levels. Secondly, factors influencing justification of wife beating were analyzed using logistic regression analysis, the dependent variable (wife beating) was classified into two categories, those who justified and those who did not justify wife beating.

The result of the logistic regression models was converted into odds ratios, which represented the effect of a one-unit change in the explanatory variable on the indicator of women's attitudes towards spouse battering.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Reasons that Justified Spousal Battering

The reasons for justification of spousal battering are shown in Table 1. The percentage of respondents who agreed with at least one reason that wife beating is justified was highly significantly ($P < 0.01$) associated with age, place of residence, wealth index, wife and husband's education. Overall, 65% of women agreed with at least one reason that wife beating is justified. The younger women were more likely to agree that wife beating is justified compared to older women. Women from urban areas (68%) with middle income background (71%) were more likely to agree that wife beating is justified compared to rural women (56%) with rich background (51%).

The percentage of respondents who agreed that wife beating is justified if they went out without telling her husband was significantly ($P < 0.01$) associated with age, marital duration, place of residence, wealth index, wife and husband's education, number of children and husband drinks alcohol. Similarly, the percentage of respondents who agreed that wife beating is justified if she neglects the children was strongly associated with age, place of residence, wife's and husband's education and if the husband drank alcohol at $P < 0.05$ levels.

The percentage of respondents who agreed that wife beating is justified if she argues with him was significantly associated with age, place of residence, wealth index, wife and husband's educational level, number of living children, and husband drinks alcohol. Additionally, the percentage of respondents who agreed that wife beating is justified if wife refused to have sex with him was considerably associated with place of residence, wealth index, wife and husband's educational level, number of living children and husband drinks alcohol. Lastly, the percentage of

Table 1 Reasons to justify wife battering.

	Percentage who agree with at least one reason	Percentage who agree that wife beating is justified					Number of currently married women
		If she goes out without telling him	If she neglects the children	If she argues with him	If she refuses to have sex with him	If she burns the food	
Age							
15-19	69.4***	53.4***	48.1*	45.9*	36.5	38.0	266
20-24	68.8	51.7	48.3	48.6	42.9	37.9	882
25-29	63.8	45.0	43.5	44.6	40.3	33.3	1,041
30-34	63.7	42.0	43.9	43.7	40.4	35.0	822
35-39	60.1	39.9	41.1	42.3	41.7	34.6	581
40+	60.5	43.0	41.6	41.1	38.6	33.1	759
Marital Duration							
0-4	64.4	48.8**	44.0	46.4	37.7	34.2	903
5-9	66.5	47.4	46.4	44.8	41.0	35.5	1,038
10-14	62.8	43.6	40.9	42.3	39.4	34.0	803
15 +	63.0	42.8	44.5	44.0	42.4	35.6	1,608
Religion							
Protestant	64.5	44.7	44.7	44.4	41.2	37.1*	930
Catholic	63.9	45.4	44.0	44.4	40.3	34.4	3,421
Place of residence							
Rural	56.0***	34.7***	34.5***	42.0**	34.1***	28.5***	1,500
Urban	68.3	50.8	49.2	45.6	43.9	38.4	2,851
Wealth Index							
Poor	67.3***	49.4***	47.4***	44.3***	42.8***	36.6***	1,784
Middle	71.1	53.6	52.1	51.4	46.1	42.3	1,356
Rich	51.4	29.9	30.6	36.7	30.9	24.4	1,211
Work status							
Working	64.8	45.4	43.8	44.3	40.8	35.4	2,095
Not-working	63.4	45.2	44.5	44.5	40.2	34.6	2,256
Wife's Educational level							
Primary	61.7***	42.0***	40.9***	37.8***	41.1***	34.8***	569
Secondary	70.2	50.5	49.5	49.2	45.4	39.5	2,658
Higher	50.6	34.5	33.3	36.2	28.6	24.3	1,124
Husband's education							
Primary	67.6***	48.9***	47.8***	45.5***	43.1***	38.2***	2,312
Secondary	65.5	45.7	45.1	48.0	41.9	35.2	1,538
Higher	43.3	27.2	24.8	27.9	24.2	19.2	500
Living children number							
< 2	65.4	49.8***	45.1	46.5*	40.8***	34.8	916
3-4	61.9	42.9	42.1	41.9	37.0	33.6	1,552
5+	65.2	45.0	45.5	45.4	43.2	36.2	1,883
Husband drinks alcohol							
No	62.7	43.6	42.1***	40.7***	38.7***	34.3	2,847
Yes	66.7	47.0	47.4	48.3	43.9	36.3	1,864
Overall	64.7	42.3	42.6	43.1	36.3	32.9	4,351

= Significant at $P < 0.05$, *=Highly Significant at $P < 0.01$.

respondents who agreed that wife beating is justified if wife burns the food was strongly related to religion, place of residence, wealth index, wife and husband's educational level. Wife battering was highly common if the wife neglected the children and refused to have sex with the husband.

3.2 Factors that Influenced Justification of Wife Beating

To understand the factors that influence attitudes

towards wife beating, logistic regression analysis was carried out by considering the socio-economic, demographic and sexual health variables. In this analysis, only percentages of those who agreed with at least one reason were considered for analysis (Table 2). The results showed that religion, place of residence, wealth index, work status, wife and husband's educational level, number of living children and husband's consumption of alcohol were significantly associated with the justification of wife beating.

Table 2 Logistic regression analysis related to factors affecting wife beating.

Variables	β	SE	Odds Ratio	Significance
Marital Duration				
0-4				
5-9	0.1539	0.1094	1.17	0.1597
10-14	-0.1291	0.1208	0.88	0.2852
15+	-0.1337	0.1195	0.87	0.2632
Religion				
Catholic				
Protestant	0.0267	0.0796	0.1.03	0.2345
Place of residence				
Rural				
Urban	0.0084	0.1143	1.01	0.0000
Wealth Index				
Poor				
Middle	0.2456	0.0868	1.28	0.0047
Rich	-0.3821	0.1390	0.68	0.0060
Work status				
Not-working				
Working	0.0648	0.0661	1.07	0.0000
Wife's Educational level				
Primary				
Secondary	0.3551	0.0971	1.43	0.0003
Higher	-0.1853	0.1226	0.83	0.1306
Husband's education				
Primary				
Secondary	0.0964	0.0793	1.10	0.2239
Higher	-0.3464	0.1232	0.71	0.0049
Living children number				
< 2				
3-4	0.2757	0.1113	1.32	0.0133
5+	0.1704	0.1273	1.19	0.1805
Husband drinks alcohol				
No				
Yes	0.1728	0.0664	1.19	0.0093

S.E Standard error; β = beta.

Women from urban areas were more likely to report that wife beating was justified compared to those from rural areas. Women from middle income group were 1.3 times more likely to report that wife beating was justified compared to those from high income group. Working women were 1.1 times more likely to report that wife beating was justified compared to those not-working. Women who had attained secondary level of education were 1.3 times more likely to report that wife beating was justified compared to those from higher levels of education. Women with many children were 1.3 times more likely to report that wife beating was justified compared to those with smaller families. Women whose husbands drink alcohol were 1.2 times more likely to report being beaten by their husbands compared to those women whose husbands never drink alcohol.

The paper shows that spousal battering was widely accepted by wives similar to a study by Hindin [3] we also found that wife beating was significantly associated with age, place of residence, wealth index, wife and husband's educational level. The results also show that women from urban areas were more likely to report that wife beating is justified, compared to those from rural areas. This is similar to a study conducted in Egypt showing that wife beating was more common in urban areas than in rural areas [11]. However the results contradict the findings of a previous study from Zimbabwe which indicated that urban women were less likely to experience wife beating than rural women [3].

Research on power relations within the family has proliferated in the past several decades [28], but it has not clearly informed social scientists as to how marital power relates to domestic violence. In a random survey of 1,553 Kentucky women, [29] found that women with jobs that were higher in status than their husbands' jobs were more likely to experience life-threatening violence than were wives who were occupationally similar to their husbands. However, when the man's job is high in status relative to his partner's occupation, there is a significant reduction in

the risk of life-threatening violence. In a review of similar studies, Hotelling & Sugarman [30] concluded that if the wife has more education or higher income than the husband, the likelihood of husband-to-wife violence increases.

This study is in agreement with the [11] Egyptian study which revealed that spousal battering was more prevalent in urban areas compared to rural areas. Krug et al. [31] shows that between 40 percent and 70 percent of all women who are murdered are killed by male intimate partners. On the other hand, between 4 and 8.6 percent of men who are murdered are killed by their female intimate partner in self-defense. CSO [9] reported that one in five women and 46.8% of women in Zambia have experienced sexual abuse and physical violence respectively.

It is possible to present an argument that because of the close and interwoven nature of relationships in the rural areas compared to the mechanistic loosely defined nature of relationships in the urban areas, there is more tacit social control of behavior in the rural areas where beating a wife may become public knowledge in a short time in the whole village and is therefore frowned upon. In the urban areas not many people may know what is happening next door and therefore the practice of wife beating may only be known by 'proximal' neighbors and not the entire 'village' and as such may not receive as much social sanction or disapproval as in the rural areas.

Results also indicate that wealth index, levels of education, poor and middle-income women with primary or no education believe that wife beating is justified. These findings were similar to previous studies by Hindin [3] and Khawaja [6] which documented that the effect of education at the individual level was visible only at the secondary or higher levels. The limited impact of primary level of education in terms of accepting spousal battering is not surprising, as just having few years of schooling, usually acquired at very young age, may not expose men or women to new non-conformist ideas. Low

levels of education may not be enough to raise the consciousness of the woman concerned to differentiate between reality and myth of male superiority as advocated in many cultural practices of society especially in the non-western societies. In addition, the effect of education will depend on whether the education is adaptive or transformative, and how it is used to challenge gender bias or to perpetuate traditional gender norms [32].

Studies have shown that women with lower levels of employment status are likely to justify wife beating [3, 33]. However in this paper it was working women who were found more likely to report that wife beating is justified than non-working women. This seems to be consistent with the findings of Patkar [34] whose results showed that employment or financial independence of women alone will not change their attitude towards wife-beating. To explain these contradictory results, one needs to examine the social context, circumstances and motivations for women's participation in the labour market. In many of the low-income countries such as Zambia, most of the women work largely in the informal sector in low paid jobs and inevitably under very exploitative conditions. In such circumstances, women may be exposed to the same patriarchal social structures at the work place as in their homes which may further reinforce the myth of male superiority. This then may not liberate the working woman who might continue to regard spousal battering as acceptable.

4. Conclusions

The results from the analysis suggest that age, marital duration, place of residence, wealth index, wife and husband's educational level, number of children and husband's alcohol consumption contributed to justification of spousal battering. It is our postulation that the high prevalence of spousal battering is essentially a symptom of distorted social institutions and social norms affecting both men and women where the latter are affected more adversely than the former.

We wish to further suggest that appropriate legislation, mechanisms to punish offenders and operation of care centres will best succeed only if a social consensus is built around re-negotiation of gender roles and against the use of violence to resolve conflicts.

As a starting point, in order to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement machinery, programmes by health workers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must work with concerned Governments to increase awareness about the unjustness of existing social norms as regards Gender Based Violence (GBV) and wife beating in particular and to sensitize different instruments of State and other organizations dealing with the issue.

A limitation of this paper is that the sample was collected from a specific population (women). It would however be important to conduct a study where men are included in the sample as well. Furthermore, only secondary data was used for this analysis.

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