

MALE DOMINANCE, HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG ABUSED WOMEN AND TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This paper examined whether women who seek help when abused differ in specific ways from women who do not and determined the association between male controlling behavior (MCB) and pregnancy termination (PT). Data for the study was derived from most recent DHS of a weighted sample of ever-married women in CDR (5080), Zambia (8671) and Nigeria(21196). Help seeking from no one ranges from 52.4% in Zambia to 55.4% in Nigeria and 62.1% in DRC while male controlling behavior is the highest in DRC. Over 19.0% of women in DRC, 13.6% in Nigeria and 13.4% in Zambia have ever terminated pregnancy. The unadjusted and adjusted ORs showed that women whose husband exhibit at least one control are more likely to have ever terminated pregnancy in all the three countries. An evidence-based understanding of the association between MCB and PT is a prerequisite for effective intervention to increase awareness on the health implications of MCB.

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1. Background/Problem Statement

Studies have documented a strong association between domestic violence and serious, adverse health outcomes affecting women and their children (Krug et al. 2002; Ahmed et al. 2006; Stephenson et al. 2006). Specifically, Kishor and Johnson (2006) found that women who suffer violence in pregnancy are likely to give birth to children with poor health outcomes and are also more likely to give birth to children they don't want and at a time they do not prepare for it. There are two aspects of violence against intimate partners that have been poorly researched, especially in relation to reproductive outcomes – male controlling behaviour and help seeking by women who experience violence. While male dominance may result into violence, non-disclosure of violence especially by intimate partner may be common in a patriarchal tradition for various reasons.

Intimate partner violence is commonly referred to as a silent epidemic because most victims of violence often are not ready to disclose violence or break the silence because of shame (Fugate et al 2005; Moe 2007); stigma associated with breaking the silence, and fear (Elbasey et. al. 2001, Chang et al 2005); religious belief and the need to rely on God (Kershner et al, 1999). Most women are also tolerant about violence from their intimate partners because of norms and societal beliefs and low self-esteem (Abbey et. al. 2001). Women who suffer violence of any sort from intimate partners, friend or in-law are less likely to report compared to women who suffer from strangers. For those who may want to seek help, there is this belief that help seeking could lead to more violence and embarrassments depending on the sources of the help and for fear of whether people will listen to them or at the end being blamed for the cause of the violence.

Male dominance, synonymous to marital control describes the attitude of married men who are possessive and domineering of their spouses. The patriarchal traditions in most African countries provide a context that facilitates an oppressive relationship where the husband establishes a pattern of unhealthy control over his wife. The major indicators of domineering behaviours include extreme possessiveness, jealousy, and attempts to isolate the woman from her family and friends and untrusting behaviors by the husbands towards their wives (NPC and ICF Macro, 2014). A domineering husband for example, may regulate the type and number of persons his spouse talks to, where she goes, or how and when his spouse spends money. He may be extremely jealous and falsely accuses the wife of unfaithfulness and constantly monitors and asks about his spouse whereabouts. Such behaviours are likely to associate with domestic violence. While GBV violates women's rights and may threaten their reproductive health, marital control may also lead to violence and thus be a reason for worse reproductive outcomes.

Studies using nationally representative and comparable data on whether women who seek help when abused differ in specific ways from women who do not and how male dominance directly influence worse reproductive outcomes, especially pregnancy termination are very scanty in sub-Saharan Africa. This paper thus examined whether women who seek help when abused differ in specific ways from women who do not and determined whether higher degree of marital control is associated with pregnancy termination in three selected sub-Saharan African countries.

2.0 Research Questions

a) What is the extent of male dominance in sub-Sahara Africa as measured by indicators of marital control?

b) Are women who seek help when abused different in specific ways from women who do not?

c) Is there any association between male controlling behaviours and termination of pregnancy?

In other words, “are women with controlling husband/partner more likely to have ever terminated pregnancy than other women with no controlling husband/partner?”

3.0 Data and Method

Data were sourced from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) from three countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The three countries were selected on the basis of geographical differences and availability of comparable data in the domestic violence module in each country’s survey. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was selected from Central Africa, Zambia from Eastern Africa and Nigeria from Western Africa. The unit of analysis was ever-married women who had at least one child, five years preceding each survey and who participated in the interview questions in the DHS domestic violence module.

The only outcome variable in our analysis is termination of pregnancy. Respondents were scored 1 if they reported ever termination of pregnancy and 0 otherwise. The two principal explanatory variables in the study are help-seeking behavior in violence and male controlling behaviour. Women who sought help irrespective of the sources of help were scored 1 and 0 otherwise.

Male Controlling Behaviour was measured using indicators of marital control provided by the DHS. The DHS questionnaire collected information on different combinations of six such behaviors, namely:

- Husband is jealous if she talks to other men;
- Husband frequently accuses her of being unfaithful;
- Husband does not permit her to meet her female friends;
- Husband tries to limit her contact with family;
- Insists on knowing where she is at all times; and
- He does not trust her with money

Each indicator was scored 1 if present or 0 otherwise. A composite score of MCB was created to indicate the number of controlling behaviours experienced by the women from their husbands. This was dichotomized as 1 for at least three controlling behavior or 0 otherwise.

Five variables were used as control in the multivariate analysis. These were background variables that have been found common to analysis of reproductive health outcomes (Kishor and Johnson, 2006): age of the respondent measured in three groups (15-24, 25-34, 35+), highest education (no formal education, primary, and secondary or more); household characteristics – residence (rural or urban) and household wealth status and current work status. The data were analyzed separately taking into account the complex survey design of the DHS by incorporating domestic violence sampling weights which adjusts for the probability of selection into the domestic violence module and for nonresponse. We also adjusted for the standard errors for the cluster sampling of primary sampling units using Stata's svy range of commands.

At the bivariate level of analysis, we analyzed the associations between selected background variables and help seeking behavior of women who experience violence. At the multivariate analyses level, we obtained the unadjusted and adjusted Odd Ratios (ORs) from binary logistic regression of the effect of male controlling behaviours on pregnancy termination

4.0 Results

Prevalence of help seeking from no one ranges from 52.4% in Zambia to 55.4% in Nigeria and 62.1% in DRC while male controlling behavior is the highest in DRC. Over 19.0% of women in DRC, 13.6% in Nigeria and 13.4% in Zambia have ever terminated pregnancy. Ever-married women who seek help when abused do not significantly differ in terms of background variables like age, education, residence and wealth status from other women who do not seek help in Zambia and DRC. In Nigeria, the percentage of ever-married women who never sought help during episode of any episode of abuse decreases as level of education increases. Unemployed women were significantly more likely to avoid seeking help than those who were engaged in economic activities (61.3% vs 53.9%). Similarly, women in rural areas who ever experienced violence from their husbands or partners were more likely to avoid seeking help than their counterparts in urban areas (58.1% vs 51.7%).

The most prevalent occurrence of controlling behavior in the three countries was when women talked to other men and when husbands demanded to know where the wife was at all times.

Multivariate analyses show that both unadjusted and adjusted ORs from binary logistic regression analysis of effects of controlling behavior on pregnancy termination are significant in all the three countries. For example, ever-married women in DRC whose husbands exhibit 3 or more controlling behaviours were 1.3 times more likely to have had at least a pregnancy terminated than women whose husbands exhibit less than 3 controlling behaviours. The adjusted odds of terminating pregnancy increase when background variables of age, education, wealth status and current work status were introduced into the logistic regression model.

Similarly both the unadjusted OR and adjusted ORs of experiencing pregnancy termination were significantly higher among women whose husband exhibit excessive controls (≥ 3 controlling behavior) in Nigeria (uOR=1.45; $p < 0.01$; aOR=1.41; $p < 0.001$) and Zambia (uOR=1.33; $p < 0.001$; aOR=1.38; $p < 0.001$) than their counterparts who women whose husbands exhibit less control (< 3 controlling behavior).

5.0 Conclusion and Potential Policy Significance

Our research effort builds on previous research on adverse reproductive health outcomes, in particular pregnancy termination in Sub-Sahara Africa and makes some important contributions to understanding the determinants of pregnancy termination from the perspective of male controlling behaviours and using nationally representative and comparable data.

We have attempted to provide an answer to our main research question on whether male dominance measured as male controlling behavior is associated with pregnancy termination among ever-married women in three sub-Saharan African countries. We assumed that an abusive and controlling family environment is likely to preclude a woman from negotiating and taking

control over her life which can limit her autonomy in taking decisions regarding her health, sex and reproductive pattern. The findings in this study supported our hypothesis that women with controlling husband/partner are more likely to have ever terminated pregnancy than other women with no controlling husband/partner in all the selected countries. We conclude that an evidence-based understanding of the association between male controlling behavior and worse reproductive outcomes (pregnancy termination) using nationally representative and comparable data is not only important for public health practitioners, but also for developing effective educational programmes to increase awareness on the health implications of excessive male domineering behaviours in patriarchal traditional settings in sub-Saharan Africa.

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Table1: Percentage Distribution of Ever Married Women by Experience of Different Forms of Violence; Background Characteristics and Fertility Outcomes: DRC, Nigeria and Zambia

	DRC 2013/14	(DHS NIGERIA DHS 2013	ZAMBIA DHS 2013/14
FORMS OF GBV	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Any Physical	45.9(2330)	14.4(3062)	38.8(3330)
Any Sexual	25.5(1295)	4.8(1008)	16.7(1431)
Any Emotional	36.6(1858)	19.2(4062)	24.0(2054)
Any of the three forms	57.4(2914)	24.5(5197)	47.2(4041)
Severity of physical violence			
any severe physical	45.3(2296)	14.1(2987)	38.3(3281)
Less severe physical	12.7(646)	5.9(1182)	13.6(1163)
BACKGROUND VARIABLES			
Current age			
15-24	25.5(1295)	23.2(4911)	22.2(1904)
25-34	41.7(2119)	37.5(7950)	40.9(3509)
35+	32.8(1666)	39.3(8335)	36.9(3159)
Residence			
Urban	33.4(1698)	37.2(7883)	42.0(3597)
Rural	66.6(3382)	62.8(13313)	58.0(4975)
Education			
No education	18.9(959)	47.1(9980)	10.9(933)
Primary	41.1(2089)	19.7(4176)	55.0(4711)
Secondary +	40.0(2032)	33.2(7040)	34.1(2922)
Age at marriage			
<18	25.5(1295)	57.0(12086)	49.4(4236)
18-24	41.7(2119)	33.2(7036)	44.1(3781)
25+	32.8(1666)	9.8(2074)	6.5(554)
Wealth Quintile			
Poor	41.3(2096)	43.4(9193)	43.8(4126)
Middle	19.9(1008)	18.5(3926)	22.0(2072)
Rich	38.9(1976)	38.1(8077)	34.2(3218)
FERTILITY-RELATED OUTCOMES			
Mean CEB	3.9	3.8	4
Mean Parity	3.4	3.2	3.5
TFR	6.6	5.5	5.3
Wanted last birth			
Wanted as at then	70.9(2711)	91.6(13014)	62.6(3810)

Wanted later/not at all	29.1(1111)	8.4(1185)	37.4(2272)
wanted current pregnancy			
Yes	68.5(511)	91.0(2825)	58.8(542)
No	31.5(235)	9.0(279)	41.2(380)
ever terminated a pregnancy			
Yes	19.0(967)	13.7(2891)	13.4(1149)
No	81.0(4113)	86.3(18277)	86.6(7421)

Table2: Percent of Ever-married Women Who Never Sought Any Help during any Form of Abuse DRC(DHS 2013/2014), Nigeria(DHS 2013) and Zambia (DHS 2013/2014)

	DRC (DHS 2013/14)	NIGERIA DHS 2013	ZAMBIA DHS 2013/14
Current age			
15-24	61.0	58.0	55.3
25-34	63.5	54.1	51.3
35+	60.9	55.5	52.1
<i>p-value</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Residence			
Urban	63.3	51.7	51.7
Rural	61.5	58.1	53.0
<i>p-value</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i><0.01</i>	<i>ns</i>
Education			
No education	61.3	62.2	51.5
Primary	60.1	53.3	53.8
Secondary +	64.7	52.7	50.1
<i>p-value</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i><0.001</i>	<i>ns</i>
Wealth Quintile			
Poorest	56.0	64.7	51.3
Poorer	60.5	55.3	54.2
Middle	63.2	53.9	52.0
Richer	66.1	52.4	53.0
Richest	65.3	54.4	51.6
<i>p-value</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i><0.01</i>	<i>ns</i>
Current work status			
not currently working	60.1	61.3	51.7
currently working	62.8	53.9	52.7
<i>p-value</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i><0.01</i>	<i>ns</i>
ALL	62.1	55.4	52.4
ns= not significant			

Table 3 Percentage of Ever-Married Women by Experience of Controlling Behaviour from DRC(DHS 2013/2014), Nigeria(DHS 2013) and Zambia(DHS 2013/2014)

	DRC (DHS 2013/14)	NIGERIA DHS 2013	ZAMBIA DHS 2013/14
Number of Controlling Behaviour	%	%	%
0	17.3 (876)	36.1 (7645)	26.2 (2244)
1	16.6 (843)	26.7 (5657)	17.2 (1471)
2	21.5 (1091)	24.2 (5134)	21.7 (1862)
3	19.7 (998)	7.7 (1632)	18.9 (1619)
4	14.2 (721)	3.1 (661)	9.6 (824)
5	10.8 (551)	2.2 (467)	6.4 (552)
Number of Controlling Behaviour			
At least 1 controlling behaviour	82.7 (4204)	63.93 (13551)	73.8 (6328)
No controlling behaviour	17.3 (876)	36.07 (7645)	26.2 (2244)
Number of Controlling Behaviour			
Less than 3	55.3 (2811)	86.98 (18436)	65.1 (5577)
3+	44.7 (2269)	13.02 (2759)	34.9 (2995)
Types of Male Controlling Behaviour			
Husband jealous or angry if she talks to other men	69.0 (3502)	57.0 (12073)	63.4 (5428)
Husband frequently accuses her of being unfaithful	29.6 (1504)	10.0 (2119)	36.7 (3097)
Husband does not permit her to meet her female friends	40.8 (2065)	10.4 (2199)	20.8 (1780)
Husband tries to limit her contact with family	27.3 (1384)	7.0 (1474)	12.6 (1081)
Husband insists on knowing where she is at all times	63.1 (3201)	37.4 (7935)	55.1 (4721)

Table 4: Logistic Regression Analysis of the Effects of Male Controlling Behaviours on Pregnancy Termination; DRC (2013/14), Nigeria(2013) and Zambia(2013/14)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)				
VARIABLE	uOR	t-statistic	95% CI	P
<3 controlling behaviour	1.00			
>= 3 controlling behaviour	1.30	2.69	1.07 - 1.58	<0.01
Constant	0.208	-22.09	0.181 - 0.239	<0.001
Number: 5691 Pop Size :5080 Design df= 535 F(1,535)=7.22; p<0.01				
VARIABLE	aOR	t-statistic	95% CI	P
<3 controlling behaviour	1.00			
>= 3 controlling behaviour	1.39	3.19	1.14 - 1.70	<0.01
Constant	0.092	-9.63	0.056 - 0.149	<0.001
Number: 5680 Pop Size :5068 Design df=535 F(13, 523)= 8.67; p<0.001				
NIGERIA				
VARIABLE	uOR	t-statistic	95% CI	P
<3 controlling behaviour	1.00			
>= 3 controlling behaviour	1.45	5.13	1.26 - 1.67	<0.001
Constant	0.15	-49.79	0.139 - 0.161	<0.001
Number: 22305 Pop Size :21196 Design df=895 F(1,895)=26.33, p<0.001				
VARIABLE	aOR	t-statistic	95% CI	P
<3 controlling behaviour	1.00			
>= 3 controlling behaviour	1.41	4.56	1.21 - 1.63	<0.001
Constant	0.062	-20.03	0.047 - 0.081	<0.001
Number: 22305 Pop Size :21196 Design df=895 F(13,883)= 16.83; p<0.001				
ZAMBIA				
VARIABLE	uOR	t-statistic	95% CI	P
<3 controlling behaviour	1.00			
>= 3 controlling behaviour	1.33	3.62	1.14 - 1.55	<0.001
Constant	0.139	-36.30	0.125 - 0.155	<0.001
Number: 9414 Pop Size :8531 Design df= 720 F(1,720)=13.11; p<0.001				
VARIABLE	aOR	t-statistic	95% CI	P
<3 controlling behaviour	1.00			
>= 3 controlling behaviour	1.38	3.97	1.18 - 1.61	<0.001
Constant	0.065	-13.02	0.043 - 0.099	<0.001
Number: 9377 Pop Size :8531 Design df=720 F(13,708)= 8.03; p<0.001				

Figure 1: Number of male controlling behaviours
DHS Nigeria, 2013

