

“What’s next?” EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DURATION OF MARRIAGE AND FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract

One gap identified in Ghana’s national gender and children’s policy framework is a goal focusing on the protection of women. Using the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, this study attempts to explore the relationship between women’s duration of marriage and forms of domestic violence experienced, grouped here into four types (emotional violence, less severe physical violence, severe physical violence and sexual violence). The results of analysis show that all forms of domestic violence reach their peak between five to nine years of marriage, with SEXUAL VIOLENCE being highest at this peak. The results also show emotional violence is highest for women in their first four years of marriage. The study recommends a provision in the national gender and children policy, for a preventive measure that aims at the protection of women.

Keywords: marital duration, violence, Ghana, male supremacy

Introduction

Domestic violence has become a topic of interest in many African countries due to cultural norms and theories of male dominance among African societies that tend to fuel and promote domestic violence among African cultures. Gender inequality results from unequal power relationships between women and men, based on the roles outlined above, and is one of the root causes of violence against women WHO, 2005.

Violence against women has been described by the WHO (2005) as one of the most blatant manifestations of domestic violence, and efforts by governments and women's organizations as well as various studies and research work have gone a long way to illustrate the importance of studying issues related to domestic violence. In the Millennium Declaration of September 2000, the General Assembly of the United Nations resolved "to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" (WHO, 2005).

Domestic violence has been found to be associated with social conditions such as poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, child mortality, maternal ill-health and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), as documented in studies by Heise et al (1998), MacCulloch (1997), Jejeebhoy (1998), Martin et al (2002), Maman et al (2000), among others.

Intimate-partner violence (also called "domestic" violence) means a woman has encountered physical, sexual or emotional violence at the hands of an intimate partner or ex-partner; (WHO, 2005).

Societal acceptance of wife-beating is quite widespread in many developing countries, and this is often attributed to cultural norms that encourage male superiority. According to Coker-Appiah and Cusack (1999), Cusack and Manuh (2009), in some cultures, wife-beating connotes a man's ability to maintain discipline and control over his household.

In Ghana, the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service (WAJU), now the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU), between January 1999 and December 2002 recorded 1869 cases of assault/wife battering alone (Amoakohene 2004). The same organization, then DOVVSU, handled 4,904 cases in 2008 and 5,709 cases in 2009.

When we explore intimate partner violence among married couples, there is often great focus on physical violence; the form of violence that leaves noticeable traces. In this vein, many women in developing countries are most possibly suffering in silence.

Studies by Wolff, Blanc & Ssekamatte-Ssebuliba (2000), Dodoo & Frost 2008 and Dodoo 2004 among others have often explained issues on male dominance in relation to African women's inability to negotiate for safe sex. As shown in Figure 1, compared to the other age groups, the percentage of women older than their husbands that were experiencing domestic violence was greater, for all forms of domestic violence.

<<Figure 1 goes here>>

Cornel (1987) argues that violence against women is "deeply embedded in power inequalities and ideologies of male supremacy"

Mooney (2000), argues that male violence against women is seen by feminists as a part of maintaining the male supremacy and controlling women

In a study conducted in Kenya on expanding men's participation in reproductive health in Kenya, showed that men used pregnancy, for instance, as a weapon to "subordinate women or cause them to accept male supremacy by reducing their personal autonomy". (APPRC, 1999).

According to Bowman (2003), explains that the exchange of bridewealth payments from a man to his wife's family connotes an entitlement and a 'purchased' right over his wife, that allows him to treat her as he likes.

Within such societies, certain forms of violence such as sexual or emotional violence may be routine and not often spoken about. Again, in view of the fact that in many African societies, marriage is as much a union between two families as it is between the couple, especially with the payment of bridewealth, marriage may be seen as a more binding commitment in such societies. This study will examine if duration of marriage, as it were, strengthens the 'ownership' and supremacy that Ghanaian men may have on women, and explore the form of violence (that is, emotional less severe, severe and sexual violence) that is common at which state of marriage.

This will allow programs and policies to target specific group of women to allow effective programming and effective implementation.

Several studies, including Kulwicki and Miller 1999; Hindin and Adair 2002; Khawaja, Linos et al. 2008, have explored the relationship between socio-economic and demographic characteristics and domestic violence..

In a study titled Domestic violence and duration of marriage, Gallegos (year) examined how domestic violence affects duration of marriage. He found that ‘the hazard of divorce is 2.598 times the baseline hazard after domestic violence’, and that ‘when the effect of domestic violence is allowed to change over time, the hazard of divorce is 4.3 times the baseline hazard in the first year’.

This paper, therefore, explores the relationship between duration of marriage and forms of domestic violence - emotional violence, less severe physical violence, severe physical violence and sexual violence.

Data and Methods

Data used from this study was from the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS). This study is conducted in Ghana every five years. In all 4916 women were administered the women’s questionnaires.

The Ghana Demographic and Health Survey in 2008 for the first time collected a nationally representative data on domestic violence by adding a domestic violence module to both the women’s and the men’s questionnaires. So that out of 4916 women that were administered the female questionnaire, 2361 were administered the domestic violence model.

The study population for the current study is currently married women that that were sampled for the domestic violence questionnaire, and had been married only once. This was to eliminate

violence from previous marriages. Women were asked if they had experienced any of these forms of violence, and for each form, whether it had occurred in the last year. In exploring the relationship between marital duration and domestic violence, the study uses the marriage duration grouped in five-year groups. The study explores different forms of domestic violence in the different marriage duration groups and different age groups.

Variables

Several studies have sort to explore the relationship between domestic violence and many socio-economic characteristics with the hope of widening our knowledge on domestic violence. Several other reports like the UNIFEM, 2003, has suggested the need for more studies to better tackle the problem of domestic violence.

Several studies have also emphasized the relation between individuals' socio-economic and demographic characteristics and domestic violence or intimate partner violence

Takyi found that men's attitudes about wife beatings in Ghana tend to be shaped predominantly by individual & household level factors such as younger age, lower education, less wealth, sole male decision-making, & more number of children (Takyi 2006).

Takyi argues that factors such as age, education, wealth among others tend to shape men's attitudes about wife beating (Takyi 2006)

Bates et al (2004), in a study to examine the types and severity of domestic violence found that participants expected women with more education and income to be less vulnerable to DV". According to the results of her study, "women whose earnings contributed more than nominally to covering their household's expenses were significantly more likely to report violence than were women who contributed very little or none". Bates, L., et al. 2004. "Socioeconomic Factors and Processes Associated With Domestic Violence in Rural Bangladesh". *International Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 30, No. 4.

Again, a study by Farmer and Tiefenthaler (1997) suggested that wives' income and other financial sources have a negative effect on the level of violence within a household. Farmer, A., Tiefenthaler, J. 1997. "An Economic Analysis of Domestic Violence". *Review of Social Economy*, Vol. 55, No. 3

Table 1 shows the percent distribution of marriage duration, and shows seven different groups of five-year marriage durations. According to the table, women that had been married for between five and nine years formed the highest percentage (19.6%), followed by women that had been married for 10-14 years. The smallest group was the group that had been married for over 30+ years.

Methods of analysis

Univariate and bivariate analysis were used to explore the relationship between duration of marriage and forms of domestic violence. Univariate analysis were used to show proportions of women within various marital durations. It was also used to show the proportion of women within each age group as well as the proportions of women that had experienced different forms

of domestic violence. Cross tabulations were used in the bivariate analysis to show the relationship between forms of domestic violence within various age groups and proportions of women experiencing domestic violence.

Again, multivariate analyses consisting of four binary logistic regression models predicting the effects of duration of marriage on domestic violence were also conducted.

Results

Figure 1 goes to buttress Dodoo and Frost (2008) argument about male dominance in the Ghanaian context. In a culture where a man is supposed to be the head of the household, and should be seen as being 'in control' of affairs concerning his home and family, age can seem like a threatening factor. As seen in figure 1, for all forms of violence, the proportion of women older than their husbands that are experiencing violence is greater than the proportions in the other age categories.

As shown in Figure 2, all forms of domestic violence appear to be lowest in the first four years of marriage and after 30 years of marriage, compared to the other marriage duration groups. Again, in the first four years of marriage, emotional violence appears highest and severe violence lowest. This may be explained by the fact that at the first few years of marriage, people may be toned down on character and so being abusive may be a character that may be toned down a bit. Emotional violence may however result from having to adjust to a new life (married life) and living with someone. By 30+ years of marriage, they may have adjusted to a person's character

(hence the emotional violence), and that possibly explains emotional violence being low at this period.

Again, the percentage of women experiencing domestic violence among women that have been married for 5 to 9 years are more than the women experiencing same forms of domestic violence in other marriage durations groups. Also, at the five to nine years of marriage that all forms of domestic violence are at their peak, the proportion of women experiencing sexual violence is more than the proportion of women experiencing other forms of violence. In a pro-natalist society like that of Ghana, women are expected by society to start having children right after marriage. So it is possible that this is because at five to nine years of marriage, a couple may have a number of children, and be experiencing the stresses of raising a family.

The binary logistic regression results (displayed in Table 2) show that the respondent's duration of marriage was significantly related to three out of the four forms of domestic violence.

<<Table 2 goes here >>

Respondents who have been married for a period of 10 to 29 years were 1.51, 1.58, 1.69, and 1.85, times more likely to experience emotional violence than respondents that had been as women. The results also showed that women that had been married for a period between five and nine years were 1.8 and 2.5 times as likely to have experienced less severe violence. Finally, for sexual violence, women that had been married for 20-24 years were more 4.2 times more to have experienced sexual violence as women that had been married for between zero to four

years, and women 5 to 9 years into marriage, were about five times as likely as women 0-4 years into their marriage to have experienced sexual violence.

Conclusion

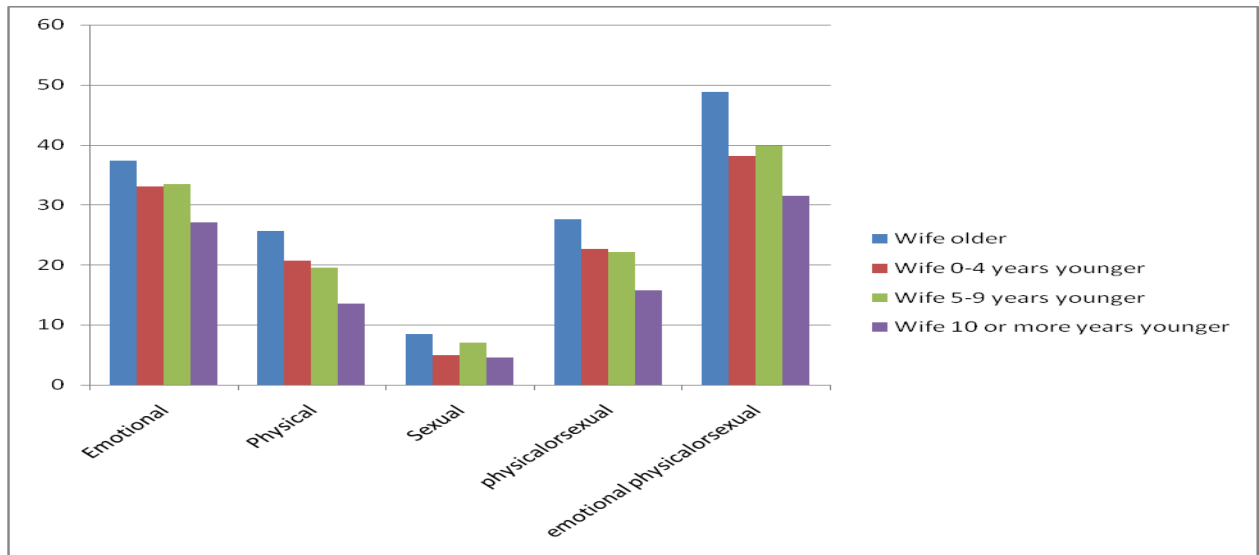
The results of the analysis show that, duration of marriage is related to a woman's experience of domestic violence. It is important for government and women's agencies to focus on group specific interventions. For instance, women's groups can target women that have been married for between five to nine years and channel interventions on sexual violence to these populations.

There is also the need to focus more on forms of domestic violence that do not have 'visible scars', such as emotional violence, and sometimes sexual violence, especially since the effects of sexual violence stood out so well.

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Figure 1: Percentage of age of wife relative to husbands'



Source: GDHS. 2008

Figure 2: Percentage of women experiencing each type of violence by duration of marriage

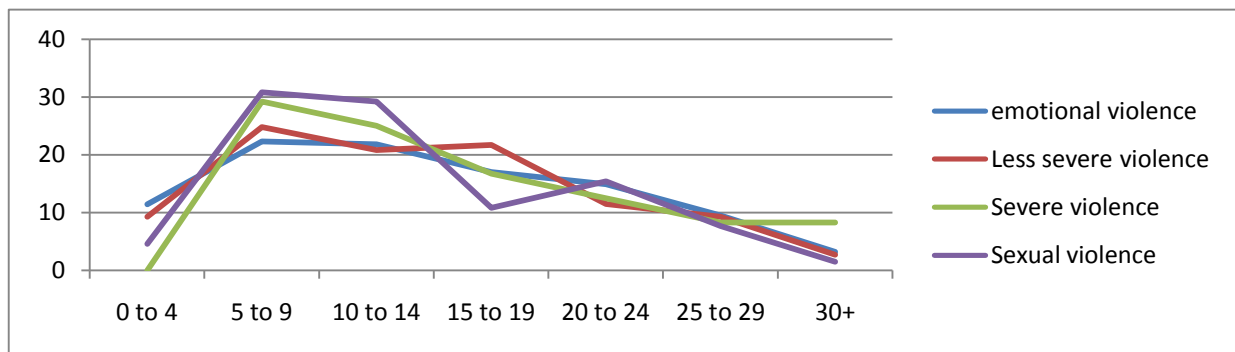


Table 1: Percent distribution of respondents by duration of marriage

Marital duration	Number	Percent
0-4	355	15.0
5-9	463	19.6
10-14	436	18.5
15-19	413	17.5
20-24	354	15.0
25-29	240	10.2
30+	100	4.2
Total	2361	100

Table 2: Binary logistic regression model showing the relationship between duration of marriage and type of domestic violence.

	Suffered any emotional violence	Suffered any less severe violence	Suffered any sexual violence
Duration of marriage			
0-4 RC	1.000	1.000	1.000
5-9	1.509*	2.064***	4.912**
10-14	1.690**	1.897**	5.194***
15-19	1.579**	2.564***	2.242
20-24	1.847**	1.574	4.188**
25-29	1.653*	1.914*	2.970
30+	1.814	1.695	1.867

***Pr<0.01 **Pr<0.05 *Pr<0.10 | (RC)= Reference Category

Source: 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS)