

## Partner's controlling behavior as a mediator of the association between sociodemographic variables and risk of intimate partner violence in Haiti.

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### Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a major problem in all societies and all social classes, and Haiti is no exception. Previous studies point out that younger, less educated, and unemployed women are more likely to experience violence from their partners (Hindin, et al., 2008; Fidan & Bui, 2016; Casique & Castro, 2018; Occean, et al., 2020). Similarly, some research reports that women who have experienced childhood abuse or witnessed their fathers abuse their mothers tend to normalize gender inequalities through violence in couple relationships (Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Gage, 2005). These studies have identified factors associated with IPV, however, the mechanisms to explain the risk of IPV against women remain unexplored. To contribute to the identification and understanding of these mechanisms, we aim to analyze the mediating role of the partner's controlling behaviors over wives in the association between sociodemographic factors and IPV. We hypothesize that the simultaneous association of certain sociodemographic characteristics and forms of control by husbands would increase the risk of being victimized by their intimate partners.

The results of this research will allow us to identify the direct and indirect effects of socio-demographic factors on the risk of IPV in Haiti and to better understand this gender-based phenomenon. Also, they will allow the government and organizations fighting against gender violence to have more effective policies to eradicate violence against women in Haiti by 2030 as indicated in the agenda of the countries that are part of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015.

### Methods

#### Data and participants

This study uses data from the last demographic survey (DHS) of Haiti, conducted in 2016-2017. This survey is a national representative. In this study, we consider physical and sexual violence against women in union in the year preceding the survey. Thus, after excluding women who are divorced, separated, or widowed at the time of the survey and eliminating observations for which there are missing data for the variables to be used, our sample consists of 3,392 women currently in union.

#### Outcome variables

Our dependent variables are physical and sexual violence. The first variable is derived from the following questions, has your (last) (husband/partner) ever done any of the following to you: a) shoved, shook, or thrown something at you? b) slapped you? c) twisted your arm or pulled your hair? d) hits you with a fist or something that could hurt you? e) kicks you, drags you across the floor, or beats you? f) tries to strangle you or burn you with intent? g) threatens or attacks you with a knife, gun, or other weapon? The response patterns to each of these situations are: No, Yes (often, sometimes, not in the past 12 months). Then, the occurrence of physical violence in the past 12 months refers to a positive answer (often or sometimes) for at least one of the 7 questions.

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Sexual violence in the past 12 months was identified in the same way as physical violence based on the following three questions: i) physically forced you to have sex with him/her when you did not want to? ii) physically forced you to perform other sexual acts that you did not want to? iii) forced you by threatening you or in some other way to perform sexual acts that you did not want to?

### **Mediator variable**

Next, we considered as a mediating variable the partner's controlling behavior over wives. The control exercised by the husband is a variable constructed from five dichotomous questions; does your partner: a) get jealous or angry if you talk to another man? b) often accuse you of being unfaithful? c) not allow you to see your friends? d) try to limit your contacts with your family? e) insist on knowing where you are at all the time? This variable is the sum of the positive responses, so it varies from 0 to 5. Thus, a value of 5 indicates that the woman is strongly controlled by her husband, and a value of 0 indicates that she has not been controlled by her husband.

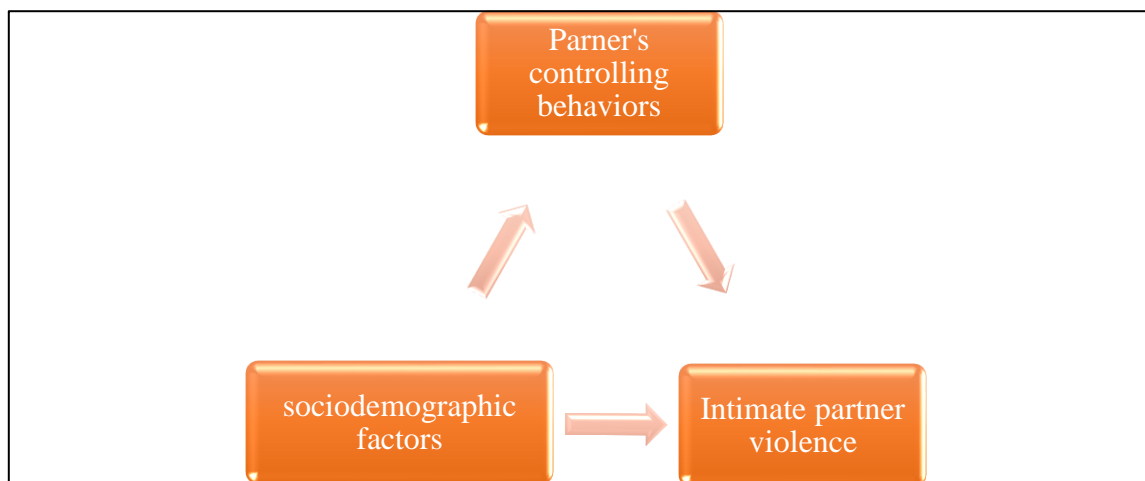
### **Independent variables**

The independent variables are the women's sociodemographic characteristics. These are age (15-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-49), education (no education, primary, secondary or Higher), type of union (married, cohabiting, visiting arrangement), religion (Catholic, Protestant, Voodoo/no religion), employment status in past 12 months, witness her father abuse her mother (no, yes), residence (Metropolitan area, rest of the country), and decision-making power scale (3-9). Women's decision power is obtained from the decision on their income, their health, and major household purchases. The decision-making power for each of these three aspects is coded into three categories, of which 3 indicates that the woman decides alone, 2 is equivalent to the woman making the decision jointly with her partner, and 1 when the decision is made by the partner or another person without the woman's participation. The final variable of decision-making power is the sum of the responses of the three aspects, which implies that the value of the woman's decision-making power varies from 3 to 9, where 3 is equivalent to the woman making no decisions in the three aspects and 9 is the woman making decisions alone in all three aspects.

### **Analysis plan**

On the one hand, we present the description of the population according to the above-mentioned variables using the survey weight. To identify the direct and indirect effects of the association of sociodemographic variables and physical or sexual violence using the partner's controlling behavior as mediating variable, we considered using the Karlson, Holm, and Breen (KHB) method. This method estimates the nonlinear probability, and its decomposition is unbiased (Kohler, et al., 2011). Thus, we estimated: (1) the bivariate association between dependent (intimate partner violence) and independent variables (sociodemographic factors) (2) the bivariate association between dependent (intimate partner violence) and mediating variable (partner's controlling behavior) and (3) the bivariate association between mediating (partner's controlling behavior) and independent (sociodemographic factors) variables (Figure 1). An independent variable that is not significant in one of the associations (1) and (3) is considered as a control variable because it has not met the criterion of the KHB decomposition method, similarly, if there is not a significant association in the second estimation (2) this variable cannot be a mediator variable in association between independent and dependent variables.

**Figure1.-** Partner's Controlling behavior mediating between sociodemographic factors and intimate partner violence.



## Results

### Description

The results indicate that 10% and 7% of the women have experienced violence and sexual violence from their partners in the last 12 months, respectively. On average, women experience 1.7 forms of control from their partners, and they have a decision power score of 5.9 which reflects a middle level of decision-making power concerning the three aspects considered. On the other hand, 21% of the women are not educated, 41% are unemployed and 13% have witnessed violence from their fathers towards their mothers (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic profile of the sample, Haiti, DHS-2016-2017

Age group	Percentage	Frequency
15-24	16.8	554
25-29	19.2	631
30-34	21.0	691
35-39	18.7	617
40-49	24.3	800
<b>Education</b>		
No education	20.5	674
Primary	35.9	1,181
Secondary or higher	43.6	1,437
<b>Type of union</b>		
Married	33.1	1,088
Cohabiting ( <i>Placée</i> )	50.5	1,661
Visiting arrangements ( <i>viv avek</i> )	16.5	543
<b>Religion</b>		
Catholic	38.2	1,260
Protestant	51.0	1,678
Voodoo or No religion	10.8	354
<b>Employment status in past 12 month</b>		
Not employed	41.2	1,358
Employed	58.8	1,935
<b>Witness father abuse mother</b>		
No	87.5	2,882
Yes	12.5	410
<b>Residence</b>		
Metropolitan area	21.0	693
Rest of the country	79.0	2,599
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,292</b>

## Bivariate analysis

First, we found that age, education, union type, religion, employment status, witness her father abuse her mother, and residence were associated with risk of physical violence. However, age, type of union and witness her father abuse her mother are the only variables that are significantly associated with sexual violence (Table not included).

On the other hand, all independent variables, except employment, were significantly associated with the partner's controlling behavior over wives. Similarly, partner's controlling behavior is associated with physical and sexual violence. Thus, women who are more controlled by their partners are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence (not shown). Then, independent variables that associate with partner's controlling behavior and partner violence will be included in the mediation analysis as indicated by the criteria of the KHB decomposition method. Before the mediation analysis, we estimated a logistic regression model to identify the associated factors with IPV without the mediate role of the control exercised by husbands (Table 2).

Table 2.- Multivariate logistic regression: Factors associated with IPV among women, Haiti.

	Physic violence	Sexual violence
<b>Age group</b>	<b>Odds</b>	<b>Odds</b>
15-24	2.156***	2.400***
25-29	1.920**	1.924**
30-34	1.796**	1.733*
35-39	1.679*	1.738*
40-49	1.000	1.000
<b>Education</b>		
No education	1.269	1.146
Primary	1.520**	1.203
Secondary or higher	1.000	1.000
<b>Type of union</b>		
Married	1.000	1.000
Cohabiting (Placée)	2.047***	1.895***
Visiting arrangements (viv avek)	1.037	1.042
<b>Religion</b>		
Catholic	1.000	1.000
Protestant	0.874	0.970
Voodoo or No religion	1.861***	0.875
<b>Employment status in past 12 month</b>		
Not employed	1.000	1.000
Employed	0.765 <sup>†</sup>	0.678*
<b>Witness father abuse mother</b>		
No	1.000	1.000
Yes	2.069***	2.335***
<b>Residence</b>		
Metropolitan area	1.000	1.000
Rest of the country	0.483***	0.648*
<b>Decision-making power</b>	1.028	1.076
<b>Constant</b>	0.052***	0.027***
Hosmer-Lemeshow $\chi^2(1,391)$	1380.2	1440.2
Prob > $\chi^2$	0.577	0.175

\*\*\*p<0.001 ; \*\*p<0.010 ; \*p<0.050 ; †p<0.10

## Mediation analysis

In the preliminary analysis, we found that women in cohabiting relationships had a higher risk of physical and sexual violence than married women. Also, the results indicate that their spouses of these women tend to exert much more control over them than married women (Table not included).

On the other hand, we found that women who have witnessed that their fathers abuse their mothers are more likely to experience both physical and sexual violence than those who have not experienced their fathers' violence against their mothers. These women experience significantly more control from their partners than their counterparts who did not have this experience in their families of origin (table not included). The higher risk of physical and sexual violence among these women may be due to the greater level of control they experienced from their partners (not shown).

This study identifies the mediating role of spousal controls in the association of certain sociodemographic factors and intimate partner violence. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine mechanisms that may influence the risk of violence in Haiti, especially with this analytical method. Furthermore, this research uses the most recent data from Haiti, the 2016-2017 DHS.

However, it should be noted that these cross-sectional data do not allow us to have a causal analysis. Moreover, the partner's controlling behavior variable is not delimited in a precise time frame. Second, spousal violence is a self-reported variable, which is subject to reporting and estimation bias. Note that we did not find a significant association between women's decision-making power and violence in couple relationships. Considering previous studies, this result is very particular to Haiti since women's decision-making power is an important factor in the analysis of male dominance. In future studies, it is important to continue to analyze this factor and especially to consider other dimensions that may reflect women's power. Similarly, future studies could analyze the mediating role of decision-making power or alcohol consumption in the association of sociodemographic factors and intimate partner violence in Haiti.

## Conclusion

Our results suggest that the partner's controlling behavior over women is very important in understanding violence in Haiti. Similarly, the results indicate that the fight against IPV must involve the elimination of forms of control exercised by husbands by educating men that women must be free to move around, to converse with whomever they want and that these acts must not generate conflicts or violence in couples. On the other hand, we need to have support and assistance programs for women victims, but also for the children of these victims so that they do not normalize violence in their relationships. Our results also suggest that Haitian society must promote more rights and power to women in informal unions to eliminate their vulnerability compared to married women. Thus, men must consider all wives equally and respect the rights of all wives to eliminate the risk of violence among all women. Finally, this study contributes to the understanding that the fight against violence must include the education of men and that expressions of control are precursors to intimate partner violence in Haiti.

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