

Prevalence and determinants of experience of physical violence among ever-partnered women age 18-35 years in South Africa

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) among young people is a common problem across the world (Mason-Jones, 2016). Although common, each country experiences IPV (in its different forms) differently. A study by Gebrezgi (2017), found that about one in three women has experienced physical violence worldwide, with the highest prevalence reported in sub-Saharan Africa. Another multi-country study found that women who ever experienced any form of physical violence ranged from 20.1% in Malawi, 28.4% in Zimbabwe, 28.5% in Rwanda, 39.2% in Kenya to 45.1% in Zambia (Palamuleni, 2019). South Africa is argued to have 'one of the highest prevalence rates of IPV in the world' (Isaacs, 2016; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020a). Over one in four women of ever-partnered women aged 18-49 years reported to have ever IPV by any partner (National Department of Health *et al.*, 2019). In Africa, most of the literature on IPV has focused on women of reproductive age (15-49 years) (Ahinkorah *et al.*, 2018; Chilanga *et al.*, 2020), and little is known about the prevalence of physical violence and its determinants among young women on a national scale. Although a few studies have been conducted on IPV among young women in South Africa, these studies have largely use non-probability sampling (Gibbs *et al.*, 2018; Makongoza and Nduna, 2021), and cannot be generalized to the entire country.

Various theories have been used to explain IPV among women (i.e. culture of violence theory, power theory, social learning theory, etc.). However, this study uses the ecological model to explain the determinants of physical violence among ever-partnered young women in South Africa. The ecological model is selected because it views IPV as multifaceted. Women's experience of physical violence is multifaceted and happens at different levels. The model identifies four risk levels (i) individual, (ii) relationship, (iii) community, and (iv) society (World Health Organization, 2010). At the individual level, the focus is on individual factors (witnessing violence at home as a child, education, etc.) that influence IPV; at the relationship level, the focus is on factors that increase the risk of IPV (such as lack of decision-making, controlling behaviour, etc.) within interpersonal relationships; at the community level, the focus is on the community context factors (such as poverty, geographical location, etc.) that influence IPV; At the society level, the focus is on 'macro-level factors' (such as acceptance and justification of IPV) that influence IPV (World Health Organization, 2010; Memiah *et al.*, 2018; Zegenhagen *et al.*, 2019). In this study, we focus on youthful women and adopt the definition of youth as outlined in the African Youth Charter and the Draft National Youth Policy 2020-2030 (African Union, 2006; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020b). The objective of this study to examine the factors associated with physical violence among ever-partnered young women in South Africa.

Data and Methods

Data source

We used secondary, cross-sectional, data from the South Africa Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) 2016. This data is publicly available for download upon request. The SADHS used the Statistics South Africa Master Sample Frame (MSF), which was based on the Census 2011 enumeration areas (EAs) (National Department of Health et al., 2019). The SADHS used a stratified two-stage sample design with a probability proportional to size sampling of primary sampling units (PSUs), where a total of 750 PSUs were selected (National Department of Health et al., 2019). The sample selected 15 292 households, of which 13 288 were occupied; from the occupied households, only 11 083 households were interviewed, yielding a response rate of 83.4% (National Department of Health et al., 2019). In the survey, women of reproductive age (WRA) (15-49 years) who were either usual household members or women present in the household on the night before the survey were eligible for the interview (National Department of Health et al., 2019). However, the domestic violence module only collected information on women aged 18 years and older, where 8 720 women aged 18+ years were selected for the domestic violence module and 6 620 (from whom privacy was obtained) were successfully interviewed, yielding a response rate of 75.9% (National Department of Health et al., 2019). The analysis in this study is based on a sample of 2 758 women aged 18-35 years.

Methods

Dependent variable

We define ever experience of physical violence as: (i) ever been pushed, shook or had something thrown by husband/partner, (ii) ever been kicked or dragged by husband/partner, (iii) ever been strangled or burnt by husband/partner, (iv) ever been threatened with knife/gun or other weapon by husband/partner, and (v) previous husband: ever hit, slap, kick or physically hurt respondent. The variable is coded as 0=No, 1=Yes. The analysis is restricted to ever-partnered women; an ever-partnered woman is a woman who: (i) has a regular boyfriend/partner/fiancée (this person being a man), (ii) is currently married or living together (cohabiting), (iii) is ever married or in union, and (iv) has had a boyfriend (*currently* and/or *in the past*).

Independent variables

Thirteen independent variables were selected for this study. These include age group, population group, education, afraid of partner, history of violence at home, age difference (*between partner and respondent*), partner's drinking habits, partner's drug usage, household composition, type of main dwelling, household wealth, place of residence, and province.

Analysis

We used Stata version 14.2 for all analyses of this study (StataCorp, 2015). Bivariate and multivariate analyses were used in this study. Because the data was collected using a two-stage sample design, we used the *svyset* command, together with the *svy* prefix, in Stata account for the complex survey design.

Preliminary results

Table 1: Prevalence of physical violence among ever-partnered women age 18-35 years in South Africa

Characteristics	Ever experienced physical violence						Chi-square	
	No		Yes		Total	value	p-value	
	%	CI	%	CI	%			
Age group						21.2	0.000	
18-19	81.5	[72.8-87.9]	18.5	[12.1-27.2]	100.0			
20-24	82.7	[79.1-85.8]	17.3	[14.2-20.9]	100.0			
25-29	78.4	[74.2-82.1]	21.6	[17.9-25.8]	100.0			
30-35	77.8	[73.5-81.5]	22.2	[18.5-26.5]	100.0			
Population group						8.5	0.075	
Black African	79.9	[77.3-82.2]	20.1	[17.8-22.7]	100.0			
Coloured	72.7	[63.9-80.0]	27.3	[20.0-36.1]	100.0			
Indian/Asian	89.2	[65.6-97.3]	10.8	[2.7-34.4]	100.0			
White	96.9	[87.9-99.3]	3.1	[0.7-12.1]	100.0			
History of violence at home						543.3	0.000	
No	83.7	[81.5-85.8]	16.3	[14.2-18.5]	100.0			
Yes	58.7	[51.0-66.1]	41.3	[33.9-49.0]	100.0			
Partner's drinking habits						662.6	0.000	
Doesn't drink	86.2	[83.7-88.5]	13.8	[11.5-16.3]	100.0			
Drinks, never drunk	85.4	[60.9-95.7]	14.6	[4.3-39.1]	100.0			
Drinks, sometimes drunk	75.5	[71.7-79.0]	24.5	[21.0-28.3]	100.0			
Drinks, often drunk	52.2	[41.6-62.7]	47.8	[37.3-58.4]	100.0			
Household composition						80.7	0.000	
Single	81.3	[73.6-87.2]	18.7	[12.8-26.4]	100.0			
Nuclear	78.9	[75.3-82.1]	21.1	[17.9-24.7]	100.0			
Extended	80.3	[77.4-82.9]	19.7	[17.1-22.6]	100.0			
Complex	78.0	[64.8-87.2]	22.0	[12.8-35.2]	100.0			
Household wealth						21.1	0.000	
Poor	77.0	[73.5-80.1]	23.0	[19.9-26.5]	100.0			
Average	78.2	[72.9-82.8]	21.8	[17.2-27.1]	100.0			
Rich	83.9	[80.4-86.8]	16.1	[13.2-19.6]	100.0			
Place of residence						2.1	0.144	
Urban	80.2	[77.3-82.8]	19.8	[17.2-22.7]	100.0			
Rural	78.7	[74.4-82.4]	21.3	[17.6-25.6]	100.0			
Province						60.9	0.000	
Western Cape	75.0	[65.5-82.6]	25.0	[17.4-34.5]	100.0			
Eastern Cape	65.5	[58.8-71.6]	34.5	[28.4-41.2]	100.0			
Northern Cape	76.4	[69.4-82.2]	23.6	[17.8-30.6]	100.0			
Free State	79.1	[71.9-84.8]	20.9	[15.2-28.1]	100.0			
KwaZulu-Natal	85.8	[80.7-89.7]	14.2	[10.3-19.3]	100.0			
North West	69.1	[59.2-77.6]	30.9	[22.4-40.8]	100.0			
Gauteng	86.4	[81.3-90.3]	13.6	[9.7-18.7]	100.0			
Mpumalanga	69.9	[63.4-75.7]	30.1	[24.3-36.6]	100.0			
Limpopo	84.3	[79.0-88.5]	15.7	[11.5-21.0]	100.0			
South Africa	79.7	[77.4-81.9]	20.3	[18.1-22.6]	100.0			

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