

## Domestic Violence Dynamics on Informal Trading Married Women in Harare, Zimbabwe

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### Abstract

*This paper investigates the average frequency of occurrence of domestic violence among informal trading married women, and the associated contributing factors. On average, the frequency of domestic violence perpetrated against informal trading married women was significantly different from zero. There was a profound association between women's experience of domestic violence and the employment status of their husbands. Those women married to formally employed husbands were more vulnerable. The main factors attributed to domestic violence were finances, infidelity and issues of relatives. Strong association was noted between the main factor contributing to domestic violence (finances) and the women's highest level of education. Overall, the majority of the respondents agreed on the opinion that economically dependent women were more prone to domestic violence in comparison to their economically independent counterparts.*

**Key Words:** Zimbabwe, Harare, domestic violence, informal trading, t-test,  $\chi^2$ -test

### 1. Introduction

Domestic violence is any form of threatening behavior towards a spouse or domestic partner in order to control him/her. This includes physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological violence and it provokes fear in the victim. It is an aggression with a purpose: to control, intimidate or subjugate. It is not a once-off incident but a pattern over time so that control is gained over the victim by the perpetrator of the abuse (Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (1999)).

This is a widespread phenomenon in the continent of Africa due to the patriarchal-entrenched cultures of its nations, and many countries have responded to it by enacting domestic violence laws. Domestic violence and rape have a deeply rooted structural pattern in Zimbabwe linked to the long history of colonialism, and white minority rule, political transition, economic crisis and adjustment, changes in expected gender roles for women and men, and the political crisis that has emerged in the last few years (Osirim, 2010). Wife beating and rape are significant violations of rights around the globe despite the fact that the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and signed by over 160 nations (Osirim, 2010). In Zimbabwe, the Domestic Violence Act came into operation on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2007 (Chirawu, 2007, p. 4), but, domestic violence still remains a pivotal issue of concern in our communities. The two epidemics, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, continue unabated. The latter has found place in the public domain of discussion, whilst the former has remained a private issue, and hence a neglected public health problem (Hove and Gwazane, (2011)).

Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (1999) observed that fear of intimidation, shame, self-blame, fear of retaliation and fear of not being believed contributed significantly to non-report of domestic violence.

Jewkes *et al* (2002) attributed domestic violence to the status of women in society. Hove and Gwazane (2011) also concluded that wealth was inversely related to domestic violence and went on to recommend that communities should engage in income generating projects so as to indirectly curb violence. González-Brenes (2003) noted that being in good relations with the female relatives of the husband, and not wealth measures, reduced domestic violence. González-Brenes (2003) further observed that women were more susceptible to domestic violence during childbearing years, typically within a few years of marriage.

Since the late 1990's, Zimbabwe has been enmeshed in a major economic crisis that has prompted women to engage in income generating activities. The majority of them have engaged in informal trade mainly due to the shrinkage in job opportunities and their low level of education.

Informal trading is the economic activity undertaken by entrepreneurs who sell legal goods and services within a space deemed to be public property, within the informal sector (Ukukhula, 2003). It has increasingly become one of Africa's key mechanisms for coping with growing poverty, particularly in urban areas, in response to the economic reform programmes introduced (Mupedziswa and Gumbo, 2001). Informal trading has become a feature mostly of Zimbabwe's urban environments, as it portrays the changing nature of the city in both spatial and economic terms. Women have nowadays become increasingly involved in the economy, acting as agents in the working world beyond the domestic scope making a sound contribution to the family survival. In spite of this positive elevation of women's status in the society, domestic violence remains prevalent.

This paper aims to assess the dynamics of domestic violence on informal trading women in Harare.

## **2. Data and methodology**

Data was collected from a sample of 49 women from Harare over the period July to August 2010. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling due to the sensitivity of the subject matter of the investigation. The informal trade was stratified into hardware, farm produce, clothing, and groceries. From each stratum, convenience samples were obtained. A questionnaire was administered for the collection of data. Descriptive statistics were used for explorative data analysis and the *t-test* was used to test for the statistical significance of the average of the frequency of occurrence per month of domestic violence among the married informal trading women. The  $\chi^2$  - test of association was used to check for independence of occurrence of domestic violence in terms of the women's highest level of education, employment status of their husbands, and the number of years in marriage. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Scientist (SPSS) version 16.

## **3. Results**

The sample investigated had 49 respondents composed of 21 (42.9%) farm produce traders, 19 (38.8%) clothes traders, 6 (12.2%) groceries traders and 3 (6.1%) hardware traders. The minimum and maximum ages of the respondents were 21 and 43 years, respectively. The mean age was 30.59 with a standard error of 0.746. The most frequent highest level of education amongst the women was ordinary secondary level, constituting 75.5% of the participants. The range of number of years in marriage was 22 years, with a mean of 7.84 and a standard error of 0.754. The range of dependants was 15, with a mean number of 3.58 and a standard error of 0.406. The employment statuses of the husbands of women in the study were as follows; 21 (42.9%) were informally employed, 19 (38.8%) were formally employed and 9 (18.3%) were not employed. 77.6% of the women indicated that they did not own their residential places. The two main demands on household income were food and clothes (44.9%) and rentals (44.9%).

We observed that 36 (73.5%) of the women interviewed indicated that they had experienced domestic violence in their lives. Of those who had an experience of domestic violence, 19 (52.8%) had experienced it at the end of the month, 10 (27.8%) in the middle of the month and 7 (19.4%) had experienced it at the beginning of the month. The three main alleged reasons for domestic violence were finances (45.1%), infidelity (29.4%), and issues of relatives (13.7%).

The mean number of domestic violence incidents experienced per month was 2.3, with a standard error of 0.723. Using the *t-test*, the mean above was found to be significantly different from zero, ( $p=0.003$ ) implying that domestic violence was prevalent in informal trading women. There were no significant associations between experience of domestic violence and any of the variables, the highest level of education of women ( $p=0.942$ ), the form of trade of the women ( $p=0.610$ ), and the number of years in marriage ( $p=0.703$ ).

However, there was a significant association between domestic violence experience and the employment status of the husband ( $p=0.022$ ). Amongst those women married to unemployed husbands, 55.6% experienced domestic violence mainly due to financial matters and issues of infidelity. For the women married to informally employed husbands, 57.1% were victims of domestic violence and attributed it to financial matters, infidelity matters and issues of relatives. A staggering 94.7% of women married to employed husbands experienced domestic violence mainly due to financial issues. There was an association between the alleged main reason for domestic violence and the highest level of education of the women ( $p=0.008$ ). All women with tertiary education and 73.1% of women with ordinary secondary level of education attributed their domestic violence experience on financial matters.

Overall, 69.4% of the respondents agreed to the opinion that economically dependent women were more prone to domestic violence in comparison to their economically independent counterparts.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

We conclude that domestic violence is statistically significant in its prevalence amongst informal trading women. Financial issues were the main reason fueling domestic violence. There were no significant associations between experience of domestic violence and the highest level of education of women, and the form of trade of the women as well as with the number of years in marriage. There was a significant association between domestic violence experience and the employment status of the husband. Those with husbands who were formally employed were more prone to domestic violence compared to those whose husbands are informally employed or unemployed. We recommend that an investigation be conducted amongst husbands of informal trading women on issues surrounding finances, infidelity and relative issues in relation to their influence on domestic violence.

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