Chapter 13

Economic Drivers of Domestic Violence among Women: A Case Study of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women seems to be more of an economic than a sociological problem. In Ghana, no study has investigated the economic causes of domestic violence against women. The chapter seeks to investigate the economic factors that are likely to drive domestic violence among married couples. The study uses a survey of 260 married women from selected communities around the University of Cape Coast. Due to the nature of the measurement of domestic violence, the study adopts the binary logit model to estimate the key economic variables that affect the likelihood of being subjected to domestic violence. Average income, property ownership, economic activities, and their interactions seem to drive domestic violence after controlling for some household covariates. It is found that income and a combination of being economically engaged and owning an asset significantly affected domestic violence at their desired level of significance. Stemming from this, the authors call on the appropriate authorities to make credit facilities available to women to enable them to be economically engaged. Empowering women through the provision of micro-credit facilities has the potential to reduce the economic dimensions of domestic violence.

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organisation defines domestic violence as ‘the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation’ (Krug et al., 2002). Domestic violence is defined here as any act of violence resulting in
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physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls (in most cases), as well as men (in some cases), including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

In another development, Augustyn, Lee, Mcalister and Sawires (2004) consider domestic violence as a pattern of purposeful coercive behaviours that may include inflicted physical injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, stalking, deprivation, intimidation and threats. These behaviours are perpetrated by someone who is, was or wishes to be involved in an intimate or dating relationship with an adult or adolescent victim and are aimed at establishing control of one partner over the other. To them, studies consistently show that the vast majority of victims of domestic violence are women. In fact, the latest United States Bureau of Justice Statistics report on domestic violence found that 85 percent of victims are women. However, it is important to note that some victims of domestic violence are men, and the violence exists in same sex relationship as well. In this study, domestic violence is defined here as any act of violence resulting in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to married men and women (GSS, 2008). The focus of this paper is on women who are most often victims of such acts.

The channels of domestic violence vary. For example, the World Report on Violence and Health, published by the World Health Organization (2002), indicates four channels through which violence may be inflicted: physical, sexual, psychological attack, and deprivation. These are further broken-down into three sub-divisions of violence according to the victim-perpetrator relationship. First, is self-directed violence in which the perpetrator and the victim are the same person with this category being further sub-divided into self-abuse and suicide. The second is interpersonal violence which is violence between individuals and is further divided into family and intimate partner violence and community violence. The former relates to child maltreatment, intimate partner violence and elder abuse while the latter includes youth violence, assault by strangers, violence related to property crimes, and violence in workplaces and other institutions. The last is collective violence which is committed by larger groups of individuals and is sub-divided into social, political and economic violence. The issue of domestic violence is prevalent in most parts of Africa including Ghana.

In Zambia, DHS data indicate that 27 percent of ever-married women reported being beaten by their spouse/partner in the past year; this rate reaches 33 percent of 15-19 year-olds and 35 percent of 20-24 year-olds. 59 percent of Zambian women have ever experienced any violence by anyone since the age of 15 years (Kishor & Johnson, 2004). In South Africa, 7 percent of 15-19 year-olds had been assaulted in the past 12 months by a current or ex-partner; and 10 percent of 15-19 year-olds were forced or persuaded to have sex against their will (South Africa DHS, 1998). In Kenya, 43% of 15-49 year old women reported having experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, with 29% reporting an experience in the previous year; 16% of women reported having ever been sexually abused, and for 13%, this had happened in the last year (Kenya DHS, 2003). In Kenya, 43% of 15-49 year old women reported having experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, with 29% reporting an experience in the previous year; 16% of women reported having ever been sexually abused, and for 13%, this had happened in the last year (Kenya DHS, 2003). In Kenya, 43% of 15-49 year old women reported having experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, with 29% reporting an experience in the previous year; 16% of women reported having ever been sexually abused, and for 13%, this had happened in the last year (Kenya DHS, 2003). In rural Ethiopia, 49% of ever-partnered women have ever experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, rising to 59% ever experiencing sexual violence (WHO, 2005). In rural Tanzania, 47% of ever-partnered women have ever experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, while 31% have ever experienced sexual violence (WHO, 2005).

Domestic violence is prevalent in Ghana. In Ghana violence in marital homes are of diverse forms including physical assault, verbal assault, or sexual violence. Restrictions on freedom of movement and withholding funds can also constitute violent behaviour. In all these forms, it is women who suffer most. Such violence acts occur on married women, ever married women and those in relationship than singles and young girls. The Ghana Statistical Service reports that the proportion of women who have