International Scholars Journals

Global Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Vol. 5 (4), pp. 001-010, April, 2016. Available online at www.internationalscholarsjournals.org © International Scholars Journals

Full Length Research Paper

Intimate partners' violence in Southern Ethiopia: Examining the prevalence and risk factors in the Sidama zone

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Accepted 08 November, 2015

The high level of intimate partner violence against women in many population groups in Ethiopia and the risk factors associated with the practice is not well understood among scholars and decision makers. This study examined the prevalence and risk factors associated with intimate partner violence in Sidama, a populous zone in Southern Ethiopia. A combination of simple random and multistage sampling techniques were used to select 1094 households, comprising women and men participants, for the field study. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained using structured questionnaire and focus group discussions. Household, women and husband characteristics were used as explanatory variables while intimate partner violence served as the dependent variable. The study revealed that the prevalence of intimate partners' violence is high in the study population (ranging from 14.7 to 61.2%) with physical violence (beating, causing physical damage and slapping) accounting for the largest share of the overall abusive acts. The predicted probability, using logistic regression shows that literate women living with alcoholic husbands, women engaged in gainful income generating activities and women living in food insecure households were more susceptible to intimate partner violence. The study concluded that while the main determinants are generally embedded in the socio-cultural practices and attitudes of the community, there are certain individual and household level variables which significantly affect its likely occurrence.

Key words: Intimate partner, violence, Sidama zone, Southern Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence is "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 (WHO, 2002). This definition actually capitalizes on the physical which may have far reaching consequences on the victims.

A common form of violence, domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, family violence and intimate partner violence(IPV), is generally understood as a pattern of abusive behavior by one or both partners in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, friends or cohabitation (Garcia-Moreno, 2006). Domestic violence manifests largely as violence against women (VAW) and if often performed by a husband or an intimate male partner.

IPV occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural group (Heise and Gottemoeller, 1999; IFPP, 2004; Garcia-Moreno, 2006). Forty-eight (48) population-based surveys conducted in 1999 worldwide revealed that between 10 and 69% of women reported being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives. The percentage of women who had been assaulted by a partner in the previous 12 months varied from 3% or less among women in Australia, Canada and the United States to 27% of ever-partnered women (that is, women who have ever had an ongoing sexual partnership) in Leon, Nicaragua, 38% of currently married women in the Republic of Korea, and 52% of currently married

Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Heise et al., 1999). Another study indicated that one in three women are physically assaulted, sexually coerced or otherwise abused in their lifetime and in most cases by an intimate partner (IFPP, 2004).

The prevalence of intimate partner violence among women varies greatly across settings according to a 15-site study conducted in 10 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand and Tanzania) Garcia-Moreno, 2006). Studies in Africa have reported that about half of all ever-married women in Zambia, 46% in Uganda, 60%in Tanzania, 42% in Kenya, and a high of 81% in Nigeria have experienced some form of violence in their lives (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).

The proportion of ever-partnered women who reported ever having experienced either sexual or physical violence, or both, ranged from 15% in a Japanese city to 71% in an Ethiopian province. Sexual violence tended to be less prevalent than physical violence, but in most sites, between 30 and 56% of ever-partnered women had experienced both kinds of partner violence. Similarly, the lowest prevalence of sexual violence in the past 12 months was reported in Japan and Serbia and Montenegro (1%), while the highest current prevalence was in rural Ethiopia (44%) (Garcia-Moreno, 2006).

A recent study by WHO estimated that the most common act of violence experienced by women was being slapped by their partner, ranging from 9% in Japan to 52% in provincial Peru. This was followed by being struck with a fist, for which these two settings again represented the extremes (2 and 42%, respectively).The percentage of ever-partnered women experiencing severe physical violence ranged from 4% of women in Japan to 49% in provincial Peru, with most countries falling between 13 and 26%. The exceptions were urban Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Namibia, and Samoa where more women reported severe violence in the past 12 months (WHO, 2011).

Compared to the few national level studies on DV presented earlier, Ethiopia ranks among the top most categories. It is estimated that DV is more prevalent in some communities especially in populous and/or resource-deprived ones. In spite of this worrying situation, very little studies have looked at the peculiarities of DV in Ethiopia. No population based studies estimate the prevalence of intimate violence at the micro level. Most of our knowledge of domestic violence is dependent on the national level reports borne by the Demographic and Health Surveys of 2000 and 2005, which lack cultural group data and analysis. Also, most studies estimate or analyze the prevalence of violence and its risk factors solely on the basis of affirmative responses of the women respondents on the lifetime occurrence or absence of an abusive event. This study has tried to overcome some of these weaknesses and aimed at estimating the magnitude of occurrence of IPV by looking at violence perpetrated against a woman by her husband in one of the most populous zones of Southern Ethiopia, the Sidama. The present study sought to answer three important questions: What is the magnitude of intimate partner violence in Sidama zone? What most common abusive acts occur at household level? What are the most important risk factors for likelihood of violence to occur?

DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study setting

The study is conducted in Sidama Zone, a populous district of Southern Ethiopia. Sidama is located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR).The Sidama zone is bordered in the South by the Oromia region except for a short stretch in the middle where it shares a border with Gedeo, on the West by the Bilate river which separates it from Wolayita, and on the North and East by the Oromia region. The administrative center for Sidama is Hawassa town. According to the recent census (CSA, 2007), the total population of the zone was 2,954,136, of which 1,491,248 are men and 1,462,888 women; with an area of 6,538.17 square kilometers, Sidama has a population density of 451.83. While 162,632 or 5.51% are urban inhabitants, a further 5,438 or 0.18% are pastoralists. The total households enumerated in 2007 were 592,539, which resulted in an average household size of 4.99 persons (CSA, 2007). A substantial area of the Sidama land produces coffee, which is the major cash crop in the region, and the bulk of population of the areas are known to heavily depend on „enset" (enset ventricosum) as a major source of survival. It is the single most important root crop grown in the study.

Sampling

The 1094 households were selected from two agro climatic zones representing highland and lowland areas of the Sidama zone of Southern Ethiopia using appropriate probability sampling. The sample size determination formula adopted for this study is given by (Woodward,1992):

$$n = \frac{\frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N}\left(\frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{d^2} - 1\right)}$$

Where Z is the upper $\alpha/2$ points of standard normal distribution with α=0.05 significance level, which is Z=1.96, d is the degree of precisions (0.04), p is proportion of wives facing violence (which is taken as 0.5 or 50%).The estimated sample size, using the above mentioned formula yields 600and weighted by 1.5 to get a total size of 900, then a 20% contingency was added. Then, probability sampling in a form of simple random and two-stage sampling method was employed for selecting the required size from the study areas. Since the two sub-districts (the low and high land) were decided in advance, the first stage of the sampling started by selecting five kebeles (that is, small villages) from the list of the two sub-districts using simple random sampling. At the second stage, random sample of households were selected from the available list to arrive at a total of 1094 households.

Data collection

The data for this study were generated through a structured interview schedule. Prior to the data collection, the checklists/schedules underwent intensive review and pre-testing on 15 subjects from all categories of respondents, and the final instrument was duplicated once some adjustments were made following the pre-test. During the interview, the enumerators went through all the items with the wife and husband separately.

The most important data forming the main response variable, IPV, was cautiously framed using standard and universally accepted tools. Attempt was made to develop measures of DV consistent with WHO guidelines. The information on the dependent variable was collected using five sets of questions which targeted a husband and a wife independently. The questions sought views on occurrence/absence of selected violence related events (such as beating, insulting, chasing, causing physical assault and slapping) during a reference period of twelve months prior to the survey date.

Based on the recommendation of WHO (2001), safety and ethical consideration in the collection of violence data was made. For instance, attempt was made to conduct the interviewing of the women (that is, wives) in a private setting in the absence of husbands. Questionnaires were administered on only one woman per household. In addition to the quantitative data, two focused group discussions (one for male and one for female group) were held in both selected areas.

Data processing and analysis

The data processing and analysis started with computing the percentages agreed and disagreed by the couple on the violence indicators mentioned earlier. The dependent variable is framed by taking the proportion of couples who agreed on all the five violence indicators.

Both bivariate and multivariate analysis are employed to identify the risk factors for intimate partner violence. In the bivariate analysis, Pearson's chi-square test of independence was used to test the existence of significant association between categories of violence status and selected risk factors. The fact that the chi-square bivariate analysis indicates effects or associations of variables without controlling the confounding effects, the net effects of each independent variable was further examined using multivariate (the logistic regression) analysis**.** The logistic regression model is given by the formula:

$$p/(1-p)=exp(a + Bx + c)$$

Where: *P* is the probability that the event *y* occurs, at $p(y = 1)$; $p/(1-p)$ is the "*odds ratio*";

In this case, *p* would be the probability of violence faced by women, whereas *1-p* would be the probability of non-violence*, a* is the constant term, and *B* is logistic coefficient while *exp(B)* is the factor by which the odds change when the independent variable increased by one unit.

The analysis rest on two partner violence outcomes: whether a woman faced violence by her partner or not. Since the interest is in identifying women at risk of facing violence, the dependent variables are coded as 1 if the woman faced violence and coded as 0 if not. A woman is counted as facing violence if she has given affirmative responses to all the five violence indicators (beating, slapping, insulting, physical or sexual abuse, chasing by partner) and the husband agreed on their occurrence during the reference period.

The odds ratio, which is determined from the logistic regression coefficients, tells us the increased or decreased chance of violence occurrence given a set level of the independent variable while controlling for the effects of the other variables in the model. Estimates of odds greater than 1.0 indicate that the risk of violence is greater than that for the reference category. Estimates less than 1.0 indicate that the risk of violence is less than that for the reference category of each variable.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the background characteristics of respondents. The proportion of households representing the low and high land areas are 51 and 49 percent respectively. The age distribution of the women shows that larger proportion of them (47.7%) are in the early adulthood (age 25 to 34) followed by those in the age group of 15 to 24 (39.4%). With regards to the number of children born by women, larger proportions of women have given birth to 1 to 3 (46.3%) and 4 to 7 children (35.5%).Protestant Christians account for the highest proportion in the religious distribution (73.5%) followed by Catholic and Muslim (10.8 and 9.4% respectively) while the remaining religious groups contribute the small proportion of the respondents. As expected, the large majority of the respondents (60.6%) came from households with 4 to 7 members and 22.1% of them having greater than 7 members. The average household size for the study population was 5.87. The analysis showed that 15.3 percent of the women were engaged in polygamous marriage arrangement (that is, the husbands were reported to have two or more wives during the survey), which is slightly above the national average of 11% reported in the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey (CSA and Macro, 2006).

The distribution of the respondents by educational status revealed that majority of the women respondents were illiterate (56.3%) followed by those with elementary level (27.9%) while the remaining respondents account for smaller proportion of the respondents. On occupation, majority (47.1%) of the respondents reported being farmers, 39.9% were self employed while the remaining employment categories contributed smaller proportion of the respondents. Land ownership by households in the study area was quite small and fragmented. Table 1 shows that about 95% of the households own a land size of less than one hectare (compared to national average of other regions).

Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of respondents (both husband and wife) who reported violence acts during the past 12 months prior to the survey date. Husband insulting the wife was the highest rate reported and agreed by 61.2% of the couple, followed by beating (34%); slapping (32.9%); chasing the wife out from home for short or longer period (25.4%); and the least agreed act of violence is causing serious physical damage on the wife (14.7%).

Looking at the summary statistics depicted in Table 3, one finds that couples significantly disagreed on most of the violent acts. That is to say either the husband or the wife denied the occurrence of the event during the

Table 1. Percentage distribution of respondents by selected background characteristics, Sidama Zone, 2011 (n = 1094).

Characteristics	Number (n = 1094)	Percent (%)
Agro climatic zone		
low land	558	51.0
high land	536	49.0
Age of women		
age 15-24	431	39.4
age 25-34	489	44.7
age 35-49	174	15.9
Number of Children born		
None	50	4.6
1-3 children	506	46.3
4-6 children	388	35.5
7-10 children	150	13.7
Religion		
Orthodox christian	28	2.6
Catholic	118	10.8
Protestant	804	73.5
Muslim	103	9.4
Traditional	25	2.3
Others	16	1.5
Household size		
0-3 persons	189	17.3
4-7 persons	663	60.6
greater than 7 persons	242	22.1
Marital form		
Polygamous	166	15.2
Monogamous	928	84.8
Educational status		
Illiterate	616	56.3
Elementary (1-6)	305	27.9
Junior secondary (7-8)	69	6.3
Secondary (9-12)	44	4.0
College diploma	14	1.3
Others	46	4.2
Usual occupation		
Self employment	437	39.9
Civil servant	13	1.2
Farmer	515	47.1
Petty trader	60	5.5
Others	69	6.3

Table 1. Cont.d.

Land size owned by the household		
Landless	31	2.8
< 0.5 hectare	459	42.0
0.5-1 hectare	579	52.9
> 1 hectare	25	2.3

Source: Survey data, February, 2011.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of husband and wife by reported agreement on each type of violence indicators, Sidama Zone, 2011 (n = 1094).

Type of abusive acts	% agreed by the partners	% not agreed by the partners
Beating of wife	34.0	66.0
Wife slapped by husband	32.9	67.1
Wife insulted by husband	61.2	38.8
Wife chased from home	25.4	74.6
Faces serious physical damage by the husband	14.7	85.3

Source: Survey data, February 2011.

Table 3. Summary on the percentage distribution of partners „agreement by type of violence indicators, Sidama Zone, 2011. (n = 1094).

Violence indicators	Number	Percent (%)
Not agreed by any of the indicators	134	12.2
Agreed on one violence indicator	73	6.7
Agreed on two of the violence indicators	129	11.8
Agreed on three violence indicators	138	12.6
Agreed on four violence indicators	262	23.9
Agreed on all five violence indicators	358	32.7
Total	1094	100.0

Source: Survey data, February 2011.

reference period. The percentage of the respondents agreeing on none of the violence indicators accounted for 12.2%. Subtracting the 12.2 from 100%, about 87.8% of the women have encountered at least one or more of violence act(s) during the past twelve months. In a stricter sense, there were quite large proportions of the respondents (32.7) who agree on the occurrence of all the five forms of abuses during the reference period. The 32.7% prevalence is taken to frame the dependent variable in the logistic regression analysis.

Once the prevalence of IPV was estimated, the second objective of this small scale study was to examine the risk factors for violence to occur. Table 4 presents the association between categories of violence status and selected background variables using the Pearson‟s Chi-square test of independence. The result suggests that six of the ten variables have significant association with IPV at different p values.

The fact that the chi-square bivariate analysis indicates effects or associations of an independent variable and that of the outcome variable without controlling the confounding effects, the net effects of each independent variable was further examined using multivariate analysis. The logistic regression analysis results shown in Table 5 included 10 independent variables to regress against the dependent variable of interest. Out of the total variables entered into the model, five of them have become significantly associated with the dependent variable, namely; literacy status of the women, participation in income generating activities, household size, alcohol intake and food security status at different p value.

It is seen that illiterate women are 24.4% less likely to face violence compared to the literate ones (OR= 0.756 and p = 0.05). Women who are not participating in gainful income generating activities are 1.32 times more likely to face violence compared to the reference category (OR = 0.1315 and p = 0.051). Households with size of 4 to 7

Table 4. Results of bivariate analysis for associations between intimate partners" violence and selected explanatory variables, Sidama zone, 2011. (n = 1094).

Variable	Category	Violence status			Chi-square test χ^2
		Faced violence	Not faced violence	Total	
Age of the women	age 15-24	14.1	25.3	39.4	6.14*** (0.046)
	age 25-34	14.6	30.1	44.7	
	age 35-49	4.0	11.9	15.9	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Household size	0-3 persons	7.1	10.1	17.3	8.463* (0.015)
	4-7 persons	19.3	41.3	60.6	
	greater than 7 persons	6.3	15.8	22.1	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Participation in decision making	Yes	25.9	48.2	74.0	6.949*** (0.008)
	No	6.9	19.1	26.0	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Age of Household head	age 15-24	4.8	8.7	13.4	2.904 (0.407)
	age 25-50	23.1	46.6	69.7	
	Above age 50	.7	2.7	3.4	
	Not reported	4.1	9.3	13.4	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Literacy status of the women	Literate	13.2	21.9	35.1	6.13* (0.013)
	Illiterate	19.6	45.3	64.9	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Participation in income generation	Yes	7.4	18.0	25.4	2.179 (0.140)
	No	25.3	49.3	74.6	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Religion	Orthodox Christian	.6	1.9	2.6	14.668* (0.012)
	Catholic	4.4	6.4	10.8	
	Protestant	23.2	50.3	73.5	
	Muslim	2.6	6.9	9.4	
	Traditional	1.4	.9	2.3	
	Others	.5	.9	1.5	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Educational status of the husband	Illiterate	9.4	19.9	29.3	1.045 (0.959)
	Elementary (1-6)	12.7	26.3	39.0	
	Junior secondary (7-8)	5.5	12.0	17.5	
	secondary (9-12)	3.3	5.9	9.1	
	college diploma	.5	1.0	1.6	
	Illiterate	1.3	2.2	3.5	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Marital form	Polygamous	4.7	10.5	15.2	0.356 (0.551)
	Monogamous	28.1	56.8	84.8	
		32.7	67.3	100.0	
Age Difference between husband and wife	Less than five years	26.1	55.6	81.7	1.193 (0.275)
	5-10 years	6.6	11.7	18.3	

Table 4. Cont.d.

		32.7	67.3	100.0	
	Yes	3.0	10.3	13.3	
Alcohol taking	No	29.7	56.9	86.7	7.840* (0.005)
		32.7	67.3	100.0	

Source: Survey data, February 2011. NB: *=p<0.05, **=p<0.01, ***=p<0.001.

Table 5. Results of logistic regression for associations between intimate partners violence and selected explanatory variables, Sidama Zone, 2011. (n= 1094).

Variables	B	S.E	Sig.	Exp(B)
Age of women				
Age 15-24 (RC)	-	-	.-	-
Age 25-34	-0.350	0.224	0.118	0.705
Age 35-49	-0.332	0.211	0.116	0.718
Religion				
Orthodox Christian(RC)	-	-	-	-
Catholic	0.461	0.706	0.514	1.586
Protestant	-0.426	0.578	0.461	.653
Muslim	0.215	0.548	0.695	1.240
Traditional	.0247	0.589	0.674	1.281
Others	-1.278	0.694	0.066	.279
Marital form				
Polygamous (RC)				
Monogamous	0.150	0.191	0.434	1.162
Literacy status				
Literate (RC)	-	-	--	-
Illiterate	-0.280	0.144	0.052	0.756*
Participation in income generating activities				
Yes (RC)	-	-	-	-
No	0.274	0.152	0.017	1.315*
Household Size				
0-3 persons(RC)	--	-	-	-
4-7 persons	-0.577	0.231	0.012	0.561*
greater than 7 persons	-0.171	0.178	0.036	0.843*
Educational status of the husband				
Illiterate **(RC)**	-	-	-	-
Elementary (1-6)	0.154	0.369	0.676	1.167
Junior secondary (7-8)	0.185	0.366	0.613	1.204
secondary (9-12)	0.350	0.388	0.367	1.419
college diploma	0.104	0.414	0.802	1.110
Others	0.371	0.633	0.557	1.449
Alcohol intake by the partner				
Yes (RC)	--	-	-	-

Table 5 Contd.

No	0.585	0.223	0.009	0.795*
Age difference between husband and wife				
No difference**(RC)**	-	-	-	-
Up to 10 years difference	0.195	0.175	0.267	1.215
Food security status				
Insecure **(RC)**	-	-	-	-
Secured	-0.590	0.169	0.000	0.554***
Constant	0.802	0.680	0.238	2.230

Source: Survey data, February 2011. RC-Reference category, -2log likelihood = 1321.68; Number of cases = 1094 * Significant at ά 0.05; ** Significant at ά .01; *** Significant at ά 0.001.

and 7+ are 43.9 and 15.7% less likely to be exposed to violence as compared to the reference category. Women living with non-alcoholic husbands were found to be 20.5 less likely to face violence compared to the reference category (OR = 0.795 and p = 0.009). Finally, food secured households (which is used as a proxy of economic status) were found to be 43.6% less likely to face violence compared to the food insecure households (OR = 0.554 and p = 0.000).

DISCUSSION

The study examined the magnitude of IPV based on a representative sample of 1094 households taken from the Sidama Zone. It is understood from the analysis that a significant proportion of women had faced the full scale of domestic violence by their partner during the past twelve months. Among the list of violence indicators used to collect the data being insulted and beaten by the husband accounted for the highest rate of IPV at 61.2 and 34%, respectively. Slapping of women, a widespread practice in the study area, accounted for about 32.9%. The different rates for beating (beating by stick, leg, stone, or any other material) slapping and physical damages reported and agreed by the couple (Table 2), gives an indication of level and spread of IPV in the study area. Notable also is that many of the physical abusive acts generally ranged from moderate to severe categories per the WHO‟s definition. According to WHO, the severity of a physical violence was ranked according to its likelihood of causing physical injuries: Being slapped, pushed or shoved were defined as moderate physical violence. Being hit with a fist, kicked, dragged, threatened with a weapon, or using a weapon was defined as severe physical violence (WHO, 2002).

The study also revealed that various reasons/pretexts used by husbands for beating or physically abusing their wife in the study areas. The informal discussions held with some FGD participants suggest that most commonly cited reasons for husbands were issues relating to child care and provision of food. Other reasons include, arguing with or talking back to a husband, flouting rules; nagging the man for money, visiting relatives or going somewhere without a husband‟s knowledge and consent and perceived infidelity. But above all, there is a general understanding among the community members (especially among elder men and women) that “a husband should discipline his wife through any mechanisms he found appropriate”. This thinking seems to be imbedded in the social, cultural and religious practices in most localities in the study area.

The study found out that the factors associated with IPV related to women‟s characteristics, household socio-economic status, or husband‟s characteristics. The two most unpopular women‟s characteristics predicting the likelihood of violent occurrence was literacy and participation in income generating activities. Contrary to the literature, education (measured in terms of literacy status) negatively affected the chance of facing intimate partner violence among the study population. Women who are illiterate are 24.4% less likely to experience intimate partner violence compared to their counterparts‟ literate women, suggesting that modest increase in educational status of women does not bring significant changes in the reduction of violence. It can be expected that women with more education would be more assertive, and thus would not settle for less in their relationships. Their male partners consequently feel that their power and control are being threatened, leading to violence. This has been corroborated by similar studies in Ghana by Ami (2008). Garciá-Moreno (2002), in a cross-cultural study, also noted that women with very poor or good education were less likely to be abused, but those with higher and enough education to challenge the status quo is at the greatest risk of IPV. In contrast, other studies conducted in low-income countries by Morales and Reichenheim (2002) and Koenig et al. (2003) found that women who have low educational attainment were more likely to experience violence.

This study also revealed that women engaged in income generating activities outside their home are more susceptible to partners‟ violence compared to those not participating. It was found that women whose income make a substantial contribution to their household behave more assertively and gain better bargaining power which threatens men‟s sense of control and superiority due to possible shift in the balance of power relationship. It was also argued that income generating women are assumed to enjoy better freedom of movement, and hence, become far from the usual control of their husbands which again threatens the power relationship in the family. This result is consistent with the finding of Roger (2007) who found that wives working outside the home were 1.04 times more likely to be abused by their husbands than wives not currently working. Similarly, a study in Bangladesh proved this hypothesis Lisa et al. (2004). The study has also documented that food security status and IPV were strongly associated (p value of 0.000). This variable is used as a proxy to measure the household income or economic status. It is measured by using standard and universally accepted tools developed by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project (FANTA). The project has developed a set of questions (Household Food Insecurity Access Scale Generic Questions) that have been used in several countries and appear to distinguish the food secure from the insecure households across different cultural contexts. The set of questions are used to assign households along a continuum of severity, from secure to severely insecure (Coats et al., 2007). The logistic regression result revealed that women living in food secure households are by far less likely to be exposed to violence by partners compared to those living in food insecure households. Studies from a wide range of settings show that, while physical violence against partners cuts across all socioeconomic groups, women living in poverty are disproportionately affected (Hindin, 2003; Jewkes, 2002). The low income in itself may not directly breed violence. However, it may operate through different mechanisms such as instilling fear in men and promote hopelessness, stress, frustration and a sense of inadequacy among men for having failed to live up to their culturally expected role as providers. In situations, where men lack the resources associated with their assumed dominant role of a male breadwinner, they are more likely to express their frustration through violence. In a similar fashion, it has been observed that if women have little access to resources, or if they have greater access to resources than their partners, thereby eroding the traditional position of men, they are placed at a higher risk of victimization by their male partners (Hindin 2003; Jewkes 2002; Brinkerhoff et al., 1992).

In relation to the husbands‟ characteristics, alcohol taking has become an important risk marker of IPV that has been found to be consistent across different settings (Moreno, 1999). Many of the studies that examined alcohol use or excessive drinking as a risk factor for partner violence found a significant association, with correlation coefficients ranging from r = 0.21 to r = 0.57. Population based surveys from Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Nicaragua, South Africa, Spain and Venezuela also found a relationship between woman‟s risk of suffering violence and her partner‟s drinking habits (Ellsberg MC et al., 2000). Many researchers believe that alcohol operates as a situational factor, increasing the likelihood of violence by reducing inhibitions, clouding judgment and impairing an individual‟s ability to interpret cues. Consistent with this finding , a national level analysis reported a positive correlation between men‟s problem-drinking and domestic violence, a relationship that has been found in high-income countries and other social classes as well (Jewkes, 2002; Koenig et al., 2003b).

The data collected for this study have overcome some of the inherent limitations of most surveys. Most previous studies, for instance, did not collect the violence related information from the husband, and the analysis solely depend on women‟s responses; the instruments usually miss some important abusive acts; a woman is counted as experiencing violence if she gives affirmative responses to one or few of the violence indicators. This study on the contrary has tried to overcome many of these weaknesses during the course of data collection and analysis.

However, there were also some limitations worth mentioning. The study provides a single /snap shot look at the study population, and hence, it may not be sound base for studying the underlying causes and mechanisms related to domestic violence. Thus, until a longitudinal data collection is possible, this study can only be used to assess the risk factors (not causal relationship) of intimate partners‟ violence. In addition, the timing of episode of the violence cannot be established through such cross-sectional study. That is to say, women are asked to report if they have ever experienced violence in a reference period prior to the survey date. Despite these weaknesses, it is believed that this work contributes to our understanding of the depth and breadth of intimate partner violence in Sidama zone, Southern Ethiopia.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The study has shown that IPV is very high in the study area, and that there are certain risk factors aggravating its occurrence. While the main determinants are generally embedded in the socio-cultural practices and attitudes of the community, there are certain individual and household level variables which significantly affect its likely occurrence. The first and foremost call of this study is the prevention of the occurrence of domestic violence by all machineries at both national and local levels. At the

national level, priorities include improving the status of women, establishing appropriate norms, policies and laws on abuse, and creating a social environment that is conducive to non-violent relationships. The most common reforms involve criminalizing physical, sexual and psychological abuse by intimate partners. There is need for public education on IPV and its criminality using intensive behavioral change strategies.

At local level, in addition to strictly implementing laws at grassroots levels where abusive acts are presumed to be higher, efforts should be made to customize the experiences of more developed countries on human right (more specifically women‟s right and protection) such as by introducing special domestic violence courts or sessions in the court system, training police and court officials and prosecution lawyers, and setting in special and free of cost consultation/ advises to victim women at local areas. Equally important is provision of peer education at household and community level, use of communication campaigns, integrating the issue of violence into other events and other community friendly strategies can be used. Such attempts to raise awareness and behavioral change endeavor, however, should also take into account men, informal community leaders and young community members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research is part of the post-doctoral research fellowship, fully sponsored by the third phase Norwegian government supported fund. The author would like to express his heart felt gratitude to Hawassa University-NORAD Project for the financial support.

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