

# **A LIFE COURSE UNDERSTANDING OF DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN GHANA**

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# Introduction

- **Overview of IPV in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)**
  - About 61% of women in Tanzania have experienced physical/and or sexual violence (Kapiga et al. 2017).
  - About one-third of women in Ghana have experienced all forms of IPV (Bowman 2003; Tenkorang et al. 2013).

# Introduction

- **Why are women vulnerable to IPV Ghana and SSA?**
  - Poverty and socio-economic disadvantage, discriminatory gender norms, women's lack of autonomy.
  - Pandemics, lockdowns and other restrictions and violence.
  - Early childhood abuse violence.

# Child abuse in Ghana

- **WHO's definition**

- Child abuse occurs when a child is subjected to any form of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation that causes actual or potential harm to the child.
- Data on child abuse in Ghana are porous and scant.
- About 94% of Ghanaian children aged 2-14 years have experienced some form of violence (Mueller et al 2016).

# Consequences of child abuse

- **Consequences**
  - Literature is almost conclusive on the effects of early childhood abuse in the life course.
  - Consequences may vary by timing and/or continuity of abuse.

## Gaps in the literature

- **Several gaps appear in the domestic violence literature**
  - First, not a lot of studies engage the life course experiences of survivors or perpetrators of violence in SSA and Ghana.
  - Most studies in Africa focus on exposure to domestic violence in early childhood and not children as direct survivors of violence (Sedziafa & Tenkorang 2016; Nwabunike & Tenkorang 2016).
  - No studies in SSA explored the timing and continuity of violence over the life course.

# Theoretical framework

- **Life course theory**

- First developed by Glenn Elder in the 1960s to help examine life histories.
- Theory applied to marriage, divorce, health, mortality and recently family violence.
- Human development as a lifelong process and family as an important socializing agent.
- Parental influences in early life have an impact in later life.

# Theoretical framework

- **Life course theory**

- Theory emphasizes the idea of ‘linked lives’—events in our lives are linked and interdependent.
- Impact of events in our lives may depend on the timing of these events.
- Timing of these events and when they occur may be important ‘turning points’ for introducing interventions.



# Data and methods

- **Data**

- Nationally representative data collected between May to August 2017 from 2,289 ever-married aged 18 years and above.
- Data from larger domestic violence project supported by the SSHRC.
- Multistage sampling.

# Data and methods

- **Measures**

- Two sets of outcomes:

- The first measures three types of violence against women: *physical, sexual and psychological* violence in the past 12 months.
- The second measured physical and sexual violence perpetrated by women against their partners/husbands in the past 12 months.
- All outcomes are additive scales created from multiple indicators.
- Focal predictor—life course experiences with domestic violence.

# Results

**Table 4: Multivariate models predicting the effects of life course experiences of violence on women as victims and perpetrators of violence**

Life course experiences of violence	Women as survivors			Women as perpetrators	
	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Sexual</i>	<i>Psychological</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Sexual</i>
No violence before and after age 15	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
No violence before but phy and/or sex violence after age 15	1.54 (.196)**	2.46(.217)***	1.84(.243)***	3.06(.212)***	2.05 (.428)
Violence before but not after age 15	1.02 (.158)	1.46 (.180)**	1.69 (.156)	1.42 (.172)**	1.44 (.420)
Violence before and after age 15	1.59(.190)***	2.70(.166)***	2.24(.149)***	2.53(.165)***	2.40 (.362)***
<i>Observed domestic violence in early childhood?</i>					
Did not observe violence	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes, between parents	1.56(.136)***	1.31 (.160)	1.33 (.149)**	1.35 (.144)**	1.87 (.259)***
Not parents, but other members of household	.737 (.240)	1.14 (.149)	1.02 (.133)	1.03 (.138)	1.74 (.265)**
<b>Women as perpetrators of violence</b>					
<i>Physical violence</i>					
No	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	-
Yes	3.25(.119)***	2.66(.136)***	4.14(.132)***	-	-
<i>Sexual violence</i>					
No	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	-
Yes	.737 (.240)	1.37 (.264)	1.14 (.292)	-	-

## Discussion

- Our findings provide support for the life course theory:
  - First, Ghanaian women with childhood experiences of IPV are more likely to be survivors of IPV in adulthood.
  - Also, women with childhood experiences of IPV are more likely to be perpetrators of violence in adulthood.
  - Observing violence in early childhood leads to similar outcomes.
  - Life course and social learning theories.
  - Some literature argue that children exposed to violence have poor conflict resolution and verbal skills.

## Discussion

- Few theories explain links between early childhood abuse and later experiences of violence.
- Our analysis found women with childhood experiences of abuse are more likely to perpetrate abuse against partners/husbands in the life course.
- Female perpetrators of IPV are more likely to be survivors of IPV. Some feminists interpret this as reactive violence.
- But we ask if women's early childhood experiences with abuse explains why they perpetrate violence and later become survivors?
- Findings show violence is complex and cyclical.

# Discussion

- **Timing and continuity of violence**
  - Violence in early childhood has an effect on women's experiences and perpetration of IPV, BUT violence after age 15 appeared more significant.
  - Probably because the type of violence we consider after age 15 may be more related to the outcomes.
  - Also, violence experienced earlier and continued over the life course, had more significance and effect than violence experienced in early childhood and discontinued.

# Policy implications

- **Domestic violence interventions**

- Our results point to the need for interventions to target family violence earlier in the life course.
- It is beneficial to stop violence earlier in the life course as chronic and sustained violence have severe impact.
- Interventions must appreciate the cyclical and complex nature of violence.
- For instance, primary, secondary and tertiary interventions may be needed to deal with holistically.

# Policy implications

- **Domestic violence interventions**
  - **Primary interventions:** target early life experiences such as childhood abuse and violence.
  - **Secondary interventions:** Target women at high risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence.
  - **Tertiary interventions:** Post abuse interventions that seek to minimize the effect of violence.



## Limitations

- We use cross-sectional data and cannot make causal connections between dependent and independent variables.
- We use retrospective data— this may be subject to recall bias, but these data have been used extensively in the literature.
- DV in SSA is sensitive and stigmatized. This could lead to under-reporting especially for sexual violence.