

Domestic Violence against Women in Cambodia: Husband's Control, Frequency of Spousal Discussion, and Domestic Violence Reported by Cambodian Women

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Abstract This study sought to examine the effects of husband's control and frequency of spousal discussion on domestic violence against Cambodian married women, using the 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey data. The sample included 1,707 married women, aged 16–49 ($M=35.14$). Structural Equation Modeling showed that husband's control positively predicted both emotional and physical violence. Frequency of spousal discussion positively predicted emotional violence, an association consistent with the idea that a husband holding patriarchal beliefs would interpret women's more frequent discussion as a violation of Cambodian norms for quiet, submissive wives. Frequency of spousal discussion and husband's control were positively correlated. The role of gender issues in husband's control and frequency of spousal discussion are discussed with respect to violence in the lives of Cambodian women.

Keywords Cambodia · Domestic violence · Discussion · Gender

Domestic violence issues have been widely studied in the West since the 1970s (e.g., Dobash and Dobash 1979; Straus 1974; Walker 1979) and recognized as a major public health concern worldwide (Norsworthy 2003; Venis and Horton 2002; Yodanis 2004). However, cultural specifics concerning the occurrence of domestic violence in parts of the world other than in the West, have not been well studied. Yount and Carrera (2006), noted that empirical research on this topic among Cambodians is limited (Yount and Carrera

2006) due perhaps to fewer scholars from this country or to the fact that Cambodia is less known to the world. Recently, the government of Cambodia expressed concern over the rise in domestic violence after a survey showed that almost a quarter of the women in Cambodia suffered from domestic violence (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2008). Yount and Carrera (2006), analyzing the 2000 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey data, found that fewer marital resources (e.g., household standard of living, women's years of education, fathers' education, and place of living) predicted greater domestic violence. Yount and Carrera's results highlighted the role of physical marital resources in domestic violence, but did not examine social marital resources, such as discussion and control that are embedded in the couple relationship. Thus, the present study investigates the role of marital social relationships in domestic violence, using the most recent nationally representative dataset, the 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey. The current study focuses on two factors of marital social relationships, husband's control and frequency of spousal discussion, both of which have been implicated in research on domestic violence, for example in Nicaraguan women (Ellsberg et al. 2000) and Vietnamese women (Shiu-Thornton et al. 2005). In Western literature, gender inequality and male dominance predict violence against women (Yodanis 2004). However, there has been no empirical research into this association in highly male dominated societies such as Cambodia.

Husband's Control

Control has been identified as a central issue in interpersonal relationships (Danziger 1976; Hamberger 2005), marital relationships (Jacob and Tennenbaum 1988; Markman and Notarius 1987) and the dynamics of marital violence

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(Rogers et al. 1996). Husband's control in this study refers to the exercise of power or control by the husbands over the wives' social activities, such as meeting with female friends, and through the husbands' accusations of wives' unfaithfulness (Ellsberg et al. 2000; Johnson 1995). Husband's control reflects a negative side of a couple's current marital relationship that could lead to violence in that relationship. A study conducted with Nicaraguan women found that husband's control increased risk of domestic violence by a factor of four times when control over 1–4 activities was indicated, and a factor of 12 when control over five or more activities was reported (Ellsberg et al. 2000). Similarly, a Turkish study found that husband violence was greater the more the women had to have the husband's permission to engage in certain activities (Kocacik et al. 2007).

In his earlier work, Johnson (1995) proposed two distinct forms of domestic violence, one derived from the family studies perspective (i.e., common couple violence) and the other derived from the feminist perspective (i.e., patriarchal terrorism). Violence occurring as a result of husband's control would be considered patriarchal terrorism. Johnson refers to this type of violence as “a form of terroristic control of wives by their husbands that involves the systematic use of not only violence, but economic subordination, threats, isolation, and other control tactics” (p. 284). Common couple violence and patriarchal terrorism differ in that the former occurs as part of everyday life conflicts. In these situations, the husband and wife may share power in the relationship. Patriarchal terrorism occurs as the husband tries to assert control completely over his wife. In addition, patriarchal terrorism is deeply rooted in male dominant traditions. A statement such as “I married you so I own you” (Dobash and Dobash 1979, p. 94) indicates a man's controlling behavior based on his assumed dominance. Thus, it could be argued that the more control the husband believes he should have over his wife, the more likely the occurrence of wife beating. The mechanism of the beating appears in two dynamic ways: first, the husband beats his wife, who may try to resist his control more until she becomes subdued, and second, although she is subdued to his control, he still feels a need to show her that no matter how hard she tries to comply, nothing will compromise his power as the husband (Dobash and Dobash 1979).

Evidence shows that Cambodians hold strong attitudes of support toward male dominant gender roles. The 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (National Institute of Public Health, National Institute of Statistics and ORC Macro 2006), part of the worldwide MEASURE DHS, includes questions about attitudes toward gender roles, and found that almost half of the respondents (45%) agreed with the statement, “It is better to educate a son than a daughter;” 42% also agreed, “A married woman should

not be allowed to work outside the home even if she wants to;” and 53% agreed, “The important decisions in the family should be made by the men of the family.” Strong beliefs about gender roles were even present in Phnom Penh, the urban capital city of Cambodia, with 44% of the respondents believing that “It is better to educate a son than a daughter.” In some provinces located in the Northeastern part of Cambodia, 76% agreed with this assertion of male preference. Smith-Hefner (1999) revealed how Cambodian mothers breastfeed boys and girls differently. Mothers believe that if boys are breastfed longer they will become strong breadwinners. In contrast, if girls are breastfed longer mothers believe that the girls' passion will increase to a level where they cannot control themselves. Because Cambodia is a male dominant society, men are expected to be controlling in their relationships and women themselves may endorse dominant roles for males. If culture supports patriarchal control and sanctions violence when there are perceived transgressions, then domestic violence receives justification and greater likelihood of enactment. It is a goal of this study to examine the relationship between women's reports of husband's controlling behavior and husband's violence against them.

Among Western couples, Smith (1990) demonstrated that wife beating incidence is higher in families where the husband holds stronger patriarchal ideology. At the societal level, structures of male dominance support violence against women (Yodanis 2004). Babcock et al. (1993) explained that such incidence is related to men trying to compensate for the powerless parts of themselves. Other cultures demonstrate similar dynamics. For example, a cross cultural qualitative study conducted with Japanese couples found gender-based factors involved in maintaining intimate partner violence. Three shared beliefs were identified: husband owning a wife, insignificant values or roles of a wife, and wives cause the violence (Nagae 2008).

Frequency of Spousal Discussion

Although more egalitarian cultural and interpersonal arrangements are associated with less domestic violence (Yodanis 2004), there are instances where women's empowerment appears to increase violence against them. For example, women who receive microcredits may face increased domestic violence when husbands believe their control over household finances has been threatened (Venis and Horton 2002). Similarly, women in Mexico faced increased risk when they became involved in reproductive decision making (Castro et al. 2008). In a society where women are supposed to remain largely quiet and silent, more frequent discussions may signal a threat to husbands' control.

These cautions about the role of frequent discussion run counter to research in Western societies where frequency of spousal discussion and effective communication predict marital satisfaction and fewer marital conflicts (e.g., Burger and Jacobson 1979; Cahn 1990; Markman and Floyd 1980). In their review on the relationship between couple violence and marital communication, Whitchurch and Pace (1993) concluded that “the majority of writers on communication and interspousal violence conceptualize interspousal violence as a function of deficiencies in individual spouses’ communication skills” (p. 96). Okun (1991) explained that “most marital and family problems stem from misunderstanding, from ineffective communication, which results in frustration and anger when implicit expectations and desires are not fulfilled” (p. 23).

In a society such as Cambodia, where women are not encouraged to engage in discussion or voice opinions, less frequent communication may result in fewer conflicts. In Cambodia, more frequent discussion may reflect women’s assertive response to patriarchal norms in the society where frequent discussions are not expected. Whether women’s more frequent discussions are motivated or not from pushing back against the norms governing their behavior, men in these relationships may question their power. Men may use violence as one means of affirming their power as the household head. Thus, the arena of communication in marital relations should be examined for implications pertaining to men’s use of violence to reinforce their masculinity (Cahn 1996).

Similar to other male-dominated societies, in Cambodia many consider a good woman to be one who follows *chhab srey* or “Rules for Girls” (Smith-Hefner 1999). “Rules for Girls” have long been included as curriculum for junior high students in the Cambodian educational system. Rules for a perfect girl include talking softly, walking softly without making noise, sitting appropriately with her legs to the side, no screaming or yelling, and obeying and pleasing her husband. In Smith-Hefner’s study, a 50 year-old Cambodian American mother living in Boston, Massachusetts, exemplified how a good girl should behave. “She has to be careful how she walks and talks, not to open her mouth, to keep herself covered” (p. 100). Many Cambodian parents also believe that men are rational, strong, and powerful and women are weak and emotional (Smith-Hefner 1999). Therefore, more frequent spousal discussion may be perceived by men as destructive to the couple relationship in the sense that men consider women’s perspectives or discussions often as pointless or as control seeking behavior. Vietnamese women share a culture very similar to that of Cambodia. In a qualitative study conducted by Shiu-Thornton et al. (2005), Vietnamese women indicated that to avoid domestic violence they needed to remain silent, noting that

“If they want to say something constructive, they must know what and how to say it. The less they say, the better they are” (p. 966).

The 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey included a measure on frequency of spousal discussion. Frequency of spousal discussion in the present study refers specifically to the frequency of discussion between the spouses regarding daily life topics such as home, money, community happenings, and work. Given the very different meaning placed on frequency of discussion in Cambodia compared to Western cultures, this study predicts that more frequent discussion will be associated with greater husband control and greater violence.

Other Correlates of Domestic Violence

Previous studies on domestic violence have shown that domestic violence can be transmitted intergenerationally from parents to children (Bernard and Bernard 1983; Kalmuss 1984; Telch and Lindquist 1984). An explanation of such occurrences involves two types of modeling: generalized modeling (in which children witnessing parental violence rationalize the acceptability of such behavior and thus increase its occurrence in their own generation) and specific modeling (in which certain patterns of violent behavior are repeated across generations) (Kalmuss 1984). A previous study on domestic violence against women in Cambodia using the 2000 Demographic Health Survey, found that participants’ history of witnessing domestic violence against their mothers in early life was related to domestic violence in their current couple relationships (Yount and Carrera 2006). Thus, it is important to take into account family history in the study.

Education is also an important indicator associated with domestic violence. Yount and Carrera (2006) found that Cambodian women’s education predicted domestic violence; specifically, women were more vulnerable to physical and emotional violence when they had fewer years of education than their husbands. Socioeconomic status also played a role in domestic violence because, as Yount and Carrera explained, women who are socioeconomically dependent on their husbands are more likely to feel that they have to endure an abusive relationship. The frequency of husband’s alcohol consumption is also linked to domestic violence (Cubbins and Vannoy 2005; Jackson 2008; Kimuna and Djamba 2008; Snow et al. 2006; Stickley et al. 2008). Stickley et al. (2008) explained that alcohol consumption may help provoke arguments between the spouses that could eventually lead to violence. In addition, Steinmetz (1978) and Archer (2000) suggested that wives can be as violent as husbands in a relationship; the battered husband is a term used to describe such a

phenomenon (cf., Johnson 2006 for an alternative view). Although few women would initiate violence toward their husbands, especially in a male dominated society (Downs et al. 2007), husbands may attribute such acts to women's dominance seeking behavior. When such interpretations are made, men may question their status and may use force as a way to show their control. Thus, in this study such acts are measured by a variable asking the women if they ever beat their husbands.

The Current Study

The framework of this study is based on Johnson's (1995) patriarchal terrorism perspective, believing that violence against women is rooted in men's patriarchal tradition and is almost exclusively motivated by men's desire to exercise their overall control over "their women." Cambodia, a male dominated society, offers an ideal setting to examine Johnson's perspective. Using data from women only participants, the current study examines associations of marital relationship qualities (as measured by husband's control and frequency of spousal discussion) with intensity of domestic violence against women in Cambodia. Snow et al. (2006) suggested that domestic violence be examined separately by measures of both physical and emotional violence. Although they are related, they differ in frequency and severity of occurrence (Arias and Pape 1999; Murphy and Hoover 1999). Adding to the marital resources (tangible and physical) that were correlates of domestic violence against women in Cambodia that Yount and Carrera (2006) reported, the current study examines selected relationship dynamics of marriage and how they are related to domestic violence, controlling for marital resources. Controlling for couples' education, husbands' alcohol use, wife's beating of husband, family violence history, and SES, the following hypotheses are generated:

- H1: The greater the husband's control, then there will be greater intensity of domestic violence. Husband's control is marked by male's exercise of patriarchal power. The act of violence against his wife occurs in a way to prove his power or to make his partner subdued and convinced that she is under his control.
- H2: Greater frequency of spousal discussion will be associated with greater intensity of domestic violence. The literature suggests that Cambodia is a male dominated society in which attitudes supporting patriarchal gender roles are strong. Contrary to the Western view that greater communication is a sign of marital success, the Cambodian tradition emphasized

the desirability of quietness and softness in wives. Therefore, frequent discussions between the couple members may suggest to men that women are violating traditional norms and that such violations threaten the men's position. Men may use violence (either physical or verbal) to prove their power. Thus, the third hypothesis is:

- H3: More frequent spousal discussion will be associated with greater husband's control.

Method

Sample

The sample was drawn from the 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). This survey is part of the worldwide MEASURE DHS project sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project's main purpose was to gather information on demography, family planning, infant and maternal mortality, domestic violence, women's status, and general health-related information on both children and women. The data were collected from 14 individual provinces (Pursat, Takeo, and Kandal) and five groups of provinces (Battambang and Krong Pailin and Mondol Kiri and Rattanak Kiri). Data were gathered through interviews with fixed format responses. Detailed descriptions of sampling procedures are available in National Institute of Public Health, National Institute of Statistics and ORC Macro (2006).

The sample in this study was nationally representative, consisting of 16,823 women and 6,731 men, age 15–49 years. For the purposes of this study, only married women were selected, with a total sample size of 7,911. Among all the selected married women, only 1,707 women had complete responses to domestic violence variables. Thus, these 1,707 participants' data were used. Treatment of missing data is discussed below in the analysis section. Although the use of responses from both men and women would enhance the scope of the study, key measures such as husband's control and domestic violence, were only obtained from women. Therefore, study focuses on wives' views of own and husband's behavior.

Mean age of the women was 34.09 years old ($SD=7.96$) within a range of 16–49. For domestic violence, 22% of ever-married women reported that they had experienced it since the age of 15 years. For husbands of the women and the women themselves, respectively, 16% and 28% had no education. Respondents in rural areas (80%) outnumbered those in the urban areas (20%). Details of women's characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographics characteristics of married women in Cambodia in 2005

Women characteristics	% (N=1,707)
Age: Mean (SD)	34.09 (7.96)
Wife's education	
No education	28.0
Primary	57.1
Secondary	14.6
Higher	.2
Husband's education	
No education	16.1
Primary	53.8
Secondary	28.2
Higher	1.3
Wealth index	
Poorest	24.6
Poorer	22.5
Middle	19.0
Richer	18.6
Richest	15.2
Type of place of residence	
Urban	20.5
Rural	79.5
Times husband gets drunk	
No drink/never	29.6
Sometime	56.0
Often	14.4

Measures

Criterion Variables

Physical Violence This latent variable was measured by nine indicators. Items included: “Spouse ever slapped” and “Spouse ever twisted her arm or pulled her hair.” The responses for each item ranged from 0–2, in which 0 indicated no, 1 sometimes, and 2 often. Cronbach’s alpha was .82 when summed into a scale.

Emotional Violence This latent variable was measured by three indicators. Items included “Spouse ever humiliated her?” “Spouse ever threatened her with harm?” and “Spouse ever insulted her or made her feel bad?” Responses for each item ranged from 0–2 in which 0 indicated no, 1 sometimes, and 2 often. Cronbach’s alpha was .75.

These two criterion variables that the DHS used to measure domestic violence were a modified, shortened version of Conflict Tactics Scale by Straus (1990). DHS found it to be an effective version measuring domestic violence that can be applied in different cultural situations.

Predictor Variables

Husband's Control This latent variable was measured by six indicators such as “Husband jealous if talking with other men,” “Husband accuses her of unfaithfulness,” and “Does not permit her to meet her girl friends.” The responses were 0 = *no* or 1 = *yes*. Higher scores indicated more controlling behaviors. Cronbach’s alpha was .80.

Frequency of Spousal Discussion This latent variable was measured by four areas of frequency of spousal discussion including “community happenings,” “events at work/farm,” “events at home,” and “spending money.” The responses for each item ranged from 0–2, in which 0 indicated *never*, 1 *sometimes*, and 2 *often*. Cronbach’s alpha was .80.

Control Variables

Family Violence History This latent variable was measured by two indicators: “abused by family members” and “exposure to father abusing mother.” The indicator “abused by family members” was an average across six family members such as [ever physically hurt by] “father,” “mother,” “brother,” “sister,” “stepfather,” and “stepmother.” The responses were 0 for *no* and 1 for *yes*. The indicator “exposure to father abusing mother” was responded to 0 for *no* and 1 for *yes*.

Beat Husband This latent variable was measured by two indicators: “ever physically hurt husband when he is not hurting you” and “did you physically hurt your husband in the last 12 months?” The response for each had 0 for *no* and 1 for *yes*.

Socioeconomic Status This was a single item indicator measured by the respondents’ “Wealth Index” with a response pattern of 1–5 in which 1 indicated the *poorest* 20% and 5 the *richest* 20%. Wealth index was not collected by using the traditional questionnaire on family income, but by assessing the combination of information on dwelling and household characteristics, consumer goods, and assets. Specifically, each household asset for which information was collected was assigned a standardized factor score generated through principal components analysis. These scores were summed up by household based on how many assets it had. Based on the sum, the sample was divided into population quintiles (i.e., five groups, each had 20% of the population) and individuals in each quintile were then given a corresponding wealth index.

Husband's Alcohol Use The women were asked “how often does your husband get drunk?” The responses 0 = *never get drunk*, 1 = *sometime*, and 2 = *very often*. Husbands who *did not drink* were scored 0.

Analysis

Frequencies of all variables were examined to check for missing data and normality. Missing data ranged from none to 177 missing cases for family violence history (about 10%), 60 missing cases for physical violence (3.5%), and 24 missing cases for husband's control (1.4%). Chi Square tests and *t*-tests revealed that there were no significant differences between participants with and without missing values on the variables of the study. Structural Equation Modeling was employed to test the hypotheses, using Amos 16.0.1 statistical software (Arcbuckle 1983–2007). Maximum Likelihood estimates were used to handle missing data and any issues involving normality of variables (Chou and Bentler 1995). According to Chou and Bentler, Maximum Likelihood estimates are robust: "the estimates are good estimates, even when the data are not normally distributed" (p. 38). The test of model fit used multiple fitness criteria including Maximum Likelihood χ^2 , Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). A nonsignificant χ^2 ($p > .05$) indicates a good model fit. However, χ^2 value is affected by the sample size: the larger the sample size, as in this study, the larger the χ^2 value, and hence the more likely it is to be significant. Therefore, the other fit indexes are used to evaluate model fit. A model with CFI and TLI equal to or above .90 is considered to be a good model fit (Bentler 1990). RMSEA is an index that is comparatively unaffected by model complexity. A model with RMSEA value lower than .05 is considered to be a good model; a model with RMSEA values from .05 to .08 is acceptable (Brown and Cudeck 1992). Prior to conducting SEM analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with all latent variables to test the construct

validity of these latent variables. The results indicated an acceptable to good model fit: $\chi^2 = 1,594$ ($df = 261$), $p < .001$; TLI = .91; CFI = .92; and RMSEA = .06.

Results

Bivariate correlations, means, and SDs, among all the indicators are shown in Table 2. Table 3 provides factor loadings of indicators of latent variables. Figure 1 depicts the structural model with both physical and emotional violence predicted by husband's control, frequency of spousal discussion, and all of the control variables. The analysis indicated a good model fit: $\chi^2 = 1,866.55$ ($df = 359$), $p < .001$; TLI = .90; CFI = .92; and RMSEA = .05. Hypothesis 1 was supported, in that greater husband's control was associated significantly with greater physical violence ($\beta = .33$) and emotional violence ($\beta = .28$). Hypothesis 2 was partly supported, in that emotional violence ($\beta = .08$), but not physical violence, was significantly associated with frequency of spousal discussion. Hypothesis 3 was also supported, with frequency of spousal discussion significantly associated with increased husband's control ($r = .08$), a bidirectional effect.

Figure 1 depicts other significant results. Predictors of physical violence included husband's education ($\beta = -.05$), husband's alcohol use ($\beta = .17$), and beat husband ($\beta = .15$). Predictors of emotional violence included husband's education ($\beta = -.06$), husband's alcohol use ($\beta = .23$), family violence history ($\beta = .19$), and beat husband ($\beta = .14$). Among bidirectional results, husband's education was associated negatively with husband's alcohol use ($r = -.09$) and positively with wealth index ($r = .33$). Wealth index was associated positively with wife's education ($r = .10$) and negatively

Table 2 Means, SDs, and bivariate correlations among all latent and single indicator variables

Variables	1 ^a	2	3	4 ^b	5 ^c	6	7	8	9	10
1. Physical violence		.49***	.05*	.35***	.11***	.22***	.23***	-.04	-.07**	-.07**
2. Emotional violence			.06*	.32***	.13***	.20***	.26***	-.05	-.08**	-.08**
3. Frequency of spousal discussion				.07**	.08**	.03	.01	-.02	.04	.13***
4. Husband control					.12***	.20***	.18***	.00	-.02	-.06*
5. Family violence history						.06*	.06	-.09**	-.06*	-.12***
6. Beat husband							.15***	.00	-.01	-.04
7. Husband's alcohol use								-.03	-.09**	-.12***
8. Wife education									.09**	.12***
9. Husband education										.34***
10. Wealth index										–
Mean	.032	.18	1.04	.08	.13	.08	.85	.87	1.19	2.77
SD	.13	.44	.61	.19	.27	.36	.65	.65	.88	1.40

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; $N = 1,707$; ^a $N = 1,647$; ^b $N = 1,683$; ^c $N = 1,530$

Table 3 Standardized factor loadings for the latent construct of domestic violence model

Construct	Indicator	Loading
Husband’s control	Jealous if talking with other men	.55***
	Accuse of being unfaithfulness	.69***
	Do not permit to meet her female friends	.74***
	Limit contact with family members	.70***
	Insist on knowing where she is	.77***
	Does not trust her with money	.57 ¹
Spousal discussion	Wife talks about events at work	.71 ¹
	Wife talks about events at home	.80***
	Wife talks about money	.75***
	Wife talks about events in community	.53***
Family violence history	Abused by family members	.33 ¹
	Exposed to father abusing mother	.47*
Husband beating	Ever physically hurt husband when he is not hurting you	.99 ¹
	How often do you hurt your husband in last 12 months?	.98***
Emotional violence	Humiliate	.70 ¹
	Threat	.75***
	Insult	.66***
Physical violence	Force sex	.39 ¹
	Attack with weapon	.40***
	Threat with weapon	.50***
	Strangle	.54***
	Kick	.74***
	Punch	.73***
	Slap	.77***
	Push	.79***

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$; ¹ factor loading was fixed at 1 for model calculation

with husband’s alcohol use ($r = -.12$). Husband’s control was positively associated with beat husband ($r = .23$). Emotional violence was strongly and positively associated with physical violence ($r = .52$).

Discussion

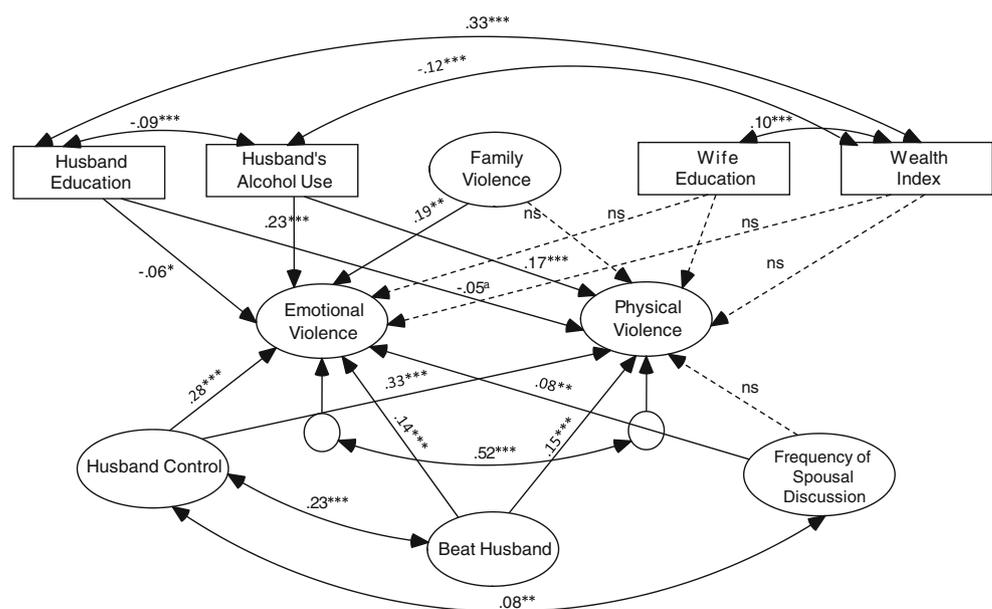
This study addressed domestic violence in Cambodia, an area in which there has been little empirical research. There has been rising concern on the part of the Cambodian government about increasing incidences of domestic violence against women in the country. Adding to the Yount and Carrera (2006) findings on the relationship between physical marital resources and domestic violence against women in Cambodia, this study furthered understanding how relationship dynamics in marriages were related to

domestic violence. Moreover, Cambodia provides an ideal setting for understanding how husband’s control is associated with domestic violence, since this country is still struggling with gender inequality and male privilege. Overall, the results found that husband’s control was associated with both physical and emotional violence (Hypothesis 1 supported), whereas frequency of spousal discussion was associated only with emotional violence (Hypothesis 2 partly supported). Greater frequency of spousal discussion was associated with increased husband’s control (Hypothesis 3 supported).

The association between husband’s control and physical and emotional violence could be explained in terms of gender issues in which men exercise their control based on their assumed male power. Consistent with the findings of Johnson (1995) and other researchers (Yodanis 2004), in this study Cambodian men appeared to use violence such as physical or verbal threats to justify or prove their power. Cambodia is a highly patriarchal society dominated by males and tolerant of husbands’ violence against their wives. Cambodian parents also socialize their children based on traditional gender ideology, even if they reside in the United States where egalitarian behavior is encouraged (Smith-Hefner 1999). In addition, “Rules for Girls,” the traditional gender role doctrine existing since the 16th century in Cambodia, has been institutionalized in the educational curriculum for junior high students to study. Coupled with how they have been socialized at home, these students may have internalized norms about their roles in society. Thus, it is accepted in Cambodia that men control women and/or husbands beat their wives. This cycle is repeated across generations. A study conducted by Shiu-Thornton et al. (2005) with Vietnamese women residing in the United States indicated that most women in their study held strong positive attitudes toward traditional gender roles and did not view domestic violence as a problem. One woman in their study noted that, “fathers abuse mothers, husbands abuse wives. Vietnamese women obey their men” (p. 966). The women’s perspectives seen in this study revealed an association of husband’s controlling behaviors with physical and emotional violence toward wives.

Results showed that more frequent spousal discussion was related to husband’s emotional violence, but not to physical violence. The discussion measure in this study was basically about frequency of daily life conversations regarding what happened in the community, at work/farm, at home, and money spending in general. More frequent discussion between couple members may signal women’s adoption of egalitarian behavior. If so, the presumably patriarchal-oriented husbands might then question their male identity. Men may then try to impose control over their wives. Figure 1 reveals that the more the discussion, the more the husband’s control. Thus, men may exercise

Fig. 1 Structural model predicting domestic violence from husband control and frequency of spousal discussions, and other control variables (standardized coefficients)



Note: $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$; $^a p = .05$; ns = nonsignificant;

R^2 (Emotional Violence) = .21

R^2 (Physical Violence) = .20

their presumed male power in the form of verbal threatening (rather than beating) to reinforce or reinstate their dominance. Women who may show more egalitarian behavior in the form of more frequent discussion are not free from violence. In fact, emotional violence is a type of violence that is less visible to the society and can lead to physical violence. As seen in Fig. 1, emotional violence was strongly associated with physical violence. This finding is consistent with the results from studies in other developing countries (Castro et al. 2008; Kocacik et al. 2007; Venis and Horton 2002) that a little empowerment of women in a patriarchal culture is related to a greater risk of victimization.

Results showed that husband's alcohol use was associated with both emotional and physical violence. Stickley et al. (2008) explained that alcohol consumption might aggravate arguments between spouses to levels that are uncontrollable and where violence could occur. Källmén and Gustafson (1998) noted that drunken behavior is influenced more by norms rather than by pharmacological effects of alcohol itself. Thus, it may be that the occurrence of domestic violence is rationalized through norms for drunken behavior.

Family violence history among women was associated with emotional violence but not physical violence. It may be that these women have learned a way to avoid being beaten based on their past experiences. They may use their experiences from witnessing or encountering violence in the past to protect from being beaten. The results also showed that beating the husband (wife beating husband

even when he does not hurt her) was related to both emotional and physical violence. In a male-dominated society such as Cambodia, women's violence initiation may indicate women's violation of patriarchal values, thus creating a situation where men question their status and behave violently toward their wives. Figure 1 also revealed that beat husband was positively associated with husband's control, suggesting that either the wife met the husband's control with physical manifestations of anger and frustration or that her behavior increased his controlling response. Such associations should be investigated further.

Wife education in this study was not associated with any of the violence variables. One explanation for this insignificance may be due to distribution of the women's educational levels in the dataset. Almost all the women had below secondary school education (80%) [57% had primary school education and 28% had no education at all]. Thus, there may not be enough variance in education for it to be used as a predictor in the model. Socioeconomic status did not predict either violence variable. However, at the bivariate correlation analysis, SES was negatively associated with both of the violence outcomes. Apparently, the association was accounted for by other variables in the model.

Strengths, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

This study used the most current, large, nationally representative dataset drawn from the 2005 Cambodia Demo-

graphic and Health Survey. Large sample sizes help increase statistical power and allow a variety of analyses. Most importantly, results from this study contribute to the scholarly literature on Cambodian people and also inform the government and policy makers about the relationship between domestic violence and marital relationships. However, there are also limitations. This study only sampled women; data from both spouses in a relationship would yield more compelling results. For example, Johnson (2006) argues that identifying type of couple violence needs data from both partners on violence and control. Another limitation is in the measurement of variables. Some variables such as emotional violence, frequency of spousal discussion, and husband's control consisted of only a few items, which might limit the scope of the latent variables. Similarly, the "Beat Husband" items could indicate a much higher threshold for women's use of violence than for male use of violence. Rarely, is severe injurious violence expressed, therefore, women who use such forms of violence against their husbands were probably not captured in these community based data. Although Cronbach's alpha showed good inter-item reliability, little is known about the validity of each measure. On the other hand, the confirmatory factor analysis supported construct validity for the model's latent variables as measured. Finally, this study is cross-sectional, which does not allow causal interpretation.

Future studies should examine attitudes toward traditional gender roles from men's and women's perspectives. This would allow testing the speculations about men's controlling behavior in relation to their traditional gender role attitudes, how such attitudes influence domestic violence against women, and women's acceptance/resistance of male control. Future studies should also specifically examine women's perceptions or rationalizations of the acceptability of violence and how it may affect violence outcomes. A measure of frequency of spousal discussion should cover more items on different types of topics and go beyond frequency to positive and negative aspects of conversations. As well, attributions about the meanings of greater discussion should be assessed.

Based on the findings from this study, there may be several avenues to reduce domestic violence in Cambodia, a country undergoing transition from patriarchal to more egalitarian attitudes and behaviors. First, the Cambodian government could re-examine its curriculum on gender related issues such as the "Rule for Girls" in junior high to reduce acceptance of violence against women. Second, if men are still endorsing attitudes toward traditional gender roles and women are embracing a more egalitarian behavior, it may be difficult to decrease rates of violence. In other words, focusing on women's egalitarian behavior while neglecting men's controlling behaviors or their patriarchal attitudes would be unlikely to decrease violence.

Thus, to reduce domestic violence, there is a need to strike a balance between men's and women's attitudes and roles to those that are mutually supported by both parties and the culture in which they live. Furthermore, enlisting men in opposing patriarchy and violence against women would be an important goal. Such involvement of men would reinforce norms of men in society who are against violence (Fabiano et al. 2003) and could locate violence against women as a human rights issue (Greig et al. 2000).

In sum, this study highlighted issues of husband's control in both physical and emotional violence experienced by women in Cambodia. Furthermore, frequency of discussion, a norm breaking behavior for women, was related to emotional violence. The frame of gender roles suggests that asymmetrical adoption of modern, egalitarian roles could exacerbate domestic violence against Cambodian women.

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