

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT (2-4 PAGES)

### Exposure to Mother's Violent Experience and Intimate Partner Violence in the Thai Context

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#### **Introduction**

Using a national survey of Intimate Partner Violence and Women's Health in Thailand conducted in 2000, we examine to what extent that exposure to mothers' experience of intimate violence at young age affects women's own intimate violence. Although the topic is widely explored in other context, it remains understudied in the Thai context where an increase of prevalence of intimate partner violence is observed. We explore how attitudes towards intimate violence, a possible impact of exposure to mothers' intimate violence, can explain or mediate the relationship between the childhood's exposure and women's own intimate violence.

This study makes use of data from a survey of Intimate Partner Violence and Women's Health in Thailand conducted in 2000 by the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University. The survey was part of the Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women supported by the World Health Organization. A total of 1,536 women in Bangkok and 1,282 in the second province were interviewed. The survey also included a qualitative data collection through focus groups and in-depth interviews.

#### **Intimate partner violence in other context**

Until recently, the most common research approach to intimate partner violence (IPV) was to investigate the personal characteristics of the perpetrator or the victim (Feing 2005). Study looking at impacts of childhood exposure to violence of their parents on individuals' violent experience with their own intimate partners remains scarce. Individuals' childhood exposure to intimate partner violence of their parents often correlates with the violence in their own intimate relationships. Men who witnessed their fathers attacking their mothers tend to perpetrate violence onto their lovers and

wives early in their relationship as they have normalized violence in intimate relationships. Similarly, women who grew up seeing their mothers being abused by their fathers may be inclined to accept wife being beaten as normal. From the social-psychological point of view, a perspective is a conclusive opinion a person has towards certain things, and reflects in a person's behavior and inclination to accept certain kinds of behavior. A violence-accept perspective may mediate the relationship between childhood's violent experience and their own intimate violence.

Across contexts, nearly all studies that included a variable on witnessing inter-parental violence have found this experience to be a risk factor for women experiencing violence (Kishor and Johnson, 2004). An analysis by Hindin et al. (2008) on IPV in 10 countries using DHS finds that women's recall of violence between their parents is a significant predictor of them having experienced violence by their husbands/partners in all six countries where this variable is included. The adjusted odds ratios range from 1.48 in Zimbabwe to 2.95 in the Dominican Republic.

In India, exposure to parental violence (father hitting mother) was a risk factor for a woman's experiencing physical violence (Jeyaseelan et al., 2007). In the Philippines, adult women who witnessed violence between their parents were significantly more likely to report perpetrating IPV, being a victim of IPV, or being in a reciprocally violent relationship (Ansara and Hindin, 2008). Using data from the children in the same study in the Philippines, Fehringer and Hindin (2008) found that witnessing violence between parents was associated with victimization and reciprocal violence in partnerships in young adulthood. In Cambodia, women who reported that their fathers beat their mothers were more than twice as likely as their counterparts to report experiencing any physical or psychological violence in the past year (Yount and Carrera, 2006). In South Africa, men who reported witnessing violence between their parents were significantly more likely to report perpetrating physical violence in the past 10 years, though the effect of witnessing violence on violence in the past year was no longer significant after multivariate adjustment (Abrahams et al., 2006). In Haiti, women who had witnessed their fathers hitting their mothers were more likely to report experiencing physical or sexual violence (Gage, 2005). In Mexico, a woman's witnessing violence between her parents was significantly associated with her reports of experiencing violence. By comparison, a woman's reports of whether

her partner had witnessed violence were less significantly associated with her own experience of IPV (Castro et al., 2008).

Intimate violence is not only related to women's experience of parents' violence, but also to the experience of their intimate partners. Individual and community level data from Uttar Pradesh in North India showed that women's experience of physical or sexual violence was related to husbands' reports of witnessing domestic violence between parents as a child (Koenig et al., 2006). These findings are consistent with a study by Martin et al. (2002) that married men in India who witnessed violence between their parents were more than three times as likely to physically abuse their wives (OR=3.82) and more than four times as likely to sexually abuse their wives with physical force (OR=4.33) as men who had not witnessed parental violence.

Previous study also indicates that experience of violence with intimate partner is also related to attitude towards violence. An analysis by Hindin et al. (2008) on IPV in 10 countries using DHS data shows that in 5 of the 10 countries studied (Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), women who believe that wife beating is justified in at least one of five circumstances were more likely to report experiencing physical or sexual violence.

### **Intimate partner violence in Thailand**

Although the relationship between exposure to violence of parents and individuals' own violent experience is widely explored in other context, the topic remains understudied in the Thai context. In Thailand within the past decade, an increase in all types of family violence against women, including intimate partner violence (IPV) is observed. From 1990 to 1993, the incidence of IPV increased from 4 to 5 cases per month to 15 to 20 cases per month in Bangkok, Thailand (Foundation for Women, 1993). It is estimated that from 1990 to 1995, physical abuse cases and rapes increase by 39% and 27% respectively (Foundation for Women, 1997). In the majority of cases of IPV, the perpetrators were husbands, boyfriends, or relatives of the victim. The divorce rate also increases from 10% in 1993 to 13% in 2000 (Charoenwongsak, 1997). Even the experiences of IPV among Thai pregnant women are similar to those found in western countries. Despite the increase in the prevalence of IPV against

women, little information on IPV against women in Thailand is revealed (Thananowan and Heidrich 2008).

A study conducted in pregnant women who attended an antenatal care unit at the Maternal and Child Hospital in Bangkok (Thanaudom, 1996) found that physical violence and emotional violence were significantly related to lower educational level, lower income, single marital status, unemployment, greater number of children, being in a nuclear family, more stressful life events (e.g., gambling or drug and alcohol problems of the husband), and women's endorsement of traditional gender roles.

Another study used a qualitative approach interviewed 35 nonpregnant, battered women residing in northern Thailand (Sripichyakan, 1999). Results indicate that the interviewed women reported less education and lower socioeconomic status than Thai women in general. The women reported seeking health care only for physical health problems because they did not perceive violence per se as a health problem. In this study, only battered women who sought help were interviewed, therefore, the prevalence of IPV may be overestimated.

A study by Chareonyooth et al. (1999) investigates the prevalence and severity of wife battering, correlates of battering, and the consequences for women's health in 188 nonpregnant married women seeking care at emergency units at two hospitals in Bangkok. The prevalence of IPV was 77%. The variables significantly related to IPV were younger age of husbands and insufficient family income. Although these studies are important because they are the only published studies of IPV in Thailand, they probably overestimate the prevalence of IPV in Thailand because of sampling biases.

Another study conducted by Thananowan and Heidrich (2008) using a convenience sample of 487 pregnant Thai women recruited during antenatal clinic visits to five hospitals located in Bangkok, Thailand. The prevalence of IPV during pregnancy was 4.8%. No differences in physical health outcome, such as poor weight gain, anemia, and first or second trimester bleeding, were found between abused and non-abused women. However, all abused respondents reported higher mean scores for depressive symptoms than the non-abused women and these differences remain after controlling for age, length of marriage, and income.

## **Descriptive results**

Descriptive analysis shows that in both study sites more than half of women who witnessed violence against their mothers when they were young reported intimate violence compared to 40% of women who did not witness violence against their mothers when they were young. Women who agreed to violent acts yield the highest rate of intimate violence. Women who stated that wife beating was unconditionally unacceptable experienced intimate violence in the lowest proportion. Thus, attitude and intimate violence may also be related. This paper will further use a multivariate analysis to explore how childhood's violent experience affects intimate violence later in women's lives. Multivariate analysis will be also employed to investigate whether attitude towards violence can explain the relationship between childhood's exposure and intimate violence.