

# Prevalence and predictors of intimate partner violence among ever-partnered women in South Africa

Stephina Kgomotso Mbele<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Population Studies and Demography, North-West University, Mahikeng Campus, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Population and Health Research Focus Area, Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, Mahikeng Campus, South Africa

**Email:** stephinakgomotsom@gmail.com

---

## ORCID

Stephina Kgomotso Mbele: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8868-4563>

---

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a global social problem and affects both men and women, although women experience intimate partner violence more than men. Africa has the highest intimate partner violence and there are variations of intimate partner violence within Africa to intimate partner violence. A study by WHO (2013) revealed that intimate partner violence is highest in Central Africa with (65.6%), 41.7% in West Africa, 38.8% in East Africa and 29.7% in Southern Africa. Like in other African countries, intimate partner violence is problematic in South Africa. There was an estimated 10% to 50% prevalence of young females and adults who faced intimate partner violence in South Africa (Matamela, 2016). The same study further reported a 19-28% incidence of IPV and a 5-7% incidence of intimate partner violent rape amongst females aged 18 to 48 years in three South African provinces (Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, and the Northern Cape) (Matamela, 2016).

Many theories and models have been used to define intimate partner violence among women (i.e. culture of violence theory, power theory, social learning theory, etc.). However, this study applied the ecological model to define the predictors that influence intimate partner violence among women. The ecological model is selected because it views IPV as multifaceted. Women's experience of IPV is multifaceted and happens at different levels. The model identifies four risk levels (i) individual, (ii) relationship, (iii) community, and (iv) society (World Health Organization, 2010). Individual involves factors (witnessing violence at home as a child) influencing IPV, community factors (place of residence, poverty, etc) that influence IPV, macro-level factors' societal factors (such as acceptance and justification of IPV) that influence IPV (World Health Organization, 2010; Memiah *et al.*, 2018; Zegenhagen *et al.*, 2019) (UN Women, 2013). The objective of the study is to examine the prevalence and predictors of intimate partner violence among ever-partnered women in South Africa.

## **Data and research methods**

### *Data source*

The Census 2011 dwelling units total was used as the primary sampling units measure of size, a total of 750 primary sampling units were nominated from the 26 sample sections, yielding 468 designated primary sampling units in urban spaces, 224 primary sampling units in traditional areas, and 58 PSUs in farm areas (National Department of Health et al., 2019). According to the National Department of Health et al, (2019: 9), the response rate of the SADHS 2016 revealed that a total of 15,292 houses were designated for the sample, of which 13,288 were inhabited. Moreover, of the occupied houses, 11,083 were positively questioned, yielding a reply rate of 83%. In the questioned houses, 9,878 qualified women age 15-49 were recognized for individual interviews; interviews were done with 8,514 women, yielding a reply rate of 86% (National Department of Health et al., 2019). In the subsample of houses designated for the male survey, 4,952 qualified men aged 15-59 were recognized and 3,618 were effectively questioned, yielding a reply rate of 73%. In this same subsample, 12,717 qualified adults age 15 and older were recognized and 10,336 were positively questioned with the adult health module, 4 yielding a reply rate of 81%. Reply rates were reliably lesser in urban areas than in nonurban areas (National Department of Health et al., 2019).

### *Methods*

#### *Dependent variable*

In this study, the dependent variable is intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence is measured as a combination of emotional or physical or emotional or sexual violence, coded as “no” (0) and “yes” (1). The analysis is restricted to ever-partnered women, is a woman who: (i) has a regular boyfriend/partner/fiancée (this person being a man), (ii) is currently married or living together (cohabiting), (iii) is ever married or in union, (iv) has had a boyfriend (currently and/or in the past).

#### *Independent variables*

In this study, eighteen independent variables were carefully selected based on the reviewed literature on the topic. The selected independent variables include age group, population group, marital status, women’s education, employment and earning status, household wealth, household composition, husband, or partner drinking habits, fear of partner, history of violence, woman’s age difference with husband/partner, woman’s education difference with husband/partner, number of decisions in which women participate, number of reasons beating is justified, type of place of residence, province.

## Analysis

This study used SPSS to analyse the data. Bivariate and multivariate analyses were used in this study.

### Preliminary analysis

**Table 1: Prevalence of IPV among ever-partnered women in South Africa**

Characteristics	Ever experienced intimate partner violence				Chi-square		95% CI
	No	Yes	Total	Prevalence	value	p-value	
<i>Age group</i>					85.7	0.000	
18-19	180	56	236	23.6			
20-29	1 194	442	1 636	27.0			[0.82-1.68]
30-39	967	369	1 336	27.6			[0.81-1.74]
40-49	712	250	962	26.0			[0.62-1.39]
<i>Population group</i>					8.3	0.081	
Black	2 674	982	3 656	26.9			
Coloured	231	108	339	31.9			[0.78-1.61]
Indian/Asian	36	9	45	19.4			[0.39-2.22]
White	109	17	126	13.4			[0.35-1.09]
Other	4	0	4	7.9			[0.01-12.03]
<i>Household wealth status</i>					30.2	0.000	
Poor	1 147	515	1 662	31.0			
Average	659	228	887	25.7			[0.58-0.89]
Rich	1 247	372	1 620	23.0			[0.52-0.81]
<i>Household composition</i>					103.1	0.000	
Single member	192	55	247	22.2			
Nuclear	1 248	427	1 675	25.5			[0.77-1.64]
Extended	1 475	576	2 051	28.1			[0.90-1.87]
Complex	138	57	195	29.4			[0.74-2.07]
<i>Husband's/partner's drinking habits</i>					1 313.0	0.000	
Doesn't drink	1 922	428	2 350	18.2			
Drinks, never drunk	32	12	44	27.7			[0.12-1.84]
Drinks, sometimes drunk	958	496	1 454	34.1			[0.18-3.95]
Drinks, often drunk	135	176	311	56.6			[0.24-3.85]
DNK	7	4	10	35.7			[0.50-8.13]
<i>Fear of partner</i>					1 435.5	0.000	
Never afraid	2 686	728	3 414	21.3			
Sometimes afraid	321	255	576	44.3			[0.08-0.18]
Afraid most of the time	46	133	180	74.2			[0.23-0.52]
<i>History of violence</i>					1 064.5	0.000	
No	2 607	761	3 369	22.6			
Yes	305	298	603	49.4			[0.61-1.23]
DNK	140	57	197	28.9			[1.86-4.02]
Cannot be determined	1 715	645	2 360	27.3			[0.91-5.88]
<i>Number of reasons beating is justified</i>					57.1	0.000	
0	2 919	985	3 905	25.2			
1	63	83	146	56.8			[0.30-3.02]

Characteristics	Ever experienced intimate partner violence				Chi-square		95% CI
	No	Yes	Total	Prevalence	value	p-value	
2	30	21	51	40.3			[0.92-10.29]
3	29	8	37	22.1			[0.38-5.19]
4	2	11	13	85.3			[0.09-1.74]
5	10	8	19	44.7			1.35-85.57]
<i>Place of residence</i>					0.0	0.957	
Urban	2 103	728	2 831	25.7			
Rural	951	388	1 338	29.0			[0.61-0.95]
<i>Province</i>					73.6	0.000	
Western Cape	317	136	452	30.0			
Eastern Cape	269	181	450	40.1			[0.90-1.87]
Northern Cape	61	22	83	26.8			[0.46-1.53]
Free State	159	64	223	28.8			[0.59-1.45]
KwaZulu-Natal	595	155	750	20.7			[0.52-1.11]
North West	183	114	297	38.5			[0.86-2.00]
Gauteng	937	242	1 179	20.5			[0.41-0.83]
Mpumalanga	230	120	350	34.3			[0.82-1.84]
Limpopo	304	81	385	21.0			[0.50-1.20]
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 053</b>	<b>1 116</b>	<b>4 169</b>	<b>26.8</b>			

## References

Matamela, F.B.M. 2016. Intimate Partner Violence Among Young People in Soweto. Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand.

National Department of Health (NDoH), Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), and ICF. 2019. South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2016. Pretoria, South Africa, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: NDoH, Stats SA, SAMRC, and ICF

UN Women. 2013. The Ecological Framework. <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1509.the-ecological-framework.html>. Date of Access: 11 March 2021.

World Health Organization/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. 2010. Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Zegenhagen, S., Ranganathan, M. & Buller, A. M. 2019. Household decision-making and its association with intimate partner violence: Examining differences in men's and women's perceptions in Uganda. *SSM - Population Health*, 8(100442): 1-13