

# Does women's paid work reduce spouse abuse? Insights from Tanzania

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# Partner violence and women's economic empowerment

- Economic strengthening a strategy for women's empowerment
- Some settings women's employment protective against partner violence
- BUT increased women's risk of partner violence in other settings
- Theory also provides conflicting views

# Economic theory

- Women in paid work should be less vulnerable to abuse
- Theory emphasis is on the control over resources:
  - Men and women cooperate in joint ventures
  - Bargaining power a function of resource endowment
  - And on viable alternatives “fallback” position

# Feminist contribution

- Women in paid work may be at higher risk of abuse
- Feminist theory emphasis is on contextual factors, gender ideologies and cultural expectations:
  - Challenges to the distribution of power
  - Women unable to fulfill existing domestic duties
  - Men unable to fulfill role as household breadwinner

# Contested development study

- Semi-structured interviews with women market traders
- 10 in Dar es Salaam and
- 10 in Mbeya
- January-March 2009

# Study inquiry

- Factors that led women to seek paid work
- Women's control over income
- Bargaining power (household and sexual decision making)
- Experiences of intimate partner violence

# Static decision making power

- Paid work did not necessarily translate into greater household decision making or sexual empowerment
- Ability to leave a violent relationship dependent on family support
- Women's earnings mitigated one source of conflict — negotiating over money

# Positive things about working

- Women's earnings not appropriated
- Increased sense of confidence and satisfaction
- Women's greater aspirations for their children



# Partner violence: a unitary phenomena?

- Experiences of partner violence:
  - **Moderate physical:** Infrequent incidents of physical violence, no injury
  - **Physical & sexual:** Physical violence occasionally accompanied by sexual coercion
  - **Severe abuse:** Frequent beatings, debilitating injuries and psychological impact
- There may be distinct “types” of partner violence that differ in the level of control; motivation; impact and etiology

# Multifaceted conflict arena?

- Major sources of conflict:
  - Negotiating over money
  - Partner problematic alcohol use
  - Partner relationships with other women
- Factors associated with women's risk of partner violence do not operate in isolation

*Men have money for alcohol and other women but not for their children*

# Further enquiry

- Short and long term impacts of women's changing economic circumstances
- Implications of paid work from different sectors on partner violence
- Macro level research on women's labour force participation and partner violence

Thank you very much!

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