The impact of disability and violence by household members on psychological distress in Cambodian women

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Bias and scope of research on violence against women with disabilities

• Most research on domestic violence has been conducted in high income countries such as the US, UK, Canada and Australia

• Focussed primarily on intimate partner violence (IPV), reflecting the nuclear family formation most common in these settings

• Underrepresented women with disabilities, despite the fact that almost 20% of women globally are estimated to have a disability (World Report on Disability, 2011).

• A Medline search conducted towards the end of 2012 revealed that only 0.17% (58/33,361) of papers on domestic violence concerned women with disabilities (WWDs).
Study setting

Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in South East Asia.

Women occupy a subordinate position within society and Cambodia ranks in the bottom third of all countries (99/145) on the Gender Inequality Index

Women earn 66% of average male earnings ($US 1532 vs $US 2315)

No change in high maternal mortality rate since 2000 (540/100,000 live births)

National surveys indicate Intimate Partner Violence affects more than 1-5 women

Women with disabilities are severely marginalised and vulnerable to triple jeopardy as a result of the interplay of their gender, disability and the violence against them
‘The triple jeopardy’ study

A mixed methods study Involving a cross sectional survey, in depth interviews, focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

It examined:

Strength of relationships between disability, gender based violence and other Rights violations

Impact of these on the mental health of Cambodian women, especially WWDS, and their access to health and other services.

Today, I am going to focus on findings from the cross sectional survey component of the study
Methods

• Survey undertaken at the household level by bi lingual Cambodian interviewers working in pairs and using a shortened version of WHO multi country survey on women’s health and domestic violence

• Geographically representative sampling. Field sites included two urban (Phnom Penh and urban Siem Reap) and three rural settings (Battambang, rural Siem Reap and Kampong Speu).

• Face to face interviews conducted with 354 women (177 WWDs and 177 non disabled women)

• Psychological distress measured by the WHO Self Report Questionnaire (SRQ)

• Disability measured by Washington short set of questions that ascertains the degree of functional impairment (WHO survey did not include questions on disability)
Location of Cambodian Survey
Field Sites

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Intimate partner violence against WWDs in Cambodia

• A previous analysis of data from the Triple Jeopardy project found no significant difference in rates of intimate partner violence between WWDs and non disabled women.

• BUT, the majority of WWDs never marry/partner and ¾ were unmarried/partnered at time of the survey as the next pp shows
Sociodemographic differences between WWDs and those without WWDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WWDs</th>
<th>Without</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Years</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>ns</td>
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<tr>
<td>No school</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried now</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives with birth</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earns money</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean financial autonomy</td>
<td>3.2 (2.5)</td>
<td>5.2(2.4)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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## Disability by household violence/coercive control

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WWDs Without</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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**Insists knowing where you are at all times**

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<th>WWDs Without</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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**Ignores you and treats you indifferently**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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**Expects you to ask permission before seeking health care**

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*p=0.05, **p=0.02, ***p=0.008, ****p=0.001,
Disability by household violence/coercive control (%)

- Physical violence: 11.4% (WMDs 25.4%) vs. 27.1% (Without 52.5%)
- Emotional violence: 52.5% (WMDs 52.5%) vs. 37.5% (Without 37.5%)
- Sexual violence: 1.1% (WMDs 5.7%) vs. 17% (Without 37.5%)
- Insists knowing where you are at all times: 34.7% (WMDs 34.7%) vs. 27.1% (Without 27.1%)
- Ignores you and treats you indifferently: 3.4% (WMDs 11.4%) vs. 1.1% (Without 1.1%)
- Expects you to ask permission before seeking health care: 58.5% (WMDs)
Psychological distress

SRQ is a 20 item measure of common mental disorders ie depression, anxiety and somatic complaints (minimum score=0, maximum=20).

**Household violence (n = 353)**
Mean score for total sample 12.8sd=4.6
Neither disability or HV 11.3sd=4.9**
Household violence only 13.1sd=3.8***
Disability only 12.9sd=5.2***
Both 14.4sd=3.8***

**p=0.01, ***p <=0.005
Mean SRQ by Household Violence and Disability Status
Most common perpetrators of household violence

Mother/Father  49.0%
Other male family member  31.3%
Other female family member  27.1%
Stepfather/stepmother  6.3%

No one mentioned: a teacher, police, soldier, male family friend, female family friend, boyfriend, stranger, someone at work, priest or religious leader
“My mother hit me many times and I don’t know why”

‘I don’t know the reason at all. But I do remember she wasn’t happy that I couldn’t do things like other people. She didn’t understand that I couldn’t see like other people, but I really tried my best. I felt really suffering and couldn’t stay with my parents any longer. I ran away to Caritas in Phnom Penh where my eyes were operated on. My aunt knew about this and sent me back home even though I didn’t want to go.”
Summary and recommendations

• WWDs = almost 1 in 5 of the world’s population but are largely missing from DV research

• Cambodian WWDs have significantly higher rates of household violence and coercive control than non-disabled women

• Exposure to such violence is likely to be protracted as more than 70% of WWDs continue to live with their birth families

Household violence and disability are linked to very high levels of psychological distress

• Clinicians, program and policy makers need to recognise household violence (not focus solely on IPV) and respond to the very high rates of psychological distress that accompany it

• But increased services are not sufficient!

• Increased mobilization of informal support within local communities is needed
• WWDs may need to gain permission to seek health care from their perpetrators and few access care despite having more violence related injuries than non-disabled women