

Women's empowerment and IPV: findings from a microfinance plus programme in rural North-West province, South Africa

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Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum
Cape Town, South Africa
October 2019



Background

- Intimate-partner violence (IPV) is a major public-health challenge in South Africa.
- Structural factors – gender inequalities, poverty, lack of economic opportunities - play a role in shaping IPV risk.
- Does microfinance play a role in tackling IPV?
 - Previously shown promising results to empower women (Duflo 2011);
 - More recently, modest impact on empowerment and no decreases in IPV (Angelucci et al 2015).
- Some evidence that it is more effective when couple with complementary training components ('plus')
- Acquiring business skills + training → improved self-esteem, negotiating skills → empowerment → reduces IPV.
- ...though the evidence is mixed.

Aim and study rationale

Aim of this study: To explore associations between women's economic situation, empowerment and IPV.

Follow-up of Intervention with Microfinance and Gender Equity (IMAGE): Microfinance loans (Small Enterprise Foundation) + 10 session participatory gender training (Sisters for Life).

Proof of Concept

- 2006 South Africa Cluster RCT: 55% reduction in IPV (Pronyk et al, 2006).
- Now an operational, non-research-based violence prevention programme.

What's happening now?

- Scaled-up in 3 provinces in South Africa (Limpopo, North-West province and Mpumalanga); >25,000 households.
- Less known - influence of the programme on women's lives now
- Small, mixed-methods longitudinal study in rural Mahikeng, North-west Province.

Study context



Women attending a loan centre and training meeting
Photo: Meghna Ranganathan

- Study area: rural Mahikeng, North-West province, South Africa.
- Ethno-linguistic group: Tsetswana/Tswana.
- The mainstay of the economy of North West Province is mining.
- Unemployment rates high (35.7%), as are poverty levels (Stats SA).

Design and sample



Sisters for Life training session during a loan meeting
Photo: Meghna Ranganathan

77 loan centres = 460 loan groups (~5 women/group) = 2300 loan recipients.

- Based on power calculations – sample required $n = 852$ women (or 415 married women).

Eligibility criteria:

- women 18 years or older.
- enrolled for a year+ in the Mahikeng branch of SEF loan centre where Sisters for Life training sessions were recently completed.
- be resident in the study site.

15 local female interviewers - 3 weeks of training; survey techniques and ethical procedures for collecting data on IPV.

Interviewer-administered surveys on range of topics including: household economic situation, partnership questions, WHO violence questions, household dynamics.

Relationship between women's economic situation, empowerment and IPV.

Absolute measures of household socio-economic status

- Age
- Asset index

Woman's economic situation

- Number of children under woman's responsibility
- Her income as a percentage of household income
- Runs a business (own/shared)
- How the money from microfinance loan is used
- Duration of business
- Earning money to cover costs
- Reinvested money earned into working of business
- Type of borrowing

Power within self

- Self confidence and confidence in communication
- Financial confidence

Power within relationship

- Household decision making autonomy
- Perceived contribution to household compared to partner
- Relationship control
- Relative educational status

Access to cash + training results in enhanced self-confidence and prevents woman from being trapped in marriage. Better able to negotiate terms of the relationship and better ability to assert her preferences.

Depending on partner's reaction (unable to measure), impact on IPV

Increase or decrease in IPV

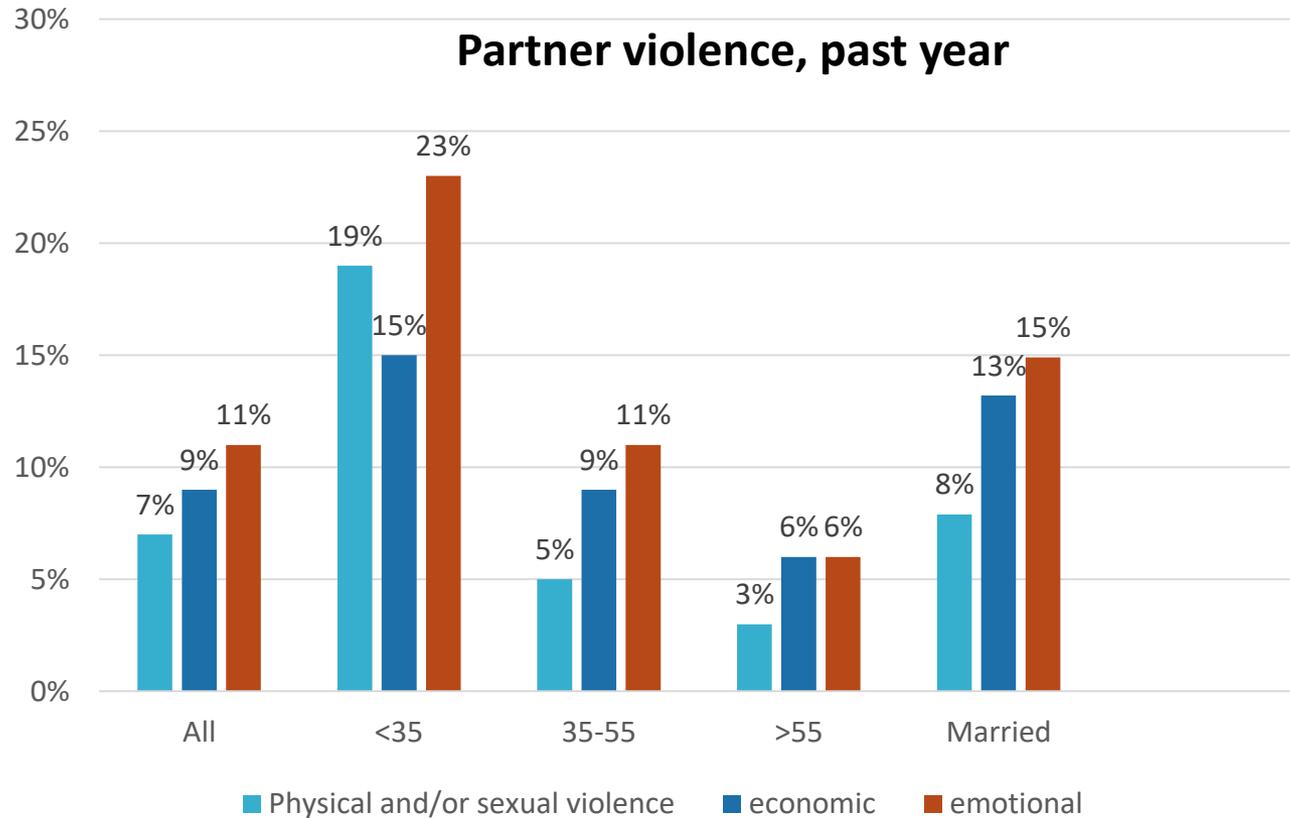
- Physical and/or sexual abuse
- Economic abuse
- Emotional abuse

CONTEXT: GENDER NORMS ABOUT WOMEN WORKING, MASCULINITY (ROLE OF PROVIDER, ETC), AND WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE HOME

Microfinance loans

Sisters for Life training

Prevalence of IPV and abuse in total and married sample by age categories



Total sample (n=852)

Half married (n=415)

Economic situation and past year IPV/abuse (n=415)

	Physical/sexual	Emotional abuse	Economic abuse
Women's proportion of money contributed to HH			
None	ref	ref	ref
Half or less	2.00 (0.5-7.7)	1.35 (0.6-3.2)	0.92 (0.3-2.3)
Most of it	1.52 (0.3-7.5)	1.19 (0.4-4.0)	0.53 (0.1-2.1)
All of it	0.41 (0.0-8.2)	1.01 (0.1-8.4)	1.00
Not earning enough to cover costs			
Never	ref	ref	ref
Once	1.94 (0.4-8.5)	1.28 (0.4-3.6)	0.70 (0.2-2.4)
Few to many times	6.12** (1.7-22.3)	2.15^ (0.9-5.0)	1.27 (0.5-3.2)
Type of borrowing			
Continuously	ref	ref	ref
Interrupted	2.16 (0.1-52.3)	1.05 (0.2-8.9)	0.55 (0.1-10.1)
New Loan	0.40 (0.1-1.9)	2.83** (1.1-7.4)	6.35** (2.2-18.5)

Statistical significance p value ^ between 0.1 and 0.05, * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001

* Adjusted for all economic variables and empowerment variables (as shown in conceptual framework) and age, HH SES

** Only showing results of those variables where there is evidence of an association with IPV.

Empowerment and past year IPV/abuse (n=415)

	Physical/sexual	Emotional abuse	Economic abuse
Power within self			
Self confidence/confidence in communication			
Very confident	ref	ref	ref
Confidence but need encouragement	0.96 (0.2-3.8)	0.68 (0.3-1.7)	0.89 (0.3-2.4)
Not confident	0.06*(0.0-0.9)	0.20**(0.1-0.8)	0.22 (0.1-1.3)
Power within relationship			
Perceived contribution as viewed by partner			
Woman's contribution most imp	ref	ref	ref
Woman's contribution not imp	2.03 (0.5-7.3)	1.80^ (0.7-4.3)	2.82* (1.0-7.8)
Perceived contribution as viewed by self			
Woman's contribution most imp	ref	ref	ref
Woman's contribution not imp	0.88 (0.2-3.6)	0.61 (0.2-1.6)	0.29*(0.1-0.9)
Sexual Relationship Power Scale (SRPS)			
High power	Ref	ref	ref
Low power	10.83**(1.2-9.6)	2.17* (0.8-5.8)	10.19**(2.4-43.2)

Empowerment and past year IPV/abuse (n=415)

	Physical/sexual	Emotional abuse	Economic abuse
Power within relationship			
Household decision-making module			
Household economic decisions			
She decides	ref	ref	ref
They decide	0.06**(0.0-0.5)	0.15**(0.0-0.5)	0.14**(0.0-0.5)
He decides	1.46 (0.4-4.8)	0.95 (0.4-2.2)	0.97 (0.3-2.7)
Social decisions			
She decides	ref	ref	ref
They decide	1.42 (0.4-5.2)	0.28**(0.1-0.7)	0.52 (0.2-1.5)
He decides	0.18 (0.0-0.9)	0.18*(0.1-0.5)	0.41 (0.1-1.4)
Reproductive decisions			
She decides	ref	ref	ref
They decide	7.48** (1.0-5.85)	3.19^ (0.8-11.7)	3.69 (0.8-17.9)
He decides	5.70* (0.8-39.4)	3.02^(0.9-10.2)	3.62^ (0.8-16.3)

Statistical significance p value ^ between 0.1 and 0.05, *<0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001

* Adjusted for all economic variables and empowerment variables (as shown in conceptual framework) and age, HH SES

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Programme engagement and IPV (all women, n=852)

- **High acceptability of scaled-up programme.**
- **Attending most of the training** associated with **less past year emotional abuse** vs attending **all** (aOR: 0.52, $p=0.02$).
- Women reporting more **support from the group** had **less past year physical and/or sexual violence** (aOR: 0.27, $p<0.001$) and **economic abuse** (0.41, $p=0.01$).

Discussion and implications of key findings

1. **Measures of IPV:** all types of violence need to be measured in interventions.
2. **Economic stress** (business costs and new loans) is associated with increases in IPV.
3. **Complementary programmes:** Loans should be accompanied by group-based complementary programmes. Our study also found that group-based support fosters group cohesion and is associated with less IPV.
4. **Focus on emotional abuse/sexual violence in more sessions:** Women attending all sessions experienced emotional abuse, suggesting that some types of IPV persists despite promising interventions.
5. **Gender roles** within couple (especially type of decision) are associated with IPV. So, gaining men's perspectives on empowerment is crucial.



Many thanks to IMAGE participants for their time and contribution to this study, as well as staff at IMAGE, Small Enterprise Foundation and Social Surveys Africa.