Domestic Violence in Cambodia- Exploring Tolerance and Incidence

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This paper examines the prevalence of domestic violence in Cambodia among ever-married women age 15-49. Using socio-demographic variables, I examine the risk factors which make women more likely to (1) report high tolerance for wife-beating and (2) report experience(s) of spousal abuse. Currently much research on domestic violence relies on measures of women’s reported tolerance for wife-beating as a proxy for incidence of domestic violence, as measures of tolerance are theoretically more valid due to their non-threatening nature. This paper uses data from the 2000 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), a nationally representative survey which includes a domestic violence module directly asking about women’s experiences with domestic violence, as well as questions related to tolerance for wife-beating and other measures of women’s empowerment. The Cambodia DHS is an ideal case study, as it includes both measures of domestic violence (tolerance and incidence). In this paper, I use logistic regression to predict variables which are linked to high tolerance for wife beating among women, and separately to predict variables which are associated with incidence of domestic violence. By comparing these two models it is possible to identify factors which place women at a greater risk for domestic violence. It is also possible to explore the relationship and links between tolerance and incidence, identifying ways in which tolerance is a useful and also problematic proxy for incidence of domestic violence.

Keywords: Cambodia, Gender, Domestic Violence, Women’s Empowerment