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# Domestic Violence Against Women in Peru: An Analysis of Individual, Cultural, and Structural Factors

Hanna M. Pioske  
*hmpioske, hmpioske@csbsju.edu*

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**Domestic Violence Against Women in Peru: An Analysis of  
Individual, Cultural, and Structural Factors**

An All-College Honors Thesis  
COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

By Hanna Pioske  
May 5, 2017

## **ABSTRACT**

Violence against women, despite decades of activism on the subject, remains a problem for women around the world. By one measure, over 35% of women globally have experienced either physical or sexual violence. The vast majority of this abuse occurs within the home. Although development programs often focus on women's empowerment as a way of freeing women from the cycle of domestic abuse, research on this issue has been more mixed, finding that in some cases, women's work outside the home or higher status relative to their husband can catalyze abuse. Peru is a particularly relevant case study for this issue because of its high rates of domestic violence despite a well-established legal framework against domestic violence. In this study, I analyze individual and state-level factors that contribute to women's likelihood of experiencing domestic violence through logistic regression using the Demographic and Health Survey as well as a case study of Peruvian laws and history. On the individual level, I find that women's education and joint decision-making within a household act as protective factors against domestic violence, while women's work outside the home, intergenerational exposure to violence, urban residence, and indigenous identity leaves them at an increased risk of abuse. On the state level, I find that despite Peru's well-developed legal framework, women's emergency centers and shelters are chronically underfunded, impeding the state's mission to end domestic violence. Additionally, a long history of guerrilla conflict in Peru may be to blame for the country's high levels of violence within the home. These findings suggest that the relationships between a country's development, women's overall levels of empowerment, and rates of domestic violence are not always as clear as many assume. This study ultimately provides a more nuanced understanding of what catalyzes domestic violence against women so that future interventions on this issue are able to address the individual, structural, and cultural dimensions of domestic violence.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Violence against women, despite decades of activism on the subject, remains a problem for women around the world, from developed countries such as the United States and Western Europe to lesser-developed nations in Latin America, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. By one measure, over 35% of women globally have experienced either physical or sexual violence. The vast majority of this abuse occurs within the home. 30% of women globally who have been in a relationship have experienced either sexual or physical violence at the hands of their partner, a number that is as high as 38% in some areas of the world (World Health Organization 2013, 2).

The experience of domestic violence has long-term effects on women's physical and mental health. Women who have been abused by their partners are 16% more likely to give birth to a baby with low birth weight, and are more than twice as likely to experience depression or have an abortion compared to women who have not experienced such violence (WHO 2013, 2). This means that domestic violence against women constitutes a major public health issue everywhere. For the vast majority of women, domestic abuse is a pattern rather than an isolated incident, with over 50% of women who had experienced violence in the past 12 months experiencing it multiple times (WHO 2010, 7). Violence against women has effects on broader society as well, notably in terms of economic losses. On one level, the resources needed to cope with domestic violence are substantial, including medical care, police work, and social and support services. Violence also takes an indirect economic toll, since women who have experienced abuse are less likely to be productive employees. Global estimates of economic losses due to violence against women range between 1 to 2% of gross domestic product (UN Women 2015, 141). However, this is a conservative estimate that varies greatly between

countries. Regions with higher rates of violence against women may be losing an even higher percentage of their GDP as a result.

Although domestic violence has long been an issue experienced by women globally, international organizations have only begun to pay serious attention to it relatively recently. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 represented a marked step forward in international attention to women's rights. Similarly, the 1993 United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was notable for including an explicit recognition of both sexual and physical violence in its definition of violence against women. However, violence against women is still widespread, especially in the domestic setting.

Domestic violence is thus a global and historical issue, and the complex nature of the subject requires in-depth, contextualized studies to better understand what provokes it. This area of policy research is especially fraught since women often find reporting their experience of domestic violence is stigmatized. Even in developed countries such as the United States, survivors of domestic abuse often do not seek help. Women living in less developed nations may face greater stigma and have fewer resources to help with this pervasive issue.

Previous studies of domestic violence have uncovered varying – and sometimes conflicting – root causes. Violent conflict, migration, work outside the home, and cultural attitudes about women's role in society all play a role in women's likelihood of experiencing domestic violence. Understanding the root causes of domestic violence, as well as what factors have been found to mitigate it, is the first step in designing anti-domestic violence policy and intervention plans. It is likewise crucial that policy and interventions be tailored to specific contexts, since the causes may differ by region and culture. In this study, I will first examine

global trends and findings about domestic violence primarily from the Global South, and then will focus on individual and state-level risk factors for domestic violence in a single case study, Peru.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Individual & Community-Level Factors**

The majority of the literature on domestic abuse focuses on individual factors that lead to higher rates of violence, including education, personal beliefs about domestic violence, family decision-making structure, and economic empowerment. This section of my literature review will detail the major variables that play into individual women's experience of experiencing domestic violence.

#### ***Household Economic Status***

A great deal of scholarship surrounding domestic violence studies the effect socioeconomic status has on domestic violence rates. This area of study stems from social structural theory, which according to Cunradi "holds that violence in human relations arises from institutionalized inequalities between people along age, race, gender, and social class lines, with those holding lower positions in the social hierarchy being subject to greater social stress, which may give rise to situational violence" (Cunradi et al 2002, 386). This theory is supplemented by the research of Benson et al, who examined connections between neighborhood disadvantage and rates of intimate partner violence. The study focused on economically distressed neighborhoods, defined as areas high in employment instability, economic deprivation, and subjective financial strain, a measure of individual feelings of anxiety over monetary resources. They conclude that intimate partner violence against women is more common in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods,

and that the effects of the neighborhood have a separate effect on partnerships than individual factors (Benson et al 2003). Similarly, Cunradi et al are able to conclude that socioeconomic status has a larger influence on the probability of domestic violence than either education or employment status (Cunradi et al 2002, 387).

### ***Women's Economic Empowerment***

Women's economic empowerment is one of the foremost areas of study in the field of domestic violence and violence against women. The assumption many women's advocacy groups make is that women who work outside the home or have access to their own money will be able to protect themselves from the worst aspects of domestic abuse. After all, these women supposedly gain more social and financial traction by working outside the home and having access to their own wages. A body of research analyzes the specific effects of women's employment and participation in credit groups. A qualitative study of perceptions of intimate partner violence in Bangladesh found that women and men both perceived that domestic violence against women had declined in recent years, and they associated this decline with changes in the relations between men and women. In the course of their interviews, "Women indicated directly that their role in income generation was a factor protecting them from IPV, whereas men indicated this indirectly by linking women's work to increased prosperity and increased prosperity to lower incidence of IPV" (Schuler et al 2013, 248). Women's work outside the home has also been quantitatively linked to lower rates of domestic violence.

In other studies, scholars have found a strong link between women's employment outside the home and increased rates of domestic violence (Flake 2005; Friedemann-Sánchez 2012; Koenig 2003). These findings, however, fluctuate between urban and rural areas as well as between areas that have longer histories of women's employment. Koenig finds initially that



women's autonomy is significantly and positively related to domestic violence. However, his work also indicates that as a greater percentage of women in a community join credit and savings groups, the risk of violence against women diminishes. This leads him to conclude that, "the effects of individual and contextual aspects of women's empowerment on violence vary significantly according to sociocultural conditions. The nature of this relationship appears to hinge, to a considerable degree, on where on the continuum of gender relations and women's status a particular setting is situated" (Koenig 2003, 285). In conservative regions where microcredit groups for women are new, the initial backlash against the programs may be violent. However, in less strict areas, increased financial and personal autonomy may not be new, so women's economic empowerment programs have little negative impact. Similarly, Naved and Persson examine the differences in domestic violence and women's credit groups between urban and rural areas. They find that women's participation in a savings and credit group in urban areas is associated with an increased risk of domestic violence, while it is associated with a decreased risk in violence for rural women. They hypothesize that this discrepancy is also due to differences in attitude towards women's autonomy between urban and rural areas (Naved and Persson 2005).

A separate body of work measures women's economic empowerment by income earned and/or the percentage of overall family income provided by the wife, and/or women's ability to make their own decisions about money (Bourey and Hindin 2013; Hindin and Adair 2002; Krishnan 2005; Rao 1997). In some of these studies, increased financial autonomy and women earning a greater percentage of household income than their husbands was associated with greater risk for domestic abuse (Bourey and Hindin 2013; Hindin and Adair 2002). This is consistent with relative resource theory: women making relatively more money than their

partners can trigger backlash as their partners attempt to preserve their traditional masculine identity. Krishnan measures women's financial autonomy as participation in an income-generating activity within or outside the home and control of the resultant income. The women studied who met this criteria of financial empowerment were more than twice as likely to report domestic violence as women who were not employed (Krishnan 2005, 93).

Resource theory and relative resource theory are sociocultural explanations for spousal abuse. Both theories hinge on the idea that control of resources within the family unit is the central predictor for domestic violence. Resource theory posits that violence is a resource like any material good, and that husbands with a high socioeconomic status and a great deal of material resources are unlikely to resort to violence to maintain dominance in a relationship. Resource theory predicts that low-income men with the fewest resources will be the most likely to commit intimate partner violence (Atkinson, Greenstein, and Lang 2005). Relative resource theory, on the other hand, looks at the relative status of a husband and wife in order to predict domestic violence. In this framework, "domestic abuse occurs when a man loses his instrumental and symbolic role as breadwinner. As women become more economically independent, men may resort to an available resource – namely, violence – to compensate for both their labor market difficulties and for their frustrations when women become chief breadwinners" (Gibson-Davis et al., 2005). Atkinson et al expand the scope of resource theory by introducing gendered resource theory, which hypothesizes that the effect of relative resources on domestic violence is moderated by the husband's gender ideology (Atkinson et al 2005, 1137). They find that wives' share of relative incomes is positively related with domestic abuse only when husbands ascribe to traditional gender ideologies.

Relative resource theory can help to explain why economically and socially empowered women may be more vulnerable to domestic violence. It is particularly useful when studying developing countries, where women's status may be rapidly changing relative to their husbands'. Levinson theorizes that rates of intimate partner violence rise with status changes, writing: "Status inconsistency is especially useful as a framework for explaining family violence, and especially wife beating, in societies in which men's traditional power in the family has eroded while women's power has increased" (Levinson 1989).

Scholars have been unable to reach a clear consensus on whether women's economic empowerment has a protective effect against domestic violence or endangers women by threatening their partner's status as the breadwinner and head of the household. Although the studies and their conclusions are diverse, the role of culture and changing norms surrounding women's role in society emerges repeatedly as a potential explanation for domestic violence. Naved, Persson, and Koenig's findings indicate that women's economic empowerment only emerges as a risk factor in conservative areas where women's work outside the home is relatively new (Naved and Persson 2005; Koenig 2003). The interplay between women's economic empowerment and cultural attitudes towards women may explain much of the variance in the literature. Looking merely at the effect of women's work outside the home could result in the backwards conclusion that the solution to domestic violence is for women to adhere to rigid gender norms and not seek out paid work. However, if we acknowledge the role of culture, we might instead read these findings as the result of a temporary backlash against women's increasing power in society. Policy solutions for that conclusion would look markedly different, and could include temporarily increasing funding to women's shelters or including men in development programs that seek to empower women.

## ***Education***

One of the strongest, most consistent predictors of domestic violence against women is the level of education attained by women. By and large, women's education is a protective factor against domestic violence (Ahmed 2005, Friedemann-Sánchez 2012, Koenig et al. 2003, Oropesa 1997). Oropesa believes that the importance of women's economic empowerment is overstated, and that education has the greatest impact on domestic violence, writing, "Wives' education fosters lower risks of violence in the home, egalitarian decision making, and satisfaction with decision making" (Oropesa 1997, 1310). Men's education can also have a negative effect on rates of domestic violence. Friedemann-Sánchez finds that higher education levels of both husband and wife have a protective effect against domestic violence, but that the effects are more pronounced for men's education. Physical violence decreases by 0.4% for every additional year of women's education, and by 2% for every additional year of men's education (Friedemann-Sánchez 2012, 679). It is possible that more educated men may have more progressive views of their wives and view spousal abuse as an outdated practice. Alternately, their higher educational attainment may mean that they feel less threatened by their wives' economic, political, or educational empowerment.

There are, of course, exceptions to this finding. Mitra and Singh study a phenomenon known as the "Kerala Paradox," which refers to the high suicide and unemployment rates among women in the State of Kerala in southwest India, despite the fact that women in that area are highly literate and educated, and the area has high rates of gender development. They conclude that, "Unless social and cultural norms promote gender equality, education alone does not pave the way for women's advancement in the labor market and in social and domestic spheres" (Mitra and Singh 2007, 1228). These findings lend additional support to the idea that cultural attitudes

about women's roles in society have an outsize impact on violence and discrimination against women. Mitra and Singh's findings highlight the importance of understanding the particularities of any given cultural, socioeconomic, and historical context. Different beliefs, forces, and practices surrounding domestic violence are present in different communities, which necessitates in-depth, contextualized research and policy solutions.

### ***Family Decision-Making Structure***

Another way of measuring women's role in the family is their participation in family decision-making. Gage's study on intimate partner violence in Haiti includes financial decision-making as a variable that gauges whether or not a relationship between spouses is egalitarian. The variable measures whether major financial decisions were made together or by the woman or her partner individually. Women who had the final say on major financial decisions were 2.7 times more likely to experience emotional violence in Gage's study, as well as 1.7 times more likely to experience physical or sexual violence than women who made those decisions jointly with their spouses. Gage writes, "The findings of this study suggest that in instances where husbands are not dominant, they may resort to different forms of violence in response to their perceived powerlessness in financial decision-making" (2005, 356). Similarly, Hindin and Adair find that in the Philippines, when either partner dominates household decision-making, women's likelihood of experiencing domestic violence increases dramatically, by 2.72% for male-dominated households and 3.82% for female-dominated homes (Hindin and Adair 2002, 1395). Family decision-making structure can thus serve as a proxy for overall relationship dynamics and quality by getting to the core of who has the final say over family affairs. Households where decision-making is dominated by men can hint at regressive attitudes women, while households

where women dominate decision-making can provoke backlash from men who feel that their authority is being threatened.

### ***Intergenerational Exposure to Violence***

A key factor affecting attitudes towards spousal abuse cross-culturally is childhood experience of violence. Several studies have found strong correlations between witnessing intergenerational violence and domestic abuse. In Naved and Persson's study of spousal physical violence in Bangladesh, they find that the strongest factor associated with domestic violence is a history of abuse of the husband's mother by his father. They write, "Husbands may learn to respond to conflict with physical violence, and wives may learn to cope with conflict by being submissive and by expecting to be abused" (Naved and Persson 2005; Rani 2004). In this way, intergenerational experiences of abuse can predict attitudes towards abuse and the probability of that abuse continuing into the future.

### **State-Level Factors**

Very few comparative studies exist that analyze differences in domestic violence rates from country to country. One of the few cross-cultural studies that exist is the World Health Organization's 2010 Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. The study collected and analyzed data from over 24,000 women in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania. It found that in the countries they studied, the proportion of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence ranged from 15% to 71% (WHO 2010, 5). This broad range highlights the need for more and better cross-national studies that can continue to study these wide gaps in women's experience of domestic violence. Although the literature on this issue is sparse, the studies that do exist fall into two main categories: structural issues,

including a country's economic status and political framework, and cultural attitudes towards women's role in the family and in society.

## **Structural Factors**

### ***National & International Law***

Legal action on the issue of domestic violence against women can be broken down to two basic subgroups: international law, and national law and policy. The most consequential piece of international law currently in existence that establishes the basic rights of women is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW). Signatories to CEDAW are legally required to adapt its provisions to protect the women in their countries, and are required to submit a report every four years detailing how they have made progress in these areas. The text of the treaty reads:

By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- To establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- To ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination by persons, organizations, or enterprises

○ (United Nations, 1979).

Per this treaty, signatories are legally bound to make progress in these areas. This progress is detailed in annual reports to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination Against Women, which reviews the report and makes recommendations for how countries can better achieve their gender equality goals. In his comparative study of judicial action against domestic violence, McQuigg finds examples in both India and South Africa where courts cited CEDAW as legal precedent to justify their rulings in favor of women (2010). To some extent, CEDAW has succeeded in the private sphere of human rights regulation, where many other human rights declarations have failed. McQuigg writes, “Quite frequently, women’s human rights will come into conflict with powers other than that of the state. These powers generally emanate from the private sphere...Under traditional principles, abuses perpetrated by these powers did not come within the ambit of international human rights law as they were not inflicted directly by the state” (2010, 344). In the past, international human rights law had been powerless to prevent human rights abuses that are not perpetrated by the state itself. However, CEDAW has been effectively used to regulate the private sphere of domestic violence.

National laws and policies on domestic violence are another key legal factor that may affect rates of domestic violence against women. Policies on the subject vary widely: some countries have detailed plans for achieving gender equality, others have specific laws about domestic violence and different aspects of family law, and others have focused in recent years on ensuring that women are equal under the eyes of the law by updating policies that prohibited them from owning land or their own businesses. A number of aggregate gender equality indexes, including the United Nation’s Gender Inequality Index, attempt to rank countries based on how progressive their laws about gender are. Ertan recommends a disaggregated measurement of gender equality policies, and defines eight separate policy sectors: blueprint policy, political representation, equal employment, reconciliation, family law, body politics and sex, body politics on reproduction, and public service delivery (Ertan 2014, 59). Of particular interest to



this study are blueprint policies, equal employment, and family law. Blueprint policies encompass constitutional law, CEDAW ratification, and gender equality action plans. Equal employment includes legislation and policy regulating equal employment, and family law encompasses the realms of divorce, rape, and domestic abuse, as well as property rights. The presence or absence of each of these types of policy could potentially be a predictive factor for overall rates of gender empowerment as well as domestic violence.

In their study of the effect of family law on violence against women, Hudson et al hypothesize that states with greater inequity in family law will have higher levels of violence against women. They conclude, “There is real evidence that inequity in family law for women is strongly related to violence against women...these results call us to see inequity in family law as an important component of the problem of, and perhaps also of solutions to, the issue of violence against women” (Hudson et al 2011, 478-479). Law, both at the international and national level, thus could potentially be a strong protective factor against domestic violence. Conversely, outdated and sexist laws and policies could lead to higher rates of domestic violence against women, especially if those laws make it more difficult for women to report domestic violence, or if violence and rape within a marriage is not explicitly illegal.

### ***Economic Development***

One of the most prevalent beliefs surrounding cross-national studies of domestic violence is that more wealthy and developed nations automatically have lower prevalence rates of domestic violence. Yount’s preliminary research found that “the structural conditions of poverty, rural residence, and gender inequality have predicted [attitudes towards spousal abuse]...poor, rural women have justified wife beating more often than their wealthier, urban counterparts” (Yount et al. 2010, 874). High levels of economic development is not always correlated with lower rates of

domestic violence, however: Peru has one of the world's highest rates of domestic violence against women, despite being marked as a highly developed country on the United Nation's Human Development Index.

Several cross-national studies use economic development of a nation as a variable to predict domestic violence (Hudson 2011, Shahidullah 2009, Yount et al. 2010). Yount et al.'s cross-national study of societal attitudes justifying domestic violence against women establishes three country-level variations intended to study overall economic prosperity, gender equity, and urbanization. They conclude, "Overall, these findings refute the expectations that a higher standard of living, greater gender equality, and a higher level of urbanization at the national level are associated with a lower percentage of women who report affirmative views about domestic violence against women" (Yount et al. 2010, 879). These inconsistencies in the research are a fruitful area for further study, as the results have thus far been inconclusive.

The World Bank Group's annual *Women, Business, and the Law* report provides annual updates on the legal restrictions on the employment and entrepreneurship of women globally. In 2016, the World Bank found that 155 countries out of the 173 studied had at least one legal barrier that prevented women in that country from accessing the same legal and economic rights as men. The report also concludes that greater legal gender inequality is associated with fewer women working or running businesses and a higher gender wage gap (World Bank Group 2016). These findings illustrate the interconnectedness of economic and legal factors in contributing to national levels of gender equality.

## **Cultural Factors**

Cultural attitudes towards women can have an outside impact on the prevalence of domestic violence in a society. However, they are notoriously difficult to study. One method of

analyzing this is asking both women and men in a society under what circumstances it is “legitimate” or “appropriate” for a husband to abuse his wife. A handful of studies have used the Demographic and Health Surveys to analyze attitudes towards spousal abuse across countries (Rani 2004, Yount 2010). Rani et al analyzed data on attitudes towards domestic violence against women across seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa, studying how different measures of women’s empowerment correlated with attitudes towards wife-beating. Rani writes, “Although the results show that the norms about wife-beating and gender roles will change with development, increasing urbanization and better education, the effect will not be substantial and it will be very slow...Thus, appropriate legislation, mechanisms to punish offenders, care centres, etc, will best succeed only if a social consensus is built around renegotiation of gender roles and against the use of violence to resolve conflicts” (Rani 2004, 132-133).

Similarly, in McQuigg’s study of judicial action against domestic violence in India, South Africa, and Canada, he finds that the effect of judicial action in favor of domestic violence victims is moderated by cultural attitudes on the issue. In the *Mohammed Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano* case, the Supreme Court of India ruled in favor of the divorced wife, but this decision was later effectively overturned by legislation passed by a more conservative legislature. McQuigg concludes, “This case illustrates the fact that even if a court makes strenuous attempts to uphold the rights and interests of women, these efforts will be unfruitful if the opinion of the general public or of the legislature is contrary to the views of the court” (2010).

Individual attitudes and beliefs surrounding a woman’s role and the acceptability of domestic violence play a large role in shaping the frequency of domestic abuse. A study by the World Health Organization asserts, “Societies often distinguish between ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ reasons for abuse and between ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ levels of violence. In this way,

certain individuals – usually husbands or older family members – are given the right to punish a woman physically, within limits, for certain transgressions.” Situations in which domestic abuse may be justified by the perpetrators and the community include not obeying one’s husband, talking back, not caring for children or the home, refusing one’s husband sex, or being unfaithful (World Health Organization 2002, 95). Koenig’s survey of domestic violence among couples in Uganda found that 70% of men and 90% of women believed that beating was justifiable in one or more situations, including refusing to have sex with one’s partner, using contraception without consulting one’s partner, and infidelity (Koenig et al 2003). A number of other studies likewise found that individuals’ approval of domestic violence in given situations is associated with higher levels of domestic violence (Krishnan 2003; Mitra and Singh 2007; Visaria 2008).

## **CASE JUSTIFICATION**

In order to better focus in on the demographics and policies of each country, I will be conducting only one case study, Peru. I was interested in both Peru’s remarkably high rates of domestic violence as well as its regional position within Latin America. Latin America has some of the highest global rates of violence against women, despite notable economic and political progress, which makes the regional context important, especially given the great deal of variation between countries. In addition to this, an important cultural construct in many Latin American countries is *machismo*, a social paradigm that encourages men to be strong providers and heads of their households. Given that a predominant theory about domestic abuse is that it can occur when women’s increasing autonomy challenges a traditionally strong patriarchal system, I wanted to study an area where such a system was present in a pronounced way.

Peru stands out amongst possible case studies due to its high levels of both development and domestic violence. In 2012, 38% of Peruvian women between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced domestic violence in their lifetime. Additionally, 9% of women in Peru had experienced domestic violence in the last 12 months. Peru thus represents the higher end of the ever-experienced domestic violence spectrum in Latin America. Although rates of domestic violence are unusually high in Peru, the expected explanatory variables such as absolute poverty, unequal laws, and women's economic marginalization are absent. On the Human Development Index, Peru is classified as a highly developed country, ranking 84<sup>th</sup> overall. Peru is one of only 18 economies surveyed by the World Bank Group in 2016 that has no legal differences between women and men (Women, Business and the Law 2016). These findings do not fall neatly in line with what one would expect for a country with a high level of domestic violence, and necessitates more in-depth study.

Van Evera writes, "Scholars interested in offering policy prescriptions should therefore study cases whose background characteristics parallel the characteristics of current or future policy problems" (1997, 84). Peru has consistently high levels of domestic violence despite its relatively high economic development and legal equality between men and women, which makes it an important case to study for policy reasons. If domestic violence persists even as women globally become more empowered and equal, scholars and policymakers must seek out alternate causes of the problem. Identifying which risk factors are significant in the case of Peru will contribute to future discussions on how find solutions to this pressing issue.

Furthermore, the lack of statistical data and analysis on violence against women in Peru has been noted by the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. In their most recent evaluation of the state of women in Peru, the committee wrote that

the State should, “in its next periodic report statistical data and analysis, disaggregated by sex, rural and urban areas, and ethnicity, indicating the impact of the measures taken...in particular with regard to the issue of violence against women” (UN CEDAW 2014, 12). This study’s combination of state and individual-level variables, using statistical analysis in some parts, is uniquely well-suited to address this data gap.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

A fair amount of research has been done on individual and community level predictive factors of domestic violence, but very few comparative studies have been conducted analyzing the impact of broad societal factors, such as gender inequality, levels of violence, and laws and policies for addressing domestic violence against women. In my research, I will fill a gap in the literature through a comparative study analyzing individual, community, and state-level factors for domestic violence in Peru.

***Primary Questions:*** What effect do nation-wide policies and rates of gender equality have on the prevalence of domestic violence? What effect do individual levels of empowerment, such as education and financial autonomy, have on domestic violence rates?

For this study, I will be analyzing factors that affect domestic violence at both an individual, structural, and cultural level. Violence against women does not occur in a vacuum and women’s experience of violence within the home is likely to be affected by broader cultural values and laws regarding women’s status in addition to their own levels of empowerment. For these reasons, I will be using an ecological model incorporating individual and state-level measures of women’s empowerment. Vyas writes of an ecological framework:

“The ecological model proposes that the factors associated with IPV [intimate partner violence] is multi-faceted, and that it is an interplay of individual, family and community factors that influences the likelihood of whether violence may occur within a household or not. Within this framework, the absolute or relative levels of education or employment that women or men have within a partnership are recognized as being potentially influential, but the role of other contextual factors is also more explicitly acknowledged” (Vyas 2009, 579).

My dependent variable will be domestic violence against women, measured as the percentage of women who had ever experienced a form of domestic violence. Experience of domestic violence will be measured using the Demographic Health Survey’s domestic violence module, which asks women whether their husband or partner had ever pushed them, shook them, threw something at them, slapped them, twisted their arm, pulled their hair, punched them, kicked them, dragged them, or beat them up; tried to choke or burn them on purpose, threatened or attacked them with a gun, knife, or weapon; physically forced them to have sexual intercourse; physically forced them to perform other sexual acts; or forced them with threats or in any other way to perform a sexual act they did not want to (DHS 2015). These questions are based off the Conflict Tactics Scale, a widely accepted scale measuring experience of intimate partner violence.

The Demographic and Health Survey Program is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and collects information through nationally-representative household surveys that provide a wide range of data on population, health, and nutrition in developing countries. The program runs a number of surveys, including some on malaria, AIDS, and other key health indicators. The survey program used for this research was the general

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), which measures a broad array of key indicators: demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, marriage and sexual activity, levels of fertility, child and infant mortality, child health, reproductive health and general women's health, nutrition of women and children, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and women's empowerment. Survey samples are generally representative at the national, residential, and regional level for all countries surveyed. Certain countries, including Peru, implement an additional domestic violence module that measures a woman's experience of different forms of physical, sexual, and emotional intimate partner violence.

Given the highly sensitive nature of domestic violence, the Demographic and Health Survey follows stringent ethical and safety guidelines to ensure that they are not placing women at risk. All members of the staff – both administrative and technical personnel as well as female and male field staff – receive special training on how to implement the domestic violence module. Only one eligible woman per household is chosen to answer the domestic violence questions, and absolute privacy is ensured. If any adult enters the room while the staff is implementing the domestic violence module, the interviewer must change the subject immediately and stop the interview if necessary. Additionally, the use of translators from the community is avoided so as to not violate privacy. All interview procedures for implementing the domestic violence module of the DHS are in line with the World Health Organization's ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women.

### ***Individual Level Variables***

**Demography:** In the interest of obtaining a holistic understanding of the women surveyed, I will incorporate four demographic characteristics into the logistic regression: the age of the respondent, her ethnic group, whether she lives in a rural or urban area, and the overall wealth of



her household. Since the Demographic and Health Survey does not include a question about the income of a household, I have constructed a household wealth index measuring the respondent's possession of common household items, including electricity, various modes of transportation, a telephone, and a television.

*H1:* Increasing age will act as a protective factor against domestic violence.

*H2:* Respondents of the Quechua, Aymara, or other indigenous groups will be more likely to experience domestic violence.

*H3:* Women living in rural areas will be more likely to experience domestic violence than women living in urban areas.

*H4:* Overall household wealth will neither increase nor decrease the respondent's likelihood of experiencing domestic violence.

**Education:** I will measure the highest education level attained by the respondent: none, primary, secondary, or higher, as well as the highest level of education that her husband has attained.

*H5:* Increasing education levels of both the respondent and her partner will lower her likelihood of experiencing domestic violence.

**Economic Empowerment:** I will operationalize "women's economic empowerment" as whether or not a woman holds a paying job outside the home, measured by the question on the Women's Questionnaire of the DHS that asks about the employment status of the woman and how she is paid.

*H6:* Women's work outside the home will act as a protective factor against her risk of experiencing domestic violence.

**Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence:** I will measure individual acceptance of domestic violence against women by both women and men using a question in the Women's

Questionnaire that asks: “In your opinion, is a husband justified in hitting or beating his wife in the following situations?” Options include “if she goes out without telling him, if she burns the food, if she neglects the children, if she argues with him, or if she refuses to have sex with him.”

*H7:* Respondents who believe abuse is justified in any case will be more likely to experience domestic violence.

**Intergenerational Experience of Violence:** I will measure this using a question on the Demographic and Health Survey that asks, “As far as you know, did your father beat your mother?”

*H8:* Respondents who witnessed their father abuse their mother will be at increased risk of domestic violence.

**Family Decision-Making Structure:** I will measure equity of family decision-making through questions on the Demographic Health Survey that measure which members of the household are responsible for making major financial decisions: the woman alone, the woman and her partner equally, the partner alone, or a third party.

*H9:* Households where either the respondent or her partner dominate financial decisions will be more likely to experience domestic violence.

## **CASE STUDY: GENDER ISSUES IN PERU**

Peru is notable for the purposes of this study for its remarkably high rate of domestic violence. As of 2012, 38% of Peruvian women between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced domestic violence in their lifetime, one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Latin America and the world. In their most recent report on the status of human rights in Peru, the U.S. State Department identified violence against women and children as one of the most significant

human rights problems facing the country. In 2015, the Peruvian Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations reported that 7 in 10 women had experienced physical or psychological abuse (U.S. State Department 2015). Although this statistic accounts for *all* violence against women, not just domestic violence, the statistic of 70% of women experiencing some form of violence is a sobering one. The same ministry reported 32,5000 cases of violence against women in the first nine months of 2015, as well as 64 femicides and 125 attempted femicides (U.S. State Department 2015).

Within Peru, there is a pronounced development gap between the coastal and inland areas. Peruvians living on the coast are more likely to have access to education and health care and tend to be wealthier and have lower rates of unemployment than those who live in the more rural rainforest and mountain areas, primarily the Aymara and Quechua indigenous groups (Flake 2005, 361). The country ranks as highly developed on the United Nation's Human Development Index, and has made meaningful strides towards alleviating poverty in recent years. Peru reports that the poverty rate has declined from 40 to 19.1% in urban areas and from 75.2 to 54.2% in rural areas. Inequality has been on the decline as well, with the Gini coefficient declining from 0.52 in 2001 and 0.46 in 2010 (Peru CEDAW 2014, 3-4). Despite this, poverty continues to be a problem for Peru, one that especially impacts indigenous communities and households headed by women.

Peru has a long history of violent conflict, a facet of the country's history that may prove integral to understanding its remarkably high rates of domestic violence. Between the years of 1980 and 2000, the country was engulfed in guerrilla war between the government and leftist groups the Shining Path and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. This conflict dragged on for two decades, and resulted in the deaths of an estimated 70,000 Peruvians, primarily peasants

living in the Andean mountains (BBC News 2012). This conflict continued a pattern of violence that began with Peru's conquest by the Spanish. Flake writes, "The high occurrence of spousal abuse in Peru is not surprising, given the country's legacy of political and social violence. Beginning with the Spanish Conquest in 1532 and extending to its present conflict with the Shining Path guerrilla organization, Peru's history is marred by almost continual bloodshed" (Flake 2005, 354). Flake then goes on to hypothesize that the prevalence of political and social violence is directly related to rates of domestic violence, since individuals are more likely to perceive violence as a normal practice when they live in a violent and war-torn society (Flake 2005, 354).

Peru was plagued with human rights violations under the increasingly authoritarian governments of Fernando Belaúnde (1980-1985), Alan García (1985-1990), and Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000). In 2009, Fujimori was sentenced to 25 years in prison for multiple human rights violations during his term as president, including multiple homicides and forced disappearances. Human Rights Watch estimates that only 2 percent of human rights violations committed during Peru's two decades of armed conflict have been brought to trial (Human Rights Watch 2015). The United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women noted that to this day, much of the violence against women inflicted during the country's decades of armed conflict has not been prosecuted, and that access to justice is not readily available for survivors (CEDAW 2014, 6). The legacy of bloodshed and human rights violations from both guerrilla groups and the government promotes a general atmosphere of violence that can, in the individual context, be expressed in the form of domestic abuse.

Although domestic violence rates in Peru are very high, the country is unique in that women and men are equal under its legal system. Although there are likely to be some gaps

between the letter of the law and its implementation, it is still worth determining to what extent laws that promote gender equity exist in Peru. Hudson et al write, “Although there are certainly gaps between law and implementation, the fact that laws protecting the rights of women exist at all is positive evidence of societal gender equality. While law cannot dictate practice and often stands impotent before it, law is nevertheless generally regarded as a strong normative factor capable of modifying practice over time, and importantly, of establishing state and community ideals” (2011, 456). As of 2016, Peru was one of only 18 economies surveyed by the World Bank Group that had no legal differences between women and men (Women, Business, and the Law 2016). The Peruvian Constitution establishes the equal rights of men and women in Article 2.2, writing, “Every person has the right...to equality before the law. No person shall be discriminated against on the basis of origin, race, sex, language, religion, opinion, economic situation, or any other distinguishing feature” (Peru 1993, translation).

Peru was also one of the first countries in Latin America to pass legislation specifically targeting domestic violence, passing the Law for Protection from Family Violence in 1993 and strengthening it in 1997 (Human Rights Watch 2000). Interestingly, this law was passed under the authoritarian government of Alberto Fujimori, and is widely believed to have been “used to ameliorate the image of the government...rather than to provide effective protection and legal reparation to battered women” (Boesten 2006, 355). Nevertheless, the legislation was effective in the sense that it made domestic violence technically illegal, even if in practice the laws were poorly enforced. Boesten writes, “More than actual enforcement, the legislation against domestic violence helps women in their conviction that they are within their rights” (2006, 377).

Although legislation seeking to end domestic violence against women abounds, implementation of the law is often severely lacking. Only 26.8% of female victims of violence

report their experience to authorities (Peru CEDAW 2012, 23). This may in part be due to the stigma that surrounds experience of domestic violence. However, as noted by the United Nations' CEDAW, low rates of reporting could also be due to prejudice and insensitivity on the part of judges, police officers, prosecutors, and health professionals (2014, 6). More funding is necessary in order to train first responders and individuals within the judicial system to respond to women seeking help in a gender-sensitive manner. Although the perpetrators of violence against women often go unpunished, Peru has made strides towards bringing abusers to justice. The Peruvian Criminal Code has been changed in order to impose heavier penalties on perpetrators of domestic violence and classify injuries resulting from domestic violence as a criminal offense (Peru 2012, 21).

More recently, the Peruvian government has done a great deal of work to improve the legal framework defining how domestic violence against women should be addressed, notably removing a requirement that forced women who reported domestic abuse to undergo a process of reconciliation with their partner before being allowed to press charges. Several national plans to address discrimination against women and/or gender based violence have been passed in recent years, including the 2009-2015 National Plan to Address Violence in the Family and Against Women and the 2016-2021 National Plan on Gender Based Violence. The U.S. State Department writes, "The legal framework governing women's rights and protections is comprehensive and well defined. Application and enforcement of the law, however, were severely lacking" (U.S. State Department 2015). Likewise, Boesten identifies lack of resources, corruption, and problems with law enforcement as problem areas standing in the way of the full implementation of anti-domestic violence law (2006, 360).

Despite corruption and poor enforcement, there are resources available to victims of domestic violence. The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations operates Women's Emergency Centers around the country that provide specially trained services for victims of domestic abuse, as well as a hotline to report incidents of domestic violence. Once again, the implementation of these programs is often poor, with a 2015 ombudsman's report stating that 40% of police stations were not adequately equipped to handle domestic violence cases. The Peruvian delegation to the United Nations also acknowledged in their CEDAW report that "the State has made progress in adopting gender equality legislation but the implementation of a gender equality policy is hampered by as yet insufficient budget allocations" (Peru CEDAW 2012, 21).

The Peruvian government as well as international bodies have acknowledged the role that culture plays in instigating and exacerbating the problem of domestic violence against women in Peru. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Violence Against Women noted in 2014 that the "discrimination against women and gender stereotypes in the State party are deeply entrenched in traditional attitudes, institutional practices and society as a whole, depriving women of the equal enjoyment of their rights and contributing to high levels of violence against women (UN CEDAW 2014, 5).

Peru is committed to gender equality on the international as well as the national level. It signed the Inter-American Treaty for the Prevention, Eradication, and Sanction of Violence Against Women in 1996, and has been a signatory of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) since 1995. CEDAW signatories are required to submit regular reports detailing "the progress made and the challenges faced by the government in fulfilling the obligation to respect, promote, and guarantee women's

right to equality and non-discrimination as set out in the Convention” (Peru 2012, 1). The most recent of these reports was submitted in November of 2012, and was reviewed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in July of 2014. Peru’s report emphasizes the progress that the country has made towards ensuring gender equality and ending violence against women, including a slight 2.6% decrease in the number of women subjected to domestic violence, from 41% in 2004-2008 to 38.4% in 2010. The committee’s response to the report highlighted traditional attitudes towards women, institutional practices, and a lack of funding and implementation of laws on gender discrimination and violence against women as Peru’s greatest challenges moving forward (2014).



**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Domestic and Background Factors**

	Total %	% experiencing domestic violence
<b>Dependent Variable</b>		
Ever experienced domestic violence	37.6	
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
<b><i>Demographics</i></b>		
<u>Age in 5-year increments</u>		
15-19	14.2	23
20-24	14.2	30.3
25-29	15.7	36.8
30-34	17.2	36.6
35-39	15.0	38.5
40-44	13.2	42
45-49	10.6	43.8
<u>Residence</u>		
Urban	64.5	39.2
Rural	35.5	35
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
Spanish speaker	89.2	37.6
Quechua	8.5	39.5
Aymara	0.9	38.1
Other indigenous	1.4	23.7
<u>Household Wealth Index</u>		
Not resident	2.2	34.2
Bottom third	22	35.3
Middle third	65.9	39
Top third	9.8	33.2
<b><i>Education</i></b>		
<u>Woman's education</u>		
No education	3.1	40.5
Primary Education	27.9	38.4
Secondary Education	43.0	39.3
Higher	26.0	32.9
<u>Partner's education</u>		
No education	1.4	35.5
Primary Education	25.3	37.1
Secondary Education	61.7	39.2
Higher	11.6	30.1
<b><i>Economic Empowerment</i></b>		
<u>Woman currently working</u>		
No	35.8	32
Yes	64.2	40.3

***Household Decision-Making***

Final say on making large household purchases

No one	0.1	42.9
Respondent alone	23.5	41.6
Respondent and husband/partner	53.7	30.9
Respondent and other person	0.2	34.6
Husband/partner alone	21.9	37.2
Someone else	0.6	26.4

Final say on deciding what to do with money husband earns

Respondent alone	15.5	37
Respondent and husband/partner	36.8	30.9
Respondent and other person	0.0	25
Husband/partner alone	13.9	42.7
Someone else	0.1	33.3
Husband/partner has no earnings	0.1	15.4
Respondent never married	33.7	56.2

***Intergenerational Exposure to Violence***

Did the respondent's father beat her mother?

No	53.1	29.7
Yes	43.7	46.2
Don't know	3.2	38.8

***Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence***

Wife beating ever justified

Wife beating never justified	95.4	37.3
Wife beating justified under one or more situations	4.6	43.5

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SOURCE: 2013 Peru Demographic and Health Survey

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**Table 2: Domestic and Background Factors Influencing Domestic Violence in Peru**

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Constant	-0.82	0.186
<b>Demographics</b>		
Age	0.077**	0.012
Urban/Rural Residence	-0.223**	0.049
Ethnicity (Indigenous/Non-indigenous)	-0.139*	0.042
Household Wealth Index	0.021	0.037
<b>Education</b>		
Woman's education	-0.163*	0.032
Partner's education	-0.036	0.039
<b>Economic Empowerment</b>		
Woman currently working	0.252*	0.043
<b>Household Decision-Making</b>		
Final say on making large household purchases	-0.049*	0.02
Final say on deciding what to do with money husband earns	0.114**	0.019
<b>Intergenerational Exposure to Violence</b>		
Did the respondent's father beat her mother?	0.077**	0.013
<b>Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence</b>		
Wife beating ever justified	0.272*	0.092
-2 Log likelihood	14855.489	
Chi-square	259.699	
df	11	
N	11694	

\* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.005$

SOURCE: 2013 Peru Demographic and Health Survey

## **ANALYSIS**

Table 1 shows the social and demographic characteristics of women in the sample (N=11,694) along with the prevalence of domestic violence among each subset of women. 37.6% of the women surveyed had experienced at least one form of domestic violence in the past year. The ages of respondents varied from 15 to 49, with a mean age of 31.32. The average respondent had 9.23 years of education, with the highest level of education among respondents at 17 years. Two indicators of household power dynamics were included in the analysis: who had the final say on making large household purchases, and who had the final say on deciding what to do with the money the husband earns. In over half of households surveyed, large household purchases

were made jointly, with both the respondent and her husband or partner weighing in. The percentage was similarly high for deciding what to do with the husband's income: 36.8% of households made that decision jointly.

The sample contained a diverse set of respondents from all of the major ethnic groups, regions of Peru, and levels of education, household wealth, and economic participation. 64.5% of the sample came from an urban area, while 35.5% were from the countryside. Given the drastic difference in development between Peru's urban coast and rural mountains and rainforest areas, representation of both urban and rural women is important. Ethnicity, measured by language spoken, is also particularly important in the Peruvian context. Although 89.2% of the sample are Spanish speakers, the Quechua and Aymara indigenous groups are also represented, making up 8.5 and 0.9% of the sample size, respectively. 64.2% of the sample were employed outside the home, although 21.4% of those employed women were either unpaid or paid in kind. Women who are not paid cash for their labor – or who do not have a say in how their money is spent – may not experience some of the protective benefits of employment. Without a cash income, women may not have the resources to leave an abusive partner. Although a majority of Peruvian women surveyed were currently employed, income dynamics still fell along traditional gendered lines. Only 12.6% of respondents made more than their husband or partner, and a majority, 68.1%, made less than their partner. This indicates that for most Peruvian households, men still occupy the symbolic role of breadwinner. This power dynamic may play into women's likelihood of experiencing domestic abuse – women may not feel that it is economically feasible to leave an abusive partner if their partner contributes the majority of household income.

Some of the variables were chosen for their ability to gauge both individual and cultural acceptance of domestic violence. One of the most important of these is intergenerational

experience of abuse, measured by asking individuals if their father ever beat their mother. Consistent with the overall high rates of domestic abuse against women, almost half of the sample – 43.7% – had witnessed their father abuse their mother. This fits into what we know about cycles of violence and abuse – individuals who witnessed or experienced abuse when they were young are much more likely to experience or perpetrate abuse as adults. Interestingly, the prevalence of domestic abuse did not make it more acceptable to the women. One of the most important findings from this demographic analysis is the vast majority of Peruvian women, 95.4% of the sample, did not justify spousal abuse under a number of different scenarios. The women’s survey asked survey respondents if wife beating was justified under the following situations: if a woman goes out without telling her partner, if she neglects the children, if she argues with her partner, if she refuses to have sex with her partner, and/or if she burns the food. Given the remarkably high rate of domestic violence in Peru, it is notable that 95.4% of the women surveyed said that domestic violence was not an acceptable response to any of the presented situations.

There are several possible explanations for this finding: firstly, it could be that domestic violence against women is culturally taboo, and that its prevalence could be a result of a generally violent culture rather than a misogynistic one. Since this study only analyzes women’s responses to the Demographic and Health Survey, it is also possible that the women’s partners are more likely to justify domestic violence than they are. Finally, the sensitive nature of the subject matter might have changed some women’s answers. Since the person conducting the survey was a stranger to the women being surveyed, it is possible that the women did not want to confess to accepting domestic violence. Survivors of abuse in particular may not want to be perceived as responsible for their own victimization.

Table 2 contains the results of a multivariate logistic regression, with lifetime experience of domestic violence as the dependent variable. Independent variables fell into four major categories: demographic, cultural, economic, and educational. Under the demographic side, two variables achieved statistical significance: age and ethnicity. Age was significant and not in the expected direction – the probability of experiencing domestic violence increased by 8.1% for each five-year age cohort. Although I hypothesized that increasing age would act as a protective factor against domestic violence, the opposite is true. This is likely due to a generational effect – it is possible that younger couples have more progressive ideals and practices surrounding relationships and domestic violence. Indeed, going back to Table 1, we see a steady increase in the percentage of women who had experienced domestic violence as we move up 5-year age groups. This difference becomes even more pronounced when you look between groups that are even further apart. 43.8% of respondents between the ages of 45 and 49 had experienced domestic violence in their lifetimes, compared to only 23% of respondents between the ages of 15-19.

Ethnicity of the respondents was also significant and in the expected direction. Indigenous women of the Quechua, Aymara, or other indigenous groups were more likely to experience domestic violence than women who spoke Spanish. This is consistent with previous findings, and given that the majority of Peru's indigenous population lives in the rural mountainous and forested areas of the country, could also suggest that rural *indigenous* women are more likely to experience domestic violence. This is likely due to poverty, structural inequality, and a lack of access to resources for abused indigenous women. This finding necessitates more in-depth study, and future research on the subject should seek to describe indigenous people's attitudes towards traditional gender roles, their place in the economic and

legal fabric of Peruvian society, as well as their access or lack of access to legal and emergency services.

Urban or rural residence was significant, although not in the expected direction. Women in rural areas were *less* likely to experience domestic violence than women living in urban areas. This is an interesting finding, and could point to the stress of urban living as a catalyst of domestic violence. Given high levels of immigration from the countryside to cities, it is also possible that domestic violence is more likely when individuals are removed from their social support networks. Household wealth, on the other hand, did not attain statistical significance. I hypothesized that household wealth would be unrelated to women's experience of domestic violence, and this was confirmed by it not attaining significance here. This lends strength to relative resource theories, which allege that overall income or household wealth does not make domestic violence against women more or less likely. Rather, it is the relative economic status between a woman and her husband that instigates domestic violence. Of course, the lack of significance for household wealth could be attributed to measurement flaws – since the Demographic and Health Surveys do not include questions on income, I have constructed a household wealth index based upon ownership of several consumer goods. A more refined measurement tool or survey that used actual income to measure wealth might reach a different conclusion.

As expected, women's educational attainment was significantly correlated with decreasing odds of women experiencing domestic violence. Women's probability of experiencing domestic violence decreased by 15% for every level of school that she had completed. Educational attainment is one of the strongest and most consistent protective factors against domestic violence, making this conclusion unsurprising but nonetheless important. The

highest level of education attained by a woman's partner was also in a negative direction, but did not attain statistical significance. We can conclude from these results that women's education should remain a priority for the developing world. However, it is worth noting that in Table 1, women whose partners had higher than a secondary education experienced the lowest rate of domestic violence, 30.1% compared to 39.2% of women whose partners had completed secondary education. Educating and empowering girls is thus only half of the equation – it is vital that men also be taught to challenge patriarchal cultural norms.

Women's work outside the home was significantly correlated with an increase in their probability of experiencing domestic violence. Women who worked outside the home were 28.6% more likely to experience domestic violence than women who did not. This is a disturbing finding, especially for those programs in Peru and elsewhere that seek to improve women's lives by encouraging their work outside the home. This finding, combined with findings on household wealth, support relative resource theories. Overall household wealth neither significantly increased or decreased a woman's likelihood of experiencing domestic violence, but a woman's work outside the home did. It is possible that men feel threatened by their wives' work outside the home regardless of their household's level of wealth. This points to a cultural problem rather than an economic one: it is men's adherence to traditional gender roles, rather than poverty, that instigates domestic violence.

Women's role in household decision-making, as measured by who has the final say in making large household purchases and spending the husband's income, reached statistical significance on both questions. The opposite positive and negative signs on the coefficients are misleading here, for in fact the findings are the same. Women experience the least domestic violence in homes where they make large decisions jointly with their husbands. Referring back



to Table 1, women who decided what to do with the money their husband earned alone experienced domestic violence at a rate of 37%, a 7-point increase from women who made the decision with their partner. Similarly, 41.6% of women who had the final say on large household purchases experienced domestic violence, a 10.7-point increase from women who made those decisions with their partner.

Intergenerational exposure to violence, measured by asking respondents if their father ever beat their mother, was associated with an 8% increase in a woman's likelihood of experiencing domestic violence. This finding reached statistical significance, as expected. Along the same lines, women who justified wife beating under any circumstance were 31.2% more likely to experience domestic violence than those who did not justify it under any circumstance. Along with education, exposure to domestic violence as a child and acceptance of domestic violence as an adult are some of the most consistently strong predictors for experiencing domestic violence by a partner. This finding is particularly concerning when we consider the high numbers of Peruvian women in every age group who have experienced domestic violence. As noted earlier and in Table 1, however, over 95% of Peruvian women did not justify wife beating under any circumstances. This is an interesting finding and seemingly contradictory to the conclusions about intergenerational exposure to violence. Although one might expect high rates of intergenerational exposure to violence to lead to equally high rates of acceptance of the practice, that has not been the case for Peruvian women. Additionally, declining rates of domestic violence among younger age groups may mean that the overall percentage of Peruvian women who experience intergenerational exposure to violence will decline as well.

## **DISCUSSION & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Of the variables surveyed, ten reached statistical significance: age, residence, ethnicity, women's education, women's work outside the home, both measures of household decision-making, intergenerational exposure to violence, and justification of domestic violence. Many of these variables point to cultural issues as the root cause of domestic violence. Of particular note in the cultural arena are the findings that indigenous ethnicity, intergenerational exposure to violence, justification of domestic violence, and male- or female-dominated household decision-making were positively and significantly associated with a woman's likelihood of experiencing domestic violence. These echo findings from the broader Peruvian context that point to regressive cultural views about domestic violence and a woman's role in society as the leading cause of Peru's high domestic violence rates.

The findings about household wealth, urban or rural residence, and women's work outside the home are some of the most interesting economic findings of this study. Household wealth was not significantly associated with either an increased or decreased probability of experiencing domestic violence, and women in the less-developed rural areas of Peru were actually *less* likely to be the victims of domestic violence than their counterparts in urban areas. Women who worked outside the home were significantly more likely to experience domestic violence than those that did not. This lends strength to relative resource theories that posit that it is a woman's relative status to her husband, rather than overall wealth or development, that impacts her likelihood of experiencing domestic violence.

Policies and development programs seeking to put an end to the problem of domestic violence against women should consider whether women's economic empowerment programs really address the underlying causes of domestic violence. Moreover, such programs – whether

implemented by external international development agencies or the Peruvian government – should consider including trainings for the women’s partners to prevent backlash. As we can see in the findings about household decision-making, the women least likely to experience domestic violence were those who made large household decisions jointly with their husbands. Approaches to this sensitive issue must be holistic and incorporate the abuser as well as the abused in order to lessen the likelihood of domestic violence.

It is important to gauge local, community, and state-level factors variables that may influence individual women’s likelihood of experiencing domestic violence. For this reason, this study incorporates a case study on Peru to help contextualize some of the findings. In this case, broader Peruvian cultural and political phenomena may tie into the country’s high rates of domestic violence. Peru’s decades-long conflict against guerrilla insurgents may foster an overall culture of violence that increases the prevalence of domestic violence. Part of the problem, then, may be a violent culture, rather than an explicitly misogynistic one. It is possible that soldiers returning from war may be more likely to abuse their wives. In the U.S. Military, rates of domestic violence are 3 to 5 times higher than in comparable civilian couples (Lutz 2004, 17). In Arthur and Clark’s cross-national study on domestic violence, they hypothesized that the more recently a nation has been involved in some type of war, the higher the levels of warfare. They write, “Violent societies may be more likely than nonviolent societies to permit domestic violence partly because where violence is used for conflict resolution generally, it is likely to be accepted as a means of conflict resolution within the family” (Arthur and Clark 2009, 151). They conclude that countries that were recently involved in war or serious internal conflict were significantly more likely to have high levels of domestic violence (Arthur and Clark 2009, 159). However, since not all post-conflict societies experience high rates of domestic violence, this

topic warrants further study. Future cross-national studies should include conflict as a variable, and individual-level analyses should attempt to gauge whether a woman's partner is in a military or armed group as a potential causal factor for domestic violence.

A similar finding from the Peruvian context is that although the country has national plans to address gender based violence and promote gender equality, the application of these laws is severely lacking. Part of this problem lies in chronic corruption among Peruvian police forces and underfunding of women's shelters and emergency services. After years of an authoritarian government known for human rights abuses and mysterious disappearances of its citizens, it is also possible that Peruvian women do not trust authorities affiliated with the government. Given the sensitive nature of domestic violence, it is a given that some women will not bring the issue to the police – but in the event that they do, it is critical that Peru increase funding and resources to women's shelters and emergency centers in order to enforce its progressive laws regarding gender based violence in the family.

One of the major benefits of this study is its ability to be replicated across multiple countries. Domestic violence is a unique issue in that it is a universal problem which nonetheless varies greatly between countries and even individuals. In order to make meaningful comparisons and predictions across and between nations, it is important that scholars continue to conduct cross-national studies on the topic of domestic violence. Although my study focuses on only one case, it is unique in its inclusion of both individual and state-level variables as potential risk factors for domestic violence. The Demographic Health Survey's standardized questions and broad range of surveyed countries provide a useful database for conducting future analysis on this issue.

The reasoning behind conducting a multi-country study on the issue of domestic violence is well expressed by the World Health Organization's 2010 multi-country study of domestic violence, one of the few cross-national comparisons of domestic violence that has been attempted. The study looked at a variety of nations from across the globe, and found that the percentage of women who had experienced domestic violence ranged from 15-71% (WHO 2010, 5). This stark disparity necessitates further study. What variables influence domestic violence – and can they be pinpointed and incorporated into anti-domestic violence policy? The researchers write, “Furthermore...it became clear that levels of violence varied substantially between settings, both among and within countries. This raised many questions, not only regarding the factors underlying these differences but also about the methods used to investigate violence in different countries. The many differences in the way violence was defined and measured in different studies made it difficult to make meaningful comparisons between studies or make reliable estimates in different settings.” (WHO 2010, 1). In the future, given more time and resources, I hope to expand the scope of this project to include more countries in Latin America as well as the rest of the developing world.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study contributes to the growing body of research on domestic violence against women in the developing world. Through the use of state-level policy analysis, descriptive statistics, and logistic regressions on survey data, I was able to conclude that the relationships between a country's development, women's overall levels of empowerment, and rates of domestic violence are not always as clear as many assume. Peru's women experience remarkably high rates of domestic violence due to a combination of low funding and implementation of gender equality laws, regressive cultural beliefs about domestic violence and a woman's place in

the home, violence in at the state level, familial cycles of violence, the perceived threat of women's increasing empowerment, and many more variables. Despite some of these findings, it would not be correct to assume that governments and development organizations should stop working on gender equity and women's empowerment. Rather, the results of this study are meant to provide a more nuanced understanding of what catalyzes domestic violence against women so that future interventions on this issue are able to address the individual, structural, and cultural dimensions of domestic violence.

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