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What is This?
Domestic Violence Against Single, Never-Married Women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Shireen Assaf¹ and Stephanie Chaban²

Abstract
This study examines the association between decision-making power, with other background variables, and domestic violence against single, never-married women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Secondary analysis using data from a 2006 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics domestic violence survey revealed that decision-making power and age were significant predictors of physical and psychological abuse. Relation to household head, refugee status, education, employment, and locality were not significant; region was only significant for psychological abuse. Further studies are needed to understand what factors allow single, never-married women to exercise decision-making power in the household and its association with domestic violence.

Keywords
autonomy, decision-making power, determinants of violence, Palestinian single women

Introduction
In recent decades, violence against women has been acknowledged as one of the greatest threats to female health and safety worldwide (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005). In 1993, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defined violence against women as:

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any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Violence against women can take many forms and may span the lifecycle: from infanticide to sexual abuse, from early marriage to sex trafficking, and from genital mutilation to partner abuse. However, domestic violence seems to be the most pervasive form of violence experienced by women. At least one in three women will experience some form of violence or abuse by her partner, and it is estimated that one in five women will be raped or threatened with rape in her lifetime (UNITE to End Violence against Women, 2008). Likewise, a World Health Organization (WHO) multicountry study reported intimate partner violence prevalence rates ranging from 15% to 71% over a woman’s lifetime (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005).

A number of international documents have identified violence against women as a human rights offense and have prioritized its eradication. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) outlines the extent to which states should go to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of their female citizens. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) points out that violence against women not only denies women their fundamental freedoms, but also is an impediment to achieving equality, development, and peace. Millennium Development Goal 3 (2000) argues that the combination of education, wage employment, and political participation will reduce violence against women and girls (United Nations Millennium Project, 2005).

On March 8, 2009, International Women’s Day, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas symbolically signed CEDAW into effect, without reservations. That same year, the Palestinian National Authority’s “Program of the Thirteenth Government” (2009) committed itself to the eradication of violence against women. Palestinian civil society has been working with governmental institutions to cultivate services for victims of domestic violence; examples include a family violence hotline, multiple shelters, family defense units at the police, and the development of a comprehensive referral system. It is within this framework that this article attempts to measure the factors that contribute to domestic violence against single, never-married Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

**Rates of Domestic Violence in the Middle East and North Africa**

Violence in the domestic sphere, whether directed at males or females, can take many forms: physical, psychological, sexual, and even economic. Many studies have been conducted in an attempt to measure these forms of abuse; comparability is difficult as different cultural settings may produce different forms of violence. In the Middle East/ North Africa (MENA) region, most figures and data focus on married women with particular attention to spousal abuse and abuse during pregnancy, though some document the abuse of other female family members; violence among unmarried couples is
not usually measured. However, given the centrality of the family and household in the MENA region, it is necessary to view domestic violence as including violence perpetrated by a variety of family members, including the extended family. Likewise, victims are not solely intimate partners, spouses, or underage children; they may include adult family members who have never been married, are widowed, or are related by blood rather than marriage.

While some research on domestic violence has shown that the extended family structure may serve to protect females from violence in the home (Clark, Hill, Jabbar, & Silverman, 2009; Clark, Silverman, Shahroui, Everson-Rose, & Groce, 2010), interfamilial dynamics may also serve to perpetuate and condone abuse. Research on domestic violence against women with cultural and ethnic differences indicates that the presence of extended family allows for abuse to take place, facilitates the abuse, or serves as a means to maintain the abusive status quo (Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004). Thus, researchers are now calling for a redefinition of domestic violence (Shively, 2011). Usage of the term “domestic violence” must consider the multiple relationships between different family members and not simply intimate or parent–child relationships. Thus, a broader, all encompassing definition of the term “domestic” within “domestic violence” is utilized within this study.

Rates of domestic violence vary within the MENA region. Documented in a literature review of violence against women in Arab and Islamic countries, a national random sample in Egypt (1996) revealed that one in three ever-married women had been beaten at least once since marriage and one third during pregnancy. In Tunisia (1998), 33.8% of women seeking out primary care reported having been beaten by a husband or family member at least once. The emergency unit of a hospital in Casablanca, Morocco (1993) documented 1,506 cases of violence against women that translated into an average occurrence of four cases a day (Douki, Nacef, Bouasker, & Ghachem, 2003). In Syria, 26% of married women reported at least three instances of abuse during the year, while weekly battering occurred among 3.3% of married women (Maziak & Asfar, 2003). According to researchers, Bedouin Arab women in Israel have a 48% lifetime exposure rate to violence in their families (Cwikel, Lev-Wiesel, & Al-Krenawi, 2003). In a review of domestic violence in North Africa, previous reports cited 17,000 instances of gender-based violence in Morocco in early 2008, and 7,400 women filed domestic violence claims in Algeria in 2009 (Sadiqi, 2010). A recent family public health survey from Iraq documented 83.1% of women reporting at least one form of marital control. Overall, younger married women were the most likely to report restrictions; 74.5% of those aged 15 to 24 years reported having to ask permission to seek health care, compared to 60.3% of those aged 40 to 49 years. As for emotional or psychological violence, 33.4% of women reported at least one form of violence and 21.2% of women experienced physical violence (Ministry of Health Iraq, Central Organization for Statistics & Information Technology, Ministry of Health, Kurdistan, Kurdistan Regional Statistics Office, & WHO, Iraq, 2007).

In studies of domestic violence, women are commonly asked about abuse from their partners. For single, never-married women living in their natal households, there
is no one individual commonly believed to be the abuser since there may be several relatives living within the household (this is especially true for the MENA region) who may perpetrate the abuse. However, a number of studies on the MENA region have attempted to identify the perpetrator. In Saudi Arabia, it was revealed that 30% of male respondents had been violent toward a female family member, with female misbehavior cited as the main reason for the abuse, in addition to disapproval over dress and conduct for unmarried women. The most likely targets of such violence were, in order of likelihood, sisters, mothers, sisters-in-law, aunts, and wives (Almosaed, 2004). In a study of Qatari female students, 80% of whom were single never-married women, it was found that 39% were abused by their brothers, 38% by their fathers, and 22% reported abuse from their mothers (Al-Ghanim, 2009). A study in Syria, conducted by UNIFEM and the General Union of Women (2006), revealed that a family member was responsible for beating 80.4% of assaulted women. Husbands were responsible for 54% of the cases; fathers and brothers accounted for 36% and 3% of the abuse, respectively. According to a family health survey in Jordan, 64.2% of women said a current or former partner had physically assaulted them, yet, for those abused by a nonintimate partner, 22.1% were physically assaulted by a brother, 19.9% by a father, and 18.5% by a mother (Department of Statistics [Jordan] & Macro International, Inc., 2008). National research on violence against women in Turkey revealed 39% of women were physically and 15% sexually abused by their partner, whereas 18% were physically and 3% were sexually abused by a nonpartner. The same research noted that the most common perpetrators in non-partner abuse were fathers (42%), mothers (32%), and brothers (16%); (ICON—Institut Public Sector, Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies, & BNB, Ankara, 2009). Personal interviews and visits to shelters in Turkey revealed that women often encountered a substantial amount of violence from in-laws, especially mothers-in-law (Shively, 2011).

Determinants of Domestic Violence

As most research on domestic violence focuses on ever-partnered women, much of the research used to study determinants of violence is also concentrated on this same population with few exceptions. A study concerning a sample of married and unmarried women accessing hospital services in Syria found that married women were more likely to be abused than unmarried women (Maziak & Asfar, 2003). This study also found that the younger a married woman was, the more likely she was to suffer from abuse. Studies have also found that women are more likely to be abused when they have low education levels (Akyuz, Sahiner, & Bakkir, 2008; Gage & Hutchinson, 2006; Koenig, Stephenson, Ahmed, Jejeebhoy, & Campbell, 2006; Maziak & Asfar, 2003), are less educated than their husbands (Yount, 2005), are poorer (Koenig et al., 2006; Yount, 2005), or live in rural areas (El-Zanaty, Hussein, Shawky, Way, & Kishor, 1996; Maziak & Asfar, 2003). Conversely, it was found that higher education among Bedouin Arab women in the Negev region of Israel increased abuse (Cwikel et al., 2003).
Autonomy, Decision-Making Power, and Domestic Violence

Levels of autonomy and decision-making power are important determinants of violence against women within the household and are found to be protective against violence in certain locales (Handwerker, 1998; Kaye, Mirembe, Bantebya, Johansson, & Ekstrom 2006; Tiwari et al., 2005). Autonomy has also been shown to relate to higher levels of education, labor force participation, and higher household wealth (Rammohan & Johar, 2009). Therefore, by association, it is expected that these factors would also reduce rates of domestic violence. However, a number of studies have documented that women with greater household decision-making power have a higher risk of being abused (Gage & Hutchinson, 2006; van der Hulst et al., 2006; Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain, & Khoshed Alam Mozumder, 2003), including among couples that were reported to have equal decision-making power (Flakje & Forste, 2006).

Within the MENA context, levels of education, wealth, and employment impacted women’s participation in household decision-making in Jordan. The higher the level of education and wealth, coupled with the ability to work, made women more likely to participate in household decision-making. The same survey revealed that Jordanian women with high education levels (compared to no education and elementary education) were less likely to experience violence (emotional, physical, and sexual) within the household (Department of Statistics [Jordan] & Macro International, Inc., 2008).

Demographic and Sociocultural Setting Within the OPT

For the purpose of this article, the OPT refers to the noncontiguous territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip, aside from having no geographical continuity, differ demographically, economically, politically, and socially. The separation, both conceptual and physical, is due to the ongoing policy of occupation and annexation instigated by the State of Israel (1967), the militarization of the second Intifada (2000), and the marginalization of the Gaza Strip by Israel (2006). In addition, the current siege on the Gaza Strip has caused further deterioration of the socioeconomic situation in the territory, highlighted by a 23-day military strike by the State of Israel begun in late December 2008 that left more than 1,400 Palestinians dead (PCHR, 2009) and scores more injured. In the West Bank, the effects of expanding illegal Israeli settlements, the continued construction of the all-encircling Separation Wall, and the fluctuating number of checkpoints that impede freedom of movement, have also contributed to worsening conditions.

According to the latest census, the population of the OPT is 4.17 million, 2.12 million males, and 2.05 million females (PCBS, 2011). Literacy rates in the OPT are relatively high overall at 94.9%, with a female literacy rate at 92.2% (PCBS, 2011). Those who have completed a university-level education (Bachelor’s degree or higher) totaled 10.4%, 8.3% of whom are female (PCBS, 2011). When comparing single, never-married women to currently married women, single, never-married women
have been found to be more educated, with 22.9% above 30 years having a secondary and above level of education compared to 10.7% of currently married women of the same age (Halabi, 2007). The labor force participation rate for females is 14.7% (PCBS, 2011).

The proportion of never-married women is higher in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, the proportion has remained at 35% between 1995 and 2004; however, in the Gaza Strip the rate rose from approximately 27% in 1995 to 33% in 2004 (Khawaja, Assaf, & Jarallah, 2009). In fact, one in 10 Palestinian women between the ages of 35 to 39 years are not married (Jarallah, 2008). This is considered to be a distinctive age category in that if a woman continues to be unmarried at this age she is not likely to ever marry.

Palestinian women live within a patriarchal society where they tend to exercise little authority and power. Kinship ties are vital for survival in such an environment; one’s extended family provides not only a name and sense of belonging, but also protection, security, and guidance (Haj, 1992; Khawaja, 2000). As a patrilineal and patrilocal society, the household serves as the location of a family’s honor and status. Thus, Palestinian women are expected to live under the authority of their families and, once married, are transferred to the authority of their husband’s home; it is rare that a single, never-married woman is allowed to live under her own authority or on her own and, if this is done, it is seen as controversial and problematic (Jarallah, 2008; Sa’ar, 2004). In fact, single, never-married women in Palestinian culture are commonly referred to as banat, or girls, until they are married, an indication that social status is strongly linked to marriage and reproduction (Sa’ar, 2004).

Since the start of the second Intifada, there has been an acknowledged decrease in the freedoms experienced by women, especially when compared to the first Intifada (Amireh, 2003). Part of this backlash can be blamed on the militarization of the second Intifada, which has minimized the public activist role of women. Furthermore, the growing Islamicization of the OPT has promoted more traditional roles for women, including pressure on women and girls to wear the hijab, or veil (Holt, 2003; Huntington, Fronk, & Chadwick, 2001) and a focus on women as reproducers of the nation (Abu-Duhou, 2003).

**Domestic Violence in the OPT**

It is only within recent years that domestic violence has been quantitatively documented in the OPT. In 2006, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) conducted a Domestic Violence Survey examining instances of abuse among ever-married women; single, never-married women over 18 years; children; and the elderly (PCBS, 2006). For ever-married women, it was found that 23.3% suffered physical abuse from their husbands, 61.7% psychological abuse, and 10.9% sexual abuse at least once during the year 2005. There were higher rates of all forms of abuse in the West Bank compared to the Gaza Strip. For single, never-married women the rates were found to be 25% for physical abuse and 52.7% for psychological abuse experienced at least once during the year 2005. Similar to their ever-married counterparts, the West Bank
had higher rates of abuse than the Gaza Strip. Exposure to sexual abuse was not asked of single, never-married women, as it was seen as a culturally sensitive issue to ask of a single woman. However, stories of sexual abuse of single, never-married women have been documented by social workers and women’s centers, including instances of incest (Al-Masri, 2000; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005).

**Method**

This study attempts to uncover the determinants of domestic violence against single, never-married women in the OPT using a national domestic violence survey. The hypothesis of the study is that physical abuse and psychological abuse are expected to be significantly higher among single, never-married women with low decision-making power. Such abuse is also expected to be higher among younger women, women who are daughters of the household head, and women with lower education levels, outside of the labor force, residing in rural or camp areas, or living within the Gaza Strip.

**Source of Data**

The data used in this study are from the PCBS Domestic Violence Survey that was conducted between December 18, 2005-January 18, 2006. The number of households in the sample for the survey was 4,212 households (2,772 in the West Bank and 1,440 in the Gaza Strip). The sampling frame used for the survey was from the 1997 Census conducted by PCBS. The sample selected was a two-stage cluster, random and systematic selection. There were four targets in the survey: ever-married women, aged 15-64 years; children, aged 5 to 17 years (interviewed by proxy); elderly, 65 years and over; and single, never-married women, aged 18 years and over.

This article focuses on the data collected from single, never-married women, aged 18 years and over. The number of single, never-married women found in the household sample of the survey was 944 (654 in the West Bank and 290 in the Gaza Strip). The nonresponse rate was 7.7% and was much higher in the West Bank at 10.4% compared to the Gaza Strip at 1.7%. This nonresponse rate of single, never-married women in the West Bank was the highest from all four of the target groups, whether from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, and resulted in 871 single, never-married women actually responding to the survey. However, for the purpose of the analysis in this article, the data were limited to only single, never-married women from 18 to 45 years old as there were low frequencies of single, never-married women after 45 years, and analysis of the outcome indicated 45 years as an appropriate cut-off point. This provided a total of 814 women for analysis and 769 women when the cases were weighted.

**Measures**

Combining all variables from the data that expressed these forms of domestic violence created two outcome variables for physical abuse and psychological abuse. For physical abuse, the variables combined were from women who were asked if
any of their household members used any of the following violent acts against them during the year:

- Threw something that could have hurt them
- Twisted their arm or pulled their hair
- Attacked them with a result of injury
- Pushed them, attacked them with a sharp object
- Beat on the head resulting in a coma
- Hit with a belt or stick, strangled
- Hit for several minutes or more
- Grabbed strongly
- Slapped
- Attack resulting in breaking of bones
- Singed or scorched

For psychological abuse the combined variables were:

- Cursed or insulted
- Told that they were fat or ugly
- Destroyed or spoiled their property
- Yelled or shouted at them
- Went out shouting and angry during a row
- Were told that they are a loose sister or daughter
- Said things to provoke their anger

These variables for physical and psychological abuse gave options for single, never-married women aged 18 years and over to answer the number of times they had suffered the abuse; however, since these frequencies were low, the new outcome variables were recoded to be either suffered abuse or not (i.e., dichotomous variables).

Secondary analysis was performed using multilogistic bivariate and multivariate regression for both these outcome variables with the main independent variable of interest being decision-making power of single, never-married women in the household. These women were asked to what extent they felt that they were capable of making decisive decisions in the household in general and the options were: none, low, medium, and high. This variable was recoded into two categories; having low to no decision-making power and having middle to high decision-making power.

The other independent variables used in the analysis included: age (continuous variable), relation to head of household (recoded according to frequencies to: daughter or other relation, including household head, sister, mother, grandmother and granddaughter); refugee status (refugee or nonrefugee); education level (recoded according to frequencies to: preparatory and less or secondary and over); work status (recoded according to frequencies into: in the labor force, full-time student and not working, or not working and not seeking work); locality type (urban, rural, or camp); and region (West Bank or Gaza Strip).
**Results**

**Description of the Sample**

The results indicated that 26% of single, never-married women in the sample were physically abused in the household and that over half (54%) were psychologically abused (see Table 1). The mean age, within the sample range from 18 to 45 years, was found to be 23.9 ±6.8. The majority of the women were daughters (88%) of the household head, with all other relations, including female-headed households,
sisters, granddaughters, or other relatives accounting for the remaining 12% of the sample. Most of the women had a secondary education or higher (62.5%). More than a third of the sample (36.1%) was not working and not seeking work; 41.6% were not working because they were full-time students, and 22.3% were in the labor force. About 43% of the sample had refugee status; however, only 16.6% lived in refugee camps, while more than half (57.7%) lived in urban areas. The sample was also distributed proportionally over the OPT, with 34.5% living in the Gaza Strip and 65.5% living in the West Bank. A large portion of the sample, 71%, indicated that they had medium to high decision-making power within their household.

**Unadjusted Results**

The unadjusted results found in Table 2 indicated that for physical abuse, only age and decision-making power were significantly associated with abuse of single, never-married women. Relation to household head, refugee status, education level, labor force status, and region were all found not to be significantly associated with physical abuse. For psychological abuse, the results showed more variables with significant associations to age, relation to household head, education level, labor force status, region, and decision-making power. Only refugee status and locality type were found not to be significantly associated with psychological abuse.

**Adjusted Results**

As shown in Table 3, two multilogistic regressions were conducted for the adjusted analysis: one for physical abuse and the other for psychological abuse. For the physical abuse regression, only age, and decision-making power were significant predictors of abuse, as was found in the unadjusted results. For age, the results indicated that the younger the woman, the more likely she was to be physically abused. For decision-making power, those who reported low to no decision-making power were 2.5 times more likely to be physically abused than those who reported medium to high decision-making power.

For psychological abuse, relation to household head, education level, and labor force status lost their significance when compared to the unadjusted results. For age, the results are similar to physical abuse, showing that the younger the woman, the more likely she was to be abused. Also, similar to the results of the physical abuse regression, those who reported low to no decision-making power were 2.5 times more likely to be psychologically abused than those who reported medium to high decision-making power. One difference between the logistic regression of physical abuse and that of psychological abuse was the region variable. In the logistic regression of physical abuse, region was not significant. However, in the psychological abuse regression, this variable was significant, with single, never-married women in the West Bank twice as likely (OR 2.0) to experience psychological abuse as their counterparts in the Gaza Strip.
Table 2. Unadjusted Results of Physical and Psychological Abuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Abused physically</th>
<th>Abused psychologically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes %</td>
<td>No %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age **</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrefugee</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory &amp; less</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary +</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor force status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In labor force</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time student</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working &amp; not seeking</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bank</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza Strip</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low to none</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to high</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p values are for two-tailed X² test.
**Age is continuous variable with reported unadjusted OR value and p value.
Discussion

The results indicate that decision-making power within the household for single, never-married Palestinian women is strongly associated with domestic violence providing a lower risk of being abused. This was also found in studies of married women conducted in Antigua and Barbados, Uganda, and China (Handwerker, 1998; Kaye et al., 2006; Tiwari et al., 2005), as well as within the Palestinian West Bank cities of Hebron, Jenin, and Ramallah (Dhaher, Mikolajczyk, Maxwell, & Kramer, 2010).

The results also indicate that younger age and limited decision-making power are significant predictors of both physical and psychological abuse of single, never-married Palestinian women; region was found to be significant for psychological abuse alone. Younger age as a risk factor for abuse was found in studies conducted on married and unmarried women in Syria (Maziak & Asfar, 2003), young wives in the

Table 3. Logistic Regression of Physical and Psychological Abuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Abused physically</th>
<th>Abused psychologically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR [95% CI]</td>
<td>p value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (continuous)</td>
<td>0.9 [0.9, 1.0]</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>0.9 [0.5, 1.6]</td>
<td>0.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relation (ref.)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>1.0 [0.7, 1.4]</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrefuge (ref.)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory &amp; less</td>
<td>1.3 [0.9, 1.9]</td>
<td>0.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary + (ref.)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor force status</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In labor force (ref.)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time student</td>
<td>0.9 [0.6, 1.5]</td>
<td>0.807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working &amp; not seeking</td>
<td>0.7 [0.4, 1.2]</td>
<td>0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (ref.)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1.1 [0.7, 1.6]</td>
<td>0.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp</td>
<td>1.1 [0.6, 1.8]</td>
<td>0.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bank</td>
<td>1.2 [0.8, 1.8]</td>
<td>0.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza Strip (ref.)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low to none</td>
<td>2.5 [1.8, 3.6]</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to high (ref)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Philippines (Hindin & Adair, 2002), and Arab Bedouin women under the age of 40 years living in Israel (Cwikel et al., 2003). However, an equal number of studies found youth to be a protective factor within the household (Dalal, Rahman, & Jansson, 2009; Klomegah, 2008; Mezey, Post, & Maxwell, 2002). This was also true in Egypt and Jordan (Department of Statistics [Jordan] & Macro International, Inc., 2008; El-Zanaty & Way, 2006.)

As for region as a predictor of abuse, no previous studies exist with a focus on the OPT, and given the unique situation of the OPT it is difficult to compare this result to other locations in the literature. The results indicate that single, never-married Palestinian women are more prone to psychological abuse in the West Bank compared to the Gaza Strip. Admittedly, this is an unexpected result given the hardships that the Gaza Strip has undergone recently. However, it is important to note that the PCBS survey was conducted in late 2005 and early 2006, just after the Israeli settler pullout and just before the election of Hamas that resulted in an international financial boycott and an Israeli-imposed siege on the over-burdened territory. Comparisons should be done with future domestic violence surveys in order to measure the impact of region on single, never-married Palestinian women’s safety within the home.

There is no significant evidence that locality (urban, rural or refugee camp) protects single, never-married Palestinian women from domestic violence. One previous study in Kenya (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008) did not find any significance with locality as well. This is in contrast to a number of studies that have indicated rural locality as a significant predictor of abuse (El-Zanaty et al., 1996; Klomegah, 2008; Lawoko, Dalal, Jiayou, & Jansson, 2007; Maziak & Asfar, 2003), rural areas and refugee camps as less protective than urban areas (Haj-Yahia, 2000), and those that found urban areas as a risk factor (Al-Nsour, Khawaja, & Khayyali, 2009; Hindin & Adair, 2002).

Contrary to the findings of other studies, increased education levels (Akyuz et al., 2008; Anson & Sagy, 1995; Kimuna & Djamba, 2008; Klomegah, 2008; Koenig et al., 2006; Maziak & Asfar, 2003; Mezey et al., 2002; Rammohan & Johar, 2009) and labor force participation (Rammohan & Johar, 2009) were not found to be significant predictors of either physical or psychological abuse among single, never-married Palestinian women. However, some variations do exist in the literature. An earlier study on domestic violence in Palestinian households revealed that wives who did not earn a salary or whose level of education was higher than that of their husband were at greater risk of abuse (Haj-Yahia, 2000). A study of Bedouin Arab women in Israel found an increased risk of abuse with higher education (Cwikel et al., 2003). In Kenya, while higher education proved to be a protective factor, the combination of higher education and employment actually increased a woman’s exposure to violence (Lawoko et al., 2007). This study also revealed that a postsecondary education alone was more protective.

Specific to Palestinian women, female educational attainment is already expected within Palestinian society. Education may not function as a protective factor because attending school is already expected of females and does not constitute an exceptional achievement. In fact, a study on family roles in contemporary Palestinian society revealed that education did not provide Palestinian women any greater freedoms.
outside the home; likewise, women working outside the home did not liberalize gender roles and attitudes within the home (Huntington et al., 2001). In addition, increased levels of education have not led to sufficient increases in economic and political participation for Palestinian women.

As for Palestinian women’s labor force participation, the OPT has one of the lowest rates in the Arab world (United Nations Development Programme, 2006). The types of employment traditionally held by women, the majority of whom are concentrated in agriculture and the service sector, often give little economic and psychological empowerment to women. If a woman ventures into another sector, the economic contribution to her family, while helpful, may not necessarily give her power or improve her status within the home as she may be viewed as “stealing” jobs from the males in her household. A similar finding was revealed in a cross-country study concerning attitudes toward wife beating in Asia (Rani & Bonu, 2009).

Finally, while the findings show that the majority of the Palestinian women surveyed were daughters of the household head (88%), this relationship was not found to be significantly associated with abuse of any type. As the majority of studies on violence in the home concentrate on spousal abuse, few specifically measure other relationships to household head. The literature measuring instances of violence toward women in the household indicated that the relationship is commonly daughter with father as abuser (Al-Ghanim, 2009; UNIFEM & the General Union of Women, 2006), sister with brother as abuser (Al-Ghanim, 2009; Almosaed, 2004; UNIFEM & the General Union of Women, 2006), and daughter with mother as abuser (Al-Ghanim, 2009).

As previously discussed, the OPT is a unique locale to measure factors contributing to domestic violence against single, never-married women. This study has revealed that higher age and greater decision-making power clearly influence instances of abuse in the Palestinian household for single, never-married women. Decision-making power within the household showed a decreased risk of abuse, but it is still unclear how such power is gained. Cross-tabulations indicate that there are significant associations with education and age; therefore, it would be interesting to study the factors that cause single, never-married women to have high decision-making power within the household in order to further understand this strong association with domestic violence.

**Limitations**

Reporting is always a problem for any study involving domestic violence and the data used in this article are no different. Reporting issues may also exist within the original survey for the decision-making variables, since they are subjective and some women may not want to admit that they have low decision-making power. It is unclear what decisive decision-making power entails in the PCBS survey; detailed questions regarding decision-making power would have provided greater insight into single, never-married women’s decision-making power in the household and its nuances. In addition, the reliability and validity of this measure is unknown. Likewise, the responses and
efforts by single, never-married women to exercise decision-making power might be viewed through a lens of gender-based oppression. As previously touched upon, the OPT is a patriarchal setting. Within such a setting it is important to keep in mind that patriarchal attitudes can and will limit women’s opportunities, no matter how many determinants or environmental factors are considered as serving to (dis)empower women and girls.

Another limitation included restricted data on other forms of violence experienced by single, never-married women. One form of violence relevant to the Palestinian context, particularly against single younger women, includes so-called “honor killings.” As a contentious topic, it merits discussion due to the fear surrounding its possibility. Exact numbers documenting the phenomenon are difficult to find, but a human rights organization in the Gaza Strip documented a total of 47 acknowledged murders between 2003 and late 2009 in the territory alone (PHRMG, 2009) indicating the extent of the violence. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005) has noted that the public disclosure of sexual assault/abuse against a woman increases the likelihood of her murder in the name of family honor.

Many women’s and human rights activists see the conflict impacting rates of violence against Palestinian women and girls; however, data are still being collected and analyzed to measure its impact. Recent research has noted violence in the public sphere may result in increased violence within the home. Husbands directly exposed to political violence are more likely to perpetrate acts of physical, sexual, and psychological violence against their spouses (Clark et al., 2010). Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s ongoing research (2009) argues that conflict-affected spaces and militarization increase the insecurity of Palestinian women and girls and promote violence against them. Researchers have also noted that witnessing violent acts in the public sphere is strongly associated with instances of domestic violence in the OPT (Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Sehwail, 2007). Similar research revealed that Palestinian girls were more likely to be exposed to higher levels of violence within the home than their male peers, despite encountering the same levels of political violence in the public sphere (Lev-Wiesel, Al-Krenawi, & Sehwail, 2007). Despite these recent studies, more long-term research is necessary to confirm whether violence in the public sphere is concretely linked to domestic violence in the Palestinian household.

The analysis may have also been limited by the availability of variables; for instance, the income level and education levels of the family were not included. Also, never-married women were not asked who the perpetrator of the abuse was in the household. Although most of the sample found the victims to be daughters of the household head, this does not necessarily mean that the abuser was the father; abuse from a brother, mother, or other relative in the household may have been perpetrated. The survey did not ask for the number of rooms or the number of members of the household from which a crowding index could be calculated; this information would have been a useful variable to include in the analysis. The order of the single women compared to other possible siblings was also not measured in the survey. Finally, the survey is a cross-sectional design and, therefore, one cannot infer causality of abuse.
Implications for the Future and Concluding Remarks

Since single, never-married Palestinian women are expected to live with their natal families until they marry, it is important to understand the risks of abuse they may face in the household. This study has found that age and decision-making power were significantly associated with physical and psychological abuse in the household. However, it was not clear how single, never-married women gained decision-making power in the household. Revealing this unknown factor will be key to learning how best to nurture an environment where single, never-married women are able to exercise decision-making power in the household and, thus, be protected from domestic violence. As this article has discussed, worldwide there is a dearth of information on domestic violence against single, unmarried women. Therefore, the first step in understanding the unique needs and vulnerabilities of this population would be through further research, particularly qualitative research studies, with single, never-married women, examining their decision-making power within the household.

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