# Female Economic Empowerment and Intimate Partner Violence in El Salvador

## – A Minor Field Study

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# Abstract

Research shows that women's labour market participation in low- and middle-income countries promotes female economic empowerment. However, it is still unclear if and how increased economic opportunities, e.g. through labour market participation, affects women's exposure to intimate partner violence and overall well-being. Economic bargaining models shed light on the economic empowerment of women and suggest that it should decrease intimate partner violence. The idea is that access to monetary recourses put women in a less vulnerable position against men in the household. In contrast, the sociological male-backlash model predicts that increased female economic empowerment might have a negative affect on women's well-being. Given women's increased power position in the household men try to make restitution for their decreased authority. Gender theorists criticise both theories for not including culture, social norms and contexts.

This Minor Field Study aims to explore and discuss how female economic empowerment, as women capacity in terms of monetary resources, affects the extent of exposure of intimate partner violence in a context of a macho culture. The data analysed relies on a field survey conducted in three cities in El Salvador during April and May 2018 and the sample includes 312 female participants. Regression results show that measures of economic empowerment sometimes are insignificant, but also that women having an employment and a paid income seem to be significantly more exposed to intimate partner violence in El Salvador, in line with the backlash model. Traditional gender norms thus seems challenged and hinder women from taking full advantage of increased economic empowerment.

*Key words*: *female economic empowerment, intimate partner violence, traditional gender norms, El Salvador, Latin America*

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# 1   Introduction

In 1993 the United Nations shed light on *violence against women* when defining it as "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 deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". Globally the perpetrators of violence against women are close to always men, often husbands or other intimate male partners, making intimate partner violence one of the most common forms of violence against women (Heise et al. 1999, p.3-5; WHO 2016). The presence of intimate partner violence against women cuts across all different religious, ethnic and social contexts (PAHO 1997). Worldwide 30 % of all women that have been in a relationship have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence by their partner (WHO 2016) and this is the most common cause of death of women between the age of 19 and 44 (Johnson et al. 2008, p.1).

Besides the individual harm on women's well-being and overall health (Jewkes 2002a; Johnson et al. 2008), violence against women brings enormous costs throughout society. It possesses large economic burden for countries health care systems since women with history of physical, sexual or psychological abuse are shown to seek medical attention more frequently than non-victims (PAHO 1997). In a lot of cases the violence also increases women's inability to work and participate in social activities, which not only leads to personal but also national loss of productivity and wealth (WHO 2016; Heise et al. 1999). In addition violence against women is a major threat for the survival and well-being of children, the future of our societies (Kishor & Johnson 2004).

Economic bargaining theory argues that female economic empowerment reduces women's risk of experiencing intimate partner violence by strengthening women's power position in the household and providing them with a resort out of an abusive relationship (Bott et al. 2012). Little evidence is thus found when it comes to empirically prove the economic bargaining model in low- and middle-income countries (Aizer 2010; Guarnieri et al. 2018). Still female economic empowerment is an important worldwide goal and strategy for eliminating violence against women (Heise et al. 1999) since it establishes an important element of well-being by reducing their economic dependency on men (Sen 1999) but also

serves a key element in poverty reduction (The World Bank 2012; True 2012). However, the empowerment, also or in contrary, might act as an aggressor to conflict. In contrast to the economic bargaining theory, the sociological male-backlash model generally predict that the affect of female economic empowerment is negative on intimate partner violence because of that men see their role as breadwinners undermined when women are/gets active in paid work outside the household (Lenze & Klasen 2017).

Gender theorists criticize both models for their singular transformatory power of female economic empowerment. Among others, Jewkes (2002b) argues that the prevalence of intimate partner violence also depends on the social and cultural setting. In contexts where traditional gender roles are challenged by women's increasing empowerment (economic empowerment through employment status and social empowerment through education) women's vulnerability to intimate partner violence is argued to also increase. In these arguments, it is suggested that violence results from patriarchal gender norms being violated by female empowerment (Kishor & Johnson 2004) and from norms of violence as a way to resolve conflict (Jewkes 2002a; 2002b).

The empirical evidence on the affect of female economic empowerment on intimate partner violence are mixed. Some studies indicate that the affect is positive while others indicate that there is a negative affect or no significant affect at all. In a time where women's labour market participation are increasing globally – not least in countries where gender norms traditionally have been putting women outside the labour market (True 2012), without chance to enforce monetary resources on their own – it is important to gain further knowledge about the link between female economic empowerment and intimate partner violence.

By this research I aim to investigate the relevance of the competing bargaining and male-backlash theoretical arguments to explore what possible linkages there are between female economic empowerment and intimate partner violence. The research question I ask is: *How does female economic empowerment affect the extent of exposure of intimate partner violence?*

The main sources for the study is data collected through my Minor Field Study in El Salvador during April and May 2018, regression estimates from the data conducted and previous empirical findings and literature. Four equations are estimated on two separated samples

capturing four elements of female economic empowerment, working status, earnings, economic independence/dependence and household ownership. Results show that traditional gender norms and male-identity as breadwinners of the household are challenged by female economic empowerment since employment, income and economic independence have negative affects on intimate partner violence in El Salvador. The measures of employment and the highest level of income are significant. The last estimation, focusing on ownership, is the only one not supporting the male-backlash model empirically, but the evidence from this estimation is weak.

Apart from shedding light on the relationship between economic empowerment and partner violence the relevance of the research should also be seen in light of the increasing global awareness of women's health and rights issues caused by violence against women, not least intimate partner violence.

# 2 Theoretical background

## 2.1 Economic bargaining model

Economic theorists commonly point out women's access to the labour market as a positive factor for decreasing intimate partner violence against women (Sen 1999). Economic household bargaining models (employment-empowerment models) explain that female economic empowerment will increase due to their access to monetary resources i.e. increased labour market participation. Hence, a woman will have a more independent status towards her partner, which reduces the exposure to intimate partner violence (Heise et al. 2015). I.e. a less financial dependent position gives the woman a concrete resort out of an abusive relationship, which is why female economic empowerment is predicted to have a protective affect on intimate partner violence in the bargaining model (Lenze & Klasen 2017).

The singular transformatory power of female economic empowerment in the bargaining model is thus commonly criticized. It excludes the complex context of different households and its prediction get's too generalizing. The meaning and outcome of female economic empowerment in one societal setting may not be the same in another setting given the existence of different societal structures among countries and even areas within countries (Malhotra et al. 2002). Moreover, women do not face the same problems in all countries due to different societal, thereto patriarchal, structures being present in different societies. How the social construction and experience of being a man often plays a crucial role when it comes to how men act out violently against women is therefore important to bring into the investigation of female economic empowerment and it's link to intimate partner violence (Malhotra et al. 2002; True 2012).

There are a lot of different kinds of constructions and experiences of being a man, yet the identities have traditionally been constructed as breadwinner identities, assuming control over not only income and resources but also women which legitimise an exclusion of women from formal work (Kersten 1996; True 2012). Some argue that along a culture of acceptance of violence as conflict resolving, lack of money and thus to be put in a dependent position as a

woman towards a man is a large cause to intimate partner violence (Ellsberg et al. 2000). Moreover, gender theorists argues that women generally are not fully aware of their preferences and also that the complex context produce unequal abilities in the bargaining process, and that not only power from paid work can predict the ability to leave a relationship (Heise et al. 2015). A fact that still remains is however that a woman without any monetary resources and agency, such as economic empowerment can bring, will be left without an alternative to leave an abusive relation (Heise et al. 2015).

## 2.2   Male-backlash model

The sociological male-backlash model argues that as women's labour market access increases intimate partner violence increases too. The reason for this is that men tries to make restitution for their decreased authority due to the women increased power position (Lenze & Klasen 2017). Masculine identities are challenged by the increase of women access to socioeconomic opportunities, which in this theoretical line results in an increase of men's violence against women compensating for the loss of economic control and both economical and social ways to prove their masculine identity. Given women's economic activity and independence increases as a result of female economic empowerment, men see their role as breadwinners undermined and therefore the violence increases (Lenze & Klasen 2017; True 2012).

The economist Anna Aizer (2007) argues that the male-backlash model leaves out the reality of women's rationality constraint. The possibility of that an abused woman can choose to end the relationship is somehow left out of considerations in the model making it quite singular in its transformatory power of female economic empowerment too. Just as gender theorists also, more commonly, argues that the bargaining model is. Even though this model possibly can be considered including a bit more cultural contextual considerations in its prediction.

## 2.3   Previous Literature

When it comes to a boost in female economic empowerment, the household bargaining model is empirically shown to hold for high-income countries (Aizer 2010; Guarnieri et al. 2018).

An increase in labour market opportunities reduces the risk of intimate partner violence (Anderberg et al. 2016). However, the empirical literature is mixed when it comes to other than high-income countries, making it critical to simply apply the household bargaining model on a low or middle-income country setting. Just as an increase in female economic empowerment can reduce economic stress within a household it can also introduce tension within households (Bhattacharyya et al. 2011).

Even though Macmillan and Gartner (1999) show some, but little, evidence for employment (as a measurement of women monetary recourses) playing a protective role against intimate partner violence (called spousal violence in their article) their study emphasizes a symbolic, rather than economic, view of employment when studying it's link to intimate partner violence. Echoing gender theorists' arguments about the need to consider cultural contexts in these kinds of studies. Also, results from Atkinson et al. (2005) support the importance of taking gender inequality frameworks in consideration. In traditional social contexts where men still see their masculinity as breadwinners of the households they are more likely to compensate a lack of relative income with violence, i.e. female economic empowerment challenge some men's masculinity identities in a way that makes women's risk of abuse increase with the empowerment.

Interviews with men in a study made in South Africa (Boonzaier 2005) shred important insights to the literature by investigating how more economic opportunities for women, in a context of rising unemployment among men, affected intimate partner violence against women. Results show that men's lack to live up to the encouraged successful masculine identity where justifying their violent behaviour against women (True 2012). In the struggle between traditionally set norms of how to be a man and women's increased economic opportunity are subject to men's violence in their struggle to maintain their dominant identity (True 2012). This is also shown to be true in all surveyed countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where a positive correlation is found between female employment and intimate partner violence, supporting the male-backlash model (Guarnieri et al. 2018). In addition, Yount (2005) that focus on Egypt, suggest that the relative, but not absolute, difference between women and men socioeconomic status increase the risk of intimate partner violence against women.

Bhattacharyya et al. (2011) study a rural Indian setting where they show evidence supporting

the economic bargaining model. Women's employment reduces intimate partner violence there and women's ownership plays a protective role against such violence. Therefore they argue for policies that boost female economic empowerment in order to increase women security. Heise et al. (2015) use data from semi-structured interviews in Tanzania where focus also lays on women's employment status and even though they do not find evidence for it to fully play a protective role against all kinds of intimate partner violence, the women's access to money have a positive effect on reducing violence rather than negative supporting the economic bargaining model too.

Lenze and Klasen (2017) use a national household survey from Jordan when exploring the link between women's employment status and intimate partner violence. Here they include men's employment status and education level when running regressions, but instead of it relatively to the women, they conclude that an increase in men's *absolute* education is the most robust factor against intimate partner violence. The only evidence when it comes to women's employment status and its link to intimate partner violence is that increased opportunities reduce the risk of sexual violence perpetrated against women. Furthermore, Panda and Agarwal (2005) finds that women ownership of households in India is associated with a reduction of intimate partner violence.

However, previous studies mentioned above, focusing on regions as a whole but also countries like South Africa, Egypt, India, Jordan and Tanzania do not really show how the relationship looks like in a more close-up Central American context where the culture are much influenced by machismo.

A large Latin American and Caribbean cross-country comparing study conducted by The Pan American Organization found solid evidence of that women from all socioeconomic groups have been exposed to intimate partner violence (Bott et al. 2012). Even though it is an overall presence of this type of violence in the region, there are large differences in socioeconomic group percentage present across countries. Women's education, wealth and urban residence are all correlated differently or not at all depending on what country at focus. That, and most relevant considered for this study, differences among countries in women's employment and it's association with intimate partner violence emphasize importance of more country-specific studies and understanding when it comes to how sociodemographic characteristics may affect the exposure of intimate partner violence. Current or recent women employment were namely

associated with an higher extent of intimate partner violence in 9 of 12 countries, not associated at all in 2 countries and negatively associated in one, Nicaragua 2006/7. This negative association in Nicaragua have also earlier been found by Kishor & Johnson (2004). El Salvador was thus not one of the investigated countries (Bott et al. 2012; Kishor and Johnson 2004). Hence it is relevant to investigate the relationship between female labour market participation and intimate partner violence in an El Salvadorian context to get a better picture of what impact women access to the labour market in the patriarchal system that exists there has.

## 2.4 Definitions

Female Economic Empowerment is defined as, the "capacity to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth" (OECD 2011). I consider the empowerment to occur by increased women employment opportunities providing them with monetary recourses that improves their economic status, independently from men.

One of the most common types of violence against women is violence including; physical, sexual and emotional abuse, perpetrated by an intimate partner. Making intimate partner violence being defined as "any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship" (WHO 2012). Domestic violence is more commonly used to refer to partner violence, but that term also includes child or elder abuse by any member of a household (WHO 2012), which are not investigated in this study and therefore not used.

In my research focus lies on how economic empowerment of women in El Salvador affect their exposure to intimate partner violence. I.e. how increased monetary resources, independence from men, possibly affect their vulnerability to intimate partner violence.

# 3  Contextual background

## 3.1  El Salvador and Intimate Partner Violence

The culture in Latin America is highly influenced by the concept of machismo that emphasizes the differences between men and women giving men both economic and social dominance over women (Ellsberg et al. 2000). Within this macho culture and social context women in El Salvador does not obtain the same rights as men in many different aspects, such as taking part of public given resources as land and healthcare for example, women rights are extremely compromised and women's access to economic opportunities are often highly discriminated.

El Salvador is pointed out to be one of the most violent countries' in the world. Violence and not least intimate partner violence are widespread in the country and the oppression of women is striking. The country has one of the world's strictest abortion laws, causing huge barrier to women's freedom from violence and discrimination (Torjesen 2017). At the same time, on-going and lately up trapping gang conflict that usually affect men has led to even more acceptance and abominable acts of violence against women too, making the gender-based violence faced by women even worse (Albaladejo 2016).

Within a context of gang-conflicts but foremost a context of machismo boosting not only gender inequality but also gender-based violence directly targeted against women El Salvador was 2016 listed as one of the deadliest countries for women in the world (Pavesi & Widmer 2016). The traditional view of men having a breadwinning position in the private arena i.e. the household puts women in a long-term socially rooted dependent position against men. Laws as the total ban of abortion further exacerbates violence against women contributing to the violation of women's rights and their unequal gender position (Bhattacharyya et al. 2011; Drysdale Walsh & Menjívar 2016).

UN Women report in their Global Database on Violence against Women (2016) that of all El Salvadorian women aged 15-49 years who is or have been in a relationship, 47 % have experienced some kind of intimate partner violence. To separate verbal and physical violence,

26 % of these women experienced physical and/or sexual violence (FESAL 2008). The same national survey that the UN Women report from identified that most of the experienced violence were acted by men drinking alcohol, taking drugs, being jealous or when the woman were questioning the man. Notably, the latter source of intimate partner violence can be seen rooted in traditional gender norms where women are subordinate men (Jewkes 2002a; 2002b). Data showing urban living women experiencing more intimate partner violence than rural living women does thus question "traditional views" as being the main driver of intimate partner violence, given that more traditional views are present in rural areas than in urban, predicting the violence to be more present in rural areas (FESAL 2008, p.255 table 9.9).

## 3.2 El Salvador and Female Economic Empowerment

During the last decade, after the end of the civil war in 1992, El Salvador has gone through a steady but slow economic growth. Earlier, women didn't contribute to the economy but much thanks to significant democratic progress and a closing gender gaps in education, women labour market opportunities has increased making their contribution to the economy enlarged (The World Bank 2012; USAID 2018). The new economic contributions are as a whole great and female labour market participation are argued to play a valuable part in poverty reduction in the region of Latin America as a whole (The World Bank 2012; True 2012).

Despite the positive reduction of inequality and poverty, there still exist a lot of gender-based violence. Latin America and El Salvador face large challenges but also possibilities for development when it comes to women's possibility of taking advantage of increased economic opportunities (The World Bank 2012). On country level female labour market participation are estimated to 53 % where 72 % are workers in informal employment, which means only 28 % of all women that work are formally employed. In comparison, men labour force participation is estimated to be about 83 % where 33 % are formally employed (UNDP 2015; World Economic Forum 2017).

# 4  Method

## 4.1 The field survey

The empirical analysis uses a cross-sectional women-only survey designed and carried out exclusively for this Minor Field Study. The survey data is compiled through a questionnaire of 21 questions carried out in the municipality of La Libertad and two larger cities, Santa Tecla and San Salvador, during April and May 2018. With an aim to explore how women capacity in terms of monetary resources affect the extent of exposure of intimate partner violence the questionnaire includes questions about female economic empowerment (such as women's working situation, earnings, status of economic independence and ownership of household) and it's questioned relation to the study's key variable *intimate partner violence*. Thereto, the questionnaire includes questions about age, education level, civil status, children and household composition to control for when running regressions. The dependent variable, *intimate partner violence*, captures the incidence of psychical, sexual and psychological intimate partner violence but it is a binary variable only possible to take the value 1 if ever abused or 0 if not. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix.

The questionnaire was developed after discussions with my Swedish supervisor Therese Nilsson and inspiration from relevant studies made earlier (Aizer 2007; Atkinson et al. 2005; Bhattacharyya et al. 2001; Heise et al. 2015; Lenze & Klasen 2017). In El Salvador informal discussions and translations of the questionnaire were made with Karen Castillo, a local woman both working in La Libertad and studying at the University of El Salvador, San Salvador. Discussions at the University of El Salvador were held with the director of the Department of Gender studies José Danilo Ramíres and with Professor Godofredo Arguillón from the Department of Economics to further develop the survey. A meeting was also held with a representative from the solid Women's Rights Organization Ormusa to elaborate the design of the survey even more and discuss strategies of how to best approach women when collecting the data. Both the director, professor and the represent from Ormusa came with valuable insights for the study and with their earlier country specific knowledge the survey became more right for its context.

In total 312 women older than 15 participated in the survey, 219 in La Libertad, 37 in Santa Tecla and 56 in San Salvador. All women who participated where asked the same questions verbally and their answers where filled in by me. This was not the original plan of how to conduct my Minor Field Study. A pilot study were first made in La Libertad where I handed over the questionnaires to women, wanting them to read the questions and fill in their answers privately. There and then I realized many women being analphabetic which made me adopt the strategy of verbally asking and filling in the answers of every women, not treating them differently due to their reading and writing skills. All women were approached one by one in public areas and asked to contribute to the study by answering a few questions about their life and experiences as women in El Salvador. In order to make the sample as random as possible they were approached without differencing between looks, age or other individual characteristics. Women were never approached when companied by men or other women. The women were very helpful and there was nobody who did not answer to the questions asked. It was only a few cases were it was impossible to achieve privacy enough to continue but these are not included in the sample.

Just as all surveys this also has its problems, and the problems does not get less complicated by having a subject of violence against women. As all other surveys about violence against women and not least intimate partner violence a number of abused women will not answer about their abusive situations due to a vary of reasons (Lenze & Klasen 2017). However, the survey conducted for this study got a percentage of women having experienced intimate partner violence quite comparable to earlier findings (see 5.1 Descriptive statistics). By reason of security aspects the survey was conducted during daytime, which probably made the sample less random than if conducted during different times of the day/evening. Women working domestically, in their own household or in others, usually work during daytime lowering the possibility of encountering them in a public area at daytime. To not loose women working at open markets or at other public areas during daytime some were encountered at their working spot and also during Saturdays and Sundays. In addition it was easier to find and get older women to participate in the survey, probably creating some tendency in the sample too, even though controlling for age in regressions. All this, and also that the sample is quite small due to time limitation, is important to have in mind when analysing the results and conclusions drawn from this survey data. 312 women from three cities participated and generalizations about how women capacity in terms of monetary resources affect the extent of

exposure of intimate partner violence in Latin America and El Salvador has to be done carefully.

## 4.2 Empirical Specification

Using the collected micro level data from El Salvador and regression analysis, I estimate how four different indicators of female economic empowerment affect the extent of intimate partner violence. Hence four models of equations with different independent key variables are used to investigate how women (1) working status, (2) monthly income, (3) economic dependency and (4) ownership of household separately affect intimate partner violence. These models are first estimated for the survey's sample as a whole and thereafter for a sample only including women in a relationship. The reason for this division is that I want to be able to compare my results to results in the previous literature that generally focuses on married women. I will also use the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) that measures the $i$th independent variable's collinearity with the other included independent variables by the equation: $\mathbf{1/(1\text{-}R^2_i)}$ in order to avoid multicollinearity in the regressions (O'brien 2007).

As mentioned, female economic empowerment is in this study considered to occur by increased women employment opportunities providing them with monetary recourses that improve their economic status, independently from men. Equation (1) is therefore the equation of main concern for this study since its key independent variable "working status" captures if the woman work 1, or not 0. What kind and what level of female economic empowerment that an employment opportunity generates differ thus a lot between working women. Different amount of income might result in different affects on intimate partner violence. Therefore equation (2) is of further interest as it captures how different levels of income affect the probability of experiencing intimate partner violence.

How employment status and income opportunities generate economic independence can vary a lot between women. Women living in various types of households, in different regions/cities, with individually characterized family backgrounds, various amount of children etc. all face different levels of economic independence, making equation (3) interesting even though the affect of working status and income is already in consideration

since this equation isolates women's economic dependency on men (1 = dependent, 0 = independent). Equation (4), where women household ownership is under closer consideration is just as equation (3) taking family background into account, an ownership of an household can as an example be inherited and not only be a result of monetary resources earned from employment opportunities. Still, the connection to employment opportunities for both key independent variables in equation (3) economic dependency and (4) household ownership cannot be excluded, which is why both equations are important to the study as a whole.

The dependent binary variable for all equations indicates whether the woman has experienced intimate partner violence 1, or not 0. Also, the same control variables (civil status, children, education, age, region and partner view of working status) are included in all equations, in line with earlier studies on intimate partner (and/or domestic) violence (Aizer 2007; Atkinson et. al 2005; Lenze & Klasen 2017). Civil status indicates if she is currently in a relationship or not, children is her amount of children, education is a vector of three education dummies (basic education, medium education and university education in relation to no education as reference category), age is also a vector of three age dummies (21-26, 27-35 and >35, all in relation to the reference category 15-20), region is a vector of two residence dummies (Santa Tecla and La Libertad, with reference category San Salvador), partner view of working status indicates if the partner disagree about her participating in paid work 0, or not 1.

Equation (1) Key independent variable: *working status*

$$Intimate\ partner\ violence\ (IPV) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 women's\ working\ status_i + \beta_2 civil\ status_i + \beta_3 children_i + \beta_4 education\ level_i + \beta_5 age_i + \beta_6 region_i + \beta_7 partner\ view\ of\ working\ status_i + e_i$$

In equation (1) the impact of women's working status on the probability of experience any type of intimate partner violence is estimated. Women's "working status" is therefore the key independent variable in this equation (1) taking the value 0 if the woman does not work outside her household and 1 if she does, not taking type (formal or not) of employment into account. There is a potential endogeneity issue since we cannot only assume women's working status to affect the exposure of intimate partner violence without assuming the opposite too. The exposure of intimate partner violence might affect women's working status

by affecting women willingness to work. Since a presence of intimate partner violence might lead to a decrease in women motivation to work due to health consequences (Lloyd 1997; Staggs & Rigger 2005) just as it may lead to an increase in women motivation to work (Narayan et al. 2000) the causality may run both ways, leading to a biased coefficient on women's working status.

Equation (2) Key independent variable: *monthly income from paid work*

$$\textit{Intimate partner violence (IPV)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \textit{income}_i + \beta_2 \textit{civil status}_i + \beta_3 \textit{children}_i + \beta_4 \textit{education level}_i + \beta_5 \textit{age}_i + \beta_6 \textit{region}_i + \beta_7 \textit{partner view of working status}_i + e_i$$

Equation (2) estimates the impact of women's income on the probability of experience any type of intimate partner violence is estimated. To see if there are differences of the probability between different income levels ($0-100, $100-200, $200-300, >$300) "income" is a vector of three dummies in relation to the first income level $0-100 that is used as the reference category. As the collected data does not include information about partners' resources it is not possible to estimate the impact of women's relative income but the absolute level of her income and resources. In this estimation the above discussion about endogeneity and reverse causality is also applicable as abused women may work to a larger extent and thereto having a larger salary.

Equation (3) Key independent variable: *economic dependency (towards a partner)*

$$\textit{Intimate partner violence (IPV)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \textit{economic dependency}_i + \beta_2 \textit{civil status}_i + \beta_3 \textit{children}_i + \beta_4 \textit{education level}_i + \beta_5 \textit{age}_i + \beta_6 \textit{region}_i + \beta_7 \textit{partner view of working status}_i + e_i$$

"Economic dependency" is an indicator equal to 0 if the woman reports that she is not depending economically on her partner (if she has one) but 1 if she depends economically on her partner. The estimation of this equation (3) therefore captures the affect that economic dependency towards a partner possibly can have on intimate partner violence.

Equation (4) Key independent variable: *ownership of household*

$$Intimate\ partner\ violence\ (IPV) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ownership\ of\ household_i + \beta_2 civil$$
$$status_i + \beta_3 children_i + \beta_4 education\ level_i + \beta_5 age_i + \beta_6 region_i + \beta_7 partner\ view$$
$$of\ working\ status_i + e_i$$

In the last equation (4) the key independent variable is ownership of household, taking the value 1 if the woman owns all of or a part of the household that she lives within, and 0 if not. This estimation captures if an ownership may play a protective role against violence in the household perpetrated by her partner or not. The discussion of endogeneity and reversed causality might be applicable to equation (3) and (4) in some extent but the key independent variables for these two last equations does not depend on willingness to work in as large extent as the key independent variables in the first two equations does.

# 5 Results

## 5.1 Descriptive statistic

All 312 participants in the survey are women and older than 15 years (15 % between 15-20, 23 % between 21-26, 20 % between 27-35 and 42 % women older than 35 years). The majority of the sample is from the municipality of La Libertad. 57 of them are married and 65 of them in a relationship but most of the participants, 61 % are not currently involved in a relationship, 1 in 5 of these commenting that they are divorced from an earlier marriage. The average number of children is 2. One third of every woman own partly or the whole household they are living within. 18 % of the women have studied or are currently studying at university level while 12.5 % have never even gone to primary school.

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics – main characteristics*

| Variables | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 2.88 | 1.11 | 1 | 4 |
| In relationship | 0.39 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Residence in La Libertad | 0.70 | 0.46 | 0 | 1 |
| Ownership of household | 0.35 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Children | 1.95 | 2.12 | 0 | 12 |
| Education level | 2.54 | 0.93 | 0 | 4 |
| Income $100-200 | 0.14 | 0.35 | 0 | 1 |
| Income $200-300 | 0.19 | 0.39 | 0 | 1 |
| Income >$300 | 0.19 | 0.40 | 0 | 1 |

*Note: Sample size N = 312. Age is categorised 1=15-20 y/o, 2=21-26 y/o, 3=27-35 y/o and 4=>35 y/o. Education is categorised as 1=no education, 2=basic education (1-6 years of schooling), 3=medium education (7-12 years of schooling) and 4=university education.*

212 of the women (68.8 %) reported that they are involved in paid work where 95 of them reported that they have formal employment (44.8 % of all working women). Important to notice here is that my data has a larger share of working women and also formally working women than what has been estimated for the national level, where 53 % of the El Salvadorian women are working and 28 % of them are formally employed (UNDP 2015; World Economic Forum 2017). This deviation can probably be explained by that a large part of women participating in the survey live in urban areas where the average employment level are larger in comparison to the rural areas. This is important to have in mind when analysing the results of this study. Despite this, when it comes to the relative differences between how many

women that are in paid work are formally employed or not, this survey data and national data are quite similar.
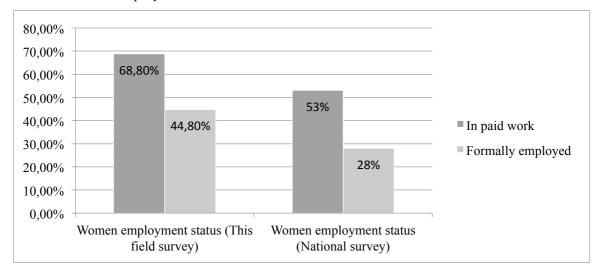
*Table 2. Women employment status in El Salvador*



The average work-time in a week for those in paid work outside their home is 8.8 hours a day, 5.5 days a week to an average salary of $160. This can be compared to the legislated minimum salary of $300 for workers in Commerce and Services, where most women tend to work (Fairlabor.org). 33.6 % of the women who work do not control their own salary, most commonly commenting that their income goes to the household as a whole. Half of the women that work and are in a relationship depend economically on their partner, commenting that their own salary is not sufficient to live at, especially when having kids.

When highlighting results from the last section of the questionnaire at issue, about the study's key variable intimate partner violence (including psychical, sexual and psychological violence) more than one third of the women had some kind of experience of intimate partner violence (35.8 %). UN Women report (2016) estimate that 26 % of all El Salvadorian women aged 15-49 years who is or ever has been in a relationship, has experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence, but when including psychological violence as well, the proportion of ever abused women rises to 47 %. I include all three types of intimate partner violence. Realistically a part of the women participating in my study have never been in a relationship which can explain why the share of abused women is 11 % less than for the national survey (UN Women 2016). However, allowing for the possibility of underestimation of intimate partner violence experiences in this kind of survey setting 35.8 % still is a large share of ever-abused women.

*Table 3. Incident of intimate partner violence in El Salvador by background characteristics (%)*

| Variables | Experience of intimate partner violence |
|---|---|
| *Civil status* | |
| Woman currently in a relation | 31.9 |
| | |
| *Working status* | |
| Not working | 18.7 |
| In paid work | 42.9 |
| | |
| *Income level* | |
| $0-100/month | 43.7 |
| $100-200/month | 36.4 |
| $200-300/month | 37.3 |
| >$300/month | 52.5 |
| | |
| *Education* | |
| None | 31.5 |
| 1-6 years of schooling | 41.8 |
| 6-12 years of schooling | 34.7 |
| 12-18 years of schooling | 26.7 |
| | |
| *Residence* | |
| Santa Tecla | 43.2 |
| San Salvador | 19.6 |
| La Libertad | 38.8 |
| | |
| *Age* | |
| 15-20 | 19.1 |
| 21-26 | 16.6 |
| 27-35 | 40.3 |
| >35 | 50.3 |

*Note:* Own calculations, sample size N = 312

Table 2 show that women who works are more likely to report experience of intimate partner violence than women who is not involved in paid work, just as low educated women are more likely to report experience of intimate partner violence than women with university education. The larger number of abused elderly women has intuitive to do with a natural association between age and experience of being in a relationship, which is in line with the comparison of the UN Women report (2016) above. It might also have to do with that female educational attainment has increased the last decade (Forste & Jensen 2013; Pekkarinen 2012; UNESCO 2018), i.e. the average age of the women that has the highest educational attainment is lower than the average age for less educated women. So the highest educated women are also the

youngest, making the probability of having experienced being in a relationship smaller among higher educated women than lower educated women.

Earnings at a medium level (second or third) are associated with less intimate partner violence than what for the lowest and highest level of income. According to where the women lives there are large differences in experiences of abusive situations. There are a larger share of women with experience of intimate partner violence in both Santa Tecla and La Libertad than in San Salvador. The 112 women (35.5 %) that had experienced intimate partner violence were asked when the last time their experience of it was. 17.9 % of the women had experienced it in the last month, 16.1 % in the last year, 35.7 % more than a year ago and 30.4 % more than 10 years ago.

In addition, every woman that contributed to the study was asked if they consider that an independent economic situation, i.e. own monetary resources, reduces the possibilities of experiencing intimate partner violence or not. 56.7 % of the women said that they think that an independent economic situation is affecting the extent of intimate partner violence positively, i.e. reducing it.

## 5.2   Estimation Results

Table 4 show results from equation (1) that focus on women working status when measuring the likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence; physical, sexual and/or psychological. The results indicate that women who are involved in paid work have a positive correlation with intimate partner violence, i.e. the probability of experiencing intimate partner violence increase with women employment opportunities. This is intuitive supporting the male-backlash model even though there is a possibility of that the relationship is driven by reversed causality, since it can be the case that abused women might be more motivated to work than non-abused women (Narayan et al. 2000). Age also seem to affect the probability of intimate partner violence, especially significant for women older than 35 years. The affect that age has when looking at the sample of "only women in relationship" is thus not different, reasonable that has to do with a higher probability of having experienced being in a relationship the older one gets. Education has not got as significant, but still an increasing, affect on the violence as work. When highlighting the estimates from "all women" the only

negatively correlated variables are, if a woman is in a relationship 1, or not 0 (civil status) and if her partner agrees with her working 1, or not 0 (partner view).

*Table 4. Results from equation (1) working status*

| Variable | Sample: | all women | only women in a relationship |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Dependent variable = Intimate partner violence* | |
| | | *Coeff. (S.E.)* | *Coeff. (S.E.)* |
| Intercept | | -0.161 (0.130) | 0.204 (0.306) |
| Working status | | 0.187*** (0.062) | 0.143 (0.132) |
| Civil status | | -0.053 (0,076) | - |
| Children | | 0.004 (0.017) | 0.009 (0.028) |
| *Level of education* | | | |
| Basic | | 0.1614* (0.086) | 0.113 (0.128) |
| Medium | | 0.189* (0.099) | 0.199 (0.155) |
| University | | 0.127 (0.110) | 0.206 (0.186) |
| *Age* | | | |
| 21-26 | | 0.017 (0.087) | -0.275 (0.229) |
| 27-35 | | 0.229** (0.095) | -0.041 (0.227) |
| >35 | | 0.321*** (0.095) | 0.107 (0.234) |
| *Region/Residence* | | | |
| Santa Tecla | | 0.143 (0.099) | -0.131 (0.188) |
| La Libertad | | 0.131* (0.071) | -0.022 (0.146) |
| Partner view | | -0.127 (0.089) | -0.122 (0.125) |
| $R^2$ | | 0.160 | 0.126 |
| Number of observations | | 312 | 122 |

*Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***, **, * denote statistical significance at 1, 5 and 10 % level.*

Table 5 show results from equation (2) that estimate the affect that different levels of income has on the probability of experiencing intimate partner violence. All levels of income are put in relation to an income of $0-100/month. All income levels over $0-100/month except for the second one in the "only women in a relationship" sample have an increasing affect on the risk of experience intimate partner violence. The largest but also only significant affect of them is the highest income level, both when looking at all women and when only including women in a relationship. From this estimation it is also possible to see that children but also higher education has an increasing affect on violence. What differ the most between the two different sample-estimations are that age and regions have different affects but as already argued in this study, the probability of having experienced being in relationships increases with age. So when only including women that actually are in a relationship, independently from age, age have no significant affect on the affect of experiencing intimate partner violence. This is true for all estimates, (1), (2), (3) and (4).

*Table 5. Results from equation (2) monthly income from paid work*

| | | **Dependent variable** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **= Intimate partner violence** | |
| ***Variable*** | *Sample:* | *all women* | *only women in a relationship* |
| | | *Coeff.* | *Coeff.* |
| | | *(S.E.)* | *(S.E.)* |
| Intercept | | -0.072 | 0.210 |
| | | (0.128) | (0.296) |
| Income level | | | |
| $100-200 | | 0.070 | 0.113 |
| | | (0.081) | (0.148) |
| $200-300 | | 0.029 | -0.009 |
| | | (0.075) | (0.137) |
| >$300 | | 0.166** | 0.255* |
| | | (0.078) | (0.147) |
| Civil status | | -0.099 | - |
| | | (0.075) | |
| Children | | 0.009 | 0.022 |
| | | (0.018) | (0.030) |
| *Level of education* | | | |
| Basic | | 0.135 | 0.066 |
| | | (0.087) | (0.130) |
| Medium | | 0.174* | 0.222 |
| | | (0.101) | (0.160) |
| University | | 0.083 | 0.139 |
| | | (0.112) | (0.192) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Age* | | |
| 21-26 | 0.029 | -0.252 |
| | (0.088) | (-0.229) |
| 27-35 | 0.244** | -0.028 |
| | (0.097) | (0.227) |
| >35 | 0.315*** | 0.086 |
| | (0.098) | (0.232) |
| | | |
| *Region/Residence* | | |
| Santa Tecla | 0.142 | -0.173 |
| | (0.102) | (0.189) |
| La Libertad | 0.139* | -0.012 |
| | (0.073) | (0.146) |
| | | |
| Partner view | -0.067 | -0.099 |
| | (0.088) | (0.112) |
| | | |
| $R^2$ | 0.149 | 0.149 |
| Number of observations | 312 | 122 |

*Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* denote statistical significance at 1, 5 and 10 % level.*

In table 6 the results from equation (3) economic dependency estimations are shown. The results from the "all women" sample are quite similar to the results when including "only women in a relationship". The more economically independent from a partner, the larger becomes the risk of experiencing intimate partner violence, supporting the male-backlash model even though the results are neither large or significant.

*Table 6. Results from equation (3) economic dependency (towards a partner)*

| | | **Dependent variable** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **= Intimate partner violence** | |
| ***Variable*** | *Sample:* | *all women* | *only women in a relationship* |
| | | Coeff. | Coeff. |
| | | (S.E.) | (S.E.) |
| Intercept | | -0.068 | 0.314 |
| | | (0.128) | (0.295) |
| | | | |
| Economic dependency | | -0.090 | -0.061 |
| | | (0.091) | (0.096) |
| | | | |
| Civil status | | -0.058 | - |
| | | (0.098) | |
| | | | |
| Children | | 0.006 | 0.008 |
| | | (0.018) | (0.028) |

| *Level of education* | | |
|---|---|---|
| Basic | 0.145* | 0.112 |
| | (0.087) | (0.129) |
| Medium | 0.179* | 0.193 |
| | (0.100) | (0.156) |
| University | 0.103 | 0.181 |
| | (0.112) | (0.187) |
| | | |
| *Age* | | |
| 21-26 | 0.030 | -0.313 |
| | (0.088) | (0.227) |
| 27-35 | 0.259*** | -0.064 |
| | (0.096) | (0.227) |
| >35 | 0.348*** | 0.083 |
| | (0.096) | (0.233) |
| | | |
| *Region/Residence* | | |
| Santa Tecla | 0.182* | -0.120 |
| | (0.100) | (0.189) |
| La Libertad | 0.163** | -0.008 |
| | (0.072) | (0.149) |
| | | |
| Partner view | -0.047 | -0.046 |
| | (0.088) | (0.095) |
| | | |
| $R^2$ | 0.137 | 0.120 |
| Number of observations | 312 | 122 |

*Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* denote statistical significance at 1, 5 and 10 % level.*

The results from equation (4) ownership of household in table 7 are the only ones that support the economic bargaining model rather than the male-backlash model. However, the effect that "ownership of household" has on intimate partner violence is not large or significant, for none of the samples.

*Table 7. Results from equation (4) ownership of household*

| | | **Dependent variable = Intimate partner violence** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Variable*** | *Sample:* | *all women* | *only women in relationship* |
| | | *Coeff.* | *Coeff.* |
| | | *(S.E.)* | *(S.E.)* |
| Intercept | | -0.062 | 0.311 |
| | | (0.127) | (0.297) |
| | | | |
| Ownership of household | | -0.052 | -0.026 |
| | | (0.06) | (0.086) |
| | | | |
| Civil status | | -0.117 | - |
| | | (0.074) | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Children | 0.006 | 0.009 |
| | (0.018) | (0.028) |
| | | |
| Level of education | | |
| Basic | 0.137 | -0.327 |
| | (0.087) | (0.227) |
| Medium | 0.171* | 0.182 |
| | (0.100) | (0.155) |
| University | 0.107 | 0.195 |
| | (0.111) | (0.187) |
| | | |
| Age | | |
| 21-26 | 0.035 | -0.327 |
| | (0.088) | (0.227) |
| 27-35 | 0.271*** | -0.078 |
| | (0.096) | (0.277) |
| >35 | 0.379*** | 0.082 |
| | (0.098) | (0.234) |
| | | |
| Region/Residence | | |
| Santa Tecla | 0.179* | -0.129 |
| | (0.100) | (0.189) |
| La Libertad | 0.156** | -0.030 |
| | (0.072) | (0.146) |
| | | |
| Partner view | -0.014 | -0.027 |
| | (0.083) | (0.091) |
| | | |
| $R^2$ | 0.137 | 0.118 |
| Number of observations | 312 | 122 |

*Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* denote statistical significance at 1, 5 and 10 % level.*

Overall, the results from the empirical estimations are quite consistent. Female economic empowerment have a positive correlation with intimate partner violence when it comes to estimations of equation (1), (2) and (3) that show equivalent results. The key independent variable working status and also the highest level of income are the largest and most significant coefficients, at least when including all women. However, equation (4) shows the opposite correlation. The coefficient for household ownership is thus weak, with no significant affect on intimate partner violence.

In context of a model with more than one explanatory (independent) variable, there is an importance of having small correlation between them. The higher the correlation between the independent variables, the harder it is to distinguish between the relationship of the variables and the dependent variable (intimate partner violence in this study) and the model is said to suffer from multicollinearity (Dougherty 2011, p.165). The correlation between the

independent variables should therefore be low to get more accurate regression estimates (Dougherty 2011, p.162). To test this for all my models I further use the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) that measures the *i*th independent variable's collinearity with the other included independent variables by the equation: **$1/(1-R^2_i)$.** $R^2_i$ is used to represent the share of variance in the *i*th independent variable and the other independent variables (O'brien 2007). A specific number estimated by a VIF test is not necessarily leading to erratic estimates (Dougherty 2011; O'Brien 2007) but I will not use independent variables above 10 in the regressions. Results from VIF tests are shown in Table. Note that none of the independent variables that are used in the estimations has a value above 10.

*Table 8. Results from VIF test on all independent variables in all equations*

| Equation | (1) | (1) | (2) | (2) | (3) | (3) | (4) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sample** | All | O-R | All | O-R | All | O-R | All | O-R |
| **Variables** | | | | | | | | |
| Work status | 1.27 | 1.13 | | | | | | |
| Income $100-200 | | | 1.68 | 1.73 | | | | |
| Income $200-300 | | | 1.89 | 1.93 | | | | |
| Income >$300 | | | 2.44 | 2.55 | | | | |
| Economic dependency | | | | | 1.16 | 1.13 | | |
| Ownership of household | | | | | | | 1.20 | 1.18 |
| Civil status | 1.17 | | 1.15 | | 1.15 | | 1.10 | |
| Children | 1.92 | 1.92 | 2.12 | 2.11 | 1.88 | 1.87 | 1.89 | 1.89 |
| Basic education | 2.49 | 2.37 | 2.66 | 2.54 | 2.51 | 2.38 | 2.47 | 2.35 |
| Medium education | 2.63 | 2.58 | 3.00 | 2.94 | 2.61 | 2.58 | 2.60 | 2.56 |
| University education | 2.52 | 2.53 | 2.75 | 2.83 | 2.51 | 2.53 | 2.51 | 2.53 |
| 21-26 y/o | 3.93 | 4.38 | 4.03 | 4.54 | 3.91 | 4.36 | 3.96 | 4.44 |
| 27-35 y/o | 5.15 | 5.78 | 5.30 | 6.05 | 5.07 | 5.76 | 5.12 | 5.83 |
| >35 y/o | 6.45 | 7.39 | 6.58 | 7.48 | 6.45 | 7.39 | 6.45 | 7.41 |
| Santa Tecla | 2.46 | 2.44 | 2.52 | 2.48 | 2.46 | 2.43 | 2.45 | 2.42 |
| La Libertad | 2.35 | 2.27 | 2.34 | 2.27 | 2.34 | 2.26 | 2.31 | 2.24 |
| Partner view | 1.32 | 1.24 | 1.27 | 1.25 | 1.24 | 1.21 | 1.25 | 1.22 |
| Sum | 2.81 | 3.09 | 2.84 | 3.13 | 2.77 | 3.08 | 2.78 | 3.10 |

*Note: All denote "all women", O-R denote "only women in relationship"*

# 6 Discussion

The aim of this study is to contribute to the existing literature of empirical evidence that explore the relationship between female economic empowerment and intimate partner violence. Thereto the aim is to do this within a context of a macho culture. This is done by carrying out a cross-sectional survey in three urban areas in El Salvador, collecting sample data that is used to estimate the affects of four different indicators of female economic empowerment on intimate partner violence. According to the findings female economic empowerment has if anything a negative, i.e. increasing, affect on intimate partner violence in the El Salvadorian setting. The results are carefully analysed within its context where society are much influenced by Latin American macho culture, with strong patriarchal norms.

As the economic bargaining model predict female economic empowerment to play a protective role against intimate partner violence, hence arguing that women who economically depend on a partner are exposed to a greater risk of intimate partner violence (Vyas & Watts 2009) are shown to be true for high-income countries (Aizer 2010; Guarnieri et al. 2018). Results from studies made in low- or middle-income countries cannot always support this model and they further express importance of including gender inequality frameworks and more contextual considerations (Atkinson et al. 2005; Macmillan & Gartner 1999; Malhotra et al. 2002; True 2012). The male-backlash model that predicts women's access to monetary recourses to increase women's risk of intimate partner violence is in some low- and middle-income countries shown to be more applicable to reality than the economic bargaining model (Boonzaier 2005; Guarnieri et al. 2018; Yount 2005). However, when it comes to Latin America there are empirical findings that contribute to the literature in mixed ways (Bott et al. 2012), which this study and its results further add on to.

As mentioned in section 5.1 every woman that contributed to the survey for this study was asked about how they consider female economic empowerment affect intimate partner violence. This came with some valuable insights. Most women had a hard time deciding if to say yes or no since they mean that the answer depends on what situation a woman faces. Still, a bit more than half of the women (56,7 %) argued about that an employment is reducing partner violence because with an income they can threat the man about leaving him as a

response to violence. This can be argued to either support the empirical findings of the study or not, worth taking up to discussion.

As a large share of the abused women (60 %) had experienced violent situations more than a year ago it is not unrealistic to think that a lot of the abused women got more motivation to work as a response to the abusive situation (Narayan et al. 2000). That argument serves a possible explanation to why so many currently working women have experienced intimate partner violence and why most of the abused women also earns the most money. At the same time, findings that indicate that abusive situations on the contrary might lead to a decrease in motivation to work due to health consequences (Lloyd 1997; Staggs & Rigger 2005) can possibly explain why the second highest share of women that have experienced violence are the lowest income earners. This share of women (47.3 %) might have earned more than a maximum of $100/month before their abusive experiences.

Clearly these arguments and potential explanations above are possible to criticize, and not least because of that the other (almost) half answered differently to the question about economic empowerment and its affect on partner violence. They argued that an abusive situation is far more complicated than just being a question of monetary recourses. Traditions, norms, family situation, social security networks etc. were brought up as examples that (also) play central roles. One woman from La Libertad said it took her 9 years to leave her abusive partner because her own parents and children did not want her to break up the family. In contrary, another woman from the same city said she accepted intimate partner violence perpetrated against her until her 12-year-old son came to her crying about it. These two women work outside their own households but their situations are characterized by other than only monetary capacities. Their actions and responses to the violence are more complicated than the reality of not depending economically on a partner, which exemplifies the complex nature of economic empowerment and partner violence.

Still equations (1), (2) and (3) all show a positive relation between female economic empowerment, through employment, income and economic independence, to partner violence which rather support the male-backlash model than the economic bargaining model. The power balance in a heterosexual relationship seem to be challenged from female employment, earnings and economic independence making the male partner resort to violent behaviour in attempt to keep the traditional power position within the relationship unchanged. The

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measurements are quite consistent, where the key independent variable working status and the highest level of income are the largest and most significant coefficients. These results are comparable to earlier empirical findings from neighbouring Nicaragua, where women who are involved in paid work have a higher risk of experiencing partner violence (Bott et al. 2012; Kishor & Johnson 2004). However, equation (4) that uses household ownership as key independent variable has a decreasing risk-affect on intimate partner violence. This goes in line with Panda and Agarwal empirical findings in rural India where women's property status has a reducing risk-affect on partner violence (2005). However, as the coefficient is small and not significant for this study I carefully interpret the estimates as weak evidence for that household ownership as a component of female economic empowerment reduces the risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.

Jewkes (2002a; 2002b) argues that the prevalence of intimate partner violence depend much on cultural settings. Also, both norms of violence as a way of conflict resolving and patriarchal gender norms are argued to hinder female economic empowerment to serve a protective role for women when it comes to partner violence (Kishor & Johnson 2004). The empirical results of this study, accompanied by the contextual background, serves supportive to the arguments brought up by Jewkes but also Kishor and Johnson among others. Moreover, the male-identity is long-term socially rooted in El Salvador where men are supposed to have a breadwinning position in the household (Pavesi & Widmer 2005), is challenged by female economic empowerment.

As shown in the descriptive statistics the average monthly income is $160, which is about half of the legislated minimum salary $300 (Fairlabor.org). Thereto, half of the women that work and are in a relationship depend economically on their partner. Due to this economic consideration a lot of the women in El Salvador do not face the alternative of leaving an abusive relationship *even though they are working*. What the economic bargaining model predicts is that female economic empowerment has a protective affect on intimate partner violence because it serves women a concrete, economic, resort out of an abusive relationship. In a way, the data collected show that there might be a lack in the female economic empowerment because of that the earnings tend to be too small to actually provide a resort out of relationships. Moreover, women in El Salvador might not be considered enough economically empowered to actually be able to apply the economic bargaining model. Still, when checking for different income levels and take the highest level of income at focus, both

the descriptive statistics and the estimates from equation (2) indicate that women that earn enough to economically be able to leave an abusive relationship anyway have a significant high risk of experiencing intimate partner violence.

Even though economic empowerment has a singular transformatory power on partner violence in high-income countries this is not the case for all women globally. The previously presented researchers express the importance of having a framework of gender-based inequality and other contextual aspects in mind when studying the association between female economic empowerment and intimate partner violence. In El Salvador both women's rights and access to economic opportunities are often highly discriminated (Albaladejo 2016; Ellsberg et. al 2000; Torjesen 2017) which might stand as the biggest hinder from enabling an all-over positive boost from female economic empowerment on partner violence and women's well-being.

# 7 Conclusions

The data and results in this study support the male-backlash model rather than the economic bargaining model that predicts female economic empowerment to reduce the risk of exploring intimate partner violence. Despite this, it is complicated to apply these results on all women in El Salvador as a whole but generally, an increase in female economic empowerment seems to be introducing more tension than what it is reducing economic stress within households.

However, the study does not conclude that female economic empowerment is something bad in it self. Female economic empowerment is, despite its affects on intimate partner violence, indeed a goal to strive for globally, without exception for El Salvador and other macho culture influenced countries. Female economic empowerment increases women's self-esteem, provides women with agency (Sen 1999) and serves as an important element in poverty reduction (The World Bank 2001; Vyas & Watts 2009). It is thus important to understand the challenges still left in El Salvador, where traditional gender norms seems to be inhibitory for women taking full advantage of increased economical opportunities. Even though poverty is showed to decrease with female economic empowerment in El Salvador, and Latin America as a whole, the country's cultural setting are important to have in mind and further work with when discussing the implications for development policy.

The problem when analysing the findings of this study along to earlier literature is that the present patriarchal structures with its traditional gender norms are hindering female economic empowerment to play the protective role that economic theorist argues for. Further research is thus needed to create more knowledge and to develop understanding of how female empowerment impacts partner violence to assure future impacts on women's well-being to be positive in all aspects.

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# Appendix

## Survey formulation

<div align="center">

**Encuesta sobre la relación de trabajo
y violencia contra mujeres en El Salvador**
*El objetivo de esta encuesta es de carácter académico y estadística, dirigida a mujeres
salvadoreñas y todas encuestadas son anónimas.*

</div>

**1. Edad**:    15-20 ☐    21-26 ☐    27-35 ☐    mas de 35 ☐

**2. Estado familiar:**    Casada ☐    Acompañada ☐    Soltera ☐    Separada ☐

**3. Cuantos hijos/as tienes?** _____

**4. Cuantos de tus hijos/as dependen económicamente de ti?** _____

**5. Eres dueña/propietaria de la casa donde vives?**    Si ☐    No ☐

**6. Tienes alguna propiedad inscrita a tu nombre?**    Si ☐    No ☐

**7. Nivel educativo:**
Ninguno ☐    Básico ☐    Medio (Bachillerato) ☐    Superior (Universidad) ☐    Otro ☐

**8. Actualmente te encuentras trabajando?**    Si ☐    No ☐

**<u>9. Entonces si, tienes un trabajo:</u>**
**9.1 Qué tipo de trabajo:** Formal ☐    Trabajo doméstico remunerado ☐    Informal ☐

**9.2 A qué edad empezaste a trabajar?** _____

**9.3 Cuántos días a la semana trabajas?** _____

**9.4 Cuántas horas al día?** _____

**9.5 Cuánto ganas en un mes? (aproximadamente)**
$ 0-100 ☐    $ 100-200 ☐    $ 200-300 ☐    Mas de $ 300 ☐

**9.6 Controlas tus ingresos de forma autónoma o propia? (Por ejemplo, no necesitas
preguntar tu pareja antes de ir a comprar algo):**    Si ☐    No ☐

**9.7 El poseer trabajo mejora tu autoestima:**    Si ☐    Mas ó menos ☐    No ☐

**9.8 Entonces si tienes una pareja, que piensa él que tú trabajes?**
De acuerdo ☐    En desacuerdo ☐

**10. Dependes económicamente de tu pareja?**    Si ☐    No ☐

**11. Has experimentado violencia física, económica, psicológica o sexual, de una pareja?**
Si ☐    No ☐

## 12. Entonces si:
**12.1 Cuándo fue la último hecho de violencia?**

Menos de un mes ☐        Menos de un año ☐        Mas de un año ☐        Mas de diez años ☐

**12.2 La experiencia anterior te motivó a buscar tu independencia económica?**

     Si ☐        No ☐

**12.3 Consideras que si posees independencia/autonomía económica esto reduce las posibilidades de ser una víctima de violencia donde el agresor es una pareja?**

     Si ☐        No ☐