

# Intimate Partner Violence and Female Job Exit in Colombia

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**Abstract:** In this paper, I explore the effects of physical and psychological intimate partner violence on women's job exit in Colombia. The relationship between domestic violence and female participation in income-generating activities is theoretically ambiguous since a more active women's contribution to household income may reduce spousal violence, but it could also be that spousal violence translates into fewer hours of work and even job exit. Empirically, I face a problem of endogeneity between a woman's decision to stay or get involved in a violent marital relationship and to exit the labor force. In order to address this potential endogeneity, I rely on two-stage least squares and a bivariate probit specification, using the 2005 Colombian Demographic and Health Survey, where I exploit the variation presented by a partner's exposure to domestic violence during childhood for identification purposes. The results obtained using two-stage least squares and bivariate probit suggest that any event of domestic violence increases by between 0.09-0.2 the likelihood of job exit, whereas physical and psychological violence increase it by 0.03-0.13 and 0.09-0.2, respectively, once we control for other individual and household characteristics that affect job exit.

**Keywords:** Colombia, intimate partner violence, labor markets

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## 1. Introduction

Intimate partner violence is a major public health problem in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Colombia is one of the countries in the region where it is highly prevalent. Understanding the effects of domestic violence against women is of substantial interest for economists, as it has large economic and social costs (Carrillo, 1992; Heise, Pitanguy and Germain, 1994; Morrison and Orlando, 1999; UNICEF, 2000; Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar, 2001) and constrains women's choices and involvement in economic activities (Vyas and Watts, 2008; Battacharya, Bedi and Chhachhi, 2009.)

Theoretically, the link between domestic violence and female participation in income-generating activities is ambiguous. Aizer (2010) shows that decreases in the male-female wage gap reduce violence perpetrated by domestic partners. Battacharya, Bedi and Chhachhi (2009) suggest not only that a more active woman's contribution to household income may reduce spousal violence. In some cases, improvements in a woman's economic status may also generate struggle within the household, and lead to more violence. On the contrary, Canavire and Rios (2010) suggest that violence affects labor decisions. The effect of spousal violence is direct and reduces a woman's job performance. This effect translates into fewer hours of work and even job exit.

Empirically, the evidence on the effect of domestic violence on female labor outcomes is mixed. For instance, violence against women is related to higher rates of unemployment (Lloyd, 1997; Lloyd and Taluc, 1999) or fewer hours of work (Meisel, Chandler and Reinzi, 2003; Swanberg and Logan, 2005; Tolman and Wang, 2005.) In some cases, however, spousal violence appears to lead to more hours of work (Staggs and Riger, 2005.) One common drawback of these studies is that they do not account for the potential