



Cash transfers, polygamy, and intimate partner violence:

Experimental evidence from Mali

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Motivation

- A growing literature shows that cash transfer (CT) programs in LMICs can ↓ IPV (Buller et al, 2018)
- Quantitative studies find ↓ in physical violence ranging from 5-11 percentage points on average (Angelucci 2008; Bobonis et al 2013; Hidrobo et al 2016; Haushofer et al 2019; Perova & Vakis 2013; Roy et al, in press)
- Given that ~1 billion transfer beneficiaries in developing world (DFID 2011), CTs promising as a scalable platform for IPV prevention

Knowledge gaps

However, most programs in existing studies target women and are in Latin America

1. What happens to IPV when transfers are **targeted to men**?
 - Many cash transfer programs around the world – particularly in Africa – target household heads, who are usually male
2. Do IPV impacts depend on **household structure**?
 - Polygamy is common in Mali, as in much of West Africa
 - Different wives may be treated differently and have different bargaining power
3. What are the **mechanisms** through which transfers affect IPV?
 - These may play out differently depending on targeting and household structure

Through what mechanisms can transfers reduce IPV? (Buller et al, 2018)

1. Improved economic security and emotional wellbeing

- Link between poverty and mental health (Lund et al 2010; Haushofer and Fehr 2014)

2. Reduced intra-household conflict

- Reduced arguments over tight budgets
- *(Conceptually, could ↑ conflict if used on temptation goods – but little evidence of this)*

3. Changing bargaining power of household members

- Transfers targeted to *women* can ↑ women's bargaining position, per bargaining models
 - *(Conceptually, could ↑ IPV risk per male response – but little evidence of this on average)*

- Little is known about how dynamics change if transfers go to men or to polygamous households

What we do

- Investigate the impacts on IPV of a national cash transfer program in Mali – *Programme de Filets Sociaux (Jigisémèjiri)*
 - Targeted beneficiary is household head – usually male
- Investigate whether impacts vary by polygamy status
- Collect and analyze detailed data on mechanisms – with a special focus on men – the main beneficiaries of the program and the perpetrator of violence in our study

Programme de Filets Sociaux Au Mali (Jigisemejiri)

- Implemented by Mali government, starting in 2014
 - Targeted to household heads (mainly men) in poor rural households, ~40% polygamous
 - From 2015-2017, designed as a randomized control trial, in 5 southern regions of Mali
 - Provided
 - 30,000 FCFA quarterly (~\$18/month)
 - Trainings (nutrition, health, finances, use of cash) – 2x/month, open to all in community, low attendance
- Aimed to improve household food security and child nutrition
- No gender-related objectives



Data used for IPV analysis

- **Quantitative:**

- Sample is “decisionmaker” & “spouse of decisionmaker” after 1-2 years (midline)
- Administered to women:
 - WHO VAW module’s questions on emotional IPV, physical IPV, controlling behaviors
 - Disputes, relationship quality
- Administered to men:
 - Emotional wellbeing – stress, anxiety, self efficacy

- **Qualitative** (Lees et al, in press):

- Gender study on intrahousehold relationships of beneficiary households in one study region

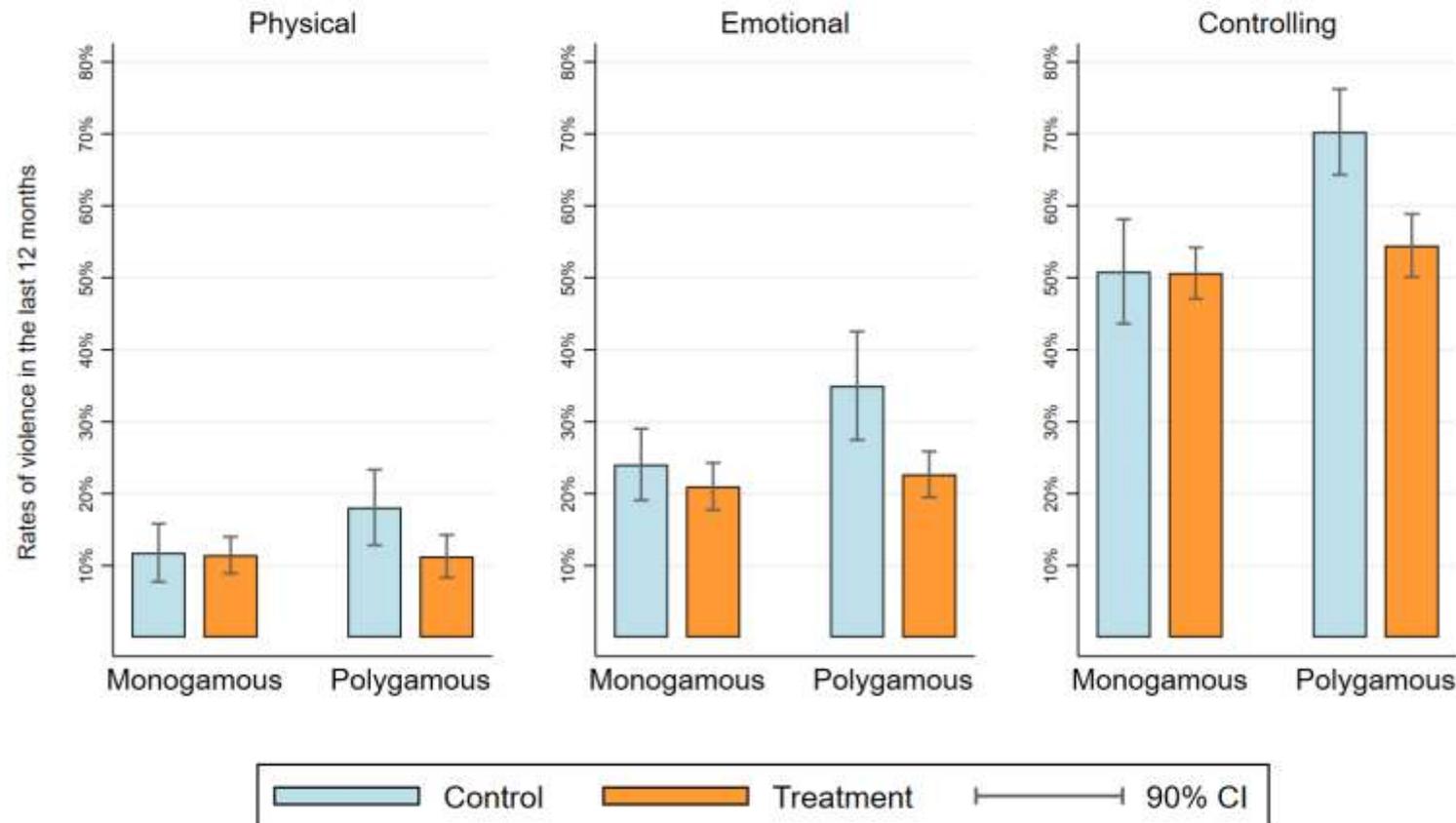
Estimation strategy

- Estimation sample of 1265 women
 - Completed decisionmaker/spouse questionnaire at midline, age ≤ 49 years, married at baseline, living with husband at midline, could be interviewed alone at midline
 - Baseline characteristics balanced across treatment and control, pooled & by polygamy status
- Use randomized design for single-difference “intent to treat” impact estimation on midline data
 - Control for baseline female characteristics (age, whether she is head or spouse of head, whether she is literate, number of children 0-6 years), household level characteristics (household size, log value of assets, and whether household head is Muslim), and region indicators
- Estimate, by polygamy status of transfer beneficiary,
 - Impacts on IPV
 - Impacts on possible mechanisms

Core result: ↓ IPV in polygamous, minimal impacts in monogamous

Prevalence of violence at midline

Adjusted means



- Monogamous: minimal impacts
- Polygamous:
 - 38% ↓ physical IPV,
 - 37% ↓ emotional IPV,
 - 23% ↓ controlling behaviors
- Driven by 2nd+ wives

Note: Outcome variables are the adjusted mean prevalence of 1) physical violence in the last 12 months, 2) emotional violence in the last 12 months, and 3) controlling behavior in the last 12 months. Standard errors are adjusted for clustering. Extended controls include baseline characteristics of woman and husband. (N=1261) Heath, Hidrobo, & Roy (2018)

Mechanisms

- In polygamous households relative to monogamous households,
 - Improved men's emotional well-being:
 - Similar economic improvements, but greater ↓ men's stress/anxiety, ↑ self-esteem
"[Jigisémèjiri] gave me courage in support of my family problems. I don't concern or worry about it."
 - Decreased intra-household conflict
 - ↓ Self-reported disputes between spouses
"Jigisémèjiri has... strengthened the respect and the harmony between my wives and myself."
 - In monogamous households, ↓ relationship trust
"When I ask him (for) money, he says he doesn't have any, but he does have some. He doesn't want to give me any."
 - No evidence of changes in women's empowerment (in polygamous or monogamous)
"The head of household makes the decision on how to spend money from the program."

Why polygamous households?

- Our evidence suggests possible roles for
 - **Observable correlates of polygamy** (e.g., household size)
 - Largely explain differential impacts on men's stress & anxiety, as well as disputes
 - Also largely explain differential impacts on physical & emotional IPV – but not on men's self-esteem or controlling behavior
 - Possible that differential norms on masculinity (unobserved) underlie these
 - **Institution of polygamy**
 - Differences in sharing of transfer, as well as communication/expectations around it
 - Men dominate decisionmaking on CTs in both polygamous and monogamous
 - But monogamous wives more likely to share and give input on use of CT – ↑ relationship strain / distrust?
 - **Greater potential for improvement**
 - Anxiety, disputes, violence higher in polygamous, particularly among 2nd+ wives – whether due to observable correlates or institution of polygamy

Summary & conclusions

- Cash transfer program targeted to household heads (mainly men) in Mali led to significant ↓ in physical IPV, emotional IPV, controlling behavior in polygamous households (driven by 2nd+ wives)
 - Minimal effect in monogamous households
- Analysis of mechanisms suggests, in polygamous more than monogamous,
 - Improved men's emotional well-being
 - Reduced intra-household conflict
 - But no significant effects on women's empowerment in polygamous or monogamous
- Differential effects by polygamy plausibly due to
 - Observable correlates of polygamy
 - Institution of polygamy – e.g., sharing/communication/expectations around transfer
 - Greater potential for impact among polygamous households

Summary & conclusions

- Cash transfer programs targeted to men can ↓ IPV
 - Even without increasing women's empowerment, CTs can ↓ IPV through improved men's emotional well-being & reduced intra-household conflict
- But program design & context shape how mechanisms play out – and resulting impacts on IPV
 - Targeting men in Mali: ↓ IPV driven by polygamous households
 - Targeting women in Ghana (Peterman et al, 2019): ↓ IPV driven by monogamous households – women's empowerment pathway important
- Program does not challenge gender norms and may reinforce male authority (Lees et al, 2019)
 - ↓ IPV does not guarantee ↑ gender equity

Thank you!

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IFPRI Discussion Paper:

<http://ebrary.ifpri.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15738coll2/id/133031>

Cash Transfer & Intimate Partner Violence
Research Collaborative:

<https://www.ifpri.org/project/cash-transfer-and-intimate-partner-violence-research-collaborative>

