

Determinants of women's autonomy over sexual behaviors within marital relationships in contemporary Vietnam

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Purpose of the study

- To explore the individual and couple level determinants of Vietnamese married women's autonomy over sexual behaviors within marital relationships

Background and significance

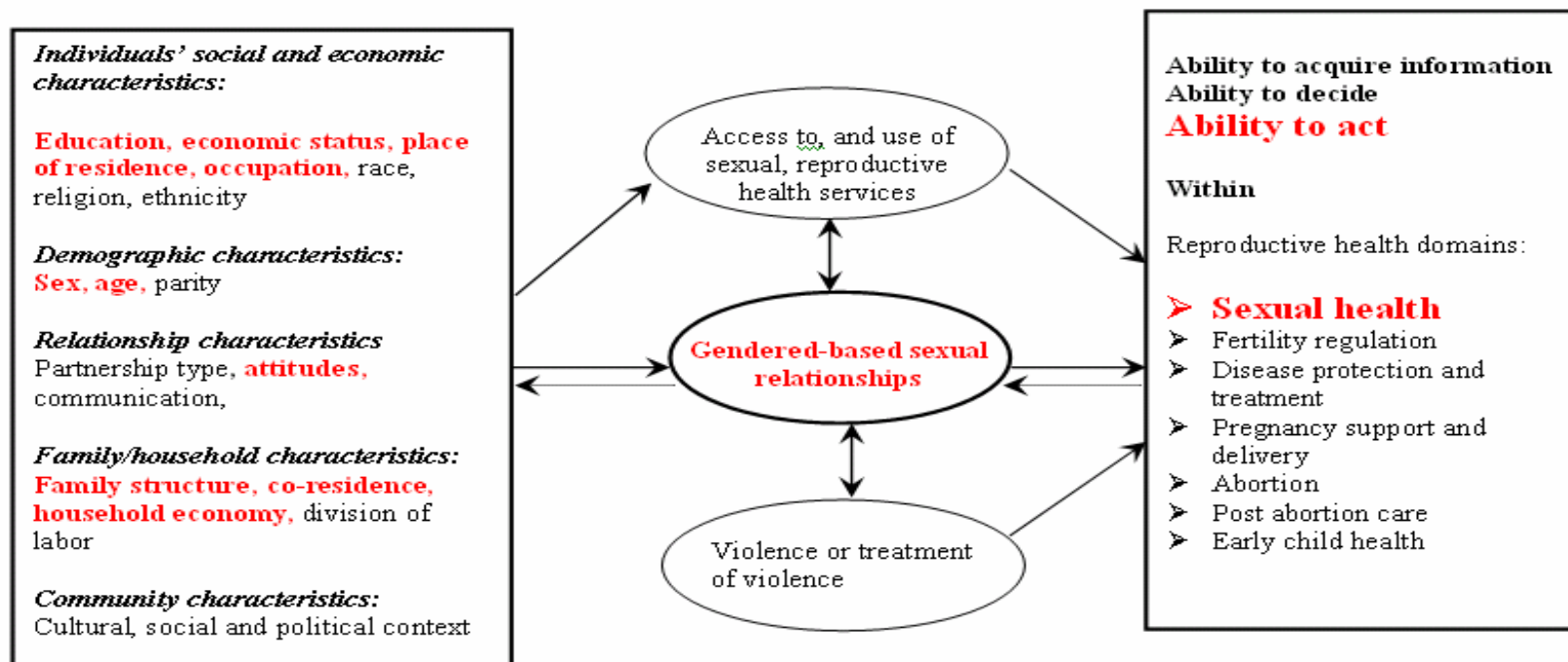
- **Gender inequality in sexual relationships has negative effects on women's sexual/reproductive health .**
- **The majority of HIV+ women who are married were infected by their husbands.**
- **HIV infections are increasing among women in Vietnam; Vietnamese women seem to have limited ability to negotiate safe sex for disease protection.**

Research questions

- **What is the attitude of adult Vietnamese toward a wife's negotiation of safer sex against STDs within marital relationships?**
- **To what degree Vietnamese women believe they have control over their sexual behaviors within marital relationships?**
- **What determine Vietnamese women's self-efficacy in sexual autonomy within marital relationships?**

Conceptual framework

Figure 1: Conceptual framework on power in relationships and women's sexual autonomy



Data and sample

- **2005 Vietnam Population and AIDS Indicator Survey (VPAIS 2005)**
 - A nationally representative sample survey of 7369 women and 6707 men aged 15-49.
- **Sample in this study:**
 - A matched sample of 3,854 currently-married couples

Outcome variables

- Women's autonomy over sexual behaviors
 - Self-efficacy in asking for condom use
 - Can you ask your husband to use a condom if you want him to?
 - Self-efficacy in refusing unwanted sex
 - Can you say no to your husband if you do not want to have sexual intercourse?

Independents variables

- **Individual level variables**
 - **Demographic factors (age, sex, type of residence: rural versus urban)**
 - **SES (education, occupation, family wealth index)**
 - **Age at first marriage**
 - **Knowledge about HIV/AIDS, knowing that condom could prevent HIV, HIV testing experience**

Independent variables

- **Couple level variables**
 - **Spousal differences on age and education**
 - **Family structure** (household size, co-residence with parents or in-laws, having at least one son)
 - **Couple's concordant acceptance to women's safe sex negotiation**
 - **Is a wife justified in asking the husband to use a condom during sex when she knows that her husband has STDs?**

Sample characteristics (N=3854 couples)

Socio-demographic indicators	Women	Men
Age		
Mean/(std)	34.2/(7.80)	36.80/(7.57)
15 - 24	13.2%	6.0%
25 - 39	57.0%	52.7%
40 - 49	29.8%	41.3%
Education		
Mean (std)	7.75/(4.18)	8.40/(4.08)
No education	8.3%	4.7%
Primary school	22.0%	19.6%
Secondary	59.4%	64.6%
Higher	10.3%	11.2%
Occupation		
Agricultural, unskilled or not working	59.0%	53.2%
Professional, technical or management	8.0%	8.7%
Clerical, factory, skilled, sales	33.0%	38.1%

Sample characteristics (N=3854 couples)

Socio-demographic indicators	
Residence	
Rural	70.3%
Urban	29.7%
Family wealth index	
Poorest	19.7%
Poorer	16.4%
Middle	17.3%
Richer	20.1%
Richest	26.5%

Sample characteristics on selected independent variables (N=3854 couples)

	Women	Men
Heard about STDs		
Yes	92.0%	94.5%
Couple's concordance yes	90%	
Knowing using condom during sex could prevent HIV		
Yes	60.7%	67.0%
Couple's concordance yes	47%	
Ever tested for HIV		
Yes	9.9%	9.7%
Couple's concordance yes	4%	
Acceptance to a wife's condom use negotiation		
Yes	90.8%	94.0%
Couple's concordance yes	87.9%	

Outcome variables on sexual autonomy

- Women's self efficacy in sexual autonomy
 - Asking husband to use a condom use
 - Yes : 66.2%
 - Refusing to have unwanted sex
 - Yes: 72.1%

Multivariate results

<i>Individual and couple level</i>	Women's self- efficacy in refusing unwanted sex (Model A)	Women's self- efficacy in asking for condom use (Model B)
	Odds Ratio/CI	Odds Ratio/CI
<u>Woman's age</u>	0.97*/ (0.94-0.99)	0.96**/(0.93-0.99)
<u>Husband's age</u>	1.03*/(1.00 -1.07)	1.03/(0.99-1.06)
<u>Women's education</u>	1.10***/(1.06-1.13)	1.08***/1.05-1.12)
<u>Having a son</u>	1.15/ (0.95-1.39)	1.33*(1.11-1.60)

Notes: ***Sig at 0.001, **Sig at 0.01, *Sig at 0.05.

Multivariate results cont.

<i>Relationship level</i>	Women's refusing unwanted sex self-efficacy (Model A) <i>Odds Ratio/CI</i>	Women's condom use self-efficacy (Model B) <i>Odds Ratio/CI</i>
<u>Knowledge on STDs</u>		
Both know	1.50/(1.13-1.99)	1.64**/(1.22-2.20)
Either one does not know (refer)		
<u>Knowledge on condom protection against HIV</u>		
Both know	1.31***/(1.12-1.54)	1.59**/(1.36-1.86)
Either on side does not know (refer)		
<u>Couple's concordant acceptance to women's sex negotiation</u>		
Both yes	2.24***/(1.77-2.84)	2.57***/(2.02-3.29)
Either on side no (refer)		

Conclusions

- **Higher sexual autonomy within marital relationships is found among women who have better education, higher occupational status, having at least one son and living in smaller household.**
- **Knowledge on STDs, condom and HIV testing experience are positively related to women's sexual autonomy.**
- **Couple's concordant acceptance to women's safe sex negotiation is associated with increased women's sexual autonomy.**

Implications

- **Women who are empowered in social and economic spheres will also be more empowered in marital and sexual relationships.**
- **Provision of information on HIV/AIDS, condoms, and counseling on HIV testing are still essential to the protection of Vietnamese married women from HIV infection.**
- **The recognition of male's involvement in women's decision making and an emphasis on spousal relationships dynamics could contribute to the promotion of women's sexual health in Vietnam.**

Thank you very much!