

# Power Base Imbalance and Intimate Partner Violence Risk in Malawi

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## Background & Motivation

- Intimate Partner Violence is a global human rights issue, with **1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence worldwide** (*Sardinha et al., 2022*)
  - Potential risks of IPV are multidimensional**, including low self-esteem, PTSD, reproductive health issues, poverty, child maltreatment, and intergenerational cycle of violence (*De Vargas Nunes Coll et al., 2020; UNODC, 2019*)
- However, the **interplay nature of IPV requires a socioecological lens** to analyze related factors, which points to a framework with **personal history , microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem** and internal system interactions (*Heise, 1998*)
  - Dynamics between partners is rarely studied. In particular, the **relative level of socioeconomic status and the mechanism of affecting IPV vulnerability is unclear** and highly dependent on contexts (*Abramsky et al., 2011; Conroy, 2014*)
- Women in Malawi only have little control over marriage and sex autonomy, while the self-reported IPV rate overall is lower than similar sub-Saharan countries



## Data & Method

**Data** Malawi Demographic and Health Survey in 2015-16. Analysis sample includes 3626 ever-married women with valid answers in the domestic violence section.

**Method** Multivariate logistic regression on last year IPV rate with power imbalance indicators

❑ **Outcome variable:** experience with physical IPV or sexual IPV in past 12 months respectively

❑ **Independent variables:** age gap, education gap, employment gap

❑ **Control variables**

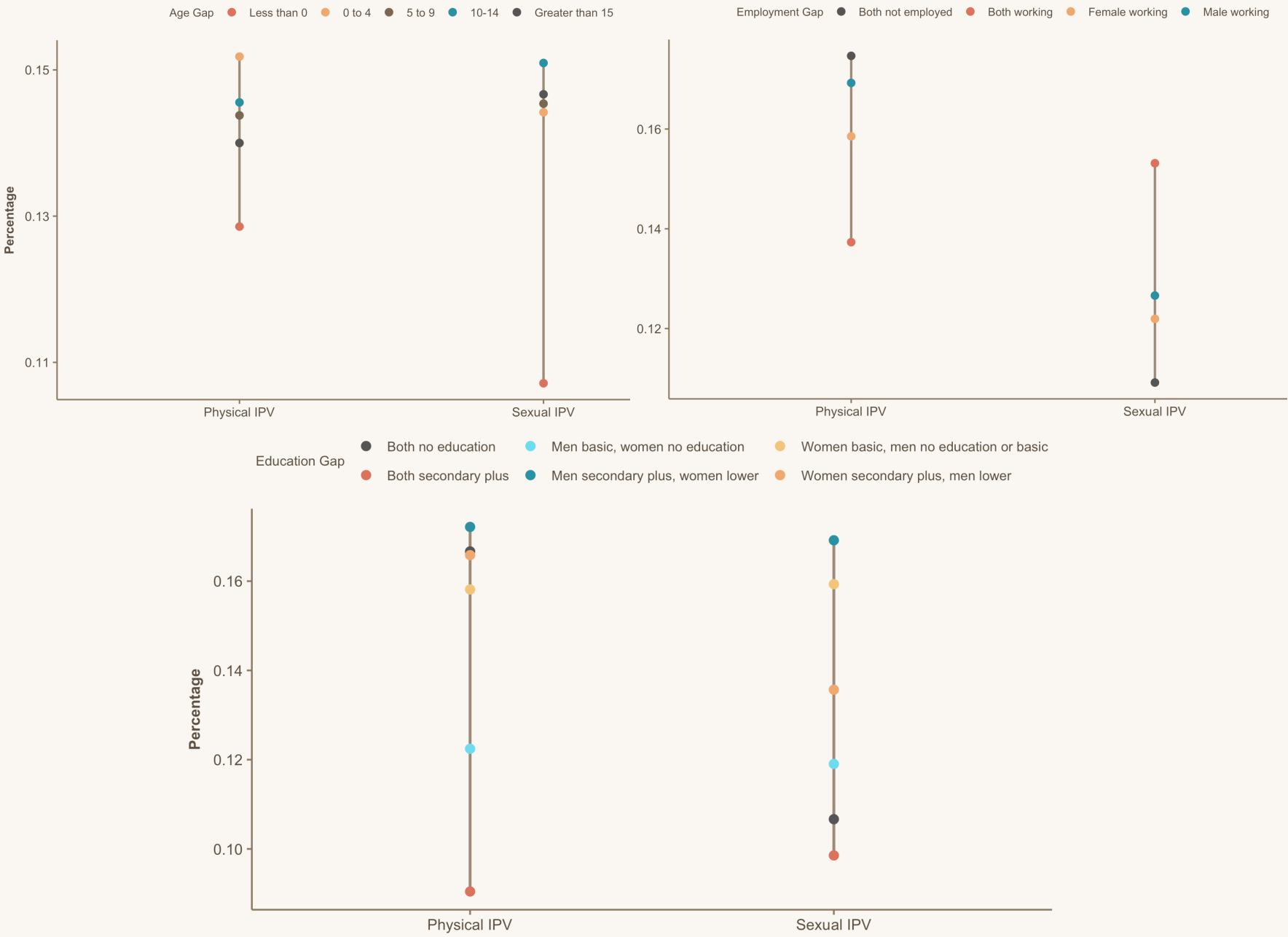
- Demographic: age, district, rural residence, religion, ethnicity
- Household: wealth quintile, number of children
- Personal history: witnessing IPV during childhood, experience of being raped
- Women empowerment: attitude toward violence



## Results

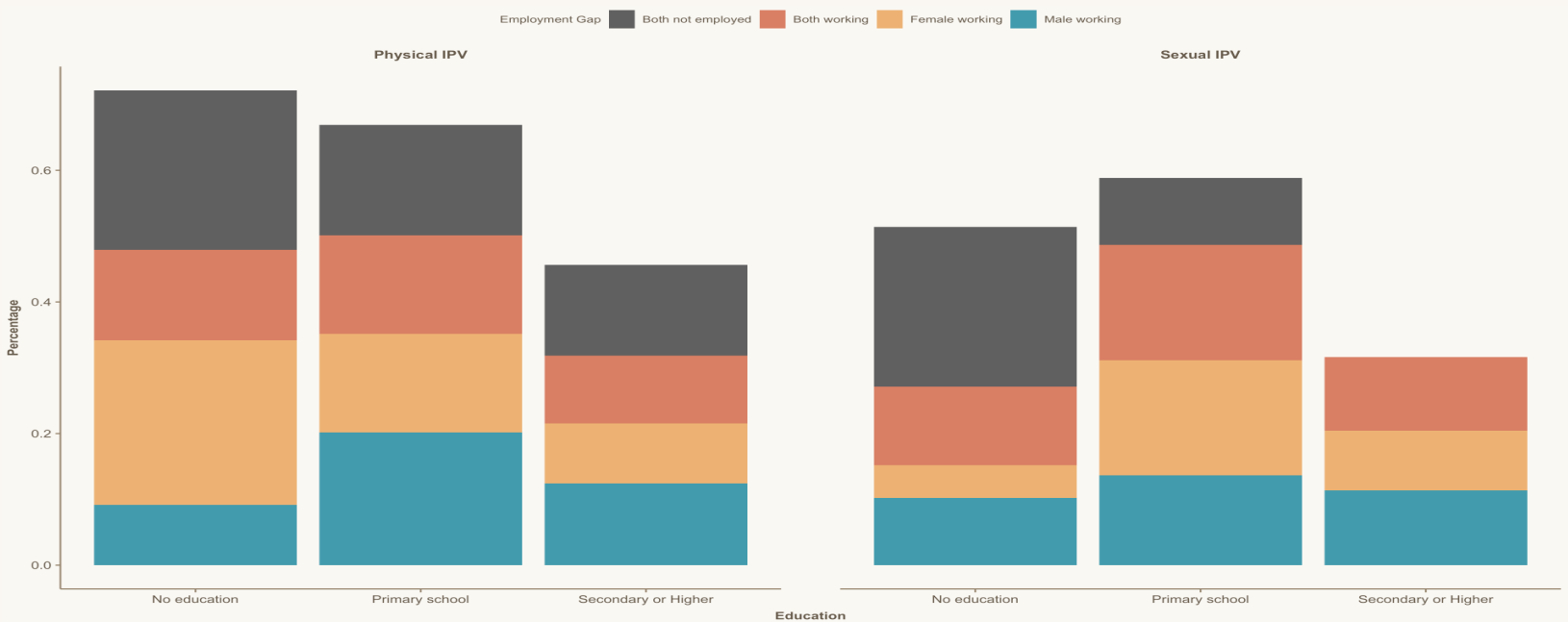
### IPV Rate by Imbalance Factor

- Avoiding marrying older men & Obtaining secondary education have strong protective power against IPV
- Sexual IPV increases hugely with larger age gap; Effect of Employment gap is unclear
- Education imbalance increases risk for IPV, especially men hold much higher degrees



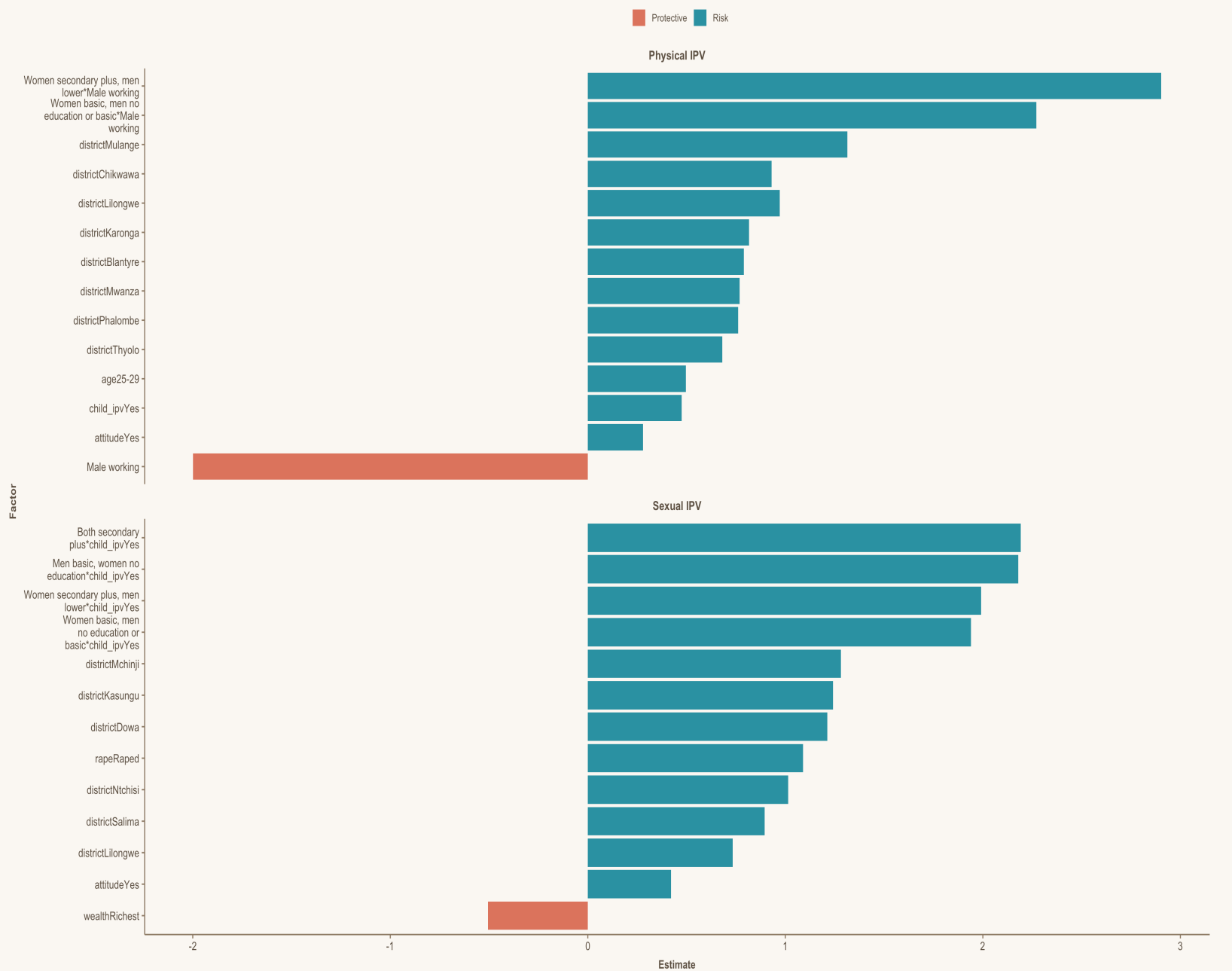
### Employment Impact by Education

- For physical IPV, female working is protective only when women have received some level of education
- Patterns of sexual IPV is unclear, while both not employed exposes huge risk for uneducated women



### Importance Magnitude

- Childhood exposure to IPV and supportive attitude toward violence** are the most consistent and **strongest risk factors**; IPV rate also varies by geographic areas
- Women aged between 25-29, holding a higher education degree than her partner while not working are highly vulnerable to physical IPV
- Childhood IPV exposure is not offset by education dynamics** between partners; Experience of being raped also increases sexual IPV risk, while **family wealth can protect women against sexual IPV**



## Policy Implications

- ❑ **Improving education level and working opportunities can protect women against IPV; Women in unbalanced relationships face higher risk of IPV**
- ❑ For Physical IPV, reduced education gap is a strong protective indicator
- ❑ Partner power balance is of greater importance to reduce sexual IPV
  - Being employed has strong protective power for women without education and married to older partners
  - However, evidence stands for both dependency and compensation theory; Impact of education gap is unclear
- ❑ School education and financial empowerment is not sufficient to advance the progress of ending violence against women in Malawi. It is of urgent need to **increase the awareness of long-lasting impact of witnessing IPV and being raped during early age in life on women's well-being**
  - Interventions must be taken at an early stage to help children witnessing IPV to navigate psychological changes
  - Schools should incorporate sexual education components to improve awareness of IPV and prevent violence exposure to children
- ❑ **Reducing IPV requires combined effort from individuals, educators and policymakers** to change social norms and advance protection for women at both cultural and legislative level. It cannot be achieved without supportive actions from men



## Research Question

- Examine **whether vulnerability of IPV rise with increased power base imbalance in education and employment between partners**, and the magnitude
- Does improved female education level and employment status reduces women's vulnerability in unbalanced relationships
- To what extent dependency and transgression of gender roles theory decides IPV