

# **The “Patriarchy of the Wage” and Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from Brazil**

## **Introduction**

The economic transformations brought about after decades of neoliberalism in Latin America are a driver of sexist violence (Gago 2020). Latin American feminists have identified two mechanisms by which these transformations drive sexist violence. The first mechanism involves the inability of the wage to secure reproductive labor. Silvia Federici’s “Patriarchy of the Wage” framework posits that the wage has served as an “objective” measure of men’s dominant position in the labor market, even as greater amounts of women participate in the labor force (Federici 2021). Thus, the wage has historically functioned as a political tool against women: in the traditional male breadwinner model, women are uncompensated for their labor within the household. Men, deprived from their traditional means of securing reproductive labor, must rely on sexist violence to ensure reproductive labor is performed in the home (Gago 2020).

Unlike the first mechanism, which arises from men’s desire to appropriate reproductive labor, the second mechanism operates in the realm of psychology and appears to be an emotional reaction to the devaluation of men’s identities. As a result of women’s increased participation in extra-domestic work and of the decline of patriarchal attitudes among them, women are more likely to express resistance or contempt for male authority (Gago 2020). Facing a loss of obedience within a monogamous heteronormative family and the collapse of the wage as an objective measure of male authority, abusive men turn to sexist violence and reproductive control as a compensatory affirmation of their authority (Bongaarts 1978, Miller et al. 2017, Barber et al. 2018, Gago 2020). Thus, continued austerity and privatization within Latin America would lead to increased incidents of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

In the 2010 Brazilian gubernatorial elections, right-wing candidate Rosalba Ciarlini succeeded the term-limited socialist governor Wilma de Faria as the governor of Rio Grande do Norte (Tupina 2022). Ciarlini’s budget cuts were historically unpopular and facing certain defeat, she declined to run for a second term (Sa 2013, Carvalho 2014). Comparing rates of IPV in Rio Grande do Norte before and after the Ciarlini administration’s budget cuts with rates of IPV in Ceará (a neighboring state with a similar demographic and economic profile that did not experience a governmental transition or a shift in spending priorities) would highlight the link between neoliberal reforms and IPV.

## *Hypothesis*

Sexist violence has been reconceptualized by feminist movements in Latin America, who see the decline of the “patriarchy of the wage” in a neoliberal context as a key driver behind it. In this view, sexist violence is exacerbated by two intertwined mechanisms: the need of men to secure reproductive labor, and male emotional backlash to the devaluation of their identity.

This study sets out to establish the relationship between men's reduced ability to command authority through the wage and the likelihood that women experience Intimate Partner Violence. Thus, this study tested the following hypotheses:

1. State budget cuts and public sector privatization will correspond with increases in the likelihood that violence against women was perpetrated by a male intimate partner.
2. Decreases of women's unemployment rate relative to men's and increases in a state total fertility rate will correspond with increases in the likelihood that violence against women was perpetrated by a male intimate partner.

Figure 1: Map of Key States



## Data and Methods

### *Data*

This study used person-level data from the Violence and Accident Surveillance module of Brazil's National Disease Notification System (VIVA-SINAN) for the years 2009-2015. VIVA-SINAN contains data on all incidents of domestic, sexual and other types of violence in Brazil.

Additionally, my final sample only included female victims of violence perpetrated by males in the states of Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará between the ages of 15 and 49. My final sample included information from 5,132 reports of violence. Unemployment data and fertility rates were taken from Brazil's Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD).

### *Methods*

To determine the effects of state neoliberal reforms on IPC, I propose a difference-in-differences (DD) model. DD methods are a common strategy for evaluating the effects of policies at a particular point in time (usually at the time of its implementation). This method compares changes in an outcome variable (whether the respondent experienced violence perpetrated by a male intimate partner) in groups unaffected by the treatment variable (budget cuts). The key

advantage of DD models is that they can provide unbiased effect estimates if the trend over time would have been equivalent in control and treatment groups absent the treatment (Stuart et al. 2014). The years 2009-2015 were measured to capture 4 years prior to the implementation of the budget cuts and 3 years post implementation. Analysis was done in R.

## Results and Discussion

A significant positive effect between budget reforms and proportion of violence among women aged 15-49 was found attributed to a male romantic partner. This proportion was operationalized by first limiting the sample to only reports of women facing violence from men. Of those women, those with a likely perpetrator identified as a boyfriend, husband, ex-boyfriend, and ex-husband were coded as experiencing IPV.

Table 1: Difference-in-difference analysis of Proportion of IPV

Dependent variable	Proportion by State		
	Ceará	Rio Grande do Norte	Treatment-Control
Proportion before reforms	0.6694561 (0.015222)	0.4590164 (0.017062)	-0.2104397 (0.022865)
Proportion after reforms	0.6182881 (0.011204)	0.5170021 (0.013169)	-0.101286 (0.026386)
Change in proportion	-0.051168 (0.018901)	0.0579857 (0.021552)	<b>0.1091537</b> (0.034915)

The predicted probability that sexist violence will be perpetrated by a male intimate partner increased from 2009 to 2015 in Rio Grande do Norte and decreased over the same time period in Ceará, as seen in Table 1. The difference-in-difference effect of budget reforms increased the probability of violence against women being perpetrated by a male intimate partner by 10.9%, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 2: ANOVA Probability of IPV

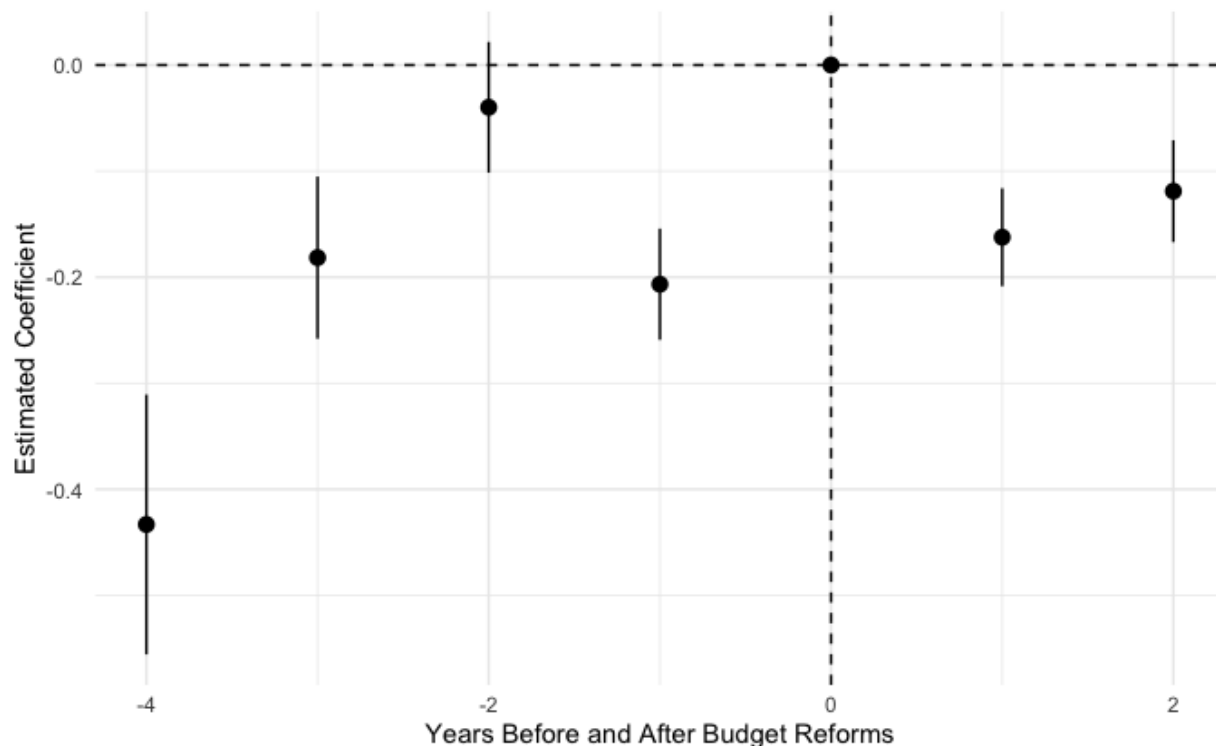
Variable	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	df	F value	p
Budget Reform	13.63	13.626	1	65.8582	6.97e-16 ***
Year Categorical Variable	9.11	1.519	6	7.3410	8.26e-08 ***
Age Group	40.76	6.793	6	32.8309	< 2e-16 ***
Education Group	11.14	1.393	8	6.7331	8.85e-09 ***
Race	2.76	0.690	4	3.3372	0.009797 **
Marriage Indicator	44.39	44.392	1	214.5544	< 2e-16 ***
Total Fertility Rate	0.29	0.294	1	1.4188	0.233688
Male Unemployment Rate	1.11	1.112	1	5.3768	0.020472 *
Female Share of Unemp.	1.80	1.805	1	8.7226	0.003167 **
Reform*Year Interaction	1.55	0.516	3	2.4950	0.058156

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.5

The DD model—summarized as an ANOVA table in Table 2—has very statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) effects for reform, each fixed effect for year, each age group, each educational group, each racial group, and each marital group. The unemployment indicators were also significant.

The event study presented in Figure 2 takes the implementation of the budget reforms into account. Relative to 2013, the years preceding the budget reforms had on average lower probabilities of IPV than those after (though 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2015 are statistically indistinguishable from each other and 2011 and 2013 are also indistinguishable).

Figure 2: IPV Event Study



### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The Rio Grande do Norte budget reforms created a quasi-experiment in which a “treatment” is enacted on a large scale and can be studied in contrast to events left “constant”. However, the treatment was not administered totally randomly, and Rio Grande do Norte could be fundamentally different from Ceará and these confounding differences could be the phenomenon measured in the analysis rather than pure the effect of budget reform. Though various controls were included to increase the internal and external validity of the study, these non-random differences between births in Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará could be limitations.

Further work in this space could focus on how IPV due to reform may not be distributed evenly across racial, age, education, and marital groups. Difference-in-differences-in-differences (DDD) testing comparing different cells stratified by race, age, education, and marital status could address this question. More states could be modeled to increase the robustness of results. Additional health outcomes associated with IPV could be modeled.

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