

*Research Article*

# Chinese Women's Financial Independence and Their Intimate Partner Violence Victimization Experiences

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## Abstract

China, as a traditional patriarchal society, provides an excellent context to examine whether and how increased financial independence of women may influence intimate partner violence. This study examines how financial independence influences Chinese women's victimization experiences of physical violence, psychological violence, controlling behavior, and sexual abuse. Data were collected from 600 married or divorced women aged between 20 and 60, who resided in a large metropolitan area in Southern China. Results indicated that while physical violence is reduced by women's financial independence, other forms of connective IPV against women are suggested as expressions of men's desire to keep financially independent women in place.

## Keywords

intimate partner violence, financial independence, feminist perspective, China

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## Introduction

The prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) varies across countries; for example, IPV against women is more prevalent in South-East Asia (37.7%), the Eastern Mediterranean (37%), and Africa (36.6%) than in the Americas (29.8%), the European region (25.4%), and the Western Pacific region (24.6%) (García-Moreno, 2005). The perpetration of IPV against women is fostered by economic and sociocultural factors, such as social norms that encourage men's use of authority and acceptance of violence against women; childhood exposure to violence; women's economic rights; and gender inequality in wages, employment, and access to education (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013). Therefore, the prevalence of IPV is suggested to be higher in traditional patriarchal societies.

In traditional patriarchal societies, the gender ideology defines men as the primary breadwinners and women often economically rely on men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This is how men gain power within an intimate relationship. Economic dependency on men may increase women's risk for IPV (Golden et al., 2013). Following this line of logic, increasing women's financial independence is suggested to be a protective factor for IPV in such a society. China provides an excellent context to examine whether and how

increased financial independence of women may influence IPV. However, only a few studies have explored the effects of different risk factors for Chinese women's victimization (Chan, 2014; Lin et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2005). The explanation for the influence of women's financial independence on their IPV victimization remains largely unaddressed in Chinese settings. It is unclear whether the traditional patriarchal society may reflect a different form of expression of IPV that is specific to the Chinese context. Therefore, the current study aims to fill the gaps in the IPV literature by analyzing data collected from Chinese women to understand the expression of control among heterosexual intimate partners. Specifically, we examined the influence of women's financial independence, patriarchal ideology, developmental factors, and demographics. We found that women's financial independence may create a backlash effect on IPV against women.

## Literature Review

### *IPV Prevalence Rate and Characteristics in China*

IPV is a public health issue that affects men and women worldwide. As defined by the World Health Organization, IPV is “any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship” (WHO, 2012, p. 1). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) has documented that almost one-third of women in samples from 56 countries have experienced physical and/or sexual assault by an intimate male partner during their lifetime.

The prevalence of IPV against women in China is high. The Chinese Health and Family Life Survey reported that the national prevalence rate of intimate partner physical violence against female adults from 1999 to 2000 was around 34% (Parish et al., 2004). The problem is more severe among women living in an urban setting. The prevalence rate of IPV during the past year was 39.2% for local women and 41.2% for migrant women in Guangzhou (Teng et al., 2014). The lifetime prevalence rate was even higher within a clinical setting with 43% of patients reporting physical and/or sexual violence (Xu et al., 2005).

### *Chinese Cultural Context*

The traditional Chinese culture is heavily influenced by Confucian doctrine, which could put women in subordinate positions. One of the doctrines, *San Cong*, states that there are three rules of obedience for women. Women should obey their father when they are young, obey their husbands during marriage, and obey their sons when they are old. Another type of doctrine, *Si De*, specifies that women should possess four kinds of virtues which are fidelity, tidiness, propriety in speech, and commitment to needlework (Tang & Lai, 2008). Moreover, *xian qi liang mu* stipulates that model women should be good wives and mothers, and *nu zi wu cai bin she de* encourages women not to obtain an education. Under the above rigid traditional gender roles, it is believed that men are the heads of the household and make major decisions. Their use of violence to assert their power over their wives is believed to be legitimate. The traditional patriarchal beliefs in Chinese societies make women become vulnerable to IPV.

Since the 1980s, the economic and social changes in China transformed China into a market-based socialist economy (Tang & Lai, 2008). As a result, women had greater access to education and employment. Women were able to contribute more financial resources to their families and therefore demand greater decision-making power in family matters. The changes within the families challenge and threaten men's status as heads of household and their decision-making power. This may lead to a rise in conflicts and tensions within families.

### *Feminist Perspective on IPV*

Feminist criminologists describe IPV against women as rooted in one partner's abuse of power and control over the other partner due to patriarchal social structure (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Patriarchy has two components, patriarchal cultural norms (which were described above) and a social structure that rationalizes and encourages male dominance (Smith, 1990). In this social context, men have control over resources. In the public sphere, patriarchal social structure manifests itself in different dimensions, such as women's social status being inferior to men's, females having less access to the political system, a lower survival rate for female infants, a gender wage gap that disadvantages women, females having less physical mobility, fewer economic opportunities for women, and a culture that accepts the above arrangements (Connell, 2005).

When women's status is studied as a predictor of IPV against women, findings are contradictory about the nature of the relationship. In a study of 16 countries, Archer (2006) found a linear relationship, with higher socioeconomic status in women related to lower IPV victimization. In particular, financially independent women were less likely to be abused (Caridad Bueno & Henderson, 2017; Rao, 1997). This finding could be explained by the household bargaining model which postulates that as women's economic opportunities increase, their likelihood of IPV victimization decreases (Caridad Bueno & Henderson, 2017). Having economic resources may include more access to social networks and information, as well as higher self-confidence and self-empowerment (Jewkes, 2002). These may bring them more exit options and higher bargaining power when they encounter IPV (Caridad Bueno & Henderson, 2017). As a result, husbands may be more willing to bargain and compromise.

Other research has found that as women's socioeconomic status increases, IPV against women increases (Cools & Kotsadam, 2017; Stark, 2009). In other words, the rising status of women may create a backlash effect and may not have a protective role in IPV against women. This could be explained by the male backlash model which assumes that the increased economic status of women may challenge their husbands' masculinity (Caridad Bueno & Henderson, 2017; Merry, 2011). Men may feel threatened by the change in traditional sex roles and hence they are more likely to use IPV to reassert their power and control over their partners.

The above studies, however, were carried out in western societies. It remains unclear whether and how the increase in Chinese women's socioeconomic status may affect men's roles within households and hence the forms of IPV in general. Therefore, research is needed to examine Chinese women's victimization experiences and how Chinese men respond to the increased economic opportunities for Chinese women.

### *Patriarchal Ideology*

The cultural justification for IPV against women has been found in more patriarchal societies, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zimbabwe (Krug et al., 2002). In those traditional societies, men are seen as the owners of their wives, and women are expected to be respectful of their husbands, stay home, and take care of children (Krug et al., 2002). If their wives fail to fulfill their roles, men feel entitled to use violence to punish their wives (Krug et al., 2002). Several studies in other cultures also showed that societies that value patriarchal cultural norms are more likely to have a high rate of IPV against women (Bui & Morash, 1999; Chan & Straus, 2008; Kim & Emery, 2003; Li, 2022; Ozaki & Otis, 2017; Smith, 1990; Yick & Agbayani-Siewert, 2000; Yoshihama, 2005). In China, women's justification of IPV is found to be highly related to IPV victimization (Lin et al., 2018).

Chinese people are more likely to hold a conservative attitude toward responses to IPV and support traditional gender roles, compared with people in the United States (Sun et al., 2011). Chinese people view IPV as a private family matter and any discussion of the IPV experience is discouraged because it may hurt the family's reputation (Sun et al., 2011). Li et al. (2020) found that Chinese college students have a greater

tolerance for IPV than students in the United States. Therefore, women may perceive IPV as shameful and prefer to tolerate it, which may make women become more susceptible to IPV.

### *Developmental Perspective on IPV*

The relationship between the developmental perspective and IPV victimization has been rarely studied. A few studies found that childhood exposure to IPV is a risk factor for IPV victimization (Cochran et al., 2011; Hamby et al., 2012; Powers et al., 2020). According to Akers and Jensen (2011), learning takes place when people interact with others. Interaction and communication most often happen in intimate personal groups, such as families. Associating with violent parents may increase opportunities for imitation of IPV. Children who have violent parents may not be exposed to nonviolent ways of solving conflicts, effective communication, and negotiation (Foshee et al., 1999). Therefore, children who are exposed to interparental violence learn that using violence is appropriate.

### *Sociodemographic Characteristics as Risk Factors for IPV*

Several sociodemographic characteristics, such as education level, marital status, and income, have been studied frequently as IPV risk factors. A meta-analysis found that having a lower education level is a risk factor for IPV perpetration (Stith et al., 2004). Hong Kong women who were divorced or in cohabitation reported a higher prevalence of IPV both in their lifetime and in the previous year, compared to married women (Lau, 2005; Leung et al., 2002). Chinese women who make no or little financial contribution to the family were found to be more likely to experience IPV perpetrated by their male intimate partner (Xu et al., 2005).

### *The Current Study*

The above literature suggests a number of perspectives and risk factors to explain women's IPV victimization experiences. However, whether and how increased financial independence of women may influence IPV in traditional patriarchal societies remains unknown. The current study is the first study that explores the effects of Chinese women's financial independence on their IPV victimization experiences of physical violence, psychological violence, controlling behavior, and sexual abuse. Using multiple regression analysis, the current study analyzed data from 600 married or divorced women in a large city in southern China.

## **Method**

Data in this study were collected from a large metropolitan area in southern China during a one-year period between May 1, 2013, and April 30, 2014. Participants received services from a government-funded Family Violence Intervention Center. Data were collected from 600 females who were married or divorced. They were asked to complete a survey instrument used to collect information about IPV victimization experiences, education level, employment status, income, and insurance.

### *Sample*

The first group was comprised of 300 divorced women aged 20 to 60. They were randomly selected from 421 women who were divorced or going through the divorce process. They reported their IPV victimization experiences and had sought help from therapists in the community or directly from the Family Violence Intervention Center located in their district. The second group was comprised of 300 married women who

were neighbors of the divorced women in the first group and did not previously report IPV victimization experiences to either therapists in the community or the Center.

## *Measures*

**Dependent Variables.** The dependent variables were the frequency of four types of IPV, including physical violence, psychological violence, controlling behavior, and sexual violence, during the past year. The responses were made on a four-point Likert scale, with 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, and 4 = all the time. The score on each type of IPV was computed by taking the average response for the items. A higher score indicates a higher level of IPV.

Physical violence includes 10 items. The respondents were asked whether they experienced: (a) throwing objects at you; (b) pushing, scratching, and hitting; (c) slapping; (d) kicking, biting, and punching; (e) burning with cigarette; (f) tying limbs up; (g) continuously kicking and/or punching; (h) threatening or stabbing with knives; (i) strangling, pushing head into water, and suffocating with pillows; and (j) pushing down staircases, force-feeding poison, and pouring acid and gasoline.

Psychological violence is a seven-item scale. The seven items were: (a) talking ill about you, (b) complaining about you, (c) humiliating or cursing, (d) throwing objects, (e) threatening to kill, (f) hurting pets or destroying loved objects, and (g) threatening with actions or facial expressions.

Controlling behavior is a scale of five items: (a) restricting interaction with friends of the opposite sex, (b) restricting interaction with friends of the same sex, (c) restricting interaction with family members, (d) suspecting or accusing of infidelity, and (e) following/stalking.

Sexual violence is measured by one item, “forcing sexual activities.”

**Independent Variables.** The independent variables were comprised of four groups: sociodemographic characteristics, financial independence, patriarchal ideology, and developmental factors. Sociodemographic characteristics included marital status, age, and education level. Marital status was a dummy variable with 1 representing married and 0 representing divorced or going through the divorce process. Age is a continuous variable that measures the actual age of the respondents. Education level was measured by an ordinal variable with 1 = elementary education and 6 = graduate education.

Financial independence was represented by employment status, income level, and six types of insurance. Employment status was coded as a dummy variable with 1 = employed. Income level measures monthly income. It is an ordinal variable with 1 = less than 1,808 RMB (US\$270) and 13 = more than 8,001 RMB (US\$1,193). Six types of insurance were measured: work-related injuries, retirement, medical, pregnancy, unemployment, and housing. Work-related injury insurance is made only by the employer. In the event that an employee is injured at work, the employee can apply for reimbursement from the employer. Retirement insurance operates by receiving contributions on a monthly basis from both the employee and the employer. It ensures an individual will be able to maintain some income after retirement. Medical insurance allows an individual to defray some of the costs of medical expenses in the event of illness or injury. Both employees and employers are required to make contributions to this fund. In addition, each month individuals receive a small amount of money onto their medical insurance card. The funds can be used to purchase medicine or other goods at pharmacies or to pay small medical expenses at hospitals. Contributions to pregnancy insurance are made by employers only. In the event that an employee becomes pregnant, she will be entitled to receive a lump sum to defray some of the costs of the childbirth. During the period of maternity leave from the company, the pregnancy insurance will cover the payment of salary. Regarding unemployment insurance, employers are expected to make a contribution toward it. In the event an individual becomes unemployed, they will be able to make a claim to receive unemployment benefits. In addition to these five types of social insurance, employers and employees are also required to pay for housing insurance. The

housing insurance can be used to make the initial down payment as well as to repay mortgages taken out when purchasing a house. Individuals who have sufficient funds accrued in a housing fund account can also apply for a lower mortgage rate compared to a normal commercial loan. These six types of insurance may affect IPV victimization because having them signifies having more economic resources.

Patriarchal ideology was operationalized by three variables. The justification for the use of IPV against women was measured by asking respondents whether the following seven circumstances were acceptable or not, with 1 = completely unacceptable and 4 = completely acceptable: (1) wives refuse to do housework, (2) wives go out without telling husbands, (3) wives refuse sex, (4) wives fail to take care of the children, (5) wives show disrespect for in-law parents, (6) wives fail to birth a boy, and (7) wives fight with husbands. The higher value, the more an individual justifies the use of IPV.

Endorsement of male dominance was constructed on a scale of six items. Respondents were asked whether they agree with the following six statements: (1) men take care of businesses outside the household while women should take care of those within, (2) wives should follow their husbands, (3) men should take charge of all family matters, (4) preserving men's face is of utmost importance, (5) nothing matters more to women than family, and (6) daughters belong to others; only sons belong to myself. The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree). A higher value indicates greater endorsement of male dominance.

Gender equality was a single-item that was assessed by asking respondents whether they agreed with the statement, "Men and women should be treated equally in society." The responses were given on a four-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly agree and 4 = strongly disagree). A lower value indicates a higher level of belief in gender equality.

Developmental perspective was operationalized by two variables. The first variable, exposure to physical violence, asked respondents if they ever witnessed parental physical violence as a child. The second variable assessed whether they ever experienced physical abuse by parents. Both variables were measured by 1 = yes and 0 = no.

## Results

### *Descriptive Statistics for Variables in the Analysis*

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for variables in the analysis. The frequencies of all four types of IPV victimization were relatively low. Controlling behaviors were the most frequently experienced by the respondents, followed by sexual abuse, psychological violence, and physical violence. The mean age of the respondents was 40.22 years old. About 68% of them were employed. More than 70% received retirement and medical insurance. About 19% to 26% received work-related injury, pregnancy, unemployment, and housing insurance. The justification for the use of IPV was low (1.37), meaning that the respondents had low acceptance for the use of IPV. The respondents had a medium level of endorsement of male dominance (2.31). The respondents also strongly believe in gender equality (1.55). All scales have acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Interest.

	<i>M, %</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Intimate partner violence victimization				
Physical violence	1.13	0.3	1	3.3
Psychological violence	1.48	0.56	1	4
Controlling behavior	1.52	0.59	1	3.8
Sexual violence	1.49	0.85	1	4
Background characteristics				
Married	50%			
Age	40.22	8.32	22	60
Education	3.15	0.92	1	6
Financial independence				
Employed	68.46%			
Income	6.25	3.7	1	13
Insurance 1: Work-related injuries	25.92%			
Insurance 2: Retirement	73.08%			
Insurance 3: Medical	75.92%			
Insurance 4: Pregnancy	27.09%			
Insurance 5: Unemployment	24.08%			
Insurance 6: Housing	19.06%			
Patriarchal ideology				
Justification of IPV	1.37	0.47	1	3.14
Male dominance	2.31	0.55	1	3.83
Gender equality	1.55	0.72	1	4
Developmental				
Exposed to physical violence	31.67%			
Being physically abused during childhood	40.17%			

Note. IPV = intimate partner violence.

### *Multivariate Analyses*

Before conducting multivariate analyses, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) were checked. The VIFs were low, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem among the independent variables. All statistical analyses were conducted in Stata 14. Table 2 presents results from the multiple regression analysis. With regard to sociodemographic variable, married women were less likely to experience all four types of IPV. Other sociodemographic characteristics were not related to IPV.

**Table 2.** Multiple Regressions of Four Types of IPV Victimization ( $N = 600$ ).

	Controlling behavior		Physical violence		Psychological violence		Sexual abuse	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
<b>Sociodemographics</b>								
Married	−0.255***	0.059	−0.111***	0.030	−0.421***	0.053	−0.556***	0.083
Age	−0.007	0.004	0.001	0.002	−0.001	0.004	−0.004	0.006
Education	−0.00007	0.035	−0.029	0.018	−0.004	0.031	−0.020	0.049
<b>Financial independence</b>								
Employed	0.277	0.405	0.051	0.207	0.367	0.365	0.387	0.573
Income	0.016	0.008	0.002	0.004	0.015*	0.007	0.055***	0.012
Insurance 1: Work-related injuries	0.100	0.075	0.022	0.038	0.012	0.067	−0.202	0.106
Insurance 2: Retirement	0.330***	0.899	0.038	0.046	0.137	0.081	0.303*	0.127
Insurance 3: Medical	−0.255**	0.092	−0.023	0.047	−0.012	0.083	−0.129	0.131
Insurance 4: Pregnancy	−0.084	0.078	0.059	0.040	0.108	0.070	−0.185	0.111
Insurance 5: Unemployment	−0.173*	0.088	−0.083	0.045	−0.241**	0.079	0.208	0.125
Insurance 6: Housing	0.014	0.085	−0.010	0.044	−0.031	0.077	0.114	0.120
<b>Patriarchal Ideology</b>								
Justification of IPV	0.270***	0.065	0.150***	0.033	0.347***	0.058	0.461***	0.092
Male dominance	0.151**	0.054	0.070*	0.028	0.039	0.049	0.095	0.076
Gender equality	0.091*	0.041	0.054*	0.021	0.056	0.037	−0.131*	0.058
<b>Developmental factors</b>								
Exposed to physical violence	0.187**	0.065	0.079*	0.033	0.148*	0.059	0.211*	0.092
Being physically abused during childhood	−0.045	0.062	−0.053	0.032	−0.048	0.056	−0.018	0.088
<b>R-squared</b>	0.196***		0.170***		0.249***		0.253***	

Note. Coef. = coefficient; SE = standard error; IPV = intimate partner violence.

\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

Several indicators of financial independence were associated with women's experiences of IPV. Women with higher income were more likely to be victims of psychological violence and sexual abuse. Women with retirement insurance were more likely to experience controlling behavior and sexual abuse from intimate partners. However, having medical insurance and unemployment insurance seems to be protective against IPV. Having medical insurance reduced the likelihood of experiencing controlling behavior. Also, having unemployment insurance significantly decreased the likelihood of being victims of controlling behavior and psychological violence. Being employed, having work-related injury insurance, pregnancy insurance, and housing insurance were not related to experiencing any types of IPV. Physical violence was not related to financial independence.

With regard to patriarchal ideology, justification of IPV significantly impacted all four types of IPV. Women who were more likely to justify the use of IPV were more likely to experience controlling behavior, physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual abuse. Believing in gender equality was related to three out of four types of IPV, all except psychological violence. A strong endorsement of male dominance was only associated with controlling behavior and physical violence.

Among variables measuring developmental factors, being exposed to physical violence was significantly associated with all four types of violence. Being physically abused during childhood, however, did not predict any of the four types of IPV victimization.

## Discussion

In the literature, it is not known whether and how the increase in Chinese women's financial independence may affect experiences of various forms of IPV in general. Therefore, using a sample of 600 married or divorced women in a large city in the southern part of China, the current study examined the impact of women's financial independence, patriarchal ideology, developmental factors, and sociodemographic characteristics on their victimization experiences of controlling behavior, psychological violence, physical violence, and sexual abuse.



First, the results show that the impacts of women's financial independence on IPV were mixed. Financial independence was associated with three out of four types of IPV, all except physical violence. This finding is partially consistent with the findings from western societies. As women's status increases, which was characterized by women's financial independence, IPV against women increases (Cools & Kotsadam, 2017; Stark, 2009). Having financial independence, such as having higher income and retirement insurance, may create a backlash effect and may not have a protective role in IPV against women. When women's status is high, men feel threatened by the change in traditional sex roles. Women's financial independence may threaten men's traditional breadwinner role and challenge their masculinity, and hence, men may feel the need to use IPV to reinstate their power and control over their partners. This supports the male backlash model which assumes that the increased economic status of women may challenge their husbands' masculinity (Caridad Bueno & Henderson, 2017; Merry, 2011). On the other hand, having medical and unemployment insurances seems to be protective against IPV. Perhaps these two types of insurance may have different significance at different employment status and age. For example, around 70% of the current sample were employed and hence having unemployment insurance may appear less "threatening" to their intimate partners. Having medical insurance may allow women to have more access to medical services and information. This may bring them more exit options if encounter IPV. As explained by the household bargaining model, women who have more exit options have higher bargaining power (Caridad Bueno & Henderson, 2017). Therefore, husbands may be more willing to compromise and use less IPV against their wives.

Using controlling behavior, psychological violence, and sexual abuse may be an expression of Chinese men's desire to reassert their dominance in the household. Future research should investigate both men's economic resources and women's economic position relative to their husbands. As illustrated by the male backlash model, IPV is conditioned upon the difference between men's and women's employment and income (Villarreal, 2007). Women who are employed are at greater risk of physical violence if their male partners are unemployed (Macmillan & Gartner, 1999). Additionally, women who have higher salaries than their husbands are more likely to experience sexual violence than women who have the same or lower salaries than their husbands (Caridad Bueno & Henderson, 2017).

In the current study, physical violence had no relationship with women's financial independence. As explained by the household bargaining model, economic resources may provide women with more exit options when they face incidents of IPV. Women are more likely to leave their abusive partners if women are financially independent and their level of financial dependency on their partners is low (Kim & Gray, 2008). Men, however, may not want to end the relationship. Men may want the women to stay in the relationship in order to establish their status as the head of household and have the ultimate decision-making power within the households. Perhaps, men may fear that the use of physical violence may make financially independent women leave the relationship. Using controlling behavior, psychological violence, and sexual abuse may be an expression of Chinese men's desire to establish their status as the head of the household.

Second, regarding patriarchal ideology, the influence of justification of IPV was consistent across the four types of IPV. The more a woman justifies IPV, the more likely they are to experience controlling behavior, physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual abuse. This is consistent with the literature that societies that value patriarchal cultural norms are more likely to have a high rate of IPV against women (Bui & Morash, 1999; Chan & Straus, 2008; Kim & Emery, 2003; Ozaki & Otis, 2017; Smith, 1990; Yick & Agbayani-Siewert, 2000; Yoshihama, 2005). However, the findings on the effect of gender equality are mixed. The scale was constructed in a way that a lower value indicated a higher level of belief in gender equality. The findings suggest that women who believe in gender equality were less likely to experience controlling behavior and physical violence, but they were more likely to experience sexual abuse. The opposite finding on sexual abuse is probably because women who are more likely to believe in gender

equality may also be more likely to challenge men's status. Therefore, men may feel the need to use sexual abuse to reestablish their status in the household.

Third, the effect of developmental factors on Chinese women's IPV experiences is equivocal. Exposure to physical violence has a significant impact on all four types of IPV. Being physically abused during childhood, however, does not predict any type of IPV victimization. A possible explanation for the finding regarding violence exposure is that children who have violent parents may not be exposed to nonviolent ways of solving conflicts, effective communication, and negotiation (Foshee et al., 1999). Therefore, children who are exposed to interparental violence learn that using violence is appropriate.

In conclusion, the traditional patriarchal culture in China and the advancement of women's financial status provide a special context for us to understand the influence of women's financial independence on their IPV victimization experiences. The current study contributes to the literature by finding that men may feel threatened by the rising financial status of women. They may use controlling behavior, psychological violence, and sexual abuse to reassert their dominance in the household. Having insurance and higher income may create a backlash effect and may not have a protective role in IPV against Chinese women. Our findings contribute to the literature by identifying how increased financial independence of women may influence IPV in a traditional patriarchal society.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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