

Chinese Women's Experience of Intimate Partner Violence: Exploring Factors Affecting Various Types of IPV

Violence Against Women

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Abstract

Using a sample of 553 married and divorced women in a large city in southern China, this study tested the effects of demographic characteristics, risk behaviors, patriarchal ideology, and personal mentality and skills on women's experience of physical violence, psychological violence, controlling behavior, and sexual abuse. Divorced women were more likely than married women to experience all types of IPV. Risk behaviors were consistently related to IPV incidents, whereas the impact of patriarchal ideology and personal mentality and skills was equivocal. Limitations of the study and implications for future research and policy are discussed.

Keywords

intimate partner violence, violence against women, China, types of IPV, risk factors for IPV

Introduction

The global awareness of violence against women has grown significantly over the past several decades. Cross-national studies conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) have repeatedly found that among various types of violence against women, intimate partner violence (IPV) remains the most common and universal form worthy of public attention and intervention (García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005; García-Moreno et al., 2013). Almost one third of all women worldwide who

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have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partners (García-Moreno et al., 2013).

The main purpose of this study is to assess factors influencing different forms of IPV against Chinese women. A significant amount of research has been conducted to identify various risk factors of IPV in numerous social and cultural contexts (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012; Jewkes, 2002). Past research, however, often failed to collect data on one or more types of violence (e.g., physical, psychological, and sexual violence), and/or combined multiple types of violence into a single indicator of IPV incidence. A relatively small number of studies that separated various types of IPV have shown that distinctive types of IPV may be associated with different risk factors (Bensley, Van Eenwyk, & Simmons, 2003; Chan, 2012; Coker, Smith, McKeown, & King, 2000; Fulu, Jewkes, Roselli, & García-Moreno, 2013; Lysova & Douglas, 2008; Papadakaki, Tzamalouka, Chatzifotiou, & Chliaoutakis, 2009). Albeit helpful in understanding IPV risk factors, most of these studies relied on bivariate analysis or simply tested the impact of a small number of potential risk factors. In the handful of studies that performed multivariate analysis (Coker et al., 2000; Papadakaki et al., 2009; Stuart et al., 2008; Thompson et al., 2006), only a few candidate risk factors in addition to basic demographic characteristics were assessed on typically no more than two types of violence. Little known effort has been made to explore the effects of commonly identified, as well as culturally specific, risk factors on women's experience of various types of violence.

In China, the emergence of IPV as a serious public health concern has drawn much research attention over the past two decades. This broad line of inquiry has identified numerous universal as well as specific characteristics of IPV in China (e.g., Chan, 2014; Chan, Brownridge, Tiwari, Fong, & Leung, 2008; Hou, Yu, Ting, Sze, & Fang, 2011; Parish, Wang, Laumann, Pan, & Luo, 2004; Shen, Chiu, & Gao, 2012; Xu et al., 2005). A few studies have also documented the common risk factors of Chinese women's victimization of IPV (e.g., education, employment status, patriarchal ideology, and risk behaviors) and explored the effects of socially and culturally specific characteristics in Chinese society (e.g., in-law conflicts, boundaries between the public and the private, and the traditional notion of "saving face") on Chinese women's experience of IPV (Chan, 2014; Chan et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2005). Similar to research conducted in Western societies, this literature either combined measures of physical and sexual violence into a singular index of IPV (e.g., Xu et al., 2005) or simply used physical violence as the indicator of IPV (e.g., Chan et al., 2008; Parish et al., 2004). Furthermore, studies that separated various types of violence when exploring their associated risk factors suffered the same problems as the Western literature in either failing to perform multivariate analysis (Fulu et al., 2013; Hou et al., 2011) at all, or exploring only a small number of candidate risk factors (Chan et al., 2008). No known effort has been made to analyze a relatively wide range of explanatory variables at the multivariate level. In addition, recent studies have found that the definitions of physical, psychological, and sexual aggression were undistinguishable among college students in Chinese societies (Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong; Jiao, Sun, Farmer, & Lin, 2016), raising the question as for

how such undifferentiated perceptions of violence may shape actual IPV experience among Chinese women.

This study is intended to address these under-investigated issues, and fill the aforementioned gaps in the Chinese IPV literature. Analyzing survey data collected from 553 married and divorced women in China, we examined the influence of various risk factors on four types of IPV. Specifically, we explored the impacts of potential risk factors such as demographics, risk behaviors, patriarchal ideology, as well as personal mentality and skills on Chinese women's experiences of severe physical violence, psychological and mild physical violence, sexual violence, and male partners' controlling behaviors.

Prevalence and Characteristics of IPV Against Women

According to the WHO, IPV entails

self-reported experience of one or more acts of physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15 years [and] severe intimate partner violence is defined on the basis of the severity of the acts of physical violence: being beaten up, choked or burnt on purpose, and/or being threatened or having a weapon used against you is considered severe. Any sexual violence is also considered severe. (García-Moreno et al., 2013, p. 6)

Many empirical studies on IPV followed WHO's definitions, which centered around the occurrence of physical and/or sexual violence in intimate relationships (Ali, Asad, Mogren, & Krantz, 2011; García-Moreno et al., 2005; García-Moreno et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2005). In WHO's most recent global study (García-Moreno et al., 2013), the lifetime prevalence of IPV against women was estimated to be 30% globally, 23.2% among developed countries, 37.7% among South-East Asian countries (e.g., Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka), and 24.6% in Western Pacific societies (e.g., China, Vietnam, Cambodia).

WHO's definitions of IPV (García-Moreno et al., 2013) differentiate IPV in terms of gradations of severity. However, as research on IPV advances, many scholars have started adopting a more complex conceptualization of IPV that more accurately reflects the reality of intimate partner abuse. Some studies conducted in China and around the world categorically differentiated between various types of IPV, including physical violence, psychological violence, sexual abuse, and controlling behaviors (Ali et al., 2011; Coker et al., 2000; Fulu et al., 2013; Hou et al., 2011; Papadakaki et al., 2009; Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013). Studies also found that the proportion of different types of violence to the total incidence of IPV varied across countries. For instance, in the United States, physical violence alone constituted 32.3% of IPV and the incidence of physical and/or psychological abuse combined registered at 35% (Walters et al., 2013), whereas in Cambodia, the incidence of physical violence alone was only 12.1%, but the incidence of psychological violence and controlling behaviors combined was twice as much at 24.2% (Fulu et al., 2013).

In traditional Confucian doctrines, violence and conflicts were generally disapproved, and violence against women was seen as a lack of gentlemanly virtues (Tang, Wong, & Cheung, 2002). However, violence against both women and children was often legitimated in practice during the imperial era, given the inferior position ascribed to women and children in the highly patriarchal Chinese society (Qu, 1947; Tang et al., 2002). Since the economic reform in the late 1970s, the documented incidence of IPV has drastically increased (Tang & Lai, 2008). This is partly due to the fact that domestic violence is becoming increasingly problematized. The national prevalence rate of physical violence was estimated at around 34% (Parish et al., 2004), and studies conducted in various parts of China (including both rural and urban areas) reported comparable lifetime prevalence (Fulu et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2005). In addition, recent studies have shown that IPV was viewed by Chinese college students as predominantly a private matter for which traditional, rather than proactive police intervention was preferred (Sun, Su, & Wu, 2011). Over the past few years, IPV has surfaced as a serious public health concern in China, calling for state protection of women's rights. In responding to greater concern about the problem, China passed its first domestic violence law in December 2015, which prohibits any form of domestic violence among married couples as well as unmarried cohabitators.

In this study, we argue that it is important to measure various types of IPV separately not only because failing to do so tends to underestimate the scope of IPV prevalence but also because there exist significant differences in what exactly constitutes IPV across demographic and cultural groups. Lin, Sun, Wu, and Liu (2015) recently found that among both Chinese and American college students, men tended to have narrower definitions of IPV, perceiving a narrower range of physically, psychologically, and sexually abusive acts as violence than women. In addition, Chinese students generally had a narrower definition of IPV in comparison with their American counterparts.

Risk Factors for IPV Against Women

This section reviewed the common risk factors of IPV against women identified in empirical studies of various disciplinary approaches and across different areas of the world, including Chinese societies. Although most studies did not distinguish between different types of IPV in analysis, we attempted to glean from this limited literature evidence for potential relationships between risk factors and specific types of IPV. This review focused on four groups of commonly identified risk factors that were used as predictors in this study: background characteristics, risk behaviors, patriarchal ideology, and mental health and social support.

Demographic Characteristics

A number of demographic characteristics were found to be consistently predictive of women's experience of IPV. Women's marital status, for example, was closely related to their experience of IPV. In fact, research showed that many divorces were the culminated

outcome of IPV (Zlotnick, Johnson, & Kohn, 2006). Around the world, ever-partnered women between the age of 35 and 39 were at greatest risk of IPV (García-Moreno et al., 2013), although other life-course events such as cohabitation, pregnancy, and child rearing also contributed to this outcome. Higher socioeconomic status (SES), which is measured as being better educated and employed, was found to lower women's risk of experiencing any kind of IPV (Abramsky et al., 2011; Capaldi et al., 2012; Chan, 2014; Chan et al., 2008; Chan, 2012; Coker et al., 2000; Jewkes, 2002; Xu et al., 2005), as higher SES signified women's financial independence and thus enabled self-empowerment when interacting with male partners (Jewkes, 2002).

Risk Behaviors

Risk behaviors, especially alcohol and drug abuse, have been consistently found to be significantly associated with IPV occurrences. Indeed, not only does substance abuse among men significantly predict men's perpetration of IPV, but substance abuse by women also significantly predicts their IPV victimization (Coker et al., 2000; Fulu et al., 2013; García-Moreno et al., 2013; Jewkes, 2002; Walters et al., 2013). In addition to merely triggering violence, studies suggest that alcohol use by women or their male partners increase the likelihood for women to experience more severe IPV (Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002; McKinney, Caetano, Rodriguez, & Okoro, 2010; Weinsheimer, Schermer, Malcoe, Baldof, & Bloomfield, 2005). In terms of illicit drug use, these studies reveal that although women's drug use increase their risks of experiencing severe IPV from their male partners, male partner's drug use is not related to severe IPV against women. A study conducted by Stuart and colleagues (2008), however, found that male reporting drug use and female reporting male partners' drug use were both linked to male physical and psychological aggression against females among couples arrested for domestic violence.

In China, substance use by females and their male partners was also predictive of women's experience of IPV (Chan, 2014; Fulu et al., 2013; Hicks, 2006; Xu et al., 2005). In addition to substance abuse, other risk behaviors, such as gambling, were also connected to domestic violence among Chinese couples (Liao, 2008).

Patriarchal Ideology

Patriarchal ideology that carried over from traditional patriarchal society has been consistently identified by feminist theorists (Dworkin, 2006; MacKinnon, 1989) as well as empirical studies as one of the primary causes of violence against women. Although certain aspects of patriarchal ideology such as chivalry were *not* found to be associated with violence against women (Nabors & Jasinski, 2009; Obeid, Chang, & Ginges, 2010), many studies conducted in China and around the world (Abramsky et al., 2011; Ali et al., 2011; Allen & Devitt, 2012; Fanslow, Robinson, Crengle, & Perese, 2010; Fulu et al., 2013; Nabors & Jasinski, 2009; Nagae & Dancy, 2010; Shen et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2005; Yick, 2000) confirm that the endorsement of male dominance and inequitable gender roles significantly predict men's perpetration and women's experience of IPV,

particularly physical and sexual violence. Such endorsement of male dominance and gender inequality tends to increase men's propensity and willingness to accept all kinds of rape myths, and the likelihood of committing physical and sexual violence against women (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Eckhardt, Samper, Suhr, & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2012; Forbes & Adams-Curtis, 2001; Golden, Perreira, & Durrance, 2013; Lee, Kim, & Lim, 2010; Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo, & Rheinboldt, 2005; Schwartz, Kelley, & Kohli, 2012).

Previous studies also reported that the acceptance of male dominance and gender inequality strengthened women's willingness to tolerate violence, including viewing them as merely private matters (Ali et al., 2011), across various demographic and geographic groups (Allen & Devitt, 2012; García-Moreno et al., 2005; Nguyen et al., 2013). Other studies contended that women who respected male dominance and traditional gender roles and justify IPV against them were actually less likely to experience IPV (Allen & Devitt, 2012; Jayatilleke et al., 2011), or that women's endorsement of egalitarianism (Karakurt & Cumbie, 2012) was likely to increase their risks of experiencing physical and/or verbal abuse. Nonetheless, findings from WHO's multi-country study supported the opposite: In all the countries studied, women who accepted or justified violence were at greater risk of experiencing violence (García-Moreno et al., 2005, p. 40). Past research also showed that the notion of keeping domestic violence as family privacy was significantly related to IPV incidence in China (Xu et al., 2005), as it is conceptually akin to whether women view IPV as a matter worthy of public intervention (Ali et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2011).

Mental Health and Social Support

Mental disorders such as depression and low self-esteem were found to be prevalent among women who experienced IPV. These women were more likely to develop depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem after IPV victimization (Ansara & Hindin, 2011; Zlotnick et al., 2006). Although depression and low self-esteem may be the negative psychological consequences of experiencing violence, many studies (including one conducted in China) also found them to be significant predictors of IPV victimization (Chan, 2014; Lehrer, Shriner, Gortmaker, & Buka, 2006; Papadakaki et al., 2009; Whiting, Simmons, Havens, Smith, & Oka, 2009). In fact, studies have suggested that low self-esteem was an apparent psychological characteristic of *both* IPV perpetrators and victims (Boney-McCoy & Sugarman, 1999; Logan, Walker, Jordan, & Leukefeld, 2006; Papadakaki et al., 2009). In addition, low self-esteem was most strongly associated with *physical* abuse, in comparison with sexual and emotional abuse (Papadakaki et al., 2009).

The lack of social support is another important predictor of women's experience of various types of IPV (Capaldi et al., 2012; Chan, 2014; Denham et al., 2007; Jewkes, 2002). Scholars posited that social support empowered women and thus fended off potential victimization from intimate partners at the very outset (Jewkes, 2002). Mild forms of victimization, such as controlling behaviors, may be prevented from developing into more serious abuse. Quasi-experimental research in the social work literature also suggested that increasing social support was an effective intervention strategy for women suffering from IPV (Tiwari et al., 2010).

The Current Study

The reviewed literature suggests that many studies across the world failed to separately analyze the effects of potential risk factors across various types of IPV. The current study represented one of very few, and the very first made in the context of China, to identify and contrast the risk factors of women's experience of various types of IPV, using multivariate regression techniques. Based on surveys collected from 553 currently married or divorced women in a large city in southern China, the current study was intended to explore how risk behaviors, patriarchal ideology, social support and mental health status, as well as demographic characteristics affect women's experience of four different types of violence in their intimate relationships.

Method

Research Site

Data used in this study were collected from a large metropolitan area in southern China. In 2014, the city had a population of approximately 10.8 million across 12 of its administrative districts. Among them, four were considered "old districts," four "new districts," and four "outskirt or satellite districts," with the last group being rural areas that recently became a part of the city. Each city district has a government-funded *Family Violence Intervention Center* established to protect the rights of women and children by preventing and handling family violence and promoting family values. Under these Centers, there are a total of 83 community stations that are staffed by specialists, whose main responsibilities are monitoring family-related issues at the community level, such as keeping records of reported family violence incidents and of help-seeking activities from victims (or potential victims) of domestic violence. The central district of the city, which was one of the old districts and had approximately 1.5 million residents, was selected as the research site for this study given the research team's familiarity with the area and strong connection to local officials.

Data Collection and Sample

Based on a survey instrument designed to illicit information related to IPV, a research team conducted face-to-face survey interviews with two groups of women in the sample district. The first group consisted of 300 women. They were randomly selected from 421 women who were divorced or in the divorce process and reported their domestic violence victimization to either the specialist in their community or directly to the district *Family Violence Intervention Center* during the 1-year period between May 1, 2013, and April 30, 2014. The second group included 300 married women who did not report domestic violence victimization and were neighbors of these divorced (or in the divorce process) women who reported victimization. When there were several women neighbors for a woman reporting violence, the one who lived nearest was chosen. This match method considered that these neighbors tended to share a high degree of socioeconomic similarities with those who reported IPV

incidents. The total initial sample thus was comprised of 600 women who were between the ages of 20 and 60.

The survey data were collected through face-to-face interviews with all respondents. Research staff interviewed the respondents in their homes in the absence of their ex-husbands or current spouses. The respondents were informed of the nature and purpose of the research project, and that participation was completely voluntary and could be terminated at any time. Any identifiable information about the respondents was later removed from the original files, and the data were entered by research staff and kept in the research center securely and confidentially. For the purpose of this study, a final sample of 553 was generated after identifying the analytic variables and dropping unusable cases and cases with missing values. Among the 47 respondents excluded from the analysis, 36.2% were married (vs. 63.8% divorced), 48.9% were employed, and 72.3% had local *hukou*.

Measures

The dependent variables were constructed based on a series of questions asking respondents whether they experienced certain acts of IPV. As shown in Table 1, 24 survey items were devised to measure respondents' experiences with four types of IPV, including physical violence, psychological violence, controlling behaviors, and sexual violence (Ali et al., 2011; Coker et al., 2000; Fulu et al., 2013; Hou et al., 2011; Papadakaki et al., 2009; Walters et al., 2013). The response categories for these items included never (0), sometimes (1), often (2), and all the time (3). Factor analyses with 23 items (excluding the one item measuring sexual violence) was conducted to assess the internal consistency and discriminant validity within and among physical abuse, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors. Three factors were extracted from the 23 items (see Table 1). Factor 1 was constructed by seven psychological abuse and three physical abuse (reflecting relatively moderate abuse) indicators. Factor 2 was represented by seven more severe physical abuse indicators and Factor 3 was represented by five controlling behavior items. These analytic results signal not only categorical difference between types of IPV but also distinction in gradations of severity (García-Moreno et al., 2013). Taking both conceptual and analytic consistencies into consideration, the 23 items were operationalized into four dependent variables, namely, psychological and moderate physical abuse, severe physical abuse, controlling behaviors, and sexual abuse. Items in each of the first three groups were added up to create summative scales as dependent variables for this study. The last dependent variable, sexual abuse, is an ordinal variable, ranging from 0-3.

The independent variables were divided into four groups: demographic characteristics, risk behaviors, patriarchal ideology, and personal mentality and skills. Demographic characteristics included marital status, age, education, local *hukou* (household registration), and employment status. Marital status was coded as a dummy variable with 1 representing married. Both divorced women and women in the divorce process (i.e., the first group of sample women) were coded as 0. *Hukou* and

Table 1. Factor Analysis Differentiating Dependent Variables.

Variables and items	Factor		
	1	2	3
Physical violence			
Throwing objects at you	0.74		
Pushing, scratching, and hitting	0.75		
Slapping	0.65		
Kicking, biting, and punching		0.69	
Burning with cigarette		0.77	
Tying limbs up		0.81	
Continuously kicking and/or punching		0.80	
Threatening or stabbing with knives, etc.		0.79	
Strangling, pushing head into water, and suffocating with pillows		0.89	
Pushing down staircases, force feeding poison, and pouring acid and gasoline		0.88	
Psychological violence			
Talking ill about you	0.66		
Complaining about you	0.75		
Humiliating or cursing	0.73		
Throwing objects	0.44		
Threatening to kill	0.47		
Hurting pets or destroying loved objects	0.62		
Threatening with actions or facial expressions	0.74		
Controlling behaviors			
Restricting interaction with friends of the opposite sex			0.84
Restricting interaction with friends of the same sex			0.81
Restricting interaction with family members			0.69
Suspecting or accusing of infidelity			0.66
Following/stalking			0.63
Sexual violence			
Forcing sexual activities			
Eigenvalues	9.46	3.22	1.46
Percent of variance explained	24.39	23.58	16.29

Note. Response categories for survey items are: (0) never; (1) rarely; (2) sometimes; and (3) often. Only factor loadings (pattern matrix coefficients) >.40 were displayed.

employment status were also coded as dichotomous variables with 1 representing local *hukou* (i.e., have house registration in the sample city) and employed. Age was measured in actual years. Education was measured by an ordinal variable varying from 1-6 (1 = *elementary education* and 6 = *graduate education*).

Risk behaviors were measured by five variables indicating whether the respondents and/or their husbands/ex-husbands (if divorced) had ever engaged in risk

behaviors such as drinking, gambling, or drug abuse (0 = *never*, 1 = *rarely*, 2 = *sometimes*, and 3 = *often*).

Patriarchal ideology was represented through four variables. The *endorsement of male dominance* was constructed as an additive scale of six items: “Men take care of businesses outside the household while women should take care of those within”; “Wives should follow their husbands”; “Men should take charge of all family matters”; “Preserving men’s face is of utmost importance”; “Nothing matters more to women than family”; and “Daughters belong to others; only sons belong to myself” (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *strongly agree*). A higher score indicated stronger endorsement for male dominance. *Gender equality* was measured by a single item which asked the respondents whether they agreed with the statement “Men and women should be treated equally in society” (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *strongly disagree*). The third variable, respondents’ *justification of IPV against women*, was measured by summing seven survey items, asking the respondents if violence from husbands is acceptable (1 = *completely unacceptable* and 4 = *completely acceptable*) in the following scenarios: “Wives refuse to do housework”; “Wives go out without telling husbands”; “Wives refuse sex”; “Wives fail to take care of the children”; “Wives show disrespect for in-law parents”; “Wives fail to birth a boy”; and “Wives fight with husbands.” A higher value thus reflected greater acceptance of IPV justification. Finally, the variable *family privacy* was derived from a single item where the respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the traditional Chinese notion that “Domestic messes should be kept within the family” (1 = *strongly disagree* and 4 = *strongly agree*).

Three variables reflected respondents’ personal mentality and skills. Respondents’ *self-esteem* was measured by three items: “I’m an able person”; “I’m a valuable person”; and “I’m a person with many strong suits.” Respondents’ *interpersonal skills* were constructed based on the following four items: “I will insist in doing what I think is right”; “I know how to get along with people”; “I can clearly express my thoughts”; and “I will ask for help when I need it.” Finally, *loneliness and helplessness* were measured by “I often feel lonely” and “I often feel helpless.” Responses to these items varied from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). Descriptive statistics for all variables were reported in Table 2. All additive scales have acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha greater than .7. Multicollinearity diagnostics indicated no problem with multicollinearity, with all variation inflation factors lower than 3.

Analysis

Preliminary analysis found that all dependent variables were highly skewed and overly dispersed, violating the assumption of equal dispersion for ordinary least square regression. As a result, negative binomial regression (for psychological and moderate physical violence, severe physical violence, and controlling behavior) and ordinal logistic regression (for sexual abuse) were selected for multivariate analysis. All statistical analyses were performed in SPSS 21. The omnibus tests for all the models were significant at the .01 level, suggesting that each model explains a significant amount of variability in the dependent variables (see Table 3 for likelihood ratio chi-squares).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Variables in Regression Analysis ($N = 553$).

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	α
Dependent variables				
Psychological and moderate physical violence	4.17	5.14	0-29	.91
Severe physical violence	0.43	1.85	0-18	.91
Controlling behavior	2.64	2.98	0-14	.84
Sexual abuse	0.50	0.87	0-3	—
Independent variables				
Background characteristics				
Married	0.51	0.50	0-1	—
Age	39.84	8.25	22-60	—
Education	3.17	0.92	1-6	—
Local <i>hukou</i>	0.57	0.50	0-1	—
Employed	0.70	0.46	0-1	—
Risk behaviors				
Gambling	0.70	0.82	0-3	—
Husband gambling	1.09	0.98	0-3	—
Alcohol use	0.67	0.69	0-3	—
Husband alcohol use	1.36	0.96	0-3	—
Husband drug use	0.23	0.56	0-3	—
Patriarchal ideology				
Male dominance	16.21	3.27	7-24	.77
Gender equality	3.46	0.71	1-4	—
IPV justification	2.95	0.78	7-22	.91
Family privacy	14.70	2.21	1-4	—
Personal mentality and skills				
Self-esteem	12.25	1.78	5-20	.79
Interpersonal skills	8.81	1.73	6-16	.81
Loneliness and helplessness	9.64	3.32	3-12	.79

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha; IPV = intimate partner violence.

Results

Table 3 reports the results from the multivariate regression analysis. In terms of demographics, marital status is the strongest predictor of women's experience of violence consistently across all four types of violence. Not surprisingly, divorced women were more likely than married women to be victims of IPV. Other than marital status, none of the background characteristics were related to psychological and moderate physical violence and severe physical violence. In the model of controlling behavior, two other demographics mattered. Older and employed women experienced less abusive controlling behavior than their younger and unemployed counterparts. For sexual abuse, women with non-local *hukou* were more likely to experience such violence.

Several forms of self and spousal risk behaviors, including alcohol use, drug use, and gambling, exerted a significant impact on women's experience of IPV. Women's

Table 3. Multivariate Regressions of Four Types of IPV on Potential Risk Factors (*N* = 553).

	Psychological and moderate physical violence ^a	Severe physical violence ^a	Controlling behavior ^a	Sexual abuse ^b
Background characteristics				
Married	-.72** (.10)	-0.68* (.34)	-.26* (.11)	-1.01** (.23)
Age	-.01 (.01)	0.02 (.02)	-.02* (.01)	-0.02 (.02)
Education	-.05 (.06)	-0.31 (.18)	-.04 (.06)	-0.02 (.13)
Local <i>hukou</i>	.00 (.12)	0.71 (.39)	-.13 (.12)	-0.75** (.24)
Employed	.15 (.12)	0.79 (.41)	.31** (.13)	0.48 (.28)
Risk behaviors				
Gambling	.14* (.07)	0.76** (.19)	.08 (.07)	0.23 (.14)
Husband gambling	.26** (.06)	0.37* (.18)	.22 (.06)	0.87** (.13)
Alcohol use	.03 (.08)	-0.09 (.24)	-.01 (.08)	-0.39* (.16)
Husband alcohol use	.27** (.06)	0.15 (.19)	.21** (.06)	0.53** (.13)
Husband drug use	.32** (.09)	1.10** (.25)	.16 (.10)	0.04 (.18)
Patriarchal ideology				
Male dominance	.02 (.02)	0.04 (.05)	-.01 (.02)	0.01 (.04)
Gender equality	.04 (.07)	-0.51* (.22)	-.11 (.08)	0.26 (.17)
IPV justification	.06** (.02)	0.07 (.05)	.05** (.02)	0.11** (.03)
Family Privacy	-.19** (.07)	0.17 (.23)	-.04 (.07)	-0.23 (.16)
Personal mentality and skills				
Self-esteem	-.00 (.03)	0.00 (.09)	.04 (.03)	0.04 (.06)
Interpersonal skills	.01 (.03)	-0.06 (.10)	-.06 (.03)	-0.03 (.07)
Loneliness and helplessness	-.13** (.03)	-0.25** (.09)	-.06 (.03)	.01 (.06)
Likelihood ratio χ^2	214.7	112.6	131.7	220.5

Note. IPV = intimate partner violence.

^aResults were derived from negative binomial regression with standard errors in parentheses.

^bResults were obtained from ordinal logistic regression with standard errors in parentheses.

involvement in gambling significantly increased their likelihood of being victims of psychological and moderate physical violence and severe physical violence, whereas their alcohol use unexpectedly decreased their chance of being sexually abused. Similar to their wives, husbands' or ex-husbands' gambling was significantly linked to women's psychological and moderate physical violence and severe physical violence. Unlike women, men's gambling was also connected to sexual violence. While women's alcohol use only influenced their sexual abuse experience, men's alcohol use had a positive effect on all forms of violence, except severe physical aggression. Finally, male partners' drug use was associated with greater psychological and moderate physical and severe physical violence against women.

Among variables reflecting patriarchal ideology, IPV justification is the most consistent predictor, significantly influencing three out of the four types of violence, except severe physical violence. A stronger endorsement of IPV justification was associated

with higher levels of psychological and moderate physical violence, controlling behavior, and sexual abuse. In addition, believing in gender equality was connected to lower levels of severe physical violence, and agreeing with the notion of family privacy was linked to lower degrees of psychological and moderate physical violence. Contrary to our expectation, the endorsement of male dominance has a weak connection to all forms of violence.

The last group of predictors, women's mentality and skills, was not very predictive of their experience of violence, with two of the three variables unrelated to IPV. The only significant predictor is feeling loneliness and helplessness, which tended to decrease women's experience with psychological and moderate and severe physical violence.

Discussion

Although a large number of studies have been conducted over the past two decades to investigate many aspects of IPV in China, past research has yet to adequately assess the effects of relevant risk factors on various forms of IPV. Using a sample of married and divorced women in a large city in southern China, this study tested the effects of women's demographic characteristics, risk behaviors, patriarchal ideology, and personal mentality and skills on their experience of physical violence, psychological violence, controlling behavior, and sexual abuse. Our findings reveal some similarities and differences to those found in past research in China and other parts of the world.

First, consistent with previous research conducted in China (Chan, 2014; Fulu et al., 2013; Hicks, 2006; Liao, 2008; Xu et al., 2005) and other countries (Coker et al., 2000; Fulu et al., 2013; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2013; Jewkes, 2002; Walters et al., 2013), Chinese women and their current or former spouses' risk behaviors of gambling, alcohol use (particularly among men), and drug use were violence-inducing in family relationships. Although the effects of alcohol and drug abuse on IPV experience are not surprising, the connection between gambling and IPV in China reflects cultural nuances. Gambling was developed out of the primarily agricultural mode of production and social stratification of traditional Chinese society as a popular activity among the agricultural population during the "downtime" of the farming cycle. It appears that the penetration of traditional gambling culture into family life is still lingering even among contemporary urban residents in China. Future research should continue to include risk behaviors into consideration when assessing their linkages to IPV. Studies utilizing in-depth interviews would allow researchers to better assess, for example, the nexus between types of gamblers (e.g., social, problem, and compulsive gamblers) and reasons for gambling by women (e.g., a method of escape from violence or simply a form of relaxation) and IPV incidents.

Second, contrary to popular belief, the impact of patriarchal ideology on Chinese women's IPV experience is equivocal. The endorsement of male dominance was completely unrelated to IPV experience, and the notions of gender equality and family privacy were significantly associated with only a single type of violence. In contrast, justifying IPV stood out as the most consistent factor related to a higher level of

psychological and moderate physical violence, controlling behavior, and sexual abuse. Although patriarchal ideology has been one of the primary culprits of violence against women globally (Abramsky et al., 2011; Ali et al., 2011; Allen & Devitt, 2012; Fanslow et al., 2010; Fulu et al., 2013; Nabors & Jasinski, 2009; Nagae & Dancy, 2010; Shen et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2005; Yick, 2000), the connections between Chinese women's attitudes toward the male-dominant culture seem to be complex and even contradictory. One may speculate that the improvement of women's rights and the advancement of women in workforces in China have made such an ideology less relevant. Nonetheless, Chinese women's acceptance of their traditional gender role, as reflected by the IPV justification scale, keeps them vulnerable to spousal violence. These findings echo the proposition that the social-psychological conditioning of violence is extremely sensitive to cultural context (Cohen, 1998; Vandello, Cohen, & Ransom, 2008). Women in transitional China are subject to the compound effect of traditional culture and modern life-style in their family life. Future research should further investigate how women's perceptions of gender roles, as well as the discrepancies between men's and women's perceptions, may be linked to women's IPV experience.

Finally, our findings confirm the detrimental influence of abusive behavior on marriage as divorced women experienced a higher level of violence across the board. Such results were found in both Western societies (see Coker et al., 2000) and China where 25-70% of divorced women often experienced some form of IPV in their marriage that contributed to their divorce (Xu et al., 2005). In addition to marital status, background characteristics are largely ineffective in predicting experience of violence, particularly psychological and physical violence, but variability in risk factors exists between specific types of IPV. For example, age and employment were only associated with controlling behavior, rather than physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, suggesting that women's interactions with their male partners could be shaped by their younger age and financial independence. Similarly, local *hukou* status was only predictive of sexual violence, rather than psychological, physical, and controlling abusive behavior. Migrant women were more likely than local women to be subjected to forced sex probably due to greater mental and financial pressures, lower social status, and possibly longer terms of separation between wife and husband. Our findings call for more research attention to the linkages between individual characteristics and various types of IPV.

Concededly, this study has several limitations. First, the scope of this study is limited to women in one highly developed urban area in China, thus limiting the generalizability of its findings to China as a whole. Future studies should include rural samples and analyze the urban-rural differences in risk factors. Second, the survey used in this study only documented lifetime prevalence without capturing past-year or past-month prevalence, which could be influenced by a distinctive set of factors. A better designed instrument should allow researchers to disentangle the prevalence and type of IPV across different time frames. Last, the sample consisted of women only, shedding little light on gender differences in risk factors of offending and victimization. A study of both women and men involving in abusive relationships would likely generate useful information on IPV causes and consequences.

Despite these shortcomings, this study has nevertheless made unique contributions to the existing literature by identifying multiple risk factors associated with various types of IPV that were never fully analyzed in the IPV literature in China. Furthermore, the findings of this study also pose practical implications. First, more resources and efforts should be directed to effectively reduce or curb risk behaviors of gambling, alcohol use, and drug use particularly among men. Although illicit drug use is already severely criminalized and controlled in China, law enforcement should work more collaboratively with social service agencies to ensure potential victims of severe IPV are given the support and service that they need. Strengthening social support networks, providing drug-alcohol free activities, and promoting stable and well-paying employment opportunities are a number of additional ways to reduce risk factors among men. For women, educational programs should be made available to help them problematize acts of psychological and sexual abuse which would otherwise be misconstrued as “normal.” These programs may include community-level information dissemination in the forms of free seminars, workshops, or counseling, as well as safe and anonymous access to domestic violence help centers when violence occurs. IPV prevention and service agencies should also gather information about partner involvement in risk behaviors so as to effectively identify potentially at-risk populations (individuals), as many victims are less likely to report their IPV victimization, but more likely to honestly report partner drinking and gambling behaviors, which are much less stigmatized in China.

Authors' Note

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