

RESEARCH BRIEF

Justification of Intimate Partner Violence in the Philippines: Attitudes Towards Wife Beating Among Filipina Women

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) is known to be a prevalent social issue that affects both women and men. In fact, experienced violence and abuse is an everyday suffering faced by most women (Rao, 1997). According to the World Health Report on Violence and Health (2002), violence inflicted by intimate partner refers to a behavior that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Amongst these categories of harmful behavior, physical violence is the most explicit and overt. Infliction of physical violence on women has a variety of forms whether it is through hitting, kicking, slapping, and beating (Owoaje & OlaOlorun, 2012). This harmful behavior is condemned around the world because of its harmful effects on an inflicted individual. However, in some cultures, this kind of harmful behavior towards women is perceived to be reasonable and justified.

Justification of Intimate Partner Violence: Context and Correlates

Around the world, violence among intimate partner relationships remains a prevalent health issue. According to Chisholm, Bullock, and Ferguson (2017), intimate partner violence refers to “including physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological

aggression” (p. 141). Globally, it is found that most countries record a range of 10–34% of women reported to have experienced intimate partner violence (WHO, 2017). Hence, intimate partner violence is a significant public health problem in the society which extremely affects women. According to Chisholm et al. (2017), intimate partner violence can be classified as sexual violence, stalking, psychological aggression, and physical violence. Amongst these classifications of intimate partner violence, physical violence is the most explicit and overt. According to a study by Owoaje and OlaOlorun (2012), infliction of physical violence on women has a variety of forms whether it is through hitting, kicking, slapping, and beating. The most prevalent among these kinds of intimate partner violence around the world is wife beating.

Wife beating is an act of physical abuse perpetrated by husbands or intimate partners (Rani, Bonu, & Diop-Sidibe, 2004). It is seen to be one of the most prevalent acts of violence against women (Fawole, Aderonmu, & Fawole, 2005). Globally, studies have found that 10–50% of women experienced being physically abused by their husbands or intimate partners (Heise, Ellsberg, & Goheemoeller, 1999). This harmful behavior is manifested due to different situations. Studies have shown that wife beating happens when there is an

argument and suspected infidelity between intimate partners (Heise et al., 1999). Also a wife's refusal to have sex is seen to trigger this violent behavior (Hindin, 2003). Globally, cultures have different perspectives in looking at this harmful behavior. On one hand, specifically on the part of women, wife beating should not be accepted and that it is against human rights. On the other hand, wife beating is seen to be justified and reasonable because of social norms or customs of the particular culture.

This harmful behavior is seen to be condemned in some societies. The rejection of the idea of wife beating shows a high status of women in a cultural setting. Hence, gender equity is given importance in these particular societies. Wife beating is also condemned in some societies because of the negative consequences of the harmful behavior. A study by Chisholm et al. (2017) related that intimate partner violence leads to physical disorders (e.g., fractures, lacerations, and head trauma) and sexually transmitted infections. It is also seen to lead to different kinds of mental health problems such as an increased risk of depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicide (Ali & Neylor, 2013).

Intimate partner violence, specifically wife beating, is justified in certain cultures around the world. According to some feminist perspective, intimate partner violence is not peculiar in some cultures; rather, it is considered to be a norm because it is culturally accepted and justified (Amirthalingam, 2005). Moreover, societal acceptance of wife beating is considered in most developing countries due to different customs and attitudes of individuals in a certain culture (Rani et al., 2004). In countries such as Brazil, Egypt, and Chile, it is seen that both men and women accept this harmful behavior because of the notion of having the right to discipline wives through physical violence (Heise et al., 1999).

Recent literature shows that these attitudes towards wife beating are influenced by factors such as educational attainment, exposure to media, and awareness on different helpdesks. These influencing factors are known to generate perspectives of an individual. Also, these are information sources that are seen to shape the mind of the people. For educational attainment, educational institutions pave the minds of

individuals to perceive that physical violence towards women is acceptable because of the normative nature of this behavior. According to Rani et al. (2004), the attitude on wife beating is accepted because of the adaptive system of educational system hence gender norms, specifically hegemonic masculinity, are perpetuated. In contrast, studies have shown that educational institutions also shape the minds of women to empower themselves to condemn any forms of violence perpetuated by their husbands or intimate partners (Bera, 2016). These educational institutions follow the transformational educational system which aims to challenge gender bias (Rani et al., 2004).

Exposure to media is also found to have an influencing power over the judgement of women to justify wife beating. Different kinds of media inform viewers on the social order. On one hand, media explicitly shows that society has a hegemonic masculine culture. Different kinds of media also present gender mainstreaming as a social norm (Sarikakis & Nguyen, 2009). This makes viewers think and perceive that women are the weaker sex and it is reasonable to inflict physical violence. On the other hand, media is also used as a tool for women empowerment. Studies have shown that media interventions have proven their role in tampering with the mind of individuals. Moreover, these interventions and campaigns have proven to be successful in increasing knowledge and awareness on intimate partner violence and influencing attitudes towards gender norms (Whitaker, Baker, & Arias, 2007; Harvey, Garcia-Moreno, & Butchart, 2007). With these campaigns, women justify that inflicting physical violence against them is not reasonable and should be condemned by the society.

Awareness of different helpdesks is an important factor in determining the perception of women in their judgment on this harmful behavior. Since most laws reflect on the patriarchal system, women perceive that they are powerless. However, there are laws that uplift and empower women on their rights (Caparas & Amparado, 2012). Laws that protect women from being abused by their intimate partner are seen to safeguard and uplift the morals of women. These laws are carried out through different helpdesks such as women's protection unit and violence against women helpdesks. Awareness of such boosts the empowerment of women

and condemns the idea of justifying physical violence perpetuated by their intimate partners.

Despite the global initiative in understanding the attitudes of women on intimate partner violence and its correlates, many of the studies done are seen to have significant limitations specifically in the Philippines. First, it is found that there is a gap in understanding this phenomenon in the country. There are only a few studies made to understand the justification of intimate partner violence in the Philippines. Second, it is seen that the country lacks rigorous research on this topic using a nationwide level of analysis. Most only rely on small samples to describe and test the significance of the mentioned correlates in influencing the attitudes of women on wife beating. Representation is seen to be a problem in generalizing the attitudes of Filipina women towards intimate partner violence.

This study addresses these limitations by providing an analysis on the phenomenon. This aims to describe the attitudes of Filipina women on intimate partner violence. This also aims to describe the relationship of influencing factors such as educational attainment, exposure to media, and awareness of different helpdesks with this harmful behavior. This study makes use of secondary data from a national survey in the Philippines. Using a national representation fills the gap on the generalization of this phenomenon in the country. With that, this analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of the justification of Filipina women on intimate partner violence.

Methods

This study made use of data from the 2013 NDHS. The 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) was conducted by the Philippines National Statistics Office. It involves “Women’s Safety Module” which was used in this study. This survey involves 31,313 women respondents from different regions in the Philippines. In this study, a simple random sampling method was used as a mode of selecting samples. With that, 9,506 respondents (30%) from the overall study population from the NDHS are to be used as the sample of this study.

Justification of intimate partner violence was assessed in the NDHS data using two questions.

Questions such as “wife beating is justified if wife argues with husband” and “wife beating is justified if wife refuses to have sex with husband” are used to measure the attitudes of Filipina women on wife beating. Responses are recorded into a dichotomous (yes/no) variable. Influencing factors (i.e., educational attainment, exposure to media, and awareness of helpdesk) were recorded into two categories each. These influencing factors were structured using data from the survey. Educational attainment was measured using an open-ended question. This variable then is divided into two categories, which are above primary and below primary level of education. Exposure to media consists of statements measuring the frequency of reading newspapers, listening to the radio, and watching television among respondents. Each statement has response options: “Not at all” (0), “Less than once a week” (1), “At least once a week” (2), and “Almost every day” (3). Awareness of helpdesks consists of statements measuring the awareness on PNP Women’s desk, DSWD regulation center for women/girls, and Women and children’s protection units. Each statements is recorded as yes (1) or no (0) response. Mean scores in either variable were measured and divided into two levels of exposure or awareness, high and low.

A quantitative analysis is used in the interpretation of the gathered data. Data is tabulated and a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics is to be used through Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages are employed to analyze data about the respondents’ educational attainment, exposure to media, awareness to different helpdesks, and their justification on domestic violence. Inferential statistics is used to determine predicting factors of the perceived justification on the infliction of physical violence among Filipina women. A binary logistic regression was used in this study.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive results on the attitudes on wife beating among Filipina married women, their educational attainment, their exposure to media, and their awareness of different helpdesks.

Of the 9,506 respondents, wife beating is not justified whether the behavior is due to the wife's refusal to have sex (97.4%) or they argue with their partner (95.9%).

Most of the respondents are seen to have finished a higher than primary level of educational attainment (65%). Of every 10 respondents, seven has a low level of exposure to different kinds of media. However, 82.3% of the respondents are well aware of various kinds of helpdesks.

Based on the odds ratios (OR; see Table 2), all influencing variables were found to be statistically significantly related to Filipina women's attitude on wife beating due to their refusal to have sex with their partner: educational attainment (OR= 0.583, 95% CI= 0.476–0.728), exposure to media (OR= 0.719, 95% CI= 0.563–0.919), and awareness of helpdesks (OR= 0.470, 95% CI= 0.313–0.706). Of these influencing variables, exposure to media was found to be the most important (OR= 0.719).

Table 1.
Descriptive Results

Variables	Categories	N	%
Dependent Variables			
Justified wife beating due to:			
Refusal to have sex	No	9255	97.4
	Yes	251	2.6
Argument with Partner	No	9115	95.9
	Yes	391	41
Independent Variables			
Educational Attainment	< Primary	3285	34.6
	> Primary	6217	65.4
Exposure to Media	Low	6813	71.7
	High	2693	28.3
Awareness of Helpdesks	Low	1683	17.7
	High	7819	82.3

Table 2.
Binary Logistic Regression Results (Justified beating due to refusal to have sex)

Variables	Categories	OR	95% CI		p-value
			Lower	Upper	
Educational Attainment	< Primary	Reference			
	> Primary	0.583	0.467	0.728	< 0.001
Exposure to Media	Low	Reference			
	High	0.719	0.563	0.919	< 0.01
Awareness of Helpdesks	Low	Reference			
	High	0.470	0.313	0.706	< 0.001

Table 3.
Binary Logistic Regression Results (Justified beating due to argument)

Variables	Categories	OR	95% CI		
			Lower	Upper	p value
Educational Attainment	< Primary	Reference			
	> Primary	0.647	0.539	0.777	< 0.001
Exposure to Media	Low	Reference			
	High	0.706	0.579	0.860	< 0.001
Awareness of Helpdesks	Low	Reference			
	High	0.671	0.473	0.950	< 0.05

Table 3 also describes that all influencing variables are statistically significantly related to justification on wife beating due to having arguments with intimate partner. Variables such as educational attainment (OR=0.647, 95% CI= 0.539–0.777), exposure to media (OR=0.706, 95% CI= 0.579–0.860), and awareness of helpdesks (OR= 0.671, 95% CI= 0.473–0.950) are seen to be significant. It is also seen that exposure to media is the most important influencing variable in relation to the perceived justified beating due to having arguments with intimate partner (OR=0.706).

Discussion

This study described the attitude of Filipina women on wife beating and its correlates. Justification of intimate partner violence has been a social issue that has been studied globally. It has been a center of debate whether infliction of physical violence experienced by women should be justified or condemned. Moreover, such attitude on wife beating is being understood by using significant factors to know why individuals, specifically, women justify or condemn the idea of intimate partner violence.

In the Philippines, it is seen that most women condemn the idea of intimate partner violence. It is notably known that the country promotes the idea to stop any forms of abuse against women. In addition, the country has various policies and laws to protect women's rights (UNDP, 2010). Filipina women are seen to be empowered in fact, the Philippines is ranked

as 5th out of 144 countries in terms of gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2013). It can be recognized that Filipina women's attitude condemns hegemonic practices by males to control women specifically in the form of abuse and violence.

Influencing variables such as the educational attainment of Filipina women, their exposure to different kinds of media, and their awareness to various kinds of helpdesks were found to be statistically significantly related to their attitudes on wife beating due to their refusal to have sex and having arguments with their intimate partners.

Educational attainment is found to be an important correlate on the attitudes on wife beating among Filipina women. It is seen in this study that having higher educational attainment means there is a lower odd of the attitude that this kind of harmful behavior is acceptable. In the Philippine setting, violence is not tolerated in educational institutions. A study by Ancho and Park (2013) stated that educational institutions should stress the campaign on violence-free schools and condemn all forms of abuse. This prohibits the idea that any form of violence, including the infliction of physical abuse towards women, is justified and reasonable. The Philippine educational institutions encourage teachers to go through the process of values transformation (Durban & Catalan, 2012). This enhances the attitude of teachers to educate their students to possess proper behavior. Also, the educational system in the Philippines favors girls. It is seen that there are higher enrolment

and completion rates of women compared to men, which compromise the development of gender-equal education opportunities (UNDP, 2017). This affects the idea of empowerment among women and condemns any ideas perpetuating any form of abuse on their rights.

Exposure to media is also found to be a significant correlate on the justification of intimate partner violence Filipina women. It is found that the more women are frequently exposed to media, the lesser the odd to have a perception that intimate partner violence is acceptable. Philippine media provides many interventions and campaigns against any form of violence. There are also Philippine laws that protect the image of women in different kinds of media. Laws such as “Nondiscriminatory and Nonderogatory Portrayal of Women in Media and Film” are seen to challenge any form of gender discrimination specifically against women. These are found to be effective in increasing knowledge and awareness of intimate partner violence (Whitaker et al., 2007). With these campaigns, women justify that inflicting physical violence against them is not reasonable and should be condemned by the society.

Being aware of different kinds of helpdesks proves to be a significant influence on the justification of women on intimate partner violence. Being aware and informed about laws on intimate partner violence indicates such behavior should never be accepted (Caparas & Amparado, 2012). Laws such as the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004, Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, The Anti-Rape Law of 1997, and so forth uplift the rights of women against any forms of abuse. These laws are carried out by Violence against Women helpdesks, PNP Women’s desk, and many more government and non-government efforts. Awareness of such boosts the empowerment of women and condemns the idea of justifying physical violence perpetuated by their intimate partners.

Conclusion

Overall, this study identified influencing factors such as the educational attainment of Filipina women, their exposure to different kinds of media, and their

awareness of helpdesk as significant correlates of the attitudes on wife beating among Filipina women. With high levels of educational attainment, exposure to media, and awareness to different helpdesks, the odd is lesser for Filipina women to perceive wife beating as justifiable or reasonable. These findings can be used for interventions and campaigns against intimate partner violence in the Philippines. Using information sources as a tool indicates empowerment among women and condemns the idea that wife beating is accepted. These findings can also be used for further study in the field of women’s rights, intimate partner violence, and other areas of interest.

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