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Examining the Relationship of Socioeconomic Status and Intimate Partner Violence Among Middle-aged Chinese Adults

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Purpose:

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has become a global public health issue that affects individuals seriously, with severe, long-lasting influences. It is defined as any violent behaviors by a current or former partner, and cause physical, psychological, and sexual harm in couple relationship. Surveys reported that approximately one in four women, and one in seven men had experienced either physical or sexual violence from their partners during their lifetime. Socioeconomic status (SES) is associated with health outcomes and relevant research increase over past years. SES is categorized as the information of educational attainment, occupation, and income which are used to classify individuals into different socioeconomic groups. Generally, individuals with higher SES tend to have fewer risks of experiencing violence. However, the situation remained unknown in Hong Kong as it has high a Gini coefficient in the world, revealing severe wealth disparity in the society. Therefore, this study examined the prevalence of IPV among middle-aged adults in Hong Kong and its associations with subjective and objective SES indicators.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study was conducted. Data was collected by household survey (n=400). Chinese version of WAST was used to measure the abusive behaviors. Higher score indicated more severe exposure to violence. A cutoff of 10 was suggested to divide abused and non-abused group. Objective SES was examined with education, occupation, and household income. Subjective SES was measured by a 10-rung ladder. Descriptive analyses were conducted to examine basic information of participants, and prevalence of preceding 1-year IPV. Pearson and Spearman Correlation were performed to assess whether being abused was associated with education, occupation, household income, and subjective SES. Last, logistic regressions were tested for identifying risk factors with preceding 1-year IPV based on gender. All analyses were conducted at 0.05 significance level.

Results:

400 participants who were married or had partners during past 12 months were recruited in this study. The mean age of the participants was 49.4 (SD=7.85), and 219 (54.8%) were female. For objective SES, majority of them received secondary school education, were employed, and earned HKD15,000-30,000 monthly household income. For subjective SES, 260 (65%) were regarded as low SES. The mean score was 4.85 (SD=1.80) of a 10-rung ladder. Based on a suggested cutoff point of 10, 26.5% of women and 29.8% of men were abused by WAST screening. Gender differences were not found in our study. Results of logistic regression revealed that, objective and subjective SES indicators were not associated with IPV among females. While for males, those with higher education and with lower subjective SES were more likely to experience IPV. In addition, significant risk factors included being young and having frequent drinking behaviors among female, and being old, being in cohabitation compared with marital relationship among male participants.

Conclusion:

The results suggest that IPV in middle-aged adults is a complex phenomenon, with different significantly associations in male and female population. For females, objective and subjective SES were not found significant with IPV in our study. For males, subjective SES was negatively associated with IPV. As it reflects some part of an individual's objective socioeconomic condition in the society, men with higher social status and stronger economic ability can fulfill more aspirations against violence. Among objective SES, only education indicator was found positively associated with IPV. Contrary to previous literature, higher education in Hong Kong was a risk factor for male adults. But the finding was consistent with another study conducted in Hong Kong among university students. Even though education was not found to be a protective factor in our study, education provides more chances and preparations for individuals when they face violence. Larger quantitative studies and qualitative inquiries are needed to further explore this preliminary finding.

Key words: intimate partner violence, socioeconomic status, relationship.

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Keywords:

Intimate Partner Violence, Relationship and Socioeconomic Status

References:

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Abstract Summary:

This study examined the prevalence of intimate partner violence and its relationship with socioeconomic status by a sample of 400 middle-aged participants in Hong Kong based on a cross-sectional study.

Content Outline:

Introduction

1. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a global public health issue that affects individuals seriously, with physical, sexual, and psychological consequences and its influence can last long.
2. Socioeconomic status (SES) is associated with health outcomes and relevant research increase over past years.
3. However, the situation remained unknown about IPV and SES among middle-aged adults in Hong Kong.

Body

1. The mean age of the 400 participants was 49.4 (SD=7.85), and 219 (54.8%) were female.
2. Based on a cut-off point of 10, 26.5% of females and 29.8% of males were abused by WAST screening.
3. For females, being young and having frequent drinking behaviours, were in high risk of being exposed to preceding 1-year IPV.
4. While for males, those who were older, with cohabitation relationship, with higher education, and with lower subjective SES, were more likely to experience IPV.

Conclusion

1. The results suggest that IPV in middle-aged adults is a complex phenomenon, with different significantly associations in males and females.
2. Contrary to previous literature, higher education in Hong Kong was not a protective factor for male adults.
3. Studies of larger sample size and qualitative inquiries are needed for further exploration.

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