Published in final edited form as:

J Interpers Violence. 2016 November ; 31(19): 3150–3173. doi:10.1177/0886260515584343.

Why do women justify violence against wives more often than do men in Vietnam?

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Abstract

Background—Intimate partner violence (IPV) harms the health of women and their children. In Vietnam, 31% of women report lifetime exposure to physical IPV, and surprisingly, women justify physical IPV against wives more often than do men.

Objective—We compare men's and women's rates of finding good reason for wife hitting and assess whether differences in childhood experiences and resources and constraints in adulthood account for observed differences.

Methods—Probability samples of married men ($N = 522$) and women ($N = 533$) were surveyed in Vietnam. Ordered logit models assessed the proportional odds for women versus men of finding more "good reasons" to hit a wife (never, 1–3 situations, 4–6 situations).

Results—In all situations, women found good reason to hit a wife more often than did men. The unadjusted odds for women versus men of reporting more good reasons to hit a wife were 6.55 (95% CI 4.82 – 8.91). This gap disappeared in adjusted models that included significant interactions of gender with age, number of children ever born, and experience of physical IPV as an adult.

Discussion—Having children was associated with justifying wife hitting among women but not men. Exposure to IPV in adulthood was associated with justifying wife hitting among men but was negatively associated with justification of IPV among women. Further study of the gendered effects of resources and constraints in adulthood on attitudes about IPV against women will clarify women's more frequent reporting than men's that IPV against women is justified.

Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) denotes acts of physical, sexual, emotional, or economic aggression or coercion by a current or former partner (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002; Postmus, Plummer, McMahon, Murshid, & Kim, 2012). Globally, 15% to 71% of women report physical and/or sexual IPV in their lifetime (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006). In Vietnam, between 32.7% and 34.4% of women report lifetime exposure to physical or sexual IPV (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2010; Vung, Ostergren, & Krantz, 2008). Women who have been exposed to IPV suffer a multitude of adverse health outcomes, and seek healthcare more often than do unexposed women (Campbell, 2002; Dutton et al., 2006; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Vung, Ostergren, & Krantz, 2009). IPV also has intergenerational effects, with the children of women who are exposed to IPV more often experiencing adverse health consequences (Yount, DiGirolamo, & Ramakrishnan, 2011), less time with their mothers (Yount, Zureick-Brown, & Salem, 2014), and poorer schooling performance (Krantz, 2002).

Studies that focus on the prevalence of IPV and its health consequences are common, but research concerning attitudes about IPV against women is more limited. Patriarchal gender norms, including a tolerance for violence against women, are one explanation for the persistence of IPV (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005; Jewkes, 2002; Luke, Schuler, Mai, Thien, & Minh, 2007). Paradoxically, research in some lower-income countries suggests that women justify IPV more often than do men (Lawoko, 2006; Uthman, Lawoko, & Moradi, 2009; Yount et al., 2011; Yount & Li, 2009). Here, we explore the nature and magnitude of the gap in men's and women's attitudes about IPV against women in Vietnam. We then decompose the observed gender attitudinal gaps by exploring (1) gender differences in childhood experiences and socio-economic resources and constraints in adulthood and (2) differences in the associations of these experiences with men's and women's attitudes about IPV against women.

Background

Pervasiveness of Inequitable Gender Norms in Everyday Life

IPV persists at a high level in countries where inequitable gender norms and tolerant attitudes about violence against women prevail (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Uthman et al., 2009). Cross-cultural ethnographic research has shown that IPV is more common in societies that are characterized by institutional practices and norms that condone male dominance (Levinson, 1989). Within male-dominated societies, acts of violence against wives are justified especially when wives' behavior is perceived to deviate from local norms of femininity (Schuler, Lenzi, & Yount, 2011; Visaria, 2000). In Vietnam, men have a higher status and more entitlements than do women (Gold, 1992; Rydström, 2003b). Contemporary gender norms and relations are influenced by traditional Confucian tenets, which promote specific models of dominant masculinity (Rydström, 2006). Patrilineal ancestor worship leads to the valuing of male over female progeny, and thus men symbolically are deemed superior, as is reflected in the Vietnamese idiom that men are the "pillars of the house" (*tru cot*) (Rydström, 2003b). Moreover, according to Taoist principles, men are believed to embody "hot anger" and women are expected to mold their beliefs and behaviors to preserve

household harmony (Rydström, 2003b; Yount, VanderEnde, et al., 2014). Within Vietnamese family life, conflict resulting in the husband's use of physical IPV against his wife still often is acceptable behavior (Vung & Krantz, 2009).

Social Learning Theory

The family is a critical site for the transmission of gender norms. Social learning theorists posit that learning occurs through the observation, retention, and production of a role model's beliefs and behavior (Akers, 1977; Bandura, 1974). Holding the belief that IPV is "normal" or "justified" may be learned from observing or experiencing violence as a child (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2010; Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). Witnessing IPV as a child is associated in adulthood with both the risk of experiencing IPV and perpetrating IPV in Vietnam, Cambodia, Egypt, and South Africa (Gass, Stein, Williams, & Seedat, 2011; Haj-Yahia, 2001; Higgins et al., 2013; Vung & Krantz, 2009; Yount & Carrera, 2006; Yount, Pham, et al., 2014). Among men, experiencing physical or sexual abuse in childhood is associated with perpetrating IPV and aggressive behavior in adulthood (Heise, 1998). Patriarchal norms in which IPV against women is tolerated may persist in part because women and men are socialized differently as children. In Vietnam, boys are socialized to endure ritual corporal punishment as a customary form of discipline by senior male relatives (Rydström, 2006). This discipline is viewed as a justified expression of power within the family patrilineage, and the violence is not extended to girls, who are viewed as outside of the bloodline and therefore inferior (Rydström, 2003a, 2003b, 2006). Thus, violence by men is normalized through the practice of aggression by grandfathers and fathers toward sons. Contrary to the aggression and power that is expected of boys, girls must remain passive, submissive, and receptive (Rydström, 2006). In childhood, boys learn to use violence while girls learn to endure it, thus acquiring tolerance towards violence through gendered processes of social learning (Jewkes, 2002; Kalmuss, 1982; Wood, 2001).

Resource Theory

According to resource theory, men are more likely to perpetrate violence against their female partners in response to conditions of low economic or occupational status (Fox, Benson, DeMaris, & Van Wyk, 2002; Goode, 1971). IPV exists at all social strata; however, globally, men in lower socioeconomic positions are more likely to perpetrate IPV than men in higher status positions (Heise, 1998; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). In Vietnam, men's lower income, occupational status, and schooling attainment is associated with IPV perpetration (Vung et al., 2008). Lower socioeconomic status often results in stress, a higher propensity to perpetrate IPV, and a greater justification of violence as a means to resolve conflicts (Sayem, Begum, & Moneesha, 2012). Men threaten or use force as a resource to assert their authority within the family (Goode, 1971). Gendered resource theorists purport that IPV results from an imbalance in the relative resources that a man has vis-à-vis his wife. Studies in the United States and South Africa have shown that women who earn more money than their husband or who serve as the family head experience IPV by their husband as retaliation for transgressing customary gender norms (Atkinson, Greenstein, & Lang, 2005; Choi & Ting, 2008). In Vietnam, women who are more economically successful than their husbands may face disapproval because their status threatens customary familial norms (Lan Anh Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). By contrast, men's older age and higher schooling attainment relative

to their partner have been negatively associated with the perpetration of physical IPV against women (Luke et al., 2007). A man's older age confers power and can be considered a social resource (Goode, 1971). This lower risk of IPV perpetration may result from the husband's fulfillment of his expected masculine role as the primary provider and authority within the family (Hoffman, Demo, & Edwards, 1994).

Gendered socialization in early childhood results in the unequal distribution of resources to women and men in adulthood. In childhood, women are taught to be self-sacrificing and to concede their autonomy to men; first to their fathers and then their husbands (Schuler et al., 2006). In adulthood, expectations of the role of mother and wife – namely to maintain family harmony – make women more dependent on an intact marriage to preserve personal and family honor. Although having children was not associated with experiencing IPV in one study of women in rural Vietnam (Vung et al., 2008), motherhood is associated with a higher risk of violence against women in Cambodia, Malaysia, Uganda, and the United States (Acevedo, Lowe, Griffin, & Botvin, 2013; Awang & Hariharan, 2011; Kwagala, Wandera, Ndugga, & Kabagenyi, 2013; Yount & Carrera, 2006). In Vietnam and other countries, women tolerate violence to preserve family unity in their role as mothers (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Schuler et al., 2006). Therefore, having children and experiencing IPV as an adult can be viewed as constraints. A common reason why women justify IPV is to “correct” mothers for ostensibly neglecting their children (Heise, 1998). Moreover, having children may lead women to justify IPV if they are financially dependent and perceive no alternatives to staying with their violent husband (Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Yount & Li, 2009). A woman's economic dependence on her partner elevates her risk of experiencing IPV, and women often cite the absence of viable economic opportunities to explain the decision to stay with a violent partner (Choi & Ting, 2008; Kalmuss, 1982; Rusbult & Martz, 1995).

Objectives

Research on IPV in Vietnam is in its early stages; the first national study of violence against women in Vietnam took place only in 2010. Of published studies, many have been qualitative (Vung et al., 2008), and none have compared men's and women's attitudes about IPV. The majority of quantitative studies which report on attitudes about IPV in Vietnam have analyzed men and women separately (Luke et al., 2007; Yount, Pham, et al., 2014). Several studies assessing gender differences in attitudes about IPV in various Sub-Saharan African countries found that women justified IPV more often than did men (Rani, Bonu, & Diop-Sidibe, 2004; Speizer, 2010; Uthman et al., 2009). Women and men were most likely to endorse wife hitting in situations where women violate prevailing gender norms, such as when a woman neglects her children or argues with her husband (Uthman et al., 2009). Adult characteristics that were associated with lower justification of IPV were similar for men and women, such as having more wealth and higher schooling attainment (Uthman et al., 2009; Waltermaurer, 2012); however, gender differentiation in these effects have not been formally tested.

The present analysis uses recently collected quantitative data to test whether and to what extent the above theoretical frameworks can explain the differences in men's and women's

justification of wife hitting in Vietnam. We test four main hypotheses. First, women will, more often than men, find good reason for a husband to hit his wife. Second, women's greater tendency to justify wife hitting will be partly accounted for by gendered social learning in childhood. Third, women's greater justification of wife hitting also will be partially explained by the gendered distribution of social and economic resources and constraints in adulthood. Finally, if men's and women's experience of violence in childhood and their social and economic resources and constraints in adulthood are dissimilar because of gender, then the influences of these variables on attitudes about IPV against women also may be differentiated by gender. The findings will inform new research and policy about the gendered characteristics that differentiate men's and women's attitudes about IPV.

Methods

Study Site

Data were collected from the My Hao district in Hung Yen province, 30 km southeast from Hanoi. My Hao is a predominantly rural area with a population of about 97,733 residents. Residents of My Hao have diverse livelihoods, comprised of farming (64%), local factory work (30%), and self-employment within small enterprises (23%) (Yount, VanderEnde, et al., 2014). Women engage in market work while also performing a majority of the domestic labor for their families (Yount, VanderEnde, et al., 2014). My Hao is governed by local People's Committees and the Communist Party, which ensures the commune's ideological position (Yount, VanderEnde, et al., 2014). Also, the Women's Unions and Youth Union have large memberships. As in other rural Vietnamese communities, reconciliation groups are present to resolve community conflicts. These community attributes are typical of rural communities in peri-urban areas (Rydström, 2003a; Yount, VanderEnde, et al., 2014).

Sample and Data Collection

A probability sample of married men and women ages 18 – 51 years was drawn from the 75 villages and 13 communes in My Hao (See Yount, VanderEnde et al., 2014, for more detail.). Seventy-four villages in My Hao were paired by the size of the eligible married population to guarantee a balance of the married men's and women's samples. The smallest of the 75 villages (and thus, one commune) was dropped from the sample because it could not be matched and had only 36 married residents. Twenty village pairs were selected with probability proportional to their total married population relative to the married population across all 74 villages. Villages in each pair were assigned randomly for surveys of men or women only. Twenty-seven households were selected randomly within each village. When house-holds had multiple eligible participants, privacy was ensured by selecting one eligible respondent at random. Expecting a 93% response rate, 1,080 persons were selected into the sample to yield 1,000 completed interviews (500 men and 500 women). The achieved response rate was 98.7%, with 1,055 interviews completed (522 men and 533 women).

The survey asked about respondents' socio-demographic and economic background, attitudes about IPV and women's recourse in response to violence, exposure to IPV and violence in childhood, and knowledge of laws concerning IPV against women. Questions on attitudes about IPV, the focus of the current analysis, included 10 agree/disagree statements

about whether a man had good reason to hit his wife for any of 10 “gender transgressive” behaviors, ranging from *wife did not finish housework to his satisfaction* to *wife is not faithful*. A confirmatory factor analysis of the questions in this sample revealed that six of the 10 items sufficiently capture attitudes about IPV among men and women respondents (Yount, VanderEnde, et al., 2014), and so we used this subset of six items in the present analysis. IRB approval was obtained from The Institutional Review Boards of Emory University and the Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population in Hanoi. All respondents gave verbal informed consent before the interviews were conducted (Yount, VanderEnde, et al., 2014).

Variables

Attitudes about IPV against women—A count variable was created from responses to the six agree-disagree statements about whether a husband has good reason to hit his wife. This count variable was categorized into three levels: reported no good reason to hit; reported some good reason to hit (agreed for 1–3 situations); and reported many good reasons to hit (agreed for 4–6 situations). Cognitive interviews using similar IPV attitudinal questions has revealed that “don’t know” responses should be interpreted as “it depends” (Yount, Halim, Head, & Schuler, 2012); therefore, in the absence of a definitive agreement, all “don’t know” responses (0 – 10 per statement) were recoded as “no.” A total of 24 participants (7 men, 17 women) reported “don’t know” to at least one agree/disagree statement. We also recoded the 24 participants with a “don’t know” response as “missing” and dropped them from the models; this approach did not substantively change the results (results available upon request).

Childhood experiences—Measures of childhood experiences included: whether (=1) or not (=0) the respondent was ever beaten in his or her childhood by their parents or another adult relative, hereby referred to as *experienced violence as a child* (3 men and 8 women with “don’t know” responses coded as 0); whether or not as a child the respondent ever saw/heard his or her mother experience physical IPV by a spouse or boyfriend, hereby referred to as *witnessed IPV as a child* (8 men and 9 women with “don’t know” responses and 1 woman with a missing response coded as 0); and whether or not the respondent’s current commune of residence was the same as where he or she had lived for a majority of childhood, identified as from 0 to 12 years of age (1 man with a “do not know” response and 2 men with missing responses coded as 0).

Social and economic resources and constraints in adulthood—Social and economic resource variables included the respondent’s age in years; whether or not the respondent was living in a joint household (with natal family or in-laws) at the time of interview (1 man with a missing response to “How close does your family of birth live to you?” and “no” response to *living with in-laws* coded as not living in a joint household); number of completed grades of schooling (2 men with missing responses; mean imputed); partner’s number of completed grades of schooling (15 men and 15 women with missing responses; mean imputed); an index for the wealth of the respondent’s household wealth score, based on principal components analysis of 11 households assets and amenities, full list available upon request (2 women with missing responses; mean imputed); whether or not

the respondent was participating in an organization at least once per year; whether or not the participant had knowledge of the new Vietnamese laws on gender and violence (4 “don’t know/refused to answer” responses coded to modal value; 1 man to “yes” and 3 women to “no”); whether or not s/he ever experienced physical IPV as an adult (1 woman with missing response coded as 0); and whether or not s/he ever perpetrated physical IPV as an adult. Social constraints included number of children ever born (although this can also be classified as a resource), and exposure to IPV as an adult. *Ever experienced physical IPV* and *ever perpetrated physical IPV* were constructed from different questions based on the respondent’s gender. Women were asked six questions about experiencing physical IPV as an adult while men were asked one; to capture ever perpetrated physical IPV as an adult, men were asked six questions about perpetration and women were asked one question.

Data Analysis

We performed univariate analyses, overall and by gender, for all individual attitudinal items and for all variables measuring childhood experiences and socio-economic resources and constraints in adulthood, to assess their completeness and distributions. Chi-square tests were used to determine significant differences between genders for each measure with one exception; the small number of men reporting experience of IPV in adulthood dictated the use of Fisher’s exact value. All analyses used weights and adjusted for the sampling design. Using the multilog procedure, we assessed bivariate relationships and ran ordered logistic regression models including theoretically motivated sets of variables shown in other studies to be associated with attitudes about IPV (Lawoko, 2006; Luke et al., 2007; Nguyen, 2006; Sayem et al., 2012; Vung & Krantz, 2009; Vung et al., 2008; Yount & Li, 2009). The proportional odds assumption was met. Analyses were conducted in SAS-Callable SUDAAN (SAS version 9.3, SUDAAN version 11.0.1). Model 1 included gender only; Model 2 included gender and measures of childhood experiences; Model 3 included gender and measures of socio-economic resources and constraints in adulthood; and Model 4 included gender and both sets of measures for childhood experiences and socio-economic resources and constraints. All variables of main interest were tested for interactions with gender resulting in eight significant interactions (available upon request). Model 5 included gender, childhood experiences, socioeconomic resources and constraints, and three interactions that remained significant when included in the full model (age, number of children ever born, and prior exposure to physical IPV as an adult).

Results

Sample Characteristics

Childhood experiences—The vast majority of men lived in the same commune in which they had lived for most of their childhood (95.9%); whereas, women often had moved away from their commune of primary residence in childhood (42.4%). Slightly more than one quarter of men (27.4%) and women (26.3%) had witnessed IPV against their mother, but men more often than women had experienced violence as a child (72.3% versus 50.3% for women) (Table 1).

Adult resources and constraints—Women, on average, were 34.2 years of age, and men were significantly older (35.9 years). Both men and women reported having a mean of two births, had similar schooling attainments (9.5 completed grades), and had partners with similar schooling attainments (9.6 grades). A higher percentage of women than men attended an organization at least once per year (50.2% versus 22.7%). Compared to women, men more often were aware of recent Vietnamese laws about IPV and gender (51.8% versus 39.8%). That said, men more often reported having ever perpetrated physical IPV (28.1% versus 1.6%) and less often reported having experienced physical IPV (0.5% versus 29.1%) than did women (Table 1).

Distributions of “good reasons” for Hitting a Wife: Total Sample and by Gender

Men and women differed markedly in their reported attitudes about physical IPV against women (final six items included in Table 2), with women consistently more often reporting that a husband had good reason to hit his wife. The largest absolute gap in attitudes was for the item *wife neglects the children* (women 63.2% and men 25.6%), and the smallest absolute gap in attitudes was for the item *asking if husband has other girlfriends* (women 15.4%; men 3.7%). More than 30% of women, compared to only 5.6% of men, agreed in at least four situations that a husband had good reason to hit his wife. In contrast, 34.6% of men, compared to only 8.3% of women, did not support a single reason for wife hitting. On average, men found good reason to hit a wife in 1.3 situations, and women found good reason to hit a wife in 2.8 situations (Table 2).

Ordered Logistic Regression Models

Table 3 shows the five ordered logistic regression models. Model 1 shows the unadjusted regression coefficient for the gender gap in attitudes, again with men as the reference ($\beta = 1.88$). In other words, women had 6.55 times higher proportional odds than men of finding good reason to hit a wife. Although this gap did not change markedly after accounting for childhood experiences (Model 2, $\beta = 1.89$), the gap was larger after accounting for social and economic resources and constraints in adulthood (Model 3, $\beta = 2.11$), and with both sets of variables together (Model 4, $\beta = 2.09$). The gender gap in attitudes remained significant in Models 2–4. In Model 5, which accounts for significant interactions of gender with age in years, number of children, and exposure to physical IPV as an adult, the gender gap in attitudes reverses and becomes non-significant ($\beta = -0.79$). In this model, own schooling ($\beta = -0.05$), partner's schooling ($\beta = -0.05$), and household wealth ($\beta = -0.08$) remained significant. The interaction terms in model 5 show how age, number of children ever born, and prior experience of physical IPV in adulthood are differentially associated with men's and women's attitudes about IPV against women. Older age was negatively associated with justification of IPV among men, while older age was positively associated with justification of IPV among women. Number of children was not associated with men's attitudes towards IPV, yet a higher number of children ever born was positively associated with women's agreement with IPV. Experiencing physical IPV as an adult was positively associated with finding good reasons for a husband to hit his wife among men but was negatively associated with justification of wife hitting among women (Table 3).

Predicted Probabilities

Table 4 shows the predicted probabilities of agreement with wife hitting, using Model 5 to illustrate the gendered effect of adult resources and constraints on attitudes about IPV against women. The majority of women and men agree with 1–3 reasons to hit a wife (some good reason; adjusted probabilities 0.642 and 0.553, respectively). Across age, number of children, and experiences of IPV as an adult, the probability of agreement with no good reasons for wife hitting were lower for women than men, and the probability of agreement with many good reasons was higher for women than men. Older women have a higher probability of agreement with many justifications for IPV compared to younger women (0.340 versus 0.255), while older men have a higher probability of agreement with no good reason for wife hitting compared to younger men (0.469 versus 0.350). Women who have more children have a higher probability of agreement with some or many justifications of IPV. However, the probability of agreement with no, some, or many justifications of IPV is similar among men no matter their number of children. Remarkably, all women who have experienced IPV as an adult agreed with either some or many good reasons to hit a wife. However, women who have not experienced IPV had a higher probability of agreeing with many good reasons for IPV compared to women who have experienced IPV (0.296 versus 0.272). Yet, in contrast to women, men who have experienced IPV had a higher probability of agreement with more good reasons to hit a wife than men who have not experienced IPV.

Discussion

In this analysis, we compared women and men's attitudes towards IPV against women in Vietnam to assess whether women more often justify IPV against women, and if so, why. This analysis adds to the literature by employing various theoretical frameworks to assess which framework best accounts for this gender gap in attitudes about justification of IPV against women in Vietnam.

Our first hypothesis was supported. Consistent with research in other countries (Uthman et al., 2009), women in My Hao justify wife hitting more often than do men. Our second hypothesis was not supported; the gender gap in attitudes about IPV against women is not partially explained by gendered childhood experiences. Likewise, the differential experiences of women and men within the family in adulthood do not account for the attitudinal gap, although resources such as education, partner's education, and the constraint of experiencing IPV as an adult were significantly associated with the justification of IPV. Rather, the differences in justification of IPV among women and men are explained by the differential effects of resources and constraints in adulthood (our third hypothesis), namely age, number of children ever born, and exposure to physical IPV as an adult.

Specifically, older age is differently associated with men's and women's agreement with wife hitting. New legislation in 2007 (National Assembly Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2007) that defined domestic violence and outlined prevention strategies may have changed ideas about femininity, and what women are expected to endure, rather than altering perceptions of masculinity. Young married women, as daughter-in-laws, occupy the lowest status within the household and are forced into servile position within the family (Rydström, 2003b). These women are subject to violence from their

husband and his parents (Luke et al., 2007). This legislation may have had a greater impact on young women, making them less likely than older women to justify IPV against wives. Because norms of masculinity were not directly addressed, it is possible that young men, as compared to young women, were less affected by the new legislation. It would then follow that younger men are more likely to justify wife hitting because of their concern with establishing their status as men. Accordingly, we found that older men were less likely than younger men to find good reasons to hit a wife, which is explained by both resource theory and gender norms. Older men have greater social and economic resources, connoted through wealth, social status within the community, and role as the family patriarch. Compared to younger men, older men have garnered resources and enjoyed authority within the family for more time, and feel less need to exercise their masculinity through endorsement of wife hitting.

Although men's attitudes about IPV against wives were not associated with their number of children, women with more children ever born were more likely than women with fewer children to find good reasons for a husband to hit a wife. This finding corroborates prior research in Egypt (Yount & Li, 2009) showing that a woman with children may feel more dependent on her marriage, perceive or actually have fewer social alternatives to the marriage, and feel more obliged to tolerate abuse for the sake of family harmony (Choi & Ting, 2008; Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Children place economic, psychological, and emotional demands on a marital partnership, which can create stress and conflict, which is associated with wife abuse (Hoffman et al., 1994). Yet this stress of having children that makes women vulnerable to abuse also makes them more dependent on their abusive partners (Kalmuss, 1982). Women who feel dependent on their partners may also find more good reasons to justify IPV against wives.

Experiencing physical IPV as an adult was positively associated with justification of IPV among men. Few men reported experiencing violence as an adult, and this association should be interpreted with caution, as it is based on a small number of exposed men. If men have been hit by their own wives, they may be more likely to justify wife hitting because such experiences are perceived as a major transgression of women's roles to maintain family harmony. The causal ordering of perpetration of IPV and justification of IPV against women is debatable; however, one study of men in Vietnam found that the association between experiences of violence as a child and greater justification of IPV against women was explained by men's perpetration of IPV as an adult (Yount, Pham, et al., 2014). In contrast, among women, experiencing physical IPV as an adult was negatively associated with justifying IPV against women. This finding contradicts previous research, which found that women who experienced IPV as an adult were more tolerant of IPV than women who had not been abused (Lawoko, 2006). In the present study, all women who had experienced IPV as an adult agreed with at least one reason to justify wife hitting. Even though some women who had not experienced IPV found no justification to hit a wife, these women had a higher probability than exposed women of agreeing with many justifications to hit a wife compared to women who have experienced IPV. These findings are complex, and may reflect an acceptance of more inequitable gender norms. It may have been easier for women who have not experienced IPV themselves to justify its use against other women. Women who have not experienced IPV may be more likely to assign blame to the woman and/or to interpret

attitudinal items differently (e.g., the woman in the scenario must be at fault) than women who have experienced IPV. The pervasiveness of gender norms may explain why all women who have experienced IPV justify its use in at least one situation even though this group is less likely to condone it overall. Women who have experienced IPV may answer these items based on their own experiences and respond with empathy.

Limitations

Some aspects of the survey limited our ability to measure fully perpetration and experience of IPV in adulthood. Women were asked six questions about experiences of physical IPV in adulthood and men were asked one question; whereas, men were asked six questions about their perpetration of IPV and women, one. We might have found more frequent reporting of exposure to IPV in adulthood among men and more frequent perpetration of IPV among women if men and women had been asked the same questions. The implications of asymmetry in the items about IPV exposure and perpetration for the findings here are an empirical question for future research.

As a cross-sectional study, resources and constraints experienced in adulthood were measured at the same time point as attitudes towards IPV, limiting our ability to infer any causal relationship.

Conclusions

Our findings, and their limitations, point to the value of unpacking the nature of and reasons for gender differences in attitudes about IPV in other resource-poor settings. Our findings suggest that having children may encourage a greater sense of dependency on marriage among women than men, particularly in a setting like Vietnam, where women's responsibility for family harmony remains strong. This greater dependency on marriage among mothers than fathers seems to account for a portion of women's greater justification of IPV. Supporting mothers to leave abusive husbands or encouraging fathers to take responsibility for family harmony are two potential directions for policy. Second, the few men who report prior experiences of IPV seem to respond with more intense "victim blaming" of wives exposed to IPV. Such men may benefit from learning the idea that no violence is acceptable and that the reasons for IPV perpetration may differ by gender.

Further qualitative research also is needed to understand the potential methodological reasons for women's greater justification of IPV against women. For example, a study using standard questions to measure attitudes towards IPV against women found that men's and women's report of agreement with wife hitting are influenced by social norms (Schuler, Yount, & Lenzi, 2012). Women tend to agree with wife hitting in order to align themselves with community norms about IPV rather than express their personal attitudes that are less tolerant towards IPV against women. Men, on the other hand, often report lower agreement with wife hitting, which reflects the socially desirable response, rather than their own more accepting views about IPV. Future analyses also could examine how different groups of women and men may interpret attitudinal questions about IPV differently. Panel studies of women and men could help to specify how exposure to or perpetration of physical IPV may

reciprocally influence attitudes about IPV. Ultimately, understanding the reasons that men and women may justify IPV remains an important step in preventing its occurrence.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP) and the My Hao district health authority for their exceptional partnerships; CCIHP collaborators Dr. Hoang Tu Anh, Dr. Trang Hung Minh, Ms. Vu Song Ha, and Ms. Quach Trang; and the study participants for their time, effort, and dedication to this project.

Funding: This work was supported by National Institutes of Health research grant 5R21HD067834-01/02 (PIs K.M.Y. and S.R.S.) and the Hubert Department of Global Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University.

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Characteristics of the Sample, Overall and by gender, $N=522$ men and $N=533$ women aged 18–51 years in My Hao, Vietnam

Table 1

Variables	Total sample		Men		Women		Gender Difference	p value
	% or M	SE	% or M	SE	% or M	SE		
Childhood Experiences								
Current residence same as in childhood	77.4	2.5	95.9	1.3	57.6	2.2		<0.001
Experienced violence as child	61.6	2.0	72.3	2.4	50.3	2.0		<0.001
Witnessed parental violence as child	26.9	1.3	27.4	2.0	26.3	1.5		0.651
Social and Economic Resources/Constraints								
Age in years	35.1	0.2	35.9	0.3	34.2	0.3		<0.001
Number of children ever born	2.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	2.0	0.0		0.091
Currently living with joint family	36.4	1.7	30.3	2.3	42.9	1.8		<0.001
Education (number of completed grades)	9.5	0.1	9.6	0.2	9.5	0.2		0.666
Partner's education (number of completed grades)	9.6	0.1	9.6	0.2	9.6	0.2		0.972
Household wealth index score	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1		0.976
Belongs to organization	36.0	2.0	22.7	1.6	50.2	2.2		<0.001
Has knowledge of law	46.0	2.6	51.8	4.3	39.8	2.5		0.021
Experienced physical IPV as an adult	14.3	1.8	0.5	0.2	29.1	1.9		<0.001
Perpetrated physical IPV as an adult	15.3	1.8	28.1	1.7	1.6	0.4		<0.001

Note: variables in italics are constraints; children may be considered both a resource and a constraint

Attitudes about intimate partner violence (IPV) against women, overall and by gender, $N=$ 522 men and $N=$ 533 women aged 18–51 years in My Hao, Vietnam

Table 2

Variables	Total sample		Men		Women		Gender Difference <i>p</i> value
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	
Attitudes Justifying IPV against women							
Wife refused to have sex with husband	10.2	1.0	4.0	1.1	16.9	1.0	<0.001
Wife asked if he had any other girlfriends	9.4	1.0	3.7	0.9	15.4	1.1	<0.001
Husband discovers wife is unfaithful	60.8	2.1	46.5	2.3	76.0	1.4	<0.001
Wife goes out without telling her husband	15.8	1.4	7.2	1.2	25.0	1.5	<0.001
Wife neglects the children	43.8	2.6	25.6	2.4	63.2	2.0	<0.001
Wife rudely argues against her husband	62.6	2.3	46.8	2.5	79.4	1.7	<0.001
Levels of Justification of IPV							
Many justifications (4 or more statements)	17.9	1.7	5.6	1.0	31.0	1.6	<0.001
Some justifications (1–3 statements)	60.2	1.3	59.8	2.0	60.7	1.6	
No justifications	21.9	1.9	34.6	2.4	8.3	1.0	
Count*	2.0	0.1	1.3	0.1	2.8	0.1	<0.001

* Mean

Table 3

Ordered logistic models of the relationship between gender, childhood experiences, social and economic resources/constraints and attitudes about IPV against women; $N = 522$ men and $N = 533$ women aged 18–51 years in My Hao, Vietnam

	(1)			(2)			(3)			(4)			(5)		
	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p
Gender															
Female (ref: male)	1.88	0.15	<0.001	1.89	0.17	<0.001	2.11	0.15	<0.001	2.09	0.16	<0.001	-0.79	0.50	0.118
Childhood Experiences															
Current residence same as in childhood (ref: no)				0.07	0.13	0.602				-0.03	0.14	0.799	-0.12	0.15	0.433
Experienced violence as child (ref: no)				-0.09	0.11	0.431				-0.04	0.11	0.718	0.02	0.11	0.866
Witnessed parental violence as child (ref: no)				0.16	0.10	0.129				0.13	0.10	0.201	0.06	0.10	0.555
Social and Economic Resources/Constraints															
Age in years							-0.01	0.01	0.399	-0.01	0.01	0.503	-0.03	0.01	0.005
Number of children ever born							0.16	0.08	0.062	0.16	0.08	0.055	0.01	0.10	0.954
Currently living with joint family (ref: no)							0.08	0.09	0.382	0.08	0.09	0.385	0.12	0.10	0.228
Education (number completed grades)							-0.05	0.02	0.008	-0.05	0.02	0.007	-0.05	0.02	0.007
Partner's education (number of completed grades)							-0.06	0.02	0.013	-0.05	0.02	0.017	-0.05	0.02	0.036
Household wealth index score							-0.07	0.04	0.069	-0.07	0.04	0.072	-0.08	0.04	0.023
Belongs to organization (ref: no)							0.20	0.10	0.057	0.20	0.10	0.056	0.10	0.10	0.307
Has knowledge of law (ref: no)							0.04	0.11	0.705	0.04	0.11	0.731	0.04	0.11	0.725
Experienced physical IPV as an adult (ref: no)							0.02	0.13	0.871	-0.01	0.13	0.936	0.81	0.32	0.014
Perpetrated physical IPV as an adult (ref: no)							0.97	0.14	<0.001	0.97	0.13	<0.001	0.99	0.14	<0.001
Interaction Terms															
Age*Gender													0.06	0.01	<0.001
Number of children ever born*Gender													0.46	0.14	0.002
Experienced physical IPV as an adult*Gender													-0.94	0.33	0.008
cutpoint 1	- -2.70	0.14	<0.001	-2.75	0.22	<0.001	-2.21	0.43	<0.001	-2.25	0.43	<0.001	-1.11	0.47	0.025
cutpoint 2	0.62	0.1	<0.001	0.57	0.19	<0.01	1.27	0.43	<0.01	1.23	0.43	<0.01	2.48	0.48	<0.001

Predicted probabilities of agreeing with reasons to hit a wife, using logistic models of the relationship between gender, childhood experiences, social and economic resources/constraints and attitudes about IPV against women (accounting for interaction); $N=$ 522 men and $N=$ 533 women aged 18–51 years in My Hao, Vietnam

Table 4

Variable	Level (+/– 1 SD)	Women			Men		
		No Justifications	Some Justifications	Many Justifications	No Justifications	Some Justifications	Many Justifications
Age	43.1	0.051	0.609	0.340	0.469	0.500	0.030
	27.3	0.075	0.670	0.255	0.350	0.601	0.049
Number of Children	2.85	0.043	0.576	0.381	0.407	0.555	0.039
	1.19	0.311	0.689	0.223	0.410	0.552	0.038
Experienced IPV as an adult	Yes	0.000	0.728	0.272	0.240	0.680	0.081
	No	0.062	0.642	0.296	0.408	0.553	0.038