



Research article

Does the gender of parent or child matter in child maltreatment in China?☆

Naixue Cui^{a,1}, Jia Xue^{b,1}, Cynthia A. Connolly^a, Jianghong Liu^{a,*}^a School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA^b School of Social Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 September 2015

Received in revised form

29 December 2015

Accepted 1 January 2016

Keywords:

Child maltreatment

Parent

Gender

China

ABSTRACT

Child maltreatment is a public health problem worldwide, and China is no exception. However, the pattern of child maltreatment remains unknown, including whether the gender of children and their parents has an impact on the occurrence of maltreatment. This study aims at examining the rates and frequency of child maltreatment, including physical abuse, psychological abuse and neglect perpetrated by mothers and fathers. We also test whether the interaction between parents' gender and their child's gender affects the occurrence of child maltreatment in China. 997 children from the China Jintan Child Cohort Study participated in the present study and reported their maltreatment experience perpetrated by their mothers and fathers using the questionnaire, Parent–Child Conflict Tactics Scale (CTSPC-CA). Generalized linear model analyses show that boys were more likely than girls to report physical abuse, and, in particular, boys were more likely than girls to be physically abused by their fathers. On the other hand, mothers were more likely than fathers to exhibit psychological aggression and use corporal punishment for both boys and girls. There was no difference based on the child's or parent's gender in the occurrence of neglect. The findings present empirical evidence that enhances the understanding of the pattern of child maltreatment in China, provide implications for social workers and health professionals to identify children at risk of child maltreatment, and shed light on future research studies.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Child maltreatment is a public health problem worldwide (Butchart, Harvey, Mian, & Furniss, 2006; Oates, 2013; Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, & Alink, 2013), including in China. It is estimated that 1 in 4 children has experienced some type of physical abuse during childhood or neglect (Fang et al., 2015; Ji & Finkelhor, 2015), and 1 in 5 children have experienced some form of psychological aggression (Fang et al., 2015). In particular, the rate of physical abuse is higher than the international estimate (22.6%) from a meta-analysis of the 111 studies conducted in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America, and the estimate (16.7%) for Asian studies only (Stoltenborgh et al., 2013). Child maltreatment is associated with psychological and behavioral problems in childhood and early adulthood, such as

☆ This study was funded by the National Institute of Environment Health Sciences grants (R01-ES018858, K01-ES015877, and K02-ES019878), the Research Award of the Office of Nursing Research at the School of Nursing of the University of Pennsylvania, and the GAPSA-Provost Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Innovation of the University of Pennsylvania.

* Corresponding author at: Room 426, Fagin Hall, 418 Curie Blvd, Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA.

¹ These authors contributed equally to this manuscript and are acknowledged as co-first authors.

depression, anxiety disorders, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, aggression and violence toward others, risky sexual behaviors and post-traumatic stress disorder, in later life (Anda et al., 2006; Dube et al., 2001; Gershoff, 2002; Gilbert et al., 2009; Lansford et al., 2002; MacKenzie, Nicklas, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2013; Scott, Smith, & Ellis, 2010; Thornberry, Henry, Ireland, & Smith, 2010). Findings from studies in China show that child maltreatment also negatively impacts children's health outcomes as well (Gershoff et al., 2010; Kwok, Chai, & He, 2013; Wong, Leung, Chow, Kam, & Tang, 2010). It has been reported that child gender (especially boys) is a risk factor of child maltreatment in China (Liao, Lee, Roberts-Lewis, Hong, & Jiao, 2011). Few studies, however, have explored the role of parents' gender and the interaction of the gender-specific parent–child dyad that play in the occurrence of child physical maltreatment, psychological aggression and neglect among Chinese children.

Gender of Parents as a Factor

The majority of Chinese studies on child maltreatment reveal an overall rate of child maltreatment perpetrated by either parent (Ji & Finkelhor, 2015); few studies have compared the differences between mothers and fathers in the rates of maltreatment toward children. Research in Western countries and Hong Kong shows that mothers report higher rates and more frequent use of corporal punishment toward their children than fathers do (Lansford et al., 2002; Tang, 2006). Wang and Liu (2014) found that more Chinese mothers reported psychological aggression and corporal punishment in Mainland China. A large study that was conducted in nine countries, including Mainland China, in which parents reported information about their use of corporal punishment with their children, also reveals the same usage pattern for mild corporal punishment, while the results regarding severe corporal punishment show that fathers are more likely to be the perpetrators (Lansford et al., 2010).

These findings can be explained by the Chinese traditional gender-linked child rearing practice. Due to the influence of Confucianism and the patriarchal social and family structure, Chinese fathers are viewed as instrumental providers, and are culturally empowered to use physical force or other forms of harsh strategies to discipline children and train their obedience (Ho, 1987; Ng, Bhugra, McManus, & Fennell, 2011). On the other hand, Chinese mothers play a more caring role in child rearing, such as feeding, dressing and providing emotional support (Jankowiak, 1992). As the primary caregivers, mothers spend more time with children, and therefore they are more likely to conflict with their children and practice more minor form of disciplinary strategy such as psychological aggression and corporal punishment to handle the conflicts and correct children's misbehavior. This gender-linked parenting style is consistent, to some extent, with findings from the western society that mothers demonstrate more authoritative (e.g. emotionally supportive and responsive) parenting styles and fathers exhibit more authoritarian (e.g. less supportive and high-control) parenting styles (Russell, Hart, Robinson, & Olsen, 2003; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994).

Gender of Child as a Factor

The gender of a child is also associated with the occurrence of child maltreatment perpetrated by parents. Studies in the Chinese context find that boys are more likely than girls to be physically abused (Liao et al., 2011), while girls are more likely than boys to be neglected (Hua et al., 2014). This phenomenon reflects the parental gender-linked expectations for children. Chinese boys, as compared to girls, face higher expectations from parents with respect to their abilities, educational investment and success, and old-age support (Hannum, Kong, & Zhang, 2009). Corporal punishment and even physical abuse have been used as a child-rearing practice to enhance parents' strict discipline for children (particularly for boys), to train their moral behavior and obedience, and to correct misbehavior. Due to the higher value and expectations of boys, they are less likely to be neglected than girls by their parents.

The disparity of child abuse between boys and girls may be also due to gender-linked behavior characteristics. Disobedience is one of the main reasons why Chinese parents practice corporal punishment (Qiao & Xie, 2015). Boys demonstrated more aggressive and delinquent behavior (Xing, Wang, Zhang, He, & Zhang, 2011), which may be regarded as misconduct that disturbs interpersonal harmony or being unfilial to their parents. Therefore, they are at higher risk of being disciplined by minor or severe forms of harsh discipline to regulate their behaviors. In contrast, girls are socialized as more obedient, considerate and less aggressive in the Chinese context and are less likely to elicit parental harsh discipline (Xing & Wang, 2013).

Interplay between Parents' Gender and Child's Gender

The interplay between the parents' gender and the child's gender in the occurrence of child maltreatment in the Chinese context remains poorly understood. Traditionally, father–son relationship is the most important relationship in the Chinese kinship, and fathers are often more demanding with their sons (Ho, 1987; Jankowiak, 1992). However, researchers found that there is no significant gender interaction in child abuse—both parents are more likely to mistreat boys than girls (Lansford et al., 2010; Wang & Liu, 2014), indicating that in spite of the traditional gender-linked role in child rearing, both mothers and fathers are equally involved in disciplining children, especially for boys.

It should be noted that these findings should be explained cautiously due to limitations. For example, the survey instrument used in Lansford et al. (2010) is a self-developed tool, and it has not been validated; therefore, the reliability and

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6832329>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6832329>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)