CONTEXTUAL ACCEPTANCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES: SURVEY AMONG INDONESIAN SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

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As social workers have high potential of dealing with issues of violence against women, it is important for students studying to enter the profession to be well prepared with the competence to deal with them. This study investigates associations between factors derived from feminist, social learning and socio-demographics perspectives and contextual acceptance of physical violence against wives. Respondents were 438 male and female undergraduate students recruited from four private and public universities in four Indonesian provinces. The study found that students who knew the victim well, studied at universities in Western Indonesia, were Muslim, reported high religiosity and egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles tended to report non-justification of wife beating. Findings were discussed within the framework of social work education strategy to improve social work students' attitudes toward violence against wives.

Keywords: contextual acceptance, physical violence, social work education, violence against wives

INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization acknowledges physical violence against women as one of the major forms of intimate partner violence that has become a global issue because it exists in any nation regardless of economic and social development status (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005 ;WHO, 2013). Physical violence in intimate partner relations can be defined as any minor physical aggression such as pushing or throwing things or severe acts that may lead to significant physical harm such as use of weapon/tools or hitting done by a spouse/partner toward his/her intimate partner (Gordon, 2002). Scholars have widely acknowledged that women have disproportionately been the victims of violence within intimate relations. Numerous studies have confirmed that violence against women results in

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survivors having to deal with serious and long-term physical, psychological, social, and mental disadvantages as well as on family's stability, children's growth and development, and larger society's quality of life (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005).

Social worker is a human service profession that has a mandate to help oppressed and vulnerable groups, including of survivors of violence, to meet their needs. The nature of the profession opens substantial chances for social workers to work with survivors (Danis, 2003). However, some studies have highlighted that social workers are not always able to provide effective or helpful services to victims, reportedly stemming from their lack of capacity to deal with the victims as well as indications of victim blaming, lack of responsiveness, and uncaring attitudes and behaviour shown toward the survivors (Danis, 2003; Danis & Lockhart, 2003; Postmus, Warener, McMahon, and Macri, 2011). These conditions have been pointed to as factors that discourage victims to seek professional help from social workers. Critics have been called for social work education to pay more attention to preparing students to acquire better skills, competence, and attitudes in working with the survivors of violence against women.

To date, few studies have been conducted to assess social work students' attitudes about intimate partner violence—and most of them have been carried out in Western and Middle East regions. A large number of existing studies were also done among students from the health or general fields (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Haj-Yahia & Schiff, 2007; Haj-Yahia & Uysal, 2008; Gharaibeh; Abu-Baker, & Aji, 2010; Obeid, Chang & Ginges, 2010). Only few studies specifically targeted informants from social work students, including studies among magister and undergraduate students in Israel (haj-yahia & Schiff, 2007); the United States (Postmus et al., 2011) and Taiwan (Haj-Yahia & Shen, 2015).

This study intends to examine factors associated with contextual justification of physical violence against wives among Indonesian social work students. Justification is the process where the individual happenings to explain the validity of an act by taking into consideration external factors or contexts (Dutton, 1981). For example, an individual may interpret an isolated event in a manner, but when the event is viewed within a social circumstance, the individual may have different or changed interpretation and definition of the incident. In the case of intimate partner violence, the public may not endorse the abuse of wives, but if the violent act is placed within a context or circumstance, individuals may qualify their statements of disapproval and attempt to defend or rationalize the violence. According to Flood & Pease (2009), acceptance of wife beating among service providers can inhibit the elimination of the problem because it can cause negative impact upon their attitudes and behaviour toward victims and further strengthen victims' helplessness and reluctance to seek help.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES IN INDONESIA

Violence against women has also become a pressing issue in Indonesia within the last two decades. The annual reports from the National Commission on Violence against Women informed that physical abuse toward wives is the most prevalent type of violence against women in Indonesia. The first systematic survey was conducted in 2006 through the first National Survey on Violence against Women and Children (SVAWC) conducted in 2006 with female adults from 68,000 households in all 33 provinces found Indonesian' women suffered from various type of abuse and most of them were perpetrated by intimate male partner. About 65% and 23% reported they had ever been psychologically and physically abused respectively. According to the victims, 72% of physical abuse was done by husbands. The latest national survey on Women's Life Experience carried out by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection in collaboration with the National Statistic Agency in 2016 showed that one-third of 9000 female respondents aged 15-64 years old who resided in 24 of 34 provinces reported ever experiencing at least one instance of physical and/or sexual violence by intimate and or non-intimate partner

Indonesian society is still regarded as patriarchal as evidenced by male dominance and submission of women. Social policies are indeed implicated in promoting patriarchy. For example, the 1974 Marriage Law stipulates that the husband is the head, protector, and provider of the family and the wife is the household manager. Society also places a great deal of control on how women should behave in that they have to act modestly and obediently, avoid making problem that can disgrace their families and their own dignity, and maintain their "purity". Meanwhile, greater freedom and choices are given to men in both private and public life. In studies regarding attitudes toward gender roles among undergraduate students and community members in West Java, a great proportion of participants agreed that public leadership should be in the hands of males, married women should prioritize their families over their career, women should (more so than men) be expected to be abstinent before marriage, and women should not be given as much freedom of mobility as men (Rusyidi, Sekarningsih & Djustiana, 2013).

At the policy and society levels, progress to address violence against women in Indonesia has evolved in the last two decades. Major actions taken by Indonesia to tackle violence against women can be traced back to 1984 when the government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and establish National Commission on Violence Against Women in 1998. In 2000 the central government launched National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Violence Against Women—a joint agreement of three ministries to establish multi-sector and integrated services to victims of gender-based violence. Following these establishments, the Elimination of Domestic Violence Act that criminalize violence within household and protection of victims was introduced in 2004.

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Public tolerance toward violence against wives is quite high in Indonesia. For example, a study among 200 randomly selected adult men and women in West Java found victim blaming and justification of violence against wives was widespread. Wives' negative characteristics (85%) and disobedience (42%) were the most commonly perceive to cause marital violence. Seventy nine percent and 60% of respondents reported they strongly agreed or agreed that it was acceptable for a husband to hit his wife if she is sexually unfaithful and being drunk respectively. Furthermore, approximately one-third of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that hitting a wife was acceptable if the wife flirted with another man, neglected taking care of family and household (Rusyidi, 2011). Although in recent years Indonesian society, including men, has begun to show more open attitudes toward talking about and resisting violence against women, as well as changing the discourse on masculinity (Nilan, Demartoto, Broom, & Germov, 2014; Hayati, Emmelin, & Eriksson, 2014), the progress is still considered slow.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF CONTEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES

This research is based on combined feminist, social learning, and socio-demographic perspectives. Critical or radical feminists have argued that intimate partner violence constitutes one of the main social manifestations of patriarchy. At the micro level, patriarchy is represented in the individual beliefs, norms, and values that legitimize male dominance over women (Smith, 1990). Therefore, according to feminist perspectives, a society that sanctions violence against a wife as the husband's privilege to correct a wife's transgression gender role tends to tolerate abuse of wives when the wife has failed in her role or overstepped her limits. In other words, violence would be commonly seen as women's fault, not men. At the individual level, it can be assumed that individuals who adhere to patriarchal beliefs about male domination or female subordination would tend to condone intimate partner violence against women.

Gender role attitudes, gender, religion and religious orientation have been used as indicators to predict patriarchal beliefs associated with attitudes toward violence against women. Studies across cultures consistently found the association between higher endorsement of traditional gender role attitudes and greater acceptance of wife beating. Gender has been found to be less consistent in predicting the contextual acceptance of violence. Much research across cultures observed that women were more likely to report their disapproval toward wife beating (e.g. Haj-Yahia & Shen, 2015; Gharaibeh et al., 2012; Haj-Yahia & de Zoysa, 2009). The exception, however, was found in the studies in among the general population in many African countries in which justification of wife abuse was significantly higher among women than men (e.g. Uthman, Lawoko, & Moradi, 2010).

Another study among the Chinese American population in the United States reported gender was not a significant predictor for contextual justification of violence against wives (e.g. Yick, 2000).

Religion has been criticized by some feminist proponents as one of the important agents that supports patriarchy and condones violence within marriage (Dobash & Dobash, 1983; Fortune, 2001). Some other maintains that the interpretations of religious teachings, not religion themselves, enforce patriarchy and female subordination. Religious teachings might increase forgiveness for abuse due to doctrines on the submissive nature of wives and unconditional nature of forgiveness and increase risks for abused women due to emphasis on the sacredness of marriage (Fortune, 2001). However, empirical support for religion and religiosity have been inconclusive as suggested by inconsistent association between religion or religiosity level with attitudes toward contextual justification of wife beating (e.g.Obeid et al., 2010).

The Social learning perspective assumes that intimate partner violence is the outcome of socialization and learning processes. Empirical studies confirmed that individual who experienced family violence during childhood tended to justify wife beating more than those who had never been exposed to domestic violence when they were younger (Obeid, et al, 2010; Gharaibeh et.al, 2012; Haj-Yahia & Shen, 2015). In this study, the marker of social learning was changed into the knowledge about victim of physical violence by a husband.

A sociological theory argues that social and ecological factors including age, income, education, employment, residence and other socio-demographic variables are related to domestic violence. Education is believed expose people to new knowledge, ideas, and perspectives that may prompt individuals to reassess their traditional cultures that emphasize female subordination. Ghabaireh et al. (2012) found that higher disapproval of wife beating was reported by college students who had highly educated parents. Age also affects individuals' ability to learn new ideas or values. Older individuals may tend to have difficulty in absorbing more liberal perspectives about family, gender roles and marriage because they have internalized their existing beliefs for a long period of time, thus making it difficult for them to accept new ideas that are inconsistent with their belief system. They also may be relatively less likely to get exposed to or influenced by the impacts of public education/campaigns or law reforms on violence against women (Yick, 2000; Worden & Carlson, 2005). On the other hand, younger generations tended to adjust themselves with social changes or new values faster than adult groups (Bui, 2005). Nevertheless, the findings from existing studies are not consistent in regards to the impacts of age on people's attitudes (Carlson & Worden, 2005; Gharaibeh et al., 2012).

Geographical area may have impact on individuals' perception and attitudes. For example, although rural area cannot be generalized, literatures suggests that living in rural areas may limit people's interactions with non-conservative family values or liberal norms and values pertaining to

women's rights and gender equality either due to relatively low education, rigid social structures and norms about family and gender roles, conservative norms about family privacy, and/or lack of availability/ access to information regarding IPV (Eastman, Bunch, Williams, & Carawan, 2007). The examination of the influence of residence location have been found to be inconsistent. Surveys in developing countries such in Africa and Asian continents found living in rural areas or refugee camps reported greater endorsement of wife abuse in certain contexts than those in urban sites (Haarr, 2007; Gharaibeh et al., 2012). However, population-based studies in rural and urban areas of Palestine and Ghana (e.g. Mann & Takyi, 2009) revealed that geographical site was not a significant predictor.

METHOD

The population of this study was Indonesian undergraduate social work students at various points of their studies. The study recruited students from two universities in Western Indonesia (West Java and Yogyakarta) and two others from Eastern Indonesia (Maluku and Papua). Of the four universities, two are public and two are private universities. Convenience sampling was applied to select the respondents. With the prior approvals from the heads of departments and lecturers, potential respondents were approached in their classes, were given an explanation about the study, and invited to participate. Those who agreed to participate gave informed consent to ensure that their participation was voluntary. The consent also highlighted the freedom to not answer some or all questions, the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any penalty, and the protection of confidentiality. Data was collected through a paper-based self-administered survey during the period of spring semester 2017. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed and 450 were returned (90% response rate). After the initial inspection, about 12 cases were dropped because of a >10% missing response rate, leaving the other 438 questionnaires to be included into final data analysis.

The dependent variable was attitudes toward contextual justification of physical violence against a wife by a husband. It was assessed using an instrument called Contextual Justification of Violence against Wives Scale. The Contextual Justification subscale is based on 11 closed-ended items that is used to assess individuals' attitudes about whether certain circumstances might justify or warrant the use of interpersonal violence. A scenario describing a man hitting his wife very hard under different situations is presented to respondents, who are then asked to select the extent to which they agree or disagree that the violence was justified. Examples of contextual justification are "She refused to have sex," "Husband was under stress" or "She did not obey him". The scale uses a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 7=strongly agree, 4=Neutral, 1=strongly disagree. The total score for this scale ranges between 11 and 55. Higher scores indicate higher contextual justification of wife beating, which indicates higher approval toward wife beating. This Scale had been previously used in

a study assessing public attitudes toward violence against wives in Indonesia with the Cronbach's alpha .75 (Rusyidi, 2011). In this study the Cronbach alpha for the Scale was .73.

The variables selected as independent variables were informed by the theoretical perspectives of the study that include gender, attitudes toward gender roles, religion and level of religiosity (feminist perspective); knowledge about victims of physical violence by a husband (social learning perspective), and finally, type of university, university location, cohort of study, and parents' level of education (socio-demographic perspective).

Attitudes toward gender roles were measured using the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (ATWS) that consists of 15 items that measures attitudes concerning the rights, roles, and obligations that woman should have in modern society. The measurement uses a four-point Likert scale where 0="strongly disagree", 1="mildly disagree", 2="mildly agree", and 3="strongly agree". The ATWS provides scores along a continuum range with lower scores indicating endorsement of traditional sex roles and higher scores reflecting the support of an egalitarian view of the roles of women and men (Helmreich, Spence, & Gibson, 1982). Cronbach alpha for the ATWS was .72.

The religiosity scale had four items that assessed participants' subjective perspective regarding the extent of their religiosity in general, religious devotion, and religious affiliation. Three of the four questions were adopted from Haj-Yahia religiosity scale. The measurement uses a six-point Likert Scale. In the original scoring system, a low score meant a high level of religiosity and a high score means a low level of religiosity (Haj-Yahia, 1998). However, in this study, the scoring was reversed in order to make it consistent with the scoring of other independent variables. The possible total scores range from 4 to 24 that suggests the higher the score, the higher religiosity level. Cronbach alpha for the scale was .8.

Other independent variables were assessed using self-developed measures. The respondents were asked to provide information about their sex (Female=1), type of university (1=public university), location of university (1=Western Indonesia), cohort (1=1st and 2nd year students), father and mother education (1= high school and above), religion (Islam=1), and knowledge about the victim (1=knew the victim well).

Data were processed and analysed using SPSS version 22. Univariate and bivariate analysis were conducted to obtain information about descriptions and correlations of examined variables. Pre-regression analysis was conducted and met the assumption of normality, the assumption of linearity, the assumption of homoscedasticity, and the absence of high multicollinearity. Three-step hierarchical multi regressions analysis examined the statistical associations starting from inputting variables from social learning into block 1 (model 1), socio-demographics in block 2 (model 2) and feminist theories on block 3 (final model).

FINDINGS

Socio-demographic profile

The average respondent age was 19.94 (SD= 2.0). Half of them was females and the other half was males. The majority of them came from public institution (55.8%) and universities located in Western Indonesia (68.6%) Above 70% of students declared themselves as Muslims and more than half of them were third year students or above. Almost half of students in this study knew a woman who was a victim of beating by her husband. On average both students' father and mother graduated from high school. Religiosity levels in general were categorized as high (M=18.36, SD= 3.31) while the mean score for attitudes toward gender roles indicated a slightly moderate support toward gender equality (M=37.87, SD=5.44). The average score of contextual justification of physical violence against women reported by respondents in this study was on the borderline between positive and negative attitudes toward wife beating (M=35.7, SD=5.44).

Contextual Justification of physical violence against wives

The distribution of students' attitudes regarding contextual justification of wife beating is presented in table 1 below. Between 6.4 and 42.3 percent of social work students in this study still reported some levels of agreement (strongly agreed, agreed, and slightly agreed) in some situations or some circumstances of physical violence against wives was justified. Four circumstances most supported by respondents for physical violence against a wife were if she was sexually unfaithful (42.3%, M= 3.99, SD=1.26), drunk (32.3%, M=3.89, SD=1.16), hurting her child(children) (29%; M=3.50, SD=1.43) and flirting with other men (27.%, M=3.45, SD=1.41). Three conditions least justified for a husband to be physically abusive toward wife reported by students included if her husband was under stress (M=2.66, SD=1.26), if the wife refused to have sex with her husband (M=2.80, SD=1.18), and if the wife was too demanding (M=2.96, SD=1.22) respectively.

Many social work students in this study, however, still expressed their ambivalence. This means that they remain undecided on whether to support or reject conditions for a husband to exercise physical violence toward his wife. For example, 44.3% and 35.2% still reported their uncertainty on if a wife's drunkenness and sexual affair with other men can be reasons for him to slap his wife.

Table 2 describes the result of a hierarchical multi-regression analysis concerning factors associated with students' evaluation of contextual justification of physical violence toward wives. The omnibus F-test in each model (equation) was significant at .000. This means the R-square in each model differs from 0 (zero). Model 1 explains 5.5% variance in the contextual approval of wife beating. Knowing a victim was found to be a significant predictor. Model 2 explains 12.3% variance in the outcome variable. Knowing a victim and university geographical location were found to be significant predictors controlling for other independent variables. In model 3, variance in the predicted variable increased to 17.7 %. Knowing the victim, university location, gender roles attitudes, religion

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and religiosity level were found to be significant predictors when other independent were held constant.

Model 3, which is the final model shows 5 significant predictors of the predicted variables. Students who knew victim of wife beating were more likely to report non-justification of wife beating than students who did not know the victim (Beta=-.126, p<.050). Students studying in universities located in Eastern Indonesia reported significantly higher approval toward contextual justification of wife beating than their counterparts from Western universities (Beta=.355, p<.001). Muslim students in this study reported significantly lower approval of contextual justification of wife beating compared to their non-Muslim counterparts (Beta=-.200, p<. 010). Students with higher religiosity level were more likely than non-religious students to report lower approval of contextual justification of wife beating (Beta=-.139, p<. 010). Finally, students who endorsed egalitarian gender roles were more likely to disapprove any situation for a husband to abuse his wife compared to students who supported traditional gender roles (Beta=-.142, p<.005).

Table 2. Distribution of Contextual Justification of Physical Violence against Wife (N=438)

To what extent do you agree slapping a wife by a husband is justified	M	SD	DS (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	N (%)	SA (%)	A (%)	AS (%)
Husband is under stress	2.66	1.26	22.4	27.2	19.2	24.9	6.2	-	.2
Wife is too demanding	2.96	1.22	15.1	22.8	21.5	32.2	8.4	-	-
Wife insults the husband's feeling	3.08	1.28	16.5	16.9	20.4	35.0	11.0	-	.2
Wife refused having sex with wife	2.80	1.18	17.4	23.3	28.4	24.3	6.4	.2	-
Wife left the house without husband's permission	3.05	1.28	16.2	20.1	17.6	34.9	11.2	-	-
Wife disobeyed husband	3.17	1.31	16.0	16.0	16.9	37.9	13.0	.2	-
Wife neglected taking care the family	3.08	1.28	16.0	17.6	21.2	33.3	11.6	.2	-
Wife flirted with other man	3.45	1.41	16.4	9.1	15.1	32.2	26.9	-	.2
Wife had sex with other man	3.99	1.26	7.8	6.2	8.5	35.2	42.1	-	.2
Wife was drunk	3.89	1.16	7.6	5.7	10.1	44.3	32.1	-	.2
Wife hurt the child	3.50	1.43	18.0	6.4	12.6	34.0	28.8	.2	-

M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation; DS=Disagree strongly, D=Disagree, SD=Slightly Disagree, N=Neutral, SA=Slightly Agree, A=Agree, AS=Agree Strongly

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Contextual Justification of Violence Against Wives on Independent Variables (N=438)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	37.740	.738		51.129	.000
	Know abused wife	-4.867	.995	-.234	-4.892	.000
2	(Constant)	30.587	1.804		16.951	.000
	Know abused wife	-3.296	1.027	-.158	-3.208	.001
	University categorical	5.464	1.437	.227	3.801	.000
	University affiliation	1.296	1.159	.057	1.119	.264
	Year starting education categorical	1.627	1.335	.072	1.219	.224
	Father education level	.825	1.605	.030	.514	.608
	Mother education level	.412	1.441	.017	.286	.775
3	(Constant)	51.848	5.036		10.295	.000
	Know abused wife	-2.632	1.011	-.126	-2.604	.010
	University categorical	8.550	2.070	.355	4.130	.000
	University affiliation	2.063	1.146	.090	1.801	.073
	Year starting education categorical	.661	1.328	.029	.498	.619
	Father education level	.883	1.567	.032	.564	.573
	Mother education level	.497	1.410	.021	.352	.725
	Sex	-.648	1.060	-.029	-.611	.541
	Religion categorical	-5.022	1.896	-.200	-2.649	.008
	Religiosity total	-.473	.175	-.139	-2.709	.007
	Total ATWS	-.291	.100	-.142	-2.906	.004

Dependent variable: Total Score Contextual Justification

DISCUSSION

This study found that in general, the students supported some contexts or circumstances that would justify a husband beating his wife. Nevertheless the proportion of students who reported some degree of agreement toward contextual justification of wife beating in Indonesia was relatively much higher compared to one found in other study, for example among Taiwan social work students (Haj-Yahia & Shen, 2015). This finding provides clear evidence for social work education in Indonesia to improve their student attitudes to be more intolerant about wife beating.

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The most supported circumstances were when the wives' behaviours were perceived as deviating from prescribed expectations of a faithful or good wife such as having extramarital affairs, getting drunk, and flirting with other men or not performing her role as a care giver, such as by hurting her child. This finding resembles results from previous studies. Studies in both developing and developed regions found that a wife's unfaithfulness and child abuse are commonly circumstances that are perceived to warrant marital violence (Garcio-Moreno, 2005; Rusyidi, 2011).

A wife's drunkenness is viewed as one of the most justified contexts for wife beating in Indonesia and this is also reported in other countries, especially in the Middle Eastern region (e.g. Gharaibeh et al, 2012; Odeid et al., 2010). In Indonesia, drinking alcohol, especially among Muslims, is not only considered a deviation from religious teaching but also from cultural expectation. Alcohol use is commonly associated with being an irresponsible or bad personality. The judgment is much harsher for drunken females/wives than males/husbands, therefore physical discipline would be accepted to educate women. These all suggest that roles of the good mother and good wife are cultural norms which are widely accepted and internalized. This is especially true among Asian families where women are socialized and highly expected to be wives and mother.

Physical violence against women in Indonesia is evident as shown by a large proportion of students who reported ever knowing well at least one victim of physical violence by a husband. This suggests that violence against women is not a rare or invisible issue among social work students. If knowing the victim is mostly through personal interaction as a witness, social work education needs to consider the provision of relevant support services for them. In addition, the fact about students' knowledge is also can be used by educational institutions to justify the importance of integrating violence against women topic into the curriculum. As it is unclear whether students' interaction with victims were developed through personal or academic (i.e. field practice, research) interaction, future studies need to differentiate the nature as well as intensity of individual interaction with the victim to provide more information about their impacts on people's attitudes.

Many Indonesian students in this study remained ambivalent about some contexts for wife beating. Such ambivalence has also been reported in a previous study (e.g. Gharaibeh et al, 2012). Being ambivalent about gender injustice issue is not an appropriate attribute for social work students given their future roles in promoting social justice. This finding suggests the importance of social work education in improving students' attitudes and change students attitudes from having uncertain attitudes to be more firm in disapproving of wife beating.

Some significant predictors found in this study are in line with the findings from previous international studies. The study found that students with more egalitarian attitudes were less likely to justify wife beating under any circumstance than students who supported traditional gender roles. This is consistent with the findings of studies among college students in Middle Eastern countries

(Gharaibeh et al. 2012; Obeid et al., 2010; Haj-Yahia & Schiff, 2009) and other Asian countries like Taiwan and Turkey (Haj-Yahia & Shen, 2015; Haj-Yahia & Zoysa, 2009). Promoting students' egalitarian gender attitudes can be a medium to promote students' attitudes toward wife beating. Social work education institutions should increase the quantity and quality of teaching and learning materials concerning gender equality and justice. This may be integrated into different basic courses such as human behaviour and social environment, human diversity, social work ethics, and so on.

The role of religion in explaining students' attitudes about wife beating found in this study added the evidence found in the previous research. Obeid's et al. (2010) study among Lebanese college students from various disciplines (including social work) found that lower approval of wife beating was reported by Christian than non-Christian students. This study, however, found the contrary with Muslim students reporting higher non-justification attitudes than their Christian counterparts. Other studies found that religiosity was not associated with university students' sympathy for battered women (Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner, 2004) but some others found the association (Geiger, Fischer, & Eyhet, 2004). This finding shows that religious affiliation is not yet a consistent predictor across geographical or cultural context and further studies are needed to build stronger evidence about its influence in shaping the attitudes.

This study added new evidence about the influence of geographical location on students' attitudes about physical violence against wives. In this study, students from Eastern Indonesian universities reported higher approval of wife beating than their counterparts from the Western region. There are a number of factors that could explain this, including the differences in educational system and support between two regions. Universities in Western Indonesia are relatively consistent in meeting the basic standards of the social work curriculum set by Social Work Education Association. Since 2000, universities in Western Indonesia have been progressively integrating discussions about gender, gender-based violence, social injustice and human rights into teaching, learning and field practice. In addition, students in Western Indonesia have greater opportunities than their counterparts in Eastern Indonesia to be exposed to public education, critical discussions and campaigns about gender issues.

Meanwhile, universities in Eastern Indonesia still face some challenges in integrating contemporary issues into the social work teaching and learning (including gender-based violence), probably due to the human resources and institutional constraints. In addition, the Eastern region is considered relatively behind its Western counterpart with regards to social economic development and achievement regarding gender equality—possibly another structural barrier that could have an impact in limiting students understanding about gender-injustice related issues.

The role of religiosity level in shaping attitudes toward contextual violence against wives is understudied. Yet this study found that students with higher degrees of religiosity reported more

positive attitudes, meaning that they reported higher disagreement about contexts for wife beating than students with lower religiosity level. More evidence is needed to explain this association. One explanation would be concerning the positive correlation between religiosity level and pro-social behaviour. It may be possible that students with higher religiosity are more sensitive and sympathetic to the disadvantaged people like survivor of violence, thus they tend refuse any context that cause harm and difficulties to humankind.

The influence of knowledge about a victim has been understudied in previous research. This study confirmed that students who knew a woman who was physically abused by her husband tended to report greater approval of contextual justification for wife beating than those who did not know a victim of violence by their husband. One possible explanation for this finding is that individual interaction with the victim developed understanding and empathy toward the survivor. A study among social work students in the USA found that previous experience with victims of violence against women associated with more positive attitudes and beliefs about victim of violence (Postmus et al., 2011).This implies that the education institution can promote the chances for students to interact with victims or learn about their life experiences both through academic setting (i.e. field practice, research) and non-academic activities (e.g. training and education about the violence) in order to improve social work students' attitudes. By having more interaction with or about victim, student is expected to develop more understanding about the victim conditions and competencies to help them.

This study did not find gender as a significant factor in predicting students' attitudes. This finding is in contrast with other studies that found female individuals to report higher degree of non-justification than male students (i.e. Gharaibeh et al., 2012; Haj-Yahia & Shen, 2015). Nevertheless this finding is not fully surprising because some studies showed that gender is not a significant predictor or that females do not always report positive attitudes toward victim of violence. A study among the Indonesian general population in West Java Indonesia and American Chinese in the USA found gender as an insignificant factor in predicting people's contextual justification of violence against wives (Rusyidi, 2011; Yick, 2000). Other international studies also found lower contextual acceptance among male respondents (Uthman, Lawoko, & Camp; Moradi, 2009).

Some possibilities might explain the lack of association between gender and contextual acceptance of wife abuse in this study. First, policies to promote gender equalities (i.e. universal education, equality at work, anti-domestic violence law) in Indonesia may have similar degrees of impact on women and men's perspective about gender relations. Second, male participants in this study may give socially desirable responses to the interviewers. Unfortunately, social desirability is not assessed in this study. Third, being social work students, both males and female students are similarly influenced by the characteristics of social work education that promote caring, service for others—especially to heal human disadvantages and resist injustice. Therefore, both male and female students similarly report intolerance of wife beating.

Some limitations of the study shall be addressed in future research. This includes the lack of generalizability because the samples were selected non-randomly. The R-square found in this study is considered low in explaining the variance of students' contextual justification of wife beating. This means future research shall include other predictors that can associate with higher variance on predicted variables such as patriarchal beliefs, training or course on violence against women, and childhood violence experience.

CONCLUSIONS

This study is considered a pioneer in examining factors associated with Indonesian social work students' attitudes toward contextual justification of wife beating. Some findings from this study are consistent with other international studies that targeted college students or the general population, thus making the evidence more robust. However, this study has also added more evidence toward the existing body of knowledge, especially from understudied variables like religion, religiosity, knowledge about victim and university's location.

The findings from the study highlights a pressing necessity for Indonesian social work education institutions to improve students' knowledge regarding violence against women. Intolerant attitudes toward wife beating shall be promoted and strengthened both through academic and non-academic activities. The Social Work Education Association is also responsible for ensuring that the teaching and learning contents concerning gender justice, human rights and professional ethics are delivered and evaluated according to set standards. Advocacy to help universities in Eastern regions will be an option to promote the capacity of educational institutions there to access needed resources to support the educational process.

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