ORIGINAL ARTICLE

"Private Dispute or Public Responsibility?" - Newspaper Framing of Domestic Violence in Four Chinese Regions

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Abstract

Purpose This study investigates the media representation of domestic violence within four Chinese regions (mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) by analyzing 58,162 newspaper articles over 21 years (2000–2020). The main research question was to explore the differences in domestic violence coverage framing among these regions.

Methods Correspondence analysis and co-occurrence network analysis were employed using the K.H. Coder software for text analysis, providing a comprehensive comparison across regions.

Results Mainland China's press adopts an individual framework, portraying domestic violence as a "private" matter related to family disputes. Hong Kong and Macao primarily utilize an institutional framework, attributing responsibility to local governments. Taiwan combines cultural/structural and integrational frameworks, emphasizing community protection and sexual abuse prevention.

Conclusions Significant variations in frames exist across the four Chinese regions. Understanding these differences can foster coordinated efforts to support survivors and raise public awareness effectively. This research contributes to comprehending domestic violence discourse and its portrayal in diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords Domestic violence · Media · Framing · Chinese regions

In late January 2022, a viral live-stream video on Douyin showed an internet celebrity visiting a mother of eight children in the village of Xuzhou in Jiangsu Province, China. She was held captive and bound by a chain around her neck. This incident sparked a discussion about the long-term abusive situation women face in rural areas of China, indicating the acceptability of such abuse in some communities (Xuzhou mother: Video of chained woman in hut outrages China internet, 2022; China probes husband of chained mother of eight after outcry, 2022).

Almost one year before the "chained woman" incident, a former Chinese journalist named Ma Jinyu posted on her Weibo account in February 2021, claiming that she had been a victim of domestic violence and infidelity for over ten years. Her disclosure reignited a debate about domestic violence victims enduring long-term abuse without seeking help. After her online exposure, the local government intervened in her case (Zhang, 2021).

The incidents highlight two different but related issues of domestic violence in China. While the former sheds light on the abusive situation faced by women in rural areas (Zhang, 2022), the latter shows that well-educated working professionals are also victims of domestic violence and may choose not to report it for an extended period.

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Domestic violence, which is used interchangeably with intimate partner violence, represents a significant social problem affecting individuals, families, and communities globally. It is a form of gender-based violence that is characterized by physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or neglect (World Health Organization, 2005). Domestic violence has severe physical and psychological consequences for victims, including physical injuries, depression, anxiety, and death. Scholars from Western nations, particularly the United States, have been studying domestic violence since the 1970s (Berns, 2004), and it has become a salient theme within fields such as public health, psychology, law, gender studies, communication, and other related disciplines. However, despite increased attention from scholars, policymakers, and the public, domestic violence remains an ongoing social issue that necessitates continuous research and intervention efforts.

In China, domestic violence has traditionally been considered a private issue and taboo. The concept of domestic violence was first introduced as violence occurring only within family settings in official government documents in 1995 (Zhao, 2000) but there were relatively rare studies on domestic violence in China in the early 1990s and early 2000, and most of these studies were case studies from a criminal perspective. These earliest studies found that domestic violence homicides caused significant harm to society, resulting in broken families (Guo, 1993), and Chinese survivors rarely seek help from domestic violence shelters (Jiang & Lambert, 2009).

In response to domestic violence awareness, China enacted the Anti-Domestic Violence Law at the end of 2015, effective from March 1, 2016 (The People's Republic of China, 2015), extending protections to non-married and same-sex couples and criminalizing domestic violence. Research by Qi et al. (2020) reported that about 25% of Chinese families encountered domestic violence in 2011, with 13.8% of married women facing mental and physical abuse. More recent data from 2021 by the All-China Women's Federation shows a reduction in such violence, with the rate of women experiencing abuse from spouses dropping to 8.6%, a 5.2% decrease over ten years (Primary data from the fourth survey on the social status of women in China. [Disiqi Zhongguo funv shehui diwei diaocha zhuyao shuju qingkuang]. 2022). Despite this progress, severe instances of wife abuse persist.

Traditional gender roles and patriarchal values were suggested as the critical factors contributing to domestic violence in Chinese culture (Xu et al., 2001; Yick & Agbayani-Siewert, 1997). The long-term influence of traditional cultural values emphasizing "saving face" (Lau & Chan, 2008) and family stability (Su et al., 2022) in China has contributed to the tolerance and acquiescence of domestic violence. In addition to abusers, survivors, and witnesses, law enforcement in China often dismisses domestic violence as "family affairs," preventing victims from seeking help (Zhao et al., 2018). Moreover, even though domestic violence is a significant issue in China, research on the topic is still relatively limited compared to Western contexts. Empirical research measuring the correlates and risk factors of domestic violence remains sparse (Zhang & Zhao, 2018). Although research into domestic violence media coverage in China exists, specific studies focusing on newspaper coverage remain limited. This oversight is significant, as newspapers, both traditional and digital, profoundly impact public opinion and policy formation in the country.

While mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao all are part of the broader Chinese civilization and share foundational Confucian values emphasizing order, forebearance, benevolence, and restraint, their distinct political histories have led to divergent socio-political trajectories. Mainland China remained under continuous Chinese governance, while the other three regions experienced varying degrees of Western colonial influence. Macao was settled by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and gradually came under Portuguese colonial rule by the late nineteenth century, exposing the region to Portuguese and broader European cultural norms. Hong Kong was colonized by the British following the Opium Wars, leading to a stronger Anglo-Western influence on its development. Taiwan fell under Japanese colonial rule in the late nineteenth century, before later becoming a separate territory from the mainland, adopting some Japanese cultural and institutional elements. These historic events and political developments have shaped unique media landscapes, domestic violence legislation, and societal norms around community involvement in domestic violence cases in each region, setting them apart from one another despite their shared Chinese cultural heritage. Examining these four neighboring regions can therefore provide an illuminating reference network for comparative analysis on the complex interplay between cultural tradition and varying degrees of colonial influence in shaping news framing of, and societal responses to, domestic violence. Taking the earliest systemic anti-domestic violence law as an example, mainland China promulgated it in 2015 (The People's Republic of China, 2015), Taiwan in 1998 (Ministry of Justice, R.O.C. (Taiwan), 1998), Hong Kong in 1986 (Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 1986), and Macao in 2016 (Government of Macau Special Administrative Region, 2016). Then, regarding news coverage and bias, do the four regions also show significant differences?

This study will analyze the media framing of domestic violence in Chinese newspapers across four

regions—mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao—over the past twenty years. Despite shared cultural and linguistic ties, differences in political and socioeconomic contexts among these regions may influence how domestic violence is reported and perceived. This comparative analysis aims to enhance understanding of how such factors shape media framing in culturally similar yet distinct societies. The research prioritizes newspaper analysis to deepen the existing literature on China's domestic violence coverage, seeking to reveal the prevalence and portrayal of domestic violence, propose effective interventions, and investigate the media's role in shaping societal attitudes.

Literature Review

To study media coverage of domestic violence, framing analysis is a prominent research tradition to harness. Since Goffman (1974) introduced framing as a concept for understanding how cultural factors influence people's perceptions, it has become an essential topic in sociology, psychology, and communication studies. Following Goffman, researchers like Tuchman (1978), Entman (1991, 1993), Pan & Kosicki (1993), and Cappella & Jamieson (1997) have investigated how media framing shapes and restricts understandings of reality. Entman (1993) described framing as highlighting certain aspects of reality, making them more prominent, while Iyengar (1996) noted that news coverage often uses episodic or thematic frames, influencing how problems are perceived and the solutions deemed necessary.

Studies on media framing and domestic violence began with a focus on the influence of social movements and media coverage in the United States in the 1970s, and wife beating was recognized as a social problem due to the Battered Women's Movement (Berns, 2004; Tierney, 1982). Other research acknowledged the role of social groups in addressing domestic violence (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Kozol, 1995). Rentschler (2015) analyzed how a feminist group in the 1990s sought to alter media portrayals of domestic violence, highlighting the continual conflict in how the issue is framed. Additionally, Storer and Rodriguez (2020) discussed recent research showing how online social activism may challenge existing narratives of gender-based violence.

Domestic and intimate partner violence research has broadened its scope over the years. Earlier studies on suggested that media coverage perpetuated patriarchal ideologies and stereotypes (Benedict, 1992; Meyers, 1994, 1997). Lamb (1991) argued that complex sentence structures and language in media articles tend to obscure the distribution of responsibility, with Lamb & Keon (1995) further showing that readers become more lenient towards perpetrators after

reading such articles. Several studies scrutinized the impact of the high-profile O. J. Simpson homicide case, highlighting that U.S. media often focus on specific issues, neglecting structural factors (Kozol, 1995; Bullock, 2007; and Maxwell et al., 2000).

Carlyle et al. (2008) illustrated that media representation can unintentionally perpetuate domestic violence as a private matter, thus undermining public commitment to addressing it. This observation is reinforced by Carlyle et al. (2014) who found that media portrayal shapes public attitudes toward victim support and involvement in preventative actions. Corroborating this, Banyard (2008) demonstrated the significant role of personal responsibility in encouraging supportive behaviors. Conversely, Berns (1999) criticized the media's victim-centric focus, arguing for a more comprehensive portrayal that includes abusers and broader social factors. This sentiment was echoed by Seely & Riffe (2021) who highlighted the scarcity of thorough thematic framing and victim narratives in news coverage. Even recent studies discovered media's portrayal can considerably influence public views and policy development (Nixon & Humphreys, 2010; Kelly & Payton, 2019).

Studies have investigated various aspects of media coverage framing, including racial and gender biases, victim-blaming narratives, and their impacts on public perception and policy. Research indicates that media framing can reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes, with incidents involving White male celebrities often downplayed or portrayed as mutual conflicts (Pepin, 2016), while coverage of spousal homicides among Ethiopian immigrants in Israel tends to reinforce negative stereotypes and shift responsibility from societal structures (Shoham, 2013). Taylor (2009) found explicit victim blaming in Florida newspapers, and Najjar (2020) observed sensationalism and victim blaming in Australian coverage of a murder-suicide. Sellers et al. (2014) noted that incidents involving female perpetrators are reported less frequently but depicted as more severe and often framed as acts of self-defense. Gillespie et al. (2013) and Richards et al. (2014) highlighted common issues in femicide reporting, such as an over-reliance on police sources and a lack of relationship context. Resimic (2016) argued that framing femicide explicitly as domestic violence in news coverage could enhance awareness and lead to better policy responses. Collectively, these studies advocate for a more balanced media portrayal of domestic violence to foster informed public engagement.

Among the few existing studies on domestic violence in China, Milwertz (2003) explored how political context, activist experience, and international exchange influenced activism against domestic violence in China. Bräuer (2016) examined the introduction of performance art domestic

violence advocacy into the tactical repertoire of Beijing's anti-domestic violence movement. Hernández (2018) offered a detailed analysis of how domestic violence and femicide were portrayed in English-language newspapers in Hong Kong in 2013. She found that the media typically presents these acts as isolated events rather than symptoms of wider societal problems, relying heavily on official sources such as the police. While some articles recognize the role of traditional Confucian values, there appears to be an ongoing conflict between traditional and modern views in media representations. This dichotomy may obscure the systemic nature of domestic violence, thereby obstructing progress toward holistic solutions.

In conclusion, research on media framing and social movements has deepened our understanding of domestic violence, influencing prevention and management policies. To combat violence against women, it is important to counter harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality, which underlines the need for responsible reporting. As this field progresses, critical examination of media representations is essential to gauge their impact on public perceptions and support for victims. Recognizing a lack of studies on media framing of domestic violence in Chinese regions, this research addresses this gap by examining portrayals across mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao.

Theoretical Approach

This study adopts Goffman's (1974) concept of frames as a foundation and is inspired by the comprehensive analysis of domestic violence framing conducted by Berns (1999) over three decades. Berns introduced the term "frame of responsibility" to characterize the assignment of responsibility in domestic violence cases. Her research demonstrated the four frames of responsibility for domestic violence. The "individual" frame of responsibility places responsibility on the individuals involved in the abusive relationship. The "institutional" frame of responsibility situates the causes and solutions for domestic violence within institutions such as the legal, medical, and religious spheres. The "cultural and structural" frame of responsibility emphasizes prevention by considering societal attitudes, sexism, media violence, poverty, and family structure as factors that contribute to an environment that may encourage or tolerate violence. The "integrational" frame of responsibility examines the interactions among individual, institutional, and cultural and structural factors.

The current study seeks to compare media representations of domestic violence over the past two decades by employing the four general frameworks proposed by Berns (1999). Based on these frames and observations of media reporting in four Chinese regions over time, we pose the following research questions:

RQ1: How has the media in the four Chinese regions (mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao) reported on domestic violence?

RQ2: Are there differences in placing the responsibility for the problem and solution of domestic violence in the media frames among the four Chinese regions?

This paper will further discuss the implications of these two research questions in the discussion part.

Methods

Databases, Search Terms, and Items Retrieved

This study uses newspaper as a source to analyze media coverage of domestic violence for two reasons: 1) With large data set spanning across two decades, this paper intends to establish a foundational profile of media coverage on domestic violence in each of the four Chinese regions. 2) Inspired by Berns' "frame of responsibility," this paper seeks to distinguish the varied clusters of words that demonstrate significant differences among the coverages of domestic violence in the four different regions.

For these reasons, we chose WiseSearch as our database. WiseSearch is the largest Chinese database of published information from Greater China, updating daily from over 12,000 content sources, including leading newspapers in Hong Kong and other top-tier newspapers and magazines from other Chinese-speaking regions (Northwestern University Library, 2023). In this study, we use the term "domestic violence" as our core search keywords, as they refer to jiating baoli (家庭暴力) or jiabao (家暴) across all four Chinese-speaking regions. The search yielded a total of 58,655 news stories, including direct coverage of domestic violence, commentary, anti-domestic violence domestic violence advocacy pieces, and other articles. All downloaded articles must contain at least one entire paragraph on domestic violence.

Table 1 Total Articles, Sentences, and Top 4 Domestic Violence-related Newspapers' Statements

	Articles	Statements	Statements (top 4)
Mainland China	28691	27398	4202
Hongkong	11156	11049	4361
Macau	4316	4277	3152
Taiwan	13999	12768	5269
Total	58162	55492	16984

Table 2 Media Sources and Examples of Statements on Domestic Violence (DV)

Region	Media	Article Number	Examples of Statements
Mainland China	Chinese Women's News (中國婦女報)	1772	"In fact, DV happens all the time, and the recent revelations in the press about the inhumane and outrageous 'chastity locks' illustrate how unequal the status of men and women is!" (2002, March 26)
	The National Edition of the Southern Metropolis Daily (南方都市報全國版)	1043	"She was very angry, so the couple often had serious arguments, which eventually turned into a DV incident in which Officer Lin punched and kicked Ms. Chen." (2002, March 5)
	he National Edition of the Yangcheng Evening News (羊城晚報全國版)	723	"Domestic violence kills children, such DV, in the young mind of an 11-year-old child, has been covered with shadows." (2006, October 26)
	Guangzhou Daily (廣州日報)	665	"Anyone with an eye can see that it was drugs and DV that ruined the musical genius and their marriage." (2006, November 3)
	Others (excluded)	23195	/
Hong Kong	Ming Pao (明報)	1252	"High unemployment rates have also brought social unrest, including drug abuse, alcoholism, DV and even hunger." (2009, February 23)
	Sing Tao Daily (星島日報)	1104	"In the past, parents had a different understanding of beating, but now there are studies and surveys that show that corporal punishment has a deep harm to children, such as leading to DV and spousal violence when they grow up." (2009, June 1)
	Oriental Daily News (東方日報)	1010	"Starting from the 2008/09 financial year, the Government will increase the expenditure on assisting victims of DV and families in need by $40 million to increase the number of places in women's shelters and enhance services such as the hotline of the Social Welfare Department" (2008, March 9)
	Wen Wei Po (文匯報)	1000	"Economic development should be followed by consideration of many social issues, such as wealth disparity, divorce, DV, etc." (2008, January 22)
	Others (excluded)	6683	/
Macau	Macau Daily (澳門日報)	1605	"SWD stressed that new services will still be available in the coming year, including social support for people with disabilities, transformation of residential care homes, DV, etc." (2004, November 27)
	Vakio Daily News (華僑日報)	806	"Focus on DV and the situation of poor families to protect abused women and children; assist women from poor single-parent families to improve their lives and the education of their children." (2004, August 19)
	Shimin Daily (市民日報)	426	"Since ancient times, human society has been experienced violence, but these highly secretive DV incidents are not discussed in the sunlight in the past. The reason for this is the influence of deep-rooted concepts such as "family shame must not be publicized", "it is difficult for a judge to settle family matters" and "couples fight in bed and make up in bed"." (2011, November 3)
	Hou Kong Daily (濠江日報)	315	"Following the first DV case solved by the judicial police after the domestic violence law came into effect, another man suspected of violence against his family in Macau was referred to the Public Prosecutor's Office by the police for assault yesterday." (2016, November 1)
	Others (excluded)	1125	/
Taiwan	Commons Daily (民眾日報)	2028	"Social workers from the Social Affairs Division of the Pingtung County Government have been serving at the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Center for nine years, assisting and caring for traumatized children, adolescents and their families to help them get out of the shadow of violence." (2009, April 7)
	China Times (中國時報)	1646	"How to mobilize mutual concern among neighbors to reduce the incidence of DV is the key more upstream." (2007, December 26)
	United Daily News (聯合報)	1000	"The Center for the Prevention of DV and Sexual Assault will hold an investigation meeting today, and if it is determined that there has been mistreatment, penalties will be imposed in accordance with the Children and Adolescents Act, and the names will be released." (2020, February 25)
	Liberty Times (自由時報)	595	"For example, if a disadvantaged family is involved in school-age children not attending school, low-income households applying for subsidies, DV, and social worker intervention, to solve the problem across bureaus often requires the vice mayor level to get everyone to sit down and talk, very inefficient. The seven systems are consolidated, then horizontally integrated, and finally back to the community, mobilizing community power." (2016, August 1)
	Others (excluded)	7499	/

Filtering, Screening, and Data Reconstruction Criteria

The initial research involved a broad collection of articles featuring domestic violence content. The subsequent phase involved filtering, screening, and reconstructing these articles to match the study's criteria, a process split into two levels:

First level: Irrelevant Content Removal - To streamline analysis and maintain focus, we extracted the first complete sentence containing domestic violence keywords from each article, known as the news lead. This strategy captures the core message and stance on domestic violence while minimizing irrelevant content. This method is effective as key discussions on domestic violence typically appear early in articles, though it

Table 3 The Keywords and Frames Emerged from Articles

Regions	Keywords	Frames Emerged from Articles	Four Responsibilities Frameworks
Mainland China	Proceed	Frame 1: family disputes and divorce proceedings	Individuals
	Court		
	Marriage		
	Husband		
	Divorce		
Hong Kong and Macau	Service	Frame 2: institutional service and welfare	Institutions
	Society		
	Social worker		
	Government		
	Welfare		
Taiwan	Community	Frame 3: community protection and citizen action	Cultural and structural factors and integrated analysis
	Activity		
	Safeguard		
	Protect		
	Center		
	Sexual abuse	Frame 4: Control of sexual abuse	
	The public		
	Control act		
	Aggression		
	Sex		

may overlook later content. The process helps exclude redundant material, enhancing clarity and relevance. Table 1 shows the count of articles downloaded and statements extracted, including those from the four most reported media (second level).

Second level: Media selection - To focus our analysis, we selected the top four newspaper sources from each of the four regions based on the volume of domestic violence coverage, as indicated by Table 1. This choice targets the most influential framing in each region. Table 2 details these mainstream media sources, the number of articles analyzed, and examples of domestic violence statements from these outlets.

Strategy, Method, and Tools for Analysis

This study utilized correspondence analysis and co-occurrence network analysis, facilitated by the K.H. Coder software, to conduct a large-scale text analysis (Diesner & Carley, 2005; Higuchi, 2016; Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010).

The multivariate statistical technique of correspondence analysis was employed to visualize and assess complex relationships within the categorical data from diverse media frames (Greenacre, 2017). Correspondence analysis helps in mapping the data in a low-dimensional space,

making it easier to observe patterns and relationships among variables. In this study, it illuminated connections between media frames and keywords related to domestic violence, providing a comprehensive comparison across four regions. This method allowed us to understand the trends in attributing responsibility in media reports on domestic violence.

Co-occurrence network analysis, as detailed by Newman (2010) and Osgood (1959), effectively illustrates the semantic structure of domestic violence coverage, mapping the relationships between frequently appearing words and phrases. This analysis employs Jaccard coefficients to evaluate the similarity between keyword sets, with higher coefficients signifying stronger connections (Jaccard, 1912). Additionally, it assesses the betweenness centrality of terms to determine their pivotal role in the network (Freeman, 1977).

The network plots (Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5) display keywords as nodes and their connections as edges based on co-occurrence frequency. Dashed lines segment the nodes into semantic blocks, grouping related keywords that frequently co-occur within similar contexts, thereby forming distinct discourse areas. Edge thickness represents the Jaccard coefficient, with thicker edges indicating stronger relationships. Node colors vary from yellow to blue, reflecting the degree of betweenness centrality, with darker shades marking more central nodes. These visualizations underscore the primary
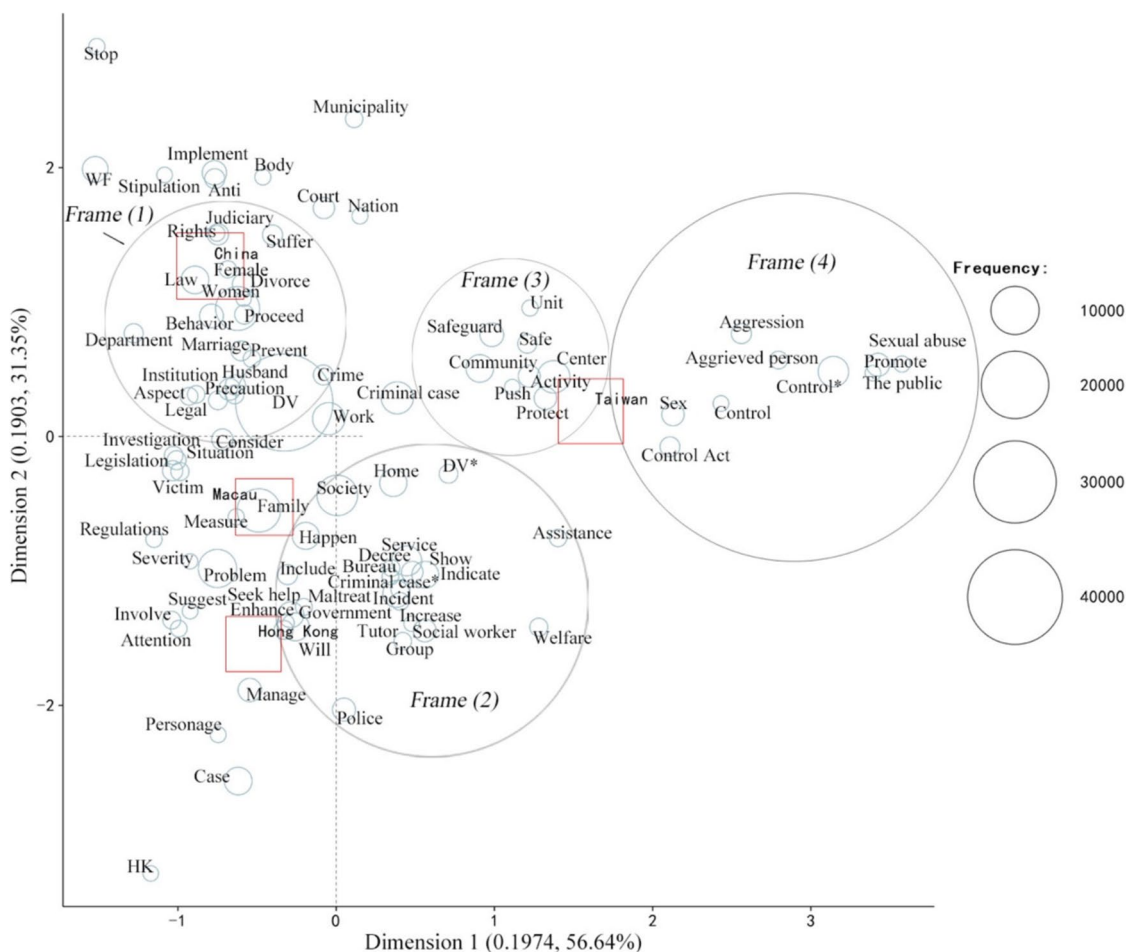
Fig. 1 Correspondence Analysis of DV coverage in four Chinese regions. *Note.* 1. The four large black circles represent the four frames, and their size does not indicate saliency. 2. The red rectangles represent the four regions. 3. The small blue circle represents the frequency of the word

themes and key terms in the discussion of domestic violence, clearly delineating different semantic areas.

In summary, using both correspondence analysis and co-occurrence network analysis provided a detailed, multifaceted exploration of the textual data, which was essential for addressing the research questions about how domestic violence is depicted and interpreted across various regions.

Results

The primary research question aimed to discern potential differences in the framing of domestic violence coverage across four Chinese regions. Table 3 illustrates the correspondence between the four frames and the high-frequency words identified in the four regions.

Correspondence Analysis

The results of the Correspondence Analysis, shown in Fig. 1, feature four regions and terms such as "case" and "crime" represented as squares and small blue circles, respectively. Circle sizes indicate the frequency of word occurrences, and square sizes reflect the text volume. Words common across all regions are near the origin (0, 0), while distinctive words are further away. This principle also applies to regions, with four large grey circles denoting distinct frames.

Correspondence Analysis in Fig. 1 reveals how domestic violence coverage differs across regions by examining the distance of nodes from the origin. Macao shows the least distinct coverage, close to the origin, while Mainland China and Taiwan are characterized by more distinct coverage due to their further distance. Macao and Hong Kong appear similar in their framing, as indicated by their proximity in the diagram.
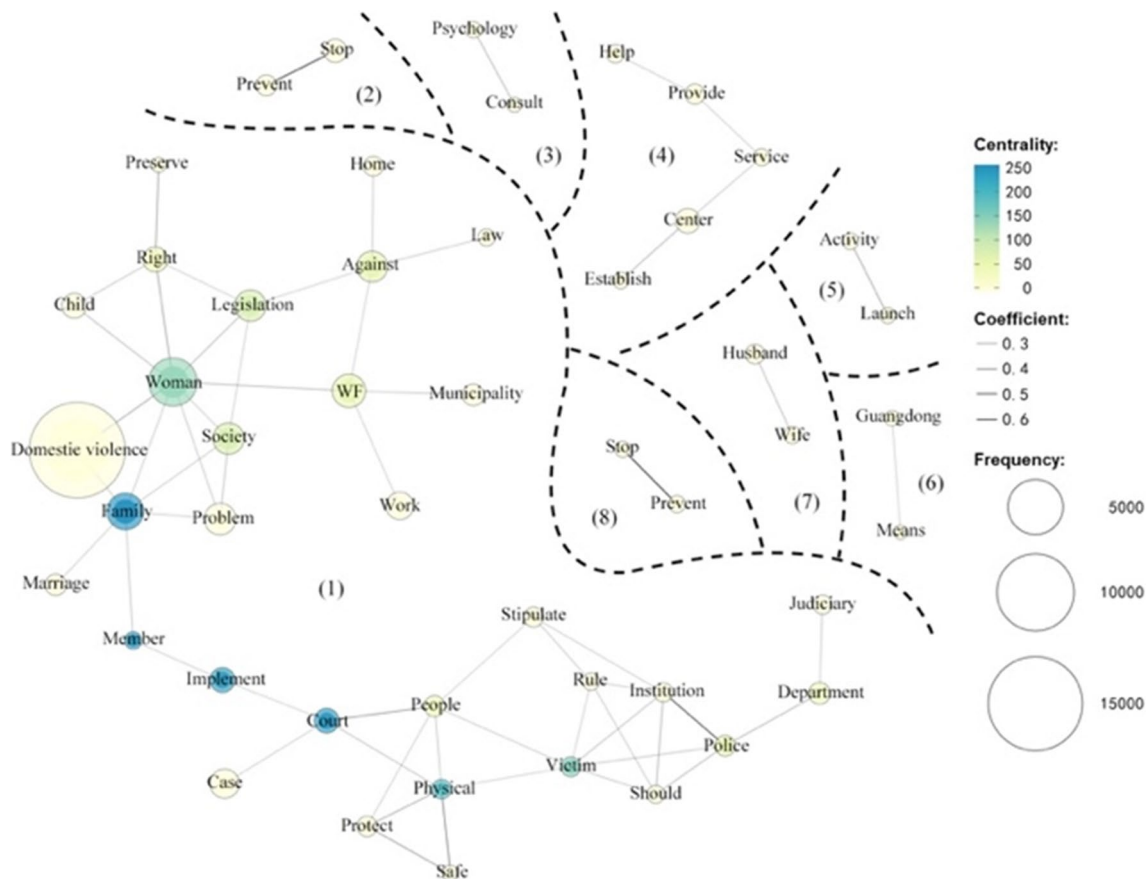
Fig. 2 Mainland China. Nodes:49 (118), Edges: 60 (6903), Density: 0.051, Min. Coef. 0.202

The analysis also identifies four distinct frames of domestic violence coverage, represented by large gray circles: (1) "Family disputes and divorce proceedings," focused on litigation related to domestic violence, with terms like "court," "marriage," and "divorce" (Table 3); (2) "Institutional service and welfare," highlighting support from governmental and social organizations, with terms like "service," "society," and "welfare"; (3) "Community protection and citizen action," emphasizing grassroots efforts in prevention, with terms like "community," "safeguard," and "center"; (4) "Sexual abuse control and prevention," addressing sexual violence, with terms like "sexual abuse," "aggression," and "sex."

The findings address RQ2 by showing significant variation in domestic violence coverage frameworks across four regions. Frame (1), associated with Mainland China, focuses on family and marital disputes. Frame (2), near Hong Kong and Macao, emphasizes government action and social support. Taiwan is prominent in Frame (3) with discussions on community support and citizen action, and in Frame (4) with a broader focus on sexual abuse. These frameworks align with the responsibility frames identified

by Berns (1999). A more detailed discussion was given in the theoretical approach section earlier.

Co-occurring Network Analysis

The Co-occurring Network Analysis in Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5 details the framing of domestic violence coverage across four Chinese regions, revealing significant differences. Taiwan showcases the most diverse semantic structure with 12 semantic blocks, compared to fewer in Mainland China (8), Hong Kong (7), and Macao (6), indicating richer discourse in Taiwan with smaller, more fragmented semantic blocks. Mainland China's coverage centers on terms like "family," "member," "implementation," and "court," highlighting a strong familial focus, whereas in Hong Kong and Macao, terms like "society" and "service" dominate, suggesting a shift towards societal and governmental responses to domestic violence. Taiwan's coverage, devoid of the "family" node, emphasizes community safeguards and social workers, aligning with broader social and public themes. This analysis complements Correspondence

Fig. 3 Hong Kong. Nodes: 50 (118), Edges: 60 (6897), Density: 0.049, Min. Coef. 0.172

Analysis, confirming regional variations in the framing of domestic violence coverage (Berns, 1999).

Discussion

This study utilized content analysis to examine media framing of domestic violence across four Chinese regions. Despite sharing a common cultural background, influenced by Confucian values that emphasize family harmony and social order, the findings reveal distinct approaches in handling domestic violence. Mainland China focuses on private disputes, contrasting with Taiwan's diverse emphasis on social and citizen involvement. Hong Kong and Macao highlight public intervention by government and social services. Mainland media often depict domestic violence as a legal or marital issue, potentially affecting survivors' reporting behavior due to traditional gender-role perspectives and the portrayal of domestic violence as a private matter. Conversely, media in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan treat it as a public issue, advocating for more robust governmental responsibility and social support.

Methodologically, the study employed Co-occurring Network Analysis alongside Correspondence Analysis to assess media frames' semantic structures and thematic clusters, illustrating distinct regional differences in framing domestic violence. Mainland China primarily attributes domestic violence to individual and familial factors, while Hong Kong and Macao focus on institutional responses, and Taiwan incorporates cultural/structural and integrational perspectives. These framing differences, emerging despite shared cultural values, suggest that varying political and social contexts within these regions lead to different strategies for addressing domestic violence. This insight is crucial for understanding and developing tailored intervention and prevention strategies specific to each region's unique social and political landscape.
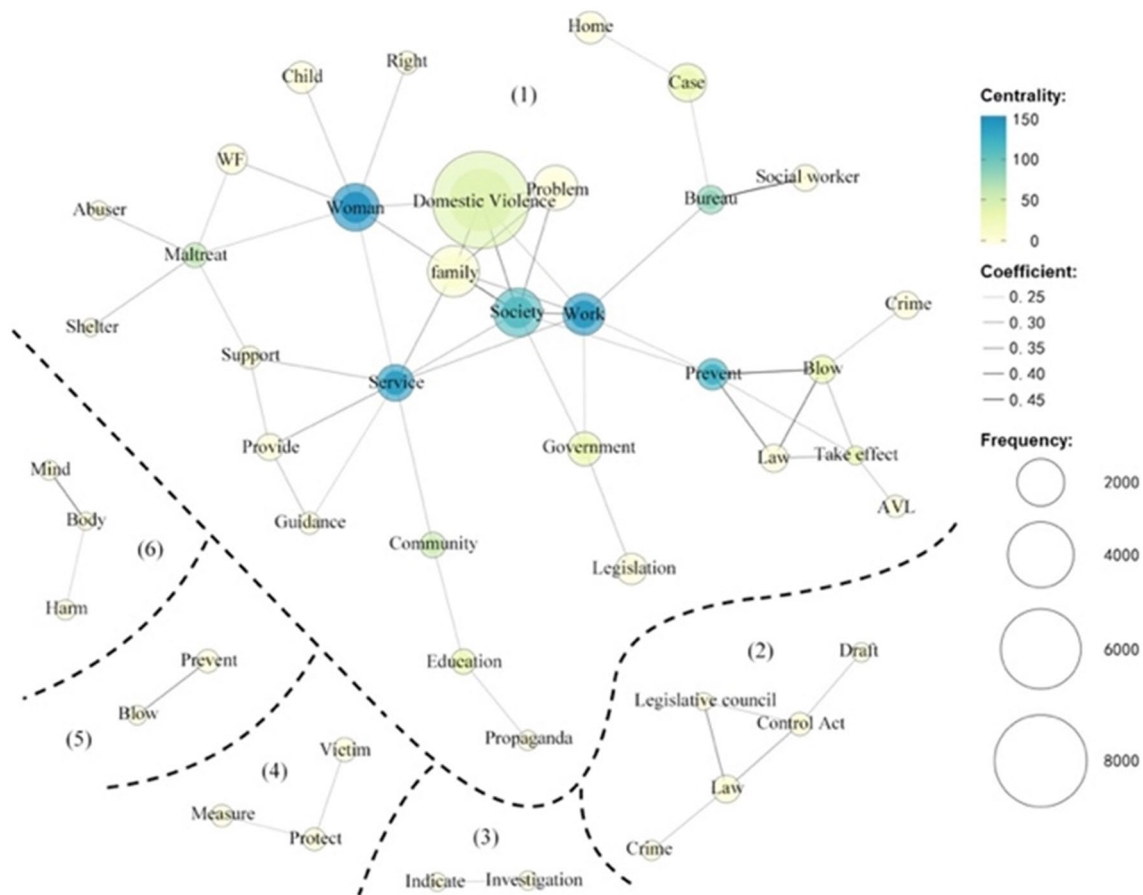
Fig. 4 Macau. Nodes: 46 (116), Edges: 60 (6670), Density: 0.058, Min. Coef. 0.238

Study Strengths and Limitations

This study is the first to compare media framing and constructive features of the domestic violence concept across Chinese regions. It provides a detailed analysis of the internal semantic diversity in different Chinese regions. The study's strength lies in its use of large text data sets and its combination of analytical methods. However, limitations include potential bias in media selection, reliance on secondary government data, and a lack of generalization to other regions. Additionally, the methodology of "first statement extraction" used in handling our large datasets efficiently might occasionally overlook contexts where details about domestic violence appear later in the articles, even though this approach was essential to manage the scope and scale of the data effectively.

Conclusion

This study reveals varying media frames of domestic, with media in Mainland China viewing it as a private issue, while media in Hong Kong and Macao emphasize institutional aspects. Media in Taiwan offers a more comprehensive perspective, incorporating cultural, structural, and integrational frames. These differences highlight the influence of media framing on public perceptions and underscore the necessity for tailored interventions and policies. Effective partnerships between domestic violence advocates, law enforcement, civil society, and media are crucial to reshape discussions on domestic violence into systemic terms, fostering a broader understanding and proactive measures.

Coalitions between journalists and domestic violence experts, as shown by Ryan et al. (2006), can significantly improve media practices and the reporting of domestic violence cases. In Mainland China, diversifying media narratives could involve publicizing formal best practices, such as distributing handbooks on domestic violence reporting and introducing awards for media excellence, supported by professional journalism associations. These efforts would enhance reporting quality and boost public awareness and comprehension. Future research should explore longitudinal studies to better understand how shifts in media framing can affect public attitudes and actions towards domestic violence, assessing long-term

Fig. 5 Taiwan. Nodes: 53 (122), Edges: 60 (7352), Density: 0.044, Min. Coef. 0.181. *Note.* 1. The thickness of the edges reflects the level of its Jaccard coefficient. 2. The color, from yellow to blue, reflects their ascending degree of betweenness centrality. 3. The size of the circles reflects each word's (node) frequency

impacts of enhanced media practices on reducing harm and improving societal responses.

Authors' Contributions **Lam, Agnes Iok Fong**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing—Original Draft, Writing- Reviewing and Editing, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition. **Zhao, George Zhilong**: Methodology, Writing—Original Draft, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Li, Ying**: Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Luo, Le**: Writing- Reviewing and Editing**. Li Hao:** Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Hall, James Brian**: Conceptualization, Writing- Reviewing and Editing, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

Data Availability Data from this study is available from the first author.

Declarations

Ethical Approval Not Applicable.

Competing Interests The Authors declare no competing interests.

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