



# Predisposing Factors Connected with Willingness to Intervene in Cases of Intimate Partner Violence: A Study in the Chinese, Italian, and Ethiopian Context

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## Abstract

The focus of this study is bystanders' behavior and their willingness to intervene in cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) in three different countries (China, Italy, and Ethiopia), considering individual and social factors (i.e., right-wing Authoritarianism, masculinity ideology, and gender). The Italian sample was made up of 192 participants (56% male). The Chinese sample was made up of 274 participants (66% female). The Ethiopian sample was made up of 161 participants (53.3% female). Participants completed the Male Role Norms Inventory–Short Form, the Right-wing Authoritarianism Scale, and the Willingness to intervene in cases of IPVAV. The Chinese model suggested how masculinity ideology is negatively associated with “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor, and positively with “not my business” factor. Right-wing authoritarianism is positively associated with “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor. The Italian model suggested how masculinity ideology was positively related to the “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor, and gender was negatively related to “not my business” factor, and positively related to “personal involvement” factor. The Ethiopian model suggested how masculinity ideology is positively associated with “personal involvement in the case” factor and gender is positively associated with the “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor. Masculine ideologies, authoritarian personality characteristics, and gender are predisposing factors toward bystander attitudes when confronted with cases of intimate partner violence. Our findings highlight key areas of focus to help raise awareness related to IPV cases, and policy aimed at promoting prosocial society.

**Keywords** Right-wing Authoritarianism · Masculinity Ideology · Gender · cross-cultural

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## Introduction

The literature highlights how intimate partner violence (IPV) is a heterogeneous phenomenon across countries (Krahé et al., 2005; WHO 2013). IPV is a form of domestic violence that affects couples or former couples. This type of violence can take many forms, such as emotional, physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological aggression (including both expressive aggression and coercive control tactics or financial abuse) against a current or former romantic or dating partner (WHO, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) compiled evidence on the lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual IPV. IPV presents itself as a cycle of abusive behavior, with periods of escalating tension, episodes of violence, and phases of reconciliation (WHO, 2021). Intimate partner violence (IPV) exhibits distinct characteristics across different cultural contexts. However, a limitation of the extant literature is the lack of diversity in this research. Most research in IPV has been performed in samples from North American and Western European countries, with a paucity of research performed in non-Western samples, leading to a lack of knowledge regarding how specific factors may vary in promoting/reducing IPV across countries. Exploring the phenomenon in countries with different cultural backgrounds is essential to structure appropriate and effective preventive interventions.

In Italy, research indicates that IPV is often rooted in deeply ingrained gender norms and patriarchal ideologies (Donovan et al., 2020). The literature found that factors such as traditional gender roles and societal expectations contribute to the perpetuation of IPV in Italy (Belmonte & Negri, 2021). In China, its collectivist culture has been identified as a significant factor influencing IPV dynamics. Hu and colleagues (2018) highlighted the prevalence of family harmony values, which often prioritize maintaining societal order over individual well-being. This cultural context can create barriers for victims of IPV in seeking help and support. Ethiopia, on the other hand, presents a unique context due to its cultural diversity and traditional gender roles. Moreover, gender inequality and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, contribute to a higher risk of IPV in Ethiopian relationships. Additionally, social norms surrounding marriage and divorce can deter victims from reporting IPV due to fear of social stigma and economic repercussions (e.g., Dirirsa et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it is notable that, in Ethiopian, Italian, and Chinese contexts, bystanders often fail to assist the victim or put an end to the violence. The literature also points out that IPV bystanders have the option of being 'passive' or 'inactive', meaning that they can choose not to get involved, ignore the situation and/or keep quiet and do nothing, support the offender and/or blame the victim, or 'active', meaning to engage and intervene to help the victim by providing different forms of informal support (e.g., offering assistance, helping them to make decisions, talking to them, helping or accompanying them to access support services, or helping them to report the case to the police) and/or stopping the violence (e.g., taking personal action, confronting the offender, requesting legal intervention or reporting the case to the police; Cf. Pagliaro et al., 2020), preventing future IPV episodes.

The role of bystanders in IPV is an important but often overlooked aspect of the issue. Bystanders, which include neighbours, friends, and family members, can play a key role in either perpetuating or interrupting the cycle of abuse. Research shows

that bystanders who witness domestic violence often struggle with ethical dilemmas, fear of retaliation, or a reluctance to get involved. However, their intervention can make a significant difference in preventing further harm to victims. Several studies (e.g., McMahon & Dick, 2011; Griffin & Worthington, 2023) explored the perspectives of bystanders in domestic violence situations. The findings revealed that many bystanders felt uncertain about how to respond appropriately or feared making the situation worse. This hesitation and lack of awareness often led to inaction. Similarly, other studies found that those who witnessed domestic violence tended to underestimate the severity of the abuse and minimize its impact on the victim (e.g., Ermer et al., 2021). Kulkarni et al. (2012) highlighted that bystanders tend to justify, minimize, or ignore domestic violence, often attributing it to factors such as stress or the aggressor's lack of control. Nevertheless, several studies emphasize the importance of bystander intervention. For instance, a study conducted by Coker et al. (2017), in USA, found that when bystanders took proactive steps to intervene, such as offering support and resources, victims felt more empowered to leave the abusive relationship. Additionally, their intervention reduced the likelihood of future violence.

To encourage bystander intervention, it is crucial to raise awareness about the signs of domestic violence, educate the public on the available resources, and emphasize the importance of speaking up. Collaborative efforts between communities, law enforcement, and social service agencies can provide bystanders with the knowledge and support needed to take action effectively. Bystanders in IPV situations have a pivotal role to play in preventing further harm to victims. Although there are challenges and barriers that may hinder their intervention, research suggests that proactive bystander intervention can make a significant impact. It is crucial to increase public awareness and provide necessary support to empower bystanders to act against domestic violence.

There are several psychosocial and socio-demographic factors associated with the willingness to intervene in episodes of sexual violence, sexual assault, and partner violence. Research has shown that individuals with higher levels of empathy and a sense of responsibility towards others are more likely to intervene when witnessing such acts (Mainwaring et al., 2023). Socio-demographic factors also play a role in the willingness to intervene. Gender has been consistently found to relate to intervention behavior, with women generally more likely to intervene in instances of sexual violence and partner violence (Bennett et al., 2014). It is important to note that these factors are not deterministic, and there are individual differences within each group. Additionally, these factors should also be examined within specific cultural contexts, as attitudes towards gender roles may vary across different societies combined with traditional values and a hierarchical social structure (Roberts et al., 2011). Indeed, few studies have investigated the role of some personal variables that may be implicated in the response from bystanders to IPV, such as right-wing authoritarianism, masculinity ideology, and gender, in different socio-cultural contexts.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) is a personality factor that includes three components as defined by Altemeyer (1996), including submissiveness to authority figures, endorsing conventional thought, and a tendency to aggress in ways that are acceptable to authority figures. RWA reinforces the belief that power, and control are legitimate methods of maintaining order and authority. RWA sometime trickles down

into personal relationships, leading to the normalization and acceptance of IPV. In other words, RWA is conducive to the promotion of male dominance and the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes, which further contribute to the prevalence of intimate partner violence. Strict adherence to traditional views such as gender roles and upholding conventional values are related to negative attitudes toward and victim blaming of IPV victims (Valor-Segura et al., 2011; Riley & Yamawaki, 2018). RWA is predictive of punitive attitudes toward female victims of violence (Hockett et al., 2009). It is, consequently, worth considering as a risk factor of victim blaming and less supportive attitudes toward IPV victims. Research has consistently shown that individuals high in RWA are more likely to engage in victim-blaming attitudes, particularly when it comes to domestic violence. They perceive the victims as somehow responsible for the abuse inflicted upon them, often attributing it to their behavior or personal characteristics. Several studies have substantiated the link between RWA and victim-blaming tendencies (e.g., Spaccatini et al., 2019). Specifically, people with high levels on RWA scale were more inclined to blame the victims and attribute the violence to their actions or choices. In other words, RWA plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards partner violence and may perpetuate victim-blaming narratives.

Furthermore, masculinity ideology is predominant in Western societies (e.g., Italy), and supports the power of men over women by proposing the idea that boys and men should be dominant, heterosexual, physically strong and should avoid feminine behaviors and attitudes (Borgogna & McDermott, 2022). Masculinity ideology in China has been heavily influenced by Confucian values, which uphold the ideal of the noble gentleman (*junzi*). This patriarchal ideology places an emphasis on hierarchical social relationships and the virtues of filial piety, loyalty, and honor. Scholars such as Louie (2002) and Harrell (2001) discuss how this ideology promotes traditional gender roles, where men are expected to fulfill their responsibilities as breadwinners, protectors, and leaders within the family and society. In Ethiopia, traditional masculinity ideology is deeply rooted in age-old cultural practices and beliefs. The concept of “machismo” or hegemonic masculinity prevails, where men are expected to display dominance, physical strength, and sexual prowess. The literature also shed light on how this ideology perpetuates gender inequalities by limiting opportunities and roles for women, while also creating pressure on men to conform to rigid and sometimes harmful notions of manhood (Leddy et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the literature underlines how masculinity ideology is a risk factor connected with increasing sexual abuse risk and IPV (Santana et al., 2006), and negative attitudes and beliefs toward IPV (Willie et al., 2018; Gerdes et al., 2018; Gage & Lease, 2021). However, few studies have investigated thus far the relationship between masculinity ideology and willingness to intervene in IPV cases. Specifically, these studies have not explored the link between ideology and defense attitudes in cases of IPV, i.e., considering the bystanders perspectives in different socio-cultural contexts (Willis & Marcantonio, 2021).

Gender is another key factor in predicting negative attitudes towards victims of IPV (Alfredsson et al., 2016). The literature has shown mixed results (e.g., Nabors & Jasinski, 2009), but concurring that men are more likely than women to blame victims of dating violence, rape, and IPV (McKinley et al., 2021). The literature sug-

gested how individuals tend to blame female victims of sexual assault more than male victims due to societal stereotypes and biases (Abrams et al., 2003). Moreover, victim-blaming is deeply rooted in patriarchal attitudes and contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequality (McKinley et al., 2021). Some researchers argue that this gender difference stems from adherence to traditional gender roles, which men tend to endorse more than women (Flood & Pease, 2006). The exact underlying reason for this difference needs further investigation, but gender consistently emerges as a significant predictor of negative attitudes towards IPV victims (Reidy et al., 2014; Yamawaki et al., 2009). Moreover, being male was significantly associated with less willingness to help the victim (Cinquegrana et al., 2017). In line of this, Banyard (2011) suggested that being male is often associated with a lower likelihood of intervention in IPV cases. This finding raises important questions about societal expectations and gender norms that discourage men from acting when they witness harmful behavior. Her work emphasizes the need to challenge these stereotypes and encourage men to actively engage in bystander intervention, as well as the importance of fostering empathy and a sense of responsibility to promote intervention among men.

## Method

Given the importance of the bystander approach in preventing and confronting any kind of IPV, the focus of this study is bystanders' willingness to intervene in cases of IPV in three different countries (China, Italy, and Ethiopia), considering possible individual and social risk factors (i.e., RWA, masculinity ideology, and gender). We chose these three countries because they are examples of different cultural contexts, Italy as a typical European individualistic society, Ethiopia as an African collectivistic society, and China as an Asiatic collectivistic society. In this work, when we refer to IPV, we specifically focus on violence committed by men towards women, because it is also the most common one in the analyzed contexts (Willis & Marcantonio, 2021). The rationale is to explore what are the predisposing individual or/and social factors connected with the willingness to intervene in IPV cases across countries, because IPV cases are increasing in recent years in Ethiopia (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015), China (Wang et al., 2017) and Italy (Petruccelli et al., 2017). Moreover, resistance to intervening in cases of IPV depends more on socio-cultural factors in these countries (Willis & Marcantonio, 2021). In this way, it is possible to help public policies in defining targeted prevention interventions.

## Participants and Procedure

The sample of the current study includes young adults and adults. The Italian sample is made up of 192 participants. The majority of participants (56%) self-identified as male. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 66 years ( $M=33.70$ ;  $SD=10.70$ ). The Chinese sample is made up of 274 participants. The majority of participants (66%) self-identified as female. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 75 years ( $M=27.70$ ;  $SD=10.10$ ). The Ethiopian sample is made up of 161 participants. The majority of participants (53.3%) self-identified as female. Participants' ages ranged

between 19 and 69 years ( $M=34.70$ ;  $SD=10.10$ ). Participants were recruited through an online survey via various social media platforms (e.g., emails, Facebook groups, blogs, etc.), and directly face-to-face in local associations and various places. In all cases the participants were informed about the objectives of the study. All questionnaires were administered in the language of the participants. The researchers conducted surveys in multiple countries, testing and validating them. They administered questionnaires, and all researchers were bilingual, their first language was the specific language of the country. Regardless, the survey was presented in various languages, allowing participants to choose the language in which they wished to fill it out. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were compliant with the ethical standards approved by the Helsinki Declaration of 1964 (and subsequent amendments) and with the ethical standards of research. The study was approved by the ethics' committee of the University of Chieti and Pescara. Data were collected between January 2019 and January 2023.

## Instruments

*The Male Role Norms Inventory–Short Form* (MRNI-SF; Levant et al., 2013) is a 21-item measure of traditional masculinity ideology norms. Responses to items are made on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). This questionnaire contains 7 subscales: restrictive emotionality, self-reliance through mechanical skills, negativity toward sexual minorities, avoidance of femininity, importance of sex, dominance, and toughness. However, according with previous study (Cinquegrana et al., 2017), we used the total score. The internal consistency of the scale was also good across all samples ( $\alpha$  range is 0.81 to 0.84).

*Right-wing Authoritarianism Scale* (Funke, 2005). It is a self-report scale composed by 12-item able to assess the dimensions of authoritarianism (i.e., conservative tendencies, proxies of political collocation). Participants responded to the items on a The Likert scale ranged from 1 (very negative) to 7 (very positive). The internal consistency of the overall scale was also good across all samples ( $\alpha$  range is 0.85 to 0.86).

*Willingness to intervene in cases of intimate partner violence against women* (WI-IPVAW; Gracia et al., 2018). The WI-IPVAW scale assesses an individual's pro-intervention attitudes in cases of IPVVAW. The 9-item version was used in this study, which presents different scenarios tackling three specific factors corresponding to three types of behavioral intentions: personal involvement in the case factor (1) (e.g., "If I heard a man shouting violently at his partner in the communal area of my building, I would intervene to stop the situation"); reporting the incident to the authorities factor (2) (e.g., "If I found out that a woman in my neighborhood was frequently beaten by her partner, but did not want to report it to the authorities, I would call the police"); and ignoring the situation/not my business factor (3) (e.g., "If a young couple was shouting and insulting each other in the street, I would ignore them"). Participants responded to the items on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = very unlikely, 6 = extremely likely). The internal consistency of the overall scale was also good across all samples and factor ( $\alpha$  range is 0.80 to 0.84).

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 1	China	3.20	0.64
	Italy	5.10	1.44
	Ethiopia	3.82	1.81
Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 2	China	3.90	0.70
	Italy	5.85	1.35
	Ethiopia	4.65	1.90
Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 3	China	3.01	0.70
	Italy	2.90	1.37
	Ethiopia	3.26	1.70
Masculinity ideology	China	2.72	0.60
	Italy	2.42	1.30
	Ethiopia	4.30	0.80
	China	4.04	0.33
Right-wing authoritarianism	Italy	2.70	0.98
	Ethiopia	5.20	0.80

**Table 2** Spearman’s rank order correlations among the key variables (China)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 1	1						
2. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 2	0.36***	1					
3. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 3	-0.27***	-0.30***	1				
4. Masculinity ideology	-0.14*	-0.15**	0.27***	1			
5. Right-wing authoritarianism	0.02	0.12*	0.12*	0.27***	1		

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### Analysis Plan

Preliminarily, descriptive statistics analysis was conducted on the variables under study for the three countries. A Spearman Rho correlation analysis was conducted to test the nexus between the variables, for each country. Subsequently, three models, each relating to a country, were computed to verify whether, in each country, masculinity ideology and authoritarianism could influence the attitude to react to IPV (considering its three factors, i.e., “personal involvement in the case”, “reporting the incident to the authorities”, and “not my business”), also considering gender (coding 1: Male and 2: Female), and controlling for age of participants. Analyses were conducted with SPSS version 27.

### Results

The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1. Tables 2, 3 and 4 show the correlations between the variables for China, Italy, and Ethiopia respectively.

**Table 3** Spearman's rank order correlations among the key variables (Italy)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 1	1						
2. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 2	0.42***	1					
3. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 3	-0.51***	-0.26***	1				
4. Masculinity ideology	0.22**	-0.10	0.21**	1			
5. Right-wing authoritarianism	-0.15*	-0.13	-0.14**	0.60***	1		

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 4** Spearman's rank order correlations among the key variables (Ethiopia)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 1	1						
2. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 2	0.34***	1					
3. Willingness to intervene in cases of IPV factor 3	-0.10	-0.06	1				
4. Masculinity ideology	0.23**	0.10	0.07	1			
5. Right-wing authoritarianism	-0.05	0.08	-0.17**	0.10	1		

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Chinese Model

The multivariate testes suggested how masculinity ideology ( $F(3)=6.54, p < .001$ ) and right-wing authoritarianism ( $F(3)=3.39, p < .01$ ) were a significant predictor of the outcomes. Specifically, univariate tests suggest that masculinity ideology is negatively associated with “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor ( $\beta = -0.26, p < .01$ ) as well as positively to the “not my business” factor ( $\beta = 0.28, p < .001$ ). Moreover, right-wing authoritarianism is positively associated with “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor ( $\beta = 0.31, p < .01$ ).

## Italian Model

The multivariate testes suggested how masculinity ideology ( $F(3)=3.00, p < .05$ ) and gender ( $F(3)=4.50, p < .01$ ) were significantly associated with the outcomes. Specifically, univariate tests suggest that masculinity ideology was a significant negative related to the “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor ( $\beta = -0.043, p < .001$ ), and gender was negatively related to “not my business” factor ( $\beta = -0.60, p < .01$ ), and positively related to “personal involvement” factor ( $\beta = 0.80, p < .01$ ).

## Ethiopian Model

The multivariate testes suggested how masculinity ideology ( $F(3)=3.50, p < .05$ ), and gender ( $F(3)=3.61, p < .01$ ) were significantly associated with the outcomes. Specifically, univariate tests suggest that masculinity ideology is positively associated with “personal involvement in the case” factor ( $\beta = 0.54, p < .01$ ), and gender is positively associated with the “reporting the incident to the authorities” factor ( $\beta = 0.80, p < .001$ ).

Table 5. shows the summary of the three models.



**Table 5** Summary of the three models

	WI-IPVAW factor 1 “personal involvement”		WI-IPVAW factor 2 “reporting the incident to the authorities”		WI-IPVAW factor 3 “not my business”	
	<i>F</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>
<b>Model 1 (China)</b>						
Corrected Model	1.10	/	4.00**	/	4.70**	/
Intercept	42.02***	3.30 (0.50)	37.16***	3.20 (0.52)	11.71***	1.90 (0.53)
Gender (female)	0.10	-0.02 (0.11)	0.33	0.045 (0.10)	0.001	-0.002
Age	1.51	0.01 (0.01)	0.10	0.001	0.02	(0.08)
Masculinity ideology	4.00	-0.16 (0.08)	10.23***	(0.005)	11.10***	0.004
Right-wing authoritarianism	0.31	0.07 (0.11)	6.40**	-0.26 (0.081)	0.40	(0.005)
				0.31 (0.12)		0.28 (0.08)
						0.10 (0.12)
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	0.12		0.16		0.17	
<b>Model 2 (Italy)</b>						
Corrected Model	3.51**	/	5.10***	/	4.00**	/
Intercept	39.70***	4.55 (0.16)	114.10***	7.20(0.534)	21.30***	3.33 (0.72)
Gender (male)	9.70**	0.80 (0.23)	0.03	0.04 (0.23)	5.70**	-0.60
Age	0.21	0.002 (0.01)	0.20	0.002 (0.01)	0.04	(0.020)
Masculinity ideology	1.75	-0.22 (0.17)	7.70**	-0.43 (0.15)	2.70	-0.003
Right-wing authoritarianism	1.80	-0.23(0.17)	1.62	-0.20 (0.16)	0.20	(0.01)
						0.27 (0.16)
						0.07 (0.16)
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	0.15		0.16		0.10	
<b>Model 3 (Ethiopia)</b>						
Corrected Model	3.50**	/	4.81**	/	1.00	/
Intercept	4.12*	2.60 (1.26)	1.70	1.72(1.32)	8.90**	3.75 (1.25)
Gender (male)	0.35	0.18 (0.30)	10.70**	0.80 (0.31)	0.20	0.13 (0.30)
Age	1.30	0.01 (0.01)	8.30	0.04 (0.01)	0.60	0.05 (0.01)
Masculinity ideology	7.50**	0.54 (0.19)	0.02	-0.06 (0.20)	1.10	0.21 (0.19)
Right-wing authoritarianism	3.40	-0.36 (0.19)	0.70	0.01 (0.20)	2.85	-0.33 (0.20)
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	0.10		0.12		0.03	

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Discussion

The study highlights different scenarios for all the three contexts, in relation to gender, masculinity ideology, and right-wing authoritarianism (in different ways, and socio-cultural contexts) to the willingness to intervene in IPV cases. The results obtained, indeed, should be interpreted considering that China and Ethiopia are among the collectivist cultures with an interdependent self, since people do not feel distinct from the others and from the surrounding environment but feels part of it, while Italy is, conversely, culture with a matrix tending more towards individualism.

### The role of Gender

Being male can increase the likelihood of avoiding help in situations of intimate partner violence (IPV) among Italian participants. Consistent with previous research (Petrucci et al., 2017), this finding emphasizes how men are more prone to utilize moral disengagement mechanisms that enable them to distance themselves from

involvement, possibly assuming that another person should take action. Moreover, being female amplified the personal involvement in intervening IPV cases among Italian participants. Women are likely to empathize more with the situation because, in general, the victim tends to be a woman (Godfrey et al., 2020). Furthermore, being female amplifies the possibility of reporting IPV episodes to the police among Ethiopian participants. Ethiopian women may have less fear and feel more empathy towards victims of IPV, leading them to feel compelled to intervene by calling the police to ensure the protection of the victims (Gashaw et al., 2020). Gender does not have a significant impact on the implementation of action strategies in cases of IPV among the Chinese participants. Similarly, a study conducted by Zhang and colleagues (2022) explored the bystander intervention behaviors in cases of aggressive actions in China. The researchers found that both males and females exhibited similar levels of willingness to intervene and take action, dispelling the notion that gender plays a crucial role in determining the behavior of witnesses.

### **The role of Masculinity Ideology**

Unexpectedly, the masculinity ideology increases personal involvement in cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) among Ethiopian participants. Masculinity ideology often promotes beliefs and expectations regarding traditional gender roles, which may include norms such as being protective, strong, and assertive. In the context of intimate partner violence, these traditional gender norms may lead individuals who subscribe to masculinity ideology to feel a sense of duty or responsibility to intervene when witnessing such violence. Since masculinity ideology emphasizes attributes like courage, honor, and protection, individuals who adhere to this ideology may interpret bystander intervention as an opportunity to embody these masculine ideals. This desire to conform to perceived social expectations of masculinity may motivate them to become personally involved in intimate partner violence cases. Additionally, masculine socialization processes often discourage men from seeking help or showing vulnerability, leading to a stronger inclination to address situations independently. In intimate partner violence cases, this can result in increased personal involvement, as individuals may feel more compelled to intervene rather than seeking professional help or involving authorities. Furthermore, masculinity ideology may also be linked to a heightened sense of personal agency and empowerment. Individuals who adhere to masculinity ideology might perceive themselves as having a greater capacity to intervene and rectify the situation, bolstering their personal involvement in cases of intimate partner violence (cf. DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1993). However, amongst Italian participants, adherence to masculine ideologies diminishes the likelihood of reporting the incident to the authorities. A study conducted, among African American and Hispanic men, indeed already demonstrated that adherence to traditional masculinity ideology is correlated with more favorable attitudes towards violence against women and opposition to legislative measures to combat this form of violence (Vincent et al., 2016). It also reveals a link between adherence to traditional masculinity ideology and a lower willingness to report violence to authorities. A previous recent study conducted in USA (Willie et al., 2018) also showed how people with greater adherence to traditional masculinity ideology were less likely to consider IPV as a

serious problem and less likely to report it to authorities. It can be assumed that a negative attitude towards reporting violence to authorities is closely linked to traditional masculinity ideology (Seidler et al., 2016).

Instead, among Chinese participants, adherence to masculinity ideology decreases the likelihood of reporting incidents to the authorities, while simultaneously exacerbating disengagement towards violence by fostering indifference towards episodes of intimate partner violence (IPV). This ideology, in this particular situation, could potentially be seen as risky because it may contribute to a lack of commitment towards addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) comprehensively. This issue should be acknowledged as a collective concern for both the man and the woman involved, especially given the power dynamics that favor men over women (Borgogna & McDermott, 2022).

### **The role of right-wing Authoritarianism**

Right-wing authoritarianism increases the possibility to report the IPV to the authorities among Chinese participants and not among Italian and Ethiopian participants. Contrary to recent findings (e.g., Riley & Yamawaki, 2018), in this specific cultural context, this trait of obedience to authority could serve as a facilitating factor in reporting to authorities that can help IPV victims. The Chinese participants, displaying loyalty towards the rules and authorities, might perceive it as their entitlement to hold the authorities accountable in cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) rather than intervening personally. This view may stem from their belief in the propriety of a superior authoritarian figure addressing such situations. In line with this, indeed, Stenner (2005) argued that individuals with an authoritarian mindset are more likely to view the world in stark terms of good versus evil. They value conformity and order and are more inclined to trust and cooperate with authorities. Moreover, the literature underlined also how right-wing authoritarian individuals have a pronounced need for security and are more likely to perceive threats from various sources, including violence (Altemeyer, 1996).

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Although the study extends the literature, it should be considered considering its limitations, e.g., the sampling method (online and in-person recruitment), and the use of self-report questionnaires, which may have influenced the study participants in terms of social desirability. So, future studies could test whether the mode of recruitment may influence the patterns, using also different (e.g., interview) or mixed methods (D'Urso et al., 2022). Moreover, our findings are limited to people able to read and to understand the written form of questionnaires. Using interviews could include participants with no internet access and un-literate people. Building on the present findings, additional research is also needed that includes other potentially important individual variables (e.g., political orientation, religiosity) that may be configured as predisposing and/or protective factors for the willingness to intervene in IPV cases, also considering the peculiarities of different national contexts.

## Conclusion

The study highlights how awareness to intervene in cases of IPV may be the result of socio-cultural factors that in the three different contexts may direct attitudes differently (Spinelli et al., 2023), probably because cultural weight carries more weight than individual variables (e.g., Yoshihama, 2000). This underlines the need for more comparative cross-cultural studies to explore the phenomenon in different cultures, going beyond the limitation of focusing on one country at a time and to including countries where research is scant.

In applicative terms, therefore, the study suggests how necessary awareness programs are for young adults and adults to counter gender-based violence and the ideologies that may underlie this process. The first weapon to use and learn is reporting and then intervene in cases of IPV indeed. The bystanders of the phenomenon represent a protective factor for the victim if, however, they have a mindset ready to react. Therefore, public policies that implement an ideology based on gender equality are fundamental. Prevention could begin as early as in educational agencies, through restructuring related to gender perceptions and stereotypes associated with the specific ideologies of cultural contexts. Implementing ideological education could act as a proactive strategy to disassemble misguided beliefs and promote the adoption of prosocial behaviors among bystanders.

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**Data Availability** Data can be requested to the first or last author.

## Declarations

**Ethics Statement** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The study was also approved by University of Chieti and Pescara' ethical committee. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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