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Perception of family violence in the Chinese Community

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Family violence is a global problem, which exists in all communities. In the Chinese society, historically, family violence, wife beating or child beating has been culturally and institutionally legitimized. Family violence includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and financial abuse. To combat family violence in the Chinese community, we must first assess our community's perception and attitude toward family violence and plan programs based on the assessment. In the last two decades, researchers and advocates have collected data on family violence in the Asian Pacific Islanders (API) population; however, most data collected are congregated under the API population as opposed to separation by sub-ethnic groups. This congregated data collection method contributed to the scarcity of data on family violence in the Chinese community.

To assess the community's current perception & attitude on family violence, we conducted 588 self-administered questionnaires in Year 2003. The questionnaire was finalized base on feedbacks from focus groups. Out of all surveyed, 10.7% had experienced family violence and 6.6% did not know or were unsure if they had experienced family violence. Overwhelmingly, the study participants considered physically-based acts to be acts of family violence, whereas, only participants with self-reports of personal experiences of family violence considered emotionally-based acts, such as blaming, to be acts of family violence, which means 82.7% of the study participants did not consider emotionally-based acts, such as put-downs and name-calling, to be acts of violence. The study findings indicate a need to educate Chinese community that verbal abuse is a form of violence.