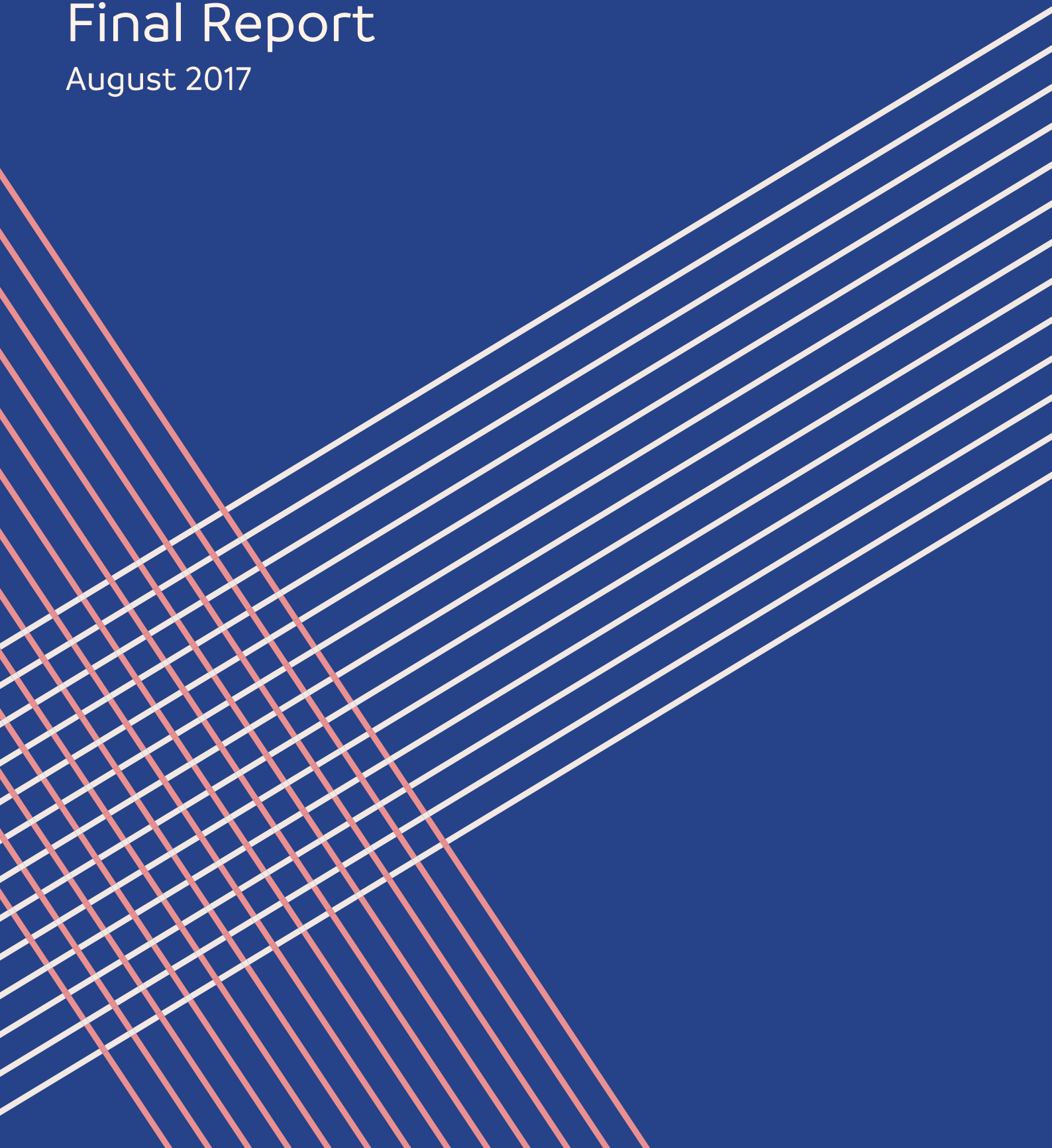


Knowledge and Perceptions towards Gender-Based Violence of Minority Girls in Hong Kong

Final Report

August 2017



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of Minority Girls in Hong Kong**

Final Report

香港少數族裔少女對於性別暴力知識與觀念研究報告

August 2017

Research Team

Principal Investigator: Prof. Raees Begum Baig
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Research Assistant: Ms. Janice Chan

Co-investigators: Dr. Chan Kam Wah
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Ms. Fok Yuen Hung
Caritas Institute of Higher Education

Prof. Wong Yu Cheung
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) has always been a prevailing problem among women, especially for minority women under transnational movement, due to the intertwining effect of a number of factors including culture, religion and migration status. However, the area of GBV on minority women is seriously under researched in Hong Kong. With the high risk of minority women experiencing GBV, it is important to explore the situation thoroughly in order to put forward effective interventions which specifically address minority women's GBV situation.

Among women of all ages, the group with the highest prevalence of GBV is known to be minority adolescents. The main reason that puts minority adolescents at heightened risk of GBV can be attributed to the higher rate of social interaction between the host society and their countries of ethnic origin, when compared with minorities from other age groups. The intense immersion in both cultural environments causes the adolescents to go through constant evaluation and re-evaluation of their value systems and practices. In light of the importance of transnational movement on adolescents, this study focuses on minority adolescent girls' perceptions and attitudes towards gender, GBV, and help-seeking.

This study employed the intersectional framework to explore the multidimensional influences on minority girls' gender and GBV perceptions and behaviour. Intersectionality framework, which looks through the lens of oppression and marginalization, and considers the intersection between race, class, and gender, has gained recognition in the study of GBV. The framework of this study focuses on the influence of six social locations including gender, race, culture, religion, migration status and education, on shaping gender and GBV perceptions of minority girls in a transnational social system.

Qualitative focused interviews were conducted on a total of 12 minority girls aged 14 to 18 from Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese ethnic backgrounds. Focused interviews were employed to uncover the tendency of the identified factors in influencing gender and GBV perception constructions, and also to gain greater understanding of the cognitions and reasoning on which the perceptions and attitudes are based. The interviews also sought to identify optimum methods and opportunities to educate minorities on gender-related issues, and best forms of interventions for GBV from minority girls' perspectives.

The findings of the study showed that transnational movement has a significant influence on the construction of minority girls' gender and GBV concepts and perceptions. Minority girls on one hand are handed down a certain level of traditional cultural practices and ideology, namely patriarchy and authoritarian values, but on the other hand they undergo a constant change process in which such values are held up against more progressive, gender-equitable perspectives. The findings also strongly break the general perception of "ethnic minority" as a confined, homogeneous identity. Minority girls demonstrate the diversity of individuals that exist within minority communities and such individuality cuts across culture, religion, age, education, and migration status.

In order to address the needs of minority girls (and women) in handling gender and GBV-related issues, this study further suggests formulating and revising policy directives to strengthen the capacity of minority girls to handle gender and GBV-related issues; create a safe and empowering environment for different forms of social integration, especially on understanding and protecting minority women from

GBV; and eliminate racial and gender prejudices and stereotypes so that the barriers caused by the confusion and misunderstanding of the public can be overcome when minority women seek help.

撮要

性別暴力在女性中是一個普遍問題，受著文化、宗教和移民狀況等效應纏繞在一起，擁有移民歷史的少數族裔女性在經驗性別暴力上比其他女性更處高危，但有關這方面的研究在香港卻嚴重不足，再加上針對少數族裔青少年的性別暴力事件普遍偏高。因此是次研究將會聚焦於探索少數族裔青少年對於性別、性別暴力和求助的觀念及態度。

多元交織性架構是一面透過種族、階級和性別的多元交錯關係透視壓迫和邊緣化的鏡子，它一直在有關性別暴力的研究中獲得認可。這次研究採用多元交織性架構探索少數族裔青少年對性別和性別暴力的觀念，聚焦探討在跨國相連的社會系統中，性別、種族、文化、宗教、移民狀況和教育等六項社會位置對塑造她們對性別和性別暴力觀念的影響。

是次研究以質性焦點訪談的方式進行，合共個別訪談了十二位年齡分別為十四至十八歲的巴基斯坦、印度和尼泊爾裔青少年進行個別訪談，透過受訪者闡述個人及社會經驗，探討不同因素如何影響她們建構對性別和性別暴力的理解，並嘗試找出在性別相關議題上對少數族裔合適的教育，以及少數族裔青少年面對性別暴力時有效的介入方法。研究結果可用作制訂更具文化敏銳度的政策、措施，甚至是實務指引，以期有效預防或處理針對少數族裔女性的性別暴力事件。

研究結果顯示，跨國遷移的經歷對建構性別和性別暴力的觀念發揮著重大的影響力，少數族裔青少年一方面被貫注充滿父權和專制價值的傳統思想和習俗，但另一方面，在傳統價值與新環境高舉的進步和性別平等觀點的抵觸下，使她們正經歷不斷變化的過程。而是次研究結果亦大力打破一般認為少數族裔作為一種有限制的同質性身份的普遍看法，少數族裔青少年展現了在少數族群內因著跨文化、宗教、年齡、教育和移民的各種多元的個人身份特性。

為了回應少數族裔青少年或婦女在處理性別和性別暴力的需要，是次研究亦進一步建議需制定及修訂政策指示以加強少數族裔青少年處理相關議題的能力、為不同的社會融合創造一個安全及充權的環境，特別是理解及保護少數族裔女性免於受到性別暴力的對待，以及消除種族和性別的偏見和定型，使少數族裔女性在尋求幫助時因公眾誤解而造成的障礙能得以被克服。

1. Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) has remained as one of the most prevailing social problems which causes serious long- and short-term damage to the victims. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines GBV as any form of violence that targets individuals and groups of individuals on the basis of their gender. It is widely accepted that GBV is a manifestation of gender inequality and serves to maintain unequal power between genders (Watts and Zimmerman, 2002). Such gender inequality has been continuously constructed and maintained by social norms, cultural traditions, patriarchal attitudes and ideology, gender stereotypes and discrimination towards girls and women; which subordinate women's social status and cause women to be more vulnerable towards GBV (Alam, Roy and Ahmed, 2010; Kohli and Malhotra, 2011).

GBV can occur throughout a woman's life, regardless of her age, class, race, religion, nationality and other characteristics. Under the intersection of factors, minority women are found to be at higher risk of experiencing GBV (The Women's Health Council, 2009; Gill, 2013). Minority and migrant women often possess limited knowledge on GBV and low initiation in help-seeking (The Women's Health Council, 2009; Tonsing, 2014; Leung and Rainlily, 2015). In 2013, the Social Welfare Department of the HKSAR recorded a total of 3836 complaints of domestic violence of which 180 (4.7%) pertained to victims of ethnic minority background.

Although currently there are different units in the Social Welfare Department which handle domestic violence cases, and hospitals and non-governmental social service organizations also provide different kinds of support for victims, including medical examination, counselling services, shelter, financial assistance and compassionate rehousing, group support services, and public prevention initiatives, the reporting of violence by ethnic minority victims has been extremely low. Not only is the help-seeking tendency low for minority women due to their cultural and religious traditions, as well as financial and immigration dependency on their husbands, services generally are unfavourable for minority women (Kapai, 2015). Frontline social workers and researchers have criticized the services for their lack of cultural sensitivity. Minority women, due to their limited language proficiency in both Chinese and English languages, have less understanding towards the services available (Association for Concern for Legal Rights of Victims of Domestic Violence, 2015). Police, in general, possess limited cultural sensitivity; and discriminatory treatment has been experienced by minority victims in police stations.

In light of the concerns from the frontline workers and deficiency on research targeting minority women's understanding towards gender and GBV, this study is significant in understanding and consolidating the situation of minority women in their perception and understanding towards gender and GBV. Most of the minorities with permanent residency in Hong Kong have originated from South Asia, but are living in Hong Kong under transnational ties with their home countries. It is important to fill the gap of research and services for the prohibition of violence against vulnerable women by having an imminent study on exploring the risk factors and gender and GBV understanding of South Asian women.

1.1 Defining “Gender-based violence” (GBV)

Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines “violence against women” as “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”.

Article 2 of the Declaration further elaborated that the violent acts are not limited to any physical, sexual and psychological violence in the family, but also those occur in the community, or perpetrated or condoned by the State. Acts of violence may include: spousal battery; sexual abuse, including of female children; dowry-related violence; rape, including marital rape; female genital mutilation/cutting and other practices harmful to women; non-spousal violence; sexual violence related to exploitation; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in school and elsewhere; trafficking in women; and forced prostitution.

However, although GBV has been well-defined internationally, not all societies have the same recognition towards GBV. Most often, understanding and recognizing GBV have been reinforced by social norms and values towards gender and the social power and position between men and women (Gracia-Moreno, 2002).

1.2 Background of minority women in Hong Kong

According to the Census and Statistics Department, there was a total of 580 000 ethnic minorities in Hong Kong in 2016. For Hong Kong policy formulation purpose, the term ‘ethnic minority’ in fact only refers minorities with Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese ethnic backgrounds, as they face most challenges in terms of economic and social integration in Hong Kong (HKSAR Legislative Council, 2006; Baig, 2012).

Women from these three ethnic backgrounds: Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese, are indeed very diverse in terms of their age and socioeconomic status. While in general the number of males exceed the number of females, there are more females than males for Pakistani and Nepalese in the age range 25-34. Sex ratio for ethnic Pakistani population stands out among the other two ethnic groups. The number of Pakistani males exceeds the number of females significantly for the age range 15-24 and 35-44; however there are fewer males than females for Indian and Nepalese in the age range 15-24. For education level, minority females tend to have lower education level than minority males, and the level of education for Pakistanis (majority primary and upper secondary) and Nepalese (majority upper secondary) is lower than Indians (majority post-secondary).

1.3 Attitude towards GBV across culture

A study conducted on South Asian (Pakistani, Indian and Nepalese) women who experienced domestic violence in Hong Kong found that although the understanding of the term ‘domestic violence’ may not be comprehensive, these women can identify behaviours exerted by the men as abusive (Tonsing, 2014). Rather than specifically using the word ‘domestic violence’, most of the interviewees spoke of behaviours ranging from physical violence to ‘put-down words, controlling finances, being ignored, and spousal infidelity, which resonate with emotional, psychological, and financial abuse ... interviewees described domestic violence using the term bad marriage’ (Tonsing, 2014, p.284).

Not only has the low level of understanding towards domestic violence been found to be consistent among South Asian women, the value of maintaining family honour is also a recurrent theme among these women. Tensing's research echoes Chawla's study in 2004, that Indian society has a high toleration towards domestic violence and the law enforcement officials do not intervene as they see abusive acts as normal in marriage and should be resolved at home (Chawla, 2004). Poudel (2011) also stressed that violence against women is a widespread problem in Nepal. Apart from cultural and social traditions on family hierarchical structure, the legal system and economic dependency have reinforced male dominance. A study conducted with 1,296 women from four major ethnicities in Nepal found that 46% of young married women aged between 15 and 24 have experienced sexual violence (Puri et al., 2011).

1.4 Intersectionality of GBV: gender, age, ethnicity, culture and religion

Scholars generally reject the notion that GBV is caused by a single factor, but rather, the complex continuum of violence constitutes of multiple forms of inequality, such as gender, race and class (Gill, 2013). Intersectionality suggests that minority women are more vulnerable to GBV as they are subjected to multiple forms of oppression, including race, gender, sex and class; and these oppressions are inter-related and mutually reinforced (Crenshaw, 1992; Collins, 2000).

Culture and religion are viewed as the strongest factors in determining a person's identity on sexuality, which is rather solid and unchangeable (Ahmadi, 2003). One of the most influential cultures and religion among minorities in developed societies is Islam. Rather than just a religion for worship, Muslims view Islamic principles as a way of living, and such principles are internalized in Muslims vividly. Islam decides how Muslims view sexuality, what is normal and desirable to them, and what acts are legitimate and acceptable. It is commonly believed that Islam is a male-dominated hierarchical culture. Traditional Muslim societal and family relationships are hierarchical and unequal, with men having the dominant role. However a significant number of migrant studies on Muslim women sexuality suggested that Islam is not a homogenous system of thought, rather there are many different stands. Islam has been influenced and shaped by different religions and cultures throughout the whole development (Ahmadi, 2003).

When migrants are caught in-between two cultures, acculturation may occur in which migrants modify their behaviour, culture, belief and values through borrowing and adapting to a dominant culture (The Women's Health Council, 2009). A study on female Iranian migrants in Sweden found that after being exposed to Swedish culture, Iranian women show a clear shift on their perceptions towards sexuality from more traditional, authoritarian and patriarchal sexual relationship to more egalitarian relationship (Ahmadi, 2003).

Studies also found that age is a strong determinant which intersects with cultural influence. When youths are put in a context of conflicting cultures, minority youths show more arbitrary position than adults on sexuality perceptions. A study in US found that migrant girls' school-based sex education enriched their information on sexuality and made them challenge the traditional way of learning sex-related knowledge from mothers, as they perceived mothers as less informative and not open to discuss sex issues (Orgocka, 2004). Yet, they also felt that the classes marginalized Muslim girls as they taught about premarital sex and prevention from sexually transmitted diseases which they perceived as

contrasting Islamic values. Another study conducted in the Netherlands shows similar results that Muslim youths view sex education classes as irrelevant since they may not be ready to discuss about sex openly in front of others due to Islamic value towards sexuality (Smerecnik et al., 2010). Yet they perceived traditional way of learning sexuality from Imam (religious leader) is no longer useful as they perceived Imams are not open to contradictory views.

1.5 Migration and minority status on GBV

Migration and minority status have put women under double vulnerability of GBV. Minority women often find themselves at greater risk not only due to being marginalised in the wider community, but under the strong patriarchal structure of their own community, they become minorities within the minority, which subjects them to constant threats from GBV.

Transnationalism is the most common form of migration. Transnationalism refers to the ties and interactions between people and institutions across the border of nation-states (Vertovec, 1999). Migrants under transnationalism very often do not cut ties with their home countries. Such cultural influence from their home countries lingers on and can influence migrants' perceptions towards gender differences and GBV. Yet, whether perceptual changes take place in the minority women largely depends on the space of social interaction with the majority society and the level of social inclusion for both minority men and women.

Social exclusion not only increases the prevalence of GBV on minority women, but also negatively influences the help-seeking behaviour and services available for minority women experiencing GBV. Acceptance of GBV against minority women has been reinforced by the state through the construction of multicultural policy. Wilson (2010) commented that multiculturalism had allowed the state to consolidate and strengthen South Asian patriarchy and the construction of South Asian women as victims. Dominant multicultural policy stresses the need for 'tolerance' toward the cultural practices of minority communities, but this, in fact, assumes that these communities are homogenous. There is a lack of understanding of how social identities are constructed within unequal power structures based on gender (Patel and Siddiqui, 2010). If the GBV experienced by minority women is simply perceived as a cultural difference, it could be seen as a phenomenon that should be tolerated. More than that, collective victimization suggests that minority women often being seen as simply 'backward' people following 'backward cultural traditions'. Such victim-blaming attitude has been held commonly by policymakers and practitioners (Thiara and Gill, 2010). Subsequently, effective interventions targeting GBV on minority women are lacking.

1.6 Research objectives

The above overseas studies primarily serve as references to understand how migration and South Asian religions and cultures impact gender perceptions and GBV. The above literature review demonstrates clearly the intertwining effect of migration and ethnicity on gender and GBV perceptions. Another important finding the literature demonstrates is that age is an important determinant on gender perception construction. Girls and young women have more capacity in constructing new forms of gender perceptions and have higher tendency to understand diversified gender perceptions. Owing to other individual characteristics, including educational experiences and social interaction, this study

proposes a framework that cuts across these determinants in exploring minority girls' gender and GBV perceptions.

Research objectives:

1. To explore minority girls' understanding towards gender and gender-based violence (GBV)
2. To understand how minority girls construct their gender role and gender stereotypes
3. To identify the specific factors that shape the perceptions of minority girls towards GBV
4. To generate key principles of good practices in handling GBV experienced by minority females

2. Research framework and methodology

Literature and frontline experiences have demonstrated that gender-based violence (GBV) has always been a prevailing problem among women, and that minority women with family migration history are at higher risk in experiencing GBV than other women due to the intertwining effect of a number of factors, including culture, religion and migration status. Furthermore, age is one of the prominent factors that determine women's vulnerability towards GBV. Young migrant women possess a more arbitrary position towards GBV due to their immersion in both dominant and minority cultures.

The area of GBV on ethnic minority women is seriously under researched in Hong Kong. However, with the high risk of minority women experiencing GBV, it is important to explore the situation more thoroughly. The above literature reviews indicates that adolescence is a critical time of idea formulation towards sexuality, and migrant adolescents experience a higher level of frustration towards sexuality due to the clash between majority and minority cultures. In light of the high rate of GBV towards adolescent girls, this study focuses on minority adolescent girls' perceptions towards gender, GBV, and help-seeking attitudes and behaviour. Such exploratory study not only leads to better understanding towards minority communities, but the findings can also be used for formulating more culturally sensitive policies ranging from preventive measures to remedial services on GBV.

With the objectives stated above, the research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the experiences and understandings of minority girls living in Hong Kong with regards to gender-based violence?
2. In what ways do the minority girls construct their ideas and concepts towards gender perceptions?
3. What are the existing interventions on GBV for minority girls and the tendency of minority girls in accessing them?
4. How can we develop effective intervention strategies which are accessible by the minority girls and applicable to the frontline professionals?

2.1 Research framework

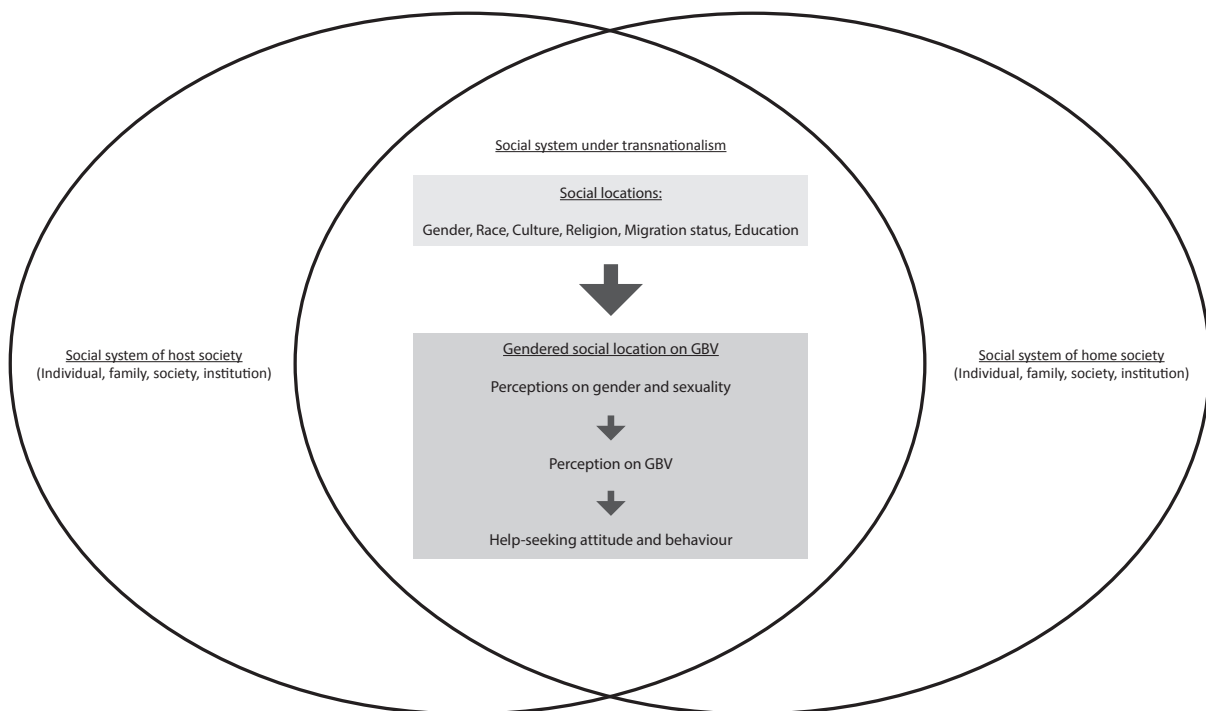
The framework of this study is used to identify the major variables that construct minority girls' perceptions and reflect the strength of these variables in the construction. Empirical studies reflected the importance of an array of factors that construct the women's perceptions on gender and GBV, including age, culture, race, religion and education. Additional variables such as migration status and transnationalism exert strong impact on migrant and minority women. Furthermore, studies on the intersectionality of these variables suggest that they are interconnected.

With power structure between genders as the root cause of GBV, intersectionality framework emphasizes women are under oppression due to socially constructed systems of domination (Purkayastha, 2010). The intersectionality framework was constructed with concern for particular forms of oppression faced by racialized women. It pinpoints the division amongst 'women' as a result of the process of racialization and class, and the disadvantages that follow. Focus on the triad elements of gender, race and class; the framework suggests that oppression of women is understood as a complex

form of disadvantage under gender structure. Rather than perceiving women as a collective with single identity (as there is no single, key form of oppression), the framework posits that social divisions interrelate in terms of the product of social relations and people’s lives which are ‘mutually constitutive’ in terms of experience and practice (Anthias, 2012).

Looking through the lens of oppression and marginalisation as constructed through the intersection between race, class, and gender, the intersectionality framework has gained recognition in the study of GBV (Gill, 2013). Sokoloff and Dupont comment that ‘intersections colour the meaning and nature of domestic violence, how it is experienced by the self and responded to the others, how personal and social consequences are represented and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained’ (2005, p.43). It is believed that the framework has much to offer in exploring women’s experiences of GBV; particularly the flexibility of the framework on social divisions allows the framework to be practical in different contexts, including the transnational context.

Focusing on the experiences of minority girls, the framework of this study is constructed to include the social systems of both the host and home societies in order to explore how these two systems interact to formulate the gender and GBV perceptions of the minority girls under transnationalism. The framework is illustrated as follow:



The framework focuses on the influence of six social locations in the transnational social system on shaping gender and GBV perceptions. Transnational social system denotes the intercept between the host and home social systems. Both home and host social systems have a certain degree of impact on the individual, yet the degree of influence of the two social systems varies across individuals.

The six social locations signal how minority girls position themselves in the power hierarchy of the society:

Gender – The power and autonomy of men and women.

Race – The self-identified racial background and the strength of identifying with it.

Culture – The preference and level of exercising the dominant/minority culture, barriers/obstacles in exercising both cultures, and the level of social integration.

Religion – The self-identified religious background and the perceived autonomy in exercising her religious practices

Migration status – Length of migration, and the connection with members in the home countries

Education – The forms of formal and informal channels of education particularly on the learning of gender and sexuality.

These six social locations are believed to exert influence on the formation of gender and GBV perceptions of minority girls. From the literature review we can understand that a person's perception towards GBV is indeed based on his/her gender identity and perception. Thus this study first explores the construction of the concept of gender for minority girls, which includes key concepts such as gender role, gender stereotyping, positioning of gender in the social systems, power relationship between genders. The exploration of gender perception facilitates the uncovering of perceptions towards GBV, which includes understanding/definition of GBV, the reasoning of GBV, and justifiability of GBV. This study also explores the help-seeking attitude, or the perceived reaction, of minority girls when encountering GBV, including their understanding towards existing services, and possible barriers in approaching these services.

2.2 Research methodology

Qualitative research methodology was used for this study. Focused interviews were employed to uncover the tendency of the identified risk factors in influencing gender and GBV perception constructions and cognitive aspects of the reasoning on the variables identified above, through the elaboration of their personal and social experiences. The interviews also sought to identify ways to educate minorities on gender-related issues, and best forms of interventions for GBV from minority girls' perspectives.

A total of 12 ethnic minority girls (4 Indian, 4 Nepalese, 4 Pakistani) aged between 14 and 18 years old participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews. Mean age 16.08 years. All of the Pakistani interviewees self-identified as Muslim; whilst 3 of the Nepalese identified themselves as Hindu and 1 non-religious; and the Indian interviewees consisted of 2 Muslim, 1 Sikh and 1 Catholic. A majority of the interviewees were born and raised in HK, except for 2 born in Pakistan and one born in Nepal. 11 of the interviewees had been living in HK for all, or most, of their lives. One interviewee (Pakistani) had lived in HK less than a year.

Each interview lasted for 1-1.5 hours. Consent has been sought from the interviewees, and upon communication with the parents when necessary. The interviews were conducted in English language. All interviews were audio recorded and were transcribed and coded for analysis.

Background of the interviewees:

Interviewee	Ethnicity	Age	Religion	Place of birth	No. years living in HK	Education level	Mother occupation	Father occupation
A	Nepalese	16	none (parents are Hindu)	HK	16	F5		
B	Pakistani	14	Muslim	HK	16	F5	Programme assistant	Unemployed
C	Indian	16	Muslim	HK	16	F4	Cook	Clerk
D	Pakistani	14	Muslim	HK	14	F2	Housewife	Chef
E	Indian	14	Muslim	HK	14	F3	Clerk	Clerk
F	Indian	18	Sikh	HK	18	University	Clerk	Accountant
G	Indian	17	Catholic	HK	17	F5	Secretary	Warehouse worker
H	Nepalese	17	Hindu	HK	17	F5	Business person	Bodyguard
I	Nepalese	17	Hindu	Nepal	10	F5	Hotel housekeeping	Construction worker
J	Pakistani	17	Muslim	Pakistan	9	F5	Housewife	Security Guard
K	Pakistani	17	Muslim	Pakistan	<1		Housewife	Banker
L	Nepalese	16	Hindu	HK	16	F5	Housewife	Construction worker

3. Research findings

Thematic analysis was carried out based on the research framework. Further categorizations were made to divide the themes into detailed sub-themes which demonstrate the critical factors that affect minority girls' perceptions on gender and gender-based violence (GBV).

Themes	Sub-themes
Gender	Defining gender Gender roles Freedom and autonomy Inequality and male superiority
Gender-based violence	Defining GBV Help-seeking behaviour
Religion and culture	Gender in religion Differences between religion and culture Self-discovery of religious belief and practices
Education	Gender inequality in education Sources of education on gender
Race and ethnicity	Self-identity Public perception on race and ethnicity
Migration pattern	Retaining cultural and religious practices

3.1. Gender

Interviewees in general demonstrated fluidity of gender concepts. The construction of gender perceptions is under constant evolvement through analysing information and experiences from both host society and their countries of ethnic origin. While there may be a certain degree of difference among religions, interviewees generally viewed South Asian cultures as male-dominated and exerting of control over women's freedom and autonomy. Such gender differences constrained women's capacity building and their making of life decisions. However, with the exposure to the gender concepts and women's social position in Hong Kong, interviewees were empowered to strive for their freedom and autonomy through confronting their parents and acting against the practices they were told to uphold back in their countries of ethnic origin.

Defining gender

Whilst some of the interviewees defined gender as a simple differentiation between 'male and female', about a quarter of them held more progressive descriptions of gender, encompassing identities which are based on more than biological sex. Interviewee A and B mentioned 'other genders' to include gay, lesbian, bisexual.

F viewed gender as a social construct, which consists of both internal and external factors:

Gender? I think it's some social perception, like of what the society thinks a man or a woman should be. For example, a sex is totally different from gender because gender depends on a social identity, while sex is more about biological anatomy of a person.

Notably, K, who had lived in HK for less than a year, described it as a means by which inequality is experienced:

To me, [gender] it's discrimination

Gender roles

All interviewees expressed clear awareness of traditional patriarchal concepts about gender roles, particularly pertaining to work, family, and power. Overall, interviewees described traditional gender stereotyping from their country of origin as males dominating physical and social space, both in family and public spheres, whilst females are expected to remain submissive and invisible. Pertaining to work and home, interviewees described females as being permitted (and expected) to operate within the private (home) sphere and only males should be in the public (work) sphere.

A: male are supposed to be more strong, masculine, and more of the dominant side...female Nepalese are more submissive towards anything. They're taught to be more feminine, be more quiet, be more... you don't get a choice, you don't a point in it, you don't get a hold on it. You listen to the older people, you listen to your husband.

D: in Pakistan in villages, their husbands do not let them go out because their husbands think that they have the right to earn money, but not the women. The women have the right to take care of the children and the home...I went there around 2015 and I was living, when I was with my dad's family, when I go out of the house I saw it and then once I was walking on the street, a street in Pakistan, I heard from a house in my own language, the husband is shouting at the wife saying, "you cannot go to work, and you have to stay at home forever!", like that.

However, interviewees differentiated their personal opinions from such ideas, and tended towards gender equality and rights of the individual. They put up strong disagreement towards unequal treatment between genders in areas of education, work opportunities and life development:

A: I don't like it when she says that girls have to do it [housework], like this specific "girls have to do it". It just irritates me a lot...We're not just kitchen tools. We're not just inside. We can even be better than males if we want to ... It's unfair. We're doing the same job. I have the same potential as the other guy, how can you not give me the same amount? Why are we different? What's the difference just because of our gender? I don't get it...I want to put all the gender in the fair ride, be it male, female, lesbian, gay, but anything. We should all be fair.

J: I mean, I also think if they are letting her (J's friend) like having so much education and get the degree, then why they won't want to let her work? They should let her work and contribute to the society because she wants to help those people. But then her parents don't allow, so I think it's very unfair.

Some interviewees attributed their change in gender values (from more traditional values defined in their countries of origin to more progressive views), to the female members of the family, especially mothers:

D: some of the women in, for example, in Pakistan country, some of the husbands do not let their wives to go out to work...in my family, my dad doesn't allow my mom to work so that's why I learnt it from her... my mom told me that even I'm still young, she's like, I should study hard on my studies, and she's like, even though after I got marriage or not but still I will go out to work. If my husband don't let, but still I will because I have a right to live my life.

Freedom and autonomy

Overall, the interviewees believed that females have more restrictions placed on them compared to males. Most pertinent to the lived realities of the interviewees were the areas of clothing, movement, and social interactions. In particular, they reported constraints on interaction with the opposite sex; that it is considered unacceptable for females to interact with males outside of their family. However, males are not subjected to the same restriction. While these restrictions on women's freedom and autonomy are most strongly exercised in their countries of ethnic origin; a certain degree of these practices have been carried over to Hong Kong by their family members and other members of the ethnic communities.

B: you have to wear appropriate clothes...not showing that much legs, not showing that much hands and your breast or your butt.

A: Males, they are allowed to wear whatever they want, they are allowed to stay as late as they want, they can walk home alone, it doesn't matter, no one's going to do anything.

E: girls, like, we can't be friends with boys, because from where I come from in India, it's like that, like even though we are just friends with someone, and the whole family doesn't really like us being friends with the other gender.

J: I want to go out with my friends, hang out with them. But then my mother always like, told me that, "You are a female. You cannot go out that..." Like it's only 8 o'clock and then she told me that, "No, you cannot go out."

Some of the effects of traditional gender values seem to be moderated by location, as the interviewees felt more freedom in HK as compared with when they are in their country of ethnic origin. With the desire to retain personal freedom and autonomy and not to conform to the standards placed on them, some have confronted their parents in a bid to assert autonomous boundaries.

G: My friend argued with her [mother] and she's like... "why not? Why not? Why not let me go out?" while she let her brother go out as well with girls and others. She was like "but you don't have the rights to do it"...And likeshe's like "what do you mean I don't have the rights? I go to school with boys and girls, so why are you stopping me from hanging out with them?"

F: I think being the fact that I'm born and brought up in Hong Kong, it contributes to that. And it's just the idea that I get from reading news or even fictional stuff, sometimes I see what the

character do. Like for example, even my family and friends, they are born and brought up in Hong Kong, they wouldn't dare to rebel against their parents, like I am very open in what I say I do go against my parents a lot but my friends wouldn't dare to do that. I don't agree with that. I think a person who knows the best is yourself even though your parents might sometimes think it's right for you, it might not be. And I think that you should always voice out your opinions with your parents.

Inequality and male superiority

The notion that boys are valued above girls was echoed by interviewees of all ethnic backgrounds. The idea of male domination was communicated to them by their parents and elders. Through comparisons with Hong Kong (a society which they perceive to be more gender equal, and provides a higher degree of freedom and autonomy for women), they were able to articulate their disagreement towards male superiority in their culture.

H: Parents adore guys because guys will give the parental surnames down the lines of the generations, so it's more important to them. So they think that boys are really precious to them, more than girls ... I think it's ridiculous. I don't think a girl should be submissive just because the society tells, because girls are human too and they have their own personality, and looking at how the society has changed, I think we should all be equal...We should not be perceived that someone is lower than us or higher than us, we are equal.

G: Like raising your voice at a man...in Indian, or Indians in Hong Kong, it's considered a bad thing...[In India] beating up your child, like if it's a girl, does something wrong, you can beat her. But if a guy does something wrong, you don't need to.

K: [In HK] There are major differences, like women are walking alone, they don't need a man. There are women who are doing jobs. Girls who are taking their education as an important thing, and fathers are supporting her.

F: I think the situation in Hong Kong is much better than India...I think people are starting to accept the idea of feminism and equality, but in India, it's still a thing that's going on for so many years and women are still struggling to be on equal holding as man, but for Hong Kong, I think most of the woman have achieved that already.

3.2 Gender-based violence

Interviewees, in general, did not have well-formed definitions of GBV. However, they were able to identify types of behaviours towards females that should not be tolerated. These identifications matched with the definition of GBV. The girls strongly attribute GBV to patriarchal social structure, especially in South Asian cultures. From this, they surmise that the prevalence of GBV is much higher in their countries of ethnic origin. Such patriarchal structure was further being seen as the major reason for the low motivation of victims to seek help. In order to protect the family reputation, females are not allowed to report GBV in their countries of ethnic origin. However, interviewees assert that they would stand against GBV and would report to the police if the situation happened in Hong Kong. There was a

general perception that the police in Hong Kong are more reliable and trustworthy, as compared with the police in their countries of ethnic origin.

Defining GBV

Interviewees presented with diverse perceptions of what GBV is, ranging from never hearing the term GBV before, to narrow (limited to overt physical violence) or ambiguous definition of GBV. However, with more elaboration by the interviewer, the interviewees were able to differentiate what actions constitute GBV. Some interviewees further indicated emotional abuse, restrictions on movement, as well as behaviours inducing psychological harm in their definition of GBV.

F: I think one of the ideas is definitely physical violence, but another could be like mentally like cutting out the woman from the society and keeping them in a corner...sometimes men they think they can do whatever they want even though the women clearly rejected them, they still try to show their dominance and still try to ask her out so I think it could be gender based violence.

K: Why do you have to follow a woman on the street? Go follow some other creature, like some dog that is to be followed, not a woman. So I think it's a violence, like making her full of fear, filling fear in her, like, she'll be scared.

When the interviewees took this a step further, they were able to identify the link between patriarchy and GBV. Several of the interviewees hold the concept that GBV stems from gender inequality. GBV is perceived as very common in "home" countries (as compared with Hong Kong), to the extent that interviewees feel that it has become the norm. When it does occur in Hong Kong, interviewees report that it is perpetrated mainly by ethnic minority males.

F: [In India] the thing that the man has the right to beat his wife if she does something wrong, I don't know why the society has such a perception but it's just the idea that it's so common for a man to beat his wife.

H: for the Nepalese families, a lot of the male members have really high ego and pride so if the woman of the family starts being the breadwinner of the family, the males tend to be more aggressive because it's hurting their pride....that's how, actually, the violent abuse or the emotional abuse begins. So I think everything should be equal, like, house chores-wise, and also the earning money.

B: places like Sham Shui Po, Tsim Sha Tsui, people are just staring at you, you can just, yeah they're just staring at you head to toe...My experience is usually EM men.

The idea of consent was a major feature in interviewees' determining what constitutes GBV. The girls are resolute in maintaining a woman's right to choose, and that there should be fairness and equality, regardless of relationship status with the other. When using arranged marriage as an example, the interviewees indicated that the consent of the individual is most important; if the girl does not agree, then arranged marriage could be GBV. Also on marital rape, the interviewees were clear-cut on the issue of consent.

H: It's the woman's right not to agree to do the arranged marriage. So if she agrees, then she gets married to the guy...[if she doesn't agree] that's forced, it's not consent, so it's a GBV if it's like that.

Counter to traditional thinking that a wife's obligation is to sexually gratify her husband, or that consent is not important in a marital relationship, the girls communicated a strong stance on the necessity of consent.

A: you're married, but you're still need the consent of your partner. If you don't have the consent, it is defined as rape. I don't get why people don't get it.

Also counter to traditional patriarchal mind-sets common in their country of ethnic origin, interviewees strongly disagreed with victim-blaming, clearly stating that they do not attribute responsibility/blame to the victims.

F: Just because someone is wearing revealing clothes does not give a right. It does not give the man the right to violate her, it's just her own opinion and she has the sense of individualism and freedom. She can wear whatever she wants, and I don't think it justifies that the man is trying to rape her just because of their clothing. Because there are so many cases where women are fully covered, they are wearing a burkha, but they are still being raped. So I don't think it justifies that.

Help-seeking behaviour

There was a consensus of opinion amongst interviewees that Hong Kong is a safe place, as compared with the country of origin, and that the protection mechanisms are more reliable. Such consensus was formed under a thorough comparison made by the interviewees between the experiences in Hong Kong and their countries being of ethnic origin. Most of the interviewees perceived that seeking help in their countries of ethnic origin when experiencing GBV would not be effective. They believe that within the context of gender inequalities in the social structure, women's words are disregarded, and men are placed above women, even in urgent situations. They perceive that authorities would not help, but rather, female victim-blaming was echoed amongst the interviewees. There was also a strong perception that the police in their countries of ethnic origin are prone to corruption.

J: In Pakistan, I'll just say cause most of the officers in police station are usually males. They can kind of have gender-based perceptions, like inequality, you could say. If a woman was a rape victim and she came to the police station for help, she might not be given help but she might be further criticised, that okay, because she is a girl, probably must have been her fault. She might have worn clothes which were too revealing, or you know, she could just be simply making things up, so why should we help her with that much enthusiasm. So they might act like they're trying to help, but not necessarily finishing the case.

Interviewees had limited knowledge about laws and policies pertaining to GBV, only that "there should be some", but no knowledge of what they are. The perception that the police in their country of origin are prone to corruption was echoed amongst all the interviewees. There was basic awareness about the

existence of organisations which help victims of GBV, but opinions about them vary. Some interviewees disregarded the effectiveness of organizations in their countries of ethnic origin to provide “real help” to victims of GBV. They saw the organizations as places where victims can go to only talk about the problem but could not tackle the fundamental patriarchal social structure.

K: [In Pakistan] There is only one organisation, and one lady who helps the women...[In HK] I think there are many NGOs supporting women and children’s rights. I’ve seen like, banners and boards, and pamphlets...But in Pakistan, she has to seek help, she can only contact Asma Jahangir for help. Nobody else would help her, even the police won’t help her. And the court also won’t help her...because there are no laws.

I: They [the organizations] won’t really fight. They will like, support her, but they won’t solve her problem. Like, if she’s raped, then they won’t solve her problem

Family reputation was found to be a major barrier to help-seeking. Interviewees all shared the same narrative of preservation of family honour and reputation when speaking of help-seeking. Again, not that they themselves ascribe to this view, but that it is the dominant narrative of traditional South Asian cultures; namely that seeking help outside of the family would disgrace all within it. The construct appeared to be based on the precept that others would gossip, speak ill of, and look down upon not only the victim, but also her whole family. Furthermore, the interviewees expressed that their peers in their countries of ethnic origin would not prefer to seek help for fear of repercussions from their parents and/or community, which would further confine their freedom.

C: If it’s a village person, then they wouldn’t seek help because if they did, they even though the one who did gender based violence, he would be arrested. But the village master actually kick the victim out of the village...he thinks that it’s disrespectful [to the village reputation]

E: Her [her friend’s] mum...her parents didn’t even tell the police because they thought it would ruin the family reputation...She want to tell, she wanted the person, to get arrested...but then, none of that happened. Her parents don’t allow her to go out anymore, she just stays at home... She can’t even go to school anymore, she left school...She has no friends. Her friends don’t like her anymore.

All interviewees expressed strong conviction to seek help if they personally encountered GBV, despite disapproval from their community. However, the type of help-seeking would differ according to the location in which the violence occurs. If in Hong Kong, interviewees are more likely to go to the police.

D: [if someone is sexually assaulted in HK] First of all, she should go to police station, and tell all the idea about the person who raped her, and after that the police might give a number to a, I mean, a number of a sexual harassment centre or something like that....I will call the police, and I will tell the police what happened.

3.3 Religion and culture

Interviewees articulated that different religions have different concepts and practices on gender roles. Some discussed their observations of gender issues in other religions. Furthermore, interviewees were

of the opinion that not all of gender roles and values that had been passed on to them are based on religion; they were able to differentiate those that are based on religion and those that are based on culture. The ability to differentiate religion from culture came about by means of a self-discovery process in which they examined religious texts by themselves.

Gender in religion

With the topic of religion, the most immediate thing that the interviewees related to was clothing. Although they felt that dress is directly related to religion, there was some deviation from the traditional mind-set/interpretation that hijab means to cover up from head to toe:

B: in Islam, since girls are required to do the hijab, like covering themselves up, that means that they're given less importance or like, how do you say, they're like, you know, confined. That's what they think, but I don't think that's the real deal here because by covering themselves they don't mean that they are required to cover their rights or cover their freedom to speak or anything like that...Hijab basically means to be modest. It's not only telling you to be modest in the way you dress, but the way you speak as well, and the way you act and think. People are only extracting a little bit of it but not considering the other portion of hijab.

It is also perceived by some girls to be down to individual choice:

E: [there is an expectation that] we have to be like, fully covered because we are also, I am also Muslim. So like, I have to wrap my head and wear the long dresses. My mum told me when she was small, and when she went to school, she's...I don't do it, but that my mum doesn't mind, she always had to cover her head and wear the long dress...

D: for their religion and their family...some of them they have to do hijab, and some of them their parents say, "It's okay, it's up to you". And they might think that it's not fair even though you're living in a different country but you still you have to follow your own religion.

The non-Muslim interviewees had the perception that their own religions (Sikh and Hindu) place fewer restrictions on girls:

F: I'm a Sikh, it doesn't have much restrictions but I think Islam does have a lot, for examples the idea of wearing burkha or hijab in public, and also not talking to the opposite sex like not interacting much with the opposite sex before marriage.

H: For the Hindus like me, our culture is not very conservative compared to like, the Christian Nepalese. The Christian Nepalese, they are really restricted in their own area, like, girls are not allowed to go to a certain place because they are Christian, or they are not allowed to wear certain clothing

Differences between religion and culture

The conversations revealed the intersectionality of religion and culture. Some interviewees almost used the terms "religion" and "culture" interchangeably, whilst others were more able to differentiate. The

ability to differentiate culture from religion was mostly by those interviewees who had engaged in their own in-depth reading of religious teachings.

F: "religion" and "societal norms" were not differentiated : ...in India, there's a societal pressure because we all live in a religion in India, and people just really judge you if you don't follow the societal norms so I think that things will be so much more different if we were living in India.

B: they use religion as a means to support them, but most things that they use, using religion as an evidence is actually like man-made, it's more of a cultural thing and not really a religion thing.

H: I have studied my religion for 1 year, and I haven't found anything like that. Like, in our holy book it is written that men and women are created equally, there are no differences....There are 30 books, and so I am on the 25th book and from 1st book to 25th book, all I got was men and women are equal ... In Quran there is no such thing that says women shouldn't go out, women should wear...cover herself...so it's different. Because every time I heard from my grandfather and my uncle referring Quran says this, Quran says that, so that made me open the book myself.

Self-discovery of religious belief and practices

Interviewees took the initiative to construct a fresh understanding of her religion, which departs from rigid observance of traditions, and incorporates progression and fluidity in mind-set.

H: [In church] all the youth generation is taking part in it, is trying to understand it more, so I feel very happy. Why can't our...we Muslims learn Quran, our book...So why can't we try to understand it? And those mates who are sitting with me they are they are taking participate, they are asking questions from the pastor again and again, and they have different questions and the pastor is answering it, and they are relaxed and they are like, "ok then , this is the way we should deal with problems".

K: The prophet teaches us that in the world there will be change and there will be people with different mind-sets, they will know Islam more than the people with previous mind-sets; more than previous knowledge ... The Quran says learn about things, because I [God] created things...because I created man and man create things and that's because I have give him a brain, and a brain is a very efficient structure...so take use of them. Bring them in use and just modernise your thinking and don't stay narrow-minded because the world has changed and so it demands you to be changed.

3.4 Education

Interviewees perceive that education is crucial to developing a sense of gender equality and for strengthening capacity to take action against gender oppression. Apart from formal education from school, diverse forms of education and information input could lead to the construction of gender and GBV values and perceptions.

Gender inequality in education

Interviewees purported that females are given less opportunities in education in their countries of ethnic origin, which they relate to traditional ideas about gender roles - that men should go out to work while women should be homemakers. They shared stories of inequality experienced by girls in the education system by means of selective attention biases in favour of the boys.

A: [In Nepal] there are more male students than female students, and they're not even allowed to go to school. From what I've heard too that my friends there, they do more work than they study...even if they do graduate from school, they're mostly going to end up as a housewife.

J: She [mother] didn't receive much education. She like...she barely did primary 5, maybe?...And still today, she regret that – why she didn't go to school. But her family, they told her that drop out, there's no use for women of education...My grandmother to don't let my mother have education because it's useless for women. She just have to stay at home and do the housework.

K: [In Pakistan] ...If they [girls] want to learn more or be educated, do jobs - they are discriminated by their fathers, by their husbands, and they you know, can't get education like men....One of my friend, she wanted to study abroad. She wanted to be an engineer. But her father only let her study til form 3 and stopped her from studying afterwards, and the reason was, "You are a girl, you are not supposed to study"

Sources of education on gender

Interviewees had varied experiences of learning about gender and GBV. For some interviewees, school appears to be one of the primary sources of education about gender issues, whilst others reported learning much of their knowledge about gender and GBV from the media, namely from internet articles, movies, and news reports. Traditional ideology on gender was gained via family elders and personal observations of situations when they visited their countries of ethnic origin. The traditional concepts often conflict with what they learn from other sources.

J: From education, we learn about the gender inequality...We learn in school that women, they have...like every human being, they need human rights. But the women in Hong Kong, they have more rights.

K: ...there was a class called "Islamiat" where we were told religious practices. My teacher was like, "When you grow up, you should take these steps to keep yourself at home and don't look for further education...She was teaching us from a book, it wasn't really her fault. She could at least tell us, "please get education, don't keep yourself at home", and like, she did

B: ...some TV shows which address such issues, you know. I may be younger, but I watch more of those, then I may have a better awareness or understanding. The more aware you are, the chances of having gender based violence would be less, equality would be more

H: I try to change by reading online articles on how people got discriminated, or how men really respects women.

Nonetheless, interviewees identified education as a vital mechanism by which traditional gender constructs can be modulated. And that lack of education is the reason why victims are silenced, rather than seeking help.

B: If they are more aware of both the rights and equality of both the genders, I don't think any of the party would choose violence as an option. So the more aware, or the more educated they are, they more they would know to prevent violence and think of other means to solve the problem or situation

F: I think it's really important to educate people, especially EM girls, that it's okay to voice out their opinions and sometimes it's okay to go against your parent's wishes and the society's wishes to do whatever they want because I think the reason why these services are not used frequently is because they don't bother to use it. They just think they have to accept everything that they want so I think that's really important, public awareness.

3.5 Race and ethnicity

Interviewees stressed their determination to draw their own identity. Such identity demonstrated the hybridity of cultures of the host society (Hong Kong) and their countries of ethnic origin under transnationalism. However, during the process of identity construction, they may encounter non-acceptance, disapproval, or opposition from their parents, classmates and the members of the general public.

Self-identity

Interviewees reported conflation between Hong Kong/Chinese and ethnic minority identity. Most of the interviewees tended to define themselves as both. Some experienced some conflict in deciding which values and practices to assimilate to her own world view, while some identified with the similarities between local Chinese and South Asians, and even further compared with western culture.

H: If I'm in HK, I'd say I'm from Nepal, but if I'm in other countries, I'd say, I'm from HK, but I'm Nepali...but I wouldn't leave out the fact that I was born in HK. I'm proud of both of my nationalities basically.

J: I think I am from both because in Hong Kong, I have been living for more than 7 years, so I have already adapted some of the cultures here from Hong Kong ... "Home is where the heart is." So, I think Pakistan is my second home. And Hong Kong is my first ... at school we are taught that, you know, you should like, try new things and everything. But then I told my mother that the school teaches us this and she said, "No. You should stick to our own values that we teach you." ... I want to change those values that my mother teaches me. But I think she won't let me change...Because I think that people should experience different things. Why the same? So, but my mother doesn't allow me, she said, "You should stick to the values." Although I want to change.

B: I think it's quite similar because in some Chinese, as I've learnt at school as well, in some typical Chinese households, they prefer having a guy because they would think that he can become the breadwinner of the family, and same goes for the South Asian countries...If you were to compare like Westerners and South Asian people or Westerners and Hong Kong people then that difference is bigger than just Hong Kong and South Asian, because we're still in Asia and some of the customs and traditions are actually pretty similar.

Public perception on race and ethnicity

Interviewees reported having experiences which led them to feel alienated and excluded from mainstream society in Hong Kong. These experiences may have been caused by misunderstanding, but nonetheless, there were some incidents of less favourable treatment by local Hong Kong Chinese, and even racism. The effect of such experiences appears to create a sense of separateness, where the girls consider themselves as HK people but feeling as though they are not quite belonging to, nor fully accepted by, mainstream Hong Kong society.

G: they [Chinese in HK] probably see us as a bad way because of our skin and colour...I was like the outcast in the whole school...they [Chinese classmates] would separate the table and like, they wouldn't come close. Because they think that I am...I am alien.

E: It also happens in my class actually, like...my friends would go...you know when they turn off the lights for like a presentation, and then they would go: "oh! Where did Aisu go? Where did Aisu go?"...Well not everyone, but then, we are discriminated.

F: I think the police is much more likely to treat about the Chinese people's case rather than the EM's

B described the situation in which her mother was not given the correct change from a shopkeeper, which caused her to question fair treatment of EM people by the police:

She reported the case instantly, but then the police just tried to cover it up, just told her to calm down, "oh it's ok it's ok, it's gonna be a hassle to check the CCTV camera, maybe they're not even working, just let it go for now". So yeah, that's what I mean by skip the hassle. Or they kinda lack enthusiasm, they just, they expect us to compromise more than they would expect Chinese people to...Even normally, if there is some cases to be reported and it's like, if it's EM, the police may not show that much enthusiasm or that much desire to help the victims.

3.6 Migration pattern

Transnational movement was common among interviewees. While most of them were born, or have lived, in Hong Kong for most of their lives, they travelled to their countries of ethnic origin from time to time. For some, observance of gender role practices shifted according to where they were.

Retaining cultural and religious practices

Interviewees reported a great disparity between the gender-related behaviours and practices of HK and those of their countries of ethnic origin. They described being placed under the pressure to abide to the gender values imposed by their family when they visited their countries of ethnic origin, and contrasted this with their level of autonomy when in Hong Kong. Such disparity appears to have resulted in the girls taking actions to assert their departure from traditional norms through refusing to conform. There exists a strong struggle between acquiring a value system that best fit for them.

D: "In 2015, I went there and I didn't wear it [hijab]. Then my father's mother was like, shouting at me. She's like, "Why do you wear Hong Kong style clothes? Why don't you wear Pakistani clothes?", like that, and then I didn't talk to her until I don't come back. I told my mom and then my mom told my Dad, and she [mum] was like, "Why don't you tell your own daughters?" because my father's sister's children, they also wear shorts etc and then no one tells them anything, and me when I was in Pakistan, I wear trousers but then it doesn't cover my legs until it was under my knee, but not all of the leg, and she keep on shouting at me.

G: they prefer girls to wear clothes that are covering themselves... so like at least long sleeves, but then long sleeves or jeans or long skirts. But I am not like that, I am born and brought up in Hong Kong, so I wear shorts, short tops [even in India]

J: [In Pakistan] father or the mother would say that, "You have to accompany with a man. A man should go with you if you want to go somewhere."...But here, if I said to my mother that I'm going out, she says that, "It's okay, you can go..." Like she don't tell me that, "you should be accompanied by a man." Like, I can go by myself...[In Pakistan] women have to wear the black, you know, abaya. It's like the whole covering. But in here, it's okay if you don't wear. Just wear the traditional clothes. But in Pakistan, you have to wear the full black clothes, even if it's really hot. You have to cover yourself in that black abaya. It's called burkha...but I don't do it.

4. Discussion

The research shows that transnational movement has a significant influence on the construction of minority girls' gender and gender-based violence (GBV) concepts and perceptions. Confirming the findings from overseas studies (Orgocka, 2004; The Women's Health Council, 2009; Smerecnik et al., 2010), minority girls in Hong Kong on one hand are handed down a certain level of traditional cultural practices and ideology, but on the other hand undergo a constant change process in which such values are held up against more progressive, gender-equitable perspectives.

The strongest cultural ideology retained is patriarchal and authoritarian social structures, such as obeying parents and males. However, the girls also differentiate culture from religion, and perceive culture as something that is changeable, and that religion is and should be strictly followed (especially for Muslim girls). Under such differentiation, the girls mostly demonstrated a change in gender and GBV concepts in which they perceived the construction of gender is more based on culture rather than religion. Coinciding with other overseas studies (Ahmadi, 2003; Smerecnik et al., 2010), under transnational movement, girls demonstrate change in their perceptions on gender and sexuality. They undergo a process of constant evaluation/re-evaluation of mind-set, in conjunction with the information and social values they acquire in the host society (Hong Kong).

The findings of this study also strongly break the general perception of "ethnic minority" as a confined, homogeneous identity. Minority girls demonstrate the diversity of individuals that exists within all minority communities and such individuality cuts across culture, religion, age, education, and migration status.

4.1 Retaining power hierarchy

The interviewees' early construction of gender concepts and the perceptions towards GBV is based on patriarchal social structure, largely derived from their country of ethnic origin. Traditionally, women have less power and are subjected to violence, and this is perceived to be normal in their country of ethnic origin. To a large extent, the girls acknowledge that power differences are deeply rooted in cultural values/practice, especially for the elder generations. The collective power of the general public is far stronger than individual opinion in dictating behaviour.

In alignment with previous research (Tonsing 2014, Chawla 2004), the girls in this study acknowledged that South Asian society has a high toleration towards domestic violence. The girls were able to articulate the connection between GBV and male superiority and dominance; which creates a social structure in which women largely remain powerless to seek help outside of the home.

However, the interviewees largely reject such attitudes and practices, and would make attempts to resist in verbal disputes with parents, or by directly refusing to conform to practices, such as wearing traditional clothing. In contrast to traditional mind-sets, the girls maintain that the rights of the individual should be preserved, such as right to consent and right to seek and receive help.

The girls tended to retain the value of parents as the authority, and thus felt obligation to obey parents, maintain family respect, and fulfil the expectation of parents. However generation differences are significant, with the girls developing different gender concepts from their parents/grandparents. This puts the girls under constant struggle between fulfilling parents' expectation and acknowledging their own ideas on gender equality and maintaining personal freedom and autonomy.

Such internal conflict may affect/limit their help-seeking behaviour, e.g. who they would share/talk to about their perusal of freedom and autonomy, and what will they do when they experience unequal treatment and violence. Parents and family members may not be the first resource person. This contradicts with mainstream thought in social work practice, which assumes that people very often seek help from their close networks.

In light of unequal power dynamics, and having acquired mind-sets which emphasise rights and equality, the girls believe that they would speak out if GBV ever happened to themselves or a close family member, despite the disapproval from their community in a bid to take back personal and female power. However, the method of help-seeking is influenced by the perceived cultural norms and practices of the location.

4.2 Undergoing conceptual and practical changes

The differences in gender perceptions between the minority girls and their parents do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, the development of different perceptions is inspired by different sources of information, including school, peers, and social media in the host society, which causes the girls to constantly evaluate/re-evaluate their gender identity and concepts. Such progressive change in gender perceptions also contradicts popular thought amongst local Chinese population that minority women are conservative on gender issues. Instead, this study reveals that minority girls hold strong ideas on gender equality and rights, and display a strong urge to have gender equality.

Minority girls in this study are essentially presented with 3 different systems in their life:

- 1) the traditional: patriarchal, non-individualistic, emphasises concepts such as preservation of family & community honour over individual freedom and autonomy. Power lies with males and the collective
- 2) the parental: the mind-set of parents, who having undergone transnationalism themselves, retain traditional values, but have also incorporated some "modern" thinking or at least internal inclination to change, and have departed from the traditional to some degree. Power largely lies with males, but awareness and desire for equality is present, and emphasis less on the collective
- 3) the de-traditional: upholds gender equality, emphasises individual freedom and autonomy. Power lies with the individual and equal between sexes

Minority girls navigate the three systems in a constant process of comparison, evaluation and re-evaluation, to find their own equilibrium. Early on in life, they start out being handed down traditional parental values, and as they grow older they become more exposed to alternative perspectives which challenge what they were initially taught, and their mind-sets evolve alongside.

Inter-generational effects on changing gender perceptions is also found with parents' evolved values on gender and GBV. It is found that the girls are highly inspired to explore further, and actually apply de-traditional ideology to their lived realities. This is most strongly observed when parents, especially mothers, have less traditional gender perceptions. The girls also expressed a preference toward a de-traditional perspective as they observed and compared differences between home country and host country in the frequency and acceptance of GBV, and availability and efficacy of protection mechanisms such as law enforcement. Education (especially gender knowledge), social interaction, social media, and increased understanding towards religious teaching (the ability to differentiate between culture and religion) contribute to the deviation from the more traditional gender perceptions and practices of their parents.

In the process, girls may challenge traditional mind-sets by questioning the validity of traditional interpretation/expression of values, particularly in the area of interpretation of religion. It is observed that some of the Muslim girls are motivated to learn and understand for themselves, rather than automatic acceptance of hearsay religion.

Contrary to common assumption in HK, the girls have well-developed ideas about GBV, displaying thoughtful consideration of many facets of the issue, including verbal vs. physical force, genuine consent vs. forced consent. They have contemplated how unequal treatment of genders fuels male entitlement, and subsequent acts of aggression when that entitlement is not satisfied.

4.3 Help-seeking attitude and behaviour

Although knowledge of actual help services is limited, conviction towards seeking help is robust. In this study, the girls most frequently identified the police as the main source of help. Such high level of trust towards the police in handling GBV is due to the evaluation and comparison of available information about Hong Kong police and police in their countries of ethnic origin. The perception of trustworthiness of Hong Kong police in handling GBV could be due to their personal experiences in contacting Hong Kong police and/or receiving information on media (such as news reports, TV drama and social media). When compared with the police in their countries of ethnic origin (which they perceived as corrupted and patriarchal), Hong Kong police is perceived to be more trustworthy to act according to the legal systems, and have higher awareness on gender equality.

On the contrary, minority girls tend not to favour seeking help from social service and community organizations. Such hesitation to seek help from non-governmental organizations is also developed through transnational comparisons between organizations in their countries of ethnic origin and in Hong Kong. The girls do not perceive the help from local organizations as significant, as they do not appear to create capacity for social change. Minority girls, in general, were aware of the organizations in their countries of ethnic origin that help women experiencing GBV. However, they perceive these organizations as only being able to provide remedial services, but not able to generate social change on gender hierarchy. Knowledge of local Hong Kong organizations and services working for women's rights is vague, although the girls believe that such services exist more abundantly than in their country of ethnic origin. Since knowledge of services is limited, the girls are not able to draw comparison between organizations in Hong Kong and in their countries of ethnic origin. Thus they retain the idea that these organizations may not be able to help much.

Although minority girls identify some barriers in help-seeking, such as language, maintaining family honour and lack of information on possible services, they show a strong tendency towards pursuing justice and standing up for individual rights. The strong concepts on gender equality and justice that they possess reveal the importance of bringing larger social change on gender equality and safeguarding the rights of minority women.

4.4 Transnational movement as the major influence

This study reviews the strong influence of transnationalism in formulating and reconstructing minorities' gender ideology and practices. The constant movement between the host society and the country of ethnic origin creates a space and capacity for minorities to acquire the values and practices of both places. This leads to transformation, coming out of the interchange of diverse value systems and practices which are internalized according to their interpretation of both social systems. The process of acculturation causes minority women to formulate unique gender ideology and practices that are differentiable from both cultural value systems alone. However, the level of acculturation is indeed individualistic; variance is not only found across generations, but also across socioeconomic status.

The largest discrepancies on gender values and practices can be seen across generations. The parental control that the minority girls spoke about can be deduced into two major directions: maintaining patriarchal structure, and the safety and security of girls.

As mentioned above, older generations tend to retain patriarchal values when compared with the girls. The differences in gender concepts across generations are based on the level of interaction and integration with the host society. Minority girls, exposed to local school environment and different forms of media, draw comparisons between the gender values and practices of their own culture and those upheld by local Hong Kong Chinese girls. Minority girls perceive local Hong Kong Chinese girls as having more freedom and autonomy, and this causes them to question their culture's gender values and practices. When parents, especially mothers, have spent extended periods of time living in Hong Kong in early life, they acquire different sets of gender values, and express higher level of fluidity in practice of traditional cultural norms. The daughters of these parents tend to be more critical towards traditional gender values and uphold stronger concepts of gender equality and justice.

However, the attitudes and behaviours of local Hong Kong Chinese towards ethnic minorities appear to inhibit the level of interaction and integration. Microaggressions and overt discrimination are experienced as alienation and non-acceptance into mainstream society. This causes the minority girls to question whether they can, and should, acquire and exercise new forms of value system. Expressions of stereotyping from the majority population towards minority cultures and practices are well defined by the minority girls. Behaviours which are based on gender power difference, such as catcalling, have carried over to Hong Kong under transnational movement, whilst such is not experienced by the predominant Chinese community.

Owing to such gender practices being carried over to Hong Kong, safety and security remains as one of the main concerns for ethnic minorities, especially for parents. Parents judge the safeness of the local environment based on their perceptions of safety for girls in their countries of ethnic origin, and as such, contribute to the control of movement of their daughters. However, minority girls interpret safeness

differently, as they express a high degree of trust towards the local Hong Kong people, who constitute part of their social network.

The effects of the intersectionality of ethnicity, religion, culture, migration, education, and race are evident even in the parents' generation, and become more apparent in the girls. Introduction of, and internalisation of de-traditional concepts pertaining to gender and GBV appears to begin in the parents who were exposed to the values and practices of different ethnicities, religions and cultures by means of migration. As seen above, race dynamics would impact sense of belonging; and hence the rate and degree of acculturation. As a new generation of migrants born in HK, social identity of the girls as HK people is stronger, as is acculturation toward de-traditional mind-sets.

5. Limitations

The interviewees included in this study were by voluntary participation, and through networks which Rainlily has good relationship with. Therefore, this study may have captured the perspectives of minority girls who are more interested in, and more sensitized on, gender issues.

However, this data included discussion of the attitudes and behaviours of friends and relatives, so is not limited to representing only the viewpoints of the interviewees.

6. Conclusion

This research explored minority girls' gender and gender-based violence (GBV) perceptions and practices. Findings indicated that not only is there no defined, homogenous set of gender values and practices for minority girls in HK, but also that exposure towards diverse value systems and practices experienced by minority girls clearly demonstrate the importance of individuality in value and practice formulation.

The individuality expressed within minority groups confirms the intersectionality framework under transnational movement. The construction of gender and GBV perceptions is influenced by each of the different factors in the intersectionality framework, which also intertwine with each other. Ethnicity, religion, culture, migration, and education all work in tandem to shape evolving mind-sets as more information becomes available to people, the diversity within ethnic groups increases.

The findings also showed that minority girls are more willing to discuss issues pertaining to gender and GBV, and affirm gender equality, than previously indicated in other literature (Orgocka 2004). This uncovering of evolving mentalities towards gender equality, freedom and autonomy serves to deconstruct public stereotypes towards minority women as traditional and conservative.

While minority girls are progressing towards gender equality, the study also exposed a larger question on the readiness of social services and policy in addressing the growing need of minority girls for gender education and interventions. Minority girls in general were not familiar with the existing services for gender and GBV issues, and also doubted their effectiveness. A strong tendency to seek (and expect) help is instead put on police, and even themselves when needed, to protect other minority women experiencing GBV. This reflects that minority girls may not have adequate outlets to talk about, and seek help, for gender and GBV related issues.

It is thus important to build an empowering environment for minority females to express their views and acquire gender and GBV concepts. Negative racial dynamics negatively impact ease and access to help-seeking. Providing an open environment which acknowledges the diversity of minority women and eliminates stereotypes of minority women, will serve to enable greater interaction with, and less reservation toward integration with mainstream society. Creating spaces in education and religion in which an exploratory and interactive approach is encouraged will empower minority girls to acquire diverse gender knowledge and resources for help.

7. Policy implications and recommendations

This study clearly demonstrates that minority girls are going through constant transformation in their gender ideology, and are developing strong beliefs towards gender equality and justice. Yet as mentioned in the conclusion, there are a number of barriers that hinder minority girls to discuss gender and gender-based violence (GBV)-related issues openly, including both minority and majority communities' prejudices and stereotypes about minority women's gender equality positioning.

Understanding and constructing gender equality concepts is quintessential for the protection of women. This study echoes numerous international studies on minority women's gender and sexual understanding and health - that minority women are more vulnerable to GBV than men and women from ethnic majority populations. This stems from undue lack of understanding and social discrimination from both within the minority community and the majority population, and also their lower socioeconomic status which affords minority women fewer options and fewer resources to seek help and justice (UNFPA 2009). The capacity to address gender and GBV-related issues is thus not only for inducing ideological change, but directly affects the help-seeking mentality and behaviour minority women.

In order to address the needs of minority girls (and women) in handling gender and GBV-related issues, policy directives should include:

- Strengthening the capacity of minority girls to handle gender and GBV-related issues;
- Creating safe and empowering environments for different forms of social integration, especially in relation to understanding and protecting minority women from GBV;
- Eliminating racial and gender prejudices and stereotypes.

7.1 Cultural and gender sensitivity training for frontline practitioners

This study showed that the police are the most common frontline practitioner that minority girls would approach if they experience GBV. Minority girls retain a high level of trust towards Hong Kong police in handling GBV, as they believe that Hong Kong police employ more gender-equitable practices and are trustworthy to deliver protection and justice than the police in their countries of ethnic origin. However, previous studies have revealed that minority women have experienced stereotyping and racist attitudes when they sought help from police in Hong Kong, and that the police also lack knowledge, and sensitive handling, of sexual violence cases (Leung and Rainlily 2015). The unsympathetic attitude of the police towards minority women's sexual abuse experiences was due to their attribution of the violence to the women's cultural background.

Attribution of differences in gender and GBV values and practices to cultural and religious reasons can also be found among social workers in Hong Kong. Social workers have expressed that they find it very difficult to speak with any confidence or authority on ethnic minority gender issues, as they do not have the capacity to judge whether certain values and practices are based on culture and religion, and thus afraid to be seen as interfering with minority culture. Such lack of capacity may cause social workers to overlook the crisis and danger minority women are experiencing. This lack of capacity to intervene in GBV occurring minority cultures in fact coincides with the finding that minority girls have lower

tendency to seek help from NGOs, as they perceive the workers as unable to bring about changes in broader patriarchal social structure.

Although currently there are cultural and gender sensitivity trainings for frontline practitioners, it remains insufficient on two premises. First, the training is often not compulsory; and second, the contents are still very much limited to basic understandings about daily practices (such as food and festivals), which is insufficient to cope with the growing complexity and diversity of minority community. Cultural and gender sensitivity training should be reformed to enable frontline practitioners to make critical judgements on gender and minority issues.

7.2 Sex and gender education in school

School is one of the major settings that minority girls acquire knowledge on gender and GBV. The acquisition can be done through formal classes, or through interactions with schoolmates and teachers. However current education curriculum does not include any resources related to gender under different cultures; and thus the needs of minority girls, especially the ambiguities on gender concepts, cannot be addressed.

Well-designed sex education curriculum which caters the needs of minority students would not only help minority girls to develop concepts on gender equality and protection from GBV, but would also address the important need to educate minority boys on gender and GBV. Under the predominantly patriarchal social systems that exist in minority communities, it is important that both males and females receive education on gender equality, in order to prevent future abuse and promote equality. As minority families may refrain from discussions about such sensitive topics within the home setting, the school setting is regarded as a less threatening context in which to explore and discuss such sensitive issues.

However, in order to turn schools into open and empowering environments for minority students to learn and discuss gender and sexuality issues, teachers' knowledge and ideology on gender concepts must first be strengthened. Thus in-depth and targeted training for teaching staff, (including teaching assistants) with minority ethnic backgrounds should be conducted.

7.3 Diversify parental education for minorities

This study clearly demonstrated that intergenerational gaps exist in gender ideology between minority girls and their parents, and such gaps hinder minority girls from talking about gender and GBV-related issues with their parents. The hindrance not only affects parent-child relationship due to the differences on gender-related practices, but may further affect minority girls' help-seeking preferences and behaviours. This places minority girls in an extremely vulnerable position. It is therefore important to bridge the gap between parents and minority girls on gender and GBV-related issues.

Indeed such intergenerational differences are not unique in Hong Kong. Some schools in the US have conducted gender education training for minority parents in order to allow the parents to have more understanding towards their children's gender and sexuality perspectives (Orgocka 2004).

Currently in Hong Kong, social service organizations and schools that have received minority students have developed substantive services for minority parents. However, these services mainly focus on the education needs of the students, such as understanding the education system in Hong Kong, school curriculum and students' performance.

In order to bridge the intergenerational gap, organizations and schools which have close connections with minority parents should diversify their services and programmes to include discussions on gender and sexuality differences under vivid transnational movement of minorities.

7.4 Review of ethnic minority service development and funding directives

The provision of work related to race relations has fallen under the mandate of the Home Affairs Department. The idea of using community development and cohesion-building strategies should facilitate community building and increase social interactions and integration among people with different ethnic backgrounds. However, the level of social interaction, and the issues involved in race relations-building largely depends on the funding and the policy directive of the government. At present, we can see most of the social and community programmes on race relations are mainly focused around daily cultural practices, such as food, clothing, art, and recreation. Programmes that promote deeper level of cultural exchange on values and ideas are still minimal.

In HK, there currently are some dedicated service centres for ethnic minorities. These are segregated from services for other populations, and currently are mostly limited to addressing tangible needs, such as education, employment and language interpretation. The diversity of service delivery very much depends on the sensitivity of the service providers, which consist mainly of social service organizations, minority groups, and the religious institutions. As reflected in this study, most of the minority girls perceive these service providers as not engaged in discussions about gender issues as they are male-dominated and not effective in bringing value changes in the minority community. It is thus important to diversify services on race relations and social integration, and provide funding opportunities for new initiatives which can cater to the diverse needs of minority communities.

Gender sensitivity should be promoted among service providers. Other than social workers, minority community leaders and religious leaders can play significant role in promoting gender equality. Overseas experience has demonstrated that when religious leaders have higher gender sensitivity and are willing to open space in the religious meeting places to discuss about gender issues, the awareness of the minority community increases significantly, and the occurrence of GBV decreases in that community. Local women's groups could play a role in bridging the gender knowledge gap with the minority communities, and the government can support these initiatives through diversifying funding schemes.

7.5 Reformulate integration and race relations policy

In the consultation paper on legislating against racial discrimination, the Government's policy on race relations is stated as: "to eliminate and combat all forms of racial discrimination; to promote racial equality and communal harmony; and to encourage ethnic minorities settled in Hong Kong to integrate into the wider society, while retaining their cultural identity ("the integration policy"). The integration policy comprises three elements:

- i) to provide practical assistance to members of ethnic minorities to facilitate their settlement in Hong Kong and their integration into the wider community;
- ii) to address the problem of racial discrimination against ethnic minorities; and
- iii) to promote equal opportunities for all ethnic groups.

The above policy directives on race relations and social integration were formulated more than 10 years ago without further subsequent discussion. With the growing complexity of the minority community, it is important to review the policy directives so that race relations and social integration more effectively facilitate gender equality values and practices in minority communities.

Also, the representation of minority girls and women from diverse backgrounds should be increased and included in the formulation of policy and services related to the minority communities since they have first-hand knowledge and experience of the impact of these policies. This would enable productive adjustments in services to more effectively address real needs, rather than repeating ongoing initiatives that are set by committees which tend to be more dominated by males and the ethnic majority.

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