YEN Shiao-Chien
“Domestic Violence against Women in East Asia”

Methodology and Approach
For answering my research questions, I firstly had to define the meaning of the words “Domestic Violence,” and consider what would fall into that category. Many different government agencies, researchers or activists tend to use varying definitions for the purposes of their own studies regarding domestic violence. In my thesis, domestic violence would be defined in accordance with the definition given by WHO and famous Peace researcher like Johan Galtung and Alberto Godenzri.

“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, deprivation or maltreatment.” (WHO 2013)

One of my goals of this paper is to examine the problem of wife abuse in Korean, Japanese, and Chinese society. The second part of my thesis tries to compare and contrast between the laws against domestic violence in South Korea, Japan and China with the laws in international standards. It will also call the DV-laws of these countries into question, and examine whether or not that these government really put the law into practice.

I emphasized on collecting data to support my research through a series of self-provided questionnaires and evaluation of the anonymous surveys. This gives me some insight of the personal argument from Japanese, Korean and Chinese students, which provides an estimate how the natives perceive DV from each of the three countries. Afterwards, I would discuss the topic with thorough analysis and comparison between them.

Main Facts
Domestic Violence knows no color and nationality and probably has always been part of the human experience. Nevertheless, domestic violence is an abusive behavior that is a violation of basic human rights and human well being.

Even in our modern society, domestic violence in East Asia has been considered an insignificant, private problem. Domestic violence, especially against women, has a long history in Japan, South Korea and China and has been socially accepted as a part of marital life in these three countries. This kind of abuse still continues to be prevalent because of cultural beliefs in male superiority, public acceptance of the practice, the government’s unwillingness to recognize its existence, and the lack of sanctions against domestic violence. The Asian traditional perspective and the patriarchal family ideology drew from the historical Confucian notion of the “three obediences,” which, although considered a positive virtue, it also unfortunately condones the use of violence against women in East Asia.

The World Health Organization has developed a typology of violence that characterized the contexts in which violence occurs and the interactions between the 3 different types of violence, specifically self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. This typology also illustrates the nature of violent acts, which could be physical, sexual, or psychological which may involve deprivation or neglect.

Psychologist Lenore Walker found that many violent relationships follow a common pattern or cycle. This cycle will continue to repeat itself, and each time, the level of violence may increase. The situation can escalate without professional help, which could be very dangerous for the abused victims.

Cycle of domestic violence

State of the Art
The topic of Domestic Violence (or DV) was long ignored from the government and also from the society. However, the problem is far more serious than people realize and often leading to unhealthy dysfunctional families or even death of the abused partner. Most of the East Asian societies tried to hide this kind of “private matter,” believing that doing so would protect the honor of the family and to “keep face.” For that reason, it was very difficult and poses a huge challenge to find information about domestic violence against women in East Asia. In fact, there was limited to almost no research on this issue.

I mostly worked with books, articles, various research papers from students, and also with internet references from 1990 to the present. I also used a lot of newspaper articles from each of the respective countries, which was very useful for my paper, because it brings light to the current situation of these three countries. Facts, figures, and percentages by UNFOSO or contemporary women’s issues were utilized to retrieve an easier way to understand and overview this topic.

Today, there are several legislations and agreement requiring that discrimination against women is forbidden. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international “Bill of rights for women”. CEDAW is one of the most highly ratified international human rights conventions, having the support of 188 States parties. General Comments (formerly known as General Recommendations (GR), were adopted by the CEDAW Committee to protect women against violence in their everyday lives. General Comments No. 12 and No. 19 are perhaps the most important portions against domestic violence against women. In addition to the CEDAW, there were also other legal treaties and conventions which guarantee protection and fair rights for everyone. Although they do not specifically mention DV or violence against women, but the scope of the laws could still help to protect people against that kind of abuse. These include the International Covenant on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and many more.

Results
During the many months that were spent in researching for my paper, I conclude that most East Asian cultures are very similar, where they share many common characteristics within the diverse cultural traditions and customs. This influences their way of thinking regarding gender-based studies, such as violence against women. Until today, there was no conclusive research or evidence that could prove or explain what influenced the development of domestic violence. Based on my studies, I believe domestic violence could be attributed to certain cultural characteristics, like the patriarchal beliefs or Confucianism ideology, which places women at a lower rank within the social spectrum that ultimately makes a culture accept domestically violent behaviors against women.

References
All references can be found in the full version of my MA thesis.

About the Author
My name is Yen Shiao-Chien, majoring in East Asian Economic and Society. My future goal is to further develop my career in East Asia.

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