What do we know about men and masculinities in Hong Kong? A scoping review and content analysis

Abstract

In this review, we critically examine existing literature on men and masculinities in Hong Kong, focusing on Hong Kong Chinese masculinity. We employ Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage methodological framework, and analysed twenty-five relevant studies. We identified themes such as breadwinner masculinity, work, family, social respectability, and manifestations of soft masculinity. The findings highlight the importance of masculinity for men's well-being, and the need for further research. Specifically, age-specific studies, nuanced exploration of gender dynamics, and the interplay between family dynamics and masculinity. We also advocate for more focused examinations beyond the generic concept of "Chinese masculinity." Our findings inform future research, interventions, and initiatives addressing masculinities in Hong Kong and beyond.

Keywords: Hong Kong; men and masculinities; Chinese masculinity; hegemonic masculinity; manhood; gender

Masculinity is a socially and culturally constructed concept that encompasses attributes, behaviours, and roles associated with being a man in society (Butler, 2006; Kimmel, 2008). It is not synonymous with men *per se*, but rather a set of social expectations that shape identities, values, behaviours, and patterns of practice associated with manhood. These expectations are constantly (re)constructed across different contexts and cultures, influenced by men, women, and social settings (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). *Masculinities* highlight the dynamic and multifaceted nature of how men perform and embody masculine traits in various cultural and social contexts.

In this review, we address the knowledge gap in understanding men and masculinities in Hong Kong. Despite the growing interest, there is a dearth of in-depth reviews specific to men and masculinities in this context. The primary objectives of this review are twofold: (i) to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing studies on men and masculinities in Hong Kong and, (ii) to conceptualise the notion of "Hong Kong Chinese masculinity" based on the findings of the included studies. We focus on the concept of hegemonic masculinity within the Hong Kong context and explore the cultural and social factors that shape the embodiment of masculinity among Hong Kong Chinese men. Additionally, we identify key themes and research gaps in the current literature, laying the foundation for future research and a nuanced understanding of masculinity in this distinct socio-cultural setting.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity has had a significant impact on contemporary understandings of men and masculinities, gender dynamics, and social hierarchies. The theory offers a comprehensive framework for elucidating the hegemonic form of masculinity that exercises power within a particular society, thereby playing a significant role in the

establishment and perpetuation of gender hierarchies and social norms. Hegemonic masculinity recognises the interplay between different forms of masculinities and highlights how certain masculinities are privileged, while others are subordinated or marginalised. Connell (1995) outlined four categories of masculinities: hegemonic, subordinate, marginalised, and complicit. These categories exist in relation to one another and form a hierarchical structure.

The concept of hegemony, derived from Antonio Gramsci (1971), involves the imposition of ideology by the ruling class to establish dominance over subordinate groups. Cultural hegemony entails an ongoing ideological struggle using coercion, consent, and cultural manipulation to secure consensus and acceptance. Hegemonic masculinity, influenced by the ability to establish and uphold norms, exerts social influence, shapes gender relations, and maintains power structures.

The concept of hegemony in explaining masculinity has faced criticism due to its lack of clarity in identifying who represents hegemonic masculinity and the specific associated behaviours (Donaldson, 1993). Inconsistent application of the concept has been observed, with descriptions ranging from a fixed type of masculinity to reflecting the prevailing dominant type in specific contexts (Martin, 1998). The concept has also been criticised for its failure to specify the practical manifestations or specific behaviours associated with conformity to hegemonic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Furthermore, confusion remains regarding the identification of individuals who are actually considered hegemonically masculine (Whitehead, 1998; 2002).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) redefined hegemonic masculinity, asserting that being considered masculine does not require men to embody all aspects of hegemonic masculinity, and the concept does not seek to depict a specific type of masculinity or a definitive category of men

who inherently possess masculine traits. They argued that masculinity is a social process shaped by social actions, allowing individuals to negotiate multiple masculinities based on their context and experiences. The reformulated framework emphasises the interplay between gender relations and social institutions, highlighting the hierarchical nature of men in the system of masculinity. It underscores the concept of hegemony by aligning with and reinforcing existing power structures and social orders. This framework recognises that masculinity is influenced by cultural, social, historical, and geographical factors, and explains how power is maintained in gender relations. Building upon this understanding, an intersectional perspective is essential for understanding the complexities of masculinities within specific contexts, as experiences and expressions of masculinity are influenced by various social identities.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been subject to ongoing debate and inconsistent usage in academia. Scholars like Flood (2002) and Beasley (2008) critiqued its inconsistent applications, arguing that "dominant" forms of masculinity in specific actual contexts do not necessarily equate to hegemonic masculinities that legitimise men's power over women and other men. According to Messerschmidt (2019), the widespread confusion among scholars arises from mistakenly labelling dominant masculinities as hegemonic masculinities. Instead, it is necessary to differentiate between these two concepts. Dominant masculinity, shaped by social norms, expectations, and institutional practices, may not fully encompass the complexities of power dynamics or the broader social order.

The distinction is significant in understanding masculine capital, as proposed by Anderson (2009) and de Visser et al. (2009). Masculine capital, building upon Bourdieu's (1984) concept of symbolic capital, examines the contribution of behaviours and characteristics to masculinity in different social contexts. For example, in the context of heterosexual white

masculinity, behaviours such as excelling in team sports (Nauright & Chandler, 1996), achieving muscularity (Lefkowich et al., 2017), alcohol consumption (Lemle & Mishkind, 1989), smoking (Kodriati et al., 2018), and overt heterosexuality have been identified as important sources of masculine capital. These behaviours can counterbalance feminine traits or protect against perceived failures of masculinity (de Visser & McDonnell, 2013). Understanding the interplay between dominant masculinities and masculine capital provides insight into the dynamic construction and manifestation of masculinity in diverse social contexts.

Hegemonic masculinity is a framework to describe the power dynamics and social processes that legitimise a hierarchical structure among different forms of masculinity, where certain forms of masculinities are regarded as superior. In contrast, masculine capital represents the embodiment of dominant masculinity and signifies the accumulation of patriarchal dividends within a specific social context. It emphasises individual agency and strategic actions within gender norms and expectations. We argue that some scholars in Hong Kong have mistakenly conflated the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and dominant masculinity. In this regard, the concept of masculine capital, which focuses on how men behave and express themselves to embody various forms of masculinity, proves to be a valuable framework for comprehending the dominant masculinities observed in Hong Kong.

Misconception of hegemonic masculinity in Hong Kong Chinese society: A review of the literature

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been extensively discussed in the men and masculinities literature. However, there are inconsistencies in its usage among scholars. Several scholars define hegemonic masculinity as the dominant ideology, culture, or ideal of masculinity within a given context (Ho et al., 2018; Rochelle, 2019; 2020). Conversely, other scholars define

it as a pattern of masculine gendered practice that legitimises dominance among certain men and subordination of women (Kong, 2004; 2009; 2021; Liong, 2017).

Scholars often oversimplify hegemonic masculinity, portraying it as a singular form that men can either "obtain", "fulfil" or "reject." However, they fail to acknowledge the complex relational nature of hegemonic masculinity, which involves examining its relationship with subordinate, marginalised, and complicit masculinities. For instance, Rochelle (2015) hypothesised that older Hong Kong men who adopt hegemonic masculinity are more likely to engage in behaviours such as smoking and alcohol consumption while attributing the origins of "traditional" hegemonic masculinity to Western societies. Leung and Chan (2014) proposed the development of gender-based or anti-sexist practices to effectively address men's issues in social work services, necessitating the deconstruction of the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Similarly, Leung, Chan, and Tam (2019) called for male caregivers in Hong Kong to abandon hegemonic masculinity to establish relationships with their spouses and children on equal grounds. Leung (2021) discussed how men negotiate a new form of masculinity by either maintaining or rejecting hegemonic masculinity through reflective engagement in caring practices. Additionally, Kong (2021) suggested that men who are denied access to power often negotiate their positions from outside hegemonic masculinity by identifying, conforming, rejecting, redefining, or even protesting against it. Kong (2020), in comparing two generations of gay men in Hong Kong, even proposed the emergence of a new form of "gay hegemonic masculinity" that combines elements of hegemonic masculinity and homonormativity.

The treatment of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed form of masculinity by scholars raises significant concerns. Instead, their approach to hegemonic masculinity aligns more closely with the concepts of dominant masculinity and masculine capital. They highlight the specific

behaviours and traits that men strategically adopt to conform to societal expectations of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity serves as a framework to demonstrate the hierarchical nature of masculinity and the dominance of certain masculine traits. Consequently, it is constantly contested, reconstructed, and negotiated within social institutions. Therefore, completely rejecting or deconstructing hegemonic masculinity is problematic. Additionally, the idea of "gay hegemonic masculinity" would only exist if homosexuality becomes a dominant social institution in Chinese culture. The scholars in the included studies primarily discuss how some men in Hong Kong embody or challenge subordinate or marginalised masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity extends beyond being a mere dominant form of masculinity; it also emphasises how social institutions maintain certain masculine traits to control and dominate the gender system.

The embodiment of the so-called hegemonic masculinity among Hong Kong Chinese is often associated with fulfilling the family breadwinner role. Rochelle (2020) argued that hegemonic masculinity is exemplified by behaviours such as being the primary provider, displaying emotional and physical strength, adhering to heterosexuality, and engaging in risk-taking behaviours. Leung, Chan, and Tam (2019) highlighted the significance of men adopting the family breadwinner role to construct their hegemonic masculinity and gain social recognition and respect. On a different note, Liong and Chan (2020) pointed out that in Chinese culture, hegemonic masculinity is linked to the Confucian masculine quality of *wen*, which encompasses refined qualities associated with literary and artistic pursuits traditionally embraced by classical scholars (Louie, 2002). The mentioned criteria alone cannot be deemed as definitive traits of hegemonic masculinity for Hong Kong Chinese without considering the other three types of masculinities within the framework of hegemonic masculinity. Nonetheless, the subsequent

section will provide a concise discussion on dominant masculinity within the specific context of Hong Kong Chinese society.

Chinese masculinities in Hong Kong: Cultural roots and transformations

Existing scholarship questions the applicability of Western conceptualizations of masculinity in Chinese society. Louie (2002) proposed that Chinese masculinity encompasses a combination of *yin* and *yang* attributes, known as the *wen-wu* construct derived from Confucian roots (Louie & Edwards, 1994). It represents a balance between macho hero qualities and intellectual gentleness. *Wen* and *wu* share commonalities, such as reserved emotional expression and emphasis on self-control (Jankowiak & Li, 2014).

Research on Chinese masculinities can be divided into two areas. One focuses on the challenges faced by diaspora Chinese men within Western hegemonic masculinity, exploring their gender strategies for attaining a sense of masculinity (Chen, 1999; Shek, 2006). The other examines the experiences of Chinese men in predominantly Chinese societies, including China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and explores the intersections of masculinities across diverse social contexts.

Traditional Chinese masculinity evolves in contemporary Chinese settings, influenced by both Western masculinities and "Pan East-Asian" soft masculinities due to globalisation (Louie, 2015; Song, 2022; Wen, 2021; Yu & Sui, 2022). Notably, the market reforms in China during the 1990s had a profound impact on the evolution of masculinity. These reforms brought about the adoption of Western cultural values, leading Chinese men to embrace assertiveness, sociability, and personal development (Jankowiak & Li, 2014). With greater financial responsibility for their families, contrasting with the pre-market reform era when the state bore the overall welfare burden of its citizens, men had to embody attributes of capability,

decisiveness, confidence, and strength, aligning with China's changing social development. As a result, contemporary Chinese societies now exhibit a coexistence of traditional and hybrid forms of masculinity.

Chinese men today face the challenge of reconciling traditional Confucian values that emphasise their roles as husbands and scholarly gentlemen (Rosenlee, 2023), along with their obligations to family and the collective interests of the state (Hird, 2017). They must also navigate the contemporary emphasis on economic entrepreneurship, individual competition, and material success in the era of neoliberalism (Song & Hird, 2013). The construction and experience of masculinities are influenced by societal structures of patriarchy and gender inequality, leading to intra-national variations (Holter, 2005). Scholars have dedicated efforts to exploring the differences in masculinities among Chinese cultures, including Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan (Kong, 2020; Wong & Yau, 2016).

Hong Kong provides a unique context for studying men and masculinities, as its connection to traditional Chinese cultural values was less impacted by the Cultural Revolution's efforts to remove Confucianism (Li & Jankowiak, 2016). While research on men and masculinities in Hong Kong has gained interest in recent decades, it only began to emerge in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Initially, studies focused on gender ideals and portrayals of masculinity in Hong Kong films and media culture (Chan, 2010; Choi, 2005; Enns, 2000; Fung & Ma, 2000; Furnham et al., 2000; Furnham & Li, 2008; Ha, 2009; Kong, 2005; Ku, 2005; Lo, 2009; Pang, 2002; 2005; Stringer, 1997). However, in the late 2000s, research involving human participants and focusing on men and masculinities in Hong Kong's social sciences field began to grow.

Liong and Ho (2019) proposed that the surge in interest in men and masculinities studies in Hong Kong began in 2009, primarily examining the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and deteriorating economic conditions on men. Since then, there has been a growing body of research exploring the intersection between masculinities and various topics, including cultural phenomena, men's health, familial and intimate relationships, and the socio-political conditions in Hong Kong. Our aim was to conduct a scoping review to comprehensively understand Hong Kong Chinese masculinity in line with this growing research.

Methodology

In this scoping review, we employed Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage methodological framework. The research question guiding this review was "What are the key characteristics of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity?" In June 2023, we conducted a comprehensive search and screening of relevant studies in seven academic databases (EBSCOhost, Sociological Abstracts, JSTOR, SAGE Journals, Web of Science, Annual Reviews, and ScienceDirect), and Google Scholar. Predefined keyword combinations (Masculinity OR Masculine OR Manhood OR Gender roles OR Gender identity) AND Hong Kong) were used to search for relevant research published in English. In addition to English language studies, the first author (HCT) identified a Chinese book (Wong, 2014) on the intersections among masculinity in Hong Kong. However, this book was excluded from the review as it was not peer-reviewed.

The objective of this scoping review was to investigate the prevalent definitions of manhood or patterns of men's practice within the Hong Kong context, referred to as "dominant masculinity" in this review. However, the term "dominant" can potentially evoke ambiguity as it may represent either the most common form of masculine practice or the form that ensures men's political dominance (Flood, 2002). To differentiate from hegemonic masculinity, we

adopted the term “dominant masculinity” in this review. All empirical studies involving human participants were included in the review, regardless of research design or time. The scoping procedures are presented in Figure 1, and a total of 25 studies met the inclusion criteria, which required them to be (i) peer-reviewed, (ii) involve Hong Kong Chinese participants, and (iii) deliberate upon the concept of masculinities. The first author (HCT) identified all possible records from the databases for identification and screening. After removing duplicates, HCT conducted the full-text screening, while the second author (CK) intermittently reviewed the process. The identification and screening process are outlined in Figure 2.

Content analysis was used to synthesise the qualitative and quantitative evidence in this scoping review (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005; Pope et al., 2008). The primary objective of the review was to conceptualise Hong Kong Chinese masculinity by extracting data on its patterns and characteristics from the included studies. Among the quantitative studies (n = 9), two scales were predominantly employed: the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46 (CMNI-46) (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2009) (n = 6) and the Masculine Discrepancy Stress Scale (MDSS) (Reidy et al., 2014; 2016) (n = 3). Notably, a common pattern emerged where participants exhibited higher mean scores on these scales. As most of the studies explored the intersection of masculinity with other social factors, the characteristics of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity were defined through cross-synthesis of their frequency across studies, employing the theoretical framework of dominant masculinity.

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Findings

General characteristics of included studies

The majority of studies (n = 15) used qualitative methodologies, primarily in-depth semi-structured interviews (n = 13) supplemented by focus groups (n = 5), participant observations (n = 2), and ethnography (n = 1). The sample sizes ranged from 5 to 45 participants, with an average sample size of 22. These qualitative studies explored various aspects of Hong Kong men's experiences in negotiating masculinities, including media consumption, homosexuality, commercial sex, and familial issues. The quantitative studies (n = 9) employed either the CMNI-46 (n = 6) or the MDSS (n = 3) to examine men's health and well-being in relation to adherence to masculine norms and the impact of lacking masculine traits on health behaviours. The sample sizes ranged from 220 to 2000 participants, with an average sample size of 977. One study used a mixed-method approach combining a telephone survey with in-depth semi-structured interviews. The sample sizes ranged from 10 to 547 participants.

Participants

The studies primarily involved male Hong Kong Chinese participants, with two qualitative studies including participants from mainland China and/or Taiwan, and two quantitative studies including participants from mainland China, South Asian backgrounds, and Caucasians residing in Hong Kong. Despite this diversity, data specific to the Hong Kong Chinese participants were available for extraction (N = 8417). The age range of the targeted populations varied from 17 to 87 years old. Specific groups studied included Korean TV drama viewers, sexual abuse survivors, sex workers, individuals involved in commercial sex/intimacy, homosexual men, male caregivers, college students, fathers, and men in intimate relationships with mainland Chinese

women. The emphasis of the studies was on role-specific rather than age-specific groups of participants.

Examining Hong Kong Chinese masculinity: Insights from quantitative studies

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI) and Masculine Discrepancy Stress Scale (MDSS)

Among the nine quantitative studies included in this review, six studies used the CMNI-46 by Parent and Moradi (2009), with four studies using the full CMNI-46 and two studies using its subscales. Three studies employed the Masculine Discrepancy Stress Scale (MDSS) or its subscales to explore the relationship between health behaviour, stress, emotional expression, and conformity to normative masculinity. The CMNI consists of 94 items divided into nine subscales: 1) Winning, 2) Emotional Control, 3) Risk-Taking, 4) Violence, 5) Power Over Women, 6) Playboy, 7) Self-Reliance, 8) Primacy of Work, and 9) Heterosexual Self-presentation. Participants rate each item on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate greater conformity to masculine norms, with some items being reverse-coded. The CMNI-46 is a shorter version of the original CMNI and has similar psychometric strengths (Parent & Moradi, 2011). The MDSS is a 5-item scale that measures individuals' subjective feelings about their embodiment of masculinity. Participants rate the items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The statements include: 1) "I am less masculine than the average guy," 2) "Compared to my guy friends, I am not very masculine," 3) "Most women I know would say that I am not as masculine as my friends," 4) "Most women would consider me to be less masculine than the typical guy," and 5) "Most guys would think I am not very masculine compared to them."

Rochelle and Yim (2015) examined the reliability of a Chinese version of CMNI-46 and found that the scale exhibited lower reliability in the Hong Kong Chinese population (α = .79) compared to the Western population (α = .85) (Parent & Moradi, 2011). Rochelle (2019) expanded the sample to include men from different ethnic groups in Hong Kong, such as Hong Kong Chinese, mainland Chinese, Caucasian, and South Asian individuals. This study explored the relationship between masculinity, health behaviour, social support, and job stress. Results showed that Hong Kong Chinese men had the lowest scores on the CMNI-46 (M = 57.45, SD = 13.10) compared to other groups: mainland Chinese (M = 58.93, SD = 13.63), South Asian (M = 65.81, SD = 11.27), and Caucasian (M = 59.59, SD = 13.61). These findings highlight cross-national and intra-national differences in the embodiment of masculinity, even within the same cultural context.

The CMNI-46 was grounded in Mahalik et al.'s (2003) gender role norms model and CMNI, and was subsequently refined by Parent and Moradi (2009). While Rochelle and Yim (2015) found the Chinese version of CMNI-46 useful for measuring the Hong Kong Chinese population, an important consideration is that the dominant masculinity norms in CMNI are based on Western traditional masculinity. Mahalik et al. (2003) argued that "the expectations of masculinity as constructed by Caucasian, middle- and upper-class heterosexuals should affect members of that group and every other male in U.S. society who is held up to those standards" (p. 5). Therefore, relying solely on CMNI and assuming that Hong Kong Chinese males embody similar dominant masculinity norms as Western white males could oversimplify the understanding of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity and potentially overlook specific traits. On the other hand, the MDSS lacks a clear definition of masculinity and relies solely on subjective feelings. Therefore, it may be challenging to fully understand Hong Kong Chinese masculinity

through these scales. However, one characteristic derived from the CMNI that may have relevance in the Hong Kong context is the emphasis on work and employment as markers of masculinity. This aspect warrants further exploration to gain a comprehensive understanding of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity.

Primacy of Work

Rochelle and Yim (2015) found higher mean scores in the "Primacy of Work" (1.65 versus 1.36), "Heterosexual Self-Presentation" (1.90 versus 1.80), and "Power over Women" (1.46 versus 1.07) subscales among Hong Kong Chinese participants compared to Western men in the original CMNI-46 study (Parent & Moradi, 2011). Another study by Rochelle (2015) revealed that older Hong Kong Chinese men showed a stronger inclination towards the primacy of work compared to younger men ($r = .31$, $p < .001$).

The "Primacy of Work" subscale consists of four items: "My work is the most important part of my life", "I don't like giving all my attention to work" (reverse-scored), "I feel good when work is my priority," and "Work comes first". These findings suggest that work holds a central position in the identity of Hong Kong Chinese men, particularly in comparison to Western men. This characteristic appears to be more prominent among the older generation of men in Hong Kong. These findings are in line with the qualitative studies included in this review.

Examining Hong Kong Chinese masculinity: Insights from qualitative studies

Breadwinner masculinity

Four studies explored the concept of "breadwinner masculinity," which refers to the societal expectation that men should be the primary financial providers while women take on homemaking roles. Lin and Tong (2007) interviewed 15 Hong Kong Chinese men and found that

traditional gender roles persisted despite the introduction of some ambiguity, such as emotional expressiveness and desire for romantic love, through Korean TV dramas. The participants still believed that men should bear primary responsibility for supporting the family.

Leung and Chan (2014) described "breadwinner masculinity" as a "double-edged sword" (Messner, 1997), providing men with power and status but also imposing pressure when their breadwinner status is challenged. The increase in double-earner families and women's employment has posed challenges to the traditional male breadwinner role. Similarly, Liong (2017) found that breadwinner masculinity remains integral to men's identity, despite the emergence of stay-at-home fathers. These studies suggest that while societal changes have altered traditional fatherhood roles, breadwinner masculinity continues to shape men's identities and experiences.

Kong's (2021) historical analysis offered insights into the origins and enduring prevalence of breadwinner masculinity in Hong Kong. It highlighted the complex interplay between social structures, cultural values, and individual experiences in shaping gender roles and the breadwinner masculine identity.

Work and employment

Work and employment have traditionally been associated with breadwinner masculinity, discussed as a fundamental aspect of masculine embodiment in five studies. However, a shift towards from the traditional breadwinner role to a contemporary "neoliberal entrepreneur" identity in the context of work and employment has emerged (Kong, 2020; 2021), presenting an intriguing area for examination.

Kong (2009) is one of the pioneering researchers who conducted research on the significance of work and employment in relation to masculinity. His study focused on male sex

workers in Hong Kong and revealed that they developed coping strategies emphasising work competence to embody the dominant masculinity associated with being an earner. Leung (2021) examined the intersection of caregiving and masculinity among 20 male caregivers, a group often seen as deviating from societal norms. The study found that participants expressed concerns about potential stigmatisation due to their caregiver identity, particularly its association with unemployment. Working-class participants were more susceptible to stigma compared to their middle-class counterparts. These findings suggest that the embodiment of masculinity may vary based on intersecting factors such as class, race, and age.

Although work and employment maintain a significant role in shaping the masculine identity of Hong Kong Chinese men, their meaning is shifting from a family-centred focus to a more individual-centred one. As noted by Kong (2020; 2021), Hong Kong's evolution as an international financial centre has made education and work crucial for success, upward mobility and individual achievement, diminishing the traditional family's role in providing economic support. He also found that younger participants in his studies embodied a "neoliberal entrepreneurial masculinity" that emphasises individual competence, material success through education and work, and the preservation of family wealth through intimacy.

Family and responsibility

The role of family is a significant component in constructing Hong Kong Chinese masculinity. As previously discussed, family is closely tied to breadwinner masculinity, which places expectations on men to financially provide for their families and fulfill their roles as fathers, husbands, and sons. Seven studies explored the role of the family in masculinity, highlighting how men fulfil their responsibilities by being filial sons, loyal husbands, and capable fathers. While being the family's breadwinner remains central, the pursuit of having a family is less

important for younger Hong Kong Chinese men (Ho, 2012; Kong, 2020; 2021). The roles of father and husband are less pronounced compared to being a responsible son. Nonetheless, husbands and fathers are responsible for caring for their family members (Leung et al., 2019; Liong, 2017) and maintaining the unity and integrity of the family unit (Ho, 2012; Liong, 2014).

Respectability

In a broader social context, respectability plays a significant role in constructing Hong Kong Chinese masculinity, as highlighted in five studies. Attaining social acceptance and displaying moral integrity are important for Hong Kong Chinese men. Sexuality emerges as a salient aspect, with participants in Kong's (2015; 2016) research engaging in purchasing sex as a form of "edgework" due to its social disapproval. Although they sought love and intimacy through such encounters, they perceived it as a negative association with masculinity and refrained from openly disclosing their involvement. Liong and Chan (2020) found that Hong Kong Chinese college students felt a strong obligation to be "performatively vigilant" (p.226). They carefully monitored their behaviour to avoid being labelled as "toxic men" associated with deficiencies in social skills, heterosexual desire, and appeal to women. However, they also aimed to prevent themselves from being stigmatised as obscene by not overacting their sexual desires. Respectability also involves adopting an authoritative role within the family (Ho et al., 2018) and avoiding actions that would bring shame upon the family (Kong, 2021).

Romantic, soft, and tender

Influenced by Confucianism, Hong Kong Chinese individuals prioritise maintaining relationship harmony and often regulate their public and familial expression of emotions (Bond & Wang, 1983; Kung, 2003; Lin & Fu, 1990). Compared to Western counterparts, Chinese males are

generally less willing to express negative or tender emotions (Chia et al., 1994). Some Hong Kong Chinese men experience discomfort when confronted with situations that require emotional expression (Tang & Lau, 1996). The reviewed literature also sheds light on prevalent tendencies observed among certain individuals who tend to internalise their emotions and avoid seeking help or support (Chan & Cho, 2023; Kong, 2021; Yeung et al., 2015). However, there are indications of a shifting ideology, with some studies suggesting expectations for men to exhibit tenderness and emotional expressiveness (Lin & Tong, 2007). A local NGO campaign highlighted the concept of the "new good man," portraying men as loving husbands and caring fathers who actively seek emotional closeness with their children and ensure their wives' happiness (Liong, 2014). Studies also found a desire for romantic intimacy among individuals engaged in compensated dating (exchanging companionship or sexual services for compensation or gifts, often with young females) and the sex industry, viewing it as a way to embody masculinity (Chu & Laidler, 2016; Kong, 2015; 2016).

Discussion

Conceptualising Hong Kong Chinese masculinity

The analysis explores the interplay between breadwinner masculinity, work, family, and social respectability in Hong Kong Chinese masculinity. These concepts are interconnected and shape men's expectations, roles, and behaviours.

Breadwinner masculinity emphasises men's role as primary providers for their families. While commonly discussed in Western societies (Myers & Demantas, 2016; Pulé & Hultman, 2019), it has distinct characteristics in the Chinese and Hong Kong context. In China, there has been a resurgence of this concept, promoted by the state through a discourse of "natural sex

differences" to foster economic development and establish a new masculine ideal. Chinese men are expected to provide both basic necessities and a desirable standard of living. In Hong Kong, utilitarianistic familism influenced by market economism shapes the embodiment of breadwinner masculinity, prioritising materialistic concerns within familial relationships (Lau, 1978; Wong & Yau, 2016; Yau, 2023). While both Hong Kong and China share elements of breadwinner masculinity, the specific manifestations and motivations differ.

Work and employment are closely tied to breadwinner masculinity in Hong Kong, with expectations for men to prioritise their careers and strive for professional success. This aligns with Western viewpoints on the significance of work, where masculinities are enacted in daily conduct, organizational life, and the construction of workplaces (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Fuller, 2000). However, the relationship between work and masculinity may vary across cultures, societies, and generations in Hong Kong. The culture of overwork in Hong Kong is rooted in the values of hard work, productivity in traditional Chinese culture, and utilitarianism. This pervasive overwork culture contributes to pressures on masculinity (Leung and Chan, 2014). Hong Kong has had longer working hours compared to other advanced regions (Legislative Council, 2019), and these long working hours may harm men's mental well-being more than women's (Driesen et al., 2010).

The increasing employment of women in Hong Kong brings changes in gender roles within the family. Men embodying breadwinner masculinity may feel pressure and perceive successful women in the workplace as a threat to their masculinity (Leung & Chan, 2014). The employment of women in Hong Kong dates back to the rapid expansion of the manufacturing industry in the 1960s and 1970s (Wong & Yau, 2016). Women often left school after primary education to support their male siblings' education and contribute to the family's income (Salaff,

1981). The primary motivation for women's employment was to optimise economic opportunities for the family rather than empowering women themselves, resulting in lower levels of education and career advancement for women. This historical context may contribute to some men perceiving "career women" as a threat in the workplace. However, with mandatory 12 years of education, men and women now have more equal opportunities from a young age, justifying a re-examination of these ideologies.

Family holds immense value in Chinese culture, and familial obligations and responsibilities shape men's pursuits and behaviours in work and employment. Filial piety remains culturally significant in contemporary China, where men are expected to defer to their parents' wishes and elevate their standing in the community (Choi & Peng, 2016; Lin, 2014). In post-socialist China, men born after the 1980s, often the only child, are expected to bring honour to their parents through entrepreneurial masculinity and achieving educational and economic success (Liu, 2019). In contrast, in Hong Kong, where the one-child policy has not been adopted and influenced by utilitarianistic familism, men are still expected to excel academically and in their careers, primarily to provide for their nuclear family rather than their parents' extended family. While men in Hong Kong are still expected to support their parents, the interests of their own families take precedence (Wong & Yau, 2016).

Social respectability is another important aspect of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity, with men expected to adhere to morally upright conduct in various aspects of their lives. This expectation aligns with the concept of *junzi*, which traditionally encompasses suppressing personal desires to achieve virtuous manhood in the public realm. In the contemporary context, being a *junzi* holds significance beyond education and business, as it helps cultivate a stable Chinese identity and grants privileged social status. By embracing Confucian values, highly

educated men establish themselves as *junzi*, distinguishing themselves from other social groups while reconciling material success with moral respectability (Hird, 2017).

Hong Kong Chinese men are also embracing qualities traditionally associated with femininity, reflecting a shift towards "soft masculinity" and the *caizi* concept. *Caizi* encompasses *qing*, a sensibility that extends to not only human beings but also natural entities, and *cai*, the intellectual ability (Song, 2004). Together with *junzi*, these concepts form the foundation of the discourse surrounding the fragile scholar, emphasising emotional expression and intimacy, education, material success, and moral respectability. However, it is important to note that Chinese/Hong Kong masculinity is dynamic and influenced by social contexts, including globalisation. Exploring the intersection between masculinity, intimacy, dating, and love may shed light on these dynamics (Choi & Chan, 2013).

Lion Rock spirit – More than a local identity

Gendered identities and national identities (not necessarily tied to a nation-state) are mutually constitutive (Goodman, 2002). We observe that the local identity of Hong Kong Chinese, through the concept of the "Lion Rock spirit," resonates with the dominant masculinity in Hong Kong.

In 1972, the TV series *Below the Lion Rock* was released by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK). This docudrama became a cultural phenomenon in Hong Kong, depicting various aspects of local life and addressing social issues. It gained popularity and resonated deeply with viewers. The series led to the emergence of the "Lion Rock spirit," representing the collective values and experiences of the local population. It symbolises the perseverance, solidarity, and self-reliance of Hong Kong citizens, including migrants from mainland China, to build a prosperous future through hard work (Lam, 2015; Wu, 2020).

The Lion Rock spirit aligns with the previously discussed emphasis on work as a catalyst for economic advancement. An archetypal Hong Kong Chinese man, embodying Lion Rock masculinity, is expected to fulfil family roles and be resilient and self-reliant. However, the Lion Rock spirit has transformed as Hong Kong has become an international financial centre, while still valuing hard work. The new Lion Rock spirit is now associated with autonomy and independence (Lam, 2015; Wu, 2020), reflecting an archetype of individual achievement rather than family honour. This transformation aligns with the contemporary identity of Hong Kong Chinese men, emphasizing work as a central pillar of their identity.

Hong Kong Chinese masculinity is a dynamic and evolving construct, shaped by factors such as work, family dynamics, and changing gender norms. It reflects a complex network of expectations and roles imposed on men within this cultural context. However, these dynamics are subject to change as society and culture transform. This dominant masculinity is partly inherited ideologically and historically, and partly evolves through social, economic, and political factors, and so on. Further research is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity and its implications.

Implications: Impacts on well-being

Several studies indicated that masculinity has a significant impact on well-being, particularly with unhealthy behaviours. Yang et al. (2018a; 2019) found that individuals perceiving themselves as lacking masculinity were more likely to engage in addictive social media use ($p < .01$) and binge drinking ($p < .05$). Rochelle (2015) discovered that older Hong Kong Chinese men had higher rates of smoking and alcohol consumption ($r = .31$, $p < .001$) and exhibited greater self-reliance ($r = .19$, $p < .01$) and emotional control ($r = .15$, $p < .01$) compared to younger generations. Additionally, the decline of masculine qualities during ageing and

retirement may lead to a loss of masculinity and social capital for older men in Western cultures (Meadows & Davidson, 2006; Thompson, 2019). It is important to consider similar impacts on older Hong Kong Chinese men and explore how cultural and contextual factors influence their experiences. Further research should also examine whether these patterns hold true for younger men influenced by shifting gender norms and societal expectations. Understanding the interplay between traditional values and emerging influences is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of masculinity and its effects on well-being.

Yeung et al. (2015) found that greater adherence to the "Emotional Control" masculine norm was associated with poorer psychological well-being ($r = -0.32$, $p < .01$) and increased stress appraisal in expressing tender emotions ($r = .22$, $p < .01$). Similarly, Yang et al. (2018b) discovered that men perceiving themselves as failing to meet societal expectations of dominant masculine attributes were more likely to experience low self-esteem, social anxiety, and depressive symptoms, particularly among younger ($\beta = -0.08$, $p < .01$) and unmarried/less-educated men ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .001$). However, the studies had some contradictory findings, possibly due to different measurement scales and limited representation of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity in Western-based scales.

Several studies in this review highlighted the lack of gender-specific social services for men (Chan & Cho, 2023; Ho, 2012; Leung & Chan, 2014; Leung, 2021), indicating the need for further research in this area. Developing tailored interventions and support systems that address the unique needs and challenges faced by men may contribute to improving their overall well-being.

Directions for future research

Age-specific research

The review identified a gap in the literature, with most studies focusing on specific roles rather than considering age-specific groups. However, some scholars recognised the importance of age differences in the embodiment of masculinity among Hong Kong Chinese (Kong, 2021), suggesting the need to include a larger sample of men from multiple generations. Additionally, research conducted in Western contexts emphasised the significance of generational factors in shaping masculinity (Hearn et al., 2012; Perales et al., 2023). The dominant form of masculinity may not apply universally to men of all ages, as older men's masculinity often differs from that of younger men (Thompson & Langendoerfer, 2016). Age-specific research exploring generational differences in masculinity embodiment and performance becomes crucial for understanding and supporting the specific needs of men at different stages of life.

Exploring masculinity and femininity

The reviewed studies focused solely on male perspectives on masculinity, but a comprehensive understanding of masculinity requires acknowledging its relationship with femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Masculinity and femininity are not exclusive to men and women, respectively. For example, female masculinity can be studied by examining the lived experiences of women, as demonstrated in Claire and Alderson's (2013) exploration in Canada. Social and gender expectations placed on males are not solely constructed by masculine perspectives (Català et al., 2012; Wong & Yau, 2016). Including diverse participants beyond males in empirical studies is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of masculinities and gender dynamics. This inclusive approach enables a broader exploration of the complex interplay

between masculinity and femininity and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gender in the context of Hong Kong.

Exploring family and kinship

The review highlights the significant influence of family and responsibilities on the construction of masculinity among Hong Kong Chinese men. Family serves as a platform for expressing and nurturing masculinity, shaping a man's self-perception to others. Family dynamics, particularly parental influence, play a crucial role in shaping gender identity (Witt, 1997). Observing and internalising gender norms within the family unit contribute to children's understanding of masculinity. Variations in family structures, such as nuclear families, single-parent families, orphans, and same-sex parents, may impact the construction and experience of masculinity. Exploring the process of socialisation and identity formation within the family context is crucial, given the transformations in family structures due to social, economic, and political changes in Hong Kong.

Longitudinal studies and life history research (Jessee, 2018) offer valuable approaches to understanding the formation of masculinity within the family and its impact on men's behaviours. These methods track individuals over time, providing insights into how masculinity evolves and is shaped by various factors. They address the complexities of masculinity within changing family structures and the broader social context in Hong Kong.

Study limitations

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged for a comprehensive understanding of its scope and potential implications. Firstly, the ambiguity between hegemonic masculinity and dominant masculinity may have influenced the literature selection and analysis. Despite efforts

made to differentiate between these constructs, further clarification and refinement of conceptual distinctions specific to Hong Kong Chinese men and masculinities literature would have improved the study's accuracy and robustness.

Secondly, the use of content analysis as a synthesis method presents limitations in capturing complex and contextual factors. Its reductive nature may oversimplify the data and overlook important nuances (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005). Relying solely on frequency-counting may ignore the depth and complexity of the phenomenon. Theme frequency does not necessarily indicate utmost importance in "Hong Kong Chinese" masculinity. Treating the absence of evidence (non-reporting) as evidence of insignificance should be done cautiously to avoid misleading conclusions. However, content analysis is suitable for descriptive and "thin" data (Snilstveit et al., 2012).

Furthermore, excluding non-empirical studies may have limited access to valuable contextual information. Considering theoretical frameworks, conceptual advancements, and intersectionality of masculinity with other social identities, such as race, class, sexual orientation, disability, media representation, history, and power dynamics, could have enriched the analysis and provided a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of masculinity in Hong Kong.

Conclusions

The objective of this review is to comprehensively understand Hong Kong Chinese masculinity, contributing to the knowledge base and informing future research and interventions. The identified themes shed light on the characteristics of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity, including breadwinner roles, the importance of work, family values, social respectability, and the increasing significance of romanticism and tenderness. The review also emphasises the influence

of social, economic, and political factors on shaping Hong Kong Chinese masculinity and the importance of masculinity for men's well-being, highlighting the need for further investigation.

The findings suggest future research directions. Age-specific studies could explore masculinity across generations in Hong Kong. Studying both masculinity and femininity would provide a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics. Exploring the interplay between family dynamics, structure, and masculinity is important, considering the evolving nature of masculinity across life stages.

The field of masculinities studies in Hong Kong is underdeveloped with knowledge gaps. Using a broad framework of "Chinese masculinity" is problematic. Specific examinations are needed to understand the experiences and challenges of Hong Kong Chinese men. Replicating the concept of "Chinese masculinity" fails to capture the intricacies of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity. More empirical research on regional Chinese masculinities is necessary to account for variations and challenges among Chinese men in different regions, including Hong Kong and Macau, as well as in trans-regional masculinities.

By studying the interconnectedness of masculinities with social dynamics and comprehensively capturing the complexities of Hong Kong Chinese masculinity, a nuanced understanding of gender relations can be gained. This understanding can inform efforts to address gender inequalities and promote inclusivity. Tailored interventions, policies, and programs can be developed to respect the diverse experiences and expressions of masculinity in Hong Kong.

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