

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: FACTORS, PERPETUATION,
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES & TREATMENT

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By

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence has been a long time issue that has affected both men and women in all cultures. The reasons someone might be abused could be related to both internal and external factors. This project reviewed previous literature that examined factors of abuse, perpetuation of abuse, cultural differences and treatments. Factors found to be related included alcohol use, violence in family of origin, need for dominance, drug use, stress, low paying occupations, cultural norms, and emotional dependency. Research findings have indicated domestic violence are a result of many factors and needs to be examined differently among different cultures and sub cultures.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Domestic violence has been a long time issue not only in the United States, but worldwide. In the United States it has been estimated that 3 million women each year have been physically or emotionally assaulted by a partner and fifty percent of the population studied by Walker (1999) had experienced some form of domestic violence at some point in their life.

In the United Kingdom four percent of women and two percent of men had been subjected to domestic violence within the last year. A Council of Europe study (1992) found that between six and ten percent of women suffered from domestic violence within any given year and one in four women had experienced at least one abusive episode with a partner over their lifetimes (Nationmaster, 2011).

Domestic violence has impacted both men and women because abusers or victims can be male or female. Numerous factors have played a huge role in the lives of the abusers and the victims and the effects of abuse are believed to have lasting negative effects on an individual. Domestic violence has been correlated with abusers and victim's education, age, and socioeconomic status. Other factors have played a role in domestic violence such as lack of social network, greater marital control by the husband, and

distress of the children and the history of marital violence in either the victims or abusers family of origin (Walker, 1999).

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence has been viewed as a serious issue in today's society and has been an underlying issue for quite some time. Domestic violence has been difficult to study and analyze for reasons such as social stigma, secrecy of the family, embarrassment and varying definitions of what violence means in different cultures. Domestic violence has been an issue that many have not been willing to talk about which has perpetuated the cycle of violence (Walker, 1999).

The United States Census Bureau in 2001 documented 691,710 non-fatal domestic violence acts committed and 1,247 fatal incidents. How many acts of domestic violence go unreported? In homes where domestic violence occurs, children who live there are at a three hundred percent greater risk of being abused (Nationmaster, 2011). Thirty to sixty-five percent of all homicides of women are related to domestic violence by their partners (Nationmaster, 2011). Domestic violence has been determined to be a serious issue that cannot be overlooked.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify from the research literature the behaviors associated with domestic violence in regards to factors related to abuse, factors related to the perpetuation of abuse, cultural differences and treatments.

Definitions of Terms

Domestic violence: Pattern of abusive behaviors that included a variety of psychological, sexual and physical maltreatment. These abusive behaviors were used by one person in the intimate relationship to gain control, power and authority (APA, 1996).

Intimate partner violence: Physical, psychological or sexual harm inflicted by a partner or ex-partner (CDC, 2011).

Physical violence: Physical force used to inflict harm but not limited to grabbing, kicking, choking, punching, biting, slapping and burning.

Sexual violence: Forced a partner to engage in a sexual act, or have engaged in sex with someone that was unable to consent or to have inflicted abusive sexual contact.

Psychological/emotional violence: Included but not limited to humiliation, control, withholding of information, harsh words, isolation, stalking and limiting financial or basic resources.

Threats: Physical or sexual violence which included the use of words, weapons or gestures to have communicated the intent to harm.

Cycle of abuse: The continuing circle that consisted of four phases, tension building, incident, reconciliation and honeymoon phase (CDC, 2011).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Domestic violence has been an issue for both men and women worldwide. There have been numerous studies done on the effects of domestic violence on children, women and men. By having examined these studies information was found about how much domestic violence affected the whole family system, whether that family system was traditional or non-traditional.

Factors Related to Abuse

Alcohol use has been correlated to domestic violence and found to be a positive predictor of domestic violence. Studies have found a correlation between aggression and alcohol and theories have been developed in order to understand this correlation. Bushman (1997) made the distinction that alcohol was thought to have increased aggression by direct physiological disinhibition. He also found alcohol may have increased aggression through emotional, cognitive and physiological changes. He had suggested while under the influence of alcohol immediate contextual factors might have been seen as more threatening or provocative than they actually were leading to an episode of abuse.

Rolfe et al. (2006) studied the relationship between aggression and heavy drinking by using quantitative and qualitative data from a Department of Health funded interview of untreated heavy drinkers. Interviews consisted of structured discussion and forced choice questions. Quantitative data showed high levels of verbal aggression, fights and serious arguments. Significant associations were found between lower socioeconomic status, lower age, number of heavy drinking days and alcohol-related aggression. From these findings it was important to note that domestic violence has been a serious social problem and that women were most often the victims but was not always. This does not mean women did not drink heavily or did not engage in violent behavior. Being male seemed to be a factor of domestic violence but both men and women were victims of domestic violence (Rolfe et al. 2006).

There was an inequality in the literature of domestic violence which assumed that the perpetrator was always male. Ninety-five of the time the perpetrator were male but this did not factor in the lack of not having reported same-sex violence and the lack of males not having reported female violence due to shame and embarrassment. Worthen & Varnado-Sullivan (2005) conducted a study that examined the influence of gender on domestic violence and responsibility for abuse. The study involved male and female participants who were presented an abusive scenario that either involved two males, two females or a male and a female. The participants made judgments about who was responsible for the abusive interaction either with or without the narrative present.

Results indicated that judgments made by females were biased against male victims and judgments were biased when the interactions had been between two males or two females. These results indicated that there might have been a bias towards males

being the perpetrator which in turn could have caused one to believe that men are always the ones that abuse. It concluded that the gender of all parties needed to be considered when judging responsibility of abuse.

Dominance was also a factor which was related to the male gender and domestic violence. Patriarchal theory stated dominance as a male gender role trait socialized young boys to put much emphasize on having gained control and power over others.

Relationships tended to have involved domestic violence where the male partners felt a need to express power (Coleman & Straus, 1990). Patriarchal theory was supported by Smith (1990) when his findings indicated that Non-Hispanic White husbands who believed that men where superior to women had been more likely to assault their wives.

Resource theorists have focused on other external resources could have been factors of domestic violence such as income, education and status impact upon power. Studies have indicated high income for wives was found to have increased conflict among couples. Status inconsistency which was a major difference in the level of resources available to both partners was found to be a contributing factor to domestic violence (Sugihara & Warner, 2002).

Babcock et al (1994) indicated relationships in which the wife was withdrawn and the husband was demanding contributed to domestic violence. It was even more strongly the case when the husbands had less decision making power tended to have engaged in domestic violence. They concluded that males who felt as though they lacked dominance in the relationship used violence to compensate.

Another factor related to abuse was violence in the perpetrator's family of origin. Current domestic violence theories have indicated violence was a learned behavior.

Children who grew up having witnessed domestic violence were more likely to have been violent as adults than those who had not witnessed violence. The use of violence could have also been interpreted as the norm not only in the home but also in intimate relationships. Children from violent homes may have been more likely to be able to rationalize for their abusive behaviors. It has been hypothesized that having witnessed domestic violence had a strong emotional impact that could carry into adulthood, which may have put the individual at a greater risk of having become an abuser (Hoglund & Nicholas, 1995; McNeal & Amato, 1998; Wagar & Rodway, 1995).

Shame has been suggested as a factor that could have led a person to have felt defensive, inferior and helpless, all of which have been shown to be characteristics of domestic violence. Shame and guilt had also been correlated with hostility, irritability and a tendency to have blamed others (Hoglund & Nicholas, 1995).

Kernsmith (2006) conducted a study which examined the impact of domestic violence in the family of origin of male and female perpetrators. Methods included a written questionnaire administered to participants in a batterer intervention counseling program in Los Angeles County, California. Questions were asked in order to have assessed abuse in the family of origin and abuse in past relationships. The modified version of the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Scale and a modified Conflict Tactics Scaled was used to examine prior domestic violence victimization, which included emotional, sexual and physical abuse. Results indicated that prior abuse in family and past intimate relationships was extremely common among the sample. Seventy-four percent had witnessed some form of domestic violence as a child, emotional abuse having been the most common. Results supported the theory that violence may be

passed from one generation to the next through learned behavior and the process of socializing (Kernsmith, 2006).

Factors Related to the Perpetuation of Abuse

More than twenty percent of women reported they had experienced some sort of violence from a romantic partner. More than thirty percent of those who had experienced domestic violence had said it resulted in a concussion or the need for surgery. The issue with domestic violence and today's society has been that so much of what has been going on in the home has been unreported or undermined (Hendy et al, 2003). There have been many reasons why someone might have been reluctant to reveal domestic violence in the home. They have included, not knowing how serious the level of violence was, denial, fear of embarrassment, fear of rejection from his or her family, feelings of guilt for having told secrets of the relationship, not having trusted authorities, and fear of increased violence from the partner if he or she found out they told someone (Hendy et al, 2003).

Researchers have studied the economic dependency of women and the emotional dependency of men found two factors independently contribute to being vulnerable to the risk of domestic violence. Bornstein (2006) found support for the notion the more emotionally dependent the victim was of the abuser, the less likely the relationship would be terminated. Emotional dependency included the need for support, nurturance, and protection even in situations where the victim was capable of functioning and surviving by him or herself.

Bornstein (2006) found emotional dependency was a multifaceted construct that involved four parts. These four parts were cognitive, motivational, behavioral and affective. The cognitive aspect of this model was the victim saw themselves (him or her) as weak and vulnerable. The motivational aspect was the need and desire for protection and nurturance from the abuser. The behavioral element included behaviors that minimize rejection or the fear of rejection and tried to strengthen ties to the potential provider. The last element of this model of emotional dependency was the affective element which included fear of abandonment and fear of the abuser not wanting to be with them anymore.

Having used assessment tests and multifaceted models researchers examined the role of victim dependency in the risk for abuse. Gelles (1976) was one of the first to research and find empirical evidence that supports the role of victim dependency in the risk for abuse. By giving unstructured interviews to victims of domestic violence and asking questions he was able to assess why these victims stayed and/or fled abusive relationships (Bornstein, 2006).

Gelles (1976) found women who had low paying occupations or no occupation at all were more likely to stay in an abusive relationship than those with a moderate or high paying occupation. Other studies have indicated similar findings but examining these results have been limited because occupational status of a victim was only one aspect of why a victim might have stayed in a relationship (Bornstein, 2006).

Domestic violence has been the outcome of many forces. Another aspect of domestic violence was the use of drugs among both partners. Stuart et al. (2008) examined illicit drug use and how it directly and indirectly affected domestic violence.

Participants were men and women who had been arrested for domestic violence.

Structural equation modeling was used to examine their data. Numerous variables were examined in both the perpetrator and the partner who included antisocial behaviors, trait anger, relationship discord, alcohol problems, drug use, psychological aggression and physical abuse. Having examined those factors they found most abusers were under the influence of illicit drugs when domestic violence was inflicted. Illicit drug use and domestic violence have been related to, but illicit drug use has not been identified as a cause of domestic violence.

Stress has been a factor which keeps someone in a domestic violence relationship because stress can negatively affect one's physical and psychological health which caused one to not make rational decisions. Eby (2004) conducted a study which looked at how women's experiences with domestic violence might have affected their stress levels. He examined this by having measured stressful events and difficult life circumstances for 107 women who had lived in poverty. The hypotheses stated women would have higher levels of stress that had experienced abuse than women who had not. Women who had experienced abuse would have had more health problems and gynecological symptoms than women who had not. And lastly women who had experienced domestic violence would report more frequent use of alcohol or drugs to relieve stress than women who had not.

Demographics were taken along with extensive interviewing and data collection. His findings supported the three hypotheses presented and many of the women in the study indicated although they knew stress was a result of domestic violence and it was negatively affecting their health they still maintained the relationship (Eby 2004).

Cultural Differences

Walker (1999) reviewed studies done in various cultures on the effects of domestic violence and why partners chose to stay in an abusive relationship but found it difficult to compare data due to cultural differences from country to country. Differences found have included but have not been limited to religious beliefs, social standards, attitudes towards violence in general, political structure, the standard for interaction between men and women, economic resources, educational resources. He concluded that those factors have caused someone to be vulnerable to violence outside and inside the home.

An important issue when having examined domestic violence has been comparing cross culturally and reporting. One of the first steps in examining a problem has been being able to define it. Researchers have found it difficult to define domestic violence due to the fact that it varied from situation to situation and from one culture to another (Walker, 1999). In order to collect data and to analyze important studies it was important to be precise in defining the actual acts of violence and who they affected and in what ways (Walker, 1999).

Vandello & Cohen (2003) found a victim might have stayed in an abusive relationship because of a concept known as the honor syndrome. The honor syndrome was defined as having virtuous behavior, altruistic acts and good moral character even in the face of domestic violence. They also provided a second definition of honor which related more to a person's status, reputation and precedence. This second definition of

honor was the one used in this study. This definition of honor related to not only males but females also. Honor norms for females included modesty, shame and avoidance of behaviors that might tarnish the family name. Because male honor often required female deference and fidelity, there was an underlying tension that served as a risk factor of domestic violence.

Vandello and Cohen (2003) found honor syndrome women in cultures of honor were expected to remain in an abusive relationship in order to remain loyal to the family and the family's reputation. Participants from cultures of honor such as Hispanics and Southern Anglos who witnessed the abusive conflict during the procedure favored the women more when she remained loyal in the relationship instead of being intolerant and independent. Whereas northern participants favored the women more when she chose to leave her abusive relationship, stating women had more strength and courage to leave the relationship than to stay. While the Hispanic and southern Anglo participants saw the victimized women as strong and equal when she chose to stay in the relationship.

These empirical findings were important because it showed one of the ways male honor operated as a catalyst for domestic violence. Female infidelity initiated a male's honor concerns and one way for a man to "redeem" his honor is through domestic violence. Findings showed women felt obligated to stay in the relationship in order to keep the honor of the family intact, in turn perpetuated and reinforced the violence (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

Edelson, et al (2007) looked at Latina women and non-Latina women who had been in a domestic violence relationship and had at least one child. Observations were obtained from samples and results indicated Latina women had greater risks for

depression, greater trauma related symptoms, lower self-esteem and less likely to make positive contributions to society. They concluded that there were two dynamics which might have increased the risk and effects of domestic violence on Latina women.

The first dynamic was a concept known as Machismo which has a set of beliefs about how a man should act. There were both positive and negative aspects of the machismo concept. Positive aspects included honor, pride, responsibility, courage and loyalty to one's family. Negative aspects included power, authority, alcohol consumption and aggressiveness. The second dynamic was known as marianismo. Women were assumed to be submissive, self-sacrificing and soft spoken when regarded to others. In turn both concepts might have perpetuated the cycle of abuse and the idea that domestic violence was a part of the culture. Findings confirmed the hypothesis Latina women who had been victims of domestic violence had significantly poorer outcomes on validity measures related to depression, self-esteem, and trauma related symptoms that did non-Latina women (Edelson, et al 2007).

Another cultural difference which was important to examine was domestic violence among the gay and lesbian community. Domestic violence was the third largest health concern following substance abuse and aids. An estimated 50% of lesbian women reported being a victim of domestic violence while in a same-sex relationship. The National Coalition against Domestic Violence estimated that 25% to 33% of same-sex relationships included domestic violence. They suggested the level of denial of abuse among same-sex couples showed the need to examine the function of domestic violence among same-sex couples (Peterman & Dixon 2003).

Treatment

1) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Easton et al (2007) examined the relationship between alcohol consumption and domestic violence and the use of cognitive behavioral therapy. Participants were alcohol dependent males who had been arrested within the last year for domestic violence. Male participants were randomly assigned to a cognitive behavioral substance abuse domestic violence group or a 12 step facilitation group. There was no significant difference in the number of sessions between groups. Results indicated a reduction in violent episodes for the participants in the SADV group when compared to the 12 step facilitation group. Results were significant and showed the possibility for CBT to be a successful form of treatment for domestic violence.

2. Group Therapy: Stith et al. (2003) reported perpetrators who completed their group therapy programs reduced violence by 50-80%. They also found nonviolence levels ranged from 59-75%. These results were significant because they showed the effectiveness of group therapy for perpetrators of domestic violence.

3. Behavioral Couples Therapy: Easton et al. (2005) reported some success with Behavioral couples' therapy which taught couples how to improve relationship function and reduce conflict. However there were setbacks to this form of therapy such as the abuser being unwilling to participate. Also the abuser might not have thought they did anything wrong or might have a restraining order so the victim and abuser could not have

contact. The treatment was revised with the combination of behavioral interventions and suitable medications.

4. Religion and Spirituality: Watlington & Murphy (2006), who examined the role of religion and spirituality, found African American women who had been victims of domestic violence had lower levels of depressive symptoms, more coping strategies and greater support networks. Data was provided from sixty-five African American women who had experienced domestic violence within the last year. Data included demographics, details of abusive episodes, current aspects of social support, religious involvement, coping activities, symptoms related to depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

They also examined the correlation between two culturally relevant coping mechanisms- spirituality and religious involvement and two mental health outcomes- depression and PTSD. Their findings linked spirituality with lower levels of depressive symptoms even after having experienced domestic violence.

5. Domestic Violence Education: This form of treatment for domestic violence involved educating both males and females on domestic violence. At the University of Quebec a mandatory course on the social aspects of violence against women was given as part of the curriculum. The goal of the course was to gain knowledge, develop awareness, and learn intervention strategies and to change current attitudes about domestic violence. At the beginning of the course respondents (26 female and 2 male) ignored the realities of domestic violence and accepted society's prejudices. At the end of the course the respondent's knowledge had been far more developed and that specific training had been

done in order to change false perceptions about domestic violence (Lachapelle & Forest, 1997).

CHAPTER 3

Conclusions

Research in the field of domestic violence has been somewhat inconclusive and domestic violence has continued to expand due to the lack of information. Because domestic violence is a worldwide issue it has been important to examine numerous factors that might affect an abuser or victim of domestic violence differently depending on one's culture. The examination of current research has identified some behaviors associated with domestic violence and also factors related to the perpetuation of abuse. Research on cultural differences and domestic violence treatments also were examined.

Factors related to abuse included the use of alcohol and Bushman (1997) concluded alcohol was thought to have increased aggression and suggested that while under the influence of alcohol immediate contextual factors might have been seen as more threatening than they actually were which led to an episode of abuse. Research suggested being male, the need for dominance and the perpetrator's family of origin were factors related to abuse.

There have been many reasons why someone might have been reluctant to reveal domestic violence in the home. Research findings have suggested economic dependency of women, emotional dependency of men, women's low paying occupations or no occupation at all, and the use of drugs and/or alcohol among both partners and stress. The

research suggests that due to these factors the cycle of abuse was difficult to get out of and to fully understand.

Having examined cultural factors of domestic abuse researchers found identifying the definition of abuse among cultures was a very important step in studying domestic violence. Different cultures had different ideas of what respect and power means in the family and the impact that the idea of the culture of honor could have on a domestic violent family. In regards to same-sex relationships and domestic violence The National Coalition against Domestic Violence estimated that 25% to 33% of same-sex relationships included domestic violence. Additional research has to be done in order to assess the dynamics of same-sex violence.

Treatments for domestic violence have included cognitive behavioral therapy, group therapy, behavioral couple's therapy, religion/spirituality and domestic violence education. It was important to note that domestic violence was a result of numerous factors and both men and women could have been victims or perpetrators. Researchers have been unable to find one factor that might have led someone to abuse a partner and the findings have showed domestic violence was a multifaceted construct that needs to be more inconclusive in its approach.

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