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THE IMPACTS OF EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD THAT LEADS TO EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE IN FUTURE INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

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PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

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by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was designed to explore a person's experiences of both exposure to domestic violence in childhood and domestic violence in their current relationships. Considering that domestic violence impacts the social wellbeing of an individual, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to a person's decision to leave the relationship, especially the factors that made it difficult to leave and the services that were accessible to the person.

To explore the aforementioned factors, this study examined interviews of eight female survivors of domestic violence that were receiving services through a domestic violence agency. The student researchers utilized in-depth interviews to gather information about their experiences with childhood exposure to domestic violence and domestic violence in their dating relationships. By using conventional content analysis, the following themes emerged: types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, challenges to leaving the relationship, motivation for leaving the relationship, and services utilized. The student researchers found that the participants were exposed to domestic violence by seeing, hearing, observing the aftermath, and engaging in the altercation. Furthermore, positive support systems such as family and friends played a significant role in avoiding domestic violence in future relationships among the sample. The findings highlight the experiences of exposure to domestic violence and how earlier experiences were perceived to be related to subsequent experiences of violence in future dating relationships. In addition, our findings

indicate that having positive support systems and utilizing resources available

may help domestic violence survivors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

We would like to dedicate this research to all survivors of domestic violence including those we have lost. We acknowledge the challenges you have overcome and the strength you carry in order to end the cycle of violence. You are loved and deserving of healthy relationships. Know that your experience is valid and that there is support for you. We believe in you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This introduction provides a problem formulation to explain the effects of exposure to domestic violence on children. The focus of this research was to explore the need for a greater understanding of the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood and subsequent experiences of violence in future intimate partner relationships. This section also provides the purpose of the study and how it is relevant to the social work profession.

Problem Formulation

The issue of domestic violence is a social problem that impacts individuals throughout all communities. Domestic violence, also called intimate partner violence is defined as controlling behaviors that one repeatedly uses in order to gain power over their intimate partner (Capacity Building Center for States, 2018). Domestic violence can be used in many forms to inflict physical, emotional, social, and psychological harm to another (Capacity Building Center for States, 2018). Statistics reveal that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of violence by their intimate partner, which include physical violence, rape, or stalking (Capacity Building Center for States, 2018).

Domestic violence goes beyond affecting the victim and perpetrator because it also places the children at risk. It is estimated that in the United

States, 30 million children under the age of 17 will be exposed to domestic violence (Capacity Building Center for States, 2018). In addition, out of 4,000 children ages zero through seventeen, 8.4% reported witnessing a family assault and 5.8% reported witnessing intimate partner violence between their parents (Finkelhor et al., 2015). Early exposure to parental domestic violence in the home has several effects on the individual, their family, and peer relationships. A child who is exposed to domestic violence can have difficulties developing healthy relationships. For instance, when there is violence in the home, the child is at risk of developing attachment issues with their parent (Howell et al., 2016). Osofsky (2018) emphasizes that a child learns to trust during their early relationships. The ability to trust creates healthy relationships in later years. Thompson and Trice-Black (2012) emphasize that children surrounded by negative experiences are more likely to show a lack of problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, and healthy coping skills. Furthermore, the lack of a healthy social development, places children at greater risk for experiencing violence within their dating relationships (Cui et al., 2013; Howell et al., 2016; Kimball, 2015).

It is important to understand the problem of exposure to violence in childhood due to its severe impacts on a child's social development. Children who grow up exposed to parental violence are at a greater risk for experiencing violence in their own intimate partner relationships. Researchers have revealed that exposure to domestic violence places a child at a greater risk for experiencing violence in future relationships (Forke et al., 2019). Research from

Black et al. (2010) found that 4,700 college students reported that their exposure to domestic violence in childhood contributed to their experiences with domestic violence in their adult dating relationships. In addition, research found that exposure to domestic violence in childhood was the second highest predictor for experiencing domestic violence as an adult (Kimber et al., 2018). By gaining insight into the problem, this research can educate adolescents and adults on the impacts of domestic violence and identify methods to decrease or prevent violence in future relationships.

In sum, the aforementioned studies focus solely on the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, which can become a predictor for experiencing domestic violence in future relationships. However, these studies did not include factors that can influence an individual's decision to leave a domestic violence relationship. In response to these gaps, the identified research questions are:

1. Does exposure to domestic violence in childhood influence participants' future experiences with domestic violence?

2. Does an individual's positive support system help them avoid domestic violence in future relationships?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of exposure to domestic violence in childhood on experiencing violence in future intimate partner

relationships. Based on previous research, a child's social, behavioral, emotional, and physical development is negatively impacted when exposed to domestic violence. Exposure to domestic violence can place a child at risk for problems with interpersonal relationships. In addition, children can experience different types of exposure to domestic violence. Therefore, it is presumed that the type of exposure to domestic violence can have a significant impact to an individual's experience with violence in future intimate partner relationships.

To gain a better understanding of the impact of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, the student researchers conducted an over the phone or video interview with clients who are currently enrolled in a domestic violence agency. By conducting the interviews, the student researchers wanted to gain better insight to the client's experience with the types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood and their experiences with violence in their intimate partner relationships. In addition, the study explored the client's support systems and its impact on the individual. The student researchers assumed that an individual's positive support system would help avoid experiences of domestic violence in future relationships. At the conclusion of the interviews the student researchers gained a better understanding on how positive support systems can influence a client's experience with domestic violence. Furthermore, the information collected contributes to future research to understand how domestic violence can significantly impact an individual throughout their lifetime.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

The findings of this study contribute to the social work practice. The information from the study provides social workers with insight and knowledge of the short-term and long-term consequences of children exposed to domestic violence by helping social workers better understand the signs that a client is exposed to domestic violence and implementing the necessary services for the child's social well-being.

The information gathered in the study also assists social work practitioners when working with the family unit by providing psychoeducation to the parents about domestic violence, the types of exposure to domestic violence, and the impacts it has on the children. This should help social workers work with the family to identify healthy tools to increase nonviolent methods of conflict resolution in addition to helping the social worker identify and establish positive support systems. Furthermore, the information in the study allows social workers to work with the family to build a healthier parent-child relationship.

In terms of social work practice on a macro level, policy advocates can propose funding for early intervention and prevention programs that focus on healthy relationships, setting boundaries, conflict resolution, and anger management. These programs can be utilized to decrease or prevent an individual's experience with violence in intimate partner relationships. Furthermore, policy advocates can set forth a motion on the expansion of policies to protect children from exposure to domestic violence.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature

relevant to the impacts of children exposed to domestic violence that can lead to

experiencing violence in future relationships. This chapter focuses on defining

domestic violence, explaining exposure to domestic violence, and summarizing

the effects on a child's development. Finally, this chapter examines theories that

are relevant to exposure to domestic violence and the impact of domestic

violence in adulthood. These theories include social learning theory and systems

theory.

Definition of Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence

Domestic violence is a societal problem that goes beyond the act of

physical aggression during an intimate partner relationship (Haselschwerdt,

Savasuk-Luxton, & Hlavaty, 2019). Domestic violence is also known as intimate

partner violence (Sousa et al., 2011). Research defines domestic violence as a

pattern of abuse used against their intimate partner as a form of control. These

patterns can be physical, psychological, and sexual abuse (Black et al., 2010;

Bowen, 2015). In addition, Cui et al. (2013) stated that domestic violence

includes verbal abuse. Kimber et al. (2017) included financial abuse when

defining domestic violence. Miller (2015) adds that domestic violence includes

the use of threatening behavior when committing these patterns of abuse. Lastly, Kimball (2016) defines that domestic violence is an intentional act used to cause harm and injury to their intimate partner.

Domestic violence can occur in adolescence which is defined as teen dating violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020) define teen dating violence as using physical, sexual, psychological, and stalking as a form of violence during adolescence. Research from Haselschwerdt and colleagues (2018) state that a perpetrator will use violence as a form to control, retaliate, and shame their partner to instill fear. A survey gathered by the CDC reported that 26 percent of women and 15 percent of men experienced any form of violence in a dating relationship before the age of 18. Consequences of teen dating violence can lead to substance use and mental health issues in adulthood (Maas et al., 2010), and researchers have found that adolescents who experienced teen dating violence are at greater risk for violence in future relationships (Maas, et al., 2010; Temple et al., 2013).

Exposure to Violence

Domestic violence that occurs in the home can place children as innocent victims. Children can experience different types of exposure to domestic violence. Researchers claim that children can witness domestic violence through seeing, hearing, as well as witnessing the aftermath of a violent incident (Callaghan et al., 2018; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016).

A child who is exposed to domestic violence can experience various risk factors. Researchers Kaufman et al., (2011) claim that children exposed to domestic violence are at risk for experiencing mental health issues and experiencing domestic violence. Specifically, Kimball (2016) found that children will experience mental health issues related to depression, anxiety, attachment disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and disassociation. In addition, research indicates that exposure to domestic violence can also lead to child abuse (Anderson & Bernhardt, 2020; Haselschwerdt, Hlavaty, Carlson, et al., 2019; Haselschwerdt, Savasuk-Luxton, & Hlavaty, 2019; Sousa et al., 2011). Lastly, children exposed to domestic violence are at risk for difficulties with physical health, academic challenges, and criminal behavior (Callaghan et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2014).

Children who are exposed to domestic violence can begin to develop perceptions about violence. Graham-Bermann and colleagues (2017) found that children exposed to domestic violence will believe that they are to blame for the violence and or see violence as the only solution to a problem. In addition, children can perceive violence as a threat, specifically to their safety (Kaufman et al. 2011; Miller, 2015). These beliefs and perception about violence can create continuing relational challenges in adolescence and adulthood.

Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence

Exposure to violence in the home has severe effects on a child and adolescent's social, psychological, and emotional development. For example,

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children who are exposed to domestic violence are likely to show aggression, antisocial behavior, withdrawal, and relational problems with peers and family (Capacity Building Center for States, 2018; Howell et al., 2016; Kaufman et al. 2011). In addition, researchers found that children are at risk for anxiety, depression, and complaints of physical pains (Kimball, 2016) and that adolescents who are exposed to parental violence in the home are likely to experience substance use, engage in sexual behavior, academic difficulties, and difficulties with peer functioning and intimate relationships (Karlsson et al., 2016; Maas et al., 2010).

The negative impacts inhibit the social maturity of a child exposed to domestic violence as early as infancy that can progress into adulthood as indicated my multiple studies. Data collected from over 50 domestic violence agencies found that 38% of approximately 13,000 children ages 1-2, displayed separation difficulties from their parent (Howell et al., 2016). Another study of 16,467 school aged children exposed to domestic violence reported to have more difficulty with peer relationships than children who are not exposed to domestic violence (Howell et al., 2016). Also, children who were exposed to domestic violence are at risk for low self-esteem, depression, and suicidal behaviors (Capacity Building Center for States, 2018; Thompson and Trice-Black, 2012). Last, a study evaluating exposure to domestic violence found that violence was an acceptable method for resolving conflict during adolescence. (Howell et al., 2016).

Based on the literature review, prior studies have focused on the issue of domestic violence and the impact on children. In addition, these studies have found that exposure to domestic violence in childhood have negative effects to a child's well-being. Specifically, several researchers found that these negative effects can be predictors for experiencing domestic violence in future relationships (Karlsson et al., 2016; Temple et al., 2013). One limitation found in examining the research was the researchers focused solely on physical aggression when discussing domestic violence (Haselschwert, Hlavaty, Carlson et al., 2019; Karlsson et al., 2016; Kaufman et al., 2018; Kimber et al., 2018; Moylan et al., 2010). This study aims to include the various types of abuse when discussing exposure to domestic violence in childhood and domestic violence in future relationships. These findings will contribute to understanding if the types of abuse exposed during childhood affects survivors' experience with domestic violence in future relationships. Furthermore, these studies focused solely on the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood which can become a predictor for experiencing domestic violence in future relationships and did not include factors that can influence an individual's decision to leave a domestic violence relationship.

In response to these gaps, this study will focus on the experiences of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, as well as the experiences of domestic violence in dating relationship and how it can influence an individual's decision to leave the relationship. By doing so, this study will contribute to future

researchers understanding of the various factors that can influence an individual to leave their domestic violence relationship.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The two theories used to provide a framework of this study are social learning theory and family systems theory. These theories will provide an understanding on the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood that can lead to experiencing violence in future intimate partner relationships.

Social learning theory asserts that children can repeat behaviors that were intentionally or unintentionally modeled by their parents (Cui et al., 2013). Temple and colleagues (2013) state that children model their parents' behaviors out of admiration and respect. Furthermore, they affirm that the children view their parents as one with knowledge and power. Social learning theory can be used to discuss how behaviors observed as a child can repeat into adulthood. Liu and colleagues (2018) focus on the idea that children develop behaviors based on learning and observation. For example, a parent's violent behavior that is observed by the child can influence their behavior in future intimate partner relationships. Social learning theory can also be applied to understand how children who are exposed to domestic violence can be at a greater risk for exhibiting aggressive, intimidating, and violent behaviors toward their future intimate partner relationships. Researchers have found that children who have experienced punitive discipline by their parents, learn that aggression can be an

acceptable form for resolving conflict with their peers and intimate partners

(Laporte et al., 2011; Temple et al., 2013). Thus, this theoretical framework can

be used to discuss how parental behaviors and attitudes toward violence can

have an impact on a child.

Another theory that is used to explain how children who are exposed to

domestic violence are likely to experience violence in future relationships is

systems theory. Specifically, family systems theory explains the idea of how

family members influence one another. Liu et al. (2018) emphasize that the

family system and its connection with all family members is important to

understand an individual's actions and behaviors. Family systems theory

stresses that the effects of the family system led to the effects of each family

member (Hyde-Nolan, Juliao, 2012). For example, the effects of domestic

violence can contribute to behavioral and emotional effects for the family

members who are exposed. Overall, family systems theory can be applied to

provide an understanding of family dynamics and how exposure to domestic

violence can be an influential factor in how a child develops.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methods that were used in this study. The chapter provides details of the study design and the sampling method used to recruit participants for the study. Then, the student researchers describe how the data were collected and the instruments that were used to conduct the study. The chapter also explains the procedures that were utilized to protect the participants. Lastly, this chapter will explain the data analysis of the outcomes of the interviews.

Study Design

The design method that was used in this research project was an exploratory, qualitative design, using over the phone or Zoom interviews. In the research reviewed, there is a lack of focus on explaining the impacts of children exposed to domestic violence that can lead to experiencing violence in future relationships. This project was an exploratory study type based on the need for gaining more in-depth information on the impact of future intimate partner relationships for individuals who are exposed to domestic violence in childhood. This research project was a qualitative research design to gain insight and understanding on the participants experiences and views. With the qualitative

design the researchers were able to explore in-depth if children's exposure to domestic violence can impact future intimate partner relationships.

Sampling

For this study, the student researchers utilized convenience sampling based on the accessibility of participants. The criteria for participating in the study include experiencing exposure to domestic violence in childhood and experiencing violence in their intimate partner relationships. The student researchers recruited participants ages 18 or older through a domestic violence agency, therefore meeting one of the criteria to participate in the study. Participants consisted of female transitional age youth and adults who have been exposed to domestic violence in childhood.

Participants were recruited by the agency's case managers. The case managers screened participants to ensure they met the criteria of experiencing exposure to domestic violence in childhood. Then, the case managers informed the clients if they would be interested in participating in a research project. The case managers provided an overview of the purpose of the research project (attempting to identify the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood that can lead to experiencing violence in future intimate partner relationships). The voluntary participants were contacted by the student researchers via phone to discuss participation in the research project and an interview was scheduled via phone or virtually (Zoom). Limits to confidentiality was also discussed.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data were collected through a questionnaire and an interview guide given during phone or Zoom interviews. To ensure participant safety and minimize interruptions, phone and Zoom interviews were conducted within 30-60 minutes. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather participant's demographic information. The demographic information included, age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment status, yearly income, highest level of education, and marital status. The student researchers collected the participants current demographics as well as their demographics during their last domestic violence relationship.

Open-ended questions of the interview guide were used through in-depth interviews for participants to share their experiences with exposure to domestic violence during their childhood and experiencing violence in their intimate partner relationships. The questions that were asked include defining domestic violence, identifying the types of domestic violence exposure in childhood, the age during the first domestic violence relationship, the factors that made it difficult to leave, factors that led to leaving the last domestic violence relationship, services utilized, and positive support systems. The students used the questions to explore the participants experiences with exposure to domestic violence in childhood that could have led to their experiences with violence in future intimate partner relationships. A copy of the research questions is included in the appendix.

Procedures

In order to conduct this research study, the student's researchers needed to seek approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, San Bernardino. The student researchers completed a proposal explaining the purpose of the study, the recruitment process, and the efforts to maintain confidentiality. To recruit participants, the student researchers sought approval from a domestic violence agency to conduct interviews with their clients. The student researchers discussed with the agency the purpose of the study and were given a letter of support consenting to participate in this study.

Prior to the interviews, the participants met with the agency's case manager to review the purpose of the study and were given a copy of the informed consent. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the case managers received a verbal consent from the voluntary participants to participate in the study. In addition, when conducting the interviews, the student researchers reviewed the informed consent and obtained verbal consent from the participants. In advance, the participants were given a copy of the interview guide to know what questions will be asked during the interview. This allowed participants to prepare for any questions that may be uncomfortable or too emotional to answer. Once the interviews were completed, the participants were provided a verbal debriefing statement and were offered a copy of the statement to be mailed to them. The student researchers provided the participants a $5 Starbucks gift card for their participation in the study.

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to the study, the student researchers focused on methods that will be used to ensure participant welfare and confidentiality. Before conducting interviews, the student researchers administered a copy of the interview questions to a small group of colleagues, including the research advisor and the managers at the agency where the participants were recruited. This provided an opportunity for the student researchers to ensure the questions will be sensitive to the participants and avoid traumatization.

To protect confidentiality, the interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. The student researchers conducted either audio or video recordings. For the safety of the participants, pseudonyms were used. No data, including the disclosure of the agency were presented in a way that would jeopardize the participant's identity. The audio and video files were recorded on the student researcher's password protected computer; once the interview was completed, it was transferred to the student researchers CSUSB Google drive account. This was used to protect from any data theft or from accidentally erasing data. Then, the student researchers transcribed the audio/video and then deleted the audio/video file upon completion. Only the researchers and supervisor had access to the transcribed interviews; only the student researchers had access to the audio/video files. The data will be deleted at the conclusion of the research study, which will be around May 2022.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the study utilized qualitative data. The interviews were digitally recorded in order to be transcribed verbatim, and the audio and video files were recorded via Zoom on the student researcher's password protected computer. To ensure that the recordings were not automatically backed up to the student researchers iCloud, the interviews were saved and transferred only to the student researchers CSUSB Google drive account. In addition, each student researcher used a journal to take notes of the participants non-verbal cues. After concluding the interviews, the student researchers independently reviewed each transcript several times and identified categories and themes from the interviews. The study used descriptive statistics to summarize the collected data. By using conventional content analysis, the student researchers analyzed the content from the interview to identify themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Once the student researchers identified specific themes relevant to the study, the student researchers focused on defining and developing sub-themes. To reach interrater reliability the student researchers discussed and compared individual findings. If any disagreements emerged, the student researchers consulted with the research supervisor for a third opinion.

Summary Chapter

In summary, this chapter focused on the methods that were utilized in this study. The research study used a qualitative design, as well as a convenience

sampling to recruit participants. The participants were recruited from a domestic

violence agency, and the student researchers collected data using a

questionnaire and interview guide during the phone or video interviews. The

student researchers followed the procedures outlined and methods to protect the

participants confidentiality. Lastly, conventional content analysis was used to

describe the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the qualitative study focusing on demographic statistics and themes that emerged from participant interviews. The student researchers interviewed a total of eight participants who were enrolled in a domestic violence agency during the month of August 2021. In reviewing interviews, important factors were categorized into the following five themes: types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, challenges to leaving the relationship, motivation for leaving the relationship, positive support systems, and services utilized. Included in this chapter is a presentation of the participants' experiences with domestic violence and the hardships they faced during and after their relationships. Tables are provided to highlight presented information.

Demographic Statistics

As indicated on Table 1 below, the data collected consisted of the current demographics of each participant at the time of interview. The study consisted of eight female survivors of domestic violence ranging in ages from 18 to 44 years old. Specifically, most of the participants were between the ages of 25 and 34 (n=5). The sample consisted of diverse individuals, with five participants identifying as Hispanic/Latina, Black/African American (n=1), Asian/Pacific

Islander (n=1), and White/Caucasian (n=1). The sample displayed three

participants were unemployed whereas the remaining were part-time (n=2),

unemployed (n=3), and two were other. Generally speaking, the participants

were of low social economic status as five of them reported earning less than

$20,000 annually. The remainder of the participants reported earning $20,000 -

$34,999 (n=2) and one earning more than $50,000 (n=1) annually. The sample

displayed a range of different levels of education. One participant reported not

obtaining high school diploma, the remainder of the participants reported

completing an education higher than a high school diploma/GED (n=2),

specifically some college (n=3) or a bachelor's degree (n=2). Lastly, majority of

the participants reported being single (n=7) with the exception of one participant

reported being separated (n=1).

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Variable	Frequencies (n)	Percentages (%)
Age		
18-24	1	12.5%
25-34	5	62.5%
35-44	2	25%
45-54	0	
55+	0	
Gender		
Male	0	
Female	8	100%
Other	0	
Decline to state	0	
Race/Ethnicity		

White/Caucasian	1	12.5%
Hispanic/Latina	5	62.5%
Black/African American	1	12.5%
Native American/American Indian	0	
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	12.5%
Other	0	
Employment Status		
Full-time	1	12.5%
Part-time	2	25%
Unemployed	3	37.5%
Other	2	25%
Income		
Less than $20,000	5	62.5%
$20,000-$34,999	2	25%
$35,000-$49,999	0	
$50,000+	1	12.5%
Highest level of education		
Some High School	1	12.5%
High School Diploma/GED	2	25%
Some College	3	37.5%
Bachelor's Degree	2	25%
Postgraduate	0	
Marital Status		
Single	7	87.5%
Cohabitation	0	
Married	0	
Separated	1	12.5%
Divorced	0	
Widowed	0	

As indicated in Table 2 below, participants were asked demographic questions related to their last domestic violence relationship. The student researchers recognized that during the participants last domestic violence relationship, all of the participants were younger but most of them were employed

full time (n=4) or part time (n=3). Furthermore, the student researchers noticed that most of the participants reported cohabitation (n=4) or married (n=1) as their relationship status.

Table 2. Demographics of Participant During the Last Domestic Violence Relationship

Variable	Frequencies (n)	Percentages (%)
Age		
18-24	4	50%
25-34	3	37.5%
35-44	1	12.5%
45-54	0	
55+	0	
Employment Status		
Full-time	4	50%
Part-time	3	37.5%
Unemployed	1	12.5%
Other	0	
Income		
Less than $20,000	4	50%
$20,000-$34,999	2	25%
$35,000-$49,999	1	12.5%
$50,000+	1	12.5%
Highest level of education		
Some High School	1	12.5%
High School Diploma/GED	4	50%
Some College	2	25%
Bachelor's Degree	1	12.5%
Postgraduate	0	
Relationship Status		
Single	3	37.5%

Cohabitation	4	50%
Married	1	12.5%
Separated	0	
Divorced	0	
Widowed	0	

Qualitative Interview Data

The participants were interviewed to collect qualitative data. The interviews varied from 20 to 70 minutes during which each participant was asked the same ten questions aimed at gaining insight to the participant's experiences with exposure to domestic violence in childhood and domestic violence experiences in their dating relationships. The questions that were asked include defining domestic violence, identifying the types of domestic violence exposure in childhood, the age during the first domestic violence relationship, the factors that made it difficult to leave, factors that led to leaving the last domestic violence relationship, services utilized, and positive support systems (See the Interview Questionnaire in Appendix A). Some of the participants were asked additional follow up questions for further clarification. From the participants' responses, the five themes that emerged included are type of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, challenges to leaving the relationships, motivation for leaving the relationship, positive support systems, and services utilized. The themes are summarized in further detail in Table 3.

Table 3. Identified Themes and Subthemes from Survivors of Domestic Violence

Themes and Subthemes:	Description of Themes:

Types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood
    1. Witnessing
    2. Hearing
    3. Observing aftermath
    4. Engaging in altercation
	The identified theme describes the type of exposure to domestic violence that a participant experienced during childhood.

Challenges to leaving the relationship
    1. No support
    2. Fear of retaliation
    3. Cultural beliefs/systems
	The identified theme describes the challenges that prevented the participant from leaving their last domestic violence relationship.

Motivation for leaving the relationship
    1. Children
    2. Infidelity
    3. Escalation of abuse
    4. Breaking the cycle of violence
    5. Perpetrator minimizing abuse
    6. Positive Support System
	The identified theme describes the motivators and/or persons that contributed the participants' decision to leave their last domestic violence relationship.

Services Utilized
    1. Domestic violence hotline
    2. Domestic violence agency/shelter
    3. Therapy/Counseling
    4. Support group
    5. Police/Restraining Order
	The identified theme describes the services that the participants used for assistance when they decided to leave their last domestic violence relationship.

Types of Exposure to Domestic Violence in Childhood

     The majority of participants identified being exposed to domestic violence in childhood (n=7). Exposure to domestic violence includes seeing, hearing, observing the aftermath, and engaging in the altercation. The participants have shared their different experiences with one or more of the identified types of exposures. The student researchers noted that all eight participants disclosed exposure to domestic violence, with the exception of one participant that understood domestic violence as including out of home violence.

Seven of the eight participants indicated seeing and hearing the domestic violence incidents occur within the home. Participant 6 stated, "As a child, my dad used to hit, abuse my mom...Yes, I heard it and I seen it." Participant 3 informed the student researchers that she was exposed to seeing her father verbally and physically harm her mother, as well as engage in infidelity. Participant 3 stated, "It was hearing and observing. My father used to abuse my mother sometimes physically, verbally a lot, and used to cheat a lot, so it's just very a lot of drama in the household. That's when my mother left." Lastly, participant 5 reported seeing verbal and physical altercations occur between her parents. Participant 5 stated,

So as a child I heard and saw my parents yelling and screaming at one another and almost daily. Sometimes the fights became physical, it was rare but there was some pushing and shoving. And they slept in different rooms my entire childhood until they separated. So, it was never really healthy at all.

Seven of the eight participants indicated observing the aftermath of a domestic violence incident that occurred within the home. Participant 2 reported observing broken items around the home due to perpetrators aggressive behaviors. Participant 2 stated,

He wouldn't throw shit at my mom, but he would break her stuff and then, like, always at the end, he would say, Oh, I'm sorry, I'm so stupid." Same

thing my partner would do. And, they would say I'm not to do it again, but it's over and over.

In addition, participant 1 informed the student researchers that she observed substances spread around the home and house items out of place due to domestic violence altercation. Participant 1 stated,

So sometimes my mom would find something that she didn't like, and she would like throw his drugs on the floor, and then he would just be dragging her by hair and start like dragging her well, the whole thing, the whole situation wasn't normal.

Two of the eight participants indicated engaging or preparing to engage in the domestic violence altercation. Participant 2 informed the student researchers that due to seeing, hearing, and observing the domestic violence altercations she would be vigilant to the domestic violence incidents. Participant 2 stated,

So, I would see it, I would hear it, and I witnessed it and everything that he would do to my mom. Maybe when we were older, he would tell us to go to our rooms and we didn't, we wouldn't want to because we're like, what if he hits my mom or what about what if he throws something around? We would just keep an ear out or we'll be like going back and forth to the restroom, you know?

Furthermore, participant 4 reported engaging in altercation out of fear for her mother's safety. Participant 4 stated,

A scenario where like my dad was choking my mom in the closet and I just

felt like my mom was going to die, you know, and there was nothing I

could do about it because I was small, and I thought I was going to watch

my mom die. And then another one in high school where they were

fighting, and I'd get in between.

<u>Challenges to Leaving Relationship</u>

All of the participants identified various challenges that prevented them

from leaving their last domestic violence relationship. These challenges included

no support, fear of retaliation, and cultural beliefs/systems. The participants have

shared their different experiences with one or more of the identified challenges.

Six of the eight participants identified having no support as a challenge to

leaving their relationship. Participant 7 indicated that her fears prevented her

from seeking or having support. Participant 7 stated, "I was scared to be alone

again...I don't won't to start over again, I was scared a lot. So I didn't seek any

help." Participant 3 stated that due to her partner isolating her as a form of

abuse, she was unable to build or seek support. Participant 3 stated, "During my

pregnancy and being in the relationship, he would prohibit me talking to anyone.

So it was difficult for me to interact with anybody at all." In addition, participant 8

indicated that due to relocating across country she had no access to support or

resources. Participant 8 stated, "I would say I was really I was alone, I'm from the

East Coast, I actually got a job transfer out here and...I know I don't have a

support system...I don't have any resources."

Furthermore, participant 6 reported that when an effort was made to seek support, her friends and family would minimize abuser's abusive characteristics. Participant 6 added that due to no support she would return to the domestic violence relationship. Participant 6 stated,

> I don't have nobody else around he was the only one there and then I'd take him back...I really never felt like my family was there for me and I was always there for my mom. If you call them and tell them, like you know, if he was acting out...and because they've never seen him, they're like "Well, he's always so nice and so sweet." So they wasn't supportive.

Lastly, participant 1 reported that she had no support system and when she would attempt to seek support from family, the family refused to help and insisted to seek support elsewhere. Participant 1 added that due to not having support she would return to abuser or enter a new domestic violence relationship.

> Participant 1 added,

> The fact that I had to care for two children on my own with no support of my family. I was couch surfing...It made it very difficult because I've never ever had a support system, I guess. Like I've never really had people and then like when I would be with my mom she would be like, "You need to go to a shelter, you need to go do this, you need to go do that" so, she was really quick to just be like "get out of here" like "you can't be here, I don't want you here." So, because of that I would always run back to my

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abuser but then instead of running back to my abuser, I ran back to

another abuser.

Three of the eight participants indicated that the fear of retaliation

prevented them from leaving their domestic violence relationship. Participant 1

identified the fear of financial retaliation. Participant 1 stated, "He held it against

me like "if you leave me, I'm not going to have the birthday party that you've been

planning for our son" and I was like putting a lot of money on it." In addition,

participant 2 reported that the abuser would make threats of keeping the child

away from her if she were to leave. Participant 2 stated,

So since he knew if I wanted to leave, he wouldn't let me take him. He

would use the excuse of my dad to keep him. And say, no, you're not

taking him because I know you're going to go to your parents. I don't want

him around your dad.

Participant 5 indicated that her abuser would use the silent treatment as a

form of retaliation when attempting to leave. Participant 5 added the fear of

safety when attempting to leave domestic violence relationship by stating,

And I remember getting silent treatment, like he got mad, he like yelled,

and the silent treatment for maybe two hours. And when he came back,

like, well he blew up before he went away but he blew up gave the silent

treatment, he went away, came back and I was scared at that point I had

called my friend and I said, Hey I'm going to come over probably tonight,

I'm actually getting kicked out of where I am staying, he's really upset that

I am going to see you. And so is it okay if I come by tonight? and I even

shared my location with my friend and everything.

Two of the eight participants indicated a challenge for leaving their

domestic violence relationship was due was due to cultural beliefs. Participant 2

reported that due to the family's cultural beliefs, violence can be used to

"toughen" a person.

Participant 2 continued,

My dad is still that same type of dad. I mean, he's a little bit different now,

but he still uses that physical, psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse.

And he doesn't know it and he thinks it's okay. It's something us, Hispanic

or Latinos go through, you know because it "toughens us up."

Participant 2 added that the family's cultural views regarding marriage

expect a person to commit to the relationship despite any circumstances related

to domestic violence. For example, "My grandfather is the type of person who

says if you got married, you go back, and you go work at your relationship."

Participant 8 reported that due to having a child out of wedlock, her

family's cultural beliefs enforced marriage as a result of having children before

marriage. Participant 8 stated, "And I got pregnant, and my family pushed for us

to get married because I am Asian, like, I can't have a child out of wedlock. And it

happened almost really fast." Participant 8 added that the family's cultural views

of domestic violence is not an acceptable means for leaving the relationship.

Participant 8 stated, "My family didn't believe me, I remember talking to my family

about it. They don't believe it. They feel like that's a thing we can work it out."

Lastly, participant 8 reported that seeking refuge elsewhere was unacceptable.

Participant 8 stated, "A shelter wasn't really an option, due to culture or whatever,

it's just that's not an option."

Motivation for Leaving the Relationship

All of the participants identified various motivators for leaving their last

domestic violence relationship. These motivators included their children,

perpetrator's infidelity, escalation of abuse, breaking the cycle of violence, and

perpetrator minimizing the abuse. The participants have shared their different

experiences with one or more of the identified motivators.

Seven of the eight participants identified their children as a primary

motivator to leaving their last domestic violence relationship. Participant 3

reported that her motivation to leave was due to the lack of involvement

regarding parenting. Participant 3 stated,

> "After I had my daughter, that's when I decided to leave after like a year
>
> because he was not allowing me to go to school. He was not allowing me
>
> to take care of myself...after having given birth to my daughter it made me
>
> realize that he wasn't helping me with my daughter, he wasn't paying
>
> attention to my daughter."

Participant 7 reported the fear of losing custody of her children as a

motivation for leaving. Participant 7 stated, "...and if not, I'm gonna lose my

daughters. He's not worth it. He is not. I already lost custody of two kids...they

need me… I messed up with my other kids. I can't be that person." In addition, participant 8 informed the student researchers that the perpetrator's expressed threats towards child motivated her to leave the relationship. Participant 8 stated, "She was the reason I left. He expressed violence towards her. So I couldn't have it."

Furthermore, participant 1 reported that her child's exposure to the domestic violence was a motivation to leaving the relationship. Participant 1 stated, "my son at the time who was two ran to his dad and started punching him. And that's when it hit me, I can't do this anymore, my son deserves better."

Lastly, participant 4 indicated protecting children from exposure to domestic violence was a motivator to leaving the relationship. Participant 4 stated,

> "It's never worth staying, especially if like your kids are involved because your kids get put through a lot, you don't realize like they're seeing and feeling everything. And they are just as scared or more of the situation than you are."

Three of eight participants indicated that a motivator for leaving the relationship was due to infidelity. Participant 1 stated, "My breaking point was when I found lipstick on his face, and I found out he was cheating on me constantly." In addition, participant 4 stated, "...he was cheating on me, like all the time...and he would always leave the house and go hangout with his friends or like go hangout with girls even."

Three of eight participants reported that the escalation of abuse motivated them to leave the relationship. Participant 6 indicated that abuse escalated from mental to physical when attempting to leave the relationship. Participant 6 stated, "It started off with the mental abuse and when I tried to leave it got physical." Participant 4 informed the student researchers that because of her mental health state the perpetrator used aggression as a physical mean for violence. Participant 4 stated, "He slapped me and then he kicked me too like I guess he said he kicked my head...and I think at that point, it kind of led to like the door being open to, like being able to actually beat me up." Lastly, participant 7 reported that perpetrator began breaking her property to prevent her from leaving. Participant 7 stated, "It was really bad like right before I left he had just broke my window, flatten my tire, broke my phone, like all within a week."

Three of eight participants indicated that their desire to break the cycle of violence as a motivator to leaving their domestic violence relationship. Participant 6 reported leaving the relationship in order to protect her children from accepting violence in their future dating relationships. Participant 6 stated,

> "Uh just the fact that I have three boys and I think when my daughter
> came, I just started thinking I can't do this because they're watching.
> They're watching me go through it, it's like if they're going through this, I
> wouldn't know how to handle it. I'm feeling like a hypocrite because, I
> mean, I know this isn't how it's supposed to be and then I want to teach
> them to not be like this. So, I have to go, I have to let it go."

In addition, participant 4 informed the student researchers that her mother's history of abuse, as well as her own domestic violence experiences were a motivator for leaving the relationship. Participant 4 stated, "Yeah and to be honest it became like this cycle, like my parents. And it was just like. I didn't want to be like that...regardless of what I wanted to tell myself, it's like the same pattern."

Lastly, participant 3 reported that by breaking the cycle of violence her daughter will not have to experience deprivation of basic needs and supports. Participant 3 stated,

> "He would deprive me of food, he would deprive me of who I could talk to, just a lot of factors that made me like leave for sure, so I wouldn't want my daughter to be deprived of food or who she could speak to or not being able to speak to my family."

Participant 3 added that by breaking the cycle of violence she is teaching her daughter that violence should not be accepted. In addition, participant 3 indicated that she wants her daughter to understand how a woman should be treated. Participant 3 stated,

> "So he was being even more abusive. So I did not want that for my daughter and I don't want her to grow up thinking that it's okay for a woman to be mistreated and I don't want her to be raised and think it's okay for a woman to be limited just because she's a woman."

Lastly, participant 3 informed student researchers that a factor in breaking the cycle of violence was to teach and model having healthy relationships. Participant 3 stated,

"Good thing I'm getting help now to break the cycle so my daughter doesn't fall, because my mom was in a better position, now I am...I don't want my daughter to be exposed to that…I want her to build healthy relationships with people, and not to have the bad experience I had."

Two of eight participants indicated that a motivator to leaving the domestic violence relationship was due to the perpetrator minimizing abusive behaviors. Participant 2 reported attempting to inform perpetrator of similar abusive behaviors that she witnessed between her parents; however, the perpetrator minimized the similarities. Participant 2 stated,

"I think that had a lot to do with what I was seeing my mom go through and seeing her go through it is like I told him, 'I know what's happening between me and you it's the same thing that has happened between my mom and my dad. He would rip my mom's stuff, and that's what you're doing to me. You break my stuff when you get mad because you can't touch me, or you don't want to touch me and it's easier for you to break my stuff'.... And I told him that my dad used to do that to my mom and now you're doing it to me. He would say, 'No, that's totally different'."

In addition, participant 7 reported that perpetrator denied his physical aggression as a form of domestic violence. Participant 7 stated,

"I was leaving and him saying that he was trying to keep me there, but he, like, kicked everything out of my hands and then he kicked my foot, but he sees it that he's never hit me because he's never, like, beat me with, beat me, beat the fuck out of me so he doesn't feel like he's hit me. But no, he has, you know? So in his eyes, like, "Oh, I've never done anything to her". But there's a lot like even a push, a shove, pulling my hair, pulling me down, all of that, but to him it's nothing."

Furthermore, participant 7 indicated that the perpetrator would blame his abusive behaviors on the participant. Participant 7 stated, "I was wrong. I was wrong for everything. I was wrong that I found out, that I was wrong for confronting him and was wrong that he broke my phone. I was wrong, that I was wrong for every single thing...to him, like it's my fault."

Lastly, all of the participants identified positive support systems as a motivator for leaving their last domestic violence relationship. These positive support systems include family and/or friends. The participants have shared their different experiences with one or more of these support systems.

Five of eight participants indicated having family and/or friends as a positive support system. Participant 2 reported her in-laws offered unconditional support. Participant 2 stated, "My in-laws are so supportive that they tell me it's on you what you want to do, just think of you and your son...make sure you know, we're always here." Participant 4 informed the student researchers that her younger brother was available to offer emotional support. Participant 4 stated,

"My brother was kind of there for me, like he was the only person like I would always talk to, even though he's sixteen. But we always would hang out or talk or like be together." Lastly, participant 3 reported that her mother provided support and encouragement in leaving the last domestic violence relationship. Participant 3 stated,

> "I was not fully open minded to ask for help mainly. And I was in really much denial that I was in an abusive relationship. The only person who helped me was my mom and she's the one that facilitated for me to stay in her home, and that's how I, you know, I got help from her. Yeah, to, to move away."

<u>Services Utilized</u>

All of the participants identified various services that were utilized when leaving their last domestic violence relationship. These services included the domestic violence hotline, domestic violence agency/shelter, therapy/counseling, support groups, and law enforcement/restraining order. The participants have shared their different experiences with one or more of the identified motivators.

Four of the eight participants indicated utilizing the domestic violence hotline. Participant 1 reported using the hotline as a means to vent about her domestic violence relationship. Participant 1 stated, "I was calling the domestic violence hotline a lot. But it was before I was breaking up with him I was still not registered, I just needed to vent about the situations that he was putting me through."

All eight participants identified utilizing domestic violence agency/shelter services when leaving their last domestic violence relationship. Participant 1 reported that she has been in contact with her local domestic violence agency to utilize services such as support groups and restraining order process. Participant 1 stated, "I ran back to the case manager at the domestic violence agency and then they helped with the restraining order." In addition, participant 6 reported that she had contacted several domestic violence agencies before attending the current agency. Participant stated, "When I went to this other domestic violence program, I was telling them I did everything on my own, I went and got the restraining order, I want to get myself counseling and I knew I needed help and I was doing it on my own."

Six of eight participants indicated utilizing therapy/counseling during or after their last domestic violence relationship. Participant 7 stated, "The DV staff and the other survivors...I go to them, and the girls here are part of my group. And I have a counselor, he's really good, that's who I go to." Participant 2 reported therapy has been essential to her stability. Participant 2 stated, "Now that I have my DV group I have the support, you know, and my therapy does help. I think without those things, I would be lost at this point." Lastly, participant 3 reported that by participating in school counseling she was able to obtain additional resources suitable for her needs. Participant 3 stated, "Pretty much all the resources that I have gotten are through school counseling, like I'm in care for single moms at school, I'm part of the CalWorks program at school."

All eight participants indicated their domestic violence support group as a service utilized when leaving their domestic violence relationship. Participant 2 stated, "After my relationship, after I got separated, I started attending my DV group. That's when I knew that domestic violence was more than just physical abuse." Furthermore, participant 8 reported that attending ongoing support groups throughout the years have been essential to her well-being. Participant 8 stated,

> My violence happened more than a decade ago, but every so often I do join a support group and just go through it like a few months here and there. And it's very therapeutic. Even 10 years later, 13 years later. And I just finished the last round at the agency and it just feels nice to remind myself almost, sometimes.

Four of the eight participants indicated utilizing services from law enforcement or assistance with restraining order process. Participant 6 informed the student researchers that when attempting to leave the relationship she had contacted law enforcement for assistance. Participant 6 stated, "So then I cut it all off like that day. Called the police and whatever, everything was reported and they called social services on me." The student researchers recognized that although the participant utilized this service the outcome did not result as anticipated by the participant. Lastly, participant 8 reported using an attorney for divorce and restraining order process. Participant 8 stated, "I went to an attorney to file for a divorce."

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the findings that emerged from the qualitative study. The student researchers presented an outline of the demographic statistics and themes that arose from the participant interviews. The participants provided information on their experiences related to exposure to domestic violence in childhood and experiences of domestic violence in dating relationships. Tables were provided to summarize the data that was collected during the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings that developed from this study, types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, challenges that made it difficult to leave the relationship, motivation for leaving the relationship, and services utilized. In this chapter, the student researchers discuss the limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and recommendations for social work practice and policy.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood to understand some of the processes that may lead to experiencing violence in future intimate partner relationships. In addition, the student researchers explored the participant's positive support systems as an essential factor that helped them avoid domestic violence in future relationships. The data collected from the interviews described the participant's perspective on domestic violence, the types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, the factors that made it challenging to leave, the motivators that led to leaving the last domestic violence relationship, and the services utilized.

The student researchers aimed at utilizing the participant interviews as a supportive method to answering the identified research questions. As previously mentioned, the identified research questions were:

1. Does exposure to domestic violence in childhood influence participants' future experiences with domestic violence?

2. Does an individual's positive support system help them avoid domestic violence in future relationships?

Prior to the participant interviews, the student researchers posited that the type of exposure to domestic violence in childhood would be related to experiencing violence in future intimate partner relationships. Specifically, the student researchers hypothesized that witnessing a violent altercation in the home and/or engaging in the altercation were predictors for an individual's experience with domestic violence in their dating relationships. Furthermore, the student researchers hypothesized that having a positive support system would help the individual avoid future domestic violence relationships.

The findings from this study highlight that the type of exposure to domestic violence in childhood played a significant role in experiencing domestic violence in future dating relationships as reported by the participants. Several participants indicated that these early experiences of exposure included witnessing, hearing, and observing the aftermath of an incident, as well as engaging in the altercation. The student researchers recognized each participant held their own unique experiences of exposure to domestic violence. For example, seven of the eight participants identified being exposed to more than one type of domestic violence abuse throughout their childhood and adolescence and went on to have similar experiences in their adult relationships. Therefore, in our sample exposure to

domestic violence was part of experiencing domestic violence in future relationships, which has been represented in quantitative studies that found prior exposure to domestic violence in childhood as a predictor to experiencing domestic violence in future relationships (Maas et al., 2010; Temple et al., 2013; Karlsson et al., 2016). Furthermore, this sample aligns with the theoretical considerations of how prior domestic violence exposure in childhood may serve as a mechanism of ongoing violence for some individuals. Aforementioned, social learning theory and family systems theory explain how a child learns certain behaviors modeled by their parents (Black et al., 2010; Hyde-Nolan & Juliao, 2012; Liu et al., 2018).

The findings from this study are similar to prior research indicating that a child's exposure to any type of domestic violence within the home is a significant risk factor for experiencing domestic violence in future dating relationships. Several participants (n=7) described how their exposure to domestic violence in childhood influenced their experiences with domestic violence in their intimate partner relationships. This is in alignment with several studies that have found that childhood exposure to domestic violence was linked to becoming a victim of domestic violence in future relationships (Forke et al., 2019; Graham-Bernann et al., 2017; Haselschwerdt, Savasuk-Luxton, & Hlavaty, 2019).

Derived from the participant interviews, the student researchers identified that exposure to domestic violence in childhood appears to be related to the desensitization of violence, which hindered the participants from recognizing the

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risks of other types of abuse that were present prior to the escalation of physical

aggression from the perpetrator. This was noted by six of the eight participants

that reported that they understood physical aggression as the only type of

domestic violence. Therefore, this created a challenge for the participants to

leave prior to escalation of physical abuse in the relationship. Other studies have

identified that survivors of domestic violence often time do not recognize other

aspects of domestic violence, which makes treatment difficult (Haselschwerdt,

Hlayaty, Carlson, et al., 2019; Kearney & O'Brien, 2021). Furthermore,

Haselschwerdt and colleagues (2019) recognize that previous research that

solely defines domestic violence as physical abuse may neglect other forms of

abuse within domestic violence.

In addition, the participants collective experiences align with social

learning theory and family systems theory that address how the family influences

an individual's experience with domestic violence (Hyde-Nolan & Juliao, 2012).

Several participants reported that during childhood they witnessed their parent

being mentally and physically abused, which was a significant factor to

experiencing similar types of abuse in their domestic violence relationships.

These theories can explain how prior exposure to domestic violence in childhood

influences an individual's experiences with domestic violence in future dating

relationships, which creates a challenge to leaving their relationship.

To support this, participant 4 reported witnessing both mental and physical

abuse between her parents and shared she experienced mental and physical

abuse within her adult dating relationship. Participant 4 stated that the perpetrator used mental abuse to control, isolate, and manipulate her to be dependent on him. In addition, participant 4 experienced being slapped and kicked as a form of physical abuse.

In addition, participant 1 reported witnessing her mother being physically abused throughout her childhood. Participant 1 shared experiencing several forms of physical violence during her dating relationships. These abusive behaviors included intimidation (i.e., gun to her head), breaking and throwing her belongings, grabbing her, throwing her, and chocking her.

The student researchers recognized similarities in this study that were consistent with prior research on this topic. Prior research acknowledges exposure to domestic violence as seeing, hearing, witnessing the aftermath of a violent incident (Callaghan et al., 2018; The Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016). In addition, Callaghan and colleagues (2018) posit that children can become actively involved during a domestic violence altercation by intervening or preventing further harm to the abused parent. The student researchers recognize the participants' experiences of exposure to domestic violence included engaging in the altercation. One participant shared that she would avoid leaving her mother alone with the perpetrator in order to prevent the abuse from escalating. Another participant shared physically intervening during the altercation to protect her mother from physical abuse and further harm. Ultimately, the child's safety

became a significant motivator for the abused parent to leave their domestic violence relationship (Rhodes et al., 2010).

As previously mentioned, the student researchers assumed that an individual's positive support system would help avoid experiences of domestic violence in future relationships. The student researchers initially believed that an individual's positive support system consists of family and friends. After reviewing the interviews, the participant's individual experiences to domestic violence resulted in different forms of support in order to meet their specific needs. The findings from the study revealed a range of support with some of the participants experiencing no support, having one form of support (family or friend), or having both family and friends as part of their positive support system. Furthermore, three of the participants' positive support systems did not consist of family and friends and another three reported having only family as part of their positive support system. Two of eight participants reported having both family and friends as part of their positive support system. This emphasizes the importance of identifying several positive support systems that impact an individual during and after the domestic violence relationship to include family and/or friends. Prior work in this area has identified support systems as an important component of leaving domestic violence relationships (Evans & Feder, 2015; Anderson & Bernhardt, 2020; Bowen, 2015; Mandal & Hindin, 2013). Research also recognizes that many survivors do not have any form of support (Evans & Feder, 2015), although some studies find that an individual's support system often

includes friends and family when present (Stylianou et al., 2021; Trotter & Allen, 2009; Evans & Feder, 2015; Thomas et al., 2015). Lastly, previous research found that positive support systems can also include neighbors, coworkers, and classmates (Stylianou et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2015).

As previously mentioned, an individual's exposure to domestic violence in childhood can desensitize an individual's understanding of violence. The student researchers recognize an individual's desensitization of violence can hinder them from leaving their domestic violence relationship. Therefore, the student researchers concluded that positive support systems play a significant role in influencing an individual to leave a domestic violence relationship. In addition, ongoing positive support systems can encourage a survivor of domestic violence from returning or entering a domestic violence relationship.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

This study can benefit social workers to gain a better understanding of an individual's experience with exposure to domestic violence in childhood, as well as their experiences with domestic violence in adult intimate partner relationships. Social workers should be offered training that is specific to assessing for domestic violence. With this knowledge, social workers can create and utilize screening tools that assess for potential domestic violence. If domestic violence is disclosed, then the social worker can conduct a more thorough assessment to gather the individual's exposure to domestic violence, current

domestic violence experiences, and support systems. Based on the assessment outcomes the social workers can provide resources such as the domestic violence hotline, a list of domestic violence agencies/shelters, therapy/counseling, support groups, and restraining order/law enforcement assistance. Lastly, by utilizing a client-centered and strengths-based approach the social worker can empower the individual's self-determination to address their domestic violence and improve their well-being.

When working with individuals with a domestic violence history, the social workers should provide psychoeducation on the impacts of exposure to domestic violence, the increased risk of experiencing domestic violence in adult dating relationships, the challenges in leaving the relationship, and the impacts of utilizing services, and having positive support systems. Social workers can also partner with community-based programs to identify and further assist domestic violence survivors with the necessary services. Prior research posits that to address the issue domestic violence, safety services should be accessible to domestic violence survivors, these services which are developed by community-based providers include advocacy, counseling, support group, and shelter (Nurius et al., 2011). Therefore, social workers can play a significant role in enhancing the delivery of services in order to equip the individual in addressing the impacts of domestic violence and developing coping skills to prevent domestic violence in future relationships.

On a macro level, this study will reveal to social workers the need for updating and developing prevention and intervention programs that are targeted to individuals of all ages. Prior research emphasize that universities are recommended to create referral programs based on campus to assist domestic violence victims with locating the necessary resources such as counseling, information, and security services (Black et al., 2010). The student researchers recommend that social workers can partner with universities to enhance existing prevention and/or intervention programs and centralize resources for the convenience of the victim in order to increase comfort when seeking support. For example, the Family Justice Center Alliance (2021) has designed multi-disciplinary, co-located service centers that aim at providing resources to victims and their children from one location in order to increase accessibility to services that meet their needs.

Also, social workers can strive to address domestic violence by creating and updating policies to protect both children and survivors of domestic violence. Specifically, these policies can aim to protect an individual's safety without the fear of retaliation or further consequences from the perpetrator and/or larger systems (i.e., child welfare, court systems, and law enforcement). Furthermore, the student researchers believe that the benefit of further research will indicate the need for updating and/or creating new policies related to domestic violence. For example, social workers can become involved in advocating for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which is a policy that

aims at protecting victims of domestic violence regardless of their immigration status. However, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2021 does not include vital conditions protecting immigrant survivors (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2021). Therefore, it is essential for social workers to be proactive in lobbying with their local legislators.

For future studies, the student researchers recommend obtaining the necessary resources for ongoing research. By having the individuals agree to participate in studies that examine the longitudinal effects, future researchers can explore the individual's experience with exposure to domestic violence and their experiences of intimate partner violence relationships throughout various stages of their life. In examining these measures, future research will be able to identify common factors that can impact an individual during their domestic violence relationships. By conducting longitudinal studies, the findings can reveal how domestic violence can impact an individual at different stages in their life. Last, the student researchers recommend using mixed method studies to combine quantitative and qualitative findings to further explore some of the findings from this study.

Limitations

While this study significantly enhances an individual's understanding of the types of exposure to domestic violence in childhood, as well as the positive support systems that aid an individual in leaving a domestic violence relationship,

there are specific limitation to be noted. First, the student researchers acknowledge one limitation in this study is the sample size. Considering that only eight participants were interviewed, we caution against generalizing these findings to other participants that do not share the same demographics. Although the researchers wanted to obtain a larger sample, time constraints placed on graduate students made it difficult to recruit a larger sample size for the study. In addition, the student researchers considered the vulnerability and potential risk in recruiting additional survivors of domestic violence. Moreover, due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the student researchers were unable to conduct the study with multiple domestic violence agencies that serve survivors from other demographics. Therefore, the findings of this study can not be generalized to all domestic violence survivors.

The student researchers found that though positive support systems encouraged the participant to leave their last domestic violence relationship, a limitation of the findings from this study are unable to predict the likelihood of a survivor experiencing another domestic violence relationship because we did not use quantitative methods. The student researchers suggest that future research evaluate interventions that examine the impact of ongoing/continuous positive support systems as an approach to educate and prevent survivors from experiencing further domestic violence relationships.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a social problem that goes beyond affecting the victim and perpetrator because it also places children at risk. Thus, it is important to understand this phenomenon better to protect multiple parties. The purpose of this study was to explore the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood that influences an individuals' experiences of violence in future intimate partner relationships. The student researchers recruited participants through a domestic violence agency to understand their experiences, motivators, and challenges related to domestic violence. The data collected emphasized that exposure to domestic violence in childhood influences participants' future experiences with domestic violence. In addition, the data revealed that positive support systems are significant in helping an individual avoid or prevent domestic violence in future relationships. The student researchers recognized that utilizing educational support groups empowered participants to leave their domestic violence relationship. Therefore, it is the hope of the student researchers that further education on domestic violence is implemented in various settings for individuals with or without experiences with domestic violence. Lastly, the student researchers hope that this study can bring awareness on the issue of domestic violence and emphasize the need of ongoing research in order to prevent domestic violence in future intimate partner relationships.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

DEVELOPED BY ARACELI RODRIGUEZ AND CEIRRA L. VENZOR

Interview Questionnaire

1a. Current Demographic information:

    1. Age

       18-24   25-34   35-44   45-54   55+

    2. Gender

       Male   Female   Other   Decline to state

    3. Race-ethnicity

   White/Caucasian   Hispanic/Latino   Black/African American   Native American/American Indian

       Asian/Pacific Islander   Other

    4. Employment status

   Full-time   Part-time   Unemployed   Other

    5. Income

   Less than $20,000 $20,000-$34,999 $35,000-$49,999 $50,000+

    6. Highest level of education

   Some high school   High school Diploma/GED Some College Bachelor's Degree Postgraduate

    7. Current marital status

   Single   Cohabitation Married   Separated   Divorced   Widowed

1b. Demographics during the last domestic violence relationship:

    1. Age

   18-24   25-34   35-44   45-54   55+

2. Employment status

Full-time   Part-time   Unemployed   Other

3. Income

Less than $20,000 $20,000-$34,999 $35,000-$49,999

      $50,000+

4. Highest level of education

Some high school   High school Diploma/GED Some College

College Degree

5. Marital status

Single   Cohabitation Married   Separated

      Divorced   Widowed

2. Can you describe what domestic violence is?

3. Did you experience any domestic violence as a child such as witnessing, hearing, and/or observing the aftermath of a domestic violence incident?

4. In how many relationships have you experienced domestic violence?

5. How old were you when you experienced your first domestic violence relationship?

6. What factors made it difficult to leave your last domestic violence relationship?

7. What led you to leave your last domestic violence relationship?

8. Did you have access to any resources that made it easier to leave your last domestic violence relationship?

9. Did you have any positive support systems during or after your domestic violence relationships?

10. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences?

11. What advice would you give people that are currently in domestic violence relationships?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to explore the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood in later experiences of violence in intimate partner relationships. This study is being conducted by Ceirra Venzor and Araceli Rodriguez, MSW students under the supervision of Dr. James Simon, Adjunct Professor in the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). This study is yet to be approved. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to explore the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood that can lead to future violence in intimate partner relationships.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked a few questions about demographics, types of exposure to domestic violence during childhood and current intimate partner relationships, support systems, and perceptions of violence. If you agree to participate, following the completion of the interview you will receive a $5 gift card to a local fast-food restaurant.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

CONFIDENTIALITY: You will not be asked to state your name during the interview. Your responses will remain confidential. At the conclusion of the study, all audio/digital files will be erased, and transcribed interviews and notes will be destroyed.

DURATION: It will take 30-60 minutes to complete the interview.

RISKS: There are no major foreseeable risks. Although not anticipated, minimal risks may be present when sharing your experiences with exposure to domestic violence in childhood and experiencing violence in their intimate partner relationships. You are not required to answer and may skip any questions or end your participation in the study. The student researchers are mandated reporters and would have to report any suspected or reported child abuse.

BENEFITS: You will receive a $5 gift card to a local fast-food restaurant as compensation for participating in this study.

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH: I understand that this research that this research will be audio or video recorded. Initials ___

CONTACT: If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. James Simon at (909) 537 – 7224 or email James.simon@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Results of this study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/) at California State University San Bernardino after August 2022.

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this study. The study was designed to explore the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood that can lead to future violence in intimate partner relationships. In this study, the student researchers are interested in interviewing individuals enrolled in a domestic violence agency to gain insight into their experiences related to domestic violence. The student researchers have gathered these resources in case any unsettled feelings occur during or after the interview.

During the interview, you can skip any questions that may cause you to feel distressed in any way. We encourage you to take any pauses as needed, as well as taking deep breaths to reduce any distraught feelings. Please feel comfortable knowing that you are not required to have your camera on during the interview.

The student researchers do not anticipate any risks to participants, however, if you experience any discomfort following your interview please reference the resource listed below.

- National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799 – 7233, www.thehotline.org
- Love is Respect (866) 331 – 9474, www.loveisrespect.org
- National Center for Victims of Crime (202) 467 – 8700, www.victimsofcrime.org
- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (800) 537 – 2238, www.nrcdv.org

If you would like to speak with your domestic violence counselor at the YWCA SGV, please contact (626) 967 – 0658 for additional support.

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Study focusing on individuals who have experienced domestic violence and who were exposed to domestic violence in childhood
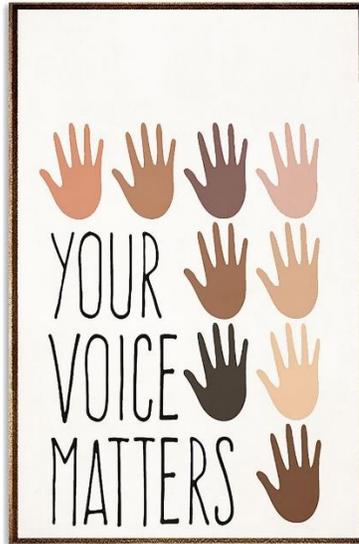
The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

Be part of an important research study.

Were you exposed to domestic violence as a child? Have you left your domestic violence relationship?

If you answered YES to these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the need for a greater understanding of the impacts of exposure to domestic violence in childhood and the risks of experiencing violence in future intimate partner relationships. Specifically, this research study will examine what factors have influenced individuals who have experienced domestic violence to leave the relationship.

The study will be conducted using telephone or Zoom to complete individual interview.

Only participants 18 years of age or older are eligible to participate.

~ Participants will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card ~

"Don't be ashamed to tell your story. It will inspire others." -Unknown

Please contact your case manager at (626) 960-2995 Ext. 114

for more information.

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2021-147
Status: Exempt

James SimonAraceli Rodriguez, Ceirra Venzor
CSBS - Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear James SimonAraceli Rodriguez, Ceirra Venzor:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "THE IMPACTS OF EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD THAT CAN LEAD TO EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE IN FUTURE INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS" has been reviewed and reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk and benefits of the study except to ensure the protection of human participants. Important Note: This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Office of Academic Research website for more information at https://www.csusb.edu/academic-research.

The study is approved as of . The study will require an annual administrative check-in (annual report) on the current status of the study on --. Please use the renewal form to complete the annual report.

If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse IRB system. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review

form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study. Please note a lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in your approval.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- **Important Notice: For all in-person research following IRB approval all research activites must be approved through the Office of Academic Research by filling out the Project Restart and Continuity Plan.**
  - **Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.**

  - **Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.**
  - **Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.**
  - **Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risks and benefits to the human participants in your IRB application. If you have any questions about the IRBs decision please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2021-147 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive regarding your research from participants or others should be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Dabbs

Nicole Dabbs, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

A collaborative approach was used to complete the research project in preparation for submission. The student researchers collaborated together throughout the research project through communication, attending Zoom meetings to discuss research, attending research advisor meetings, and researching relevant information on the topic of the study. To successfully complete the study, the student researchers contributed to the formatting, editing, and revision process.

Araceli Rodriguez and Ceirra Lena Venzor collaborated on the following sections:

1. Introduction

2. Literature Review

3. Methods

4. Results

5. Discussion

Both student researchers contributed to the development of the interview questionnaire, informed consent, debriefing statement, and creating recruitment materials.