

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SP 2009

Department:Social Work

Degree:PhD

Title:COPING AMONG PREGNANT, RURAL, LOW-INCOME WOMEN FACING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (PREGNANCY TO THREE MONTHS POST-NATAL).

Imagine what it would be like to be pregnant, poor, living in a rural area without community resources, and face violence from your intimate partner. It would mean facing multiple impediments simultaneously with limited accessibility to help. This study is an attempt to gain insight into the lives of low-income, pregnant women facing intimate partner violence in rural Missouri. It studies the coping skills they used and the factors that influence their decisions and relationships. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with women during pregnancy and three months post-natal who had experienced domestic violence. Data were analyzed using grounded theory. The most important finding that helped all participants cope with their abuse was the urge to protect the unborn/newborn baby. The following participant quote highlights the major findings of this study where women left abusive relationships as they realized the danger to the unborn fetus and hence the urge to protect it:

"I think that if it wasn't for her (her fetus), then there is no telling what I would have probably let happen, probably would have stayed. You know, because I was really starting to believe what he is saying, nobody wants you, nobody wants to be with you. Stuff like that. Because that's where I put all my focus and energy into, instead of him I feel like I had something better just leave. And I know that it is a really really hard thing to do but, I mean that is the best advice that you can give somebody in that situation when they are pregnant or not, you just got to find a way, if not then there are people willing to help you get away, you just have to be ready to do it. Leave".(Nakisha, age 22).

Research, policy and practice implications for working with pregnant, rural, low-income women facing IPV are also discussed.