



Challenges Faced by Women and Children Protection Personnel in Dealing with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence: An Exploration

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach to address and police officers play a crucial role in dealing with it. Thus, this study was conducted to know the challenges encountered by police officers in dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence. This study made use of qualitative descriptive design. The study involved ten police officers, each representing the Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) of the ten police stations in Baguio City. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the ten police officers and thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data gathered. Findings revealed that the common challenges encountered are: difficulty in communicating with intoxicated perpetrators of domestic violence, boastful perpetrators of domestic violence and different persona in front of police officers than in private.

Keywords: domestic violence, police officers, perpetrators, challenges, women and children protection desk

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem that occurs in every culture and social group, leading to devastating physical, emotional, financial, and social effects on victims, families, and communities (World Health Organization, 2013). It is no longer acceptable to view domestic violence as a "private matter," and the role of law enforcement and justice sectors is crucial in providing a comprehensive, coordinated, and multi-faceted response to domestic abuse (Council of Europe, 2011). These sectors can be mobilized to become more effective tools to protect victims and end abuse, providing justice and redress for those affected by domestic violence.

Abusive partners work very hard to keep victims trapped in the relationship that they may try to isolate the victim from friends and family to reduce the people and places where the survivor can ask for help or support (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2017). With this argument, Law enforcers or the police officers can hardly find the perpetrator even when the information about domestic abuse is relayed to them by a concerned citizen or member of the victim or the perpetrators family.

According to Cultura et al. (2017), one of the challenges faced by Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) investigators in dealing with Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) cases is the reluctance of victims to reveal the true facts. As a result, police officers may be unable to immediately capture the offender and turn over the case for due process, as they need to have full details and the true identity of the batterer before proceeding.

Moreover, previous studies have examined various aspects of police response to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) situations, including how police define their role, how they assess the scenario, how perceptions of IPV affect arrest decisions, and how the severity of violence affects police involvement (Gill et al., 2021). Other research has explored the development of police attitudes towards IPV over time, as well as the relationship between police officer gender and those attitudes.

In addition, the way that police respond to domestic abuse is becoming more "risk-led," yet there are inherent and perhaps impossible to overcome difficulties with this strategy. There are differences in risk assessment methods used by different police agencies, inconsistent risk-based practices, and uneven training and expertise. It can be more helpful to comprehend police responses to domestic abuse if one is aware of the significance given to particular risk factors by relevant practitioners and how they determine risk (Robinson, 2018).

Thus, law enforcement agencies should develop policies related to domestic violence that provide not only a proactive, victim-centered approach but also perpetrator - centered approach in order to look into the root cause of the violence without any bias. How Police Officers respond to domestic violence is the first and most vital step to improving officers' ability to address domestic violence in their community (Alexandria,2023).

Literature Review

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) are highly prevalent worldwide, and understanding how incarcerated men with a history of intimate partner violence exhibit cyclical behaviors that escalate in violence has implications for departments of correction in their efforts to break a pattern of recidivism and address successful reentry of male intimate partner offenders into society (Miles & De Claire, 2018). Despite considerable efforts by researchers and practitioners, there is still ambiguity around 'what works' with perpetrators of domestic abuse when attempting to prevent such offending or reduce re-offending (Tarzia et al., 2020).

To address this issue, intervention programs targeting perpetrators have been developed. However, experiences of psychological support have been mixed, with some participants describing how individual or couples' therapy had been ineffective in reducing their use of abusive behaviors or how they had felt blamed for their relationship problems within therapy (Calcia et al., 2021). Perpetrators attend perpetrator intervention programs with a range of motivations, ranging from a determination to change who they are to a determination to avoid a custodial sentence. The most common barriers to change, found in this analysis, were cognitive distortions, emotional dysregulation, gendered social constructions, and self-esteem issues (McColgan et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development has implemented the Counseling Services for the Rehabilitation of Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (CSRPDV) under Republic Act No. 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004. The CSRPDV provides rehabilitative counseling and treatment to perpetrators towards learning constructive ways of coping with anger and emotional outbursts and reforming their ways. When necessary, the offender shall be ordered by the Court to submit to psychiatric treatment or confinement (Almaiz et al., 2021). Studies have revealed that simplified approaches to counseling

can easily extract the feelings of perpetrators, leading to the identification of problems and provision of appropriate intervention.

Opportunities for intervening with perpetrators should continue to be explored across the 'offender journey,' from the preventative stage during childhood to early intervention with 'first-time' offenders and working with the highest risk repeat perpetrators who continue to offend beyond punishment and rehabilitative efforts. This may involve innovative ways of working that move beyond the traditional approaches of punishment and intervention, particularly given that there is no single identified means of intervening that works better than any others. That said, particularly while it remains unclear what is effective when developing and delivering perpetrator services, investment must be made in ongoing robust evaluation (Miles & De Claire, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the following theories.

Social Learning Theory, this theory posits that individuals learn by observing and modeling the behavior of others, as well as through the consequences of their own behavior. In the context of this study, the theory could be used to explore how perpetrators of domestic violence learn and reinforce their abusive behavior, as well as how law enforcement and protection personnel learn and respond to these behaviors.

Ecological Systems Theory, which highlights the multiple layers of influence on individual behavior, including the individual, family, community, and larger societal factors. This theory could be useful in examining the various factors that contribute to domestic violence, including cultural norms, gender roles, and power dynamics, and how these factors intersect with the actions and responses of law enforcement and protection personnel.

Feminist Theory, which emphasizes the role of gender in shaping social relationships, power dynamics, and experiences of violence. This theory could be useful in exploring the gendered nature of domestic violence and how it intersects with the actions and responses of law enforcement and protection personnel.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to know the different challenges encountered by WCPD police officers in dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the challenges experienced by police officers in dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes in the respondents' answers.

Population of the Study

This study was participated by ten (10) police officers who are WCPD personnel and with work experience of at least one (1) year, thus they were chosen purposively. These ten police officers came from ten (10) WCPD stations of Baguio City.

Data Gathering Tools

In conducting this study, the researchers used an interview guide to facilitate face-to-face data gathering. The interview guide was designed to explore the challenges that police officers

face when dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence. The questions were open-ended to allow the participants to provide detailed and descriptive responses, and to ensure that the researchers were able to gather as much information as possible on the challenges experienced by the officers.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers first submitted a letter of request to the Graduate School Office, seeking permission to conduct the research. Once the request was approved, the researchers then sent another letter of request to the City Mayor and City Police Director, seeking approval to conduct the study within their jurisdiction.

In order to ensure that all relevant parties were aware of the study, the researchers provided all Women and Children Protection (WCP) stations with a copy of the approved letter prior to the data gathering process. This step was taken to ensure that the officers were fully informed about the research, and to obtain their cooperation in the data gathering process.

After obtaining the necessary approvals, the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the selected police officers using the interview guide. The data gathered was then compiled and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes in the responses provided by the participants.

Treatment of Data

The responses were systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. The codes were then organized based on their similarity, and overarching categories of common data were established. These categories, or themes, were then used to summarize the data and to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by police officers in dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence.

Ethical Considerations

To prevent unethical practices during the conduct of the study, the following ethical guidelines were monitored. Informed consent, in which our participants were completely aware of the study's goal and were not subjected to any compulsion. Voluntary participation meant that individuals could opt out of the study at any moment without consequences. Participants were also not subjected to any bodily or psychological damage. Confidentiality was also ensured by the researchers, who ensured that the information provided by the participants will not be available to anybody other than the study's conductors, including their identity, whether they wanted to keep it a secret or disclose their respective identities in answering the interviews. By following these ethical guidelines, the researchers were able to conduct the study in a manner that was respectful of the participants' rights and privacy. This also helped to establish trust between the researchers and the participants, which is crucial in any study involving human subjects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Difficulty in communicating with intoxicated perpetrators of domestic violence. The study's key informants identified that communicating with intoxicated perpetrators of domestic violence is a common and significant challenge they faced. Informant 3, stated that "when perpetrators are under the influence of liquors, they become uncooperative", also Informant 1 mentioned that "most perpetrators of domestic violence are influenced by liquor that talking to them requires patience". The influence of alcohol on perpetrators can result in conflicting statements, uncooperative behavior and violence hindering effective communication and making it more difficult for them to manage the situation. In a study in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence found that alcohol use was associated with higher levels of aggression and that perpetrators who were under the influence of alcohol were more likely to engage in severe violence (Stuart et al., 2008). Another study published in the Journal of Family Violence found that perpetrators who were under the influence of alcohol were less likely to comply with police officers and more likely to resist arrest (Barnett et al., 2014). This implies that alcohol affects the behavior of perpetrators and hinder effective communication between police officers and perpetrators, making it more challenging to manage domestic violence situation.

Boastful perpetrators of domestic violence. According to participant 4, "Others are too boastful and keep on mentioning names of high ranking-officials to frightened us". Perpetrators who are boastful tend to be more confident and may resist police intervention, making it more difficult for officers to manage the situation. Previous research has also highlighted the impact of perpetrator attitudes and beliefs on domestic violence incidents, with some perpetrators viewing violence as a means of asserting power and control over their partners (Johnson & Leone, 2005). In addition, boastful perpetrators often have a sense of entitlement and believe that their actions are justified, which can lead to resistance and uncooperative behavior during investigations (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Their confidence and lack of remorse can also make it difficult for police officers to establish rapport and build trust with them, hindering effective communication and making it more challenging to gather accurate information about the incident. Boastful perpetrators may also downplay the severity of the incident or provide false information, making it difficult for officers to determine the appropriate course of action. Research has shown that perpetrator attitudes and beliefs play a significant role in domestic violence incidents, with some perpetrators viewing violence as a means of asserting power and control over their partners (Choi, 2010). These beliefs can make it more difficult for police officers to intervene effectively and prevent future incidents. In some cases, these attitudes may also increase the likelihood of reoffending, making it crucial to address them in interventions.

Different persona in front of police officers than in private. This phenomenon, known as "police presentational behavior," can make it difficult for police officers to accurately assess the situation and determine the appropriate course of action. Previous research has also shown that perpetrators of domestic violence may engage in such behavior to avoid arrest or intervention by police officers (Johnson & Leone, 2005). According to informant 9, "They are very sweet and loving to their spouse in front of police officers but when we are not present, they become abusive." One study published in the Journal of Family Violence found that perpetrators of domestic violence often present themselves as calm and cooperative in front of police officers, but may become more aggressive and violent once the officers leave (Cronin, 2013). Another study published in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence found that perpetrators of domestic violence

may use strategic image management to manipulate the perceptions of police officers and avoid arrest or intervention (Finn & McDevitt, 2015). These studies support the finding that perpetrators of domestic violence may present a different persona in front of police officers than in private, a phenomenon known as "police presentational behavior." This can make it difficult for police officers to accurately assess the situation and determine the appropriate course of action.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The different challenges encountered and experienced by the police officers can hinder their ability to investigate and file cases against perpetrators, and provide appropriate support and protection to victims.

Recommendations

1. Specialized training programs can be provided to help police officers identify and manage intoxicated perpetrators and boastful perpetrators, including de-escalation techniques and methods to safely detain them.
2. Develop partnerships between law enforcement and mental health professionals to provide additional support and resources for intoxicated perpetrators.
3. Specialized training can be provided to help police officers identify and manage individuals who exhibit different personas in front of them than in private, including techniques for building trust and rapport with individuals and strategies for identifying and addressing potential safety concerns.

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