

Narratives of Domestic Violence against Women: A Multiple Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-multiple case study was conducted to investigate the lived experiences, coping and insights on domestic violence of women in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. This study employed case study design utilizing In-depth Interview. Five women were interviewed identified through the snowball technique. Using the Miles and Huberman framework in the data analysis, it was revealed that domestic violence as experienced by women having an abusive partner include physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse, economic abuse, and grave threat. These abused women cope by giving attention and focus to children, and seeking social support. Further, the emerging themes on their insights in addressing these abuses comprise provision of livelihood program, seminar on women's rights and protection, and counselling and moral recovery program.

Keywords: Domestic violence, case study, women, thematic analysis, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. The problem is not only widely dispersed geographically, but its incidence is also extensive, making it a typical and accepted behavior. Hence, domestic violence is widespread which is deeply ingrained and has serious impacts on women's health and well-being. Its continued existence is morally indefensible. Its cost to individuals, to health systems and to society is enormous. Yet no other major problem of public health has been so widely ignored and so little understood (Kaur & Garg, 2009).

Relatively, the Philippines is not excused from this type of phenomenon. According to Republic Act 9262, otherwise known as the "The Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004", the government values the dignity of women and guarantees full respect for human rights. The law also recognizes the need to protect the family and its members particularly women and children, from violence and threats to their personal safety and security. Towards the end, the government exerts efforts to address violence committed against women and children in keeping with the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution and Provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, convention on the rights of the child and other international human rights instruments of which the Philippines is a party member (Mallorca, 2010).

However, despite the passage of the said law, the following cases were reported to the Philippine National Police after nine years of its implementation. In 2013, number of Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) cases reported to the Philippine National Police (PNP) increases by 49.4 % from 2012 report. The increase caused the trend to go upward again after it decreases in 2011. In addition, the 2013 report is so far the highest number of

reported VAWC cases since 1997. The trend however is not conclusive of a decreasing or increasing VAWC incidence in the country because data are based only from the extracted report from the PNP. Across a ten-year period from 2004 to 2013, average violations of RA 9262 ranked first at 57% among different VAWC categories since its implementation in 2004 (Annan, 2010).

In Bansalan, Davao del Sur, several citizens were asking whether the Local Government Unit has established approaches to curb down the prevalence of domestic violence on women. Thus, the researchers opted to conduct this study for assessment purposes. Moreover, the researchers have not come across a study on the prevalence of domestic violence on women in the locality. Hence, concerned beneficiaries may find the study a useful means in coming up with the possible solutions for related problems.

The main purpose of this qualitative - multiple case study was to investigate the experiences of women on domestic violence in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. Moreover, it also aimed to explore their coping mechanisms and insights to reducing cases of domestic violence.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative - multiple case study approach as research design. A qualitative approach is best suited to the research as it sought to study and gain deeper understanding of the incidence of domestic violence among women. Qualitative - multiple case study gives an avenue to engage the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. Multiple case-study ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. It also seeks to ensure that the topic of interest is well explored and that the essence of the phenomenon is revealed (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2006). The key informants of this study were the women who experienced domestic violence in

Bansalan, Davao del Sur. Five (5) women were identified through snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling (or referral sampling) is a nonprobability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances (Goodman, 1961). Further, snowball sampling uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate, through their social networks, other participants who meet the eligibility criteria and could potentially contribute to a specific study (Morgan, 2008).

This study made use of semi-structured interview guide. This instrument was used by researchers to determine the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of women who experienced the prevailing phenomenon. The interview guide was semi-structured in order to guide the participants in answering the open-ended questions and to allow them some room to add their personal meanings to the interview. Interviews were recorded using an audio program as the back-up recording device. Researchers also jot down notes during the interviews.

In analyzing the data of the study, the researchers used the thematic analysis using Miles and Huberman framework. Data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions are the three main components of the said framework. These components involved coding (or categorizing data, and describing details and implications leading to themes), memoing (or writing and gathering written notes of thoughts and ideas and links about concepts and drawing a sketch or graphs), and developing propositions (Punch, 2005).

Likewise, obtaining approval from the participants, getting informed consent and respecting the anonymity of the participants were the primordial ethical considerations in this research. The informed consent was a written description of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, the time commitment involved, the intended use of results, the right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time, and the confidentiality of all information gathered through data collection methods. Using

pseudonyms for the participants was another important ethical consideration to ensure that anonymity of participants was preserved (Creswell, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Experiences of Women on Domestic Violence

The first objective of this study was to determine the experiences of women in terms of domestic violence. Domestic violence as experienced by unfortunate women having an abusive partner is just one of the prevailing problems surrounding the global issues. As perceived, the incidence of control or power of a person over the other is evident. Most reported cases of such were the battered wives referred as a major violation on the human rights according to RA 9262 or The Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004. It involves force or other methods of abuse and as such the themes that are captured in the materialization of this study is verified. As professed by various authors (Garcia-Moreno & Stockl, 2013; McQuigg, 2011), globally, the victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. In abusive relationships, there may be a cycle of abuse during which tensions rise and an act of violence is committed.

From the conducted interview, five main themes emerged. The themes are; (a) *Physical Abuse*, (b) *Sexual Abuse*, (c) *Verbal Abuse*, (d) *Economic Abuse*, and (e) *Grave Threat*. Physical abuse in relation to the domestic violence against women is subjective to the most reported cases in these problems. Technically, physical abuse pertains to the exertion of violent force to other person that cause harm on the latter. This abused, however, integrates broad range of behaviors that may come under the heading of physical abuse which include the actions such as punching, slapping, pulling hair and the likes (Nicolson, 2010).

Relatively, IDI results found out that the key informants of this study were experiencing such violence. Further, the foregoing experiences of the participants has sometimes lead them to feel unsafe and scared which can also lead to negative effects to victim's psychological upbringing. According to some researchers (Dutton & Painter, 1981; Schechter et al., 2007) victims of domestic violence may be trapped in domestic violent situations. As a result of abuse, victims may experience a poor ability to create healthy relationships and psychological stress.

Sexual Abuse. Since violence against women is mostly associated within couples, sexual abuse is inevitable. However, it does not mean that sexual abuse is about sex alone. It was also defined that sexual abuse is about overpowering in a relationship, for instance, sexual behavior performed without a partner's consent. This includes forcing a partner to have sex even if she is not willing to do any sexual activities; and pursuing sexual activity even in the presence of their children This affirmed the contention of Shipway (2004) which described sexual abuse as any situation in which a domestic abused victim is forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe, or degrading sexual activity, which is of significance to the IDI results in which informants admitted that they were being forced to have sex with their husband even in front of their children.

Verbal and Emotional Abuse. Verbal abuse is most commonly associated with domestic violence. Verbal abuse as it caused emotional stress occurs when an intimate partner seeks control over his partner by name calling in an insulting manner, blaming the partner for everything, shouting, throws bad words, shaming or humiliating through verbal enactments. Inevitable as it is, it has very serious effects same as in physical abuse. As stated by Kurst-Swanger & Petcosky (2003), making insults, blaming the intimate partner for the misfortunes they face, or even shouting in front the crowd as associated in verbal abuse may sometimes attempt to create a negative impact to the women's psychological upbringing. Relatively, IDI results revealed that the women in the study were

experiencing emotional and verbal abuse from their husbands. They receive humiliations, curses and nags.

Economic Abuse. This abuse pertains to financial concern. Behavior that maintains power and control over finances constitute financial abuse. This summarizes the following cases which includes the suffering of a partner by forcing them to seek job to earn their living. This may include controlling or deprivation of one's financial assets that causes latter to seek job. As such mismanagement of budget usually happens if the partner tends to sustain their vices. This confirmed the statement of McKie (2005) which explained that technically, an abusive partner takes control of finances to prevent the other person from leaving and to maintain power in a relationship. An abuser may take control of all the money, withholding it, forcing someone to work against their will is a kind or economical abuse Based on the IDI results, the participants revealed that, sometimes, they were forced to work to earn money for their living while their husbands show irresponsible acts by means of abusing their money to sustain their vices.

Grave Threat. Grave threat is a form of abuse characterized by which the abuser has declared an intention or determination to inflict punishment, injury in retaliation for gaining the power over another person. Technically, the use of harmful weapons was mainly manifested on this abuse, hence, grave threat is considered as an element of the crime. In addition, Cosimo (2012) avowed that he law provides that grave threat is an act whereby abusers are with the intention of threatening another with the infliction upon his person, honor or property or that of his family of any wrong amounting to a crime. The threat is considered to be a grave threat if the offender shall have made the threat imposing any condition, even though not unlawful, and that said offender shall have attained his purpose. The crime shall likewise be grave threat even if the threat of infliction of harm upon a person, his honor or property was not made subject to a condition. Like for instance, throwing words and using deadly weapons that have threatened the

abused party with the infliction of harm amounting to a crime which may be homicide or murder

Coping Mechanisms of Women Who Experienced Domestic Violence

The second objective of this study was to determine the coping mechanisms of women as they experienced domestic violence and picture out concrete and general picture of how they manage to stay within the relationship in which their respective intimate partners, whom they are expected to rely their needs, are instead abusive on their part. Significantly, the analysis of the data gathered on the conducted interview has resulted to the emergence of two themes; (a) *Attention and Focus to Children* and (b) *Seeking Social Support*.

Attention and Focus to Children. In many ways, this mechanism plays a vital role in the survival of most abused wives in this phenomenon. Attention and focus to children has become one of the effective coping mechanisms of women experiencing domestic violence as revealed in the interviews conducted. Technically, their children are somehow their source of fortitude and hope, so, during the interview they have expressed that they are going to give their full attention towards their children because they don't want their children suffer from any psychological stress because of family problem. Besides, victims also believe that the domestic abuses they have experienced from their husbands are considered normal in relationships. As mentioned by Radford & Hester (2006), some mothers who experienced violence from their husbands wanted the relationship to work out and felt it was up to them to accept what was going on and make the best of it, hoping that things might change in the future. Women tried to keep things as normal. Normal in the sense that their family are at least intact.

Seeking Social Support. One important mechanism done by the key informants of this study was

seeking social support. This mechanism presents psychological booster characteristics in which these women engaged in a domestic violence seeks guidance from their family or close friends. This enables them to feel secured amidst every hardship they feel since they find sympathy from those persons. Significantly, they can share their feelings to other persons and, as such, the burden they feel will lessen. Besides, Kocot & Goodman (2003) stated that women who experienced abuse tend to develop the capacity to stay strong enough or even fight back for their rights against the abuses they suffer. Further, seeking social support from people who are experiencing similar problems or sharing one's feelings and experiences by cultivating friendships can sometimes boost the sentiments of the abused women. Sharing one's feelings and experiences could be the outlet for coping with the violent experiences.

Insights of Women Who Experienced Domestic Violence

The inclusion of this dimension in this study was to investigate the insights of abused women on how the problem, though may not be fully eliminated but at least lessened. Further, the study examined the needs of women that may be addressed or provided by the local government unit or the community perhaps. Significantly, the analysis of the data gathered on the conducted interview has resulted to the emergence of the following themes; (a) *Provision of Livelihood Program*, (b) *Seminar on Women's Rights and Protection*, and (c) *Counseling and Moral Recovery Program*.

Provision of Livelihood Program. The proposal on the provision of livelihood program to the unfortunate abused women is one insight shared by the key informants. They believed that this opens important windows of opportunities existing to support the early recovery of affected women. In conjunction, Roberts (2002) had pointed out the provision of livelihood support is also an

important opportunity to promote gender equality since it capitalizes on the capacities of women in terms of economic and reshape their social roles in the society as economically capable individuals. Further, livelihood strategies aim at developing self-reliance. Livelihood interventions should be designed and implemented to strengthen women's and men's productive capacity early on and to promote longer-term self-sufficiency.

Seminar on Women's Rights and Protection. The call of women to promote a seminar on women's right and protection is another insight gained from the interviews conducted. The key informants deemed that interventions like this need to be initiated within the barangay to enable them to feel secured because they know that their husbands will be fully aware of their rights. As explained by Bowen (2011), this strategy will provide abusive partners the better understanding of the rights of women, and to secure safety planning, and advocacy programs in a coordinated community response. The seminar should be properly planned and designed which includes intake and orientation; sentencing recommendations or working with probation officers and the courts; re-offense or developing protocols; building safety into programs; helping offenders understand their pattern and intention of abusive behavior; and helping offenders understand how their beliefs are linked to their behavior.

Counseling and Moral Recovery Program. Counseling and moral recovery program are deemed to be an effective mechanism to revive family relationships, as revealed in the responses of the key informants. Likewise, Licuanan (2016) said that the initiation of moral recovery program shall encompass the motion to strengthen the couples' moral resources which adopt the values and ideals of a person living in a pro-God, pro-people, pro-country and pro-nature community. The exposure of such program shall cover the innate religiosity. In such a way, abusive partners to prevent themselves from doing intrusive acts or destructive motion which will then change their attitude in a better and acceptable way.

Conclusion

Abused women have undergone different modes of abuses such as being violated physically, sexually, verbally, economically as well as grave threat. With these negative experiences, women look for the brighter side of their family and be positive amidst the negative impact of the abuses they have experienced. To cope, women tend to focus themselves on their children and be responsible women at home. They committed themselves to their family. In addition, they also seek guidance and social support from their families and friends. This would give them enough courage to fight for their rights. Further, women reflected on the need to have provision of livelihood program by the government so they would no longer depend their family needs on their husband's income. Moreover, they also highlighted that there should be a seminar on women's right and protection and counseling and moral recovery program for they believe that through these methods their husbands would change their personal upbringing and attitude in an acceptable manner.

Implications for Practice

The Local Government Unit may intensify the law protecting women's right. They shall be responsible for those problems arising on such violence such as they should have a strict implementation of all related laws which support and protect the women's rights. They may allocate funds for the provision of livelihood program, not only for those unfortunate women, but for the community as a whole. Further, they may initiate a seminar pertaining on the discussion of women's right and protection.

Similarly, the Barangay Council may present a strong tie to the local government unit in promoting local laws pertaining to the protection of women's right. They may report and submit any related cases on this violence to the LGU and propose various interventions that will

downscale the problem. As well, Barangay officials may initiate a seminar pertaining on the discussion of women's right and protection and seek for an allocation of local budget for the provision of livelihood program. In addition, the NGO which supports women's right may act as a local ambassador for those abused in fighting for their rights.

Furthermore, the church may initiate a moral recovery program for those married couples. Church ministers may incorporate spiritual help for those couples who were prone to this kind of violence. At the same time, married couples shall remind themselves that they must act together as one and look for the goodness of their family not by abusing one partner or harassing them when they wanted to. Most importantly, their relationship must be bounded with love centering God as the control of their life. Lastly, for the Community, they shall promote local laws pertaining to the women's right and protection. They shall fight for women's right and protection by submitting and proposing any programs that could help lessen the problems arising on such violence.

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