Male Victims’ Accounts of Female-Perpetrated Intimate Partner Violence

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Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is often argued to be unitary whereby men perpetrate violence against their female partners to defend their patriarchal status. Others argue that IPV is a human, rather than gendered, problem (Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007), as men report experiencing IPV.

Men experience a wide range of physical abuse (Hines et al., 2007) and often experience severe psychological consequences, such as PTSD, depression, and stress (Straus & Stets, 1990).

Male victims are less likely to view IPV as a crime and are less likely to report it (Dutton & White, 2013). Also, men who disclose their victimisation are often met with contempt/ridicule and often feel re-victimised by help services (Hines et al., 2007).

Male victims often experience emotional abuse and controlling behaviours (Hines et al., 2007). Also, 64.5% of the 107 men who had children reported that their wives used the children to control them.

Aim

The present qualitative study aimed to gain a rich and more detailed understanding of male ‘victims’ experiences of female-perpetrated IPV.

Method

Data Analysis

Inductive Thematic Analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used. Themes were identified at the semantic level, focusing on the explicit meanings of peoples’ discourse.

Rationale for TA

TA is not constrained by a theoretical position, allowing greater flexibility during analysis. TA also aids understanding peoples’ experiences and motivations through their own language.

Data Collection

Eight accounts written by anonymous male IPV victims were taken from the One in Three website; a campaign to raise awareness of the existence & experiences of male IPV victims.

Only accounts of a longer length were chosen for this study to allow for a richer qualitative analysis (M word count = 1779)

Results

Three overarching themes were identified, with nine subthemes

The IPV Myth

Female Abuse Manipulation of the System Designed for Them

Child Protection Issues

Victims’ Perception of ‘Procedural Injustice’

Discussion

The IPV Myth

The IPV Myth may result from the acceptance of asymmetry position of IPV that views it as a male-specific offence. Media portrayals also reinforce this stereotype (Carll, 2003). Moreover, male victimisation contradicts the masculinized/patriarchal construction of men. Thus, little attention/support is offered (George, 1994). The Female Abusers’ Manipulation of the System Designed for Them subtheme supports Hines et al.’s (2007) finding that some female abusers threatened to have their partners falsely arrested as they knew the system was unlikely to consider men as victims.

Child Protection Issues

Children are often witnesses to IPV & are victims of the assault themselves (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007). They also sometimes try to intervene to protect the abused parent (Fattuzzo, 1997).

Victims’ Perception of ‘Procedural Injustice’

Procedural Justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) states people are as concerned with decision-making processes as they are with the outcome. Leventhal’s (1980) elements of fairness (impartiality, accuracy & representation) were absent in the men’s accounts, supporting the idea that the decision-making process was unjust.

Conclusions

The results highlights the pervasiveness of the IPV myth, which has allowed for a distorted perception of IPV. This perception has influenced the decision-making processes that male IPV victims come into contact with, allowing for re-victimisation and unjust child custody outcomes. Also, children appear to often be the unexpected victims within IPV, as they tend to witness the abuse or become injured themselves.

The implications of the current findings contribute to raising societal awareness as to the existence of male victims of female-perpetrated IPV and, thus, challenge current perceptions.

References


