Intimate Partner Violence Determinants in Botswana: A Case of Male Survivors

Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious social problem, which affects millions of men. Historically, intimate partner violence has been considered a female victim issue and the concept of female victims is much more recognized in the general population than the concept of male victims. IPV against men is a phenomenon that has received little attention in the academic literature and the media around the world. This paper explores the determinants of Intimate Partner Violence and uses social learning theory to examine dynamics surrounding IPV in male survivors by identifying major areas, and significant players in the male' survivors' life that can help understand factors that put them at risk of IPV, which could be entry points for interventions and mitigation strategies. Desk review was used and focused on a literature review of the current state of knowledge on the determinants and men's experiences of IPV. Since governments have an obligation to serve all citizens, there is a need to widen the scope of social policy in this area. Governments should continue developing policies with the explicit objective of responding to, preventing, and ending violence against both women and men. However, gender-based analysis approaches to IPV need to consider the impacts of violence on all genders and develop policy-relevant responses to the needs of each, men, and women. Additionally, the study points to the need for research that may be wider in scope, cover more geographical areas and document the experiences of men as victims of IPV. Expand research on male survivors of IPV by encouraging more inclusive research designs that investigate patterns of IPV across the gender spectrum.

Key words: partner violence, female victims, gender, power

Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence is one of the most persistent violations of human rights across the world according to the World Health Organization [1]. "IPV affects all social classes and has recently received renewed attention during the current COVID-19 pandemic with more cases being reported. The World Health Organization defines IPV as any behavior in an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in that relationship" [1]. "Although most reported IPV is perpetrated by men toward women [2], research have increasingly recognized that the experience of IPV is not limited to women and that men can also be victims of abuse. Hence, the general objective of the study is to examine IPV determinants on male survivors, in Botswana".

Statement of the Problem

"The identification and recognition of men as recipients or victims of IPV strongly challenges a society in which men are seen to be economically, socially, and politically dominant" [3]. "This is because IPV is commonly understood as a gendered phenomenon, and most often men are positioned as the perpetrators and women as the victims or survivors" [4]. "This understanding is informed by many factors within the patriarchal society that disadvantages women, including decades of evidence indicating that men regularly commit violence against their female partners. However, men also experience IPV, often from female partners, and their experiences are commonly downplayed or ignored considering the dominant ideas of gender, power, and violence within our society" [5].

Furthermore, in the past, the hypothesis was that women in general endure more physical and psychological wounds because of male executed IPV than men who experience female perpetuated violence [6,3]. However, researchers such as [3,7,8] have opposed this notion, and a flourishing area of research has acknowledged the magnitude of IPV on male victims. "The common motivators of women's violent behavior in intimate relationships are fear, defense of children, control, and retribution for real or perceived wrongdoing" [9]. "Additionally, poor emotional regulation, provocation by their partner [10], or their partners' insensitivity to their needs [11] may also lead to violent behavior". "Some common characteristics among abusive female partners and wives are childhood trauma, emotional abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, physical neglect, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" [12]. "Prior literature suggests that male victims experience physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal forms of IPV" [13]. "They also experience coercive control and manipulative behaviors through gender stereotypes of abuse, use of children, and isolation" [5].

This paper examines the determinants of IPV on male survivors in Botswana. Despite the efforts of various stakeholders to raise awareness on IPV globally, regionally, nationally and despite numerous studies surrounding the issue, IPV continues in many communities, including Botswana. The determinants of IPV on men is not yet described and characterized in Botswana. Hence, this triggered the interest of the researchers to conduct a study on the determinants of IPV on male survivors. The aim is to contribute to characterize this phenomenon to better understand it, include temporary and permanent mitigation programs and policies targeting victims of IPV. This article used social learning theory to explore

factors influencing IPV on male. The proposed framework can help in identifying major areas, and significant players in the male' survivors' life that can help understand factors that put them at risk of IPV, which could be entry points for interventions and mitigation strategies.

Background

Evidence from numerous analyses by [14,15] reveal that "rates of childhood trauma and abuse are remarkably high among women who use violence". To support the above stated, Swan et al.'s [14] found that "a sample of women who used intimate partner violence, 60% of them experienced emotional abuse and neglect, 58% were sexually abused, 52% were physically abused, and 41% were physically neglected" [15]. "Experiences of childhood abuse have been found in several studies to be a risk factor for women's violent and abusive behavior toward others",[14]. "A longitudinal study of 136 women who were treated at a hospital for sexual abuse as children examined the impact of childhood abuse on the women's adult relationships [16] found that childhood experiences of sexual abuse predicted both women's use of violence against intimate partners and the partners' use of violence against them" [16].

Other factors that contribute to IPV among males include low household income, unemployment, and low educational levels. "Studies in Asia, Europe, and the United States demonstrated that male violence victimization is significantly associated with younger age [17], low household income [18], unemployment [7] lower educational levels [19], alcohol consumption, and illicit drug use, and prior violence or history of childhood abuse". The investigation of risk factors for physical violence against men is limited in Africa, and it would be difficult to extrapolate the results from studies conducted in Asia, Europe, and the United States into African men because of socioeconomic, behavioral, cultural, and environmental differences.

"Meanwhile, South African young adults were three times more likely to report IPV victimization than those aged 65 years or older. Similarly, [20] found that Korean men were less likely to inflict or become the target of verbal and physical abuse as they aged". "The relationship between education and IPV victimization indicates that individuals with no or low educational attainment tend to be at higher risk" [21]. "In a study of a large sample of Korean men, individuals who graduated from middle or high school or attained a college degree were significantly less likely to report IPV victimization than those with only an

elementary school education or less" [20]. In terms of employment status, individuals who are unemployed or low-income earners are typically more likely to experience IPV victimization, this transpires when the victim does not have economic control over the family or couple's finances, hence may lead to financial dependency.

However, employment status may not necessarily have the same impact on men and women. [20] found that "while jobless men were at a slightly lower risk of IPV victimization than those who were employed full-time or part-time, the same association was not present for women". "In another study involving 1148 Hispanic men and 1399 Hispanic women, [22] found that men employed full-time were at significantly higher risk of IPV victimization than a control group including students, disabled individuals, retired people, and homemakers".

Literature Search: Intimate Partner Violence on Men

According to [23] female who mostly perpetuate intimate partner violence stated that they opt to use violence as a way of defending themselves from their male partners. Swan & Snow [15] have found that women cite self-defense as a drive for violence more frequently than their partners do. In an investigation of female's motives for violence [15] self-defense was the most identified factor, with 75% of participants stating that they used violence to defend themselves from their partners. In addition, a study by [10] found that thirty-nine (39%) from the total sample of 412 females who were arrested for IPV had acted because of self-defense. Literature states that self-defense acts are fueled by having great fear of being violated by their partners, thus women perpetuate violence, [24]. Concurrently, [25] posits that women also perpetuate violence toward their partners is a way of protecting their children from any form of violent that their male partner might use on children. Any form of violence directed towards children influences the behaviour of women, thus they opt to use violence to defend themselves and their children [26]

Some research indicates that more men tend to use violence to have control over their partners or a relationship that undermines their masculinity and authority. A study by [24] alludes that, compared to women, men are most prone to instigate control violent interactions. However, this does not mean that control intentions are not present from women's violence as it is stated by [15] who identified that thirty-eight (38%) of women stated they had threatened to use violence at least sometimes to make their partners do the things they wanted them to do; [15], of those fifty-three (53%) stated that the threats were effective at least some of the time. Similarly, [10], sample of women arrested for intimate partner violence indicated

that the percentage of time they used violence ‘to get control over their partner’ was 22%, ‘to get their partner to do something or stop doing something’ was 22% and ‘to make their partner to agree with them was 17%’ [10]. “In the analysis of women’s motivation for violence [15], self-defense was frequently the most endorsed motive, with 75% of participants stating that they used violence to defend themselves” [10].

“In fact, the latest finding from the 2016 Korea National Survey show that while the prevalence of woman IPV victimization involving physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic abuse was 12.1%, a staggering 8.6% of Korean men reported having experienced at least 1 of those types of violence as well. Moreover, the proportion of IPV victimization including controlling behaviors was 33.1% for men” [27].

“Studies in Asia, Europe, and the United States demonstrated that male violence victimization is significantly associated with younger age [17], low household income [18], unemployment [7] lower educational levels [19], alcohol consumption, and illicit drug use, being married and prior violence or history of childhood abuse”. The investigation of risk factors for physical violence against men is limited in Africa and it is difficult to extrapolate the results from studies conducted in Asia, Europe, and the United States to Africans because of socioeconomic, behavioral, cultural, and environmental differences.

Studies focusing on factors contributing to IPV on men imply that women using violence on their partners is vengeance for their partners wrongdoing. Finding from Swam and Snow [15] state that forty-five (45%) of women indicated that they deal with the stress from their partner’s actions, by using violence as a way of getting even. In addition, thirty-five (35%) from a sample of women arrested for intimate partner violence, indicated that they used violence to retaliate for emotional hurt by their partners, while 20% indicated that they use violence to react for being hit first by their partner [10]. [27] agrees with [10] who stated that forty-two (42%) of female compared to twenty-two (22%) for violence as punishment, especially physical to get back at their partners for hurting them emotionally or abusing [27].

Studies reveal that rates of childhood distresses and mistreatments by caregivers, parents and the community are prevalent among females who perpetuate violence. [14] indicate that from the total sample of women who perpetuate violence, majority of them had experienced emotional abuse and neglect, while 58% experienced sexual abuse, 52% grew up as victims of physical abuse, and 41% from the total sample were neglected by their caregivers [15]. In line with previous studies, [28], [29] found out that women violence

towards partners is abuse related at one point when growing up, as shown by studies of women recommended for domestic violence interventions.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study on females treated for sexual abuse as minors found that at a later stage, the sexual abuse contributed to female using violence against their intimate partners and vice versa [16]. In addition, it was also found out that females who were mostly beaten by their caregivers' used violence against them [16].

Meanwhile, literature show that female who suffer or diagnosed with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress disorders are most likely to use violence towards their intimate partners, [30]. Moreover, in a study by [14] it was found out that "69% of women who used violence on their partners met criteria for depression on a screening measure and approximately one in three met criteria on a posttraumatic stress disorder screen" [14]. Almost, one in five women suffered from alcohol or drug problems, and 24% of the participants were prescribed psychiatric treatment. Similarly, [28] discovered "an above average predominance of depression (67%), bipolar disorder (18%), anxiety issues (9%), and substance use complications (67%) while 30% stated suicide trials, with 20% had been treated and hospitalized for psychiatric purposes, and 25% had been detoxified" [28].

Method

Desk review was used for this article. It focused on literature review of the current state of knowledge on the determinants and men's experiences of IPV. Interest was on reviewing a broad scope of literature and evidence sources of peer reviewed qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method manuscripts, government documents, theoretical papers, dissertations, reviews and commentaries, and literature across multiple databases.

Discussion

Intimate partner violence against men in Botswana manifests itself in the form of physical and emotional violence perpetrated by women and, such violence is often viewed as a personal and private affair. For some time, violence against men has not been widely identified as persistent and glaring social, legal, and health problem and the magnitude of the problem is unknown, especially in Botswana. According to Botswana Network on Ethics, Law, and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) Representative, males experience IPV and fewer cases or occasions are reported, mainly because the ecosystem view men as socially dominant. Additionally, the lack of recognition for male victims of means that survivors must cope

without any help, support, and /or guidance. Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Support Centre (BGBVC) states that women can be violent and create a fearful environment for their male partners but argues there is no sufficient evidence that this is a large syndrome as it is with women.

Mostly, the primary motive for violence is to establish and maintain power and control over a partner. This corresponds to the findings of [15] who identified that thirty-eight (38%) of female had promised to use violence to have control over their male partners and a considerable number of women fifty-three (53%) from the 38% that were identified mentioned that they acted upon the threats several times. BONELA and BGBVC agree with Swan and Snow findings and are of the view that perpetrators do this by restricting their partners access to things like cars, bank accounts, constant reminder of their past mistakes and excessive monitoring of their whereabouts.

"Furthermore, globally, Botswana not being an exception, technology plays a significant role in today's intimate partnerships. Individuals meet their future partners online, on dating platforms, and social media, communicate fast and efficiently, share pictures, and stay connected to their loved ones. However, the dark side of digital technologies within relationships might include stalking and the surveillance of victims by abusive partners using digital location services [31], monitoring the partners' social networking activity and their e-mails through stolen passwords, remote cameras and microphones, spyware, or simply by forcing them to reveal their passwords and "share" their accounts". These actions are also a form of one partner obtaining control and power over the other one as well as the relationship, thus could lead to IPV. However, some may be so subtle that one may not realize until they are cemented into a toxic, controlling, and abusive relationship.

As with violence against women, domestic violence against men is by no means limited to simply physical assaults. Literature recognizes that there are women involved in emotionally and physically violent relationships who express and enact disturbance beyond the expected (and acceptable) scope of distress. Such individuals, spurred on by deep feelings of vengefulness, vindictiveness, and animosity, behave in a manner that is singularly destructive; destructive to themselves as well. Revenge in couples usually occurs when the relationship ends and one of the partners does not forgive the other for some perceived humiliation, such as infidelity or break up and it is more intense when it involves a romantic partner.

Moreover, when revenge is carried out by people who were emotionally close, perpetrators use all kinds of elements within reach, such as gossip, hurtful remarks to acquaintances, coercive actions, harassment. [27] found out that forty-two (42%) of female compared to twenty-two (22%) mentioned that they opt for violence to punish, especially physically to get back at their partners. Meanwhile, other violent activities include stalking, physically assaulting the male partner or their new partners, telephoning all mutual friends and business associates of the male partner in an effort to ruin their reputation, pressing fabricated criminal charges against their partner (including alleged failure to support children), staging intentionally unsuccessful suicide attempts for the purpose of manipulation, snatching children from the male partner's care and custody, and vandalizing the male partner's property. Concurrently, [10] found out that thirty-five (35%) from a sample of 87 women were arrested for intimate partner violence, indicated that they used violence to retaliate for being emotionally hurt while 20% indicated that they use violence to react being hit first by their partner.

"Literature proposes that violence inflicted on a male partner by a female partner is sometimes carried out in self-defense" [9]. "For most people in society, it is an implausible idea that a woman would hit a man for any other reason than in self-defense. When faced with a violent domestic situation, men are placed in a demanding situation as they must make the decision whether to stand up for themselves and confront the situation like a 'real man' in their traditional, stereotypical role or reject that role and allow themselves to become a victim of intimate partner violence and be rendered powerless. These findings are chimed with [23] conclusions who stated that female who mostly perpetuate intimate partner violence state that they opt to use violence as a way of defending themselves from their male partners. Furthermore, this concurs with [15] investigations that alluded 75% of female's having motives for violence to defend themselves from their partners".

"The Social Learning Theory is based on the idea that individuals learn from their interactions with others within a social context. Independently, by observing the behaviours of others, people develop similar behaviours. After observing the behaviour of others, people assimilate and imitate that behaviour, especially if their observational experiences are positive or include rewards related to the observed behaviour" [32]. Observational learning takes place at any age. Social learning theory posits that people learn from one another, through observation, imitation, and modelling.

Therefore, this suggests that children learn and adapt to the actions, attitudes and beliefs portrayed and executed by those around them. Children, in this case girls may observe how people around them react towards violence, if there is any form of violence prevalent in their surroundings, they might observe, adapt, and imitate that behavior. If a young child sees her parents or people in her or his environment shout, batter or forcefully have sexual encounters with the other partner, the child may be influenced to replicate the behavior. At first, the child might be neutral towards victimization, but after these violent actions are paired or associated with one's close family members or society, imitation occurs.

"Gradually, the child perceives violence as appropriate or being violated as appropriate. The SLT has been used in studies to explain how violent behaviors are passed down through generations. It has also been used to explain how aggression and aggressive behaviors can be learned through modeling. Therefore, individuals who witnessed IPV as children could retain and reproduce the behavior either as a perpetrator or survivor who tolerates abuse" [33]. Thus [34], states that "there is indeed a positive relationship between females who have a history of violence within the family during childhood and partner violence in adulthood, hence interventions should also target females with a history of violence to disrupt the cycle of violence across generations".

Furthermore, studies by White and Humphrey [35] also draw from social learning theory by stating that IPV may occur because of masculinization, where the female takes on a more masculine role in a family/society setting, also as females move into the male workplace, they experience role strain which might increase the likelihood of them taking out anger and frustration on their male partner. However, when females experience frustration at not being able to participate in a male work environment that leads to aggressive behaviour to obtain money and power from the male partner. It is important to acknowledge that the breadwinner model, a paradigm of family-centered is the belief that a man must work outside the home and earn income to provide for the family while a woman stays at home and takes care of the household duties and family [36] & [37]. Since many men secure masculinity identity through breadwinner status, the inability to achieve this status has been found to disempower unemployed men and make them feel that they are not men enough thus placing them at an elevated risk of being victims of IPV.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Men being battered or abused by their partners is not a myth in Botswana. They experience coercive control, psychological and verbal abuse, and physical violence by their partners. Government policies around IPV are framed through the lens of violence against women or gender-based violence and often exclude the possibility that heterosexual men experience violence. This reinforces gaps in research, funding, and service delivery. Since governments have an obligation to serve all citizens, there needs to be a widening in the scope of social policy in this area. Governments should continue developing policies with the explicit objective of responding to, preventing, and ending violence against women. However, gender-based analysis approaches to IPV need to consider the impacts of violence on all genders, developing policy-relevant responses to the needs of each, both men and women. In addition, this article may give rise to the enactment of policies in the fields of health, education, and human rights in general and strengthen existing institutional units for monitoring and assisting men living in violence by establishing settings that will focus on the reduction of IPV prevalence as well as creation of suitable platforms were men can report without fear of being judged or perceived as weak.

The study points to the need for research that may be wider in scope, cover more geographical areas and document experiences of men as victims of IPV, entrapment by perpetrators, laws, social policies, and enforcement practices. Expand research on male survivors of IPV by encouraging more inclusive research designs that investigate patterns of IPV across the gender spectrum. Research can further consider how men's experiences of IPV intersect with socioeconomic status, disability, parenting, and long-term outcomes on children. Additionally, research needs to better explain cases where violence is reciprocated in relationships and better distinguish violence used in self-defense.

The article is significant in the sense that it is one of a kind in Botswana as little research has been conducted in this field. It may also raise more questions and expose gaps that will require further investigation involving multi-disciplinary approaches and methodologies.

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