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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRIUMPH OVER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: ABUSED WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AND COPING JOURNEY

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of women who were victims of domestic violence and their coping journey in an abusive relationship. In the course of the study, three (3) research problems were answered; namely: (1) What were the experiences of the informants; (2) What were the effects of violence on the informants; and (3) How did the informants cope with the abusive relationship?. The study involved five women who were victims of domestic violence. They were from Barangay Marigondon, Lapulapu City, Cebu, Philippines. The phenomenological design was utilized in this study, and the collection of information techniques were: In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion. The informants were asked to sign the consent with the content of the terms and purposes of the interview, using an audio or video recorder for the purpose of recording the conversation. The in-depth interview was conducted in a place where it was favorable to the informants. The participation of the informants was voluntary, and they were assured of the confidentiality of their identity. A free flowing mode of conversation was obtained and the informants have shared their personal experiences. Nine themes surfaced in this study; namely: *Victims of Abusive Relationship, Powerlessness under Male Abuser, Vicious Cycle of Violence, Impaired Sense of Being, Diminished Self Worth, Distressed Children, Reclaiming Strength and Self-confidence, Standing up for the Children, and Creating a Support System*. Based on the findings of the study, the following measures for implementation were offered: Massive education and awareness campaign on R.A. 9262 from the Barangay up to the national level. Establishing Support Groups and Help Lines where battered women can call for help, providing Shelters, Centers, and Halfway Houses as havens for run-away and battered women, and providing free services from Social Workers, Psychologists, Medical Practitioners, and Legal Advisers to help battered women. A further analysis and in-depth inquiry on the study of the experiences of children witnessing violence while growing up were also suggested as means of assessment. These were to assess whether or not children repeat the same cycle of violence experienced from abusive parents. Furthermore, the Local Government Units were encouraged to collaborate with Local and International Organizations who provide trainings for abused women to become advocates of a violence-free society, incorporating sustainable livelihood programs, trainings, and short term courses to empower abused women to be self reliant and help reclaim their dignity to start a new phase in their lives.

INTRODUCTION

In the shadows of our society, behind closed doors, countless women endure the terrifying and often silent ordeal of domestic violence. This insidious issue permeates every corner of the globe, transcending cultural, socioeconomic, and educational barriers. Triumph Over Domestic Violence: Abused Women's Experiences and Coping Journey delves into the heart of this pervasive problem, seeking to illuminate the experiences of abused women and their remarkable journey toward healing and empowerment. Domestic violence is a pervasive and deeply distressing issue that affects countless women worldwide.

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Its physical, emotional, and psychological consequences are profound, leaving scars that extend far beyond the realm of the immediate relationship. Yet, amidst this darkness, stories of resilience and strength emerge, as women strive to triumph over domestic violence. This study, "Triumph over Domestic Violence: Abused Women's Experiences and Coping Journey," delves into the narratives of these courageous women, shedding light on their experiences and the remarkable paths they forge toward healing and empowerment. Through a comprehensive exploration of these experiences, this study aims to not only raise awareness of the profound challenges women face within abusive relationships but also celebrate their indomitable spirit as they rise above the circumstances that once confined them. By doing so, we hope to contribute to a broader discourse on domestic violence, one that acknowledges the triumphs of survivors and offers insights that

may inform future interventions and support mechanisms. Ultimately, this study seeks to not only bear witness to their triumphs but also inspire hope and action, ensuring that no one has to endure domestic violence and that those who do find the strength and support needed to reclaim their lives. This study is anchored in the Feminist theory of Coleman & Straus, (1990), which emphasizes the power of inequality of opposite sexes. It appears that a batterer is not only trying to hurt the woman he batters; he also wants to subdue her to gain power and control over every facet of her life. A man will resort to violence as a means of control; he does not intend to kill her, rather keep her in her place. Society and traditions order people to think men are the providers, pursuers, leaders, and take on dominant roles in society while women are men's companions and supporters, nurturers, and take on subordinate roles in society. He seduces her with charm and dignity, making the woman feel fortunate to have him. Then he frightens her by making her afraid of disappointing him. The woman becomes hopeless to keep him and do nothing to dismay him. The man may resort to revealing a vulnerable side, prompting her pity, or making her feel that she is the only one that can help him. The woman becomes entrapped in this relationship for psychological and emotional reasons (Ann Goetting).

Also, the Classical theory according to Dr. Lenore Walker is related to classical battered women's syndrome theory which notes that the syndrome is not a disease, but an approach that acquires the principles of learned helplessness to construe why some women are unable to leave their abusers. The learned helplessness method sought to account for the passive behavior subjects display when placed in an unmanageable environment. Walker delineates a "battered woman" as any woman 18 years old or older, who is or has been in an intimate relationship with a man who repeatedly harms her. A woman placed in an unmanageable environment will become tolerant and accept painful stimuli, even though escape is apparent and possible. Gender has an impact on the experience of violence in an intimate relationship; no particular pattern leads to a person's becoming a victim. In line with this, the Social Learning Theory also claims that abusive behavior is learned from exposure to violence and by imitation (Bandura, 1962). Battered women's unpleasant experiences in their family such as being exposed and, or being the target of violence have been linked to various problems in adult life, including anxiety, depression, inadequate social competence, and poor self-esteem (Avakame, 1998). It suggests that those women who are socialized as submissive might not develop sufficient self-protection skills as children, specifically if they came from homes where women are victimized (Browne, 1991). Harmful use of alcohol, exposure to child maltreatment, or witnessing violence in the family, low education, attitudes accepting of brutality, and gender inequality are the risk factors of becoming a victim. Similarly, children witnessing the violence against mothers are a risk of behavioral problems (Blair, McFarlane, Nava, Gilroy, & Madloux, 2015).

Furthermore, R.A 9262 the Anti - Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004 deemed to be closely linked with the unequal power relationship between women and men otherwise known as "gender-based violence." Traditions and the social norms dictate people to think that men are leaders, pursuers, providers and take on the dominant roles in society. Men are gaining more power over women due to society's perception. And violence against women is a form of men's expression of controlling women to retain power. R.A 9262

held much promise for women suffering from psychological, physical, and sexual abuse from their boyfriends, husbands, common-law partners. However, the stories of violence by intimate partners presented by women survivors who came to a different organization are grim reminders that it is on two things to have a law and to diligently implement its provisions to protect women from violence and uphold their rights (amnesty.org.ph). These will also affect the children if they witness violence, they may suffer consequences just as far-reaching and devastating as those seen in physically battered children. Children that witness the abuse of their mother from their father and violent homes experience similar issues to those who are physically battered children. Affiliated research shows children, who both experience and witness their fathers abusing themselves and their mothers, suffer the most profound emotional and behavioral distress. Growing up in violent households a child may exhibit a host of adverse emotions and behaviors. They may also become violent themselves in response to threats (in school or at home), attempt suicide, use drugs, and abuse alcohol, abuse themselves (i.e., cutting), anxiety and depression, poor social skills and many more negative effects.

In the study of Cynthia S. Superable about the Lived Experiences of Battered Women in Ozamiz City, Philippines, Wife battering is a prevalent case in Asian countries. Regardless of existing laws like the R.A. 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women, and Their Children Act of 2004 (Philippine Official Gazette, 2004), being afflicted with physical injuries is the most common form of physical battering that several women in the country suffer. Nevertheless, R.A. 9262 allows the Philippine government to interfere in domestic affairs when aggression is committed against women and children. According to a study on "Lived experience of women subjected to domestic violence and abuse", domestic violence and repeated victimization and offending can even give rise to fatality. Evaluation of the quality of service delivery, and understanding of domestic violence by members of the community and health care workers show poor results with some people still adhere to myths coming from cultural beliefs (de Beer E, Poggenpoel M, Myburgh CP). Community can also be the factor in helping battered women discrimination worsen the effects of violence towards them. Abused women prefer to stay home and endure their husbands' battering to protect children and family from social stigma. Abused women, for instance, are stigmatized or blamed for allegedly causing the battery and for not ending the predicament promptly. Battered women are held responsible for the occurrence of abusive situations (Vidal-Fernández & Megías, 2014). Hence, they become conscious of what other people may think of them and develop negative perceptions of themselves. Several factors are associated with battered women. First, traditionally husbands viewed their wives as mere possessions (Wallach et al., 2010). Wives should serve and respect male as a family head (Wallach et al., 2010). Second, the impact of substance abuse such as alcohol and prohibited drugs resulting in mental misconception proves to be unfavorable to women (Subodh et al., 2014; Wilson, Graham, & Taft, 2016). Third, physically abused women have a feeling of worthlessness as an indication of poor self-esteem. Through an in-depth analysis of the coping strategies employed by abused women, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on domestic violence prevention and survivor support.

By understanding the triumphs and tribulations of these women, we hope to foster empathy and awareness, encouraging a societal shift towards zero tolerance for abuse. *Triumph Over Domestic Violence: Abused Women's Experiences and Coping Journey* is not just a research endeavor; it is a call to action, urging us to stand in solidarity with survivors, advocate for their rights, and work collectively to create a world where no woman has to endure the horrors of domestic violence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted experiences of battered women in Marigondon, Lapu-Lapu City, the research adopts the qualitative phenomenology design as the chosen method. Phenomenology, as elucidated by Creswell (1998), is a research approach that delves into the intrinsic meaning of experiences as perceived by individuals within a specific context. This methodology is particularly apt for the exploration of the lived experiences of women who have suffered from domestic violence within the confines of Barangay Marigondon, Lapu-Lapu City, as it permits a deep and nuanced analysis of their encounters. This study centered on the narratives of five (5) women residing in Barangay Marigondon, a carefully selected group that embodies the essence of the experiences of battered women. The process of participant selection was underpinned by a set of thoughtful considerations, aimed at ensuring a productive and ethical research journey. These considerations encompassed the participants' willingness to collaborate with the researcher, their unwavering commitment to the research study, and their genuine interest, not only at the commencement of the study but also throughout the entire data collection phase. The selection criteria for informants were meticulously defined, thereby ensuring the inclusion of participants who met specific eligibility requirements. The chosen informants were required to fulfill the following conditions: (1) cohabitation with their respective partners, (2) firsthand experience of domestic violence perpetrated by their husbands, and (3) an unequivocal willingness to actively participate in the research endeavors. To facilitate a seamless and mutually convenient data gathering process, the researcher diligently coordinated schedules that accommodated the unique circumstances and preferences of each participant. This careful consideration of participant selection and engagement was fundamental to the integrity of the research, creating an environment of trust and respect, and ensuring the rich and authentic documentation of the experiences of battered women in Barangay Marigondon.

The robust foundation of this study lies in the meticulous analysis of the collected data through the rigorous application of Colaizzi's method. Every piece of information, delicately gleaned from the participants' narratives, served as the cornerstone of our data analysis process. During the interviews, the participants' responses were not merely heard but comprehensively understood and interpreted, ensuring that the essence of their experiences was accurately captured. In employing Colaizzi's method, the researcher skillfully delved into the intricacies of the participants' accounts. The nuances of their emotions, the frequency of specific incidents, and the depth of their experiences were meticulously examined. Through the systematic application of Colaizzi's coding factors, the researcher discerned the underlying patterns, identifying not only the raw emotions embedded in the

narratives but also the subtle nuances that often escape casual observation. This methodological approach enabled us to unravel the layers of meaning within the participants' stories. Their emotions, thoughts, and coping mechanisms were dissected, providing profound insights into the intricate tapestry of their experiences. By meticulously identifying emergent themes, we transcended the surface-level understanding, delving into the profound impact of domestic violence on their lives. Through this rigorous analytical process, we not only honored the authenticity of their narratives but also gained a deeper understanding of the complexities of their experiences, shedding light on the unspoken challenges faced by battered women in Marigondon, Lapu-Lapu City. Prior to their participation, the participants were provided with a consent form that comprehensively outlined their rights, the potential benefits of participation, the significance of feeling comfortable throughout the process, and instructions regarding the nature of the study. As part of the ethical commitment, the information gathered was safeguarded from any form of misuse or unauthorized disclosure. An alias was ingeniously employed to protect the real identities of the participants, fortifying the confidentiality of their personal information.

In the pursuit of trustworthiness and credibility, essential cornerstones of this phenomenological research, every piece of data collected was subjected to meticulous recording and transcription. Adherence to the established protocol was rigorous, and the research findings were derived directly from the unaltered data procured from the audio recordings of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. This encompassed a comprehensive range of sources, including personal interviews, interview transcripts, member checking, and follow-up personal interviews with the participants. To ensure the dependability of the research findings, external review was integrated into the process. An impartial third party scrutinized the research methodology and data analysis to affirm the consistency of the findings. Furthermore, steps were taken to maintain conformability, anchoring the results solely in the responses of the participants and assiduously avoiding potential biases or personal motivations of the researcher. An audit trail was meticulously documented, offering a transparent account of each facet of data analysis and decision-making, thereby safeguarding the authenticity of the research findings. Coding procedures for the audit trail included categorization and verification of themes originating from the participants' narratives, ensuring the ease and accuracy of accessing vital information throughout the research process.

RESULTS

The process of deriving emergent themes was grounded in the intricate analysis of the profound narratives shared by each informant. These themes were meticulously constructed from the meaningful statements that resonated with the unique experiences and perspectives of the participants. Distilled from a multitude of significant statements, a total of nine (9) emergent themes emerged, providing a profound and structured understanding of the multifaceted aspects of being an abused woman. These emergent themes are borne from the very essence of the experiences narrated by the informants, encapsulating the spectrum of emotions, challenges, and resilience they encountered throughout their journey. These themes collectively unravel the layers of complexity inherent in the lives of abused women, encompassing their experiences,

the pervasive impact of violence on their daily existence, and the various strategies they employ to navigate the harrowing terrain of abusive relationships.

What were the experiences of the informants?

Theme No. 1: Victims of Abusive Relationship - The informants courageously shared their harrowing experiences as victims of male-inflicted abuse. Their narratives, both brave and heartbreaking, shed light on the pervasive issue of physical abuse that plagues their lives. This exploration into the shadows of domestic violence aims to expose the stark reality faced by countless women, offering an unfiltered glimpse into their struggles and resilience. One of the responses of the informants was For years, she suffered in silence, trapped in an abusive relationship that left me emotionally and physically scarred. She felt powerless, convinced that no one would believe her or that there was no way out. But it wasn't until she shared her story with a close friend that she began to see a glimmer of hope. She encouraged to seek help, to break free from the cycle of abuse. And so, she took those first, terrifying steps towards escaping her tormentor.

Theme No. 2: Powerlessness under Male Abuser - This theme encapsulates the deeply distressing reality faced by many victims of domestic violence, predominantly women. It signifies a situation in which an individual, usually a woman, finds herself trapped in a relationship characterized by the abuse of power, control, and aggression perpetrated by a male abuser. As we encounter the stark and distressing reality endured by countless victims of domestic violence, with a disproportionate burden carried by women. This thematic representation underscores the heart-wrenching scenario where an individual, often a woman, becomes ensnared in a perilous relationship marked by the relentless exploitation of power, the insidious grip of control, and the unrelenting onslaught of aggression at the hands of a male abuser.

The recurring patterns of abuse described above shed light on the common triggers that drive batterers to mistreat their partners. Such triggers often include the batterer channeling their frustration onto their female partner, particularly when they suffer losses in gambling or grapple with addictions and jealousy issues. These dynamics find corroboration in RA 9262, also known as the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004, which recognizes such gender-based violence as a direct result of unequal power dynamics between men and women. Traditional social norms often depict men as leaders and primary decision-makers, reinforcing these unequal power structures within society. The insights offered by this research underscore the urgency of addressing these deeply ingrained gender dynamics and the need for broader awareness, education, and support systems to tackle the roots of abuse and promote healthier, more equitable relationships between genders.

Theme No. 3: Vicious Cycle of Violence - This theme illuminates the cyclical pattern that characterizes many abusive relationships, encapsulating the repetitive nature of domestic violence. The heart of the vicious cycle lies in the repetitive nature of violence. The cycle of violence is influenced by broader societal and cultural factors. These include a reluctance to intervene in what is seen as a "private" matter, stigmatization of victims, and traditional gender roles that perpetuate power imbalances.

One of the informants shared that fear is a constant companion in the cycle of violence, keeping the victim compliant and under the control of the abuser. Threats, intimidation, and manipulation are used to maintain power over the victim.

What were the effects of violence on the informants?

Theme No. 4: Impaired Sense of Being - It reflects the profound and enduring effects of violence on the informants who have suffered from abusive relationships. This theme encompasses a significant discussion on the multifaceted repercussions of domestic violence, including its impact on the victims' sense of self and identity. Informant stated that prolonged exposure to abuse can result in a profound loss of personal identity and feel they have become defined solely by their role as a victim, caregiver, or subordinate to the abuser. They may lose sight of their own aspirations, interests, and independence.

Informants shared that It's hard to describe the profound impact of abuse on one's sense of self. Over time, the constant degradation and belittling wore away at my self-esteem until she hardly recognized the person I used to be. She began to question her worth, her abilities, and her right to live free from fear. It wasn't just the physical scars; it was the emotional wounds that ran deep. She started to believe the hurtful words, thinking that maybe she deserved the treatment she endured.

Theme No. 5: Diminished Self Worth - This theme represents the heart-wrenching consequence of domestic violence, particularly for women who endure abusive relationships. It reflects the pervasive and insidious erosion of an individual's self-esteem, self-perception, and self-confidence. Victims often internalize blame, feeling unworthy and undeserving, which can lead to profound feelings of guilt and shame. These emotional scars result in self-doubt, a loss of trust in oneself and others, and can hinder the ability to make independent decisions. The impact extends beyond the individual, affecting relationships, social interactions, and mental health.

The informants often endure relentless emotional and psychological abuse. This persistent maltreatment chips away at their self-worth, leaving them with a diminished sense of their own value and abilities. Many abused women internalize the blame for the violence they experience. They may feel deep guilt and shame, believing that they somehow deserve the abuse or that they are inherently flawed. These feelings further contribute to their diminished self-worth.

Theme No. 6: Distressed Children - This theme is a distressing reminder of the collateral damage caused by domestic violence. Children exposed to such environments often endure profound emotional and psychological distress as they bear witness to traumatic events within their own homes. This distress can have lasting consequences, affecting their emotional well-being, social interactions, and overall development. Furthermore, the distress experienced by these children is not isolated; it frequently intersects with other themes, such as the cyclical nature of abuse, as they may either perpetuate or become trapped in abusive relationships themselves in the future. It described the struggles faced by the informant that her children experienced emotional and psychological distress, as they grapple with fear, confusion, and anxiety.

As the informant shared her statement that, as a mother, it's been heart-wrenching to see the impact of the abuse of her children. They've had to witness things that no child should ever see, and she can see the fear and confusion in their eyes. Her son has started acting out, and her daughter, she's become withdrawn. She haunted by the thought that they'll carry this trauma with them throughout their lives. But it also lit a fire within her to protect them, to stand up for their well-being. She sought professional help for them and created a safe, nurturing environment at home. She determined to break this cycle of violence for their sake. She hope that by sharing our story, people will understand the dire need to protect these innocent children from the lifelong scars of domestic violence and that we can collectively work towards a future where no child has to experience this kind of distress.

How did the informants cope with the abusive relationship?

Theme No. 7: Reclaiming Strength and Self-confidence - It embodies the resilient spirit of informants who have endured abusive relationships. It signifies a journey of transformation and self-empowerment as they strive to break free from the shackles of abuse. Many informants gradually regain their self-esteem and self-worth, often through counseling, support networks, and personal determination. They embark on a path of self-discovery, reclaiming their identity and self-confidence that was eroded during the abuse. This theme emphasizes the importance of recognizing the indomitable human spirit, highlighting the need for ongoing support, empowerment, and resources to help survivors rebuild their lives, assert their independence, and break free from the cycle of abuse. It showcases the potential for resilience and healing, even in the face of profound adversity.

The informant shared that leaving that abusive relationship was the hardest thing she ever done. For so long, she believed the insults and the degradation. But deep down, she knew she was worth more. With the support of a counselor and a network of friends who believed in her, she slowly started to rebuild her self-esteem. It wasn't easy. There were days when self-doubt crept back in, but she refused to let it define her. She took small steps to regain her independence, to rediscover the passions she had set aside for far too long. It's a journey, and it's still ongoing, but she can look in the mirror now and see a survivor. She hope that her story can inspire others to reclaim their strength and self-confidence, to break free from the chains of abuse, and to find their worth again.

Theme No. 8: Standing up for the Children - This theme signifies not only intervention but also prevention, acknowledging that breaking the cycle of violence starts with nurturing a violence-free environment for children. Adults must offer unwavering support, providing avenues for expression and healing through counseling and therapy. Communities, too, need to actively engage, fostering awareness campaigns and educational programs that enlighten both adults and children about the nuances of domestic violence, its impact on young minds, and the available resources for support. By standing up for the children, society can disrupt the inter generational transmission of abuse, paving the way for a future generation free from the shackles of violence. It involves creating safe spaces, promoting open dialogue, and fostering a culture of empathy and understanding.

Only through collective efforts, compassion, and unwavering advocacy can we truly stand up for the children, offering them hope, healing, and a chance for a brighter, violence-free tomorrow.

The informant stated that in the beginning, she thought she could handle it all for the sake of her children. But as the years went by, the abuse grew worse, and she realized the toll it was taking on her kids. Her son started acting out at school, and her daughter withdrew from everything. That's when she knew she had to stand up for them, to protect their future. She found the strength to leave, even though it was terrifying. She wanted to break this cycle and ensure that her children wouldn't grow up thinking that this was normal. It's been a tough journey, but it's worth it to see her kids smile again, to watch them grow up in a safe, loving home. She hope that by sharing her story, other women will find the courage to stand up for their children too.

Theme No. 9: Creating a Support System- Is a beacon of hope amidst the darkness of domestic violence, illuminating the crucial role of friends, family, and community networks in assisting survivors on their journey towards healing and independence. In the harrowing world of domestic violence, victims often grapple with isolation, fear, and a profound sense of helplessness. Yet, the emergence of a robust support system represents a lifeline that offers solace, empowerment, and the potential for a fresh start. These networks can take various forms, from close friends who provide emotional support to formal organizations that offer legal and counseling assistance. A strong support system not only helps survivors break free from the cycle of abuse but also provides the foundation for the arduous process of healing. It offers a safe space for survivors to share their stories, voice their concerns, and receive the validation they so desperately need. The empathy and understanding of these allies help rebuild self-esteem and self-worth, counteracting the corrosive effects of abuse.

Informant shared that when she finally mustered the courage to leave her abusive partner, she felt lost and terrified. But she was fortunate to have a support system in the form of friends and family who stood by her, offered a listening ear, and provided a safe place for me and to my children. Their unwavering support gave the strength to take those first steps toward independence. She also found refuge in a local women's shelter that not only offered a secure space but connected me with counseling and legal assistance. With their guidance, she was able to rebuild life. Her journey to recovery was far from easy, but the presence of these support systems made all the difference. She want other survivors to know that they don't have to face this battle alone, that there are people and organizations ready to help.

DISCUSSION

This study is on anchored the Feminist theory of Coleman & Straus, (1990), which emphasizes the power of inequality of opposite sexes and supported with the Classical theory according to Dr. Lenore Walker is related to classical battered women 's syndrome theory which notes that the syndrome is not a disease, but an approach that acquires the principles of learned helplessness to construe why some women are unable to leave their abusers and the Social Learning Theory also claims that abusive behavior is learned from exposure to violence and by imitation (Bandura, 1962).

Victims of Abusive Relationship: The experiences shared by the informants align with the research of Fischbach and Herbert (1997), who noted that abusive relationships often center around dominance and control over one's partner, instilling fear and frustration in the victims. The study highlights how women subjected to such abuse may gradually assimilate this behavior, which can lead to a sense of dependence. The informants' stories vividly illustrate these dynamics, with accounts of physical abuse, including beatings, hitting, dragging, and pushing, underscoring the unhealthy nature of such relationships and the enduring trauma they leave in their wake (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997). This research serves as a critical reminder of the prevalence and severity of domestic violence and reinforces the urgent need for support, awareness, and intervention to help those trapped in abusive relationships break free from the cycle of control and fear. It further highlights the courage and resilience of survivors who share their experiences in the hope of inspiring change and bringing an end to the silence surrounding domestic violence.

Powerlessness under Male Abuser: The recurrent patterns of abuse detailed above provide valuable insights into the underlying triggers that propel individuals to mistreat their partners. These triggers frequently manifest when individuals channel their frustrations, particularly stemming from losses in gambling, struggles with addictions, and issues of jealousy, onto their female partners. The dynamics elucidated find resonance in RA 9262, or the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004, which identifies gender-based violence as a direct consequence of imbalances in power dynamics between men and women. The legislation acknowledges that traditional social norms often depict men as leaders and primary decision-makers, perpetuating these uneven power structures within society. The findings from this research emphasize the pressing need to address these deeply ingrained gender dynamics. It underscores the urgency for comprehensive initiatives aimed at raising awareness, providing education, and establishing robust support systems. By doing so, we can confront the roots of abuse and foster healthier, more equitable relationships between genders, promoting a society free from the pervasive impact of gender-based violence.

Vicious Cycle of Violence: The theory of Learned Helplessness, initially developed by psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven Maier, provides a significant lens through which to understand the passive responses exhibited by victims of domestic violence when trapped in an unmanageable and abusive environment. This theory posits that when individuals repeatedly face situations where they perceive no control over their circumstances, they eventually learn to become passive and helpless. The experiences shared by the informants in this study align with this theory, as they vividly illustrate how domestic violence subjects them to a constant sense of life threat, extreme fear, and an overpowering feeling of helplessness during each incident (Browne, 1993). This research supports the notion that, over time, victims of abuse may develop a learned response of passivity and submission as a means of coping with an environment that appears unmanageable and threatening. By acknowledging the theory of Learned Helplessness, we can better comprehend the psychological mechanisms at play in the lives of victims and work towards creating more effective interventions and support systems to break the cycle of abuse.

Impaired Sense of Being: The research conducted by De, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh highlights a disheartening aspect of addressing domestic violence – the persistence of myths and misconceptions within communities, including among healthcare workers. Their findings suggest that the quality of service and understanding of domestic violence remain inadequate, with cultural beliefs and stereotypes perpetuating these myths. This points to the critical need for comprehensive awareness campaigns and education initiatives to debunk these false notions and promote a more accurate understanding of domestic violence. Furthermore, the disparities in emotional profiles between women who are victims of violence and those who are not reveal the deep emotional scars that result from abusive relationships. The higher levels of deprivation, depression, and aggression experienced by victims underscore the profound psychological and emotional toll of abuse. On the other hand, the emotional scope of reproduction and incorporation that emerges in women who have not suffered violence highlights the stark contrast in their experiences. These findings emphasize the urgency of providing support, intervention, and resources to help victims break free from the cycle of abuse and address the emotional and psychological trauma they endure. Discrimination and adherence to harmful myths only serve to perpetuate the suffering of victims. It is crucial that society, including healthcare workers, play a vital role in dispelling these misconceptions and offering the necessary assistance to survivors of domestic violence.

Diminished Self Worth: The theme of the batterer's attempt to overpower and control the woman in an abusive relationship finds validation in the Feminist theory, particularly exemplified by Coleman and Straus (1990). According to this perspective, domestic violence is not merely about distressing the victim; it is a means for the batterer to assert dominance and gain control over every facet of the woman's life. The abuser aims to strip away the victim's agency, ultimately leading her to forget her place and submit to the violence. However, this dynamic doesn't only erode the woman's autonomy; it also proves detrimental to the man as he loses control over his own actions. The relentless violence generates frustration, not only in the victim but in the batterer as well, creating a self-destructive cycle that serves as a stark reminder of the deeply entrenched power struggles within abusive relationships. The feminist perspective and the experiences of the informants highlight the urgent need for interventions that address the root causes of abusive behaviors, such as power and control dynamics, and the necessity of support systems to empower victims to break free from this cycle and regain control over their own lives.

Distressed Children: The theme discussed here finds significant support in the Social Learning Theory proposed by Bandura in 1962. This theory posits that abusive behavior is learned through exposure to violence and imitation. It underscores how individuals, particularly children, who are exposed to violent behavior in their families, can internalize these patterns of behavior and later replicate them. This not only perpetuates the cycle of violence but also places children who witness such abuse at risk of developing behavioral problems themselves. The impact on children growing up in violent households is profound, leading to adverse behaviors and emotions that can persist into adulthood. The risk factors for becoming a victim of domestic violence are multifaceted and interrelated. They encompass poor educational opportunities, exposure to child maltreatment or witnessing

family violence, harmful alcohol use, the acceptance of violence as a norm, and gender inequality. These factors contribute to the perpetuation of abuse and underscore the complex web of influences that shape abusive relationships. Understanding the dynamics illuminated by the Social Learning Theory is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. By addressing the root causes of domestic violence and providing support to both victims and perpetrators, we can work towards breaking the cycle of abuse and creating a society where violence is not tolerated and gender equality is upheld.

Reclaiming Strength and Self-confidence: According to Reich et al. (2014), it's crucial to recognize that women facing abuse may be motivated by a strong concern for the welfare of their families. Ending a marriage may not be perceived as an option when it could potentially lead to more harm or instability for their children. In response to these complex situations, governments have taken measures to protect the rights and safety of battered women. One such measure is Section 8 of RA 9262, the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004, which introduces Protection Orders aimed at preventing further acts of violence against women and their children. These orders play a vital role in minimizing disruptions in the victim's daily life, empowering them to become self-dependent, and safeguarding them from additional harm. By acknowledging these legal provisions, society acknowledges the need for comprehensive support and protection for victims of domestic violence, offering a path to safety and independence while considering the complex dynamics that often surround abusive relationships.

Standing up for the Children: In exploring this theme, it becomes evident that the Social Learning Theory proposed by Bandura can be countered through proactive measures. Children who witness parental conflict are at risk of internalizing these patterns and exhibiting violent tendencies in their own interactions (Geffner, Igelman, & Zellner, 2013). It is imperative to engage with children and provide them with a comprehensive understanding of what they have observed. Shielding them from the truth only leaves them with unanswered questions, potentially leading them to interpret the situation in their own way. With time, these unresolved questions might manifest in their behavior, as they emulate the violence they witnessed due to a lack of explanation about its harmful nature. By openly addressing their queries and providing age-appropriate explanations, we can disrupt the cycle of learned violence, offering children a chance to comprehend, process, and reject harmful behaviors they may have witnessed. Open dialogue and education serve as powerful tools to break this cycle and cultivate a future generation capable of fostering healthy, non-violent relationships.

Creating a Support System: Battered women often grapple with a profound sense of powerlessness, perceiving that they lack control over their circumstances, which leads to a submissive stance in their relationship with abusive partners (Cortes, 2013; Walker, 1979). Such victims of violence frequently experience heightened negative emotions, including sadness, apathy, loneliness, anger, and reduced sociability. The prevalence of these negative emotional states, coupled with the experiences of deprivation and aggression, presents a significant risk factor for the development of mental health disorders. In these challenging circumstances, battered women

require the presence of individuals who can offer support, understanding, and a safe space. A comforting and empathetic environment becomes their lifeline as they cope with the trauma and turmoil resulting from abusive experiences. This understanding emphasizes the urgent need for support systems, mental health resources, and community structures that provide solace and assistance to survivors of domestic violence as they work toward healing and reclaiming their lives.

CONCLUSION

The study, "Triumph over Domestic Violence: Abused Women's Experiences and Coping Journey," delves into the deeply distressing reality faced by victims of domestic violence, predominantly women, who find themselves trapped in abusive relationships marked by the abuse of power, control, and aggression perpetrated by male abusers. Through a phenomenological approach, this research explores the experiences of battered women in Marigondon, Lapu-Lapu City, shedding light on the multifaceted aspects of their ordeal. Key findings highlight that victims often endure violence in silence, feeling trapped and powerless due to fear, social pressure, or economic dependence. The relentless and cyclical nature of domestic violence perpetuates their suffering, leaving deep emotional scars, including depression, anxiety, and feelings of worthlessness. The impact extends to children exposed to such environments, resulting in behavioral problems and emotional distress. However, amidst this adversity, survivors demonstrate remarkable strength and resilience, seeking to break free from their abusers, rebuild their lives, and protect their children. They benefit significantly from support networks and education that challenge the misconceptions and stereotypes perpetuating violence. The implications of this study call for increased awareness, comprehensive support systems, prevention and intervention measures, legal protections, and gender equality initiatives to combat domestic violence effectively. Triumph over domestic violence is achievable through collective effort, education, and the recognition of survivors' resilience and determination to break free from the cycle of abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications for Practice: These implications for practice emphasize the need for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to addressing domestic violence. By raising awareness, offering support services, focusing on prevention and intervention, strengthening legal protections, and promoting gender equality, society can work towards eradicating domestic violence and fostering a safer and more equitable future for all.

Education and Awareness: It is imperative to prioritize the education of women regarding their rights and the knowledge about violence against women, especially in the context of RA 9262. Simultaneously, community officials must be well-informed about these issues to effectively assist women in their communities. Law enforcement and public officers should conduct regular seminars and workshops to empower women with a deeper understanding of their rights, enabling them to take decisive steps to address their challenging situations.

Strengthening the Implementation of RA 9262: The robust enforcement of the "Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act of 2004" (RA 9262) is essential.

In today's society, gender-based violence is universally condemned, and both men and women should be treated equally. Law enforcement agencies, specifically the PNP Women's Desk, should be actively engaged in addressing the current situation in their respective communities. It is crucial to communicate to men that the government is unwavering in its commitment to safeguarding the rights of women. Perpetrators of gender-based violence must be made aware that their offenses will be penalized in accordance with the law.

Establishment of Support Centers: The government should establish dedicated centers to provide assistance to women who have experienced abuse from their partners or husbands. These women often grapple with trauma and various psychological problems stemming from the abuse they endured. What these women require most is acceptance, understanding, and empathy. Therefore, the local barangay officials should place a strong emphasis on creating and maintaining support centers for women. Given the prevalence of violence against women today, such centers are an urgent necessity.

Livelihood Programs: To empower women to start anew after leaving their partners, the government should introduce livelihood programs. In many households, men traditionally serve as the primary breadwinners, which can deter women from leaving abusive relationships for fear of being unable to provide for their children. Offering livelihood opportunities is a critical step to assist these women in embarking on a new chapter in their lives. It ensures that they and their families have the means to sustain themselves, thus removing a significant obstacle to leaving an abusive relationship.

Implication for Future Studies:

The researchers recommend further comprehensive inquiries to deepen our understanding of the issues surrounding domestic violence. These include:

Quantitative Assessment of Awareness: A quantitative study is recommended to gauge the level of awareness among women regarding RA 9262. This research should aim to correlate this awareness with the experiences of battered women. The objective is to ascertain whether women are informed about their rights and those of their children. Such an inquiry can provide valuable insights into the relationship between awareness and the prevalence of domestic violence.

Qualitative Exploration of Children's Experiences: A qualitative study should be conducted to delve into the experiences of children who have witnessed domestic violence during their upbringing. This research will shed light on the long-term effects of such exposure and how it impacts their development as they grow into adulthood. Understanding the psychological and emotional consequences on these children is crucial to addressing the cycle of violence.

Community-Wide Assessment: It is essential to conduct a community-wide assessment to determine the percentage of battered women within a given area. This inquiry will reveal the extent of the issue within the community, helping authorities and support organizations allocate resources and assistance effectively. By quantifying the prevalence of women who experience domestic violence, more targeted interventions can be developed to address the problem comprehensively.

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