DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN WISCONSIN

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN WISCONSIN

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a very serious and destructive behavior that has put a giant rip in today’s society. It is one of the causes for broken homes, broken marriages, and lost children. Domestic violence is so devastating that it takes a very long time to recover from it, if one does at all. There are many myths surrounding domestic violence. One example of these myths is the notion that all batterers are drug users, have low self-esteem and/or have a genetic defect.

This paper summarizes and describes the forms domestic violence can take (physical, sexual, emotional, and economic). Causes of domestic violence are described, because males and females experience domestic violence differently, and gender differences are also explored. Recommendations are made concerning treatment of offenders and support of battered women.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This paper was written with the intention of examining problems of Domestic violence. Domestic abuse is a serious problem and the batterers are often unbelievably brutal (Downs, 1996). Researchers have long speculated that when one person relies on another for financial assistance, physical help, or emotional support, the possibility that the dependent member of the dyad will be mistreated or exploited increases (Dearwater, Coben, & Campbell, 1998).

Approximately one in three adult women will experience at least one physical assault by an intimate partner during their lifetime (American Psychological Association, 1996). This does not account for the cases that go unreported. Victims do not always report their abuse because of fear of their partner, fear for the safety of their children and also because they fear they might become homeless (Mills, 2003).

Over 27,000 incidents of domestic violence were reported to the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2001. This is a nearly ten percent increase from the number of incidents reported in 2000. However, even though there were 27,000 reported incidents, over 32,000 women were served by the majority of domestic violence agencies in 2002.

Because many instances of abuse go unreported and victims are often unable or unwilling to provide accurate descriptions, it is difficult to obtain sound estimates of the frequency of domestic violence in America. Studies indicate that more than 95% of abuse perpetrators are men, although some researchers believe that the incidence of domestic violence perpetrated by women may be underestimated, in part because of the social stigma associated with male victimization (Kaukinen, 2004).
Domestic violence is a widespread concern within our society, despite decades of attempts to prevent and treat it (Peled & Edleson, 1994; Stith, Rosen, & McCollum, 2003). Given the personality attributes of abuse perpetrators, it is reasonable to infer that genuine intimacy is rarely present in abusive relationships (Dutton, 1994, 1998).

Nearly two in three female victims of violence were related to or knew their attackers. Almost six times as many women victimized by intimates (18%) as those victimized by strangers (3%) did not report their violent victimization to police because they feared reprisal from the offender. There are numerous resources in Wisconsin that can help combat this problem (Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report, 2003).

Although there has been considerable research on dependency and partner abuse in recent years, findings from these investigations have been reviewed in a way that might lead to a better understanding of the interactions among the psychological factors and social forces that shape this dynamic (Bornstein, 1993).

Several different situations can contribute to domestic violence, such as stress. This can be devastating to the whole family (Bancroft, 2004). Studies have found that domestic violence is more prevalent in families that conserve traditional sex roles, come from lower socioeconomic classes, have an unemployed male and have lower education levels (Weitzman, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Nearly two in three female victims of violence were related to or knew their attackers. Almost six times as many women who were victimized by intimates (18%), compared to those victimized by strangers (3%) did not report their violent victimization to police because they feared reprisal from the offender (Wisconsin Domestic Violent Homicide Report, 2003).
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify how to prevent this behavior from continuing to rage through our communities and to discover ways to get victims as well as the offenders the resources they need to help them overcome this problem. Many people are ashamed or afraid to admit this is a problem in their homes; however, there are numerous resources in Wisconsin to help combat this problem.

Significance of the Study

This is a very important study because; domestic violence has taken too many lives and livelihood. With the right resources and training, this behavior can be changed and the results will be families working together again with a more positive outcome. Community input and re-building will improve, as the offender and the victim will re-gain self-esteem and a better image.

Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that the sources used in this paper were accurate. Material from the library was used as well as books and journal comparisons. The author reviewed books, journals and statistics from the web site as well.

Methods and Procedures

This author reviewed books, journals and statistics from the library and web site relating to abuse statistics in Wisconsin.
CHAPTER II:

REVIEW of LITERATURE

For a long time, society simply ignored domestic violence or defined it in euphemistic
terms of avoidance as a mere domestic matter (Downs, 1996). However, there is no excuse for
domestic violence, which has had an impact on the community, government and the corporate
world (Wilson, 1997).

Domestic violence occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to
physically or psychologically dominate another (Mills, 2003). It is perpetrated by both men and
women and can also occur in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. Domestic violence can
occur in all cultures, races, religions, and classes. The emphasis has been on women of abuse;
however, there is now some advocacy for men as victims.

Intimate male partners kill their female partner more often than the reverse. In 2001 in the
United States, 1,034 men killed their female intimate partners, and 295 women killed their male
partners. Although men may perform the majority of sexual abuse on women and children in the
family, women are more likely to be physically abusive (Mills, 2003).

Domestic violence has been defined as the physical, sexual, economic, or psychological
abuse directed toward one’s spouse, partner or other family member within the household (Mills,
2003). Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive tactics that are used to gain and maintain power
and control in an ongoing, familiar relationship (Wisconsin Coalition against Domestic Violence,
2001).
Types of Violence

Physical violence is any use of size, strength, or presence to hurt or control someone else (Wilson, 1997). Physical abuse can include: hitting, slapping, shoving, biting, and grabbing. Physical abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use (OVW).

Sexual violence is another form of domestic abuse. Sexual abuse is any sexual behavior meant to control, manipulate, humiliate, or demean another person. Sexual abuse is common in abusive relationships and is often used as a means to exert power over the female partner and to further shame and humiliate her (Wilson, 1997).

Emotional violence is caused by threats of acts or coercive tactics. This type of abuse is usually harder to define than physical abuse Emotional abuse can also include isolating the victim from friends and family; not letting the victim has any access to money or outside resources. Emotional abuse can cause people to become physically violent; it can create an environment fraught with emotional upheaval (Mills, 2003).

Withholding one’s access to money, or forbidding one’s attendance at school or employment, can be identified as economic abuse. Making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources is also economic abuse (www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm).

Causes of Violence

There are many different theories as to the causes of domestic violence. These include psychological theories that consider personality traits and mental characteristics of the offender.
There is also the social theory that considers external factors in the offender’s environment, such as family structure, stress as well as social learning. In some cases, violence comes out of a perceived need for power and control (Downs, 1996).

Other factors associated with domestic violence include substance abuse, mental illness, and classism (Bancroft, 2004). Abuse in poor families is more likely to be reported to ER staff, police, and social services by victims and bystanders, than abuse in middle class or upper class families (Weitzman, 2000). Shame is another reason why some women do not report their abuse.

It has been indicated that economic dependency in women and emotional dependency in men independently contribute to domestic/partner abuse risk and that high levels of emotional dependency in an abuse partner may reduce the likelihood that the victimized person will terminate the relationship.

Studies have found that domestic violence is more prevalent in families that conserve traditional sex roles, come from lower socioeconomic classes, have an unemployed male and have lower education levels (Weitzman, 2000). Abusers’ effort to dominate their partners has been attributed to low self-esteem, unresolved childhood conflicts, stress of poverty, hostility and resentment.

Gender Differences

It has been noted that physical abuse is almost invariably preceded by psychological abuse. Police and hospitals indicate that a higher percentage of females than males seek treatment and report such crimes. Rates of females being arrested for domestic violence has increased, however, male aggressors still outrank females (Mills, 2003).
Stereotypes assert the view that women are both physically weak and emotionally subservient to men (and therefore incapable of perpetrating emotional let alone physical harm). Aggression by women is considered insignificant compared with men’s violence. Physical abuse by women is often seen by men as less serious or just an emotional outburst (Mills, 2003).

Because these attitudes held by men about women’s aggression resonated with what the culture still largely believed, people held on to those gendered assumptions and embraced the feminist stand on domestic violence, which asserted men’s exclusive role in committing it (Downs, 1996).

Domestic abuse is a serious problem. Women’s violence against men in domestic relationships does happen, but it is different than men’s violence. It is far less likely to be motivated by a desire to dominate or control their partners. Since men have enjoyed a gender monopoly on the avenues of public participation, it is easy to equate the values attached to transcendence to masculinity (Downs, 1996).

Treatment and Support

Over 27,000 incidents of domestic violence were reported to the Wisconsin Department of Justice in 2001. This is a nearly ten percent increase from the number of incidents reported in 2000 (Department of Justice, 2001). Domestic violence is rarely a one-time event; it usually gets worse and happens more often (WCADV, 2003).

If an individual live with someone who abuses them, they need to take immediate measure to protect themselves. They are in danger if the abuser talks about murder or suicide. They are also in particular danger if they are thinking about leaving an abusive relationship. Because of the risk of
being seriously hurt or killed when leaving, it is important to develop a safe plan for leaving (Domestic Violence and Abuse, 2001).

Within domestic violence treatment programs there exists two apparent messages: accountability for the aggressor and protection for the victim (Stith, 2003). There is often a program to work with the individual perpetrator, which in current practice is often the male, and a separate social service program to work with the victim, which is typically the female (Aldarondo & Straus, 1994).

Abusers are responsible for their own actions. Educational programs done in a group setting have been shown to be the most effective way to help abusers change their behavior. The most effective programs usually have at least a 26-week program, and many of the participants are court mandated into the program. It has been noted that one on one counseling and/or counseling the victim and abuser together has been proven to be harmful to the victims (WCADV, 2006).
Chapter III

Summary and Conclusions

Many myths surround domestic abuse. People think that batters are violent because they have low self-esteem, a genetic defect, a drug problem or because they lose control of their emotions. Even though any one of these may be true, the primary cause of battering is learned behavior (http://wrcracine.com/domestic.htm).

Abusive partners use violence to gain power and control. When they want something, they know how to get it—violence. Abuse works because it maintains control over a woman. She lives in fear of further violence and alters her behavior to accommodate her abuser’s moods, whims, and needs in order to protect herself and/or children (http://wrcracine.com/domestic.htm).

Domestic violence has been a serious problem for many years. In 1985, the National Institute of Mental Health found that every 15 seconds a woman was beaten in her home, and 11.6% of marriages experienced some physical violence within a given year (National Institute of Mental Health, 1985). Domestic violence, been defined as the physical, sexual, economic and psychological abuse directed one’s spouse, partner or other family members within the household, continues to be a problem. Withholding access to money and resources, isolating the partner from friends and family, and forbidding employment are insidious forms of abuse, but nonetheless very damaging. Causes of domestic violence include substance abuse, mental illness, traditional attitudes toward members and socioeconomic stress.

Effective programs stress personal accountability, mandated by the court. Abusers need to understand their own psychological issues, develop better tools for resolving interpersonal
problems, and develop an understanding of the effects of their behavior on the victim and others. They need to hold themselves accountable for their actions rather than shifting blame to the spouse.

Domestic violence is one of the most devastating social issues we have to face today. Homes have been broken, lives lost and communities torn apart. Domestic violence has far too many destructive fingers pointing at victims and their families. Many women who are abused engage in behaviors that further damage their health, such as smoking, substance abuse, or drinking alcohol; they also have depression or eating disorders (Bancroft, 1999). Moreover, being allowed to continue to abuse, damages the abuser.
References


