What Are The Barriers To Recognising and Responding to Male Victims of Domestic Violence In Ireland?

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for award of Masters in Criminology

By

Olawunmi O. Onafuwa

September 2011

Supervisor: Dr. Kevin Lalor

Department of Social Sciences and Law, Dublin Institute of Technology
Declaration

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards the award of Masters in Criminology is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part fulfilment of the award named above.

Signature of candidate:-----------------------------------------------------

Date:---------------------------------------------------------------
Abstract

The primary objective of this thesis is to look at the role of men as victims of domestic violence and the barriers that confronts them as victims of female perpetrated crime. A literature review was presented along with the use of mixed method research, by using quantitative and qualitative research method. An online survey was conducted which was posted on a survey website “survey4men.ie”, thirty men responded by filling the questionnaire. The survey was constructed to attract men who would ordinarily find it difficult in disclosing abuse; however the anonymity of the survey generated a good response.

Four men were also interviewed to gain full insight into what they construed as barriers which prevented them from reporting their victimisation. Three medical doctors were interviewed to gain insight into their contacts with men who may have experienced domestic violence and how the doctors responded to patients presenting with domestic violence issue.

It was found in this research that men are victims of domestic violence but are very reluctant in reporting abuse to the police and find it very difficult in seeking help due to the stigma attached to the crime, it was also found that most disclosure of domestic violence were made to family members and for some who disclosed abuse to the police felt further victimized by the response given after such disclosure. It was further found that medical professionals are not adequately trained to handle disclosures of domestic violence from male victims and only dealt with such disclosure as best as they humanly can.
Acknowledgments

First and foremost I offer my thanksgiving and appreciation to the Lord Almighty who gave me strength and health during this course. Without health and strength from above I would have been unable to withstand the demands of the work.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Kevin Lalor, for all his help, support and encouragement throughout this process. Without his patience, knowledge and good nature, this thesis would not have been completed.

I would also like to thank all the lecturers who took time out in explaining how things needed to be done at Masters Level, which made it easy when it got to writing up of the thesis. Dr. Claire Hamilton will never be forgotten in this respect and in my time at DIT.

I dedicate my thesis to all the men who took time out to complete the survey, as without their input the research would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Darach Murphy who took special interest in this thesis and made strong effort in getting it out there.

A very special thanks goes to my darling husband, without whom life would have been very difficult before, during and after the thesis, thanks for your support.
I would also like to show my gratitude to my family who are always there for me no matter what, especially my mother Professor (Mrs) M.O. Ogungbe who insists that I take my studies to the utmost level, Dad thanks for your love and support, Ogo, Fiffy and Ini thanks for always asking “Are you ok mum?”, and to all my families too numerous to mention but I say thanks to you all. Special thanks to Aisling Project and my Coordinator who gave me the opportunity to attend all my lectures.

Lastly, I offer my regards and appreciation to all those who supported in any respect during the completion of this thesis.
# Table of Contents

Declaration of ownership........................................................................................................ i  
Abstract................................................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgments.................................................................................................................. iii  
Table of Contents.................................................................................................................... iv  

1. **Introduction**  
   Context ...................................................................................................................... 1  
   Rationale..................................................................................................................... 2  
   Aims and objectives...................................................................................................... 2  
   Aims.............................................................................................................................. 2  
   Objectives.................................................................................................................... . 3  
   Research Methodology................................................................................................. 3  
   Organisation of the Dissertation................................................................................... 3  

2. **Literature Review**  
   Introduction.................................................................................................................. . 5  
   General Perception on Victims of Domestic Violence................................................. 5  
   Domestic violence: What does it mean? ...................................................................... 6  
   Feminists Perspectives on Domestic violence.............................................................. 8  
   Prevalent Research on Male Victims of Domestic Violence........................................ 11  
   Why do men under-report domestic violence............................................................... 12  
   Chapter Summary........................................................................................................ 15  

3. **Methodology**  
   Introduction.................................................................................................................... 16  
   Hypothesis.................................................................................................................... 16  
   Research Approach....................................................................................................... 17  
   Data Collection Method................................................................................................. 18  
   Sampling........................................................................................................................ 19  
   Access........................................................................................................................... 20  
   Transcribing & Coding................................................................................................. 21  
   Validity & Reliability................................................................................................. 21  
   Ethical Consideration............................................................................................... 22  
   Strengths and Limitations of the study................................................................. 23  
   Summary...................................................................................................................... 23
4. Findings

Data Analysis .................................................................................................................. 24
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 24
General perception on male victims of domestic violence ........................................... 24
Disclosing the abuse ..................................................................................................... 24
Findings on Disclosure from the Interview ................................................................ 26
Attitude of the Police .................................................................................................... 26
Action Taken .................................................................................................................. 28
Types of Abuse Experienced ......................................................................................... 29
Suggested Improvements: Desired Changes ................................................................. 31
Suggestions on desired changes ..................................................................................... 31
Male Victims of domestic violence contact with Medical professionals ................... 32
Chapter Summary ........................................................................................................ 33

5. Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 35
Responses to Male Victims of Domestic Violence in Ireland ...................................... 35
Societal Attitude and Acceptance of Men as Victims of Domestic Violence .............. 35
Domestic Violence Training ......................................................................................... 36
Training for medical professionals .............................................................................. 36
Participants Suggestions for Improvements to Domestic Violence in Ireland .......... 37
Conclusions .................................................................................................................. 39

References .................................................................................................................. 40

APPENDICES ............................................................................................................... 45

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS ............................................................................ 45
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH MEDICAL DOCTORS ....................... 49
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS/DEBRIEFING STATEMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS ....... 51
APPENDIX D: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE VIA E-MAIL ...................................... 52
APPENDIX E: FUNDING FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IRELAND .... 53
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

Domestic violence has been highly publicised and many reforms has been formulated to address the issue, both women and male are now recognised as being capable of being victims of this age old crime. However, the issue of males as victims of domestic violence still faces a series of setbacks in comparison to female victims of domestic violence.

Research shows females represent the majority of victims of domestic violence and abuse; however male victims are often not included in research and thus are under researched. Some research has shown that the number of male victims is higher than was previously recognised. Even though the topic of domestic violence has generated so much interest in recent decades, little research has been done on male victims of domestic violence in Ireland, in comparison to studies done on female victims. The last national study was in 2005 by Watson & Parson, this national study cannot be said to be currently representative of the present situation regarding male victims of domestic violence as the study is over five years old.

These studies have been done for various reasons, such as influencing policy change, to criminalise the act of violence on any person regardless of age, race or ethnicity, however the country needs a more recent study in order for all victims of domestic violence to be adequately represented.

This research will focus on the barriers to responding and adequately recognising the male victims of domestic Violence in Ireland. The study purport to show that male abuse is on the rise and is greatly under reported; this thesis will attempt to bring to fore the reason why the issue is going unreported by making attempt at investigating, retrieving information and finding answers to the research question.
RATIONALE

While most attention is given to women who are abused by men, men are often overlooked as victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence should no longer be viewed as a gender-based crime in the Irish society; male victims of domestic violence still find it difficult accessing services for domestic abuse victims in Ireland. Furthermore, this does not represent equality and neutrality as can be evidenced by the number of services and support available for both male and female victims of domestic violence in Ireland.

The main focus of this study will be to investigate, retrieve information and to find answers to three key research questions:

- What are the barriers to recognizing and responding to male domestic violence in Ireland?
- Why are there more women shelters than male refuges or shelters?
- What impedes men from reporting domestic violence?

This study will attempt to bring to fore the reason why the issue usually go unreported, governmental funding for victims of domestic violence in Ireland will be compared and contrasted to gain insight into whether these can also constitute as barriers into reporting of domestic abuse by male victims. Furthermore, the study also purport to show that evaluating responses to domestic violence on the basis of conviction rates alone may underestimate the actual figures of male victims of domestic violence.

Aims and Objectives

Aim

To investigate, retrieve information about the main reasons why male victims of domestic violence in Ireland finds it difficult in disclosing abuse despite the fact that statistics in the
National Crime Council (2005), has highlighted that domestic violence remains a disturbingly prevalent feature of the Irish society.

**Objectives**

- To close the gap which still exists concerning research into male victims of domestic violence?
- To show that there is a lack of data on the extent of domestic abuse being experienced by this group of people in our society.
- To give male victims of domestic an opportunity to express their opinion, share their experiences on domestic violence and its impact on their everyday life.
- To present findings and make recommendations for improvement on best response to victims of domestic violence irrespective of gender.

**Research Methodology**

The data was gathered through a survey, the survey uses both mainly closed questions to allow numerical data to be collected, and it also contains a number of qualitative questions to obtain participants opinions on subjects in great detail using their own words. The study also used face to face interview with four participants to gather data and gain insight into their experiences of domestic violence.

**Organisation of the Dissertation**

Following this chapter, Chapter two addresses the existing literature on domestic violence perpetrated against men by their female counterparts. Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology including the research design and research methods. A description of the data collection and analysis is given, validity, reliability, strengths and limitations encountered in the study are explored.
Chapter Four is a presentation of the findings. Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings drawing on the literature earlier reviewed. It also contains the conclusions from the study and recommendations for further research.
Literature Review

Introduction

There has been a long standing consensus in Ireland and other countries that women are predominantly the victims of domestic violence and men the perpetrators.

This chapter is an overview of the literature related to this study; there will be a brief exploration of domestic violence definitions, attitude towards domestic abuse of both men and women, national and international policies. Prevalence studies on domestic violence will be examined in conjunction with existing research on male victims of domestic violence. The extent of domestic violence in which men are victims and not perpetrators will be examined along with the possible barriers in responding to such abuse in Ireland. This is to gain insight into the public’s perception of male victims of domestic violence. This chapter culminates with a brief account of voluntary and statutory provisions for male victims of domestic violence in comparison to female victims of same crime.

General perception on Victims of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of many human rights violations which affect different types of people irrespective of age, race, gender and social class. Whenever the issue or topic of domestic violence is being raised, the image that mostly comes to mind is that of the woman and child cowering in a corner and afraid for their lives in their homes. The question which remains is “What about men?”

There has been a long standing perception in the Irish society that women are primarily the victims of domestic violence and that men are only perpetrators. This perception may be based on prevalence studies on women who were victims of domestic violence, for example the research by the task force on violence against women (1997). However in recent times, this view/opinion is changing and studies have shown that men can also be victims of domestic violence as reported in Ireland by McKeon and Kidd (2002), and in Watson and Parsons (2005). Even though domestic, sexual and gender based violence have recently emerged as highly important topics both here in Ireland and in the international community, most often times, the
topic has been framed principally with respect to violence against women, particularly sexual crimes. However, it is now widely accepted that both men and women can be victims of domestic violence and also perpetrators of violence in the home. Though there has been considerable progress in the knowledge and awareness on the issue of domestic violence, there is still paucity of research on male victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence towards men perpetrated by their female partners is an under researched area in Ireland, which is only recently coming to the forefront of societal debates. Watsons and Parsons (2005), definitive piece of research conducted for the National crime Council of Ireland found that:

15% of women and 6% of men suffer severe domestic abuse, 29% of women and 26% of men suffer domestic abuse when severe abuse and minor incidents are combined. 13% of women and 13% of men suffer physical abuse or minor physical incidents and 29% of women (1 in 3) and only 5% of men (1 in 20) report to the Gardai. See, (http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Pages/WP09000005).

While at first glance looking at the result of the research, there is suggestion that women and men experience the same level of domestic violence, it has been noted by previous studies that the impact and severity of domestic violence can be much greater on women however, men also experience domestic violence with adverse effects as well, and mere knowledge of male domestic violence is no longer enough. What is necessary is to find out the barriers preventing and responding to male victims of domestic violence and solutions to domestic violence must also encompass male victims and female perpetrators altogether.

**Domestic Violence: What Does It Mean?**

There are several competing definitions of domestic violence adopted in Irish Research, the Irish government established a Task Force to formulate recommendations on the future direction of domestic violence policy in Ireland and in publishing its recommendations proposed the definition of domestic violence as follows:

> “the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence, in close adult relationships. This includes violence perpetrated by spouse, partner, son, daughter or any other person who is a close blood relation to the victim” (Report of the Task Force on Domestic Violence 1997, p. 27).
The term ‘domestic violence’ covers a wide range of abusive behaviours that occur in intimate relationships between adults. These behaviours may be physical, psychological or sexual and may result in injuries to the victim, depending on the severity and frequency of the violence. (McKeon & Kidd, 2002).

Watsons and Parsons’ report for the National Crime Council (2005), defines domestic abuse as

“a pattern of physical, emotional, or sexual behaviour between partners in an intimate relationship that causes, or risks causing, significant negative consequences for the person affected.”

The gender-neutrality of the definition put forth by the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Ireland makes allowance for an all inclusiveness of all persons both male and female to be considered as victims. It is therefore explicitly clear that according to the wording of the governmental definition of domestic violence, a definition which is utilised for the enactment of policies in relation to violence in the home, any person, male or female, young or old, adult, child, heterosexual or gay can be a victim of domestic violence. McKeon & Kidd, in a review of international gender-neutral research on domestic violence also support the all inclusiveness position.

Violence comes in different forms which makes it multi-faceted, it is suggested that it can comprise of any one or combination of the following, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, destruction of property, isolation from friends, family and other sources of support, threat to others including children, stalking and control over access to money, personal items, food, transport and telephone. (Office of the Tainiste, 1997).

It should however be noted that despite the different definitions and meaning of domestic violence, the comprehensive Task force definition of domestic violence highlighted above is that which is generally accepted as the standard definition in use in Ireland today. For the purpose of this study, victims of domestic abuse will be referred to as ‘male victims of domestic violence’.
Feminists Perspectives on domestic violence.

The voluminous literature on the issue of domestic abuse owes much to the work of feminist scholars, researchers and activists. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s feminists sought to raise awareness of the pervasiveness, persistence and effects of domestic abuse, whilst also acquiring resources and establishing services that would help women and children to live without fear for their personal safety (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hester et al., 1995; Kelly, 1988).

Feminist theorists in the 1970s brought to light various inequalities being experienced by women in our societies which brought about tremendous changes in terms of reforms and policies in relation to domestic violence in various societies. Feminists propose that it is men who dominate society and this privilege enables men to enforce rules to the detriment of women (Burke, 2003, p. 15). Patriarchy and masculinity according to feminists are the main reasons behind domestic violence against women, male supremacy and female subordination (Maguire, Morgan, & Reiner, 2007).

Male violence against women was taken up as an issue in the 1970s by the feminist movement with women groups springing up and discussing male violence against women and gender power relations, currently male victims of domestic violence in our society are in the position where women victims of domestic violence were 20 years back.

Some critics have argued that violence by women is only in self defence or retaliation (Kurz, 1993; and Pleck, 1987). They claim that when women are instigators, it is a pre-emptive strike aimed at instigating an inevitable male attack, thus bringing forth the self defence debate.

In much feminist research into domestic abuse men's victimisation is only acknowledged within the context of women's defensive and retaliatory responses to the cumulative experience of harassment, intimidation and violence (Ammons, 2001; Lees, 1997). The debate over female aggression as being linked to self-defensive behaviour is being disputed according to national representative sample surveys. (Whittaker, Haileyesus, & Saltzman, 2007). The most reliable population surveys indicate that in Western industrialized democracies such as the United States and Canada, where women enjoy higher status, women tend to engage in physical aggression at rates comparable to men and are as likely, or more likely, to be initiators (Williams & Frieze, 2005; Strauss, 1993; Fiebert, 2004). Crime surveys and shelter studies have been known to
support the traditional feminist view, while clinical data and national surveys support a gender inclusive approach. (Cook, 1997; Watson & Parson, 2005).

The environment we live in plays a vital role in the way people view relationships mainly because men have been looked upon as the dominant partner in any relationship which is currently creating an unfair bias in our society. One of the main debates associated with domestic violence is whether there is ‘gender asymmetry’ where men are more frequently perpetrators of the violence than women (Dobash & Dobash 2004, p. 324).

There are many reasons people assume that men cannot be victims thus ignoring the possibility of such occurrences. Women are now more organized, supportive, and outspoken about domestic violence and abuse against women. Due to dire statistics on male victims of domestic violence, very little attention is being paid to the issue of domestic abuse and violence against men, mainly because of insurmountable statistical evidence on the prevalence of domestic violence against women in comparison to male victims.

The burden of constructing ‘hegemonic masculinity’ impacts considerably on male victims of domestic violence because of the perception of a man as always being authoritative and in control. This perception further limits and constraint men’s acceptance as victims of domestic violence because the victimization of men will be seen as a deviation from the perceived images of men in our society (Cornell, 1995).

Steinmetz coined the term ‘battered husband syndrome’ to draw attention to men’s victimization by releasing results from several studies showing percentage of wives who have used physical violence is higher than the percentage of husbands, she also found that women were as likely as men to initiate physical violence, and that they had similar motives for their violent acts. (Steinmetz, 1977). Battered husband syndrome is the label some researchers and activists give to the notion that violence amongst couples is mutual combat, that intimate victimization is gender symmetrical and the fact that a proportion of victims of violent crimes by intimates are men. (Kimmel & Aronson, 2004).

It has been observed by some commentators that the lack of recognition given to 'battered men' is indicative of the hegemony of a powerful 'feminist matriarchy' (Rome, 2001). Certainly, there is
a long history of domestic abuse cases being caricatured in terms of 'nagging wives' attacking 'hen-pecked husbands' (Brogden & Harkin, 2000).

The way in which society view gender images of men and women are passed from generation to generation, this is having a great negative impact on men’s experiences of domestic violence (Cleary, 2004). It is very difficult to reverse a belief that has span several decades. Societal and family belief in the strength of a man belittles men who admits to abuse, boys have been told not to hit girls and they have grown into men who should not hit girls but rather take it like a man, so when a man is being beaten, slapped, kicked around and emotionally destroyed, where can he go to in a society that have always told him “take it like a man”, “boys don’t cry”.

The media in support of feminist theory that men are the only perpetrator in domestic violence presents vivid graphic images of men abusing women and children, which makes visual representation of domestic abuse to the general populace a male thing. Females have often been portrayed as the only victim and men the perpetrators. (McKeon and Kidd, 2003).

Research has however, shown that women are no longer the sole victims of domestic violence as highlighted in the National Crime Council Survey conducted in Ireland in 2003 and published in 2005; McKeon & Kidd, 2003; and British Crime Survey, 2008/09.

The British Crime Survey (2008/09) found that 6.3% of women and 3.9% of men experienced domestic abuse in 2008/09. This is an equivalent of 1.15 million women and 629,000 men and this equates to a gender-victim ratio of 38% male: 62% female. This suggests that violence is demonstrated by both genders. A recent national study carried out in Ireland by Watsons & Parsons (2005), found that 6% of men and 15% of women suffer abuse each year, and this survey happens to be the most recent and detailed research into the experiences of victims of domestic violence in Ireland.

Family violence researchers focus on the mutual importance between genders thereby claiming that both men and women who perpetrate domestic violence possesses similar characteristics, motivations and experiences (Dobash & Dobash, 2004, p. 327). Migliacco (2002), however, argues that the experiences of abused men and women will never be equal as their experiences are not identical.
When comparing studies into domestic abuse and the perpetrators, there are very few studies carried on male victims of domestic in relation to female victims, this further highlights the fact that domestic violence against men is still under studied. Dobash & Dobash study of 2004, was meant to be a study on male victims due to the title “Women’s Violence to men in relationships”, however, the article focused primarily on female victims thereby failing to document and understand the experiences of men in intimate relationships.

Several literature and researches have been conducted into the effects of domestic violence on the victims and support services available to such victims, but most of the services in Ireland are geared towards female victims of domestic violence. There are over 40 domestic violence support services in Ireland for female victims of domestic violence but just one is dedicated to male victims of domestic violence.

Since it has been established that domestic violence is not limited to a particular gender, the next step forward in addressing the problem of domestic violence in relation to men, is to accept that there should be equality in services. Currently, in Ireland, there is disparity in services available to men experiencing domestic violence in comparison to women experiencing same. The next question is ‘Why is there inequality in services for male victims of domestic violence?’

**Prevalence Studies on Male Victims of Domestic Violence**

More women are now being convicted of domestic violence, but discovering the true number of male victims is still very much a complex affair. In the United Kingdom, women accounted for 7% of all convictions for domestic violence in 2010, but what is not clear is whether the growing numbers of women convicted represents a rise in actual cases of female-perpetrated domestic violence (Graham-Kevan, 2011). Though domestic violence has traditionally been understood as a crime perpetrated by domineering men against defenceless women, research has however, consistently found that men and women self-report domestic violence at a similar rates. Professor John Archer from the University of Central Lancashire, conducted a number of meta-analytic reviews and found that
“women are as likely to engage in domestic violence as men but men still represent a substantial proportion of people who are assaulted, injured or killed by an intimate partner (50%, 30% and 25% respectively.

The British Crime Survey 2006, in its report estimated 2.5 million incidents of domestic acts against men in England and Wales. Ninety four percent of men subjected to domestic violence incidences did not think that what happened to them was a crime and this will invariably affect reports made to the police and statistics arising from police reports.

It has also been reported by Atmore 2001, that though men experience domestic violence from their female partner, figures on husband abuse vary too widely to determine the extent or seriousness of the problem. Evidence concerning victimisation rates remains largely anecdotal and is more often than not represented in formal research data and the main reason for this is that men are sometimes not the targets of data collection efforts.

If the empirical research is correct in suggesting that between a quarter and half of all domestic violence victims are men, then why has women’s domestic violence towards men been unreported for so long and what has changed to make domestic violence towards men more visible in recent times in Ireland?

**Why do men under-report domestic violence?**

According to Cook (1997), Hamel (2007), and Hines, Brown & Dunning (2007), the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship for men include fear of failure, fear for the children, few resources, shame, stigma and discrimination. Men are often reluctant to report abuse because of gender conditioning, and the concern of being ridiculed.

Another reason may be the feminist movement which took up the cause of domestic abuse of women, feminists campaigned successfully to bring the issue into the public arena, thereby securing resources to establish services to help victims. This activism and advocacy led to governmental and public acceptance that “domestic violence” is synonymous with violence
against women and children. The dual stereotypes of the violent man and the passive woman have undoubtedly obscured the existence of male victims of domestic violence in the past.

Researchers have suggested that women are more likely to report domestic violence to police than men are, for example in Ireland, 29% of female victims and 5% of male victims of domestic abuse reported the abuse to the police (NCC Survey, 2005). According to Buzawa, Austin, Bannon, and Jackson (1992), in a study of the police arrest policy in Detroit, it found that “male victims reported three times the rate of serious injury as their female counterparts, 38% compared to 14%” (p. 263). This suggests that when confronted with domestic violence situations, police rarely arrests a female perpetrator and this may constitute bias in police reports on domestic violence.

As Buzawa et al. (1992), puts it:

“Not one male victim was pleased with the police response. They stated that their preferences were not respected by the police officers, and neither was their victimisation taken seriously. The lack of police response occurred regardless of the degree of the injury, and all the men interviewed reported that incidences which the police were called upon was trivialised and they were belittled by the officers” (Buzawa et al., 1992, p. 265).

Brown (2004) also found that women perpetrators do not get much conviction in violent situations causing injury on male in comparison to male perpetrators. In cases where only the male partner was injured, the female was charged in 60.2% of the cases, however, when the female partner was injured, the male was charged 91.1% of the time and in no-injury cases, the male was charged 52.5% of the time and the female 13.2% (p. 65).

Men who do report are often unwilling to bring charges or later withdraw from the judicial process. Brown (2004) opines that the low percentage of women found guilty was due to “witness problems” due to the unwillingness of men to testify. The pattern is however the reverse for female victims; the more serious the injury suffered, the more likely women testify. In the United States, male victims are far less likely than female victims to report rape, physical assault, or stalking. (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Amen in Ireland, have criticised the response of the police in relation to men’s report of domestic violence at the hands of their wives, according to the organisation, when reports are made by men questions such as the following have been asked : “What size is your wife?”
The Scottish police statistics on domestic violence suggests a complex picture of police action. When men were victims, the police seem to have been less likely to deem as crimes the actions of female perpetrators, whereas, when men were perpetrators the police appear to have been more likely to deem the incident a crime or an offence than when women were perpetrators. It is impossible to tell from this dataset the extent to which police action was mediated by the severity of the incidents, perpetrators' responses to the police at the scene, and/or the victims' wishes. (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/09/15201/9614)

The police appear to have used warnings more frequently in incidents involving male victims than in incidents involving female victims. Nevertheless, the statistics do lend support to the hypothesis that male victims of domestic may find it difficult to report their victimization to the police based on the belief that the police would not or could not do anything on their behalf. See Cook (1997), Fontes (2006), and Migliaccio, (2002).

This could further suggest that most victims of intimate partner violence do not consider the justice system an appropriate vehicle for seeking support. According to the National violence Against Women Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), police are three times more likely to arrest when a female victim calls, the National Family Violence Survey also found that men were three times more likely than women to be arrested themselves after calling the police (Kelly, 2003).

Though there are studies suggesting bias in response to domestic violence by law enforcement officers as previously stated. There is however some evidence that law enforcement responses are moving towards gender neutrality. In Buzawa and Hotalings’ (2006) study in Massachusetts, female suspects accounted for 22% of all suspects in their sample and when a female was labelled a suspect she was immediately arrested. A much larger sample from the National Incident-Based Reporting system of 2,819 police jurisdictions in 19 states (United States) found that men and women were equally likely to be arrested for partner violence when the circumstances were similar (Hirschel, 2008). Buzawa & Hotaling discovered that even when the perpetrator is arrested, male victims are provided with far less support from the police for example, (denied information brochures and referrals). Furthermore, research finds that male victims who file for restraining orders are significantly more likely than female victims to be denied even when presenting with comparable abuse histories (Basi, 2005; Muller, Desmarais & Hamel).
Conclusions

Police responses to male victims have to be understood, in terms of the different contexts in which domestic abuse takes place, that is, in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, between partners and ex-partners, and between partners with no previous histories of abuse and those already known to them. Female perpetrated abuse in intimate relationships is at least as common as male abuse, and can often extend to the same degree of severity; law enforcement ought to be properly trained in recognising and responding to victims of domestic violence irrespective of gender.

All victims of domestic violence ought to feel safe and offenders held accountable for their violent behaviours. Arrests should be made when there is clear evidence of violence and reason to believe that the victim is in danger with consideration being given to criminal history of the involved parties especially in cases where the police have been repeatedly called to incidences of assault as a result of domestic violence.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research strategies adopted to determine if there are indeed barriers which prevent the reporting of domestic abuse by men in the Irish society. It documents the processes taken, the data collection methods that were chosen and the justification for the method. It includes ethical considerations and concerns.

Sekaran (2003) states that a research methodology may be defined as academia’s established regulatory framework for the collection and evaluation of existent knowledge for the purpose of arriving at, and validating, new knowledge. Research methodology occupies a position of unique importance. A methodology does not simply frame a study but it identifies the research tools and strategies that will be employed, and relates their use to specified research aims.

Thus, the judgement on the validity of the study is derivable from the careful presentation of the framework, the study attempts to arrive at such objectives through a number of methodological instruments such as research design and methods and sampling of the population under study. It also discusses methods of data collection, analysis of data and access and limitations encountered in the process of collection of the data for the study.

Hypothesis

The research question which guided this study is:

What are the Barriers in Recognizing and Responding to Male Domestic Violence in Ireland?

The study examined the following issues:
• What impedes male victims from reporting domestic violence?
• Why there are disparities in domestic violence shelters/refuges for women than are for men in Ireland?

Research Approach

According to Creswell (2003), the selection of the research approach is a critically important decision. The research approach does not simply inform the research design but it gives the researcher the opportunity to critically consider how each of the various approaches may contribute to, limit the study, or allow the researcher to satisfy the articulated objectives and design an approach which best satisfies the research requirements.

Jackson (1994) contends that a researcher should not limit himself/herself to a particular approach but, instead, should use a variety of approaches, if and when required by the study. Therefore, due to the sensitivity of the topic and for adequate representativeness, the researcher has decided that the appropriate method for this study will be mixed method, using both qualitative and quantitative method.

Quantitative research is quantifiable, systematic and efficient, it can make observations more explicit, make it easier to aggregate and summarise data and it allows for statistical analysis (Maxfied & Barbie, 2005). Questionnaires for the survey was distributed through tools such as email, websites directing participants to survey monkeys in order to find out unbiased knowledge of domestic violence which might have been difficult to extract in a face-to-face interview. Survey methods are very popular because of their versatility, and a well designed survey can enhance knowledge of most social issues. (Bachman & Schutt, 2008). Surveys are regularly used to communicate with the public, gather opinions, and are seen as an effective tool in the gathering of public attitude towards certain issues (Frank et al, 2005).

The study also used in depth semi-structured qualitative interviews to examine the experience of male victims of domestic violence and abuse with the aim of meeting the research hypothesis, interviews was conducted with four willing participants from a support service for male victims.
of domestic violence in Navan, County Meath. This location was chosen as a referral point because it happens to be the only support service available to men experiencing domestic violence.

The qualitative research included key informant interviews with professionals and services that may have had contacts with male victims of domestic abuse; three General Practitioners (GP) were randomly selected from surgeries in different areas of Dublin (Swords, Ballymun, and Balbriggan).

**Data Collection Method**

Hermmersly in Bergman argues that mixing methods “goes beyond the mere combination of qualitative and quantitative components as qualitative and quantitative methods are neither uniform, nor stable, nor meaningful beyond a particular research context.” (2008, p.5).

The method of data collection employed for the study is the use of online questionnaire using online survey software, this online tool was selected because it allowed easy access to individual/groups that were not possible to reach or interview through other channels. Communities and groups do exist in cyberspace, due to the growing number of people accessing social networks it is now easier to find a large concentrated group of people conducting face-to-face discussions on topics that would otherwise have proved difficult to discuss even with members of the same families. One important advantage of using this online survey tool for the researcher is that virtual communities offer a mechanism through which the researcher could gain access to people with specific interests and values regarding the issue or problem which the researcher is studying. Furthermore, specific respondents were identified using social network site like face-book and twitter that would otherwise be hard to locate.

A focused interview was conducted with a group of five men accessing the support group of Amen in Navan, County Meath and this was to retrieve information and gain insight into their experiences on possible barriers that may have prevented the reporting of domestic violence. Collection of data by the use of email and telephone conversation was used for the professionals who might have had contacts with male victims of domestic abuse. Information was be collected
from three GP’s with the option of conversation by email or by face-to-face interview, whichever the professional finds convenient and the researcher had face-to-face interview with all the GP’s. In addition to the information collected from the GP’s and the participants from Amen in Navan, the researcher also had interview with one willing participant from the general populace who was willing to narrate his experience with the researcher even though the participant still lives with his abuser.

The qualitative inquiry in this study was essential in that, most often people’s words and actions will be required because the qualitative method of enquiry allows the researcher to capture language and behaviour. The interview data was collected by the researcher in the form of audio-taped interviews, which was transcribed for later use in the data analysis. An interview allowed the researcher a personal view of what the participant endured and also shed insight into the subject matter of the research “what are the barriers in responding to male domestic violence in Ireland”. The researcher was well aware of the impact the interview might have on the participants i.e., emotional effect of remembering and recounting experience as abused for the purpose of the study. The researcher was also aware that the scientific benefit of case studies lies in its ability to open the way for discoveries (Berg 2005, p. 294).

One major advantage of using interview is that the researcher can probe responses and follow up on general ideas, motives and feelings which the questionnaire will not be able to achieve, due to the sensitivity of the subject matter.

“The way in which the interviewee responds with facial expressions and body language can provide information that a written response might conceal. Written responses have to be taken at face value, but a response in an interview can be developed and clarified” (Bell 2005, p. 157)

**Sampling**

The study relied on purposive sampling method, due to the fact that the study had a particular predefined group which it is seeking. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), purposive sampling bases the selection of study settings and participants on features and characteristics that will enable the researcher to gather in-depth information on the areas of research interest.
Sampling for the online survey was targeted at male member of the population, this being the target focus of the study. Since qualitative research is not focused on statistical significance, there will be no requirement that samples are of a magnitude scale to achieve this but will be sufficiently reasonable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Within the context of the present study, sample size was determined by that which was realistically available to the researcher. The following topics were included in the questionnaire:

- Demographic information;
- Age range of participants;
- Types of abuse experienced;
- Reasons for non-disclosure of abuse;
- Barriers preventing response to male domestic violence in Ireland;
- Participants were invited to comments on how to adequately recognize and respond to male victims of domestic violence in Ireland.

In addition to the highly structured close-ended questions, a number of qualitative open-ended questions were also included. These questions were included for exploratory purposes in other to enable the participants to elaborate and willingly write about their personal experiences with the sole purpose of enhancing the quality of the quantitative data.

Access

Access to participants was gained through the support service available in Ireland for male victims of domestic violence. To gain access to participants, an email was sent to the co-ordinator of Amen, explaining the purpose of the study, the time necessary for completion of the study. Researcher’s contact details were given and further correspondences and responses were made through email, participants information and contact details were sent for arrangement and scheduling of time and day for the group interview.

Contact was also made to the publisher of men health forum in Ireland, the forum publishes health magazines for men and the survey was included in the (MHFI) August newsletter of the
organisation encouraging men to take part in the survey. The newsletter encouraged men to take part in the survey assuring that the researcher will protect each participant privacy at all times.

**Transcription and Coding**

The interviews were recorded, transcribed with the permission of the participants. Several researchers like Miles & Huberman (1994), (Patton, 1987; Merriam, 1998; and Sekaran, 2003) have all insisted that following transcription, interviews must be coded. Coding facilitates later analysis of the data and ensures both the accuracy and relevancy of the analysis. This simply clarifies that the coding process contributes to the quality of the qualitative data analysis. Miles & Huberman (1994) suggests that coding be guided by both the research’s conceptual framework and research questions. The implications inherent in this is that the researcher need identify and define the key terms, precisely clarify what she is looking for and know why she is looking for particular terms.

**Validity & Reliability**

Validity of the survey was maximised by ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, which was to ensure that truthful responses are given. The researcher stressed that the study was not for financial purposes and that there would be no financial remunerations for partaking in the survey. The analysis of the survey was reliable due to the use of standardised questionnaires which ensured a reliable and measurable response from all participants.

Accordingly, it is important that the researcher maintains a comprehensive protocol of his study, in case others may be interested in checking its reliability. It should be noted that the researcher is more often than not confronted with a variety of variables which may impinge upon the reliability of her findings. If the researcher mainly draws conclusions from on the basis of interview data, it could mean that respondents were biased, or simply not in the mood to answer the questions due to lack of interest. It is not unlikely for respondents to simply tick a response to an option on a questionnaire without reading or considering it. (Sekaran, 2003)
It is therefore noteworthy that in reducing bias when inputting the questionnaire data, the researcher carefully read through them to ensure there are no logical flaws and that the responses given by any one respondent are not contradictory (Hair et al., 2003). To better ensure reliability, the researcher scheduled interviews at the respondent’s convenience, and by pursuing this approach, the researcher was able to minimize the chances of distractions which may lead to incorrect or inappropriate responses.

**Ethical Consideration**

As the issue of domestic violence is an extremely sensitive and personal one, it is very clear that the study needed to be conducted with utmost respect and sensitivity. Payne and Payne (2004), points out that ethical practice is not a switch that can be turned on or off when one feels like it, but that it ‘lies at the very heart of research’ beginning to end. It is the responsibility of the researcher to maintain moral conduct throughout the research process. The participants were made aware that the research was being carried out in part requirements for the Masters in Criminology in the Dublin Institute of Technology and that it would be made available to them at their request.

The Code of Ethics of the British Society of Criminology provided guidelines in terms of ethics which shaped the approach in this study. Research should not only benefit the participants but be driven by sufficient prior knowledge by respondents and their participation should be made voluntarily. Weighing the potential benefits from doing research against the possibility of harm being done to the people being studied or harm to other people is a fundamental ethical dilemma in all research (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005).

Attempt was made to prospective agencies and medical personnel relevant to the study by means of an official letter seeking their assistance and participation for the research. The research participants were informed about the nature of the research and were told to ask any questions for clarification purposes and that participation is completely voluntary, withdrawal from participation without malicious intent was guaranteed. Participants were made to understand what the research was about, the implications for themselves and their involvement
and they were informed of their rights in the process. Assurances were made in recourse to maintenance of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality at every stage of the conduct of the study.

**Strengths & Limitations of the Study**

One of the limitations encountered during the course of the research was getting abused men to share their experiences with a female researcher; the process of recounting stories was particularly emotional for the participant. When engaged in the data gathering process, the researcher knew that it was necessary to exercise complete objectivity and the researcher had to distance herself from the research and not influence respondents towards answers which were consistence with the research hypotheses.

Another limitation was in the online survey, in any given Internet community, there were undoubtedly some individuals who were more likely than others to complete an online survey, getting access to potential participants by posting invitations to participate in a survey on community bulletin boards, discussion groups, and chat rooms was regarded by some members of such groups as sometimes offensive, spam mails which sometimes results in being deleted without actually reading through and finding out what the survey is about.

The researcher was able to overcome this limitation by fostering “good will” between herself and community participants by offering to provide information about the results of the study to the community, the researcher liaised with the administrator of men’s forum who offered to post it on the web page of the men’s health forum in Ireland, and the administrator also posted a link to a page on a community web site.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an outline of the data collection methods employed during the study. The following chapter outlines the findings from the data analysis process.
CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter documents the main findings from the research. Firstly, key issues from the survey are presented, and then an individual interview held with four male victims of domestic violence and lastly interview held with three medical doctors in relation to their experiences of possible barriers in recognizing and responding to male victims of domestic violence.

Finally, this chapter describes suggestions for improvement in better management of issues surrounding domestic violence from the victims’ perspectives.

General perception on male victims of domestic violence.

Having analysed the data from the online survey, the themes which became apparent includes disclosure of abuse, forms of abuse experienced, police attitude and the general perception of people towards male victims of domestic abuse.

Disclosing the abuse

When asked about disclosure of abuse and whom they confided the abuse to, the finding from the online survey is that 35% disclosed the abuse to their friends, 50% to family, 10% social worker and 5% to police. Some of the men made negative comments about their disclosure to the police which they claimed was met with negativity especially when their wives lied about the abuse. 30% said that they had contact with the police and that they were not taken seriously and when asked why the men did not seek help, 50% said that they felt that they would not be taken seriously, they cited fear of being ridiculed and the feeling of shame as some of the reasons for not seeking help. The participants cited being seen as “weak”, being treated as a “joke”, and not “being taken seriously” as reason for not making attempt in contacting domestic violence
services. The reasons given for not reporting may support the reports from the Gardai Annual Report of 1998, which cites thus “the incidence of men reporting domestic violence to the Gardai is 11%”, and this may be due to the negative experiences most of the men got from the police.
Finding on disclosure from the interview.

The research found from the responses of the four participants of the one-on-one interview, that men are extremely reluctant to ask for help due to issues bordering on emasculation and male pride. When asked about the reasons for not disclosing abuse from their partner, the men’s responses were that male victims do not want to be seen as weak and unmanly, mainly because of the stereotypical assumptions about men always being the abuser and not the abused. One participant further explained that “he found it hard to comprehend that he was a victim and was therefore in denial for a very long time before he finally decided that he had enough and needed to seek help”. The other men were worried that if they seek help, they may be charged as the perpetrator rather than the victim.

One participant said that

“the only reason I did not seek help was because she only gets mad occasionally and when she starts hitting me, she yells in rage that I am the one making her angry by not giving her what she wants. She threatens to take the children away from me forever and whenever I hear that I feel powerless because I can’t live without my kids and she knows that nobody will believe me”

Attitude of police

Other description of reasons for not reporting abuse were that many of the men felt discriminated against due to their gender and that the attitudes of police officers called to scenes of domestic violence is initially that of unbelief from the men and support towards the abuser. One participant claimed that the police officer who came to his house did not believe that he was the victim and asked him to leave the house for a while. Another participant said that he called the police when his wife became violent towards him, he expected his wife to be arrested but the police who came to his house did nothing and neither was his wife reprimanded in any way. The participant said he “felt like a second-class victim”.

Unlike previous report in Gadd (2002), there is no indication that male victims of domestic violence are less likely to call the police than women, however when participants contacted the police, a lot found no support and were often perceived as perpetrators of domestic violence.
This finding suggests that men’s victimization is not taken seriously by the police and making malicious accusations against men is another aspect of abuse some female invoke on their partner.

The men were also asked if the police offered them information about support services available for male victims of domestic violence and the entire three participant from the interview responded that no information was provided to them, however, 30% of responses from the online survey said they were provided with information on available support for victims of domestic violence while 70% said that they were provided with no information.
The participant’s response to the question of “was any action taken against your partner by the police?” reveals that 90% said action was not taken against their partner in domestic violence disputes. When asked to explain the action taken by the police (Question 15 of the survey), the responses gotten are as follows:

“several cautions but nothing more”

“I have tried getting orders against her in district court but have ended up with orders against me in retaliation”

“The police said I have insufficient evidence and so cannot do anything”

“Court Order”

“The police told me to go to a hotel to cool off”
Types of abuse experienced

The findings give some insight into the types of abuse inflicted on the men who are victims of domestic violence by their female partners.

For example, 90% of the men surveyed experienced some form of mental abuse like constant threat, ridicule, humiliation in front of others and not being able to sleep. 72% of the respondents have also experienced some form of physical assault, 55% of the respondents had been hit with heavy objects, 9% had been stabbed, while 22% have been threatened with being killed. One man described how while he was asleep, he was stabbed twice but the knife hit him on the shoulder and that it narrowly escaped his heart. Some of the respondents said that they slept in their rooms with barricaded doors while one man said he slept in his car for weeks in fear of his life.

When asked about their reaction to the abuse experienced, 70% said they walked away from violent episode, while 20% said they did nothing. From the findings, mental abuse seems to be the most prevalent form of abuse used by the female perpetrators, 90% of the men surveyed said their wives threatened to report to the police that the men were in fact the instigator and perpetrator of the abuse and in most cases the threat were carried out.
Types of Abuse Suffered by Respondents

- Physical Abuse: 60%
- Mental Abuse: 80%

Psychological Threat used

- False Report: 90%
- Remove from Home: 10%
- Used children as weapon: 50%

Physical
Mental
Suggested improvements

Desired Changes

The participants for the online survey were asked if they were minister in charge of domestic violence affairs in Ireland, what they would do to improve domestic violence issues (see survey Q. 21, Appendix A). Almost three-quarters expressed their desires for changes on domestic violence issues in Ireland with particular attention being paid to the negativity surrounding male victims of domestic violence.

Suggestions on desired changes

These are the words of the men when asked about how to improve domestic violence issues in relation to men in Ireland.

*If I was in charge of domestic violence issues in our country, I will make sure that there is awareness, security for men and therapy.* (Male, 30 years)

*In October 2009, my wife stabbed me a number of times and then calmly walked away from the room and then told Gardai that i self harm and amazingly, she was believed and no action was taken against her. All i want is for justice to be done at all times, do not judge and treat male victims with respect.* (Male, 50 years)

*If I was minister, I will make sure to assist, be humane, believe that women are capable of abuse too and be empathetic.* (Male, 40 years)

Other suggestions for improvement on domestic violence issues are that the men interviewed feel strongly about the use of barring orders and the ease with which it is easily obtained in Ireland without actual investigation to see if there is absolute need for it or if it just being sought to be used as a tool in the continuing domestic abuse against the man. The men also want personnel in the Gardai, legal system, state and social services to receive gender training in the area of
domestic violence. And finally they want the police to fully investigate all domestic violence allegations without bias taking into consideration that domestic violence affects does not restricts itself to a particular gender.

**Male victims of domestic violence contact with medical professionals**

Three general practitioner’s were approached (two male and one female) who may have had direct contact with male victims of domestic violence in Ireland, the general practitioner’s were randomly chosen from three different locations in Dublin city centre (Ballymun), Swords and Balbriggan both in Dublin North Nounty. They were asked about the extent of domestic violence presented to them at their practice and about their responses to men who were experiencing abuse.

The first male doctor in Swords had come across one male victim of domestic violence and disclosure of abuse was only made known to the doctor after the victim presented himself at the doctor’s surgery four times in a two month period. The second male doctor had treated five male victims due to referrals from a previous victim, whom he had treated for domestic abuse. The female doctor on the other had treated suspected cases of injury resulting from a domestic violence but the victim failed to make a disclosure, it should be noted that these cases were recounted on memory and when asked if the cases were officially documented as injuries resulting from domestic violence, the doctor’s response were in the negative.

The first doctor said he initially thought the injuries were from a drunken fight in a bar but he then realised that the patient was emotionally distressed and upon further questioning, the man confided in the doctor as to the real cause of his injuries. The doctor said he felt very uncomfortable with the disclosure because he was not trained to handle disclosures from male victims of domestic violence and had no agency referral leaflet in his practice but told the patient to contact the police and the citizen’s advice bureau.

The second doctor said that the first time he treated a patient with domestic violence bruising, he found it very hard believing that a man could be a victim of domestic violence but that he handled it the best way he could by treating the patient and telling the man to “just leave if he
can’t handle his wife” and then sent him home. He said that when men come to him with injuries, he may have merely placed it as injuries from sports, fight with other men or work. He however said that the first contact with the patient with domestic abuse injuries got him reading and studying more on how to best handle situations like that, should it present itself again which it did. He said that all the information he later got was done entirely on his own because he had no training from medical school in that regard and he had no knowledge of any agencies dealing with male victims of domestic violence until a decade later after his first contact with the first patient who was going through domestic violence.

When the female doctor was asked how she will deal with male victims of domestic patient who comes to her for treatment, she replied that she felt that the first man she had contact with failed to disclose the abuse to her “because of her gender” she said even though she is aware of domestic violence affecting women more than men having treated women and children, she however has no knowledge of resources available to male victims of domestic violence and that she will investigate and find how she can better meet her patients needs in future.

The doctors were also asked whether a general practitioner’s gender affects disclosure or not, all three doctor’s believes that male victims of domestic violence would feel more comfortable in confiding to another male for a number of reasons, firstly, a male victim will feel highly uncomfortable disclosing abuse to a woman doctor having been betrayed or abused by one prior to disclosure and that he will be looking for a “male knowledge”/ “understanding” on the issue, the male victim will be looking for a another male who can provide assurances that the victim of the abuse is not alone and that there are other men out there who may be going through the same issues as him. The female doctor was of a mixed opinion based on her experience, she said that

“some men would definitely find it better talking to a man rather than to a woman and that some may decide to talk to a female doctor depending on the severity of the abuse.”

**Chapter Summary**

Barriers in recognizing and responding to male domestic violence vary from one respondent to another respondent. The participants mostly expressed disbelief and masculinisation as reasons for not disclosing abuse; they were afraid of what people will say and were not sure of where to
seek help despite being victims of a prosecutorial crime. The majority of respondents reported that the police had not been helpful because of their gender but they all believe that given adequate public awareness on issues of domestic violence especially in relation to men and public knowledge of where to seek assistance, they will know who to call and where to seek assistance without fear of prejudice and bias. Most of those who had contact with the police were not satisfied with the outcome and they felt further victimized from the contact. However, despite the lack of faith expressed in the society and the police, it did not put the men off making suggestions as to how domestic violence issues affecting men could be improved. Further recommendations will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5
Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations

Introduction
This chapter presents a discussion on and interpretations of the findings. It looks at the relationship between this study and the other studies previously discussed in the literature review in relation to male victims of domestic violence and the possible barriers in recognizing and responding to their victimization. The implication of the research on policy, public’s attitude, service provision, adequate training on issue of domestic violence in relation to men accessing support and recommendations for future research are also addressed.

The findings clarify and support the debates surrounding male victims of domestic violence and provide insight and knowledge which are required to gain an understanding of the issues involved with men as victims and not perpetrators of domestic violence.

Responses to male victims of domestic violence in Ireland.
Domestic violence in Ireland and elsewhere has been widely acknowledged to be a serious crime, the human and emotional costs of domestic violence are incalculable, and calculating the economic cost of the problem proves to be nearly impossible. The latest figure in the 2005 NCC survey reveals that only 5% of male report the abuse to the police, the result of the survey is consistent with previous findings on reporting domestic violence which has shown that men do not report abuse in comparison with their female counterpart. Brown (2004), found huge discrepancies in arrest and prosecution of spousal assault as a function of gender, he found that women were four times more likely to report partner violence to police (81% Vs. 19%). Brown also found that women were more likely to have the police arrest when reporting (75% Vs. 60%) than if men are reporting an assault by the woman (Brown 2004, P. 34). A combination of men’s unwillingness to report and the police being unwilling to arrest female means only 2% of female
perpetrators are arrested (Brown, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2003, p.4). This suggests that
government surveys of intimate violence estimates based on crime report data for example
(police arrests, etcetera.) underestimate male victimization.

There are a number of core issues which reveals reasons behind non-reporting of domestic abuse
by men, from the findings of the questionnaires the suggested reasons are as follows.

Societal Attitude and Acceptance of Men as Victims of domestic violence.

There is still an apparent lack of awareness about the nature and extent of domestic abuse where
men are the victims. The stigma and shame attached to domestic violence is still evident in the
Irish society and the fear of what people will say and the uncertainty of unbelief prevents victims
from seeking or accessing available help. The society is a major influencing factor on how men
can be acknowledged as probable victims of domestic violence, in order to overcome the
stereotypical assumptions about men as strong and always being the dominant person in any
relationship, these social constructions of hegemonic masculinity need to be changed through
advertisement and gender equality campaigns involving domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Training.

Responses from men about contact with the police are also considered as being a possible barrier
in investigating and preventing present and future abuse. Findings from the survey suggests that
the police need adequate training in the area of domestic violence and how to respond to claims
of suspected abuse from a partner irrespective of gender. Many responses from participants
suggest lack of faith in the police as a first contact institution for help in domestic violence
situations. These findings further support the National Crime Council survey (2005), which
record just 11% of report made to the police and further claims under reporting as reasons for
low percentage.
Proper investigation on domestic violence accusation needs to be taken seriously from all parties involved in domestic violence cases especially when it involves children being used as pawns or weapons in domestic violence disputes.

**Training for medical professionals**

The findings from the research reflect the lack of training on response and proper administration of help or referral to relevant agencies as indicated from the responses of the medical professionals, the need for training in domestic abuse situation cannot be overemphasized as these can further prevent disclosure from male victims of domestic violence. These professionals are in a position to identify abuse or respond to call for help from those who present at their private practice or health facilities.

**Participants Suggestions for improvements to Domestic Violence Issues in Ireland**

When participants of the study were asked what changes or improvements they would like to see on how to adequately respond to domestic violence in Ireland, they were asked to write down their suggestions. The men’s suggestions for improvement were generally related to the area of bias by social workers, health care professionals, the police, societal acceptance and public awareness on domestic violence issues generally irrespective of gender.

The men also stated that governmental funding be made available for men to be able to access support services, currently in Ireland men who needs to access refuge services will have to travel to County Meath from wherever they live in Ireland. They stated that the only support services for men in Ireland is too limited in terms of access, location and shelter in emergency cases and in some cases when they needed accommodation for themselves and their children, the only available option then is a B&B (bed and breakfast) which they claim is far from suitable for men with children. All men interviewed felt the need for ‘a safe place’ to take themselves and their children when incidents in the home becomes abusive and dangerous.
The suggestions of the men may not be incompatible with that of the government as there are measures introduced in recent times by the government which may influence change in relation to male victims of domestic violence in Ireland. According to COSC, there is now a national strategy being put in place for the prevention, recognition and response to domestic violence issues in Ireland.

The strategy is a priority action to correct the lack of co-ordination between various agencies in Ireland working in the area of domestic violence issues (organisations in the state & voluntary organisations), and seeks to provide a clear vision for all government-related action on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in a five year period from 2010 – 2014. This strategy has been developed by Cosc and is a major advancement towards achieving a positive response towards domestic, sexual and gender-based violence against women, children, men and older people in Ireland. It is hoped that by the year 2014, all incidences of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in Ireland will be understood and recognised, and will be unacceptable to society. The strategy further aims to ensure that by 2014, there will be increased safety for victims together with improved level of service provision and increased accountability of perpetrators (cosc.ie).

From the strategy plan (2010 – 2014), this further indicates that the government acknowledges that there are indeed barriers in recognising and responding to domestic violence issues irrespective of gender in Ireland, even though this is welcome step towards the right direction, the plan may be flawed if national studies is not conducted into the experiences of male victims of domestic violence because the results from such studies will assist in better implementation and understanding of domestic violence and it’s affects on men.
Conclusions

In summary, the data accumulated during this study combine to affirm the hypothesis that there are indeed barriers in responding and recognising male victims of domestic violence in Ireland. The results generated from this study will contribute to the existing knowledge on domestic violence, particularly male victims of domestic violence. It is hoped that the findings of this research, and the recommendations made, will stimulate further research into the experiences of men going through domestic violence which can later be translated into firm action, so that everyone will be aware that domestic violence is not just a female thing.

The result seeks to create opportunity for victim services providers for provision of programs alongside existing ones that will take multifaceted dynamics into account without favouring one type of victim to the detriment of another and to assist the Irish Government in formulating gender neutral policies, structures and support which should encompass everyone in the society, provision of equal funding and adequate services to be provided for all victims who require service.

Funding for victims of domestic violence are still not equal, and it is understandable given the prevalent statistics on the number of women experiencing domestic violence, however since it has also been acknowledged that men too experience domestic violence, one support service for men in the whole of Ireland is not enough as indicated from the findings of this study. Government supports, structures and policies on domestic violence does not reflect the equality of funding in respect to domestic violence, presently 99% of all government funding for supports of victims of domestic violence goes to female victims. (See Appendix E) which gives details of government funding for male and female victims respectively on a per-capita basis.

Finally, in other to promote a culture of prevention and recognition of issues affecting male victims of domestic violence, it is highly important for everyone in the Irish society to learn how to effectively respond to domestic violence issues in way that promotes equality and gender-neutrality.
References


Freeman, M.D.A. (1979.) Violence in the home. Northamptonshire. Saxon House


41


http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jun/07/feminism-domestic-violence-men
APPENDIX A : SURVEY QUESTIONS

Male Victims of Domestic Violence

What are the barriers to responding and recognizing male victims of domestic violence in Ireland/Northern Ireland.

1. Select your age range : *
2. Select your region: *
3. Did your partner wife, girlfriend ever do any of the following things to you : *
   - Slap you on any part of the body
   - Twist your arm or pull your hair
   - Push you, throw something at you
   - Shouted, swore or scream at you
   - Threw things at you
   - Pushed, shoved or grabbed you
   - Done other things not listed
4. If you selected any of the above, please describe the most recent in details :

5. How often were you abused as described above
   - Daily
   - Weekly
   - Occasionally
   - Only in the last 12 months
   - Before the last 12 months
6. Did your partner, wife, girlfriend ever:
   - Humiliate you in front of others
   - Threaten to hurt or harm you with an object or weapon
   - Insult, ridicule or make you feel bad about yourself
   - Others
7. If you selected any of the options in question 6 above, kindly state how often this will occur :
   - Daily
   - Weekly
   - Often
   - Occasionally
8. How did you manage/cope with the domestic abuse experienced from your partner?
9. Did you report the abuse to any of the following: *  □  Friend  □  Brother / Sister  □  Colleague  □  Police  □  Social Services  □  Other
10. What made you decide to report this abuse?

11. If you reported the abuse to police or social services, how were you responded to? Please explain briefly.

12. Did the Police officer / Social Welfare officer make sure that you could tell your story safely and comfortably (by giving you enough time, privacy, encouragement, or whatever else you needed to recount your experience)?  □  Yes  □  No
13. Were your injuries adequately noted by taking pictures and proper documentation of your injuries?  □  Yes  □  No
14. Did the police take action upon your partner?  □  Yes  □  No
15. What actions were taken against your partner?
16. Were you satisfied with the action taken by the police? Please explain.

17. Are you aware of any support service for male victims of domestic violence? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Were you provided information on support groups for male victims of domestic violence? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. If you were provided with information on support groups for male victims of domestic violence, who provided the information? Please indicate below.

20. Imagine if you are a Minister, or someone in charge of domestic violence affairs in Ireland/Northern Ireland, what top 3 things would you do to assist male victims of domestic violence?
21. Do you believe that your experience of domestic violence from a female partner is a rare occurrence in Ireland/Northern Ireland? Please expand

Type the letters you see in the image below.

K X x L L
Appendix B

Interview questions with the medical professionals.

1. Do you know of any available help for male victims of domestic violence?
2. Do you think that male victims of domestic violence are reluctant to get help? In your opinion, is this true?
3. Have you ever come into contact with a male patient who might have been a victim of domestic violence?
4. How did you know he was a victim of domestic violence and not a perpetrator?
5. Did the patient make a disclosure as to his situation or did you probe the patient in getting a disclosure?
6. What was your initial response to the disclosed information about domestic abuse?
7. Did you advice the patient about the available options of assistance available to him?
8. Were you ever trained on how to respond to male victims of domestic violence who comes to you for treatment?
APPENDIX C

Questions for group interview.

Hello, my name is ola onafuwa, I’m studying criminology at DIT and as part of the award of master’s in criminology, I am conducting a research into the barriers in recognising and responding to male victims of domestic violence.

I’ll like to ask you a few questions in relation to your experiences on domestic violence issues particularly issues affecting men faced with the issue of domestic violence.

1. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself?
2. What was your upbringing like?
3. Have you ever experience domestic violence? If yes
4. What type of domestic violence did you experience?
5. When did the abuse start?
6. Did you disclose the abuse?
7. Whom did you disclose the abuse to?
8. What was your fear about disclosing the abuse?
9. What was the response when you first disclose the abuse?
10. Did you report the abuse to the police?
11. Were you responded to adequately by the police?
12. Was any action taken?
13. What was the hardest experience for you on the issue of domestic violence?
14. How did you find assistance/help?
15. What do you think are the biggest barriers for male victims of domestic violence in disclosing domestic abuse?
16. What would you recommend for future management of domestic violence issues in relation to men?

We have now come to the end of the interview, thanks for taking time out to answer my questions.
Debriefing statement after interview with research participants

Appendix- C I

We have now come to the end of our interview. I would like to thank you for your participation; it is greatly valued in helping me with my research. I would like you to know again that the research is for the purpose of gaining an understanding into the issue of male victims of domestic violence and the possibilities of barriers in recognizing and responding to their victimisation in Ireland. Hopefully this research will aid improvements in awareness, support and help for male victims. The information that you have disclosed will remain confidential. If you have any further questions concerning the research conducted please do not hesitate to ask me now or contact me at a later date. Thank you once again.
APPENDIX: D

Invitation via email.

Dear Sir/Ma,

My name is Olawunmi Onafuwa and I am a student at Dublin Institute of Technology in my final year. For my dissertation I am interested in researching the Barriers in recognising and responding to male victims of domestic violence in Ireland. I am looking for professionals such as you to participate in an approximately 30 minute (phone) interview or face-to-face interview to discuss issues surrounding domestic violence towards men by their female partners. The aim of my research is to gain an understanding into the victims thoughts and feelings and the help available to them. Additionally looking to how the attitudes of society and government impact on the male victims. The research will be conducted in full confidence. It would be very beneficial to hear your expert view on these matters. I would be extremely grateful for your assistance in this research. If you are interested in taking part then please contact me via email on olawunmio@gmail.com. Please respond before the (various dates used) in order to allow for arrangements to take place. Thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours Sincerely,
Olawunmi Onafuwa
Appendix E: Funding for victims of domestic violence.

Department of Health/HSE funding for male and female victims of domestic violence based on the findings of the NCC/ESRI report

15% of women and 6% of men suffer severe domestic abuse – equates to 213,000 women and 88,000 men per NCC.

Department of Health/HSE:

€12,000,000.00 - average €56 per female victim

€50,000 – average 56 cent per male victim (1%)

29% of women and 26% of men suffer domestic abuse when severe and minor abuse are combined:

Department of Health/HSE:

€12,000,000.00 - average €29 per female victim

€50,000 – average 13 cent per male victim (0.4%)

Department of Health/HSE:

€12,000,000.00 - average €65 per female victim

€50,000 – average 26 cent per male victim (0.4%)
Health Service Executive Funding for victims of domestic violence

The HSE currently funds
20 Crisis Refuges
26 Support Services
16 Rape Crisis Centres and in addition they fund Two National Networks Safe Ireland and Rape Crisis Network @ at a cost of €20.5 Million approximately

The majority of the services are for female victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence but there is only one Support Service for Male Victims.

Note: This information was received by email from Health Service Executive office.