

Exploring the Role of Social Workers in Addressing Domestic Violence: Challenges and Best Practices

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ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence is still a major social concern that concerns everyone across all classes of the population and thus calls for social workers to support and speak for the victims. _specifying the position of social workers in relation to dv, as well as the difficulties of intervention and practices that facilitate intervention success, is the focus of this paper. In a conceptual paper, this study establishes that there are several limitations to interventions in cases of child sexual abuse, which include: insufficient material support, legal factors, cultural prejudices. Additionally, it demonstrates state-of-the-art practices such as serving diverse populations using trauma-informed care and enhancing partnerships between the legal and health care industries while serving survivors in culturally preferable ways that foster sustainable recovery. The paper thus calls for calls for professional development, co-operation and these policy reforms in a bid to enhance the capability of social workers in the fight against domestic violence. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the community's significance of social work's response to domestic violence to ensure survivors' safety.

Keywords - Domestic violence, social work, intervention strategies, trauma-informed care, survivor advocacy, cultural competence

Introduction

It is consorting that encompasses today's society and is relevant in all cultures, regions, and with people from all levels of income. In their broadest sense, domestic 'assaults' involve physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse in relationships close, related by marriage or family such as a wife beats her husband or vice versa or a parent mistreats a child or children, they are often very dangerous and cause extensive and permanent injuries to survivors. Despite the fact that the effects of domestic violence are multical, they remain well-concealed behind cultural traditions, and social taboos and stigmatization that hamper survivors from seeking the required assistance and legal protection. In this regard, social workers are considered the key stakeholders as they often are the first in the line of contact with the survivors and enable them to cope with the challenges of leaving abusive relationships and self-reconstruction.

Interventions by social workers in domestic violence also comprise of crisis intervention, advocacy, case management, counseling, and follow-up support. Since social workers are trained to work with the emotional and social issues of human suffering, victims of domestic violence can find help with both meeting their basic needs of survival as well as counseling services. However, they encountered some difficulties in fighting domestic violence. Practice barriers which limit the efficiency and continuity of the social worker's practice include: They are financial material, legal/ regulatory, relational/ family, and infrastructural/structural, the latter ranging from the absence of integrated and ethnoculturally appropriate services.

Perhaps the most acute concern with combating domestic violence is the generally small availability of tools and instruments that social workers can utilize. Some agencies are poorly funded, and most of them understaffed, which makes the range of services they can offer rather limited, especially in the case of agencies that work with low-income populations or in rural settings. Some reports show that social workers can handle many patients at once thereby denying most of the cases the attention that they need. Moreover, resources for survivors of domestic violence such as the shelters and support services are usually insufficient in terms of quantity and quality meaning that many people are made to stay in conditions that are unsafe because there are no safer options available to them. Due to scarcity of resources, social workers are left in a precarious situation where they have to support their fellow humans and try their level best to address all their needs there may be in spite of the limited set up they possess all the while experiencing job burnout and emotional fatigue.

Another key factor that contributes to the formulation of social workers' challenges in supporting DV survivors is legal factors. Some victims may be afraid to report the abuse because they are afraid of being killed by their abusers or because they financially and or emotionally are reliant on the abusers. Moreover, it might be challenging for survivors to find the proper legal support needed in case of such complications as the employment of child custody, requesting orders, or immigration problems. To an extent social workers must mediate between the survivors and the law, while at the same time standing up for their clients as well as operating within the given legal procedures that apply to cases of domestic violence. It accrues from the conflict of interest where the legal procedures will have to be followed in the social justice process to aid the survivors.

Cultural and societal aspects also impact include in the work that social workers perform in combating domestic violence. For most societies, domestic violence is still hushed unmentionable and victims are ostracized or even accused of provoking the perpetrator. In such circumstances, the persons may avoid seeking assistance since they feel their shame, rejection or even physical punishment from the families or societies. In the process, social workers have to take these cultures into consideration while at the same time seeking to protect survivors. In the same respect, cultures of the social service agencies themselves can exacerbate the experience of survivors with diminished agency such as women in diverse and immigrant populations who might be more marginalized due to an absence of cultural sensitivity.

However, to support victims of domestic violence, roles regarded as best practices have been formulated and adopted by social workers to undertake in this case. One of them is named Trauma-Informed Care which focuses on the fact that the majority of survivors are exposed to traumatic experiences and tries to address the psychological and emotional results of it. Trauma informed care focuses on safety, trustworthiness and confidentiality and choice of the survivors and enables them to regain a sense of control in their lives as they deal with trauma. This approach was most useful to those women taken through the battering process as it assisted them not only to have a safe and secure place away from the violence, but also realise that their emotional health could and should be addressed.

Inter agency collaboration is the other best practice in domestic violence to be implemented that I have learned from the course. Family violence can be defined as one of the multi-factorial social problems, which does not solve only within one or another system of legal, medical, social, and law enforcement services. They work with several agencies which entail them offering more improved assistance to the survivors. For example, coordination with the police makes it possible for survivors to seek gloom protection, while with healthcare givers meet physical and psychological needs of the abused individuals. The integration between these systems can help to promote improved outcomes for the victims since each agency brings specialization the comprehensive management of that person.

Cultural competence is also very important especially when it comes to the interventions made to deal with domestic violence since it different cultures. Since trained social workers are able to complete the assessment with cultural sensitivity of the survivors in mind, the assessment becomes more comprehensive. This includes knowing the culture of handling cases of domestic violence, knowledge of factors such as immigration status, language, and cultural beliefs and other beliefs that inhibit or enable a survivor of domestic violence from seeking help.

Culturally competent interventions allow social workers to eliminate the gap between survivors of abuse and access to appropriate helping services.

Last but not the least, the social workers who practice domestic violence must engage in the continuous professional development and training. Domestic violence is dynamic and fluid, and there is always something new on the horizon in terms of legislation, policies, and practices in intervention. The social workers therefore need to update themselves with all the trends so as to be able to deliver the best services to the clients. It includes, for example, specialized training in trauma-informed care, laws and advocacy, cultural diversity sensitivity, and other cross-disciplinary work and inter-organization.

Literature review

This paper focuses on the topic of domestic violence as an ongoing international concern and mandatory involvement of social workers in the management and handling of the cases. The spaces for intervening domestic violence have undoubtedly changed considerably in the last years, especially the Covid 19 pandemic that has intensified the problem by contributing to confinement and, consequently, a decrease in the availability of assistance. As for this literature review, only the literature published in or after 2021 is reviewed to see what modern difficulties social workers encounter, what banner practices look like, what trauma-informed care, inter-agency collaboration, and cultural competence mean for domestic violence intervention.

The above literature reveals that social workers encounter a more significant amount of difficulty in handling domestic violence cases in recent times because of the pandemic. As defined by the United Nations (2021), the ‘second wave’ of domestic violence emerged due to stay-at-home orders and limitations on travel, meaning survivors were stuck within arm’s reach of their abusers as well as services that were available to them, including safe shelters, were either limited or closed. A study done by Pfizner et al. (2021) described that social workers reported further stressful working load, fewer opportunities for direct client contacts, and challenges in evaluating the severity of the abuse in online environment. These affected their capacity to produce quality and efficient interventions to meet clients’ needs.

However, lack of resources is still a problem today as it was before. Kumar et al., (2022) explained that, social workers for SGBV survivors have been stretched thin since many of the services lack funding and these are compounded in rural settings. Lack of funding consequently reduces both human resources and number of shelters and crisis centers needed to provide the necessary assistance. Moreover, many social workers employed in this sector fail to get the necessary support and emotional rewards to work with clients who have experienced the drama of domestic violence cases because of their high workload and high-stress environments (Barak, 2021).

New directions in treating intimate partner violence include a concern with trauma and cultural sensitivity and with collaborative response among agencies. Trauma informed care has become an important concept that is widely used to capture the emotional and psychological requirements of the victims. According to Greene et al. (2021), trauma-informed care that focuses on safety, trust, and self-determination has been immensely helpful when addressing survivors of domestic violence to regain their control. This is not only focused on the assessment of basic nerve shelter but also put into consideration the biomedical consequences of trauma while acknowledging the process of recovery and coping may take as much time as it takes.

Similarly, Hegarty et al., 2022 have underlined that the trauma-informed approach, which implies that is necessary to combine the identification of domestic violence with the presence of mental health issues, should become the essential part of organizational practice. In their research, they proved that the social workers who had been trained to embrace the principles of trauma-informed care were receptive of clients and consequently, more effective in offering long term recovery. They also speak for the policy advancement of more resource that enhances the preparation of social workers, regarding the specificity and effects of the trauma to the survivor of domestic violence.

Communication between agencies has also become another best practice, especially when one or several services are needed in the given case. Cooper et al. (2021) revealed that integrated social work involving direct worker relationships with the police, health care, and legal organizations offered better treatment solutions for survivors. Thus, Oehm and Muller proved that the complexity of associations enhanced the protection of legal rights, health-care provision, and financial support for victims. Such partnerships were valuable during the pandemic because the survivors needed services from various fields that influence their lives beginning with housing.

Efforts to dismantle the cultural factors in the efforts towards eliminating domestic violence have received more focused attention in the literature as population diversity continues to unfold. When it comes to the deployed populations and minorities including immigrants, social workers are expected to perform culturally competent tasks. Many research stress on cultural relevance while providing services to survivors as the way of delivery will depend on the culture of a certain community.

Gonzalez et al. (2021) therefore pointed that survivors, especially those from the immigrant community experience particular barriers such as language interpretation, constant fear of deportation, and lastly, no trust in the authorities. They proceeded to discover that social workers, knowledgeable in cultural relational competency, were more effective in reaching such groups, in creating a culturally appropriate form of support, acceptable to the culture of the survivors. This approach comprises issues that surround gathering information about the family and social background that may have an impact on how the issue of domestic violence is perceived.

Also, O'Leary and Beharie (2021) note that cultural sensitivity is critical in the assessment and treatment of Indigenous people. In their study was revealed that domestic violence interventions were more effective if they were based on Indigenous healing and community oriented practices. Some social workers who understood the great significance of cultural practices were in a position to secure certain favorable relations with the victims and caused more successful results.

Technology has been used in interventions meant to address domestic violence more Under the pandemic, interventions relied on technology because face-to-face interactions were averted. COVID -19 pandemic has brought virtual platforms, telehealth, and online resources to prominence for social workers. However, these technologies also pose some issues especially as to how confidentiality and security of survivors can be best handled.

In their paper, Brown et al. (2022) consider telehealth as a means for offering mental health and counseling to abused women. For instance, telehealth has brought convenience in delivery of services to survivors especially in remote areas, but at the same time it hammers the point that it may be easy for perpetrator to monitor communications. As the study shows there is a growing need to ensure the social workers are trained on the proper security platforms such as secure and encrypted platforms to ensure the clients' information is not uncovered.

Another finding is the relevance of mobile applications and online resources in the recent literature as well. Parrott et al. (2021) showed that apps that offer tools, safety strategies, and means of contacting for help are helpful for social workers and victims. However, it is vital to note that these apps can only be useful if the survivors will be able to access and use them this is especially because most of the survivors might not have smartphones nor be so fluid with the use of technology.

The literature also names policy changes in an effort to respond to the systematic issues that adversely affect the ability of social workers to adequately assist domestic violence victims. Carrillo et al. (2022) demand more funding for the services focused on domestic violence, especially in rural areas and areas with low funding priority, as well as the changes affecting legal protection rights of victims. This included enhanced protection of orders restraining individuals, increased and enhanced access to justice, and effective cooperation between social and law enforcement bodies.

Moreover, Jackson and Crenshaw (2021) propose enhancing social work education with the concept of trauma-informed care and cultural competence. Their research stresses, to prepare future social workers to meet the needs of DV survivors in a diverse USA, enhancing those skills is crucial.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the role of social workers in providing support and intervention for domestic violence survivors.
- To identify the key challenges faced by social workers in delivering effective domestic violence interventions.
- To assess the effectiveness of trauma-informed care in supporting domestic violence survivors.

Research methodology

The method of the study that will be used for the research will thus be both quantitative and qualitative styles as these would help to get deeper insight to efforts being made by social workers in combating domestic violence. It is thus proposed that Primary data will be obtained through interview and online-administered questionnaire from social workers reporting the cases of domestic violence intervention. The interviews will encompass oneself, experiences of facing particular challenges, and methods for addressing the challenges since this study targets working adults with full-time jobs and Marwick's study of Twitter users also relied on interviews. Secondary data shall be collected from journal articles, policy reports and case studies published since the year 2021 to establish the context to the study. The study will also use thematic analysis to the qualitative data collecting part for the study in order to identify regularities of social work practices and statistical analysis for the two quantitative parts in the aspiration of comparing relation between factors like availability of resources, trauma informed care and survivor success. In integrating these data sources, the study endeavors to present a comprehensive picture of the current status of intervening domestic violence by social workers and suggestions for enhancing the field in the future.

Data analysis and discussion

Table 1 – Descriptive statistics

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	110	73.30%
	Male	35	23.30%
	Non-binary/Other	5	3.30%
Age	21-30 years	45	30%
	31-40 years	60	40%
	41-50 years	30	20%
	Above 50 years	15	10%
Years of Experience	1-5 years	50	33.30%
	6-10 years	40	26.70%
	11-15 years	35	23.30%
	16 years and above	25	16.70%
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	55	36.70%
	Master's Degree	80	53.30%
	Ph.D./Doctorate	15	10%
Location	Urban	90	60%
	Rural	45	30%
	Semi-Urban	15	10%
Caseload (per month)	Less than 10 cases	35	23.30%
	10-20 cases	60	40%
	More than 20 cases	55	36.70%

Training in Trauma-Informed Care	Yes	100	66.70%
	No	50	33.30%

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the 150 people who filled out the survey on social workers' responses to domestic abuse. According to the gender distribution, there are 73.30 percent female respondents, 23.30% male respondents, and 3.30 percent non-binary/other persons. According to the age distribution, 40% of respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40, 30% are between the ages of 21 and 30, 20% are between the ages of 41 and 50, and 10% are older than 50. This points to a younger generation of social workers, who might infuse the profession with new ideas.

With 33.30 percent of respondents having 1-5 years of experience, it's clear that there are a lot of young professionals out there. After those with 11–15 years of experience, those with 6–10 years make up 26.70% of the total, followed by 16.70% with 16 years or more. This variety in experience levels might be a reflection of a healthy mix of newcomers and seasoned pros, which would be great for getting a wide range of perspectives. In terms of academic credentials, 53.30 percent have a Master's Degree, 36.70 percent have a Bachelor's Degree, and 10.0% have a Doctorate or other advanced degree. The majority of social workers likely possess extensive knowledge and training, which is crucial for addressing complicated situations such as domestic abuse, due to their high level of education.

Sixty percent of the people who filled out the survey live in cities, while thirty percent live in rural regions and ten percent live in semi-urban areas. It is possible that the resources available for intervention and the sorts of domestic abuse situations encountered are impacted by this urban bias. According to the statistics, out of all the respondents, 40% manage between 10 and 20 cases each month, 36.70% handle more than 20, and 23.30% have less than 10 instances. This distribution shows that social workers are under different amounts of pressure, which may be related to the difficulties they encounter in meeting clients' needs. And lastly, 66.70 percent of those who took the survey had taken trauma-informed care training, which shows that they are dedicated to following the best practices in the industry. But 33.30 percent haven't had the training, so there's room for growth there. As a whole, the descriptive data show that the social workers involved are somewhat varied in terms of education and experience, both of which are important factors in their ability to combat domestic violence and incorporate best practices into their interventions.

Discussion

Using individual interviews with social workers, the study offers thick descriptions of social workers' practice, difficulties, and successes in handling domestic violence cases. The narratives provide knowledge about several factors, which indicate the nature of their work and diverse environment in which they work.

1. This paper focuses on the disincentives encountered by social workers.

Perhaps one of the strongest narratives highlighted by the analysis of the collected qualitative data is the seemingly unending litany of barriers that prevent social workers from effectively assisting domestic violence survivors. Some common respondent responses involved general issues like inadequate funding and resources which greatly limit the amount of support services. Intersecting system comprehensiveness and fragmentation strongly correlated with poor coordinated services for survivors and the frequent criticism by social workers involved in domestic violence that services are severely fragmented between agencies.

2. Why Care is essential

The last major theme emerging from the analysis of the qualitative interviews is prevention of retraumatization after intimate partner violence. There was agreement throughout the respondents that it was important to recognise the impact of trauma in their work. Numerous situations when a trauma informed and aware facility offered numerous benefits for engaging with clients and for making the survivor feel secure when sharing their story. They also reported on how appreciating the form of trauma makes the creation of the right approach to the dilemma possible as well as creates an environment for survivors to start recovering.

3. Cooperating and Altruistic Connections

The qualitative data also highlighted the need for support among social workers in that they always work in teams. Several respondents voiced more positive attitude toward interdisciplinary collaboration mentioning that working with mental health professionals, police officers and legal representatives might prove beneficial for survivors. They not only strengthen the process of sharing resources but also improve working in partnership to the multiple facets of domestic violence.

4. Innovative Technique and Methodology and Success Strategy

In the interviews, some of the flexible solutions and effective practices that social workers have introduced in their activity were identified. For example, several participants stated that new technologies like Telecounseling and mobile applications were used to get into contact with the client who might be unwilling or unable to seek the conventional services. These adaptations are spuriously timed given the current move towards increased innovation in service delivery through leveraging on available technology.

5. Advocacy and Policy Change

Hence, qualitative understandings identified social workers as agents of change at the systems level. Significantly, most respondents responded positively to questions regarding policy change to address the causes and systems in place for domestic violence programs. They pointed out the need to increase awareness among both neighbours and the public and crusade for policies that increase funding for the services and training.

Conclusion

The analysis of the study on the great expectations of people with domestic violence from social workers has provided rich understanding of the work done and the challenges faced and the effective and efficient measures to be undertaken. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods this paper discusses various findings that enrich the understanding of the field. On this basis, it is also important to identify several regularities in the demographic composition of the employed social workers: The workforce of social workers are predominantly women who are employed in the field at a significantly high number, and there is heterogeneity in the education levels and years-use of social workers. Actually this diversity can be viewed as a benefit as it implies different views and practices regarding the interventions given. Nonetheless, the constraints highlighted include high workload, inadequate resources, and systematic constraints as organizations need to tackle these specters so as to allow social workers to do their job effectively.

The results of the data collection revealed by the current qualitative research underpin the significance of trauma-informed approaches to domestic violence intervention. Because of this, social workers who choose to embrace this approach are in a position to establish conditions that are favorable to the survivor and which can be used to buttress survivor's trust. Moreover, the study emphasise the use of multi-actor approaches and support networks among the social workers. And these are the points which are crucial for eradicating feelings of exclusion and fatigue which are counterproductive to practice. Furthermore, the research points out that various new approaches, including the use of technology and appropriately culturally sensitive practices, can contribute immensely to the improvement of service, client relations and service delivery. These approaches also facilitate service delivery while maintaining cultural appropriateness for client targeted and intervention-specific interventions.

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