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Exploring the radiating effect of domestic abuse: a qualitative investigation using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Domestic abuse is often viewed as an individual matter, affecting only those in the abusive relationship. Research suggests domestic abuse has a radiating effect on others in the victim's social network. In attempt to fill a gap in the literature this research explored the impact of domestic abuse upon family members. Three semi-structured interviews were carried out and these were transcribed and analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. The analysis suggests domestic abuse has negative repercussions for family members; physical and psychological. Furthermore, the analysis revealed several factors that contribute to the radiating effect including adhering to myths, attributing blame and 'Othering' the victim. Understanding of the radiating effect may be further advanced by exploring these contributing factors. This research therefore lends support to the radiating effect and demonstrates the need for further investigations.

KEY WORDS:	DOMESTIC ABUSE	ATTRIBUTION THEORY	RADIATING EFFECT	SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOG-ICAL ANALYSIS

Background

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse (DA) affects women, men and their families; physically, psychologically and socially (Bonomi, et al., 2006; Campbell and Lewandowski, 1997; Coker et al., 2002; Dutton et al., 2006; Pico-Alfonso et al., 2006; Plichta and Falik, 2001). DA may consist of physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and economical factors (Nicolson, 2010) and often involves isolation (Buel, 1999; Nielson et al., 1992), secrecy and control issues.

Victims tend to disclose the DA to those closest to them, hence, relatives and friends (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). The 2001 British Crime Survey utilised a self-completion questionnaire in attempt to estimate the extent and nature of DA alongside sexual assault and stalking for England and Wales. Participants comprised of a nationally representative sample of 22,463 women and men aged 16 to 59. Among women, 58% of victims disclosed the DA to their own friends, relatives and neighbours, whilst men had a similar pattern. (Walby and Allan, 2004).

Attributions and myths

Family members may blame victims and/or perpetrators for the DA. It has been suggested that support providers attribute blame towards the victim as a defensible mechanism against emotional vulnerability (Bryant and Spencer, 2003). Attribution of blame itself may in fact shape emotions and consequently behaviours (Fincham et al., 1990). The attribution of blame could be understood in relation to common myths that accommodate DA, these include; 'she could just leave', 'certain women attract violent men' 'abusers were abused', and 'it is alcohol and drug related' (Nicolson, 2010). Although these myths are preoccupied with female victims, it is important to note that males are too susceptible to DA, with one in ten men having been a victim (Walby and Allan, 2004). Past literature has demonstrated that individuals who adhere to DA myths, express negative attitudes towards DA and are more likely to attribute blame (Yamawaki et al., 2012).

Attribution theory is a social psychological approach to causal ascriptions concerned with individual's epistemology, which may explain the often-found blame assigned to DA victims (Bryant and Spencer, 2003). Though there are several differing attribution theories, they all share an underlying principle that people interpret behaviours in terms of its cause, and that representations are made in relation to behaviours (Kelley and Michela, 1980). An element of attribution theory claims that social cognition is concerned with the way "individuals allocate or attribute responsibility to individual actors within a scenario" (Grubb and Turner 2012:444) and the way individuals use information to attain causal explanations for an event (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). In addition, it examines the collective information gathered by the individual that leads to forming that casual judgement, for instance "When a person's actions are seen as intentional, they are evaluated quite differently than otherwise" (Kelley and Michela, 1980:488).

Heider (1958) distinguished between two types of attributions; dispositional attribution and situational attribution. The first infers that something about the person is primarily responsible for the behaviour produced whilst the latter supposes something external to the individual (Solomon, 1978). Although situational influences are often understood they are frequently overlooked and individuals often assume that a person's disposition is responsible (Jones and Nisbett, 1971). This tendency to attribute more internally rather than externally is known as the 'fundamental attribution bias' (Manusov and Spitzberg, 2008).

Attributions of causality have been said to modify the emotions we feel. Weiner (1985) perceived emotions to manifest from the attributions individuals make about events or situations. Weiner suggests that emotions are related to different causal dimensions, for instance, anger and pity are related to the controllability dimension; controllable causes attributed lead to feelings of anger whilst uncontrollable causes feelings of pity. If we accept Weiner's theory, we would expect family members adhering to myths regarding DA victims having control over the abuse to express anger towards victims. Alternatively, pity would be expressed if believed victims have no control over the abuse

Attributing blame to victims is widely recognised as illustrated in a vast amount of literature (e.g. Pollard, 1992) and studies have specifically demonstrated the tendency to blame DA victims (Kristiansen and Giulietti, 1990). A great exemplification of this victim blaming is the frequently asked question "why does she stay?" indicating that the victim needs to make the change, which subsequently places the blame on the victim (Maureen et al., 2008). The common myth which characterises this victim blaming is that individuals choose to be victimized by returning to their assailant (Dunn and Powell-Williams, 2007; Yamawaki et al., 2012). This is illustrated in Warden and Carlson's (2005) study whose findings suggest widespread victim blaming. Majority of their respondents believed woman want to be abused as those who wished to end the abuse could leave the relationship.

Goodkind et al. (2003) found that women who had higher amount of separations with their assailants received less emotional support from family members and friends, they suggested this was due to frustration, hurt and helplessness feelings they may experience when the victim repeatedly returns to the abusive relationship. However, it could be proposed that reduction in support is due to the attributions and myths assigned to DA, or perhaps, it is consequential upon the negative impact DA has on those in the victim's social network which will be discussed.

The radiating impact of domestic abuse

Research and discussions on the impact of DA have primarily focused upon the individuals who directly experience the abuse, thus the 'victim'. However, the consequences of DA exceed the victims themselves, as family and friends may too be affected (Crowell and Burgess, 1996). DA has a radiating effect with a destructive impact not only on victims themselves, but also transforming the lives of those connected to them (Riger et. al, 2002).

A vast amount of literature has focused on the impact upon children who live with or witness DA amongst their parents (Edleson, 1999; Kolbo et al., 1996; Holt et al., 2008). Children in such circumstances are at risk of physical abuse in addition to sexual abuse (Humphreys and Mullender, 2002). Studies have illustrated that physical and sexual abuse of an individual may also have its toll on family and friends of the victim, and therefore they could be perceived as secondary victims (Crowell and Burgess, 1996). An example of secondary victims has been demonstrated whereby family and friends of rape and assault victims experience negative psychological consequences irrespective of victim's distress levels (Davis et al., 1995).

Family members of DA victims may be subjected to harassment, threats and in some cases even physical danger from the abuser (American Psychological Association, 1996). Qualitative interviews with women in abusive relationships have revealed that certain extended families fear for their own safety (Riger et. al, 2002). Additionally, it has been reported that the assailant often contacts others in the victim's social network such as friends, co-workers and family members in an attempt to find the victim (Browne, 1987). These accounts have been made by DA victims themselves and therefore do not capture or represent the subjective experiences of family members or others in the victim's social network who may experience or perceive these violent episodes differently.

In order to assess the multiple elements at the individual, family, social structural and sociocultural levels causing and maintaining DA, Carlson (1984) applied Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological framework which conceptualises that different systems interact with one another, influencing human development. Carlson found that this model permits identification and specification of possible interrelationships between variables across the different levels of the framework in relation to DA. This same ecological construct was therefore applied by Riger et al. (2002) to examine the extended ramifications of DA on the lives of those linked to victims.

Riger et al. (2002) observed three effects caused by DA; 1) first order effects are concerned with direct impact on the victim only. 2) Second order effects refers to the impact on the victim's ability to function within their physical and social environment, in addition to the impairment of their relationships with others. 3) Third order effects regard the modifications created by the DA on others not directly victimized by the perpetrator, but none the less impacted upon.

Riger et al. (2002) demonstrate the devastating impact third order effects have on others in the victim's social network, family members in particular. DA was found to impact on victim's children, corresponding with the vast amount of research previously conducted (Edleson, 1999; Kolbo et al., 1996; Holt et al., 2008). DA was also found to impact family members' responsibilities, whereby family members frequently assisted in child rearing; babysitting or assuming temporary custody. Family members were also found to be threatened by the abusers, and were too subjected to violence. It was therefore recommended that in order to understand the full impact of DA, all levels should be considered.

On reviewing the literature, it appeared that DA is still often viewed as an individual matter affecting only those in the abusive relationship, whilst neglecting the impact on others in the victim's social network. Due to the lack of research and gap in the

literature that should be addressed, the main aim of this research was to explore the impact of DA on the victim's family members achieved through several objectives. The first objective was to investigate the subjective meanings, feelings and rationalisations of family members towards DA. The next objective was to examine the actions taken and the roles played by family members throughout the abusive relationship. The third objective was to examine the ways in which family members encountered the DA. And the final objective was to develop a deeper understanding of DA radiating effect in relation to family members.

Methodology

Qualitative rationale

There are various theoretical frameworks in qualitative research, differing in their underlying philosophies and depending on the epistemological position held by the researcher (Willig, 2013). However, the common objective of these differing approaches in qualitative research, are to enrich understanding rather than to verify early theoretical conclusions (Elliot et al., 1999). The research aimed to uncover how family members of DA victims experience and make sense of the DA. Qualitative research was therefore most suitable for this piece of research as it is concerned with the subjective meanings of individuals and the way in which individuals rationalise the world and events that they experience (Willig, 2013).

This research takes a relativist ontology, the concept that there is no absolute truth or validity. Reality is subjective according to differences in perception and constructed through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially, thus, it emphasises diversity of interpretations (Willig, 2013). Furthermore, the researcher attempts to understand the phenomena under investigation through the perspective of participants studied as "The aim of qualitative research is to understand and represent the experience and actions of people as they encounter, engage, and live through situations" (Elliot et al., 1999:216). Qualitative research thus aims to capture the subjective feelings of a specific experience, or attempt to identify patterns of experiences amongst a population (Willig, 2013).

Method

The researcher carried out in-depth semi structured interviews guided by an interview schedule (Appendix A). Participants were recruited through purposive sampling (Palys, 2008); a snowball technique was utilised whereby initial informants proposed other participants for the study based on researcher's criteria (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). The criteria comprised of participant being a family member of an individual who had experienced DA, but who was no longer in the abusive relationship, this being important due to the sensitivity of the phenomena and thus well-being of participants. The interviews were later transcribed and Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA; Smith, 1996) was then conducted to permit for the identification of themes within the data collected (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Semi structured interviews were utilised in this research. Interviews provide a rich and possible manner for accounting participant's experiences by encouraging

participants to enclose these in detail. Furthermore, interviews are the most commonly used research method in qualitative research (King and Horrocks, 2010; Runswick-Cole, 2011), as they are flexible and tend to focus on individual's own experiences rather than general beliefs or opinions (King and Horrocks, 2010). Semi structured interviews are most commonly used for data collection within qualitative research, due to its compatibility with several methods of data analysis (Willig, 2013). Moreover, it provides participants with the opportunity to be heard and express specific experiences of their lives.

The semi-structured interviews were not dictated by the interview schedule, rather they were guided by it. This gave the researcher more flexibility, allowing adjustment of questions in light of participant's response (Burman, 1995). For instance, it allowed the researcher to probe and further explore participant's answers which is essential in the exploration of participant's perspectives (Bryman, 2004; King and Horrocks, 2010). Furthermore, the interviewee played a crucial role in shaping the interview, as the focus was on the participant's psychological and social world (Smith and Eatough, 2007).

Approaches concerned with in depth personal experience such as the one applied in this study require a word for word transcription of the interviews (King and Horrocks, 2010), and therefore a verbatim transcription was conducted. The transcriptions were conducted by the researcher as this is considered to be a vital stage within qualitative research (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Transcription could be understood as the first stage of data analysis; in order to achieve an accurate written account of the data the researcher must carefully listen to every spoken word and thus becomes closely familiar with the data.

In order to produce a good qualitative report, the data analysis method must be appropriately used in relation to the data collected and the research question in place (Willig, 2013). The researcher's position has an impact upon the appropriate data analysis method (Howitt, 2010), IPA is a method which builds on theories of human experiences, particularly that of phenomenology and hermeneutics (Larkin et al., 2006). IPA is utilised when the epistemological position is imprecise (Willig, 2013) in order to identify the meanings provided by an interviewee in making sense of experiences.

IPA is applicable when research is concerned with individual's experiences of specific phenomena (Howitt, 2010). It aims to carry out an in depth investigation into the lived experiences of individuals and to examine how those individuals make sense of their world (Smith and Eatough, 2007). IPA is thus an ideographic approach, whereby each case is analysed individually first, before attempting to integrate meaning across the sample (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). IPA places emphasis on understanding the individual and therefore was best suited for the relativist ontology of this research.

Researchers have recognised that in order to produce detailed interpretative accounts, a very small sample should be utilised. It has been suggested that three participants is a useful number for conducting IPA as Smith and Osborn (2003:57) argue that:

'This allows sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case but also allows a detailed examination of similarity and difference, convergence and divergence....divergence. The danger for the newcomer is that if the sample size is too large they become overwhelmed by the vast amount of data generated by a qualitative study and are not able to produce a sufficiently penetrating analysis.'

Smith et al. (2009) recommend using three to six participants for a student project, noting however that their own practice is "n = 3 as the default size for an under-graduate or Masters-level IPA study" (Smith et al., 2009:52). Furthermore, time and resources available to students conducting research projects influence the sample size (Howitt and Cramer, 2011). Due to this being an in-depth undergradu-ate piece of research, the time and resources available to the researcher allowed for a sample of three participants.

Ethical considerations

The research conformed to the British Psychological Society (2009) 'Code of Eth-ics and Conduct'. Willig (2013) specifies five key ethical considerations that were addressed throughout this piece of research; informed consent, deception, right to withdraw, debriefing and confidentiality.

In order for participants to give informed consent, they should have adequate knowledge on the proposed research (Howitt, 2010). Participants invited to take part in the research (Appendix B) were therefore provided with a participant information sheet (Appendix C) prior to giving their informed consent. This included information on the research topic, purpose of the study, procedure and the duration of participant's commitment, informing them of their responsibilities as a participant, along with the researcher's obligations. Participants were requested to sign a consent form (Appendix D) prior to the interviews, only after acquiring adequate information regarding the research (Appendix C). All participants were legally and mentally capable of providing their voluntary informed consent.

There was no use of deception in this study. Qualitative research requires a more trusting relationships between participants and researcher that has been said to assist in obtaining rich, detailed interview data (Howitt, 2010). Participants were notified of the recording of interviews, use of these recordings and the procedure for their storage and data protection. Participants were also informed of their rights to withdraw from the research up to a specific date articulated to them and were made aware that there would not have been any contingent consequences for doing so.

Once the interviews were conducted, participants were debriefed on the full nature of the research (Appendix E) and given the opportunity to raise issues that were not covered by the interviewer which may have been important for their satisfaction. Participants were offered a copy of their interview transcript and findings of the study if they desired. Confidentiality was assured by the removal of personal identifiers from the interview transcripts. Furthermore, pseudo names were provided during the transcription phase of the research in order to maintain participant's anonymity. Interviews were kept on a password protected computer and recordings were destroyed once the transcription stage was complete.

Participants

Hannah is a younger sister to a DA victim, she is 36 years old, married with children, and works directly with females experiencing DA. Adam is 29 years and works in full time employment, single with no children, and he is an older brother of a victim. Asiyah is 20 years old and is a full time student, single with no children and she is the niece of a victim.

Analysis & Discussion

The interpretative phenomenological method was guided by the four stages described by Smith and Osborn (2003). The analysis began with an initial case familiarisation, achieved through reading and rereading the verbatim transcript. During this stage, initial responses were annotated in the left hand margins and these were then used for the identification of preliminary themes noted in the right hand margins (see appendix G). Connections were then made between the themes and a table of superordinate themes for the first case was produced, whereby instances supporting the themes can be found (see appendix H). This procedure was repeated for the two remaining cases. Following from there, cross-case patterns were established and a table of master themes was created (see appendix I). A narrative account supported by verbatim extracts was then produced, thus the analysis that follows emerged from the transcripts rather than predicted constructs.

The superordinate themes that emerged from the analysis consist of; 1) Attribution, causality and responsibility, 2) Victim's welfare first, and 3) Obligation, responsibility and commitment. This first theme sets the scene for those which follow as it articulates the participants' reasoning for the occurrence of DA in the first place. The remaining two themes address the ramifications DA has on family members.

Attribution, causality and responsibility

DA is perceived to be a normalised phenomenon within society; *'happens on a daily basis and it's just not a unique thing'* (Adam, 63-64), *'it's kind of just life, I think that's what happens, it kind of just becomes the norm'* (Asiyah, 155-156). Common myths surrounding DA including; ''abusers were abused', 'it is alcohol and drug related', and ''she could just leave' (Nicolson, 2010) were articulated by the participants; *'I asked the question to my sister, do you think his mum and dad were abusive' (Hannah, 240-241), 'if you've grown up with it then its normal to then repeat it on your partner'* (Asiyah, 64), '*he doesn't force her to stay with him'* (Adam, 95), '*I think he did take drugs, I think he used to take amphetamine'* (Hannah, 278). By adhering to the myth 'abusers were abused' and 'its drug and alcohol related' an acknowledgment is made that DA is a social matter. And yet, the analysis confirms that even though situational influences are understood, they are often overlooked and the person's internal disposition is believed to be responsible for the behaviour produced (Jones and Nisbett, 1971).

Participants strongly attribute DA dispositionally to the victim and assailant. For instance, when asked why he thinks DA happens, Adam *responded 'I don't think there is one specific reason'* (19), however it soon becomes apparent that Adam strongly believes DA is fundamentally about the perpetrator <u>and</u> victim*; 'that's just*

the sort of person they are, some people are like that, unfortunately' (24-25). This is also the case with Asiyah who believes DA is down to victim's insecurity and perpetrator's sense of superiority *'if they're insecure, or if, like, wanting to be superior and take it out on another person'* (62-63). Contrarily, Hannah strongly attributes DA to the perpetrator, her *stance 'I truly believe that there was something grounded with him'* (229-230) was consistent throughout, possibly due to her professional insight.

Participants' rationalised and attributed DA in regards to the assailant's disposition by perceiving the assailant as psychopathological*; 'my sister's partner is an aggressive, controlling psychopath'* (Adam, 75-76), *'I think he got something out of doing it, I think he enjoyed doing it'* (Hannah, 276). Furthermore, the assailant is perceived as someone who will continue to inflict abuse, suggesting this is innate; *'it will continue and continue if he has done it once'* (Adam, 46), *'he's not going to change'* (Hannah, 185). The victim's disposition is similarly used to rationalise and attribute the DA, however, unlike the assailant, the victim is perceived as having the ability to change;

> *'it's down to insecurity, she's just an insecure little girl, she's selfish, and she clearly doesn't have anything better to do with her life'* (Adam, 90-91).

> *"for her to be the victim in that situation, for her to have gone through what she'd gone through it's like the complete opposite character for us'* (Asiyah, 162-164).

Adam suggests the victim could have behaved differently, in a selfless and goal oriented manner whilst for Asiyah, the victim's unusual disposition consequently echoes change. Indicating that the victim needs to make the change subsequently places blame on the victim (Maureen et al., 2008) and thus it is not surprising that they both attribute blame to the victim;

> *'he doesn't force her to stay with him, she chooses to go back to him so in a way she's choosing to be a victim'* (Adam, 95-96).

> '*know like when to walk out the relationship, especially because both of them kept going back, I would never do that'* (Asiyah, 94-95).

Both participants' are adhering to the common myth that individuals choose to be victimized by returning to their assailant (Dunn and Powell-Williams, 2007; Yamawaki et al., 2012). This attribution of blame is coherent with Warden and Carlson's (2005) findings, whereby respondents attributed blame to the victim, believing woman want to be abused as they remain in the abusive relationship. Furthermore, this attribution of blame links into Wiener's (1985) theory of causality, whereby controllable causes lead to feelings of anger, transparent by Adam's use of words *'selfish'* and '*little girl'.* Similarly, uncontrollable and unintentional attributions are likely to result in sympathy and offers of assistance (Manusov and Spitzberg, 2008). This can be seen with Hannah who consistently articulated that DA is grounded within the perpetrator, the victim perceived as having no control results in Hannah sympathising with DA victims and she therefore offers her assistance;

> *'I've seen the impact it can have on a person living in that relationship umm and from that the children centre have supported me to train to be able to deliver support to women that are in abusive relationships, to help identify different types of behaviour or characteristics'* (218-221).

Attributing blame to victims and perpetrators can thus be understood in relation to adhering to myths surrounding DA, specifically in relation to the dispositional myths that outweigh the situational ones. Adhering to these myths and attributing blame have serious repercussions as attribution of blame itself may in fact shape emotions and consequently behaviours (Fincham et al., 1990). Behaviour modifications have serious psychological, physical and social ramifications on family members as well as on the victim. They result in feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and helplessness, in addition to physical and financial implications which will become transparent in the following themes.

Victim's welfare vs own welfare

Consequences of DA go beyond the victim, as family members are too affected by the DA (Crowell and Burgess, 1996). Both Hannah and Adam experienced a constant concern for their sister's safety and this gave rise to feelings of anxiety and stress;

> *'I use to lay at night thinking will I get the phone call tonight telling me my sister's dead, if I'm being honest, umm that he's killed her, umm where as now, look I'm getting upset [tearing up], whereas now, I don't get that anymore'* (Hannah, 358-361)

> *'it was just a massive stress to my life, every night going to bed not knowing what would happen, whether I would get a call the next morning saying she's in hospital or something worse'* (Adam, 57-60).

The stress experienced by family members is believed to have brought about several stress related illnesses; *'I mean I came out with a skin condition that's related to stress* (Adam,135), *'my mum got ill, my mum ended up with alopecia, losing her hair through stress'* (Hannah, 315-316). This impact on family member's health may result in their decision to withdraw from the situation and their constant concern for the victim's safety;

> *'I switched off, I had to sort of switch off my feelings and my worries because it would have made me really ill as well, so, but it was I think probably four years, and then I thought right, I can't do anymore'* (Hannah, 324-326).

Goodkind et al. (2003) suggests that DA victims receive less emotional support from family members and friends due to feelings of frustration, hurt and helplessness they may experience when the victim repeatedly returns to the abusive relationship. Lack of support appears to be consequential upon family members withdrawing from the victim. These feelings of frustration, hurt and helplessness are resonated by Adam who distanced himself from his sister and who no longer has a relationship with her;

'although she might not be in the relationship now, it wouldn't surprise me if she got back into the relationship in 6 months or 12 months or whenever, so really it's just an everlasting feeling that there is no positive, cause you want to believe it's over, and even if it is, you can't' (163-166).

Concerns for the victim's safety is therefore illustrated to bare psychological implications for family members, including feelings of hopelessness, *'you feel a little bit, a little bit hopeless, a little bit useless'* (Hannah, 316), and helplessness;

'you don't know what to do, you don't know what to do, you're fearful for your relative and you don't know who to turn to, how to get that person help, if they want help, how to deal with it yourself' (Hannah, 302-304).

Support providers have been said to attribute blame towards the victim as a defence mechanism against emotional vulnerability (Bryant and Spencer, 2003). Another self defence mechanism for family members that became apparent is 'Othering'. 'Othering' is a form of social representation, which involves constructing the 'Other' through a set of discourses that differentiates them from oneself, as they are perceived as a threat to one's self-representation (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996). 'Othering' of the victim is illustrated by Asiyah;

'like I wouldn't put up with half the stuff that umm, well I wouldn't put up with any of it, especially if I was in a relationship, and it's made me think like not stand up against it but just like know like when to walk out the relationship, especially because both of them kept going back, I would never do that' (92-95).

The victim is being 'Othered' by the words '*I wouldn't'*, '*I would never'* and '*if I was'*, these words are suggesting the victim is different to Asiyah and this in turn allows Asiyah to protect herself. There are several implications to 'Othering' including; marginalisation, decreased opportunities and exclusion (Johnson et al., 2004). Furthermore, 'Othering' has been demonstrated to create access barriers whereby individuals who experience negative or unwelcoming feelings from the health system do not seek appropriate health care (Johnson et al., 2004). 'Othering' may therefore be adapted to explain the isolation often experienced by DA victims (Buel, 1999; Nielson et al., 1992). Victims may avoid contact with their relatives who are 'Othering' them due to the DA. Moreover, 'Othering' results in the individual ignoring the complexity and subjectivity of the 'Otherd' (Dervin, 2011) which could explain dispositional blame attributed to the victim. Family members may in turn feel guilty for their 'Othering' of the victim as they may blame themselves for the victim's isolation and consequential rejection of support.

Family obligations & responsibilities

Family members tend to experience different obligations and responsibilities towards other family members. It is therefore not surprising that these are impacted upon by DA. Family members experience an impact on their child rearing responsibilities articulated by the participants;

'my grandma and the others sisters would help out loads, like with picking her son up, and taking him to [inaudible]' (Asiyah,105-106).

> *'she was in a previous relationship that was also fairly domestic violent, and not a great relationship, umm, so I took her in with my niece'* (Adam, 34-36).
> *'my youngest nephew went to live with my mum for what should have been a short period of time'* (Hannah, 69-70).

This impact on family members' responsibilities' is coherent with the findings of Riger et al. (2002). However, responsibilities go beyond assisting in child rearing as family members are faced with other responsibilities including assisting the victim financially and protecting the victim from harm. Family members feel it is their responsibility to financially assist the victim; *'my auntie still relies on my, her mum quite a lot and when she separated originally from him, cause financially she was struggling'* (Asiyah, 104-105)*, 'For her own safety my mum, paid for her, to move into a rented property, even though she owned a property'* (Hannah, 161-162). Hannah's mum financially assisting the victim '*for her own safety'* illustrates that financial assistance interlinks with family member's need to protect the victim.

Family members feel obligated to protect the victim from the abuse and therefore experience negative perceptions of themselves when they fail to do so; *'a little bit useless, cause all you want to do is sweep in and pick that person up, and take them out* (Hannah, 317-318). Guilt is accompanied by failing to protect the victim as can be appreciated by Adam who resonates a sense of guilt for not foreseeing his sister's abuse, *'I think the signs were there in front of me long before that'* (39-40). Feelings of guilt is also made transparent by Hannah who discloses that her nephew was made to believe he failed to protect his mother even though he was testifying against the perpetrator for that precise reason;

> *'his solicitor ripped him to bits saying that how can you tell me that you're a 20 year old lad and watched you're mum get beat up but then couldn't do anything about it, so our Dave tore himself to bits'* (118-120).

This guilt eventually led her nephew to take the law into his own hands; resorting to violence in wanting to protect his mother; *'ended up getting into trouble, because he hit him'* (Hannah, 192-193). The need to protect the victim may resort in family members taking legal actions against the victim's will. This in turn leads to conflict with the victim that has emotional ramifications for family members. This is exemplified by Hannah who was blamed by her sister when social services and police intervened;

> *'I had my sister screaming at me on the street, wouldn't talk to me, umm it was all my fault, I'd destroyed what she had with him, umm I think my sister's words were it's all a load of bollocks, he doesn't do this to me, he doesn't do that to me, umm ye, it was really, really distressing'* (70-73).

These obligations, responsibilities and commitments expressed by family members demonstrate the radiating impact that DA has on family members. Even though family members are not directly victimized by the perpetrator, they experience physical and psychological ramifications by the DA and they are therefore none the less impacted upon. This therefore strengthens and expands on the findings of third order effects by Riger et al. (2002).

Concluding comments

The research demonstrates the radiating effect of DA. Consequences of DA exceeds the victims themselves, as family and friends are too affected physically and psychologically. The research suggests that adhering to common myths surrounding DA contributes to the radiating impact experienced by family members. Family members specifically allocate blame to the DA victim believing they have control over the abuse, this belief is underpinned by the common myth that by returning to their assailant they choose to be victimized (Dunn and Powell-Williams, 2007; Yamawaki et al., 2012). This attribution of blame leads to feelings of anger (Weiner, 1985) which modify family member's behaviour towards the victim and in turn have negative ramifications for both victim and family members. It is therefore important to provide information and increase awareness of the social constraints and other factors which may influence a victim's choice to remain in the abusive relationship, as this may reduce the amount of family members adhering to these myths and in turn minimise the radiating impact.

It has been suggested that family members attribute blame to the victim as a self-defence mechanism (Bryant and Spencer, 2003). This research discovered another self-defence mechanism utilised by family members, that of 'Othering'. By 'Othering' the victim, family members can protect themselves and preserve their self-representation as they are different to the victim. Although family member 'Other' the victim as a self-protection mechanism, they are in fact achieving the opposite, as this 'Othering' contributes to the radiating impact experienced by family members. Research suggests that victims withdraw from those 'Othering' them due to negative experiences accompanied by this (Johnson et al., 2004). 'Othering' DA victims therefore contributes to their isolation, and this results in a negative impact on family members who experience guilt and self-blame for the victim's isolation and consequential rejection of their support. Thus, 'Othering' DA victims has serious ramifications for both the victims and family members.

Individual's tendency to experience different obligations and responsibilities towards their family members are impacted upon as a result of DA. Family members experience an increased sense of responsibility toward the victim's wellbeing, they feel obligated to assist and protect the victim and children involved, and therefore experience an impact on child rearing responsibilities previously found by Riger et al. (2002). However, the present research demonstrates that family members are faced with additional responsibilities including assisting the victim financially and protecting the victim from harm. These responsibilities have negative psychological and physical implications for family members. Responsibilities experienced by family members demonstrate the radiating effect as modifications to these are created by the DA which in turn impact upon family member's lives.

To date, research and discussions regarding DA circulate around DA victims and their children. The analysis of this study has demonstrated that DA not only impact upon victims, but has a radiating effect with a negative impact on their family member. This research therefore fills a gap in the literature and demonstrates the need to further investigate the implications DA has for others connected to the victims, as they could be perceived as secondary victims of DA.

There may be limitations to this study in relation to the sample used. Firstly, a sample size of three participants was utilised and it could therefore be argued that a larger sample size may have produced different findings. However, due to this being an undergraduate piece of research whereby resources and time was limited, it was important for the researcher to be cautious in regards to the sample size. Extensive data that could not have been included due to the limitations of the assignment would have been unethical of itself. Secondly, participants were related to the victim differently whereby two of the participants were sibling of a victim and one participant was a niece, this difference in relatedness proximity may have had an influence on the results. Future research could therefore utilise a larger sample of cohesive family members, for instance just siblings in order to examine these affects. Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct this research with parents of DA victims in order to examine the differing radiating effects DA may exhibit on different family members.

Reflexive analysis

When conducting IPA, It is recognised that the researcher can never completely know a participant's phenomenological world (Howitt, 2010). Furthermore, IPA can never achieve a true genuine first person account, as the participant's accounts interact with the researcher's and this results in the co-construction of subjectivity (Larkin et al., 2006). The researcher contributed to the construction of the analysis due to her own understanding of the explored phenomenon. The researcher chose this area of research as she herself is a family member of a DA victim. Due to her own personal experiences with the phenomenon she held the belief that family members are too affected by the DA. Throughout the research process, the researcher's awareness of her own contribution in the constructions of meaning was required and therefore her personal and epistemological reflexivity was taken into account. Personal reflexivity being the researcher's own experiences and beliefs, whilst epistemological reflexivity reflects upon the assumptions made (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999).

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