

2020

## Understanding the Connection between Armed Conflict and Child Abuse by Men

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Understanding the Connection between Armed Conflict and Child Abuse by Men

by

Andre Isbell

MA, Penn State University, 2013

BA, American Military University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

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28 May 2020

## Abstract

Violence in the homes of male survivors of armed conflict is an enduring problem that negatively impacts the physical, emotional, and behavioral development of children in the home. However, gaps in the literature exist about the parenting behaviors of male survivors of armed conflict in a low-income country setting. The purpose of this study was to understand how the lived traumatic experiences from armed conflict affect parenting behaviors and perceptions of child abuse. The research questions examined perceptions of abusive behaviors toward children by male survivors of armed conflict and how traumatic experiences affect their views on child abuse, parenting, and disciplining children. A case study design was used in conjunction with purposeful sampling of 12 interview respondents who are survivors of armed conflict. Data were coded with NVivo 12 Pro and analyzed using Moustakas's modified Van Kaam method. Findings revealed that armed conflict has an overwhelmingly negative impact on male survivors, their perceptions of child abuse and the manner in which they parented their children. The results of this study may be used by communities and policy makers to develop programs to help survivors develop their needed parenting skills.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving family. Rossana, Moises and Alejandra you have inspired me to do things I never thought I possible. I thank you for your sacrifices so I could complete this dissertation.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my God for being with me throughout my life. I would like to thank my parents Albert and the late Carol Isbell. Thank you for showing kindness and adopting a boy who the world threw away. Thanks to my entire family. You all have played a role in me achieving this accomplishment. Thanks to my committee members, Dr. Koehle and Dr. Campbell. It was really a pleasure working with you through this journey.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The damage caused by warfare affects all levels of society. Warfare damages the fabric of families and their ability to function as a healthy unit. Low-income countries tend to suffer most from armed conflicts and families in such countries suffer disproportionately when compared to high-income countries (Rees, Thorpe, Tol, Fonseca, & Silove, 2015). Olema, Catani, Ertl, Saile, and Neuner (2014) observed that studies have established a connection between the traumatizing effects of war and husbands or male intimate partners physically and emotionally abusing their domestic partners. War has similar effects on children living in the same home. Child maltreatment is represented in a variety of forms such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and neglect (Mills et al., 2013). The abuse of children has been linked to a myriad of long-term negative effects such as physical diseases and criminal and risky behaviors (Gilbert et al. 2009).

The prevention of child abuse in low-income countries presents many challenges. The Ugandan child protection system is at best extremely limited and at worst completely ineffective in preventing child abuse with few dedicated resources committed to reduce or prevent child abuse (Child Naker, Horton, Walakira, & Devries, 2014). This has resulted in Ugandan children being exposed to high levels of violence inside and outside their homes. There has also been a disruption of family relationships and the functionality of the family unit (Saile, Ertl, Neuner, & Catani 2016).

In this study, I collected information that will facilitate the development of programs to assist war affected men when rearing children. Furthermore, this study may

be used to help mitigate some of the adverse effects of war by creating programs which specifically target those who have experienced or witnessed extreme violence, death, rape or other traumatic war-related experiences.

I selected the research problem for four reasons. First, I did not find a study that documented the perceptions of parenting from the perspective of men who have experienced war-related violence (as victims or as military members who fought against it) in a low-income country setting and how they perceive abuse, maltreatment, and neglect of children. In this study, I explored the perceptions of male parents or caretakers who have had traumatic experiences from armed conflicts and their perceptions on the abuse of children. Secondly, there is the need to understand how these male caretakers view their aggressive behaviors toward children in their care and ultimately their families. Thirdly, there is a need to understand the perceptions of these men so that future parental educational programs and support services can be tailored to cater to men and help them to learn how to raise a healthy family. Last, it was my goal to create a study that would create a deeper understanding of the barriers that prevent this population from having positive parenting outcomes.

Chapter 1 includes an outline of how armed conflict continues to affect children even after major fighting has ended by exploring the experiences of male maternal figures who participated in the hostilities. The purpose of the study was to understand how lived traumatic experiences from armed conflicts may affect parenting. This chapter will include an introduction, background, problem statement, purpose of the study,

research questions, theoretical framework of the study, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitation, limitation, significance, and summary.

Chapter 2 will include a discussion of the search strategies used to gather relevant literature for the current qualitative case study. The literature review will include a description of the theoretical framework that I used for the study: Widom's (1989) cycle of violence theory. Widom's (1989) cycle of violence theory posits that previous victimization, particularly at a younger age, is a risk factor for parents or caretakers to perpetrate violence against their own children. Chapter 2 will include introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, conceptual framework, literature review related to key variables and concepts, and summary and conclusions.

Chapter 3 will include an explanation of the methodology of the study. I employed a case study design to understand the perceptions of Ugandan men regarding child rearing and discipline. As the lead researcher for this project, my role was to gather and interpret data from the participants of this study. I analyzed and arranged this information into themes. I used purposive sampling techniques to select participants. I used interviews, reflexive notes, and peer-reviewed articles as the data collection instruments. Chapter 3 will include research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and summary.

Chapter 4 will include the findings of the research. The chapter will include introduction, setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary. Chapter 5 will include the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Through this study, I will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the problem of child rearing in a post-conflict setting in low-income countries.

### **Background**

Having a safe and stable family life is vital for the healthy development of children (Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, 2018). However, armed conflict has a negative effect on all levels of society. The family unit is particularly affected negatively during and after armed hostilities. Researchers have found a strong link between child abuse as a risk factor for later delinquency and violent behavior (Mueller-Bamouh, Ruf-Leuschner, Dohrmann, Schauer, & Elbert, 2016). Research conducted in Northern Uganda showed that traumatic experiences from the exposure to war perpetuate the cycle of violence and manifest itself in the home of those who have had traumatic experiences (Saile, Ertl, Neuner, & Catani, 2014). Catani, Schauer, and Neuner (2008) conducted research where they demonstrated the commonalities between two low-income societies that have experienced prolonged exposure to war and the high rates of child abuse. Catani, Schauer, and Neuner (2008) highlighted how war traumatizes men and increases their propensity for domestic violence.

Constant exposure to violence from war can result in increased risk of men committing violence against their domestic partners and children. A survey of Afghani school-age children between the ages of 7 and 15 years reported nearly 60% of boys and approximately 44 % of girls had experienced a form of abuse or neglect (Catani et al., 2009). The study found that 31.5 % of fathers beat their wives and 41.6 % of fathers beat their children, with 9% of the students requiring medical treatment for injuries they

received from the abuse (Catani et al., 2009). High rates of abuse were also found in Sri Lanka, with 41.2 % of fathers beating their wives and 67.6 % of fathers beating their children (Catani et al., 2009). The sustained conflict has resulted in child abuse becoming an endemic problem in low-income countries that have experienced recent armed conflicts.

Conversely, a study in the United States found that 6.07 % of children aged 1 to 17 years experienced a form of neglect in the past year and 15.14 % of children experienced a form of neglect within their lifetime (Vanderminden et al., 2019). Interestingly, American veterans who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have higher rates of family violence that is associated with this population. Studies have reported rates of up to 63% of family violence among veterans who have severe PTSD (Monson, Taft, & Fredman, 2009). Research has linked the severity of aggressive behavior toward spouses or domestic partner and the severity of PTSD (Monson et al., 2009). A study examined domestic violence from Vietnam veterans who had PTSD and found nearly one-third of these veterans engaged in violence against their domestic partners (Jordan et al., 1992).

Ugandan war victims have experiences that are unique to low-income countries. Unlike the United States, Uganda has a substantial population of former child soldiers who were traumatized by decades-long armed conflict in addition to the adult population. Research on former child soldiers found significant emotional distress (Vindevoel, De Schryver, Broekaert, & Derluyn 2013). The psychological impact of being a child soldier is long-lasting. Former male child soldiers were more likely to have severe behavioral



challenges (Vindevogel et al., 2013). Behavioral and emotional challenges that child soldiers face is similar to others that live in war-torn areas (Vindevogel et al., 2013). Northern Uganda is currently experiencing a post-conflict era which has brought these problems to the forefront. The link between war-related exposure and partner-violence against women has been established in Uganda (Saile et al., 2014) while a similar link has been established in American PTSD veterans (Jordan et al., 1992 and Monson, Taft, & Fredman, 2009).

Researchers have recognized that there is a lack of research concerning how men who have had traumatic experiences from war manage negative emotions associated with domestic relationship (Tharp et al., 2016). Researchers examined the associations between war events and psychosocial outcomes. A majority of the scholarly literature that I reviewed for this study was quantitative while this current study was qualitative in nature to explore this problem through a different methodological lens. I sought to understand the feelings and thoughts of those who have lived through traumatic war experiences. I also sought to gain an understanding from the male perspective. In this study, I addressed the gap in literature regarding child abuse perceptions from men who have had traumatic experiences from the war. This study is needed due to the nature of child abuse in Uganda and the overwhelmingly negative impact it has on children and on the community that they live in.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a problem with efforts by the government to prevent child abuse in Uganda. Specifically, the Ugandan child protection system is ineffective at preventing

child abuse and there are few resources dedicated to the prevention of child abuse (Child et al., 2014). The Ugandan Constitution provides protection for vulnerable children throughout Uganda. The protections are implemented by justice, welfare, education, and health systems in Uganda (Walakira, 2013). However, the implementation has lacked due to bureaucracy, lack of funding, and poorly trained staff from various agencies (Walakira, Bulukuki, Omona, & Kafuko, 2010; Walakira, 2011, 2013). Furthermore, there is almost no information on how well the child protection system handles cases, or children's experiences of the system. Little is known about children's disclosure of violence or help-seeking behavior in this context, although studies suggest that children confide primarily in parents (Child, 2014). This has resulted in children experiencing disruptions in family relationships, emotional abuse by their parents, community violence, and high levels of family violence (Saile et al., 2016). Currently, efforts to prevent parents from abusing their children include improving reporting methods by allowing victims to report abuse via confidential disclosure rather than traditional reporting methods (Barr et al., 2017). However, the methods have not been effective. For example, districts in Uganda reported a physical abuse rate of up to 90% for children, including a sexual abuse rate of 4% for boys and 13% for girls in 2015 (Clarke et al., 2016). Violence at home has been proven to stunt emotional and social development in children (Clarke et al., 2016). Violence within families continues to adversely affect the healthy development of children in post-conflict Uganda despite the end of the war (Saile et al., 2016). Previous researchers have suggested a link between the traumatizing events of war and the tendency for men to commit domestic violence against their partners (Olema, et al., 2014).

There is a gap in the literature on the connection between male parents who have been exposed to war (such as abduction, child soldiers) and their propensity to abuse children under their care. Therefore, the problem is the lack of information on male caretakers who have experienced traumatic events from war and how they perceive child abuse. This study will fill this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by providing empirical research data to public policy decision-makers. This will enhance the formulation of policies for preventing child abuse that focuses on providing needed support services to male caretakers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the link between male caretakers who were traumatized by war and abusive behaviors toward children under their care. I used an inductive research paradigm to explore the research problem. I selected participants from self-reported survivors of armed conflict who have experienced traumatic events. An understanding of their views on the treatment of children in their care, policies, and programs will help in developing effective methods for reducing abuse among this population.

Family members who have experienced war-related violence are prone to perpetuate continued violence against children (Saile et al., 2014). Saile et al., (2014) further stated that, “through the legitimization of violence, war may encourage aggression as adaptive behavior making it a justified method and aim in the socialization of children” (p. 139). Research has proven a link between war-related violence and violence against children in a post-conflict setting (Saile et al, 2014). Olema et al. (2014) asserted

that children who experience maltreatment during their childhood, particularly at home, are psychologically vulnerable throughout their lives. Therefore, the research will provide knowledge on the issue through exploring the research problem a study in Uganda.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and understand child abuse perceptions among male survivors of war with traumatic experiences. The central research questions (RQ) that I used to guide the study were:

(RQ1): How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors view abusive behaviors toward children?

(RQ2): How does lived traumatic experiences of armed conflict affect their views on child rearing?

(RQ3): How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors perceive parental educational programs and family support services?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework that I used to guide this qualitative research study was Widom's cycle of violence theory. I used this framework to understand how men who have had war-related violence perceive parenting. The cycle of violence theory was developed by Widom in 1989 and builds on the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). The social learning theory states that behavior patterns are acquired during childhood by observing their environment and experiences received (Tomsich, 2015). Widom (1989) stated that previous victimization, particularly at a younger age, is a risk factor for parents or caretakers to perpetrate violence against their own children. The theory further

hypothesizes that child maltreatment heightens the risk for violence later in life.

Widom's (1989) found that abused and neglected children are at a significantly higher risk of becoming criminals, delinquents, and even violent criminals than their non-abused peers. Further studies provide support for the cycle of violence theory by providing evidence that higher levels of organized violence increased the risk of maltreatment of domestic partners and children (Catani et al., 2008). Violence can be transferred from socioecological contexts (intergenerational) such as armed conflicts to the family level by traumatic events which can result in family violence that is war-related (Catani et al., 2008). A more detailed explanation of the theory's propositions is provided in Chapter 2. This theory was useful for finding solutions to the research questions and identifying the relationship between war victims and the abuse of children in their care.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is aligned with defining, learning, and exploring in detail what particular people do in their lives and what actions mean to them (Patton, 2015). The qualitative methodology is used by researchers to get an individualized, in-depth, and contextually sensitive understanding of people and their experiences (Patton, 2015). Qualitative studies are based on a constructivist model. A key tenant to constructivism is the truth that is dependent and relative on a person's perspective (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Researchers use this perspective to engender close collaboration between themselves and participants. Because of this close collaboration, participants share experiences about their lives with the researchers. Researchers are then

able to understand participants' actions by the stories they tell during the research process (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

In this study, I used a case study design. When used properly, case studies are context-sensitive and holistic to qualitative inquiry themes (Patton, 2015). I used the case study design to increase knowledge of child abuse from the view of the participants. In this study, I cultivated an understanding of child abuse from the view of the armed-conflict male survivors. Researchers use case studies to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific case (Yin, 2015). Using the case study approach, I gained an in-depth understanding of how victims of war view child abuse or other methods of child discipline. I did not attempt to determine find if someone was abusing a child but to provide an understanding of how armed conflict affects perceptions of child abuse. The main focus of a case study is to understand a topic from the perception of either an individual or a group of individuals (Yin, 2016). Moreover, through this study, I developed an understanding of armed conflict survivors' views on abusive behaviors toward children as well as how lived traumatic experiences from armed conflict affect views on child rearing.

Researchers use the case study approach to gain an understanding of the participants in their study. Yin (2014) stated that case studies are very useful for answering 'why' and 'how' questions. My research questions were aligned with the case study method, because I sought to answer 'how' and 'why' questions by examining past experiences and current perceptions. In case studies, rich data can be collected from participants of a study (Patton, 2015). Case studies are particularly effective when they

are focused and not broad (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case studies are also effective when they have boundaries that prevent the study from becoming too far-reaching and broad. Baxter and Jack (2008) suggested limiting research to a specific place and time, time, and activity or by activity and time. Limiting the scope of the case being researched ensures that the research remains in scope. To ensure my research was not too broad, I limited my research to Uganda and armed-conflict male survivors.

Twelve to fifteen-armed conflict survivors from Uganda will give their opinions and beliefs through confidential individual in-depth interviews conducted via emails, Skype, phone, or in person. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) recommended at least 12 interviews to achieve saturation when trying to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals. I also collected data on child abuse and intimate partner violence by armed conflict survivors from a variety of research studies.

The sampling plan that I used for this project was purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects a unit from the population using their judgment that represents a certain part of the population (O'Sullivan, Berner, Taliaferro, & Rassel, 2016). The type of data analysis that I used was a modified Van Kaam method. This process includes a listing of relevant experiences called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). I also used the reducing and eliminating method to determine invariant constituents followed by thematizing and clustering the constituents (Moustakas, 1994). By using the modified Van Kaam method, I developed grouping and themes to emerge during data analysis. My goal as a researcher was to understand

participants' views on child abuse and what they consider appropriate child discipline measures.

### **Definitions**

The following are the working definitions for the various terms and expressions that I used throughout the document:

*Child soldier:* Children who have been recruited by or associated with armed forces or armed groups (Vindevogel et al., 2013)

*Domestic violence:* It is being used here to encompass the range of violence that might take place within and across different family subsystems (e.g., inter-partner, parent-child, sibling-sibling) (Catani et al., 2008).

*Emotional abuse:* It is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant threats, criticism, or rejection, as well as withholding support, love, or guidance (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).

*Neglect:* This is the failure of a guardian, parent, or other caregivers to provide for a child's basic needs.

- *Physical neglect.* Failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013)
- *Emotional Inattention to a child's emotional needs.* Failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs) (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013)



*Physical abuse:* Non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of beating, punching, biting, kicking, throwing, shaking, stabbing, choking, burning, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other objects), or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a caregiver, parent, or other people who have responsibility for the child (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).

*Poly-victim:* Children who suffer from four or more different kinds of victimization in a single year (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007).

*Sexual abuse:* Activities by a caregiver or parent such as fondling a child's genitals, rape, indecent exposure, penetration, sodomy, incest, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are beliefs held by the researcher that cannot be verified. My assumptions were necessary to address the perceptions of child abuse of survivors of armed conflict. In this study, I assumed that:

1. The participants felt comfortable to share their perspectives and experiences,
2. Records received from the government would help to contribute to the results of this study,
3. Relevant nonprofit organizations would allow members to participate during the interview process
4. Purposive sampling was sufficient to provide rich data for understating child abuse perceptions in the observed population,

5. The participants selected would be representative of armed-conflict male survivors in Uganda,
6. The participants' responses to interview questions would be honest and answered to the best of their ability, and
7. The participants felt comfortable and free to provide feedback to questions they did not understand or if they needed further clarification of certain questions.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Child abuse and child maltreatment affects every country but is especially severe in low-income countries. The problem of child abuse is then compounded by armed conflicts in these countries. Child abuse in Uganda has been investigated from a multitude of angles to understand the causes (Swahn et al., 2017). Researchers in Uganda have focused on reporting methods to reduce child abuse among school-age children (Barr et al., 2017). The research problem is the effects of victims of war on child abuse by caregivers and parents. This research will provide information that will have social implications by facilitating the development of programs to assist the population when rearing children. Furthermore, this study may be used to help mitigate some of the adverse effects of war by creating programs which specifically target those who have experienced or witnessed extreme violence, death, rape or other traumatic war-related experiences. The conceptual framework for this study provides insight into how violence at home can affect the development of children.

I delimited this study to male survivors of armed conflict who live in Uganda. In an ideal world, this study would cover all armed conflict survivors across Uganda but due to financial restraints, it is not possible at this time. Therefore, this study will recruit armed conflict-male survivors who reside in Uganda at the time of the study. Participants will be at least 18 years old single or married who have or who may have children in the future. The study will exclude individuals below 18 years and female care givers. They will be interviewed in a suitable and comfortable location. The study can be replicated in other parts of Uganda or in other low-income countries.

### **Limitations**

While delimitations represented aspects of the study that were within the researcher's control, limitations represent factors of the study that are not within the researcher's control. I am an American who does not speak Luganda which may reduce the amount of information I can obtain from the participants. It may also restrict the interpretation of the data collected. If research participants prefer to conduct the interview in Luganda, an interpreter will be trained using the Family Health International (FHI) protections training based on the Belmont Report principles (Walden University, Institutional Review Board, n.d.)

A challenge for this study will include ensuring a separate identity of the researcher from a volunteer at local NGO's that participants may come from. A potential barrier will be the recruitment of participants for interviews. The researcher will be request participants from multiple NGO's to participate in the study as a means of increasing the participant pool. Further barriers could also include finding a suitable

partner organization. Funding may be a limitation as well since the research will be conducted in Uganda and is self-funded. Personal interviews will be conducted in Kampala to mitigate the cost.

Yin (2014) admitted that there are concerns with using case studies such as the inability to generalize the findings. Yin (2014) stated that meeting validity and preserving objectivity during case studies will require a systematic process that makes sure that there is no outside influence on the outcomes and research should be replicable by other researchers. Case studies are particularly effective when they are focused and not broad (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case studies are also effective when they have boundaries that prevent the study from becoming too broad and far-reaching. Baxter and Jack (2008) suggested limiting research to a specific time and place, time, and activity or by activity and time. Limiting the scope of the case being researched will ensure the research remains in scope. To ensure my research is not too broad, I will limit my research to one region of Uganda. I will also limit my scope to male survivors of wars who live in Northern Uganda.

### **Significance**

Child neglect and maltreatment have been investigated and examined in Uganda from a variety of perspectives (Swahn, et al., 2017). However, these problems continue to exist and grow throughout the country. The research will fill a gap in understanding how men who have experienced war-related violence perceive abusive behaviors toward children. The study seeks to understand how conflict survivors view abusive behaviors toward children and how traumatic experiences from war have affected those views.

The research has potential contribution to practice by providing information that can be used when educating male caretakers about non-violent means of disciplining and educating their children. The social change implications for this study are the development of programs to better assist the population when rearing children. Furthermore, this study may be used to help mitigate some of the adverse effects of war by creating programs which specifically target those who have experienced or witnessed extreme violence, death, rape or other traumatic war-related experiences. By addressing the perceptions of child abuse by men who have experienced war-related violence, the study will provide data that can contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

### **Summary**

Research efforts on armed conflicts in low-income countries such as Uganda are continuing to grow. Furthermore, research into the role of male caregivers in post-conflict areas also continues to grow (Mehus, Wieling, Achan, & Oloya, 2018). Understanding the perceptions of child abuse from men who have been adversely affected is important toward reducing child abuse. Uganda's past is littered with wars and atrocities that affect the country today even though major hostilities ended in 2006 (Wieling et al., (2015). The legacy of the victims of wars continues to leave a lasting impact on both old and young people in Uganda. High rates of domestic violence plague previous areas that experienced war (Saile et al., 2014) thus creating poly-victims from wars that have ended (Finkelhor et al., 2007).

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the perceptions of male caretakers living in Uganda who were traumatized by war and understand their

perceptions of abusive behaviors toward children. The use of a qualitative case study approach gives the researcher the opportunity to gain an incredible understanding of a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2015). The case study approached used for this study will allow for a deep understanding of this population by using interview questions that are open and allow for the participants to share from their experiences.

The study will be founded on the cycle of violence framework to explain the connections between armed conflict survivors and child abuse perceptions. The limitations identified include language barrier, funding, and separation of the identity of a researcher from that of a volunteer. The scope is on one region of Uganda and the participants are limited to men who are 18 years or over and have experienced armed-conflict violence. The research will fill the gap on how male war survivors perceive abusive behaviors toward children. Chapter Two will present a literature review that is current and relevant to this study. It will also help to identify the gap in research that is the basis for the current research project.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

There is the lack of information on male caretakers who have experienced traumatic events from war and their perceptions of child abuse in a low-income country setting. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to study the perceptions and experiences of male caretakers who were traumatized by war and how they view abusive behaviors toward children who are in their care.

Previous researchers found that armed conflict negatively affects the lives of children in a variety of ways. Children who are raised in a post-conflict setting are more likely to be orphaned, abused (physical, emotional, or sexual ways) or they have to deal with deep emotional scars and psychosocial trauma from exposure to violence even though they have not directly experienced the conflict (Kamya, 2017). Olema, et al. (2016) found a connection between the propensity of men to commit domestic violence when they have experienced traumatic events from armed conflict. However, research conducted specifically from a male point of view is limited (Alleyne-Green, Kulick, Grocher, & Betancourt, 2018).

The chapter provides a review of relevant scholarly academic journals, books, and articles on the long-term effects of war on raising children. The impact that war has on male caretakers such as fathers, uncles or teachers and their role in raising children are addressed in this chapter. The literature review chapter aims to provide relevant sources pertaining to armed conflict as a vector for child abuse. Chapter 2 covers the literature

search strategy, theoretical foundation, and literature review related to the key variables of concepts. The chapter ends with a summary of the chapter and my conclusions.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

There is a limited amount of research on the perceptions of men who have had traumatic experiences from war and how they perceive child abuse. However, scholarly research about the abuse from those who have experienced trauma from armed conflict or organized violence in a post-conflict setting is continuing to grow. Sriskandarajah, Neuner, and Catani (2015) stated there is limited research about child abuse in post-conflict settings specifically from parents who live in low-income countries.

I conducted the literature search using multiple search strategies to identify relevant sources. Resources included subject matter experts, professional associations related to child abuse, local resources, and academic and topical databases. I used ProQuest, Sage Journals, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and Thoreau databases. The search terms I used to find relevant articles from the databases were *physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, child neglect, child male treatment, child abuse, domestic abuse, domestic violence (DV), intimate partner violence (IPV) Africa, organized violence, Uganda, refugees, war, armed conflict, rape, child soldier, poly-victim, cycle of violence, intergenerational transmission of violence, social learning theory, military, veterans, guerilla warfare, post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), aggression, appetitive aggression, parental education, parenting, psychological stress, qualitative method, and case study*. The Boolean operators “AND” and “OR” were used to combine the search terms. Examples of combinations used were physical abuse AND post-



traumatic stress syndrome, OR child abuse and psychological stress, Uganda, refugees, war, armed conflict, AND child male treatment.

I used the search terms in all databases. The articles sourced from searches provided relevant and current information that assisted in explaining the connection between armed conflict and the intergenerational transmission of violence to children. I selected that were relevant this chapter because they provided an in-depth analysis of information related to the research topic. The results and conclusions from the literature are presented.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework that I used to ground this study was Widom's cycle of violence theory. The theory was developed by Widom in 1989 and it hypothesized that individuals who experienced previous abuse were more likely to abuse others. Widom (1989) found a relationship between those who have experienced abuse or neglect and violent or aggressive behavior later in life.

Widom's cycle of violence theory builds upon social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory states behavior is learned through observation of actions by others (Bandura, 1977). The observed behaviors can be both positive and negative. Bandura (1977) also found that new behaviors can be learned by simply observing others. Social learning theory can help explain the positive impacts when raising children in a loving and caring environment. It also can help to explain the negative behaviors that may develop during armed conflict.

The cycle of violence theory provides an explanation as to where some victims may learn aggressive or violent behavior is acceptable when raising or caring for children. Saile Ertl, Neuner, and Catani (2014) suggested that aggressive behaviors learned from armed conflict could be a coping mechanism. Tomsich (2015) contended that that socialization and conditioning by a person's family or environment is a mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of violence or for the cycle of violence to continue. Felson and Lane (2009) research helped to confirm the intergenerational transmission of violence. Their research found a strong connection between inmates who were sexually abused victims and their propensity to become sexual abuse offenders later in life. The study also produced similar results for inmates who were victims of physical abuse and their inclination to commit physical violent crimes later in life.

Saile et al. (2014) performed research in Northern Uganda and found a strong correlation between self-reported aggressive parenting behaviors and guardians who had their own experiences of childhood maltreatment. Furthermore, Saile et al. (2014) found male guardians who had posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms also demonstrated aggressive parenting behaviors. Another study by Waldman-Levi, Finzi-Dottan, and Weintraub (2013) found that the severity of PTSD may be a risk factor in the intergenerational transmission of violence through negative parenting. Similarly, Berckmoes, Eichelsheim, Rutayisire, Richters, and Hola (2017) used the cycle of violence theory to explain the intergenerational transmission of violence in a post-conflict setting (Rwanda). Their qualitative research focused on the long-term effect of armed

conflict and found that family conflict along with other negative factors continue long after the fighting has ended.

Numerous children in Uganda are faced with the reality of child abuse. Child abuse is a very complicated topic that has various types of abuse such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Thus, Widom's cycle of violence theory is applicable to this study because it assists in explaining how violence continues to plague regions even after the war or armed conflict has ended and there seems to be peace. The framework used to study how state-sponsored or organized violence continues the intergenerational transmission of violence.

The theory was applicable in addressing research questions and this helps to understand perceptions of abusive behaviors toward children by male survivors of armed conflict and how traumatic experiences have affected views on child abuse, parenting or disciplining children. The theory will help in explaining why such actions take place around the world. In addition to theories, there is also a bevy of research on child abuse and the causes of the different types of abuse. However, research concerning male parenting in war-affected populations in low-income countries is extremely limited. Specifically, there is very little literature regarding how experiences of armed conflict affect parenting practices. Therefore, Widom's cycle of violence theory assisted in expounding the findings of the previous studies.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

The literature review includes relevant scholarly information about the traumatizing events of war and the tendency for men to commit domestic violence in a

post-conflict setting. The literature review includes information on the connection between male parents or male caregivers who themselves have been exposed to war (i.e., abduction, child soldiers) and their propensity to abuse children in their care. The mission of this literature review was to provide a foundation and validate the following research questions:

RQ 1 - How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors view abusive behaviors toward children?

RQ 2 - How does lived traumatic experiences of armed conflict affect views on child rearing?

RQ3. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors perceive parental educational programs and family support services?

Wars often bring negative societal factors such as the lack of basic social services (i.e., health care or education), poverty, changes in family makeup, and traumatic experiences or lack of love (Saile et al., 2014). These negative factors can last years or even decades after the actual wars. Parents may then experience traumatic stressors which could build up over time; therefore, increasing a child's risk of being mistreated or abused (Saile et al., 2014). Both parents and children who live in a post-conflict setting are burdened with the legacy of armed conflict.

### **Conflict-Related Trauma and Intimate Partner Violence**

Domestic and community violence are linked to post-conflict regions. Bradley (2018) stated that when violence in public stops, it is transferred to the private lives of those affected by war. Protecting women from domestic violence is increasingly

becoming a policy goal; however, the enforcement of laws has proven challenging in low-income countries that are affected by conflicts (Bradley, 2018).

Men who have experienced war-related trauma need to have their voices and perspectives heard. It is vital to effectively understand men's experiences by effectively engaging this population in intimate partner violence prevention and reduction strategies because PTSD has been linked to higher rates of intimate partner violence in male American veterans (Tharp, Sherman, Holland, Townsend, & Bowling, 2016). Limited research has been conducted on intimate partner violence in high-income countries such as the United States. Jordan et al. (1992) established a link between intimate partner violence by Vietnam veterans and Tharp et al. (2016) found a similar link between Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. Relating to the study by Tharp et al. (2016), it is evident that combat zone experience is the unifying experience when accounting for the higher rate of intimate partner violence among American military veterans. The study showed that intimate partner violence is up to three times more than the general public in the United States, which signifies a strong correlation between domestic violence and exposure to organized violence (Tharp et al., 2016).

Similarly, male American veterans in low-income who have experienced traumatic events from war also commit high rates of intimate partner violence (Nandi et al., 2017). Nandi et al. (2017) sought to understand the effects the Burundian civil war, which lasted from 1993 to 2006, had on soldiers. Their study found that based on the severity of PTSD, there was an increased rate of intimate partner violence, violence against children, and community violence from this population. However, violence

against children was associated with family violence while intimate partner violence was closely linked to PTSD that resulted from the traumatic events after the war (Nandi et al., 2017).

War violence has a long-term negative effect on families. The current research by Nandi et al. (2017) further indicated that war-related trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder are risk factors for domestic violence among soldiers and those who have experienced war in the past. War-related trauma from past armed conflicts has also been linked to enhanced aggression by the survivors. This is evident in the study by Hecker, Fetz, Ainamani, and Elbert (2015), that war-related trauma leads to major psychological issues such as depression and substance abuse. The study indicated that communities affected by these types of issues have reported higher levels of family violence.

Various aspects of armed conflict and family violence have been researched. Rieder and Elbert (2013) studied the relationship and effects of organized violence on family violence in Rwanda. The research found a relationship between exposure to war and genocide, and parents' level of posttraumatic stress disorder. Rieder and Elbert (2013) also found the long-term effects of violence such as an increased rate of poverty and mental health problems among parents.

Aggression from PTSD can manifest itself through intimate partner violence. Catani et al. (2009) conducted a study in school districts in Kabul Afghanistan and in Northeastern Sri Lanka that were affected by the long-term conflict. The study consisted of school-age children and their exposure to violence. The study found that 31.5% of fathers hit their wives in Afghanistan and 41 % of fathers beat their wives in Sri Lanka.

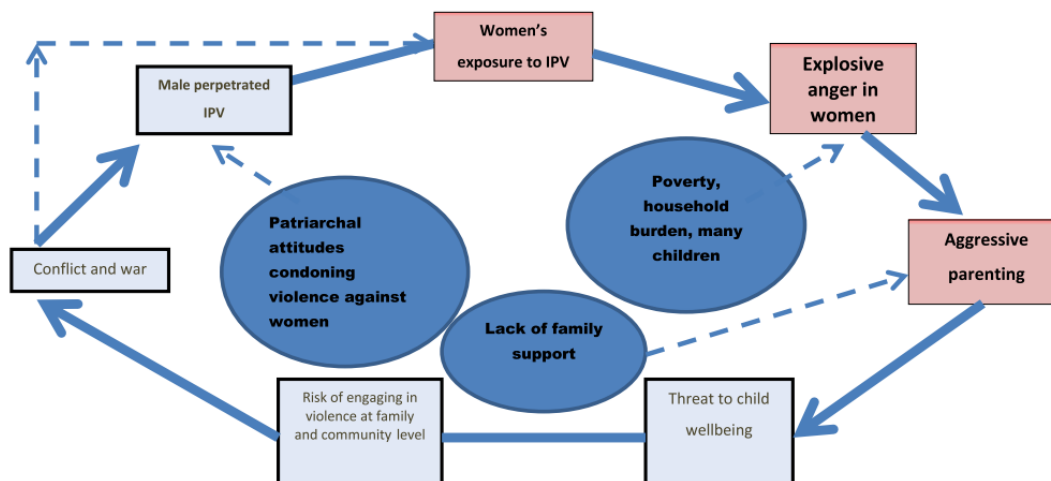
Intimate partner violence may be connected to appetitive aggression. Former combatants or survivors of trauma may see violent acts as appealing or exciting thus leading to appetitive aggression (Nandi, Bambonye, Crombach, Elbert, & Weierstall, 2016).

Witnessing this type of violence at home has long-term negative effects on children development (Catani, Schauer, & Neuner, 2008).

Male parenting figures may not direct their aggression toward children but at their domestic partner. Rees, Thorpe, Tol, Fonseca, and Silove (2015) studied the role of intimate partner violence among Timor-Leste women. The results of the study found a correlation between intimate partner violence from their domestic partner and explosive anger and aggression toward their children. The participants of the study reported harsh parenting techniques toward their children.

Women who suffer from violence at home due to war may pass their anger and aggression to their children (Rees et al., 2015). Catani et al. (2009) found a high rate of women who were abused by their male domestic partner then physically abused the children in their care in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Children who are abused at a younger age are prone to severe behavioral challenges later in life (Augsburger, Dohrmann, Schauer, & Elbert, 2017). The conflict cycle of domestic violence and how it relates to

family conflict in low-income families is presented in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Conflict-related cycle of violence model. Source: Rees, Thorpe, Tol, Fonseca, & Silove (2015).

Figure 1 depicts the cycle of violence from men who have participated in conflict and war to the possible harm of children by their mother in Timor-Leste (Rees et al., 2015). The diagram shows how armed conflict and war contributes to the cycle of violence that is far removed from the actual combat zone. Silove et al. (2016) found women who live with survivors of mass trauma have higher levels of aggression and explosive anger. The study further found that women were more likely to have increased levels of PTSD when living with survivors of mass trauma caused by armed conflict. Silove and colleagues theorized that PTSD experienced by women was related to increased risk of intimate partner violence (2016).

The traumatic experiences or stressors that lead to PTSD help in shaping aggressive behaviors that can lead to a lack of control, failure to control impulses, reactive aggression, and appetitive aggression (Augsburger et al., 2017). These types of



behaviors negatively impact on a healthy and functioning relationship. They also pose long-term consequences like poor mental health, physical, and reproductive health (Alleyne-Green et al., 2018).

### **Violence and Male War Affected Youth**

Growing up in a post-conflict setting is very challenging for most children because they face many adversities such as poverty, community-based violence, domestic violence, and other trauma (Saile, Ertl, Neuner, & Catani, 2016). The aftermath of war lingers long after the conflict. War negatively affects youth who are born in conflict settings and this contributes to the creation of poly-victims (Cole, Maxwell, & Chipaca, 2014).

The experiences of youths, especially those under 18 years old, in conflict setting can be especially harsh. They can be forced not only to kill but to commit sexual violence (Kelly, Branham, & Decker, 2016). In a study by Kelly et al. (2016), public violence was described by former child soldiers who witnessed peers being killed when they tried to escape by murdering other child's soldiers in the group. Kelly and colleagues also found that violence is normalized and contributes to severe PTSD in the survivors who escape or those who returned to their community (2016).

Cole et al. (2014) studied a post-war that involved Angola's youth men aged between 15 to 17 years old. The study was qualitative in nature and was conducted with the aim to understand how armed conflict or organized violence contributes to criminal behavior. The study found that children were victims of multiple crimes, which included physical assaults such as gang violence or assaults by parents, sexual victimization or,

domestic slavery. Fifty-six percent of the study's participants were victims of assault in their homes. The study's participants also had high rates of neglect and abuse. The study's finding thus helped in linking violent behavior from youth to victimization in a low-income and post-armed conflict setting (Cole et al., 2014).

Further, Cole et al. (2014) described some of the paths that could lead some youths to become poly-victims such as living with families where violence and conflict are prevalent, poverty or other issues that lead to the emotional neglect of a child and living in violent and dangerous neighborhoods. The study participants recognized armed conflict as a significant contributing factor to their victimization. They recognized the connection between the violence at home or in their communities and war. Some of the study's participants also believed solving problems with weapons and physical violence was an acceptable way to resolve conflicts (Cole et al., 2014).

Similarly, research has also been conducted on male youth who have had negative violent experiences and the effect such experiences have on intimate and functional relationships. A study by Alleyne-Green et al. (2018) examined exposure to violence from armed conflict or organized violence and the effect it has on community and family reintegration in Sierra Leon. Their research found a relationship between violent experiences during a conflict and the risk for either being a victim or perpetrating all forms of domestic violence. Additionally, the research found violence perpetration and violence victimization as a result of traumatic experiences. Interestingly, their study found that if a male was exposed to violence during armed conflict, they were less likely to be psychologically abusive. But men who were exposed to physical violence during

wartime had a positive correlation with abusive behaviors toward their families. Alleyne-Green and colleagues theorized that men are also more likely to commit sexual violence from lack of impulse control and extreme aggressiveness that may be associated with PTSD, which could have been developed due to exposure to violence from armed conflict (2018).

Besides, Alleyne-Green et al. (2018) yielded compelling results regarding the concerns of male war that affect youths and allow becoming victims of crimes. After community reintegration, some of the men felt that conflict negatively affected their status in the communities. They also felt the type of stigma that is attached to them by their communities; hence increasing their likelihood of becoming victims of crimes, particularly physically violent crime (Alleyne-Green et al., 2018). Furthermore, men who witnessed wartime violence were less likely to report being victims of violent crimes when they returned to their communities (Alleyne-Green et al., 2018).

Some war-affected victims are not only reintegrated into their communities, but they are also integrated into other countries as refugees. Mueller-Bamouh, Leuschner, Dohrmann, Schauer, and Elbert (2016) studied organized violence and how it might amplify aggressive behaviors among men under 21 years. The participants of the study came from various countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Gambia, Iran, Syria, and others. The study focused on low-income non-western countries that are experiencing conflict or have experienced recent conflicts (Mueller-Bamouh et al., 2016). Three types of aggression that were studied were reactive aggression, which is used in defense, proactive aggression which is used to gain a specific item or status, and

appetitive aggression which is related to the enjoyment of violence. The study also examined the link that different types of aggression have with untreated PTSD symptoms among survivors of organized violence. Mueller-Bamouh et al. (2016) found that youth organized violence or combat substantially contributes to youth committing violent acts that are related to appetitive aggression when they have PTSD. The results were supported in another study that appetitive aggression is the main cause of intimate partner violence among adult Burundian soldiers who suffered from various degrees of PTSD from armed conflict (Nandi et al., 2016).

Mueller-Bamouh et al. (2016) also found that violent behavior is consistent in not only young male soldiers but also street children who were brought up in a violent setting due to their circumstances or community environments. This study suggests that appetitive aggression occurs from extreme forms of violence that are found in combat or extremely violent homes or neighborhoods. PTSD is the common factor of violence Mueller-Bamouh et al. (2016) and Nandi et al. (2016) found that the more severe the PTSD is, the greater aggression in the participants which is then translated into family and community violence.

### **Life after Armed Conflict**

Being exposed to trauma from war can have negative long-term effects on both adult men and male children who participate in armed conflict. These particular groups of men have higher rates of physical and psychological intimate partner violence or child abuse than their peers who have not experienced trauma from armed conflict (Tharp et al., 2016). Not all men who have experienced trauma from armed conflict become violent

toward their families. However, there is a significant correlation associated with intimate partner violence or child abuse and PTSD from combat exposure or trauma (Tharp et al., 2016). Some of the survivors of the armed conflict find life after the conflict more difficult than during the conflict (Denov & Lakor, 2017). Hope, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Alves-Costa, Tomlinson & Halligan (2019) research found veterans who suffer from PTSD are less satisfied with being parents. Their study further found that the PTSD increased the parenting stress.

Research conducted by Tharp et al. (2016) on 125 male veterans who were admitted to committing varying domestic violence acts found an association between violence and PTSD. PTSD has been recognized as a significant factor in domestic and child abuse committed by American veterans. The study further found that the severity of the PTSD reflects greater domestic violence (Tharp et al., 2016). Furthermore, half of this study's participants admitted that when intimate partner violence occurred at home, it happens in front of children. The study indicated that domestic violence from American veterans last for decades after the member returned from the respective war zone (Tharp et al., 2016).

Similar to American veterans, those who have experienced trauma from armed conflict in a low-income country are also at an increased risk of intimate partner violence and child abuse. Hecker et al. (2015) found that war-related aggression was linked to family violence after refugees left armed conflict area. Unlike American veterans, most refugees are not diagnosed with PTSD or receiving proper medical treatment (Hecker et al., 2015). The appetitive aggression may promote resilience against PTSD, and this

hypothesized that war-related trauma exposure is correlated with family violence, which in turn correlates to appetitive aggression. Further, there is a link between PTSD severity and aggression that leads to family violence (Hecker et al., 2015).

Refugees represent a different portion of armed conflict survivors since many of them were not active soldiers. However, the events of war have similar effects on refugees as it has on combatants. This is evident in a study by Hecker et al. (2015) which found that aggression and family violence is transferred not only from combatants but also from the civilian population. Furthermore, the results of the study found elevated levels of aggressive behavior in refugee camps. Violence is then seen by this population as normal and their attitudes toward violence and aggression may be positive (Hecker et al., 2015). These findings may help to explain the elevated levels of violence in postwar societies and how untreated PTSD among the population continues a cycle of violence long after the conflict has ended.

The higher levels of violence in refugee and former combatant communities are directly transferred to their families (Hecker et al., 2015). Family-related violence is associated with parental traumatization received during events from armed conflict or organized violence. These events can include murder, rape, torture or imprisonment (Timeshel, Montgomery, & Dalgaard, 2017). The resulting PTSD is then transferred to children through various forms of abuse. This is supported in the study by Timeshel et al. (2017) that the harm children receive from their parents cause them to lack trust in them. This can, in turn, lead to emotional detachment from both the children and the parents thus causing the parents to emotionally neglect their children through abuse behaviors

(Timeshel et al., 2017). Further, Timeshel and colleagues found that refugee status is linked to intimate partner violence and child abuse (2017). This has led to refugee children becoming less psychologically adjusted to their parents than their peers whose parents have not experienced trauma (Dalgaard, Todd, Daniel, & Montgomery, 2016).

A study by Sriskandarajah et al. (2015) found a bivariate correlation between mass trauma experienced and family violence. Their research found that exposure to violence may induce violence against children. Also, the study discovered that children and adults who experience trauma from war are most likely to engage in violence against their family. These actions are associated with maltreatment of children from their parents due to parental trauma that happened during childhood (Sriskandarajah et al., 2015).

Another research by Saile et al. (2014) studied the transference of violence between war exposed parents in Northern Uganda. The results of the study concluded that violence from armed conflict or organized violence is the predictor of child victimization and intimate relationship victimization. The research also found that male posttraumatic systems predicted higher levels of violence, which is reported by the child. In addition, Saile et al. (2014) established that war exposure affects men and their propensity to commit violence. The study also provides additional evidence about the severity of PTSD from the exposure of war.

Alcohol use is also a contributing factor to family violence after armed conflict and organized violence exposure (Ertl, Saile, Neuner, & Catani, 2016). Alcohol abuse was found to be a contributing factor in the physical abuse of children in Kampala,

Uganda (Swahn, Culbreth, Staton, Self-Brown, & Kasirye, 2017). Ertl et al. (2016) suggested that survivors of traumatic experiences use alcohol as a form of self-medication. Men who had been exposed to trauma from armed conflict had a high rate of alcohol consumption in Ugandan. Besides, the study found that alcohol was used to decrease symptoms of PTSD and it differs dramatically between men and women especially in Northern Uganda. The study found that the majority of men (46 percent) meeting the definition of alcohol abuse and only one percent of women meeting the same definition (Ertl et al., 2016).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The major themes present in this literature review included the conflict-related trauma and intimate partner violence, organized violence effects on male youth, and life after the conflict has ended. The reviewed articles suggest that intimate partner abuse and child abuse is related to PTSD that men receive from armed conflict. The literature also indicates trauma due to armed conflict has long-term and adverse effects on the health and stability of the family unit.

It is evident from the existing body of literature that there is lack of research pertaining the perceptions of men who suffer from PTSD on violence and how their perspectives and participation are critical to effectively engage in violence prevention and reduction strategies. There is a considerable gap in the literature related to the connection between male parents or caretakers who themselves have been exposed to war and their propensity to abuse children in their care. This research project will attempt to fill this gap by exploring the perceptions of male caretakers living in Uganda who were



traumatized by war and understand their perceptions of abusive behaviors toward children in their care.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the link between male caretakers who were traumatized by war and abusive behaviors toward children under their care. An inductive research paradigm was used to explore the research problem. Participants were selected from self-reported survivors of armed conflict who have experienced traumatic events. An understanding of their views on the treatment of children in their care, policies, and programs could help in developing effective methods for reducing abuse among this population.

I used a qualitative methodology to gain an in-depth, individualized, and contextually sensitive understanding of people and their experiences (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, the case study design was used in this study and entailed identifying a group of armed conflict survivors as research case studies to understand their perceptions on the use of violence against children who are under their care. This study also sought to understand lived traumatic experiences from armed conflict on child rearing.

Chapter 3 includes the research design, the rationale for the use of the chosen tradition, and the role of the researcher in the study. The research methodology was covered in this chapter with a focus on the selection process of the participants, data collection instruments, and data analysis. The other section covered in this chapter was the trustworthiness of the study which includes ethical considerations. Lastly, a summary of the key areas covered in this section is provided.

### **Design and Rationale**

The following research questions were used to explore this phenomenon.

RQ1. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors view abusive behaviors toward children?

RQ2. How do lived traumatic experiences of armed conflict affect views on child rearing?

RQ3. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors perceive parental educational programs and family support services?

The central concept that guided this study was the perceptions of armed conflict or organized violence survivors who experienced trauma and their perspectives of abusive behavior toward children. A review of the literature revealed there was a lack of research pertaining to the connection between male parents who have been exposed to war such as abduction and their propensity to abuse children under their care. The participation of this population is critical to effectively determine violence prevention and reduction strategies.

The research tradition for this project is a qualitative case study design that will be used to explore armed conflict survivors' perceptions of child abuse. A qualitative case study design was chosen for the study because it allowed for a deeper understanding of a specific population through the examination of personal reflections and perspectives of a certain population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A qualitative case study approach was used as it allows researchers to gather and analyze data which facilitates an in-depth description of a particular phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, a qualitative inquiry

provides rich data about individualized and contextually understanding of a particular topic such as perceptions that a particular population may have.

Qualitative research allows for the exploration of a particular phenomenon from the views of the people who experienced the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Thus, in this study, a qualitative case study design will guide me in the research process. When used properly, case studies are context-sensitive and holistic to qualitative inquiry themes (Patton, 2015). The case study will thus aim to increase the knowledge concerning child abuse from the views of the male armed conflict survivors who have had traumatic experiences. Yin (2014) stated that case studies allow researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific case.

In this study, a qualitative case study design case study aided in collecting in-depth understanding of how victims of war view child abuse or other methods of child discipline. The case study does not seek to find “if” someone is abusing a child; rather, it provides an understanding of how armed conflict affects perceptions of child abuse. The case study will enhance direct contact with participants to gather relevant information and rich data through interviews on the research issue of this study. The case study provided an enhanced examination of the long-term effects of armed conflict or organized violence on families and communities. Uganda has over 1.2 million refugees who have fled from violent situations ([www.unhrc.org](http://www.unhrc.org), 2018).

I used the case study to understand the topic from the perceptions of either an individual or a group of individuals as described by Yin (2016). The qualitative case study approach enables the researcher to gain an incredible understanding of the

participants' experiences during the study. Yin (2016) stated that case studies are useful when answering the 'why' and 'how' questions which align with the research questions of this study. Case studies allow for rich data to be collected from participants when the case study is focused (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Baxter and Jack (2008) further recommended limiting research to a specific place, time, and activity or by activity and time. To ensure my research is not too broad, the scope of this research is Uganda where only male armed-conflict survivors will be the study participants.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as a researcher is to participate as the data collection instrument. I was the primary researcher and responsible for ensuring the study met the purpose of the study and that the research questions were answered. As the data collector, it was important to ensure an understanding of the participants' real-life experiences (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills 2017). By doing this, I was able to understand the phenomenon being studied. Thus, I conducted the interviews with men who were armed conflict or organized violence survivors. As a researcher, I was responsible for bounding the case. This included being selective and identifying the parameters of the research project to include the participants, location, and establishing a period (Harrison et al., 2017). I also analyzed the data based on the information that I collected through the interviews.

In relation to my personal and professional relationships with the participants, I do not have any supervisory role over any male armed conflict survivors, but I come in contact with refugee children who have had traumatic experiences from armed conflict. I

will manage any biases by excluding them from participating in this study. In addition, I do not have any personal or professional relationships with any participants in this study.

To manage research bias, I ensured that I had no power over the participants in this study and make sure the participants were unknown to me before I started conducting the study. I avoided prejudices by not tempting participants to provide particular answers during the data collection process. To further prevent any influence of my bias, I allowed participants to fully respond to all questions without displaying any of my personal feelings toward the participants. I ensured their personal experiences and perceptions were respected.

### **Ethical Issues**

Each participant signed a consent form that explained their confidentiality rights, the obligation to report, and their right to end the interview at any time. To ensure confidentiality, no identifying information was availed to the public and all responses were confidential. Participants were identified numerically. Each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes to ensure ample time was given to each participant. Research participants were compensated for inconveniences, time spent, and expenses incurred in taking part in a study such as travel costs as per the national regulations regarding research (Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Kampala, 2014). Each participant received 36,000 Ugandan shillings (about 10 USD) to comply with the national guidelines. Compensation given to participants of the study was given as a gift and token for the time they give to the project.

English is the second language in Uganda, there may be participants who do not speak or understand English. Hence, I ensured that Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Ugandan research regulations were adhered to. Informed consent will only be signed in the language or dialect in which the participants are fluent in or the translator is fluent in (IRB, n.d.). No participants will be recruited if he is not fluent in the consent form language or the translator is not fluent in the participants' language. Each translator will be required to complete Family Health International (FHI) training in English to ensure *Belmont Report* principles are followed (IRB, n.d.). During the data collection process, permission will be requested and granted from each participant before recording is initiated. A transcription company was used to accurately transcribe the responses of the participants. To maintain confidentiality, each interviewee will be given a numerical ID. Along with a recording device, a research journal will be used during the interviews as well. All data gathered from this research project will be password-protected files and stored on my personal computer. Data will also be backed via the outlook cloud.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Qualitative research necessitates quality data to be sourced. For this reason, purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. Purposive sampling was used to select appropriate male participants who have had traumatic experiences from armed conflict and their views on abusive behaviors toward children. Maxwell (2013) stated that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to achieve representativeness by selecting participants who are homogenous thus providing more confidence in results than random

sampling. Maxwell (2013) further stated that purposeful sampling can effectively capture the heterogeneity of a particular population. Purposeful sampling also allows for the examination of cases that can provide suitable themes or theories that can address the developed research questions. This sampling technique also enables the researcher to evaluate different perceptions about a specific phenomenon that are obtained from different populations (Maxwell, 2013).

Purposeful sampling was chosen because it emphasizes an in-depth understanding of specific cases which leads the researcher to learn a great deal about the issues of importance (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling was used where the researcher made his own decisions on specific participants to include in the study. Using this sampling technique, the selection will be made based on gender, age, marital status, and based on experiences about traumatic experiences.

The study population will be adult men who have had traumatic experiences in armed conflict. Only adult men aged 18 years and over who have experienced traumatic events from armed conflict or have organized violence and currently reside in Uganda. The participants of this study were married, single, or divorced. The participants also shared how long they had been away from war or armed conflict to facilitate data analysis. A total of 15 participants were anticipated to participate in the study. This sample size is appropriate because a qualitative research method requires a small sample of between five to 25 participants to reach data saturation. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) recommended at least 12 interviews to achieve saturation when trying to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively



homogeneous individuals. Saturation will then be achieved when no new themes or concepts emerge from participants. The goal of this study is to gather enough information and saturation is achieved.

The selection criteria consisted of first contacting a Ngo in Uganda to explain my research project and request their cooperation in inviting participants who met the criteria to participate in the study. The Ngo works with reintegrating refugees and other armed conflict survivors back into their communities. The Ngo agreed to work with me on the research project and signed a letter of cooperation. The Ngo will help to distribute flyers advertising the study to possible participants. After participants were identified, I contacted the potential participants through WhatsApp, in-person, or by phone to receive their email address or physical address to send them the invitation letter and provide an explanation of the study. I followed up with the participants to confirm their interest in the research project, their ability to answer any questions, and to confirm their participation in the research project through emails.

### **Instrumentation**

For this research project, semistructured interviews were used for the collection of data. An interview guide with semistructured open-ended questions was used. Interview guides ensure continuity of open-ended questions and it ensures alignment of research questions being asked (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

An interview guide was developed by the researcher based on the literature review to guide the data collection process. The interview questions were developed in a way that differs but are related to the research questions of the study. An interview guide

with a total of nine questions was developed. The questions in the interview guide first focused on armed conflict and what effects the participants believe it affects a man's role as a father and his role in the community. The interview questions then focus on methods of discipline and abusive behaviors toward. To ensure the content validity of the data collection instrument, the interview guide was reviewed by three experts. Their feedback was incorporated into the interview guide to further increase the validity of guide.

I have over 15 years of experience in conducting investigations using open and closed-ended questions. As an interviewer, I have no control over the answers provided to me. The data collection instrument provided insight into the perceptions of child abuse from men who have been in armed conflict. I developed the interview guide for this qualitative case study in a manner that I will not manipulate or control any aspect of the participants during the interview process and responds to the research questions.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The recruitment of the participants will be done through a Ngo in Uganda, an NGO that works with war victims in Uganda. A Letter of Cooperation (Appendix A) was used to document the nature of cooperation between the ngo and the researcher. The organization helped in identifying potential participants. Since I play the role of the researcher in this project, I was the one interviewing the participants without a translator.

Once the organization signed and sent the Letter of Cooperation back via email, I sought approval via University's IRB for approval. After approval was granted, I began participant selection for data collection. Twelve interviews were conducted. The data

collection was conducted through interviews which were scheduled to last for 60 minutes. Each participant was interviewed only once. I scheduled the interviews with each participant at a suitable location. During the data collection process, the responses were recorded with an iPhone 8 using Skype.

In relation to participants' withdrawal from the study during data collection, I conducted the briefing procedure where I verbally informed the participants that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time during the interview. I further informed them that if they terminated the interview, they would still receive the full compensation amount of UGX 36,000.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Data was analyzed using a Modified Van Kaam. This process included a listing of relevant experiences called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Then, I used the reducing and eliminating method to determine invariant constituents followed by thematizing and clustering of the constituents (Moustakas, 1994). The use of a modified Van Kaam method of analysis allowed for the grouping and themes to emerge during data analysis. The NVivo software was used to organize data. NVivo assists in the organization and management of data from interviews. The software helped to identify links between different data points and also find disparities in data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Credibility (internal validity) is vital in ensuring the trustworthiness of any research project. Patton (2015) stated credibility is composed of four specific elements. First, it entails in-depth fieldwork that yields high-quality data. The second element is a methodical and thorough examination of data with specific attention paid to issues that may affect credibility. The third element is the creditability of the researcher which includes the training, experience, and track record. The last element is the readers and user's philosophical belief in the validity of qualitative research (Patton, 2015).

To ensure my project is credible, I used a variety of strategies. I researched and studied qualitative and quantitative research projects from various sources such as academic journals. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) stated that qualitative research should be able to give an accurate picture of what is being examined. To ensure credibility or internal validity of the study, I used member checking where each participant received an exact transcript of the interview and a copy of the analysis of the interview as supported by Miles et al. (2014). This helped in ensuring an accurate and fair representation of the interview. To further ensure credibility, triangulation was used. Patton (2015) describes triangulation in qualitative research as gathering and analyzing multiple perspectives using diverse sources of data and using alternative frameworks during analysis.

### **Transferability**

Transferability (external validity) measures how the results of a study can be transferred to another study (Patton, 2015). Yin (2014) contends full descriptions of data not only ensures accuracy but also provides in-depth details of the study. Thus, detailed

descriptions of this research project will be presented transparently to increase trustworthiness. Transferability of the study was achieved by providing comprehensive descriptions of how the study was conducted. This provided a clear understanding of the issues being investigated and thus providing information that can be transferred to different countries not only those with war-affected populations but populations that may have experienced violence. The study provided an in-depth description of the methodology used, the study participants and sample size used, and the data collection instruments.

### **Dependability**

Dependability can be attained when qualitative research is stable and consistent for a period of time so the data results can be measured in other contexts (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure the dependability of my research project, I followed Yin (2014) steps of auditability by ensuring the research questions are clear. I clearly and concisely explained my role as a researcher. This research project was also reviewed by peers to further ensure dependability. In addition, documents used throughout the research project, such as notes from interviews, transcriptions, and audio recordings of the interviews will be presented to confirm data was accurate and consistent.

### **Confirmability**

The final step of trustworthiness is confirmability. Confirmability or objectivity relates to the impartiality of the findings from a research project. Bitsch (2005) stated

confirmability ensures other researchers have the ability to confirm a study if needed.

Bitsch (2005) further stated reflexive journaling, triangulation, and the audit trail can be used to establish confirmability. To ensure confirmability, I used a reflexive journal. I kept and maintained the reflexive journal in the form of a diary where I reflected on the progress of the research process in relation to my research goals and objectives. Reflexive journaling can help to reduce biases and errors during both data collection and data analysis (Yin, 2014).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Before conducting the research, approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (approval # 08-27-19-0488249) and TASO Research Ethics Committee (Approval # 071/19-UG-REC-009) was obtained. I followed all ethical rules and regulations in Uganda and all guidelines set out by the approving ethical committees will be used and followed explicitly to safeguard the individuals who participated in the study. The study was conducted using face-to-face interviews over skype. During the interview process, all ethical standards will be adhered to.

The purpose of the research was communicated verbally and in writing to all research participants to ensure a full understanding of the project. Prior to asking any questions, the researcher provided the participants with informed consent forms written in the language that the participants understand and are comfortable with. The participants were requested to sign and return the consent form to the researcher. The informed consent forms was used to verify that no participant is forced or pressured in any way to participate in the study. The consent form consisted of the purpose of the study and

important information explaining how the participants will be protected, the obligation to report any disclosure of crimes, and data security and confidentiality.

Any identifiable information like names of the participants, specific location of where the research is conducted, and any other detail information will be kept confidential. No names or identifying information will be released to the public at any time, especially during data collection. Instead, pseudonyms or codes will be used in lieu of participants' names. For example, A1 will be used for the first participant, A2 for the second participant and so on. Confidentiality and anonymity of each participant will be safeguarded throughout the project and after the project is completed.

To further ensure data safety, all information pertaining to this research project will be placed in a password-protected file on my computer that is only accessible to me. All non-digital confidential information will be locked in a file cabinet that is accessible to me. In accordance with Walden's guidelines, all information will be kept for a minimum of five years within which the information will be properly disposed by shredding all paper files and permanent deletion of all digital files.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the link between male caretakers who were traumatized by war and abusive behaviors toward children under their care. An inductive research paradigm will be used to explore the research problem. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the research design and rationale of its selection. The chapter also explained the role of a researcher, the methodology that will be used in the research project, participant selection process,

instrumentation or data collection instrument, and data analysis. Also covered in chapter three of my project is trustworthiness and ethical consideration for the research project. Chapter 4 will present the study results and findings.



## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand and explore how lived traumatic experiences from armed conflict affect parenting behaviors and perceptions among male armed conflict survivors. This section presented the detailed steps used to carry out this qualitative study. This chapter details the research setting; participants' demographics; the recruitment method; data collection procedures, storage, and data analysis; and evidence of trustworthiness.

For this qualitative case study, I explored the perceptions and experiences of 12 Ugandan male armed conflict survivors. The researcher sought to understand how their experiences from armed conflict shaped their thoughts about raising and disciplining children. Investigating this phenomenon provided answers to the research questions. The participants provided insights into Ugandan male armed conflict survivors and their thoughts on parenting and child discipline. Some studies highlighted how war traumatizes men and increases their propensity for domestic abuse against their partners Catani, Schauer, and Neuner (2008). However, this study explored the child abuse perceptions among this population in a low-income country context.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth responses from the study's participants. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to convey their thoughts in their own words. The resulting data answered the three research questions posed by this qualitative study. The results of this study add to the body of literature and offer insights into understanding the long term affects war, organized violence, or armed

conflict has on the parenting behaviors of male armed conflict survivors. The research questions considered for this study:

RQ1. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors view abusive behaviors toward children?

RQ2. How does lived traumatic experiences of armed conflict affect views on child-rearing?

RQ3. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors perceive parental educational programs and family support services?

The research questions provided the structure to examine the perspectives on child-rearing from the participants. Chapter 4 included the demographic profiles of participants, the process of data collection and data analysis of major themes and sub-themes, results of interviews and research questions, and a summary.

### **Setting**

After obtaining approval from Walden University's IRB (approval # 08-27-19-0488249) and TASO Research Ethics Committee (Approval # 071/19-UG-REC-009). Invitations via email and flyers were provided to prospective participants. Twelve participants replied favorably to the invitations and completed their consent forms. Data collection commenced through in-depth semi structured interviews. All interviews were recorded and took place via teleconference using Skype due to time and budget constraints. Interviews took place in a private and safe setting that ensured the participants' privacy, and confidentiality was protected at all times during the data collection process. Interviews were conducted over a 3-week time period.

### **Demographics**

The participants included 12 adult aged men from Uganda whose ages ranged from 22 to 55 who had traumatic armed conflict experiences. Purposive sampling was used to select appropriate male participants who had traumatic experiences from armed conflict and their views on abusive behaviors toward children and child-rearing. Each participant was identified as a number (i.e., Participant 1 through Participant 12) throughout this study. Names and identifying features were redacted from the study (if mentioned) to protect the privacy of participants.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher purposefully recruited 12 participants who met the requirements for participating in the study. Each of the study's participants stated that he had direct involvement with armed conflict at varying levels. Experiences included being abducted, being soldiers, and witnessing various war events. The experiences that the participants recounted and described were extremely relevant to answering the questions posed by the researcher. The case study design allowed for an understanding of child abuse from the view of the male armed-conflict survivor. Case studies allow researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific case (Yin, 2015). A case study method allowed for an in-depth understanding of how victims of war view child abuse or other methods of child discipline.

The data collection instrument for this study was a roughly 30- to 60-minute interview that involved a questionnaire that the researcher developed to obtain responses from participants of this study. The interview questions allowed the participants to

express their perceptions about (a) child-rearing, (b) child discipline, (c) challenges of being a father in a post-conflict era, and (d) experience with armed conflict. I used Skype to record data. The researcher manually transcribed each interview and offered each interview participants the opportunity to review the interview and transcript to ensure accuracy.

### **Data Analysis**

The interview questions were designed to allow analysis of the three research questions, the researcher collected the data and manually transcribed the interviews. The researcher went through each interview to review the participants' responses. During this process, the researcher checked the research journal to ensure the validity of the findings. The researcher recorded emerging themes after the completion of each interviews. Logging notes in this manner assisted in the facilitation of coding expressions and terms that were similar, which assisted in helping answer the stated research questions (Maxwell, 2013).

The data analysis method used was based on Moustakas's (1994) revised Van Kaam method to code data and created thematic groupings. This data analysis method allows for the organization and examination of the data collected for this research project. The steps to this method are:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping
2. Reduction and elimination
3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents
4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application

5. Using relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes; constructing individual textual descriptions of the experience
6. Constructing individual structural descriptions of the experience based on the individual textural descriptions and imaginative variation
7. Constructing for each research participant a textural-structural description of the meaning and essences of the experience. From the individual textural structured descriptions, develop a composite description of the meaning and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole. (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121)

Themes and subthemes will be explained in the results section of this chapter in detail.

There were no discrepant cases found during the data analysis.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Validity and reliability through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were established during this qualitative case study. Credibility was established through saturation, reflexivity, and transcription review. The reflexivity process assisted in disclosing all experiences that related to the perceptions of child-rearing and child discipline from the interview participants. Each participant was offered a transcript and personal meeting for their review to ensure their words were accurately stated.

Furthermore, each participant was also allowed to have a face to face meeting to discuss feedback. Only six participants accepted the offer to meet again. Transferability was ensured by the use of an in-depth description of the study's context and participants.

Dependability was established through the use of audits to ensure that information was accurately transcribed. The researcher manually cross-checked all recordings interviews, interview notes, and transcription to ensure confirmability was established.

## **Results**

The purpose of this study was to better understand male armed conflict survivors' perceptions on child rearing and child abuse. This particular study used a qualitative methodology to document the lived experiences of the participants. The participants experiences varied depending on when and where they experienced armed conflict in their lives. The following section is comprised of excerpts from verbatim transcripts of the twelve participants who participated in this research project. Through the data analysis process seven themes were identified by the researcher. The results are presented in the following sections to address the three research questions.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors view abusive behaviors toward children?

Data analyzed based on the first research question brought three themes. Theme one involved abusing (beating) children and how it is not appropriate for fathers to abuse children. Theme two involved the discipline behaviors deemed suitable by the participants. Participants experienced armed conflict and various points in their lives. Some participants experiences came when they were children running from war. While others experienced armed conflict as adults.

Participants were asked to explain and describe what methods of discipline are effective for children. They shared their thoughts to help with understanding the perceptions of child discipline among the participants. One participant stated, “you don’t need to become physical with a child” while another stated “never beat your child”. Overall the participants stated that they were against abusing children. This was a very consistent theme throughout the data collection process.

However, the second theme to emerge was the use of corporal punishment and its place in raising children in Uganda. The participants made a very clear distinction between what they perceived as abuse and what they saw as good discipline for children under their care. The participants were evenly split on whether physical punishment (spanking) was appropriate for children. The third theme to emerge was no form of physical punishment was appropriate.

Table 1

*Perceptions of abusive behavior*

Theme	Number ( <i>n</i> =12)	Percentage
Negative perception of beating children	12	100%
Spanking as appropriate discipline	6	50%
No physical punishment	6	50%

**Theme 1: Abuse of children**

The first theme that that emerged from the data was negative perception of beating children in their care. The participants shared both stories from their childhood and during the armed conflict. For some of the participants both where intertwined since they experienced childhood and war at the same time. In this study, all participants had

an extremely negative perspective of “abusing” children. Participants made clear they believed abuse of children was morally wrong.

Participant 5 shared,

My stepmother chased me away from home but (said) if I don't come back with a pencil I don't come back. So, because I knew I knew what was going to happen when I come back without the pencil I never came back. I ran away from home until my father came back from Kampala and came back from Mbarara look for me. She beat me with a golf stick. This one that plays golf. So, I fear her so much according to what she was doing to me. So, she was punishing me in the manner that shows me that she wasn't I'm not her child. So, when I remembered what happened and what was happening at that I can't do it to my children.

Participant 12 shared,

Abusing it in a concerning about to domestic violence. That's one is feel you hurt them you beat them for nothing. You don't take them to hospital no treatment. no buying clothes, no giving food. That's it. That's what they called domestic violence.

The participants described in detail what they thought constituted child abuse.

Participant 4 felt “first caning you are hurting, you are hurting his, maybe you are you are hurting, you are breaking you are tarnishing his rights.” He was the only participant that used the word “rights.” He further felt “you abuse somebody you know you abuse somebody in front of the children that is also an abusive behavior, such behavior, I think



that those are the abusive behaviors toward children.” He was one of two participants who discussed how abusing others is also a form of abuse.

Participant 7 shared:

Over canning as I told you that when we do this punishment we don't use a lot of force we cane them like give them like three strokes like someone but I can see some parents go over aboard and they over cane them they give them like twenty canes heavily others even slap, kick them others even burn children even I have seen parents burning their children because a child has stolen some money from the a parent gets a polythene bag a plastic and burns the hands of the child and that is being over aboard some parents do that but I think that is not good discipline.

## **Theme 2: Spanking as Appropriate Discipline**

Six participants also made a distinction between abuse and physical discipline. All participants stated as children they were caned by their parents with Participant 11 stating, “this is an African way” when referring to caning. Six participants had a varying opinion on caning and what amount of caning is appropriate punishment for children. While the other participants felt corporal punishment was ineffective.

Participant 12 felt:

Good punishment you bring a child in a in a good manner you explain you explain to her or he what she has done then you lie down and you punish the other one you get a hit and something. You don't ask you just jump and start beating for nothing without knowing the reason.

Participant 10 had a similar view

If you see what you are trying to adopt is refusing, yeah cane on the buttocks or one slap not hard one just a simple one. At the end the day you console you are like sorry you know what I'm not going to do this and also you promise me you are not going to do this and this and its I want you to be a good person I don't want to keep fighting with you then she will be like yes daddy yes mammy then I think like that I think that's the best way of disciplining kids to me.

Participant 11 also felt:

You'll get a cane at least lie him down, give him like four to five, yeah. I think that's physical but not very physical. Because sometimes those children who they cane to a big extent they end up running away from their homes and these are the street children we see around.

Participant 3 shared:

Here in Africa caning is the first thing for a child to learn because if he is being caned, he knows that if I do it again, they will cane again more than what they did they did yesterday

Physical like telling a child to go like canning, go and slash a compound, hardworking (yard work or retrieving water) treatment and doing exercise.

Participant 7 felt:

So there are very many methods in Uganda that are effective you have told me about the effective methods of here in Uganda the most effective method is a canning the child, yeah that is the most effective we parents as the Africans or the

Ugandans when we just talk to the children they don't listen they hear by just spanking them not heavy spans in trying to discipline them so when a child maybe does a mistake if you give him like one or two canes comes back to order he cannot repeat the same mistake. That is the most effective that we use this side

### **Theme 3: No physical punishment**

Six participants felt no form of corporal punishment was justified. They believed in counseling and talking to children to discipline children in their care.

Participant 1 stated:

You don't need to become physical with a child. Our bodies are created by God.

Then when you assault you assault God's body. Never beat a child.

Grounding is the best thing for children.

Participant 2 felt:

Beating a child, listen, this one I can explain well. If really that is your child I don't think if you want to discipline a child you have to beat a child, you have to like tell him this is bad this is good, don't do this don't do that!

Participant 10 shared:

You see this has been the best way of disciplining a kid me I think is by talking to him or her some kind of counseling this could be once but make it more often whenever you see that maybe he is trying to do the same thing repeatedly let's try to do it convince as in counseling basically when I see that something is going astray.

RQ2: How does lived traumatic experiences of armed conflict affect views on child rearing?

Data analyzed based on the second research question brought three themes. The fourth theme that was present during every interview was the loss of economic status in the community. The loss of land, jobs and overall livelihood was an effect of armed conflict that in some cases lasted decades. The participants stated that armed conflict directly leads to long lasting economic loss that impacts children negatively.

The fifth theme to emerge was the separation of families. This made some of the participants feel that they were unable to raise their families and led to the loss of their spouses. This led participants to feel that they lost their social and moral status in their communities and within their families. The separation or relocation of families had a very negative and long term effect on the participants of the study.

The sixth theme to emerge was the loss of parental love for their children. Participant four stated his experience made him “I think I turned a bit harsh. Like a bit tough to children it changed me mentally. It really changed me mentally”. Participants also felt their parent’s loss affection for them during the conflicts this had a long term effect on them well into adulthood and even reflected on how they raised their children.

#### **Theme 4: Loss of Economic Status**

The loss of economic status was mentioned by every participant in the study. Every participant made it a point to talk about what their families lost because of armed conflict. The economic loss placed tremendous amounts of stress on the participants of the study.

Participant 1 shared:

We lose properties at home we lose everything we have what we have setup. The standard of living is affected you cannot be stable as in when it comes to working condition, also when it comes to moments of instability, as a parent like I've told you, shelter is a problem, medication is a problem, feeding is a problem, movement is a problem, and also there is a lot in loss of property,

Now, at this time remember that before you left before okay when the economy was stable of course you had what was yours yes, you know first of as a parent you had maybe our own sources of revenue let me talk about you [REDACTED] you have your own way you get resources to put up an opportunity not so? For example, you can be a farmer and through farming you end up buying a motorcycle for example in Uganda we buy a motorcycle then we ride them because it's a source of income so when you lose property during war when you come back

There are some families who may be need to build up what they had lost like in construction or like farming for example the more you keep on may go digging from one place to another you end up getting some small income and also selling off a few that you might have despite the fact that it is damaged but you can sell it out and then you get something which is at standard? And also, that thing happened in Kampala that is the village yeah? Or you sell of the land then you come to Kampala and then you build up a shop.

Participant 12 stated:

You start a family you maybe lack money, lack of food because you are starting a family as a new home. The problem is lack of Finance Lack of food at home lack of hygiene, you know, everybody tells you everything is not fine, but it was tough at the end you have to lack everything you have been running up and down you don't have food you don't have clothes.

Participant 7 explained how the loss of economic loss affected his family and how it brought his family into poverty:

Yeah, I think because a parent is not that that's safe because he has sacrifice make sure that the families safe. So he is the one supposed to sacrifice because my father I told you he had a shop was running a retail shop even he had to make sure that he does not sell when the war intensified he made sure he does not sell the food stuffs that was in the shop for our survival preparing for those issues when people will not move out to get something to eat so he refused even to sell the foodstuffs like rice, posho like beans in preparation things maybe for the outcome of the war.

Armed conflict at times brings about poverty I see that people's property was destroyed as a child growing up many people had businesses but businesses had to collapse, buildings were put down, the plantations were put down people started starving there was no food and we who were living in towns we could not get food because in the village where food was coming they could not bring that food and people were not going to gardens to cultivate so we had to suffer given that the businesses that our parents had we were having had collapsed we had to

start again start all over. So, I think that it was a set back to our parents but they recovered with time with time they had to recover but at first it was not that easy.

As a father for me the greatest challenge because at that time I was a child I did not know the greatest challenge our father had but financially he was struggling we saw him he was struggling financially because he could not provide essentials he was providing before as a kid I observed that but I don't know how he was feeling by then but that was my observation at times we wanted to get books from him but he used to tell us that he has not money even the meals at home changed and it started changing we started eating meals we were not used to we ate posho and beans we were not used to eating that so meaning that even his finances were affected.

Participant 6 felt:

Challenges facing up to the war, one, lack of appropriate jobs. Because of lost people, two, inadequate income to survive, three trauma, trauma yeah, yeah you traumatize about what happened you can always remember what happened you will not feel good all the time you are thinking you believe like if your people they were around you be somewhere basically.

Participant 5 similarly felt:

I started working when I was almost 15 years because I had to survive, and I was the oldest and as you know there was loss of lives. The experience i and the impact i got first of all, I lost my dad. He was the one surviving Us by then and lost business completely my mother had no business to survive us. So, it brought a

lot to impact on our lives and completely we changed we couldn't survive in the same way as we had when we still had our father. when the way grow up with your people at home when the armed conflict comes first of all, you are not stable financially. So, you have no property at all it is as if you're beginning a new life so in begin beginning this new life.

### **Theme 5 Family Separation:**

The participants felt strongly about how being separated from their families affected them negatively. The separation of families affected some of the participants long after the war. Participants also discussed how resulting relocation from the family separation affected them as well. Participant 1 felt “Separation of parents that now means that there is no parentage hood in that family. Everything is in disarray” he further stated, “if there is that kind of Separation then you lose out, change of culture”. Participant 2 felt “when there is war, of course, you'll get displaced, now, you will lose families, friends, relatives, property, you get people run away you get dislocated you don't see each other family union, it was very hard to start a new life, that's how we struggled”

Participant 1 stated “must sit right there and go there you find another community and another harsh environment leave your culture norms foreign land you on in foreign whatever and you know, nobody knows you.” While Participant 7 described the sudden shock of relocating

“They had to chase us away from the house we had to run away because the people who were capturing power had to guide us to the direction we had to take where they were coming from the soldiers of then government so we had to run



the other side where the soldiers that captured power were coming from so I had to run with my blanket my bedding,” While Participant 9 shared some of his difficulties “ The community is returning to normal but all the same you can be resettled in an area you don’t belong to that’s one thing all together. Then I mean you encounter different people with different perceptions with different cultures then you are supposed to switch on to different cultures, alright.

When you are from the northern stuff, alright? They happen to resettle you in the eastern region where you don’t belong, alright? You can make it which and ever so you get that is I mean parenting your children because they are being engaged with other people and with other children listening to switch to communities other do’s and don’ts of other culture so you get a problem of nurturing students as expected because they are exposed to each and everything that is bad and that is good.

### **Theme 6 Parental Affection:**

Losing the affection of parental figures had long term effects on the participants. Participant 4 was abducted, and he felt his experience made him “I think I turned a bit harsh. Like a bit tough to Children it changed me mentally. It really changed me mentally.” While Participant 8 relationship with his father was forever changed, he stated the following:

What I can tell you is that sometimes they become rough. Sometimes they become rough on the children. Since you are a child you have nothing to do. They just tell you to do this. If you don't do it just to be really a big problem by that

time what I can assume talk about that one day we were in the bush I had a cough. Yes. We are passing around breathe, then they told me not to Cough but had no choice cause cough can come you cannot control it. My dad was annoyed when I coughed, he say that do you want us to get killed in three hours by even my father myself. Come really tough and annoy.

My dad was good. But when it reaches that time the way how he changed even we didn't know how he's changing just showing he was tough on us every time telling us shouting at us every time. Don't do this do that everything when he's so tough. Saying that I will leave you to die from else I survive myself. So really, they changed the behavior. They change the behavior. Of course, one day. He told me the you (name deleted). If you don't get serious you pray to God that cough get here if you don't, I will leave you in the bush and you die there alone. See how it's changed his mind. I thought he loved me so much. That's what I thought but when he utter that statement, I feel so bad and maybe he didn't even stop from there because he was really serious. That was really serious. It affect me so much because I loved him, but he said I will leave me to die if it's for him to survive.

3. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors perceive parental educational programs and family support services?

Data analyzed based on the third research question brought one theme. Theme seven involved the participants limited or generic knowledge of programs designed to help them. Participant 3 stated “I don't know about them by name but part of these Ngos or UNICEF for people can get rehabilitation” Participant 9 stated “No, negative in

Uganda we've never got one. We got one for women and then children that are being taken to rehabilitation centers a little bit, cause for them there but for men they get no noticed to anything nothing, nothing! So, you make better through the contingency elements of life by yourself you make yourself by yourself nobody else gonna”.

**Theme 7 Few resources for fathers:**

The emerging theme was there are few resources for men and therefore men need to Participants knew very little of few resources meant to help them. Participant 2 felt “you restructure yourself because that is after the conflict of course there is nothing that you have to, you have to start on your own”. Participant 7 stated the following when asked about resources for fathers “Not that much but after the war for me I saw there was rehabilitating there was a ministry of rehabilitation by that time who used to give foods stuffs to people who suffered during the armed conflict and give them utensils at home to use”. Participants knew of resources i.e. World Food Program or UNICEF. However, they did not know specific programs for men.

Participant 4 felt: I would say no cause in our country. I think we are not informed that’s what I would say.” When asked why he felt people were not informed he further stated “Every person in our country. I hope almost a good percentage on our country's population. We are all not we are just we take things for granted. That's what I am saying, we take things for granted”. Participant 11 shared:

Resources, resources, you know Africa is a little bit very complicated You can talk about resources at it's kind of a deep question because they can promise you

something but on many occasions they never get to fulfill so it's kind of a complex but at least of recent they are trying to compensate.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 provided a detailed description of the setting of my study, 12 participants, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, evidence of trustworthiness, and the overall results of the data collected. In this study, the participants openly described parenting behaviors and perceptions. This section explored the perceptions and experiences of 12 Ugandan male armed conflict survivors of child-rearing. The section sought to understand the role their experiences played in their thoughts about raising children. The results of the study showed a variety of perceptions from the participants. Seven themes were uncovered and presented throughout this chapter. In Chapter 5, I discuss the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion Recommendations, and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand and explore how lived traumatic experiences from armed conflict may affect parenting behaviors and perceptions among male armed conflict survivors. During the literature review process, I found that there was a lack of research concerning how men who have had traumatic experiences from war manage negative emotions associated with domestic partners and children under their care (Tharp et al., 2016). My study filled a gap in the literature by exploring the lack of information on male caretakers who have experienced traumatic events from war and how they perceive child abuse. The study provided information on male caretakers who have experienced traumatic events from war and their perceptions of child abuse and child rearing in a low-income country setting. Three research questions were asked to understand this homogenous population.

Chapter 5 provides summary of the study, including an interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, recommendations for the stakeholders, implications for social change, and the conclusion.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions guided this qualitative study. The question were created to explore how male armed conflict survivors perceive child abuse and child discipline. The research questions for this study were:

RQ1. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors view abusive behaviors toward children?

RQ2. How does lived traumatic experiences of armed conflict affect views on child rearing?

RQ3. How do Ugandan armed conflict survivors perceive parental educational programs and family support services?

### **Interpretation of Findings**

There has been considerable research conducted on domestic violence in post-conflict regions. When violence in public stops, it is transferred to the private lives of those affected by armed conflict (Bradley, 2018). Men who have experienced war-related trauma need to have their voices and perspectives heard. It is vital to effectively understand men's experiences by effectively engaging this population in intimate partner violence prevention and reduction strategies (Tharp et al, 2016). Cycle of violence theory served as the theoretical foundation for this study. The framework was used to allow participants in the study to openly speak about their past experiences and their current perceptions about child abuse and child rearing. There were seven major themes that emerged during data analysis. This study addressed the gap in literature by exploring child abuse perceptions from men who have had traumatic experiences from the war.

Seven themes were identified using Moustakas's (1994) Van Kaam method of analysis. The first theme that emerged was an overwhelming perception of beating or abusing children in their care. Participants believed abusing children was morally wrong and against their values and responsibility as fathers and men. The first theme was in line with the values of what fathers are supposed to be. The findings initially contradicted Widom's cycle of violence theory because the participants stated they had a negative

view of beating children. During the literature review process there was limited information on the perception of child abuse from male armed conflict survivors.

The second theme to emerge was the distinction that some participants made between abuse and corporal punishment (spanking or caning). Fifty percent of participants believed different levels of corporal punishment were a valid form of discipline for children under their care. The second theme agreed with Widom's cycle of violence theory. Catani et al. (2009) found that 41.6 % of fathers in Afghanistan beat their children while Sri Lanka had an even higher rate of 67.6% fathers beating their children. The second theme was surprising because of the contrast between the first and the second theme. All of the participants stated they did not believe in beating children but half of those stated hitting their children in some form was an acceptable form of discipline.

The third theme to emerge was the rejection of any form of physical punishment toward children by half of the participants. This theme also followed previous research by establishing not all fathers who experienced conflict abused their children.

The fourth theme to emerge was the economic impact war had on the participants and their families. All of the participants found this to be a significant stressor in their lives. The loss of land, jobs, and overall livelihood was an effect of armed conflict that in some cases lasted decades. The participants stated that armed conflict directly leads to long-lasting economic loss that eventually impacts the relationship they have with their children. The long-lasting effects of economic loss was not mentioned in the literature

review. The loss of economic status lasted decades and was also transferred to children similar in how violence could be transferred.

The fifth theme to emerge was the separation of families. Participants felt that they were unable to raise their families and that led to the loss of their spouses. This led participants to feel that they lost their social and moral status in their communities and within their families. The separation or relocation of families had a very negative and long term effect on the participants of the study. Previous research suggested being a refugee contributed to intimate partner violence and child abuse (Timeshel et al, 2017). While the participants were not technically refugees, the trauma of being forced to move to a different area was identified by some of the participants of the study and the impact of having to start over was long-lasting.

The sixth theme to emerge was the loss of parental affection. Losing parental affection made some participants turn “harsh” toward children. Armed conflict changed some of the parents, which in turn had a long-lasting effect on their children long after the armed conflict had ended. Theme six was in alignment with Widom’s cycle of violence theory as well, because losing parental affection was transferred onto the following generation.

The final theme to emerge was that the participants felt there were few resources for fathers or men after armed conflict. Participants generally only knew of general programs but no specifics for fathers. While Uganda has many NGOs operating, they currently are not effective in addressing some men’s issues. The tone of the previous research was parenting behaviors of men who have experienced armed conflict was



limited at best (Alleyne-Green, Kulick, Grocher, & Betancourt, 2018). Therefore, it was anticipated limited resources are committed to this group and the participants confirmed their lack of knowledge about programs.

### **Limitations**

This study had some limitations that were discovered and need to be tackled to improve the study. The first limitation was the language barrier. Due to IRB rules for doctoral students, no translators were used for this project. This reduced the sample population specifically outside of the capital city of Kampala. No participants were used for this study who were not fluent in English. The next limitation was that the findings were generalized to similar populations of armed conflict survivors in Uganda. However, the findings may not be generalized to other low income countries. The third limitation of the study was to ensure honest and accurate answers in the interviews. It is possible interviewees may have been nervous or fearful when answering the questions. The researcher assumed all participants answered the questions openly and honestly. The fourth limitation of the study was the interview instrument. Certain questions were unable to be asked such as has a child under your care ever been abused. The impact of paying the participants meant there were volunteers for the study. However, it is unclear if the number of volunteers would have been the same without payment.

### **Recommendations**

Current research on male armed conflict survivors' views on child abuse is very limited as noted in the literature review. This research project has revealed some recommendations for the future research emerged from this study. The first

recommendation was mentioned in the limitations section of this chapter, interviews should be conducted in local languages by trained interpreters to ensure data collection is not restricted. The second is to extend the sample population and make the study quantitative. A quantitative could be conducted across similar countries to gain a broader understanding of male armed conflict survivors' parenting behaviors. A quantitative study would allow for a larger sample and provide increase confidently to allow for truthful answers.

The next recommendation is to have educational resources directed toward this population to inform them of programs that benefit them. This will increase participation in programs designed to prevent child abuse and gender based violence. Stakeholders and NGO's should work with local councils to identify men who have had armed conflict experiences and target programs toward the affected population. Programs should include having healthy and strong families. The programs should also focus on economic solutions for the families to relieve a major stressor.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Violence in the home of men who have experienced armed conflict or organized violence is an issue that need to be addressed. By exploring my study, I was able to understand the perceptions of armed conflict survivors in Uganda. The stories and thoughts shared by the participants of this study will affect positive social change in Uganda. The participants of the study were all adult aged men who had traumatic experiences from armed conflict. Even though they had traumatic experiences, they still

tried to put their lives back together. However, they have not been able to get the help they have needed to succeed and break the cycle that contributed to them.

There is a gap in the literature regarding parenting behaviors of male who have experienced armed conflict due to their not being a focus on this men's issues.

Implementing a plan to provide resources for men with counseling and programs will help them be better fathers and community members. The NGO sector as well as the governmental sector should implement a process for which this population has resources dedicated to them. Resources could intertwined with gender based violence programs to help families and communities as a whole. Creating and publicizing programs for men could be the difference in having a healthy home and a home filled with violence.

The results of this study can lead to programs and policies that make communities strong and healthier. Overcoming the effects of armed conflict is extremely difficult especially in a low income country. Programs may help build the resiliency of the communities and prevent violence in the home. These programs and police could be the tools these participants need to have healthy families.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the long term affects armed conflict have on men and their families. The findings of this study demonstrated that war has a devastating impact on men and their families long after the conflict has ended. Armed conflict is detrimental to anyone and people have different reactions to being involved in conflict. The study participants expressed their experiences and the challenges they faced years after the conflict ended. They spoke of the pain of being involved in the conflict. Furthermore,

they spoke of the challenges they faced when trying to put their lives together in the years after the conflict. This study brought to light how armed conflict leaves deep scars that are not easily healed. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the child abuse perceptions of male armed conflict survivors. While each participant had different opinions about child abuse and child discipline. Their opinions and views provide key information in improving services to the affect population. The views of those who lived through atrocities should be involved in the creation of solutions when communities are returning to normal.

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## Appendix A



Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Understanding the Connection between Violent Traumatic Experiences and Child Abuse by Male Caretakers. As part of this study, I authorize you to give a summary of your dissertation for recruitment, use of a room to conduct interviews and dissemination of the results. Individuals participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include distributing "invitation to participate" among our network and authorizing you to contact and interview via telephones, email, or video conferencing respondents for your research questions, for data collection. Participants will be asked to choose preferred method of communication. Participants will receive compensation of 36,000 Ugandan shillings for participating in this study participation will be voluntary. Participants will be given the opportunity to review their responses. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change. I understand that the student will be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official

Contact Information

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

## Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Hello,

My name is [REDACTED], and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am researching male parenting perceptions in war-affected populations. The study is affiliated with [REDACTED] Uganda. I am seeking adult age men (18 and over) who have experienced armed conflict. I invite you to contact me about participating in this study.

The family unit is particularly affected negatively during and after armed hostilities. Research has found a strong link between child abuse as a risk factor for later delinquency and violent behavior. If you are interested in learning more about the study and participating, please contact, [REDACTED] at

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Regards

[REDACTED]

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol

### Interview Questions

1. Let's begin with you telling me about yourself and why you choose to participate in this study?
  - a. Do you have any questions for me? Please feel free to ask any question during this interview I would be glad to answer. Also remember you can stop the questioning at any time, and it is perfectly ok to do so.
2. How has armed conflict affected your life? (RQ 2)
3. What were your parental experience prior to armed conflict? (RQ 2)
  - a. What were your parental experiences after armed conflict?
4. How does armed conflict affect a man's role as a father? (RQ 1)
5. How does experiences with armed conflict influence fathers approaches to parenting? (RQ 2)
6. How do you see a father's role in parenting after the conflict has ended and the communities are returning to normal? (RQ 2)
7. Which of the methods of discipline are most effective for children? (RQ 1)
  - a. What method of discipline was common when you were a child?
8. Did armed conflict change your perception of disciplining of children? (RQ 2)
9. What are abusive behaviors toward children? (RQ 2)
10. Does physical correcting of children help them to respect their parents? Why? (RQ 1)

- a. What forms of physical punishment are appropriate for children?
11. Who do you believe is a good resource for fathers (who've experienced armed conflict) for learning how to be a good parent? (RQ 3)

**Closing Statement**

Thank you for the interview and for your time. Your answers will help shed light on how men armed conflict survivors view child abuse Uganda. Do you have any questions for me? If you feel you have more information that you want to share with me, please do not hesitate to call me or to email me.