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Understanding the Connection Between Male Intimate Relationship Narratives and Domestic Violence Convictions

Stephanie Purdy
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Stephanie Purdy

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Understanding the Connection Between Male Intimate Relationship Narratives and
Domestic Violence Convictions

by

Stephanie Purdy

MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MS, Fayetteville State University, 2012

BA, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

February 2023

Abstract

Domestic violence (DV) continues to be a serious social challenge throughout the world. DV and recidivism rates are continuing to rise among individuals involved with intimate or familial relationships, with victims and perpetrators of all genders. This narrative inquiry study utilized narratives of intimate relationships among adult men, 18 years and older, who were convicted of domestically violent behaviors. The research question investigated participant experiences with female intimacy and how this was connected to domestically violent behaviors. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks were led by attachment and social learning theories, which were linked to understanding challenges with forming a less-than-positive bond with a familial female caretaker or learning from what was observed within the home. Data were collected by engaging in semi structured interviews with adult males over 18 who had convictions for DV. Data gathered from these interviews delivered information useful in identifying resources to flatten or eliminate the curve of violent behavior. Data identified four themes among participants: (a) lack of trust and respect within relationships, (b) abandonment by others, (c) abuse by a person in trust, and (d) an underlying fear. The results may be used for positive social change in therapeutic settings as well as developing individualized treatment plans to help promote positive relationships to lessen the engagement of domestically violent behaviors.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my sister, Jennifer Bass. She endured immense suffering during her life; yet kept a smile on her face throughout her battle to live. Her fight from wounds received through domestically violent behaviors ended on March 2, 2020. She leaves behind a message that tomorrow is a new day to make memories, instigate change, and to be a better person.

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I would like to thank my husband, Matthew Purdy, for standing beside me and pushing me to do my best. I would also like to thank my children for their support and understanding when I was unavailable to tend to their needs. I would like to acknowledge my younger sister, Jennifer Bass, and her encouragement to initially pursue this interest. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge Rachel Mills for her support and encouragement throughout this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Violence against females, including physical, emotional, psychological, and mental violence, is a major issue not only within the United States, but also globally (Zarling et al., 2019). Domestic violence (DV) maintains a steady trend in regard to victims each year. According to Maxwell et al. (2020) the number of DV-related incidents reported to law enforcement topped over 600,000 between 2006 and 2015 annually, with a smaller portion of those ending in death. The recidivism rate among male perpetrators of DV tends to remain high, yet those who engage in treatment have less than a 25% chance of reengaging in these behaviors compared to those without treatment options (Lauch et al., 2017). Although extensive research has been conducted regarding childhood abuse and DV perpetration among males, a gap exists in current literature with understanding narratives of intimate relationships with females and how they relate to DV. This research involved narratives of lived experiences among males who had been convicted of DV.

Chapter 1 presents literature describing the relationship between attachment and observed behaviors relating to intimate relationships and subsequent domestically violent behaviors among adult males within the background section. Within the problem statement, the significant issue with DV and its impact on individuals is discussed with regard to attachment and socially learned behaviors. Moving on to the purpose statement, understanding and examining the narratives of intimate relationships in relation to violent behaviors are discussed. A research question is presented, and attachment and social

learning theories are discussed as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study. In describing the nature of the study, I introduce the qualitative method as a means to understand the lived experiences of participants (Patton, 2015). Discussing the significance of the study, I address how the findings have the potential to deliver information useful in helping identify resources to flatten the curve of domestically violent behaviors among adult males.

Background

Despite a growing trend in DV with either male or female victims, women are more often victimized with domestically violent behaviors with an emphasis on their well-being more so than men (Huntley et al., 2020; Kadiani et al., 2020). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020) suggested that DV involves various types of abuse whereby a familial individual often inflicts serious injury on the victim, noting that it impacts women more often than men. DV is often used as a display of negative power by one partner toward another within intimate relationships, most often with a male perpetrator (Kadiani et al., 2020). Early intervention is vital to stop this pattern of behaviors as children are susceptible to violence they witness or failed parental relationships, leaving them exposed to challenges throughout their lives (Reife & Jaffe, 2019).

While there has been research on the long-term effects of these challenges, other research has focused on the search to comprehend the relationship between attachment and the connection between parents and infants (Barbaro & Shackelford, 2019; Reife & Jaffe, 2019). If attachment is understood as developing between a parent and their infant,

then challenges associated with attachment issues may also be understood with future intimate relationships (Park, 2016). Bowlby (1969) suggested that the parent's role is vital in shaping a child's life. Failure in forming appropriate attachment and observing violence in the home initiates failed positive intimacy in relationships as the male child progresses in life (Gustafsson et al., 2017). Bandura (1977) detailed the effects of learning theory in relation to a young child's life and the lasting challenges of these behaviors into adulthood.

There have been various studies concerning childhood abuse and neglect and their relationship to DV in adulthood. Little research has been conducted to describe the experiences of male narratives with intimate relationships and their relation to DV in adulthood. Narratives provide an opportunity for the adult male to detail and describe their lived experiences while also providing the best opportunity for gathering information from these descriptions as an additional way to understand engagement in DV-related behaviors (Patton, 2015). The existing literature failed to identify common themes shared among men about their experiences with intimacy and how they relate to DV behavior. This study worked to identify commonalities of lived experiences among adult males to identify options that had the potential to reduce DV recidivism rates.

Problem Statement

DV has become one of the leading causes of assaults and deaths for women within the United States, the United Kingdom, and Iceland (Sigurdsson, 2019). Up to 40 million women (one out of five) and over 30 million men (one out of 10) are victims of DV each year within the United States alone (CDC, 2020). This type of violence is

slowly becoming a widely recognized issue and occurs in intimate or familial relationships (Kramer & Finley, 2018). DV often includes physical, mental, emotional, or verbal abuse between partners and other family members (Kramer & Finley, 2018). Park (2016) discussed how DV is a problem that exists within the social environment, and while victims do include males, most often there are a higher percentage of female victims. Park also provided insight into the effects of DV on individuals within the community as a concern that needs further review.

Although there has been considerable research conducted on attachment disorders and DV, most has been centered around learned behaviors observed between parents and violence within the home (Barbaro & Shackelford, 2019; Paat & Hope, 2015). Gustafsson et al. (2017) discussed how attachment-related issues impact children as they continue to mature throughout their life, influencing the relationships they attempt to form. Pietromonaco and Beck (2015) suggested that emotional challenges, challenges in building and maintaining goals, and behavioral issues stemming from attachment concerns often impact an individual's ability to form and maintain intimate relationships. Park (2016) briefly discussed the link between attachment issues and DV among reviews of various literature within her work and indicated that attachment challenges can influence intimate partner violence. Stover et al. (2018) provided an inside look into the relationship between abuse or violence during childhood and DV in adulthood. More research is needed on the narratives of intimate relationships in men who have engaged in this type of violence with their partners and what their experiences are. This study assisted in advancing existing literature by examining the narratives of intimate

relationships with men who had been convicted of DV. Data collected from this study assisted with classifying common themes and providing information to identify resources useful in promoting social change.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the narratives of intimate relationships in men who were convicted of DV to understand how they perceived these events as shaping their lives. Although DV among adult males is a universal issue (Kramer & Finley, 2018), a gap exists with understanding narrative experiences and how they influence DV behavior. This qualitative study incorporated a narrative approach to examine the lived experiences of males convicted of DV as told through their eyes. This study used semi structured, open-ended questions in working with adult males 18 years and older to understand their experiences with intimate relationships and their roadmap with engaging in DV.

Research Question

How are earlier familial experiences with female intimacy connected to domestically violent behaviors in males 18 and older?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this study were attachment theory and social learning theory, as narrative inquiry's foundation lies within social dynamics. Attachment theory is helpful in describing the relationship between a mother and child and how this relationship progresses throughout the formative first years of the child's life (Bowlby, 1969). Social learning theory is a framework suggesting that many children

learn from those around them, implying that behaviors they witness are those they will begin to display (Bandura, 1977).

Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1969) was well-known for his work on attachment theory and the importance of the child bonding and building on the relationship with their mother within the earliest years of the child's life. This concept signifies that failure to form an attachment or developing anxious attachments has the potential to influence negative behaviors as the child progresses into adulthood (Bowlby, 1969). Children who have formed a secure attachment with their mothers tend to refrain from destructive behaviors, indicating that attachment has a vital role in a child's life (Houston & Grych, 2016). Bowlby's theory was vital to this study in relation to the concept that young boys who fail to form and maintain a secure attachment with their mothers are at risk of engaging in DV with their partners as they mature into adults.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory consists of various principles, including learning and maintaining behaviors or ideas (Kretchmar, 2019). The concept of social learning assists with explaining why parents who build secure relationships with their children reinforce the value of positive relationships (Bandura, 1977). Parents who model different behaviors lead their children to witness an oppositional relationship, one that will likely have little or no foundations on meaning, thereby influencing them to adopt the negative patterns of behaviors they observed. There are various meanings behind social learning theory, yet for the purpose of this study, the theoretical framework suggests that children

observing and experiencing secure relationships will enhance their ability to form these attachments and build positive behaviors as they mature into adolescence and adulthood. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the theoretical and conceptual frameworks in greater detail and provide a better understanding of both conceptual frameworks.

Nature of the Study

This study was conducted by examining lived experiences through the lens of male participants. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative studies help describe and capture experiences of individuals with regard to challenges faced within their lives through their own lens. This study used a narrative inquiry approach by exploring and describing the life experiences of adult males who were convicted of DV and were no longer incarcerated. Semi structured, open-ended interview questions were utilized to understand life experiences among participants. These questions provided insight into how their experiences related to attachment or observed issues with their mothers or other significant individuals within their lives as young boys. This design was appropriate for this study due to the nature of the topic. Research was centered on understanding early relationship experiences between familial caretakers and the adult male as a young child. Understanding these relationships and the type of childhood attachment formed helps in identifying the potential for violence with intimate partners as the male progresses into adulthood (Park, 2016).

Definitions of Key Terms

Domestic violence (DV): DV is defined as abusive or controlling behaviors such as mental, emotional, verbal, physical, or psychological abuse toward another person,

more specifically between two people who are in a familial or intimate relationship (Bartol & Bartol, 2017; Buchanan, 2019; Kramer & Finley, 2018).

Attachment: A bond that begins in infancy and develops its intensity over an individual's life (Bowlby, 1969).

Intimate relationships: Intimate relationships is defined as a close or familiar relationships between two intimate partners such as male/female, male/male, or female/female (Park, 2016).

Convicted male offender: *Male offender* is defined as a male who engages in any type of behavior that is violent or has engaged in a form of criminal behavior (Vignansky & Timor, 2017). For the purpose of this study, a convicted male offender had a prior conviction of DV.

Assumptions

In this study, I explored narratives of intimate relationships and assumed that they provided data to confirm a connection between these experiences and domestically violent behaviors in adult males. There was the assumption that all participants would engage willingly, with minimal resistance or concerns. A final assumption was that all participants would provide honest answers to the best of their ability and that the information gathered would assist in improving social change.

Scope and Delimitations

This narrative inquiry study used participants who had prior convictions of DV; individuals without prior convictions were not incorporated into this study. The candidates were males 18 years and older to prevent any challenges associated with

recruiting youth participants. The information gathered was limited to only the narratives of intimate relationships from the participants' point of view, with no factual documentation presented. A small group of five or more participants, as recommended in a narrative inquiry study, does not represent the total number of convicted DV offenders.

Limitations

The population sample did not represent the entire group of adult males who engaged in DV, indicating that the study had limitations in forming an accurate description of this type of relationship in all adult males. Data collection was done by gathering secondary opinions of the participants, and the data collected may have been distorted. The wording, quality, and length of the semi structured questions had limitations with obtaining data due to participant hesitation or time constraints with some participants who engaged.

Significance

Attachment issues can be attributed to various challenges throughout an individual's life, yet the link between childhood attachment with young boys and their mothers and DV as adult males remains a topic for additional study (Gustafsson et al., 2017). Maintaining a healthy view of intimate relationships has the power to influence decision-making throughout the course of building intimacy with others. Young boys who fail to build a secure attachment with their mothers' face limitations in forming and maintaining positive relationships with their intimate partners while maturing into adulthood and often meet other psychological challenges (Park, 2016). Understanding the narratives of intimate relationships assisted with providing useful information in

determining attachment between an adult male and his mother, and the impact it had on forming intimacy with his partner.

This research worked to expand upon this topic and assist with closing the gap of unknown data by using fundamental information from attachment and social learning theories. This research has the potential to assist in providing insight concerning ways to intervene (e.g., therapeutic intervention) while the male child is young or during adolescence to help prevent engagement in violent behaviors as males mature into adulthood. Identifying ways to limit DV into adulthood was a crucial part of this study. The outcome provides readers and professionals with additional understanding on this topic. In addition, alternative ways to lessen these behaviors before they become problematic were identified through this study. The results may provide practitioners with useful information in determining appropriate, individualized treatment for juvenile and adult males.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced a narrative inquiry study to understand the narratives of intimate relationships among adult males and their lived experiences of these relationships. Zarling et al. (2019) described the seriousness of DV-related incidents and their impact on victims, especially women, by describing DV as a global challenge often described as the number-one factor of death in women. The lived experiences have the potential to provide additional understanding of participants' views on intimate relationships and how these views influenced their engagement in DV-related behaviors with their intimate partners.

The research question was developed based on a narrative inquiry approach designed to utilize Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Both of these conceptual frameworks helped in understanding and expanding upon the phenomenon in question. Chapter 1 also addressed the nature of the study, background, key term definitions, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, significance of the study, and potential contributions of this study to members within the social community. Chapter 2 expands upon information provided in Chapter 1 by providing a deeper review of the literature, including literature search strategies, current literature relating to DV, intimate relationships in childhood, intimate relationship narratives and adult males convicted of DV, and adult males and conviction rates. Chapter 2 also includes a review of the methodological literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The goal of this study was to understand and tell the stories of males convicted of DV, specifically their experiences with female intimacy and what they suggested contributed to their DV behavior. For the purpose of this study, DV is described as a significant issue affecting not only victims and their families, but also the social community as a whole (Costa et al., 2015). DV is one of the leading causes of assaults and deaths for women within the United States, the United Kingdom, and Iceland (Sigurdsson, 2019).

DV has become a universally recognized issue and is often used as a control mechanism within intimate relationships (Kramer & Finley, 2018). Data on the impact of DV show that between 5% and 40% of women are abused by their significant others and up to 40% may succumb to their injuries, while also indicating that men are more likely to offend in this type of violence than women (Park, 2016; WHO, 2017). Reaves (2017) conducted a study for the Bureau of Justice Statistics between 2006 and 2015 and determined that with the 60% of DV cases reported to police, female victimizations more than tripled the report of male victimizations. Park (2016) proposed that DV continues to be a challenge within communities and suggested that it is a social issue requiring change. Karakoc et al. (2015) discovered at least one in three women would experience DV within their life, supporting the seriousness of this issue. Domestically violent behaviors often remain unreported, leading to a more serious challenge for law

enforcement, families, and victims (Broidy et al., 2016). Failing to report violence leaves victims vulnerable to continued abuse.

Considerable research has been conducted regarding attachment disorders in relation to DV based on learned behaviors between parents and violence within the home (Paat & Hope, 2015). Stover et al. (2018) provided an inside look into the relationship between abuse or violence during childhood and DV in adulthood. While there has been extensive research on attachment in relation to DV, less research has been done regarding what can be learned from narratives of intimate relationships that influence men to engage in violent behaviors toward their significant others. Gustafsson et al. (2017) discussed the impacts of attachment-related issues and the influence on children as they matured throughout their lives while influencing the way they developed and viewed growing relationships with others. Gustafsson et al. continued to describe the relationships between children and their parents but more significantly the limitations regarding forming secure attachments, while indicating that these children were more prone to witness violence and struggle to build positive relationships with others.

McClure and Parmenter (2017) discovered that violence toward intimate partners was tied to childhood trauma, anxiety, and attachment issues, which were on track with current trends involving DV-related behaviors. In an effort to understand the relationship of attachment with the connection between parents and infants, Barbaro and Shackelford (2019) engaged in their research and revealed that anxious romantic attachment is associated with insecurities influencing an individual to engage in violent behaviors with their partners. Pietromonaco and Beck (2015) reviewed current literature and suggested

that intimacy is faced with challenges among males who failed to form a positive attachment with their mothers early in life.

The initial attachment and bond formed between a parent and child remains a crucial milestone throughout an individual's life. Rieser-Danner and Slaughter (2021) discovered that forming an early bond between child and parent developed the foundation for building secure relationships throughout the child's life, and without this foundation, intimacy was challenged. The risks of engaging in DV or the risks of recidivism with this type of behavior increase with a history of failed attachment (Xiang & Han, 2020). Studies have shown that over 60% of individuals who have been convicted for domestically violent crimes are rearrested for similar behaviors following their release from incarceration, demonstrating that the recidivism rate for engagement in DV-related behaviors is high (Alpher et al., 2018).

In the following review, I analyze current literature and concepts surrounding intimate relationships in childhood, intimate relationship narratives and adult males convicted of DV, and adult males and conviction rates for DV. This review begins with narratives of intimacy and understanding any links to DV-related situations.

Literature Search Strategy

To ensure that relevant literature was identified, the following were used: Google Scholar, American Psychological Association Library, and Walden University Library, with the following key words and phrases: *intimate partner violence*, *domestic violence*, *intimate relationships*, *male offender*, *intimate relationship narratives*, *domestic violence statistics*, *attachment*, and *male perpetrator*. Key combinations of search terms included

domestic violence + intimate relationships + male offenders, intimate relationship experiences + male offender + domestic violence, intimate relationships + male domestic violence perpetration, narratives of intimate relationships + male domestic violence, intimate relationship experiences + male offender domestic violence, intimate relationships + childhood, attachment + spouse abuse, relationship violence + intimacy, and attachment + intimate relationships. This search initially covered literature published between 2015 and 2020, including studies relating to narratives of intimate relationships and male DV convictions, statistics, and relevant background information. Sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, published books, WHO reports, CDC reports, and other relevant publications.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Narrative inquiry lies within social dynamics, signifying that the best theoretical frameworks to utilize for this study were attachment theory and social learning theory. Attachment theory is helpful with describing the relationship between a mother and child and how this relationship progresses throughout the formative first years of the child's life (Bowlby, 1969). Social learning theory suggests that many children learn from those around them, implying that the behaviors witnessed are those they will begin to display (Bandura, 1977).

Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1969) was well-known for his role in developing attachment theory and addressing the importance of the child bonding and building on the relationship with the mother within the earliest years of the child's life. Failure to form an attachment or

forming anxious attachments has the potential to influence negative behaviors as the child progresses into adulthood (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment is a crucial aspect of an infant's life in securing an early relationship of trust with individuals significant to their growth (Bowlby, 1969). Throughout his work, Bowlby argued that there was one purpose for behaviors that infants display: to grasp the attention of their primary caregiver and to build security in the closeness the infant gained. Without this connection, the infant would face various challenges while maturing throughout their life (Bowlby, 1969).

A secure attachment is the foundation for future healthy, trusting relationships that develop and form with others, but it is necessary for such attachment to be built early in life (Karakurt et al., 2016). Karakurt et al. (2016) researched the foundations of attachment in relation to males and females, detailing the significance of shaky foundations with females' relationships, yet little information was given in consideration to males and their relationship status, signifying that more research is needed in this area. Children who have formed a secure attachment with their mothers tend to refrain from destructive behaviors, indicating that attachment has a vital role in a child's life (Houston & Grych, 2016).

Pietromonaco and Beck (2015) suggested that the ability to build positive intimate relationships and manage challenges easily is obtained by forming secure attachments early in life. Girme et al. (2018) specified that if a person experienced variance in attachment levels throughout their life, their intimate relationships would be at risk, but they failed to demonstrate any associated violent behaviors by male partners. There has been little research regarding the process of attachment with one specific individual

throughout an individual's life and how this attachment, or lack thereof, instigates various behaviors throughout the lifespan, including violent ones (Girme et al., 2018). Park (2016) argued that a child could feel a mother's total existence in their life and would build on this while continuing to shape a foundation of security throughout their lifespan. Without this safety, a child would have difficulty believing and trusting in others (Park, 2016). Bowlby's theory was vital to this study in addressing the concept that young boys who fail to form and maintain a secure attachment with their mothers are at risk of engaging in DV with their intimate partners as they mature into adults.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura was most known for his work with social learning theory. He based principles on the idea that what is observed is what is learned (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory consists of various principles, including learning and maintaining behaviors or ideas (Kretchmar, 2019). Childhood observations of idols, parents, and other important figures plant the initial seeds that develop into adulthood behaviors, positive or negative (Bartol & Bartol, 2017). Parents and other significant role models in a child's life who build secure relationships reinforce the value of positive interactions.

Parents and other significant individuals who model negative relationship behaviors lead children to witness an oppositional relationship. This relationship is one that will likely have little or no foundation on meaning, thereby influencing children to adopt negative patterns of behaviors they have observed (Bartol & Bartol, 2017). Paat and Hope (2015) suggested that criminal behaviors are learned from what children observe among important figures within their lives and suggested that children observing

positive behaviors are likely to engage in positive behaviors as they mature. There are various meanings behind social learning theory, yet for the purpose of this study, the theoretical framework suggests that children observing and experiencing secure relationships will enhance their ability to form these attachments and build positive behaviors as they mature into adolescence and adulthood (Bandura, 1977).

Conceptual and Theoretical Synthesis

Both theoretical frameworks were appropriate for examining the narratives of intimate relationships to discover any underlying adverse experiences relating to adult engagement with DV. Stover et al. (2018) discovered through their study that childhood traumatic experiences linked to DV were prevalent when attachment was a challenge. This study suggested that children who form positive attachments may experience more positive experiences and relationships throughout their lifetime. Accordingly, children who witness positive relationships within their early years are more apt to experience and display these same types of behaviors with others, including intimate partners, as they mature (Bartol & Bartol, 2017). This type of learning is linked to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Intimate Relationships in Childhood

Nixon et al. (2017) revealed that mothers who failed to leave abusive relationships exposed their children to violence and a skewed view of positive relationships at an early age. Although prior studies have detailed a connection between abuse or neglect in childhood or witnessing some type of violence within the home and

engagement in DV as an adult, little is known of the relationship experiences between children and parental figures (Iratzoqui & Watts, 2019). A positive relationship is crucial between a child and their caregiver (Brebner et al., 2015). In a study by Brebner et al. (2015), it was determined that providing the basic necessities and building a strong, positive relationship between the caregiver and child proved crucial with helping to develop stronger future relationships. Ki et al. (2018) discovered that children seek interpersonal relationships with others; more importantly, they pursue intimate connections with their parents. Parents' failure to fulfill this role in their child's life provides a lifetime of additional challenges, behavioral concerns, and low self-confidence for the child (Ki et al., 2018). This discovery was made through quantitative research designed to identify various ways that men versus women survived in regard to parental rejection, and results showed that men had different experiences, including not associating the feelings with one parent as opposed to the feelings by both (Ki et al., 2018).

Identifying coping skills provides insight into ways that adult men manage adversity within intimate relationships with their partners and whether they have the ability to positively manage stressful situations. Although this study provided useful information relating to childhood relationships with parents, it provided little information concerning how relationships with other individuals throughout the child's life influenced their coping mechanisms and how these coping skills (or lack thereof) would influence intimate partner violence (Ki et al., 2018). This study expanded upon experiences of intimate relationships to include those with other familial or adult influences within the

child's life. Information relating to relationship dynamics that may influence positive or negative coping skills with regard to intimate partner challenges was discovered in regard to communication challenges.

Individuals who witness unhealthy relationships within their childhood are prone to developing psychopathological behaviors, leading to recidivism with violent behaviors, as they mature into adulthood (Dargis & Koenigs, 2017). A study by Dargis and Koenigs (2017) included over 100 adult male participants who were serving a prison sentence. Many aspects were researched throughout their study, with exposure to DV within the home as one of those (Dargis & Koenigs, 2017). Exposure to unhealthy intimate relationships as a child significantly increased the likelihood of engagement in violence as an adult (Dargis & Koenigs, 2017). However, limitations such as cultural background, number of participants, and current incarceration restricted the findings of the research. Additional studies that include a broader number of participants from diverse backgrounds and geographical areas are needed to gain a greater understanding of exposure to these types of intimate relationships and future violent behaviors.

Intimate Relationship Narratives and Males Convicted of Domestic Violence

Haj-Yahia et al. (2019) suggested that children exposed to violent behaviors, especially among persons of trust, were more likely to engage in these behaviors with their intimate partners as they matured into adulthood. Gathering intimate relationship narratives may offer greater insight into childhood experiences and provide additional information concerning other factors influencing adult violence, as Haj-Yahia et al. recommended for additional research. Morrison et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative

study with adult men in community groups, with the intent to identify the best intervention services for young male children to prevent future engagement in DV-related behaviors. This study focused on generalized questions relating to the adults' perspectives on relationships and preventative measures for young children who may be at risk of engaging in violent behaviors with their partners, instead of their own narrative experiences (Morrison et al., 2018). The participants in this study discussed the importance of witnessing and understanding positive relationships with others to encourage building these types of connections with their intimate partners and refrain from engaging in violent behaviors (Morrison et al., 2018). Although this study revealed significant information in building and maintaining healthy relationships from a perpetrator's perspective, additional studies are recommended to gather personal experiences as they relate to relationships and violent behaviors against partners.

Adult Males and Conviction Rates

Recidivism has long been a concern regarding DV offenses. Adverse experiences faced during childhood impacted the engagement in violence as the child progressed throughout their adolescence and into adulthood (Craig & Zettler, 2020; Fox et al., 2015). Craig and Zettler (2020) utilized a quantitative study among male and female juveniles incarcerated over a specified timeframe and discovered that challenges faced throughout childhood had less impact on White males and females than Black and Hispanic adolescents. Males among races other than Caucasian were found to have a higher recidivism rate for engagement with violence against their intimate partners than females, however (Craig & Zettler, 2020). This study only showed the rates among juveniles,

indicating that additional research was needed to understand the influential factors in repeat DV offenses among adult males from all ethnic backgrounds. Although helpful information was discovered from this study, Craig and Zettler faced limitations with their population and geographic region, leaving room for more growth and research concerning influential factors within the lives of adult men and their role with repeat DV offenses.

Fox et al. (2015) engaged in their study to identify and understand a way to discover individuals who would engage in serious crimes before those criminal acts took place. Identifying a way to decrease or eliminate the engagement in criminal behavior could potentially bring great change within communities. Fox et al. used a quantitative method and risk-assessment with a population of over 20,000 to understand if youth are at risk of engaging in violent behavior before they ever engage in violent behavior. Following the completion of their study it was determined children who faced bad childhood experiences were more likely to engage in criminal acts, more specifically violent acts, than children who had not experienced any adverse conditions during childhood (Fox et al., 2015). The study conducted by these researchers provided helpful information, but their data was limited to a smaller geographical area with only information gathered from the children's experiences regarding adverse experiences and no background from parents (Fox et al., 2015). Additional research among adult males and their experiences with intimate relationships has the potential to deliver a greater understanding into the background and lived experiences from childhood into adulthood and the influencing factors associated with their engagement in DV offenses as adults.

Psychological Effects on Offenders

Emotional Abuse and Control

Emotional abuse occurs when victims are beat down or are limited to who they see and maintain relationships with, where and when they are employed, and kept in seclusion and maintains control in an individual's life (Kranik, 2016; Stark, 2020). Childhood emotional abuse plays an impact as they progress into adulthood, instigating other adverse behaviors including those related to DV (Hunt et al., 2017). A study by Duff et al. (2020) examined ten male participants who were behind bars for taking their partners' lives. They determined men who have lost their perception of power due to early emotional distress find themselves engaged in abuse with their partners as a means of regaining their self-worth and control. Additionally, participants failed to accept accountability for their actions; instead, other people, places, and things were to blame (Duff et al., 2020). Male participants indicated victims and their friends impacted the level of abuse which occurred, often due to personalities, behaviors, and other influential factors marring the intimate relationship between offender and victim. This study had some limitations including the small number of participants, the geographical area used, and cultural background. Additional research is needed to identify additional effects of DV and to include a larger, more diverse background.

Di Piazza et al. (2017) were interested in learning if psychological behaviors such as emotional distress, sadness, and being impulsive influenced domestically violent behaviors. Examining a group of over 50 male participants between the ages of 20 and 67, questionnaires were handed out to each participant to engage in the study and provide

feedback (Di Piazza et al., 2017). It was determined that the inability for participants to recognize their own emotional distress, as well as their partners', had a substantial impact on the engagement in violent behaviors (Di Piazza et al., 2017). With the limitations of population size and cultural background, additional studies are recommended to include a more diverse group of participants to determine if there are similarities with emotional distress and other psychological behaviors when engaging in domestically violent behaviors.

Sexual Abuse

Connolly (2020) conducted research aimed to discover if harmful experiences during childhood, such as sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, had an impact on the child's behaviors throughout their lifetime. Connolly utilized a quasi-experimental method to gather data from over 6,000 participants which suggested early childhood adversities are linked to violent behaviors later in a child's life. Although there were strengths to his study, there were also limitations leaving additional room for completion of future research. According to Connolly, data is limited to only information provided by participants through surveys and does not include unreported challenges from childhood. Thus, some vital childhood information is not disclosed limiting data and insight that is gathered. Additional research is needed in understanding adverse experiences during childhood and the effects on behaviors later in life.

Norton-Baker et al. (2019) aimed to understand if exposure to childhood sexual abuse influenced violent behaviors as a child matured into adulthood. Their research was approved by their school and utilized participants who voluntarily engaged in the study

(Norton-Baker, 2019). Using data collected during the study, it was determined that almost 10% of all participants, including all genders, reported some type of childhood sexual abuse (Norton-Baker, 2019). Three hypotheses were tested in their study with hypothesis one theorizing after controlling other types of childhood abuses, child sex abuse would still impact adverse or violence in adulthood (Norton-Baker, 2019). Results conclude there was a significant link between child sexual abuse and adult violence, even when other childhood factors were eliminated or controlled. This research provided useful information with moving forward in the fight against violent behaviors, including DV; however, there are limitations. Only undergraduate participants were used, limiting the sample of individuals participating in the study. Additional research is warranted to further this data and identify any correlations with a more diverse group of individuals.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Individuals who have experienced trauma from early childhood will continue to experience distress as they continue to progress into adulthood (Hecker et al., 2015).

These feelings of distress are associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs after witnessing a traumatic event such as death of a loved one, community violence, personal violence, or familial violence and impacts an individual's ability to positively function (Piotrowski et al., 2020). Gilbar et al. (2020) aimed to identify any links between male childhood trauma and PTSD and engagement of DV as adults. A study with over 200 random Israeli/Jewish participants from various treatment centers was implemented in an attempt to discover if these psychological traits had an impact on violent behaviors (Gilbar et al., 2020). PTSD was

determined to have a significant impact on domestically violent behaviors with exposure to childhood trauma, without a direct link (Gilbar et al., 2020). Furthermore, to have a diagnosis of PTSD an individual is indirectly or directly exposed to trauma at some point in their lives indicating childhood trauma has an indirect link to DV (Gilbar et al., 2020). Additional studies are needed to identify the root cause of childhood trauma which can be done using qualitative approaches.

Hecker et al. (2015) conducted research to determine the correlation between exposure to trauma and engagement with violence among family members in Uganda. Their study utilized just over 300 participants who had no war related experience and included refugees from other countries (Hecker et al., 2015). Exposure to trauma initiates additional challenges for individuals, including a PTSD diagnosis, and findings suggest participants who witnessed traumatic events engaged in domestically violent behaviors with family members (Hecker et al., 2015). Although these findings provide useful information regarding trauma exposure and DV, they were limited to a specific geographical area and restricted population. Additional research is needed with a more diverse group of participants to gain a broader understanding of the effects of PTSD and violent behaviors.

Social Withdrawal and Isolation

Social isolation refers to an individual's failure to engage in significant relationships and communication with others (Garcia, 2019). Isolating oneself from others, including family and friends, may indicate other difficulties in an individual's life. Aguilar and Gonzalez-Calderon (2020) were interested in understanding if social

isolation was correlated with the engagement of intimate partner violence. Between 2016 and 2017 research was conducted on over one thousand individuals to identify a connection between social withdrawal and family violence in Catalonia, Spain (Aguilar and Gonzalez-Calderon, 2020). Their findings indicate there is a link between social isolation and violent behaviors with family members (Aguilar and Gonzalez-Calderon, 2020). However, due to the limited size of participants and utilization of only one geographical region, additional research is needed to identify if these findings remain common throughout a more diverse population.

In 2020, researchers were determined to understand the correlation between COVID isolation and DV among perpetrators and victims (Navas-Talosan et al., 2020). When COVID-19 first hit in 2020, most countries went into isolation or shut down to isolate or eliminate the virus. Several factors, such as job loss, financial uncertainty, and DV, influenced individual and familial behaviors (Navas-Talosan et al., 2020). Data was gathered from the Family Commissioner regarding DV incidents reported during the initial lockdown in Colombia and results imply isolation increased the rate in which male perpetrators engaged in DV (Navas-Talosan et al., 2020). However, these results were from a specific culture and were limited in size and diversity, indicating additional research is needed to understand the effects of isolation on other cultures and geographical regions of the world.

Qualitative Empirical Reviews

Qualitative research is designed to understand the meaning and lived experiences of individuals from their standpoints (Patton, 2015). Lapierre et al. (2018) described a

child's view on the relationship with their mother after witnessing DV related incidents. Lapierre et al. discovered both child and mother face similar challenges with DV but the child suffers most from lack of affection, communication, and interaction from their mother during and after episodes of DV with their partner. These findings were made possible by the researchers' interaction with the children as well as the children's narratives and views of their lived experiences with regard to DV and the relationship with their mothers. Evang and Øverlien (2015) focused on the capabilities of young children to describe their experiences with DV while escaping the situation with their mothers. What they found was that children are smarter than adults give credit, and their recounts are useful in pursuing early intervention. Members of society often fail to see the strength of children's input and how their descriptions can assist with providing appropriate help at an early age to contribute to lessening the impact of DV as the child matures into adulthood. This study provided support for the legitimacy of children's views and encouraged future researchers to take into consideration the aptitude of their viewpoints.

Scott and Fernandes de Oliveira (2018) conducted their qualitative study to determine and understand the experiences of men who engage in DV behaviors. The researchers were determined to identify positive methods to implement in reducing men's engagement in these violent behaviors. Women were found to be a part of the issue with the men's accounts yet, the men also engaged in previous violent behaviors which influenced their current behaviors (Scott & Fernandes de Oliveira, 2018). The researchers determined that men from all economic groups were violent toward their partners and

strategies were needed to assist with lessening this type of violence (Scott & Fernandes de Oliveira, 2018).

In a similar study, Rollero (2020) discovered there were additional factors to consider when dissecting a male's perspective about their prior, lived experiences besides focusing solely on their individual thoughts. He studied participants who were currently using a form of intervention to help lessen their violent behaviors, including those who failed to successfully complete their treatment (Rollero, 2020). His study acknowledged factors such as economic status, cultural diversity, education background, and learned behaviors often take a role in an adult male's engagement in DV behaviors, and suggested additional research to determine what resources could be introduced to ensure male perpetrators successfully completed treatment (Rollero, 2020).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 included an introduction concerning the extensive challenge of DV not only within the United States but as a global issue (Sigurdsson, 2019; WHO 2017). These types of behaviors are universally recognized as a control mechanism within relationships threatening the safety and security of both intimate partners (Kramer & Finley, 2018). Although DV affects both genders as victims and offenders, male offenders are the purpose of this study. Reaves's (2017) study for the Bureau of Justice Statistics determined that in less than 60% of the DV cases reported to police, female victimizations more than tripled male victimizations; thus, indicating males maintain a higher rate of perpetrating than females. As this type of violence continues to escalate

among citizens within communities, it is proposed that change is needed (Park, 2016), especially with regard to the recidivism rates among adult males.

Adverse experiences faced during childhood often influence an individual's engagement in violence as they mature into adulthood (Craig & Zettler, 2020; Fox et al., 2015). There has been extensive research concerning learned behaviors, childhood abuse, and attachment as it relates to DV in adults. Little research has been conducted on the narratives of intimate relationships and what can be learned from these narratives. Learning more about these experiences would enable researchers to dig deeper into the underlying issues to identify solutions and stop the cycle.

The two theoretical frameworks best suited for this study were attachment and social learning theory. Both frameworks provided an in-depth look at the theoretical influences of DV and recidivism in adult males. An individual's failure to form an attachment early in life with persons of trust influenced negative behaviors as the individual matures (Bowlby, 1969). Social learning consisted of various principles relating to the learned behaviors throughout childhood, including those of positive relationships (Bandura, 1977).

A review of the methodology presented more qualitative narrative studies are needed regarding DV, recidivism, and how to bring change (Craig & Zettler, 2020; Fox et al., 2015). The gap in literature established the need to understand the narratives of intimate relationships and what can be understood from the backgrounds of lived experiences, to assist with promoting change and breaking the cycle of DV among adult men. This study extended current literature on DV by offering insight into identifying

ways to end the cycle in adult males. This was done after gathering and deciphering data regarding the participants' lived experiences while working to discover the correct resources to mitigate the problem.

Chapter 3 describes the systems of methods used in this study. Chapter 3 also includes the research design, role of the researcher, methodology and how participants were chosen. Chapter 3 further describes how data were collected by way of a qualitative methodology, the data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures of concern in this qualitative study using a narrative inquiry approach.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

DV is one of the leading causes of assaults and deaths for women in the United States and abroad, with over 6,000 more female than male victims within the United States annually (Maxwell et al., 2020). Although DV affects both males and females, most victims are females. The toxic effects of DV continue to affect survivors and offenders in various forms throughout their lives. These effects include bad dreams, anxiety, depression, and difficulty building and maintaining trust in relationships (Young et al., 2016). The narratives of intimate relationships and any connections discovered were analyzed throughout this study.

Narrative inquiry was used as a means to reveal convicted males' own experiences with intimate relationships and their perception of contributing factors to DV behaviors. Although DV among adult males is a universal issue (Kramer & Finley, 2018), a gap exists within understanding narratives of lived experiences and how they influence DV behavior. A narrative approach was used to study the lives of males convicted for DV. Semi structured, open-ended questions were used in interviews with adult males above the age of 18 to understand and examine their lived experiences.

This chapter details the methodological approach used to understand the narratives of intimate relationships in adult males with prior convictions of DV. The risks of engaging in domestically violent behaviors as well as recidivism increase without implementing positive interventions (Tutty & Babins-Wagner, 2019). Learning about and understanding the narratives described in this study has the potential to deliver significant

information in relation to the participants' view on intimate relationships. Understanding the factors involved with the perpetration of DV can provide researchers with greater insight into why DV continues to be a challenge within the United States and abroad.

This chapter addresses the research design as a narrative inquiry approach and presents the rationale to support the design. A discussion of how a phenomenological approach was best used to gain greater insight into the narratives of intimate relationships among men convicted of DV is presented in this chapter. Additional sections address the role of the researcher as an important aspect of the study, how participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, and data collection processes using in-person, semi structured interviews. Data analysis, protocol, and procedures, and how coding was completed to identify common themes to potentially assist in promoting the rationale of this study, are also discussed in this chapter. Additionally, I discuss issues of trustworthiness with information gathered, deciphered, and presented to protect and maintain confidentiality of all participants involved with the study.

Research Design and Rationale

A narrative inquiry design was suitable for this study because the data collected consisted of information gathered from stories that participants shared in relation to their views and experiences involving intimate relationships. Narrative methods include information voiced by individuals and may also include information they have written down over time, such as journals, diaries, texts, or other written data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Stories told through a narrative inquiry approach were gathered through interviews with participants and later transcribed to understand how these experiences support the

research questions (Patton, 2015). Narrative inquiry provides a detailed look into the lived experiences of individuals as they relate to their perspectives and provided a deeper look into experiences of intimate relationships as told by participants selected for this study (Gilstein, 2020). Unlike other qualitative methods, narrative inquiry provides an opportunity for participants to share detailed and in-depth information as perceived from their experiences, opening doors to dig deep into their lives (Patton, 2015).

Research Question

The following research question was established in response to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks involving attachment and social learning theories. In a narrative inquiry approach, the research questions should identify the lived experiences of an individual and how they relate to the phenomenon in question (Patton, 2015). The research question was as follows: How are earlier familial experiences with female intimacy connected to domestically violent behaviors in males 18 and older?

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was aware that it was critical to ensure the credibility of this narrative inquiry study. I was responsible for recruiting participants using a variety of methods, and when interviewing, I made sure that teamwork existed between me and the participants. I maintained professional boundaries while building rapport and following the code of ethics with participants during the research (Oviedo et al., 2021). Participants were notified that all engagement in the study was voluntary and confidential. Prior to working with participants and gathering data, any personal biases of mine were eliminated to ensure that accuracy was obtained.

Researcher Bias

Researchers stand as one of the most important aspects in research while immersing themselves into gathering data and excluding biases to code what is collected to use within their study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As a female researcher in the field, I ensured that any predetermined thoughts relating to the topic of interest were eliminated. DV is of personal interest; therefore, as the primary researcher interviewing participants, I maintained self-awareness of any biases and eradicated them prior to meeting and engaging with individuals who volunteered to engage in this study.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research uses data collected while working with participants, and ethical considerations should be kept in mind. The first consideration when working with individuals is to prevent any harm in addition to the challenges already experienced in life (Patton, 2015). Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) assisted with ensuring that these ethical guidelines were adhered to and followed throughout selecting and engaging with participants for this qualitative study. Prior to interacting with participants, I introduced a full explanation of the study and discussed it with candidates. It was important to confirm that informed consent, which includes many provisions for the participant, was signed prior to engaging in interviews. Confidentiality was maintained by using letters to represent the participants' names and by refraining from incorporating any information linked to the participant directly. Recordings were made during the interview process and emphasized with participants, so they understood and consented to this feature of the research project. This helped prevent any surprises as the

research began and proceeded. A plan was implemented to allow participants a break during interviews if the conversation became challenging and to remind them that participation was voluntary with the choice to retract consent at any time.

Concepts/Philosophy: Narrative Inquiry Approach

A narrative approach, by means of a qualitative method, uses described experiences to gather more information about a specific topic, interest, or cultural background in reference (Butina, 2015). Narratives deliver stories told by the participant to the researcher about who they are and what they have experienced throughout life (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, Ford (2020) described narrative inquiry as a method used to gather information using two approaches: identifying commonalities through experiences shared by participants or finding a link between the stories told. These two approaches provide researchers an opportunity to find similar connections in an attempt to answer or support their research questions. An individual's narrative does not just tell a tale; instead, it offers a deeper view into their lived experiences to spotlight the link between what they experienced and social challenges and exhibited behaviors (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The objective of a narrative inquiry approach is to understand these experiences in greater detail so that researchers can decipher the narratives shared to find common ideas (Patton, 2015).

Narrative inquiry utilizes journals, video recordings, newspaper articles, books, and other documentation to assist with understanding the shared experiences of participants (Patton, 2015). Butina (2015) defined various features of narrative inquiry and stressed the importance of utilizing data already collected or saved to support and

provide additional information when gathering stories from individuals. Patton (2015) indicated that narratives dig deeper than a simply told story to highlight select experiences from early childhood into adulthood with the potential to influence violent or other inappropriate behaviors. Listening to and learning more with regard to these experiences had the potential to provide additional insight into the lives of domestically violent offenders. Gathering additional data assisted with providing doorways to resources to help mitigate the concern.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested setting specifications for including or excluding participants, such as the need to be older than 18, to speak English, to have experience with the topic of research, and to agree to recorded interviews to prevent discrepancies in the written data. For this study, there needed to be at least five participants, who needed to be 18 years of age or older, to have been convicted of at least one DV offense, and to speak English. It was imperative for participants to understand the questions presented, have full capacity to respond, and have experience in the phenomenon of interest. Recorded interviews and emailed questionnaires assisted with accuracy in documenting the narratives as described by participants.

Purposive and Snowball Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in participant recruitment along with the snowballing effect within this study. Purposive sampling is used in qualitative studies to choose specific individuals who have extensive knowledge about the topic of interest and

may include groups of three or more participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Snowballing allows participants from a study to share information with others who have experienced the phenomenon in an effort to gain additional participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Small groups of participants are used in qualitative studies to allow opportunities for the researcher to dig deeper into their lived experiences. In this study, I sought to understand narratives of intimate relationships by adult males who had received prior convictions for DV by using a narrative inquiry approach. Although this group portrayed a subset of the total population of men who have received convictions of DV, using a sample of at least five participants helped deliver rich and meaningful data pertaining to the topic of interest (Patton, 2015). Narrative inquiry involves gathering detailed, enriched stories from a smaller group of participants to provide data for decoding and deciphering.

Gaining Access to Participants

With COVID-19 still having a huge impact within the world, participant accessibility was a challenge. As recommended in qualitative research, participants were recruited using virtual means via purposeful and snowball sampling approaches.

Purposeful sampling allows researchers to gain access to participants with experience of the studied phenomenon to ensure that information gathered coincides with the topic of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Candidate selection began with at least five adult males, as recommended with a narrative inquiry study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Participants were 18 and older to prevent any challenges associated with recruiting youth participants, from English-speaking backgrounds, individuals with prior convictions of DV, and those who were willing to voluntarily participate in this study. I planned to use

snowball sampling if I felt that additional participants were needed to assist with accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). When the number of participants became difficult to recruit, online social media groups and word of mouth were used.

Data Collection Protocols and Procedure

In-person interviews are best for gathering data with qualitative research using this approach. I used narrative inquiry to dig beneath the surface of participants' told stories to discover pertinent information in relation to this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Due to current COVID-19 regulations and recommendations, Plan A was to utilize virtual interviews with participants using Facebook, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Google Duo, or email. I used Plan A to obtain access to participants. Participants delivered their stories in a comfortable setting, followed by subsequent questions to reflect and address any misunderstanding or confusion. To protect participants' confidentiality, use of names or public data was eliminated in this study, and a letter was assigned to protect their identities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Semi structured questions guided the interviews as they related to the research question, and each meeting was audio recorded or documented through email to ensure transcription accuracy. Questions were not designed to intimidate participants, and at any time during the interview, if participants felt uncomfortable answering questions, the process moved on. Communication occurred with participants prior to interviews to inform them that breaks could be used when or if they felt the need to step away and regroup. A list of interview questions was provided for Walden approval prior to meeting with participants.

Data Analysis

I used narrative analysis to study participants' narrative experiences and understand what was discussed, and I separated data into themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Conducting research using a qualitative method produced an abundance of information to sort through. Computerized means of analysis such as the NVivo system was recommended by Walden University and by others who had used it to help analyze data in prior studies. The data collected were thoroughly read to fully understand and become familiar with the information, biases were eliminated, data were managed with confidentiality and integrity, and coding was used to keep information in specific themes. Interviews were manually transcribed to ensure accuracy with data acquired from each interview.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability

Trustworthiness is vital with qualitative research. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are crucial aspects of qualitative research and with data collected from participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility incorporates all aspects narrated by a participant, and although credibility may not accurately define truths of the total population with regard to a phenomenon, it does describe the individual's experiences (Lemon & Hayes, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). With regard to credibility, a professional transcriptionist may be used for assistance in transcribing data. In this study, a transcriptionist was not used; therefore, a confidentiality agreement was not

implemented and given out. Each interview was recorded to ensure validity when transcribing the information gathered and decoded for use with this study.

Transferability assisted in bringing specific features of this study to other studies; therefore, it was important to ensure that all data collected were analyzed to confirm accuracy and deep insight into the told stories of participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, a detailed description of collected data allows readers to decipher if there are portions of this research that are helpful with other studies. To assist in confirming dependability and transcript accuracy, member check-ins occurred after data were transcribed. This helped establish dependability and mitigated issues of trustworthiness. Finally, prior to meeting with participants and engaging in the interview process, I eliminated any biases or lessened them to help strengthen confirmability of collected data.

Theoretical Triangulation

Theoretical triangulation refers to the use of two or more theoretical frameworks to help interpret collected data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Triangulation is a recommended strategy to help lessen or eliminate issues of trustworthiness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, attachment and social theories were incorporated as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks to assist with interpreting data and maintaining enhanced credibility and consistency.

Summary and Conclusion

Chapter 3 detailed the purpose of this study, in which research was needed to understand participants' views and experiences with intimate relationships. This was a

narrative inquiry study using stories of intimate relationships told by adult men who had prior convictions for DV. The phenomenological research approach was a way in which these described experiences were understood and applied to the phenomenon of interest. Chapter 3 described the research question in detail, provided the research design, and explained why this type of approach was best used for this type of study. Chapter 3 addressed how participants were chosen and what methods were used to collect data. Finally, issues of trustworthiness, including reliability and validity of data that were collected and distributed, were discussed in this chapter. This research has the potential to initiate social change within the community, lessen the impact of recidivism with DV behaviors in adult males, and bridge the gap with current literature relating to narratives of intimate relationships and DV. Chapter 4 outlines the analysis of the data collected by using participant interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the narratives of intimate relationships in men who were convicted of DV and understand how they perceived that these events had shaped their lives and influenced their engagement in domestically violent behaviors. The study derived meaning from nine male participants who had prior convictions for and engaged in DV toward a partner. The intent was to capture the lived experiences of adult males in order to develop a meaningful understanding of how childhood experiences with female intimacy affected their ability to maintain positive intimate relationships with others as they matured into adulthood, leading to domestically violent behaviors.

In this chapter, the current study is discussed, including the setting where interviews took place, demographics of participants, and how data were collected and transcribed. The following paragraphs give a detailed description of the above, the data analysis process, and the results of the study.

Setting

Due to COVID-19 restrictions when interviewing participants, most interviews were conducted via Zoom, while some were done through email. Participants were chosen using purposeful sampling and by utilizing social media groups as approved by the IRB. Those who participated in the study confirmed by sending “I consent” emails to me. A \$25 Visa gift card was emailed to each participant who completed the study with me. The interviews were not conducted in any environment where I had a current or

previous professional role. Interviews were done virtually using Zoom, a videoconferencing program, and other virtual means, including emailed questionnaires to participants who preferred this method over phone call or video chat. There were no known conditions that would have had an influence on the analysis and transcription of interviews and data collected.

Demographics

The research sample consisted of nine ($N = 9$) male participants who self-described as being over 18, spoke English, and had prior convictions for DV. These participants shared that they had knowledge of the phenomenon and consented to voluntarily participate in the study. Specific demographic information regarding participants' ethnicity, religious background, and marital status was not gathered at the time of the interview as it was not relevant to the research. Participants and their respective age groups can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age group	Gender
AA	21–30	M
BB	31–40	M
CC	21–30	M
DD	21–30	M
EE	21–30	M
FF	21–30	M
GG	18–20	M
HH	21–30	M
II	21–30	M

Data Collection

Participants were gathered using purposeful sampling and by displaying flyers (Appendix A) in community settings and posting in social media groups. The objective was to obtain eight to 10 participants; however, only nine individuals responded and engaged. Semi structured (Appendix B) interviews were conducted virtually by use of Zoom and email due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time the interviews took place. Each interview was scheduled for approximately 45 minutes, but some were conducted within a 20- to 25-minute timeframe. Consent forms were obtained through email and by each participant sending a reply of “I consent” if they wished to proceed with the study. Upon receipt of the replied consent, interviews were scheduled and conducted by use of virtual means. I completed the transcription of the Zoom videos by hand, using Microsoft Word; the questionnaires completed by email were an accurate description of the participants’ own words as they provided detailed answers to the interview questions.

Data Analysis

The data and themes reached saturation at the ninth participant. Therefore, the foundation for understanding the relationship between the experiences of childhood intimacy with females and domestically violent behaviors was taken from the in-depth, semi structured interviews of the nine male participants. These interviews produced four major themes and 12 subthemes.

Data collected were analyzed and coded to decipher information gathered and separated into themes (Saldana, 2016). Themes and subthemes among the collected data were the foundation of the research and imperative to the study (Patton, 2015). After

interviews were transcribed, each was analyzed separately, and then all interviews were studied together to identify and distinguish commonalities and themes.

Stage 1 of analyzing data consisted of listening to and transcribing all videoed recordings with participants. This included listening to the recordings multiple times to ensure accuracy when transcribing the interviews. Second, the emailed questionnaires were scrutinized, read, and reread to gain an initial understanding of participants' responses and to confirm that they were focused on the interview questions as they related to the central research question.

Stage 2 of data analysis included highlighting initial themes that emerged for individual transcribed interviews. This stage was used to identify any themes associated with the central research question for each individual participant.

Stage 3 was used to synthesize the interviews and identify common main themes among all participants. This stage also included writing notes alongside responses to identify subthemes from each interview.

Finally, the fourth stage of data analysis involved reviewing each interview, highlighted information, and corresponding notes to verify accuracy. As Saldana (2016) suggested, it can take a third and fourth attempt to accurately code transcribed information; therefore, it is imperative to repeat Stages 1 through 3. Once these steps were taken, Table 2 was developed with the themes and subthemes from the described experiences of participants.

Table 2*Themes for Research Question 1: Lived Experience of Participants*

Overarching themes	Subthemes
1. Trust and respect within relationships	1. Ability to communicate 2. Loyalty 3. Lack of support and love
2. Abandonment by others	1. Mother not available or growing up only with father 2. Mother was heavy drinker and not present.
3. Abuse by a person in trust	1. Physical 2. Emotional or no bond/attachment with mom 3. Neglect and threatening
4. An underlying fear	1. Abandonment 2. Harming female relatives or engaging in violent behaviors 3. Communicating with others or asking for help

Data Verification

Data verification is vital to ensure accuracy and validity in research; therefore, methods of data verification for this study included member checking, reading and rereading collected data, and using evidence of trustworthiness steps (Patton, 2015). Once the interviews were transcribed, each participant was given a copy of their transcript to ensure accuracy. This step provided participants the opportunity to confirm accuracy or make changes to any of the responses they provided. Any transcript returned with notations for change was edited respectively.

Interviews were conducted with participants at different times, separately, and by use of unique Zoom links and email. The interviews were conducted in a quiet space

away from other individuals to ensure privacy and maintain confidentiality. For anonymity, the participants were unknown to me.

Themes Identified

Four major themes emerged from analysis and transcription. These themes included trust and respect within a relationship, abandonment by others, abuse by a person of trust, and an underlying fear. From these four main themes, 12 subthemes were identified and are shown in Table 2. These will be discussed in additional detail in this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Qualitative research is more complex than a quantitative study following a strict flow, suggesting that additional measures need to be taken to support the trustworthiness and quality of the study. As discussed in Chapter 3, trustworthiness is essential and is accomplished by applying various methods to verify accuracy of data collected and is determined by using transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility (internal validity) involves the use of various methods to authenticate trustworthiness and ensure accuracy. Throughout this study, I conducted member checking to confirm that data were accurately transcribed and probed for clarifying information. Interviews were listened to multiple times to assure that words were transcribed accordingly while theoretical triangulation was utilized. Conceptual theories were used to provide a broader analysis of the lived experiences of participants.

Personal biases were set aside to capture the true lived experiences of male participants who engaged in the study.

Transferability

Transferability references topics of interest relating to other situations with the ability to transmit findings outside the setting of the original study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Throughout this study, I provided information such as participant and selection criteria, research setting, and participants' voluntary engagement so that other researchers will have adequate facts regarding this study's purpose. To strengthen the transferability of the findings of my study, detailed descriptions of participant responses were provided so that other researchers will have sufficient facts regarding this study's intent and magnitude.

Dependability

Dependability refers to how data were obtained and the reasoning behind collecting such data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability of data was established in this study by creating a new trail of information and reviewing with participants' information that they had shared. Details of interviews were recorded, listened to, and reviewed multiple times to ensure accuracy and grasp significant points related to the study as provided by participant. Collected data were transcribed and coded twice, while detailed handwritten notes were documented in the margins. Member checking was performed to ensure the accuracy of recorded data, and feedback was encouraged if inaccuracies were noted. No participant responded to share edits that were needed. Peer debriefing was

conducted by a colleague who had an interest in the details regarding the topic of this study. This was conducted to curb any biases regarding data transcription.

Confirmability

Confirmability indicates that the researcher refrains from entering the study subjectively; however, they enter with an open mind while gathering information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Throughout this study, I documented how data were collected while also ensuring that transcribed data were checked and rechecked. Biases were removed by eliminating leading questions; using prepared, semi structured questions; using participants' exact wording; and transcribing data accurately. Each participant was interviewed separately, all participants responded to the same set of questions, and each interview was transcribed accurately. Notes were taken in the margin of each transcribed interview while peer debriefing was conducted by a colleague who had an interest in the details regarding the topic of this study. Peer debriefing was utilized to help curb any bias with regard to transcribed data. Framework alignment was followed by ensuring that the problem, purpose, and research question aligned while identifying and selecting participants who matched the problem/research question.

Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the narratives of intimate relationships in men who were convicted of DV and understand how they perceived these events to have shaped their lives and influenced their engagement in domestically violent behaviors. Interviews were conducted virtually through Zoom and through email. The

interview consisted of 16 semi structured, open-ended questions that were developed and implemented to answer the following research question.

Central Research Question

The central research question for this study was as follows: How are earlier familial experiences with female intimacy connected to domestically violent behaviors in males 18 and older?

All participants interviewed were 18 and older, were English speaking, and had a prior conviction for DV. After consent was obtained, interviews were scheduled, and each participant was interviewed. Interviews were allotted to take 45 minutes, but some were conducted within 20 to 25 minutes. Each of the Zoom interviews was recorded using the Zoom recording as well as using a recording device on an iPhone that was later transferred onto a USB drive. Each of the nine participants was asked the 16 questions developed in response to the main research question, and ample time was provided at the end of their interview to provide additional information not previously gathered.

Identified Themes

Theme 1: Trust and Respect Within Relationships

The majority of participants shared that they appreciated trust and respect within their relationships, especially with their partners or significant others. When asked what some of the challenges were with maintaining intimate relationships, Participant AA shared, “trust.” Participant BB stated that he and his partner started “arguing after staying together for almost a year due to lack of trust.” Participant CC shared that he valued “love and respect” within his relationship with his mother, sister, and other female

relatives. Participant DD discussed his relationship with his wife as changing when he started “feeling insecure due to signs of discrepancies from his wife.” Participant EE reported that he valued “peace, trust, love, and caring” in a relationship. Participant FF shared that his relationship was “based on trust and respect” during the early stage. Finally, Participant GG shared that his relationship with his mother was “full of love, protection, and supportive.” Building trust and respect in relationships, especially early ones, can initiate the foundation for healthy and constructive connections while also encouraging positive interactions with significant others.

Subtheme 1.1: Ability to Communicate.

A few participants shared that they struggled with communicating effectively with others. Their experiences with mistrust and disrespect throughout their lives impacted their ability to maintain trust within their relationships with others, often influencing negative behaviors. Participant EE stated, “I started feeling insecure due to signs of discrepancies from my wife, I found myself turning into a violent person.” Participant BB shared that he and his partner began “arguing more,” negatively influencing their ability to effectively communicate.

Subtheme 1.2: Loyalty

Loyalty is defined as a strong commitment to another person and involves offering love, devotion, and respect (Issitt, 2020). In participant interviews, loyalty was viewed as a strong value in some of the relationships with their mothers, sisters, female relatives, or significant others. Participant AA shared that one challenge he had with maintaining healthy and positive relationships was “loyalty” from his partner. AA

continued to share, “I felt like there was no more love from her and she was acting differently. I knew she was cheating, and I became violent.” Participant BB stated, “I used to check for her location,” indicating his inability to trust his partner, breaking loyalty that had been built. Participant DD shared, “trust is key. If you don’t feel it, then feelings will fade.”

Subtheme 1.3: Lack of Support and Love

Participant EE shared his relationship with his mother was “good when I was very young, but as I was growing up, the relationship changed, and my mother started viewing me as a bad person.” When sharing how his relationship was as a teenager with his mom, Participant EE stated, “the relationship did not improve since I got the same kind of harsh treatments. After leaving high school my mother hated me and mistreated me.” The needed support and love from his mother were not present throughout his early childhood and teenage years; indicating this lack of relationship influenced his ability to maintain positive relationships with others. Participant GG shared he appreciated his mother’s “time, love, and support. Those are the most things I value.” When looking at the relationship between males and their mother, most participants sought love and support. When this was not provided, they faced additional challenges with engaging with others throughout their lives. According to Participant BB, “socializing was something difficult since I was a young boy.”

Theme 2: Abandonment by Others

Abandonment doesn’t necessarily mean a person has physically removed themselves from the situation. However, abandonment can infer the person is physically,

emotionally, or mentally not present as well. Some participants referenced their mother's abandonment growing up while being raised by their father or other family members. Participant BB described his childhood relationship with his mother as "not good." He shared his mother wasn't "proud" of him because she was "bad to me and other relatives who showed care asking about my welfare." Participant EE shared growing up his "relationship with his mother changed and his mother started viewing him as a bad person. The relationship was not good." According to Participant CC as he grew older, "the gap between me and my mother increased, and we only met once a month."

Subtheme 2.1: Mom Not Available/Growing Up with Father

Participant FF shared "I was raised by my grandmother most of my childhood and I grew up not knowing much about my mother because she was busy working." Participant HH reported "I didn't spend a lot of time with my mother when I was young. I was with my dad."

Subtheme 2.2: Mom Heavy Drinker, Not Present Mentally or Physically

Participants AA, DD, and EE shared their mothers were not present in their earlier lives due to drinking. Participant AA reported "my mother had a bad reputation. She was a heavy drinker, and she was so abusive." Participant DD shared, "I had a bad relationship with my mother, she was a drinker." Finally, Participant EE reported his relationship with his mother was "not the best and guessed it was because she was an alcoholic."

Theme 3: Abuse by Person in Trust

Abuse early in childhood may have a lasting impact on children as they mature into adulthood and includes physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019). Participant AA shared his mother was “abusive.” Participant BB also reported he had an “abusive mother while growing up.” Participant DD shared as he grew up, his mother became “more abusive.” According to Participant EE, his mother gave him “harsh treatments.”

Subtheme 3.1: Physical

There are at least four different types of abuse, one is physical (Adily et al., 2021). Participants AA, DD, and EE shared their mother had physically abused them. According to Participant AA, he described his relationship with his mother as “no bond at all because of her harshness and physical abuse.” Participant DD shared he grew up with “pain because his mother became physically abusive toward him.” Finally, Participant EE reported his mother gave him “hard treatments by beating me” growing up and their relationship “did not improve.”

Subtheme 3.2: Emotional (No Bond/Attachment with Mom)

Participants AA, BB, EE, FF, and HH, had trouble forming secure attachments or bonds with their mothers growing up. Participant AA shared his relationship was “broken, no bond at all.” Participant BB disclosed he experienced a “tough time bonding with his mother.” Participant EE expressed his difficulty to build a bond with his mother because she viewed him as “a bad person.” Finally, Participant HH shared he had a “small bond, not like something major,” with his mother.

Subtheme 3.3: Neglect/Threatening.

Patients BB, FF, and HH expressed their experiences with neglect or threats as children. Participant BB shared he had a “bad relationship with his mother and she used to threaten him.” Participant FF shared his mother “hated and mistreated him,” while also sharing his mom “hated him.” Participant HH reported his mother was not a part of his early life and he spent a lot of time “chilling with my dad,” and “didn’t spend a lot of time with his mother,” as she wasn’t in his early life.

Theme 4: An Underlying Fear

Participants AA, BB, DD, EE, GG, and HH described their experiences with fear. Participant AA shared some of his extended family members were “afraid to play or hang out with him because they thought he would harm them.” He also shared he was “afraid to talk with others,” due to being broken from his early childhood experiences. Participant BB shared he had trouble “speaking or opening up,” due to the fear he experienced from childhood situations. Participant DD shared he grew fearful of “asking for help,” and described his childhood as the common denominator. Participant EE expressed grew fearful of his “mother and sister’s hatred,” toward him. Participant GG also expressed his fear of abandonment by his mom and siblings “being taken away from him.” Participant HH shared due to his mother’s abandonment and only having his father around, he had no one to talk to but his father and grew fearful of “talking to someone who wasn’t his father,” as he grew and matured into adolescence and adulthood.

Subtheme 4.1: Abandonment

Participants AA, EE, FF, and II expressed experiences with feelings of abandonment by their mothers. Participant AA shared his mother was a “heavy drinker” and “not around much.” Participant EE shared he was “overworked,” as a child and didn’t maintain a “good relationship with his mother.” He also shared his relationships with female relatives were “good apart from his sisters who joined hands with his mom.” Participant FF expressed he was “raised by my grandmother most of my childhood. I grew up not knowing too much about my mother because she was busy working.” Participant II described his relationship with his mother becoming more distant as he matured into adolescence, and now shares more with his “sisters if he has a problem.”

Subtheme 4.2: Harming Female Relatives/Engaging in Violence.

Participant AA described female relatives were afraid of him because they thought he “would harm them.” He shared he was “fearful to talk with others and ask for help.” BB reported he was “harsh to his relatives because he didn’t want to talk to them.” DD also reported some of his female relatives “were fearful he would hurt them.” FF disclosed as he began to mature, he became more engaged in violence. “I had too much pressure and arguments escalated into violence.” Participant II shared he used to “argue with his sister, a lot.”

Subtheme 4.3: Communicating with Others or Asking for Help

Participant AA shared his biggest challenge is “asking for help and expressing himself because it is hard.” Participant BB expressed his fear of “speaking up.” Participant DD reported his biggest challenge is “asking for help when he is down

nowadays.” He also shared his mother “gave him threats when he made the decision to ask for help.”

Thematic Summary

In summary, the four themes: trust/respect in relationships, abandonment by others, abuse by person of trust, and an underlying fear, emerged as commonalities in the shared experiences of males, convicted of DV, and those who had engaged in DV toward their significant others. Participants were helpful in describing their emotions and experiences with the four themes. All participants expressed their pain and failure to understand some of the challenges they faced within their early, intimate relationships with females, especially their mothers.

The theme, trust/respect in relationships, represents the experiences participants faced with their mother’s and now, significant others. Their stories expressed their resentment and difficulty understanding the lack of trust they experienced as an early child. Some expressed their struggles with trust in current relationships while others expressed their frustrations with building trust with their mothers.

Abandonment by others shared participants’ experiences of being abandoned by their mother’s and sister’s as they progressed into adolescence and adulthood. Some shared they were raised by their father or grandmother, while others expressed that although their mothers were physically present in the home, she was drunk and not emotionally present for them.

The abuse by a person of trust details experiences among participants of being abused by their mothers. Some expressed they were physically abused and beaten. Others

shared psychological abuse of threats and abandonment by their mother, the person entrusted to provide their emotional, physical, and psychological care.

Finally, an underlying fear represented fears expressed by a few male participants. Throughout their childhood, some expressed and experienced fear. A few participants feared physical abuse, while some expressed others feared the possibility of being harmed by them. Childhood is a vital stage of a child's life with building the foundation for shaping the remainder of their lives. Initiating a life on fear is unhelpful in forming positive outcomes as the child progresses through the stages of their lives.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the narratives of intimate relationships in men who had prior convictions of DV and understand how they perceived these events shaped their lives and influenced their engagement in domestically violent behaviors. Nine male participants, aged 18 and older, took part in this study. The main research question set the guideline for interview questions as they related to the research question. The nine male participants engaged voluntarily via Zoom or email and described their individual experiences. Data were analyzed by using a narrative technique and themes that emerged from transcribing data were presented using a detailed narrative form based on responses obtained.

Demographics of participants were not part of the study; however, all participants were male. Participants revealed their lived experiences using personal perspectives and described complex information among them all. However, they did share commonalities including feeling abandonment and abused. Chapter 5 will begin by discussing the

purpose and interpretation of findings regarding this study. Limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications will then be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The narratives from men who had been convicted for DV were examined through the lens of their personal experiences. The aim was to understand experiences with intimate relationships, especially those with female caretakers, and their influence on the lives of participants. Attachment theory and social learning theory were the conceptual frameworks utilized to help understand the role of attachment and any learned behaviors that had an influence on the individuals' lives and any intimate relationships formed throughout their adolescent and adult years. Information gathered from this study can assist with identifying resources to utilize in promoting positive change for offenders of DV.

Attachment and social learning theory suggest that connection and socially learned behaviors play a role in shaping the lives of children as they progress into their adolescent and adulthood years. For this study, nine adult males who had previously been convicted for DV were interviewed using a semi structured interview format. Their subjective experiences were sought to gain an additional and better understanding of their views on intimate relationships throughout their early childhood years. All participants were males who were over 18, English speaking, and with prior convictions for DV. All ethical guidelines were considered, and IRB approval was granted prior to data collection. Participants were notified of the informed consent form and confidentiality regarding their participation in the study. Participants were given the opportunity to engage in the study or withdraw at any time.

Chapter 5 will provide information on the four themes gathered from engaging in semi structured interviews with participants who were convicted for DV. Chapter 5 will focus on the introduction, interpretation of findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications. Finally, I will discuss the conclusion of the study.

Interpretation of Findings

Theoretical Frameworks

The results of this study indicate a strong connection with components of Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. These two theories allowed for the association between attachment with mother and any learned behaviors with regard to intimacy within the family dynamic. Attachment theory laid the foundation for understanding the role that attachment plays in developing healthy relationships throughout life. The findings from this study indicate that a failed attachment between a mother and her young son may influence failed intimacy with partners through adolescence and into adulthood. Social learning theory paved the way for understanding the role of learned behaviors influencing interaction with intimate partners. The findings from this study suggest that abandonment, abuse, difficulty communicating, trust, and fear played a role in the engagement of domestically violent behaviors between the participants and their significant others.

Theme 1: Trust and Respect

Forming trust and respect with parental figures is important in the lives of younger individuals in building the foundation for a continued positive outlook and self-esteem (Mertol & Gunde, 2020). One participant shared that he had difficulty trusting

his partner, which placed additional strain on their relationship and lessened his ability to communicate well. One individual stated that he was a good person, but he was influenced by the environment he grew up in with a failed support system. Trust formed at its earliest stage in an infant's life will influence the child's views on others (friends, relatives, partners) as they progress throughout life (Mertol & Gunde, 2020). Another participant shared that change is difficult when one is haunted by the past and disloyalty, with nothing to value but food and shelter. Another participant expressed a comparable situation with increased disagreements forming failing trust within his relationship as an adult. According to Murphy et al. (2021), building early attachment and trust sets the foundation for future positive relationships. Two participants shared their appreciation for trust and respect, although they did not experience these as a child. They suggested that this would have helped them form solid foundations for their relationships.

Theme 2: Abandonment by Others

One participant experienced emotional abandonment leaving a negative impact on his ability to form and maintain healthy relationships. Although his mother was physically present, she was consumed by work, alcohol, or other obligations while being unavailable for his emotional needs. Another participant reported that his grandmother raised him and he did not know much about his mother. He shared that she was always working and offered little to no support throughout his childhood. He continued to share that he valued and longed for an attachment with his mom, something he never experienced. Forming strong and secure attachments with maternal figures influences healthy paths leading to positive behaviors and relationships (Magorokosho & Mberira,

2020). “When I was growing up, we had a small bond, but it was nothing major because she was always engaged with other things,” shared one individual.

Theme 3: Abuse by a Person in Trust

Participants described their experiences with physical and emotional abuse by someone they trusted, more often the maternal figure in the home. They shared seeking acceptance from others when they were unable to get it from their mom, the one they craved it from the most. One individual shared that the physical abuse he endured from his mom intensified as he progressed into adolescence, and his fear grew stronger of her. Another discussed the threats by his mom and how they became worse as he grew older, indicating an emotional scar left behind. He continued to share that his mother was not proud of him and was bad to him most of the time; thus, he found solace with others who provided what he was missing.

Leadership, guidance, communication, and love are a few roles that mothers provide their children to maximize development and relationship building (Yang et al., 2022). “I had a bad relationship with my mother, she was a heavy drinker and very abusive to me,” shared one participant. Another individual described his relationship with his mother as good initially; however, it began to change when his mother viewed him as a bad person and began to treat him harshly.

Theme 4: An Underlying Fear

Fear manifests itself in many aspects of life, can stem from unfavorable childhood experiences, and may influence violent behavior (Craig & Zettler, 2020). The early stages of childhood are most important in helping form and lay the path toward a healthy and

positive outlook on life (Magorokosho & Mberira, 2020). One participant described some of his fears as stemming from being broken and being afraid to talk with others or ask for help. He further shared that he was afraid to play and hang out with female relatives when he was younger due to a fear of harming them. One participant discussed his fear of abandonment from his mother and his challenges in forming relationships. Another participant described how he had developed an underlying fear of not feeling loved and supported, especially by his mother.

Limitations

Transferability indicates the ability to transfer portions of this study to other studies to assist in continued research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, only nine males participated, representing a small fraction of individuals who have engaged in and been convicted of domestically violent behaviors, with prior convictions. The group of participants who engaged in this study did not include individuals who had engaged in DV without legal ramifications. The broader population of these individuals may have provided differentiating information. Generalization of this study to a broader population is not possible due to qualitative studies consisting of small groups of individuals engaging in each study, including this one. Additionally, this sample may not be representative to the whole of the United States, as this sample was from a small geographical area with its own culture. Credibility describes the trustworthiness of information shared by participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). With this study, information shared by participants may have been skewed based on their personal feelings toward their mother. Information shared may have been forgotten or twisted during interviews.

Hypotheses abound as to why a participant would not share truthful information in an interview; for example, a significant amount of time may have lapsed between childhood and an interview, resulting in fidelity issues. That said, none of the participants had any obvious reasons to be untruthful, and thus the information obtained is considered accurate and genuine.

Recommendations

Participants shared positive qualities such as expressing a genuine interest in learning skills to become better fathers to their children. Additionally, some participants expressed their fears regarding communicating with partners or other female relatives. Participants shared their struggles with trust and experiences with trauma during childhood and into adulthood. The absence of the mother during childhood, whether a physical or emotional absence, played a significant role in many participants' shared experiences.

Additional qualitative research is recommended to gather further information regarding a more in-depth look at abandonment and trust issues. Repeating this study but with a more diverse population of individuals, including those who have engaged in domestically violent behaviors toward both females and males, and those without prior convictions, has the potential to deliver additional information. Absenteeism of mothers in the home displayed failed attachment, intimacy, and parenting among several participants in this study. Studies pitched toward the parenting styles of mothers with their sons has the potential to gain additional information regarding how parenting influences behaviors later in life among males. The purpose of this study was to examine

experiences of intimacy between mothers and sons or female caretakers. Additional research focused on sexual or physical abuse by fathers toward sons in early childhood is recommended to see if there is valuable information gathered with regard to this phenomenon.

Implications

The findings of this narrative inquiry study have the potential to foster positive social change through understandings gathered about engagement in domestically violent behaviors based on shared experiences concerning intimate relationships between mothers or other female caretakers. Theme 2 exposed how men were challenged by an absentee mother throughout early childhood. Theme 3 shared the influence of emotional and physical abuse on participants' young lives. Theme 1 revealed the challenge of trust and loyalty influencing negative behaviors.

Significant concerns for the participants' emotional, mental, and physical health implicate therapeutic or other mental health interventions. Therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, or other mental health professionals may need to modify treatment plans to cater toward thematic areas identified in this study. Parenting classes for males who have experienced absent mothers have the potential to provide them with a key to create better parenting styles and lessen the impact of abuse later in life among their own children (Cano, 2022).

Those developing counseling and support groups geared toward males who have engaged in domestically violent behaviors may want to incorporate positive coping skills. Such group leaders may also want to incorporate lessons on reducing codependency and

promote healthy relationships. Positive social change among males who engage in DV is dependent upon sharing results that will reach them. The results of this study will be shared with local mental health agencies and treatment facilities as well as those participants who have expressed an interest.

Conclusion

While there was previous research geared toward the cause of DV, including research on childhood abuse and neglect, little research was conducted on the described experiences of intimate relationships as told through the male's perspective. According to the CDC (2020), more women than men fall victim to DV each year in the United States; however, domestically violent behaviors impact both genders. Males who perpetrate with domestically violent behaviors shared similar experiences in this study, including abuse, abandonment, trust and loyalty issues, and difficulty communicating with others. According to Gustafsson et al. (2017), difficulty developing and forming secure attachments in children impacts their ability to do the same with others into adulthood.

Implications for social change include addressing the issue while also exploring therapeutic relationships. This research highlights a topic that is becoming well-known throughout the United States and other countries (Zarling et al., 2019). It also provides support and implications for psychotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals who provide direct services to males both convicted and not convicted of DV.

One goal of this study was to extend the current literature on males who had engaged in domestically violent behaviors by sharing their experiences of childhood

intimacy as seen through their eyes. This study allowed in-depth responses from a small sample of this population. This study identified four main themes: trust and respect within a relationship, abandonment by others, abuse by a person of trust, and an underlying fear. From these four main themes, 12 subthemes were identified. Based on these themes and subthemes, additional research is suggested for future qualitative or quantitative research studies to assist with understanding more about these themes as they relate to domestically violent behaviors. These themes can help inform professionals with ways to improve therapeutic interventions or the therapeutic relationship as a whole for this population. This current research can help fill a void with regard to this phenomenon while also providing opportunities for social change. This study can help in developing how support is delivered in serving this population while providing additional education and treatment outcomes to help with building positive, healthy coping skills and relationships.

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Appendix A: Flyer

Seeking participants to voluntarily engage in a student led research study on the following topic:

Understanding the Connection Between Male Intimate Relationship Narratives and Domestic Violence Convictions

The following criteria is a must:

- Male
- 18 and over
- English speaking
- Prior Conviction of Domestic Violence

All information shared will be confidential, with the exception of speaking with the researcher, and information regarding charges or domestically violent behaviors will not be discussed. A \$25 gift certificate will be given to participants to reach out and complete the study.

Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions

1. What does an intimate relationship mean to you?
2. Tell me about your relationship with your mother as a child.
3. What was the relationship like as you grew older into your teenage years?
4. Can you give me an example of what you mean?
5. Please describe how things changed as you grew older between you and your mother or other mother figure?
6. Please tell me how your relationship was with your sister or female relatives as a child.
7. What did you value most in the intimate relationships with your mother, sister, or other female relatives growing up?
8. What were some of the fears or challenges in developing these relationships if there were any?
9. Please share any challenges with maintaining those intimate relationships throughout childhood into adulthood, and today.
10. Tell me about your most recent intimate relationship.
11. What was it like when the relationship first started?
12. Can you describe how things started changing with your most recent relationship?
13. What are some of the challenges with maintaining intimate relationships as an adult?

14. From your life experiences, who do you feel was your biggest influencer in understanding what intimacy and intimate relationships meant?
15. Tell me about the resources or supports you feel would help with your healing and recovery.
16. What other information would you like to share with me regarding this topic?