



# Hidden Victims: An Exploration of Men's Experiences of Violence and Control

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# OVERVIEW

- Introduce some of the literature on men's victimisation
- Discuss aim of current study and the gaps it sought to fill
- Describe methodology and sample
- Discuss preliminary findings specifically here focused around controlling behaviour
- Consider how these findings could inform practice

# FEMINIST THEORY AND LITERATURE

- Cause of IPV is gender; it is a gendered crime
- IPV is driven by patriarchal values and control
- Not psychopathology or personality but socially and historically constructed control – patriarchy
- IPV male perpetrators are different from other offenders

# FAMILY VIOLENCE APPROACH

- General aggression model and approach
- Men's violence:
  - Risk factors
  - Adverse Childhood Experiences
  - Emotion Dysregulation
- Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS: Straus, 1979) - Gender symmetry
- Large scale studies - Archer (2000)

# EMERGENCE OF MALE VICTIMS

- Steinmetz (1978) “The Battered Husband Syndrome”
- “Charivari” and “Riding the donkey backwards” (George, 2002)
- “When a woman slaps her husband in the heat of an argument, it is unlikely to be interpreted by him as a serious attempt to do him physical harm. In fact, it is likely to be seen as a quaint form of feminine communication” (Johnson, 2008)
- Common criticisms...But is women's violence trivial?

# MEN'S EXPERIENCES

- Hines, et al. (2007): callers to DAH
- Men too suffer the mental health problems that are associated with IPV (e.g., Próspero & Kim, 2009; Hines & Douglas, 2011).
- Comparison of abused men to abused women, rather than non abused men (e.g. Herzberger, 1996) - tendency for focusing on internalising symptoms, men tend to externalise (Afifi et al., 2008)

# CONTROL

- Foundation of feminist theory – posited to be a male phenomenon.
- Emotional abuse, controlling behaviour, psychological aggression – big overlap
- Includes financial control, humiliation, trying to control their behaviour, restrict time with family and friends
- Bates, Graham-Kevan and Archer (2014); Bates and Graham-Kevan (2016)

# WHY DON'T MEN HIT BACK?

- Prevalence of bi-directional violence indicates for some men they are victims and perpetrators
- But many men don't ever retaliate, why?
- Society doesn't tolerate violence against women - originating at early age where boys don't hit girls
- Suggests norms of chivalry cause men to inhibit their aggression



# LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AGGRESSION

- Tilbook et al. (2010) found high rates of this by women who control
- This is often a factor preventing men leaving, because of the fear of losing their children (Hines & Douglas, 2010).
- Tsui, et al. (2010) found men's experiences are made more difficult by a number of factors.
  - Perception of target of service provision, 66.7% of the sample felt IPV services were targeted at female clients.
  - A further 25.7% felt stigmatisation was the greatest obstacle they faced and worried the police would not believe them.
- Hines, Brown and Dunning (2007) 50.3% "manipulating the system"

# AIMS OF THE STUDY

- Address criticisms of non-gendered quantitative research
- Qualitatively explore men's experiences of intimate partner violence from female partners; focusing on:
  - *Experiences of verbal and physical aggression*
  - *Experiences of control and "gaslighting"*
  - *Barriers to help-seeking*
  - *Impact of experiences*
- Questionnaire and interview based study

# METHOD

- Open ended questionnaire. Included following questions:
  - Can you describe what happens when there is conflict in your relationship? For example (Has this ever escalated to physical aggression?)
  - Sometimes in relationships, people try and influence, or manipulate each other's behaviour. Thinking about this, can you describe your partner's behaviour around...?
    - Your friends and family?
    - Finances and children (if applicable)
    - Your levels of independence e.g. job, your activities without them
- Utilised the CBS (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2005)
- $N = 161$  with 14 follow up interviews

# FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

Verbal and  
Physical  
Aggression

Control

Sexual  
aggression

Barriers to  
seeking  
help

Post-  
separation  
abuse

# VERBAL AND PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

- *“...throwing anything she could get her hands on from tv remotes to ornaments. I used to get punched, slapped and kicked as well”*
- *“In the evening after any argument, always as I was about to fall asleep, she would bring up the whole argument up again. I soon learnt to just apologise for anything and everything because if I didn't I wouldn't be allowed to get any sleep.”*
- *“There will be slapping, scratching, pushing, pulling, blocking exit from a room, spitting, sometimes kicking or throwing things.”*
- *“70% of the time it would be verbal with shouting and threats. 30% would involve violence. Normally when I was unaware. Sleeping or in the shower, bath or toilet.”*
- *“She has woken up in the middle of the night hitting me”*

# LACK OF RETALIATION

- *"I was raised to never ever ever hit a woman, so I never fought back, I just covered my face and backed away from her the best I could"*
- *"I grew up witnessing DV towards my mother and so I would never lay my hands on a woman"*
- *"I was and am too afraid even to defend myself, i know that if i do and any injury occurs, there's no way i could prove self defense."*
- *"No I didn't respond, because I was scared"*
- *"I have never attacked her or fought back at all. I have tried to restrain her at times to prevent her from attacking me. The problem with that is that she would then show me bruises a couple of days later and tell me that she could report me to the police for assault and that they would believe her story. Unfortunately that is true. It eventually got to the point where I would just cover my face and not even try to restrain her."*

# CONTROL - ISOLATED

- *“She controlled my friendships and controlled my contact with my family...This would include logging onto my emails and sending emails to my family pretending to be me”*
- *“Yes, she totally manipulated the relationships I had with my own family trying to avoid contact with them or not seeing them and feeding me negative comments about them all the time...it was gradual you see and like the frog warmed up gently in the pan you do not see the abuse of the relationship creeping up and taking over you.”*
- *“I have no friends now, my wife insisted I stop socialising as I was now with her and if I loved her I would not want to spend time with anyone else.”*
- *“what I have come to realise is that she was deleting a lot of messages from friends that I was getting...she had actually got into my phone and deleted messages from friends and deleted a few friends off my Facebook page as well”*

# CONTROL - THREATS AND MANIPULATION

- *“I mean she developed a thing where she would actually take off her wedding and engagement ring...she would take them off and leave them off for sort of days or weeks...that would always sort of strike fear.”*
- *“if I actually tried to argue with her about anything whereas she would just turn around and say “fine, I am just going to leave and take the kids””*
- *“I knew in their face that they already knew what I was telling them, and the only way they could have known was through my ex –wife. So, she used my child abuse constantly, as if... it was controlling”*
- *“I now know you’re going into a relationship you don’t share fuck all like that...it’s dangerous, you’re giving somebody too much ammunition. And she used it against me yeah, because that was my greatest fear was my daughter being taken from me and that’s what happened”*



# FALSE ALLEGATIONS

- *“She obviously she starts off saying “oh no he used to beat me up” and then it got onto I had sexually abused my older kids, so they had to go through a child protection investigation. Erm... then she said I was having a relationship with an unspecified child at the school”, I was working at, so I got suspended for three months and a whole big position of trust enquiry”*
- *“she once injured her hand... she punched me in the face too hard...and then the doctor offered for her to press charges against me, and she made sure that I knew about that when we got in the car. She said that the doctor has gave her his card, and that anytime that she wants all she has to do is call this doctor and the doctor will help her press charges against me for assault, and I said “but you hit me in the face, and broke your hand on my face”, and she said “it doesn’t matter...and she used that as a threat all the time, she said “all I have to do is call the doctor”. She also used to say that all she has to do is put a bruise on her body and just bang herself again a door jam or something, and she just have to say that I did that”*

# CONTROL AROUND MONEY AND CHILDREN

- *“She had control of my wages and gave me £20 per week from them”*
- *“In the end she had all my online banking passwords and my money always seemed to disappear before id got it.”*
- *“She kept telling me that she would kill out children and me if I ever left her or if I did not comply with whatever it was that she wanted”*
- *“I'd have to bring proof of purchase for milk when she would send me to the shops and ring her when in the shops to prove that I was there and only there, I wasn't allowed to take my daughter to school because of all the single mothers there.”*

# GASLIGHTING

- *“Yes I was constantly told I had remembered everything wrong and that I was mentally unwell for thinking these bad thoughts and that she only loved me.”*
- *“Yes, I didn't know that was a real thing, and didn't know it was called gas lighting, but it describes exactly what she did - that's the nail on the head there.”*
- *“It absolutely occurred. I would put something somewhere and she was the only person who could have moved it or would have because the kids would have never touched it. when I couldn't find it, she would find it somewhere that wasn't even close to where I was sure I left it. She would tell me I was the crazy one”*
- *“ I would begin to doubt my own sanity and perception of reality.”*

# SEXUAL AGGRESSION

- *“Sex used as a form of abuse and control”*
- *“...waking up to find myself handcuffed to the metal bedframe. She proceeded to torture me (insertion of vibrators into my anus, lots of small cuts with a craft knife, squeezing and hitting testicles) and then got infuriated because I was not getting an erection (obviously too terrified and in too much pain) and gave me a good punching and left me there.”*
- *“I opened my diary and she had placed a letter in it stating that she was pregnant and had come off the pill deliberately...I felt totally violated”*
- *“She also was in complete control of our sex life - she decided if, when, and how we had sex... She also controlled when/if I was allowed to orgasm, and would be violent if I didn't comply.”*

# BARRIERS TO HELP SEEKING OR LEAVING

- *“She kept telling me that she would kill our children and me if I ever left her or if I did not comply with whatever it was that she wanted”*
- *“Not sure how to explain I was beat up by a girl. Would have been ashamed”*
- *“...threatened me with rape allegations if I told anyone official”*
- *“I called a helpline and a women’s shelter and they both told me I was the abuser and refused to help”*
- *“I reported her to the Police on one occasion and was asked what I had done to deserve the beating, I told them I had done nothing at all, to which they told me that was unlikely and it was probably something I had done or said”*

# POST-SEPARATION ABUSE

- *“I haven’t seen her [daughter] for three years”*
- *“shortly after that we actually separated then things changed really dramatically and if they had been bad over the last few months then it became horrible really and then the children were in the middle of it...I haven’t seen my eldest child and the middle one I’ve not seen him now for 8 months”*
- *“on Father’s Day itself I got a text message through with a picture: Happy Father’s Day, you f-ing sperm donor!”*
- *“She harassed me for a little over two years, sending me emails. Even once I was in a relationship with somebody else”*

# IMPACT OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

- *“I tried to kill myself...I ate all the sleeping pills I could find, drank a bit, and was happy that it was over. I woke up next to her, It was the worst moment in my life, I was still in hell”*
- *“I am still afraid of her”*
- *“The relationship is over for two years now and I still don't feel like I could trust another person to form a new relationship. I'm also heartbroken knowing there is nothing I can do to help my son, I'm still in court fighting”*
- *““Left me with vision loss in one eye...Symptoms of Brain injuries and PTSD/”*

# SEVERITY AND IMPACT OF IPV

- Significant verbal, physical and sexual aggression experienced
- Experiences of control
  - Through children
  - Through “gaslighting”
  - Through isolation and manipulation of relationships
  - Through false allegations
- Barriers to confiding in anyone, to help-seeking and the continuation of abuse post-separation
- Serious physical and mental health impact



# DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE FOR MEN

- “ ...in addition, male victims have unique experiences in that their female abusers are able to use a system that is designed to aide female victims of domestic violence. Thus, some female perpetrators of IPV manipulate their husbands because they know that the system is designed without the abused male’s experiences in mind, and that more often than not people will not believe or take seriously these men’s victimisation.”
- Hines et al., (2007)

# HELP-SEEKING MODEL

- Screening/assessment process used by some UK organisations
- Wrong for several reasons...
  - Assumption men are perpetrators in disguise
  - Adds an additional layer of victimisation to an already vulnerable group
  - Will affect men's decision to come forward, could affect mental health symptoms
  - Same procedure not in place for women – with nature of bidirectional abuse

# FUTURES DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Significant and severe abuse experiences by men
- Move away from assuming men are always perpetrators
- More recognition and changing attitudes
- More money is needed to ensure there is a widespread availability of men's services geographically
- Further exploration of experiences around help-seeking in the UK
- Further research exploring experiences in different nations

# THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!



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