

THE SILENT CRISIS

MALE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

SYLVIA KEYES

LEAH HARRINGTON

SUZANNE MARTIN

DIPLOMA IN SOCIAL CARE

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DECLARATION

This project thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the Diploma in Social Care, School of Social Sciences, Dublin Institute of Technology, Rathmines. I declare that unless otherwise stated, the contents of this project thesis is my own work and has not been submitted, in part or whole, to any other College or University.

Signed: _____
Leah Harrington

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Sylvia Keyes

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Suzanne Martin

Date: _____

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Thank You.

ABSTRACT

The Run

*I really want to stay
on the Run,
But everyday is not such fun.
The Clock is like a hammer's head
And everyday the Second's bed,
A bed of mind.
A bed of fear,
A bed of far and near
But Some day Soon,
Maybe, not So Near,
That bed will not be Filled
With Fear.
And if not So, And not to be,
I'll do that 'Run' and
Face the Fear.*

The Run, 17th September 1999

By Richard G. One day at a time.

An earlier attempt on his life. He has since taken his own life.

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INTRODUCTION

In carrying out a study on male victims of domestic violence, the main issue to be raised is the question of the extent to which it occurs in Irish society today. The ‘Silent Crisis’ aims to investigate male victims of domestic violence and document that it does exist. Other areas that need to be addressed are the type of abuse men endure in the domestic structure; in other words, whether they endure physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse or all of the above.

In this dissertation we, the authors, aim to highlight the problems of family violence towards men, its effect on themselves and their families, and the support services that are available to them in Ireland. Throughout the world, people (both the public and professionals) are aware that women and children are victims of family violence, but can men equally be the victims?

In this dissertation, many topics will be addressed, examined and discussed, to prove that women are also capable of violence towards their partners. Due to the limitations of this dissertation, many topics could not be discussed at length due to the extremity of the topic chosen, for example, the impact of this violence in children. We, the authors, believe that men are also victims of domestic violence, but they are the silent victims.

Chapter One

- A definition and discussion of family violence.
- Society’s perception of an ideal man.
- The different types of domestic violence.
- Survey carried out, commissioned by Amen, highlighting the different types of abuse suffered by the male victim.
- Impact on children is briefly outlined.
- The factors that make a woman become abusive in today’s family cycle, and the common characteristics.

Chapter Two

- The Domestic Violence Act 1996.
- Garda Síochána policy on domestic violence intervention.
- Different types of orders available.
- Legal issues for men.
- Health issues for the male victims.
- GP's response, and hope for the future.
- Services available to male victims.

Chapter Three

- Methodology.

Chapter Four

- Results and discussion.
- A blend of findings from case studies and a literature review compiled by the authors.

Chapter Five

- Conclusion and recommendations for research and practice.

Appendices

1. Questions for the interviewees.
2. A list of services contacted by the authors.

References

Reasons for Undertaking this Study

We, the authors, undertook this study because little is known or written about male victims of domestic violence. We set out to investigate whether males are also victims of domestic abuse. Through the documentary *Dispatches* (BBC, 1999), watched by the authors, great awareness was raised, and we felt there was a need to question the extent to which domestic violence against males occurs in this country.

CHAPTER ONE

When most people think of domestic violence, images of battered women or abused children come to mind. But there is another side to this issue that is not as familiar, the male victims of domestic abuse. The suffering of abused men should not be taken lightly, and all services to victims of abuse should be free of sex discrimination. Most services that are out there to support victims of domestic violence are geared towards women. We need to ask why this is.

What kind of man 'lets' a woman abuse him? Who is the 'typical' victim? Is he weak? Helpless? What about family and friends? Why doesn't he just leave? Why would anybody live with a violent partner who say they love them, but yet hurts them?

Through the authors' research these types of questions will be answered in the following chapters.

In our society, the perception of an 'ideal man' is to be strong and to be self reliant. In the past, the primary child-rearing responsibilities were usually placed on women, and greater financial resources were generally available to men; however, these roles have certainly changed in today's society. Men are largely involved in the rearing of their families, and the woman have the choice to work, with a lot more opportunities available to them. These options for women are socially acceptable. Male options are more limited. Society still places the highest value on a man who is successful financially; the man who can be a 'good provider'.

The vast majority of recorded incidents of domestic violence are of men on women. Society, although aware of the male victims, treats them as a joke. In reality, he is a man in fear, a man in isolation, a man stigmatised as weak. Why? Because he does not conform to the stereotypical male image.

(Amen Information Leaflet)

There are many reasons why men do not report abuse, reasons such as being afraid of being laughed at by their peers, humiliation and embarrassment. Men feel they may be able to change and help their partners. Men also feel that it is a private matter, and feel that it is better to keep it within the family context. A very common reason is that they love their partners.

A typical problem that faces the male victim in particular is denial. Most men feel that they should be able to deal with the problem, and that they are supposed to be able to 'take it'.

Abuse in any form is wrong, it is destructive to every aspects of a person's life.
(Philip Cook, p91)

Male victims are victimised because they fail to conform to the 'macho man' stereotype; they are labelled as 'wimps' within our society. Just because a victim is a man, this should not make him any less of a man.

Two examples of well-known men who were abused by their wives were John Wayne and Humphrey Bogart. The stereotypical idea is that men control their wives because they are bigger physically, stronger and harder emotionally, but in fact, the reality is very different.

Domestic violence has been defined by Giddens as follows:

Violent behaviour directed by one member of a household against another.
(Giddens, A., 1995, p752).

Family violence could be described as the total controlling and disempowering of one individual by another. It can leave victims exhausted and broken, with no foreseeable future. The authors use the word 'exhausted' because constant, unrelenting criticism and fault-finding would wear a partner down. When a person hears over and over again that

he is stupid, worthless, ugly etc.; the insults may be internalised, and therefore the victims allows them to become part of his self-image.

Daniel and Kashani (1998, p3) have defined violence as,

.....mistreatment, injury, insulting and coarse language, to hurt by treating badly.

Similarly, Gelles and Straus (1979, p550) describe it as

.....an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person.

Other authors (e.g., Neuberger, Hampton, Marx and White, 1996) have greatly broadened the concept of family violence by constructing a category called 'paediatric social illness' and including physical violence, accidental injury, failure to thrive and poisoning (p3).

The home is often idealised as a haven of security and happiness, yet this is questioned by Giddens. He states that,

The home is in fact the most dangerous place in modern society. In statistical terms, a person of any age or of either sex is far more likely to be subject to physical attack in the home than on the street at night.
(Giddens, A. 1997, p163)

Domestic violence is generally understood to include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Non-verbal abuse
- Isolation.

The authors' understanding of the different types of abuse are the following.

Physical abuse includes:

- slapping
- hitting
- kicking
- burning
- punching
- choking
- shoving
- beating
- throwing objects
- locking out
- restraining

and other acts that are designed to injure, hurt, endanger or cause physical pain.

A study of male victims of domestic violence was carried out in Ireland with forty men, commissioned by Amen (1999). It showed under the heading of physical abuse eight types of physical violence used, and the percentages of the type of physical abuse on male victim.

- 55% were hit with heavy objects;
- 57.5% smashed things in house;
- 50% had suffered from scratched faces;
- 40% were threatened with a weapon;
- 45% were pushed or hit;
- 32.5% were threatened to be kicked in genitals;
- 15% were stabbed with a knife or other sharp object;
- 22.5% were threatened with death.

The following two questions were asked under the heading of physical attack:

1. How did you respond to physical attacks?
2. What types of physical force, if any did you use against your partner?

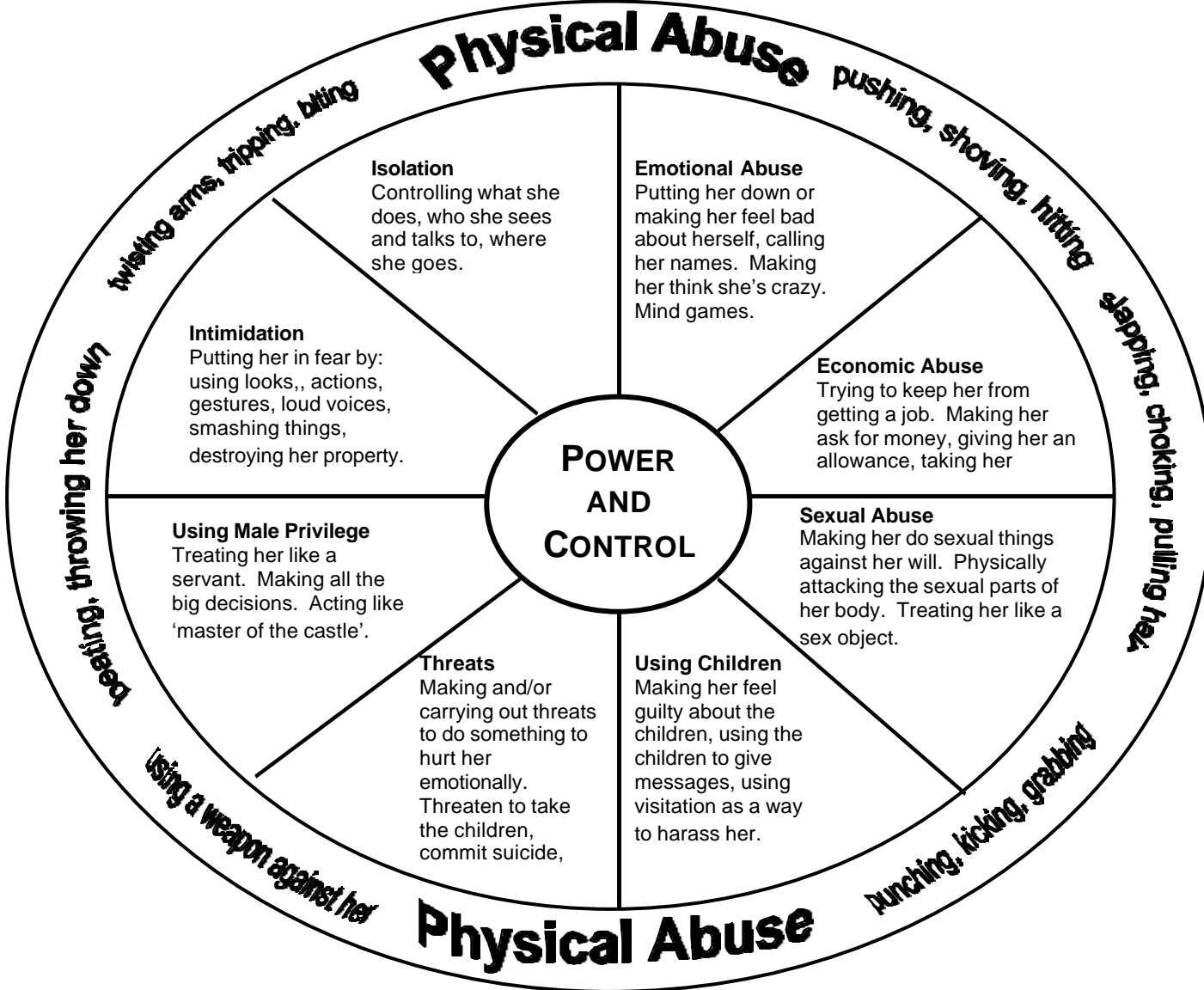
Question 1

- Seventy-seven percent of respondents walked away;
- Sixty-five percent of respondents left the home;
- Fifty-three percent of respondents tried to reason with their partner.

Question 2

- Fifteen percent of respondents pushed their partner away;
- Fifteen percent of respondents smashed things in the house;
- Many of the respondents commented that they did not use any violence.

The Power and Control Wheel shows with clarity the different types of abuse:



Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when the abuser is constantly doing or saying things to shame, insult, ridicule, embarrass, demean, belittle or mentally hurt another person. This might include insults relating to their appearance such as fat, stupid, ugly. It also includes threatening to abandon, or threatening to take children away. Emotional abuse has long-lasting, devastating effects on victims and their families, and their overall integration in society.

The question on emotional abuse asked in the survey commissioned by Amen (1999) was:

What emotional effects has your partner's abuse had on you?

- Eighty-two percent suffered from low self esteem;
- Seventy-seven percent suffered from insomnia;
- Sixty-two percent suffered from loss of appetite;
- Sixty-two percent suffered from depression;
- Sixty-two percent still live in fear;
- Fifty percent, as a result of the abuse, mistrust women.

Other consequences include:

- Performance in work had been affected;
- Loss of job;
- Abuse had put strain on the victims' relationships with their children;
- Some had lost contact with their children;
- Many said that they had been falsely accused of abusing their children.

Sexual Abuse

This involves forcing somebody to have sex when she/he does not want to, forcing someone to engage in sexual acts which are unpleasant, or frightening to them; basically anything that makes a person feel demeaned or violated.

None of the victims in the Amen (1999) survey were sexually abused by their partners.

Shaw (1999, p4) defines sexually abusive behaviour as,

.....any sexual behaviour which occurs

- (1) without consent;
- (2) without equality, or
- (3) as a result of coercion.

Psychological Abuse

The authors describe this type of abuse as attack on the victim's mind. The victims are lead to believe that they are 'mad' and all the responsibilities of the offender are placed on the victim. They feel shattered and worthless and are afraid as a result to make even the smallest day-to-day decisions within the home. The following are the types of psychological threats used on the victims surveyed.

- Ninety percent were falsely reported;
- Eighty percent of victims were threatened with removal from the home;
- 72.5% were threatened with losing everything they had;
- Sixty percent were threatened with never seeing their children again.

Under psychological abuse they looked at the types of mental abuse suffered.

- Ninety percent of the victims had lies told about them;
- Eighty-five percent of the victims' partners claimed to be victims;
- Eighty percent of them were taunted to use violence;
- Eighty percent were deprived of sleep;
- 72.5% were cut off from family and friends;
- 72.5% were subjected to unreasonable jealousy.

Non-verbal Abuse

The victim in this case is refused access to money and basic necessities such as food and clothes. They are not consulted about financial matters, thus leaving them very dependent on their abuser.

Isolation

This means being isolated from everybody around them; family, friends, society as a whole. The attention of the victim is expected to be focused solely on the abuser; the personality of the victim is removed through fear.

The above study, carried out by Amen (1999), was a success in that victims were given the chance to voice their real life experiences. They wished for openness and honesty regarding the issue of abuse, and they expressed the wish that society be made aware of the reality of the male victim of domestic violence, and to have this issue taken seriously. They also stated that there was a need for appropriate support services which included shelter accommodation, not only for themselves, but for their children, as emergency shelter is needed by them when incidents of violence occur. They also requested that the Garda Síochána, the legal system, the state and social services receive gender-sensitive training in the area of domestic violence. The men surveyed also felt strongly that female perpetrators of domestic violence were all too easily able to obtain barring orders, and that they are never penalised when the allegations the victims make are proven to be true.

(A Study of Male Victims of Domestic Violence, commissioned by Amen, 1 Brews Hill, Navan)

Victims and abusers in domestic violence come from all walks of life, and can occur regardless of race, religion, class, occupation or background. The appearance of the home to the outside world can be deceiving. Victims of abuse may appear to be strong, financially secure etc., but may suffer from isolation, low self-esteem or any of the manifestations of domestic violence.

Those in violent relationships tend to fight about the same topics as non-violent couples, i.e. money, housework, parenting etc., but unfortunately, they do not draw the same boundaries that healthy couples do. Abuse tends to begin with degrading behaviour, insults, put downs, later leading to isolation, jealousy, physical abuse. In the Garda

Síochána Community Relations Section, they confirm this by pointing out that there are three phases of domestic violence:

- A tension building phase;
- An acute battery phase;
- A reconciliation phase.

This reconciliation phase tends, as time goes on to last for shorter and shorter periods. During this phase, the victim is ‘walking on eggshells’ in order to pacify his partner. This point is illustrated in one of the interviews conducted by the authors.

Domestic violence and the impact it has on children is a huge issue, and unfortunately, one that is too big to discuss at length in this thesis.

The adults involved in domestic violence are, sadly, unaware of the extent of the damage resulting from domestic violence and the impact it has on their children. The authors chose to include this very important aspect, due to their professional experience in working with children in care. It is not possible to hide abuse from children or prevent them from being frightened or confused by it.

Children are likely to suffer some of the following physical symptoms in response that the anxiety that domestic violence causes them:

- stomach aches;
- headaches;
- enuresis;
- sleep disturbances, including fear of the dark / resistance to bed time;
- low self-esteem;
- generally poor health.

These symptoms will vary depending on the age of the child, i.e. a younger child may have different symptoms than an adolescent. It is important also to remember that some children will not manifest any physical symptoms of the anxiety they feel, although they may feel anxious and unhappy. Living with violence has enormous effects on children. As a result of living with violence, they may lose friends, their schoolwork may suffer, and they end up struggling in society during what are meant to be the happiest days of

their lives, their childhood years. Children feel huge pressure to 'make everything ok', to try to please both parents, and are generally caught in the middle.

Dobash and Dobash (1984) found that children observing attacks overwhelmingly supported the victims, either actively or passively. Responses included pleas to stop, thus resulting in the child crying and trying to hide (*Rethinking Domestic Violence*, p152).

Children witnessing domestic violence live in a constant state of uncertainty and instability. It must also be stated that children may blame themselves for the violence or may devote all their own energy to whatever they think will keep their parents from fighting. All of us as children learn through modelling, not on what we are told, but on what we see. Adults can dismiss the level of suffering and damage inflicted on children who witness domestic violence.

Perhaps the most disturbing effect of family violence is the way in which it teaches children that it is the way a family functions, that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems.

The fact that many conflicts involve violence does not mean that violence is necessary to resolve them. It rather indicates that those who use violence either cannot think of a better strategy or believe violence to be the method of choice.
(C.A. Klein, *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Family Violence*, 1998 p7)

Child maltreatment represents an extreme form of dysfunctional parenting that threatens and affects the development of the child's competence in its sociocognitive, emotional and behavioural domains.
(C.A. Klein, *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Family Violence*, 1998 p7)

In June this year, the Cabinet Office women's unit launched a campaign to 'change the culture' that presented domestic violence as almost exclusively a problem of male crime. It managed to omit another under-reported fact: that most violence against children is committed by their mothers, not their fathers. A study by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children revealed a few years ago that natural

mothers, not fathers, are most frequently the perpetrators of physical injury, emotional abuse and neglect. This is not particularly surprising, since mothers generally have much more daily contact than fathers with their children.

There was yet another notable omission: the women's unit material did not differentiate between couples who were married and people who were living together or had irregular lovers.

(*Sunday Times News Review*, October 24th 1999, taken from Amen website)

So what makes a woman abuse in today's family cycle?

It seems that most abusers tend to share quite a number of traits, background and behaviour patterns. The goal of the abuser is power and control over their partner. They lack the ability to trust, often because of a lack of attachment experienced with a parent. They believe that they can only gain security against abandonment through control. Many people believe that abusers are abusive due to experiencing abuse themselves, perhaps between their own parents; this may be true in some cases, but it is very important to remember that growing up in a violent home does not guarantee a person will become abusive.

Randall quotes Jacobson, (1992, p23) as saying,

Batterers fall into two distinct types; a hot-headed, excessively reactive type, and a cool, calculating and proactive type, where the battering is part of a general subjugation of the partner.

In comparison to the above, one of the authors looked at a video titled *Dispatches* (Channel 4). The video looked at the lives of two women, Fiona and Debbie, who abused their partners. They admitted that they needed to have power and control over their partners in order for them to feel secure. Both women admitted to being very physically abusive towards their partners, and also said that their partners never hit them, but only protected themselves.

Fiona: On one occasion I slapped my partner across the side of the head so hard I burst his eardrum; there's been times where I've hit him so hard he fell over; at one point I pinned him down on the bed and threatened him with a knife.

Debbie: He fuelled my jealousy, when in bed one night I pulled back the duvet and poured bleach on his genitals, he screamed and went to wash it off and said I was a lunatic. I don't have any remorse over it, I just thought he deserved it.

Little research has been done into why women abuse their partners; very few of the men in the video had any idea. Debbie believed that drink was a huge factor in her case. Two other factors mentioned were mental illness and the effects of experiencing a miserable childhood. Both Debbie's and Fiona's first adult relationships were with men who were extremely violent. In each case that anger was directed at the next man that came into their lives.

Debbie: I wanted to hurt him the way I was hurting inside and the only way I could do that was to lash out.

(Rendard and Jacob, 1988, p260) state that,

Alcohol tends to make situations dangerous. They say that intoxication reduces the accuracy of social judgement and leads to behaviour that is likely to attract complaints.

(Iselles 1987) states that alcohol may be deliberately used to provide an excuse of why they beat their partners.

According to research carried out by *Dispatches* (1999), in conjunction with Professor Kevin Brown, an expert in the field of domestic violence, University of Birmingham, sleep deprivation was a new characteristic with domestic violence against men. It is a tactic used by women to compensate for the lack of natural strength. It is more effective

to abuse their partners when they are asleep, as their guards are down and they are more vulnerable, and would be less able to defend themselves. Experts had not seen this tactic before, and were quite shocked at the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT 1996

The year 1996 was the year a new bill on domestic violence became law. The new act improved the rights for many victims of family violence, and was the first piece of legislation to provide protection from a non-marital partner. Prior to the 1996 Act, only married victims of domestic violence could apply for a barring order, but this has now changed. The Domestic Violence Act 1996 is also written in a gender-neutral way.

Section 2: Safety Order

The Safety Order within the 1996 Domestic Violence Act is a new addition. It is similar to a barring order, in that it offers safety and protection through the law from a perpetrator of family violence. A Safety Order can be granted for up to five years. It does not require the respondent to leave the home, but the concept is that the respondent will not use or threaten to use violence, molest or put the applicant in fear of molestation. These conditions must be adhered to if the respondent wishes to remain in the home.

A new feature of both the Barring Order and the Safety Order is that both the Health Boards and the Garda Síochána can now apply to the court on the behalf of the applicant; this was not so prior to the 1996 Act. This can be done if the Health Boards and the Gardaí believe the welfare and safety of the victim is at risk and that the abuser will try to prevent the victim from applying.

Section 3: Barring Order

A Barring Order is a court order which prevents the respondent from coming into contact with the applicant. It directs the respondent to leave the residence; if the respondent is not living with the victim, then the order prevents them from entering the victim's home until the court sees fit. If the order is breached, the respondent may face a fine, imprisonment or both.

Section 4: Interim Barring Order

An interim barring order can be issued while under the hearing of a barring order, and is a temporary barring order, pending a court date. The interim barring order has the legal power to do the following:

1. Direct the respondent to leave the place of residence,
or
2. If the applicant and the respondent do not reside in the same place, the interim barring order can bar the respondent from watching or being in the vicinity of the victim's home.

Section 5: Protection Order

A Protection Order can be issued while awaiting a hearing of a Safety Order or Barring Order, if the court believes that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the safety and welfare of the applicant is at risk.

When a Barring Order or a Safety Order comes into effect, the Protection Order or Interim Order is no longer effective.

Section 18: Powers of Gardaí

Under the new Act, the Gardaí can arrest a suspect they believe to be violent without a warrant.

When a member of An Garda Síochána has reasonable cause for believing that in respect of an Order of this Act, an offence is being committed under Section 17, the member may, on complaint being made to him or her by or on the behalf of the person who was the applicant to which the order relates, arrest the respondent concerned without the warrant.
(Domestic Violence Act, 1996, 18-(1)(a) p18)

In summary, the Domestic Violence Act 1996 gives more power to the Garda Síochána and the Health Boards; therefore it allows these bodies to apply on behalf of the victims who may not have the courage to do so for themselves if they believe that violence is ongoing. Co-habittees now have the protection of the law and legal system from the

person who abuses them, so too can parents who need protection from their violent children. In addition to Barring Orders and Protection Orders, there are also Safety Orders and Interim Barring Orders.

LEGAL ISSUES WITH REGARD TO MALE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In law, a male victim faces two obstacles; firstly he has to prove he is a victim, and secondly, he has to ensure that his children are protected, and do not become new victims. Most men react by staying silent. Often this silence is encouraged by factors such as fear of ridicule and the realisation that it is unlikely that his partner will be evicted from the home. Even when a man has proved that he is a victim, it seems his only course of action is to leave the home. He is then separated from his children and often experiences difficulty in obtaining realistic and regular contact. He is, in fact, treated as the perpetrator rather than the victim.

The law presumes that the children are almost always better off with their mother. Consequently, the only options for men seem to be to put up with the abuse, or leave the home, since under the law there is no real protection for them. If a male victim seeks help, society should offer the same protection and help to him and his children as is given to a female victim.

Women **should** be judged by the same standards as men, and women who are violent **should** be held legally responsible for their actions, but unfortunately this is not always the case (www.amen.ie: leaflet).

She beat myself and my children. I took out protection on the children. She promptly got an Interim Barring Order on me. The Gardaí removed me from the home. For God's sake, I was the victim! Who will protect my children?

(www.amen.ie : victim's comment)

As I put away the shopping, she stabbed me in the back with a seven-inch knife. I was put on life support. It was several days before my family knew whether I'd survive.

(www.amen.ie : victim's comment)

This victim's wife got a nine month suspended sentence, but what if the roles were reversed? Would the judgement be the same?

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

During our research, one of the authors contacted the Garda Síochána Training College in Templemore, in order to find out about the training that the Gardaí receive regarding the issue of domestic violence. The author was transferred to the research department, where the author spoke to a Garda. He informed the author that although there was extensive research done in the area of domestic violence against women and children, but no research had been carried out on domestic violence against men to date.

The author was then transferred to the training college, which specifically deals with the Domestic Violence Module. The author found that only one lecture throughout the Domestic Violence Module was dedicated to violence against men; the whole module is more orientated towards women as victims of domestic violence. According to the Garda, the area of domestic violence is relatively new to the college, and because there is very little research done, the information they have would be very limited. It is only in the last couple of years that this issues has been introduced into the training programme.

The college retrieves updated information on Amen's website every couple of weeks. Any books that the college uses are American or English.

The Garda agreed with the author that domestic violence against men is a very important issue which needs to be taken seriously. He also agreed that it is important that it should be treated with equal gravity regardless of the gender of the victim, but realises that this is not always the case.

On the 15th February 2001 as part of our research, one of the authors contacted the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit for information. To say the least, the reception she received left a lot to be desired; the garda who answered reacted with laughter, the author was then put on hold, before being eventually cut off.

Society does not have the right to discriminate against a victim of domestic violence because of their gender.....Domestic violence is not a gender issue – it is a social issue affecting men, women and children.

(www.amen.ie)

During further research the author contacted the Garda Síochána Domestic Violence and Assault Unit to research information available. The garda who the author contacted stipulated that they regard the area of domestic violence as a gender neutral issue; however, the only leaflet they had available was entitled *Violence Against Women*.

Who Commits Domestic Violence?

As a general rule, it is a husband or partner who commits this shattering crime against women. To the public, he may appear to be a warm, loving person, and a law abiding citizen.

(An Garda Síochána - *Violence Against Women* leaflet)

Also, during her research, the author was made aware of an article written in the *Evening Herald*, from October 12th 1998, which stated that when Garda Assistant Commissioners Hugh Sheehan was asked to distribute leaflets on domestic violence against men, he refused, stating that to do so ‘would indicate preferential treatment’.

A Garda spokesman told the author that a gender neutral leaflet would soon be issued by the Department of Justice, but to date, none are available. On contacting the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the author was informed that they have a gender neutral leaflet available, entitled *Protection From Domestic Violence*, but in the section on where to seek help, Women’s Aid, Legal Aid, the District Court, and the Garda Síochána are all listed, but there is no mention of a support group for men.

According to the Garda Síochána Annual Report, 1997, the total recorded incidents of domestic violence was 4,184. In this report, there was no gender breakdown, as compared to the following years. In the Annual Report, 1998, the number of reported incidents was 8,448, and in the 1999 report the number of incidents reported was 10,110. The gender breakdown was similar in both reports; although the offenders were predominantly male, some nine percent of offenders were female. Complainants were predominantly female, with eleven percent of complainants being male (Garda Síochána Annual Report, 1997, 1998, 1999, pp88, 106, 114).

In comparing these reports it can be seen as positive, insofar as the Garda Síochána have begun to regard domestic violence as a gender neutral issue. In the report commissioned by Amen in 1999 (highlighted in Chapter One of this thesis), the men who were surveyed were asked who they confided in about their abuse.

- Sixty percent: family and friends;
- Thirty-five percent: social services;
- Sixty-two percent: Amen;
- Seventy-two percent: legal advisor.

Note: Out of the seventy-two percent who sought legal advice, only three men were advised to seek a Safety Order.

The fifty-five percent of men surveyed who did not report the abuse to the Garda Síochána were asked why they did not:

- Eighty percent of them said that the Gardaí did not take this issue seriously;
- Seventy-seven percent of these men also felt too ashamed to report the incidents.

What happened to those who did report their abuse to the Gardaí?

- Forty-five percent of the respondents said they contact the Gardaí;
- Ninety-seven percent of these respondents said that they believed they were not taken seriously. The respondents said that the Gardaí were dismissive; some respondents were told to leave the home, and treated as if they were the ones being violent.

John Waters stated that statistics on reporting are unreliable because men are reluctant to report the abuse. He said that the additional barriers facing men are fear of being ridiculed, not being believed, presumption of guilt and the realisation that regardless of who is at fault, they will lose their home and their children in the hostile, anti-man family law system (www.amen.ie/irishtimes).

There are many health issues for men related to domestic violence; these include having symptoms of depression, panic attacks, changes in appetite involving weight gain or weight loss and sleep deprivation.

Some of the injuries reported to the Amen Helpline include contusions, lacerations, abrasions, fractures, stabbings, kicking, biting, scratching, spitting, cigarette burns, pulling out tufts of hair etc. (Amen Report).

Male victims suffer from feelings of shame, guilt (was it their own fault?), feelings of sadness and worthlessness. They also can feel suicidal and sometimes take their own lives without disclosing what was happening to them. Although many contemplate suicide, they may not act on these feelings for the sake of their children. At times, it is for the sake of their children that some men go on, and continue to live in their situation.

GP's must pry more into the health of their male patients.
(Dr Michael Boland talking at the ICGP AGM 1999)

This article was discovered by one of the authors while researching medical issues surrounding domestic violence against men.

He discussed with General Practitioners not to shy away from asking difficult questions in situations where they suspect domestic violence or abuse, and said that questions should be asked of both the victim and the perpetrator. He stressed that it was important to remember that not all violence was committed by men. Men can often be victims.

In situations of domestic violence, General Practitioners should keep clear and detailed clinical notes and always reinforce the issue of confidentiality with the patient. It is vital, he added, to organise appropriate and regular

follow-up procedures. It is time for general practitioners to make an impact in the area of men's health, Dr. Boland said. General Practitioners need to be more aware of the health risks facing their male patients.

www.imt.ie

If doctors are convinced that they are seeing a case of domestic violence, the patient will be encouraged to disclose it, and will be referred to the relevant support services.

DOCTORS TO TACKLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Doctors in the Accident and Emergency Department at James Connolly Memorial Hospital in Blanchardstown, Dublin are to become involved in a novel project to help victims of domestic violence. This project is thought to be the first of its kind to involve the community in a co-ordinated approach to the problem. As part of the research the author has contacted the Accident and Emergency Department of Blanchardstown Hospital. She was referred to a doctor who is involved with project that was set up with the support group, Women's Aid, to help tackle the issues around domestic violence.

The doctor stated that, along with their team, every six months Women's Aid run a training course with updated information, but has, to date, not had any training around the issue of domestic violence against men.

The doctor did, however, state that they are seeing more and more cases of male victims who have sustained injuries inflicted by their partners, and in some cases, they have been horrific. The doctor also stated that men have come to the Accident and Emergency Unit with emotional, psychological and mental problems they have developed, due to being victims of domestic violence.

I'm a doctor. Who do I talk to? Who is going to believe me?
(Victim's comments, Amen leaflet)

My physical wounds will heal in time, but the emotional abuse will remain with me forever.
(Victim's comments, Amen leaflet)

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MALE VICTIMS

Amen

Amen is a voluntary group, founded in December 1997, which provides a confidential helpline, a support service and information for male victims of domestic abuse, who previously suffered silently and alone in abusive relationship (Amen leaflet).

Since the setting up of Amen, the organisation has received fourteen thousand calls. Callers to Amen come from all walks of life, all age groups and from every social class. Amen volunteers provide information to the men who ring the helpline on the legal remedies available to them, and assist them in making decisions on the options open to them.

Amen volunteers work to increase public awareness of the plight of the male victim of domestic abuse through media interviews, giving talks etc. Since the founding of Amen, this formerly taboo subject has featured in newspaper articles and radio and television programmes (Amen leaflet).

The organisation also campaigns for greater recognition and support services for male victims from political and statutory bodies and for the inclusion of men, men's groups and men's experiences in the formulation of relevant social policy and legislation (Amen leaflet).

The first European Conference on Male Victims of Domestic Violence, 'The Silence Is Over', was held at UCD on December 10th, 1998. This conference was organised and run by Amen. The second International Conference on Male Victims of Domestic Violence was held on March 30th 2000, at the Ardboyne Hotel in Navan. This conference was also organised by Amen, and was called 'It is also a Crime to Beat a Man'.

Father and Family Time

Wesley House, Leeson Park, Dublin 4

Father and Family Time is a voluntary organisation which provides a service for separated fathers and their children to spend quality time together. They provide a controlled, safe environment in allowing fathers to exercise their rights to access with their children every Sunday afternoon. The organisers try to make the situation as informal as possible.

They also provide support when needed and provide a listening ear. Social workers at times use this service for assessment purposes. They also have the facilities for voluntary solicitors and representatives of the Family Court to visit and give support. The main aim of this organisation is to provide quality time for the fathers and their children, and have been successful to date.

First Contact

This organisation's aims are to reduce male domestic violence in society, and also to help men overcome and change their behaviour.

Victim Support

Victim Support is committed to the best interest of victims of crime by actively supporting them, identifying their needs and advocating their rights.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

SECONDARY SOURCES

In order for us to carry out our research, we needed to contact professionals and organisations who deal specifically with areas of male domestic violence. Contact was made with the following organisations:

1. Aware
2. Crisis Intervention
3. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit
4. Father and Family Time
5. Family Mediation Services
6. Family Support Services
7. First Contact
8. James Connelly Memorial Hospital, Blanchardstown
9. Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
10. Legal Aid Board
11. Eastern Health Board
12. The Rape Crisis Centre
13. An Garda Síochána Training College, Templemore
14. M.O.V.E.
15. Victim Support
16. Samaritans
17. Women's Aid
18. Parent Equality Services

All of the above services and organisations referred the authors to the only support service and helpline available to male victims of domestic violence, Amen, at 1 Brew's Hill, Navan.

PRIMARY DATA

The authors used video analysis, which were viewings of Channel 4's *Dispatches* documentary, RTE's *Nationwide*, and TV3's *20/20* documentary, all of which focused on the related topic. We got information packs from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Legal Aid Board, the Garda Síochána Domestic Violence and Assault Unit, and Amen. We also accessed the internet for further information.

As Denscombe (1998, p60) states,

Internet documents.....needed to be subjected to the researcher's own quality audit along the lines of those recommended in relation to books and journals - but with even more vigour and rigour.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with three participants who were known to the authors, and one participant introduced to us by Amen's service. Eight others came forward to volunteer their stores when they were made aware of the area of study that we were investigating. We conducted semi-structured interviews as the authors knew what questions to ask the participants; we had a clear list of issues that we wanted to be addressed and answered. Denscombe (1998, p113) states,

.....with the semi-structured interview the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. The answers are open-ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest.

The authors chose this style of interviewing, as it lends itself to in-depth investigations, particularly those which explore personal accounts of experiences and feelings of the men's lives. Structured interviews would not have been suitable due to the sensitivity of this study. As Denscombe (1998, p112) states,

Structured interviews involve tight control over the format of the questions and answers. Structured interviews are often associated with social surveys where researchers are trying to collect large volumes of data from a wide range of respondents.

This would not have been viable for us to do, as we were only interviewing three people.

The design of the interview and the way it was conducted means that the information obtained was of a quantitative and qualitative nature. The quantitative information indicates the extent of the abuse experienced by the men, and the qualitative information gives a clear insight into the nature of the abuse, and the men's experiences following disclosure to the statutory bodies.

We used convenience sampling for our interviews, as three of the four participants interviewed were known to us. Denscombe (1998, p17) quotes Stake as saying,

Our time and access for fieldwork are almost always limited. If we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry.
(Stake, 1995, p4).

One of the authors interviewed four men who were victims of domestic violence and a further eight men gave the authors written accounts of their experiences. They were aged between twenty-four and forty-five years of age. Six out of the twelve participants' relationships began when they were in their late teenage years, and the other six participants' relationships began in their early twenties. When asked when the abuse began to happen, five participants said that it began after they got married, six said it began two to three years after moving in together, and one said that it began after twenty-five years of a very happy marriage.

The majority of our information was obtained from the organisation mentioned earlier in this thesis, Amen, which deals with male victims of domestic violence. The reason for this is that the authors found very little information elsewhere. The libraries showed few listings of books or relevant material, information available was based on violence against women and children. The authors attended two support group meetings at Amen in Navan; this gave great insight into and a real feeling for the real life hardships of male victims. It was through the first meeting attended that we met the four participants for our interviews. We used data from a study that was commissioned by Amen in 1999, carried out in County Monaghan. The survey ascertained the views of the men regarding the types of support which should be put in place to deal with male victims of domestic violence. The survey also explored the nature of the violence perpetrated by women against men.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

As the aim of this study is to investigate male victims of domestic violence, the authors decided that the best way to get information would be to interview the male victims themselves. As this topic is a sensitive social issue, one has to take into account the sensitive nature of this study - meaning, taking into consideration both the personal feelings and the experiences surrounding very private areas of the men's lives whilst conducting the interviews.

TYPES OF ABUSE

The types of abuse experienced by these men varied and included mental, physical, psychological, verbal and emotional abuse. One participant said,

.....mmm.....I was clattered on many occasions, punched, kicked, mm hair pulled and scabbed.....mmm [laughs]. I remember one of her best methods of ending or starting an argument would be to stand face to face with ya, and mmm spit just right into your face, mmm and it just wasn't a small spit, this came from the depths of her, within her, you know mmm and that was one of the most degrading things that I have experienced. This happened on many occasions with her. [sighs] It was pretty harrowing, a traumatic experience to go through mmm.

Another participant said:

She had complete power over me. I lived under a constant threat of violence, which became progressively worse as time went on. She'd get me into the corner of the kitchen and go for my throat. She would scream and spit and lash out with lightening temper.

Another said:

I was a victim of domestic abuse which I endured for several years. I suffered verbal torture and stress, ill health and I nearly lost my business as part of the ongoing abuse caused by my wife.

Another stated:

She has become very aggressive, abusive and controlling. She regularly accuses me of being with other women even though she knows that's not true. She wants me to account for my every movement. She constantly criticises my sexual performance and compares me to previous boyfriends. She calls me a wimp when I won't hit back. She tries to prevent me from seeing my family and is insanely jealous of my brother and sister.

Eleven out of the twelve participants received serious injuries from their wife/partner and the violence was often inflicted using an object. Jana L. Jasinski (1998, p7) states,

Feminists maintain that historically and culturally rooted inequalities of power are the underlying cause of male violence against women and that women are the real victims of intimate violence. It has been argued that physical violence by husbands and wives cannot be equated because of their greater potential for physical injury by husbands, given their usually greater size and strength.

But comparing this to the *Dispatches* (Channel 4, 1999) programme on violence against men, out of the one hundred men who were surveyed, there was one main tactic that women commonly used to compensate for their lack of natural strength - one third of the men were attacked in bed, while they were asleep; this was something that experts on domestic violence had never seen before. Professor Kevin Browne said,

That's a characteristic of husband battering for obvious reasons, because women are generally smaller and less strong than men, and so this would be a way of counteracting that. And therefore you don't get the same level of assaults of women when they are asleep.

One interviewee said,

I got into bed; it was about two o'clock. She actually stuck a hairclip down my ear. I just felt this pain, it was unbearable, there was blood everywhere. You are vulnerable, you can't protect yourself when you are asleep - your guard is down.

Professor Kevin Browne went on to state,

The sort of response from these male victims to violence in the home mirrors that of female victims, in that they have low self-esteem, they are emotionally and socially isolated, they are suffering high levels of depression and some of them are tempted to commit suicide. The sorts of

severity that men suffer is exactly the same when they are the victims as with women who are victims of domestic violence. In fact, when you look at the number of men who are stabbed, it is quite, quite alarming.

In the *Dispatches* programme, of the one hundred men interviewed, a quarter of these men were stabbed, and half of them had a weapon used on them by their wife or partner.

One participant recalls:

Several objects.....a press door, a bed.....she threw it down the stairs at me, tried to set fire to a room I was in, throwing cups of coffee plus the mug at me, mmm, various different things.

Another participant said:

I got pushed down the stairs mmm as a result of that push I had an operation on my spine because of the damage that was done. To this day I am still getting medical attention for it. But I am going to have to get a second operation on my spine as the first one wasn't successful. That was the most serious of injuries that I received from her.

Another said:

Once she pushed me down the stairs and left me there unconscious for about twenty minutes. I was concussed and had a broken wrist. The next morning she ordered me out to do the shopping. I was close to passing out before I phoned my brother who took me to the hospital.

Three out of the four participants interviewed tried to defend themselves but they never retaliated; the fourth participant did not experience any physical abuse. One participant said,

Not to retaliate, but to try and put your hands up to stop someone trying to hit you, yeah.

Another participant said,

Yes, I have to say I was, because and on many occasions what was happening to be was probably on par if not worse than what any man my own age or size would be able to do to ya. But I just couldn't bring [sighs] myself to do that. I would defend myself; I would try to hold her or push her back mmm to keep her at arm's length to me. But I **never** used physical force in a sense that what she done to me to actually to do back to her, no I never done that.

In comparison to a survey carried out by Amen in 1999 when they asked how they responded to physical attacks, seventy-seven percent said that they walked away, sixty-five percent of respondents said that they left the house and fifty-five percent said they tried to reason with their partner. When asked what type of physical force, if any, the respondents themselves had used against their partner, fifteen percent said that they pushed their partner away, fifteen percent said that they smashed things in the house, and many of the respondents commented that they did not use any violence. One of the clear patterns here is that none of the men have ever used any sort of physical violence against their wives or partners.

Two out of the four participants interviewed have had false allegations made against them by their wife / partner; the eight men who gave written accounts of their experiences never mentioned whether any allegations were made against them. One participant said:

The first time I just walked out because it was intimated that I had done something to my daughter. Mmm the second time, the last time I should say, it was eh, it was eh, constant jibes and slagging over a period of time and sexual allegations against her. So, that was the last time we split and that was it. She later admitted to family members that she made up the allegations just to have a go at me, to rise me, and that I never had done anything to her or to my daughter.

In Amen's 1999 survey, eighty-two percent of the respondents had had false allegations made against them.

In a *20/20* (2000) programme on domestic violence against men, one of the men interviewed said:

When the kids were small, when I would tell them their night time stories, she often said, 'what are you doing there?' trying to make out you might be doing something else. That type of thing, you know, yet I was only telling them their stories.

Another man said,

She made a couple of allegations against me saying that I had physically abused my son and then she made allegations that I had sexually abused my daughter. Which, because of the sensitivity of the work I'm involved in, it really, not only did it jeopardise my relationship with my children, but it put my career at risk and put it under scrutiny.

It can be seen from these testimonies that this is another pattern that has emerged as part of male domestic abuse.

LOOKING FOR HELP

Out of the eleven participants, eight have look for help; two of them have sought professional counselling, and six of them have sought legal advice. One participant said,

The only professional help that I have sought is on legal matters mm but in relation to what happened in the home and to me personally, psychologically, emotionally, no, I haven't come around to that yet.

Another participant said:

I am so ashamed and embarrassed. I do not know where to turn. She put a hot iron on my hand and I got a nasty burn. I told them in casualty that I did it when I was drunk. I don't drink. It is very embarrassing to have to face the public after such assaults.

Eight participants have told a family member or close friend what was happening to them but three of them still haven't told anyone the true extent of what has happened to them. It took six of the eleven participants two to three years before they confided in anyone, and three of the participants still have not sought any type of help.

In comparison with Amen's 1999 survey, sixty percent of the respondents confided in family or friends; thirty-five percent confided in social services; sixty-two percent spoke to Amen about what was happening and seventy two percent sought legal help.

FEELINGS ABOUT THE ABUSE

Feelings and the effects of the abuse varied from feelings of isolation, being trapped, depressed, lack of self-confidence, panic attacks, low self-esteem, sleeplessness, poor appetite, hopelessness, poor concentration, anorexia, humiliation, mental anguish, emotional and physical distress, lethargy and pain, to name but a few of the feelings that were expressed!

One participant said,

Yes, you would feel on your own and you would feel trapped in a sense that you would keep trying to do things differently, to see if things would get better. Move house, or you would do up the house and stuff like that, you would feel trapped in that situation that you feel that if you keep doing different stuff that things will change. I tried doing all that stuff and it didn't work!

Another participant went on to say,

I felt I was totally on my own. I had a couple of very close friends who gave me a lot of support throughout the whole lot of it mmm but I found it very hard to, I found, very isolated, very lonely, became depressed about it. A lot of physical things, you know, I lost an awful lot of weight, couldn't eat, sleep. This went on for about a year mmm until suddenly I, for whatever reason, I suddenly came out of it.

Another participant said:

This is having a terrible effect on me. I am constantly anxious. I cannot concentrate on my work - I am under-performing. I am losing weight. I have difficulty in sleeping. I am afraid of what she might do to me when I go asleep. She has said that she could kill me and get away with it.

Another participant commented:

My GP had diagnosed reactive depression and I also developed anorexia.

When asked whether they thought their wife/partner was capable of killing them, three of the four participants interviewed said that the thought had entered their heads. One participant said,

Mmm the thought had crossed my mind mmm on many occasions because of the rages she would get into and that the majority of these arguments,

outbursts and physical attacks took place in the home mmm [sighs] the thought had crossed my mind.

Three of the four participants interviewed thought about committing suicide whilst in the relationship. One participant said:

I have felt on many occasions very, very helpless mmm very, very depressed and disillusioned about it. Mmm yeah, the thought had crossed my mind that the only way out of this would be to get out of it totally and do that yeah.

Another participant stated:

Yes, I never went through with it. I stopped the car inches away from the wall. It wasn't a once-off thought, but a number of times.

In the *Dispatches* (1999) programme, this pattern also emerged, with the interviewees all saying that they thought of killing themselves at one time or another; as one man said:

It seemed the only pain-free way out of this relationship. I do not know what to do. I am consistently inconsistent. I am losing my value and my worth. Why does she treat me like this?

Also, in the *20/20* (2000) programme one man said:

The only way I felt it could end would be when I died. I got so low on one occasion that I felt if I did commit suicide it would obviously end then, but I didn't go down that road, as it was quite a frightening thought.

One could ask the questions, 'why did you stay? why didn't you leave? The answer to this question is very simple; as one participant said:

Children, I stayed for the children because I love them, I wanted to be with them and I wasn't a part-time dad. I put an awful lot of time into the children despite the fact she said I didn't, that I was never there but I was. I used to love playing with them and being with them and still do, that's why.

Another participant said:

Mmm there are many, many reasons why I think primarily, well the fact was for my children, they were first and foremost what kept me going through it all.

Another said:

Due to the constant and serious physical and other abuse from my wife to myself and to the children I had to obtain a barring order.

Another stated:

Because, for seven years my daughter has become the centre of my life, not to have seen her for seven months is also upsetting and the longer that this goes on, the darker the future seems to be; this adds to the stress and so this vicious circle continues.

In comparison to the survey carried out by Amen (1999), sixty percent of the respondents stayed for fear of losing contact with their children, and seventy percent stayed out of concern for their children's safety. In the *Dispatches* (1999) programme, the *Nationwide* (2000) programme and *20/20* (2000), the same pattern emerged; that the majority of men stayed for their children.

How did these men protect themselves? Did they have any hobbies? Eight out of the eleven participants had hobbies and different outlets for them to escape for a few hours.

One participant said:

Well, I suppose most of my spare time when I was off, I had a second job, as she controlled my monthly wages and I was often left with less than a tenner to do me for the month. Other times I spent a lot of time coaching, football mmm, I spent a lot of time with the children, out of the house when the weather was good. Stuff like that, so yeah.

When the men were asked whether their wives/partners ever called the police, or whether they ever called the police themselves, eight of the eleven participants said that neither themselves or their wives/partners did. One of the participants stated that he never thought of it, and looked surprised that he had been asked the question. Another participant said:

Mmm, the police were called on about three occasions mmm, and strangely enough it was never done by either of us, it was always by, had to be by, a neighbour or had to be a family member on her side, as we lived quite close to them. Yes, the police did intervene on three occasions.

Another participant stated:

She continued to attack me here only this time she used a rake, she also reversed her car at me, and trapped me between the car and van; luckily I was only slightly hurt. I went to my local Garda station to report the attack; I made a formal statement to the Garda on duty and asked her to have a word with my wife, she said she would do so. When I returned home my wife realised where I had been and made a telephoned complaint to the same Garda. In her complaint she said that I had verbally and mentally abused her. As a result of this complaint, the Garda whom I initially complained to came to the house and arrested me and she locked me up until the next day when I had to appear in court.

In the survey carried out by Amen (1999), eighty percent of the respondents said the Gardaí did not take this issue seriously.

When asked what the police reaction was to their complaint, and whether they felt that they were taken seriously, eight of the eleven participants said that the police did not take them seriously. These respondents said that the Gardaí were dismissive; some respondents were told to leave the house and treated as though they were the ones being violent. One participant that was interviewed by the authors stated:

No, I felt totally, mmm that I was always the one to cause this. No, they made me feel that I was the one cause of it mmm because there was children involved and because whenever the police came round the children, she would have the baby in her arms or you know, suddenly they would be sitting with me. I just felt that the picture that was being portrayed was a picture of a woman who was going through domestic violence.

Two of the participants interviewed represented themselves in court. One participant said:

My wife got a barring order against me, how she got it was she said in her statement to get the barring order that I, this totally shocked me, I.....I claiming that I threatened to kill my children, kill her, I'd beaten her, I done this to her, and done that to her and it was all totally false. And the sad thing about it, she admitted this herself in court, in front of the judge, and there was nothing done about it! I think what hurts the most is having the stigma of the barring order over my head mmm I know deep down that I never laid a finger on her in my life.

Another participant stated:

The judge threatened me with jail, but despite the initial lack of support from him and my legal team, I fought for my daughter. It has been a long hard year and a half but my daughter and I have stayed together and won our custody case. We are both over the moon.

In comparison, the *Nationwide* (2000) programme interviewed a man who said:

She got a nine month suspended sentence for actual bodily harm. Even though she stabbed me with a dagger. My intended murder was premeditated and planned. The trial was a joke! Had I stabbed my wife in the back and she had suffered the loss of half of her lung I would have been sentenced to seven to ten years in prison.

IMPACT ON LIFE

The experiences these men have lived through has affected all areas of their health; they have suffered depression, nightmares, been put on sleeping tablets and anti-depressants, to name but a few. One participant said:

I couldn't concentrate, I couldn't function, everything was like a storm, I couldn't believe the, it was reality but it was like a dream, no not a dream, but a nightmare – I wasn't sleeping, I still don't sleep, I get the odd night like.

Another participant said:

Mmm, yes it certainly has, I certainly believe. Physically mmm I suppose I have, I look older than I am now. The fact that I can't, the fact that because I have had an operation on my spine now I can't take part in any of these sports anymore. My fitness level has dropped mmm I feel a lot of the time I can't sleep at night mmm appetite wise, sort of down for a while. It has effected me in many ways.

When asked whether they wished they had lived their lives differently, three out of the four participants said that they did. As one participant said:

Mmm, yes I do, yes I do, in hindsight there was a lot of things that I would have loved to do then that I can't do now.

Another participant said:

Yes, with the exception of the children, I wouldn't change them. I would have preferred a happier marriage to mmm yeah, a happier marriage.

This pattern also emerged in the *20/20* (2000) and *Nationwide* (2000) programmes with the men interviewed; they wished that they had lived their lives differently in some ways.

One man interviewed on the *20/20* programme said:

I wish I had done things differently, maybe if I was more of a man or I had taken control of the relationship more of a stereotypical man then maybe this wouldn't have happened. That it wouldn't have gotten out of control, but I think that's crazy, as she would have gotten to me in some way, as she wanted full control.

Regarding the type of impact this has had on all their lives, one participant said:

It has had a huge impact on me mmm [sighs] purely from the sense of not being able to be with my children, mmm not seeing my children as much as I would like to see them. I have a two and a half year old son at the moment that I never have spent one night with. I think, that to me that I'm called a father by law and I'm called a father by name, but I feel I'm not a father because mmm I just don't have the access that I would like to have with them.

Another participant said:

Well, I had to change my whole life because I chose to move out of the family home a good distance away. I was, had the support of my family, but I still was pretty much on my own. So I had to seek out new friends, accommodation, come to terms with what had happened and I suppose that did have an effect on me. Since leaving the family home I have changed mentally and emotionally. I don't feel as at risk or vulnerable mmm, so yeah.

When asked whether their children ever witnessed any of the abuse, all eleven of the participants confirmed that they had. One participant said:

Regrettably they have witnessed some of the abuse of my wife towards me. At all times I did my best to protect the children.

Another participant said:

The children told the psychologist details of the abuse they had suffered when their mother lived with them and they don't want to live or see her. They are afraid of their mother, and told the psychologist so.

Another said:

My children and I were abused by my wife, their mother, for years, we had nowhere to go, and I knew I would be disbelieved because I am a man.

One child who wrote her story, who is only fourteen years old, states:

My dad was thrown out of the house. He got a few punches and things thrown at him by my mam and aunt. They and my uncle were always beating him up. I wanted to go to him, I went down the stairs, got my coat and tried to go with him. My aunt pushed me in the door and I nearly fell. She dug her two fingers into my chest and left a bruise there.

She goes on to say about life without her dad:

I'm afraid in the house on my own, so I kept a broken mirror, knife, deodorant and hammer beside me. There is never milk or bread in the house. I always have to make the dinner, clean the house and mind the kids. If a fella comes in with my mam, we are told to get up to bed even if it's six in the evening. I made a phone call to the police. My dad was talking to the police and told them I had a knife under my mattress. The police said little girls can make up things.

So what advice would these participants give to other men who are going through the same abuse as they did? One participant said:

I would advise any father to fight for the right to get the children back. It is difficult for the children, they have a right to be happy, and the judges and the Gardaí do not often listen to them.

Another participant said:

They need to get a barring order or a safety order, they need to start looking after number one, because you don't think of number one. They need to get help for themselves – Amen give great support and advice. They are the only organisation in Ireland, would you believe, in this day and age, for men who are victims of domestic violence!

On the *Nationwide* (2000) programme one of the men interviewed said:

It is very important to me now that other men know that if it happens to them, to come out. I found it very hard to come out and talk about it, but it is up to me now and the rest of us in Amen to tell men there's nothing wrong and not to be ashamed, we are here to help you. I believe if I had found help before I had been stabbed, that I don't think I would ever have been stabbed now.

This pattern of advice was the same in the *20/20* (2000) and *Dispatches* (1999) programmes; all the men said that other men should go and tell someone about it and get help.

So what is the way forward for male victims of domestic violence? A very clear pattern emerged; all of the participants said the following:

- The Gardaí need to start taking this matter more seriously as do the rest of society;
- More services need to be provided by the state and other bodies;
- A public awareness campaign needs to be mounted;
- The same help for men as women get;
- State agencies need to realise the problems men have;
- Adequate housing / shelters for men and their children;
- More services;
- Equal rights on par with women: the legal system needs to have a more balanced view;
- Just to be listened to and believed!

This pattern also emerged on the *20/20*, *Dispatches*, and *Nationwide* programmes.

This is one man's story of his life experience living with a violent partner.

Slap

*Slap! A belt across the face with an adult hand
A beating painful, administered and planned
A lust-based love dissolves before a battered eye
Chaos causes corruption with an angry cry*

*Domestic Violence, imagine if you can
But be aware, this time the victim is a man*

*He reaches for help, his body limp
but Country Gardaí call him 'wimp'
Interrogation is on the way
in his home he can no longer stay*

*The Social Worker sides with her
And calls the man a swine, a cur.*

*Politicians turn their back
Reminding him of her sadistic whack
They avoid the issues
And jump through hoops
to avoid the wrath of the women's groups*

*Amen is stronger than a man
Five thousand cases also ran*

*In this small island we call home
Where evicted men on the streets do roam
A race of abusers have come to light
and now begins a brand new fight.
Before us faces a series of tests
To defeat abusers with rounded breasts.*

*These men have nowhere else to go
For in their homes they cannot grow
We were all taught it is a sin
to retaliate and beat a woman we call kin*

*But there is a group for abused men
It's based in Navan and called AMEN.*

Permission given by Amen to include this in our dissertation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Through our primary and secondary data we have investigated and documented that male domestic violence does exist in society today. We have outlined the different types of abuse and the levels endured in Chapter One, the findings within our case study in Chapter Three have confirmed the above.

We have outlined the effects male domestic abuse has both on themselves and their families and have shown the lack of support services that are available to them in our society to date.

Whilst the authors acknowledge that there is a problem with male domestic abuse under no circumstances are we ignoring the abuse that women and children have endured.

Cook confirmed this by saying:

It is not 'victim blaming' to understand that both men and women can and most often do contribute to this most significant societal problem (1997, p34).

We the authors hope that we have brought about some awareness to both professionals and public bodies that male victims are also part of the domestic violence cycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** A raised awareness among all social care professionals that domestic violence against men does exist.
- 2.** More services need to be provided by state and other bodies.
- 3.** Adequate housing / shelters for men and their children.
- 4.** The legal system to have a more balanced view of domestic violence and a more equitable approach.
- 5.** The Gardaí to take male victims of domestic violence seriously and to have adequate training introduced – taking into consideration gender neutral issues.
- 6.** More funding to be given from state bodies to voluntary organisations supporting male victims of domestic violence.
- 7.** Counselling should be made available for female perpetrators.

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX ONE

1. Aware	01-676 6166
2. Crisis Intervention	01-604 0203
3. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit	01-475 5555
4. Father and Family Time	01-660 5367
5. Family Mediation Services	01-634 4320
6. Family Support Services	01-838 7122
7. First Contact	1850-323233
8. James Connelly Memorial Hospital Blanchardstown	01-821 3844
9. Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	01-602 8202
10. Legal Aid Board	01-240 0900
11. Eastern Health Board, Social Work Department, Swords Unit	01-890 0455
12. Rape Crisis Centre	01-661 4911
13. Garda Síochána Training College Templemore	0504-31522
14. M.O.V.E.	01-872 4357
15. Victim Support	01-878 0870
16. Samaritans	01-872 7700
17. Women's Aid	01-878 0870
18. Parent Equality Services	0402-9333163

All of the above services and organisations referred the authors to the only support service and helpline available to male victims of domestic abuse; that organisation is **Amen**, 1 Brew's Hill, Navan.

APPENDIX 2

Interview Questions

1. When did your relationship begin?
2. What ages were you both?
3. When did the abuse begin to happen?
4. What did she do, i.e. mental, physical, psychological, emotional?
5. Were there any serious injuries?
6. What type of violence did she use? Did she use an object?
7. Were you tempted to defend yourself or to retaliate?
8. When did you start to realise that things were going wrong, that what was happening was not right?
9. Did she make any allegations against you?
10. If yes, how did you react?
11. Did you tell anyone about what was happening? If not, why?
12. When did you start looking for help?
13. How long was it before you told anyone about the violence?
14. What kept you going through it all?
15. Did you ever feel isolated / trapped?
16. Did you ever dread / avoid going home?
17. Why did you stay? Why didn't you leave?
18. Did you think she was capable of killing you?
19. Did you ever think of committing suicide?
20. How did you protect yourself? Did you have any hobbies?
21. Did she ever call the police? Did you ever call them?
22. If you did, what was their reaction to you? Were you taken seriously?
23. Was your partner ever charged? Did it go to court?
24. Do you wish you had lived your life differently?
25. What type of impact has this had on your life?
26. How did this affect your health?
27. What advice would you give to other men?
28. Did your children ever witness any of the abuse?

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