

Research Paper: Income as a cause of Domestic Violence

Preface

Domestic violence is sadly a common occurrence in our society. Its causes range from problems with other relationships, child custody, financial issues, and behavioral factors. According to The Utah Domestic Violence Council (UDVC) (2012), domestic violence is defined as, “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner”. It is often not reported and the socioeconomic status can determine the victim’s choices. My research led me to many views of how domestic violence occurs. A few sources led me to racial underlining reasons; others were of behavioral health from prenatal care to adulthood. What can be agreed upon is that causes can be intertwined to create a domestic violence situation.

Introduction

A prime example of a financial domestic scenario that can become abusive is one in which income and finances are not shared equally between the two partners, the lack thereof, or the dependence on one partner’s income. These stresses can lead to a controlling atmosphere that is abusive and eventually becomes repetitive. Written in UDVC Spring 2012 newsletter, in 2011 there were 277 hotline calls answered in which support, information and services were needed. Economic abuse defined by the UDVC’s Domestic Violence Related Death Report Workgroup is paraphrased as the attempt or succeeding in making an individual financially dependent and controlling all the financial resources, such as withholding money, or forbidding education and work (2007). Domestic violence research mainly focuses on victims, immediate care and resources needed, and how to lower the percentage of cases. There was very little research that I found to focus on the root causes of domestic violence.

Review Literature

For research I utilized two major sources, The Utah Domestic Violence Council (UDVC) and EBSCOhost Domestic Violence Case Studies. Both of these sources led me to facts, statistics and case studies involving income and race. There were four case studies I used to support my thesis. A newspaper article by Fox 13 Now was of assistance for directing me to UDVC website. The article was written on November 30, 2012 about Utah domestic violence and lack of funds for organizations that help victims. Other local information I used for research was the Unified Police Department of an interview with Sergeant Dan Moriarty of their Investigations unit. His information helped in my research to determine what cases authorities deal with most and if there are trends that occur. Having a primary source to compare to my articles helped me to determine how income affects domestic violence.

Thesis Statement and Research

Income and financial issues are one cause of domestically violent situations. I based my thesis on a belief that lower income families are more susceptible to domestic violence due to factors such as lower education, immigration, cultural status and job qualifications. I assumed that those factors would contribute to domestic violence. However, I did not find evidence that focused strictly on income as a cause of domestic violence. The article I read made me realize that income isn't as prevalent of a problem for domestic violence cases as I thought. After disproving my thesis I began to research against it. Questions I asked consisted of how income is not a prevalent issue in domestic violence cases and why the causes of domestic violence create trends in our society that lead to segregation of victims. My research disproved that income alone causes domestic violence.. With each case study I researched, low income was determined but the cause was related to poor education, ethnicity and behavior. Income was an effect of those factors, which in combination leads to domestic violence. Behavioral health does show direct correlation to domestic violence in the case study titled, The Effects of Domestic Violence on the Stability of Attachment from Infancy to Preschool in 2011 and statistics taken from UDVC in 2007.

In the case study there was research done on 150 women and children over domestic violence and household income. The early childhood study that was administered was the Strange Situation Procedure, which is a study where mother, and child experience 2 separations and 2 reunions. With mothers and children that experience any kind of domestic violence or change in household income, there are signs of how the mother and child respond to each other with separations and reunions. This experiment determines whether the mother and child have a secure, insecure, avoidant or disorganized attachment to each other. With each woman they were given questionnaires on their experiences with prenatal, pregnant and postnatal domestic violence and changes in household income. From the combined data it was determined that a combination of domestic violence upon the women and age of the child determined the level of insecurity, which determined that behavioral health of the child was affected. The group of insecure attached mothers and children showed high rates of prenatal domestic violence. The exact opposite group of mothers and children with secure attachments showed low reported rates of domestic violence. The second study that determined if household income affected the child's attachment, determined that the results were fairly similar. The secure group showed an increase in income in the child's first years and then remained at a steady rate until age four. The insecure group showed data that the income hovered between \$700 to \$750 per month. By age 4 the household income was raising slightly. This data helps support a portion of my thesis but rather helps prove that mental experiences and behaviors can cure or cause a lack of attachment of mother to child depending on domestic violence and household income.

The Utah Domestic Violence Council included statistics in their 2007 Domestic Violence Press Kit that indicated behavioral health is impacted by domestic violence and can lead to further

domestic violence. "A comparison of delinquents and non-delinquent youth found that a history of family violence or abuse was the most significant difference between two groups" (1989). This statistic shows that with family violence it can continue through generations. Most likely the delinquent youths studied had a history of domestic violence, which caused their behavior. Another statistic reported on the UDVC Domestic Violence Press Kit was "Children witnessing the violence inflicted on their mothers evidence behavioral, somatic, or emotional problems similar to those experienced by physically abused children" (1990). These behavioral studies further disprove my thesis of income alone causing domestic violence. With history of family violence many children grow up insecure, unattached, and delinquent, according to The Effects of Domestic Violence on the Stability of Attachment from infancy to Preschool and the UDVC 2007 Domestic Violence Press Kit. Children do not always end up with a problematic future but there is a high risk. My interview with Sgt. Dan Moriarty explained how behavioral, ethnic and economic issues are usually intertwined with domestic violence cases.

Body of Content

In my interview with Sgt. Dan Moriarty of the Investigations Unit of Unified Police Department of Salt Lake County, explained to me his experiences of domestic violence cases. When it came to the causes of domestic violence, he expressed that "after a certain time, avoiding the cause of it becomes helpful. There will always be these cases and focusing on why it happens cannot help the cases at that moment"(2012). His expertise allowed me to take my focus off of the facts and case studies and realize that domestic violence happens to actual people. The common trends that occur in domestic violence cases are examples of simple human behavior. I asked Sgt. Moriarty about a correlation between the economic recession and domestic violence cases. He cannot definitively answer for just domestic violence cases but for crime, he verifies that with bad economic times there is a rise in crime as well. For my thesis, Sgt. Moriarty quoted, "The cases of domestic violence range from high to low income, a lot of times it's over other relationships and custody issues. To say that income is a cause of domestic violence would be too broad"(2012). Sgt. Moriarty's interview led me to research about the ethnic correlation of domestic violence, and whether that is a better direct cause of domestic violence.

There were two case studies I found that had concentration on the Hispanic and Black ethnicities, specifically women. Study Documents Domestic Violence by Race, Income, gave a percentage that is strong to ignore. In Rhode Island Black and Hispanic make up only 6% of the population as of 1990, but they represented more than 17% of the domestic violence cases reported in police reports (2003). That is not a coincidence. Dr. Deborah Pearlman commented in the article that, "At every level of income, Blacks do not do as well as Whites and Hispanics. In the U.S. there is a skin color hierarchy that affects education, disposable income, wealth, assets, stability of employment, and health" (2003). Dr. Pearlman's information might have been accurate at that time

and location of the United States. The information is outdated however more recent research shows similar trends with low-income Hispanic subgroups. In the case study written in the Journal of Marriage and Family, "Women with few social resources are at elevated risk of partner abuse" (2005). The study also mentions that women who are represented in the lower socioeconomic strata are at high risk. This article included African Americans in the lower socioeconomic strata. With these studies it is hard to not point a cause towards ethnic discrimination as well as all the other possible causes.

Conclusion

In ending my research I found that the most important thing to affect domestic violence cases are the resources available to help the victims. The Utah Domestic Violence Council proved its power against domestic violence by the amount of support provided, information, safety planning and many other safe options. The causes may range from behavioral, economic, and ethnic but the result is all the same.

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