

## Community Perception of Domestic Violence: A Pilot Study

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### Abstract

Domestic violence is a serious social problem that can affect the quality of life. Statistics from the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) show that the number of reported cases is increasing. Therefore, a pilot study was conducted to find out the public's perception of domestic violence. This study uses a quantitative design through a survey method. This study was conducted in the State of Terengganu through a simple random sampling technique. A total of 65 sample people were selected to be respondents for the pilot study. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 25 and analyzed using descriptive analysis. The results of the study found that the community has a high perception of domestic violence. However, the public lacks knowledge about the Domestic Violence Act. Therefore, it is suggested that a framework or program that focuses on increasing community awareness and understanding of the Domestic Violence Act be developed immediately for the well-being of each layer of society in the community.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Physical Violence, Emotional Violence, Economic Violence, Sexual Violence

### Introduction

The domestic violence phenomenon is a social problem that has been integrated into the life of the community. According to Nuruaslizawati et al (2021), domestic violence occurs in various ethnic, social, economic, and religious groups, but is viewed differently from the aspect of the country or culture. Domestic violence is usually done by related individuals, whether husbands, wives, ex-partners, family members, friends, or acquaintances. The purpose is to control to the point of inflicting injury or causing injury regardless of whether it is physical, emotional, or sexual.

The Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) statistics for 2021 found that there were 7,468 cases of domestic violence compared to 2020 5,260 cases in. Although domestic violence cases decreased slightly in 2022 with 4,162 cases but are still not good stuff. Reports from the press

found that there were 353 domestic violence cases reported to PDRM since the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented and 135 calls regarding domestic violence cases were recorded through *Talian Kasih* under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia (KPWKM) (Muhaamad, 2020).

There are various types of motives for violent incidents that are reported to PDRM such as disagreements, consumption of prohibited substances (drugs and alcohol), financial problems, jealousy, child problems, property disputes, emotional stress, mental, and family problems, cheating, divorce process, and hot temper. A study by Wake and Kandula (2022) also found that factors such as emotional stress, job loss due to lockdown, lack of sufficient savings, addiction to prohibited substances such as drugs and alcohol, technology, and quarantine for a long and contribute to the occurrence of domestic violence.

### *Domestic Violence Phenomenon*

Domestic violence today has left an impact not only on morbidity but also on death. The pattern of violence that occurs results in an imbalance of power causing individuals who are in intimate relationships or have been in intimate relationships to be in fear. Social workers in the United Kingdom, define domestic violence as "any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercing or threatening behavior, violence or abuse against those aged 16 and over who are or have been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or their sexuality" (Dey & Thakar, 2022).

For the Malaysian context, the Domestic Violence Act 1994 defines domestic violence as involving (i) unintentionally using the victim's property to the extent that the victim suffers hardship due to financial loss; (ii) threatening the victim's intention of causing the victim to fear either himself or his property, the safety of third parties or suffering; (iii) informs the victim or a third person, with the intending to insult the victim through any means, electronic or otherwise; (iv) causing psychological abuse including emotional injury to the victim; (v) causing the victim to experience delusions by using any intoxicating substance or any other substance without the consent of the victim or if consent is given, the consent is obtained by force; or (vi) in cases where the victim is a child, causing the victim to experience delusion by using any intoxicating substance or any other substance.

Domestic violence is seen as consistently involving power and control where all sociological dynamics refer to male and female stereotypes. The imbalance of power that is maintained using self-control techniques causes the victim to be in fear (Randawar & Jayabalan, 2018). This gender stereotype has caused men to abuse power, not practicing equality and discrimination resulting in violence. Men are considered to have "privileges" due to the patriarchal system. For example, men often dominate in holding a position regardless of whether it is in the field of work, religion, or society. While women are socialized to be housewives to take care of and nurture children (Nuruaslizawati et al., 2021).

Pence and Paymer (1993) see domestic violence as being caused by several points of difference to maintain power and control. The Model of the Power and Control Wheel is used to help describe the behavior of perpetrators, victims, and communities. The aim is to change behavior, understand the relationship of violence, and find solutions without violence in the relationship. There are eight dimensions of abuse used in the power and control wheel model namely; i) threats, ii) emotional abuse, iii) social isolation, iv) drinking, denying and blaming, v) using children, vi) using male privilege, vii) economic abuse, and viii) using coercion and

threats. The dominance of power and/or control the husband and/or wife possesses causes domestic violence.

### Methodology

This study uses a quantitative design through a survey method. According to Creswell and Creswell (2022), survey methods aim to describe trends, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characters based on a sample or study population. The pilot study sample involved a total of 65 respondents where a total of 41 respondents were selected to answer the questionnaire face-to-face and 24 people were selected virtually through the distribution of Google Forms. All the data from the Pilot Study has been screened accordingly to examine the suitability to the course of the actual study. The data obtained were collected, coded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive analysis techniques were used to obtain frequency values and percentages of community perceptions of domestic violence.

### Result and Discussion

Table 1 shows the community's perception of domestic violence. A total of 98.5% (64 people) of respondents understood domestic violence and 1.5% (one person) of them did not understand domestic violence. In terms of forms of domestic violence, it was found that the majority of respondents considered physical, emotional, sexual, and economic violence as one form of domestic violence with respective percentage values of 98.5% (64 people), 96.9% (63 people) 96.9% (63 people) and 83.1% (54 people). However, for the respondents' knowledge of the domestic violence act, it was found that 53% (34 people) of the respondents knew about the domestic violence act and 47.7% (31 people) of the respondents did not know about the domestic violence act.

Table 1

*Community's Perception of Domestic Violence*

| Variables   | Yes<br>(N=65/%) | No<br>(N=65/%) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| I understand domestic violence.                     | 64(98.5)        | 1(1.5)         |
| Physical violence is a form of domestic violence.   | 64(98.5)        | 1(1.5)         |
| Emotional violence is a form of domestic violence.  | 63(96.9)        | 2(3.1)         |
| Sexual violence is one form of domestic violence.   | 63(96.9)        | 2(3.1)         |
| Economic violence is one form of domestic violence. | 54 (83.1)       | 11 (16.9)      |
| I know about the domestic violence act.             | 31 (47.7)       | 34(52.3)       |

Domestic violence has formed a perception where initially the community did not consider this issue of violence as a serious issue and should be hidden because it is considered a personal matter. According to Webster et al (2018), attitude is one aspect that affects relationships with individuals around. The low altitude and level of knowledge of women, especially regarding rights which is stated in the law, is the main factor in the occurrence of the problem of domestic violence (Nazli et al., 2016).

According to Abdul Ghani et al (2016), most women who experience domestic violence refuse to disclose the abuse and hide the experience from society. Nuruaslizawati & Siti Hajar (2021); Othman et al (2014), found that some women believe that when they are married, they are

"owned" by their husbands and it is the husband's right to beat his wife for certain reasons. This is because most people still consider this issue as a family issue. There are not many victims who dare to speak up to testify about this issue to protect the good name of the family. The study of Saffari et al (2017), states that women regardless of age, marital status, number of children, education level, employment status, substance abuse, and economic status are at risk of all forms of violence. Physical violence is seen as a form of violence that can be seen visually and clearly where this action can cause pain and leave an impact on the victim. This violence is the most common and difficult to hide because it affects the appearance of both men and women. Actions consist of physical attacks such as kicking, pinching, hitting, burning, strangling, throwing objects, and using weapons to cause injury or death. According to Robert (2018), acts of intimidation, harm, and threats whether verbal or physical to cause harm are considered physical violence. Physical violence is the most common and difficult to hide because it affects appearance and results in death for both men and women.

Unlike physical violence. Physical violence generally involves injury to the body while emotional violence affects the mind. Emotional violence refers to any act that damages a person's self-esteem, self-identity, health, and development. The purpose is to manipulate and insult through various patterns (Zabihzadeh et al., 2015). According to Slabbert and Green (2013), women who experience domestic violence often receive negative feedback from their partners about their shortcomings in various aspects such as character, abilities, attractiveness, and personality. This can cause fear or trauma when not being able to control the situation that has happened. As a result, a person may suffer emotional stress, lose self-confidence and experience severe emotional stress such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Sexual violence is a complex and abusive behavior that often occurs in heterosexual relationships. Sexual violence is defined as any type of unwanted contact or sexual conduct that is carried out by force, threat, or use of force. Sexual violence often occurs throughout the marriage but is not voiced (silent code) (Towns & Adams, 2016). According to Nuruaslizawati et al (2022); NurFadhilah (2014), sexual violence begins with an attitude that tends to treat the wife rudely either intentionally or unintentionally, threatening and threatening to cause emotional and psychological disturbance to the victim due to insults and reproaches. A study by Fadzilah et al (2015), reported that 58.9 percent of the 316 respondents who were victims of domestic violence were treated roughly in sexual relations. Hasna' & Akram (2017), based on marriage dissolution files in the Lower Syariah Courts of Kedah and Penang, found that domestic sexual violence is a contributor to divorce in Malaysia. In addition, the media also commented on sexual abuse where a husband demands his rights in an inappropriate situation, for example during menstruation, and acts to beat his wife when she rejects his will (Chua, 2016). This matter is also seen to influence male sexual desire and biological needs that need to be met. Added to this is the stigma that women are an attraction for men to have sexual intercourse either forcibly or voluntarily (Siti Hajar et al., 2022; Hasna, 2017).

Economic violence is seen as a form of violence based on changing gender structures. A study by Karupiah and Gopal (2017) found that the main contributors to domestic violence in the Indian community in Penang are poverty and stress. Economic violence refers to a pattern of behavior that interferes with the partner's ability, especially in acquiring, using, or maintaining economic resources (Gibbs et al., 2014). Denial to access finance and work is also considered economic violence. A study from the Women's Aid Organization (WAO) found that

financial dependence on perpetrators exposed women to domestic violence. A total of 52 women out of 192 women who took refuge in WAO in 2015 and 2016 stated that being a housewife was not by their choice, but because their partner (husband) forced them to stay at home (WAO, 2017). Randawar and Jayabalan (2018), see economic violence as not only consisting of withholding financial support or preventing a person from finding a job but including forcing a person to claim social security payments, sign a power of attorney, sign a contract for the purchase of goods or property, to sign a contract for providing finance, loans or credit, signing guarantee contracts and signing any legal documents for the establishment or operation of a business.

Awareness to stop violence should be an important requirement especially in combating stigma and increasing community knowledge related to domestic violence. Therefore, the Social Work Profession Act is necessary to give the highest recognition to the field of social work in Malaysia (Amin et al., 2020). The enactment of the Social Work Bill is very appropriate to be introduced in Malaysia as one of the prevention and education efforts, especially in domestic violence in addition to dignifying the social work profession. Education not only needs to focus on formal education but needs to be publicized through mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, seminars, online courses, and others.

### **Conclusion**

Although there have been many studies and interventions on domestic violence, this problem is still at an alarming level. The prevalence of community-reporting cases of domestic violence is low. The understanding and cooperation of all parties in dealing with domestic violence cases are necessary to explain the rights and responsibilities of individuals whether from a civil or sharia aspect. This is because the Federal Constitution Article 8 also explains that "everyone is equal before the law and entitled to equal protection under the law".

Therefore, various social initiatives need to be implemented or improved to reduce perceptions and increase the public's level of knowledge about domestic violence in Malaysia. The experience of women who have suffered from domestic violence shows that sometimes they are afraid to share what they are experiencing. This situation occurs due to the effects of emotional violence that are often administered by the offender to the victim.

As a follow-up action, it is suggested that a top-down and bottom-up approach be applied to every level of society so that they are more sensitive, especially in differentiating issues, forms, or factors of domestic violence. The bottom-up based approach refers to social support actions from the informal sector (friends, family, neighbors) and community empowerment programs. The purpose is to share experiences or problems reducing the risk of violence. In addition, the top-down approach refers to comprehensive factors in decision-making. This top-down approach is the government's effort to identify the situation or situation or picture to take the best initiative to be the main driving force in achieving the final goal. These factors involve the strengthening of social restrictions, the role of the media in conveying information about domestic violence issues, an integrated network between local communities and certain agencies in reducing domestic violence, establishing a special agency responsible for managing domestic violence cases, and the placement of family social workers in religious offices in each state and district.

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