

**Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment Program in Managing Domestic
Violence Rates**

by

Madison Paige Jordan

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science

Helms School of Government

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ABSTRACT

The Lethality Assessment Program was implemented into law enforcement procedures to help manage domestic violence. This eleven-item questionnaire evaluates the risk of lethality of the victim by asking questions about the relationship. Therefore, depending on risk law enforcement can connect the victim with resources. Domestic violence has had rising recognition across the world creating laws to protect victims. However, there is a need for research on domestic violence and the procedures put into place. The Lethality Assessment Program is one of the many diverse ways used to protect victims. The State of Virginia's law enforcement is required to use it as a tool and connect the victim with resources. This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment Program by evaluating pre- and post-domestic violence rates. Therefore, one would expect the Lethality Assessment Program to decrease domestic violence rates because it connects victims with resources. Consequently, evaluating the effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment will aid in managing domestic violence rates.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Lethality Assessment Program, law enforcement

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Data Analysis Reporting Team (DART)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Incident Based Report (IBR)

Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Domestic violence is estimated to affect around 10 million people each year in the United States, with one in four women being affected, and one in nine men being affected (Huecker et al., 2023 para. 1). Domestic violence differs from other types of violence because it occurs in intimate relationships, not between individuals with no intimate connection. Violence in relationships is called domestic violence, or previously called intimate partner violence.

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological, or technological actions or threats of actions or other patterns of coercive behavior that influence another person within an intimate partner relationship. (Office on Violence, 2023, para. 1)

The United States Department of Justice (2023), defines domestic violence as:

A pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another. Domestic violence behaviors include, but are not limited to “physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological, or technological actions or threats of actions or other patterns of coercive behavior that influence another person within an intimate partner relationship (para. 1).

Background

Violence, specifically domestic violence, is a complex topic and often misunderstood. Therefore, there can be multiple ways domestic violence can be categorized. Ali et al. (2016), categorizes the various types of violence that can occur during an intimate partner relationship. These types of violence include physical, sexual, psychological, coercive controlling violence, and situational couple violence. All these forms of violence in relationships are centralized

around the power and control that is held over the victims, making it difficult to leave relationships (*U.S. Department of Justice, 2023*).

Physical violence is defined as the use of physical force to inflict pain, injury, or physical suffering to the victim. These actions can include but are not limited to slapping, beating, kicking, pinching, biting, pushing, shoving, dragging, stabbing, spanking, scratching, hitting with a fist or something else that could hurt, burning, choking, threatening, or using a gun, knife, or any other weapon. Physical violence is the easiest form of violence to identify as it usually leaves physical evidence. This physical evidence can then be used in court.

Sexual violence is defined as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments, or acts to traffic, against a person's sexuality using coercion or power. This includes partners physically forcing a partner to perform a sexual act, humiliating, or harming a partner during sex.

Psychological violence is defined as various behaviors intended to humiliate and control another individual. Some examples of psychological violence are verbal abuse, name calling, constant criticism, blackmailing, and many other forms of emotional maltreatment.

Psychological violence is the most difficult to identify and supply evidence for the court.

Coercive Controlling Violence is defined as a pattern of emotionally abusive behaviors that produce intimidation, coercion, and control combined with physical violence perpetrated against an intimate partner. Coercive controlling violence generates a cycle of control and manipulation against the partner. Therefore, the abuser is constantly watching their partner's actions for any disobedience which could result in punishment for the partner. The victim is made to feel completely powerless and isolated. Consequently, this type of violence is more common and severe than other types of violence. This violence encompasses cultural

perspectives, such as a male owning a female and produces the historical ideas of a male perpetrating a female victim, surrounding domestic violence.

Situational Couple Violence is the most common type of violence. Situational couple violence is the type of violence between partners, specifically when an individual is violent towards the non-controlling partner in a relationship. Therefore, the nonviolent partner or a violent but non-controlling partner may retaliate with violence. The intention of situational couple violence is not for power, control, or coercion, but rather is resulting from a situation that has escalated into physical violence, usually due to an individual's inability to cope with negative feelings. Therefore, this violence does not usually increase in frequency over time and does not form a pattern of behaviors. This abuse tends to be more verbal than physical, due to the lack of controlling and coercive behaviors. Consequently, this form of violence can be found in many intimate partner relationships and is evenly initiated by both male and females. Garcia-Moreno, et al., found male's initiation rates at 12.2% and females initiating rates at 12.4%. Situational Couple Violence lacks the abusive cycle that domestic violence is known for (García-Moreno, et al., 2005, as cited in Ali, et al., 2016, p.17-18).

Problem Statement

With domestic violence being so widespread, researchers and law enforcement have studied and tried different methods to manage the rates of it. Domestic violence is destructive and has prolonged negative effects on individuals. Most times domestic violence goes unnoticed until it is too late, and the victim is either severely injured, killed, or bonded to the perpetrator. Consequently, there have been many different theories constructed to control domestic violence and catch it in the early stages. One method that has been researched is the implementation of screening tools, creation of hotlines and shelters, and advancement in resources for victims. This study will focus on the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program and its

effectiveness. This study addresses the effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment Program on managing domestic violence rates. The researchers are examining if the implementation of this screening tool had a significant impact. The study evaluates this by comparing domestic violence data from 2000-2022 in Virginia, with the Lethality Assessment being implemented in 2012. The research question for this study is has the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program had a significant impact on domestic violence rates?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) is to “educate society on intimate partner violence or domestic violence, specifically victim- survivors about risk factors for homicide. By evaluating the risk of homicide, law enforcement can connect victims with the appropriate resources and safety planning services. (*National Institute for Justice, 2015, para. 1*)” The Lethality Assessment Program evaluates the victim’s risk of lethality through an eleven-item questionnaire (*National Institute for Justice, 2015, para. 1-3*). The screening tool is used when “the officer believes that an assault or other violent act has occurred, not depending on arrest, or the officer is concerned for the victim’s safety once they leave the scene, or the officer has repeatedly responded to the location for domestic violence incidents, or the officer has a gut feeling that the victim is in danger” (*National Institute of Justice, 2015, para. 3*). If a victim presents as “high risk” then the referral process begins, connecting the victim with resources and organizations. Officers are encouraged to use this screening tool and resources as they determine it is necessary.

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to understand the impact the Lethality Assessment Program has had on domestic violence rates. This research will examine the rate of domestic violence pre- and post-implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program, for the state of Virginia. At this stage in the research, the Lethality Assessment Program will be

generally defined as the eleven- question screening tool used by law enforcement for predicting possible lethality, to identify domestic violence. The theory guiding this study is Albert Bandura's social learning theory which focuses on how individuals learn by observing behaviors. Bandura found a way of combining many psychological approaches into one. The social learning theory implies that humans learn behaviors from observational learning and modeling. However, this includes the live model observation, verbal instructions and symbolic models. Consequently, Bandura believed that the act of observation helps to model behavior, such as reading a book, watching the television, or social media. An individual may begin by imitating behavior and as it becomes a learned behavior, the individual may begin to model it. Therefore, if a young child is witnessing domestic violence, this theory would predict that the child will begin to reproduce the behaviors. While there are other theories for why domestic violence occurs, this is one of the most researched. There is a significant amount of support for the social learning theory, specifically on how the environment affects behaviors (Akers & Jennings, 2015, p.230-239). There is not one specific reason for why domestic violence occurs, but the social learning theory is a widely supported reason. Research on domestic violence and solutions to it are extremely limited. Therefore, there have been "best practices" put into effect by law enforcement, which have not been researched to evaluate the effectiveness, specifically the Lethality Assessment Program.

This quantitative comparative study will compare the Lethality Assessment Program implementation to the domestic violence rates for Virginia. The dependent variable is defined as the variable that can change due to the independent variable. In this study, the dependent variable would be the domestic violence rates, specifically pre- and post-implementation rates of the Lethality Assessment Program. The population evaluated in this study is those in Virginia. Virginia provides all crime data for the entire state. The independent variable is defined as the

variable that upon implementation is hypothesized to make a change or a difference in the outcome. In this study, the independent variable would be the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program into law enforcement and communities in Virginia in 2012. Therefore, the screening tool being put into place would be the variable that is hypothesized in this study to change the outcome of domestic violence rates. The researcher's objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment Program questionnaire in reducing domestic violence. The Lethality Assessment Program does this by identifying victims, providing resources, and charging offenders. Researching the effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment Program will help identify how the questionnaire is managing domestic violence rates and identifying any further resources required.

The Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) is a eleven-question screening tool used by law enforcement out in the field. It creates a standard response and referral protocol for law enforcement to comply with (Lethality Assessment Program, 2013). This study contributes to the existing knowledge of research statistics by identifying the development of the Lethality Assessment Program in comparison to statistics after the development of the Lethality Assessment Program. This study will examine the rates of domestic violence before and after the LAP to identify the effectiveness of the screening tool. The Lethality Assessment Program is a new development in the past 15 years resulting in minimal research on its effectiveness and how it plays a role in prosecution. The research on the Lethality Assessment Program does not have a comparative study of pre and post implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program.

However, a gap in the research is effective ways to measure and manage domestic violence. Domestic violence is a difficult variable to measure. This is due to crime that usually occurs privately within homes and the victim may be fearful to report it. Therefore, society can provide an estimate on how much domestic violence there is. However, there is no validated tool

to quantify domestic violence. Researchers implemented the Lethality Assessment Program as a screening tool to help identify victims of violence. There is no substantial research on how effective this program is and if victims are using this as a resource. Therefore, there should be more research whether the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program to identify if it is helping law enforcement identify victims, or if it has just become a routine measure that provides no benefits to identifying victims.

Significance of the Study

Domestic violence research has developed over the past thirty years due to an increase in awareness surrounding the issue (Stover, 2005, p. 448). In 2001, 691,710 nonfatal and 1,247 fatal acts of violence were committed in intimate partner relationships in the United States (Stover, 2005 p. 448). This accounts for 20% of the violence against women in 2001. Furthermore, Stover (2005, p. 448) found that 3 to 8 million children experience and witness violence in the United States each year. Presently, nearly 10 million people are affected by domestic violence a year (*National Coalition*, 2020, p.1). Consequently, there was a 42% increase in the number of victimizations between 2016 to 2018 (*National Coalition*, 2020, p. 1). With an increase in domestic violence, there could be many hypothesized variables affecting the rise in rates. Firstly, a variable that may have caused an increase is due to awareness surrounding domestic violence. With a higher level of awareness in the communities, it could lead to a higher number of incidents being reported. If society is more aware of the issue, then victims may be more likely to reach out for support and resources (*National Coalition*, 2020, p.1). Another variable that could have increased rates is the impact of COVID-19 on citizens at large. With more individuals unable to leave their homes, there could have been more conflict, which could have played a role in rising rates. As these are hypothesized variables that could have impacted rates, there is still a need for more research (*National Coalition*, 2020, p.1). Researching domestic violence is extremely important to combat it and find solutions.

When domestic violence is left unresolved it can create dangerous situations and increases the risk of the victim's injury or death (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 1). Domestic violence has a serious impact on the victim but can also affect those who witness it. A study by Mazza et al. (2021) found that a victim can experience differing negative effects after experiencing violence. For example, women who are in a reproductive age have been found to have poorer reproductive health, sexual health, and higher risks of obstetric and gynecologic complications (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 2). There can also be a negative effect on a woman's mental health, specifically after childbirth, making them more at risk for depression and substance abuse (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 2). Mental illnesses can be linked to many physical illnesses as well. Mazza et al. (2021) found that exposure to violence can contribute to a multitude of mental illnesses, exacerbate mental illness, and increase vulnerability to partner violence (para. 2). Given that, emotional violence can be extremely detrimental to an individual and is the most common type of violence across the world (Mazza et al., 2021, para 3). Therefore, there are numerous factors domestic violence such as financial, language, and legal status.

Exposure to violence not only has direct consequences on the victim but also those who witness it. Children can be witnesses to different violence in the home which can be detrimental for them (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 6). In childhood development, a child needs to have a primary attachment with their primary caregivers to develop a secure attachment. The development of a secure attachment happens during the infancy stage, when the child depends on the caregiver to meet all their needs. Therefore, when exposed to violence and hostility it makes it more difficult for the child to make a secure attachment to the caregiver. Even if a child does not witness violence, the knowledge of violence can be enough to cause harm, such as "internalizing symptoms, externalizing behaviors, having problems with perceptual and cognitive functioning, academic difficulties, and interpersonal difficulties" (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 6). Consequently,

a child exposed to domestic violence has a higher risk of physical and mental health disorders. The child is also at a higher risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of the same violent behaviors in the future. When domestic violence is present, there is also a chance that child abuse, neglect, or substance abuse is present in the household (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 6). With chances of abuse or neglect, it puts the child at an even higher risk of physical, mental, behavioral, and social difficulties in the future (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 6). Some physical health conditions that have been linked to exposure to violence in childhood are heart disease, stroke, asthma, diabetes, and mental distress (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 6). Mazza et al. (2021), found that victims of adverse childhood experiences usually get involved in domestic violence about 15 years later (para. 8). Exposure to violence is a variable researched to help create a deeper understanding of domestic violence.

A variable beginning in 2019 that may have played a role in the increase of domestic violence rates was the Coronavirus. The coronavirus spread across the world shutting down governments and countries. Due to the severity of the virus, there were mandatory lockdowns making it so that citizens were unable to leave their homes. Due to the lockdown individuals were locked in their home with their partners without any support or resources. Therefore, many researchers hypothesize that there were higher chances of domestic violence. However, there is still a need for research on the effects of coronavirus (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 13). Researchers have argued that due to “social isolation, exposure to economic and psychological stressors, increase in negative coping mechanisms, and inability to access health and social services” there may have been an increase in domestic violence rates (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 13). With the world shut down, including schools, children may have been more likely to be exposed to violence. There is still a significant need for research on domestic violence during the coronavirus, researchers have found that referral services declined (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 13).

Therefore, the chances that domestic violence was going unnoticed was higher (Mazza et al., 2021, para. 13). Coronavirus also made it more difficult to conduct research and get an accurate representation of domestic violence rates.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Domestic violence has been rising over the past fifty years due to societal changes on the perception of relationships and violence. In earlier history, societal practices supported men having complete and total control over women with there being no legal response for any violence within relationships and no support for victims (Goodmark, 2016, p.1). Presently, society is implementing new perspectives on relationships and with that also comes the difficulty of finding best practices and solutions to responding to problems of domestic violence. This shift did not begin to develop until society shifted their focus to becoming “tough on crime” (Goodmark, 2016, p. 2). Domestic violence has existed throughout history with no solutions to manage it. The Lethality Assessment Program was one of the first solutions in the development of managing domestic violence.

Theoretical Foundation

Domestic violence is a common crime, in which researchers have looked to discover theories surrounding it. Most of the time, an individual wants to know why an event occurs, specifically when it comes to intimate partner violence. There are some major theories surrounding this main framework behind domestic violence is the perspective that the victims are viewed in. The perspectives have been slowly shifting throughout history, providing a background for domestic violence research. These theories are important in explaining the behaviors of domestic violence to aid in solution production. As researchers, one must understand the process of how and why domestic violence may happen before being able to create solutions. Therefore, the shifts in theory throughout history are very important to the knowledge of domestic violence and the development of practices to help manage rates.

Feminism

One area that greatly impacted a change of perspective, creating a new outlook on theories in society was feminism. The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 was one of the first

major steps in addressing the state's priorities on domestic violence. This act provided legal services, greater funding, transitional housing, and other assistance offered to women who were victims. A professor, Catharine MacKinnon, constructed the theory of dominance feminism, which "contended that male domination of women in society, aided by the laws, had constructed women as sexual objects for the use of men " (Goodmark, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, the feminist ideology challenged the issues of sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence by men's assertion of dominance over women. Society had the stereotype that women were passive, weak, and powerless, therefore, the men looked to control them.

With this perspective surrounding women, wife beating was allowed and accepted in society. The first account of "wife beating" can be traced back to 753 B.C. (*History*, n.d., para. 2). In this society, wife beating was socially acceptable if the rod or stick being used for physical discipline was no wider than the base of a man's right thumb. This was referred to as the "the Rule of Thumb" (*History*, n.d., para 2). This method of control continued to be accepted until 1871, when Alabama and Massachusetts reformed the law to make wife beating illegal. This reform started conversations about wife beating and started a movement to prohibit wife beating across the United States. In 1962, domestic violence cases were transferred from Criminal court to Family court in New York. This made it difficult to penalize a perpetrator criminally for domestic violence (*History*, n.d., para. 2). It was not until 1972 that the first emergency rape crisis line was established. In 1975 the Abused Women's Aid in Crisis was established. Around 1976, the first domestic violence shelters began to open and by 1983 there were over 700 shelters in the United States (*History*, n.d., para. 2).

Johnson's Typology

From these societal perspectives, some major theories were developed around domestic violence. Michael Johnson (2016) theorized his ideas of violence typology in the 1990s (Ali et

al., 2016, p. 18). Johnson proposed that there could be patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence. It was not until later that he developed different types of intimate partner violence, including Coercive Controlling Violence, Violent Resistance, Situational Couple Violence, Mutual Violent Control Violence, and Separation-Instigated Violence. Johnson argued that the central principle to these events was the pattern of behaviors in a relationship (Ali et al., 2016, p. 18).

The violence resistance typology is used when the “victim of violence resists from a coercive controlling partner” (Ali et al., 2016, p. 18). This type of violence has also been used to describe the results of resistance due to battered women syndrome. Violence resistance refers to the violence caused by a victim standing up to a perpetrator that is violent to stop it (Ali et al., 2016, p. 18). Therefore, this violence is reactive and usually short due to the resistance behind it. These acts are usually not planned and begin abruptly after a perpetrator has experienced negative emotions. Due to the reactivity of this violence, these events usually end worse for the victim, and the method to protect themselves is ineffective. Ali et al. (2016), states that the victims are twice as likely to sustain injury as those who do not use this violence (p. 18). Researchers also point out the limitations of violent resistance research, specifically on male’s restrictive behavior (Ali et al., 2016, p. 18).

Mutual violent control violence occurs “when both partners are violent and controlling towards each other” (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19). This violence is very rare; therefore, it is not well researched and can affect about 4% of intimate partner relationships (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19). Mutual control violence needs significantly more research. The last type of violence in Johnson’s typology is separation- instigated violence. This type of violence occurs “in couples who are in the process of separation and divorce” (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19). This type of violence can occur in relationships that do not usually have a history of violence and can be triggered by the trauma

of separation. The trauma of separation can be due to the loss of psychological control that an individual may be facing. Therefore, the individual facing psychological loss and negative emotions is more likely to become the perpetrator in the situation. Separation-instigated violence does not usually increase in frequency and is usually limited to a few outbursts. Consequently, Johnson's typologies focus on the control in a relationship which can cause outburst of violence (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19).

From Johnson's theory of separation-instigated violence, Janet Johnston studied the different types of motivations for violence. Firstly, episodic male battering is initiated by a male against a partner (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19). This violence can range from moderate to severe consequences and is due to high conflicts in separating families. When the event becomes severe, it is usually due to a loss of control. Secondly, is separation-engendered violence which occurs "during or after the separation period with no violence during the marriage itself" (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19). Ali et al. (2016) finds that this type of violence is present in 25% of divorcing families due to a partner feeling abandoned or other negative associated feelings (p. 19). Thirdly, is the male controlling interactive violence which is caused from verbal arguments that escalate into physical altercations. Therefore, violence can be initiated by either party and creates dangerous situations. This is present in 20% of divorcing families (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19). Lastly, there are psychotic and paranoid reactions. This motivating factor for domestic violence has not been researched thoroughly and conclusions cannot be made from it (Ali et al., 2016, p. 19). There can be different motivating factors for violence in a separation.

Holtzwoth-Munroe's Typology

The classic view of domestic violence revolves around the male being the perpetrator and the female being the victim. Therefore, Holtzwoth-Munroe's typology focuses on the distinguishing factors of the perpetrator rather than the violence itself. This typology is broken

down into four parts: family only, dysphoria- borderline, low level anti-social perpetrators and generally violent- antisocial men (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Like most parts there is significant research needed on these typologies. A family only perpetrator is placed in the moderately violent offender group due to being less likely to exercise severe and frequent violence, specifically outside of the home, engage in criminal behavior, and display traits of a personality disorder (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Therefore, it is argued that family only perpetrators are less likely to have substance abuse problems, but they are more likely to engage in psychological and sexual abuse rather than physical abuse. A family only perpetrator relies on non-violent abuse patterns to control the victim. This perpetrator can be found in 50% of perpetrating populations (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20).

Dysphoric borderline perpetrators are the second typology of perpetrators, who usually engage in moderate to severe violence. These individuals are usually violent towards their partner and show some violence outside of the home. These individuals may be involved in physical violence, psychological or sexual abuse (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Dysphoric borderline's main difference is how the individual displays traits of dysphoria or borderline personality disorder (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). For example, an individual can become distressed, jealous, angry, or have many different negatively associated emotions quickly which can cause an eruption in behavior that is unpredictable. An individual who classifies as a dysphoric borderline perpetrator may have substance use. This can be found in 25% of perpetrating individuals (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Due to the level of frustration this individual may feel, they may resort to severe violence.

The most violent form of domestic violence perpetrators are generally violent and antisocial batterers. These batterers engage in "frequent and severe intrafamilial violence, including psychological and sexual abuse" (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Therefore, these individuals

are more likely to use weapons and continue to engage in criminal behavior. This violence results in severe injury to the victim. The perpetrator may also be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder and will usually have substance abuse problems. Generally violent and antisocial batterers are found in 25 to 30% of the population (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Lastly, there are the low level anti-social batters which encapsulate the moderate perpetrators who show moderate family violence and criminal behavior. This type of batterer was added in 2000 and is not fully supported by researchers. Holtzwoth-Munroe's theory differs from others by focusing on the identifying characteristics of the perpetrator instead of the violence (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20).

Jacobson and Gottman's Typology

Jacobson and Gottman's typology is another form of classifying domestic violence. His typology specifically examines physiological changes in male perpetrators who resort to using violence. Jacobson and Gottman used a consistent definition of violence to examine male partner's use of violence in different groups (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). From this it was concluded that perpetrators could be classified into two different types: cobras and pitbulls. Cobras exhibit physiological changes including a decrease in heart rate when in a verbal argument, and were more antisocial, aggressive, and violent. Pitbulls exhibit physiological changes including an increase in heart rate, while maintaining moderate levels of violence and are less likely to be involved in criminal behavior (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Jacobson and Gottman found that both pitbulls and cobras centered around controlling the victim. Societal stereotypes center around the idea of males being the perpetrator, however, women can be the perpetrator as well. Ali et al. (2016) argues that research suggests the rates of violence may even be the same between males and females (p. 20).

Swan and Snow's Typology

Swan and Snow's typology examine women who use violence. This categorizes women into three different subtypes: victims, abused aggressors, and mixed relationships (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Firstly, are victims which refers to the women is a victim of a violent event to respond with violence. For example, a woman who is in a domestic violent relationship and has experienced severe physical, sexual, or verbal violence, who then responds to a situation with violence, usually classified as self-defense (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20). Secondly, is the classification of the aggressor where the women are more violent than their partner. The woman may be the perpetrator in the relationship and have coercive, controlling behaviors over the victim. The primary motivating factor behind this is control. Lastly, is the classification of mixed relationships which is a combination aggressors and victims. This subtype accounts for over 50% of women perpetrators in domestic violence. However, researchers and societal perspectives tend to view women's acts of violence as a response to other behaviors (Ali et al., 2016, p. 20).

Miller and Meloy's Typology

Miller and Meloy's typology are centered around women's behaviors and responses creating domestic violence incidents. These researchers proposed three different categories that women can be classified as being perpetrators of domestic violence, including generalized violent behavior, frustration response behavior, and defensive behavior (Ali et al., 2016, p. 21). Generalized violent behavior are women who are violent in nature and may participate in criminal behaviors throughout life. However, these women do not usually possess control over the victims. Secondly, the frustration response behavior which women who use violence to respond to a history of abuse in a violent manner (Ali et al., 2016, p. 21). Lastly, defensive behavior is where women use violence as a form of self-defense. One example of this is when a woman is trying to protect their children from the perpetrator. This type of response can be extremely dangerous as the perpetrator then reacts to the violence, usually with escalating

behavior (Ali et al., 2016, p. 21). This can also make it difficult for law enforcement to identify the roles of everyone in a relationship.

There are different reasons why abusers feel the need to control their victims. Some families may be more at risk of domestic violence. For example, a family in which a child witnessed domestic violence behavior may be more at risk of becoming a perpetrator, due to the learned behavior of being violent (Huecker et al., 2023, para. 2). Secondly, someone may feel the need to control due to cultural beliefs. In many cultures around the world, the societal norm is that the man has rights to control the women as she is seen as property. The male “owns” her and can do what he wants (Huecker et al., 2023, para. 14). Therefore, the idea of using violence to control someone is accepted and encouraged in cultures. The marriage symbolizes the permission to be in total control and have ownership over a woman, societal perspectives have begun to disapprove violence and the idea of having a significant other as property, to a perspective where women have personal freedoms and equal rights (Huecker et al., 2023, para. 14). This causes abusers to commit abuse for other reasons. One reason directly reflects on the abusers' personal feelings or beliefs including anger management, jealousy, low self-esteem, feeling inferior, or any other negative feelings (Huecker et al., 2023, para 26). When an individual is feeling negatively about themselves, they use learned behaviors to cope such as violence. The perpetrator may feel the need to commit violence to combat these negative feelings to create feelings of power and strength. Secondly, a perpetrator may commit violence can be due to mental illnesses or substance abuse disorders. An individual struggling with a personality disorder or psychological disorder may be prone to violence. If an individual is using substances, impairment may cause them to be more violent and lean towards domestic violence. There are infinite reasons why domestic violence occurs; however, some individuals may be more at risk than others (Huecker et al., 2023, para. 27).

Related Literature

Awareness of domestic violence continues to increase, and resources are used. The Coalitions Against Domestic Violence started to be founded across the country and news organizations began covering these topics to spread awareness. In 1993, the United Nations recognized domestic violence as an international human rights issue and adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (*History*, n.d., para. 2). Beginning in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act was created which recognized that domestic violence and sexual assault were crimes in the United States. This act also provided funding for domestic violence resources and later many states added stalking as a crime to the act. The Office on Violence Against Women was created in 1995 (*US*, 2022). The Office on Violence Against Women worked to create grant programs and legislation, including four formula programs to help combat domestic violence. Efforts were focused on transitional housing, crisis intervention and direct services, legal assistance and training for court and law enforcement (*History*, n.d., para. 2). Throughout the 2000s laws were added and changed regarding domestic violence, including topics like sexual assault and child protective services involvement. It was not until 2019, that the “boyfriend loophole” was closed in the Violence Against Women Act. This “prohibited those convicted of abusing, assaulting, or stalking a current or former dating partner from owning a firearm” (*History*, n.d., para. 2). Laws are constantly changing to reflect violence and provide more protection for victims.

Risk Factors

Risk factors can vary from individual, relationship, community, educational, and societal. There have been links found between education and domestic violence (Mead et al., 2010, para. 6). Research has also made conclusions on childhood abuse leading to becoming a perpetrator of domestic violence. Pathological adaptation is due to witnessing abuse and violence within the

family, and learning the behavior (Mead et al., 2010, para. 1). A child who has learned that violence is a resolution to conflict, will then act in a way that mirrors that. Therefore, the opposite may be true, in which children who witness domestic violence or abuse may be more likely to become victims as adults. Research has found that “females who witness domestic violence as children are more likely to be victimized by their spouses” (Hueckner et al., 2023, para. 30). Consequently, men who have learned to disrespect females and view them as inferior are more likely to abuse their spouses. While there may be societal norms for domestic violence, this can happen to anyone despite gender or race. Accordingly, domination can happen to anyone and can be emotional, physical, or sexual abuse (Hueckner et al., 2023, para. 30). Therefore, abusers may be victims of violence and may use violence due to learned behavior.

Brain Response

Not only is there an emotional response to domestic violence, but there are also changes in the chemistry of the brain of the victim. Everyone will experience and perceive a situation differently and the brain will rewire itself due to the perceptions of the individual. Therefore, if children experience violence, the brain may perceive it differently than another child may (Mead et al., 2010, para.2). The sympathetic and parasympathetic systems control how individuals perceive and respond to everyday experiences. This controls the fight, flight, or freeze response. When a person experiences a traumatic event, there may be different neurotransmitters and hormones released to cope with the situation. Therefore, there are biological reasons why victims go back to their abusers beginning in childhood. A child who is exposed to violence may become conditioned to hostile, aggressive behaviors (Mead et al., 2010, para. 3). Therefore, the brain begins to adapt to these behaviors and the response it elicits. The body and brain get used to being in the fight, flight, or freeze response and then consequently, the brain wants to maintain the same response. Neurotransmitters are part of the adaptation process, making it physically

difficult for a victim to leave a violent relationship. For example, oxytocin, which is linked to sensory nerves, creates a bond between the victim and the abuser (Mead et al., 2010, para. 3).

The three major neurotransmitters that are affected are dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin.

Dopamine

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter located in the brain that travels through three major pathways. Dopamine projects through the brain starting in the ventral tegmental area and the substantia nigra (Mead et al., 2010, para. 33). It then follows the mesolimbic pathway to the anterior cingulate and medial prefrontal cortex. The mesolimbic pathway is responsible for “reward response, approach motivation, and emotion” (Mead et al., 2010, para. 33). Dopamine transmission starting in the substantia nigra is responsible for the fight/ flight response from the nervous system. Therefore, research has shown that adverse environments, specifically violent environments, “can induce long term down regulation of dopamine activity” (Mead et al., 2010, para. 35). Therefore, this elicits higher responses to stress and behaviors. However, after consistent repeat exposure to the same stimuli, dopamine production is reduced, leading to chronic stress (Mead et al., 2010, para. 35). Researchers argue that stressful environments can induce impulsive behavior. Dopamine reinforces behaviors and is responsible for the fight or flight response.

Norepinephrine

Norepinephrine is a neurotransmitter involved in the sympathetic nervous system. Norepinephrine is a neurotransmitter in the pons and the medulla. Norepinephrine is involved in the general arousal system and stimulates the sympathetic nervous system. This neurotransmitter reinforces behavior, and inhibits higher activation of the prefrontal cortex, leading to higher cognition (Mead et al., 2010, para. 42). Norepinephrine is released during a stressful environment enhances classical conditioning. When the sympathetic nervous system is

stimulated, physiological changes include increases in heart rate, vision improvements, increased airflow, slowed digestion and urine output (Alshak, 2023, para. 3). The sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for physical activity and initiates the fight or flight response (Alshak, 2023, para. 3).

Serotonin

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter located in the brainstem that travels through the central nervous system and is linked to anxiety and depression. Serotonin is involved with detecting conflict in goals, monitoring punishment and non-rewarding stimuli. Therefore, avoidance behaviors can be present (Mead et al., 2010, para. 56). Serotonin is an important neurotransmitter that helps to control mood in the brain. When it is affected, it can create mental health disorders and depressive episodes. This in turn influences the individual and how they live. A victim may not see an escape from an abusive relationship and end up staying in it (Mead et al., 2010, para. 56).

When a violent situation occurs, it triggers these neurotransmitters, and the sympathetic nervous system is activated with the immediate goal being survival. The nervous system triggers these systems within seconds and the state of homeostasis is disturbed. When homeostasis is disturbed, especially in childhood, there are biological changes in the brain. For example, children who have experienced or witnessed violence have elevated levels of cortisol (Mead et al., 2010, para. 67). Therefore, the duration and type of violence also contribute to brain functioning. However, neglected children do not show signs of elevated cortisol. Children who have experienced violence are more likely to have higher cortisol reactivity, meaning their bodies tend to stay in the fight-or-flight response. Research has found that those who have experienced violence as a child have higher cortisol levels, only if they were experiencing psychiatric symptoms, specifically post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. If the brain has

higher cortisol levels, then hormones and energy are being released to the organs for survival (Mead et al., 2010, para. 68). This means that the body is working harder to protect itself and function. With the body being in an elevated state it has negative impacts on the cardiovascular, nervous, immune, and circulatory systems (Mead et al., 2010, para. 69). When under stress, the hippocampus becomes involved in regulating the stress response. Therefore, early exposure to violence can negatively impact development in the brain. The hippocampus can be negatively impacted due to stress exposure. The hippocampus regulates stress response and under acute stress hippocampal functions are enhanced. One enhanced function is memory, but after 30 minutes of stress memory begins to deteriorate. After prolonged periods of stress, learning and memory are negatively impacted causing memory loss. The prefrontal cortex can also be negatively affected due to stressors (Mead et al., 2010, para 92). Damage to the prefrontal cortex can cause problems in executive functioning causing misinterpretations, deficits in inhibition, and aggressive behavior (Mead et al., 2010, para. 92). Therefore, cognitive and motor planning, integrating and evaluating emotional information can also be affected. While there is still research needed, these biological changes could become permanent due to prolonged violence.

Startle Response

Another biological adaptation to violence that can present is the startle response. The startle response is defined as “an involuntary physiological reaction to unexpected and abrupt stimuli, which facilitates interruption of ongoing behavior assumption of a protective body posture” (Mead et al., 2010, para. 99). These responses usually tend to increase in those who have post-traumatic stress disorder. Those who have experienced violence have higher startle responses. The brain begins to develop in utero from the bottom up, and continues through infancy, childhood, and young adulthood (Mead et al., 2010, para. 99). This is due to biological adaptation to life-threatening stimuli that causes the body to remain in a defensive state (Mead et

al., 2010, para. 99). However, research has been unable to determine if this is a short-term or long-term adaptation. As the brain develops, it can be easily modified by stressors and violence.

Virginia Law

Virginia state law defines domestic violence as “a pattern of behavior and method of control, in which a hierarchy of power is established in which one partner dominates the other through physical or psychological violence” (para. 1). There are five different categories for family violence that the abuse could be categorized as: physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, economic control, and neglect. In Virginia, two laws encapsulate domestic violence, 18.2-57.2 and 18.2- 60. There are other charges that may be used to charge an offender, but these two are the main laws surrounding domestic violence in Virginia. The first law which is Code 18:2-57.2, which encapsulates the assault and battery charges against a family or household member. This law makes it illegal to wound or cause bodily injury by assault and battery against family or household members. However, there are some circumstances that can be deemed assault and battery by discretion of law enforcement. This law also gives the court the ability to order an emergency protective order for a victim. The second law is Code 18.2-60 which protects against communication, threats, and stalking done written or orally. This protects victims from the defendant communicating with the victim. The law can be enforced wherever the communications were written or received. Therefore, this law encapsulates all non-physical aspects of domestic violence. For example, this is the area of the law that would protect against controlling behavior of a perpetrator, such as emotional violence.

The Lethality Assessment Program was introduced into Virginia in 2012, requiring law enforcement to use it in all possible domestic violence-related situations. The Lethality Assessment Program was a “nationally recognized model developed by the Maryland Network to End Domestic Violence in 2005” (*Virginia*, n.d., p.1). This urged law enforcement agencies to

collaborate more with domestic violence agencies and created more awareness surrounding the issue of domestic violence. Law enforcement officers use the Lethality Assessment as a screening tool for possible domestic violence. When the officer responds to a call that could be a potential domestic violence victim, the officer is required to ask the victim if they are willing to respond to a set of questions. The series of eleven questions will then be asked to the victim and based off the responses the victim will be assessed for danger, being categorized as high risk or low risk. This screening tool is used to predict the possibility of lethality due to domestic violence incidents. If the victim is identified as high risk, the officer must call the domestic violence agency and connect the victim with resources. However, if the officer responds to any potential domestic violence, the officer can also distribute resources as needed. The Lethality Assessment Program recognizes and creates awareness for domestic violence, while connecting victims to resources (Virginia, n.d., p.1-12).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Domestic violence is a crime that has existed for centuries, is difficult to manage, and is under researched. A review of the literature on domestic violence and intimate partner violence

suggests as much. This review includes definitions, history, theories, biological aspects, and laws surrounding domestic violence. A review of the Lethality Assessment Program was completed including its history, examination of the questionnaire and procedures, and legislation in the state of Virginia. The Lethality Assessment Program was enacted into the state of Virginia's law in 2012 mandating each police department to use the questionnaire as a screening tool. This study is to test if the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program in the State of Virginia affected domestic violence rates. One could argue that domestic violence rates would see an initial spike due to implementation, then decrease due to connecting victims with resources. This study will examine how impactful the Lethality Assessment Program is and if it is making a difference in domestic violence rates. Examining this is important because the more information there is about domestic violence, there can be more methods to combat it. The independent variable in this study would be the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program. The dependent variable is the variable that could be affected due to the implementation of the independent variable which would be the domestic violence rates in the State of Virginia.

Design

The study of this design examines the domestic violence rates pre and post Lethality Assessment Program implementation. Throughout the study the population used for data retrieval, which was the state of Virginia, remains constant and unchanged to help better understand the impact of the independent variable. Therefore, the researcher can examine the rates of domestic violence and compare the difference in the means. Specifically for this study, the amount of time would be evaluated pre and post-implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program. The researcher will be studying two (2) time periods: 2001-2011 (pre) and 2012-2022 (post), a consistent of 10 years' worth of data to examine. This research is limited to the state of Virginia, in which the State Police use the same methods to collect data annually. The dependent

variable is the levels of domestic violence, which in this study will include data from the “Crimes against persons” (*Virginia State, 2001*) including homicide, forcible sex offenses, assault offenses, and nonforcible sex offenses in which the relationship is spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends, and ex-spouses. The independent variable, the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program, will be defined as the eleven-question screening tool used to help law enforcement identify potential victims of domestic violence which was implemented into the state of Virginia in 2012. The explanatory variable is the variable that upon implementation can cause an effect on the study, which in this study would be the Lethality Assessment Program. These relationships are also known as *intimate relationships* or partners. For this study, domestic violence will be violence against a person from a spouse or *partner*.

This study is an experimental design that specifically examines the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program on domestic violence rates. An experimental design was chosen because it identifies, or not, the effect that the program might or might not have. This occurs because the researcher examines the differences between control group, or pre-lethality Assessment Program period and the experimental group, or the post –Lethality Assessment Program. This would determine if the Lethality Assessment Program is associated with decreased domestic violence rates. Accordingly, inferential statistics by way of a t-test may determine this by comparing the pre and post-data. This method in criminal justice is often referred to as the Bayesian analysis of crime rates, which specifically focuses on the period before a crime intervention and the time after an intervention to determine its effectiveness (Willemain, 1978, p.1). A paired t-test will be used to test the two groups to determine if the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program is effective in decreasing domestic violence rates (*Glossary, 2022, p.1*). Researchers used the data set to output the descriptive statistics in SPSS. Descriptive statistics give a clear summary of the data by using different

measures. This then helps researchers to have a deeper understanding of the data and find abnormalities or patterns in the dataset. The mean and standard deviation was found for domestic violence incidents to help the researcher understand the data set, the population, specifically looking for the distribution of data and the average of the populations. This showed researchers any possible variable that could have affected the outcome of the study. Therefore, researchers can examine trends and the significance of the data to make conclusions on the research question. Therefore, the researchers can see the trends and patterns based off descriptive statistics. These statistics give a deeper understanding of the data sets including the distribution and averages which give the researcher data to stand behind the conclusions. This then can let researchers account for any variables which strengthen the conclusions and account for any weaknesses.

After finding the descriptive statistics then the researcher can begin the analysis. The researcher executed a paired t-test analysis with a .05 confidence interval and data was recorded. A .05 confidence interval means that there is a 95% chance of being correct. Therefore, in statistics, this is used to examine significance and make conclusions. As it is a small interval, it suggests to the researcher that if the test was run again, it would yield the same results. Therefore, it can be assumed that the test is *reliable*. The researcher will document the results and complete them for pre and post Lethality Assessment Program implementation.

Participants and Setting

The level of analysis is the citizens of Virginia because every law enforcement agency is required to use the questionnaire in any possible domestic violence situations (*Jason, n.d., p. 1*). The data in this study will examine those citizens who have reported domestic violence to law enforcement. Data sets were collected from the Virginia State Police's DART program, collected by the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) section through Incident Based Reporting

system (IBR). The UCR provides strict definitions and guidelines for categorizing crimes. The UCR also requires that each crime associated with the incident be reported through the IBR no matter the severity of the crime. Virginia State Police (2001) provides the definitions used for the data and full demographic information on the different crimes (p. 16). The data sets used in the pre-Lethality Assessment Program period were from 2000 through 2011 and the data sets used in the post-Lethality Assessment Program per periods 2012 through 2022. Each police department in Virginia must report crime data each year to the DART program to be analyzed for the entire state (Virginia, 2001, p. 9).

This study is an experimental design that examines the impact that the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program has on domestic violence rates. An experimental design was chosen because it specifically examines the relationship between the two time periods – before and after the implementation of the LAP. This may identify if the Lethality Assessment Program is associated with decreased domestic violence rates. Accordingly, a t-test may determine the relationship between the Lethality Assessment Program and domestic violence rates by comparing the pre and post-data. This method in criminal justice is often referred to as the Bayesian analysis of crime rates, which specifically focuses on the period before a crime intervention and the time after an intervention to determine its effectiveness (Willemain, 1978, p.1). A paired t-test will be used to test the two groups to determine if the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program is effective in decreasing domestic violence rates (*Glossary*, 2022, p.1). Therefore, researchers can examine trends and significance of the statistics to be able to make a conclusion. The researcher does this when they must find the difference in means between the two data sets. The researcher takes the means and subtracts them to find the absolute difference, in which they can then divide the standard deviation to get the standardized mean difference (*Mean*, n.d., p. 1). This test was chosen to find the differences between the

experimental group and the control group to understand the effect of the independent variable. The researcher of this study used the data set to output the descriptive statistics in SPSS, helping the reader to simplify the data to promote deeper understanding. For example, the data is easier to comprehend when it is simplified, such as using the means, which can help the reader to understand the data. The mean and standard deviation was found for domestic violence incidents. These are used to understand the data and population of the study. These statistics give a deeper understanding of the data sets and give the researcher data to stand behind on the conclusions. The descriptive statistics show the reader the population that was tested, specifically race and gender. Statistics on race and gender are important for the research to help identify any variables that may have affected the data. The researcher must address the variables that could have had an effect on the study to make the argument stronger. One must address a counterargument to have a stronger argument. Readers can compare the victims and offenders' race and gender demographics to promote a deeper understanding of the study. It also informs the researcher of the population that was tested. Firstly, the researcher must create the hypothesis and the null hypothesis. If a paired t-test is significant then the researcher will reject the null hypothesis based on the confidence interval. A paired t-test analysis with a .05 confidence interval was executed trying to find the differences in means between before and after implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program. A .05 confidence interval means that there is a 95% chance of the difference explaining the relationship. This confidence interval gives the researcher a way to ground the arguments, along with addressing the counterarguments and variables that could have played a role in the study. This finding is used to examine significance and make conclusions. The researcher will document the results and complete them for pre and post Lethality Assessment Program implementation.

Table 1

Gender Demographics for People Victimized (Average Number of Subjects)

	Pre-LAP 2001-2011	Post-LAP 2012-2022
Male	13295.55	10,266.91
Female	10042.73	9,790.36

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Table 2

Race Demographics for People Victimized (Average Number of Subjects)

	Pre-LAP 2001-2011	Post-LAP 2012-2022
White	12,953.45	10,710
Black	9,536	9,396.18
Am. Indian/ Alaskn	39.45	29.73
Asian/ Pacific Isl..	372.27	327.36
Unknown	3707.82	225.36

Copyright by Virginia State Police

Table 3

Gender Demographics for People who Offended (Average Number of Subjects)

	Pre-LAP 2001-2011	Post-LAP 2012-2022
Male	22,029.18	15,027.09
Female	3,131.82	2,764.27

Copyright by Virginia State Police

Table 4

Race Demographics for People who Offended (Average Number of Subjects)

	Pre-LAP 2001-2011	Post-LAP 2012-2022
White	9,748.09	7,494.36
Black	15,298.09	9,752.09

Am. Indian/ Alaskan	13.73	10.55
Asian/ Pacific Isl.	165.36	135.09
Unknown	450.36	256.55

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Table 6

Pre- Lethality Assessment Program Implementation (2001-2011) Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Domestic Violence Incidents	11	1273.00	2475.00	1686.6364	464.46642
Total Crime Incidents	11	12745.00	15670.00	14634.5455	1005.96505
Valid N (Years)	11				

Table 7

Post Lethality Assessment Program Implementation (2012-2022) Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Domestic Violence Incidents	11	1060.00	4101.00	2476.5455	1212.57473
Total Crime Incidents	11	12674.00	17165.00	14010.0000	1291.69168
Valid N (Years)	11				

Sampling Error and Confidence Interval - Population

Research Question

RQ1: Has the implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program caused a reduction in domestic violence rates?

Hypothesis

H₀ 1: The implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program was associated with a statistically significant decrease in domestic violence rates.

H_a 1: The implementation of the Lethality Assessment Program was not associated with a statistically significant decrease in domestic violence rates.

Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) monitors ethics in research. Therefore, the completion of this application was necessary for this study. This study uses archival data from Virginia State Police, specifically found through the Data Analysis Reporting Team (DART). Therefore, the data was protected and there was no personal information reported. Therefore, consent is not necessary and those involved in the crimes have their identities protected. Consequently, there were no ethical concerns, and an IRB waiver was obtained during this study.

The researcher found the archival data through the Virginia State Polices website, under the DART division. Under the DART division, there is all crime data for the years 2000-2022 presented as the crime report. These statistics are presented by the Uniform Crime Report who is responsible for tracking crime data nationwide using the Federal Bureau of Investigations (*Crime*, para 1). From the data, the researcher used the violent crime rates and statistics to form data tables in Excel. For this study, the researcher specifically used violent crime rates to test the effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment Program in reducing domestic violence rates. The researcher used the previously defined definitions to find the domestic violence rates. However, in some of the data sets, robbery was included in violent crime rates. Therefore, the researcher was aware and deducted those rates from the total to prevent any inaccuracies. The researcher then put the data sets into IBM's SPSS statistical analysis software for an analysis of the data. This data then yielded results which were recorded and analyzed. The researcher found that the p-value after a two-tailed t-test was $p=0.0573$, which means that the p-value was greater than .05, making the test not statistically significant and the test fails to reject the null hypothesis. The researcher hypothesized that the data would not show a statistically significant decrease in the rates of domestic violence. Consequently, this research does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the Lethality Assessment Program is influencing the population of Virginia. This is due to the nature of the Lethality Assessment Program and how it is being used. For

example, victims are in a vulnerable state when being assessed, therefore, the victim may be scared to tell the truth or may be unable to. It may also be argued that eleven-questions is not nearly enough to develop a glimpse of the relationship and the abuse that may be happening. However, the Lethality Assessment Program has connected more victims and law enforcement with the proper resources. Therefore, there is significantly more research needed on domestic violence, specifically the Lethality Assessment Program.

t-Test: Two-Tailed

	<i>Pre- LAP</i>	<i>Post- LAP</i>
Mean	1686.6363	2476.5455
Variance	215729.055	1470337.47
Observations	11	11
Pooled Variance	843033.264	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	20	
t Stat	-2.0176	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0573	
t Critical two-tail	2.0859	

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 30, 2024

Madison Jordan
Douglas Orr

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23-24-1837 Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Lethality Assessment Program in Combatting Domestic Violence

Dear Madison Jordan and Douglas Orr,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research because it will not involve the collection of identifiable, private information from or about living individuals (45 CFR 46.102).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

For a PDF of your IRB letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.