

SUPPORT SYSTEMS: THE EFFECT THEY HAVE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
VICTIMS

by

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ABSTRACT

In the last five years, domestic violence has escalated in the number of episodes reported and in the severity of violence. Researchers attribute this increased frequency and severity to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown time of the pandemic, victims and their abusers could not escape from arguments, which resulted in tensions rising. This study brings attention to the fact that domestic violence is still a pervasive problem. It gives information to help the abused stay out of violent relationships and/or escape. There was conflicting research on whether support systems help victims of these violent relationships escape or stay in abuse. The focus of this study was to clarify the experiences of participants who have been abused and how those who escaped did so, focusing on what effect support systems had on them compared to those still in abuse. Data was gathered through surveys filled out by 17 females who were in abusive relationships and survivors over 18 years of age. The data collected found that most participants had generalized support, meaning it was inconsistent or they had no support at all from growing up and entering abuse. One theme revealed that most sought social support after leaving the abusive relationship, with a few noting having positive support after leaving. Another theme revealed that social support was not a significant factor in leaving, but rather, an individual epiphany moment was the most cited reason for leaving. Lastly, support systems did appear to be a factor in entering abuse, but leaving abuse appeared to be an individual experience. A limitation of the current study was that participants were dichotomously separated (abused who left and abused who stayed); future research can research support systems of never abused in comparison.

Keywords: Domestic violence, abuse, support systems

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation, first and foremost, to my Savior. All thanks go to The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit for keeping me encouraged and for getting my focus on track and keeping it there.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my daughters Elizabeth and Hannah, to my son-in-law Marcus, and to my grandchildren Chloe, Joseph, and Hayden. I am thankful that they have helped to keep my nose to the grindstone, for giving me distractions when I needed them, and for helping me know how strong The Holy Spirit can be within me, without me, and all around me. I am eternally grateful for all the love.

I dedicate this dissertation to my friends (Mrs. Joann, Nicole, Joslyn, Mr. Roger, Gayle, and Tomekia) and the ones who did not even know me, who have prayed for me, the participants who gave their time to fill out my survey, and people who kept me encouraged. To Dawn and Tina, I know I can pick up the phone today, and you will answer. To Jeremy and Tyler, you will never know how God has used you, and what an inspiration you have been to me and mine.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

On September 14, 2015, Amy Prentiss walked into the bathroom at her residence and took a shower. When she stepped out of the bathroom, her live-in boyfriend shot her between the eyes, and she was instantaneously taken from this earth (Dworznik, 2016; Leach, 2016). While reviewing the case, the FBI seized all of Amy's electronics and found pictures she had saved in her phone of bruises her boyfriend had inflicted. It was later noted that Amy had texted her daughter and told her she was leaving her boyfriend for good this time (she had left a few times previously, only to return at his pleading, stating he would never do it again, and he would change). The question that has eluded family, friends, and professionals for years is: Why do women stay? Throughout the years, there have been many answers to this question, with the most repeated answer being that the victims have low self-esteem, feel they love the individual abusing them, and feel they have no way of escaping (Correa et al., 2020). For this research proposal, the feeling of having no way to run was looked at more closely through the lens of support systems. Can support systems help women feel more secure in their effort to escape their violent relationships? In this paper, a literature review was conducted on the most recent information provided on domestic violence and domestic violence in relation to support systems. A biblical view of domestic violence and support systems is given. Additionally, the reasoning behind the research on domestic violence victims and their support systems, the projected participants, the materials to be used, and the research project process were documented.

Background

The definition of domestic violence has evolved among researchers over the years. Initially, it was defined as a physically violent act against a spouse (Sack, 2004). The original definition and thought process also included that, to some point, women were also to blame for the abuse (Sack, 2004). These female victims were thought to have pushed their predators' buttons, fought back, and did not leave the relationship, so they must have wanted to be there (Sack, 2004). In many of these situations, even when the female victims called the police, they did not press charges against their abusers. The women would cry to the police officers and often stated that it was just a misunderstanding (Sack, 2004). Bonamigo et al. (2021) define domestic violence as any act against a significant other that results in negative physiological or psychological consequences. Farr (2021) goes even deeper with her definition, stating that abuse is when one partner uses manipulation to gain power over and control their significant other; this includes spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, financial, and sexual control. Hegarty et al. (2017) state that even though the definition of abuse has broadened to include not just physical but psychological and sexual acts, many of the intake forms used by professionals in emergency rooms, doctor's offices, and hospitals do not retain these forms of abuse. Heyman et al. (2020) continue the discussion by stating that community services should have family maltreatment forms available for people to fill out voluntarily so that domestic violence can be identified by self-report by those willing to fill out the forms.

Positive social support systems are thought to be a necessary vital part of a victim coming into a mind frame of being able to leave a violent relationship (Hoff, 2016;

Katerndahl et al., 2013). They are also thought necessary to help a victim leave the violence and stay out of it. The literature that has been written also states that these victims need a new mindset that allows them to believe they are worthy enough not to be in an abusive situation and that they can make it out and stay out one step at a time. The focus of this research project was to identify if victims needing a new mindset is true in the participant's processes and if a positive social support system has helped victims get to the point where they have obtained the right mindset to get out and stay out of their abusive situation.

The research that has been done identifies several reasons why women stay in abusive situations. It is becoming less popular to blame women for staying in these abusive relationships (Sack, 2004). Research has shown that women are afraid to leave (Hoff, 2016). Women are worried they will be severely beaten, they won't be able to find a job and financially support themselves and their children, and they won't have enough positive support systems to help them maintain positivity in all aspects of their lives (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and financial). They also fear being physically alone (Hoff, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013; Kotera & Rhodes, 2019). These female victims often believe they cannot find anyone different and better, especially if they have been in more than one abusive relationship and were (or are still being) abused by their parents. In recent research, there are authors who also state that social support systems help women leave abuse, leave abusive situations, and stay out of future abusive situations (Hoff, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013). Many women have left the abuse for many reasons; some have gone back into the same situation with the same predator, some have left and returned to a different abusive situation with another predator, and some

have left, started life fresh and new, and never returned to an abusive relationship again. The research on social support systems and how they affect these victims is quite ambiguous (Hoff, 2016; Jose & Novaco, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013). Some authors state that social support systems help women escape; they help women run and stay out of abuse, yet research also states they help women stay in abusive situations. This research project clarified the confusion throughout the literature and gave a more definitive answer to how different types of social support systems affect women in abusive domestic violence situations. The research project also defined the different kinds of social support systems (negative, general, positive, and no support systems) and found out how each affects a victim of domestic violence.

There is a religious aspect woven into our society in times past that made it appear that the church either approved of domestic violence, did not want to interfere in domestic violence situations, or simply did not understand what the bible had to say on the topic (Kobo, 2018; Marsden, 2018; Westenberg, 2017; Zamfir, 2018; Zust et al., 2021). The Bible is very clear that relationships are essential. That is why God created man, to have a relationship with Him. That is also why He created women so that men would not be alone. He created them, male and female, to become one in body and in spirit through the act of marriage (*King James Version*, 1611/2023, Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:31). They are both to love one another, serve one another, be gentle with one another, and be kind to one another (I Corinthians 13). They are not to be jealous, envious, or prideful (I Corinthians 13). They are to hope in Christ together and have mercy and grace with one another (I Corinthians 13).

Idriss (2017) states that people should not confuse someone defending the honor of someone else as domestic violence. If abuse occurs, it is in self-defense of one that needs to be protected. A man is to love his wife as Christ loves the church (*King James Version*, 1611/2023, Ephesians 5). Christ is the provider and protector of the church as a man is to be the provider and protector of his family (Philippians 4:19; Psalm 3:3; I Timothy 5:8). Therefore, when a woman fights back to protect herself and her children it should be considered self-defense and not a return of abuse (Idriss, 2017).

Problem Statement

Domestic violence is a terrible problem across the world. Women need help escaping their abusive situations and knowing who they can rely on to help them. In research conducted by Jose and Novaco (2016), they state that support systems can give women a false sense of security and help them stay longer in the abuse. A few authors state that women need support systems to help them leave their abusers (Burge et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2019; Ekström, 2018; Sullivan, 2018; Ye et al., 2020; Zust et al., 2021). Research further states that a woman must have a particular mindset to leave her abusive situation (Machisa et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2018). When a woman decides to leave, she still needs help getting out and staying out (Burge et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2019; Ekström, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2019; Ye et al., 2020; Zust et al., 2021).

There was a gap in knowledge of exactly what type of support system a woman needs to escape her abusive situation (Jose & Novaco, 2016; Sullivan, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2019). There needs to be clarity and uniformity across research, therapists, family, and community support services regarding what a victim needs (Burge et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2019; Ekström, 2018; Jose & Novaco, 2016; Sullivan, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2019;

Ye et al., 2020; Zust et al., 2021). There are different types of support systems: Those that give negative support, those that provide generalized support, those that offer no support, and those that give positive support. There was no mention of different types of support in the research that has been done in this area, nor has any research tried to define these support systems and the role each takes in a victim's life (Burge et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2019; Ekström, 2018; Jose & Novaco, 2016; Sullivan, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2019; Ye et al., 2020; Zust et al., 2021).

There needs to be no confusion in any study on helping women leave their abusive situations. Positive support systems can help women escape their abusive situations and stay out (Hoff, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013). The positive support systems help for the abused was implied by research, but no definitive types of support systems were mentioned in any of the studies. Therefore, it was not known what type of support system affects the abused in what way. There needs to be clarity in the definitions of types of support systems for research. Professionals can learn from the clarity of definitions and teach their clients/patients who are abused exactly what type of support they need and do not need. Community-based support services can also learn how to help victims understand what type of support they need, identify those exhibiting the right kind of support for the victim, and learn how to be the correct type of support for the victims themselves.

Purpose of the Study

This research project used a qualitative phenomenological narrative case study to define different types of support systems to understand the lived experience of victims when leaving a domestic violence situation among women who have experienced abuse.

Furthermore, how these women experienced any support that helped them leave was compared to those who have left abusive relationships and those who have stayed in abusive relationships.

Research Questions

Research Questions

RQ1: How do women who have experienced physical abuse and permanently left their abuser describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse?

RQ2: How do women who have experienced physical abuse, left their abuser, and returned to abuse describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse?

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

Completing a research project on women who have been abused presents a problem in obtaining a large enough sample size. Women who are abused at times are reluctant to trust someone enough to tell them their stories (Zust, Housley, & Klatke, 2017). However, once a survivor believes they can trust a person, they want their stories to be told to help themselves by voicing their experience and to help others avoid having the same experience (Battaglia, Finley, & Liebschutz, 2003). The research was thought to present a problem in that it was thought to be limited to one geographical area, which decreases the reliability of the results being wholly accurate and applicable to the abused victim demographic. But this was alleviated by it being shared by others on Facebook all across the world women had access to the survey. The demographic issue was attempted to be controlled, at least in a small way, by having a sample of women from different

types of cultures, ethnicities, religions, and nationalities. Performing a qualitative study does not always give definitive answers to one's research and relies on the hope that participants were honest (Johnson, Scheitle, & Ecklund, 2021).

Performing surveys without a researcher present has its pitfalls. A researcher who can tell when an individual is not being totally honest can, at times, asks questions to help a participant feel more comfortable in telling the truth and asks questions that can help a participant better understand the questions being asked of them and what the goal of the research is so that the participant understands how important it is, to tell the truth, and to know they are not being judged. The researcher's ability to read people's non-verbal communication and body language is vital.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Social entrapment is a theory that defines a person as being trapped by fear of repercussions of an act or thought process, so they do not follow through with that act or speak certain thought processes and try to stop those thought processes, so they do not accidentally speak their thought processes out loud or become motivated enough to act upon them (Tolmie et al., 2018). When a significant other makes their partner feel trapped in any way, this is abuse (Tolmie et al., 2018). That is why the definition of abuse has been changed. This is why the way community services, the police, and courtrooms handle domestic violence should change now (Bonamigo et al., 202; Farr, 2021; Hegarty et al., 2017; Heyman et al., 2020). Looking into the Bible to see what God says about abuse, it is noted that men are not to entrap women. Rather, they are to love them as Christ loves the church (*King James Version*, 1611/2023, Ephesians 5:25). Christ died for the church and has given the church free will (Galatians 1:4; John 8:36). In an article

written by Douglas et al. (2020), it speaks about entrapment. Two women in the article felt trapped and were victims of domestic violence; one victim was killed by her abuser, and the other killed her abuser. The article states that had the people around them looked at their situations through the lens of entrapment being a part of domestic violence and the victim's victimization, one of them may not have died, and the other one may not have committed murder (Douglas et al., 2020). Had anyone in these women's positive social support systems (meaning a support system that cared enough to talk to the victim about abuse and help them get out of it and stay out of it, and understand what domestic abuse is and how worthy they are) understood entrapment, what it means, and how vicious it can be on a victim, they may have been able to help these women. They could have helped these women understand how important it was to get out and stay out and how they could have helped them to accomplish this task. Had the police known how to handle the situations if they had ever been called out to the homes for a domestic dispute call, the victim's doctors, families, or anyone around them, if they had wanted to be a part of their positive social support system there were things, they could have done to help them (Douglas et al., 2021). It is difficult for many people to move past the bystander effect of fearing that they too will be harmed by the perpetrator if they reach out to help or burned by the victim in the way that, at times, victims defend their perpetrators (Taylor et al., 2019). The fear is reasonable but should not be all-consuming and hinder people from helping others and recognizing when the victim is willing and able to receive help (Taylor et al., 2019).

Definition of Terms

Domestic violence - sometimes referred to as abuse: for this heterosexual relationship-focused project, it is a man you are in a relationship with making you feel less than or trapped in any or all parts of your life (i.e., spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, financial, and sexual). The abuse includes but is not limited to physical abuse, neglect, abandonment, and isolation (Bonamigo et al., 202; Farr, 2021; Hegarty et al., 2017; Heyman et al., 2020; Sack, 2004).

Positive social support system - is defined as a person who has a relationship with one or more other people that is therapeutic to that person in one or more aspects of their life (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and financial). Using the words positive support system does not mean the relationship is always positive, but overall positive and therapeutic (Ahn et al., 2017; Blais & Zalta, 2023).

General support systems - are those that consist of people who are in one's life but are mainly just acquaintances. They may or may not lend their help from time to time. They are unreliable for support (Debnam et al., 2012).

Negative support system - consists of people pulling on the other members of the group, asking for help from them but not giving it back, and just having a negative influence (Ahn et al., 2017; Blais & Zalta, 2023).

No support system - is defined as not having anyone to talk to, relate to, or ask for help (Cohen, & McKay, 2020).

Significance of the Study

The information this research project provided was intended to help women know what kind of support they need to seek when they were trying to escape a domestic violence situation, to help the victims stay out of domestic violence situations, help

communities know what type of support women need to help them escape and stay out of domestic violence situations and to help professionals and therapists have a consensus on different types of support and how different support systems affect the abused. Professionals who research and publish information about domestic violence, victims of domestic violence, predators of domestic violence, and support systems of domestic violence victims and predators separately and combined need to have a consensus about the fact there are different types of support systems, and not all are helpful. Professionals need to have a clearly defined consensus about the separate types of support systems and how they are defined. When writing about support systems in their research, professionals need to be clear on what type of support they were writing about. The specific support systems affect their research and their participants. The research results provided were also intended to help professionals in their pursuit of helping victims escape. There are different types of professionals, those who are licensed and those who are not. The professionals who help people without a formal license sometimes come from a church setting, with pastors being counselors to their parishioners and their communities. The work done on this research project also helps to clarify what the Bible says about male and female marital relationships and domestic violence (by law or common law) (*King James Version*, 2022/1611, Mark 10:6).

Biblically any significant other relationship that has had sexual intercourse is a marital relationship. When the Bible discusses the two shall become one flesh, it states that anytime a man and woman have sexual intercourse, they come together as two puzzle pieces and become one unit (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:31). The man becomes responsible for that woman at that time and the woman the man. Their

bodies then belong to not only themselves but one another. They are to love one another as they love themselves and care for one another with love from that moment forward. Many do not believe this and ignore this. However, this research project will apply this truth to all partners' relationships under the same roof. This does not mean a predator is responsible for a woman who has left him. Once a woman has entered another relationship with another man, he can relinquish her of any previous commitments (Numbers 30:8). A woman should also not allow herself to be entrapped by these truths if a man is an abuser. Thus, he is not fulfilling God's words. Therefore, God probably did not unite the two; safety is always a priority. David told a lie to protect himself from Saul in the Old Testament and did not suffer terrible ramifications because of the importance of safety (I Samuel 19). The explanation given of absolution by another man does not mean a woman should run from one man to another to be absolved of a previous relationship because the blood of Jesus has been applied to everyone's sins, even when one enters into a wrong relationship (I John 1:7). The explanation of the Biblical worldview in relation to domestic violence is given in the hopes that support systems within the church will no longer be confused about where they stand on helping these women (victims of domestic violence) to escape. The church itself has been a source of confusion for years. Many religions have believed that a woman has no place speaking in church or at home unless spoken to. Some religions also believe that a woman is to submit to her husband because the husband is to be the ruler and lord of the home. The interpretation given here is a misinterpretation of the Bible. Although Sarah called Abraham lord, this does not mean all women must call their husbands lord. Abraham and Sarah had a fully Biblical marriage that God put together and ordained (I Peter 3:6). She

communicated with her husband and was allowed to participate in their decision-making processes. Abraham sometimes obeyed her requests to the point that he slept with her maidservant (Genesis 16). It is noted that the church has had such a narrow point of view, it has led to people not helping the abused women stuck in domestic violence relationships because the Bible says a woman is supposed to be submissive (Ephesians 5; Kobo, 2018; Marsden, 2018; Westenberg, 2017; Zamfir, 2018; Zust et al., 2021). However, what the church fails to realize is that the scripture that tells wives to submit to their husbands in Ephesians follows the scripture that states all Christians are subject to one another to help one another and to keep each other accountable, so they do not fall too far from God's grace: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). The Bible also states that men are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Christ has given the church free will (with guidelines out of love to follow because we love Him) and has died for the church, laid His life down willingly; a man who is willing to lay down his life for his wife in this manner does not abuse her (Ephesians 5:21).

Summary

In summary, domestic violence abuse research is necessary as abuse continues to be a detrimental societal problem. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States (NCADV, 2020). These statistics are only calculated by what is reported. According to Decker et al. (2022), domestic violence abuse is still the most unreported crime. Domestic violence can lead to death. It is important to help the abused understand they have a way out and a way to stay out. Research has been done that states social

support systems can help the abused understand that they do not deserve the abuse, are not the reason for it, and can get out if they desire to escape. The problem was there was research that also states that social support systems help the abused stay in abuse because of a false sense of security, help the abused get out of abuse but not stay out. The research was confusing. It was noted that none of the research stated that there were different types of social support systems, and which affected the abused in which way. All the research generalized the terminology of social support systems. This research project aims to clarify the different types of support systems and how each affects each woman participant. In giving clear definitions of different types of support systems and a clear Biblical perspective, as well as theoretical frameworks, the research report, when completed, can help in clearing up the confusion that past research and religions have contained.

In understanding past research to find the gap in the literature, a full literature review was done on domestic violence, domestic violence past and present definitions, risk factors of entering into an abusive relationship, the abused, why they have stayed in the abuse in times past, how those who have escaped have escaped, and how those who stayed out accomplished never returning. The literature review also investigated where social support systems lie in the path of the abused, how social support systems helped or hindered the abused, and because of the timing of the literature review COVID-19 and its effects on the abused, their escaping, how social media may be able to help victims in their path to becoming survivors, and how social support systems were hindered in helping, have been included.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Introduction

Sin began with the fall of Adam and Eve (*King James Version*, 1611/2023, Genesis 1). Now those that are not saved walk according to the prince of the air of darkness (Ephesians 2:2). The Bible continues to state that those that are not saved are the children of wrath, meaning they have anger and hatred at the center of their being (Ephesians 2:3; Proverbs 19:19). There is a large possibility that domestic violence will continue to be a problem, but this does not mean that society should ever stop trying to put an end to it. Christians should continue to teach one another in love to do better and know that it is not God's will for one to mistreat their significant other but to protect them from all harm and provide for them (I Timothy 5:8).

In this chapter, a literature review was completed on scholarly peer-reviewed articles, books on domestic violence, and the Bible. The literature review includes a description of the search strategy, domestic violence risk factors, a conceptual framework: abuse is a human rights issue, a theoretical framework: entrapment is a form of abuse, tools to help identify abuse, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs in relation to victims of domestic violence, why women stay, how women get out, how women stay out, support systems in relation to the abused, how people on social media sites can become a part of victims support systems, and support systems during COVID-19, tools in identifying domestic violence.

Description of Search Strategy

The information in this paper has been accumulated from reviewing up-to-date, reasonable, credible, appearing to be accurate, and peer-reviewed articles. The limitations of this existing literature were due to the lack of up-to-date information. There were very few articles and one book from the past 5-7 years to draw information from that was specific to domestic violence and support systems. The literature search strategy for this review was to find out as much relevant information as possible: what is domestic violence, who are its victims, what are support systems, how do these support systems affect victims, and what does the Bible have to say about each of these questions? The databases used for the research were Google Scholar, The Jerry Falwell Library at Liberty University Online, and Biblegateway.com. The following terms were utilized for the search process: Domestic violence, why do women stay, support systems, how do women escape domestic violence, how do women stay out of domestic violence once they have left, how do support systems affect women leaving domestic violence situations, how do support systems affect women staying out of domestic violence situations involving male and female relationships. The information left out of the search was that of the LGBTQ community and women on men violence. The research project proposal focuses singularly on the abuse of significant male others on their female companions. The research began with broad searches to read as much information as possible, then narrowed to the last five years for the most relevant present information. Furthermore, the biblical research was conducted through specific scriptures being Google searched and then found on biblegateway.com, where the scriptures were read and transcribed into the biblical worldview section of the literature review. This learner is

a student of the Bible and knows of specific scriptures that pertain to the content of this research project from the King James Version.

Review of Literature

Many professionals have researched domestic violence over the past twenty years, more so than ever. In the past five years, most of the concentration has been on COVID-19 and how the pandemic affected those living in domestic violence. Professionals have made little to no effort to go beyond this topic, making it difficult to learn up-to-date information about specific topics related to domestic violence. Although difficult to find, there were peer-reviewed professional articles and literature that could be found on support systems and how they affect those in domestic violence situations.

The literature review for this research project summarizes data on domestic violence, female victims of domestic violence, risk factors, support systems, how support systems may affect victims' lives and thought processes, how social media plays into victims' lives, and how the COVID-19 Pandemic affected domestic violence situations. The literature review shows where there was a lack of definitions in describing the different types of support systems, therefore leading to confusion on how support systems affect victims of domestic violence and the need for more research in this area. The information continues with a brief Biblical worldview; an all-exhaustive review of the Bible's viewpoints on marital relationships would be too overwhelming for this project.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is any situation where someone in a romantic relationship, hurts, hinders, or traps their partner (Bonamigo et al., 202; Farr, 2021; Hegarty et al., 2017; Heyman et al., 2020; Sack, 2004). For this research project, domestic violence is

referred to as men abusing women spiritually by inhibiting them from going to church, praying, and reading their bible; mentally, by speaking down to them, yelling at them, and not speaking to them at all; emotionally by not allowing them to have feelings and function at all outside of his control. Physically by hitting, hindering them from leaving, and throwing things at them; sexually by sexually assaulting them, denying them sex, and forcing them to be involved with others sexually; and financially by inhibiting, limiting, and controlling their spending (Bonamigo et al., 202; Farr, 2021; Hegarty et al., 2017; Heyman et al., 2020).

Many factors put a woman at risk of entering a relationship with an abusive partner. Women, their family members, and those in their social support systems need to know what the risk factors are for domestic violence victims. The following is a list of risk factors that only includes the top risk factors: low self-esteem, having a negative support system or no support system at all, becoming pregnant unexpectedly, especially at a young age, coming from a low-income family where the parents were not very educated, and being a school dropout (Ahinkorah et al., 2018; Rai & Choi, 2018; Duval et al., 2020; Ebert & Steinert, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2019; Sanz-Barbero et al., 2019).

Risk Factor: Low Self-Esteem

In the case of Amy Prentiss, it was noted that she was educated. Amy was a Registered Nurse working on her Nurse Practitioner schooling and had a profitable job working as a coder for Home Health Agencies across the United States. Amy had very low self-esteem in relation to her parents not supporting her and loving her unconditionally the way she needed and expected to be loved. Her parents were of middle-class income and were not very educated. Amy did have support outside her

family but could not fathom living without a man. The inability to live without a man, in turn, drove her from one abusive situation to another, with her last boyfriend being the most threatening and having access to a gun. All the negative thought processes of her own, not having an overwhelmingly positive support system, and her boyfriend having access to a gun were what led to Amy's untimely death and the death of her boyfriend; he killed her when he found out she was going to leave him after her shower. He had access to her phone, and while she was in the shower, he prepared his gun, and when she opened the bathroom door, he shot her between the eyes. According to Spencer and Stitch (2020), and Robinson et al. (2018), the more threatening the verbal abuse is, and the more readily available a weapon such as a gun is, the more fatal the relationship is to be.

Low self-esteem can become a never-ending cycle (Van Geel et al., 2018). Some have asked the chicken and egg question in relation to low self-esteem and victimization, which came first. In most cases, it begins with at least some form of feeling less than others; it is not always a full-blown case of not loving oneself (Van Geel et al., 2018). Sometimes a predator can mask who he is and is let in the door without a woman knowing he is a predator (Nguyen et al., 2019; Van Geel et al., 2018). In most cases, though, there are red flags showing that one is a predator before there is a live-in relationship situation. Predators often victimize people with low self-esteem because of their thought processes (Talaifar et al., 2021). Predators often know those with low self-esteem are easy prey (Nguyen et al., 2019; Van Geel et al., 2018; Talaifar et al., 2021). Then once a woman has opened the door to living in oppression, entrapment, and in harm's way, she often begins to feel even more down about herself and depressed (Van Geel et al., 2018). Predators entrapping women, and the women believing the negative

from their predators, outside forces, and themselves makes it very difficult for a woman to break the cycle of abuse so that she can eventually be freed.

Risk Factor: Support Systems

In society and within families, there are many different types of support systems: negative, general, none (known as no support system), and positive support systems.

They are defined as follows: Positive social support system is defined as a person who has a relationship with one or more other people that is therapeutic to that person in one or more aspects of their lives (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and financial) to caveat, this does not mean the relationship is always positive, but overall positive and therapeutic (Pearson, 1986). There are people usually in a positive social support system who love the victim enough to tell them they are beautiful, intelligent, and worthy of a relationship without abuse. Usually, people in these positive support systems will physically and monetarily help the victim escape and stay out of abusive relationships. General support systems consist of people in one's life that are mainly acquaintances. They may or may not lend their help from time to time. They are unreliable for support. A negative support system consists of people pulling on someone, asking for help from someone but not giving it back, and just having a negative influence. No support system is defined as not having anyone to whom one can talk, relate, or ask for help from.

Many dysfunctional families raise children, but this does not mean that all of these children will wind up in abusive relationships as they grow older and marry. In an article by Riggs (2019), a review was done of past empirical and theoretical literature concerning children growing up in dysfunctional homes, especially in relation to emotional abuse. An emotionally abusive parent(s) would classify as a negative support

system. The parents of these children still support their children in other ways as in feeding them and providing shelter, clothing, and medical care when needed. Therefore, they are still a support system. The article goes on to say that many children who grow up in these households tend to have attachment insecurities with maladaptive coping responses to the negativity brought on by a dysfunctional family. Then when married, a significant other cripples the female victim into not believing they could never escape, function outside the present relationship, or be able to find a better relationship (Riggs, 2019). This leads to women desiring attention from those men who are dysfunctional. Beginning for some women what is a never-ending cycle. It is difficult for a woman to accept love from a good man when they do not understand goodness or how to accept it (Jouriles et al., 2008).

There are households in the world today where children are still being physically abused. Abusive parenting is considered a negative support system situation (Lasong et al., 2020). An abusive home with a negative support system puts a child at an increased risk of entering into an abusive relationship with not only significant others but also friends, especially when a person is unable to reach healing from their childhood abuse and allow their parents to continue to abuse them physically and in any or all other ways (Lasong, 2020).

The children whose parents abandon and neglect them would be the children with no support system. There are times when these children do stay in their homes, but the parents are not available and use their money for drugs/alcohol leaving the children to fend for themselves (Gordon, 2022). Most children in these instances wind up on the streets, continuing to fend for themselves or in the foster system (Gordon, 2022). Foster

systems are not always ideal. Some work, some do not, and even in those that do work, some children fall through the cracks. Abusive homes lead to the children's inability to recognize good from bad relationships sometimes and, as in the specific emotional abuse situation, an inability to connect with people in a functional manner (Riggs, 2019).

It is important to definitively define the different types of support systems and know what role each plays in women getting out of abusive situations and staying out. Counselors and abused women need to know how others have succeeded in their pursuit of leaving and getting out, so they know where to focus their attention during counseling, in the act of trying to get out, and in the act of staying out.

Amy Prentiss was intelligent. She read scholarly articles. If there had been definitive information out there that explained support systems, the different types, and how they help or hinder an abused victim, maybe she would have worked harder to surround herself with a positive support system that would have helped her escape and stay out before it reached the point of her death.

Risk Factor: Unexpected Pregnancy

Dating couples often find themselves in a place of fluctuation. Sometimes this may bring out the worst in a man who has never dated before and does not even know his buttons can be pushed, and he can become an abuser. These men sometimes do not even become abusers until an unexpected pregnancy is allowed to turn their world upside down. A baby is often a surprise. It is a joyous surprise to many but not to all. Some people see a baby as a burden they are unprepared for and do not want. Often it is the man in the situation who is not prepared and does not want the baby but will not let the woman go even if she continues her pregnancy. These men become very aggressive,

harming the mother and baby (Finnbogadóttir et al., 2020; Rai & Choi, 2018; Maxwell et al., 2018). Abuse toward pregnant women and their babies is a global problem (Maxwell et al., 2018; Orpin et al., 2020). As noted by an article written by Orpin et al. (2020), this is also prevalent in Nigeria, with Nigerian pregnant women being at an increased risk of violence from their partners.

Risk Factor: Unexpected Pregnancy at a Young Age

The risk of being abused during an unexpected pregnancy increases as the age of the parents of the unborn decreases (Maxwell et al., 2018). The increased risk leads to a greater fatality rate in mothers and their babies. Most of these young pregnant girls are naïve in knowing how to care for themselves in general and especially do not know how to care for their pregnant selves and their babies. They often hide their pregnancies from their parents and the baby's father, leading to no prenatal care being obtained nor any doctor visits. These babies are, at times, born in school or home bathrooms, in vehicles on the way to the doctor, and in other non-prepared and non-sanitary places. If the mother and baby survive the birthing process, they are at an increased risk of infection, dehydration, and malnutrition (Acharya et al., 2019; Samankasikorn et al., 2019; Shamu et al., 2018).

Risk Factors: Low Income

Unexpected pregnancy violence can also be confounded in low-income families (Finnbogadóttir et al., 2020; Maxwell et al., 2018; Rai & Choi, 2018). Families with insufficient money to meet their basic needs have a high rate of domestic violence abuse among their members. Low income does not just pertain to unexpected pregnancies. Still, overall, a large number of reported domestic violence homes are those with inadequate

funding, which adds to the pressures of life and an increase in frustration, which leads to violence and more violence (Ahinkorah et al., 2018).

Risk Factor: Low Education

The last risk factor among the top risk factors is low education. Women who drop out of school are more susceptible to entering a relationship with someone abusive. Some of these women do not know any better and cannot see that they are in a never-ending cycle. It begins with low self-esteem and then grows from there. They do not believe they can finish school, or they are bullied because predators recognize those with low self-esteem, and they wind up dropping out of school and living with a bully because they do not believe they deserve any better (Ahinkorah et al., 2018).

Conceptual Framework

Female victims of domestic violence have experienced a major life crisis. Before, during, and after a woman is abused, she needs a positive social support system. When a woman starts with a positive social support system, it can help her stay away from abuse by educating her, loving her, and helping her love herself and know she is enough. When the systems fail, or the woman herself does not understand that she is loved enough due to mental incapacabilities related to physical issues, negative self-thought processes, mental health issues, and drug/alcohol use and abuse, they may enter into an abusive relationship. Women who do not have a support system and have a negative and general support system are at an increased risk of entering these relationships. Once a woman enters an abusive relationship, she needs positive social support to give her positive conversations, acts, and thoughts. A woman can learn positive self-talk when surrounded by positive support. This positive self-talk helps a woman love herself and know she is

enough. A woman needs a positive social support system to be there to listen when she needs to talk, to help put emergency plans into place so that she may escape when she is ready, to help her find community resources, to help keep her and her children find safety, to help her escape when the time comes, to help monetarily if and when the situation calls for it in the process of safety and escape, and to help her by whatever means necessary to stay out of the abuse.

Domestic violence abuse can also be considered an act against a woman's human rights. Therefore, it is a human rights violation (Ahinkorah et al., 2018). The abuse suffered by domestic violence victims threatens their spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health. It is a threat to their safety. It is a threat to their freedom. It is against their rights to not be treated inhumanly, it is against their right to not be tortured, it is against their right to not be treated cruelly, and it is against their right to not be humiliated or degraded in any way or fashion (Ahinkorah et al., 2018). All humans have the same rights and responsibilities. An abuser is responsible for treating his significant other with love and respect. A woman victim has the right not to stand by and allow themselves to be continuously abused. The problem is that the law has not caught up with this thought process locally or internationally. Locally, law enforcement agencies can only ask a woman if she wants to press charges against her oppressor. If she declines, the offender does not go to jail unless the officers have witnessed abuse, or the offender is belligerent towards the police (Sullivan, 2018). In China, the women who are victims are encouraged to stay with their husbands or to return to them if they have left them and are encouraged to try and stick it out (Xie et al., 2018). The thought process is more on

keeping the family together than on the rights of the women victims involved. Society has come a long way from previous thought processes but still has a long way to go.

Theoretical Framework

Social entrapment is the physical and psychological fear an aggressor enforces on his victim, the indifference of those that are supposed to be a part of a woman's positive social support system, and genderism against women by society in general (Tolmie et al., 2018). According to the survivor hypothesis (initially theorized by Gondolf and Fisher), Nnaemeka, et al. (2020), states that some women have an innate nature to survive. These women need positive therapeutic social support systems to help them recognize this about themselves before it is too late. Literature states that most women wait until their or their children's lives are severely threatened before they leave or until they have been beaten within moments of the end of their lives.

Tools Used to Help Identify Domestic Violence

In an article written by Robinson and Clancy (2020), a new tool for helping police officers identify domestic violence situations was implemented. The tool was noted to help police officers know before going out on a call if there had been a domestic dispute previously and what type of abuse was noted. The information in the tool helped police officers know how to be prepared on arrival to the situation and how to react and separate those from home quickly if no weapons were involved. It is important in emergency situations for community services across the globe to be educated and prepared with specific interventions in place to help them handle domestic violence situations (Dias et al., 2019; Halliwell et al., 2019; Kobo, 2018; Machisa et al., 2018; Qi et al., 2020; Robinson & Clancy, 2020; Sardinha & Catalán, 2018).

Victims, at times, also need access to technology to contact those who can help them. The abused using technology safely is not always easy because technology can be used to keep track of someone, where someone is presently, and where they have been. Technologists are always trying to advance technology to help people stay in touch and make sure no one gets lost or hurt, but these advances are detrimental to those who are living with predators that can use these technologies to harm the victims further (Bellini et al., 2020; Woodlock, 2017). There are new innovative ways that webpages specific to domestic violence victims are using to erase themselves from a victim's browsing history by telling the victim they can press a certain button, which will erase it. Research also states they are trying to invent ways to give anonymity to victims on social media to allow them to reach for help on social media platforms (Andalibi et al., 2018; Homan et al., 2020). Andalibi et al. (2018) also explain how social media can be used to build a victim's support system. The article stated that by using hashtags, people could find each other with like experiences, give each other psychological support, and supply each other with information about what has and has not worked for them in getting out of abuse and staying out.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Fear

The root of most victims who do not leave their relationship's thought processes is fear (Gill, 2004; Kurz, 1998). Fear they are not good enough (Gill, 2004; Kurz, 1998). Fear that no one else will ever want or love them (Gill, 2004; Kurz, 1998). Fear that they will be homeless or the women's battered shelters will not be safe (Gill, 2004; Kurz, 1998). Fear that they must leave all their belongings and pets behind. When rehabilitation is necessary, they fear they cannot enter a rehabilitation facility with their children. Some

victims also fear they just will not and cannot make it without the person they are living with and on their own (Gill, 2004; Kurz, 1998). This raises the question: How will they learn to leave and not go back (Gill, 2004; Kurz, 1998)?

The Bible says perfect love casts out fear, which is why some of the risk factors are related to not being loved, attached, or abused as a child (*King James Version*, 1611/2023, I John 4:18). This brings in the model of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. When Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is not met, one has issues with being stable spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically (Gorman, 2010; Hill, 2010; Hopper, 2020). One of the most basic needs for a human is safety. When a person is unsafe, their mind is consumed with anxiety and fear (Gorman, 2010; Psalm 4:8). They lose their motivation to be able to accomplish just about anything, and at times when this can become a generational curse because of learned helplessness (Gorman, 2010).

According to Maslow's theory, a person can only grow one step at a time (Gorman, 2010). First, one's physiological needs must be met. It is a shame to say air, water, food, sleep, housing, clothing (for warmth, protection, and cleanliness) and reproduction needs are not always met (Gorman, 2010). Once basic needs are met, a person needs to continue to grow. All people need safety (Gorman, 2010). They need to know they are secure (Gorman, 2010). When a person has financial income and resources that will help them remain secure, pay their bills, go to the doctor, exercise, and afford to eat the right food to stay healthy, they can feel a sense of security (Gorman, 2010). The third tier is love and belonging. A person feels secure in that others love them and will help them. Knowing that one has friends, family, a sense of belonging, and is connected to other human beings builds security (Gorman, 2010). God created humans for a

relationship with Him and with others (*King James Version*, 1611/2023, Genesis 1; Hebrews 10:24; Proverbs 27:17). The fourth tier comes from having all the previous steps accomplished, which helps a person have esteem about themselves, respect for themselves and others, and from others (Gorman, 2010). It helps one to be recognized by themselves and others and to recognize others. People have usually gained at least some form of status at this level, which leads them to feel inner strength and know they are free. The last level is self-actualization, the stage where one knows who they are, who God is, who God is in and around them, and what they were created for, where what others think does not make them weak, only stronger because their friends and family are positive support systems to their fullest (Gorman, 2010; Matthew 17: 1&2). Only those meant to be in one's inner circle are still with them; everyone else has been weeded out.

The sad realization is that those who are abused do not make it to the second level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs until they have left the abuse and begun to work on themselves and stand on their own two feet (Hill, 2010). Anyone can obtain self-actualization. One must want it and start taking steps toward it, one step at a time (Hill, 2010). For the abused, it often takes someone else telling them they are worth it, and for something to click inside of them, then they must reach out to someone who will help, accept the help, and start taking the steps (Hill, 2010).

Why Women Stay in Domestic Violence

To understand support systems, tools for support systems and victims to use, and why COVID-19 exacerbated the violence, one must first understand why women stay for so long or continue to return to these relationships. In an article written many years ago by Gelles (1976), the reason for some women was that the abuse was not that bad. They

could deal with it because it was not life-threatening and constant. Women who had parents who abused them thought it was a normal way of life and tended not to seek help and stayed in the abuse (Gelles, 1976). The last reason that was prevalent in the article was that women who did not have many resources tended to stay more frequently (Gelles, 1976). Later, in an article by Choice and Lamke (1997), the reason women stayed seemed to center around the answer to two questions a woman would ask herself: Would she be better off leaving? And could she succeed at leaving? If she answered yes to these two questions, the greater the possibility would be of her putting a plan into action, leaving, and staying gone. In the most recent literature, each of the aforementioned reasons is listed, as well as the question of whether the battered woman even sees herself as a victim. Does she believe she deserves it? The most prevalent question a woman asks herself is if I reveal I am a victim, will I be blamed, criticized, ignored, or will anyone help me? Is there anyone able to help me? Will I be a burden, and who do I tell, who will help me, and how do I obtain this help (Battaglia, Finley, & Liebschutz, 2003; Giner-Sorolla, & McGee, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Gurm & Marchbank, 2020; Kennedy, & Prock, 2018).

Getting Out

Women who are survivors have been questioned on how they got out. Many of these women stated they had to mentally change their thought processes (Battaglia et al., 2003; Hoff, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013). The mental change at times came at the expense of their bodies. Women often wait until they have been beaten beyond recognition, beaten until bones are broken, their children have been threatened and beaten, and they fear for their lives before they leave.

In the case of Amy Prentiss, that is why her boyfriend went and retrieved his gun while she was in the shower. He had found out she was leaving him for the last time. He knew she had reached her breaking point and would no longer stand for him abusing her. It is not known specifically how he found out (there are implications, it was through her phone because of her text to her daughter that stated she was leaving for good this time), but he did. Thankfully for the survivors who are questioned in the research provided, they made it out alive, maybe not well, safe, and alright to begin with. But for many, once they got out, they were willing to get help to not return.

Survivors of Domestic Violence

To be called a survivor, one must first leave the abuse and stay out, never to return. To do this, victims must realize they do not just want to physically survive. They need to realize they are worth it and set their mind on getting out (Childress et al., 2021). Women then must rely on local services and family support systems to help them in their leaving processes. There are many different services a victim should be able to rely on that should have protocols and interventions in place to help; these include but are not limited to: Therapists, medical professionals, law enforcement personnel, shelters, churches, and social services (Ekström, 2018; Hinsliff-Smith & McGarry, 2017; Laing, 2017; Medel-Herrero et al., 2020; Nnawulezi et al., 2018; O'Reilly & Peters, 2018; Stylianou, 2019).

In research, survivors are questioned about how they left and stayed out of the abuse (Cho et al., 2020; Kulkarni, 2019). The research states that most survivors had to prepare mentally and physically by changing their thought processes and lining up resources (Machisa et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2018). Some survivors had to rely on

support systems to help them prepare and stay prepared until it was safe to escape (Sullivan, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2019). The problem with the research was that most of it was outdated and does not specify what types of support systems are helpful and what types can be detrimental. In an article written by Jose and Novaco (2016), it was stated that support systems can give victims a false sense of security, leading to them staying longer in the abuse they are in because they believe they can manage it. The article does not specify what type of support system the victim has that leads to this type of false security (Jose & Novaco, 2016). In more recent research, the consensus was that support systems help victims get out of abuse (Burge et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2019; Ekström, 2018; Ye et al., 2020; Zust et al., 2021). But some research states that some support systems cannot help a victim maintain a stable mind and help keep them out of the abuse (Hinsliff-Smith & McGarry, 2017; Usher et al., 2020).

Women who have removed themselves from abuse start their spiritual and mental journey to becoming healed and whole begin building new social support systems (Battaglia et al., 2003; Hinsliff-Smith & McGarry, 2017; Usher et al., 2020). Many who use community resources realize they should begin building their own family and friends and choose reliable people. Victims will look for people with whom they can have a reciprocal relationship of support. It was noted that a lot of victims who were questioned during research done on support systems noted they were the center of their support systems and the one that was giving out the most support and not receiving much, if any at all, in return (Katerndahl et al., 2013).

Support Systems

According to an article written by Katerndahl, Burge, Ferrer, Becho, & Wood (2013), it was thought by some that if a person has a support system, that person will not wind up in an abusive situation/relationship. They go on to say that this was not true. Not only do people with support systems wind up in abusive situations, but at times, these social support systems are the reason some stay in these abusive situations (Jose & Novaco, 2016). Katerndahl et al. (2013) qualitatively studied women with support systems. They questioned both abused and non-abused women from primary care clinics. They found that women in abusive situations in their study were not more apt to have social support systems, and victims with support systems had smaller support systems than those of the non-abused group that had support systems. The study also found that the support systems of the abused did not include the woman's in-laws. They also found that the people included in the non-abused support systems were easier and quicker to get a hold of (Katerndahl et al., 2013). The central reasoning behind why these support systems did not keep these women from ending up in abusive situations, nor did they help them get out of their abusive situations, was that the study found the abused woman was the center of the support system (Katerndahl et al., 2013). So, not only were the women abused, but they were the one's giving most of the support to those around them in their support system. They were reaching out of their situations to help lend a hand to others, but no one was reaching in to help the women out of their situations (Katerndahl et al., 2013). With the abused woman being the center of the support group, she may not have been comfortable enough to talk to anyone about her situation, and maybe they had no idea that she, too, needed help and support. Adding to the thought processes of Katerndahl et al. (2013), a social support system does not necessarily mean that a woman

will not wind up in an abusive relationship nor help one to get out of one once they are in it. Jose and Novaco (2016) state that having a support system helps reduce the stress of an abused woman, therefore at times, they believe they can handle the situation better than if they did not have one; thus, it prolongs their stay when the people in the support system care for them no matter what hoping they will make the decision on their own to one day leave and then they can help them get out (Fraser et al., 2002). Waiting on the abused to decide on their own is not loving or supportive. A positive relationship is when one is comfortable enough to tell the victim they are too precious and worthy to allow a man to abuse them.

Jose and Novaco (2016) also state that social support systems have been found to be a protective factor for those exposed to abuse. In an article by Estrellado and Loh (2014), a qualitative study was done on 40 battered women who social workers in Manilla, Philippines, selected. The study was done to determine why Filipino women stayed in or left an abusive relationship. In contrast to the studies done by Katerndahl et al. (2013) and Jose and Novaco (2016), the study showed that when a woman had a support system, she felt like she had a choice to leave or not (Estrellado & Loh, 2014). Most women who did not have a support system did not feel they had much of a choice, mainly because of their financial situation. They knew they would not make it without support and someone willing to help (Estrellado & Loh, 2014). Those in the study who had already left stated it was because they had received considerable support (Estrellado & Loh, 2014). The help from others helped the women to be able to make a firm decision to leave their partners. The help these women received came from family, friends, and women's social groups (Estrellado & Loh, 2014). In an article by Wuest & Merritt-Gray

(2016), a qualitative study was done on 15 Caucasian females from East Canada who were known by either a transition house worker or community health nurse to have left abusive situations. The study showed that for the women to not only leave but to stay gone, they needed positive support systems, especially those who had no independent resources to rely on (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2016). Furthermore, a qualitative study done over a two-year period of nine women who were living in a women's home by Hoff (2016), states that the survivors often built a new positive support system once they were out of their immediate crisis mode, had determined to stay out of such relationships, and rebuild their lives.

COVID-19

A moderate amount of research has been done on domestic violence locally in the United States and internationally across many different countries. The research that has been done attempts to answer the following: What is domestic violence, why women stay, what are interventions that can be implemented for the victims, what is the role of technology in relation to domestic violence and its victims, what are the components of support systems of the victims, and what are the effects of these support systems on the victims? The most recent research still tries to answer these questions, but the last three years of literature was focused on the effects of COVID-19 in relation to domestic violence. The most recent literature states that the "lockdown" increased the intensity and episodes of domestic violence across the globe and decreased the ability of support systems to help (Boserup et al., 2020; Campbell, 2020; Caroline & Louise, 2020; Ertan et al., 2020; Hall & Tucker, 2020; Ilesanmi et al., 2020; Mazza et al., 2020; Nnawulezi & HacsKaylo, 2022; Sifat, 2020; Su et al., 2021; Usher et al., 2020; Van Gelder et al., 2020;

Ye et al., 2020). It was noted that this was important and will be touched on here in this review. Research needs to reach beyond the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and focus on trying to help women escape, overall, never to return to the violence again.

During COVID-19, everyone was taxed, families, friends, and lack of information about whether shelters were open and hospitals for those being abused with COVID-19 symptoms; it was a very trying time for everyone, especially those being abused. Social media helped get the word out about some resources, but not everyone has computers. Before COVID-19, hospitals had problems with screening patients and diagnosing them with abuse, especially physical abuse; the pandemic worsened this problem. The consensus of all the articles reviewed in relation to COVID-19 was that it inadvertently caused an increase in not only the number of domestic abuse cases but also the intensity of violence and the number of fatalities in relation to domestic violence. Ilesanmi et al. (2020), performed a study to determine to what extent the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic was on domestic violence. Because of the decrease in monetary intake in most families during COVID-19, the authors Ilesanmi et al. (2020), believed there was an increase in stress leading to more violence, alcohol intake, drug use, and a never-ending cycle of this, which could lead to more violent acts and homicides (Ilesanmi et al., 2020). The research was accumulated by the author's observations done on abused women and children in one demographical area in Nigeria (Ilesanmi et al., 2020). The research showed that the abuser did not have any form of escape as they would have before the lockdown (Ilesanmi et al., 2020). The author stated that when people return to work, school, and social functions to remember they should remember to search for the abused and get them to help (Ilesanmi et al., 2020). The authors go on to say, as the Bible does

that society is one and needs to look out for each other in this world, especially those who are more vulnerable (Ilesanmi et al., 2020). The article supports the idea that anyone in the world as an individual and the world as a whole can be a part of anyone's positive support system, helping victims through whatever difficulty they may be experiencing in any way possible (Ilesanmi et al., 2020).

In America, domestic violence increased, leaving women more vulnerable during COVID-19. The authors, Boserup et al. (2020), began their research while the pandemic and lockdown were still in progress. They believe it gave them a unique look at what was happening while it was in progress (Boserup et al., 2020). With a lockdown, it was difficult to perform a research project, so the authors used police emergency reports from cities across America. They reviewed said reports for domestic violence occurrences (Boserup et al., 2020). The reports were also reviewed for the number of calls involving women seeking help who were being abused. This was then compared to the number of calls over the same amount of time before the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown (Boserup et al., 2020). The documentation showed an increase in the number of domestic violence acts during the COVID-19 pandemic (Boserup et al., 2020). The documentation also showed that the reported incidents of drug and alcohol-involved abuse increased in episodes (Boserup et al., 2020). The documentation reviewed noted that women couldn't get help from family and friends because they were also being taxed during this time (Boserup et al., 2020). Research can continue to be done in this area to find a way to help women cope with abuse and how to reach out, and who is available during pandemics. The authors of this article believed that it was healthcare practitioners' responsibility to step up their protocols during pandemics to help identify domestic violence victims

because they appeared to be failing to do so during the Covid pandemic (Bradley et al., 2020). A literature review was done on Canadian healthcare reports of women who had been treated and were known to be abused (Bradley et al., 2020). The review showed that although most literature states that neck injuries are related to abuse, only fourteen percent of people with neck injuries were screened for domestic abuse, the authors state this was not sufficient (Bradley et al., 2020). The authors concluded that Canada needs to step it up and implement better domestic violence screening processes in their healthcare systems (Bradley et al., 2020). They also noted that the documentation came from telehealth visits and that Canada at least had a safe word initiative in place so that if the patient needed immediate help, they could let their healthcare practitioner know this (Bradley et al., 2020). Further investigation needs to be done on how good a safe word initiative was in a home environment with the abuser on lockdown. How does a woman know the safe word without her abuser knowing the safe word? Bright et al. (2020), also did a research article to find out the impact of Covid-19 on domestic violence in the United States. After a 300-news article review by Bright, et al. (2020), their results also showed an increase in violence within the home being reported (Bright et al., 2020). The problem with reviewing newspaper articles is that although they are up-to-date and prevalent, some news article writers over-dramatize and do not always tell the truth (Bright et al., 2020). But there was no way to prove this one way or the other (Bright et al., 2020). Overall though, the articles tried to put information out there for the abused so that they would know where to seek help if needed, especially during the lockdown times (Bright et al., 2020). Further research needs to be done now that lockdowns have been

lifted to find the full effect of what Covid had on domestic violence and how society can do better in the future.

Campbell (2020) wrote an article on how local agencies must communicate better during pandemics/natural disasters. Literature was reviewed for those going through the phenomenological experience of abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic (Campbell, 2020). The participants reported being abused during the pandemic while receiving medical treatment (Campbell, 2020). Medical charts and emergency medical reports were reviewed to obtain a number of how many reported being abused, how the medical teams handled the report, and to see if there were any deficiencies in taking care of the abuse report by the medical teams (Campbell, 2020). The results showed a decrease in actual abuse reports during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, but the author accredited this to the fact that most documentation was from telehealth visits (Campbell, 2020). The results also showed increased adult abuse worldwide after the pandemic restrictions began to be lifted (Campbell, 2020). This research needs to be continued now that lockdowns from the COVID-19 pandemic have been lifted, and most of this research was done during the lockdown. Although it was noted earlier that a safe word was a questionable way for someone to let their practitioner know they needed help, in this article, it was not noted that any such thing was in place for the telehealth visits that were reviewed, a safe word was better than not having anything in place, and this needs to be looked into to see if this was just an oversight of this author or if the places that were reviewed would have benefited from some form of the safe word until something else could have been put into place.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, research was done that stated domestic violence increased with an increase in fatalities related to said violence (Ilesanmi et al., 2020). Now that society has gone back to work and school, no new literature exists to state whether violence has decreased. Some believe that in the present day and time, it is hard to make real and true friends, much less form a positive support system that is there for one when times get hard (Crossman, 2016). With the pandemic and the increase in social media sites, people are becoming less friendly toward others, especially people they do not know. This can create even more problems in the future because women victims need others to be sociable, and reaching out to them is thought to be needed for a woman to feel strong enough to leave an abusive situation (Hoff, 2016).

Social Media

Technology has advanced over the last couple of years, as has research into domestic violence. Social media has been used by Homan et al. (2020), to do a global research project. The authors analyzed data from Twitter to see if victims gave reasons for staying or leaving abuse (Homan et al., 2020). The authors believe that people on Twitter will divulge intimate information on a subject and can use it to help answer their questions (Homan et al., 2020). The research used word tagging with the following phrases: #WhyIStayed and #WhyILeft; over nine thousand results flooded in (Homan et al., 2020). The tweets were very revealing and intimate in detail (Homan et al., 2020). The tweets described the victim's and abuser's lives, as well as friends and family thought processes (Homan et al., 2020). The tweets also described the actual abuse actions and how others responded to the abused person. This research showed that social media platforms can be used to collect data for research (Homan et al., 2020). The study has

confidentiality and informed consent issues, but the participants freely answered (Homan et al., 2020). The results also showed that people on social media can be supportive in times of crisis because they would encourage one another when they read each other's tweets (Homan et al., 2020). Further research needs to be done to see if it is worth the effort for the abused to cipher through the positive and negative comments to find the support they may need. The research needs to answer the question: Can reading the negative comments have a longer-term negative effect that outweighs the positive?

In contrast to Twitter, where everyone can see who wrote what posts, Reddit has a private message aspect to their application. Andalibi et al. (2018), used Reddit to perform their research project for the purpose of anonymity. Their article aims to show that social media sites can allow people to remain anonymous (Andalibi et al., 2018). The authors of this article looked at the phenomenological act of sexual abuse among people on social media platforms (Andalibi et al., 2018). They did this to discover how best people can give support to those who have suffered this tragedy without the victim losing their identity (Andalibi et al., 2018). The participants used for this study were people on the social media site Reddit who had posted their previous experiences with this form of abuse (Andalibi et al., 2018). The authors of this article reviewed posts made by sexual abuse survivors and their supporting comments (Andalibi et al., 2018). The results of the article show that when given a chance through Redditt's sexual abuse survivor forums and other forums, people who had throwaway accounts (only temporary accounts) and were able to remain anonymous were more readily able to talk about their experience (Andalibi et al., 2018). The same was true for those supporting the survivors; when they had throwaway accounts and could remain anonymous, they were more willing to give

positive support (Andalibi et al., 2018). One of the benefits of this kind of support is that it helps in the healing process of survivors (Andalibi et al., 2018). Understandably, people would want to remain anonymous when talking about their experiences; this was a good research project (Andalibi et al., 2018). More research needs to be done in this area to understand how to make these forums more readily available to other social media sites and sites where therapy is offered so the support received can be obtainable on a more professional level if the survivor chooses. The research only showed one media site's information, and it was not a long-term study. This article supports the need for positive support during the healing process of people who have been abused.

Gap in Literature

There was literature supporting the statement that support systems help women leave domestic violence relationships and go back into them. There was literature that supports systems to help women get out of domestic violence relationships and stay out (Burge, et al., 2017; Katerndahl et al., 2013). There was also literature that states support systems help women stay in abuse, give them a false sense of security, and help them believe they will not be equipped to leave (Jose & Novaco, 2016). The problem was that none of the literature acknowledges that there are different types of support systems, what these different types of support systems are, or how each type may lend to a different mindset and thought process in relation to the person that has said support system.

The articles had up-to-date information from small focus groups, leaving their information only accurate for the specific demographics mentioned. The lack of information leads to needing more studies to be done in this area, with a wider range of demographics. Society needs to know the importance of positive, therapeutic social

support systems, especially when pertaining to keeping their loved ones out of abusive situations, helping them get out of an abusive situation once they are in one, and helping them stay out of abusive situations. Abused people not only at times go back to the same abuser if they do not have a strong enough support system but often repeat the same with different abusers if they get out and stay out of a previous situation of abuse (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2016). Future studies in this area can go even deeper into the relationship between an abused person's resilience and the need for positive, therapeutic social support systems to leave and stay away from abusive situations (Jose & Novaco, 2016; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2016). A closer look can also be taken into the fact that sometimes a person needs to be their own center of support, in conjunction with resilience, family, and friends. Some of the abused left because they had their own resources to rely upon (Jose & Novaco, 2016; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2016).

This research project aims to state that researchers need to be clearer in their research and define what type of support system affects a victim of domestic violence in what way. Also, this research project will perform research that defines different types of support systems for its participants who have been victims of domestic violence before asking them questions about what support systems they had and how they affected them.

Women who left and stayed gone needed a good, positive, and therapeutic support system (Estrellado & Loh, 2014; Fraser et al., 2002; Jose & Novaco, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2016). However, that was not all they needed. Most that left and stayed gone also had self-resilience/preservation and their own resources to rely on (such as a degree so they could work and pay their own bills) (Jose & Novaco, 2016; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2016). More current and up-to-date studies need to be done in this

area so that therapists know more about how to help women by counseling them while they are in the situation, helping them get out of their situations, and helping them stay out of the situation. Furthermore, the study needs to continue so that the counselor knows how others have succeeded and where to help the counselor and client focus their attention on how to get out and stay out.

As noted in the literature, it was very difficult to retrieve information from women who are currently in an abusive relationship. The abuser was normally close by or has measures in place that allow him to keep track of his victim at almost all times (Swanberg et al., 2006). Another factor was that some women feel shame and guilt about their situation and are even more reluctant to speak about it in front of anyone, even their support systems if they have one (Ginner-Sorolla & McGee, 2017; Gurm, & Marchbank, 2020; Kennedy & Prock, 2018;). In conclusion, it was noted that this research project took place among those who are now in abuse and those who are not in an abusive significant other relationship.

Biblical Foundations of the Study

The Bible is the infallible word of God. The problem with its interpretation is that man is fallible and fallen; therefore, when man interprets God's word on His own, He does not get it all perfectly right. From beginning to end, the Bible is about relationships. God's relationship with man began with creation (*King James Version*, 2023/1611, Genesis 1). God then looked down upon the earth and saw that man was alone and that it was not good for him to be alone. He then created Eve (Genesis 2:18-19). Eve was created, and God commanded her and Adam to go forth and multiply (Genesis 1:28). The Bible states that women are helpful mates for men. Proverbs 31 provides instructions for

a virtuous Godly woman to know how to take care of her husband, self, children, and home. In the New Testament, many scriptures, specifically in Ephesians, describe both husband and wife roles (Ephesians 5). In an article by Ademiluka (2019), this is brought to attention when churches in Nigeria misinterpret God's word by quoting:

“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she departs, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.” (I Corinthians 7:10 –11).

The churches then forbid their married couples to divorce no matter what happens, stating that marriage is for better or for worse. The words spoken here are true, but the Bible is a whole entity. They are only looking at one portion of scripture. The scripture also states that what God has joined together let no man put asunder (Matthew 19:6; Mark 9:10). Today, there is no research to show that people are still praying and fasting as the Bible instructs; therefore, it is doubtful that all marriages are what God has joined together. There are also scriptures in the Old Testament that tells in more detail what can and cannot be considered in seeking a divorce, the bottom line being that a man can relinquish a woman from a previous commitment if he so chooses. The meaning of this statement is not in contradiction to the scripture that if a man marries a divorced woman, he commits adultery. There are different levels of meaning. One must look at the whole (Deuteronomy 24). Jesus said because they kept pressing the issue, there were guidelines set up for divorcement, but this is only because of sin and being unequally yoked, which the Bible says do not do (Matthew 19; II Corinthians 6:14-18). In the Old Testament, the ten commandments were given because the people kept messing up, then got nitpicky over this, that, and the other, and sinful. As time went on in Judges, more

specific guidelines (laws) were given to help people do right. Numbers 30 states a man can relinquish a woman from any previous commitments. Man does not have authority over his own body, but his wife does and vice versa (I Corinthians 7:4). Even though the Bible says not to be unequally yoked, Christians marry non-Christians anyway (II Corinthians 6:14). Non-Christians will be accountable and judged against the word of God on judgment day, but do not adhere to it while on this earth, nor should they be expected too until they become Christians. The word of God says judge not lest ye be judged Christians cannot judge non-Christians for not adhering to the word of God. Still, they should lovingly show them by the way they live their life what the Bible says and be ready to convey the Bible verbally if ever asked about it, to lead a non-Christian to Christ and to teach why the Christians believe what they believe and live the way that they do. That said, one should pray for their spouse if they are abusive. One should protect themselves and their children from an abuser and get out and seek God's face and protection once they are out. God intends good for His people, even those not saved yet (Jeremiah 29:11).

Churches need to pray about what they say and the message they send to their congregations and communities; the Bible does say that women are to submit to men, but it also says men should leave their fathers and mothers and cleave unto their wives and love their wives as Christ loved the church, Christ has given the church freewill, He is there to hold his wife's hand, walk with her in love, and guide her in God's word because He is the physical manifestation of God's word. Therefore, He knows every word and what it means, and He loved the church so much He laid down His life to cover every one of their sins so that they could live in peace and cleanliness for all of eternity with Him

(Ephesians 5). The scripture that tells wives to submit to their husbands in Ephesians follows the scripture that states all Christians are subject to one another in an effort to help one another, to keep each one accountable so they do not fall too far from God's grace: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). This scripture given and others like it do not give a man a right to abuse his spouse in any way shape or form, the scripture says to love her as he loves himself (which could be where a huge part of the problem lies, a lot of men do not love themselves. Therefore, they are unable to love their wives rightly) (Ephesians 5:28; Kobo, 2018; Marsden, 2018; Westenberg, 2017; Zamfir, 2018; Zust et al., 2021). Spirituality is important in helping women learn to love themselves enough to leave abuse and stay out, knowing that God created them enough (Senter & Caldwell, 2002).

Amy Prentiss was the product of a family raised in church in the bible belt south. Where men were in control, and women were seen and not heard (Burlaka et al., 2020; Heyrman, 2013). The world, including the South, has made great advances in this area, but the older generations still hold on to days gone by (Bartky, 2020). Amy herself struggled with giving the man of her household power because that is what she watched in her own family, was taught at church, was taught at school, and even though she was liberated from these thought processes, they were so instilled in her it was a constant battle. Amy was married five times like the woman at the well. The last man she was with was not her husband. She had failed so many times she held on literally until the last minute to finally decide to leave him for good. In Amy's fourth marriage, she and her husband allowed other people into their relationship. Because she was the woman in the situation, her parents ganged up against her with her husband, who divorced her for

committing the same exact sin he did. They continually told her how wrong she was, abusing her even though they were no longer together. Her parents continue the relationship with Amy's ex-husband even today, treating his new wife as their own and their daughter as if she were their granddaughter.

The Bible, when taken as a whole, prayerfully read under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, is a great tool for learning God's will, voice, love, understanding, protection, mercy, and grace—the literature review of the Bible and of thought processes of times past and present that men formed. Men are fallible. Misinterpretation can occur that discredits good works in the Christian field: “Evangelical Christians are the largest growing religious affiliations in the United States. Evangelical Christian members may have conservative views on marriage and gender roles that complicate leaving a violent marriage.” (Zust, Hously, & Klatke, 2017). As Wolters (2005) stated, we are all a product of the fall. As the Bible says, we have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. Judge not lest ye be judged. Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who love the Lord. Johnson et al. (2010) also states in the last chapter of their book that humility is key to accomplishing peace. He goes on to quote scripture like: “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” (*King James Version*, 1611/2021, Proverbs 12:15). Christian professionals need to decide what they believe about Christianity and psychology, understand why they believe it, be able to back it up, and then move on into peace over it. Staying humble, knowing that others may not share the same thoughts, is alright because everyone answers to God and needs to come to their own conclusions.

Summary

Risk factors occur on a continuum with some women exposed to more risk factors than others. The thing about the risk factors was that some women have all of them (Acharya et al., 2019; Samankasikorn et al., 2019; Shamu et al., 2018). They have low self-esteem, which leads to them dropping out of school. Dropping out of school and having low self-esteem lead them to have no or low income (Finnbogadóttir et al., 2020; Maxwell et al., 2018; Rai & Choi, 2018). So, they move in with a predator who pays them any attention because they have low self-esteem and do not want to be homeless then, sometimes they wind up with an unwanted pregnancy (Acharya et al., 2019; Samankasikorn et al., 2019; Shamu et al., 2018). These women then feel like they are in a never-ending cycle because they do not believe they are worthy, have adequate resources, or positive social support systems to help them know they are worthy. They also do not believe they have anyone who knows the steps to get out and stay out and help them follow through with these steps.

Research on domestic violence has been done that flows with the times. In the past, it was noted that men were supported in their decision to abuse women because they were the head of the household, and what they said and wanted was to be listened to and obeyed by women without any backtalk. Most men and women believed that this is what the Bible meant when it said wives should submit to their husbands, this was mainly because priests, preachers, and bishops in times past were men and did not encourage their congregant members to read the bible on their own, and this was how they being men interpreted those scriptures and taught them. The women were to be seen and not heard, taking care of the family in obedience and submission, not realizing the scripture that states this is within the same chapter that states people are to submit to one another

helping each other and that men are to love their wives as themselves and as Christ loves the church (giving it free will, having conversations and relationship). Then as times began to change with women's liberation, women were blamed for entering into these relationships and staying. The blame was not laid at the feet of men still, but at least people were beginning to acknowledge that domestic violence abuse may actually be wrong. Now in more recent times, as laws have started to change and points of view have deepened over the fact that domestic violence abuse is wrong, many factors have been researched by professionals. Professionals have researched and defined what domestic violence abuse means through each stage of its gradual acceptance of being wrong. The most recent definition is the most accepted; it is anything a significant other does to hurt, hinder, or trap them. Professionals have studied the risk factors of how women wind up in these types of relationships, with the top six beings: low self-esteem, having a negative support system or no support system at all, becoming pregnant unexpectedly, especially at a young age, coming from a low-income family where the parents were not very educated, and being a school dropout. Professionals have researched why women stay, how they get out, and how they stay out.

In comparing research from over half a century, to two decades ago and most recently, the reasons women stay in abuse have been consistent. The thought processes behind the women desiring to get out, knowing how society looks at domestic violence, and knowing how the church looks at domestic violence have changed drastically from being accepted to now being looked at as a possible human rights issue. Research also has advanced in knowing the woman is not to blame in most instances, and often they

desire to get out. Still, they do not have the right frame of mind, desire, and resources to accomplish the extraordinary task of getting out and staying out.

The primary purpose of this research and literature review was to help women domestic violence victims find out the core reasons why others in the same situation got out and stayed out. The literature review concludes that society has made great strides in acknowledging that domestic violence abuse is wrong, what exactly it is, why women stay, and to some extent, how they get out and stay out. But the literature was unclear on what types of support systems helped women get out of abuse and stay out. There was a lack of definitions for different types of support systems. All support systems are just lumped together under the topic of support systems. There needs to be clear definitions and explanations of the results of each kind of support system in whether they help women escape and stay out if they hinder them, or if they just don't affect the victims one way or the other. There was a clear need for clarity and further research into how different support systems affect domestic violence victims.

This research project aims to clarify the confusion in previous literature and to answer the question of which support system affects abused women in which way. The research consisted of 21 participants aged 18 and living in abuse, and those who have left abuse and stayed out. The participants answered a survey questionnaire either in person at a local shelter or through online websites Qualtrics. All data was then be compiled and analyzed and published.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

Overview

There was an abundance of research on domestic violence and a few articles on support systems, but none defines the type of support system discussed within the article. The few articles related to support systems were also confusing in that some say support systems help victims get out; some say they help victims stay in violent situations longer (Burge, et al., 2017; Jose & Novaco, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013). This research filled the gap between thought processes of how social support systems affect those in abusive situations. In completing this research, different types of support systems were defined, and their roles in the lives of victims were more defined. In this chapter, the qualitative research approach was discussed. How this qualitative research answers the research question noting how support systems affect victims were addressed, as the research design, participants, procedures, instrumentation, and how the data was analyzed. To conclude this chapter, a brief discussion on delimitations, assumptions, limitations, and a summary of the chapter is given.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do women who have experienced physical abuse and permanently left their abuser describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse?

RQ2: How do women who have experienced physical abuse, left their abuser, and returned to abuse describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse?

Research Design

This qualitative study uses a narrative approach with a phenomenological case study interpretation of the shared experiences of the female participants and their social support systems or lack thereof. Women in domestic violence situations share a lived experience that others do not. These women also have a story to tell about their lived experiences. The open-ended qualitative questionnaire used for this research project was intended to help women tell their lived experience(s) in relation to being abused and staying in abuse or leaving abuse and how support systems affected these processes. The questions were written and presented with an open-ended answering format so participants can expound at any time within the space allowed.

Materials

The initial materials used for informed consent was an information sheet provided as the first page of the online survey, participants were instructed to not continue if they wish not to participate. The research data was gathered by an open-ended question qualitative survey through social media platforms Facebook and Instagram. A Qualtrics application was used, and a computer and internet were needed for this process. The survey was posted on Facebook and Instagram to elicit participants with a full explanation of the process. A computer and word cloud programs were used to process the qualitative information.

Participants

For this research project 21 women aged eighteen and greater were recruited for participation. Out of the 21, only 17 totally completed the survey. The women aged 18 and above were asked if they would like to participate in a research project for a graduate student at Liberty University for her dissertation process. The participants were then

given information about the research project and participant parameters. Those who chose to continue were instructed to continue through the rest of the process and were instructed during the informed consent information sheet process that they could exit the research project at any time they chose.

The participants for this qualitative research project were women of varied cultural, ethical, financial, and religious/nonreligious backgrounds, as much as the willing participants allowed, to ensure diversity (see Appendix B). The women who participated were separated into two separate groups. The groups of women were labeled as previously abused that have left the abusive situation for good and those who were still living in the abusive situations.

Study Procedures

The recruitment of participants began with a link that was posted for the questionnaire on the student researchers Social Media sites, which included Facebook and Instagram. Anyone that saw the posts was allowed to share the post anywhere they desired too online. The link remained online for a few weeks until the number of participants required for this survey was met. The first step of research had two phases. The first phase was the explanation of the research project. A description of the process of a graduate student performing the research project and a review of the informed consent, ethics, confidentiality, and compensation was done as an information sheet provided as the first page of the Qualtrics survey. Since an informed consent was not signed because the survey was totally anonymous, participants were instructed to exit the survey if they did not desire to participate (see Appendix A).

The second phase of step one of the research projects was giving definitions and explanations of terms used in the questionnaire (see Appendix C). Data gathering began in step two, and the continuing on to the questionnaires by the participants who completed the survey (see Appendix D). The participants in this research project were given a qualitative questionnaire. The data was combined and divided into two categories of women: those who have been abused and were still in abuse, those who have been abused and escaped permanently. Each of the two categories were then further broken down into groups according to their support systems: those with a positive support system, those with a general support system, those with a negative support system, and those with no support system. The data was then analyzed for: The experience shared by abused women still being abused with positive support systems, negative support systems, general support systems, and no support system: The experience shared by those who were formerly abused women (that have left and stayed out) with negative support systems, general support systems, no support system, positive support systems. Data was gathered, organized, processed, and written up using an Excel application and a Word Cloud program (see Materials).

Instrumentation

In this research project, demographic information was recorded to help with the validity of results for many different cultures. Then questions from a combination of three separate domestic violence screening tools and new questions specific to this research project were presented to the participants. The three various screening tools were as follows: HITS, Universal Violence Prevention Screening Protocol, and Partner Violence Screen (Choo & Houry, 2015). The validity of HITS was tested by Chen et al.

(2005), against two standard screening tools, ISA-P (only asked about physical abuse) and the WAST (a very lengthy questionnaire that is complex and focused on argument resolution). The HITS screening tool was valid for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking women (Brown et al., 2000; Chen et al., 2005; Coker et al., 2001). In an article by Heron et al. (2003), it was noted that the validity of the Universal Violence Prevention Screening was tested against the ISA (see previous statement) in the emergency department as being needed to help discover domestic violence in patients (Chen et al., 2005). Feldhaus et al. (1997), found that the specificity of the PVS helped in its reliability and validity (Chen et al., 2005).

Survey Questions

The following appear to be yes/no and closed-ended questions, but the participant may elaborate on any question if they desire.

1. Have you ever been in an abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Yes or No

2. Are you in an abusive relationship with a male significant other presently?

Choices: Yes or No

3. Have you left an abusive relationship with a male significant other and stayed out?

Choices: Yes or No

4. Have you left an abusive relationship with a male significant other and returned to the same relationship or gone into another abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Yes or No

5. Growing up what kind of support system did you have?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

6. If you have been or are being abused by a male significant other, according to the support system definitions, what kind of support did you have before entering an abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

N/A – does not apply to me.

7. If you have been or are being abused by a male significant other, according to the support system definitions, what kind of support did you have during your abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

N/A – does not apply to me.

8. If you were abused by a male significant other and you got out of an that relationship and stayed out, according to the support system definitions. What kind of support did you have when you left an abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

N/A – does not apply to me.

9. If you were abused and have been out of an abusive relationship for six months or more, what kind of support system do you have now?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support,

N/A – does not apply to me.

- 10.** If you have left an abusive relationship with a male significant other, please describe your experience leaving the abuse? To include the following: What helped you make the decision to leave? How did you leave? Did you have children that you took with you? Pets? Belongings? Did you have a positive social support system, and did they help you leave?
- 11.** If you have been out of an abusive relationship with a male significant other and have stayed out for over six months, please describe how you are now. To include the following: Do you have a support system now? What type of support system do you have now? Is it the same one as when you were living in the abuse and/or escaping the abusive relationship?
- Please feel free to elaborate with any and all of these questions as you feel comfortable.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed through a casual design lens of a narrative case study analysis. Applicable statements were broken down and categorized to look for prominent themes and rationales for each category. Those themes were then analyzed between the most-least popular with the designing of word clouds, charts, and tables for visual accuracy to be presented. There were word clouds produced for each category to capture themes, patterns, motivations, and deep understandings of how victims left abusive relationships and what propelled them to stay out of future abusive relationships. Word cloud analysis was done to help visualize the participant's thought processes throughout the research project. The data was then reviewed to see if it supported or

disputed the thought process that social support systems affect an abused female's decision to stay in a relationship or leave an abusive relationship.

Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations

Completing a research project on women who have been abused presented a problem in obtaining a large enough sample size. Women who are abused at times are reluctant to trust someone enough to tell them their stories (Zust, Housley, & Klatke, 2017). However, once a survivor believes they can trust a person, some want their stories to be told in an effort to help themselves by voicing their experience and in an effort to help others to avoid having the same experience (Battaglia, Finley, & Liebschutz, 2003). The research also presents a problem in that it was limited to one geographical area, which decreases the reliability of the results being wholly accurate and applicable to the abused victim demographic. This was alleviated by the survey link being shared across the world via Facebook by participants and non-participants. The demographic issue was attempted to be controlled, at least in a small way, by having a sample of women from different types of cultures, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. Performing a qualitative study does not always give definitive answers to one's research and this research project and results relies on the hope that participants were honest (Johnson, Scheitle, & Ecklund, 2021).

As stated before, 17 women finished the survey completely. The 17 women had the shared experience of abuse, with 14 of them sharing the experience of leaving and staying out for over six months, 2 of them had a shared experience of recently leaving their abusers, and 2 had the shared experience of still being in abuse. These experiences led to the women being separated into two categories the 16 that had left and the 2 that

were still in abuse, this was a limitation of the research because it could have been broken even further with those who left being separated into recently and greater than six months. It was another limitation to not have included a group for never abused whose social support system history and present-day answers could have been compared to those who have been abused.

Summary

This research project was centered around social support systems' effect on domestic violence victims. This research project was a qualitative study that posed questions to participants through Qualtrics on the Internet. The questionnaire contained questions compiled from HITS, Universal Prevention Screening Protocol, and Partner Violence Screening tools, as well as new questions pertaining to this research proposal.

The data was then compiled and used a narrative case study analysis that shows how different social support systems affected each participant. The data was then separated by categories of women 18 and older that have been previously abused got out and never returned and those that have been abused and were still living in the abuse. Then each group was analyzed further as to which type of social support group affected each group the most. The data was then written up, and the results posted.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

Domestic violence is a terrible problem across the world. Women need help escaping their abusive situations and knowing who they can rely on to help them. In research done by Jose and Novaco (2016), they state that support systems can give women a false sense of security and help them stay longer in the abuse. A few authors state that women need support systems to help them leave their abusers (Burge et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2019; Ekström, 2018; Sullivan, 2018; Ye et al., 2020; Zust et al., 2021). Research further states that a woman must have a particular mindset to leave her abusive situation (Machisa et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2018). When a woman decides to leave, she still needs help getting out and staying out (Burge et al., 2017; Dias et al., 2019; Ekström, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2019; Ye et al., 2020; Zust et al., 2021).

This research used a qualitative phenomenological narrative case study to define different types of support systems (Starman, 2013). This was done in an attempt to understand the lived experience(s) of victims and their support systems growing up, before entering abuse, while in abuse, in the process of leaving abuse, and after abuse for those who left abuse in comparison to the support systems of those still in abuse while they were growing up, before they entered abuse, and what they were when filling out the survey still being in abuse.

Research Questions

Research Questions

RQ1: How do women who have experienced physical abuse and permanently left their abuser describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse?

RQ2: How do women who have experienced physical abuse, left their abuser, and returned to abuse describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse?

Data was collected through an anonymous Qualtrics survey (see Appendix D for questions). There were twenty-one participants (three of whom did not complete the survey) who were women 18 and older who had experienced some form of abuse from a male significant other over the course of their life. There is a brief synopsis of each participant (who were numbered because there were no names attached to the surveys) in Table 1. The participants were numbered as participants 1,2,3 up to 17, with their specific information attached to them. The analysis results from the survey were presented in a chart that shows the coding and themes that were used to separate and analyze the data (see Table 2; Figure 1; & Figure 2).

Descriptive Results

Participants

In this heterosexual relationship-focused study, domestic violence - sometimes referred to as abuse is defined as: a man a woman is in a relationship with who makes them feel less than or trapped in any or all parts of their life (i.e., spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, financial, and sexual). The abuse includes but is not limited to physical abuse, neglect, abandonment, and isolation (Bonamigo et al., 202; Farr, 2021; Hegarty et al., 2017; Heyman et al., 2020; Sack, 2004).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Demographics		Hispanic or Non	Still in abuse (no) or out of abuse (yes)	Left and returned to same or different abusive relationship
	Age	Race			
1	30-50,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
2	30-50,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
3	>51,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
4	>51,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
5	30-50,	Caucasian	Hispanic	No	Yes
6	>51,	Caucasian	No answer	Yes	No
7	30-50,	Caucasian	Hispanic	No	Yes
8	30-50,	Caucasian	Non	Yes	Still in 1 st
9	>51,	Caucasian	No answer	No	Yes
10	30-50,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
11	30-50,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
12	30-50,	Caucasian	No	No	No
13	18-29,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
14	>51,	Caucasian	Hispanic	No	Yes
15	30-50,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
16	30-50,	Caucasian	Non	No	Yes
17	18-29,	African American	Non	No	No

Study Findings

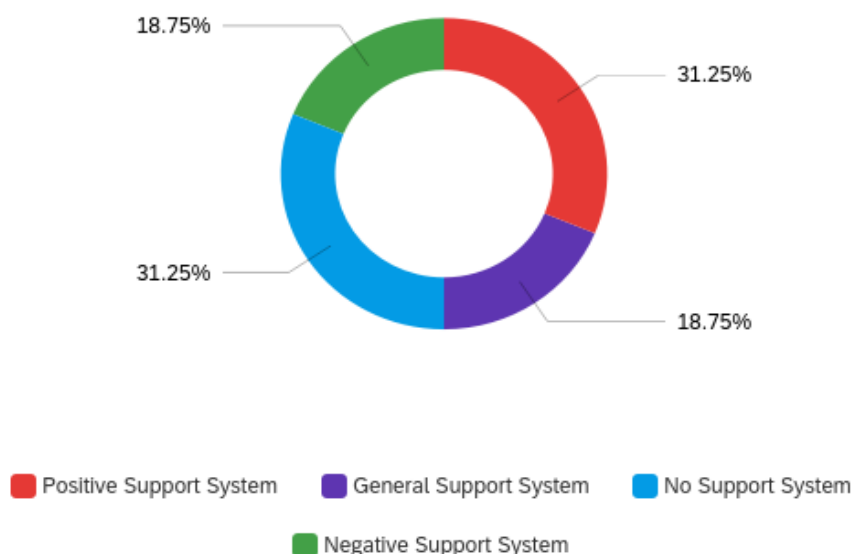
The data collected has been viewed through a phenomenological lens, with the researcher interpreting the data as related to the research questions in a narrative method. The first research question asked: How do women who have experienced physical abuse and permanently left their abuser describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse? During the abuse most of the participants stated they had no support systems, a few said they had general, and two stated they had a positive support system. There were sixteen participants who left their abuser, most of whom stated they now have positive support systems.

The second research question asked: How do women who have experienced physical abuse, left their abuser, and returned to abuse describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse? There were two participants still living in abuse. One participant still in abuse stated she had a positive support system. The other participant, still in abuse, stated she had no support system.

Women who have experienced physical abuse mostly felt they had no support or positive support while growing up (see Figure 1). There were a few women who stated they had positive support systems while growing up but gave conflicting answers in their narrative, so it was unclear if they truly had positive support systems prior to entering the abuse or not.

Figure 1

Participants perception of their support while growing up



Comparing the results between what kind of support system a participant experienced while growing up and before the abusive relationship, with the type or support systems reported current state/post abuse, the answers changed from five stating they had positive support systems to only two stating they had positive support systems. The participants were encouraged to elaborate, but none of them chose to elaborate on the answer to this question. With it being a survey, there was no interviewer present to ask what happened between growing up and entering a relationship, if anything at all (see Table 3). The next question asked what type of support systems the participants had while they were in an abusive relationship(s). Only one of the two who had previously answered positive again answered positive support while in the abuse. The overwhelming response to this question was that most of the women had no support while in the abuse. One woman stated she felt gaslit because those that were in her life made her feel like she was doing something wrong, and she deserved whatever abuse she was getting from her

predator. Another participant stated that no one knew what was going on. She had people in her life, but they did not help her to get out or support her through her pain, because she did not allow anyone to know what was happening. In the same way, some had abusers who were not physically abusive, so no one knew what was happening until it did become physical, and there was physical evidence that something was going on. In these cases, the participants stated that the support was still not positive, but there was at least some form of support once they found out physical abuse was happening. In others' lives there were cases of entrapment where the abuser kept their victims isolated, they were not allowed to come and go freely, or talk on the phone as they wish. Their abuser kept a tight grip around what was going on in the household and around the household, so that there was no way for their victims to receive support or let others know that they even needed support. The answers to the questions were not only negative words they had a negative tone. The participant who did explain she felt gaslit seemed to be a reoccurring underlying theme, among other women, that they truly felt that others looked at them as if they deserved the abuse and that was why they did not lend them positive support or help.

Only one woman stated she had a positive support system while in the abuse that helped her leave. The other women who left, left on their own and restructured their lives after leaving. One of the two women that stated they were still in the abuse stated she has a positive support system that was currently encouraging her to leave. The second woman who was still in abuse did not give any details. A few of the women had more than one abusive relationship before making the final decision to leave for good. Most of them state they had to leave on their own and then rebuilt their lives and support systems (see

Table 3). There were three that stated that even though they have left and stayed out they have only general to no support systems.

The following was the first question asking for specific details: If you have left an abusive relationship with a male significant other, please describe your experience leaving the abuse? To include the following: What helped you make the decision to leave? How did you leave? Did you have children that you took with you? Pets? Belongings? Did you have a positive social support system, and did they help you leave? The themes as the women were contemplating leaving, were in the process of leaving, and going through with the act of leaving were mostly negative (see Figure 2; see Appendix H for complete question and answers). All women except for two have escaped their predators. The two participants who were still in abuse were not included in the results for this question. The lived experiences of the women who had left were all drastically different during the process. One participant had their dog killed, one was able to get away quickly because her predator went to jail and was still there, one woman got away quickly because her predator killed himself in front of her and her kids after trying to kill her. It was not easy for these women to leave, some of them had to leave their children behind and were able to return and retrieve them. The few participants who did report a positive and/or general support systems mentioned them all as different people. There were participants who had immediate family as their positive support system, some had extended family, some church, and some a friend. While the list was long, those that made up what positive and/or general support the women had were very few members it was one or two family, friend(s), or church members, making it even more difficult to make that final decision to leave.



The following was the second question asking for specific details (the last question in the survey): If you have been out of an abusive relationship with a male significant other and have stayed out for over six months, please describe how you are now. To include the following: Do you have a support system now? What type of support system do you have now? Is it the same one as when you were living in the abuse and/or escaping the abusive relationship? Those who left had a more positive theme flowing now that they have been free from abuse for an extended amount of time (see Figure 3; see Appendix H for complete question and answers). Having to escape abuse, which was

traumatic within itself, under sometimes horrific circumstances, without much help if any at all helped these women realize how much of their own positive support system, they themselves can be and need to be. Some of them also came to the realization how much they need a positive support system to help them stay strong and out of the abuse.

Figure 3

Thought processes after leaving the abuse.



The data codes were preconceived using the different types of support systems and the situation of being in or out of abuse being used to separate the women into categories. The themes then began to arise from the statements and answers given by each participant to show the lived experience of each participant through what type of support systems they had growing up, before entering abuse (see Table 2), while in abuse (see Table 2), and after leaving the abuse (for those who have left and stayed gone permanently) (see Table 3).

Table 2

Deductive Coding: Lived experiences before and while in an abusive

Growing up what kind of support system did you have?	If you have been or are being abused by a male significant other, according to the support system definitions, what kind of support did you have before entering an abusive relationship with a male significant other?	If you have been or are being abused by a male significant other, according to the support system definitions, what kind of support did you have during your abusive relationship with a male significant other?
No Support System	No support system. My mother was my support system however, she was the victim of domestic violence as well. And domestic violence was not discussed.	No support system because no one knew about it until it became physical abuse. No one can see emotional and physical abuse.
General Support System	General support system	No support
General Support System	negative and no support system	negative and no support system
No Support System	None	None
Positive Support System	My parents and siblings.	Family and church
No Support System	no idea	none
No Support System	General	None
Positive Support System	Always had positive support from friends and family.	Great support by friends and family. Always here for me and encouraging me.
Positive Support System	General support of close friends	None
No response given	Average family support	No support he wouldn't allow it
Negative Support System	None	None
Negative Support System	Negative. Grew up with a very narcissistic mother, enabling family system. Didn't know any different.	Little to none. Mostly gaslit to feel that I had done something to deserve this treatment.
General Support System	Very lite my dad is the one who was aggressive and igniting.	No
Negative Support System	No support	No support
Positive Support System	General support system	No support system
Positive Support System	Positive	No support because no one knew the abuse was happening.
No Support System	Verbal abuse happen often and I just quit the relationship after 3 years.	Support from a good friend of mines we talk and she helped me overcome the bad things that happen to me.

The data analysis showed that women mostly had a general or positive social support system growing up. They then converted to mostly generalized to no support

system before entering abusive situations. Then, once in the abuse, most of the participants had no support systems. For those who left abuse never to return, their support systems were varied with some still forming their support systems, some having already rebuilt positive support systems, and some having realized for the moment God and themselves were their support system. There were still those who stated they had no support system, and only one stated they had a generalized support system. There were very few who stated they had negative support systems throughout any of the processes, which was a surprising finding and is further discussed in the implication section in chapter 5.

The data collected showed that women overall have to make up their minds on their own to leave abuse before leaving. Most of the women who answered the survey left while having little to no support at all. They continued to build their lives to be able to maintain their escape. The majority had been out of abuse for more than six months. There were two participants still in abuse and two who had recently left their abusive situations. The women who had left for over six months were the ones with the most positive support system answer for now in their lives the most. There is much more research that can be done in this area. The demographics of these women were mostly Caucasian females who were over the age of thirty. The next chapter will continue to explain the further implications of this research and what can be done moving forward.

The research data for this study supported the majority of the literature that stated that most women have to come to a place on their own where they say enough is enough to leave an abusive relationship (Hoff, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013). It is helpful to have a positive support system in place once a woman makes up her mind to leave, the process

can be helped along by those in the positive support system. After separating the women into two groups: those who have left abuse and those still in abuse. The types of support systems each woman had were looked at, as well as their story of when and how the ones who left decided to leave. Current data did not support the assertion that positive support systems give women a false sense of support so they stay longer and endure as long as they can. The data supports the thought process that positive support systems encourage women to leave the abuse as soon as possible.

Table 3

Lived experience upon escaping and now.

If you were abused by a male significant other and you got out of an that relationship and stayed out, according to the support system definitions. What kind of support did you have when you left an abusive relationship with a male significant other?	If you were abused and have been out of an abusive relationship for six months or more, what kind of support system do you have now?
Positive support system.	Positive support system.
General support	Positive support system
no support	general support
None	None
Family	Friends and family
none n/a	
General	Positive
I have not left yet.	N/A.
I was divorced for 5 years, fell into gambling addiction been married to my current husband for 21 years	GOD Almighty first, friend, sister, 2 adult sons
I didn't I just moved on	None
None	Family, friends, clients
None. In fact lost most friendships, and family accused me of playing victim for attention. I remained quiet.	I am happily remarried to a gentle and soft caring man. I no longer talk to anyone who stood by idly during my abuse.
No	No

No support	No support
Positive Support System	Positive support system
No support because again no one knew until I had been out for a little while but once they knew it was general support	Positive
Therapy and self care was a major success.	N/A

Summary

In this qualitative phenomenological case study research project, demographic information was recorded to help with the validity of results for many different cultures. Then questions from a combination of three separate domestic violence screening tools and new questions specific to this research project were presented to the participants. The three various screening tools were as follows: HITS, Universal Violence Prevention Screening Protocol, and Partner Violence Screen (Choo & Houry, 2015). The validity of HITS was tested by Chen et al. (2005), against two standard screening tools, ISA-P (only asked about physical abuse) and the WAST (a very lengthy questionnaire that was complex and focused on argument resolution). The HITS screening tool was valid for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking women (Brown et al., 2000; Chen et al., 2005; Coker et al., 2001). In an article by Heron et al. (2003), it was noted that the validity of the Universal Violence Prevention Screening was tested against the ISA (see previous statement) in the emergency department as being needed to help discover domestic violence in patients (Chen et al., 2005). Feldhaus et al. (1997), found that the specificity of the PVS helped in its reliability and validity (Chen et al., 2005).

The data codes for the research were preconceived using the different types of support systems, and the situation of being in or out of abuse was used to separate the

women into categories. The themes then began to arise from the statements and answers given by each participant to show the lived experience of each participant through what type of support systems they had growing up, before entering abuse (see Table 2), while in abuse (see Table 2), and after leaving the abuse (for those who have left and stayed gone permanently) (see Table 3).

The data for this qualitative phenomenological research narrative case study was analyzed using an excel and word cloud application to form theme's, figures, and tables, to use in support of answering the research questions: How do women who have experienced physical abuse and permanently left their abuser describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse? And: How do women who have experienced physical abuse, left their abuser, and returned to abuse describe their lived experience with their social support systems during and after experiencing abuse? The data showed the lived experience(s) for all involved had two consistent themes of generalized to no support system throughout with an increase in positive support systems once women had left their abusers permanently and began to rebuild their lives and social support systems (see Tables 2 & 3).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

This research project uses a qualitative approach to a phenomenological narrative case study defining different types of support systems to understand the lived experience of victims when leaving a domestic violence situation among women who have experienced abuse. Furthermore, how these women experienced any support that helped them leave were compared to those who have stayed in abusive relationships.

Summary of Findings

The research for this study showed relative themes throughout the participants answers. To this researcher's surprise, five of the nineteen participants who completed the survey stated they had a positive support system while growing up before entering their abusive situations. Although two participants answered other questions making it appear they potentially did not realize they did not have a positive support system. There were also three other participants who stated they had generalized support systems growing up, there were two who reported negative support systems, but overall, the largest group answered no support system at all.

The answers to the survey questionnaire given by the participants showed that the social support systems growing up were mixed answers. Out of the 17 participants, 15 had left the abuse, and two were still living in abusive relationships. There were five of the participants that stated they had a positive support system growing up which was not a finding that was expected, although out of those 5/3 went on to say that their social support systems changed to generalized between growing up and moving into an abusive relationship. Out of the two who stated they still had a positive support system, one of

them was one of the two still living in abuse; she stated her positive support system was encouraging her to leave on a regular basis. She just has not done it yet. Once going into an abusive relationship, 14 out of the 17 stated they had no support system, with one stating hers was between negative support and no support. The results from this portion of the research gives information that can help in future research. The lived experience growing up was not always negative for women who wind up in abuse, as was the thought process of the researcher before beginning the research project; rather the decline in types of support systems began somewhere between growing up and entering the abuse. Then while in the abuse, the types of social support systems continued to decline for most of the participants. Then when the fourteen women who left their abuser 9 stated they began to have positive social support systems. One participant stated she was happily remarried to a caring man, one participant stated that they themselves were their own support system, and one stated that God almighty was the first person in their newfound positive social support system. The research here supports research found during the literature review that some women have to have an epiphany moment where they say enough is enough and do not desire to live in the abuse anymore before leaving and moving on. Some of the participants stated it was after they had broken bones that they left, one stated that after she saw her daughter go out to play with the neighboring children and all her daughter knew how to do was fight was when she left, one stated it was after her dog was killed, and one stated that when she was trying to leave her husband, abuser caught her tried to kill her in front of their children and then turned the gun on himself and killed himself.

The participants who had left the abuse and were no longer in an abusive relationship mostly stated that they were a part of their own support system now. Out of the those who stated they had positive support systems now, one participant reported a positive support system before the abuse, which was still being maintained. Participants who reported generalized or no support systems from growing up and right before entering their abusive situations reported rebuilding their support systems or were in the process of doing so. Participants who experienced physical abuse mostly felt they had no support or positive support while growing up (see Figure 1). There were a few women who stated they had positive support systems while growing up but gave conflicting answers in their narrative, so it was unclear if they truly had positive support systems prior to entering the abuse or not.

Discussion of Findings

The research data for this study supports the majority of the literature that stated that most women have to come to a place on their own where they say enough is enough to leave an abusive relationship (Hoff, 2016; Katerndahl et al., 2013). It is helpful to have a positive support system in place once a woman makes up her mind to leave, the process can be helped along by those in the positive support system. After separating the women into two groups: those who have left abuse and those still in abuse. The types of support systems each woman had were looked at, as well as their story of when and how the ones who left decided to leave. Current data did not support the assertion that positive support systems give women a false sense of support so they stay longer and endure as long as they can. The data supports the thought process that positive support systems encourage women to leave the abuse as soon as possible.

The participants overall did not emphasize what role God or religion played in their epiphany moment or in their escape. But there were a few who did acknowledge without Him, not only would they not have gotten out and stayed out, but they also most likely would not be alive today. It took the participants time to realize abuse was not the best life for them, and if they wanted to stay alive and not be abused, they had to get out (see Table 2).

As the Bible states, God wants good for all of His creation (King James Version, 1611/2023, Romans 8:28). The participants had to want this for themselves, even those with positive social support systems. It takes time sometimes for people to understand that all people are beautifully and wonderfully made, (Psalm 139:14), which includes them, and they did not deserve to be abused (see Table 2).

Implications

The fundamental foundation of this research project was separating support systems into categories that were broad in type and definition. This research includes all types of support for clarity in filling the gap of past literature that generalized support systems into one group. The survey questionnaire conveyed these different types of support systems to the participants and then asked questions in relation to their lived experience with abuse and their support systems.

The data showed that once the 16 escaped the abuse and stayed gone, they restructured their support systems, were their own support, or were still working on their support systems. The stories were different from what the triggering moment was, but all of those that left had that moment. Then most of them used that moment to not only leave but to begin to rebuild their social support systems. They have continued to build their

lives to be able to maintain their escape. The majority have been out of abuse for more than six months. There were two still in abuse and two that had recently left their abusive situations. The women who answered that they now have a positive social support system the most were those who had been out of the abuse for more than six months.

The data in this research project can help start the conversation of what it might take to help a woman have her epiphany moment. To help a woman realize she is enough because no matter what type of support system these women had, they still found themselves in abusive situations. Although positive support systems were not as common as general and no support systems, they were still greater than the negative support system group that women had before entering abuse.

The data provided can help support resources to understand how valuable they are to women, especially once she has made up her mind to leave and did not have any support or resources to do so. Support resources need to understand that sometimes they are the only support system a woman has other than herself, and when a woman is in a healing process, she needs encouragement and support so that she can support herself even further (Hoff, 2016; Katerndahl, 2016).

The data showed that overall, the participants felt they had no support to general support systems. It was not a projected expectation that out of the 17 participants who completed the survey, only three participants stated they had a negative support system growing up. This finding leads us to the fact that women who wind up in abuse did not necessarily come from a negative support system.

Through the process of living in abuse and leaving, once the 15 escaped their abuse, they restructured their social support systems, were their own support, or were still

working on their social support systems. One of the women still in abuse stated she had a positive social support system that was encouraging her to leave; this was very important information that supported the thought process found in previous research during the literature review that stated until a woman is ready to leave herself a positive social support system can just encourage her to leave, be there ready to help when she has her epiphany moment, and then help her to rebuild her life and keep her encouraged so that she does not return to abusive relationships. The epiphany moment needing to happen was an expected outcome. It was found that for that epiphany moment to happen, most of the women needed something negative to happen to have their epiphany moment, although they were all able to escape physically intact, and those with children were eventually all able to take them out of the abuse as well.

Limitations

Completing a research project on women who have been abused presents a problem in obtaining a large enough sample size. Women who are abused are often reluctant to trust anyone (Zust, Housley, & Klatke, 2017). The survey was on Social Media sites where there were more than 1500 women able to view the request. There was a balance within those over 1500 women of demographics, all ages, all races, and all ethnicities. The 1500 women were from different geographical areas with different types of cultures, religions, and nationalities. The resulting data were gathered from those who were American Indian, African American, and Caucasian (with at least three Hispanic participants included). However, the overwhelming majority were non-Hispanic Caucasians. The limited ethnic pool of participants was a limitation and a foundation for further study to see if there are reasons that different cultures may be more reluctant to

come forward and answer questions about their abusive situations past or present.

Another limitation was that performing a qualitative study does not always give definitive answers to one's research (Johnson, Scheitle, & Ecklund, 2021).

The surveys were filled out without a researcher present, which has its pitfalls. A researcher, when able to be present can read body language and cues, can tell when an individual was not being totally honest, and at times, can ask additional follow-up questions. Having a researcher present to communicate with can also help a participant feel more comfortable in telling the truth and gives them the ability to ask questions that can help them better understand the questions being asked of them and what was the goal of the research. Another problem was that this was a qualitative study fully relying on the hope that the participants were honest (Johnson, Scheitle, & Ecklund, 2021).

As stated before, 17 women finished the survey completely. The 17 women had the shared experience of abuse, with 13 of them sharing the experience of leaving and staying out for over six months, 2 of them had a shared experience of recently leaving their abusers, and 2 had the shared experience of still being in abuse. These experiences led to the women being separated into two categories the 15 that had left and the 2 that were still in abuse, this was a limitation of the research because it could have been broken even further with those who left being separated into recently and greater than six months. A group can also be added to look at the social support systems of women who have never been abused to be compared with those who have been abused.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data collected from this research project can be used as a foundation for many more research projects. Specifically, projects on the different types of support systems

and a support system's ability to encourage or discourage women in leaving abusive relationships. Further studies should be conducted on the social constructs associated with female kindness, understanding that women may be hesitant to portray their families in a negative light by identifying them as a negative support system. Women may not state they had a negative support system because they know their parents themselves came from a negative support system, and they feel empathy for them. Positive support systems were not as common as general support systems and no support systems.

A second limitation to the current study was that women have to reach an epiphany moment of believing they are enough, and they did not want themselves and/or their children to be abused anymore before leaving. How does this epiphany moment happen? Is it different for every woman? Is it different in its timing for different cultures and ethnicities? Can society, families, support resources, or friends help these women have their epiphanies sooner? As mentioned before positive support systems were not as common as general and no support systems, they were still greater than the negative support system group that women had before entering into abuse. This leads to another topic to be delved into: Is it out of respect for their family that these women did not desire to say they grew up in negative support systems? There were many implications that this data can be a foundation for in future studies of women and how to help them to avoid abusive relationships or to get out of one as soon as they recognize they are in one.

In this study, there were 21 women who attempted the survey, and 17 finished it completely. The 17 women had the shared experience of abuse, with 13 of them sharing the experience of leaving and staying out for over six months, 2 of them had a shared experience of recently leaving their abusers, and 2 had the shared experience of still

being in abuse. These experiences led to the women being separated into two categories: the 16 that had left and the 2 that were still in abuse. This can be broken down even further into more categories for future research with the difference between the 14 who had been gone for over 6 months and the 2 who had recently left the abuse. A group can also be added to look at the social support systems of women who have never been abused to be compared with those who have been abused.

The number of research projects that can branch out from this foundational research project was many. This research was the first of its kind to separate different types of support systems. The only hope is that the new avenues of research provoked by this project can be completed in the near future so that women can get out of or never go into these types of abusive relationships.

Summary

The most prominent research question in relation to women in abusive situations is: Why do they stay? This research project attempted to reach further into that question: Is it because there is a lack of positive support systems? Can positive support systems help women get out of these relationships once they have entered them? To help answer these questions a qualitative research survey was conducted through a Qualtrics application. The survey asked questions that helped look into the lived experiences of those who were still in abuse and those who had left abuse and stayed out in relation to their social support systems: before, during, and after their abusive situations.

The data showed that overall women felt that had no support or general support systems before entering abuse, the same was true for while in abuse, and then once they escaped the abuse and stayed gone, they restructured their support systems, were their

own support, or were still working on their support systems. One of the women still in abuse stated she had a positive support system that was encouraging her to leave, this was very important information, that supports until a woman is ready to leave herself, there is not a lot of others can do but wait and pray for her to become ready to leave. The question now is: Is there certain things that can be done, words that can be said, or seeds that can be sown into a woman's life to help her get to the ready stage and help her to have her epiphany moment that she is enough and that she has had enough.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET

Consent**SUPPORT SYSTEMS: THE AFFECT THEY HAVE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS**

Title of the Project: Support Systems: The Affect They Have On Domestic Violence Victims

Principal Investigator: Kimberly D. Burton, Doctoral Graduate Student Psychology Department at Liberty University.

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
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You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a female 18 years of age or older, and have been in at least one relationship with a male significant other. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
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The purpose of this study is to bring attention to domestic violence, the fact that it is still a problem, and to give information to help society and professionals come up with ways to help the abused escape and stay out of the violence through understanding the relationship social support systems play in the lives of women.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Fill out a demographic form. This should take no longer than five minutes.
2. Read definitions and terms that will be used in the questionnaire/survey. This should take no longer than ten minutes.
3. Fill out a questionnaire/survey. This should not take more than twenty minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include giving acknowledgment and a definition to the different types of social support systems. Clarifying each social support systems role in helping domestic violence victims leave violent relationships and not return to them.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer/in a locked drawer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. All hardcopy material will be shredded once scanned into a computer.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, while taking an online survey please exit the survey and close your internet browser.

If answering survey in person with researcher please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials.

Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Kimberly D. Burton. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at kburton18@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the information provided above.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Demographic information

Age: _____

Race: _____

White/Caucasian = 1

Black/African American = 2

American Indian = 3

Alaska Native = 4

Asian = 5

Native Hawaiian = 6

Other Pacific Islander = 7

Ethnicity: _____

Hispanic = 1

Non-Hispanic = 2

APPENDIX C: DEFINITIONS OF TERMINOLOGY USED IN QUESTIONNAIRE

Defined Terms

Domestic Violence: sometimes referred to as abuse: for this heterosexual relationship focused project, it is a man you are in a relationship with making you feel less than or trapped in any or all parts of your life (i.e., spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, financial, and sexual). The abuse includes but is not limited to physical abuse, neglect, abandonment, and isolation (Bonamigo et al., 202; Farr, 2021; Hegarty et al., 2017; Heyman et al., 2020; Sack, 2004).

Positive social support system: is defined as a person that has a relationship with one or more other person(s) that is therapeutic to that person in one or more aspects of their life (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and/or financial) this does not mean the relationship is always positive, but overall positive and therapeutic (Ahn et al., 2017; Blais & Zalta, 2023).

General support system: is defined as those that consist of people that are in one's life but are mainly just acquaintances, they may or may not lend their help from time to time, they are unreliable for support (Debnam et al., 2012).

Negative support system: consists of people pulling on someone, asking for help from someone but not giving it back, and just has a negative influence (Ahn et al., 2017; Blais & Zalta, 2023).

No support system: is defined as not having anyone that one can talk to, relate to, or ask for help from (Cohen & McKay, 2020).

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions

The following appear to be yes/no and closed ended questions, but the participant may elaborate on any question if they desire.

1. Have you ever been in an abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Yes or No

2. Are you in an abusive relationship with a male significant other presently?

Choices: Yes or No

3. Have you left an abusive relationship with a male significant other and stayed out?

Choices: Yes or No

4. Have you left an abusive relationship with a male significant other and returned to the same relationship or gone into another abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Yes or No

5. Growing up what kind of support system did you have?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

6. If you have been or are being abused by a male significant other, according to the support system definitions, what kind of support did you have before entering an abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

N/A – does not apply to me.

7. If you have been or are being abused by a male significant other, according to the support system definitions, what kind of support did you have during your abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

N/A – does not apply to me.

8. If you were abused by a male significant other and you got out of an that relationship and stayed out, according to the support system definitions. What kind of support did you have when you left an abusive relationship with a male significant other?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support

N/A – does not apply to me.

9. If you were abused and have been out of an abusive relationship for six months or more, what kind of support system do you have now?

Choices: Positive, General, Negative, No support,

N/A – does not apply to me.

- 10.** If you have left an abusive relationship with a male significant other, please describe your experience leaving the abuse? To include the following: What helped you make the decision to leave? How did you leave? Did you have children that you took with you? Pets? Belongings? Did you have a positive social support system, and did they help you leave?

- 11.** If you have been out of an abusive relationship with a male significant other and have stayed out for over six months, please describe how you are now. To include the following: Do you have a support system now? What type of

support system do you have now? Is it the same one as when you were living in the abuse and/or escaping the abusive relationship?

Please feel free to elaborate with any and all of these questions as you feel comfortable.

APPENDIX E: HITS, UNIVERSAL PREVENTION SCREENING TOOL, AND PARTNER VIOLENCE SCREEN

Screening Tool	Questions	Test Performance
HITS ^a	How often does your partner: 1. Physically hurt you? 2. Insult you or talk down to you? 3. Threaten you with harm? 4. Scream or curse at you?	Sensitivity ^{b,c,d} : 30-88% Specificity ^{b,c,d} : 83-97%
Universal Violence Prevention Screening Protocol (adapted) ^e	Have you been in a relationship with a partner in the past year? If yes, within the past year has a partner: (a) Slapped, kicked, pushed, choked, or punched you? (b) Forced or coerced you to have sex? (c) Threatened you with a knife or gun to scare or hurt you? (d) Made you afraid that you could be physically hurt? (e) Repeatedly used words, yelled, or screamed in a way that frightened you, threatened you, put you down, or made you feel rejected?	PPV for physical violence ^{e,f} : 71-89% PPV for emotional violence ^{e,f} : 75-92%
Partner Violence Screen (PVS) ^g	1. Have you been hit, kicked, punched or otherwise hurt by someone in the past year? If so, by whom? 2. Do you feel safe in your current relationship? 3. Is there a partner from a previous relationship who is making you feel unsafe now?	Sensitivity ^{g,h} : 65-71% Specificity ^{g,h} : 80-84%

APPENDIX F: RECRUITMENT FACEBOOK


ATTENTION Ladies 18 and Older: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Psychology at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experience of victims when leaving a domestic violence situation among women who have experienced abuse and left never to return. Furthermore, how these women experienced any support that helped them leave will be compared to those who have left abusive relationships and returned to them, and those who have stayed in abusive relationships and never tried to leave. To participate, you must be a female 18 years of age or older and have been in a relationship with a male significant other. Participants will be asked to answer questions which should take about five to thirty minutes to complete, depending on how much detail you as a participant desire to give. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please **CLICK HERE:** https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cCLOliOD6kNmsgm . A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey.

APPENDIX G: RECRUITMENT INSTAGRAM

ATTENTION Ladies 18 and Older: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Psychology at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experience of victims when leaving a domestic violence situation among women who have experienced abuse and have left. Furthermore, how these women experienced any support that helped them leave will be compared to those who have left abusive relationships only to return, and those who have stayed in abusive relationships that have never tried to leave. To participate, you must be a female 18 years of age or older and have been in a relationship at some point previously and/or currently with a male significant other/husband. Participants will be asked to answer questions which should take about five to thirty minutes to complete, depending on how much detail you as a participant desire to give. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please **CLICK on LINK IN MY BIO**. A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey.

APPENDIX H: COMPLETE ANSWERS TO WORD CLOUD QUESTIONS

<p>10. If you have left an abusive relationship with a male significant other, please describe your experience leaving the abuse? To include the following: What helped you make the decision to leave? How did you leave? Did you have children that you took with you? Pets? Belongings? Did you have a positive social support system, and did they help you leave?</p>	<p>11. If you have been out of an abusive relationship with a male significant other and have stayed out for over six months, please describe how you are now. To include the following: Do you have a support system now? What type of support system do you have now? Is it the same one as when you were living in the abuse and/or escaping the abusive relationship?</p>
<p>The reason I left the relationship is because he was on probation for other things. Never for domestic violence. He never got arrested or charged for domestic violence. I was not his first victim but I'm the only victim the reached out for help from the judicial system. What helped me make the decision to leave is that he was incarcerated and could not get out of jail because he was on probation otherwise, I would have bonded him out and went right back to him out of fear of him trying to kill me once he was released. I left when he was arrested. I took everything I had with me and bought a house. He was incarcerated, there was nothing he could do. He served several years for his crimes against me and violating his probation. My positive support system did help me leave, they helped me pack and move into my new home.</p>	<p>I have a positive support system and it is the same support system that I had prior.</p>
<p>The first abusive relationship I was in I was in for 3 years and we had a son together. I ended up leaving when he punched me in the face in front of our son and a friend, it was in a public area and someone called the police. This made it easier because he was arrested. I got a court order and full custody of our son. I had a positive support system of friends and family. I did go back after several months unfortunately.</p>	<p>I had a general support system when I went back and when I left again, I got a positive support system.</p>
<p>My daughter fought with neighbor kids it's all she knew. second husband died and i didn't want to marry again until the cycle was broken i brought my daughter and the vehicle that was paid off and whatever fit in the car.</p>	<p>I am my own support system, i encourage myself and have a few people that are there and i have educated myself on how to reach out for help and where to go to get help when i need it</p>
<p>Was left for the streets</p>	<p>Lots of self care still healing working on self</p>
<p>I planned and did it secretly. The first one killed my dog, after that I knew I was next. I made a plan, got my kids far away, took only some clothes and left to an undisclosed location and contacted an attorney to start divorce proceedings. The second one I made plans and left suddenly the same way. The third, made a plan and left suddenly.</p>	<p>I have had much less support this last go around. It has been the most difficult one. I left in Jan and in July I met someone new. Proceeding with extreme caution.</p>

<p>Space</p> <p>I just left - he was going to kill me</p> <p>Yes belongings. No pets or kids.</p> <p>Yes I had started hanging out with a positive support system</p>	<p>It's been years. My life has changed for the better</p>
N/A	N/A
<p>Sister, family mostly my father retired now after 45 years of nursing</p> <p>I am an RN with BS degree</p> <p>Reading self help books</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Neighbor is new friend of 2 plus years</p> <p>Older sister</p>
I yookgge lid and left with nothing leaving even my dog behind	No isupport
<p>I remember him hitting me and then my aunt was there with the police. She had found me beaten in the floor passed out. The OIC took my statement and in no time I had a restraining order on him, I had packed a bag and just left everything. His mother was there acting belligerent. I couldn't face him in court, so I didn't go. Judge ordered him to rejoin the ARMY or go to jail. He chose the army and was gone inside of 30 days. He also had to write me an apology letter. Which he did before being shipped over seas. Texas doesn't look well upon a man putting his hands on a woman.</p>	<p>Oh yes, I have an amazing new husband and 2 children that we love dearly </p>
<p>I left everything when he went for a walk. Including my children and it gutted me. The day I went back for my children was the day he attempted to kill me and then took his own life. I had no support system.</p>	<p>It has been since march of 2021 since his passing. I have a very select few friends who have been there for me through it and almost everyone else including family I have cut off. The more I have healed from it the more I resent the lack of support offered. Mg circle is decidedly tiny. It is smaller out of the abuse than before. I feel like so many people were disillusioned by finding out the truth of my situation that they didn't know what box to put me in in their own lives- I made the choice for them. I also feel like this situation showed me an extreme in the world. Some people lack empathy to an extreme selfish level and some people still display it at even a detriment to their own safety.</p>
No	No
<p>I left after a high-speed face all over the city where I live I had to call the police they escorted him to my house and watched him take his belongings and everything else value out of the house I kept our child only because I made it to his school before he did to pick him up and that is how the high speed chase occurred because he was trying to take her son away from me we did not have pets I did keep the apartment we lived in but only because his plans were to leave me for someone else and he already had somewhere else to stay and didn't want any of our things I had no support system at all and even the family members of his who tried to support me had to stop because he got mad at them</p>	<p>Yeah I have stayed out for more than 6 months how am I doing not so great I feel like my go life has been destroyed because of this last relationship that I was in I told this person everything about myself and about my history and they use that against me I still do not have a support system</p>

<p>So I left the first abuser when one of the many times he would kick me out for something I didn't do. It was every 2-3 days I would be put outside with all of my things and nowhere to go because my family had passed away so he knew I would be on streets then after couple days call me say how he loves me and pick me up but the last time was when I met Mike my 2nd abuser. I moved away with Mike for 3 years and was still in contact with Jeff my 1st abuser when I had enough of mikes mental abuse of him saying I was cheating every time I turned around and I wasn't I would leave but my only place to go was to Jeff's so I would go to him and like always he would beat me and kick me out 2 days later so I did that for couple years went from mental abuse to mental abuse and physical abuse then in the midst of it all I had gotten me a good job and moved up the ladder quickly so the last time Mike left went done drugs and started his mental stuff and lost his job and it made us lose our home we were buying I left and gotten my own apartment this was first time I was able to support myself. I had no kind of support from anyone. I finally was on my own but I still had Jeff in and out of my life now it's been atleast 2 years since he later a finger on me and he was just keeping me hanging on cuz he knew the love I had for him just to use me well he ended up stealing Mikes truck which was in my name so when police caught him in Oklahoma I had to take a 3 day trip and \$2000 later with Mike to go get truck since it was in my name I had to sign it out so before we even got home Jeff was out of jail and threatening me my kids my job so I started finally standing up and I called police everytime he threatened me and I tried putting restraining order but can't do that because didn't have address to serve him ...so when we got back Mike decided to stay the week with me to protect me from Jeff well the Sunday night Mike wanted me to have sex with him and I said no and he started calling me every name in the book from b**ch to whore to whatever degrading name he could do I had enough this was my apartment so I said Mike Either Shut the f**k up or get the f**k out and as soon as the words left my mouth I knew it was mistake because I saw in his eyes he snapped How dare I talk to him like that so I grabbed the clothes hamper closest to me and stuffed he clothes in there and said GO MIKE and he left..well I went to sleep and about an hour later I was just dozing off and someone started banging on my door and window so I immediately thought Jeff so I grabbed phone called 911 telling them his name and how I had charges filed and was trying to get restraining order and I hear my front door kicked in and I screamed then the bathroom door kicked in and there was Mike holding screwdriver and he came towards me I screamed his name to 911 operator and when he seen I was on phone with police he said Cop calling B**ch and went to run but 911 operator said don't worry ma'am police are there...Mike ended up slashing all four tires and damaging my apt so he was arrested and I put a life time restraining order on him and still trying to put one on Jeff...the sheriff department has a program that paid to relocate me and I have changed phone numbers, vehicles, job, and home so neither can find me. Jeff still threatens me thru messenger which finally I blocked because now I try to focus k. Good</p>	<p>It's been about 3 months and things are great and I will not take either one of them back ever again</p>
<p>Once my jaw was fractured, I just decided it was time and moved. I had no children or pets but I did take my belongings.</p>	<p>I'm doing wonderful. Remarried a caring man and have a positive support system after I made necessary changes like cutting a vast majority of people out of my life.</p>
<p>NO</p>	<p>Verball abuse was hurtful I move on with my life by getting a therapist and exercising.</p>

