

Nursing Practice and Health Care

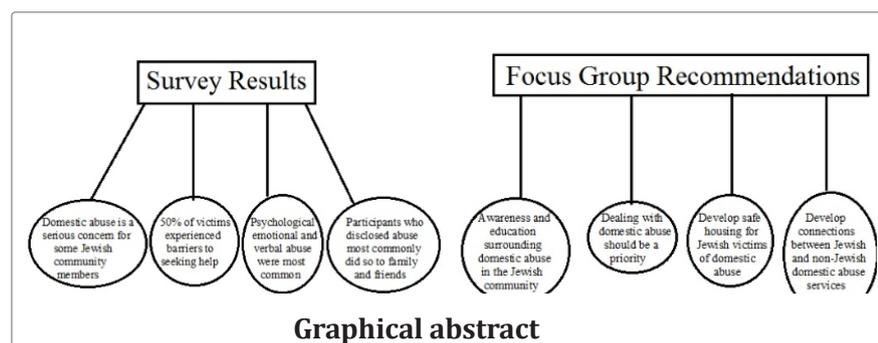
Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Communities of the Canadian Prairie Provinces

Nicole Letourneau^{1*}
 Jordana Linder²
 Andrea Silverstone³
 Nela Cosic²
 Jason Novick⁴
 Jane Urself⁵
 Mary Hampton⁶
 Cyril Kesten⁷
 Linda Duffett-Leger²
 Karen Wood⁸
 Suhad Bisharat⁹
 Alexis Zederayko⁶

¹Faculty of Nursing and Cumming School of Medicine, Departments of Pediatrics, Psychiatry, & Community Health Sciences, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
²Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
³Jewish Family Service Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
⁴Cumming School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
⁵Department of Sociology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
⁶Department of Psychology, University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
⁷Faculty of Education, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
⁸RESOLVE Saskatchewan, Luther College, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
⁹The Laurel Centre, Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Abstract

Domestic abuse is often overlooked by Jewish community members and some religious clergy. This study examined the perspectives of Jewish community members and service providers across the Canadian Prairie provinces regarding domestic abuse. Using an online survey, the authors assessed the efficacy of available services, barriers to accessing services, and the prevalence, impact, and response of the community to domestic abuse. Focus groups were also conducted, mostly with service providers.



Keywords

Domestic abuse; Jewish communities; Canadian prairie provinces

Introduction

Intimate partner domestic abuse is the most common form of violence experienced by women in Canada [1]. Victims not only face immediate physical and emotional trauma but also risk psychological distress [2], substance abuse [3], and suicide attempts [4]. Historically, major stressful life events, such as domestic abuse, pair with religious schema, allowing faith to guide coping ability and empower victims to seek help [5]. Social support from religious institutions (e.g., churches, synagogues, mosques) has been found to be a key factor in many women's abilities to rebuild their lives and family relationships [6]. Researchers have also identified the importance of spirituality and religious involvement to one's psychological well-being for domestic abuse survivors, including greater quality of life [7] and decreased depression [8]. However, comfortably practicing faith can be compromised by religious norms that restrict disclosure of domestic abuse due to perceived shame and stigma, financial and other reasons [9].

According to a systematic review conducted by Alhabib, Nur, Jones [10] the lifetime prevalence of domestic abuse against women varies significantly between studies, with a range of 1.9-70%. This variation is due to diverse study factors such as: differences in the research methods [11]; the setting in which the studies were conducted [12], definitions of abuse [13], and cultural differences that affect participants' comfort in disclosing [14]. According to a 2013 World Health Organization systematic review, the lifetime prevalence rate of domestic abuse experienced by ever-partnered women from 86 countries representing all global regions was 30% [15]. Furthermore, a World Health Organization

Article Information

DOI: 10.31021/nphc.20191102
Article Type: Research Article
Journal Type: Open Access
Volume: 1 **Issue:** 1
Manuscript ID: NPHC-1-102
Publisher: Boffin Access Limited

Received Date: 30 January 2019
Accepted Date: 19 February 2019
Published Date: 21 February 2019

*Corresponding author:

Nicole Letourneau
 Nursing and Cumming School of Medicine
 Departments of Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and
 Community Health Sciences
 University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
 T2N 1N4, Canada
 Tel: (403) 210-3833
 E-mail: nicole.letourneau@ucalgary.ca

Citation: Letourneau N, Linder J, Silverstone A, Cosic N, Novick J, et al. Domestic abuse in the jewish communities of the canadian prairie provinces. *Nurs Pract Health Care*. 2019 Feb;1(1):102

Copyright: © 2019 Letourneau N, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

multi-country study found that between 4-54% of respondents experienced domestic violence within the past year [16].

In accordance with incidents reported to police in 2016, Canada's domestic violence rate was 310 victims per 100,000 people [17]. Rates varied between provinces and territories, with Nunavut demonstrating the highest preponderance of domestic violence (3,790 victims per 100,000 people) and Ontario demonstrating the lowest (224 victims per 100,000 people). According to a 2014 Statistics Canada study [18], 13% percent of Canadians self-reported violence within a previous relationship during the preceding 5 years. Furthermore, 17% of Canadians reported that they had experienced some form of emotional or financial abuse in their current or past relationship [19]. In addition, only 22% of domestic abuse victims said that they reported the incident to the police [20]. Victims tend to rely on informal sources of support, such as friends and family, more often than formal social services such as crisis centres, shelters, and social workers [18].

Evidence suggests similar rates and seriousness of domestic abuse is experienced in Jewish communities compared to other faith and cultural communities [21]. However, domestic abuse is often overlooked or disregarded by Jewish community members and some religious clergy [22], a situation that may make it difficult for nurses to adequately intervene and offer support. Furthermore, Jewish individuals experiencing domestic abuse may encounter barriers to accessing support within their Jewish community and their needs may be unique to their community membership [23]. Some of these unique characteristics include: delaying to seek help or not seeking help at all [24]; not accessing services such as emergency shelters and social service organizations [25]; and specific issues and misinterpretations that surround the Jewish divorce, known as a *Ghet* (i.e., Jewish law that indicates a divorce has to be initiated by the husband) [26]. Furthermore, the 'close-knit' Jewish community may add an additional barrier to disclosure [27]. Victims may not access Jewish community resources [28] and support from family and friends [29] out of fear of stigmatization.

In Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, social service agencies are trying to develop and provide domestic violence support services to match community needs in Jewish communities. Through discussions of evidence based research regarding prevalence and impact of domestic abuse in Jewish communities, it is possible to reduce the stigmatization of disclosure [30]. Rabbis have a critical role in encouraging a supportive religious community environment where victims do not fear disclosure [31]. Leaders in the Jewish communities of the Prairie Provinces, including Jewish Family Service in Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg and Chabad Saskatchewan, have identified an urgent need to understand the prevalence, impact, and response of the community to domestic abuse and the efficacy of services that currently exist. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine Jewish community members and service providers' perspectives and experiences of domestic abuse across the Canadian Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) in order to offer insight for nurses and other health and social service providers who may encounter domestic abuse among Jewish Community members.

Methods

Study design

This study utilized a mixed method, multisite, community-based participatory approach to better understand the scope of domestic abuse among Jewish people living in the Prairie Provinces and the needs, barriers and response to disclosure of affected community members. A mixed methods approach [32] allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of domestic abuse in the Jewish Community. Focus groups were used to validate and explore the survey findings in addition to creating further dialogue surrounding the issue of domestic abuse that could not be obtained by a survey alone. Furthermore, focus groups enhanced and built on the survey findings through discussions and delivered meaningful recommendations for action.

Consistent with principles of community-based participatory research design [33], a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was created, comprising 12 stakeholders from service provider and academic backgrounds as well as Jewish community leadership across the Canadian Prairie Provinces. The CAC was formed to advise the research team on the study design and survey adaptation, reflect on the findings, and propose recommendations. All procedures were approved by the appropriate Provinces Institutional Review Board [Alberta - The University of Calgary Research Ethics Board (REB); Manitoba - The University of Manitoba's Research Ethics Board (REB); and Saskatchewan - University of Regina's Ethics Board (REB)].

Sample and Setting

The research took place in Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton), Manitoba (Winnipeg) and Saskatchewan (Saskatoon and Regina) and included Jewish community members in each of these provinces. With the help of the lead organization within each province, multiple Jewish organizations were identified as recruitment sites. These included Jewish day schools, synagogues, social service agencies, community centers, summer camps, and youth and student organizations within each province. Research affiliates in these sites distributed information about the study and the online survey link to their member lists *via* email. It is typical in these provinces that Jewish individuals are connected to at least one Jewish organization as a member, thus utilizing multiple Jewish organizations' member lists allowed for the greatest and most inclusive access to our population of interest.

Survey

Self-identified English speaking Jewish persons, over the age of 18 were invited by email to access the anonymous web survey. Only broad, demographic characteristics of participants were collected, including gender, age, province of residence (and whether they are in a rural or urban area), type of Jewish background and whether they are currently, or have previously, been a service provider. The survey was accessible through SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) and required participants to provide consent by selecting "Agree". The survey took approximately 15-30 minutes to complete.

Focus groups

Three focus groups were conducted, with 5-10 participants in each province (Calgary, Winnipeg and Regina) comprising of mostly service providers. One member of the study team from each site facilitated the focus group discussions and a project coordinator took notes. The purpose of the focus groups was to disseminate the findings from participant survey responses, seek feedback, and solicit ideas for next steps and knowledge translation initiatives and target agencies.

Data collection survey

This study builds on the work of the 2002 Chicago Jewish Women International's (JWI) Needs Assessment Survey [34] by adapting their survey (used to obtain priorities for action for the Chicago Jewish community) to meet the needs of Jewish community members residing in the Canadian Prairie Provinces. As the Prairie Provinces are drastically smaller than those studied in the JWI research, the survey had to be adapted accordingly. Since smaller rural Jewish communities are less likely to have Jewish specific resources which exist in larger communities, our study included additional questions specific to women and other victims of domestic abuse from small, relatively more isolated, Jewish communities.

Once permission to use the original JWI survey was obtained a knowledgeable and experienced research team and CAC members met *via* teleconference to adapt the questionnaire to suit the needs of Jewish individuals, including women, men, children and perpetrators of abuse in the Canadian Prairie Provinces. The survey was altered from the original study in multiple ways. The original research focused on women victims of domestic abuse in and around Chicago, Illinois; however, our research took a broader approach, asking questions relevant to women, men, and child victims as well as instigators

of domestic abuse. We also included broader demographics for participants to select from (i.e., including transgender as a gender option and allowing participants to indicate multiple ways in which they consider themselves Jewish). Furthermore, our study included additional questions specific to both victims and instigators of domestic abuse from small, relatively more isolated, Jewish communities, as well as adding or removing answer choices to make the selections meaningful to participants. Table 1 outlines the six main survey categories that were focused on the adaptation.

Focus group questions

Focus group data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Focus group participants were explained the findings from the questionnaire and discussed their perspectives on the findings from the categories of questions as well as their feedback on next steps and recommendations to address domestic abuse in the Jewish communities of the Prairie Provinces. The sessions were audio recorded and a project coordinator took notes. A summary report of the findings of the survey was developed by the study team to guide focus group discussions. Following consent, general demographic data was collected from participants.

Survey Categories	Descriptions
Perspectives on domestic abuse in the Jewish community	The survey identified what the respondents felt were abusive situations between intimate partners, what they believe the scope and seriousness of domestic abuse within the Jewish community is, and what should be done to improve issues around domestic abuse in the Jewish community.
Personal experience as a victim	The survey identified whether or not participants are or have been a victim of domestic abuse, including child abuse. If they identified as current or past victims of domestic abuse, the survey then identified the type of abuse that occurred and whether or not the participant sought help and if it was beneficial to them. Lastly, the survey asked the participants to identify any barriers that caused a delay in seeking help or caused their needs to go unmet.
Personal experience as an instigator of abuse	The survey identified whether or not participants are or have been an instigator of domestic abuse. If they identified as current or past instigators of domestic abuse, the survey identified the type of abuse that occurred and whether or not the participant sought help controlling their abusive behaviours and if the resources they used were beneficial to them. Lastly, the survey asked the participants to identify any barriers that caused a delay in seeking help or caused their needs to go unmet.
Involvement in resolving domestic abuse within the Jewish community	The survey identified if participants were aware of an elderly person, adult, or child/teenager that was a victim of domestic abuse. It also determined what resources respondents would utilize if one of their friends confided that they were in an abusive relationship.
Involvement in resolving domestic abuse within the Jewish community as a service provider	The survey identified if participants were service providers that have worked with Jewish families or individuals with issues regarding intimate partner domestic abuse. Through multiple choice questions, participants described what their service provider role was, what kind of abuse they dealt with, and what family members were abused in the situation that they were involved in. The survey also described whether or not the participant was the initial resource the client utilized and if they referred their client to any other resources. Lastly, the participants were asked to identify any barriers that their clients experienced and any needs that were not met.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Survey

Participant information survey

Two hundred and forty-one individuals provided consent to participate, of which 183 completed the online questionnaire. The majority of participants identified as female (77%) and residents of Alberta (80%) (Table 2 for participant descriptive characteristics). The survey focused on three main areas of questions derived from the original 6 survey categories: questions surrounding beliefs about domestic abuse in the Jewish community; questions regarding personal experience with domestic abuse both as a victim and/or as a perpetrator; and experience with domestic abuse as a service provider or spiritual leader (i.e. Rabbi). Key findings from each of these categories are described (Tables 3-9 for select frequency results).

Focus groups

Twenty-four participants from the three Prairie Provinces provided consent to take part in the participant focus groups. Only 18 participants completed the demographic questionnaire. Of the 18 participants, 13 self-identified as female, 4 as male, and one participant failed to respond. In terms of age, 12 participants reported being 50 years old or greater (ages ranged from 50-70 years), 3 participants reported being less than fifty years old (ranging from 26-43 years old) and 3 participants did not report their age. Four participants reside

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	30	21.13%
Female	109	76.76%
Transgender	2	1.41%
Other	1	0.70%
Age		
<20	1	0.78%
20-29	8	6.25%
30-39	22	17.19%
40-49	20	15.63%
50-59	29	22.66%
60-69	30	23.44%
>70	18	14.06%
Residence		
Alberta	113	80.14%
Saskatchewan	17	12.06%
Manitoba	11	7.80%
Service Provider for IPV		
Yes	43	27.74%
No, other service provider	16	10.32%
No	96	61.94%
Service Provider for Child Abuse		
Yes	24	16.11%
No, other service provider	27	18.12%
No	98	65.77%

Table 2: Demographic and descriptive characteristics of survey participants (n=183)

Answer Choices	Response (%)
A very serious problem	18.03
A somewhat serious problem	40.44
Not a very serious problem	9.84
Not a problem at all	1.64
Don't know/not sure	30.05

Table 3: To what extent do you think domestic abuse is a problem in the Jewish community?

in Alberta and participated in the Calgary focus group, 9 participants are from Manitoba and participated in the Winnipeg focus group and 5 participants live in Saskatchewan and participated in the Regina focus group. All but one participant (17/18) self-identified as Jewish, and were involved in domestic abuse work through their role in the Jewish community. Seven participants reported their highest level of education as having completed a Master's level degree, one

Answer Choices	Response (%)
More common	4.37
Less common	24.04
About the same	59.56
Don't know/not sure	12.02

Table 4: Do you think domestic abuse is more common, less common or occurs at about the same rate in the Jewish community as in the general population?

Answer Choices	Response (%)
Yes	27.62
No	66.85
Not sure	4.42
Prefer not to answer	1.1

Table 5: Are you a survivor of abuse?

Answer Choices	Response (%)
Physical abuse	40.23
Verbal abuse	70.11
Psychological/emotional abuse	81.61
Sexual abuse	13.79
Financial abuse	42.53
Religious/spiritual abuse	17.24
I was not abused as an adult	8.05
Not sure if I was abused as an adult	0.00

Table 6: What forms of abuse were involved (as an adult) (select all that apply)?

Answer Choices	Response (%)
Domestic violence shelter	6.67
Domestic violence counseling service	23.33
Jewish social service/counseling agency	26.67
Other social service/counseling agency	13.33
Rabbi	3.33
Private therapist	36.67
Friends	66.67
Police	3.33
Domestic violence hotline	3.33
Clergy (other than Rabbi)	0
Family	43.33
Lawyer	13.33
Doctor	13.33
Other	13.33

Table 7: Please indicate additional sources of help utilized (select all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response (%)
Beliefs that domestic abuse did not occur in Jewish families	20.69
Safety concerns	34.48
Shonda/shame associated with domestic abuse	37.93
Concerns about disrupting the family	48.28
Concerns about financial security	48.28
Other concerns for children/custody issues	27.59
I did not experience any barriers in recognizing to get help for domestic abuse	24.14
Other	20.69

Table 8: Did any of the following barriers delay your recognizing or getting help for domestic abuse (select all that apply)?

Answer Choices	Response (%)
Yes	40.00
No	49.03
Suspected abuse but not sure	10.97

Table 9: Have you ever known an adult in your community who was abused by an intimate partner?

participant has a professional degree (i.e. MD), six participants completed an undergraduate degree and one participant completed a professional certificate program.

Data analysis

Quantitative data from completed surveys were analyzed for descriptive statistics using SPSS data analysis software. Focus group data transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using NVIVO qualitative software. Thematic content analysis was used to identify key categories and themes. Transcripts were reviewed by two study team members and organized into common categories of information and summarized into larger themes [32], from which recommendations were developed to guide improvements in services and resources for those affected by domestic abuse in the Jewish communities of the Prairie Provinces. Quantitative and qualitative data from the three provinces were triangulated for all analysis and interpretation.

Results

Survey and focus group findings are summarized in the three following themes: 1) Beliefs about domestic abuse in the Jewish community; 2) personal experience with domestic abuse (as a victim or perpetrator); 3) experience with domestic abuse as a service provider or spiritual leader. Next, recommendations derived from the focus group discussions are presented.

Beliefs about domestic abuse in the Jewish community

When asked on the survey "to what extent do you think domestic abuse is a problem in the Jewish community", 58% of participants reported domestic abuse as "a very serious problem" or "a somewhat a serious problem". Only 12% of participants believed it was "not a problem at all" or "not a very serious problem", while 30% were unsure. When asked their beliefs about the rates of domestic abuse in Jewish communities, 60% of participants believed that domestic abuse occurred at a similar rate as the general population, whereas 24% believed it was less common for Jewish people. Only four percent of participants believed domestic abuse was more common in the Jewish community as compared to the general population and 12% were unsure. Many of the focus group participants were surprised by these survey results. One participant expected survey participants to underestimate the amount of abuse in the Jewish community, stating, "well, we don't want to air out dirty laundry". It is not surprising that the majority of survey participants viewed

domestic abuse as a serious problem, since half of the participants (51%) reported knowing an adult within the Jewish community who was abused by an intimate partner or suspected abuse. Furthermore, 28% of participants reported being a service provider working with Jewish families experiencing domestic abuse, thus having some understanding regarding the prevalence of the issue.

Most participants asked who they would refer a friend who confided in them about being in an abusive relationship, responded that they would refer a friend to domestic abuse counselling services (77%), followed by a Jewish counselling agency (68%). Rabbis as a referral source for domestic abuse had the lowest response selection (29%). Participants were provided with a list of potential areas for action on domestic abuse and asked to select what they believe should be the top five priorities. Seventy-one percent of participants selected programs/services for abused women in the Jewish community to be the number one priority. Programs/services for abused children in the Jewish community were rated second (57%).

Personal experience with domestic abuse (as a victim or perpetrator)

Twenty-eight percent of survey participants reported being a survivor of abuse and 5% reported currently being in an abusive relationship. The most common types of abuse reported (participants could select more than one option) were psychological/emotional abuse (82%), verbal abuse (70%) financial abuse (43%) and physical abuse (40%). The majority of focus group participants agreed that physical abuse is less likely than emotional, verbal or financial abuse among Jewish community members. As one participant stated, *"I don't think that physical abuse would be high on my radar on the Jewish community"*. One service provider noted that when the abuser is Jewish the abuse is more likely to be verbal and emotional, whereas abusers from a non-Jewish background tend to engage in more physical abuse.

Of those survey participants who experienced any form of abuse in their life, 56% did not seek help of any form or disclose the abuse to anyone, including family and friends. Of those that did utilize sources of help, most selected friends (67%) and family (43%). Of the participants who experienced domestic abuse and sought help, 46 percent reported that they did not experience any barriers contrary to 50% who did; barriers included financing for a lawyer, being worried someone would find out, and not being aware of Jewish services available. The main barriers reported from a list of barriers provided (participants could select all that apply) that delayed getting help for domestic abuse were concerns about disrupting the family (48%) and concerns about financial security (48%), followed by shame associated with domestic abuse (38%). When asked about the largest unmet need in the Jewish community in relation to domestic abuse some representative responses were:

- *I don't think that it's acknowledged that it even happens*
- *Knowledge of what resources are available*
- *Never knew that these programs existed...more advertising and promotion would be beneficial*
- *Not wanting to speak to free services in the community for fear of it being discussed in this small community*

Eight percent of survey participants confirmed that they have perpetrated domestic abuse by inflicting violence on an intimate partner or family member in the past. These participants were asked if they sought help of any form to control their violent behavior, and most commonly reported seeing a private therapist (36%), and seeking help from family members (36%).

Experience with domestic abuse as a service provider or spiritual leader

Survey participants who reported that they were service providers or spiritual leaders were asked a series of questions regarding their work in the area of domestic abuse in the Jewish community. Twenty-two percent responded "yes" when asked if anyone in the Jewish community had ever disclosed domestic abuse

to them in their professional role. The forms of abuse reported in these cases included psychological/emotional (87%), verbal (85%) followed by financial (57%), and physically (55%). Participants were more likely to have referred clients to, or consulted with, the Jewish Family Service (40%) and domestic abuse counselling agency/hotline/shelters (36%), compared to the police (21%) and the rabbi (23%). Asked where their clients typically first seek assistance, service providers were more likely to select Jewish social service/counselling agencies (27%) and police (27%). Friends (67%) and family (60%) were the most commonly reported source of 'additional' help utilized by clients, consistent with what participants who have experienced domestic abuse selected as most common sources of help that they sought.

Focus group participants were disappointed, but not surprised, at the low number of the questionnaire participants reporting turning to a Jewish agency for support or help with domestic abuse, and rather turning to friends and family first. There was some concern about the low statistic of individuals turning to an agency that offers domestic abuse services for support. Focus group participants that work in social service agencies noted that most of their domestic abuse clients ended up contacting and receiving their services through an indirect route, either by being referred to by a friend or referred to for another concern (e.g. depression). Focus group participants noted that agencies need to be more receptive and better understand the barriers that abuse victims face in coming to them for help.

According to service providers, the most common barriers delaying their clients from getting help include: concerns about disrupting the family (80%) and concerns about financial security (67%). Twenty-seven percent of service provider participants reported that not having a kosher shelter/shelter where Shabbat could be observed was a barrier to meeting Jewish abuse victim's needs. Focus group participants also commented on potential barriers to disclosure, seeking help and/or leaving an abusive situation. One main theme was maintaining anonymity in a small community. In a smaller Jewish community, Jewish service providers and rabbis may know both parties, which would make it very difficult for either side to confide in them. There may be fear amongst victims that disclosing domestic abuse could impact their involvement within the community, their children's involvement within the community, friendships, etc. Similarly, feelings of shame were described as a barrier to accessing Jewish social services. Jewish victims may be concerned what others in the community think of them and may be worried entering into a Jewish social service agency that they would be seen by someone they know.

Notably, it was reported that sometimes there is fear of disclosing to someone outside of the Jewish community as they may not understand their unique perspectives or concerns. Someone who is not from a close-knit community may not completely appreciate what disclosure might mean for their ongoing community membership. In addition, someone from a non-Jewish background may refer a client who may be kosher to a shelter where non-kosher food items are served. Furthermore, there are specific Jewish laws surrounding divorce that a non-Jewish service provider may not be aware of. These findings suggest that there are barriers for victims to disclose to someone within their religious community as well as to an "outsider". Another barrier commonly reported was financial security, as it can be expensive to be a Jewish community member (i.e., belonging to a Jewish community center, synagogue, and day school) and victims may fear if they disclose domestic abuse or leave their abuser they may lose the ability to maintain this community "membership" from a financial perspective.

Survey participants who identified themselves as a rabbi or other clergy, were asked to report on their role with respect to the issue of domestic abuse; they were most likely to select providing emotional support to victims (87%), and helping to link victims to services as their role in relation to domestic abuse within the Jewish community (96%). Rabbis reported that additional funding for services (42%), coordination of activities and programs between local providers (42%) and education/training on crisis intervention (36%) would be

most helpful to support their rabbinical work, compared to services or providers (8%) and consultation available from a Rabbi with domestic abuse expertise (12%).

Recommendations derived from focus groups

Four key recommendations were derived from the focus group discussions.

1) Awareness and education: It was suggested that more awareness and education are required surrounding domestic abuse, domestic abuse in the Jewish community and resources available in the Jewish community. There were many suggestions to increase awareness and education. First, following in the lead of Canadian cities with larger Jewish communities, bringing orthodox wives in to speak about domestic abuse may begin to raise awareness of the issue within the Jewish community and open the dialogue in efforts to increase the comfort level and reduce the shame in Jewish victims disclosing. Second, it was suggested that increasing awareness in the schools about domestic abuse might help reduce the stigmatization of domestic abuse so more victims will be comfortable reaching out of resources and services.

2) Making domestic abuse a priority: It was recommended that a person within the Jewish community of each city or province, with expertise in domestic abuse specific to Jewish abuse victims, be designated to create a strategic plan that includes education, awareness, services and supports. He/she would be a first point of entry to educate the community (seminars, speak at the Jewish day school and high schools), and guide victims of domestic abuse of resources available both within and outside of the Jewish community. This position would require funding from the community, thus a commitment would need to be made at the leadership level to prioritize the issue of domestic abuse in the Jewish community and fund appropriate agencies and staffing positions to tackle the problem.

3) Safe housing for Jewish victims of domestic abuse: It was noted that many victims of domestic abuse have no place to go once they leave an abusive situation, and that religious Jewish people would not be able to follow their Jewish customs in a non-Jewish-specific shelter. Focus group participants recommended implementing safe, affordable long term housing options for those who want to leave an abusive situation. In cities with larger Jewish populations this may involve a Jewish shelter, and in smaller Jewish communities, subsidized apartments or homes could be secured.

4) Develop connections with Jewish and non-Jewish domestic abuse services: It was recommended efforts be made to improve collaborations between Jewish social service agencies, rabbis, schools, and community centers, thereby enhancing awareness of resources available to individuals experiencing domestic abuse and promoting appropriate referrals. In smaller Jewish communities, focus group participants discussed making close connections with already established, but not Jewish, domestic abuse services. It may not be financially feasible or necessary to create Jewish specific services for a small Jewish population experiencing domestic abuse when the broader community may already have supports and services established. It was suggested rather to offer "Jewish specific" cultural sensitivity consultation or support through existing programs and services within the city or province. For example, a rabbi, Jewish social service provider or Jewish domestic abuse coordinator could consult with non-Jewish domestic abuse agencies to better understand the specific cultural and religious aspects impacting the experiences of Jewish individuals affected by domestic abuse.

Discussion

Findings from this study support previous literature in that domestic abuse is viewed as a significant and serious concern within the Jewish community [35-37]. However, multiple barriers and gaps to accessing services exist, many that are specific to the "Jewish experience" of domestic abuse [38]. In Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, through this study, Jewish community leaders and social service providers as well as academics in the field of domestic

abuse now have Jewish and Canadian specific data surrounding the experience of domestic abuse, need for services, and barriers to and gaps in current services for Jewish victims. In addition, this study helps raise awareness about the issue of domestic abuse in the Jewish communities of the Prairie Provinces and creates recommendations for future services to match community needs. To our knowledge, we are the first to administer an adaptation of this questionnaire to a Canadian Jewish community.

Findings from this study reveal that the majority of participants believed that domestic abuse is a serious issue within the Jewish community and in fact know someone within the Jewish community who has experienced domestic abuse from an intimate partner. Programs and services for abused women and children were among the top five priorities noted for areas of action that the Jewish community should take. It should be noted, that based on findings from this study, physical abuse was not the most common form of abuse that participants have experienced or that service providers have noted seeing most in their practice. Emotional, verbal and financial abuse need to be recognized and brought to the attention of non-Jewish service providers and addressed in any new programs developed based on recommendations from this study. Some key barriers identified from participants of this study that need to be considered in future service provision both within and outside the Jewish community include affordable housing options, feelings of shame, maintaining anonymity and safety in disclosing in a small Jewish community, financial concerns, and awareness of resources available.

Findings from this study will inform solutions for Jewish communities in the Prairie Provinces by facilitating the development of programs and policies specific to the needs of Jewish women and other victims of domestic abuse from small Jewish communities. To better support and service Jewish individuals experiencing domestic abuse, findings from this study suggest that the Jewish communities of the Prairie Provinces need to place their attention and resources on increasing awareness and education surrounding domestic abuse in the Jewish community and services available to victims of domestic abuse, creating a paid staff position dedicated to domestic abuse, creating safe housing options for Jewish domestic abuse victims, and developing strong connections with Jewish and non-Jewish domestic abuse services in order to reduce the barriers of Jewish individuals disclosing and reduce the gaps in service provision. In addition, as domestic abuse victims tend to disclose to friends and family first, it is important to target informal support networks when creating interventions that target domestic abuse prevention or when creating domestic abuse resources and programs.

Limitations

Some study limitations should be noted. First, this study had a small sample survey size and is a preliminary study assessing the rates of and barriers surrounding domestic abuse in 3 Canadian provinces. According to the 2016 Canadian Census [39], there are approximately 20,000 Jewish individuals residing in the three Prairie Provinces combined (includes all Jewish individuals, not just those over the age of 18). We were able to access a small portion of these individuals by connecting with all Jewish individuals that are affiliated with at least one Jewish organization in the province (i.e. Jewish day school, synagogue, Jewish community center). Thus, we would expect that there are unaffiliated Jewish individuals in each of the Provinces that we were unable to reach. In addition, the majority of participants were from Alberta, and as such any issues specific to Saskatchewan (such as not having a Jewish social service agency) or Manitoba may not have been fully captured. Second, the small sample size could be due to the sensitive nature of the topic of domestic abuse and associated stigma. Third, data was collected *via* an online survey and it is possible that some members of the population lacked a computer or the technical skills required to complete an online survey. The 183 participants, however, represented multiple perspectives (i.e. victims, perpetrators and service providers and rabbis) and enhanced our understanding of domestic abuse from Jewish individuals living in the Prairie Provinces. Furthermore,

minimal Canadian data exist for this population and therefore even these preliminary estimates and perspectives that are limited by methodological factors still contribute to the literature as it has yet to be examined.

A final limitation of this study is the potential for self-selection bias. This may have resulted in both over and underestimating the rates of domestic abuse in the Jewish communities. Overestimation of the number of Jewish individuals that have or are currently experiencing domestic abuse, may have occurred as victims and survivors of domestic abuse are more aware of the issue and interested in an anonymous forum to share their opinions and experiences. On the other hand, Jewish victims or survivors of domestic abuse may have been less likely to participate in this study for fear of being exposed or feelings of shame from their experiences. We are unable to determine which direction, self-selection may have biased the sample and the findings. Including participants with diverse domestic abuse experiences from three different provinces, using focus group and survey data, strengthened the findings of this study.

Future directions

It is the hope of the authors of this study and the Advisory Committee that this research will bring more awareness to the issue of domestic abuse in Jewish communities across Canada and create an environment that eliminates the stigmatization and feelings of shame that many Jewish individuals experience. Findings from this study can inform the development or enhancement of nursing and other health and social services for those experiencing domestic violence in the Jewish communities of the Prairie Provinces, and can serve to support the allocation of additional funding for domestic abuse outreach and service provision. Furthermore, other Jewish communities across Canada and around the world can learn from this research in order to better understand some of the needs and barriers that Jewish individuals experience.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no potential conflicts of interest to report.

Funding

This work was supported by the Prairie Action Foundation.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the participants who volunteered their time and effort in completing this survey. We would also like to thank the following individuals for partnering with us and assisting in this research: the Jewish Family Service Calgary (led by Executive Director Marty Hornstein and Clinical Counselor Tanya Muschanov, Clinical Director Megan Macleod), Jewish Family Service Edmonton (led by Executive Director Larry Derkach), Jewish Family Service Winnipeg (led by Executive Director Al Bennarroch), and Chabad Jewish Centre of Regina (led by Rabbi Avrohom Simmonds).

References

- Burczycka M, Conroy S, Savage L. Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2017. Statistics, Canada.
- Howard LM, Oram S, Galley H, Trevillion K, Feder G. Domestic violence and perinatal mental disorders: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS Med*. 2013;10(5):e1001452.
- Devries KM, Mak JY, Bacchus LJ, Child JC, Falder G, et al. Intimate partner violence and incident depressive symptoms and suicide attempts: a systematic review of longitudinal studies. *PLoS Med*. 2013;10(5):e1001439.
- Dillon G, Hussain R, Loxton D, Rahman S. Mental and physical health and intimate partner violence against women: A review of the literature. *Int J Family Med*. 2013;2013:313909.
- Drumm R, Popescu M, Cooper L, Shannon T, Marge S, et al. God just brought me through it: Spiritual coping strategies for resilience among intimate partner violence survivors. *Clin Soc Work J*. 2014;42(4):385-394.
- Anderson KM, Renner LM, Danis FS. Recovery: resilience and growth in the aftermath of domestic violence. *Violence Against Women*. 2012 Nov;18(11):1279-1299.
- Gillum TL, Sullivan CM, Bybee DI. The importance of spirituality in the lives of domestic violence survivors. *Violence Against Wom*. 2006;12(3):240-250.
- Arnette NC, Mascaro N, Santana MC, Davis S, Kaslow NJ. Enhancing spiritual well-being among suicidal African American female survivors of intimate partner violence. *J Clin Psychol*. 2007;63(10):909-924.
- Gilad M. In God's shadow: Unveiling the hidden world of victims of domestic violence in observant religious communities. *RJLC*. 2013;11(3):471-550.
- Alhabib S, Nur U, Jones R. Domestic violence against women: Systematic review of prevalence studies. *J Fam Violence*. 2010;25(4):369-382.
- Certain H, Mueller M, Jagodzinski T, Fleming M. Domestic abuse during the previous year in a sample of postpartum women. *JOGNN* 2008;37(1):35-41.
- Nouhjah S, Latifi SM. Variation in the prevalence of domestic violence between neighboring areas. *Int Sch Res Notices*. 2014:1-7.
- Watts C, Zimmerman C. Violence against women: global scope and magnitude. *Lancet*. 2002;359(9313):1232-1237.
- Fernández M. Cultural beliefs and domestic violence. *Ann Ny Acad Sci*. 2006;1087(1):250-260.
- WHO. Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. World Health Organization. 2013.
- Garcia-Moreno C, Jansen HA, Ellsberg M, Heise L, Watts CH. Prevalence of intimate partner violence: Findings from the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence. *Lancet*. 2006;368(9543):1260-1269.
- Burczycka M, Conroy SJ. Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2016. Statistics Canada. 2016.
- Statistics Canada. Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2014. Statistics Canada. 2016.
- Sinha M. Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2010. Statistics Canada. 2012.
- Statistics Canada. Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2011. Statistics Canada. 2013.
- Sisselman-Borgia A, Bonanno R. Rabbinical response to domestic violence: A qualitative study. *Journal of Religion Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*. 2017;36(4):434-455.
- Ringel S, Bina R. Understanding causes of and responses to intimate partner violence in a Jewish Orthodox community: Survivors' and leaders' perspectives. *Res Soc Work Pract*. 2007;17(2):277-286.
- Guthartz SA. Domestic violence and the Jewish community. *Mich J Gen Law*. 2004;11:27-62.
- Horsburgh B. Lifting the veil of secrecy: Domestic violence in the Jewish community. In: Sokoloff NJ, Pratt C (eds). *Domestic violence at the margins: Readings on race, class, gender, and culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; 2007.
- Bitton MS. PTSD, posttraumatic growth, and coping among ultra-orthodox Jewish battered women in Israel. *J Loss Trauma*. 2014;19(2):155-172.
- Grodner E, Sweifach JJA. Domestic violence in the Orthodox Jewish home: A value-sensitive approach to recovery. *Affilia J Wom Soc Wo*. 2004;19(3):305-316.
- Richie BE, Smith B, West C. *Domestic violence at the margins: Readings on race, class, gender, and culture*. Rutgers University Press. 2005.
- Cares AC, Cusick RG. Risks and opportunities of faith and culture: The case of abused Jewish women. *J Fam Violence*. 2012;27(5):427-435.

29. Sweifach J, Heft-LaPorte DSW. A model for group work practice with Ultra-Orthodox Jewish victims of domestic violence: A qualitative study. *Soc Work Groups*. 2007;30(3):29-45.
30. Kaufman CG. Domestic Violence and the Jewish Community: The Literature Expands. *Nashim*. 2010;20:172-175.
31. Buchbinder E, Shoob T. Essential partnership: Child welfare officers' perceptions of cooperation with Rabbis in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Israel. *J Soc Serv Res*. 2013;39(2):204-217.
32. Cresswell JW. Mixed-method research: Introduction and application. In: Cizek G (ed). *Handbook of educational policy*. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press; 1999.
33. Israel B, Eng E, Schultz A, Parker E. *Methods in community-based participatory research for health*. Josey-Bass. 2005.
34. JWI. JWI's needs assessment: A portrait of domestic abuse in the Jewish community. *Jewish Women International*. 2010.
35. Benjamins MR, Rhodes DM, Carp JM, Whitman S. A local community health survey: Findings from a population-based survey of the largest Jewish community in Chicago. *J Commun Health*. 2006;31(6):479-495.
36. Salamon M. *Abuse in the Jewish community: Religious and communal factors that undermine the apprehension of offenders and the treatment of victims*. Urim Publications. 2011.
37. Weisberg DI. *Domestic violence: Legal and social reality*. New York, NY: Aspen Publishers; 2012.
38. Shechory-Bitton M. A glimpse into the world of battered Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women in Israel: a follow-up study on women who resided in a shelter. *Health Care Women Int*. 2014;35(4):400-422.
39. Statistics Canada. *Census profile, 2016 Census*. Statistics Canada. 2017.