
Lived Experiences of Women Victims of Domestic Violence in Lal-lo: Basis for Enhancing the Functionality of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks in Barangays

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to uncover the lived experiences of women victims of domestic violence using descriptive-qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. It focused on types/forms/characteristics of domestic violence experienced by the women victims and their experiences encountered for each type/form of violence; identified the factors that lead to the commission of violence by the spouse; the impact of domestic violence to their lives and well-being, and determined the help and support-seeking experiences and behaviors of the women victim. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interview guide using purposive-snowball sampling. Through thematic analysis, four central themes emerged: the lived experiences of domestic violence, factors contributing to violence, help-seeking behaviors, and impacts on victims' well-being. The study underscores challenges in accessing support systems, particularly due to limited awareness among victims about local Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks. This study revealed a critical issue when exploring the lived experiences of women who are victims of domestic violence. These women encounter challenges in filing complaints, primarily attributed to their limited education and awareness regarding the existence and purpose of Violence Against Women (VAW) desks in barangays, as observed among the participants. It emphasizes the need for women to be aware of their rights and the existence of VAW Desks in their barangay, empowering them to seek help promptly when facing violence from their spouses. An action plan is proposed to enhance VAW Desk functionality, which aims to address and bridge the awareness gap, strengthen support networks, and enhance the overall functionality of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks, ensuring a more effective response to domestic violence cases at the barangay level.

Keywords: *Violence, Commission of Violence, help and support seeking experiences, phenomenology, thematic analysis, aggression, awareness, functionality of VAW Desks*

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by world leaders in 2015, establish a road map for progress that is both sustainable and leaves no one behind. One of its 17 goals is to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as to ensure the rights of women and girls across all goals. Despite the world's approved agenda, violence against women continues to arise. Violence against women (VAW) is a widespread and deeply rooted problem that affects women all over the world.

The World Health Organization (2019) defines VAW as any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women. This includes various forms of violence such as economic, psychological, sexual, and physical violence, including domestic abuse. In the Philippines, VAW is alarmingly prevalent, with one in four Filipino women aged 15 to 49 having experienced abuse. Domestic violence, a common form of VAW, affects individuals across all demographics and relationships, causing severe physical, psychological, and social trauma to victims

Despite legislative efforts such as Republic Act 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act of 2004) and Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women), VAW continues unabated. The establishment of Barangay VAW Desks, as mandated by these laws, aims to address and provide support for VAW cases. However, research findings indicate significant challenges in addressing Violence Against Women (VAW) due to inadequate resources and equipment, as well as limitations in the age and educational background of VAW desk officers (Consignado et al., 2022). Policy amendments are necessary to ensure adequate training and resource allocation for these officers.

Similarly, Tavares et al. (2019) underscored crucial factors for addressing VAW locally, such as budget commitments, 24-hour hotlines, training for law enforcement and medical professionals, national protocols, dedicated police units, national plans, shelters, and legal aid (Tavares et al., 2019). Fraser and Wood

(2018) also emphasize the need for sufficient budget, comprehensive policy frameworks, training for public employees, and inter-agency cooperation.

In addition, since many occurrences of VAW frequently go unreported due to the "culture of silence" among women victims, the absence of concrete information showing the extent of VAW in the country as a whole is an even worse problem. This is because of a combination of factors, including gender inequality, patriarchal norms, and ineffective implementation.

It is crucial to understand the particular context of VAW at the grassroots levels, in order to establish specific interventions and strategies to effectively address the problem. Hence, it is imperative that experiences of women victims of violence, specifically dealing with their help and support seeking behaviors, among others, at the barangay level, be known thru an in-depth perspective to identify areas for improvement in the functionality of VAW Desks, being the government's basic form of instrumentality in the country that led advocacies on the elimination of VAW, hence this study.

This study focused on the lived experiences of women victims of domestic violence in Lal-lo, Cagayan, exploring their socio-demographic profiles, types of violence experienced, factors leading to violence, impacts on their well-being, and their help-seeking behaviors. The study aims to enhance the functionality of VAW Desks by an action plan and contribute to the broader efforts of addressing VAW in the Philippines.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

To obtain the objectives of this study, the researchers used the descriptive -qualitative research design with phenomenology as an approach. The study is descriptive -qualitative as it described narrative data that were collected from the participants about a certain phenomenon.

Meanwhile, a qualitative phenomenological study helped to understand and learn about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). It was helpful

for finding out what events meant to people. Phenomenology, as a qualitative approach, aimed to “explain the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals” (Moran & Mooney, 2002).

Further, the use of phenomenological research design helped to reveal and understand the lived experiences of women victims of domestic violence, including the factors that led to the commission of violence, the impact of domestic violence on their lives, and their help and support-seeking behavior and experiences.

Sampling Technique

This study used purposive snowball sampling to identify the samples. Purposive sampling was a non-probability sampling technique utilized to “select participants who possessed specific characteristics or experiences that aligned with the objectives of this study” (Nikolopoulou, 2023). The researchers initially coordinated with the VAW Desk officer to identify women victims of domestic violence based on their records.

Snowball sampling, on the other hand, was also a non-probability sampling technique where new samples were recruited or referred by other participants (Nikolopoulou, 2023). This sampling technique was often used to conduct studies with specific traits or experiences that were difficult to identify. In this study, snowball sampling was used after the initial interviews with the participants, as identified by the VAW Desk officer of the barangay. If the participants were aware of other women who had experienced domestic violence, they were asked for their consent to refer these women for the study.

Locale of the study

This study was conducted in the town of Lal-lo. It is a first-class municipality situated in the province of Cagayan, Philippines. The municipality is composed of 35 barangays.

Research Instruments

This study focused on the lived experiences of women victims of domestic violence in a specific barangay of Lal-lo. An interview guide questionnaire was utilized as a research instrument to gather qualitative data. The interview guide questionnaire was semi-structured – where questions were within the predetermined thematic framework (George, 2023). The researchers used an interview guide that contained a key list of topics and open-ended questions that focused on the forms or characteristics of domestic violence experienced by the women, experiences encountered by the women victims of violence in terms of physical, emotional, economic, and psychological abuse, factors that led to the commission of violence by their spouse, the impact of domestic violence on their lives and well-being, as well as the women victims’ seeking help and support behaviors and experiences.

Collection of Data

Prior to the conduct of the study, a permission to conduct the study from the municipal Mayor of Lal-lo was sought. When permission was granted, the researchers proceeded to the VAW Desk officer of the barangay and asked who were the women residents of the barangay who have experienced domestic violence based on the VAW records of the barangay.

Data were collected through face-to-face interview with the participants. After the participants were identified, the researchers proceeded with the interview. Ethical considerations were observed by the researchers while conducting the study. A comfortable and safe environment for the participants were considered to let them comfortably share their experiences.

The researchers followed the interview guide while remaining open to the participants’ unique perspectives and experiences. Interviews were conducted and continued until data saturation was achieved.

Video or audio recording can be used in this phase with the participants' consent.

Analysis of the Data/ Statistical treatment

The information was gathered from the participants through face-to-face interviews were transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes emerging from the interviews.

Thematic analysis examines the data to identify common themes that come up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2023). It was used to identify recurring themes, or insights from the interview data. The data were summarized and an in-depth understanding of the collected information from the participants were developed. After that, the verification process took place where the researchers check the validity of understanding by rechecking the transcripts, which allowed the researchers to modify or verify the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Victims of Violence Against Women

The participants' ages range from 27 to 58 years old, with three participants being in their late 20s, two in their 40s, and another two in their 50s. This diverse age range experiencing domestic violence suggests that VAW is not confined to a particular life stage or generation. The presence of domestic violence within this age range emphasizes the complex interplay of various factors that contribute to the violence against women.

As to the marital status of the participants, four (57 percent) of the seven participants were married. Two (29 percent) of them were separated from their spouses from the time the interviews were conducted. On the other hand, one (14 percent) of the participants is widowed.

This result indicates that most of the participants are married. This finding suggests a correlation between marital status and the likelihood of experiencing violence, i.e., married women are likely to experience physical violence. Researchers Adak, Nurşen et al. (2021) found out that married women are more likely to be exposed to physical violence than single women. Additionally, divorced or separated women are exposed to economic violence given that their access to economic resources were either limited or prevented by their husbands. When all types of violence were taken into account in this study, it was revealed that married women had the highest representation among women who are exposed to violence.

In terms of the highest educational attainment of participants, only one (20 percent) out of the seven participants finished primary grade. Three (40 percent) of the participants are high school undergraduates and the remaining three (40 percent) participants have completed college. This finding suggests that having a higher level of education does not guarantee insusceptibility from domestic violence. It emphasizes that the VAW is complex and influenced by various factors beyond educational background.

As for the highest educational attainment of the participants' spouses, one (14 percent) of the spouses had only attained primary grade level. Two (29 percent) of them are high school graduates. One (14 percent) spouse, however, did not finish high school, while three (43 percent) spouses of the participants reached college but did not graduate. This finding indicates that women face the risk of abuse from their spouses across various educational levels, highlighting that educational attainment of the spouse does not seem to correlate with a decreased likelihood of abuse towards their wives.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants in terms of profile variables

Variables		Frequency (n=7)	Percentage
Age			
58		1	14.29
52		1	14.29
49		1	14.29
45		1	14.29
28		2	28.57
27		1	14.29
Marital Status			
Married		4	57
Separated		2	29
Widowed		1	14
Highest Educational Attainment		Participant	Spouse
Primary Grade		1	20
High School Undergraduate/HS Graduate		3	40
College Graduate/College Undergraduate		3	40
Number of Years Living with Spouse			
33		1	14.29
25		1	14.29
7		1	14.29
6		2	28.57
3		1	14.29
0.25 years (3 months)		1	14.29
Number of Children		Age	
4 (Participant 2)		31, 30, 26, 16	1
3 (Participant 1)		11, 9, 6	1
2 (Participant 3)		3, 5	1
1 (Participant 7)		5	1
0 (Participant 4,5,6)			4
Occupation			
Participant	Spouse		Monthly Income
BBQ Vendor	Delivery Boy (Gasul)	Participant 1	3000
Farmer	No work	Participant 2	2,400
Saleslady	Factory Worker	Participant 3	2,500
None	Welder	Participant 4	4000
Government Employee	Deceased	Participant 5	16, 000
Assistant in Hardware Store	Carpenter	Participant 6	12,900
Aesthetician	Foreman	Participant 7	10,000

The range of years spent living with a spouse/partner varies widely among the participants, ranging from as short as 3 months to as long as 33 years. Participant 2 holds the longest duration, having lived with her spouse for 33 years, followed by participant 5, who spent 25 years with her late spouse. Participant 1 was together with her spouse for seven years before separating. Both participant 4 and participant 7 spent 6 years with their spouses. Participant 3 has been living with her spouse for 3 years, while participant 6 had the shortest duration with her partner, which is three months. This finding means that whether a couple has been together for a brief period, like three months, or for long duration, such as 33 years, domestic violence can still occur. This result implies that the risk of experiencing domestic violence is not determined by the length of the relationship; rather, it suggests that the factors contributing to domestic violence transcend the duration of time a couple has been together.

In terms of the number of children, Participant 2 has the highest count among the four, whose

children's ages range from 16 to 31. Three of their children are already working, while the youngest, at 16 years old, is still studying. The second participant with the second most number of children is Participant 1, who has three kids whose ages range from 6 to 11. It is evident that the children are still quite young. Participant 4, on the other hand, has two children with ages 3 and 5. It is apparent that the children are still toddlers. Participant 7 has one child who is 5 years old. Meanwhile, participants 4, 5, and 6 do not have any children. Participant 5 does not have children with her spouse due to her infertile husband. Participant 6, being single, does not have any plan of having children yet.

The number of children among the participants introduces a layer of complexity to the experience of domestic violence. For participants with children, the findings suggest that domestic violence has the potential to affect not only the adult victims but also the children within the household. The ages of the children vary, and their exposure to violence may have consequences on their well-being, development, and perceptions of home and safety. Additionally, participants who have children may face additional challenges when attempting to leave a violent partner. The presence of children can complicate the decision-making process and create concerns about the well-being of the children during and after separation.

Regarding the monthly income and occupations of the participants and their spouses, Participant 1 works as a BBQ vendor, while her spouse is a delivery boy, resulting in a combined monthly income of Php 3,000. Participant 2 is a farmer, earning Php 2,400 monthly, and her spouse does not have a job. Participant 3 works as a saleslady, and her spouse is a factory worker, both with a combined monthly income of Php 2,500. Participant 4 is jobless, while her spouse is a welder, earning Php 4,000 monthly. Participant 5, a government employee, had a deceased

spouse, and together they were earning a total of Php 16,000 monthly. Participant 6 works as an assistant in a hardware store, and her spouse is a carpenter, resulting in a combined monthly income of Php 12,900. Participant 7, an aesthetician, and her spouse, a foreman, have a combined monthly income of Php 10,000.

The data illustrate a variety of occupations and income levels among the participants. Some have stable employment with combined earnings, while others face situations such as a deceased spouse or a spouse without an occupation.

Types/ Forms/ Characteristics of Domestic Violence Experienced Women

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse can either be controlled or impulsive and consists of physical assaults. These assaults result in injuries ranging from bruising, scalding, burning and stabbing to internal injuries, cracked ribs or broken bones (Slabbert, I., & Green, S., 2014).

Six out of seven of the participants in this study indicated that they have experienced physical violence. Their husbands commonly used force in any sort of violent conduct that results in bodily harm, such as slapping, punching, kicking, beating with any object, and harming using a knife or bottle.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be verbal or non-verbal. It is persistent and corrosive, destroying self-worth and self-esteem. This type of abuse usually includes the use of ridicule, insults, accusations, infidelity and ignoring one's partner, all of which result in the breaking down of the victim's self-esteem and self-worth (Slabbert, I., & Green, S., 2014).

All the participants of this study experienced emotional abuse together with physical abuse except Participant 7. The abuse they have experienced was manifested in various forms, including insults, shouting, and belittling. The impact of these experiences has left them

feeling depressed and stressed to a significant extent, compounded by the effects of physical abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual violence is defined as being forced to engage in sexual intercourse or perform sexual actions when they do not choose to. (Philippine Statistics Authority - PSA & ICF, 2018).

Two of the participants (29 percent) in this study indicated that they were sexually abused by their partners. The sexual abuse ranged from being coerced or pressured into sexual activities against their will even though they are married and the other involves disclosure of private information.

Economic Abuse

According to Alkan, Ö., Özar, Ş., & Ünver, Ş. (2021), the term "economic abuse" became popular in the late 1980s, and it involves controlling a woman's ability to gain, use, and sustain economic resources, thereby threatening her economic security and potential for self-sufficiency.

Three of the participants (43 percent) in this study indicated that they are facing financial hardships stemming from insufficient support, misplaced priorities, excessive spending, and lack of accountability within familial relationships which results to domestic abuse from their husbands.

All Four Types of Abuse

One of the participants (14 percent) indicated that she is exposed to all four types of domestic abuse. Six of the participants (86 percent) indicated that they are physically abused by their husbands. All the participants (100 percent) in this study stated that they are abused emotionally and psychologically, while two of the participants (29 percent) indicated that they were sexually abused by their partners. Lastly, three of the participants (43 percent) in this study indicated that they are facing financial hardships stemming from

insufficient support, misplaced priorities, excessive spending, and lack of accountability within familial relationships which resulted to domestic abuse from their husbands. Different authors (Bollen et al., 1999:8; Bassuk et al., 2005:387; Griggs et al., 2005:68; Wiehe, 1998:6) agree that all four types of domestic violence often occur simultaneously and Vincent and Jouriles (2002:78) conclude that the well-being of many women is negatively affected by their partners who use different types of domestic violence.

Experiences of Abuse by the Women Victims for Each Form of Abuse Experiences of Physical Abuse

The thematic analysis of the responses of the participants regarding their experiences of physical abuse reveal several key themes in the participant's responses:

Violence and Aggression

The women, being the victims, are used to their husbands' violent and dominating ways. According to Semahegn, A., & Mengistie, B. (2015), physical violence (beating) is any sort of violent conduct that can result in bodily harm, such as slapping, punching, kicking, beating with any object, twisting the arms, strangulation, or using a knife or gun against women.

The narratives of Participants 1, 2, 3, and 6 revolved around their husbands' violent behavior, which stemmed from their aggression, as they resorted to the use of force to maintain control over their relationships. Participant 1 stated, "Tungpa danug, durun, ken kugtar, ngem haan unay jay kugtar ajay tungpa ti kanayun." (*Slaps, punches, shoves, and kicks, but not so much for the shoves, more on slaps.*) Similarly, Participant 2 said "Lalo nu sumsumru, neng agkabil nukwa." (*If he is triggered, he will beat me.*) Participant 3 shared, "Sampal, ngem suntok nak met ah, minsan gumulong kami eh ngem syempre maabaknak latta ah kasi lalaki." (*Slaps, but sometimes I*

punch him too; we end up rolling on the ground sometimes. Of course, since he is man, I end being defeated.) These statements of the participants showed a passive acceptance of their situation—that is, their husbands are physically abusing them. On the other hand, Participant 6 said that he was hit by her husband because of jealousy. "Sinuntok ako noon kasi may pinagseselosan siya", she shared. (*He punched me because he was jealous of someone else.*). These actions and traits can become extreme, contributing to an unhealthy relationship that may lead to physical abuse. For many women, resisting physical assault was proven difficult, exposing their fears and vulnerabilities

Pain and Injury

The physical effects of violence highlight the wounds, bruising, and pain endured by these victims, alongside the emotional suffering and trauma they have experienced. According to the Office on Women's Health (2021) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, violence's short-term physical consequence might range from small injuries to serious outcomes. They can include bruises, wounds, fractured bones, or injury to organs and other body components.

The narratives of Participants 3 and 5 when asked about their experiences of physical abuse highlight the severity of the abuse they suffered from their husbands, manifesting through pain and injury. Participant 5 narrated "Nakigtut nak! Ta napannak met kinabilen. Nagdakkell black eye ku idi." (*I was shocked because he suddenly beat me. I got a big black eye that time.*) Similarly, Participant 3 shared, "Bugbog nga sabali, binugbug na tuy ulok. Haan makita pasa na." (*Beating differently...He beat me on the head. The bruise is not visible*). She also added "Lahat, ah! Amin napadasan kung ano, akala ko patay na ako." (*Everything! I went through everything, and I thought I was dead.*) These experiences highlight how the pain and injury inflicted by their husbands are evidenced by visible bruises and internal pain. These physical manifestations serve as enduring reminders,

tangible symbols of the traumatic events they have experienced.

Alcohol Consumption Worsening Violence

The statements from participants underscore how their husbands' alcohol consumption adversely affects their relationships, leading to instances of physical abuse. Participant 3 recounted, 'Nu mapan ko sunduen isuna dijay inuman, kagurana. Tun sumangpet kami dijay balay, bugbog sarado nak.' (*If I approach him while he's drinking, he will be upset. As we get home, he beat me up.*) Similarly, Participant 6 mentioned, 'Nananakit siya kapag lasing, sinuntok ako noon.' (He becomes violent when he's drunk; he punched me before.)

These instances reveal that these women perceive acts of abuse as normal interactions between spouses. They believe that the husband's aggression, whether using a knife or falsely attacking with a bottle of beer, is solely due to the influence of alcohol. This highlights how fights and mutual harm seem to escalate when their husbands consume alcohol. Cortes (2013) suggests that battered women often feel helpless and submissive towards their abusers—their husbands. They tend to attribute the aggression to alcohol consumption, viewing it as their fault and assuming partial responsibility for the inflicted pain.

Violence Beyond Physical

The physical manifestation of conflicts and fights not only results in bruises and injuries but also encompasses the destruction of belongings and spaces. Participant 1 vividly expressed this by stating, 'Suna ah, napalalo agdadel gamit. Cellphone ko garud ket dinadael na.' (He continually breaks things up. He also broke my phone.) The severity of the victims' reactions to their husbands' rage and aggressiveness is evident in these behaviors. Participant 3 further described how her husband attempted to break a bottle of alcohol over her head, stressing, 'Nangala iti beer nga

napunno nagan na, ihampas na kuma tuy ulok ngem nasalo ajay ading na. Natay nak kuma nabayagen ah.' (He grabbed an unopened beer and attempted to smack it on my head, but his brother intervened. I'd be dead by now if he hadn't stopped him.) Similarly, participant 4 stated, 'Nagbabasag yan ng bote dahil sa selos lang.' (He smashes bottles only out of jealousy.)

The aggression of the husbands has a negative impact not only on the physical well-being of the victims but also on their sense of belonging, resulting from the throwing of sharp objects or hitting with an object (Kapur, 2020)."

Experiences of Emotional / Psychological Abuse

Several main themes were revealed from the thematic analysis of participants' responses on their experiences of emotional/ psychological abuse.

Stress and Emotional Struggle

Women are often believed to perceive themselves as having no control over their situations, manifesting in a submission to punishment and violence. Rogers and Follingstad's (2014) findings revealed that the most significant long-term negative effects of psychological abuse include PTSD, anxiety, depression, self-esteem difficulties, physical impairments, and general life functioning restrictions. Women tend to blame themselves for their inability to change the situation, leading to self-esteem issues, anxiety, and depression.

Participant 1 expressed a strong emotional reaction, stressing the words, "Ibabainnak, Sobra!" (*He embarrasses me excessively!*), indicating intense feelings and revealing frustration or distress. The words uttered are immensely heartbreaking, especially coming from the man whom she loved. Kapur's (2020) study suggests that women subjected to this form of abuse often develop anxiety, stress, depression, and trauma. Furthermore, Participant 2 stated, "Ma- is-istressnak ken

agijay ub-ubrainna. Makitkita pay ubbingmi." (*I am stressed with what he's doing; our children even witness it.*) These statements highlight the stress caused by their husband's abusive behavior and its impact on their children's emotional well-being.

Suicidal Thoughts / Drive Toward Death

The hardships faced by the participants are linked to feelings of hopelessness and being trapped in difficult circumstances. Participant 1 highlighted the challenges resulting from her husband's actions, noting his lack of effort in building and supporting their family. In expressing her frustration, she revealed, "Kasla kayatko agpakamatay. Ajay agtrabtrabahuka tapos kurang para ken yana; tapos isuna mandi pay aggaraw nu awan trabahona. Syempre agpanunutnak nu kasanuk mabiyag annakko." (*I feel like committing suicide. When I work, and then it is not enough for him; he won't move anymore when he doesn't have a job, of course, I will think of a way to sustain my children's needs to live.*) She grapples with sustaining their living conditions, especially for their children, resorting to extreme thoughts due to financial difficulties and the frustration of working hard without positive outcomes.

In instances where women experience significant depression and stress resulting from physical abuse, they often contemplate ending their lives. This goes beyond the evident physical injuries, encompassing a broader impact on their overall well-being. The consequences of such abuse not only cause physical pain but also extend to mental and emotional health, affecting the victims' overall health and welfare.

Feelings of Betrayal and Disappointment

Participant 4 shared how she feels betrayed upon learning that her husband mentioned another woman's name in his dreams while asleep. She further expressed, "Malakas yan kumita idi, malakas met agbabae" (*He used to earn much money. He was also strong in*

attracting women.), suggesting that her husband is unfaithful, even though they already have children. Discovering that a loved one is secretly cheating can be a challenging experience for a woman, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-blame.

Similarly, Participant 5 discussed a sense of disappointment when she stated, "Nu adda kagurana kanyak ket ibatuna amin nga baduk," (*Whenever he is angry of me, he will throw all my clothes.*) This statement reflects feelings of disappointment and hurt within the relationship due to mistreatment.

Powerlessness and Anxiety

Participants 3, 5, and 6 all conveyed their fear of their husbands, who threatened them, leading to anxiety and a sense of powerlessness, as the male figure is commonly perceived as more dominant than the female. Participant 5 revealed, "Agsangangitak latta idin" (*I just burst into tears.*), indicating that her only coping mechanism with her husband's behavior is through crying, as she lacks the courage to stand up for herself. Additionally, Participant 6 mentioned, "Nung first time na sinaktan niya ako, sobra akong natakot. Nanginginig pa ako noon." (*I was terrified the first time he hit me. I was trembling that time.*) This illustrates the extent of her fear when her husband became physically aggressive.

Living in an abusive environment exposes victims to constant fear of triggering their partner's jealousy or anger. Participant 3 shared, "Pumikit ako, di na ako gumalaw, akala ko patay na ako." (*I closed my eyes and froze because I thought I was already dead.*), describing the traumatic experience of her husband attempting to pierce her with a knife and break a bottle of beer on her head. Another chilling experience she recounted was when her husband threatened them in their sleep, saying, "Adda paglamayanen." (*Someone will die.*) This instilled fear for her life and the safety of her children, especially when her husband sharpened a knife while they were sleeping.

These experiences significantly impact the victims' mental health and emotional well-being, causing severe fear and anxiety, aligning with Kapur's (2020) study on the impact of physical abuse on women's lives.

The sense of security that husbands are expected to provide is contradicted by the experiences of these participants, as the very individuals who should ensure their family's safety instill fear and threats in their lives. Trauma leaves victims feeling powerless and incapable of controlling their circumstances, leading to profound feelings of helplessness.

Experiences of Sexual Abuse

Through a thematic analysis, several significant themes emerged from the participant's descriptions of their experiences with sexual-domestic abuse.

Marital Rape

Sexual violence is defined as being compelled to engage in sexual intercourse or perform sexual actions against one's will (Philippine Statistics Authority - PSA & ICF, 2018). Participant 1's statement reveals that she was coerced or pressured into sexual activities against her will, even though they are married. As she stated, "Pilpilitennak nukwa deng, naglaing agpilit uray madik, agpipilit." (*He forced me. He's good at forcing even if I don't want to.*) Her right to personal boundaries in their intimate relationship is violated.

Emotional Blackmail and Threats

Threats and emotional manipulation are employed by the partner of Participant 2. According to her statement, "Hindi naman ako pinipilit pero binabantaan ako na ipagkakalat niyang may nangyayari sa amin kapag nakipaghiwalay ako" (*I'm not being forced, but he's threatening me that he will spread the word about what happened between us if I break up with him*), highlighting her situation where her partner is preventing her from separating, potentially by disclosing private information.

This attempt to control her impedes her ability to exercise her own rights and will.

In summary, these responses collectively highlight distressing dynamics within intimate relationships, including sexual coercion, marital rape and the use of threats and emotional manipulation to maintain control. These themes underscore the importance of consent, communication, and the establishment of healthy boundaries in relationships to ensure the well-being of all parties involved.

Experiences of Economic Abuse

Thematic analysis of participant's responses addressing the experiences on economic-domestic abuse faced by women are indicated in many themes.

Insufficient Income and Financial Struggle

According to Alkan, Ö., Özar, Ş., & Ünver, Ş. (2021), the term "economic abuse" involves controlling a woman's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources, thereby threatening her economic security and potential for self-sufficiency. The experiences of these women illustrate their struggle with insufficient income from their husbands to sustain and support their families. In the statement of Participant 1, she mentioned, "Kurang ti supportna ken agijay ubbing, isu nga kaykayatko agubra." (*His support wasn't enough to sustain our children, so I chose to work.*) This reveals how the lack of financial resources affects their living conditions, compelling her to work to meet her children's needs. On the other hand, statements from other participants highlight their challenges in receiving adequate support from their husbands, hindering them from fulfilling their responsibilities and in addressing their family's needs.

Personal Interest and Vices

The participants have expressed frustration due to the lack of support from their husbands. Participant 3 explained, "Pag magswesweldo siya, hindi siya diretso sa bahay, dumaan sa

beer house, sa mga barkada niya kahit may sakit yung mga anak niya, yung mga bata.” (*When he receives his salary, he doesn’t go straight home; instead, he goes to the beer house, to his friends, even when his children are sick.*) Similarly, Participant 7 stated, “Awan, haan agsupsuporta isuna, uray la kuma mangted para ken ta anak na awan pay ngem nu paginum kada pagsugalna, adu kwartana met.” (*He doesn’t provide money to support his child anymore, but he spends a lot on drinking and gambling.*) The participants’ statements indicate that their husbands prioritize personal interests and vices, such as spending time at beer houses and engaging in leisure activities, over meeting the needs of their sick children or contributing to the family’s well-being. This emphasis on personal enjoyment despite familial responsibilities creates a concerning disconnect between their priorities and family support.

Lack of Accountability

The irresponsible financial behavior of the husbands of these women affects their roles as providers for their families. Neglecting familial obligations has become habitual for them, as Participant 5 pointed out, “Isu ajay nangkabilanna kanyak idi insaldak jay braceletko. Ket awan met itedna kanyak. Siyak met amin ag-gastu.” (*That’s why he slapped me when I pawned my bracelet. He doesn’t give anything, and I am responsible for everything.*) This situation compelled Participant 5 to sell her bracelet just to sustain their family’s needs and seek medical attention for a serious illness. It highlights the significance of a family facing a cycle of financial challenges resulting from a lack of discipline and accountability from their husbands. In summary, these economic themes collectively depict a scenario of financial hardships arising from insufficient support, misplaced priorities, excessive spending, and lack of accountability within familial relationships. The narratives underscore the necessity for responsible financial management and a shared commitment to addressing

economic challenges for the well-being of the family.

Factors That Lead to the Commission of Violence

The thematic analysis of the responses of the participants regarding factors that lead to the commission of violence revealed several key themes in participants’ responses. These themes primarily consist of external factors that influence the violence experienced by women. The environment in which women victims find themselves, particularly that of their spouses, significantly contributes to the reasons for their ongoing abuse.

Habitual Gambling

The stories of Participants 5 and 7 focus on the negative consequences of frequent involvement in cockfighting, exposing the resulting suffering and distress caused by this obsessive behavior. Both Participant 5 and Participant 7 highlighted the consistent involvement of their spouses in cockfighting. Despite their differing circumstances, the similarity between their situations lies in the fact that cockfighting is the root cause of the abuse they experience from their partners.

Participant 7 mentioned that whenever she attempts to address her spouse about his habit of engaging in cockfighting, he becomes angry. She stated, “Simula pay idi a gapu ti kanayun na panaginum ken ata kanayun nga tuptupada. Gapu iti panag sug-sugalna kada tupada or e-sabong kakasjay pangikukwaan na kwartana kada arak, nu dillawek makagura nagaduntu iti ibagabagana kenyakun. Agapa kamin tun” (*Since before, because of his constant drinking and involvement in cockfighting. Because of his frequent alcohol consumption, cockfighting, or online cockfighting, that’s where he spends his money. When I confront him about it, he gets angry and says a lot of things to me, which is where our fights start.*)

Participant 5 observed that when his involvement in cockfighting leads to losses, his

behavior reportedly takes a turn for the worse. He stated, "Agsugal pay ti sabong. Nu maabak ket isu ajay madi ti ugalina nukwan" (*He engages in cockfighting frequently, and when he loses, his behavior changes*).

This situation illustrates the impact of cockfighting on their relationships, wherein addressing this habit triggers anger in one case and worsened behavior in another. It demonstrates that their spouses tend to channel their anger or frustrations, which originate from their gambling losses, towards the women victims, resulting in abusive conduct. According to Soumi et al. (2019), someone who gambles may commit Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). This aggression may result from the gambler's rage and frustration over gambling losses, manifested as an immediate aggressive reaction to financial stress and crisis.

Alcohol Abuse

The participants' stories clearly express a worrying pattern: their partners' alcoholism serves as a driving force for abusive behavior toward the women in their homes. This repeating cycle of alcohol-induced violence illustrates a frustrating reality that these women encounter at the hands of their spouses.

Both Participant 5 and Participant 7 mentioned that their husbands are not only addicted to cockfighting but also to alcohol abuse. Participant 6 emphasized, "Ang lakas niya uminom. Wala pa atang araw na hindi siya umuuwing lasing." (*He drinks heavily. There seems to be no day when he doesn't come home drunk.*) Additionally, Participant 1 expressed, "Nu makainum, pagbabartekannak." (*When he is drunk, he abuses me.*)

These women endure the consequences of violence due to their husbands' alcohol abuse. This is supported by one of the findings of the study entitled "Living with an Alcoholic Partner: Problems Faced and Coping Strategies Used by Wives of Alcoholic Clients" by Ajinkya,

S. (2014), that the alcoholic is so consumed by alcohol that he ignores his obligations and the demands of other family members and is unable to fulfill his expected roles and responsibilities. In such cases, the functions traditionally performed by men sometimes fall on the wives, adding to their stress and suffering. This means that because of their spouses' frequent drinking, they can no longer function properly as a partner, affecting their relationship, and this becomes the cause of the violence they experience.

Enabling Behavior Exhibited by In-Laws

According to Participant 5's statement, despite experiencing abuse from her spouse, her in-laws tend to side with her husband rather than supporting her. She expressed, "Dagita met baket ken lakay idi, isu met latta ti patyendan". (*It was only him who was trusted by his parents.*) This lack of support becomes evident as her suffering is disregarded, and her husband is trusted and believed by her in-laws.

This lack of support from her in-laws becomes evident, as they seem to trust and believe her husband despite her suffering. Conversely, Participant 7 mentioned that her spouse's parents tend to condone or cover up their son's wrongful actions. She mentioned, "Ket kunsintidor met nagannakna; ilibakda pay agita ubra anakda." Additionally, she emphasized, "Tapos kasta la garud ta anakdan, ilibak da palang kenyak aramidna." (*But his parents are enablers. They even cover up their son's wrongdoings.*). Participant 7 also pointed out her husband's disrespectful behavior towards her parents, which reflects not only his lack of respect towards them but also towards her. She expressed, "Dati payen nga sungsubatan nagannakna. Isu nga awan respetona kenyak. Imbes nga ungta nagannakna ken agita aramidna a ket haanda met mabagaan ta nauyuyung met isuna kenyada. Bugkawanna met isuda. Bastos." (*Before, he used to always argue with his parents, so he doesn't respect me. Instead of his parents scolding him, he doesn't listen to them and becomes even angrier. He's*

disrespectful.) This supports the findings of the study titled, "Effects of Domestic Violence on Children" conducted by the Office on Women's Health's (2021) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, that there is a high likelihood for a child to become abusive if they witness abuse at home.

The impact of how parents raise their children significantly influences their child's behavior, especially towards their future spouse. The involvement of parents in the lives of their married children has a substantial effect, which can either be beneficial or detrimental to them.

Impact of Domestic Violence to the Lives and Well-Being of the Women Victims

The analysis of participants' responses regarding the impact of domestic violence on their lives and well-being revealed several main themes in their answers.

Struggle with Mental Health

Due to the abuse, they endure from their spouses, the mental health of female victims has been severely impacted. Participant 1 mentioned contemplating ending her life due to the abuse she experienced from her husband, stating, "Kasla kayatko agpakamatay." (*I feel like committing suicide*).

Participant 2 expressed stress due to her spouse's actions, saying, "Adu epektona neng. Ma-is-istressnak ken agijay ub-ubraenna. Makitkita pay ubbingmi" (*It has a lot of impact. I get stressed by what he does, and even the children witness it*).

Participant 6 mentioned trembling in fear for her life because of the abuse she suffers from her husband, recalling the first time he hurt her, "Nung first time na sinaktan niya ako, sobra akong natakot; nanginginig pa ako noon" (*The first time he hurt me; I was extremely scared. I was trembling that time*).

Based on their statements, the psychological effects of the abuse on female victims are evident. There is a fear for one's life, and some

contemplate ending their lives due to the abuse they have endured. This is supported by one of the findings of the study titled, "Mental and Physical Health and Intimate Partner Violence Against Women" by Dillon et al., 2013; Lagdon et al., 2014, which indicates that women victims are at risk of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Parental Concerns

Participant 1 shared that despite facing mental health issues caused by her spouse, one of her main concerns is figuring out how to provide for her children. She expressed, "Ajay agtrabtrabahuka tapos kurang para kenya tapos isuna mandi pay aggaraw nu awan trabahona. Syempre agpanunutka nu kasanum mabiyag annakmo" (*When you're working, but it's still not enough for him, and when he doesn't make any effort when he's jobless, of course, you start thinking about how you'll provide for your child*.) This illustrates that she does not only suffer psychologically due to her spouse's abuse but also experiences significant emotional distress worrying about her children's well-being. On the other hand, Participant 2 is stressed due to the mistreatment inflicted by her spouse. Her worry centers on her children witnessing the abuse she endures. She mentioned, "Ma-is-istressnak ken agijay ub-ubraenna. Makitkita pay ubbingmi" (*I'm stressed by what he's doing, and our children even witness it*).

From their stories, it's clear that the welfare of their children is their primary concern. They do not only endure mental suffering due to the abuse but also undergo emotional distress thinking about their children. According to the findings of Dodaj, A. (2020), children who have witnessed domestic violence have a high prevalence of psychiatric issues. Furthermore, there is evidence that a number of child and parent factors are significant in understanding what determines children's exposure to domestic violence. This shows the significant impact of the violence committed by husbands

against women victims and their children, with various effects, especially on the child's mental health.

Help and Support-Seeking Experiences and Behaviors of the Women Victims

The following key themes were revealed as a result of the thematic analysis of the responses of the participants regarding the help and support-seeking experiences and behaviors of the women victims of domestic violence:

Family Support and Inaction

The stories of Participants 5, 6, and 7 reveal the hardships families face when dealing with abuse within their midst and the varying levels of support they receive. Participant 5's account portrays a distressing situation where the family becomes aware of the abuse but struggles to take decisive action. The victim expressed, "Agsina kami kuma idin ngem madina met kayat. Naamwanda tatang ku idi jay inubrana kanyak. Agsangsangit ni tatangku idi ngem awan met naaramidanda" (*We were supposed to separate back then, but he didn't want to. My father and our family found out about what he did to me. My dad cried then, but they cannot do anything.*) McLaren's study in 2010 revealed that people want to act but might not know the appropriate steps or how to ensure safety, highlighting barriers to immediate action, potentially due to fear or lack of awareness. This implies that families might struggle to take action against abuse despite being aware of it due to the issues involved, such as not knowing the right steps or feeling fearful, highlighting the challenges in addressing sensitive issues within families.

On the other hand, family support is evident in the accounts given by Participants 6 and

7. Participant 6's experience reflects the involvement of their partner's parents, who, despite acknowledging the issue, advised the participant to leave the relationship. The victim stated, "Kinausap ako ng mga magulang niya. Kahit gusto nila ako, pero pangit naman ugali ng

anak nila, sinabihan nila ako na hiwalayan ko na kasi baka may mas malala pang mangyari sa akin" (*His parents confronted me. Even though they like me, their son's behavior isn't good. They told me to break up with their son because something worse might happen to me.*) Similarly, Participant 7 acknowledged receiving support from their parents, expressing, "Bagbagaandak nuka ti nagannakko, isu ti support nga maalalak" (*My parents are advising me. That's the support I receive.*) The reliance on parental guidance highlights the importance of familial networks for emotional, practical, and possibly financial assistance. Studies like the one conducted by Prosman et al. in 2015 showed that home-visiting interventions by supportive parents significantly reduce IPV, underscoring the effectiveness of such support systems for victims overwhelmed by their experiences. Family support plays a crucial role in helping victims, as shown by instances where a partner's parents advised leaving the relationship and where a victim received guidance from their parents. This emphasizes the significance of familial networks for emotional, practical, and financial assistance in such situations.

Endurance and Escaping Abuse

Participants 3 and 4's stories shed light on how victims endure abuse and defend themselves to stay safe. Participant 3 displayed incredible readiness to escape harm, staying alert even while asleep, showing constant alertness and a strong desire to get away from the situation. The victim stated, "Napadasak nga uray maturugkami ket aghasa ti itak. Isu nga dijay nakun nagbalaw. (I experienced that even while we were sleeping, he sharpened a bolo. That's why I left. If I hadn't left, it would have been the same. I endured that for three whole years.) Her situation showed that she faced constant danger, leading Participant 3 to leave. It highlights how she endured a scary situation for a long time, emphasizing how tough it was for her to endure for three years. In contrast, Participant 4 had a physical confrontation and

used a coconut leaf for self-defense, revealing how victims will go to great lengths to protect themselves. She cited, "Ti purpose ko idin ket agtaraynak ta talawak suna, para lang haan dumakkel nga haan umabot nga ano... ket nagaw-atna atuy buhok ko. Hinila nan. E, di haannak nakataray... ket nakaalanak palatang. Insaplit ko a dijay bukotna Nasugat idi, nabitawannak. Nagtaray nakun. Napannak bundok dita. (*My intention back then was just to run away from him, so the fight wouldn't escalate to something worse... but he caught my hair... He pulled it. So, I couldn't run... then I found a coconut leaf. I hit him on the back with it. He got wounded, and he let go of me. I ran. I ran towards the mountain nearby.* (referring to their backyard near the mountain.) This highlights her attempt to de-escalate the situation and defend herself in a moment of danger, eventually seeking safety by fleeing towards the mountain area. Their stories show how victims instinctively strive to stay safe and use their resourcefulness to escape danger.

Empowerment and Self-Preservation

One behavior observed in a victim is the act of fighting back against the abuser. Participant 2 stated, "Nu baybay-ak kakaasinak met isu nga patulak met nukwa" (*If I let him (hurt me), I'll be pitiful. That's why I engage with him, too.*) She expressed her determination not to be a passive victim and she resolved to combat the violence inflicted upon her. This behavior can be linked to Battered Woman Syndrome, now associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a term coined by psychologist Lenore Walker in her study published in 1979 entitled "Battered Women: A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence." Battered Woman Syndrome denotes the psychological effects of living with intimate partner violence (Walker, 1979). She noted that battered woman's syndrome is not a mental illness but the result of what happens when you live day in and day out with trauma. This illustrates how someone enduring constant abuse might feel compelled

to fight back to protect herself, even though it's harmful.

The strong decision to leave an abusive relationship also highlights the empowerment and determination of the victims involved. Participant 6 showed unwavering determination to leave the abusive relationship. She said, "Iniwan ko na kasi hindi siya nagbabago. Kahit lumuhod siya noon. Wala na akong pakialam" (*I left because he hadn't changed. Even when he kneeled before, I didn't care anymore.*) Even when the partner apologized and pleaded, the participant stayed firm in her choice to walk away. This strong determination shows a clear decision to leave the relationship, demonstrating a commitment to self-preservation and a strong desire to break free from the cycle of abuse.

Fear of Consequences

Victims did not ask for legal help because they are afraid the person hurting them might face legal consequences. Participant 3's story shows how fear stops people from seeking formal help. Participant 3's experience shows how she was hesitant to ask for help from the authorities because she was scared of what might happen if she did. She said, "Nu agapakami haannak mapan ospital. Napannak barangay idi naminsan, dimmawatak tulong, ngem imbaga ajay barangay nga nu ituloy ko, mapannak kano agpakasjay kuma dijay ospital nu adu pasak. Sabi kasi pag-inano mo yan, makulong asawa mo, haanko met lang intuloy, mabutengnak met nga makulong suna." (*Whenever we fight, I don't go to the hospital. There was one time I went to the barangay, and asked for help, but they said that if I proceed, I should first go to the hospital if I have many bruises. They said if I reported the incident, my husband might get arrested, so I didn't pursue it. I'm also afraid he might get imprisoned.*) The statement of the victim reflects the various fears and worries individuals may harbor when considering seeking assistance. According to the British Columbia Legal Society, survivors' (women) help-seeking behaviors in heterosexual

relationships involve concerns that include: belief or hope that the abuse will end, the “make-up” period after violence reassures them or strengthens their emotional bond with their partner, victims depend on their partner—to pay the bills, take care of them, or for other help, fear that their partner will become even more violent if they leave, fear for the safety of their children and other loved ones, fear that their children will be taken into government care, fear of losing their home, fear for the safety of their pets or farm animals, fear that no one will believe that the abuse happened, fear from isolation from their family and friends, and part of the abuse may have been to ensure their isolation, fear that they do not feel they have the support they need, fear of being deported or of losing their immigration status, that they do not know about their rights or the help that is available, fear of the legal system, they feel pressure from their family or friends to stay, they feel pressure or blame from their community; they live in a rural area with few services and supports available; they live in a small town where everyone knows everyone’s business (Feindel & Roulette, 2010, p. 14); they do not want to bring shame to their families, and they want to save their faces (Holmes & Hunt, 2017).

From the list of concerns above, it was evident that the victim has a fear of the legal system. She was afraid that her husband might get arrested. This fear of consequences for the partner inhibited the participant from seeking formal help, showcasing the complexities victims face when weighing their options.

Seeking Legal Help

Victims contemplated separation early on and considered involving legal or community interventions, showcasing a proactive stance. Participant 1 stated, “Tatta nasapa pay isinamun... haanko ammu deng ngem balakko mapan barangay nga ireklamo isuna” (While it's still early, break up with him... I don't know, but I plan to go to the barangay to file a complaint against him.) Participant 1's

statement reveals a proactive approach to their situation, considering separation early on. This proactive stance signifies a recognition of the severity of the issue and a willingness to take action, but the victim showed uncertainty. This can be associated with women experiencing domestic and family violence often experiencing increased stress and trauma during legal engagement, leading to self-medicating and hiding mental health concerns (Douglas, 2018). It's a sign that they realize how serious the situation is and they're willing to do something about it. However, the uncertainty in saying “I don't know” suggests they might still be unsure or confused about what to do, even if they're thinking about involving the authorities.

Extent of Awareness of Support Systems

One participant displayed awareness of support systems available in her community, such as the Violence Against Women (VAW) Desk in the barangay, indicating a certain level of knowledge and access to resources. The mention of approaching “Kagawad Wilson and the Violence Against Women Desk in their barangay” reflects Participant 2’s efforts to seek help and support, showcasing an awareness of available resources for victims of violence and a willingness to seek assistance.

Meanwhile, when participants were asked about their awareness of the Violence Against Women Desk in their community, the majority responded that they were unaware of its existence or purpose. This underscores a significant gap in the government's efforts, despite the Department of the Interior and Local Government's initiative to establish VAW Desks in each barangay. It emphasizes that, while there is a governmental push for these desks, there is insufficient dissemination and awareness among the populace regarding their existence and function.

Proposed Action Plan to Enhance the Functionality of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks

In light of the results of the study, the following action plan to improve the functionality of VAW Desks is proposed:

Table 2. Proposed action plan for the enhancement of the functionality of VAW desks in barangays.

Objectives	Action/ Activities To Be Taken	Persons/ Institutions Involved	Expected Output	Budgeting	Span of Implementation
Key Issue: Lack of awareness about the existence and purpose of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks in barangays					
• To raise community awareness and understanding through campaigns and workshops	Launch an extensive community outreach program through local media, assembly, and seminars, explaining the purpose and services of VAW desks.	LGU, PNP, MSWD, Barangay Officials, Local Non-Government Organizations, Local Media Outlet, E.G., 95.1 DWRL FM	Heightened awareness among residents about VAW desks, their services, and how to access them	Expenses for advertisement, venue booking, transportation, and materials printing	3 months for planning and execution
• To educate schools and community centers about domestic violence and utilization of VAW desks	Conduct regular educational sessions in schools and community centers about recognizing and responding to domestic violence, emphasizing the role and function of VAW desks	LGU, PNP, MSWD, Barangay Officials, Schools and Universities, Local Women's Group	Enhanced knowledge among students and community members on identifying signs of abuse and seeking help from VAW desks	Costs for materials preparation, transportation, and possibly honoraria for speakers.	Regular sessions scheduled throughout the year
• To enhance VAW desk accessibility and support	Expand VAW desks operating hours, provide hotline services, and ensure a comfortable and confidential environment for victims seeking help.	Barangay Officials, VAW Desks Officers, Local Community Volunteers	Increased accessibility and comfort for victims seeking assistance, leading to more reports and support	Budget for setting up hotlines, possibly renovating or equipping existing spaces for confidentiality	6 months to implement changes and assess effectiveness
• To establish clear communication channel to access information about the VAW Desk	Create easily accessible information materials such as posters, brochures, leaflets, and online resources explaining the VAW Desk	Barangay Officials, VAW Desk Officers, Barangay Media Team/Online websites Committee	Improved accessibility to information about the VAW Desk, leading to increased inquiries and usage	Design and printing costs for posters, brochures, and leaflets, as well as website development if necessary	1 month for designing and printing, with ongoing updates as necessary
• To utilize social media platform for VAW Desks	Develop and maintain social media accounts such as Facebook Page for VAW Desk, sharing informative content as well as success stories or testimonials & encourage community engagement through interactive posts or Q&A sessions.	Social media administrators for the accounts, VAW Desk Officers, Community Members	Increased visibility and engagement on social media platforms, leading to heightened awareness among residents who have social media accounts	Budget for boosting posts, creating visual content, and possibly hiring social media managers	Continuous, with daily or weekly updates and engagement

The above proposed action plan aims to address and bridge the awareness gap, strengthen support networks, and enhance the overall functionality of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks, ensuring a more effective response to domestic violence cases at the barangay level.

CONCLUSIONS

The study involved seven female victims who had experienced domestic violence. The participants in this study are residents of Lal-lo,

Cagayan, with ages ranging from 28 to 56 years old. Most of them are married, have children, and the majority have sources of income.

Domestic abuse affects women of all ages, educational backgrounds, and lengths of relationship, demonstrating its broad nature that includes socioeconomic difficulties. Children in these households worsen problems, affecting both the victims and their mental health. The participants' work and income levels indicate the vast range of situations that lead to domestic abuse. These women endure a variety of forms of violence, including physical, psychological, and financial. Despite the presence of VAW desks in each barangay in Lal-lo, women victims are often ignorant of them and do not seek aid from them.

They lack knowledge concerning the VAW (Violence Against Women) desk available in every barangay. That's why they are unable to report to the authorities if they are experiencing violence and keeping their experiences to themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for every woman to have awareness about their rights and the existence of VAW (Violence Against Women) desks in their barangay, which they can readily approach whenever they experience violence from their spouses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. The crafted proposed action plan should be implemented to address and bridge the awareness gap, strengthen support networks, and enhance the overall functionality of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks.
2. The Local Government Unit of Lal-lo should continue to strengthen its gender and development (GAD) endeavors and efforts to advocate

- for gender equality, particularly concerning the needs of victims of violence against women.
3. The university should provide more programs and conduct various extension programs and services addressing violence against women.
 4. Launching an extensive community outreach programs should be conducted through local media, seminars, and workshops to raise community awareness and understanding explaining the purpose and services of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks.
 5. Regular educational sessions should be conducted to educate community centers about recognizing and responding to domestic violence, emphasizing the role and function of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks.
 6. The Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks should enhance operating hours, provide hotline services, and ensure a comfortable and confidential environment for victims seeking help.
 7. The Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks should create and provide easily accessible information materials such as posters, brochures, leaflets, and online resources explaining the Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks to establish clear communication channel to access information.
 8. The Violence Against Women (VAW) Desk should develop and maintain social media accounts such as Facebook Page for sharing informative content as well as success stories or testimonials to encourage community engagement through interactive posts or Q&A sessions.
 9. A follow up study should be conducted to examine the level of awareness of Violence Against Women (VAW) Desks and undertake similar studies aimed at improving existing policies, programs, and services addressing violence against women.

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