

Narratives of Domestic Violence Among Homosexuals in Intimate Relations: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology

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Abstract— Domestic violence in same-sex relationships remains underrepresented in criminological research and policy discourse. This study explores the lived experiences of homosexual and bisexual individuals who have experienced intimate partner violence within same-sex relationships. Grounded in Minority Stress Theory and Social Learning Theory, the research examines how stigma, discrimination, and power imbalances influence patterns of abuse. Using a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design, data were collected from seventeen participants in the Davao Region, Philippines, through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis revealed seven major themes: gradual escalation of abuse; emotional and psychological violence; physical harm; financial abuse and economic control; verbal abuse, gaslighting, and isolation; power imbalance; and erosion and reclamation of self-worth. Findings indicate that abuse often begins subtly through emotional manipulation and jealousy before progressing into multifaceted forms of violence. Participants reported institutional invisibility, limited legal protection, and barriers to support services. Despite these challenges, narratives reflected resilience and emerging recovery. The study highlights the need for inclusive policies, culturally competent interventions, and strengthened institutional mechanisms to ensure equal protection regardless of sexual orientation.

Keywords— Criminal Justice; Domestic Violence; Intimate Partner Violence; LGBTQ+ Victims; Minority Stress; Same-Sex Relationships; Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

The past 20 years have seen a significant increase in awareness of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in conflict, which has sparked research and the creation of interventions aimed at identifying survivors and meeting their needs for protection and health. However, studies and the UN policy agenda have not fully addressed the health of men, boys, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other non-binary) and other non-binary individuals subjected to sexual violence in conflict (Gambir, 2024)

One problematic issue and concern regarding laws protecting bisexuals and homosexuals experiencing domestic violence is the lack of specific provisions and tailored support systems to address the unique challenges faced by this population. While progress has been made in recognizing domestic violence as a serious crime and implementing measures to protect victims, bisexual and homosexual individuals often encounter additional barriers and discrimination when seeking help due to societal biases and stigmatization.

Although, Republic Act 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004 is continuously modified and amendments have been made, it still lacks the inclusion of the victims coming from the LGBTQ+ society.

Presently, House Bill No.1365 is expediting the inclusion of the term “partners” in the provisions of VAWC law. Furthermore, if domestic violence committed against bisexuals and homosexuals is not adequately addressed, it can perpetuate a cycle of abuse, hinder the well-being and mental health of the affected individuals, and contribute to a culture of fear and silence that prevents others from coming forward, ultimately undermining efforts to achieve equality and social justice for all (Calton et al, 2021).

Studying domestic violence committed against bisexuals and homosexuals is of utmost importance for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the unique experiences and challenges faced by these marginalized communities, which are often overlooked or underrepresented in research and

policy-making. Understanding the specific dynamics and factors contributing to domestic violence among bisexual and homosexual individuals can inform the development of targeted interventions and support systems (Williams, 2024).

Previous studies have made important contributions to this area of research. They have highlighted the higher prevalence of domestic violence within bisexual and homosexual relationships compared to heterosexual relationships. These studies have also identified specific risk factors such as homophobia, biphobia, and societal discrimination that contribute to increased vulnerability to domestic violence in this population (Corey et al., 2022).

This study is anchored to Minority Stress Theory by Ilan Meyer (1995) which posits that people from marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ experience additional stress in their lives because of the stigma, social rejection and discrimination. According to this model specific groups experience distal and proximal stressors which in turn adversely affect the mental and physical well-being of a person. Where distal stressors are defined as external events including discrimination and victimization, while proximal stressors are internal conflicts developed through constant exposure to the distal stressors (Velez, B. L., et al., 2023).

The main theory above is supported by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory which states that individuals learn behavior through observation, imitation, and modeling of others. It suggests that people can acquire new behaviors and attitudes by observing the actions and consequences experienced by others. This theory emphasizes the role of social interactions and the environment in shaping human behavior (McLeod, 2023)

Applying the Minority Stress Theory and Social Learning Theory to domestic violence in LGBT relationships, we can understand how certain behaviors and patterns may be perpetuated within these couples. It is crucial to note that domestic violence can occur in any relationship, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. However, LGBT couples may face unique challenges and dynamics that can contribute to the development and perpetuation of

domestic violence within their relationships. Various factors such as observational learning which state that LGBT individuals may observe and internalize aggressive or violent behaviors within their families of origin, social circles, or media representations. If they witness domestic violence as children or adolescents, they might be more prone to replicating those behaviors in their own relationships later in life.

This study also aims to answer the following questions: To explore the lived experiences of homosexual individuals who were victims of domestic violence. Also, to examine the coping mechanisms employed by homosexual victims of domestic violence. Lastly, to determine the recommendations of the victims on how to address domestic violence.

The researcher presented the outcome of the study, which is expected to benefit various beneficiaries and entities, including legislative bodies of the Philippines, advocacy groups, local government units, students, academic institutions, and future researchers.

First, the legislative bodies of the Philippines, as participants in policymaking, will gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences of homosexual and bisexual victims of domestic violence. These findings will be formally presented through policy briefs, position papers, and consultative forums, enabling lawmakers to craft targeted, inclusive, and responsive legislation to address the victims' needs.

Second, advocacy groups and local government units (LGUs) will be engaged through dissemination seminars, community dialogues, and partnerships with civil society organizations. By sharing the narratives and data in accessible formats, these groups can integrate the findings into their advocacy campaigns, public awareness drives, and local policy frameworks, ensuring that the voices of the victims are heard and acted upon at both grassroots and regional levels.

Third, students of Criminal Justice Education will have the opportunity to study the documented experiences of homosexual and bisexual victims of domestic violence. These findings may serve as a foundation for further research, critical analysis, and

the development of more inclusive criminological perspectives.

Fourth, the University of Mindanao, particularly the Criminology Department, can incorporate the findings into its curriculum and training programs. This integration will foster a deeper understanding of diversity in the context of law enforcement and criminal justice, preparing future professionals to address similar issues with empathy, equity, and legal insight.

Furthermore, future researchers will be able to use the documented data, themes, and recommendations as a reliable reference point for subsequent academic and policy-oriented investigations, ensuring that the conversation continues and evolves toward concrete societal change. Finally, this research will directly contribute to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Sustainable Development Goal 16, named; gender equality, peace, justice, and strong institutions, as adapted by the Philippine government. This highlights the often-overlooked experiences of homosexual individuals who suffer from domestic violence, but insufficient protection, representation and support. This study can inform policymakers, human rights advocates, social service agencies and others about what works to serve LGBTQ+ people in a more inclusive and responsive way that addresses unique needs. Stronger and better institutions that will recognize and enforce the rights of all citizens, regardless of sexual orientation, create the environment that values and respects fidelity, equality, and human rights to rid the world of sustainable peace and justice. Also, the study amplifies the voices from the homosexual group thereby increasing transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in building strong institutions that are cognizant about the existence of all sectors of society, more so than others who've remained unheard for such a long time.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Participants

Based on the setting of the study, the researcher concluded that there should be a minimum of 17 participants, 7 for a focus group discussion and 10 for

an in-depth interview, residing in Davao Regions. Additionally, Creswell's (2023) study, which recommends a phenomenological study containing a maximum of 17 participants, supports the choice of participants. Participants in the study are chosen solely at their own volition. Participants are therefore free to leave the study at any moment if they feel uncomfortable, that the material is unbalanced, or if they feel ashamed to respond to questions.

Purposive sampling was used to choose and identify the study's participants. Purposive sampling is a technique for locating and choosing examples that will effectively utilize the limited research resources at hand (El-Amouri, 2024). It is used to choose survey participants who are most likely to offer precise and insightful information. This entails locating and selecting a person who has expertise in or familiarity with the subject matter of this investigation. Purposive sampling was used in this study's research approach, and the participants are gays and bisexuals who have experienced domestic abuse. Participation in the current study is determined by inclusion criteria, which are the salient characteristics of the target population that the researcher will use to address the issue (MaxQDA Research Guides, 2026). Prior to the actual interview, the willingness of these participants will be ascertained.

Additionally, the following are the inclusion criteria for the study's participants; (1) The participants must be or must have been in a homosexual relationship and at least 18 years old and above; (2) The participant must have a history of domestic violence in the relationship; (3) Their relationship must be at least 1 year; and lastly, (4) the participant must be a resident within Davao region. Anyone not belonging in homosexual relationship or in less than 1 year of homosexual relationship, or is 18 years old below and not residing within Davao region, is excluded to participate in this study. Each participant signed an informed consent form before the researcher performed the interview with them.

Materials and Instrument

The phenomenological research method was employed in this study as part of the qualitative

research design. The semi-structured interview questions used in the in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) for this study was the instrument used to collect data. The responses were recorded, transcribed, translated, and evaluated. An interview that is semi-structured is one in which the researcher deviates slightly from the pre-planned list of questions. The researcher used more open-ended questions to allow for a discussion with the respondent, as opposed to a direct question-and-response format (George, 2022). The interview guide was written by the researcher and submitted for validity and reliability testing.

The validated interview guide that the validators accepted was followed by the researcher. Interviews were audio-recorded using a secure digital recorder and supplemented with field notes to ensure accurate data capture. The recordings were stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher. Data was retained solely for transcription and analysis purposes and will be backed up on encrypted storage to prevent unauthorized access.

Recordings were kept for a maximum of one month after transcription, after which all audio files and associated personal data were permanently deleted by securely erasing the files, in strict compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). This procedure ensures the confidentiality and privacy of participant responses throughout the research lifecycle.

Design and Procedure

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically adopting a descriptive phenomenological approach. Descriptive phenomenology aims to precisely depict and characterize the lived experiences of individuals experiencing a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This design was uniquely suited for this study as it focused on deeply understanding the contemporary issues, structural challenges, and personal realities surrounding homosexual and bisexual individuals who have been victims of domestic abuse. By operating within a qualitative framework, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data generation, ensuring that

the nuances of the participants' voices remained central to the study's focus.

Participants consisting specifically of homosexual and bisexual victims of domestic violence were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure they met the specific criteria of the investigation. To secure community entry, a formal request letter was sent to the Tagum City Unified Pride Movement, headed by Leo D. Revita. The organization's role was strictly limited to providing recruitment support and access to potential participants without influencing individual choices to join the study.

Data collection relied on structured and semi-structured interviews designed to meet the research objectives. The researcher prioritized empathy to foster a supportive and comfortable environment for the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Interviews were audio- or video-recorded with explicit participant permission to ensure no vital details were lost, while the researcher simultaneously kept detailed field notes. For focus group discussions, participants were oriented ahead of time that while the researcher would treat all data confidentially, absolute confidentiality among group members could not be guaranteed, and members were urged to respect each other's privacy. The researcher also conducted individual structured and semi-structured interviews designed to meet the research objectives. The researcher prioritized empathy during these sessions to foster a supportive, non-threatening, and comfortable environment for the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Interviews were audio- or video-recorded with explicit participant permission to avoid the accidental loss of critical details, while the researcher simultaneously maintained detailed field notes.

To ensure a rigorous and well-structured process, the researcher served as the primary instrument for this study, assuming the distinct roles of interviewer, transcriber, and translator. Data collection utilized structured and semi-structured interviews designed to meet the research objectives while prioritizing empathy to ensure participant comfort (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Following the interviews, the

researcher personally transcribed the audio recordings, stripping background noise to produce clean transcripts (Flick, 2023). These were then translated into Standard English statements for structured analysis, and subsequently member-checked by the respondents to verify accuracy. To satisfy qualitative validity criteria, the researcher-maintained credibility by ensuring the findings accurately reflected the participants' original data; transferability by providing a detailed methodology; dependability by anchoring all inferences in primary data; and confirmability by eliminating personal bias from data interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2022).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher presents and interprets the qualitative findings from focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) from individuals who identifies as a LGBTQ+ and who experienced domestic violence in a same-sex relationship.

Lived Experiences of Homosexual Individuals who Have Been Victims of Domestic Violence

This highlights the emergent themes and corresponding core ideas derived from the lived experiences of homosexual individuals who have been victims of domestic violence; (1) Gradual Acceleration of Abuse, (2) Prevalence of Emotional and Psychological Abuse, and (3) Physical Abuse as an Escalating Pattern. These themes demonstrate the complex and progressive nature of same-sex relationship. These observations point to the necessity to treat domestic violence in homosexual relationships as a serious social problem that is presented in specific but interdependent ways.

Gradual Acceleration of Abuse. Violence in same-sex relationship did not emerge abruptly but was rather built gradually over time. This arc mirrors classic cycle-of-violence and coercive control frameworks in which seemingly minor hostilities normalize disrespect and lower thresholds for subsequent aggression (Sangeetha et al., 2022). Respondents explained a first stage that involved emotional and psychological control that is usually camouflaged as concern, jealousy, possessiveness. These behaviors

escalated and increased in frequency as the relationships grew to become verbal, physical and continued psychological abuse. This slow trend ensured that victims could not instantly realize the extent of the abuse thus the damaging dynamics established as normal in the relationship.

IDI 9 bravely explains the degree of difficulty of discussing these sensitive issues, and described how peaceful relationship turned into control and aggression:

"Uhhh... mostly emotional and psychological, pero naa pud times nga physical. Like, sa una, ako ra man unta gusto ug peaceful nga relationship, pero over time, nagbago siya." (IDI 9)

[It was mostly emotional and psychological abuse, though sometimes it became physical. At first, I just wanted a peaceful relationship, but over time she changed.]

IDI 3 reported a similar tendency wherein small, previous conflicts would slowly escalate following the trigger events or even exposure to the unhealthy behaviors:

"Dati mag lalis me over mga childish things ra pero sukad atong adlaw na nasakpan nako sya sa iyang bisyo almost every day nami magbugno." (IDI 3)

[Before, we only argued about small, childish things. But since the day I caught her with her drug habit, we've been fighting almost every day]

Also, IDI 4 recounted how abuse shifted from the occasional verbal attacks into severe physical harm that instilled fear:

"Sa una, rare lang, uy, verbal attacks lang. Then, as the years passed, nag-escalate siya. Parang every month na lang may major incident, tapos daily na yung maliit na paninira." (IDI 4)

[At first, it was rare, just verbal attacks. But as the years went by, it got worse. It reached a point where there was a major incident almost every month, and the small insults happened daily]

In similar situation, IDI 7 emphasized how abused also escalated into normalized aspect of daily life.

Participant experiences psychological maltreatment that occurred consistently:

“Kuan, nag-start siya every few months lang. Pero, sa pagdugay na namo, parang every week na lang may major fight na may verbal or physical component. Nag-escalate talaga ang severity. Ang psychological abuse naa daily na, yung constant criticism. Parang naging normal na lang yung sakit sa balay.” (IDI 7)

[It only happened occasionally at first. But as our relationship lengthened, we were fighting seriously almost every week, and the fights involved verbal and physical abuse. It got much worse. The mental abuse constant put-downs is now a daily thing. The bad feelings at home just feel like a regular part of life now.]

Taken together, these narratives trace a clear escalation. It started from jealousy through patterned tension to routine insults and recurrent major incidents. This is consistent with evidence that LGBTQ+ partners experience comparable or higher rates of repeated psychological aggression that can set the stage for more severe harm (HRC Foundation, 2022). The progression illustrates how everyday friction can become embedded as a harmful relational norm when compounded by stigma and limited safe avenues for intervention (Nnyombi et al., 2022). Overtime, repeated exposure to physical, verbal and emotional harm, created an environment of constant fear, tension and mental distress.

Prevalence of Emotional and Psychological Abuse. Survivors emphasized psychological aggression as the ambient climate of harm: jealousy and “jokes” that disguised contempt evolved into emotional distance, monitoring, and control. This correlates with studies documenting the pervasiveness of psychological intimate partner violence in sexual minority relationships and its disproportionate contribution to mental health burden (Jessup et al., 2024; Rosen et al., 2025).

IDI 6 described how possessiveness masked as love eventually intensified into physical and emotional harm:

“Ang manifestation kay nag-start sa over-jealousy. At first sweet ra, like ‘gusto nako ikaw lang,’ pero later, nag-evolve into control, ug eventually into physical and emotional abuse.” (IDI 6)

[The abuse started with too much jealousy. At first, it seemed sweet, like when he said, ‘I only want you,’ but later it turned into control, and eventually into physical and emotional abuse.]

IDI 2 Identified multiple factors that led to emotional and psychological abuse. Also, the participant added how lack of support left them unseen:

“Kulang sa awareness ang mga tawo nga abuse can exist bisan same-sex relationship. Wala jud mi kapadulngan kay murag invisible mi sa sistema.” (IDI 2)

[Lack of awareness that abuse can exist even in a same-sex relationship. We really had nowhere to go because we felt invisible to the system.]

Power imbalances, coupled with underlying insecurity, quietly sustained the cycle of emotional abuse. As IDI 4 had put it:

“Hay, well, her own insecurity siguro. Feeling ko, super low self-esteem niya, so she had to control everything. Then, extreme jealousy. And power dynamic? Kasi mas established na siya financially, so I was dependent. Ah, and, lack of accountability talaga on her part. Never siyang nag-sorry ng totoo. Parang feeling niya, she was entitled to treat me that way.” (IDI 4)

[Well, maybe it was because of her own insecurities. I think she had very low self-esteem, so she wanted to control everything. She was also extremely jealous. And there was a power imbalance — she was more financially stable, so I became dependent on her. Also, she never took responsibility for her actions. She never gave a sincere apology. It’s like she felt entitled to treat me that way.]

Furthermore, IDI 5 highlighted the cumulative effects of emotional and psychological abuse extended beyond the relationship, eroding self-worth, undermining trust, and destabilizing daily life:

“Naapektohan ko tanan aspects. Emotionally, murag wala nako self-worth. Sa relationships, nahadlok ko mosalig sa uban. Daily life, struggle gyud kay bisan sa work, magdala ko sa trauma.” (IDI 5)

[It affected every part of my life. Emotionally, I felt like I lost my self-worth. In relationships, I became afraid to trust others. In my daily life, I really struggled, because even at work, I carried the trauma with me.]

In general, these narratives indicate that emotional and psychological abuse operated as a persistent, foundational form of violence, leaving durable imprints on victims’ identities, relationships, and coping capacities long after the abuse ended. This corroborates with the evidence that LGBTQ+ survivors experience intertwined abuse modalities and face unique barriers to disclosure and medical and legal help-seeking (Scheer et al., 2023; Ummak et al., 2025). Moreover, studies indicated that in contexts marked by internalized stigma, anticipated rejection, and concealment, demeaning narratives stick more easily and go unchallenged, which magnifies the harm of emotional abuse (Muzammil et al., 2024)

Physical Abuse as an Escalating Pattern. Disputes over autonomy or finances frequently precipitated episodes of physical violence that layered onto ongoing psychological abuse. These patterns align with studies documenting multi-form intimate partner violence among sexual minorities and deliberate concealment to avoid exposure, stigma, or involuntary disclosure of sexual orientation (Rollins et al. 2023).

For IDI 8, physical abuse surfaced after patterns of control, particularly restriction of finances, were questioned. The participant stated:

“My partner lang. Nagsugod siya as simple na pagsingka lang, and then telling me na hindi ako pwede mag-spend ng sarili kong pera without his permission. Tapos, nag-manifest na into pagsingil sa akong credit cards, pag-kuha sa akong ATM card, ug pag-butang sa akong name sa mga utang na siya ang gumawa. The physical abuse nagsunod na lang pag mag-question ko sa iyang spending.” (IDI 8)

[It was just my partner. It started as simple yelling, and then telling me I couldn't spend my own money

without his permission. Then, it turned into him using my credit cards, taking my ATM card, and putting my name on debts that he made. The physical abuse only followed when I questioned his spending.]

On the other hand, IDI 4 described physical abuse that started as verbal degradation, jokes and humiliation and escalated into physical harm:

“It started as maliit na things lang, criticism na uy, joke lang daw kuno. Like, uy, calling me bobo or walang alam. Pero, uy, it manifested na into shouting, throwing things na diin ko na tamaan, and then eventually, slapping and shoving.” (IDI 4)
[It started with small things, like criticism that she said were just jokes, like calling me stupid or saying I didn't know anything. But then it got worse she started shouting, throwing things that would hit me, and eventually slapping and pushing me.]

In most severe cases, physical abuse reached life threatening levels. As what IDI 3 had stated:

“So balik ta, gidunggab ko niya tapos sakong kahadlok nidagan jud ko kay basin og usban pa ko niya, nangayo kog tabang unya siya kay giapas ko tapos gidala ko niya sa hospital.” (IDI 3)
[So, back to the stabbing: After she stabbed me, I ran away because I was scared, she would do it again, and I called for help. She chased after me and was the one who took me to the hospital.]

Long after the abuse ended, participants described persistent fear, avoidance of new relationships, and ongoing trauma—evidence that physical abuse leaves deep and durable psychological scars. The narrative also shows how extreme physical violence, reinforced by manipulation and fear of retaliation, silenced victims, and thwarted accountability. Such findings align with LGBTQ+ intimate partner violence literature highlighting psychological aggression’s role in fostering isolation, fear, and reduced help-seeking (D’Cruz, Hammond, and Dixon 2024).

Coping Mechanism Employed by Homosexual Victims of Domestic Violence

The themes represent how the survivors managed their healing process through seeking emotional validation, recovering self-worth, building supportive networks,

and discussing practical and legal issues. Together, the table shows how multidimensional the coping process was, since it was not confined to psychological adaptation but included also relational, behavioral, and structural approaches wherein survivors regained control of their lives in a gradual manner.

Adaptive Coping with Social Support. Participants actively pursued the process of healing and resiliency in the form of interpersonal relations, professional assistance, and deliberate self-management techniques following abuse. The current literature underlines that social support is one of the most important protective factors of intimacy partner violence recovery, especially in LGBTQ individuals, the coping pattern of which is often influenced by both exposure to trauma and minority stress.

Noted my several participants, that seeking help of reliable friends was a first and important step towards coping. Community engagement was also found to be an effective coping mechanism. IDI 10 stated:

"I also started volunteering sa LGBTQ+ org, kay gusto nako ma-channel akong pain into something meaningful." (IDI 10)

[I also started volunteering for an LGBTQ+ organization to turn my pain into something meaningful.]

Professional mental health services were identified as instrumental in processing trauma and developing healthier coping strategies. IDI 2 shared:

"Talking to a therapist was a big help." (IDI 2)

In addition, IDI 3 emphasized the necessity to surround them deliberately with supportive individuals to make them feel good and secure:

"I surrounded myself with my greatest allies jud akong parents og akong very close friends akong gitug anan sa akoang situation." (IDI 3)

[I surrounded myself with my greatest allies jud akong parents og akong very close friends akong gitug anan sa akoang situation.]

Similarly, another factor that contributed to a number of participants was family support, which offered an emotional way to ground oneself and a fresh feeling of belonging. As IDI 5 expressed:

"I also talked to my family at first ilaha jud ko gimaymayan sakoang mga mali pero later on ilaha gihapon ko gi accept og gicomfort which is dako kayo na tabang for me kanang mapaminawan gani ko." (IDI 5)

[I also talked to my family at first, they pointed out my mistakes, but later on, they still accepted and comforted me. That meant a lot to me, because just being listened to made a big difference.]

Altogether, these stories help to understand that adaptive coping was not a passive survival but an active and relations-oriented process that focused on connection, affirmation, and meaning-making. The approaches used by participants are consistent with the current evidence that affirming, trauma-informed, and community-based coping resources have the greatest benefit to LGBTQ survivors since they help them overcome the effects of the abuse and moreover the social stigma of the whole community that can only contribute to distress (Schmitz et al., 2025; Matheson et al., 2025).

Non-Judgmental Support Networks as a Lifeline. The presence of affirming, non-critical space, especially through the web and community-based spaces, acted as an important survival and recovery tool to the participants following the instances of abuse. Recent research points to the fact that non-judgmental space is particularly essential to survivors of intimate partner violence who belong to LGBTQ relationships due to the fear of stigmatization, lack of faith, or the stigmatization that the conventional system of support (when a victim unfolds to anyone) often supports. This coincides with some literature that suggests that peer-based and identity-affirming support systems (in particular, gained through the Internet) can help reduce their isolation, normalize lived experiences, and promote a sense of psychological safety in the process of recovery (Carman & Kay-Lambkin, 2022; Meyer and Frost, 2023).

Some of the participants explained that LGBTQ-specific online communities were their initial encounter with being trusted and supported unconditionally. IDI 2 expressed how being in an online community helped them:

"I tried to keep myself busy pero nakahunahuna ko di nako kaya I need help mao to nag seek kog support from online groups and online counselors." (IDI 2)
[I tried to keep myself busy but I thought I couldn't handle it anymore, I need help so that's why I sought support from online groups and online counselors.]

In addition to direct interpersonal support, the participants had also applied self-guided and creative methods of coping that was frequently suggested inside these non-judgment spaces. Some of the participants had their ambivalent reactions when writing anonymously, which illustrates the unpredictability of the virtual realm. FGD 3 responded:

"Online forums ra gapost ko anonymously asking for advice, kay maulaw pa ko mag reveal, naay mga nindot og comment naa poy dili." (FGD 3)
[I posted anonymously online on online forums; some responses were kind, some not.]

Nevertheless, part validation was termed as significant regardless of being contrasted with the silence or judgment that subjects expected to obtain offline. Reflection and self-understanding were also supported by reading the material suggested by mental health professionals. FGD 4 said:

"I listened to mga podcasts tas read articles and books recommended by my therapist." (FGD 4)
[Listening to podcasts and reading books suggested by my therapist.]

Overall, these stories illustrate that non-judgmental support groups, whether in the form of an Internet peer support, digital therapy, expression of creativity, or self-guided learning, served as a lifeline and helped participants to restore their emotional stability and re-establish trust in themselves. These results are consistent with the current studies suggesting that affirmative and low-threshold support spaces are

linked with better coping, less stigma and more involvement in a healing process among LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence (Carman & Kay-Lambkin, 2022; Pachankis et al., 2023).

Gradual Healing Through Support-Seeking. This is a depiction of recovery as an arduous, relational process that is characterized by acts of repeatedly reaching out, being acknowledged, and rediscovering a voice. The recent research stresses that recovery after intimate partner violence is not a linear one but a progress that is developed over time within the framework of the consistent interactions with positive relations and space oriented at the survivor. In the LGBTQ community, support-seeking stands out as a particularly crucial factor as the survivors tend to step out of a long-term cycle of silencing, isolation, and identity-based stigmatization; peer affirms aid in rebuilding agency and combating internalized stigma (Hines and Douglas, 2021; Lyons et al., 2021).

To others, attending a survivor support group became the first time that they were listened to and believed. IDI2 mentioned:

"I went to a support group for women survivors first time nako na-feel nga 'naa koy voice'." (IDI 2)
[I sought help. I went to a support group for women survivors that was the first time I felt like 'I have a voice'.]

Others insisted on how experience is shared on maintaining hope and motivation. Talking to the people who had also experienced some form of abuse was inspirational and reassuring that they could heal. IDI 10 also shared their experience:

"Pero pinaka-nakatabang gyud kay connecting with other survivors. Maka-ingon ko, 'Ah, dili lang diay ako.' That sense of shared experience healed me." (IDI 10)
[But what helped me the most was connecting with other survivors. It made me realize I wasn't alone that shared experience was healing.]

There were also informal support networks that were critical in slow healing. The respondents also referred to chosen family and internet networks as reliable

ways of acceptance and emotional protection. This constellation of support has been defined in it as the foundational part of recovery for IDI 7:

"Informal support was my chosen family and the online group. Ang most helpful talaga is the informal network kay sila ang constant presence sa life ko. Yung feeling na someone actually cares and understands."

[The informal support was my chosen family and the online group. The informal network was actually the most helpful because they are a constant presence in my life. It's that feeling that someone actually cares and understands.]

The re-entry into social life also represented recovery. The importance in attending gatherings and reconnecting was also useful in helping the participants find joy, vitality, and some sense of normalcy after spending so much time in fear and isolation. These experiences show that the process of healing occurred due to ongoing support-seeking on both the formal and informal levels as opposed to a single intervention. The recovery of voice, connection, and social participation is also gradual and correlated with the recent evidence that peer-based support and reintegration into society can help survivors of intimate partner violence to have better psychological well-being and post-traumatic development (Hines and Douglas, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2023).

Recommendations of the Victims on How to Address Domestic Violence

The themes extracted from the responses of the participants capture the collective demand of the survivors to empower themselves individually and demand reform in the system to address the issue of domestic violence. These themes are (1) Transforming Personal Pain into Advocacy, (2) Strengthening Legal Protections and Support Systems, and (3) Encouragement to Seek Support and Prioritize Personal Safety.

Transforming Personal Pain into Advocacy. Participants redefined their experiences of abuse into places of power, meaning and social interaction. According to recent literature, there are survivors of intimate partner violence who go beyond the recovery

to the meaning-making and advocacy, where lived experience is a source of empowerment, identity reconstruction, and social contribution. This change is frequently accompanied by reclaiming the stigmatized identities and fighting the silence that the survivors experience because of abuse and the social marginalization in general (Calton et al., 2021; Lyons et al., 2022; Scheer).

According to participants, a gradual rejection of silence became a characteristic change in their story of abuse aftermath. To others advocacy started inwardly - by reclaiming voice and self-recognition. IDI 2 stated:

"Trust should not be blind. Dili dapat mawala imong voice para lang malipay ang imong partner. Healthy boundaries are non-negotiable." (IDI 2)
[Trust should not be blind. You shouldn't lose your voice just to make your partner happy. Healthy boundaries are non-negotiable.]

IDI 8 explained that abuse led to a greater feeling of independence and self-reliance:

"It made me hyper-aware of red flags. Pero, it also made me fiercely independent. I embrace my identity as a bakla who is financially smart and physically strong. I am a survivor and a master of my own fate." (IDI 8)
[It made me hyper-aware of red flags. But it also made me fiercely independent. I embrace my identity as a gay who is financially smart and physically strong. I am a survivor and a master of my own fate.]

IDI 7 mentioned that they also partake in raising awareness and peer support in order to make sure that others are not harmed in the same way.

"Hmm, I want to help other gay men na ma-break ang cycle. Sige ko mag-perform para ma-raise ang awareness about DV sa LGBTQ+ community. I want my pain to have meaning." (IDI 7)
[Hmm, I want to help other gay men break the cycle. I continue to perform to raise awareness about domestic violence (DV) in the LGBTQ+ community. I want my pain to have meaning.]

Altogether, these stories can show that turning pain into advocacy helped the participants to redefine identity, affirm marginalized selves, and rebuild a sense of purpose beyond victimization. This procedure is in line with the modern research on post-traumatic growth that has identified advocacy, peer support, and meaning making as factors that correlate with elevated levels of self-efficacy, empowerment, and psychological health among the survivors of intimate partner violence especially those who are a part of stigmatized communities (Sullivan and Goodman, 2023).

Strengthening Legal Protections and Support Systems. Participants recognize that recovery and prevention of abuse is not an individual responsibility but rather needs responsive, inclusive, and well-implemented structural support. The recent literature lays stress on the fact that the safety and overall wellbeing of survivors are highly dependent on the access to legal safeguards, policies of inclusion, and community-based education that recognize the existence of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (Meyer et al., 2021). Research always proves that invisibility to heterosexual survivors is most likely to take place when the legal system does not recognize them and the support system (Lim et al., 2025).

The willingness to seek help was identified as a key aspect that participants need to consider, yet the help should also be truly available and confirming. IDI 7 considered the value of being prepared in addition to the support being available:

"I will not hesitate to seek help. I know the red flags na. I will always prioritize my safety. No more suffer in silence or shame. Help is available, pero dapat willing ka modawat." (IDI 7)

[I will not hesitate to seek help. I now know the red flags. I will always prioritize my safety. No more suffering in silence or shame. Help is available, but you have to be willing to accept it.]

More than personal considerations, IDI 1 did express detailed policy suggestions that were based on their experiences.

"I hope nga mas i-strengthen ang implementation sa laws para sa LGBTQ+ victims. Dapat naa tay inclusive shelters ug training sa police officers para dili i-dismiss ang amoang kaso. And, educate communities about SOGIE so naay awareness." (IDI 1)

[I hope that the implementation of laws protecting LGBTQ+ victims will be strengthened. There should be inclusive shelters and training for police officers so that our cases are not dismissed. In addition, communities should be educated about SOGIE to raise awareness.]

IDI 3 highlighted the importance of legalizing LGBTQ victims:

"Siguro, mas inclusive policies para sa LGBTQ+ community. Like clearer protection under the law, support systems like shelters nga dili bias, ug awareness programs kay basin naay mga under the abuse na diay pero wala sila kabalo kay pagtuo nila normal ra na sa mga LGBTQ+ na couples, og unta kanang mga rehabilitation centers or counseling programs for victims na tailored specifically to cater LGBTQ+ victims of domestic violence." (IDI 3)
[I believe we need more inclusive policies for the LGBTQ+ community. This includes clearer legal protection, support systems like unbiased shelters, and awareness programs. We need these programs because some people may be experiencing abuse but don't realize it, believing it's normal in LGBTQ+ relationships. Finally, we need rehabilitation centers and counseling programs for victims that are specifically designed for LGBTQ+ victims of domestic violence.]

IDI 7 contended to broaden the area of existing protection laws:

"Una, is unta the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act (VAWC) must be expanded to be gender-inclusive. The language must protect all LGBTQ+ individuals. Dapat may specific training sa police and barangay officials about same-sex domestic violence dynamics, kasi kami ang often ignored. Ug, funding para sa mga shelters that are safe and welcoming to gay men and other trans/queer

folks. Kailangan namin ng pantay na proteksyon talaga." (IDI 7)

[First, is I hope the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act (VAWC) must be expanded to be gender-inclusive. The language must protect all LGBTQ+ individuals. There needs to be specific training for police and local officials (barangay) about the dynamics of same-sex domestic violence, because we are often ignored. Also, funding for shelters that are safe and welcoming to gay men and other trans/queer folks is needed. We really need equal protection]

These stories reveal that survivors did not only identify those gaps in the system but also saw a way to reform the system- they demanded inclusive laws and a non-discriminating shelter, professional service providers, and social education to eradicate stigma. In general, the findings are reflective of findings that validate language, policy guarantees to LGBTQ+ individuals, and culturally responsive service provision raise reporting, trust and survivor confidence and safety. (Meyer et al., 2021; Woulfe and Goodman, 2021). The theme emphasizes that the measures to reinforce the legal protection and support systems are vital not just to recovery by survivors but also the prevention of violence in the marginalized communities in general (Lim et al., 2025).

Encouragement to Seek Support and Prioritize Personal Safety. This demonstrates the participants as a group focusing on the need to seek help early, protect oneself, and normalize seeking help as a form of self-respect instead of self-weakness.

Modern literature highlights the idea that the choice of survivors to get support can be postponed due to fear and stigma and the perceived unbelievability, which is especially significant among the LGBTQ population who may suffer discrimination or expectations of underestimation at the formal level. Existing literatures affirms that communication, support from peers, and safe spaces increases disclosure rates and reduces the duration of abuse (Frost et al., 2021; Calton et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 2021).

Participants were repeatedly advised to be open and disclose in the first step towards safety. IDI 9 underlined the necessity to break silence:

"Hmm, siguro akong advice, ayaw hulata nga maubos ka before ka mobiya. Love yourself enough to walk away. And also, reach out naa gyud mga LGBTQ+ groups nga motabang, like mga safe spaces online. Ayaw kahadlok mu-share kay naa gyud maminaw." (IDI 9)

[My advice: don't wait until you lose yourself before you leave. Love yourself enough to walk away. And reach out there are LGBTQ+ groups and safe spaces willing to help. Don't be afraid to share; someone will listen.]

This assertion is indicative of the realization that disclosure can neutralize isolation and self-blame two factors that enable abuse to continue.

IDI 3 dismantled the stigma against help-seeking, that said:

"Actually, if there is one thing nice about what happened to me it is knowing for a fact na seeking help is never a sign of weakness. Mas naging close ko sa akoang family. Nabal-an nako og kins akoang mga maduolan jud." (IDI 3)

[Actually, if there is one positive thing about what happened to me, it's realizing that seeking help is absolutely not a sign of weakness. I also became much closer to my family. And I learned exactly who I can truly rely on.]

IDI 2 stated that accessible and competent support infrastructures are required:

"I hope nga naa stronger laws and support systems for LGBT victims, like safe spaces, helplines nga inclusive, ug training sa authority's para mas sensitive sila sa LGBT issues. Dili lang kay legal, but also emotional and psychological support." (IDI 2)

[I hope there will be stronger laws and support systems for LGBT victims, such as safe spaces, inclusive helplines, and training for authorities so they can be more sensitive to LGBT issues. Not just legal support, but also emotional and psychological support.]

Taken together, those stories will prove that focusing on safety and finding support were considered not only as individual decisions but socially enabled behaviors that needed to be facilitated in inclusive settings (Frost et al., 2021; Calton et al., 2021; Sabri et al., 2021). The recommendations of the participants correspond to the positions of recent empirical data according to which LGBTQ-affirming services, training of authorities on their cultural competency, and the presence of visible safe spaces can eliminate obviated help-seeking behaviors, increase survivor trust, and reduce revictimization (Lim et al., 2025; Meyer et al., 2021).

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, I found out through this study that there is actually gap in our current legal and law enforcement system, which are traditionally addressed for heterogeneity. As a criminology practitioner, this encourages me to advocate for gender-neutral changes and updates in the protocols in handling situations involving homosexual victims of domestic violence. It underscores the need to remove the heteronormative biases in crime data collection as well as in risk assessment so that LGBTQ+ victims remain visible and included in the system.

In addition to that, this research greatly impacts my practice by encouraging integration of SOGIE-informed, trauma-sensitive training for law enforcement officers as well as investigators. Through this the focus will be on ensuring that first responders can accurately identify early signs of gaslighting, outing threats, and economic abuse in same-sex relationships. Practicing criminology is not only about apprehending perpetrators, but also about preventing crimes to happen, preventing recidivism and most importantly it is about victimology. The need to shift in the approach in dealing with victims to a more restorative and holistic model is evident in this research. Collaborations between law enforcement and social workers, mental health professionals and LGBTQ+ advocacy groups is shown through this research to have significantly improve the survivors healing. Thus, this study may help to improve the current legal system and create programs tailored to

address problems mentioned by the participants in this study.

Recommendation

The proposed work is valuable to the further research since it broadens the knowledge concerning domestic violence in same-sex marriage especially through the lens of the voice of homosexual individuals that is frequently undermined in popular intimate partner violence literature. The results emphasize the ways in which abuse within these settings entails identity-based invalidation, coercive control, manipulation of finances, and invisibility within the system. The next step of the research could be carried out by future researchers through comparative studies of other sexual minority groups, with the crossing of other intersectional characteristics which may include socioeconomic status, age, religion, or geographic location. Longitudinal research could also come in handy to investigate the changes in coping mechanisms with time and how survivors can also become agencies of change and empowered survivors.

On top of this, the study opens up possibilities of policy-oriented intervention-based studies. Future researchers can consider the efficacy of inclusive shelters, gender-neutral systems of laws, and culturally competent training of law enforcement and social workers. The contribution of affirming support systems to psychological recovery in LGBTQ survivors could be measured in quantitative studies. It is also necessary to have localized research which examines how existing laws can be enhanced like domestic violence laws to increase its effectiveness with regards to same-sex domestic violence. This study will help create a smaller step towards more comprehensive, evidence-based studies that consider the voices of those who feel marginalized.

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