



Women's experience of domestic violence in Maluku[☆]



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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this research was to explore women's experience of domestic violence in Maluku.

Method: A qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach was used in this study. There were eight participants.

Results: The research has found five themes including the changing behavior of husbands, the causes of domestic violence, the forms of domestic violence involving husbands, the impact of domestic violence on self-concept, and strengthening self-potential.

Conclusions: The result of this research recommends mental health nurses should counsel women who experienced domestic violence during the recovery stage to enhance the women's mental health.

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Introduction

In many cases, violence against women occurs because of an imbalanced relationship between women and men. This is referred to as gender inequity. In most Indonesian families, there are differences in the roles and rights of women and

men in society, and the status of women is lower than that of men. Indeed, men have special rights, and women are viewed as things that belong to men. Hence, women can be treated arbitrarily or even violently. However, gender-based violence and all forms of sexual exploitation are transgressions against human dignity and humanity, and thus they must be ended.¹

According to Indonesian Law No. 23 (2004), violence against women is any action that causes physical, sexual, or psychological damage to women, including threats, extortion, and freedom arrogation, in either public or private life. The discussion about domestic violence perpetrated by husbands against their wives is complex and sometimes difficult

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to compare with other forms of violence because the victim and the assailant remain together in a personal relationship with legal, institutional, and social implications. This study is the first to explore the experiences of victims of domestic violence in Maluku, Indonesia.

Method

A qualitative research methodology was used in this research with a phenomenological approach. A qualitative methodology was chosen because of the need to explore women's experiences of domestic violence in detail. In this research, a descriptive or transcendent phenomenological approach was adopted, which consists of four stages: bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing.²

Purposive sampling was used as a sample collection method to ensure that the participants fit the research purpose and were chosen based on relevant inclusion criteria.³ Creswell described purposive sampling as a technique for selecting participants who can provide rich information to help the researcher better understand the central phenomenon under study.⁴ Here, the participant's data were obtained from LAPPAN (Lembaga Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak/Women and Children Empowerment Institution) Ambon.⁵ The inclusion criteria for this study were as follows: (a) a married woman, living with an abusive husband, who has experienced domestic violence for six months recently; (b) a willingness to share her personal story connected to domestic violence. Eight participants were included in the study sample. The list of participants name is given by LAPPAN; there were no participants rejected to participate in this interview.

The data collection was performed through interviews with the participants in LAPPAN Ambon, in the participant's homes, and a café. The interviews were transcribed, and then the data were analyzed. The research period was from the beginning of January to the end of March 2017.

The analysis methodology used in this study was based on Colaizzi's approach. The participants were all women who have experienced domestic violence and are still living together with their husbands. Ethical considerations required the protection of all the participants in several aspects: autonomy, anonymity, confidentiality, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence.

Results

There were eight participants in this research, all of whom were women. Their ages ranged from 30 to 54 years. They were all still married and living with their husbands (assailant). All of the women had some low education, except for one participant with a bachelor degree. On average, the participants experienced more than ten years of domestic violence in their married lives. Physical and economic violence were common forms of domestic violence experienced by the participants.

This research identified five themes related to the women's descriptions of their experiences of domestic violence: the changing behavior of husbands, changes in women's self-concept due to domestic violence, negative emotions in children caused by their father's domestic

violence, and the prevalence of physical and psychological violence. These themes will be discussed one by one in the following sections.

Discussion

Theme 1: The changing of the behavior of husbands. The husbands and wives responsibilities in a marriage to maintain their household: maintaining communication between the husband and wife, maintaining and caring for all family members; teamwork and helping each other in the marital relationship; and ensuring harmony, affection, and love in the relationship. Often, these things occur in the first year of a marriage, but in the next year things may go wrong, and the husband may hold his wife responsible for any mistakes and become abusive. Domestic violence is a common situation that triggers stress, trauma, depression, and low self-esteem in the victims. All the participants in this research stated that their husband's behavior had changed completely from the beginning of the marriage to the second year or after their second children were born. At the beginning of their marriages, their husbands loved them very much; they helped each other with chores and had very nice relationships. Their husbands helped them take care of the children. However, in the second and the third years of their marriages, their husbands changed. After one year full of romance and affection, either the husband or wife often has an affair. In this study, however, only the husband's behavior changed. After two years of marriage, most of them had affairs and developed drinking habits.

According to the participants, in their first year of marriage, their husbands were affectionate, always helped with chores, and were loving and romantic. However, this only occurred at the beginning of the marriage. Six participants said that their husband's behavior changed at the beginning of the second year of marriage or after their second children were born (P1–P7). However, P4 and P8 reported that they had good relationships with their husbands and that their husbands always showed affection, called them *my dear*, and helped them take care of the children until the fifth year of marriage. After the fifth year, however, their husband's behavior changed. The participants indicated that their husband's behavioral changes included hanging out with their friends, developing drinking habits, and committing adultery.

Couples-based research found that changes occur in a marriage after the initial intimate stage. The closeness of the husband and wife is no longer a primary aspect of the marriage. As mentioned above, after two years, intimacy and emotional closeness are no longer the primary values of marriage, and thus they no longer protect the harmony of the household. Consequently, husbands may act carelessly or thoughtlessly toward their wives, as they believe that they own them. Rather than showing affection or care as they did initially, the husbands become selfish and may commit domestic violence against their wives.

Theme 2: The causes of domestic violence. The second theme that emerged in this research was the change in women's self-concept caused by domestic violence. The violence occurred when their husbands began drinking and took mistresses. They became ruder and behaved without

concern for their wives. This type of domestic violence is psychological and impacts the victim's sense of self. Four of the participants (P1, P5, P6, and P7) recounted this type of psychological violence. These women were terrified of their husbands when they were drunk, were disappointed to discover their husband's affairs, and were subjected to verbal abuse. They felt sad because their husbands rarely come home to them (P2, P3, P6, P7). They did not feel respected as wives and were angry with their husbands. It is argued that domestic violence does not impact the victim's self-care. Therefore, while the participants mentioned psychological effects, including embarrassment, low self-esteem, disappointment, disrespect, and anger, these effects should not influence their self-care.

Domestic violence includes not only physical violence but also sexual and mental violence, such as cursing, humiliating, and terror in the form of threats if the victim attempts to leave her husband or report the violence. Moreover, some victims are murdered by their husbands, and as a result, women experiencing domestic violence suffer from both physical and mental harm.

The second category of domestic violence is related to the psychological impact on women's environment. P1, P3, and P7 reported that they felt uncomfortable with their neighbors, as they were afraid of being a disgrace to their family. P4 and P6 said that they would be uncomfortable if their family knew what they had been through. P1, P5, P6, P7, and P8 indicated that they felt sad when their children became victims of their husband's violence. By examining the psychological impacts of domestic violence on these women, the researcher was able to conclude that their self-concepts had changed. Self-concept is very important for understanding people and their behavior. It is formed from one's internal experiences. In this study, the participants indicated that the domestic violence they experienced influenced their relationship with their environment because they felt ashamed, disgraced, and did not want to embarrass their friends. Consequently, they did not feel comfortable having a relationship with their surroundings. Nevertheless, experiencing domestic violence caused these women to stand on their own feet and make efforts to survive.

Theme 3: Types of domestic violence. Another issue that emerged was the psychological impact of domestic violence on children with regard to their families. P1, P5, and P6 said that their children became depressed when their fathers hit them. Further, P4 and P6 reported that their children were afraid of their fathers when they were drunk. P3 and P6 stated that their children hated and held grudges toward their father because they were unable to continue their schooling. P3, P4, and P8 said that their children had become rebels, were ignoring their parent's advice, and were holding grudges toward their fathers.

The children also experienced psychological impacts related to their schooling. For example, the children sometimes left school without permission (P2, P6, P8), fought with their friends and rebelled against their teachers (P8).

It was found that children from families in which domestic violence occurred tended to have more behavioral problems and lower social competencies compared to those who never experienced domestic violence. A study of 22 children from 6 to 12 years of age found that children who were experiencing domestic violence often had severe

behavioral problems, poor adaptive skills, and elevated levels of anxiety. Therefore, children who live in families in which domestic violence occurs are also the victims of their father's violent behavior. Relating to the theory described above, such children tend to have behavioral problems within their families and in school. In school, they skip classes and fight with their friends and teachers.

Theme 4: Self-concept problems caused by domestic violence. This theme is supported by two categories: physical violence and psychological violence. All the participants reported physical violence, which occurred when their husbands were drunk or angry. Some of their husbands even hit them using blunt objects. P1 and P5 said that when their husbands came home drunk, they would yell and sometimes call them names such as a dog. The women were scolded, hit, kicked, stepped on, and slammed into walls by their husbands. P1 reported that she had to go to the hospital several times due to her husband's violence. P3, P4, P6, P7, and P8 said that they were often slapped, hit, and kicked when their husbands were angry.

All of the participants also reported psychological violence, as their husbands got drunk, angry, and blamed their wives for no reason. P1 and P5 said that when their husbands came home drunk, they would yell roughly, calling them names, using abusive language, and treating them disrespectfully. P5 stated that her husband locked her in her home for three days, threatening to kill her if she disobeyed.

The results of this research are not only based on interviews with the participants but also personal observations of the situations and the participant's condition. P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 did not agree to be interviewed in their own homes because they were afraid that their husbands might suddenly return home. P1 and P2 were willing to be interviewed in their relative's houses, which were not far from their own homes. P1 was uneasy during her interview. She continually peered out of the house, afraid that her husband might suddenly appear. When she related her experiences, she became somewhat carried away, although she did not cry. She said that she surrendered her life to God. P2 told her stories with a hard voice, filled with hatred for her husband. P1, P2, P3, and P4 chose to be interviewed in their offices during breaks. When telling her story, P4 broke down sobbing. The researcher asked if she could continue the interview, and P4 said that she could. She continued with her story, wiping her tears with a tissue. P5 also asked to be interviewed in her workplace. She was working as a cashier in a small coffee shop, and the interview was performed during her break time. P5 told her story emotionally. She was very angry toward her husband, and eventually, she also began to cry. However, she wiped her tears away and continued angrily. She said that she had made a report to the police, and her husband was arrested and jailed for three days, but his behavior never changed. P5 wanted to leave her husband because three days before the interview he had hit her again. She showed her wound to the researcher. This also happened with P6. She was not comfortable being interviewed in her home. She wanted to meet in a more relaxing place. She was very stressed when she told her story, especially when talking about her children's needs. She worked as a domestic helper for her neighbor to fulfill her children needs. P7 and P8 were willing to be interviewed in their own homes because their husbands were away on another island.

Even so, as she was telling her story, P7 peered outside many times, afraid that her husband might come home.

In this research, the participants are considered to be emotionally intelligent people because even though they have faced so many problems, they are still able to meet their responsibilities as housewives and communicate with others if needed.

Theme 5: Strengthening of self-potential in response to husbands' changing behavior. This theme is supported by two categories: an effort to calm oneself and an effort to live independently. Both categories emerged from the participant's statements. For example, P1, P3, and P6 said that they participated in church and social activities outside of the home so they could forget about their household problems. P1, P3, P6, and P7 stated that they were praying, drawing themselves closer to God, and trying to be patient and allow their husbands to win the fights. P3, P5, and P6 indicated that they avoided their husbands whenever they were drunk. P3 and P6 also reported participating in church activities in their neighborhoods.

With regard to making an effort to live independently, P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, and P8 reported they were trying to earn money to meet their own needs by selling traditional cakes and fried bananas and working as domestic helpers for their neighbors. P1, P3, P4, P6, and P7 said that they tried to understand their husband's desires to avoid conflicts. P1, P5, P6, P7, and P8 stated that they wanted to work in order to be respected by their husbands. P5 indicated that she had to work as a cashier in a coffee shop to earn money for herself. P4 was a treasurer in a service office in Maluku, so she had never been disrespected by her husband with regard to financial matters.

Domestic violence probably does not defeat them mentally; instead, it can be a traumatic situation for the victim to rise again and have the motivation to live independently and not be dependent on someone else.⁶ However, according to the participant's statements, the victims of domestic violence do not just give up on their situations or view them as hopeless. These women showed the ability to solve their problems in their way. They can socialize with their environments and earn a living on their own. Therefore, women who are victims of domestic violence can independently improve their life quality and self-potential.

Conclusion

This research revealed five themes related to women's experiences of domestic violence. The study included eight participants, and the five themes emerged: *The first theme*

changes in the behavior of husbands. This theme describes how the husband's behavior changes from the beginning of marriage to later in married life; *the second theme* is the causes of domestic violence. All the participants experienced the same general causes: lack of togetherness, lack of healthy communication in the family, and the husband's negative behavior; *the third theme* is the impact of domestic violence on the victim's self-concept. Based on the participant's experiences, domestic violence had a negative influence on how they pictured themselves and in the way their children viewed their husbands; *the fourth theme* is the different types of domestic violence. The participants reported that their husbands engaged not only in physical violence but also in psychological and economic violence, which required the victims to earn a living by themselves; *the fifth theme* is the strengthening of self-potential in response to domestic violence. The participants responded to domestic violence by trying to calm themselves, focusing on religious matters, and making an effort to become financially independent so that they did not have to rely on their abusive husbands.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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