

Perception of Online Newspapers on the Coverage of Domestic Violence in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a major public issue in Malaysia. Local empirical studies and official records provide limited information about number of cases, methods, risks and preventive measures of domestic violence, further; little is known of how media describes this violent act in this country. This study aimed to investigate the perception of media and what we can learn from local online newspapers coverage of domestic violence in Malaysia. Data were gathered from the online archives (June 2003 until July 2017) of 8 local online newspapers. Thematic and content analysis were carried out. A total of 124 articles and 47 photos that met the selection criteria were retrieved and analysed. The searched articles described information informed from predominantly secondary sources of information with minimal accounts of the survivors of domestic violence. The predominant themes highlighted in the newspaper articles were i) number of violence; ii) types of abuse; iii) possible factors contributing to domestic violence; v) reasons for staying; and vi) legal matters related to domestic violence. Media has provided beneficial information on domestic violence, but often brief and lacked details about the issues presented. Further enhancement needed including providing more information on economic and social abuses, discussion on domestic violence against elder and incapacitated people and detail descriptions of procedures for accessing services and help-seeking methods. Stories of domestic violence should be presented in a more comprehensive manner to enhance awareness of the public, increase support system, improve policy and ultimately end this violent behaviour.

***Keywords:** Media, online newspapers, domestic violence, violence against women, Malaysia*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The United Nations defines the act of violence against women as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to the woman, including threats, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life’. Global estimates published by World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that 1 in 3 of women worldwide has experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence some time in their lives [2]. In 2014, Global Status Report on Violence Prevention signified that South-East Asia region has

the highest prevalence of violence against women with intimate partner violence estimated to be about 37.7%. In Malaysia, police records showed that from January until October 2016, a total of 4000 cases of domestic violence occurred in this country [3]. This indicates a significant increase in cases whereby only about 3500 cases reported earlier in 2012 [4]. Earlier, local epidemiological study carried out in 2012 using tools similar to WHO Multi-country study on domestic violence found that of 2640 participants, a total of 383 (14.5%) participants had experienced at least one type of violence and about 205 (7.8%) experienced emotional abuse, 132 (5.0%) experienced physical violence and 46 (1.7%) participants reported suffering from sexual abuse [5].

Domestic violence is part of the web of violence and almost half of the intimate partner violence co-occurs with other family violence in particular child abuse; hence resulted in more severe negative implications [6-8]. Even without the co-occurrence, intimate partner violence always gives rise to short-term and long-term detrimental effect not only to the victim partner (often women) but also children and other family members [9]. For the victim, effects could be physical, mental, sexual or even reproductive, with an increased risk of AIDS or HIV [10]. There may be loss of confidence and self-esteem, leading to disturbed relationships. They are also at a doubled risk of abortions and experiencing mental disorders such as depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [11]. For the children, exposure to domestic violence increases their susceptibility to various internalizing behaviours (such as depressive symptoms, anxiety, fearfulness, social withdrawal) and externalizing behaviours (such as aggression, bullying, vandalism), and mental illness (such as major depression, anxiety disorders and PTSD) [9].

Media including online news is an integral part of today's society. With loads of information being disseminated over the internet, online media has become the very fabric upon which our society is being built. How media depict domestic violence provide a substantial effect on public perceptions and social policy, subsequently impact individual behaviour; the consequences could be positive or negative. Many researchers especially those who claimed themselves as women's activists or feminists have

argued that media has explained the domestic violence in unconstructive manners. It was argued that compared to other violence phenomena such as sexual assault or rape, the frequency of coverage of domestic violence in media was found to be lesser than those of sexual assaults perhaps because domestic violence is perceived by journalists as less sensational or less dramatic than sexual violence [12]. It has been suggested to be presented by media in a superficial manner [13]. Media often skewed the actual presentation and risk factors of domestic violence [14-16]. The presentation of media on domestic violence is argued by experts sided more towards the perpetrator (often a man) and blamed the victim. Media perpetuated victim-blaming by portraying the victim (often a woman) as being disloyal, nagging or annoying and failing to be accommodating to the male partner. The woman is also blamed for abusing drugs or alcohol that her behaviour at the time of violence is unacceptable [12]. When the victim defends herself or retaliates, the incidence is considered or portrayed as mutual combat. Further, media tend to draw attention that domestic violence occurs as a result of abuser's poor control of the situation such as having mental illness or financial difficulties [12, 14]. Media also claimed by the researchers to introduce error in reporting techniques such as presenting the incidence by detailing the individual incidence instead of complex social context leading to violence. Media is suggested to use linguistic flaws; for example, the sentence used is often presented in passive voice so that the perpetrator is not mentioned or hidden such as 'women are being murdered' instead of 'husband murdered his wife'[12]. Such negative presentations on domestic violence indirectly continue to become hurdles for women to come forward for disclosure and treatment [17]. Hence, public education effort is needed so that this covert phenomenon can be addressed and presented properly and comprehensively.

In the era of digital technology, one important way to disseminate information on domestic violence is through online media. Hence creating awareness on domestic violence among journalists is vital. Through mainstream and popular media, they could help by portraying domestic violence in a more constructive manner. If used correctly, online media can play a leading role in increasing the knowledge and awareness of public

on domestic violence. In Malaysia, there are substantial articles in media such as online newspapers which highlight stories and matters related to the domestic violence. However, no scholarly discussion has been published to evaluate the presentation of media on domestic violence and assess message public received from the articles. Hence, this study aimed to examine the perception of media on domestic violence in this country and through thematic analysis highlights what knowledge that can be gathered from of the published articles.

2.0 METHODS

2.1 Study Design

This is an archival analysis which review the archives of online newspaper that published articles on domestic violence.

2.2 Data Collection

Eight online newspapers were purposely selected to be included in this study. These include the Star or Star Online, Utusan Malaysia or Utusan Online, New Straits Times, Berita Harian, Harian Metro or MyMetro, Kosmo, Sinar Harian, and the Malay Mail Online. Online newspaper archives were chosen because they were readily available and accessible for reviews compared to printed newspapers. All of these online newspapers publish new articles in their respective online websites every day. In order to retrieve data from the online archives of English newspaper, English terms used were ‘domestic violence’, ‘family violence’, ‘husband abuse’ and ‘wife abuse’ and for Bahasa Malaysia newspapers, the terms used were ‘*keganasan rumahtangga*’, dan ‘*penganiyaan wanita*’, or ‘*keganasan wanita*’, and ‘*keganasan suami*’ were used. Articles were also hand-searched from the website where the link to the cases was available. The articles for this study included highlights, commentary, opinion, letter or report that described the phenomenon of domestic violence in Malaysia. It was not restricted to written articles only; photos that were illustrated and published together with the articles were also retrieved. Article published from June 2003 to July 2017 were included. Refer Figure 1 for the summary

of data collection.

2.3 Data Analysis

Medical students in the posting of psychiatry performed the data retrieval and analysis which were guided by a consultant psychiatrist. Articles and photos from the website were copied and saved in words document. Thematic analysis involving repetitive reading and careful line-by-line analysis of the content and themes of each article and photo were then carried out. Weekly meetings between members were done to evaluate the emergent themes and to discuss any disagreement of the themes or content. Final readings of the articles were done to ensure that the main theme had represented the overall content of the articles. Appropriate sentences that represented the themes were chosen to be included in the result. In order to maximise anonymity, any names of the person and place that related to domestic violence published by the newspapers were disguised and bracketed. Refer Figure 1 for the summary of data analysis.

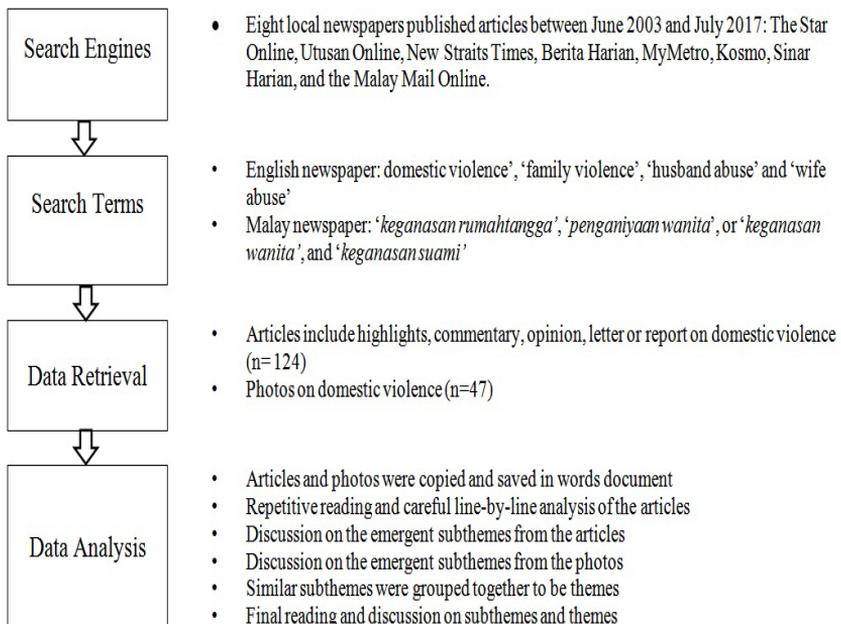


Figure 1: Summary of Data Collection and Data Analysis

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Number of Violence

The newspaper articles often interchangeably used domestic violence with violence against women. Majority of the articles mentioning about violence against women and only a few articles mentioned about violence against men. In average violence against women are three times higher than violence against men. Most articles described the number of cases, such as, ‘in 2008, out of the total, 2,648 cases were violence against women, whereas only 1,121 were (violence) against men. Last year, 2,558 were against women, compared to 930 against men... Until April this year, 998 cases were violence against women and 355 cases against men’ [18]. Some articles specifically described the number of domestic violence cases such as, ‘three years ago, [the minister] said that 958 out of 3,673 reported cases of domestic violence in Malaysia involved male victims’ [19]. In a recent article, the cumulative figure was also presented, such as ‘Police statistics show that domestic violence is on the increase, with 15,617 reported cases between 2014 and 2016’ [20]. A few reasons were given for the increase in the number of cases. It might be because of the real increase of cases or else because of ‘... there are more awareness and knowledge among women on where they can go to seek help’ [21], or ‘... like other developed countries, as we are developing, the numbers will increase. It is related to family development issues, finance issues, in a changing society ...’ [18]. There is no article that described domestic violence in terms of rate, ratio or prevalence.

3.2 Type of Abuse

Most articles used the term domestic violence to represent violence against wife or husband. Only a few articles described that domestic violence includes violence against children, incapacitated family members and elderly people. Types of abuse occur in domestic violence described by the articles include physical, psychological (or emotional or mental), sexual, social and economic aggression or abuse. The two most commonly reported were physical and psychological abuse. One of the examples of the

article that mentioned this category described that ‘All the domestic abuse victims who sought shelter at Women’s Aid Organization (WAO) suffered from mental abuse. About 95.5 per cent also suffered from physical abuse. More than a third suffered from sexual abuse, and more than half suffered financial and social abuse’ [22].

Majority of the newspaper articles on domestic violence described physical abuse. Various methods of abuse mentioned such as being slapped, kicked, straggled, hit, and dragged. Not uncommon photos illustrated in the article showed physical injuries experienced by the victim. A few cases ended up with death, as described by one article, ‘She was only 17 but already married. Now, she is dead, allegedly punched to death by the man she married – a 27-year-old labourer’ [23].

Nevertheless, a few experts’ especially social activists reminded public that domestic violence does not exclusively about physical abuse but also other abuses such as psychological abuse. In one of the articles, a lawyer from Malaya High Court described that ‘But many husbands or men do not realize that the way they talk or communicate with their wives can cause emotional and psychological stress. Then cause the loss of self-esteem and the dignity of a woman knowingly or not, the husband has committed acts of psychological or emotional violence through continuing use of language and means of communication that inflicts extreme sadness and despair on the wife. According to the definition of domestic violence under section 2 of the Domestic Violence Act 1994, domestic violence may also involve any behaviour, conduct or act which causes persistent depression to the couple in the marriage – Translated’ [24].

Similar article further described other examples of the situation which can be considered as psychological abuse which include; ‘Self-restraint or silent, in his own home that ultimately leads to torture of the wife, when the wife is ignored at all. Next, the actions of a husband who neglected his responsibility either through the physical or psychological manner, leaving his wife without news or maintenance is a form of emotional tyranny against the wife. This situation is much happening in the life of a husband who practices unfair polygamy and even tries to get the penalties often to

the first wife. There are also husbands who often belittle their wives' ability and communicate by using humiliation and offensive words towards the wife. In addition, there are also husbands who control the thinking of his wife through acts of manipulating thoughts and provocations of fear or putting any mistake on the wife without justification – Translated' [24].

In another article, psychological abuse was further described to include behaviour which can cause the victim to have delusion. However, no definition or explanation about the delusion was given. The article also mentioned that such behaviour has been described in the Domestic Violence Act (Act 521) [25].

There were very few articles that commented about sexual abuse. One of the examples was an article about how a husband demanded sexual intercourse during an inappropriate time such as 'even when the wife was menstruating and would assault her each time she rejected his advances' [26]. Marital rape is another type of sexual abuse that has been described. An article highlighted the opinion of social activists about marital rape; they argued that '...what is considered rape is having sex with somebody without their consent or by force. So they (legal authorities) don't even recognize that in a marriage, husbands do force their wife to have sex, many still blamed the victim for getting raped... Being married to someone does not entitle you to have sex with that person whenever you want. Non-consensual sex is rape no matter what. A wife is not a husband's property... Marital rape is a form of domestic violence, and often occurs along with other forms of abuse... We work with many women who shared their stories about their abusive husbands forcing them to have sex, sometimes even using objects. Many don't use the term 'rape' as they don't know they can say no to their husbands' [27].

Economic abuse and social abuse were mentioned briefly in a few articles. However, no further explanation was given.

3.3 Possible Factors Contributing to Domestic Violence

Factors contributing to domestic violence were described by 77% of the articles. The two important specific subthemes emerged from the

thematic analysis were; role confusion and situational psychosocial leading to violence such as drug addiction, family-related stress and financial difficulties.

3.3.1 Role Confusion

A few articles described the traditional gender role of women that may link to domestic violence. Description in the articles suggested that women and girls are taught to be more homely, timid, submissive, and obedient. They are expected not to raise their voices and obey their husband who is the leader of the family. For example, in a certain condition, 'Women or wife is labelled as husband's property, hence husband can do whatever he wants including acting violent - Translated' [28]. Unconditional acquiescent to this doctrine was described by several articles support the violent act of husband and increase the susceptibility of women to be victimized. One article explained this in the context of condoning the act of violence as a method of 'teaching' girls or women, 'Many more cases of domestic violence are not reported because the perpetrators feel that their actions are not grounding or terrorizing instead it is a responsibility to teach or educate the wife - Translated ' [29].

On the other hand, according to a few articles, there is another group of people in the society, where women are allowed to work but stressed up with their dual role; juggling between being a wife and a worker. In certain occasion, the emancipation of women perceived as a threat or disrespectful behavior to their traditional husband, leading to discord as described by one article, 'Today, many women bring home their assertiveness in making decision until husbands feel not being respected...that is the nature of the husband as a man who should be understood – Translated' [30]. The stress in certain situation perpetuates further when the husband takes advantage and put all his responsibilities to his wife. In this case, the women can be the victim or else aggressor when they channel their anger to the less dominating husband. This example is described by one of the articles, 'There are husbands who do not work from marriage until having many children. All household expenses including car installments, home rentals, food expenses and childcare cost are incurred 100 percent by the wife.

Husband becomes a ‘king’ at home and even his cigarette must be paid by his wife. To make the matter worse, not only they are not working, the husbands are gamblers and drug addicts – Translated’ [31].

3.3.2 Situational Psychosocial Factors

One of the important psychosocial factors described in local newspapers contributed to domestic violence is the involvement of the husband in alcohol and drug addiction. This is described in one of the articles, ‘The problem of alcohol and drug influences is also a major factor in causing women and children to become victims of violence and abuse - Translated’ [32]. Drug misuse according to a few articles leads to financial difficulties and associates with criminal activities. Moreover, mental disturbances during intoxication or withdrawal stage manifest with rage, impulsive behaviour, poor judgement and psychosis which may precipitate violence against surrounding people women and children at home. Other crucial factors contributing to domestic violence include poor communication between couples, stress related to work and child upbringing, financial difficulties and spousal infidelity. Below is an example of statistics given by one of women activists highlighted in the newspaper, ‘Respondents gave multiple answers to triggers of abuse, 25 per cent said the abuse occurred for no apparent reason, 48 per cent said their abusers had a ‘suspicious nature’, 28 per cent reported that the abuse was due to jealousy, 22 per cent said it was due to financial problems and eight per cent said it was due to work-related stress’ [22].

3.4 Reasons for Staying

3.4.1 Being Afraid and Feeling of Insecurity

There are a few reasons of why victimisation and violence continue as described in the newspaper articles. Strong emotional and psychological forces keep the victim tied to the abuser. The most common reason is ‘fear’ harboured by the victim and surrounding people. Women victims

are afraid following the threat of physical harm to self or children, fear of losing custody of the children should they choose to be separated and fear of emotional consequences to children following separation. These thoughts were described by one of the articles, 'They afraid of losing support and having fear of husband's threat of taking away the children -Translated' [33]. For unemployed women whom husband is the main source of income, fear of losing financial support for children and family, become the important reason for continuing staying in the violent environment.

In addition, victims also were described as being afraid of receiving a negative reaction from family and people surroundings. This was described by one of the articles, 'Usually, victim chose not to be free because afraid of the aggressor, and facing social pressure from family and friends -Translated' [29]. According to a few articles, many in the society still believe that domestic violence is a personal matter and must be dealt with in family context. Surrounding people too showed lack of concern and harboured 'fear' to intrude personal matter. Below is an example of a story described by a woman who received no help despite witnessed by others being the victim of the violent husband, 'At that moment I was hanging on his feet, worshipping him, begging, but he kept letting me out of the house in such a shameful state. I was left so for about 15 minutes...there were neighbours and people who were passing by in front of the house who saw the 'degrading' behaviour. There were also neighbours who saw the incident from home, but they were afraid to help – Translated' [34].

3.4.2 Poor Access to Services and Support System

Many of the women did not have the agency to free themselves from the violent environment because they have inadequate knowledge of how to get access to services as described by one of the articles, 'Overall, the victim of domestic violence did not know their rights and unsure of how to seek for help. Hence, it is not surprising if many of them kept to themselves the violence against them -Translated' [35]. This also has resulted in only a few perpetrators being charged, 'This lack of information,

coupled with the poor support of them, is adding to the growing number of cases that go unreported. It also explains why only a dismal number of cases inevitably go to court. According to police statistics, 42,449 cases of domestic violence were reported from 2000–2012. Only 3,600 perpetrators were charged in court and just 1,800 abusers were convicted' [36].

Acting in concert of poor knowledge on seeking help is services which are not friendly to the victims. Complex procedures making it more difficult for the victim to get help. An article explained the opinion of the minister regarding such difficulty, 'I agree that there is the problem of bureaucracy in managing cases of violence against women. I agree there are authorities who are not sensitive on this issue...the matters continue because the attitude of a few parties including police and social welfare department who are irresponsible in managing the issue of violence against women –Translated' [37]. Another article explained further the problems experienced by victims in details, 'This is because the problem of domestic violence is not an issue that needs to be considered and emphasized. Most women who are victims of domestic violence are abused by husbands had trouble to receive protection despite having lodged a police report. This is because many consider that violence against women is a personal issue and there should be no intervention. After making the report, they were sent home and asked to discuss (with family) because enforcement officer focused more on cases such as robbery and rape. It is as if this case is not serious – Translated' [37].

Furthermore, a few articles described that often the discussions regarding domestic violence attract the attention of mostly women. Participation of men is rather sparse as highlighted by one of the articles, 'When we organise events on women's rights that is, say, attended by 300 or 400 people, maybe only 10 participants would be men'. In response, we have started to organise women's rights forums that are targeted at men only. At a recent one, a few hundred showed up. They gave good feedback.' [18]. The consequences of poor support and services are continuous violence and victimisation which may end up with death. A story of a woman who was the victim of domestic violence below shows

of how she was poorly treated and supported by current existing service providers, for example, enforcement authorities which failed to protect her from the abuse, ‘[Madam ABC], 28, was beaten to death last May by her estranged husband who was abusive throughout their 11-year marriage. She feared for her life – she had filed for divorce, made numerous police reports on her husband’s behaviour, and even received several interim protection orders (IPO). Even her mum and her sister made police reports, alarmed at the abuse ABC suffered from. Despite ABC going through all the official channels, her husband wasn’t deterred from attacking her. He beat her, savagely, until she died from her injuries. Her husband and three others have since been charged with murder under Section 302 of the Penal Code, which carries a death sentence upon conviction. The case is fixed for hearing on April 28’ [36].

Ineffective services to help the victims may occur because of poor interaction and collaboration between various agencies as described in the same article, ‘...multiple agencies are involved in dealing with domestic violence. Welfare workers (government and NGOs) are there to protect and counsel victims of abuse, police and law enforcement officers are charged with protecting them, as well as apprehending and prosecuting the perpetrators, and healthcare workers treat the physical, mental, emotional and psychological scars of the victims and their abusers.... however, these agencies work largely in isolation, leaving gaps in the handling of domestic violence cases.’ [36].

3.5 Legal Matters

3.5.1 Domestic Violence Act (DVA)

‘Malaysia passed the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) in 1994, the first country in the region to pass a specific law on domestic abuse. It was implemented two years later (1996), and it’s been amended several times to further strengthen the law’ [36]. For example, ‘The Domestic Violence Act 1994 was amended in 2012, to make offences involving domestic violence sizable (arrestable without a warrant). If an alleged domestic violence

perpetrator is a threat to the safety of the survivor, then the perpetrator can and should be arrested' [38].

The act has been continuously evaluated to fill the gaps which include, 'addressing barriers that women face in accessing justice, review current data collection procedures to better understand domestic violence, strengthen current legislative reforms, and provide for all front-line state service providers and court officials to receive comprehensive training within a common learning platform' [39]. Hence, a few recommendations have been proposed including 'a call to amend the current Domestic Violence Act, create a multi-stakeholder committee for on-going review of the response to domestic violence, and incorporate psychological first-aid and crisis counselling as part of a survivor-centred response' [39]. Further, the increased awareness that both genders and other family members also could become the victims of violence, the recent amendment, 'the DVA (Amendment) 2017 will provide more protections to abuse victims, regardless of gender... [and] to every single family member.' [40]. In addition, DVA (Amendment) 2017 has been amended to address victim's financial loss, fear for safety, misappropriation of property and distress induced by the third person. In terms of counseling, the act will also protect the victim from psychological distress when facing the perpetrator during the counseling session which is part of the reconciliation program as described by an article, 'With the new law, reconciliation proceedings can only be carried out with the consent of the victim. This is not to punish either party but to protect the victim. You cannot force her to face her abuse' [20]. The new amendment also, 'recognises survivor's right to exclusive occupancy. If a court grants a survivor occupancy of a shared residence, it must grant the survivor exclusive occupancy – not just a specified part of the residence' [41].

However, there are still improvements that need to be done. One of the important difficulties to enforcing the act is that DVA must be read together with the provisions of the Penal Code. Hence, the victim must fall back on the provisions for assault in Penal Code to criminalize the

perpetrator's violent behaviour. This is necessary to invoke the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), which governs police investigations. Without the capacity to function together with Penal Code, DVA is ineffective. For example, the problem occurs when proposing 'stalking' as part of DVA as described by one of the articles, 'Currently, 'stalking' could not be included in the Act, which was passed in Dewan Rakyat today, as it was not yet categorized as a criminal act under the Penal Code. This is why we could not include it (stalking) in the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act 2017' [42]. Other future amendments proposed by the coalition of activists include, 'recognise abuse between unmarried intimate partners; extend the maximum duration of protection orders, to protect survivors when the court proceedings are over; and enable survivors to get long-term protection without needing to press criminal charges against the abuser' [41].

3.5.2 Restraining Orders

There are three types of legal provisions that frequently discussed in the articles; Emergency Protection Orders (EPO), Interim Protection Orders (IPO) and Protection orders (PO). These provisions are meant to protect members of the victim and family from abuse as described by one of the articles, 'Section 4(1) of the Act provides that the Court may during the pendency of investigations relating to the commission of an offence involving domestic violence, issue an interim protection order prohibiting the person against whom the order is made by using domestic violence against his or her spouse or former spouse or a child or an incapacitated adult or any other member of the family...' [43].

3.5.2.1 Emergency Protection Order (EPO)

EPO is one of the amendments included in the DVA (Amendment) 2017 which provides an immediate temporary protection for victims from their abusers. Understanding the fear of victims to make the police report, it allows the application to be made by others and provide more power to social welfare officer, 'The application for emergency protection can be made by the victim or ex-part by victim's counsel, family, guardian or even by a JKM officer itself. Along with the emergency protection

order, the authorized JKM officer can also issue a prohibition order against the alleged perpetrator from entering the victim's premises even if it's a place of residence, from attempting or causing physical injury and inciting any others to harass, abuse or distress the victim' [44]. Further, 'The EPOs would be effective for a period of one week and if the perpetrator committed violence against the protected person, he could be liable to a fine of RM4,000 or jail of not more than one year or both' [45].

3.5.2.2 Interim Protection Orders (IPO)

Interim protection orders (IPO) is legal provisions which protect the victim during the investigation process. 'The IPO is a crucial document which protects domestic violence survivors from further abuse as it notifies the alleged abuser to refrain from any acts of violence, including threats. Police can help obtain an IPO for a domestic violence victim within 24-hours of a police report. When functioning correctly, the police force stands between survivors and further violence. The police force must be absolutely clear about their duties in handling domestic violence cases' [38]. Application of IPO must be done to the court after making the police report. However, many voiced out their disappointment on the effectiveness of IPO. Article entitled '*IPO macam gusi tak bergigi, pistol tak berpeluru* [IPO is like gum without teeth, pistol without bullet]' described that, 'These single mothers claim that the IPO is not only difficult to obtain, but it is just beautiful on the papers listed in the Domestic Violence Act Act, but it is too difficult to implement. The IPO seems to play the pull of the ropes between the two departments which makes it difficult for single mothers to get it. Too many questions and a push to reject from JKM and the police – Translated'[46].

3.5.2.3 Protection Orders (PO)

The PO is granted by the court to ensure the victim is protected from any abuse or harassment from the perpetrator. A protection order may be varied, withdrawn or set aside if the complainant makes an application for variation or rescission, but only if the court is satisfied that the application is being made freely and voluntarily. The court will consider the application

but is not obliged to withdraw the protection order. The court may refuse to withdraw if it believes that the victim or other family members require protection.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

A challenge to disseminating knowledge regarding domestic violence through scholarly writing or publication is that it depends on the public as the end-user searching for the relevant knowledge (such as information from journals, books or conferences) in a restricted website. Further, it takes years for an empirical research to be published and once available as a journal article, the information may be out dated. Currently, only a few published articles on domestic violence in this country to inform knowledge and information regarding this phenomenon. In contrary, online media such as online newspaper could easily be accessed with wider coverage, it allows fast publication and dissemination, however, its function is yet to be utilized. In this study, we found that lots of information can be gathered from newspapers, but, the dissemination needs to be appropriate. Our review of the online newspaper articles indicated that the public read the articles to gain the basic knowledge and the factors contributing to the act of violence, problems in accessing the services and legal provisions related to domestic violence. The information, however, can be inadequate and much improvement in reporting this phenomenon is required.

4.1 Gaps in Presentation of Domestic Violence in the News

From the review, we noticed a few gaps in how newspaper articles presenting the stories of domestic violence which require further future enhancement, so that domestic violence is highlighted in a more comprehensive manner.

4.1.1 News on Victims should include Men, Elderly and Disabled people

The term domestic violence is often used to indicate intimate partner

violence, which predominantly describes domestic violence against woman i.e. that wife (woman) as the victim and husband (man) as the perpetrator. Currently, awareness of both genders who could be either victim or perpetrator has encouraged increasing stories and description of violence against men as well. However, still hidden is the understanding of violence against members of the family including abuse against elder people and the incapacitated family member. Violence against these groups of people have been recognized in the DVA 1994 which stated that: victims include ‘other member of the family’ means (a) (i) an adult son or daughter; or (ii) a father or mother, of the offender; or (b) (i) a brother or sister; or (ii) any other relative and ‘incapacitated adult’ means a person who is wholly or partially incapacitated or infirm, by reason of physical or mental disability or ill-health or old age, who is living as a member of the offender’s family. Violence against these groups of people only attracts the attention of scholars beginning in this recent decade. A few researchers in Malaysia have started researching violence against elder people [47-50] and disabled people [51]. In a research of 291 elder people in Kuala Lumpur, about 9.6% reported experiencing some form of abuse or neglect within 12 months preceding the study [47]. Not only the public has lack of concern about abuse against elder people, a qualitative study among primary care physician indicated of ineffective intervention to address this type of violence among doctors [50]. Among the hurdles according to the participants include patients’ nondisclosure, refusal to receive the external intervention, the poor network between agencies, lack of structural support, and lack of legal provision specifically addressing elder abuse [50]. In terms of abuse against disabled family members, to date, there is a serious gap to understand more regarding this type of domestic violence. Surely, there is still a lot of work to be done to understand this type of domestic violence.

4.1.2 News on Types of Abuse should include Economic and Social abuses

When describing the types of domestic violence, emphases were mainly on domestic physical abuse and psychological abuse and domestic sexual abuse including incest and marital rape. Locally as well as worldwide, the

stories and information on economic abuse and social abuse also may not be complete. Despite the sparse of evidence, encouragement and appreciation are necessary for the activists and advocates of prevention of violence in Malaysia whose works and initiatives have successfully brought forward the amendment to DVA on economic violence especially on addressing victim's financial loss and misappropriation of property (DVA amendment (2017)). Elsewhere, in a review of 80 articles that addressed economic abuse in the context of domestic violence, the authors found that economic abuse is very prevalent. The article included perpetrator's tactics that can be categories into economic control, economic exploitation and employment sabotage [52]. Economic control includes 'restricting access to finances, refusing to contribute financially for necessities or other items, restricting access to financial information or involvement with financial decision-making, and controlling the household spending'. Economic exploitation is 'misusing family finances, damaging property, stealing property, money, or identities, going into debt through coercion or in secret, kicking the victim out of the living situation, using wealth as a weapon or as a threat; selling necessary household or personal items, restricting access to health care or insurance, and denying or restricting access to transportation'. Moreover, the employment sabotage tactics include 'anything related to the preventing of a partner from work' [52]. In order to address this type of abuse or violence, both local media and researchers in Malaysia should start researching and publishing matters related to domestic economic abuse.

In terms of social abuse, awareness has increased; from the discussion on mainly on freedom of movement or 'confining or detaining the victim against the victim's will' (DVA 1994), the movement has led to the recognition of stalking as part of violent behaviour. Understanding of other forms of social abuse such as cyber abuse using telephones, tablets, computers, and social networking websites are vital. Through the use of these advance media, perpetrators could exert their violent behaviours through cyberstalking, oppression, humiliation and various other controlling and abusive behaviours [53]. Economic abuse and limitation of movement could cause severe financial difficulties for victims and can

prevent them from becoming economically secure and independent [54]. In turn, such violence could lead to difficulties for victims to leave the violent relationship and cause the victims little choice and feel forced to come back to the abusive relationship [55].

4.1.3 News on Intervention should include Ways of Seeking Help

The legal provisions related to domestic violence that have been predominantly highlighted in the articles include the DVA 1994, DVA (amendment) 2017, PO, IPO and EPO. The description, however, lack of details on the steps should be taken by the victims to deal with the legal process. A few articles have provided the number of helplines (such as Talian Nur, Befrienders) and contact numbers of help centres or organizations (such as Women's Aid Organization (WAO) and All Women's Action Society (AWAM)). However, these helpline numbers often published as footnotes by English language newspapers, but lacking in Malay language newspapers articles. For further enhancement, details and step-by-step procedures and contact numbers of medical consultation at One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC), police report, engagement with social welfare department, application of EPO, IPO and PO from courts and other relevant procedures for help-seeking methods should be clearly illustrated and described in all the newspaper articles to facilitate victims to get assistance. By doing so, the online newspaper can be used to increase accessibility to those services and promote help-seeking behaviours among the victims of domestic violence.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Domestic violence is a covert behaviour which described by a few as 'domestic terrorism', should be presented in a comprehensive, accurate and helpful manner so that public is aware of its risks, consequences, preventive measures, details procedures of help-seeking and effective intervention. Although substantial evidence described the unconstructive presentations of domestic violence by media, in this era of information

technology with nearly limitless boundaries and possibilities, journalists and other professionals should grab the opportunity to use media as tools for disseminating correct information and knowledge. Online newspapers can be used to increase accessibility to services and indirectly empower those vulnerable and marginalised groups of people to free themselves from the trapped of the cycle of violence.

This article has provided some beneficial aspects of information disseminated by online newspapers, but the findings must be read with a few limitations. We are aware that the analyses were not carried out to include all newspapers in Malaysia and no investigation on hardcopies of the newspapers was done. One should be cautious of the bias in the media presentation. Journalists should be wise to choose professional and ethical ways of presenting domestic violence so that online newspapers can be used effectively as the media to prevent such violence.

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