

Dynamics of Battered Filipino Women: Validating a Dynamics of Abuse Model

Alicia F. Estrellado
Rose Marie Salazar-Clemeña
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines

This study was designed to validate Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña's (2007) Dynamics of Abuse Model. It also aimed to further explore and analyze dynamics of Filipino battered women. A qualitative study of 20 battered women was conducted using in-depth interview. Participants reported 19 categories of abuse, 20 categories of contributing factors to abuse, 16 categories of effects of abuse on women's perception of self, view of the world, sense of well-being, and interpersonal relationships, and 13 categories of coping strategies. Responses were coded based on Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña's model. The study demonstrated that Dynamics of Abuse Model can be useful as a conceptual framework for understanding concerns of battered women. Implications for counseling practice and research are discussed.

KEYWORDS: battered Filipino women, model validation, dynamics of abuse model, forms of abuse, contributing factors, effects of abuse, coping strategies

Domestic violence is a phenomenon occurring in almost all societies. In 2009, the Philippine National Police (PNP) reported 9,485 cases of violence against women, 5,285 of which were committed by a spouse or partner. Based on the PNP data from 1997-2009, abuse by an intimate partner accounts for 45.5% of all violence against women cases nationwide (Philippine Commission on Women, 2010). It was observed that cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) increased since the implementation of RA 9262, otherwise known as "Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004." The vast information dissemination of the law and its strict implementation trend may have caused the rise of reporting IPV cases.

The statistics imply that violence against women is a serious

problem. It represents a hidden hindrance to economic and social development. Likewise, it drains women's energy, undermines their self-confidence and compromises their health, thus, depriving society of their meaningful participation.

There are several perspectives to explain the dynamics of violence against women. Models for violence are found within the family, the mass media, and society at large (Bandura, 1977). Violence against women occurs within a sociocultural context. Sociocultural theories postulate that violence is a cultural attitude reflected in the glorification of violent behavior in the mass media. Society reflects a permissive attitude toward violence in the willingness to accept aggression as a part of daily living (Felix & Paz-Ingente, 2003). This implies that the foundation of many forms of abuse, such as women abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse, underlies the overwhelming acceptance of the use of violence in society (Viano, 1992).

In addition to the sociocultural perspective, gender role research has contributed significant findings. Walker (1979) argues that the childhood sex-role socialization of women is conducive to women battering. Boys are taught to display strength while girls are taught to be passive and yield control to men. This traditional sex-role socialization has the effect of socializing girls to become victims and boys to become perpetrators of violence.

Although sociocultural and gender variables may be recognized as factors in women abuse, some researchers believe that the problem of violence is couched within the family dynamics. There has been mounting support emerging for the linkages between women's victimization by their spouses and earlier childhood experiences, such as being exposed to and/or being the target of violence in the family of origin. Battered women were more likely to come from homes where the father displayed male dominant, controlling qualities, rigid sex role patterns and harsh punishments (McNeal & Amato, 1998). However, few research studies have been done to determine ways in which women incorporate early experiences with violence in their adult lives and how these affect the emergence and continuation of violence in intimate relationships (Heise, 1998).

Merry (2009) acknowledges the perpetrator's responsibility in women abuse and assigns blame to the perpetrator. This perspective recognizes that battered women have little or no responsibility for their victimization and, therefore, being dehumanized. However, this perspective sometimes hides the choices and power that battered women have in their hands. Hence, it is also important to recognize

the reality of women's victimization and the perspective on choice and responsibility as being dynamic and multiple (Bartky, 1990). Responsible action can make radical progressive change which requires that battered women acknowledge their own investments in their choices and responsibilities as well as their accountability to themselves and others.

Other models that offer vital insights into aspects of violence against women, specifically intimate partner violence (IPV), include Boss's (2002) Contextual Model of Family Stress that highlighted three dimensions (the stressor event, the resources available, and the perception or meaning attached to abuse) that are involved in intimate partner abuse. The model also included contextual factors (culture, economy, development, and history) that may affect the three components of the model. Rolling and Brosi (2010) applied the model to one battered woman's experience for assessment purposes, offering insights for possible intervention.

In a study by Eisikovits, Goldbatt, and Winstok (1999), a theoretical model was developed to provide an analysis of abuse based on accounts given by cohabiting partners. Content analysis produced content categories based on accounts related to what happened in the violent event, why the abuse happened, and the meanings attached to the abuse. Relationships among the content categories were analyzed along intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social areas.

In terms of battered women's stay/leave decision-making process, Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) provided ways of comprehending and predicting factors associated with battered women's decision to stay in or leave an abusive relationship (Choice & Lamke, 1997; Le & Agnew, 2003). The model insinuated that battered women make logical decisions based on the cost-benefit ratio intrinsic in the intimate relationship. In line with this, Rhatigan and Axsom (2006) replicated and extended research using the Investment Model to comprehend battered women's commitment to violent relationships. Results revealed that each of the factors (relationship satisfaction, quality alternatives, and investments) involved in the Investment Model contributed to women's commitment to the relationship.

In a special issue of the *Philippine Journal of Psychology* (2007) devoted to psychological research on abuse in intimate and family relationships, Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007) reported conducting case studies of five battered women using a conceptual framework of the dynamics of abuse. Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña's

study is important because it incorporated variables (forms of abuse, contributing factors, effects of abuse, and the coping mechanisms used) in understanding the dynamics of abuse of battered Filipino women. Although the model seems helpful for understanding battered women’s experiences of abuse, the intrapersonal and interpersonal factors that contributed to abuse, the effects of abuse on women, and the coping strategies used, the study was based on only five cases of battered Filipino women. There was a need to validate the conceptual framework of the dynamics of abuse to enhance future theoretical and empirical work. Hence, the purpose of this study was to validate Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña’s (2007) model of dynamics of abuse as well as further explore and analyze dynamics of battered Filipino women.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is guided by the conceptual framework of dynamics of abuse developed by Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007). Dynamics of abuse refers to the abuse experienced by the women, the factors they perceive to contribute to the abuse, the effects of abuse on them and the coping mechanisms they employ (Figure 1).

Woman battering can take various forms, which may range from physical, emotional, and verbal, to economic and sexual. Section 3 of Republic Act No. 9262 defines violence against women as “any act or a series of acts committed by any person against a woman who

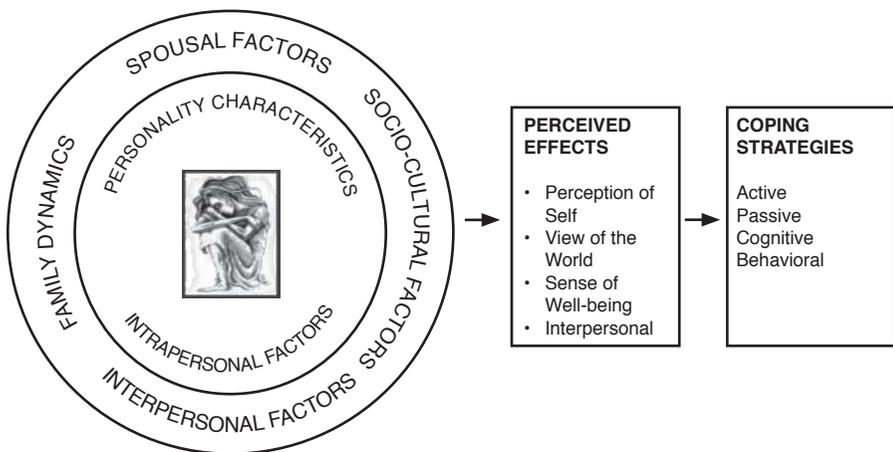


Figure 1. Dynamics of Abuse.

is his wife, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom he has a common child, which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, or economic abuse including threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.”

Intrapersonal and interpersonal factors are seen as contributing factors to violence against women. Intrapersonal factors (depicted in the inner circle in Figure 1) refer to the personality characteristics of women that made them vulnerable to abuse. Battered women are reported to exhibit characteristics such as learned helplessness, passivity, a feeling of being overwhelmed, low self-esteem, and self blame (Walker, 1979). These distinctive characteristics of battered women are often assumed to be products of abuse. However, it is difficult to determine whether these characteristics are caused by the trauma of abuse or are prevalent before the abuse.

Interpersonal factors include family dynamics, spousal factors, and socio-cultural issues. Family dynamics refers to battered women’s experiences in the family of origin that made them susceptible to abuse. Some investigations have implied that having been exposed to violence increases the possibility of getting involved with an abusive partner, possibly just like their fathers (Simons, Johnson, Beamen & Conge, 1993). Dynamics of intimate partner violence is better understood by exploring factors linked to men who abuse them. Intergenerational transmission theory suggests that abusers come from a violent home and are abused themselves (Gortner, Gollan, & Jacobson, 1997). Some social learning theories explain that experiences with violence and exposure to parental spousal abuse predispose the male partner to follow the role that he learned in childhood (Kalmuss & Seletzer, 1989; Straus & Smith, 1990). Likewise, women’s vulnerability to abuse may be explained by looking into issues situated in a broader socio-cultural context, focusing on the structure of society within which the violence takes place (Coleman & Strauss, 1986).

Abuse may greatly affect the battered woman’s life by influencing the manner in which she lives, such as her interpersonal relationships, how she sees herself, how she views her environment and the challenges she is or is not willing to face.

In response to the effects of abuse, women focus on what can

be done about the troubling event or condition. Women cope with violence in a variety of ways, which can be classified into two dimensions. The first involves the distinction between *active* and *passive* strategies (Holahan & Moos, 1987). Active coping refers to the individual's attempt to change the situation, such as leaving the abusive relationship. Passive strategies, on the other hand, include avoidant efforts such as enduring the abuse. The second dimension distinguishes between *cognitive* and *behavioral* strategies (Holahan & Moos, 1995). Behavioral coping includes observable action done to reduce stress, whereas cognitive coping is an attempt to change one's perception about the abuse.

METHOD

Research Design

The study employed the qualitative approach using in-depth interview to explore the dynamics of Filipino battered women. Story telling was encouraged because it led to the unfolding of personal histories as well as the broader social discourse that shaped women's understanding of their lives.

Participants

The participants in the study were 20 battered women selected using non-random, purposive sampling method. The demographic information (Table 1) shows that the average age of the participants was 32.3 years, with a range from 20 to 57. The average duration of being with the abusive partner was 9.65 years, with a range from 2 to 25 years. Of the 20 participants, 65% (n=13) have left the relationship. For these women, the average duration of having been with their partner was 8.76 years. Those who continued their relationships have stayed with their partners for an average of 11.28 years. Seven of the participants were housewives and eight were working. The five unemployed participants have left their abusive partners and are staying in a substitute home care for women. Based on the women's occupation (present and previous) and educational attainment, it can be inferred that most of the participants belonged to the low socioeconomic status.

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Battered Women, N=20.

Variables	Categories	F
Age	55-59	1
	50-54	0
	45-49	2
	40-44	2
	35-39	2
	30-34	3
	25-29	5
	20-24	5
Educational Attainment	Elementary	5
	High School	8
	College	7
Occupation	Housewife	7
	Yaya (Nanny)	2
	Beautician	2
	Vendor	1
	Support staff	1
	Sewer	1
	Sales lady	1
	Unemployed	5
Marital Status	Separated	13
	Living with Partner	7
Years of Marriage	1-5	7
	6-10	4
	11-15	5
	16-20	2
	21-25	2
Number of Children	0-2	8
	3-5	9
	6-8	3

Participants were selected upon the recommendation of professionals working with them, on the basis of the following criteria: [a] the participants have been victims of intimate partner abuse for at least one year; and [b] there was no manifestation of significant impaired mental state at the time of recruitment for the study.

INSTRUMENTS

Personal Information Sheet. This researcher-made personal information sheet included the following information: participant's name, age, educational attainment, occupation, marital status, years of marriage or stay with abusive partner, and number of children.

Interview Guide Questions. A semi-structured Interview Guide, developed for this study, consisted of 15 questions based on a broad reading of the literature with a focus on the main theme relating to the dynamics of women battering. The questions were divided into four sections, the first section dealing with forms of abuse experienced by the participants. The second set of questions focused on the causative factors of women battering, which evaluated family dynamics, intrapersonal factors, spousal, and socio-cultural factors, as perceived by the women. The third set of questions dealt with the effects of abuse on battered women's perception of the self, view of the world, sense of well-being and interpersonal relationship. The final set of questions focused on the coping strategies the battered women employed.

PROCEDURE

Twenty participants were identified/recruited from three centers that gave assistance to women on various issues. The first site (n=11, 55%), was a non-government organization that provided crisis intervention services to women victims/survivors of violence. The second site (n=5, 25%) was a complete facility established as a substitute home care for women. The third site was a baranggay community-based center in Manila (n=4, 20%), that handled community problems such as domestic violence.

An appropriate introduction of the primary researcher and the purpose of the study started off the interview. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the interview data. Each participant was interviewed for approximately 45 to 90 minutes at a venue with sufficient privacy. The participants were also informed of their right to decline from answering questions they felt uncomfortable with and to terminate the interview whenever they wanted. With the participants' permission, a microcassette recorder was used to

document participants' accounts and verbalized thoughts of the battering experience.

Taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. Two raters (professionals with adequate knowledge in clinical and counseling psychology and who have worked with battered women and have done research in this area) were given the task of independently analyzing the protocols.

The procedures for the content analysis of the data consisted of the following: a) The team (primary researcher and raters) read all transcripts several times for the purpose of immersing themselves in the participants' world as articulated in their narratives, b) the team differentiated parts of the description, identifying meaning units to organize data for later analysis; and c) lengthy and complex materials were organized around themes found in the protocols. When disagreements occurred, the team discussed their ideas until a consensus was reached on the categories.

RESULTS

Forms of Abuse

The nature of the intimate partner abuse experienced by the women in the study was not uniform. Instead, they struggled with various combinations of physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and economical abuse (Table 2). The severity of each form of abuse also varied.

Physical abuse. Without exception, the battered women in the study suffered physical abuse at the hands of their partners. Likewise, all of them experienced abuse more than once; most of them not being able to tell the number of times they had been physically abused by their partners. Their experience of physical abuse ranged from simple assault to assault and battering with a dangerous weapon. The following statements of participants are illustrative of this finding:

He would hurt me, slap, punch me. I would get all beaten up. He could easily drag my body all around because I am thin.

Everytime he would come home with eyes ablaze, I do not know what would happen to me. There would be times he would be holding a knife and I would be cut in many places. You see these are my scars on my arms from the cuts I would get every time he would have knife in hand. I shield my face for fear of being hit; that is why the cuts are all on my arms.

Table 2

Forms of Abuse Experienced by the Women, N=20.

Domain	Categories	F
Physical	<i>Simple Assault and Battering</i>	
	Punched	10
	Slapped	8
	Pulled hair, dragged by hair	6
	Pushed, thrown, dragged	5
	Choked	4
	<i>Assault and Battering with a Dangerous Weapon</i>	
	Kicked, butted repeatedly with head	14
	Threatened with a knife/gun	6
	Attacked with hard objects	4
Stabbed with knife	1	
Psychological	Verbal Abuse	20
	Isolation	5
	Husband's womanizing	4
	Intimidation	2
	Child exploited	1
Economic	No/Inadequate financial support	8
	Mishandling of family income	4
Sexual	Marital rape/forced sex	5
	Unwanted sexual practice	2
	Exploitation through prostitution	1

Psychological abuse. All of the participants experienced psychological abuse (Table 2), which included uttering put downs and degrading remarks. Some women said that they felt they were held by their husbands/partners against their will. One woman's agony was revealed in the following words:

I feel so degraded with what he does to me but I cannot complain because he will beat me up. He often says a lot of things to my face, but what I really could not take was when he told me I was worthless, that I was just trash. So I felt of no use to him and that I was dispensable. I thought just because I have no money of my own he treats me like that.

The study also revealed that the husband/partner's womanizing was another category of psychological abuse experienced by four of

the women in the study. As one of the women put it:

He always insults me for every little misunderstanding. His insults keep wracking my brain. But the most painful thing he did to me was his philandering. I can accept physical violence but not his other women. That is truly painful.

Apparent in two participants' experience of psychological abuse was intimidation that included looks, gestures or actions meant to remind them of their partners' capacity for physical violence such as punching walls, destroying things or displaying weapons. Two women shared painful experiences that involved their children who were molested/exploited by their partners. One woman shared her painful experiences when her daughter was exploited by her partner:

My daughter confided to me that while she was peeing in the bathroom a man came and touched her private part, and fingered her. My daughter was a bit dazed. I feared for her. I stomachached being subjected to all the disgusting things he does, but I would not allow him to do the same to my daughter.

Economic abuse. Money was found to be another tool by which men further controlled their partners, ensuring their financial dependence on them. This takes the form of abuse classified as economic. This was accounted by eight of the participants in the study.

Oftentimes, he would come home cursing, demanding what I spend for with the money he brings home. Where else would I spend it? He only gives me a small amount. His pay is so little, and we need the money to buy milk, then our food. How could he expect that there would still be money left? In the most recent incident, he kicked me so hard I flew against the window frame; I had a blackeye.

Sexual abuse. Eight women revealed that they were sexually abused by their intimate partners. Five of them said that they had been made to have sex with their partners against their will. Two women were forced to perform unwanted sexual practices or degrading acts before or during intercourse and one participant was sold to her partner's friends in exchange for shabu. Some of them made these confessions:

Whenever my husband is high on shabu, he would rape me but I would fight him off. He would take off my dress by force, sometimes he would rip off my clothes despite my pleas. We would end up getting physical with each other. He also wanted different (sexual) positions. I really do not want to do it but I am too weak to fight.

One time, my husband asked me to use something. We used a shiny foil with a flame under it. I found out it was shabu. I went limp, then I felt there were men touching me, stroking different parts of my body. I could not do anything because there were many of them.

The next morning, I was so mad at my husband. I found out he sold me in exchange of shabu. That became my life, whenever my husband needed shabu, he would make others use me.

Contributing Factors

When the women were asked about the contributing factors to abuse, they gave various explanations which were classified as intrapersonal and interpersonal factors (Table 3).

Intrapersonal factors. Personality characteristics of the women were given by the women themselves as possible explanations for the abuse (Table 3). Most of the women perceived themselves to have tendencies toward exhibiting long-suffering, martyr-like traits like being self-sacrificing, submissive, and passive. As one of them said:

When I was young, I had an attitude of just keeping quiet even if I am being mistreated. I would just cry it out; I do not fight back. When I was scolded, I would keep quiet. I am the type of person who does not complain. I am a martyr.

The women also reported exhibiting self-esteem deficit and difficult temperament that may have triggered the abuse. Some participants blamed themselves for the abuse they experienced. To quote the participants' insightful words:

I was like a dog gone astray. I had no house to call my own. The street was my home. I was brave, but that was just a front. I had to fight back but I was weak. My life had no direction. Wherever my feet took me that's where I went. There was nowhere to go. It seemed I was worth nothing.

I was searching for love but I was gullible. If there was someone courting me, pretending to love, I could not see right through him. That was how things were. I was hungry for love.

Interpersonal factors. Family dynamics, spousal factors, and socio-cultural issues were also perceived as contributing factors to violence against women. Parental neglect, history of abuse, parental violence, and parental indulgence were the experiences of the women in their family of origin that they thought might explain their vulnerability to abuse. The following utterance of the participants exemplifies these findings:

My mother gave me away to her rich relative. I did not want to but my mother told me I had no choice because by going there, I would have food to eat and I would not get sick. It upset me a lot but I could not do anything. I felt bad because my mother knew they had turn me into a helper in the house, but she still left me. That time, I loved my mother so much, but I felt I

Table 3.

Contributing Factors to Abuse on Women.

Domains	Categories	F
Intrapersonal Factors	<i>Personality Characteristics</i>	
	Self-Sacrificing, Submissive, Passive	15
	Low Self-Esteem	8
	Self blame	5
	Difficult Temperament	5
	Gullible	2
Interpersonal Factors	<i>Family Dynamics</i>	
	Parental Neglect	17
	History of Abuse in the Family	13
	Parental Discord/Violence	14
	Parental Indulgence	1
	<i>Spousal Factors</i>	
	Personality Problem (Possessive, Lack of Impulse control, communication deficiency)	18
	Parental Neglect	13
	Use of Drugs	13
	Parental Discord/Violence	12
	History of Physical Abuse	8
	History of Delinquency	7
	Parental Indulgence	3
	<i>Socio-cultural Factors</i>	
	Traditional Sex-Role Expectation	18
Indifferent Law Enforcer	10	
Social Stigma	5	
Religious Influence	4	

was unimportant to her.

When I was a child, it seemed like I had no parents. Nobody looked after me. I would go to school with a bag with holes, the edge of my skirt would be unhemmed. Often, I would come home and there would be no food. I experienced eating food which my playmates have dropped on the ground. My mother left us all alone. She lived like a single woman ever since she and my father separated.

The women also shared insights on what and how their partners contributed to abuse. Personality problems, parental neglect, use of drugs, violent upbringing, parental discord, history of delinquency,

*Table 4.**Perceived Effects of Abuse on Women.*

Themes	Categories	F
Perception of Self	Low self-esteem	18
	Loss of identity	6
	Self pity	4
	Sex object	4
View of the World	Pessimism	18
	Fear of the future, uncertainty	11
	Optimism	2
Sense of Well-being	Depression	17
	Suicidal thoughts/attempts	8
	Anxiety	5
	Feeling of going crazy	4
	Somatic symptoms	4
Interpersonal	Loss of trust	10
	Social withdrawal/isolation due to shame	9
	Displaced anger to children	4
	Need social interaction	1

and parental indulgence were the spousal factors perceived by them as providing an explanation for women abuse. One woman said:

At times, angry or not, my husband throws anything he lays his hands on. I have asked him to control himself because he has smashed almost all of our plates. Even our walls are full of holes because if he fails to hit me, he hits the wall.

In terms of the socio-cultural factors, almost all of the participants believed that women abuse is a product of traditional sex-role expectations. Likewise, the social stigma of coming from a broken family and religious influence seemed important in explaining women battering.

Perceived Effects

Self-perceived effects of abuse (Table 4) revolved around the women's perception of self, their view of the world, sense of wellbeing, and

interpersonal relationships.

Perception of self. Most of the women expressed the view that their self-esteem deteriorated as a result of the abuse. Related to this was a sense of weakened identity. Some of the participants expressed self-pity and a feeling of being treated like a sex object. The following retrospectives testify to the depth to which women felt their self-esteem had been shattered within the abusive relationship:

I sort of think so lowly of myself, like I am a maid. I am a blind follower. I have really lost trust in myself. I am like a robot.

He never loved me. He treats me like a dirty rag. I look at myself as trash. I do house work, I serve my husband, I cook for him, I feed him. After meals, he leaves the table, takes a bath, gets dressed, leaves and comes back at midnight. After slaving for him, this is what I get.

View of the world. Most of the women in the study spoke of pessimism in terms of loss of hope that they could change the damaging circumstances in their lives. Some of the participants expressed uncertainty about the future not only for themselves but more so for their children. However, two women were still positive about their outlook in life. The following responses are two different effects of abuse on women's view of the world:

I cannot understand the fear that grips me every waking moment. I am jobless. I am afraid for me and my children now and more so in the future. I am not even sure if my children still have a future to look forward to.

I am not losing hope. I still have a clear view of life. Even if that happened to me, I still have beautiful plans for my children. I don't want to lose hope or to become disheartened because I would not be able to think straight.

Sense of wellbeing. The feeling of depression was very evident in most of the women interviewed. Some of them said that they felt their circumstances were so extreme that the depression they suffered rendered them suicidal. Likewise, high anxiety level, feeling of going crazy, and impairment of health, as seen in weight change and other stress symptoms, were experienced by some participants. The effects of abuse on the women's well being are mirrored in the following statements:

I feel so insignificant. Imagine, I have no job, nothing to lean on. The most painful part is that my children were taken away from me. I feel so weak. It seems there is no hope for me. I was suicidal then.

Table 5.

Coping Strategies Of Battered Women.

Themes	Categories	F
Passive	Tolerate/endure abuse	20
	Cry	18
	Pray	16
	Denial/ignore abuse	4
	Keep busy with work	4
Passive-Cognitive	Hopeful that partner will change	4
Active-Behavioral	Seek help	18
	Leave	13
	Talk with partner	6
	Try to be a better wife	5
	Fight back	5
	Have extra-marital affair	4
	Press charges	4

I hear some things, I close my eyes but I cannot sleep. I am haunted by my husband's voice. I am not sure if I am asleep but I hear his voice, his cursing. The painful episodes in my life seem to come back to me, particularly his beatings. I thought I was going crazy.

Interpersonal relationships. Another psychological effect of abuse was the profound sense of betrayal of trust apparent in half of the women in the study. The experience of abuse gave rise to shame, leading some women to withdraw from social interaction. There were also some participants who displaced their anger to their children. These findings are quite evident in the following responses:

I lost my trust in others. My mother was supposed to be the first to take care of me but she left me. Then my husband who is supposed to fight for me is the one who hurts me. Who, then, could I trust?

I became irritable. My children bore the brunt of my anger. I felt sorry after yelling at them and hitting them, but I could not control myself. Sometimes, I hit them for no reason at all.

Coping Strategies of Battered Women

Coping strategies used by the participants (Table 5) were classified

into four, namely, passive, passive-cognitive, active, and active-behavioral.

All of the women tended to be passive, simply tolerating or enduring the abuse. Most of them found crying and praying as helpful means to lessen the pain they were experiencing. A few women tried to deny or ignore the abuse and kept themselves busy at work.

Another coping strategy used by some women was considered as passive-cognitive because there was no active attempt to change their situation; they simply tried to change the way they thought of their situation by being hopeful that their partners will change.

The women were not entirely passive victims of abuse, however, because almost all of them also made attempts to change their situation. They employed active behavioral coping strategies. Almost all of the women tried to seek alternative means of managing the situation such as seeking help from relatives, baranggay officials, the pastor, or the police. One of the women said:

I may be ashamed. I always run to my family. I go home because I am annoyed with the abuse being committed by my husband. Sometimes I stayed there for a week or until I have rested from all the cursing and punches of my husband.

The women who believed that their situation was getting worse opted to leave their abusive partners. A few women tried to talk with their partners when the situation was peaceful and calm. Some women tried to fight back, whereas others tried to get even by having extra marital affair, or pressed charges against their abusive partners. However, some women chose to become better wives. The following responses are indicative of these findings:

Even if he hurts me, I try to be a good wife. I cook for him, I do the laundry, I am almost his slave. I do that so that he would feel that I can revenge but I did not. I want to make him feel that I am a good wife for him to feel guilty.

My husband insulted me so much. He said that I am ugly and that nobody will ever like me. I believed him until I had a textmate. We met. We had a date several times. We went to see a movie, and he put his arms around my shoulders. He made me feel that he likes me. I was able to prove that I am not ugly.

DISCUSSION

The central aim of this study was to examine the comprehensiveness of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña's (2007) Dynamics of Abuse Model

by exploring and analyzing battered women's experiences of abuse, contributing factors to abuse, effects of abuse, and coping strategies.

Forms of Abuse

Physical abuse was the most obvious and the most visible form of abuse suffered by all the women in this study at the hands of their abusive partners. Most of the incidents of physical abuse, particularly the most lethal, happened when the abusive partners were under the influence of drugs. This finding was also revealed in the study of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007). However, other categories of physical abuse were reported by the participants in the present study. Some participants experienced being dragged by their hair and choked to death. One participant almost died because she was stabbed by her partner with a kitchen knife.

Any kind of aggression is accompanied by psychological abuse, the most common of which is verbal in nature. Compared to those in the earlier study of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007), participants in this study divulged more categories of psychological abuse.

Their abusive partners' intimidating looks, gestures, and actions (such as smashing or throwing things, and displaying guns or knives) reminded the women of their partners' potential for physical abuse. Abusers also used isolation so that women would feel alone in their struggle. Womanizing was likewise perceived as a form of psychological abuse. The emotional suffering experienced by a participant when she learned that her daughter was exploited by her partner in exchange for shabu was still another form of psychological abuse. All the women said that psychological abuse was just as hurtful and as weakening as physical abuse. Psychological abuse may even be more incapacitating and harmful for the woman's day-to-day functioning (Coker, Smith, Mckeown, & King, 2000).

Economic abuse was experienced by most housewives who, having no paying jobs, were financially dependent on their partners. Money was found to be another tool by which men could further control the women (Estrellado & Salazar-Clemeña, 2007).

The usual case of sexual abuse experienced by the women was that of non-consensual sex. It is significant to note, however, that only one used the term "marital rape" in reference to this, whereas others were reluctant to share their experiences in this regard. This is consistent with the findings obtained by Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007). Traditionally, Filipino women accept that part of

their role in marriage is to satisfy the sexual needs of their intimate partners. This may explain why it is difficult for them to understand the concept of rape in marriage or to consider this behavior as a crime (Arugaan sa Kalakasan, 1994).

Two more categories of sexual abuse were reported in the present investigation that were not cited in the earlier study (Estrellado & Salazar-Clemeña, 2007). Two women were forced to perform unwanted sexual practices or degrading acts before or during sexual intercourse and one participant was sold to her partner's friends and forced to have sex with them in exchange for shabu.

Contributing Factors

Abuse in intimate relationships is a problem with numerous causes determined by many variables, most of them attributed by the women to their abusive partners. The battered women believed that the personality problems of their abusive partners could have contributed to the abuse. This finding is prominent in the present study, however, this was not revealed in the case studies of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007). The small number of participants may have posed limitations for the previous study.

Most of the women's perception of their partner's use of drugs as contributing to abuse is consistent with findings of studies showing substance use as a condition that co-exists with violence against women (Estrellado & Salazar-Clemeña, 2007; van Wormer, 2007; Leonard & Blane, 1992). However, alcohol intoxication or drug use could in fact be an excuse for abusive behavior rather than the precipitating factor that triggers violent behavior (van Wormer, 2007; Leonard & Blane, 1992).

Traditional sex role expectations and indifferent law enforcers as socio-cultural factors contributing to women abuse provided support for Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña's (2007) study. Traditional sex role expectations involve subordination of women and unequal gender relations, that could be partly explained by the structuring of the family system, as reflected in the structuring of society (Felix & Paz-Ingente, 2003). In the Philippines, women are brought up to be passive and submissive (Arugaan sa Kalakasan, 1994). While men are taught to be tough, cool, and aggressive, women are generally socialized to nurture men and alleviate their emotional burden, to become a *tagasalo* (catcher or rescuer) (Rodrigo, 1990; Carandang, 1987).

Most of the women tried to seek help but were deprived of assistance because domestic violence is generally viewed as a “private matter.” Acts of violence in the home were therefore largely ignored by relatives, law enforcers, and even church leaders who are expected to help. This indifference of relatives and authorities regarding abuse on women could further perpetuate the phenomenon of women battering.

The present study revealed other categories such as social stigma and religious influence as other socio-cultural factors contributing to women abuse.

Dynamics of the family of origin of both the battered women and their intimate partners also contribute to the abuse of women. This finding corroborates those of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007). Most of the women and their partners came from troubled and dysfunctional families. They were abused, neglected, abandoned, had witnessed or experienced abuse in their family of origin. As victims of childhood abuse, the women might have been accustomed to being treated with indifference or cruelty; hence, they may have learned to believe that such treatment was normal and inevitable. Results of Cascardi, O’Leary and Lawrence’s (1995) study suggest that women who were raised in an abusive home environment would have a higher probability of marital relationships marked by overall distress and conflict. Marital relationships of most of the participants’ parents were described to be discordant. They may have thus provided these women with an unhealthy pattern of marriage to follow in their own intimate relationships.

The participants expressed awareness that their partners began to learn abuse/violence at an early age, as they grew up witnessing their fathers abuse their mothers, or being also physically or psychologically abused as children. In their families, it seemed that male dominance was never questioned. It was difficult for them to unlearn male dominance and violence as a way of relating to others. Empirical evidence over the past decade on the relationship between marital violence and children’s behavioral problems clearly indicates that children growing up in families marked with violence are at high risk for behavioral problems (Kalmuss & Seletzer, 1989). The key determinant of these problems was ineffective child rearing in the family of origin. This happened when the family atmosphere lacked discipline, supervision, and affection. Instead of disciplining them for misbehavior or helping them improve with love and care, their parents may have disciplined them simply out of irritation. Without

proper discipline, children grow up with poor impulse control and insufficient boundaries.

The present study identified parental indulgence and history of delinquency as other categories of family dynamics and spousal factor not found in the 2007 study of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña.

Finally, the present study supported the study of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007) that the personality characteristics of the women themselves (e.g., being self-sacrificing, tolerant, submissive, and having low self-esteem) help explain abuse. *Pagtitiis* (to tolerate/endure) and *pagtitimpi* (to suppress) are highly valued Filipino traditions used as tools to make oneself loved—a strong Filipino need (Lapuz, 1978). Likewise, a large part of a Filipina's self-worth becomes dependent on her ability to take responsibility for others or to be a *tagasalo* (catcher or rescuer; Carandang, 1987). Hence she enjoys this role indefinitely or until such time as she gets physically drained or burnt out (Carandang, 1987). Being enduring, yielding, and responsible are given importance in the concept of femininity in the Filipino culture.

Low self-esteem was another characteristic that could have made the women vulnerable to abuse. They might have felt they did not deserve to be treated well. Likewise, their lack of self-worth may have made them attracted to men who gave them the impression of being strong and macho.

In addition to self-sacrificing traits and low self-esteem, the present study identified two personality characteristics perceived to contribute to abuse—difficult temperament and being gullible.

Some participants' poor impulse control was yet another factor that could have triggered the abuse. With both partners having difficult temperaments, a simple discussion of issues led to heated arguments and most of the time, to violence.

Gullibility, as mentioned by two participants, could explain why they failed to make the right choice for a partner. Having been abused or abandoned earlier, they easily fell in love with any man who came into their lives. They could not wait to test the sincerity of the man's intention. They said they knew there was something wrong with their ability to choose a partner who would treat them with respect; however, the longing for somebody to love them could have been intense.

Effects of Abuse

Low self-esteem was central in the discussion of the effects of abuse on

women. Almost all of the participants expressed the belief that their self-esteem crumbled as a result of the continued abuse experienced at the hands of their partners. Abuse eats away battered women's sense of self-worth, trust in their perceptions, and self-concept (La Violette & Barnett, 2000).

Hopelessness, feeling of uncertainty and fear of the future characterized the participants' view of the world. Most women in the study felt hopeless that they could still change the circumstances in their lives.

Depression was one of the foremost emotional responses of the participants. The daily impact of living in a context of fear, brought about by the abuse, is directly related to depression (Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992). However, depending on the degree to which the women felt that their circumstances were unbearable and hopeless, the severity of their depression varied. For those who felt that their circumstances were so intense, the depression precipitated thoughts or acts of suicide. For these women, depression rendered them unable to reflect and find ways of changing the situation. This made their abusers gain even more control over them. There were also some participants who became very anxious and reported somatic complaints. These findings are in line with reports that the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder in abused women is associated with high levels of anxiety and depression (Mertin & Mohr, 2000), low self-esteem, and a general failure to adjust in day-to-day functioning (Campbell, 2002).

The abuse had further repercussions on the interpersonal relationships of the participants. One significant effect was the profound sense of betrayal of trust. They felt that their ability to trust or to form new relationships and friendships had been damaged. The results of the study likewise revealed that the abuse also affected women's parenting behavior. The women disclosed that they became irritable and displaced their anger on their children. As stated by Walker (2000), battered women are eight times more likely to be violent toward their children when they are actively in an abusive relationship compared to when they have decided to end that relationship.

These findings are consistent with the study of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007) showing that low self-esteem, depression, feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness, suicidal ideation/attempts, anxiety, loss of trust, and displacement of anger to children are the effects of abuse on women.

The present study reveals other categories of effects of abuse on battered women: loss of identity, self pity, belief that they were sex objects, optimism, feelings of being crazy, social withdrawal/isolation due to shame, and need for social interaction.

The participants further cited a weakened sense of identity as another effect of abuse. As they became disturbed by the constant beatings, humiliation and put downs, they felt that they no longer were able to identify who they are. Because they were unable to draw upon their personal resources of identity, they lost more power in the relationship. Given this scenario, some women expressed self pity and felt they were going crazy.

For the women who experienced sexual abuse, they felt they were not human beings but simply sex objects. Instead of being loved and taken care of, they felt used and exploited.

The experience of abuse also gave rise to shame. Some women chose to distance themselves from others because they learned to feel shame. This sense of shame was intensified by their sense of inadequacy. Moreover, their loss of self-worth may have stirred on the realization that abuse is a sign of their failure to achieve intimate and familial ideals and dreams (Mills, 1998).

In spite of the horrifying experiences of abuse, however, two women were still optimistic about life. Rather than giving rise to despair, they preferred to have the sense of hope that there is a better life after the abuse. Hope springs from the fact that they have decided to end their abusive relationship. This time, they need social interaction and to be in control of their lives.

Coping Strategies

Abusive relationships created circumstances under which women utilized coping strategies to preserve their psychological functioning and physical wellbeing so as to manage the demands of taxing situations.

Initially, all women in the study used passive strategies in coping with the abuse. They tried to endure the abuse as much as they could. Most of them cried to unburden themselves while others prayed hard for divine intervention. However, for a few, there was denial. They could not face the reality that their partners would want to hurt them. As explained by Carlson (1997), denial as a defense mechanism can help maintain internal stability and coherence to prevent a collapse of one's worldview and cognitive as well as emotional functioning.

The women also utilized some active, behavioral, and cognitive coping strategies. A few consoled themselves with the hope that their husbands would still change and strived to become better wives. Those who decided to remain with their abusive partners nurtured the hope that the relationship in which they have invested so much would not be a complete failure. They may also have considered the length of their relationship and economic factors. Some women have lived with their partners for more than 10 years. As Resbult and Martz (1995) found, a longer relationship was predictive of a higher level of commitment. Likewise, Hilton (1992) observed that battered women clearly face great economic impediments when attempting to leave their abusive partner. In many instances, the decision is dependent on the women's assessment of what is best for their children.

However, when the change they were hoping for did not happen, most of the women left their abusive partners. There were factors that forced these women to end the relationship: the realization that their partners were unwilling to change, the recognition of the long-term emotional damage they were suffering, and the awareness that the abuse had begun to take a toll on their children. Leaving was the only way to end the abuse and the only option that could guarantee that they could maintain control over their lives (Rusbult & Martz, 1995).

In addition to the coping strategies of being passive and tolerant of the abuse, talking to abusive partners, hoping for change, seeking help and leaving abusive partners, which had been revealed earlier (Estrellado & Salazar-Clemeña, 2007), other ways of coping reported by participants in the present study included trying to fight back, attempting to get even by having extra marital affair, or pressing charges against their abusive partners. Others kept themselves busy with their work while a few chose to become better wives.

Model Validation

The results of this study validate and further expand the Dynamics of Abuse Model of Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña (2007). The dynamics of battered women could be explained through the factors included in the model—forms of abuse, contributing factors (intrapersonal and interpersonal), effects of abuse, and coping strategies. This study revealed, however, other specific items under some of these factors (e.g., stabbed with knife and exploitation through prostitution as forms of abuse, feeling of going crazy and social withdrawal due to shame as effects of abuse) that could help provide a more comprehensive

explanation of the phenomenon of women battering.

Implications for Counseling Practice

Counselors can benefit from using the Dynamics of Abuse Model (Estrellado & Salazar-Clemeña, 2007), with additional inputs from this study in helping women victims of abuse. When counseling victims of spouse violence, counselors can help them to a) understand that the abuse, whatever form it takes, is associated with numerous psychological problems, b) achieve more realistic and accurate perception about the abuse experience and its effect on them and their children, and c) strengthen coping strategies that women deem appropriate based on the cost and benefits of the various coping strategies. Counselors need to be careful about pushing women victims of abuse toward more active and assertive coping strategies, however. Such plan may be insensitive to how the women appraise the problem and its effect on their psychological well-being.

Another salient finding of the study indicates that abuse can influence maternal parenting behavior. Some of the women admitted they tended to displace their anger to their children, supporting the notion that battering is one experience that has a negative impact on the women's ability to parent their children adequately. This may be an important contribution to the literature of domestic violence because it adds a new perspective in understanding the dynamics of these families. Considering that the experience of battering made it difficult for these women to use appropriate child-rearing practices, the children may be at risk for developing personality problem behavior. This finding suggests the importance of intervention programs for women victims of abuse to help them develop appropriate parenting skills.

Low self-esteem was found to be both a contributing factor as well as an effect of abuse. Counselors' intervention strategies (preventive and remedial) can therefore focus on improving the self-esteem of women vulnerable to abuse as well as those who have been victimized.

Results from this study also highlighted sources of strength for the women that may be significant for counselors and other helping professionals (especially those working with battered women) to consider. One obvious resource for them was their faith and the support of their church. Given these findings, clinicians developing prevention or intervention strategies around issues of intimate partner abuse should also consider the role of religion and spirituality in

understanding and responding to abuse. Likewise, practitioners may work closely with church leaders in preparing them to adequately address women abuse.

The study is limited by its small size, demographic variables of the participants, and interview format and questions asked. Future validation of the conceptual framework can employ a larger sample with different demographic background.

REFERENCES

- Aguilar, R. J., & Nightingale, N. N. (1994). The impact of specific battering experience on the self-esteem of abused women. *Journal of Family Violence, 9*, 35-45.
- Arugaan sa Kalakasan (1994). *Sino ang may sala?* Quezon City, Philippines: Circle Publications.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bartky, S. (1990). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Boss, P. (2002). *Family stress management: A contextual approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Campbell, J. C. (2002). Health consequences of intimate partner violence. *The Lancet, 359*, 1331-1336.
- Carandang, M.L.A. (1987). *Filipino children under stress*. Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Carlson, B. E. (1997). A stress and coping approach to intervention with abused women. *Family Relation, 46*, 291-298.
- Cascardi, M., & O'Leary, K.D. (1992). Depressive symptomatology, self-esteem in battered women. *Journal of Family Violence, 7*, 249-259.
- Cascardi, M., O'Leary, K.D., Lawrence, E., & Schlee, K.A. (1995). Characteristics of abused women seeking treatment regarding marital conflict. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 63*, 616-623.
- Choice, P., & Lamke, L. K. (1997). A conceptual approach to understanding abused women's stay/leave decisions. *Journal of Family Issues, 3*, 79-80
- Coleman, D. & Straus, M. (1986). Marital power, conflict and violence in a nationally representative sample of American couples. In M. Straus & R. Gelles (Eds.). *Physical violence in American families*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

- Coker, A. L., Smith, P. H., Mckeown, R. E., & King, M. J. (2000). Frequency and correlates of intimate partner violence by type: Physical, sexual, and psychological battering. *American Journal of Public Health, 90*, 553-559.
- Estrellado, A. F., & Salazar-Clemeña, R. M. (2007). Dynamics of abuse: Case studies of five Filipino battered women. *Philippine Journal of Psychology, 40*, 5-33.
- Eisikovits, Z., Goldbatt, H., & Winstok, Z. (1999). Partner accounts of intimate violence: Towards a theoretical model. *Families in Society, 80*, 606-619.
- Felix, L., & Paz-Ingente, R. (2003). *Protecting women and children: A handbook on community-based response to violence*. Quezon City: Center for Reproductive Health Leadership and Development.
- Follingstad, D. R., Laughlin, J. E., Polek, D. S., Rutledge, L. L., & Hause, E. S. (1991). Identification of patterns of wife abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 6*, 187-204.
- Gortner, E.T., Gollan, J.K., & Jacobson, N.S. (1997). Psychological aspects of perpetrators and their relationships with the victims. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 20*, 337-352.
- Guerrero, S. H., & Penano-Ho, L. (1999). *The many faces of violence: Abusers and abusive relationships in Filipino family*. Quezon City: University Center for Women's Studies.
- Heise, L. L. (1998). Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework. *Violence Against Women, 4*, 262-290.
- Herbert, T. B., Silver, R. C., & Ellard, J. H. (1991). Coping with an abusive relationship: How and why do women stay? *Marriage and Family, 53*, 311-325.
- Hilton, N. Z. (1992). Battered women's concerns about their children witnessing wife assault. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 4*, 77-82
- Holahan, C. J., & Moos, R. H. (1987). Personal and contextual determinants of coping strategies. *Journal of Family Violence, 52*, 946-955.
- Irin Asia (2008). Philippines: Law fails to stem domestic violence. Retrieved May 1, 2009 from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81668>.
- Kalmuss, D., & Seltzer, J. A. (1989). A framework for studying family socialization over the life cycle: The case of family violence. *Journal of Family Issues, 10*, 339-358.
- Lapuz, L. (1977). *Filipino marriages in crisis*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers.
- LaViolette, A. & Barnett, O. (2000). *It could happen to anyone: Why battered women stay*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Le, B., & Agnew, C. R. (2003). Commitment and its theorized determinants: A meta-analysis of the investment model. *Personal Relationships, 10*, 37-57.
- Leonard, K. E., & Blane, H. T. (1992). Alcohol and marital aggression in a national sample of young men. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 7*, 19-30.
- McNeal, C. & Amato, P. R. (1998). Parents' marital violence: Long term consequence for children. *Journal of Family Issues, 19*, 123-139.
- Merry, S. E. (2009). *Gender violence: A cultural perspective*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mertin, P., & Mohr, P.B. (2000). Incidence and correlates of posttraumatic stress disorder in Australian victims of domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence, 15*, 411-422.
- Mills, L. G. (1998). *The heart of intimate abuse: New interventions in child welfare, criminal justice, and health settings*. New York: Springer.
- Palacio, R. (2004). NAPC-WSC reports high in of battered women. Retrieved August 25, 2005 from <http://pia.gov.ph/news.asp?fi=p041208.htm&w=1..>
- Philippine Commission on Women (2010). Statistics on violence against Filipino women. Retrieved October 25, 2010 from <http://womensphere.wordpress.com/2009/02/14/domestic-violence-up-in-2008-in-the-philippines>.
- Renzetti, C.M., Edleson, J. L., & Bergen, R. K. (2001). *Violence against women*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Republic Act No. 9262 (2004, March 8). An act defining violence against women and their children, providing for protective measures for victims, prescribing penalties therefore, and for other purposes.
- Rhatigan, D. L., & Axsom, D. K. (2006). Using the investment model to understand battered women's commitment to abusive relationship. *Journal of Family Violence, 21*, 153-162.
- Roberts, A., & Roberts, B. (2005). A comprehensive model for crisis intervention with battered women and their children. In A. Roberts (Ed.), *Crisis intervention handbook: Assessment, treatment, and research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rusbult, C. C., & Martz, J. M. (1995). Remaining in an abusive relationship: An investment model analysis of nonvoluntary dependence. *Psychological Bulletin, 21*, 558-571.
- Sanchez, R., & Sobrevega-Chan, J. (1997). *Women and men's perspectives on fertility regulation and other reproductive health issues*. Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines Center for Women Studies.

- Simons, R. L., Johnson, C., Veaman, J., & Conger, R. D. (1993). Explaining women's double jeopardy: Factors that mediate the association between harsh treatment as a child and violence by a husband. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 713-723.
- Straus, M. & Smith, C. (1990). Family patterns and child abuse. In M. Straus & R. Gelles (Eds.). *Physical violence in American families*. New Jersey: Transcription.
- van Wormer, K. S. (2007). Domestic violence and substance abuse: An integrated approach. In A. Roberts (Ed.), *Battered women and their families: Intervention strategies and treatment*. New York: Springer.
- Viano, E.C. (1992). Violence among intimates: Major issues and approaches. In E.C. Viano (Ed.), *Intimate violence: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. Philadelphia: Hemisphere, 3-12.
- Walker, L.E.A. (2000). *Battered women syndrome* (2nd ed). New York: Springer.
- Walker, L.E.A. (1993). The battered woman syndrome is a psychological consequence of abuse. In R. J. Gelles & D.R. Laseke (Eds.), *Current controversies on family violence*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 133-153.