

THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION AND ETHNICITY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines how an individual's level of education and ethnicity influence the risk of experiencing domestic violence (DV). Findings within existing research about education levels and DV suggest that higher levels of education are generally associated with a decreased risk of experiencing DV. However, educational disparities exist that impact marginalized populations. Ethnic minorities are at a disproportionate risk of experiencing limited access to educational opportunities. These groups are also at an elevated risk of experiencing DV. This study also explores how ethnic backgrounds and cultural norms impact risk and willingness to seek help for DV. The research in this study expands on the limited body of literature in this area by addressing research gaps that explore this topic but lack proper synthesis and depth. It also proposes policy implications to increase access to educational opportunities and reduce DV risk.

Keywords: domestic violence, higher education, ethnicity, disparities, risk

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), domestic violence (DV) is defined as abusive behaviors by one partner against another partner in an intimate relationship, which includes physical violence, sexual violence, and emotional abuse, used to exert control, power, and intimidation (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV], 2017). DV happens across all races and ethnicities, with minorities being disproportionately affected (Hulley et al., 2023). To understand the significance of this topic, researchers must realize that disparities in educational opportunities disproportionately affect minorities at a higher percentage (Bostock et al., 2009; Hulley et al., 2023; Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2013). It must also be taken into account that different ethnic backgrounds and cultural norms also affect how a victim perceives DV and their willingness to seek help (Hulley et al., 2023; Stockman et al., 2015). Many theories aim to explain how education and ethnicity affect the risk of experiencing DV, but the theories that explain this relationship best are social learning theory (SLT) and feminist theory. Research on DV is extensive but lacks proper synthesis and depth as to how education level and ethnicity influence an individual's risk of experiencing DV (Karunaratne & Harris, 2022).

Existing literature describes DV as one of the most common forms of violence against women (Erten & Keskin, 2018). The literature states that, on average, one in four women experiences DV, with minority women's rates of DV being nearly doubled that of the average (Stockman et al., 2015). Victims of DV experience many barriers when leaving abusive relationships (Hulley et al., 2023). Researchers have found that a substantial barrier among victims of DV is a lack of knowledge about the range of formal and informal resources available to them (Ashworth et al., 2015; Hulley et al., 2023). Among victims who lack knowledge of

resources available for DV situations, high percentages included Black, Asian, and Hispanic women (Hulley et al., 2023). Strict cultural norms within these groups can influence how individuals respond to and experience DV (Hulley et al., 2023).

The relationship between how education and ethnicity influence an individual's risk of experiencing DV is complex (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Wobbekind, 2012). Education alone, however, plays an important role in people's lives. Through the attainment of higher education, people can access different opportunities and use those opportunities as tools of empowerment and awareness (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). For many minorities, education serves as a tool to increase their opportunities and break the cycles of poverty and abuse (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). Existing literature mentions that some populations with the highest risk of educational disparities include minority populations and individuals whose first language is not English (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). Education is an important tool that helps mitigate the risk of experiencing DV, and researchers describe higher education as a factor that protects people from DV, as the attainment of a higher education provides adequate resources, awareness, and a supportive environment (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Klencakova et al., 2023; Wobbekind, 2012).

Despite the wealth of empirical knowledge on DV, the scholarship lacks proper synthesis and depth to how an individual's education level and ethnicity influence the risk of experiencing DV (Klencakova et al., 2023; Weitzman, 2018). While the limited existing studies generally link higher levels of education with a lower risk of experiencing DV, the relationship is complex and can be influenced by other factors (Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Masaiti et al., 2022). The lack of a comprehensive synthesis on this topic leaves a gap in knowledge, and many aspects of this relationship remain underexplored (Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Klencakova et al., 2023;

Masaiti et al., 2022; Weitzman, 2018). Addressing the lack of synthesis is essential to aid in the creation of policy implications and interventions to make education more accessible for people, predominantly for minority populations, as a tool for the prevention and reduction of DV (Khan et al., 2013).

The purpose of this study is to explore how education level and ethnicity influence an individual's risk of experiencing DV. More specifically, this study will use a mixed methods approach by gathering data from clients who utilize support services from a comprehensive crime prevention agency in Tarrant County and interviews with employees from the agency to explore how education levels and ethnicity affect one's risk of experiencing DV. By conducting this research, findings can help inform policy recommendations and encourage culturally tailored services for victims of abuse (Khan et al., 2013). This study also aims to expand on the limited literature that explores the intersectionality between education, ethnicity, and DV. (Klencakova et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Domestic Violence

DV is an ongoing public health issue that happens across all races and ethnicities; however, it is an issue that disproportionately affects women (Hulley et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2013). The NCADV defines DV as violent behaviors by one partner against another partner in an intimate relationship, which includes physical violence, sexual violence, and emotional abuse, intended to exert authority and control (NCADV, 2017). The prevalence of DV among women has risen to an alarming degree, and researchers now estimate that one in every four women has experienced DV (Bostock et al., 2009). DV has lasting emotional, physical, and social consequences (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001). Bostock et al. (2009) stated that the individuals at the highest risk of DV are younger adult women who are economically dependent, unemployed, and lack post-secondary education. Additionally, research emphasizes that minority women are at a considerably higher risk of experiencing DV compared to their non-minority counterparts (Bostock et al., 2009; Erten & Keskin, 2018; Hulley et al., 2023). Minority women hesitate to seek help as many lack knowledge of available resources or support programs, as well as cultural norms and beliefs that prevent them from accessing these services (Bostock et al., 2009). Together, the findings from existing research emphasize the risks and challenges minority women encounter, emphasizing the need for interventions tailored to address the structural factors faced by this population (Hulley et al., 2023; Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Shorey et al., 2012).

Evolution of Domestic Violence: A 50-Year History

The legal history of DV is of substantial importance, as the conversation around DV and policies has undergone extensive change within the last five decades. In the mid-20th century,

DV was commonly seen as a private matter with very little, if any, legal interaction, but vocal efforts from feminist activists and the women's rights movements in the 1970s led to a shift in how DV was viewed both legally and socially (Gover et al., 2021). This wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s demanded a judicial response, which led to a change in how DV cases were handled and redefined the meaning of DV as a criminal matter as opposed to a private matter belonging at home (Belknap & Grant, 2021; Gover et al., 2021).

A significant legislative act that had a substantial impact on victims of DV is the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) (Clark, 2007). VAWA is a critical piece of legislation that aims to create interventions for DV and other gender-based violence; it was passed in 1994 and had a prominent role in providing funding for victim services and evidentiary matters (Gover et al., 2021; Jordan, 2005). It continues to undergo refinement to better serve victims of DV and other gender-based abuse to ensure a more vast protection and support system (Gover et al., 2021). Soon after the 1994 legislation, in the mid-late 1990s, DV Courts became a popular form of intervention for DV and became more specialized to involve more community, law enforcement, and victims' services to collaborate for better access to resources and support for the victim (Gover et al., 2021).

DV was gaining more national awareness going into the early 2000s. More women were recognizing that the abuse they had endured was a form of DV. The issue of DV gained greater attention and awareness on college campuses around the nation in the early 2000s through the 2010s (Napolitano, 2015). While this issue was not solely restricted to college campuses, growing national awareness of DV and ongoing legislation drew the attention of many student activists. Through legislation and several policy changes, such as amendments to the Clery Act and VAWA in the 2010s, there was a push for universities to have more widespread protections

for students and accountability measures (Gregory et al., 2016). DV awareness and education on college campuses has now become a priority for many institutions, with many of them providing campus-wide initiatives to recognize signs of DV and amplification of DV resources available to students (Franklin et al., 2016; Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Napolitano, 2015).

With the continual legislation and policy amendments to fight DV, the 2010s were a pivotal time for U.S. feminism and activism (Tambe, 2018). DV continues to be a prevalent issue in the nation; however, during the 2010s, we saw the emergence of the #MeToo movement. To summarize, the #MeToo Twitter hashtag was a term coined by activist Tarana Burke in 2006 and gained momentum in 2017; it provided a safe medium for victims to share their stories of sexual harassment, assault, and other violence against women (Williams et al., 2019). This Twitter hashtag went viral and rapidly caught the attention of many people and celebrities, with the hashtag being retweeted over half a million times over the span of twenty-four hours (Tambe, 2018). This simple but pivotal hashtag movement allowed people to put names to faces and faces to stories of the many women who are part of the statistics, arguably one of the most potent forms of activism in the women's movement (Williams et al., 2019). The power of this movement is incredibly significant as many types of sexual and DV crime are still severely underreported due to the victim's fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, but having a space for victims where they are allowed to share their story acknowledges them to see that they are not alone (Williams et al., 2019).

To this day, there are continued reforms, such as VAWA, that advocate for victims of DV and expand protections for victims from varying ethnic and educational backgrounds (Gover et al., 2021). While this is substantial progress for victims of DV, a significant population that is still left out from benefiting from these resources are victims of DV in marginalized populations.

Many women, in particular immigrant and minority groups, suffer DV in silence in fear of compromising their presence in the United States, lack of knowledge of resources available, or lack of proper tailoring of services to them (Bostock et al., 2009; Clark, 2007). Education provides women with the tools to recognize signs of DV as well as knowledge of what to do if they experience DV. However, educational disparities pose many challenges for many women, so they are left helpless to endure the effects of DV. Academic institutions are doing well in having accessible resources and intervention programs (Coker et al., 2011). The Green Dot program is an example of a widely used intervention program across campuses in the nation for DV that is used to train students to recognize behaviors that may lead to abusive situations and increase awareness of DV (Coker et al., 2011). Yet, many students, often of minority backgrounds, feel that services and intervention programs are not adequately tailored to them (Gómez, 2022). This indicates a critical shift toward greater inclusivity and equity within these services and programs to ensure they reach all students (Gómez, 2022). Nonetheless, the pursuit of higher education remains a valuable tool in reducing DV as it equips individuals with the knowledge and resources necessary to mitigate DV that otherwise would not have been known if not through an educational setting (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Khan et al., 2013; Masaiti et al., 2022).

Accessing Support

Many women who experience DV will find support by telling someone within their social network about their experience, whether it be a relative, friend, or someone they trust (Hydén, 2015). Victims will frequently resort to confiding in a trusted individual about DV because many women lack knowledge of proper formal support systems and are often also afraid of seeking help (Ashworth et al., 2015; Hulley et al., 2023). As Hydén (2015) states, when an

individual becomes a victim, it is not a straightforward act; it is often a process that involves victims recognizing that they are victims of DV. Many women, in particular minority women, face challenges in identifying patterns of abuse, often brushing abuse as something "normal" and something that stays within the relationship (Hulley et al., 2023). Educational disparities among marginalized groups prevent them from recognizing patterns of abuse, further contributing to the increased rates of DV in these communities (Hulley et al., 2023). Acknowledgment of abuse is often a vulnerable process. Still, education, as mentioned by Novick (2022), serves as a tool to recognize signs of DV, which will, in hope, equip both victims and even non-victims with knowledge of resources available for DV. Many perpetrators exploit the victim's fear and lack of awareness to seek formal sanctions, using these factors as a means to control and sustain abuse toward the victim (Belisle et al., 2024).

Disparities in Education

Despite the efforts to expand educational access to reduce the risk of an individual experiencing DV, disparities in education persist and continue to influence the prevalence of DV (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). Ethnic and racial disparities in education are evident due to the significant gaps in academic achievement, limited access to post-secondary education, and lower graduation rates for minority students (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). The United States leads in higher education rankings for the quality of its universities; however, educational attainment in the country is an issue that persists, further contributing to educational disparities (Wobbekind, 2012). Quintana and Mahgoub (2016) argued that one of the most substantial factors that contributes to educational disparities among different populations is socioeconomic status (SES). Researchers found that inequalities in education often begin when students enter kindergarten (Lloyd, 2018). The discrepancy most experienced by students in

childhood is social class differences; minorities are at a social class disadvantage, whereas their White and most Asian peers often experience advantages due to their social class, which allows them to enjoy higher achievement (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). Lloyd (2018) notes that an increase in income, also referred to as SES, is often associated with increased access to educational resources and opportunities, a finding that corroborates those of other scholars (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). Addressing these disparities in education among minorities is essential because the lack of access to a quality education continues the cycle of poverty and increases an individual's risk of experiencing DV (Weitzman, 2018).

Importance of Education

Education has a substantial role in reducing the risk of an individual experiencing DV by increasing awareness, empowerment, and opportunity (Masaiti et al., 2022; Klencakova et al., 2023; Wobbekind, 2012). For minority populations, education increases the prospects for success and freedom (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). Families from under-represented backgrounds often encourage their children to pursue post-secondary education as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty, abuse, and limited opportunities (Gutmann, 2014). Attainment of education has intergenerational benefits, completely changing the trajectory of individuals and their families; therefore, families of minority populations emphasize obtaining a post-secondary education (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Gutmann, 2014). Through higher-level education, individuals develop skills for economic and societal advancement while enhancing personal development (Wobbekind, 2012). From a societal perspective, attaining education allows for a sustainable economy, improved social mobility, and better life prospects (Hoai, 2023). However, while education is a valuable tool that fosters growth and promotes empowerment, not everyone has

the same access to a post-secondary education (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Wobbekind, 2012). Minority populations have a high risk of educational disparities, with social class and ethnic differences being at the forefront of these disparities (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016).

Education and Domestic Violence

The relationship between education and domestic violence is complex. Existing literature points to the direction of educational attainment of higher education as a factor that reduces an individual's risk of experiencing DV; however, there is a lack of proper synthesis and depth on the relationship between an individual's level of education and the risk of experiencing DV (Khan et al., 2013; Klencakova et al., 2023). Education influences the dynamic by providing individuals with awareness of DV, recognition of behaviors that lead to DV, and enhancing understanding of resources available to them (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Khan et al., 2013; Klencakova et al., 2023; Masaiti et al., 2022; Wobbekind, 2012). DV can have long-term effects on victims who lack adequate access to education, particularly a higher-level education, which can create a continuance of abusive cycles, poverty, and dependence, making it challenging to leave a DV situation (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001; Wobbekind, 2012). As previously discussed, historically, DV was seen as an issue that was dealt with in private, and it was not until advocates verbalized the need for awareness of DV that DV started becoming less of a private matter and more of a public health issue (Belknap & Grant, 2021; Gover et al., 2021). Vocalization and advocacy for awareness of DV on college campuses in the early 2000s have prioritized the need for colleges and universities to speak about this public health issue, and it is often the first time many young adults come across information about DV at all (Voth Schrag et al., 2024). Many see education as a tool for opportunity and empowerment, and in relation to DV, education helps prevent and reduce DV (Klencakova et al.,

2023; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). However, education alone is not the only factor that can eliminate DV; but it plays a key factor in promoting awareness and reduction of DV (Khan et al., 2013; Weitzman, 2018).

Ethnicity and Domestic Violence

Ethnic minorities are often underrepresented in DV research, partly because many individuals from these groups do not seek formal support services. Research in DV has primarily focused on broad categorizations: White and non-White individuals, with the influence of ethnicity and culture on the experience of DV being explored more recently (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Serrata et al., 2019). When considering the experience of DV among different ethnic groups, factors such as family structure, cultural beliefs, immigration status, and oppression must be taken into account (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). The largest ethnicities that experience DV at a disproportionately high rate are African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians (Hulley et al., 2023; Serrata et al., 2019). Different cultural norms and societal structures can impact how victims perceive and respond to their experience of DV.

When examining DV among African Americans, ethnicity plays a substantial role in why women from this community face barriers when accessing DV support services. The cultural norms and stereotypes within the African American community emphasize strong family ties and privacy, often keeping private matters within the home (Hulley et al., 2023). African American culture portrays women as strong individuals within their communities, and seeking help of any kind is frequently viewed as a sign of weakness (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Experiences of institutionalized racism, policies, and prejudicial treatment among African American communities discourage African American individuals who experience DV from seeking adequate resources (Hulley et al., 2023).

Similarly, for Hispanic victims of DV, their cultural background places a high value on family loyalty (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Hispanic communities often pressure individuals to protect the family's reputation at all costs. Cultural pressure to protect the family at all costs is a barrier unique to this community because "telling" on a family member can be seen as a form of betrayal of family loyalty (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Language barrier contributes to the alarmingly high rates of DV within Hispanic communities since victims may lack proficiency in English to properly communicate their needs for support (Serrata et al., 2019). Hispanic culture places emphasis on women maintaining their virginity until marriage, meaning that if a woman were to leave an abusive relationship, she would be unable to remarry or find love, as once a Hispanic woman is no longer a virgin, she may be perceived as "worthless" by cultural standards (Hulley et al., 2023). Immigration status also presents a significant challenge this group faces because reporting DV or seeking help might jeopardize their legal status in the United States (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). The fear of deportation results in many women to endure prolonged periods of abuse in silence, with victims often feeling trapped by cultural beliefs (Serrata et al., 2019).

Among Asian victims of DV, themes of male dominance and female submission significantly impact a victim's willingness to seek adequate support services. Asian culture places a high value on masculinity, which often leaves women to just "put up with" anything their husbands say or do (Hulley et al., 2023). Similarly to Hispanic culture, Asian culture also values virginity, instilling the belief that women should remain in an abusive relationship because if a woman is no longer a virgin, they are deemed "worthless" by cultural standards (Hulley et al., 2023; Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Socioeconomic dependence on their husband often serves as another barrier Asian women face. As described in Hulley et al. (2023), Asian

victims describe experiences of DV as being a “bird in a cage,” with feelings of isolation and being trapped because Asian culture places high value on men. Women are expected to do as they are told.

Cultural norms and practices leave many ethnic minority women feeling trapped. Family honor and loyalty are deeply ingrained into these cultures, which leaves women who experience abuse in unfavorable situations (Hulley et al., 2023). To protect the family, women may be compelled to prioritize family loyalty above all else. This pressure often comes at the expense of their safety (Hulley et al., 2023; Kasturirangan et al., 2004).

Theoretical Perspectives Linking Education, Ethnicity, and Domestic Violence

Several criminological theories within the realm of criminal justice aim to explain criminal behavior (Cochran et al., 2017). Since the focus of this study is on victims of criminal behavior, the following theories provide insight into victimhood and how the education level and ethnicity of a victim affect their risk of experiencing DV (Cochran et al., 2017; Houston, 2014; McPhail et al., 2007; Powers et al., 2020). Collectively, the theories that largely support that higher education often leads to a decreased risk of DV are social learning theory (SLT) and feminist theory (Powers et al., 2020). While both theories emphasize education as a protective factor, ethnicity also has a notable role in how victims respond to DV. Cultural norms and behaviors learned from one’s community can influence how an individual seeks and interacts with DV support services (Cochran et al., 2017).

Social Learning Theory

SLT is one of the most prominent theories in criminal justice that explains criminal behavior (Cochran et al., 2017). SLT emphasizes that people learn behaviors through the observation of others, and in the context of DV, direct exposure or indirectly being exposed to

DV elevates the risk of an individual becoming a victim of DV (Powers et al., 2020). Cochran et al. (2017) noted that one of the most significant behaviors that contributes to the cycle of continuation of DV is imitation. When individuals imitate behavior or patterns, they engage in behavior that has been observed and reinforced (Cochran et al., 2017). Localio et al. (2018) made the connection between childhood exposure to DV and increased risk of becoming a victim of DV; when a child grows up knowing only an environment of abuse, it reinforces the idea of abuse, heightening the risk of becoming a victim later in life. Literature makes the connection that culture can play a role in how behaviors are learned and acted upon (Localio et al., 2018). This is especially important in the context of marginalized and minority populations, where cultural norms may influence how a victim interacts with and responds to DV (Hulley et al., 2023). This stresses the need for culturally appropriate educational interventions to address the unique dynamics of how education and ethnicity impact experiences of DV. Education serves as a protective factor since, through education, individuals can learn patterns of healthy relationships, learn signs of DV, and increase awareness of resources, all with the goal of reducing DV risk (Cochran et al., 2017; Powers et al., 2020).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is a sociological theory that argues that many of the patriarchal systems in place create inequalities that disproportionately impact women and increase their risk for DV (McPhail et al., 2007). Feminist theory also discusses how patriarchal, cultural, and societal norms, particularly within minority populations, normalize spousal violence (Namy et al., 2017). Under patriarchy, masculinity is very closely associated with power and control, whereas femininity is closely associated with dependence and weakness (De Coster & Heimer, 2021). Women's ability to attain higher education challenges the patriarchy, which empowers women to

break the cycle of abuse (Houston, 2014). Education reduces women's long-term probability of experiencing DV as when a woman increases her level of education, it provides mechanisms of awareness to fight against DV (McPhail et al., 2007). Scholars consistently argue about the validity of this theory and whether it can give insight into victimhood, as this theory focuses on a gendered perspective and might not provide sufficient insight (De Coster & Heimer, 2021). However, De Coster and Heimer (2021) emphasize that explanations of DV must be gendered in order to unpack the realities of the many women who are victims.

Social Learning Theory and Feminist Theory

Together, these theories provide frameworks that emphasize how education and ethnicity affect experiences with DV as well as the importance of education to address and reduce the risk of experiencing DV (Cochran et al., 2017; Houston, 2014; McPhail et al., 2007; Powers et al., 2020). SLT aligns with feminist theory in that gender norms learned through society and different cultural backgrounds can reinforce negative and harmful behaviors (Cochran et al., 2017; McPhail et al., 2007). Both theories emphasize the need for advocacy for gender equality to reshape the conversation about DV and traditional gender norms (De Coster & Heimer, 2021; Gordon Simons & Sutton, 2021). Education is a transformative tool that can target the behaviors that contribute to violent behavior and power structures that sustain domestic abuse while also changing individual and societal attitudes (Namy et al., 2017; Powers et al., 2020). Furthermore, SLT and feminist theory highlight that education can serve as a tool that promotes healthy relationship patterns and disrupts harmful gender norms (McPhail et al., 2007; Cochran et al., 2017; Powers et al., 2020).

Key Highlights

In short, existing literature underlines the complexities of DV and the factors that influence it, with education level and ethnicity being just a few of the many factors that impact a victim's risk of experiencing DV (Klencakova et al., 2023). However, the current literature lacks proper synthesis and depth on how both education levels and ethnicity influence the risk of experiencing DV, leaving a gap to be explored in this field (Klencakova et al., 2023). DV is an ongoing issue that can affect anyone but predominantly affects women (Hulley et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2013). More specifically, minority women are at higher risk of experiencing DV due to cultural factors (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). To this day, continual legislation and policy amendments fight to reduce the risk of DV (Gover et al., 2021). Likewise, studies generally agree that education can act as a protective factor from DV, which leads to implications to make education more attainable to all, regardless of ethnic or racial background (Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Khan et al., 2013; Masaiti et al., 2022; Weitzman, 2018). However, beyond its possible role in DV prevention and reduction, education should be made more accessible to individuals of all ethnicities and backgrounds as it provides numerous benefits to an individual (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Gutmann, 2014; Wobbekind, 2012). This highlights the need to further explore how educational attainment and ethnicity influence an individual's risk of experiencing DV.

CURRENT STUDY

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to explore how an individual's educational level and ethnicity influence the risk of experiencing DV. Specifically, this research was guided by two important research questions:

1. Do people who experience DV tend to have lower levels of education?
2. Do people from certain ethnic backgrounds tend to face a higher risk of experiencing DV?

Data and Methods

This study utilizes data from One Safe Place (OSP), a comprehensive crime prevention agency that houses many victim support services in Fort Worth, Texas. One Safe Place was selected because they provide comprehensive victim support services to all of Tarrant County. The agency brings a multi-agency network under one roof, ensuring that they provide adequate coordinated services to victims of DV. OSP offers various long- and short-term solutions for victims in Tarrant County, which include but are not limited to childcare support, legal assistance, and counseling services. OSP is also conveniently centrally located near Fort Worth's hospital district.

Specifically, for this study, the data used was from intake surveys that OSP conducts upon the arrival of an individual looking to use their services. OSP conducts these intake surveys to collect and gather data for their facility. This research focuses on data from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023. Since OSP collected this data through their intake surveys for administrative purposes, it is considered secondary data for this study.

Qualitative data were also gathered through semi-structured interviews with OSP employees to gain a further understanding of how an individual's level of education and ethnicity affect DV and interaction with support services.

To assess any potential disparities, the data provided by OSP intake surveys was compared to census data to determine if the demographics of OSP clients reflect the population of Tarrant County, Texas. This comparison aids in identifying the underrepresentation or overrepresentation of groups among clients who experienced DV and utilized support services.

Quantitative Data

The data for OSP clients consists of 982 responses. U.S. Census Bureau (2023) listed that in 2023, the population of Tarrant County was 2,182,947 people. However, for variable-specific comparisons, the *level of education* census data is only available for individuals 25 years and older, resulting in a dataset size of N=1,427,698. For the variable of *ethnicity*, the census only records data for six of the seven observed categories of ethnicity in OSP client data, not accounting for American Indian/Alaskan Native, resulting in a dataset size of N=2,179,647.

OSP also provided data on how clients heard about OSP. The data will be discussed descriptively to provide insight into how clients hear and learn about OSP. The dataset size for this variable is N=1,019. This data is also collected from the intake surveys that OSP conducts upon arrival of an individual seeking to use their services. An individual can mark all sources applicable to how they learned and heard of OSP. This leads to a different dataset size for this specific variable.

Data Coding

To ensure consistency between OSP client data and Tarrant County census data, the variables *level of education* and *ethnicity* were coded as follows. For the variable of the *level of*

education, respondents who indicated that they had less than 12 years of education were coded as 1; high school diploma, which includes the GED equivalent, is coded as 2; some college was coded as 3; vocational training was coded as 4; college graduate was coded as 5; and postgraduate was coded as 6.

For the variable of *ethnicity*, American Indian/Alaska Native was coded as 1; Asian/Pacific Islander was coded as 2; Black/African American was coded as 3; Hispanic was coded as 4; White/Caucasian was coded as 5; Multiracial was coded as 6; and Other was coded as 7.

The variable of *how clients heard about OSP* was coded for visual interpretation. Child Protective Services (CPS) was coded as 1, clergy was coded as 2, court order was coded as 3, district attorney was coded as 4, friend/family was coded as 5, hospital was coded as 6, internet (OSP website) was coded as 7, law enforcement was coded as 8, OSP presentation was coded as 9, OSP staff was coded as 10, self was coded as 11, social media was coded as 12, social service agency was coded as 13, and other was coded as 14.

Qualitative Data

To supplement the data gathered from OSP, semi-structured interviews were conducted with OSP employees to gain valuable insight into how a victim's level of education and ethnicity influence the risk of experiencing DV from their perspectives. Interview participants were recruited with the help of a third-party contact at OSP through convenience sampling, which was based on their accessibility and willingness to participate (Andrade, 2021). A recruitment email was sent to further explain the details of this study and participation information via the point of contact at OSP. The main criteria for selection were that they had to be 18 years or older and

employees of OSP that directly work with intake or support services for victims. This allowed for diverse perspectives from individuals who work within intake or support services at OSP.

The interviews were conducted in February 2025. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviews occurred during regular working hours at OSP in a private area where the interviewee felt comfortable being interviewed. Informed consent was gathered from participants. Participants were informed that they had no obligation to participate in this study; they could choose not to answer a question and could stop the interview at any time. Confidentiality is of utmost importance, and it was reassured to participants before and after the interview. The interviews encompassed eight open-ended questions to gather rich and thoughtful responses from the OSP employees. The final sample size for employees interviewed was three (n=3). The small sample size was limited by time constraints and the busy schedules of the population intended to be interviewed. However, despite the small sample size, the number of interviews was adequate for this study. Of the seven individuals who work directly with intake or support services at OSP, three individuals were willing to participate to provide valuable insights for this study.

Data Analysis Strategy

Descriptive statistics will be conducted to analyze the datasets without making inferences beyond the observed sample. These statistics will be used to compare OSP client data and census data while at the same time highlighting any disparities among the populations being analyzed.

Interviews were audio recorded only with the consent from the interviewee to ensure that the researcher could focus on conducting the interview and gathering rich data. After the interviews with OSP employees concluded, they were transcribed and analyzed to identify recurring patterns via thematic coding (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Ayre & McCaffery, 2022).

Reoccurring patterns are reported in the findings section to enhance the understanding of the influence that level of education and ethnicity have on the risk of experiencing DV.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

The first goal of this study was to analyze the descriptive characteristics of OSP clients, specifically their levels of education and ethnicity, and compare these findings to the education levels and ethnicities of the broader population of Tarrant County in the same year. Results are displayed in Tables 1 and 2. Findings are also shown in bar graphs for visual interpretations in Figures 1 and 2.

Level of Education

As displayed in Table 1, OSP clients' level of education ranged from less than 12 years of education (1) to postgraduate (6) with a mean score of 2.85, which falls between a high school diploma and some college. This suggests that, on average, clients of OSP have completed a high school diploma or its equivalent, a GED. The standard deviation for this data set is 1.406, which suggests that while the average education is a high school diploma, there is some variability in the responses regarding the levels of education of OSP clients.

These results are then compared to the population of Tarrant County. Tarrant County's level of education ranges from less than 12 years of education (1) to postgraduate (6), with the exclusion of vocational training. Vocational training was a level of education included in OSP client's data but not in Tarrant County's data. The mean score for the level of education of the population of Tarrant County is 3.36, which falls between some college and college graduate, suggesting that, on average, the population of Tarrant County has some college education. The standard deviation for this specific variable is 1.63, suggesting that there is diversity in the education levels of those accounted for in the U.S. Census.

Figure 1 visually displays the distribution of this variable among OSP clients and the Tarrant County population. A noticeable disparity in Figure 1 is that individuals who utilized OSP services and held a high school diploma were overrepresented, as they made up 32.5% of clients who utilized OSP services. Yet only 23.1% of the population of Tarrant County held a high school diploma. Further disparities also appear within higher education levels. Individuals with some college education are fairly equally distributed between OSP clients (26.8%) and the population of Tarrant County (27.6%). The gap widens as the level of education increases. College graduates make up 22.2% of the Tarrant County population but only 16.4% of OSP clients. Postgraduates are considerably underrepresented, making up 11.5% of the Tarrant County population but only 3.8% of OSP clients. These trends align with existing literature suggesting that higher levels of education are generally associated with a decreased risk of experiencing DV (Masaiti et al., 2022; Wobbekind, 2012). Given that existing studies have conducted advanced statistical analyses, this study offers a unique contribution by analyzing data from Fort Worth, Texas, a geographic region that has not been studied extensively in this context.

Ethnicity

With respect to ethnicity, Table 2 lists the ethnicity of OSP clients and the population of Tarrant County. OSP clients' ethnicity has a mean score of 4.04. Table 2 highlights the ethnicities that are overrepresented as OSP clients. Black/African American, Hispanic, and White/Caucasian groups are overrepresented, while American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and Other are underrepresented. The findings in Table 2 serve as an indicator of the notable demographic differences among OSP clients.

With respect to the population of Tarrant County, the mean ethnicity score for the population of Tarrant County is 4.20. It is important to note that census data did not contain data for American Indian/Alaska Natives, which was an ethnicity that OSP client data did contain. The largest ethnicities in Tarrant County are White/Caucasian, Hispanic, and Black/African American. Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and Other make up a smaller percentage of the Tarrant County population.

Figure 2 visually displays the distribution of this variable among OSP clients and the Tarrant County population. A notable finding from Figure 2 is that the three largest ethnicities in Tarrant County are White/Caucasian (41.4%), Hispanic (30.5%), and Black/African American (17.6%). Other ethnicities, Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and Other, have small representation. While White/Caucasian individuals make up the largest ethnic group in Tarrant County, they are noticeably underrepresented among OSP clients as they make up 41.4% of the Tarrant County population yet only represent 28.3% of OSP clients. In contrast, two of the ethnicities that also largely represent the broader population of Tarrant County are overrepresented as OSP clients. Hispanics make up 30.5% of Tarrant County yet represent 35.1% of individuals that utilized services at OSP, and Black/African Americans have a higher percentage of overrepresentation, with this ethnicity only making up 17.6% of Tarrant County yet 28.9% of OSP clients. These findings align with existing literature that suggests minorities experience DV at a disproportionately higher rate than White/Caucasian counterparts (Hulley et al., 2023; Serrata et al., 2019).

How Clients Heard about One Safe Place

As displayed in Table 3, there are several different ways that clients learn about OSP. From observations of Table 3, it is clear that the most common way that individuals learn about

OSP is through Child Protective Services, which accounts for 20.2% of the responses. The next most common ways are through friends/family and self. Friends/Family made up 15.7% of the responses, and self accounts for 14.7% of responses. These methods, being the most common ways that individuals learn about OSP and their available support services, emphasize the importance of referrals from other agencies and word of mouth.

Interview Findings

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three OSP employees. These interviews allowed for the collection of data that enhanced findings from the quantitative data of this study. To identify findings from the individuals who were interviewed and maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used to reference responses from the individuals: Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and Interviewee 3. Outlined in this section are the four overarching themes that were identified in the interviews with OSP employees: education as a tool for awareness, ethnic disparities, barriers to seeking help, and the importance of culturally competent domestic violence services. All four of these themes are, in a way, related to each other, further highlighting the relationship between education, ethnicity, and DV.

Theme One: Education as a Tool for Awareness

Throughout interviews with the OSP employees, it was clear that they viewed education as a tool to increase awareness of DV and to increase an individual's confidence. One interviewee (Interviewee #1) mentioned that some people might not understand that DV is about power and control, emphasizing the importance of education as a tool for awareness (Klencakova et al., 2023). Two interviewees similarly identified that through education, individuals can be exposed to and educated about warning signs:

“...the more educated, the more you learn new things and have the ability to change your perspective on things, which can help change and break generational cycles within a culture” (Interviewee #2).

Interviewee #1 also mentioned that individuals who may not be exposed or educated on warning signs might not know they are in a DV relationship. Besides its role in promoting awareness of DV, education increases the prospects for confidence, success, and freedom (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). Attainment of higher levels of education not only allows for the development of skills to enhance awareness of DV but also fosters personal development (Wobbekind, 2012). Interviewee #1 makes a statement that efficiently combines the ideas offered by Brittain and Kozlak (2007) and Wobbekind (2012) in their literature:

“...education exposes people to things they did not know before, which can enhance confidence and allow them to have a better understanding on how to protect themselves and others. Education also allows for economic security and independence” (Interviewee #1).

Theme Two: Ethnic Disparities

Interviewees were asked about how they felt that ethnicity affects DV experiences and engagement with victim support services. All three interviewees highlighted the fact that marginalized groups and ethnic minorities are more deeply impacted by DV. Interviewee #3 links the ethnic disparities in DV to cultural standards, stating:

“In some cultures, domestic violence is very normalized and not discussed. Different ethnic backgrounds have different views of domestic violence” (Interviewee #3).

Two interviewees mentioned two of the most predominant ethnic groups in Tarrant County as the ethnic groups with the highest risk of experiencing DV and as the most likely to experience barriers when seeking DV support services. Interviewee #1 highlights which ethnicities they believe to be disproportionately affected by DV:

“...primarily Hispanic and Black men and women are impacted, with women from these ethnicities at higher risk” (Interviewee #1).

With respect to this observation, Interviewee #2 makes a noteworthy statement regarding one of the predominant minorities in Tarrant County:

“I think Hispanic people, specifically undocumented Latinos in the United States, may be at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence. Undocumented people are already scared to contact police, even if they are victims of abuse, which can give the abuser a sense of power and control to continue the abuse. The cultural and societal norms also contribute to why victims may stay silent” (Interviewee #2).

Interviewee #2 also makes another noteworthy observation in regard to ethnic disparities in DV:

“...culture plays a huge role in what we normalize while growing up, what we see at home, how we are viewed, treated, and expected to be. This can lead to experiencing domestic violence and not even knowing, leading an individual to not reach out for support or services out of shame” (Interviewee #2).

Theme Three: Barriers to Seeking Help

While analyzing the interviews, a reoccurring theme kept frequently appearing across interviewees' responses: barriers that individuals experience when seeking help from DV. While all interviewees generally agreed that culture can be a barrier to why many victims do not seek help, Interviewee #3 highlights why victims, particularly those from minority populations, do not seek support:

“... in a lot of Latino, Asian, and African American backgrounds, clients are more hesitant to reach out and get the help they need in fear of what their culture will think” (Interviewee #3).

Among all the individuals being interviewed, fear of stigma and judgment from one's own community is a substantial reason many victims do not seek support for DV. Fear of judgment and cultural stigma leave many women, particularly those of minority populations,

feeling stuck and trapped (Hulley et al., 2023). Similar to what was discussed in the previous theme and by Hulley et al. (2023), as Interviewee #2 mentions, cultural and societal norms contribute to why a victim does not seek support:

“In many cultures, it is looked down upon if you need to reach out for help” (Interviewee #2).

Interviewee #1 highlights that the lack of knowledge of the resources available for victims presents as a barrier. The lack of not knowing that there are resources available for victims of DV is a barrier itself because many victims do not know what they do not know, often leaving them in reoccurring cycles of abuse (Hulley et al., 2023; Kasturirangan et al., 2004).

Theme Four: Importance of Culturally Competent Domestic Violence Services

Empirical observations from the interviewees agree that minorities and marginalized communities are at the highest risk of experiencing DV (Hulley et al., 2023). It is for this reason that culturally competent DV services are so essential. To ensure that the populations being affected by DV the most are being adequately assisted, services catered to these populations must be provided. In order to properly serve these populations, all three interviewees highlighted the fact that individuals who directly interact with and assist victims of DV need to be educated on serving multiple cultures and should be unbiased when serving clients. Interviewee #3 offered insight as to how the staff that directly interact with victims at OSP ensure that they are adequately serving individuals from all backgrounds and states that:

“We go through training that exposes us to various cultures and backgrounds to learn what is normalized in those communities. Also, having a diverse staff ensures that we can learn from each other to help fit the needs and concerns our clients have” (Interviewee #3).

Similarly, Interviewee #1 echoes the response made by Interviewee #3:

“...advocates need to be educated on serving multiple cultures, should know how to appropriately use translation and interpretation, and be unbiased when serving clients regardless of religion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, etc.” (Interviewee #1).

Interviewee #2 offers a different perspective on how OSP, as a non-profit organization, ensures that they are adequately serving clients of all backgrounds. Interviewee #2 states that:

“...we are constantly searching for partnerships, staff, or any resources to help provide and meet our client’s needs, and if we do not have something at the moment, we are a very open non-profit always looking for ways to cover those needs” (Interviewee #2).

These responses from interviewees highlight that OSP, as a crime prevention agency, ensures that staff are equipped with the proper knowledge and tools to serve a diverse population. Additionally, as mentioned by Interviewee #2, OSP ensures that they are constantly searching for the most up-to-date and culturally tailored services to serve the community, recognizing that minorities are disproportionately affected by DV.

DISCUSSION

There is a wealth of empirical knowledge of DV, yet little attention has been put on the influence that an individual's level of education and ethnicity has on the risk of experiencing DV (Weitzman, 2018). The findings from this study align with the limited literature, which suggests that individuals with lower levels of education tend to have an increased risk of experiencing DV (Bostock et al., 2009). Existing studies emphasize that minorities are at a higher risk of experiencing DV (Hulley et al., 2023; Serrata et al., 2019). However, few studies have examined how ethnicity affects an individual's risk of experiencing DV. Of those studies that did, they lacked an in-depth exploration of this topic and left many aspects of this relationship underexplored and unanswered (Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Masaiti et al., 2022; Weitzman, 2018). As a result, there is a need for research that explores the influence that an individual's level of education and ethnicity have on the risk of experiencing DV. The purpose of this study was to address this gap in the literature, reveal essential findings, and recommend policy implications.

Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data highlighted disparities in the risk of experiencing DV across different education levels and ethnicities within OSP clients and the broader population of Tarrant County. While the datasets focus on a single geographic region and one crime agency, findings still provide valuable insight into how education and ethnicity influence an individual's risk of experiencing DV.

Quantitative data revealed that experiences of DV tend to be more common among individuals with lower levels of education. As discussed in the findings for this variable, those with a high school diploma are considerably overrepresented as clients in OSP, making up 23.1% of the population of Tarrant County but 32.5% of OSP clients. Literature suggests that education

allows individuals to have increased awareness of DV and the ability to recognize signs of abuse, which supports the findings of higher levels of education being underrepresented (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Khan et al., 2013; Klencakova et al., 2023; Masaiti et al., 2022; Wobbekind, 2012). Postgraduates, the highest education level recorded on the data, are underrepresented as those who experience DV, making up 11.5% of the Tarrant County population but only 3.8% of OSP clients. This allows us to understand that educational attainment can aid in reducing the risk of experiencing DV, but it does not make an individual entirely resistant, as DV still occurred across all education levels in this study. While the limited dataset size and specific geographic region limit the exploratory nature of the findings of this study, it does emphasize the need to increase and make educational opportunities more accessible for the community (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). Figure 1 provides a visual representation of this finding.

In terms of ethnicity, quantitative data revealed that two ethnic minorities have a higher risk of experiencing DV while simultaneously highlighting that ethnic minorities overall are at greater risk of experiencing DV (Hulley et al., 2023). When analyzing census data from 2023, data reveals that Tarrant County is predominantly made up of three ethnicities: White/Caucasian, Hispanic, and Black/African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Of these ethnicities, Hispanics and Black/African Americans were at the highest risk of experiencing DV. Hispanics made up 30.5% of the county's population, and Black/African Americans made up 17.6% in 2023 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). These ethnic minorities are overrepresented as clients at OSP; Hispanics account for 35.1% of clients, and Black/African Americans have a higher percentage of overrepresentation, making up 28.9% of OSP clients. This finding suggests that these ethnic minorities are at an elevated risk of experiencing DV and may face more barriers when it comes

to seeking help, which simultaneously highlights the need for culturally tailored support services for these communities (Hulley et al., 2023; Serrata et al., 2019).

Although the sample size of interviews with OSP employees is small, it provides valuable data that helps draw important conclusions regarding how education and ethnicity influence the risk of experiencing DV. The data from the interviews aligned with findings from descriptive data from OSP clients and the larger Tarrant County population, as well as the limited literature on this topic. Data collected from all interviewees suggests that individuals with lower educational attainment are at an elevated risk of experiencing DV while supporting the fact that attaining higher education enhances an individual's confidence and also serves as a tool for awareness of DV. This was the first theme observed among responses from all interviewees. As mentioned by Interviewee #1, education allows for economic independence and freedom, which is also reflected in literature (Masaiti et al., 2022; Wobbekind, 2012). In fact, the literature finds that beyond reducing the risk of experiencing DV, education has other added benefits for personal advancement (Masaiti et al., 2022; Wobbekind, 2012).

Another recurring theme from the interviews was the fact that there are ethnic disparities among those who experience DV. This second theme underlines recognition of the fact that individuals from certain ethnic backgrounds tend to experience DV at an increased rate and that minority populations are disproportionately affected by DV (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). As noted by Interviewee #3, ethnic disparities in DV can often be traced back to cultural norms because, in some cultures, DV might be normalized to the point where individuals may not even recognize that they are in an abusive situation.

This theme transitions naturally into the next observed theme: barriers to seeking help. Interviewee #3 also mentions that victims from minority populations might hesitate to seek help

from DV for fear of what their culture might think of them. Together, these themes align with quantitative data and highlight the need for DV agencies to recognize that minority populations are at a disproportionately higher risk of experiencing DV. This presents as a barrier as many minority women may not feel that they can seek help due to fear of judgment from both the agency and their community or because of the lack of culturally competent support services. This barrier is also echoed in the literature by Hulley et al. (2023), who note that fear of judgment leads to many victims feeling trapped. These two themes answer our second research question in understanding which ethnicities tend to have an increased risk of experiencing DV and simultaneously explore how ethnicity affects the risk of experiencing DV.

The last recurring theme from the interviews ties all the previous themes: the importance of culturally competent domestic violence services. This theme helps emphasize the fact that to properly serve populations at the highest risk of experiencing DV, services must be tailored to those populations to meet their unique cultural needs (Bostock et al., 2009). Ensuring that culturally competent DV support services are provided ensures that victims, especially those who are at the highest risk, feel properly supported. As mentioned by Kasturirangan et al. (2004) and Hulley et al. (2023), ensuring victims find support that is geared towards them increases the possibility that they engage with the support services. By acknowledging the influence that ethnicity and cultural norms have on the risk of experiencing DV and willingness to seek help, crime service agencies and support services can better serve diverse populations at the highest risk (Bostock et al., 2009).

Policy Implications

The findings of this study present recommendations for policy implications, particularly to address the complex relationship between education, ethnicity, and DV. This study found that

experiences of DV tend to be more common among individuals with lower levels of education. Existing literature generally links a higher level of education with a decreased risk of experiencing DV (Karunaratne & Harris, 2022; Masaiti et al., 2022). Despite education's role in decreasing the risk of experiences with DV, education should be made and remain accessible and available to all. Ensuring that all individuals have equitable access to education has many benefits, such as the attainment of skills for economic and societal advancement while simultaneously enhancing personal development (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007; Gutmann, 2014; Wobbekind, 2012). Strengthening or establishing partnerships with education programs, such as local community colleges or vocational training programs, can equip individuals to have the tools needed for recovery and social development (Brittain & Kozlak, 2007). Education can offer stability to survivors of DV, helping them rebuild their lives (Masaiti et al., 2022; Wobbekind, 2012).

Second, the findings in this study suggest that two of the largest ethnic minority populations in Tarrant County are overrepresented as clients in One Safe Place. This overrepresentation indicates that certain ethnicities tend to face a higher risk of experiencing DV, aligning with the existing research that states that minorities are at higher risk of experiencing DV (Hulley et al., 2023). This highlights the need for DV support resource shelters to have inclusive and culturally competent services. Such services are needed to properly service victims from these communities when seeking help, especially since ethnicity or cultural norms can present as a barrier in itself when looking for support services (Green et al., 2024).

Developments should be made for programs at DV shelters to prioritize inclusivity, to ensure that individuals from diverse backgrounds feel safe and understood, and that services provided reflect the diversity of the community (Green et al., 2024). This also means that more targeted

approaches to reaching communities that are at higher risk of experiencing DV should be made. Creating outreach programs with this approach in mind can help effectively spread awareness about support services available to vulnerable populations.

Limitations

While this study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between education, ethnicity, and DV, limitations should be considered when interpreting these results. The dataset of this study is limited to individuals seeking services from a single crime prevention agency in Fort Worth, Texas. As expected, the results may not fully represent the broader population of DV survivors across other shelters in different cities. Since the dataset also solely consists of individuals who actively sought services at One Safe Place, the experience of individuals who sought similar services in other nearby shelters may not be fully represented. With this said, the findings in this study only reflect individuals within the area of Tarrant County; similar studies should be replicated in other geographical locations, both within and outside of Texas.

Second, the privacy and safety of clients is of utmost importance to One Safe Place. Federal and state laws and organizational policies prohibit access to sensitive information that may have provided deeper insights for this research (National Crime Victim Law Institute, 2021). Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, victims of DV have the right to have their data protected and confidential, which was respected during the entirety of this study. While these restrictions limited the amount of data that was allowed to be gathered, in alignment with regulations and out of respect for the victims, no identifiable information was collected for this research.

Another limitation was the small sample size of the One Safe Place (OSP) employees that were interviewed. While the research did yield rich and valuable qualitative data, this study was

based on three interviews with OSP employees. A larger sample could have provided more diverse findings for this study. Nonetheless, the interviews that were conducted with OSP employees still provided valuable and rich insight into how education and ethnicity influence an individual's risk of experiencing DV. Still, a larger sample size could strengthen the exploratory nature of this study.

Directions for Future Research

These findings highlight important directions for future research. First, this research should be repeated in other areas to determine whether findings from this study are consistent across various regions and demographics. Expanding research to different geographic areas can help provide a more comprehensive understanding and further explore the influence of education and ethnicity on the risk of experiencing DV.

Furthermore, a larger sample size for qualitative data would be beneficial for future research as a larger sample of employees who work at abuse prevention agencies can provide more insight and add to the exploratory nature of the findings. Recreating this study at different shelters could also provide insights into common and unique experiences or patterns that victim service agencies face. This may provide a more in-depth understanding of how education and ethnicity influence the risk of experiencing DV.

Another direction for research is to explore additional factors that might affect an individual's risk of experiencing DV. This study found that experiences of DV tend to be more common among individuals who have lower levels of education, which supports the fact that education levels influence the risk of DV (Bostock et al., 2009). Furthermore, findings from this study suggest that ethnicity, more specifically ethnic norms and beliefs, plays a role in the risk of an individual experiencing DV. Future studies should examine other social and economic factors

that may influence the risk of experiencing DV, such as employment status and socioeconomic status (SES). These factors, while not explored within this study, may also contribute to an individual's risk of experiencing DV (Lanchimba et al., 2023).

Additionally, survivors of DV should also be considered in future studies of this nature. This research relied on secondary data collected by OSP from their clients and interviews with OSP employees. While valuable and rich data was collected, gathering perspectives from DV survivors can provide deeper insight into how education and ethnicity affect the risk of experiencing DV and improve future research.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to address the gap in the research surrounding education, ethnicity, and DV, particularly since research remains limited in this specific context. This research emphasizes the complex relationship between education, ethnicity, and DV. The findings and exploratory nature of the study present important insight into how education influences the risk of DV.

The descriptive data for this variable supports the finding that experiences of DV tend to be more common among individuals with lower levels of education as they are overrepresented as clients who utilize services at OSP. The descriptive data also revealed that two minority groups, Black/African American and Hispanic communities, are at higher risk of experiencing DV among the population of Tarrant County. This supports the emphasis that certain ethnicities tend to have a higher risk of experiencing DV, and ethnicity plays a role in the risk of experiencing DV (Hulley et al., 2023). It is not necessarily an individual's ethnicity that causes the risk of experiencing DV, but more so the cultural norms and beliefs within an ethnic group. Ethnic minorities, as noted by all the interviews, face unique cultural challenges and norms that can increase their risk of abuse. A common challenge among these groups is the normalization of violence (Hulley et al., 2023). The normalization of abuse makes it tough for victims to recognize abuse or seek support services. Ethnicity not only influences the risk of experiencing DV, but at times, it can also be a barrier to accessing support services for abuse (Hulley et al., 2023). Interviews with OSP employees mirrored those of the descriptive data, reinforcing the association between lowered educational level and increased risk of experiencing DV while also suggesting that ethnicity has a role in influencing the risk of experiencing DV as one's ethnicity can, at times, be a barrier to seeking support for DV (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Hulley et al., 2023).

While these findings will be beneficial to One Safe Place, other crime prevention agencies or DV shelters that provide support services and resources to victims might also find this study on how education and ethnicity affect the risk of experiencing DV insightful. Ultimately, this study aims to help fill a gap in the literature in an area where research is limited. These findings can aid in policy recommendations, promote fair access to education opportunities, as well as contribute to the efforts to reduce the risk of experiencing DV among populations that are at high risk (Khan et al., 2013). As a result, this work holds both academic and practical value.

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APPENDICES

TABLE 1: Descriptive statistics for the level of education of OSP clients and Tarrant County.

OSP Clients (N=982)			Comparison Group (N=1,427,698)	
Variable Level of Education	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than 12 Years (1)	154	15.7	180,716	15.6
High School Diploma (2)	319	32.5	327,466	23.1
Some College (3)	263	26.8	406,454	27.6
Vocational Training (4)	48	4.9	-	-
College Graduate (5)	161	16.4	336,802	22.2
Postgraduate (6)	37	3.8	176,260	11.5
TOTAL	982	100.0	1,427,698	100.00

Mean: 2.85 Median: 3.00 Standard Deviation: 1.406	Mean: 3.36 Median: 3.00 Standard Deviation: 1.63
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**Education data from the census is only measured from individuals of the population 25 years and over.*

TABLE 2: Descriptive statistics for the ethnicity of OSP clients and Tarrant County.

OSP Clients (N=982)			Comparison group (N=2,179,647)	
Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native (1)	12	1.2	-	-
Asian/Pacific Islander (2)	15	1.5	136,422	6.2
Black/African American (3)	284	28.9	384,187	17.6
Hispanic (4)	345	35.1	665,936	30.5
White/Caucasian (5)	278	28.3	903,984	41.4
Multiracial (6)	37	3.8	78,467	3.6
Other (7)	11	1.1	10,651	0.5
TOTAL	982	100.00	2,179,647	99.8

Mean: 4.04 Median: 4.0 Standard Deviation: .997	Mean: 4.20 Median: 4.00 Standard Deviation: .994
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TABLE 3: How clients heard about OSP

OSP Clients' Responses (N=1,019)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How client heard of OSP		
Child Protective Services (1)	206	20.2
Clergy (2)	0	0
Court Order (3)	4	.4
District Attorney (4)	22	2.2
Friend/Family (5)	160	15.7
Hospital (6)	40	3.9
Internet (OSP Website) (7)	76	7.5
Law Enforcement (8)	130	12.8
OSP Presentation (9)	1	.1
OSP Staff (10)	1	.1
Self (11)	150	14.7
Social Media (12)	5	.5
Social Svc Agency (13)	123	12.1
Other (14)	101	9.9
TOTAL	1,019	100.00

Mean: 7.52 Median: 8.00 Standard Deviation: 4.447
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FIGURE 1. Level of education for OSP clients (N=982) and Tarrant County (N=1,427,698)

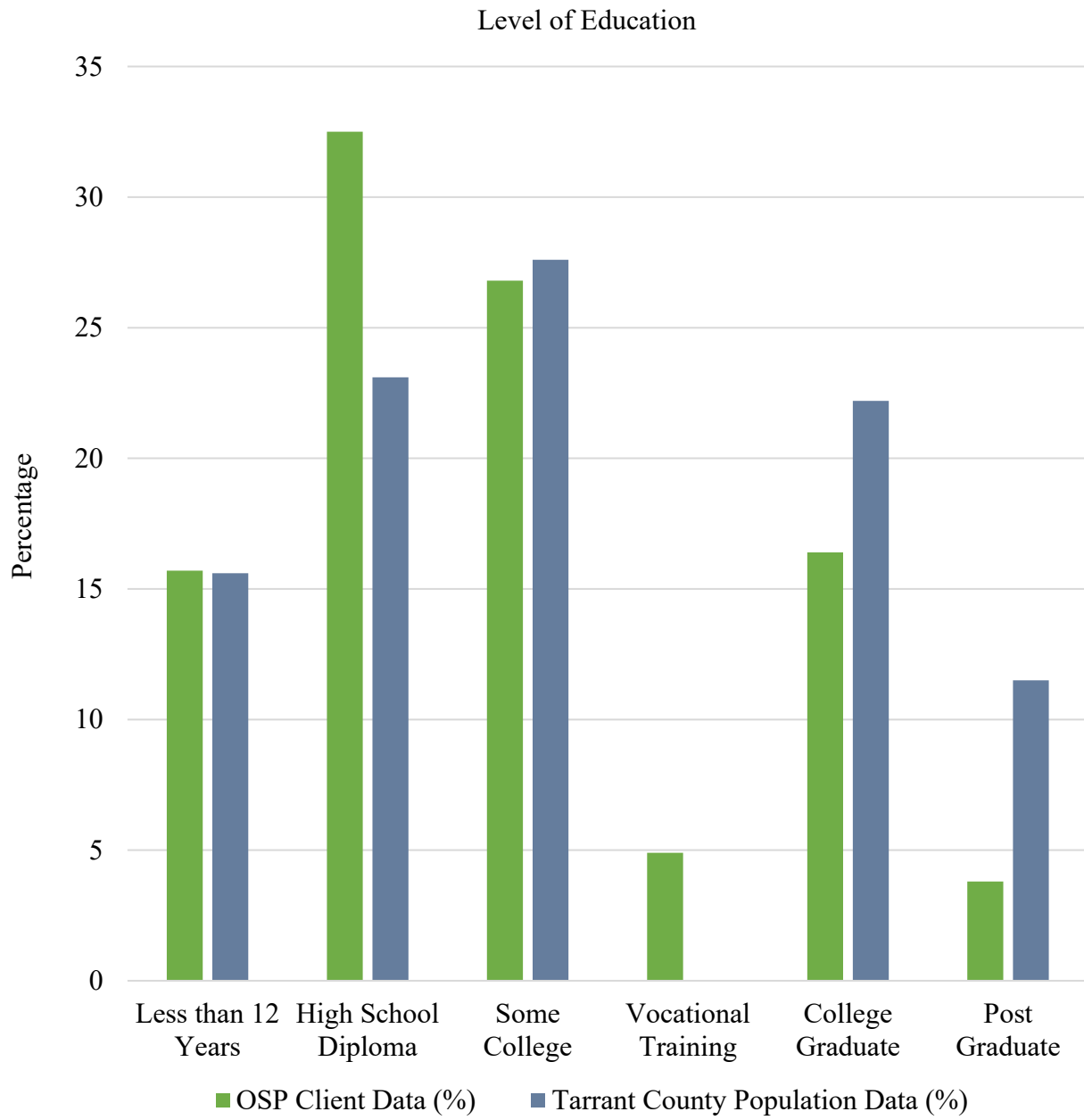


FIGURE 2. Ethnicity of OSP clients (N=982) and Tarrant County (N=2,179,647)

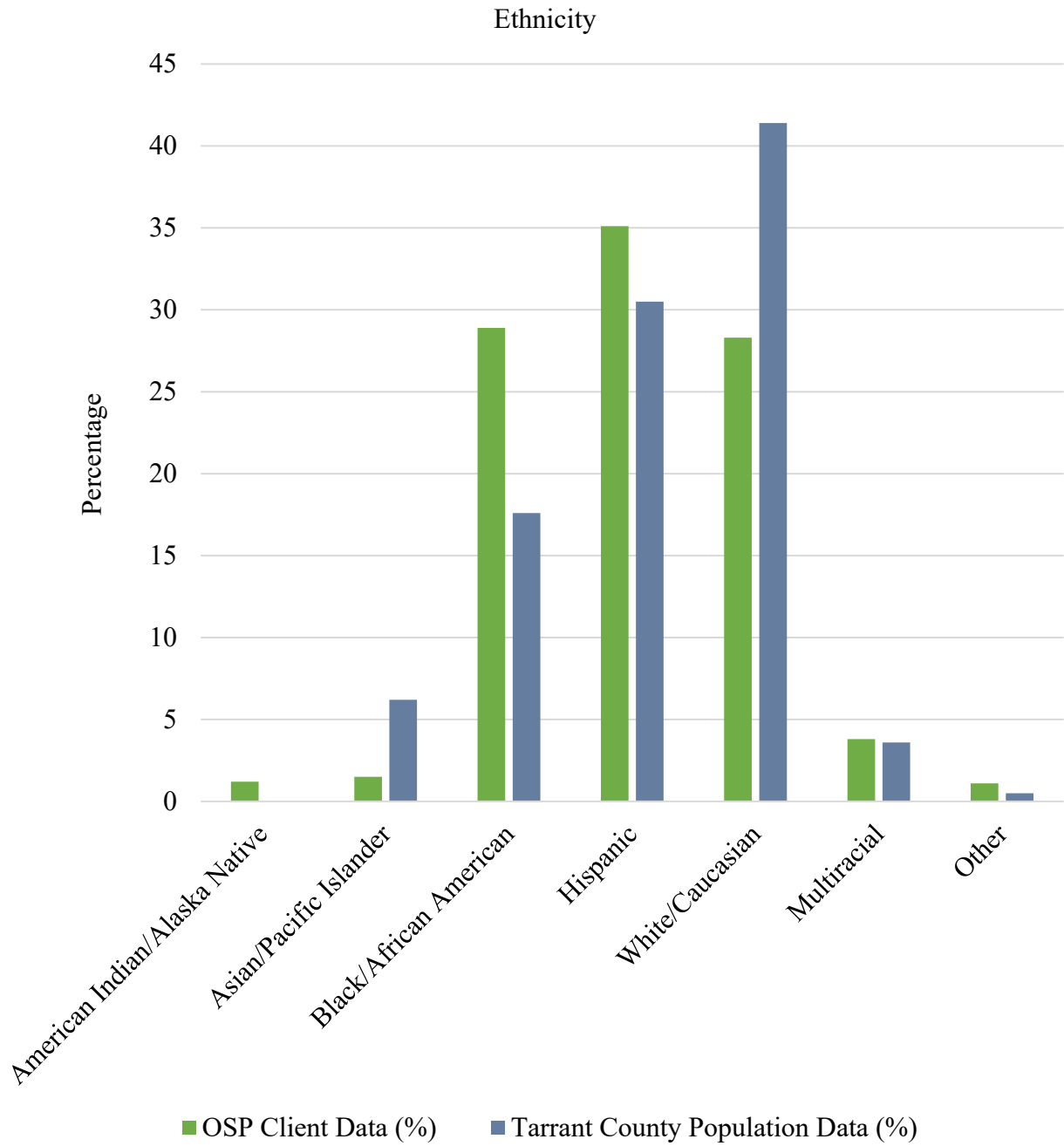
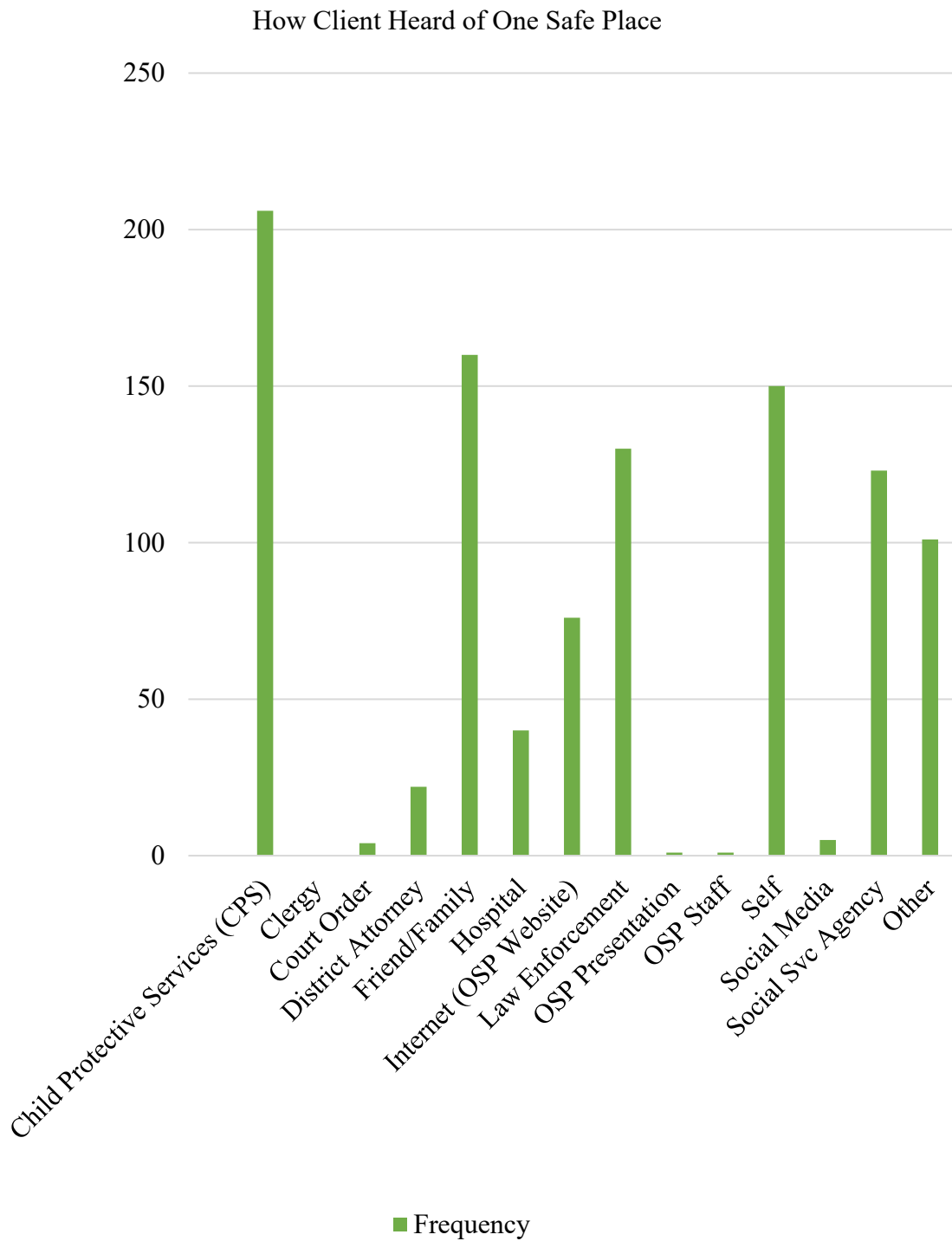


FIGURE 3: How clients heard of OSP (N=1,019)



Effect of Education and Ethnicity on Domestic Violence Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your role at One Safe Place?

2. How long have you been working at One Safe Place?
 - a. Less than 6 months
 - b. 6 months to 1 year
 - c. 1-3 years
 - d. 3-5 years
 - e. More than 5 years

3. How do you feel about the following statement: "An individual's level of education impacts their likelihood of experiencing domestic violence." Why?
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

4. How do you feel about the following statement: "An individual's ethnic background impacts their engagement with domestic violence support services." Why?
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

5. From your experience, are clients from certain ethnic backgrounds at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence? If so, which ethnic backgrounds? If not, what influences the risk of domestic violence regardless of one's ethnic background?

VITA

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