

Editor's Note

Any form of abuse is contemptible, and much more so when it is committed by an intimate partner or a family member.

During the first nine months of 2004, the Department of Social Welfare and Development offices served 7,847 victims of child abuse (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2004). At the end of the third quarter of 2005, the Philippine National Police recorded 5,146 cases of violence against women of which 35.64 percent involved wife battery (del Puerto, 2005). Even if the unreported cases are not considered, these statistics clearly indicate that domestic violence and child abuse remain a serious problem in our country.

As psychologists, one of our main contributions in our crusade against all forms of abuse has been through our research undertakings. Our research findings about the many facets of the phenomenon of abuse provide valuable information that can benefit the concerned individuals and groups, such as the victims of abuse and their family members as well as the counselors and therapists who work with them, and the government agencies and non-government organizations that help in addressing the abuse problem in various ways.

This special issue puts together six articles—five empirical studies and one theoretical paper—about the different types of abuse in intimate and family relationships. They add to the pool of local psychological research on abuse and reflect our continuing interest in understanding this phenomenon.

The first article by Estrellado and Salazar-Clemeña gives us a glimpse of the ordeal of five battered women who experienced a combination of physical, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse at the hands of their intimate partners. The authors describe the devastating effects of the abuse on the women's psychological functioning and on their interpersonal relationships. What makes this case study different from accounts of wife battery that we

usually read in newspapers and magazine articles is the use of a comprehensive conceptual framework that incorporates a number of psychological factors which allows us to understand the dynamics of abuse more in-depth.

Although statistics indicate that almost all victims of domestic violence are women, Jurisprudencia's study drives home the point that men can also be abused in intimate relationships. He describes the experiences of six Filipino husbands who bravely came out of the shadow to talk about the different types of abuse that they suffered from. Jurisprudencia cites some psychological factors that contribute to the cycle of abuse and some cultural factors that make it more difficult for abused Filipino men to admit that they are victims of domestic violence.

The next three articles are about the various forms of child abuse.

Ladion looks into the role of faith in God in the recovery of nine evangelical Christians from the trauma of child sexual abuse. In each case write-up, the author describes how these survivors struggled with the harrowing effects of the abuse and how their spiritual religious conversion experience, specifically their experience of God's unconditional love and forgiveness, helped get them on the road to recovery. In analyzing their continuing recovery process, Ladion uses both the Christian perspective and the lens of a psychologist, thus allowing her to draw parallels between the psychologist's practice of psychotherapy and recovery in the Christian sense.

Saplala's case study of six male convicted felons from the maximum security compound of the New Bilibid Prisons reveals that all of them experienced neglect and other forms of child abuse at the hands of their parents, relatives, and surrogate parents. The author underscores the participants' extensive use of defense mechanisms in the way they viewed their experiences of abuse, justifying their abusers' behaviors as due to their circumstances in life, like their being poor. Although it may be tempting to attribute the felons' criminal behavior to their experiences of child abuse, Saplala makes it clear that the data from his study are not enough to infer that cause-effect relationship.

The study of Tarroja, Balajadia-Alcala, and Co is different from the other five articles in terms of research design and the use of a quantitative mode of data analysis. The authors look into the impact of family composition and last incident of abuse on five dimensions of psychosocial well-being, namely, sense of safety, sense of competence, self-esteem, ability to adjust, and ability to form healthy connections. Equally interesting as the results of their inferential statistical analysis are the low mean ratings on all the five dimensions which corroborate the findings of many qualitative studies about the traumatic effects of abuse on the victims.

This special issue ends with the theoretical paper of Ofreneo and Montiel on how intimate violence can be framed in the context of a relationship. They examine the psychological and the feminist sociological discourses which are the dominant discourses on domestic violence, and proceed to a discussion of positioning theory as an alternative framework in understanding the dynamics of intimate violence. The authors include an illustrative example of how to do positioning analysis of a couple's interaction that led to an incidence of physical violence. Although positioning theory falls within a social constructionist paradigm, Ofreneo and Montiel convincingly make the point that it has important implications for counseling or therapy.

As a clinical psychologist, I have been deeply touched by the lives of my clients who were survivors of abuse. When I reflect on their painful, difficult, and long healing process, I cannot help but wish for an end to the abuse problem because no one deserves to go through such an ordeal. It is then my ardent hope that the lessons learned and insights gained from this special issue will not only benefit the concerned individuals and agencies but will help as well in raising the awareness of the general public about the evils of all forms of abuse so we can lessen, if not eradicate, this problem that has wrought untold misery to the lives of many.

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