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Method and Analysis

Review of Nordic Studies

Our aim here was to collect data, information and conclusions provided by previous surveys for reference and comparison. We have reviewed key Nordic prevalence studies that chart the extent of violence against men in intimate relationships.

The research literature on partner violence is considerably more extensive than the research on violence against men in other intimate relationships, and throughout we reflect on our lack of knowledge about violence against men within friendships, the family and other relationships of trust. The majority of Nordic prevalence studies of violence in intimate relationships focus on violence in heterosexual relationships, and the Nordic literature on violence in gay relationships is very limited. We found only one prevalence study in this field. We also found no Nordic prevalence studies on honour-related violence/forced marriage in our review of the available literature. The Norwegian health surveys contained very few questions about violence. In two major Norwegian studies, Helseundersøkelsen i Oslo (Health Survey in Oslo; HUBRO) and Helseundersøkelsen i Hordland (Health Survey in Hordaland; HUSK), only women were asked questions about violence.

Our main aim has been to look at studies dealing with violence towards adult men (over 18 years old). We have not, in our review of the literature, been able to throw light on the risk factors or variations in vulnerability between different groups of men. We have, to a limited degree, found statistics relating to the prevalence of violence against men from the wider family, friends and acquaintances/colleagues. The majority of studies that highlight violence from the wider family and friends are oriented towards men under the age of 18.

Survey

We conducted an internet survey to investigate the level of awareness among the Norwegian public of the available support services, including crisis centres, family protection offices and centres against incest and sexual abuse, and the level of public awareness that these can (also) be accessed by men.

Qualitative Study of Male Victims of Violence

The aim of this qualitative study was to gain greater insight into men's experiences of violence, and to contribute new and relevant knowledge to a research field that has been dominated by research into women's experiences of violence. There is little knowledge about, or understanding of, men's experience of violence in intimate relationships, so that these interviews with vulnerable men represent part of a project to improve visibility. The purpose of this study is to throw light on how men live with violence and how they deal with their experiences.

The questions we address in this qualitative part of the study concern the kinds of experiences men have in intimate relationships, the relationships in which violence occurs and the consequences this violence has for men. Furthermore, we have asked men about their experiences of the available support services and how the help on offer might be improved.

The interview study consists of in-depth interviews with 28 men who have been subjected to various forms of violence in intimate relationships. The vast majority (26 men) are current or former users of family

protection services, crisis centres or centres against incest and sexual assault. In addition to posing questions about their experience of violence, the interviews also include questions about their early childhood experiences, their backgrounds and upbringing, and family relationships. We have asked about the psychological, emotional and social consequences of the violence on the daily lives of these men, and asked them to reflect on how they function in the workplace, within the family and in other areas of their lives.

The interviews were conducted from March to August 2016 by Claes Ekenstam, Jørgen Lorentzen and Marianne Inéz Lien. The interviews lasted for 1.5–2.5 hours and were transcribed verbatim.

Interviewees from Family Protection and Crisis Centres

At the very start of the project, we contacted three *family protection offices* which we knew had worked specifically with violence against men in close relationships. Initially we arranged for two of these offices to contact men whom they thought could contribute to our study. It was soon proved, however, that the selected offices had some difficulty in recruiting men, and with time being of the essence we sought potential interviewees through alternative channels. Four men were recruited through the snowball sampling method—that is, through colleagues who knew of men who had been exposed to violence in intimate relationships, and who asked these men if they wanted to participate in our interviews. Furthermore, we recruited six men by posting information about the project on Facebook and Proba's website. One of the men we wanted to interview withdrew immediately before the interview, so that our final number of interviewees was nine. All nine are heterosexual, ethnic Norwegian men between the ages of 28 and 66. Seven of them have children. They have all experienced violence from a present or former female partner. Eight out of the nine men have used the services of various family protection offices around the country.

We have also interviewed nine men who have used various *crisis centres* in Norway. We deliberately sought to recruit a wide range of men in this sample, with special emphasis on including men of immigrant background.

Six out of the nine men in this sample come from foreign backgrounds. There were two reasons for our desire to include this group of men. Firstly, our knowledge of violence against men from immigrant backgrounds is almost non-existent; secondly, statistics from Norwegian crisis centres show that the percentage of immigrant users is high and that their numbers have increased in recent years. Three of the nine men have experienced violence from gay partners. In this area too, previous knowledge is inadequate.

In the book, we refer to the interviewees as either foreign or Norwegian, and give no further details of their origins so as to protect their identity. These interviewees have been given names that offer the reader some sense of regional background. Several of our contributors have partners from foreign backgrounds. We mention partners as either foreign or Norwegian.

Interviewees from the Centre Against Incest and Sexual Abuse

We conducted ten interviews with men who have been subjected to sexual abuse as children or adolescents, and in some cases as adults. All these men have, as a result of this abuse, sought help at one of Norway's centres against incest and sexual abuse. The interviews were conducted at, and in collaboration with, two of these centres in spring 2016.

All the interviewees were ethnic Norwegian. Most were between 36 and 48 years old, one was younger (28 years old) and two were over 60 years old. This sample represents a wide range of men with various occupations and in differing circumstances. Some lived alone with or without their children, or were divorced. Others were married or were living with partners, with or without their children or stepchildren, or had children (and grandchildren) who were living elsewhere.

In planning the interviews, we also wanted to ask about the experiences of the professionals who meet these men. Early on in the project, we held discussions with staff from all three of the above support agencies to get an insight into the issues that might be important to highlight in our interviews.

Interview Methods

The interviews were designed with the intention of getting descriptions of everyday events and encouraging men to reflect on their lived experiences (Ellis and Flaherty 1992). We chose an open and inquiring approach where the men were allowed to tell their stories in their own time; we were keen that they should put their experiences in their own words and have time to reflect on possible links between their childhood experiences and adult experiences of violence. The interviews were set up as semi-structured life-story interviews (Atkinson 1998).

This interview technique is inspired by phenomenology. In the context of qualitative studies, the phenomenological approach aims to get insight into a particular phenomenon from the perspective of the actors, describing the world as perceived by them and exploring meaning through their experiences. This interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is concerned with the personal perception of the informants' experiences (Smith et al. 1999). This is particularly important in research that affects people's physical and mental health and rehabilitation (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). We used the same opening questions with each interviewee, with which we focused on topics relevant to the study, without being locked into a standardised template. Connections and patterns in the experiences of subjects, as well as varying perceptions and different aspects of the phenomena themselves, can then be captured.

Ethical Considerations

Violence is a sensitive issue, and we have been delicate and attentive in our approach to gain access to the men's experiences. We were particularly concerned that the men should be able to control how much they said about actual incidents of violence. Each interviewee was given a letter explaining what their information would be used for.

The interviews of men from the centres against incest and sexual abuse were conducted at the centres by a researcher in our team who is a qualified psychotherapist with long experience in talking to men who are

victims of violence. Sexual abuse can, in particular, be very difficult to talk about. We established good relationships with members of staff at all the centres, in particular with those staff at the centre against incest and sexual abuse who recruited interviewees. To ensure proper ongoing support throughout and after the project, it was agreed that staff would be on the premises during the interviews and would offer the men a debriefing afterwards if and when it was needed.

In order to ensure a sense of security around the informants from the crisis centres, the interviews were conducted in the centres' premises during the day. Staff were available to talk to afterwards. Interviews with the men from family protection were generally conducted on the premises of Proba Social Analysis, and all the interviewees were encouraged to make contact if they needed to talk afterwards.

All the interviews were transcribed in their entirety. Names, places and other information that might be a risk to anonymity were omitted during the transcription process. We have used fictional names for the interviewees throughout. We have omitted any details about occupation and education to further ensure anonymity. The project has been approved by the Personvernombudet (NSD; Norwegian Data Protection Agency for Research).

Analysis and Preparation

These interviews form part of a project aimed at increasing the visibility of male victims of violence. We have, in the presentation of our empirical data, put emphasis on giving detailed descriptions of men's experiences of violence and abuse, and their understanding of the situations in which it occurs and its consequences in their lives.

Those men recruited through crisis centres and family protection offices have all been the subject of partner violence and thus share similar experiences of violence, but have very different profiles. The men with experience of crisis centres are current users of their centre and have been exposed to violence recently. Their backgrounds are various. The sample includes both ethnic Norwegians and men from immigrant backgrounds. Three of the men have experience of partner violence in gay relationships.

The variety of backgrounds from which the men come adds breadth to the narrative about men's experience of violence in intimate relationships.

The majority of men who have had contact with family protection have experiences of violence that date from more than five years ago. This allows the study to provide insight into the long-term effects of partner violence. This sample also consists of men who have attended family protection offices for mediation. Their experiences of violence have often been left unmentioned during this mediation. This is reflected in Chap. 5.

The interviewees recruited through incest centres have suffered abuse in childhood and adolescence, and describe the profound psychological and social consequences that this violence has had on them. In our analysis of these men, therefore, there is a greater focus on the kinds of trauma that have been caused by this violence than there is in the analysis of the other men's experiences in Chap. 4.

References

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