

Domestic Violence: Intimate Partner Violence Victimization Non-Reporting to the Police in Trinidad and Tobago



Wendell C. Wallace, Cherrie Gibson, Netty-Ann Gordon, Rennie Lakhan, Jinnalee Mahabir, and Cassandra Seetahal¹

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Abstract

Globally, domestic violence (DV) is a common and serious problem that incurs significant costs to victims, their families and governments. DV involves violence between intimate partners as well as against vulnerable members of society, such as children and older people. In order to resolve issues of DV victimization, the police rely on victims to report their victimization; however, there is an on-going concern that incidents of DV between intimate partners tend to be unreported/underreported to the police in Trinidad and Tobago. The current exploratory effort draws on data from semi-structured interviews with individuals (N=130) in six diverse geographical locations in Trinidad and Tobago regarding their non-reporting of DV victimization to the police. The findings indicate that the main reason for DV victimization non-reporting by males on the island was fear of being viewed negatively by police officers and the public (32%), while for females the main reason was dependent economic status (21%)/protection of family (21%). For both males and females, the main barrier to reporting DV victimization to the police was embarrassment/shame. A key research finding was that males were nine times more likely than females to not report their DV victimization to the police.

¹ The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

Corresponding Author: Wendell C. Wallace, wendell.wallace@sta.uwi.edu

Introduction

The primary objective of the present study is to examine the factors influencing domestic violence (DV) victimization non-reporting to the police in Trinidad and Tobago, thereby contributing to the development of a wider criminal justice practice by enhancing knowledge, understanding and awareness of the experiences of victims of DV through their non-reporting behaviors. In Trinidad and Tobago, DV is a term that has traditionally been used to describe the violence that occur between individuals with all forms of familial relationships, including persons in intimate relationships. According to Trinidad and Tobago's Domestic Violence Act, Chapter 45:56, Act 27 of 1999 as amended by Act #8 of 2006, DV refers to the 'physical, sexual, emotional or psychological or financial abuse committed by a person against a spouse, child, any other person who is a member of the household or dependent.' In some jurisdictions, the term intimate partner violence (IPV) has replaced the term DV as it relates to violence between intimate partners such as a husband and wife or violence between individuals who has or has had an intimate, romantic, or spousal relationship, however, IPV is not specifically defined in the legislation governing DV in Trinidad and Tobago. The result is that in Trinidad and Tobago, the term DV is widely used by both the police and local residents on the island to refer to violence between intimate partners and acts of IPV are subsumed under the broad categorization of DV.

In this article, whenever the term 'DV' is used, it refers specifically to physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse between intimate partners as well as the victimization of a person with whom the abuser has or has had an intimate, romantic, or spousal relationship. This does not include violence used against children, or any other person who is a member of the household or dependent as highlighted in Trinidad and Tobago's Domestic Violence Act. For victims of DV in Trinidad and Tobago, the main state agency that deals with incidents of DV is the Police, however, there are other resources such as hotlines and private non-governmental agencies with shelters, unfortunately, these are limited. For instance, on the island of Tobago, there are no shelters for female victims of DV and throughout Trinidad and Tobago, infrastructure for male victims of DV are non-existent. As it relates to the training of Police officers to deal with DV on the island, the training is limited and restricted to brief workshops with police recruits during their Academy training.

In Trinidad and Tobago, there has been a consistent lack of data on the prevalence rates of DV. However, in a recent study by Pemberton and Joseph (2018) with 1,000 women across Trinidad and Tobago, the results indicated that one in three women has suffered DV at the hands of their partners. Additionally, data

from the Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Branch (2018), of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) indicates that for the period 2009 to 2014, women made 74% of all reports of DV, while men contributed 26% of DV reports on the island. Importantly, there are legal ramifications for individuals who are found guilty of DV in Trinidad and Tobago. For instance, if found guilty of DV, the penalties are as follows: (i) on a first conviction, the penalty is a fine not exceeding nine thousand dollars or imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months; (ii) on a second conviction, to a fine not exceeding fifteen thousand dollars or imprisonment for a period not exceeding twenty-four months or both; and (iii) on any subsequent conviction, to a period of imprisonment not exceeding five years.

According to Day, McKenna, and Bowlus (2005), DV significantly impedes economic growth and development, affects the health of the adult victim and their children, impacts parenting, impacts community's economic and cultural well-being and causes financial and economic burden on victims, households, the public sector, private businesses, and the society as a whole. Instructively, the costs associated with DV has not bypassed Trinidad and Tobago. Using a similar methodology to Walby (2014), a rough calculation of the financial cost of DV (quantified as pain and suffering costs, the costs of services used by victims, health care, social services, housing, legal services and the reduction in economic output) was conducted by the lead researcher of the current research effort. The finding revealed that the cost of DV to individuals, the state, and businesses in Trinidad and Tobago is approximately \$8,250 to \$12,500 per person.

DV victimization is a complex issue (Burnett, 2013; Fincher et al., 2015), is often underreported to police (Wolf et al., 2013) and incurs significant social, emotional and economic costs to victims, their families and the broader community (Day, McKenna, & Bowlus, 2005; Laing & Bobic, 2002; Walby, 2004; Waters et al., 2004). DV is also not a new epidemic as it spans history and cultures (Burnett, 2013) and is commonly observed worldwide (Adibelli, Ünal, & Şen, 2016), however, the importance of DV victimization non-reporting to the police cannot be understated or underestimated. This is premised on the notion that non-reporting of any type of criminal victimization negatively impacts the type and amount of crime known to the police or the 'dark figure of crime' (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Doorewaard, 2014; Slocum et al., 2010). Apart from the dark figure of crime, there are also implications for the allocation of resources to assist victims, implications for interventions as well as implications for the perpetrators of crime who may continue their victimization unabated as they remain unknown to the police (Doorewaard, 2014). In this article, "non-reporting" means 'a failure to report

victimization to an individual or entity with legal responsibility for receiving such reports,' in this instance, the police.

Importantly, data on DV victimization reporting for 2009-2017 in Trinidad and Tobago highlights the extent of DV reports made to the police on the island (see *Table 1*). However, due to concerns surrounding DV non- and underreporting, it is suggested that the figures may not be an accurate representation of the actual phenomenon on the island.

Over the last two decades, there have been a plethora of research conducted on DV in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, there is scholarly works on the causes of DV and the criminal justice system response to it (Lazarus-Black, 2007; Holder-Dolly, 2000), prevalence of DV (Nagassar et al., 2010; Office of the Prime Minister, 2016), policy formulation and implementation (Bissessar, 2000; Lazarus-Black, 2002), factors influencing women's decisions to stay in abusive relationships, forms of abuse and social support systems (Hadeed, 2003; Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006), economic costs (Theodore et al., 2008), historical context of DV (Gopaul, Morgan, & Reddock, 1996) and impacts of DV (Holder-Dolly & Sogren, 2004; St. Bernard, 2003). However, researchers in Trinidad and Tobago have not trained their research sights on DV victimization non-reporting and local literature on this area of research is sparse.

Table 1 Domestic Violence reports - Trinidad and Tobago by Police Division and Gender 2009-2017

Divisions	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Port of Spain	3	1	22	12	59	22	37	7	23	7	47	22	41	18	33	6	23	9
Southern	451	160	350	143	576	228	778	315	696	238	582	262	411	190	240	94	190	86
Western	127	36	95	32	169	112	146	21	115	36	105	26	68	23	47	16	15	5
Northern	185	59	147	42	262	86	268	84	286	96	251	72	183	55	212	70	32	13
Central	122	33	218	68	159	36	187	39	145	37	269	75	333	85	186	63	13	39
South Western	117	62	96	25	154	87	109	29	62	14	60	12	72	18	53	27	76	47
Eastern	27	2	18	2	19	4	18	1	9	6	33	8	38	5	21	7	15	3
North Eastern	92	27	63	20	48	12	48	8	55	17	42	23	43	6	43	5	10	8
Tobago	2	0	46	5	106	36	181	61	86	34	34	8	39	4	11	7	6	2
Sub-Total	1126	380	1055	349	1552	623	1772	565	1477	485	1423	508	1228	404	846	295	78	33
Total	1506		1404		2175		2337		1962		1931		1632		1141		1122	

Legend: F=Females, M=Males.

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, (2018).

The non-reporting of violence between intimate partners is a major concern as well as a problem for government officials as well as members of civic society in Trinidad and Tobago and it has been argued that the problem should be placed on the policy agenda on the island. Additionally, concerns have also been raised by the local population regarding the non-reporting of DV between intimate partners on the island. The concern surrounding DV and its non- and underreporting on the island has been recognized by government officials as well as civic society and this recognizance is encapsulated by the proliferation of activism by groups such as Women of Substance, Coalition against Domestic Violence T&T and Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals (O.A.B.I.). Additionally, Theodore et al. (2008) and the Office of the Prime Minister (2016) allude to the problematic nature of DV non-reporting to the police on the island. For instance, the Office of the Prime Minister (2016) points out that while there is research in Trinidad and Tobago on DV generally; adequate research in other domains [inclusive of non-reporting] remains elusive. In sum, given the rich local scholarship dedicated to understanding the dynamics and prevalence of DV on the island, it is surprising that not much is known about DV non-reporting to the police in the jurisdiction. In light of this, the authors of this paper submit that there is an existing gap in the academic literature on DV victimization non-reporting to the police in Trinidad and Tobago.

Background

The prevention, management and alleviation of DV is a social challenge and a complex task (Burnett, 2013; Fincher et al., 2015) as it is heavily dependent on the reporting of victimization to the police. Despite the heavy dependence on victims to report their DV victimization to the police as well as the importance of reporting DV victimization, the phenomenon has historically been considered a private issue (Kronenberg, 2013), while police departments have traditionally treated DV matters as “family affairs” (Stalans & Finn, 2006); and tended not to become involved. In a similar vein, government officials and policy-makers have viewed the non-reporting of DV as a relatively minor social problem affecting only a limited number of individuals (World Health Organization (WHO), (2005). Consistent with the position of the Stalans and Finn (2006) and WHO (2005) is a commonly held view in local policing and international academic circles that it is a rational, conscious decision of victims of DV not to report their victimization (see Boateng, 2016; Bowles, Garcia, & Garoupa, 2009; Felson et al., 2002; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1988; Kaukinen, 2002) and further, that it is the victim’s right to do so.

Due to changing times and values, it has been recognized that DV victimization non-reporting is a social concern (Van der Vijver, 1993), a worldwide phenomenon,

a policing problem (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Skogan, 1976) and a complex global problem that is difficult to study and respond to (Bott et al., 2012; Casey et al., 2011; Dar, 2013; Felson & Paré, 2005; Langton et al., 2012; Palermo, Bleck, & Peterman, 2014). The challenge surrounding DV non- and underreporting is premised on the notion that many victims of spousal violence do not seek help or report their victimization (Burnett, 2013; Fincher et al., 2015). In Trinidad and Tobago's context, the available academic literature on policing suggests that the non-reporting of crime generally to the police in Trinidad and Tobago is a function of residents' lack of faith in the efficiency and effectiveness of the police to solve crime on the island, lack of confidence or trust in the police (Kirton, Anatol, & Braithwaite, 2010; Wallace, 2012), poor police relations with citizens (Pino & Johnson, 2011) and lack of faith in the judicial system (Kirton, Anatol & Braithwaite, 2010). With the postulations of Kirton, Anatol, and Braithwaite (2010), Pino and Johnson (2011), and Wallace (2012) in mind, the non-reporting of DV victimization to the police on the island is worthy of further elucidation.

DV Non-Reporting

Legislators, policymakers, criminologists and scholars in other disciplines have consistently sought to understand the rationale for victims' non-reporting of their DV victimization to the police (Gover et al., 2013). Generally, the rationales for DV victimization remain shrouded in mystery as many incidents of sexual, physical and emotional abuse between intimate partners remain hidden, untold and increasingly unreported (Catalano, 2007; Lichtenstein & Johnson, 2009; Podana, 2010; Stanko, 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In addition, the problem of DV victimization is referred to as occurring 'behind closed doors' (Haarr, 2013; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Yost et al., 2005), the 'tip of the iceberg' of DV (Gracia, 2004), submerged and allegedly invisible to society and "not openly discussed" (Haarr, 2013, p. 9), due in part to its non-reporting. Research by Felson, Messner, Hoskin and Deane (2002) also point to a common assumption that victims of DV are reluctant to call the police.

DV victimization non-reporting is also evident in a host of international literature. For example, in a study conducted by Stavrou, Poynton and Weatherburn (2016) in Australia, it was found that less than half of all people who have been a victim of DV report the incident to police. In another study on DV in India, Kokiwar et al. (2004) point out that 41.6% of those persons affected by DV did not report it to anyone. In a similar study conducted by Palermo, Peterman and Bleck (2014) which aimed to quantify the magnitude of underreporting of gender-based violence, the results indicated that on average, just 7% of women reported their

victimization to a formal source such as a doctor, the justice system, or a social service provider. Andersson et al. (2010) point to a similar phenomenon of underreporting of DV in Pakistan where out that in a national survey of abuse against women, of the 7,895 women who had suffered physical violence, only 14 had reported the matter to the police. Rennison and Welchans (2000) and Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) also point out that DV tends to be underreported as women report only one-quarter to one-half of their assaults to police, and men perhaps less. Greenfeld et al. (1998) point out that only about half of domestic violence incidents are reported to police, while Yost et al. (2005) reports that DV represents the largest segment of unreported crime in the United States.

The non-reporting of DV victimization to the police serves to compromise official police statistics via 'the dark figure of crime' (crimes committed, but not reported) and can lead to systematic non-creation and non-implementation of policies, support mechanisms (counseling and treatment) and interventions aimed at its alleviation (see Sulak, Saxon, & Fearon, 2014 for support). Further, if there is indeed misinformation on the actual number of DV incidents in Trinidad and Tobago or 'the dark figure of crime,' there may be inadequate allocation of resources aimed at alleviating the problem (Bosick et al., 2012; Langton et al., 2012). Additionally, when DV victimization is unreported, victims do not access, receive, and/or benefit from state psychological and medical treatment to cope with their victimization (Bosick et al., 2012; Langton et al., 2012, Van der Vijver, 1993). Thus, from academic and policy perspectives, it is not only important to know who the victims of DV are and what they do when they are victimized, but also why they do not report their DV victimization (Hotaling & Buzawa, 2003).

DV Non-Reporting: Theoretical Perspectives

Numerous theories abound regarding DV victimization non-reporting. These theories are well grounded as they were constructed over time and while they offer much, many exceed the scope of this paper. In light of this, three theoretical perspectives will be used to underpin this study. First, Weiss (2011) theoretical framework for elucidating victims' non-reporting of DV or the rationales that victims use to justify why they do not report their victimization to police is applicable to this research effort and will be utilized. The framework delineates four account types, namely: (1) denying criminal intent, (2) denying serious injury, (3) denying victim innocence, and (4) rejecting a victim identity. Instructively, any one of the four aforementioned account typologies can be used as the rationale for DV victimization non-reporting; however, they are often interconnected and this increases the propensity for DV non-reporting.

Second, the Decision Theory (Hansson, 2005) is applicable to answering the research questions emanating from the study and will be used to explain the non-reporting of DV victimization in Trinidad and Tobago. The Decision Theory is grounded in decision making by individuals and is concerned with goal-directed behaviour in the presence of options. The Decision Theory submits that in decision making, individuals choose between different alternatives (options). In the context of the current effort, it is theorized that victims of spousal violence weigh their alternatives (options) and make a decision to report or not to report the DV incident based on internal and external factors.

Third, the Rational Choice Theory has a long and well established tradition in academic explanations of crime reporting and non-reporting and will be utilized to explain the non-reporting of DV victimization to the police in Trinidad and Tobago. The basic assumption derived from the Rational Choice Theory is that victims of DV often make a rational decision to report or not report their victimization to the police when 'incentives are high and costs are low' (Felson et al., 2002). According to the Rational Choice Theory, victims of crime who believe that there are greater benefits than costs of reporting their victimization will report the offending behaviour to the police (Boateng, 2016; Bowles et al., 2009; Felson et al., 2002), while those who believe that there are greater costs than benefits to reporting, tend not to report their victimization (Kaukinen, 2002). In other words, the decision to report or not report DV victimization is a rational decision based on victims' assessments of costs and benefits associated with reporting (Bowles, Garcia, & Garoupa, 2009).

Current Study

The current research effort is exploratory, descriptive and uses a qualitative research design and data collection process, however, embedded within the qualitative research design is a quantitative approach to gathering the demographic data of the participants. Internationally, studies on the non-reporting of DV victimization are common (see Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Barrett & St. Pierre, 2011; Chen & Ullman, 2010; Gover et al., 2013; Rodriguez, Shedon, & Rao, 2008). Philosophically, this study is no different from previous studies conducted on DV victimization non-reporting in the Western world, though contextually different on social and cultural contexts. Indeed, research has suggested that social and cultural differences may explain the difference in reporting/non-reporting behaviours of victims in Western and non-Western countries (see Chon, 2014; Cohn, Zinzow, Resnick, & Kilpatrick, 2013 for support). As it relates to the social and cultural contexts of Trinidad and Tobago, there is a traditional history of poor relations

between the police and community residents in Trinidad and Tobago (Pino & Johnson, 2011) and lack of trust in the police (Wallace, 2012), while politically, there appears a lack of political will to manage DV victimization by governments on the island. It is suggested that these factors impact on victims of DV willingness to report their victimization to the police on the island.

The Research Context

Trinidad and Tobago is a small, twin-island, Caribbean nation located about seven miles off the northeast coast of Venezuela (Kuhns, Johnson & King, 2011). The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost island of the Caribbean and is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. Trinidad and Tobago is a multi-ethnic society which is characterized by many races and ethnic groups. The two main groups are of African and Indian descent, however, Tobago has less ethnic diversity than Trinidad. The island has a population of approximately 1.3 million people with a variety of races and cultures. The island's economy is based on natural resources such as natural gas, petroleum, tourism, and asphalt (Kirton, Anatol & Braithwaite, 2010). Traditionally, Trinidad and Tobago's society is patriarchal in its ontology, however, there is a tendency on the island towards gynocentrism or the inclination to place the needs, wants, and desires of women ahead of all others (Elam, 2016).

Methods and Materials

The research received ethical approval from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, all necessary measures were taken to ensure the anonymity and safety of participants and to minimize potential distress during the interviews. Keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the study, a key requirement of the study was that pre- and post-care should be taken with all phases of the research process. As a result, safeguards were put into place to ensure the safety of both the interviewers and the respondents. For example, the interviews were conducted at mutually agreed upon, yet, convenient and safe locations (not at the home of the victim); with care taken to ensure that the perpetrator of the abuse was absent and could not find out about the interview. As it relates to post-care, at the conclusion of the interviews, participants were debriefed and provided with a list of organizations that are affiliated with the restoration of health and well-being to assist them if they needed any form of assistance such as benefits assistance, mental health therapy, and substance abuse treatment.

The study was designed to answer two key questions namely: (1) What are the reasons for DV victimization non-reporting to the police in Trinidad and Tobago? and, (2) Do reasons for DV victimization non-reporting to the police in Trinidad and Tobago vary by gender? In seeking to answer these research questions, the participants were asked questions including, but not limited to: 1. You indicated that you were a victim of DV, did you report the act to the Police? 2. Would you encourage victims of DV to report their abuse to the Police? Why/Why not? 3. What were the top three barriers to reporting your DV victimization to the Police? 4. What were the main reasons for the non-reporting of DV victimization to the Police?, and 5. How do/did you deal with DV you faced in your relationship? These questions and others were framed in the context of existing literature and the theories underpinning the current effort as the literature, for example, suggest the existence of barriers to the reporting of DV victimization to the police (Burnett, 2013; Fincher et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) Participants must be 18 years and older, and (2) participants must have experienced victimization by an intimate partner within the preceding past year to five years. The study's contribution to knowledge is constructed within the exploratory methodological aperçu of Park and Burgess (1921) that focuses on illuminating phenomena rather than pursuing generalizability, hypothesis testing as well as bivariate and multivariate analyses.

Data Collection

The data for this study were gathered in five geographically heterogeneous communities in Trinidad (East-West corridor, Central, East and South-East Trinidad) and in one community in Tobago using a convenience sample of community residents to analyze the status of DV non-reporting in the jurisdiction. The ethnic composition of community one in South-East Trinidad is a mixture of Africans and East Indians, community five in the East-West corridor of Trinidad also shows a mixture of Africans and East Indians, while community four in Central Trinidad is predominantly East Indian oriented. Community two in the East-West corridor of Trinidad consists of predominantly individuals of African descent as is Community three (East Port-of-Spain). The ethnic composition of Tobago's population is largely African descended as the island tends to have less ethnic diversity than Trinidad (Kirton et al., 2010).

The data for this analysis are based on a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The demographic questionnaire contained six questions and was designed to gather participants' demographic information (date of birth, marital status, family structure, employment status, perceived economic status,

ethnicity etc.). A semi-structured interview sheet consisting of twelve questions was utilized to address participants non-reporting of DV to the police as well as barriers to reporting. Before conducting the interviews, the participants received verbal and written information about the purpose of the study from the researchers and were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Consent was obtained from all participants, DV was operationalized to mean physical, sexual, emotional or psychological or financial abuse between intimate partners and the participants invited to answer the demographic questionnaire and the semi-structured interview questions on the non-reporting of DV.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized as it was theorized that the narratives emanating from the transcripts would be broad and deep enough to probe and interrogate the rationales for non-reporting of DV victimization. In all instances, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants after the completion of the demographic instrument and took approximately 20–30 minutes to complete, depending on the individual. Questions on DV victimization non-reporting were based on a modified variant of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (the CTS2) by Straus and Douglas (2004). As the researchers did not wish to constrain the participants' responses, the semi-structured interview sheet contained several open-ended questions which allowed the participants the opportunity to freely narrate their experiences, while offering the researchers the opportunity to probe further on partially answered questions. In some instances, the semi-structured interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and in others they were hand-written (due to respect for the wishes of some respondents who preferred not to be tape-recorded). In all instances, the semi-structured interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after being recorded.

Sample Procedure

The geographical locations that form a part of this study were chosen by randomly selecting them from a pool of larger geographical locations within Trinidad and Tobago using the lottery method. The names of several geographical locations (East, West, East-West, North, South, South-East, Central, South-West etc.) were written on a piece of paper, placed in a hat and mixed thoroughly. The blind-folded, lead researcher from the research team (N=7) then picked six pieces of paper with the name of a geographical locations from the hat and these areas were used for the study. The data for the study were gathered between 2015 and 2016.

A convenience sample was utilized in the study as a sampling frame of potential DV victims for a random sample was unavailable. The eventual study population

included individuals who were referred to the researchers by persons who had previously completed the semi-structured interview, individuals who were informed of the study and contacted the researchers and persons who observed the researchers on the field and volunteered/encouraged others to participate. After initial contact with the participants, some interviews were conducted immediately, while in other instances, the researchers contacted the participants and arranged a convenient time to conduct the interviews. In sum, retrospective data were collected from 98 participants who agreed to participate in the study from a larger pool of 245 persons in Trinidad and 32 participants from a larger pool of 70 persons in Tobago. Importantly, there were no financial and/or tangible rewards offered to the participants for completing the semi-structured interviews besides the intrinsic benefit of assisting the researchers with an important and underappreciated area of research.

Data Analysis

The analytical strategy for this study was guided by its aims which involved focusing on, and identifying key rationales for the non-reporting of DV victimization based on participants' accounts and determining differences in non-reporting of spousal violence by gender. Data elicitation and content analysis were conducted on the narratives of the participants using Attride-Sterling's (2001) Thematic Network Analysis. The narrative and text segments pertaining to DV victimization non-reporting as explained by the study's respondents were coded for their central ideas. Initial codes emanated from the narratives and these were clustered into more inclusive themes. Several quotes provided emerging themes and these quotes will be highlighted later in the discourse. The quantitative and qualitative data were entered into a Microsoft Excel worksheet, analyzed and are presented using simple percentages as the researchers are not seeking correlations between variables, but are interested in the phenomenon in its natural state. Descriptive statistics are used to show the prevalence of DV victimization non-reporting by respondents as well as their rationales. Qualitative data are also utilized to highlight the rationales for non-reporting of spousal violence to the police in Trinidad and Tobago and several quotes from the participants are incorporated into the results.

Results

Demographic Information

Of 245 persons who were initially sampled in Trinidad, 147 individuals indicated that they were victims of DV. Of the 147 individuals who indicated that they were victims of DV, 33 individuals indicated that they had reported their victimization to

the police. Of the 114 remaining and potential study participants who had initially satisfied the criterion for participation in the study (18 years and older, victim of DV between intimate partners and had not reported their victimization to the police), 16 could not be located and/or opted out of participating in the study due to time constraints, fear of the abuser and anonymity concerns. Data were then gathered from the 98 remaining participants in Trinidad.

With regards to Tobago, 70 individuals in the main city Scarborough were randomly sampled. Of the 70 individuals who were initially sampled, 56 persons indicated that they were victims of DV, with 10 persons indicating that they had reported their victimization to the police. Of the 46 persons who fulfilled the inclusion criteria (18 years and older, victim of DV and had not reported their victimization to the police), 14 did not participate in the study as they were too busy, could not be located and 1 had died (this death was unrelated to DV victimization). Data were then gathered from the 32 remaining respondents in Tobago. Overall, of the 160 persons who had satisfied the study's criteria, data were collected from 130 or 81% of those individuals who therefore constitutes the study's population for the current paper.

Participants provided information on their age, race/ethnicity, marital status, and education at the time of being interviewed. 48% of the participants self-identified as being East-Indian descended, 42% self-identified as African descended and 9% identified themselves as Dougl'a's (Mixed descended individuals). The mean age of the participants was 35.93 ± 3.87 years (range of ages: 18–64); 70 % (n=91) were married, and 77 % (n=70) of the married participants had children. The study's participants consisted of 48 male respondents from Trinidad and 8 male respondents from Tobago (n=56) and 50 female respondents from Trinidad and 24 female respondents from Tobago (n=74). When the data were aggregated 43% of the study's respondents were male and 57% of the respondents were female.

Quantitative Results

The findings emanating from the analysis of the dataset indicate a variance in terms of the factors that hindered male and female victims of spousal abuse from reporting the incidents to the police and this is depicted at *Table 2*. For males, the top three reasons for non-reporting of their DV victimization was fear of being perceived negatively as a large percentage of the male respondents (32%) indicated that they feared being viewed negatively by police officers and members of the public if they reported the DV incident. This was followed by dealing with the matter personally (17%), protection of privacy (17%) and embarrassment and shame (17%).

Other reasons included lack of trust in the police (9%), lack of confidence in the justice system (4%) and triviality of the incident/protection of family (4%). The findings on male non-reporting of their spousal victimization is substantiated by Felson et al., (2002) on privacy concerns, by Barkhuizen (2015), Cook (2009) and Drijber et al. (2013) on embarrassment/shame and ridicule, and by Drijber et al. (2013), Hines and Douglas (2009) and Tsui (2014) on stigmatization.

This non-reporting of spousal violence by males in the study can also be attributed to the effect of gynocentrism which creates a cultural default on the micro and macro level where women’s DV victimization reporting is a call to action and a man’s DV victimization reporting is seen as taboo (Elam, 2016). In the context of Trinidad and Tobago, the authors of this article submit that gynocentrism pervades all aspects of the CJS as well as society, hence the apprehension by men in the study to report their DV victimization to the police. For male respondents, the main barrier to non-reporting DV victimization to the police was embarrassment/shame (17%).

For females, the main reasons for non-reporting of DV victimization to the police centered around the victim’s dependent economic status (21%) and protection of family (21%). This was followed by perceived triviality of the DV victimization incident (20%) and dealing with the matter personally (18%). Other factors for non-reporting of spousal violence included ownership of the offence (self-blame) (3%) as well as fear for their lives, the male being the sole breadwinner in the home, lack of an alternative place of abode, fear of further DV, fear of the abuser, shame, guilt and protection of family. The aforementioned findings are consistent with that of Greenfeld et al. (1998) on the non-reporting of DV incidents to the police by female victims. For females, the main barrier to the reporting of DV incidents to the police was embarrassment and shame (20%) and this is consistent with findings of Greenfeld et al. (1998) and Klein-Pritchard (2012).

Table 2 Participants’ reasons for non-reporting of DV victimization and main barrier to reporting DV victimization to the police

	Reason #1	Reason #2	Reason #3	Main barrier to reporting
Male	Fear of being viewed negatively (as being weak) by police/members of the public (32%)	Dealing with the matter personally (17%)	Privacy (17%) Embarrassment and shame (17%)	Embarrassment/shame (17%)
Female	Dependent economic status (21%) Protection of family (21%)	Triviality of incident (20%)	Dealing with the matter personally (18%)	Embarrassment/shame (20%)

Source: Fieldwork (2016)

Other notable findings emanating from this study were that 80% of the respondents indicated that they will advise victims of spousal violence to report their victimization to the police. This finding is consistent with the findings by Felson and Paré (2005) in their study on DV that victims of DV often encourage others to report victimization when it occurs to them. Another key finding emanating from this exploratory study was that the non-reporting of spousal violence to the police appears substantial as approximately 51% of those persons within the initial sample who had experienced the phenomenon never reported their victimization to the police in Trinidad and Tobago. These findings are also consistent with international studies which show that DV non-reporting appears to be a chronic issue (Felson & Paré, 2005; Grech & Burgess, 2011; Klein-Pritchard, 2012; Mosher, Miethe & Phillips, 2002; New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 1992; Rennison & Welchans, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

The data also indicated that older participants (40-45 years and above) were more likely to report their DV victimization to the police when compared to younger respondents in the study. This finding is complemented by Buzawa et al. (1999), Catalano (2007) and Chen and Ullman (2010) who all point out that older persons were more likely to report their DV victimization to the police. Males in the study were nine times more likely than females not to report DV victimization to members of the TTPS. This finding is consistent with prior research findings by Felson and Paré (2005) and Douglas and Hines (2011, p. 475), who cogitate that "Men are not likely to seek help for problems that their larger community deems non-normative or determines that they should be able to solve or control themselves."

Of the 130 participants who were interviewed, 70% (n=91) were married, (though at differing stages such as separated but still legally married, living in the same house but not sharing the same room, seeking divorce etc.). Of the 91 individuals who indicated their relationship status as married, 77% were men and 23% were women who did not report spousal violence to the police in Trinidad and Tobago. This finding was not surprising given the prevailing view that men generally avoid reporting their DV victimization to the police (Felson & Paré, 2005). When disaggregated by ethnicity, the data indicated that East Indian descended participants (48%) were more likely to not report their spousal abuse to the police than Afro-descended participants (42%). This finding is not surprising as anecdotal evidence on the island suggest that based on cultural and traditional antecedents, persons of East Indian descent generally keep their DV victimization behind closed doors.

Qualitative Results

As a major component of the study involved the qualitative research methodology, several responses emanating from the respondents have been included in the qualitative results section of this paper. This inclusion is premised on the work of Corden and Sainsbury (2006) who point out that “including verbatim quotations from research participants has become effectively standard practice in much qualitative social research” (p. 1). The rationale for selecting the verbatim quotations is that they represent the emerging themes of the study, they are used as the matter of enquiry; as evidence; as explanation; as illustration; to deepen understanding; to give participants a voice, and to enhance readability (see Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Further, the inclusion of the quotes from the study’s participants will assist in clarifying links between the data, interpretation and conclusions (see support from Spencer et al., 2003; Long & Godfrey, 2004). Importantly, the qualitative responses to the open-ended questions on the reasons for non-reporting of DV victimization to the police in Trinidad and Tobago provides rich scholarship, opulent contextual data and descriptive patterns of the phenomenon under inquiry. In the context of this study, the researchers were able to gain more in-depth information that would have been difficult to gather and convey quantitatively. Several of the quotes from the respondents are highlighted below. For example, in community one, a participant opined:

“In these parts, everybody know everybody and the police and them is fren with everybody. So instead ah wasting time to go to the station an make ah report that they won’t deal with anyway, man and woman does just patch up they thing, unless the violence get outta hand.”

In community two, this quote emanated from a female participant:

“Why report your man if at the end of the day he is the one who supporting the family? There are other ways to solve those types of conflict besides going to the police.”

In community three, one participant stated:

In my pad (home) we have ah understanding that we not going to use violence to settle we differences, but if it ever happen, we will go to our parents or the parish priest because we doh wanna shame we family by going to the police and courts and thing.

In community four, one participant stated:

“teeth and tongue does clash, so man and woman will always get into rab [argument]. Sometimes is really over small issues that we deal with on our own.”

In community five, a female participant articulated the following:

"In life you always encounter unfortunate situations as well as accidents. Does it make sense to report your husband or wife for a little slap? Sometimes making an official police report is helpful, but in other instances, some people does trip and lose they mind and do crazy thing after. I will never make that mistake. Plus, sometime when you make the report to the station, instead of dealing with the report, the police always tracking [making advances] you."

In community six, one participant proffered the following view:

"Man, this place too small to report certain personal things to the police. Once I went to the police station to make a report about something and saw my next door neighbour who is a police. You know, I turn right around and leave. I just never bothered to make the report because I know if I reported the incident, my neighbour would know. Plus, the police have so many other important things to do rather than being involved in them simple man an woman business and plenty times when the police lock up the man or the woman, before the court date, they make up. Is only one set ah waste of the police time."

The selected qualitative responses emanating from the participants are quite illuminating in a number of ways as they shed light on some of the rationales for the non-reporting of spousal violence in Trinidad and Tobago. Based on the victim's explanations outlined above for their non-reporting of DV victimization, there is an appearance of a nexus between non-reporting of DV victimization and the theories underpinning this study (Rational Choice Theory, Decision Theory and Weiss (2011) theoretical framework for elucidating victims' non-reporting of DV victimization to police).

Discussion

The rationale for the non-reporting of DV victimization to the police in Trinidad and Tobago appears to be premised on rational choices made by victims to not report their victimization. For example, 17% of the male respondents and 18% of the female respondents indicated that they preferred to deal with victimization by their spouses personally without assistance from the police. Yet, other respondents opined that their DV victimization was trivial, that they feared retaliation by the perpetrator of the DV and that reporting the incident to the police was a waste of time for both the victim and police (see participant's quote in community six). This is in line with the Rational Choice Theory which posits that individuals have preferences and make rational decisions to report or not report their victimization

to the police when 'incentives are high and costs are low (Felson et al., 2002). The Decision Theory as well as Weiss' (2011) theoretical framework also offers support for explanations proffered by some respondents for their DV non-reporting as some respondents failed to report their victimization to the police as some victims of spousal violence indicated that they used alternatives such as consulting with their parents and priests as well as solving the issue themselves rather than reporting the matter to the police, denied criminal intent of the abuser, and trivialized the abuse/denied serious injury (Hansson, 2005; Weiss, 2011).

Importantly, the research answered the study's two research questions. As it relates to research question number 1, the data highlighted that there is a variation by gender in terms of male/female non-reporting of DV victimization as males in the sample were nine times more likely than females to not report incidents of DV victimization to the police in Trinidad and Tobago. As it relates to research question number 2, the data points to a plethora of rationales for the non-reporting of spousal violence to the police in Trinidad and Tobago. The rationales include lack of faith in the criminal justice system, lack of trust and confidence in the police, police inefficiency, fear of retaliation from the abuser, use of other alternatives, denial of criminal intent of the abuser, and trivial nature of the abuse, denial of serious injury, embarrassment and shame, protection of family, DV victimization being a private matter, nothing could be done and apathy. The aforementioned rationales for non-reporting of DV victimization to the police in Trinidad and Tobago are in congruence with previous findings on DV non-reporting by Boateng (2016) and Bowles et al. (2009) and are aligned with the Decision Theory, Rational Choice theory and Weiss' theoretical framework for understanding the non-reporting of DV victimization.

When DV between intimate partners is not reported to the police by victims, the true nature of crime is unknown (the dark figure of crime), victims may not be able to obtain the necessary services to cope with the victimization, offenders go unpunished and policing resources may be misallocated due to inaccurate information (Langton et al., 2012). With this in mind, it is important to understand the characteristics of DV victimization unknown to police, the victims who do not report their victimization, and the reasons for non-reporting. In Trinidad and Tobago's context, this may assist in the identification of gaps in the provision of criminal justice and state welfare services as well as inform police practice and policies. Importantly, the current effort extends the available research literature on DV victimization non-reporting in Trinidad and Tobago.

Recommendations

There is no one strategy that will facilitate the reporting of DV victimization to the police across all contexts as acts of spousal violence occur within a variety of societal contexts and the degree to which it is either reinforced or sanctioned will influence whether complaints are lodged with police officers or not. Several recommendations are proffered and these are aimed at encouraging the reporting of spousal violence on the island. The recommendations are:

1. Focused educational awareness programs and outreach campaigns aimed at sensitizing the public, especially men, to encourage them to report their DV victimization to the police as well as to transmit the idea of social responsibility of reporting DV victimization so as to shatter the climate of tolerance and deter potential offenders.
2. Enhanced training of police officers to facilitate the smooth and effective reporting of DV victimization in a humane, confidential manner in an effort to minimize the fear, trepidation and embarrassment associated with its reporting.
3. The usage of an eclectic approach to facilitate easier and/or more comfortable reporting of DV victimization to the police, for example, the creation of contemporary systems to allow for the virtual reporting of spousal violence.
4. Public awareness campaigns focusing on the invisible part of DV victimization to highlight that the continuation of DV victimization is the result of the victim's as well as the silence, tolerance, and inhibition of persons in the victim's circle of influence.

Limitation of the Study

This study was subject to a number of limitations. First, the results of this study might potentially be biased due to selection and/or non-respondent bias. Additionally, the extent of reporting bias could not be determined and though anonymity was guaranteed to the study's participants, some participants may have chosen socially desirable responses, or suffered from memory loss. Second, the small sample size restricted the application of more rigorous statistical tests for differences between these groups. Further, the non-random sample of participants in this study and the small sample size (N=130) means it is not possible to generalize the results. However, similar to Heal's (2015) work with male Jamaicans involved in the UK drug trade which utilized a small sample of 'hard to reach' drug functionaries, (N=8) and Apsler, Cummins and Carl's (2003) study which utilized a sample of ninety victims of DV for their study on DV by intimate partners, the current effort focused on the quality of respondents and not on the quantity.

Additionally, due to the sensitive nature of the research, while the sample size may appear small, this is a function of the nature of the study as DV victims are a 'hard to reach population.' This was evidenced during the pursuit of the study as some respondents were skeptical about being interviewed due to safety concerns as well as the sensitive nature of their information. In fact, several potential respondents who initially agreed to participate in the study, later reversed their decision and did not participate in the study. Despite the study's limitations and its exploratory nature, the current effort appears to be the first of its kind to offer analyses of the non-reporting of DV incidents to the police in Trinidad and Tobago and advances DV victimization non-reporting research beyond what is currently known on the island. The present study is therefore a first, critical step toward a fuller understanding of the rationales for DV non-reporting in Trinidad and Tobago.

Directions for Future Research

In reflecting on the challenges encountered during the research process, the authors note several interesting approaches for future research on spousal violence non-reporting in Trinidad and Tobago and this provides impetus for future research. Given the lacuna in the existing literature on the non-reporting of DV victimization to the police in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a need for future research into the phenomenon on the island. Future research should utilize a more rigorous methodological approach and a larger sample so as to permit greater comparisons across demographic groups. Additionally, a different research approach should be employed so as to enhance the response rate as this was a key challenge faced in the conduct of the present effort as a large number of potential respondents did not want to discuss the topic openly, in public and face to face. Future research on DV victimization non-reporting on the island should also be conducted collaboratively by government and academia as this may ensure funding and the pursuit of the study on a national basis.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to add to extremely limited literature on DV victimization non-reporting in Trinidad and Tobago. Prior to this study, reasons for the non-reporting of DV victimization on the island were ephemeral and based on conjecture, logic and speculation. While this conjecture, logic and speculation might have had some credence, most of the previously espoused arguments were nothing short of elliptical colloquial exchanges which were in dire need of refining. The evidence emanating from the current exploratory effort should assist in removing some decontextualized notions surrounding the non-reporting of DV

victimization on the island. As a result of this study, and despite the limitations, residents in Trinidad and Tobago are now in an enhanced position to draw assumptions and conclusions (albeit limited and with some cautions due to the small cohort of participants and the exploratory nature of the research) as the data indicates a level of non-reporting of DV victimization to the police on the island.

The current effort also set out to determine whether DV non-reporting in Trinidad and Tobago was impacted by gender as well the rationales for non-reporting. Based on this study's findings, it may be hypothesized that the non-reporting of DV victimization in Trinidad and Tobago is influenced by a conflation of factors including, but not limited to, fear of offender, fear of retaliation, apathy, lack of trust and confidence in the police, triviality of incident and that the rationale for its non-reporting on the island varies by gender as males are 9 times more likely than females to not report their victimization. Further, it seems reasonable to draw a conclusion from the study that there is a nexus between DV victimization non-reporting and the 'dark figure of crime' on the island as the data showed a high level of non-reporting of DV victimization on the island. In closing, Hammer (2002), points out that "Unfortunately, disparate, decontextualized and sometimes illegitimate findings can be easily cited and are often employed to back up fallacious claims" (p. 95). Hopefully, the findings of this study will assist in the removal of illegitimate claims associated with the non-reporting of DV victimization in Trinidad and Tobago.

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About the Authors

Wendell C. Wallace is a Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice in the Department of Behavioural Sciences, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. He received his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor of Philosophy Degrees from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. He also received his law degree from the University of London (External program) and his Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) from Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. Email: wendell.wallace@sta.uwi.edu.

Cherrie Gibson is a Master's of Science student in the Criminology and Criminal Justice program at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. She received her Bachelor's Degree from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Email: lethalcherrie@yahoo.com.

Netty-Ann Gordon is a Master's of Science student in the Criminology and Criminal Justice program at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. She received holds a Master's Degree in Public Sector Management from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Email: preciousnetty@hotmail.com.

Rennie Lakhan is a Master's of Science student in the Criminology and Criminal Justice program at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. He received his Bachelor's Degree from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Email: rennielakhan@rocketmail.com.

Jinnalee Mahabir is a Master's of Science student in the Criminology and Criminal Justice program at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. She received her Bachelor's Degree from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Email: jinnalee_mahabir@outlook.com.

Cassandra Seetahal is an Attorney-at-Law in Trinidad and Tobago and a Master's of Science student in the Criminology and Criminal Justice program at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. She received her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, and her Legal Education Certificate from the Hugh Wooding Law School, Trinidad and Tobago. Email: cassandrasetahal@hotmail.com.