

The Experience of Mothering in Relationships Involving Intimate Partner Violence

***Nolawit Teshome**

Abstract

This study explored the experience of mothers who have been in relationships involving Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and child exposure to the violence. Semi-structured in depth interviews were held with a total of five women. Descriptive phenomenology approach was employed for conducting this study. Giorgi's method of analysis for phenomenological study was used to analyze the data. The findings indicate that women respondents were in a very stressful position as they had experienced violence by their partners and also had children to look after. The exposure of the children to the violence and their partner's abuse of the children have been shown to be a source of distress for the women. However, the women were also comforted by the presence of their children in their lives despite the fact that parenting had added to their stress in IPV. The women were found to be aware of their possible short comings as parents but this was so in a way that was not self-blaming. They appeared to understand their situations and also acknowledged their efforts and achievements as mothers which could be used to make sure that interventions build on the strengths of these women in the process of empowerment. The results of the study show that the women and their children have needs that call for greater attention to be given for survivors of IPV as the available services and service providers need to be attentive to their special needs and the need to expand the types and number of services provided for these women and their children.

Key Words: Intimate Partner Violence, Parenting/Mothering, Child Exposure

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Despite the cultural or economic differences between different societies of

^{*}Addis Ababa University Graduate School of Social Work, Advisor: Abebe Assefa (PhD). Currently working as a Lecturer in the Sociology department of Debre Birhan University, Mobile: 0911876692, email address: nolawitk@gmail.com

the world, women have a long history of being victims of violence in almost every one of them. This violence is often by an intimate partner (Horril & Berman, 2004.)

Different terminologies are used in different literature to describe the situation in which a woman is abused by her male partner. According to Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) (2007), some of the terms are: spouse assault, woman abuse, wife assault, family violence, conjugal violence, domestic violence, and relationship violence. Terms like wife assault fall short in describing the abuse of those who are no longer married to their batterer or those who have had a relationship, which has not been legalized as marriage and thus cannot cover the full extent of the problem. Therefore, it is suggested that it would be best to use the term Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) to make sure of the inclusion of all women who have been abused by an intimate partner be it a boyfriend, husband, a former husband, or any other possible form of relationship.

Studies have been done regarding the prevalence and severity of intimate partner violence in Ethiopia, and showed that the problem is highly prevalent (Regassa, 2012, EWLA, 2007).

Women in violent relationships could experience the incidents while having a child on the way and/or raising the ones they have already had. Researches show that the risk of experiencing IPV increases during the reproductive years. A pregnant woman has 35.6% greater chance of experiencing IPV than a non-pregnant one (NACCHO, 2008). And more than half of the women who experience IPV have children under the age of 12 (DeJonghe, Bogat, Levendosky & Voneye, 2008). Violence in such situations is believed to have negative effects on the mothers and their children.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studies are being conducted to look into the prevalence and effect of this problem. There are also recent attempts to explore how mothers experience parenting in IPV. Except for studies about the prevalence of IPV in Ethiopia, the available literature lacks detailed information regarding how mothers in Ethiopia experience intimate partner violence with their parenting responsibilities and more so on how they deal with the hardships they face in such situations where the provision of services are at their infancy and there is a culture that condones IPV. This leaves a gap to be explored especially as

the voices of those who experience the problem need to be taken into account to determine a point of intervention and further research.

This study thus aimed to fill this gap by looking into the overall experience of mothers in IPV as they are the ones contacting available service providers and also taking most of the responsibility to look after their children.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

General Objective:

The general objective of this study was to understand the experience of parenting in Intimate Partner Violence.

Specific Objectives:

The following were the specific objectives of the study:

1. To describe the violence experienced by the women
2. To look into the understanding of mothers about the issue of child exposure to IPV
3. To identify how the women view their parenting in IPV
4. To discuss how the mothers describe the support they need to deal with the problems related to the violence.

1.4 Conceptual Definitions

Intimate Partner Violence is A pattern of assaultive and/or coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as economic coercion, that, in this case, the partners use against the mothers to gain power and control in the relationship.

Child exposure to IPV includes children's auditory, visual or inferred exposure and incorporates incidents when the child did not directly witness the violence but has come to know about it eventually.

A parent in this writing includes a biological, a step parent or a foster parent and the same applies to the children.

1.5 Theoretical Orientation

As a point of departure to discuss the findings of the research, feminist perspective towards the issue of intimate partner violence is used. This perspective looks at the issue of violence against women, as a whole, as the result of the historical oppression of women and the imbalance of power in the patriarchal society (Seelay& Plunkett, 2002). To provide a better alternative from previous approaches that are criticized for being victim-

blaming, scholars suggest the use of feminist perspective in future studies in order to bring about an approach that is less blaming and more supportive to mothers in IPV (Peled & Gill, 2011). These authors call for an approach by social workers and others that is not only focused on the challenges the mothers face but also on their strengths so as to empower and help them gain control over their mothering.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Study Design

As there was not enough number of studies conducted on the issue of mothering in IPV in Ethiopia, the study has been set to be an exploratory one. And in order to explore what took place in such violent relationships, it was appropriate to attempt to understand the situation from the point of view of those who had experienced it. In an interpretative social science, of which phenomenological approach belongs to, the purpose of social work research is to understand what is meaningful to the individuals and how they experience their daily lives.

2.2 Techniques of Data Analysis

After conducting each interview, the recordings were transcribed and translated into the English language. Giorgi's method of analysis for phenomenological research was used for this study. The method, according to Castro (2003), has five major stages that were implemented as discussed below.

At the first stage, which is referred to as *familiarization*, transcribed protocols were read and reread for the sole purpose of trying to understand the whole of the meaning of the experience from the point of view of the participant herself. Here effort was made to refrain from making any interpretation of the accounts of the participant.

The second stage was dividing each protocol into what Giorgi calls Meaning Units (units or blocks that express a self-contained meaning). This was done by looking at the different key aspects that the participants expressed in their descriptions. In my study, some 11 to 17 Meaning Units developed under each separate protocol, which summed up to 71 Meaning Units in general.

The third stage involved two steps to be followed. The first one is stating the meanings that dominate each Meaning Units using the researcher's language

and as simply as possible while maintain the participant's context. This first transformation of the Meaning Units was then related to the topic/question under study and the meanings of each meaning unit were rewritten into more of the language of the profession. Here, the transformed meaning units were interrogated in light of the research questions. This resulted in each participant's experiences and descriptions providing answers to the four major research questions of the study.

The fourth stage of the analysis also involved two steps. First, the meaning units of each description or protocol were synthesized in order to make a descriptive statement of the particular characteristics of every subject to state how the phenomenon takes place and then a general structure of each of the participant's accounts were made, in order to show the most general and essential meaning of the phenomenon under study. Here, a generalized summary statement of the essence of the experience was made for each protocol.

The fifth stage of the analysis process was where the transformed Meaning Units from all the five protocols of the study were integrated to describe what all the descriptions of the participants have in common. Attempt was then made to universalize the findings of the study by focusing on the essential aspects and characteristics of the studied phenomenon- mothering in IPV.

3. Findings

3.1 Women's Experience of Intimate Partner Violence

Accounts of Violence

Physical violence was included in all the descriptions of the women regarding the type of violence that they had experienced and it was more or less the one that the women talked about in length even though they described it taking place along with psychological or sexual assault as well.

All the woman stated that they decided to leave when the danger of staying in the relationship became more than they could bear. Meskerem remembers her last day with her husband, the day she left the house: "*He picked up a knife. ...I run out of the house when he picked up a knife to stab me.*" Look at how Meskerem explained how her partner's drinking behavior, her having a child, and his extra marital affair all contributed to the violence:

He was peaceful. ...He used to give me most of his earnings and take smaller for himself. Everything changed when I had the child... Even all the quarrel started after I had a child ...he drinks. But if he hasn't taken alcohol, he used to be just fine. But then within 15 day of quitting alcohol, he would just get up in the morning and start an argument. Then when I tell people about this, they told me that he must have started an affair. They said that men act this way when there is some other woman. And it was just like they said. ...When you see the way he was at the beginning and then how he turned out to be at the end...it changes a lot. You will understand it by simply comparing how it was at the begging with how things get at the time (of cheating). His behavior changed ...

One of the participants however claimed that she wouldn't consider them reasons as they were not convincing enough and stated her account as follows. *'He does that when he gets a reason. But he doesn't need a real reason; a minor issue is enough for him to do that.'*

3.1.2 Pregnancy, a Point of Greater Risk of Violence

Those who could recall the time when the violence started or became worse stated that it was around the time of their pregnancy. This was true regardless of the difference in the father's desire to have a child or not.

3.1.3 Mother's Perception towards Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence

3.1.3 Experiences of Child Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence

It is essential to mention here that during the interview, all the participants became more emotional while discussing issues related to their children in light of IPV. All the participants stated that their children were exposed to most of the violence either by directly seeing or hearing it happened or by seeing its effects after sometime. There were also cases where the partner involved the children in his act of violence towards their mother.

3.1.4 Concurrence of Intimate Partner Violence and Child Abuse

Some of the perpetrators were also described as violent towards the children.

3.14.1 Effects of Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence on Children

All the participants talked emotionally about the effects they claimed that the exposure to violence had on the children. Those children who were old

enough to have been at school were observed to have lost their interests for school and got lower grades. However, there were also deeper concerns about the lasting effects on the child's overall behavior as Meskerem, who called the exposure “traumatizing” for children described her concern as follows:

He is going to have a behavior just like his father. I get upset that I have gone through a lot of trouble to raise him but he might turn out to be a bad citizen. I get upset very much because my child is behaving wrong ...The way he is going now; we won't be able to manage when he gets to the age of seven. And his interest for smocking, his attitude towards women...when he sees a good-looking woman, he asks me what I think about her looks. He is too young for all that...the way he acts in front of the judge... He is behaving like his father; he doesn't even have a child's behavior. He doesn't want to play with children his age; he only wants to be with adults.

Having observed their children's exposure to the IPV and the possible effects it had had on them, the mothers did not remain passive. Most had attempted to prevent their children's exposure with the limited means they had at hand.

3.1.5 Attempts to Prevent Child Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence

In the availability of a separate room, two of the mothers mentioned “*taking the children to bed early*” as the only measure they took to try and prevent their children from seeing the violence that was likely to happen when the father got home at night. For some, this was physically impossible.

3.1.6 Parenting in Intimate Partner Violence

3.1.6.1 Hardships of Parenting in Intimate Partner Violence

All the participants started their description of parenting in the presence of IPV as something that was “very hard”. The frustration of having tried a lot to make things work and still having children affected was obvious in the accounts of the mothers. As soon as the topic of the conversation changed to that of parenting in IPV, two of the participants started explaining how being in their position has made them consider committing suicide. Meskerem explains:

the only thing you keep thinking about is ending your own life....especially when my child sees that I'm crying so hard [after a violent incident] ...she[my daughter] keeps looking at my face calling

me “mom” ...it breaks my heart....You know why? Because...like when he is drunk and yells, if you only saw how she reacts when he is like that...how she screams ...

This was also how Fetya responded to the question about what it was like to be a mother in a violent relationship:

Being dead is better than living the life I live! I am serious. There are times I wish I were dead. There are times where I feel like killing myself. You know why? Because I am living like this for my children but I couldn't even save them. And that hurts. It's better not to be alive... than having to live like this... It's hard.

Influenced by Child's Well Being

In the descriptions by all the participants, the idea of paying sacrifices, as a mother, for the children's wellbeing was evident. Their decisions of whether or not to stay in the relationship were also highly influenced by how it would affect or had affected the children.

3.1.7 Success as a Parent

Despite the hardships that women faced in their role as parents in a violent relationship, and even though none of them claimed that they believed they were successful as a parent, none of them felt as though they had completely failed as a parent either.

3.1.8 Partners View of Motherhood

The participants stated that their partners believed once the women had a child, the probability of them leaving the relationship and making it on their own was much lower (because mothers had to take care of their children) and that this would keep mothers in the relationship despite the continued violence.

3.1.9 Children as Sources of Happiness

The mothering experience in IPV was described as stressful and the participants explained that they stayed in the relationship for longer than they should for their children. However, the participants also described their children as sources of happiness and relief. Meskerem's explanation below serves to show this:

Yes, yes. If I didn't give birth...I wouldn't have been this miserable...he would think that I could go out and have a job. But now, he knows that I

have a child in my arms...he knows that I can't work. So now it's like "she has nowhere to go so she will stay no matter what I do to her". But you know, I don't care if I lose things I had with him, ...my child is my flower, she is my happiness. God has given her to me and has let her grow for me.

3.1.10 Effects of Violence on Mother-Daughter Relationship

The participants did not claim that their relationship with their children was affected by the violence negatively. In three of the cases, the children were described as being protective of their mothers described by their attempts to stop the partner from beating the mother and advising the mother to leave the home before, as Meskerem stated "he [the partner] kills" the mother. The case of Fetya, however, was slightly different as she explained her experience made her less attentive to her children at times as follows:

I think it (the IPV) has made them love me even more. They love me very much. They don't want to be without me....it has affected me though. I become upset. I feel sick. When I get upset... thinking about what happened...I feel like ending my life. I have anxiety. My stomach swells when I get upset. I feel anxious. I feel disturbed. And I don't want anyone to speak to me, including them [the children].

Fetya's noticing of her own approach towards her children suggests that some mothers were in fact very cautious and aware of the changes IPV brought in their behavior and in their relationships with their children.

3.2 How Do Mothers Describe the Support They Need

3.2.1 Support Received

The research participants have also talked about the institutions that they contacted in the process of trying to end the violence, settle their divorce or in a couple of cases, get counseling support for their children. In the interest of keeping anonymity, the institutions, which the women approached to get some help for the problems related with the violence, were not referred to directly.

There was one woman who had attempted to get counseling services for her son by contacting organizers of some radio program. Another had been a guest in the program and in the process had been assisted even though she

was not happy with the way it ended as people tried to force her into signing on paper works regarding the custody issue.

The Women, Children and Youth Affairs Offices at Woreda and Sub City level were places where some women turned to after escaping an act of violence by their husbands. They stated that the offices tended to send them back after trying to make reconciliation and the same violence awaited them when they got back home. However, these offices were also the ones where one of the participants got referred to Ethiopian Women Lawyer's Association EWLA and then got access to the shelter.

One of the respondents also mentioned the child justice project working under the Supreme Court, which had provided her with a lawyer and were very supportive until she claimed they stopped when her late husband bribed them.

3.2.2 Support Needed

Most of the mothers explained how they wished things were and did not directly refer to types of services for IPV victims, which was understandable, as these women hadn't the opportunity to benefit from a well-developed support system.

In the description of the participant lays a portrait of a father who was not supportive of the mother's efforts or wishes of preventing exposure of children to IPV. As illustrated in the statements above, the father either didn't make enough efforts to prevent their children from exposure to violence or involved the children directly in the violence. There were also cases of the fathers being violent towards the children along with their mothers.

The mothers stated the change they needed to see both in their families and in the system of the country including some advice to mothers in IPV. Here, I have to acknowledge the possibility that most women might have focused more about the legal issues because we were introduced through an organization that works mainly on providing legal services. Starting from the desired changes at home, Bogalech had the following to say regarding the way to handle disputes:

Well...children must not see these things [IPV]. If we could, the way it should be was us [me and my husband] going in to a separate room and discusses what we have to...if possible. This has to be because they are just children. Their minds are like white paper and what's been written once can't be erased. So I would be happy if children didn't see ...

Meskerem stated her view as to what measures mothers in intimate partner violence should take as follows:

And another thing is...divorce. I mean if I weren't wise enough to escape that day, he would have finished me up. Why? He would have stabbed me and then figured that he should finish what he has already started and he would have killed me. And so what I want to say about this is that it's better to get a divorce if there is quarrel in the house. Better to just get divorced. That's it. ... It's all traumatizing for children. It would be much better to raise your children on your own even though it's hard; it's better than this kind of life, for the mind of your children.

Both Meskerem and Felekech believed that, measures at the legal front had to be taken. Meskerem recommended,

I think there should be strongly implemented law for men who are like this. You know why? Once they have a child, it's a must for them to take care of the children. For instance, I have a responsibility to raise my child; even if he [my husband] hits me; even if he picked up a knife...I didn't leave my child with him like other women do. If I did, he would kill her one-day. So I took my child with me...

Fetya believed that it didn't matter where the support was from. Knowing that someone was there [Social Support] to help was of great value to women in her situation. Here is what she had said:

Some people think about money when support is mentioned. But it is not only about money. It means a lot to have someone say to you "I'm here, don't worry". I have told you that I don't have family but there are also people who have families but are facing things alone. So it's a big deal to have someone by your side telling you to be strong and telling you they are there. Be it someone from the government or non-government institution. Just having someone...you just need to have someone to tell you it is going to be all right.

Regarding support such as counseling services, both Fetya and Felekech explained that they believed their children need counseling but that they were able to find any for their children so far. However, they did not show much concern for their own wellbeing as Felekech states.

My son is my counseling...if I get to raise my child properly and if I am able to move around with freedom...if this is settled, I don't have any other problem. My main concern is my son. If he is fine, I will be too.

There didn't seem to be much help offered by individuals close to the women which could be a result of a multitude of reasons but also from the women's experience probably because the women do not disclose the violence until after much time passed by and also because in some cases like Fetya's, people might fear retaliation measures by the violent partner, which made it difficult for victims of violence to seek support as well.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrates the difficulty faced by the participant mothers as they struggled to deal with the effects of the Intimate Partner Violence while also having to fulfill their duties as a mother.

The women have experienced, usually a combination of, various forms of violence by their partners including physical, sexual, psychological abuses as that have been shown in studies at a number of places in Ethiopia (Tegbar et al., 2004, Yegomawork, et al, 2003, Sileshi, et al., 2009).

However, the ones women described and discussed in length were the abuse acts that were more physical even though they had discussed almost all sorts of violence. This might indicate the fact that other types of violence were more hurtful and thus harder to talk about as described by a couple of the participants.

The participants in this study discussed how their partners made the decisions to have or not to have a baby regardless of the their willingness and controlling decisions that might lead to complications during pregnancy and after child birth such as keeping women from going to health care centers. This finding is consistent with findings in other parts of the world (Holly, et al, 2008, Lapierre, 2010). The women's accounts have shown that the time of pregnancy is usually a time of greater risk of experiencing IPV as in other studies with similar results (DeJonghe, et al, 2008).

Some of the women's descriptions of possible reasons as to why their partner became violent were consistent with the research findings about the factors that increased the likelihood of IPV occurrence such as the husband's alcohol use, extramarital affairs, and the women being pregnant (Sileshi et al., 2009; Agumasie et al., 2013).

The discussion about children's exposure to violence brought most mothers to tears and was the highest pick of emotion for mothers. All the participants stated that their children were exposed to the violence and fathers involved the children in violence by telling them to disobey or even, in one case, to be violent towards their mothers and this is consistent with research findings that show that abusive fathers attacked the mothering authority of the women as part of a strategy to gain control (Flynn, 2012).

Most of the participant's accounts about the fathers were either negligent or even physically abusive to the children showing the co-occurrence of IPV and child abuse evident in several studies around the world (Edleson, et al, 2003, Ellsberg et al., 2000). Mothers did attempt, when possible, to prevent children from witnessing the violence by taking the children to bed early and also doing what they can not to have a fight started or not to worsen the violence similar to the findings of Peled and Gill (2011) that resulted in mothers having used various strategies to prevent the children from exposure. However, some indicated that the violence usually took them by surprise and was so severe that they put all their efforts in trying to defend themselves during, for instance, extreme beatings and so they might not be able to do anything to protect the children. It was assumed at the beginning of this study that the findings would yield various mechanisms used by parents to prevent the children's exposure to IPV. However, it was evident that there were not that many mechanisms to do so, which was understandable because of the limited resources that the women had at their disposal.

The participants discussed that they believed the violence affected the children that witnessed it. In one case, the participant believed that the physical violence during the pregnancy was the most likely reason for the baby having heart conditions after birth which was a concern brought up by researches with similar findings including one conducted in Ethiopia that

proved maternal depression and IPV contributed to the death of infants (Holly, et al., 2008; Deyessa, et al., 2010).

Exposure to the IPV, the mothers claimed, has made their children timid and lacking in self-confidence, the children were also getting lower grades at school, and in one case, taking on a violent behavior like that of the father consistent with literature showing children exposed to IPV might have behavioral, social, emotional, cognitive and attitudinal problems (Sherry et al, 2011; Edleson, et al, 2003; Ellsberg et al., 2000).

In the case of mothering in IPV, the frustration and stress resulting from having tried a lot to make things work and still having children affected was obvious in the accounts of the mothers as evident in other qualitative studies where women gave similar description (Ellsberg et al., 2000). The stress of mothering in IPV was evident in the accounts of the mothers, some of whom, have talked about their considering to commit suicide, one participant stated that she felt sick, anxious and upset and didn't want to talk to people while others described it as making them timid and lacking self-esteem similar in studies that have registered women having experienced poor health and emotional distress including consideration of suicide and depressive episodes (Moreno et al, 2005; Yegomawork et al., 2003).

The women decided to leave when the violence got worse than they could bear or it threatened their lives, the children's wellbeing though being at the center of their decisions of whether or not to stay in the abusive relationship. This was mainly due to economic constraints consistent with the findings of (Horril et al, 2004). Moe, (2009) also come up with a similar finding that shows that motherhood, or concern for their children are at the center of the mother's decisions as they stay in abusive relationships even if it means that they have to endure the violence for a prolonged time.

As in other studies, the women's descriptions frequently contain the issue of greater responsibility being placed on mothers than fathers when it comes to taking care of their children. They often talked about having to scarify their all for the wellbeing of the children. This, the violence at home and the partner's negligence towards the children put greater responsibility in a violent situation where the mother has less control over decisions in the home as it is also found in the study of Lapierre (2010).

The mothers didn't feel as completely successful as parents as they were not in control of most of the situations in the relationship, however, they seemed to have been able to appreciate the fact that they had made many sacrifices for their children to the best of their ability and that their children would have been in much worse situations if the mothers were not there. Mothers did not claim the violence has affected their relationship with their children negatively some stating that it has made the children show more affection towards them and be protective. And even though mothering in IPV was stressful, it was also described as a source of joy for mothers, suggesting the possibility that this positive feeling might help by minimizing the anxiety they went through.

In one case, a mother described the fact that the effects of IPV made her less attentive to her children as she became upset and didn't want to talk to people including her children which could be the result of depression that has been proven to affect mother's psychological wellbeing in a similar study (DeJonghe, et al, 2008). However, other accounts from the other participants did not reflect any such difficulty of the mother in her responsibilities of looking after the children consistent with findings that show that experiencing IPV does not necessarily mean that parents will be less attentive or warm towards their children (Casanueva, et al., 2008; Renner, 2009).

The belief in the need for a mother to sacrifice everything for her child's sake, the women claimed, was what made partners carry on with their violent behaviors. Because the men believed that the women would take whatever hardship they faced for the sake of the children and also the fact that women would find it difficult to raise their children on their own if they decided to leave their marriages made some men include forcing a woman to have more babies as one controlling mechanism. Showing how it's been set in the society that mothers are to take most of the responsibility for the children's wellbeing which is also shown in the general tendency of the fathers to show negligence. This finding is consistent with a study that was conducted to examine how people placed varying degrees of responsibility of taking care of children in cases of IPV (Terrance, et al, 2009). The findings show that women were responsible for the violence committed on the children by the father even while they themselves were being victims of the violence.

There were also beliefs that challenge the idealized motherhood concept shown in the accounts of women, who, even though felt they were responsible for taking care of their children, that they also believe fathers should also act responsibly to care for the children that they too brought to existence. The women's sense of agency and their belief in the possibility of being able to live on their own, accepting that it won't be easy, is evident in their decisions to separate from their violent partners.

Not much individual level support was available for some of them regarding the IPV as people fear retaliation by the perpetrators if they offer help and because perpetrators has isolated the women, making it less likely to have many people in their social networks.

Concerning ways in which the participants and those other mothers in IPV could be supported, they expressed their desires as follows: to have ways to handle disputes at home without exposing children; the desire for the legal system to be more attentive to their needs and for people to do their jobs honestly, for there to be counseling services available for their children and in general to have a social support (someone or something) that women in their situations can count on for moral support so that they are encouraged to hope and try for the best.

5. Conclusion, Implication and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

The first major conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that mothers in a relationship where there was Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) find themselves in a very difficult and stressful situation. Even though there was a certain level of understanding, the stressfulness of the women's position was yet to be fully explored and addressed along with its possible effects on the women, their families and communities in general. It is evident that the women have experienced multiple forms of IPV in their relationships and have suffered as a result of those incidents. The violent acts were repetitive and sometimes unpredicted and the women have suffered physical and psychological problems as a result of the incidents. However, the issue of having children exposed to the violence was of greater concern for the mothers as they were aware of the fact that the exposure has several short and long term negative effects on their children. Not having been able to protect their children from the exposure and sometimes from being direct

victims of the violence has clearly brought much pain to the mothers and has worsened the hardship that results from experiencing IPV. Mothers who have experienced IPV, therefore, were in need of intervention that can consider their needs that differ from other woman survivors of IPV.

This might not be an easy task as mothers were more concerned about their children's wellbeing than their own in times of hardship. This concern could show that mothers in IPV may not give enough attention to their own wellbeing and intervention programs should incorporate this knowledge to make sure that the women's safety are given enough attention to avoid further problems. On the other hand, this attitude of the mothers could also be very useful in efforts to provide support for children as mothers are more attentive and aware about their children's overall condition and possible signs of problems that might have resulted from exposure to violence.

Even though the women were highly stressed as a result of their parenting responsibilities in the face of IPV and even if they did not view their parenting as completely successful, having a child was also a source of emotional comfort and happiness for the women and they didn't acknowledge their achievements as parents. They hold views that incorporate both the pros and cons of being a mother in IPV. This is an important point to consider while dealing with similar cases as a reminder that being a mother in IPV has some opportunities that could build on the resilience of the women in such situations. This attitude that was balanced and realistic could indicate the strength of the women and their ability to entertain the fact that they were in difficult circumstances and therefore have some shortcomings as mothers which didn't necessarily overshadow all that they have achieved in their parenting roles.

5.1.2 Implications

As a profession with the mission of enhancing human well-being, particularly attentive to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable and oppressed, social work is concerned about the issue of Intimate Partner Violence and the women who experience it. This research has demonstrated that mothers who have been victims of IPV experience difficulties in relation to the violence they are subjected to and also in relation to their responsibilities as mothers to their children in such violent homes. It is very important for social workers in positions that provide

services for families that have experienced IPV to understand the interplay between these two factors i.e., IPV and mothering in order to provide the best possible support. Hence, social workers and others in related positions at institutions such as health centers, police offices, courts, safe houses and various level WCY offices should give due attention to the issue of mothering in IPV.

The findings of this study show the women's desire to get support either for themselves or for their children. This shows an opportunity for social workers to intervene in families that are experiencing IPV if there are enough service providers who are concerned with the rehabilitation of survivors of IPV and their children. Therefore, governmental or non-governmental organizations (NGO) should develop projects aimed at providing services for these women and their children.

As an implication for social work research, it is forwarded that further research is needed to investigate the needs of women who have experienced IPV in much detail to be able to provide better services and there is also a need to look further in to the awareness of various communities in Ethiopia about the overall issue of intimate partner violence in order to provide a clear picture for better indication of points of intervention to tackle the problem of IPV.

5.1.3 Recommendation

There is a need to expand the service provision capacity of organizations, such as safe houses for survivors of IPV, and/or help the establishment of new ones that can provide multi-level support services for mothers who have been victims of IPV and their children. The Ministry of Women, Children and Youth need to create ways for such services to be available for these women and their families and the currently limited types of services need to be improved in order to tackle the problem of IPV from various angles.

People working in the legal system, various levels of the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MWCYA), shelter homes and other organizations who are contacted by women survivors of IPV need to be attentive to the unique needs of the women, especially those that have children. They need to be cautious in order to avoid adding to the stress the women are already in as a result of their IPV experience and their mothering

responsibility. This can be achieved through training these professionals on ways to handle cases of Intimate Partner Violence.

Intervention plans and their implementation should be able to use the women's positive qualities and their achievements as parents to their children as a starting point and build on the women's sense of success so that the programs are made sure to incorporate the women's strengths in their efforts to help the women take control over their lives and succeed.

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