

**Understanding Domestic Violence in Calgary's Ethnocultural Communities: Barriers,
Perceptions, Hesitancy and Strategies**

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I am pleased to present the research study report on behalf of the Ethno-Culturally Diverse Communities (ECDC) for 2023. In 2014 and 2015, I had the opportunity to compile and present findings on two community consultations that the ECDC took the initiative and organized. These community consultations involved engaging with community members, activists, leaders, and service providers to address the challenges surrounding domestic violence within ethno-cultural communities. The consultations further motivated and served as a catalyst for ECDC to build momentum, advocate and further explore issues and challenges surrounding domestic violence in ethno-cultural communities for continued action. This research study is among many other initiatives to promote change towards continued progress.

The ECDC and the Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society collaborated on this research, receiving essential backing and substantial funding from ActionDignity, a social services agency situated in Calgary. ActionDignity played a pivotal role in providing financial resources to investigate the intricacies and obstacles associated with tackling domestic violence within culturally diverse communities in Calgary.

This study would not be possible without the leadership of Andrea Silverstone, CEO of Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society; Brielle Batty Smith, Prevention Team Lead of Sagesse; Humaira Falak, Co-Chair, ECDC and Program Coordinator of ActionDignity; Jassim Al-Mossawi, Co-Chair, ECDC and Psychologist at Mosaic Primary Care Network, and the ECDC team, especially who gave their time for focus groups.

Study Team

Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society empowers organizations, communities, and individuals with the resources to disrupt structures of abuse by developing a Blueprint for Change, presenting intersections between domestic abuse and other issues and conditions that need to be in place to achieve tangible progress.

ActionDignity was founded to build a fairer and more equitable Calgary, collaborating with all equity-seeking, ethnic and racialized communities to achieve lasting social transformation. It fosters collective action by empowering grassroots racialized community organizations to develop and strengthen their capabilities for effective systemic transformation at the individual, communal, and policy levels through various programs.

Ethnoculturally Diverse Communities (ECDC)

The ECDC, a coalition of Calgary-wide community organizations, was founded in September 2013 to ensure the health and safety of ethno-culturally diverse communities of Calgary by forming coordinated and collaborative ethno-cultural networks in addressing domestic violence. Currently, with thirty community organizations in Calgary meeting once a month, ECDC's vision is "All ethno-culturally diverse communities in Calgary are healthy and free of domestic violence."

Introduction

Domestic violence is a pervasive global issue irrespective of geographical, cultural, racial, religious, socioeconomic, and class backgrounds (Guedes et al., 2016; Shirwadkar, 2004). This fact is critical for Canada as it credits its ethno-cultural diversity to immigration (Statistics Canada, 2008). This acknowledgment of its ethno-cultural diversity underscores the importance of considering diversity and intersections of ethnicity, gender, race, and religion when developing policies, programs, and services for addressing domestic violence within ethno-cultural

communities (Ghafournia N & Easteal. P, 2018; Shirwadkar, 2004). The literature acknowledges systemic and institutional inequities existing prior to immigration that ‘intensify women’s vulnerabilities’ post immigration (Erez et al., 2009, p. 36). It is well-accepted that research on sensitive issues among immigrant communities requires immense resources.

Recognizing such inequities, this study, while acknowledging previous studies and their contributions towards exploring domestic violence among immigrant communities, has adopted the Community Based Participatory Research approach. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a collaborative research approach that involves active partnership between researchers and community members to address local issues, promote equity, and generate knowledge that benefits the community. CBPR allows for an inclusive and interactive collaborative approach that values community participation and operates within a social justice framework. As explained by Ghafournia & Easteal (2018), this prevents an overlook of various intersections and lack of inclusion as it “contributes to their exclusion, invisibility, and rights to protection” (p. 1) and continued neglect while furthering the lack of understanding of domestic violence among ethnocultural communities (Sev’er, 2002).

Equally critical while considering the above intersectionality and complexities is a need to emphasize the conscious distancing from using ‘culture’ as a contributing factor, as it leads to a continuation of ‘othering’ immigrant and ethnocultural communities while accepting that there is not just one factor responsible for the prevalence of domestic violence (Ghafournia & Easteal, 2018). As Ghafournia & Easteal (2018) explain, in the process of identifying gaps and barriers to domestic violence services among the ethno-cultural communities, it is essential to explore “what inequalities are considered, how they are conceptualized and connected to violence” and not focus on culture (p. 1). The community consultation reports by the ECDC supported the above findings and identified significant gaps in prevention and planning (Kharat, 2015). Intending to further the

current literature, this study aims to understand the complex and unique needs of ethno-cultural communities, including sexual and gendered minorities, and experiences of domestic violence in Calgary with nine ethnocultural communities of Calgary.

Method

As noted above, this study applied the CBPR method. Such an approach minimized power imbalances and aided community partnership and positive community outcomes. It is a collaborative research approach involving active participation from community members, organizations, and researchers throughout the entire research process. CBPR aims to promote equitable partnerships between community members and researchers, and produce evidence-based research that is relevant, meaningful, and actionable for the community (Sánchez et. al., 2021).

This study followed the research adhered to the principles of CBPR, encompassing activities such as development of research questions, gather and analyzing data and sharing findings. By involving community members in every stage of the research process, CBPR seeks to promote a more equitable distribution of power and to ensure that research results are relevant to the needs and concerns of the community. Wilson et al. (2017), as stated in Minkler and Wallerstein (2008), noted “CBPR is considered capable of building alliances across differences” (p. 189). This perspective is critical given that this study involved nine community groups of Calgary. Thus, CBPR allowed a participatory and collaborative approach to research that empowers communities to promote social change.

Recruitment

The nine community groups were selected based on their status as Calgary’s top nine immigrant-receiving groups (Statistics Canada, 2016). Efforts to engage the Japanese communities were unsuccessful. Flyers for awareness and participant recruitment were developed by Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society and sent to all members of the ECDC for circulation. All

ECDC members, and ActionDignity in particular, followed up with the above by emailing and encouraging community partners to participate. The study received ethics approval from the Community Health Committee in February 2022 (HREBA.CHC-21-0041). Community groups participating in the Zoom study were required to have at least three and no more than ten members to promote meaningful, effective, and manageable dialogue. Participants offered either verbal or written consent to take part and have their discussions audio recorded. Informed consent was provided to the participants prior to the beginning of the focus group, and all participants were given the opportunity to terminate their participation if they desired. The study encountered several challenges, including misunderstandings with the procedures to register, broken registration hyperlinks, confusion with the dates and time of focus groups, internet connectivity issues, scheduling conflicts, privacy concerns, apathetic community attitudes and cultural or time-related factors that impacted participants' availability.

Data Analysis

Each focus group was provided with seven discussion questions that the ECDC identified.

The questions were:

1. How does your community perceive domestic violence?
2. Is domestic violence one of the major issues in your community?
3. List accessible resources for communities to address domestic violence.
4. What are the barriers to reach domestic violence services?
5. What are community specific challenges to address domestic violence?
6. List the barriers to access domestic violence supports during the pandemic.
7. Discuss domestic violence among sexually diverse individuals.

The analysis of the audio recordings from participant discussions occasionally encountered challenges when it was difficult to understand some accents, which, unfortunately, at times led to a loss of data. After completing all focus groups, a thematic analysis was conducted based on the questions. Analyzing the data was time-consuming due to the challenges above, the vast amount of data, and the limited time available to the principal investigator.

Results

The study involved focus groups with nine communities in Calgary and involved expert community members, activists, leaders, and service providers. The focus group began with a PowerPoint presentation of what was expected from the participants, explaining informed consent and the CBPR method. The facilitator of the ECDC presented each discussion question on a separate slide. The themes presented below are based on discussions of each question. It is important to acknowledge that the complexity of the phenomenon of domestic violence is evident in the discussions, especially for the first five questions (noted above). This often resulted in participants continuing to answer and discuss the first question while the actual discussion was on the third question. Such interchangeability was noted to be common and resulted in a lack of clarity in explanations and impacted the results. Also noted is a similarity in themes for most of the questions resulting in overlap in presenting themes.

Towards the end of the report, there is a separate section on strategies presented by participants to initiate change in their communities. These strategies include suggestions for engaging communities for campaigns, initiating discussions on human rights and respectful relationships as a catalyst for domestic violence discussions, conducting needs assessments for capacity building in each community, aligning with the momentum gained due to the pandemic for acknowledging anxieties and stress, designating physical community resources for community workshops on healthy relationships, involving community members on program planning and

facilitation, increased funding to programs, hiring specific ethnic therapists and counsellors, expanding and intersecting domestic violence with mental health and other suggestions.

The following discussion highlights the identified common themes for each of the seven questions.

Question One: How Does Your Community Perceive Domestic Violence?

A. Domestic Violence is a Confusing, Complex, and Foreign Concept.

Participants stated that prior to explaining how domestic violence is perceived in their communities, it is first essential to acknowledge the difficulty of understanding the concept of domestic violence due to its complexity and divergence in meaning. Most participants indicated that domestic violence is a confusing and foreign concept that is not considered serious in their countries of origin. As explained by a community member from the Arab community:

“In my culture, domestic violence is a foreign word. We come to this place like Canada and here it is about protection. Most people do not know they are experiencing domestic violence. We have no clear idea of what it is until we get very stressed out. Most people do not know what domestic violence is. When we attend community discussions like this research study, then we realize we might be in a domestic violence situation. So, if you could emphasize and begin with what is domestic violence. Defining is needed. It is a foreign word.”

Some participants from the Chinese community indicated that the confusion could be due to difficulties in identifying domestic violence due to its complexity:

“They do not know how to identify what is exactly domestic violence. It is so much complicated. In our community it is considered as a family thing. Sometimes family members do not realize and are not aware whether it is family violence. Because there's no concept such as domestic violence. It is very difficult to identify what is exactly family violence.”

Some participants stated tolerating incidences of domestic violence if there is no continued escalation.

“I will say that part of it for people who are new to Canada, might not identify it- including like a physical violence and emotional violence, sexual abuse and then threatening, they feel like it just

a fight. It is not escalating like violence so that's what normally people do. People don't have this kind of concept and knowledge.”

Participants from the Korean community explained that the confusion and difficulties in identifying and naming incidences as domestic violence could be because of how domestic violence is understood in their country of origin:

“In our country domestic violence is not perceived as serious. Domestic violence is perceived as different to a Canadian system. In our community, we do not talk about it outside as it an issue for the family.”

B. Everything is Considered Domestic Violence in Canada.

Individuals from Black, Filipino, and South Asian communities suggest that the misunderstanding might stem from Canada's perception of domestic violence. According to some participants, any form of control or aggression is deemed violent in Canada. Furthermore, emotional violence is frequently disregarded as domestic violence, exacerbating the confusion.

“In Canada everything is considered as violence including emotional or being controlling. This is different in our community. Often those that we do not consider as domestic violence, are considered here. These are challenges I faced in my community.”

“In Canada, domestic violence, have a different definition as it is understood in the Philippines.”

“I think that concept of domestic violence in our Arab community and in our culture and throughout the Arab world is that it is something new.”

“The problem is that they don't think that this is abuse. They think this is part of their life even if they have been verbally, physically, mentally and financially abused. They don't get pocket money and often do not have anything to spend. They think that this is not the violence.”

C. Importance Given to Physical Violence and Difficulties with Comprehending the Legal System in Canada.

Participants from some communities indicated that in their communities only physical violence is perceived as domestic violence. As noted by the Filipino and Arab community participants, intersected are patriarchal gendered and societal norms that makes the concept of domestic violence something new and to be resolved

within a family without external support. Important to note here is the lack of clarity leading to confusion on how the emergency services in Canada address the prevalence of domestic violence in families.

“For the Filipino community it is only about physical violence. But here in Canada, it is different. It is not only physical, emotional, economic, financial and children. Domestic violence is not about the people it is also about if children are involved. In Philippines if there is physical violence then there could be some problem. However, this is a family problem. But there is a big difference in Canada as it is beyond physical.”

Participants from the Korean community indicated confusion over Canada’s legal system and societal pressures to reunite with family led to stress.

“In the Korean community, lot of times people just think that only physical violence is part of domestic violence, which is not correct. Financial abuse, mental and emotional abuse, psychological abuse, child abuse or senior abuses are all included in domestic violence.

For the Filipino community in Canada, the system is very different from how the police system works back in our country. If the crime is personal, and the person drops the charges there is no crime, and there is no charge because there is no one complaining now. In Canada many people will pressure the women, to drop the charges. Your husband, your children, your community, your relatives and the woman is pressured to do that. But the community does not understand that even if they dropped the charges, it does not automatically drop because the judges are going to make the decision. The husband or the wife will say I dropped the charges already, but there are still charges. The police or judges are still pursuing the case. This is confusing as the parents think there are no charges, and they will get back together, not realizing that actually there is still a charge against them, and they cannot breach the order. Which means they can go to jail. That is where a lot of these issues in terms of children, child protection and violation of the order. This is where it education is very, very important because it is really different from how we understand the system that we have back home and how the system works in. Often the confusion is why are their charges if my wife have dropped them.”

“Most South Asian women understand that the real issue is if somebody hits you. They do not realize that emotional abuse does damage to their health. They do not give importance to their feelings. So, they don't react to emotional abuse.”

D. Inherited Communication Behaviors from Countries of Origin Considered as Normal.

Most participants acknowledged that behaviors related to domestic violence are frequently learned and transmitted across generations within families. These actions are ingrained and often perceived as acceptable. Additionally, there is a noticeable scarcity of supportive resources available to

address the effects of domestic violence in other countries. Exacerbating these are the unchallenged societal norms as highlighted by the Hispanic and Arab communities.

“I think that domestic violence started a long time ago from my grandma my grandpa. They would yell at my parents and then my partner think it was normal. Domestic violence thus grows into family within the kids. Children and partners sometimes do not realize how we behave or how we talk to boys and children and the tone we use. So, it is probably the easy way to start to live with domestic violence as people start yelling and think it is normal.”

“Most of the problem from domestic violence is based on the family issues of how our parents behave with us in the past.”

“Sometimes at home, we get used to it. For example, parents who raised their boys and yell a lot. So sometimes it becomes normal in the way how people communicate at home. So, it is easy to break this line between just been yelling and then everything escalates.”

“In the psyche of our Arab culture, it's an internal issue. It is not a state or a community issue. Even if we say it is among us, it is not the business of an outsider. If there is physical violence and a neighbor calls the police, usually our community members are only afraid of the punishment and not paying attention to how much harm the other person endured. In the Arab community, we think that how can the government tell me what to do inside my own home.”

E. Intersectionality and Intergenerationally Created Dependencies Due to Incidences of Domestic Violence.

Some participants indicated that the intersections of gendered roles and expectations, combined with the impacts of isolation, can create a fear of acknowledging the existence of domestic violence. The Hispanic community indicated that most men are expected to work outside while the women are entrusted with caregiving responsibilities, thus influencing dependence and creating isolation.

“In our ethnic group, the man goes outside of home. Most of the families and women are isolated at home. So sometimes it becomes difficult to address if men do not have normal behavior.”

Participants of the South Asian community indicated that adding the complexity is the fear of openly acknowledging the existence of domestic violence, often leading to normalizing it. In addition is the lack of knowledge of available resources, and one's rights to address violence. Some

participants highlighted the uniqueness of having multi-generational households that cause power imbalances and conflict within families:

“As a community we really do not understand domestic violence and even if we do, we would not want to come out openly and discuss it. We have normalized it. So much that we think that this physical abuse or whatever his control is normal, and we do not really take it as an abuse. It is often because of the whole patriarchal setup.”

“Most South Asian women do not have access to their rights. They don't know. They think that they were born to be abused. They are not told. They were taught that your husband's place is your home, and you are going to your husband. Whatever it is that is your last place.”

“I feel like it is not just your husband that can cause it. I think there are other members of the family that also exist in the household, and they can also be participating in domestic violence. In your own house you are not told to be aware of your surroundings. This is only when you are working outside that you pay attention. But the experiences of abuse happen when you are in your own house”.

“In the South Asian community, women are worried about what the community would say about them. They usually understand that a husband has every right on his wife.”

“Domestic violence can happen to anyone, either verbal or physical. It can happen to parents, kids, or a husband and even grandparents or primary caregiver for the children.”

F. Patriarchy, and the Dilemma of Undermining and Justifying Incidences of Domestic Violence.

Most participants indicated a tendency to undermine incidences of domestic violence and labelling them as an argument, given that this is between family members.

“I was born and raised in Syria Damascus, for the first half of my life and the other half in North America. When it comes to domestic violence there are two problems. One is the concept of domestic violence; it does not exist as a talking point or as a community issue. Even if we want to call the domestic violence trouble within family members it is not acceptable by the family for anybody outside to intervene. So, on the one hand there is no domestic violence, but there is domestic violence. And if you talk about domestic violence, you can face problems.”

“For the Arab communities, the root of domestic violence comes from the culture. The way they have been raised. The culture gives privilege to men in general to behave in a certain way. This is due to lack of education, lack of information. In their country of origin, it is not easy for women to think or stand for their rights. For men whatever they said, or whatever they do is acceptable.”

“And you know, especially men have a lot of power over anybody in the household so anything will be considered inferior to his supreme power.”

“In the Chinese community, in our culture, it is hard to identify emotional violence as sometimes people don’t feel it is like a violence. They do not want to fit it into calling it violence because it is by family members.”

“Often in the Hispanic community it is sometimes in the heat of the moment and lead to something physical. Sometimes it could be due to miss-communication.”

“Members of the Filipino community know that aside from physical, domestic violence can also be verbal abuse and impacts psychologically and emotionally. I think they understand it as domestic violence and know that it is not only physical but also emotional because many of my friends from the community know that verbal abuse is very significant. Saying bad words or belittling someone in the family. It also includes a child, who does not go to school and is maltreated verbally using a lot of negative words.”

G. Differences in Understanding and Defining Domestic Violence.

Despite the variance in understanding, most participants stated to be aware of what constitutes domestic violence. Despite this, importance was given to physical violence while emotional and other kinds of control were often ignored. As participants indicated, this was not out of ignorance, however, due to a prevalence of prevailing norms and societal fears, including fear of isolation and lack of supports. Some participants also included elder abuse in this explanation. Importantly, participants included elders and children in their definition of domestic violence and did not restrict it only to violent occurrences between intimate partners.

“Family violence or domestic violence for the Filipino community is when there is physical violence. This means hitting, choking punching. So, anything that is not physical is not seen as domestic violence. Members will only call police when they get hurt physically and that is why they will say that physical violence is the only reason when they reach to that point where they experienced the physical violence that is the only time, they will say I am experiencing domestic violence and I need help and will call police or call someone to ask for support. Some individuals will refuse to admit.

Emphasis is with physical violence instead of looking for other forms of violence including verbal abuse. Most often community members will say that they are fine. There is less financial or sexual violence. Most often they do not know why they are charged and in jail. This is because in Canada, domestic violence has a different definition in comparison to the Philippines. There is the concern of elder abuse as well. Children control their parents’ money when they grow up right when they're seniors. some things are natural to our culture and become embedded in our culture. there's a lot of cultural factors that are involved and many community members will not recognize the violence.”

“In the Chinese community, domestic violence could be fighting with their husbands or the wife. Domestic violence is verbal abuse, and also emotional violence and cultural, and religious. These things are not even identified or considered. The focus is on physical violence as the emotional part is hard to judge. In our culture, it is hard to identify emotional violence as sometimes people don’t feel it is like a violence.”

“It is hurting the other person in the family.”

“Domestic violence is abusing physically, sexually, threatening, and financial. It is not just husband and wives and includes others as well. It could happen between couples who are not married.”

“It could happen to anyone (parents, children). It could happen in foster families and fostered children as well. Those stories do not come out.”

“Most South Asian women understand that the real issue is if somebody hits you. They do not realize that emotional abuse does damage to their health. They do not give importance to their feelings. So, they do not react to emotional abuse. Most of the domestic violence is in the families where only the husband controls the finances.”

“I do not think domestic violence occurs in a sequence. Everything is just part of the physical violence. There is a lot of emotional and there is monetary like financial violence.”

“In the South Asian community lot of people told me that husbands they have a single account in the bank and the woman is not allowed as a secondary joint account holder.”

“Domestic violence is with whom you have a close relationship, and violence means when that person is harsh to you and that relationship. The common one here is spousal abuse and married person abusing their partner. That happens also between parents and children. Anyone who is treated unfairly. It could be emotional, financial.”

“Senior abuse should also be a part of domestic violence.”

“In our Korean community we know that economic abuse is also a part of domestic violence. Even if the husband is not working, and the wife is only working, the husband is the one who is controlling the money. So that is a part of economic violence. In the case of sex abuse she doesn't want anyone to know or go somewhere to seek help. The wife thinks that we are a family and we can solve it by ourselves.”

“I grew up with domestic violence and experienced it from my parents and brothers in the Arab community. I know what physical and mental abuse mean. It exists, but because we are women, you feel shy to report to the police. You cannot as it is the end of the world to go to the police and report to brother or sister or mother or father. It is the end of the world as you will be rejected. It exists. Maybe a wife can go against the husband. They have the right. But between siblings and parents it is very hard.”

Like other communities, members of the Black community agreed that experiences of physical violence are considered domestic violence:

“I will always think domestic violence is just physical. Physical hitting in a relationship so just between husband and wife, not necessarily the other people in the home. But it was just my narrow vision right. It could be physical, mental, emotional and all these different areas, even among the children and the parents in the home. When it occurs out of the house, it is considered something else but domestic is usually within the family and among the family.”

H. Created Dependencies and Intersections to Community Shame, Isolation and Acknowledging Domestic Violence.

Participants indicated that created dependencies due to intersecting complexities of social and community ostracism and isolation impact how community members reach out for available support.

“In our Korean community, if you talk about something even though you are a survivor, you are so afraid that you will be judged because you are abused. People will judge you and even though you are a survivor they will tell you maybe you have done something wrong. But that's how people would perceive that's like experiencing trauma and shame again. I think in our Korean community sees domestic violence as shame. Lot of times people just think that only physical violence is part of domestic violence, which is not correct. Financial abuse, mental and emotional abuse, psychological abuse, child abuse or senior abuses are all included in domestic violence.”

Members of the Arab community indicated that the direct impact of community ostracism is experiencing community shame and isolation. Importantly, participants stated that women acutely experience incidents of social isolation due to unwritten community rules that often unchallenged. Some participants suggested that experiences of community ostracism are often the price that women have to ‘pay’ for being ‘different’ and reaching out for support as everyone experiences control and violence.

“Unfortunately, people they don't really talk about it openly and there is still the shame as a barrier to deal with their domestic violence. We still have that. People try to avoid it and even if those that they dare to talk about it openly experience shame and feel the isolation from the community. You don't get a lot of support. A lot of women when they separate, they face isolation from the community.”

“In the Arab community, when a woman is divorced, everyone who knows her stop contacting her. There is some mentality in the community, and they have a problem, and are not comfortable dealing with a divorced woman. The community does not ostracize men who are divorced or separated as much.”

“In the Arab community, it is an understanding and a mentality that you are going to be less than everyone because you made the decision to be different. They think you are a big shot to be different than the rest because everybody has family issues. So, they think like why she has to make this choice and be different than those people. Also, when there is a relationship breakdown, they kind go on a mission to damage the reputation of the other side. Men can do it and women do it. So, they play the victim even if they are the abusers. They can put the blame on one person and the community sides with one person. But mainly shame most of the time is placed on women and not men. The men, you know after the divorce is encouraged to find someone else and marry and move on with his life, and gets a lot of support from family, friends. But the woman would be the same for years. It is very damaging for women. This is the community telling the woman that you do not deserve a second chance. They look at her down, and they also isolate the kids so women that they have kids all the sudden they lose a lot of friends, because of that situation.

“In my culture few years ago men are not broad minded and think that women just stay at home. So there needs to be an awareness that men and women are equal. And when they don’t have (a) job, they start violence. This impacts community and families, and so we have to create discussions and have some counselling committees.”

1. Implications on Mental Health Due to Community Ostracism

Participants acknowledged the need for intersectional awareness to combat domestic violence and the lack of support available. The fear of being ostracized by the community was identified as a barrier that prevents individuals from seeking help, leading to further mental health issues. To address this issue, participants suggested providing resources and education to raise awareness of intersectionality and its role in domestic violence.

“It is very damaging for women in my Arab community. They say that the woman does not deserve a second chance. They look down on her and isolate the kids. Suddenly, they lose a lot of friends. This is a kind of a different type of abuse as the children ask their mother where their friends are, and how come no one visits us. This makes the woman feel that despite making the right decision they have lost all the people. So they fall into depression, as a result of shame. Sometimes it takes years for them to recover. I know as I work in counseling. They experience other symptoms such as physical illness, as a result of the psychological issues. This is how enormous the sense of shame and the pressure from our community. It is not only the shame, there are a lot of factors that prevent a woman to stand for themselves or to do some changes or to stop the domestic violence.”

J. Lack of Support from Community.

Most participants stated that there is a lack of support to acknowledge the existence of domestic violence. As participants from the Arab community explained:

“I find the community takes the male side. We still have that in our community. Some religious leaders they do not really help when women go to them. I used to go to a community leader to tell him about the type of issues that our community faces. And I got no positive response. I was brushed off and there was no action. They actually dismissed and got rid of me.”

“In the Arab community, we have a fear of rejection and lack of support. Many women that can stand up on their own very fast, but if they have kids and they lose support for a mother it breaks her heart. It becomes really hard. Sometimes we have to move out because of the physical violence. And children have to go to a different area, different school, different everything. There is a lot of adjustment. Children find it hard. They lose their friends at school, and they have to adjust. It just a big step for the woman to decide along with the sense of shame and the blame. It is enormous. they are hesitant to report it or to deal with it.”

Question One Summary

The above briefly introduces the complexity of understanding domestic violence as perceived by ethno-cultural communities. The complexity arises from lack of clarity, education, intergenerational and inherited norms that are often unchallenged with an emphasis on physical violence, plus fears of further social marginalization, lack of appropriate policies in countries of origin, intersecting with fears of isolation, community ostracism and mental health.

Question Two: Is Domestic Violence One of the Major Issues in Your Community?

A. Intersectional and Identifying Difficulties.

Most participants indicated that domestic violence is a complex phenomenon that is often hidden and intersects with other issues, as identified in the first question; thus, it becomes difficult to label it as one of the major issues. While some participants agreed (most participants of the Filipino, South Asian and the Arab community agreed), often there was discussion on highlighting what domestic violence is and a lack of consensus to admit it as one of the major issues. It is evident

from the following themes that participant reflections often involved discussions on the first question, thus emphasizing the complexity of understanding domestic violence among ethno-cultural communities.

“I don't know if there is the biggest issue. I'm sure that there is violence in our community, remembering that the violence is not only physical, but also bearable, starting from this point I'm sure it exists, what I don't know if it is the biggest problem.”

“I think that the main problem is not always domestic violence, as there are different types of violence within community.”

B. Need for Community Evaluation.

The Black community indicated a need to conduct systematic community reviews to evaluate each community prior to acknowledging if domestic violence could be deemed as a major issue in their community.

“It's hard for me to say yes it's one of the main issues. Because I don't even know if it has been measured. hard to say no it's not so because it hasn't been really measured, you know I'm not sure if I'm being clear but I'm going to lean more on know there are other things”

C. Pervasiveness of Domestic Violence

“I think, domestic violence is in every house, every country, every culture and in every community. But we do not see it because we don't live with them. They have their own way of living, but normally men always think the better and best and more important than women. Men want to manipulate and control everything. So I think pretty much every house has domestic violence.”

D. Intersections of Shame

“It is difficult to say that because people when they suffer in domestic violence, they feel ashamed, and they hide these kind of things. The other thing is that this is generated from generations and is passed on to the parents, the children or even us. Everyone sees it as normal. We cannot identify it as we grow in this understanding. But we know when something is not right.”

E. Identifying Domestic Violence as a Major Issue.

All participants of the Filipino community agreed that it was a major issue:

“I can say yes, because of lack of knowledge and also dependent, is there a big difference.”

Despite identifying it as a major issue for their community, participants from the Filipino community indicated that separation is not an acceptable solution, with most community members leaning towards family reunification:

“The couples don't want to separate it's like a no, no, the separate So even if there's domestic violence happening already. couples will do everything, not the separate. A difference in the Philippines there's no divorce here there is divorced. Lack of knowledge- we don't tend to address it, because we don't know that what is happening with us, is it DV and how to deal. the children so that's probably when it becomes a major issue.”

The findings were similar for the Arab and the South Asian community:

“Domestic violence is one of the major issues of our South Asian community given that there are so many layers.”

“It is a very major issue in the South Asian community, as many of us, like many of our participants shared already. Not being considered as an issue it like it's been like believe that it's a part of life is so normalized that nobody even considers this. Oh, this is part of this is domestic violence, know like we believe that no this is part of life, this is how we are supposed to if this is all our parents live. is how we live, and this is how we are teaching or preparing our kids to live like that okay.”

“People are getting the awareness about it, but still it lies the major issue because it still considered a stigma. To come out of the homes, especially as Monica referred that mostly women, they don't want to come back home they conditionally emotionally they take it very lightly oh you to routine. So they do not give it much importance. many agencies here in Canada, they are working to approve this domestic violence, but again referred back to Korea nobody's trying to come out. So if we do not have examples, if we do not have the offset like mind of the women, how could, how could we you know do it.”

“I would say, definitely hundred percent it is.”

“I think it is a major issue in the South Asian community. I don't know if it's because I know of people that I didn't know before, but it's really present in I think it's a crisis. Unfortunately, I've been able to witness some of these domestic violence happening with the young people in their 20s. I don't know how the support will be and then how to really I don't know reach out to this group of people.”

“It is like a big umbrella, and those are raindrops under those umbrella like an emotional just by the topic is equal to the individual answer.

“You haven't had the chance to have healthy role model for you and for your son to witness.”

“I can agree on domestic violence, one of the major issues in the Community.”

“All of us in the Arab community agree that that culture has a big big role culture plays a big role.”

F. Unchallenged and Intersections of Patriarchal Norms.

“I think there are two factors very important in domestic violence, it can be emotional and also can be physical. especially in the Spanish women, men, they don't want women to work because they want to control the, the women, they want women to stay home and they don't you know, like in in manipulate in asking money so that is one of the main factor, I can see here in Calgary”

“The moment when they are married very first thing that parents challenged in Pakistan that this that the house where you are going is your last, you know that place to live. So they compromise are their life, so this is one of my observation is a very little reporting to the police and to the other agencies and people think, because they read their domestic issue their internal problem, and they should not discuss with other people. The issue is there, of course I can't deny that one but it's not publicly reported it.”

“It's hidden. It is there, but it's hidden nobody tells talks about that.”

G. Difficulties with Acknowledging Domestic Violence as a Major Issue.

“Even the ability to come out in a forum like this to say something. If you're experiencing it, why would you go out and say it, because that makes it public right. So, it's not an easy thing and it's not proceed whoever if you're if you're on a public forum and you're told that all you're saying something. It's not exactly an easy topic to even come out and admit.”

H. Intersections with Mental Health.

“In your home, yes, yes, of course, of course, I think you know it is the root of all the problem like this stress, depression, anxiety. So, when women come to her books are there, my stress due to domestic violence. And they have chronic health issues, because of domestic violence, it is a very, very major issue in her community.”

There was a lack of consensus among participants of the Chinese community if domestic violence was one of their communities' major issues.

“Domestic violence is the major issue in the Chinese community because it's like one of the issues, but I don't think it's the major issue. Mostly it's because the finance like a brought up is like kind of issue, and then in like the Chinese Community mostly I would say, mostly like people they try. To looking for jobs if later with jobs to like a balance and then support a family, this kind of issue, it will be like a decrease it happens, but in the other way that like it's very like. For the domestic violence, like it has like a characteristic it's like a hidden because people don't

want to share and as (previous participant) mention it it's kind of feeling like a loose face and in other point that like. There's lots of like a issues behind that it's not only like a something we are hearing from one part. Actually it's like a lot of complex complicated like a fax cost like this happen because there's like a cultural issue, and they are also lots of like a finance and complicated and especially if later people they living in the same household lots of those like, living habits and also those like a living style it come up lots of the could conflict mix like things like even more complicated so that's like I will say that it's not a major issue, it happens everywhere in any culture.”

“I didn't think that's some major issues but definitely will have some on you know, Chinese woman, you know I think now emotional abuse is become more you know. Young Chinese woman they now know how to you know to deal with this kind of problem so usually they were looking for social workers or you know, with her husband, because she go looking for a psychologist so that will help the issue this kind of. problem, but this depends sometimes or come on has been buying so by doing there's some education, I think this this this violence show.”

I. Resettlement Concerns

Some participants indicated a need to explore resettlement stressors while exploring if domestic violence was one of the major concerns for their community. For example, the Arab, Filipino, and the Korean community stated:

“There is lots of layers comes behind the domestic violence coming to you and your country. Different countries culture, religion, language, whether everything that can also cause the domestic (violence) because some people when they came here they find it everything is different and changing. Maybe the dad or the men face some challenges with the with the job finding the job that is can affect their the whole system and their the mental health.”

“He's the responsible, he is he's doing all the outside, jobs and when he came to Canada, maybe he faced these things at the beginning, for a couple years or a couple months it depends, or he. forced to work, something else that can affect their self esteem and then, when the domestic violence, also arise in the in the community.”

“Even though all this stress come to through the in family and family some people lost, you know, jobs and family got attentions and they are more talk about unnecessary some stuff like that kind of a domestic bias as well, I think. also contribute to the epic violence including the unemployment.”

“You will hear a lot of Filipino clients who will be like I worked five jobs to pay for my days and it creates jobs and really stressed and make them angry increases. There's no support they're getting on the decrease in their workloads. There's so much clients that like this underlying addictions, child is actually a lot of symptoms of like, for instance, anger issues or ADHD, but you will be in denial to attack. Those combination creates a dynamic that increases domestic chances of domestic violence. In the Filipino community, even when I work in this field, my

parents indicated to me, domestic violence doesn't exist in our community. He is embarrassed and ashamed. So we'll just hide it. there's a lot of cultural context. even though we are like talking about major issues how about support systems there's also like own there's a lot of us, but also few of us for a number of populations.”

“Our community is in denial and let's be honest, if someone will say I'm experiencing these abuses from my husband, everyone will be trying to help the couple to not talk about the downside, even you know relatives, so it is an issue a big issue and it's a community issue, but the Community is not acknowledging it as an issue. Our community is not open to acknowledge that this is happening. We need to create a support, because we know that that going to children, services or for the government to be involved. It's a big issue, it's a child protection issue that means a lot of the situation, the parents are not in control because it's the government now, who has to make those some.”

J. Denial by Community Elders

“I have one conversation with one of the elder in our Filipino community, and she was surprised when I said that we have Family violence in our community, and she said no that's not happening in our community that's not so it is a major issue, but I think it is we grew to this issue.”

“I don't think this one of the major issues in the Korean community is that one up there, a lot of things you know. lot of people avoid talk about it.”

“And then, also about psychology or mental house I'm also a possibility and gender gap, you know, like in Asia, in general we don't have a lot of opportunities, like men. when we have kids, we need to take care, a lot of things to do, besides going to work so sometimes. We have a problem with also to take care of ourselves, and we cannot ask for all because people think that is your responsibility, you know I'm saying so, I think, domestic violence is one thing.”

K. Community Ostracism

“A lot of people in the Korean community are hiding because of you know, the judgments people would make for anything but they you know get to know from you and that's why it's I would say yes, it is serious, right now, even more than before ever um I I've heard just in general, domestic violence has been like really serious problem”

L. Racism and Unemployment Due to Pandemic Adding to the Stressors.

“Ever since like pandemic happen for whole world, not just our Korean community, but yeah but with that part of racism and hate crimes raising so much. I think a lot of stress has been no I people may not be so confident losing you know their job you know, unemployment, all these things make people so frustrated and stressed.”

M. Major Issue for Young Children Witnessing Violence:

“I have fought domestic violence, little bit with the young generation, the young adults. They don't finish university I just after high school in the try to find some job and happy to have kids. They are very young and the relationship, you were not nurture maybe were to friendship, they have that child and that commitment is done then. So young people taking care of a young kid then we'll all the tensions that responsibility as a parent out there, so become. so, a little bit violent take place, especially when young people are living together. I'm not saying it's nice system but it's not significant compared to the other than we take the entire Community, then I will say is less, but is it is a major issue in a young adult life too, so in a way, I can read online rather than your family coming together, it says this. (A)”

“I think they see it in the home, really, they live it in their home, and this is what they know.”

Question Two Summary

Responses to the question about domestic violence's prominence in communities showed a range of views. Participants recognized its complex nature, often hidden and interconnected with other issues. While some acknowledged it as significant, especially in certain ethno-cultural groups, others emphasized the need for community evaluations before labeling it a major issue. Domestic violence's widespread presence was noted, though obscured by cultural norms and shame.

Question Three: List Accessible Resources for Communities to Address Domestic Violence.

Most participants indicated that despite the uncertainty of acceptable outcomes, changing preferences of younger educated community members, and fear of repercussions to reach out for support, the most common resources to reach out were the immigrant serving settlement agencies, emergency police services, faith leaders, or a family friend. Reaching out to emergency services was contingent upon the severity of physical violence. The themes that were presented in this section were:

A. Fear of Unacceptable Solutions:

“In the Afghan community we usually prefer reaching out to informal community support, elders or family elders. People prefer to reach out to family members due to the stigma. But the solutions may or may not work.”

“In the Filipino community, they access immigrant serving agencies like the center for newcomers, however most of the people will go first to their friends and pastors and church leaders.”

Elaborating on the above, participants from the Arab community explained that the difficulties in reaching out to resources lie in the fact that concepts such as counselling or mental health services are new. Therefore, some members of the Arab community prefer to reach out to someone they trust:

“People like to go to someone they trust first, their friends, to try to solve the problems. Friends then go to the husband to give some kind of advice on who is right or wrong here. When this fails the religious leaders are involved. The concept of going to a family counselor is really scary. People believe that this is the family secret and internal family issue. The question they ask is why I should talk to someone about my issues. And why will this person tell me how I should live. It is not really acceptable and not a familiar concept to seek help from a professional. Family counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrist are not like going to meet family or friends. Sometimes they just go home and suffer in silence for a while before being able to decide on what to do next.”

B. Severity of Physical Violence as the Deciding Factor (to Access Resources) Despite Concerns:

“In the South Asian community, it is normal to share with friends or somebody we can like a community leader or a religious leader. If there is too much physical violence, then members call 911. Once they are mentally ready to accept the consequences, only then they will go ask for the help or when it is too much physical violence and if the physician sees the bruises and then they report to the government, otherwise nobody take initiative to get the resources.”

“If it is a life-threatening situation people from the Chinese community will call 911 even if there are language issues. Though the percentage is not super high for the Chinese families, but it happens.”

C. Fear of Being Separated and Divorced:

“In the South Asian community, most members are still not comfortable using the available community support. The danger is that if they speak out and reach out to resources which are available, then the marriage is going to break. Their partner will take it very seriously and feel insulted and they will kick the woman out. 90% of the woman, they just don't talk at the most, they just tell some friend or parents, not even go to the religious leader, because once they talk to external resources, they might be out of marriage.”

D. Uncertainty of Terms and Language to Use:

“In the Chinese community, people usually do not know what to say even if resources are there to access. They do not know how to protect their self. Some women know of emergency shelters, and they know they can leave their home.”

E. Hidden and Difficult Access to Resources in Public Spaces:

A few participants highlighted the difficulty with access to available community resources. Some participants indicated that while resources were available, they were hard to find and not obvious to all those who visited and frequented their community.

“For the South Asian community, I do not think resources are outlined in a way that is friendly I feel like they are somehow hidden. They are not apparent at public spaces that are frequented. You have to seek them out. If somebody is in distress, they are not going to seek them out. That is too much work. I don't think resources are readily available and accessible.”

Echoing the above, participants from the Black community indicated that the difficulty with access also includes a lack of opportunities for direct contact when calling the first time and the way many of their community members are moved to different workers within an agency.

“I am not aware of any resources. I am not sure where to send people from my community for help. I have heard of the Sheriff King. Direct contact is not there. When you call, you get to five different people to get an answer and it is not easily accessible at all.

F. Evolving Community Preferences:

Participants from the Nigerian community indicated the diminishing respect to reach out to them for support for faith leaders and community elders. New community members now prefer to contact confidential emergency services such as the emergency police services.

“Nigeria is divided into three major tribes. When we came two decades ago, we used to respect those who came before us, and the church was held in high esteem. So, if anyone was going through a difficult time, we could easily identify them and then the elders could go and meet the families. But recently we have seen that most people who come arrive with money and education, and the value and respect to the elders is now diminished. So now everything is in secret. Earlier the elders and the faith leaders were there, and people used those resources. The police services are the most usual resource being used. So rather than reaching out to community elders or faith leaders, new community members prefer to call the police.”

G. Uniqueness of Language and Community Specific Resources:

Filipino participants highlighted the urgent need for community and language-specific resources, especially for services such as addiction counselling. Although language interpreters are a valuable resource, participants, especially from the Filipino community, stated that given their unique language, translating and interpreting it in English becomes difficult:

“Especially with the Filipino community the hard part is accessibility because our language expression is different from typical English. But it is difficult that the idea is that they will get to speak in English. For instance in our community, the resources are almost next to nothing for addiction counseling.”

The Korean community echoed the above sentiments regarding lacking language-specific resources:

“And they don't really know how to express the actual feeling or emotions especially of the survivors. It is important to let the counselor or the social workers to know.”

“As a social worker in Calgary, I think anyone can go anywhere for resources but there are a lot of barriers for our community and that's why I founded our organization. I know there are resources for people who are in need, but even though there are places to go to seek for help they don't know what to do with the cultural background or they do not know how to consider that. Language is a big part of all this. Not everyone is comfortable with interpreters or know how to express themselves.”

Regardless of the above concerns, most participants indicated that regulations to enquire about domestic violence when visiting hospitals and the existence of emergency services is an essential service, especially due to the availability of language interpreters:

“People working in the hospitals enquire when we first visit for injuries if we are feeling okay. The first questions are related to domestic violence. It is surprising when we go to children's hospital, nurses bring cards in various languages that have information on domestic violence that have names and phone numbers of organizations that you can dial in case that you are stressed or suffering. The emergency lines are very useful because you have the opportunity to express yourself in your own language and you do not have to speak English. But often we call a friend, a close friend, or relatives, or parents.”

H. Issues of Lengthy Time Constraints Versus Family Goals

Many participants stated that family reunification was usually the goal for their community. Also highlighted was the time needed to legally process domestic violence cases is a deterrent and barrier. In addition to this was the reliance on faith leaders to reach out for support.

“Filipinos do not access those resources because by the time the case will be heard the time passed is already severe. By this time, most of the families in our communities are already in the preventive phase. So instead of accessing external legal resources, we rely on friends or other people.”

“Filipino won’t usually access community gate keepers. I think how we look at domestic violence is very personnel issue. We don't want to share to anyone, unless we trust someone. So, they normally would go to first friends or church leaders. Filipinos are 85% Catholics. I think a lot of them will go to the to the church leaders or the pastors.”

I. Cultural Differences:

Participants from the Filipino community indicated that because most community members spoke English, requests to have language-specific resources were often not addressed.

“The agencies say Filipinos can be part of any organizations because they speak English. But often it is not about the language and is about the culture and a lot of it is the cultural. There is a difference between how we view family violence in in our country in the Philippines and in Canada. So, then we can explain it in our culture. It would be different if it is someone who is a white Caucasian. For example, I do not think they really understand when we say Filipinos work three jobs. Social workers and this is from our experience, social workers would come to me and say I don't understand why do you have to work three jobs, what is it that Filipino parents have to do. The support is different. If it is a Filipino, then they will completely understand why I have three jobs is because I have five families back home that I support. And I have loans.”

J. Underreporting and Denying Abuse Due to Systemic Difficulties:

Given some of the difficulties explained earlier concerning community ostracism, participants indicated that community members prefer to contact family and friends. When external service providers are involved, it is not uncommon for individuals to minimize abuse:

“You will be amazed on how many family members reverse this stories and say everything is ok, and deny the abuse. It is because they do not want the issue to be public. It is a difficult concept to say things about the family member and open up to the public or the community especially if it your husband. It is difficult to do this publicly to your wife or your children.”

Question Three Summary

Responses regarding accessible resources for addressing domestic violence highlight a range of factors influencing resource utilization. These include a preference for informal support due to stigma, the triggering of resource use based on the severity of physical violence, concerns about marriage dissolution, uncertainty about resource terminology, challenges in locating resources, evolving preferences favoring involvement of law enforcement, the need for language-specific resources, significance of hospital inquiries and emergency services, impact of time constraints on resource utilization, cultural nuances shaping support preferences, and underreporting linked to community ostracism.

Question Four: List Barriers to Reach Domestic Violence Services

Most participants indicated that the barriers to accessing domestic violence services intersected with the previously mentioned difficulties. Some of the common barriers stated were language, community beliefs and ostracism, lack of support and isolation. The discussion threw light on some predominant themes:

A. Lack of Awareness:

Some participants indicated that lack of knowledge and practices prevalent in their countries of origin result in individuals not accessing services:

“In the Chinese community it is the fear of reporting, confidentiality, and the fear of not knowing.”

“In the South Asian community, women believe that if you share it outside, you will be sent back home to your country. You won't be able to get your permanent residence. Those things are being used to suppress.”

“The main barrier is the not knowing about available resources.”

B. Intersecting and Unchallenged Ingrained Gendered and Religious Beliefs:

“Many women in the Hispanic community think that they cannot support their house and need the husband and his income. They are told that they cannot survive without the husband and need

him all the time. It is ingrained in the women's head that without a husband they are nothing. Women believe it and so they rather be quiet and tell no one about what's happening, than look for help, because they may think they are not able to find a job and take care of the kids."

"In the South Asian community there are a lot of myths and stereotypes that are connected with domestic violence without any specific relation to culture."

"Most of the time it is cultural. I think that women and children, and even men they do not know in the Hispanic communities. Sometimes they feel ashamed. So, they prefer to continue keeping it secret and unexpressed on what is going on, because they are afraid to be misunderstood."

"In our Hispanic community you believe that you stay with your husband forever. No matter what. So it does not matter if your husband hits you. It does not matter if you have a horrible life with him. You have to stay with him until you die. It is less about religion, but the key thing is that you have to stay with him."

Participants from the Chinese community highlighted that the act of domestic violence is about a prevailing community mindset, that is often ingrained, inherited and left unchallenged:

"Domestic violence about a mindset. It is about how you are raised as a child and your culture. For example, if a mother got abused by the father, it might impact how the children would behave in the future."

"Shame, judgement, resentment, loneliness, depression, and suicidal ideation especially for women. Loneliness contributes to women especially immigrant women in the Chinese community."

"In the Filipino community, this is really a sensitive issue for public discussion. They are ashamed to talk about it, even to their friends so sometimes they just only keep it keep it by themselves."

This was echoed by participants from the South Asian community:

"If somebody even tries to talk or share somewhere, the community, the relatives will pull that person back. They would ask how dare you did not know this things should keep stay inside the house. So, mentality is also a biggest thing. People are not sharing when you just say this word domestic violence. The reaction is usually, 'my goodness, oh, my goodness'- what are you talking? It does not happen in our family, or our family is not like that. So people are scared of even talking about it or even listening this word. Yes, awareness is coming up people are getting aware, but still majority are all like that."

C. Prioritizing Resettlement Demands:

Most participants indicated that resettling includes being without social and familial support and often lacking skills to express themselves in English. These impact the ability to reach out to report incidences of domestic violence.

“For the Filipino community, usually we prioritize resettlement and surviving as immigrants than reporting domestic violence.”

“For the Korean community, when we can come to Canada, we need to take care of our family.”

“In the Chinese community, our next generation who are growing up here have different ideas, but for the traditional Chinese it's really hard for them to ask outside as they would be considered crazy.”

“For the Filipino community, the priorities different. There are difficulties to connect with our community because of interest. Most people say I have work. I don't experience domestic violence, or I don't know anyone who has experienced this or I am busy.”

“Women have to work and look after kids and take care of all the caregiving responsibilities such as taking care of school. Everyone is busy so most of the woman remain quiet. Being silence is common.”

“(The) language barrier is a big one for the Hispanic community.”

“For the South Asian the biggest is the language barrier.”

“In the Chinese community, the barriers of education and barriers to using computers. Community members often do not know the resources. Sometimes people live in an area that speak a language different from their own and often the language service is not enough.”

“We should realize the woman are weak. They cannot handle the stress especially if their parents are living in Pakistan or India. There is nobody around them. They have very limited friendship. They don't know the system. It puts a lot of pressure, especially to make a decision and leaving the husband and their house. Isolation is another issue. Underreporting, ethno-specific shelters, and financial dependency. Women in my community don't drive or they do not know how to go by buses. They don't know how to go or where to go. In our community 50% (of) ladies are working or not, and those are not working, they don't have the money for anything even their pocket money. They have to beg, what will they do without money. They do not eat outside so money issue is the biggest issue. The housewives, they don't work they know if something will happen there will be no one. With the government's support, can they survive?”

While some participants stated that women are emotionally resilient, others contested that they are weak:

“In the South Asian community, working women also go through domestic violence. Women are mentally stronger. So yes, women are mentally and emotionally stronger. Their weakness is that women emotionally always think about their children’s future. And in our society, it is generally believed that the man is responsible for working outside. These are the challenges for the moment.”

D. Inappropriate Fear of Losing Children:

“In our Hispanic community if we are beaten, we are afraid to expose ourselves. We fear that we are going to lose our children. So that is why women are always quiet.”

E. Pressure to Keep Family Together:

“Women think that the husband is going to change. They have a hope that every everything is going to be better. Sometimes when an episode of violence happens at home, the husband says look what you make me do. Women think that they did something wrong and the husband just react. After sometimes the husband comes crying or saying I am sorry I won't do it again. If they have kids, women don't want to break up the relationship and prefer to suffer in order to keep the family together.”

F. Systemic Challenges:

Some participants indicated that systemic challenges are barriers to reporting:

“If you do not have proof police don't believe in you.”

“In the Korean community, we sacrifice. When people come as immigrants, they cannot maintain the same job that they had in their countries. Sometimes even though they were doctors, lawyers, they come here, and they start a survivor job or in very low level job. Because they try to survive every day. All these things can also affect people and may lower their confidence. It impacts mental health by questions like why am I here, why did I give up.

“We have a lot of social workers, but to be honest, I work with a lot of agency and non- profit organization, most of them are White. I would say cultural competency just doesn't come with education.”

“For the Arabic community, I think there are wonderful people out there, but sometimes our issues are complicated and can be misunderstood.”

“A woman from the South Asian community gathered the courage to call emergency services when she was going through the abuse but found the system lagging in providing services. She was struggling as no one was picking up. They answered three days later. The counselors said we will let you know. The system is clogged.”

There was some disagreement on the availability of resources. Some participants in the South Asian community indicated that resources were available:

“In Alberta, resources are always published in different languages, so I won't say that language is the barrier.”

However, other participants indicated that resources are not easily available:

“I think the resources are not out there, because people have to dig deeper and when they are under stress they are not going to be able to go even online and pick up the phone and search.”

“In the South Asian community, many are technically handicapped. So don't know how to use computer. Sometime reporting takes a lot of time. They are not comfortable.”

“A couple of women from the South Asian community left their home, but shelters keep them for less than one month. The problem with the ladies is they don't want to go and live with the White women in a shelter downtown or somewhere. I don't know if there are shelters for the Indian community.”

“In the Black community I know of families that came from refugee camps and they struggle.”

“In my Chinese community, I think it is the financial part. I mean psychological counseling is really expensive.”

G. Stigma of Mental Health:

Some participants highlighted the intersection of language and the stigma of accepting mental health concerns as a barrier to reporting:

“In our Chinese community, language is a barrier. And it is a shame to talk about mental health to my friends and domestic violence. This prevent(s) people from talking and it is shameful to talk.”

“For the Filipino community, there is a huge issue about stigma on mental health.”

“In the Korean community, women are ashamed to talk about their issues. We have grown in this mindset. I wonder how to make women talk about their issues.”

“Shame, judgement, resentment, loneliness, depression, and suicidal ideation especially for women. Loneliness contributes to women especially immigrant women in the Chinese community.”

“In the Korean community, there are so many underlying issues. With three jobs, the mental health and the drug use. We are not talking about marijuana here, we are talking about cocaine or

methamphetamine, which is a drug that can affect mental health. Many community members who are in the hospital because of mental health.”

H. Intersections of Ingrained Gendered Roles and Community Restrictions:

“Sometimes they said that well you don't have to complain. Because you are a woman right.”

“In our Spanish community, I feel that women are brave, but they have lost their spirit to be brave. It is because they don't find their support around family, friends, or even the children. Something makes women hesitate and weak.”

“In Chinese family having a boy is very important. In Asians such concepts are very deeply ingrained in older generations”

“The biggest challenge in the Chinese community is the shame. It is deep in our culture. We believe that you bring dishonor to our family.”

“Where I am coming from in Nigeria, the women do not have much to say while the men can talk. Women don't have the liberty to ask for themselves, they are limited in what they are allowed. This prevents them from exposing their families and bring shame and dishonor. Family is very important in the African community. Women was limited in the amount of power they hold.”

“In my Afghan culture, usually males are dominant over family, including children and women. The root cause is boys in a family are usually given more opportunities and authority while girls are not given. So many opportunities are given to boys. Girls and women are usually not seen and are in the background especially back home with the Taliban. Here in Canada, at least women can talk. Community encourages women to be silent, and obedient. They appreciate the good patient woman who never opens her mouth and always praises. Women to be considered good need to have these qualities- not to speak their rights and accept everything.”

Question Four Summary

Barriers to accessing domestic violence services include lack of awareness about available resources, deeply ingrained gendered and religious beliefs that discourage reporting, prioritization of resettlement concerns over seeking help, fear of losing custody of children, pressure to maintain family unity, systemic challenges like lack of proof, stigma surrounding mental health, and the intersection of traditional gender roles and societal restrictions. These factors collectively hinder individuals from accessing the necessary support for domestic violence situations.

Question Five: Community Specific Challenges to Address Domestic Violence

Most participants indicated that concepts of family shame and honour and ingrained gendered patriarchal community attitudes that largely remain unchallenged continue to be an impediment. Such entrenched gender roles, cultural norms, and societal expectations of shame and honour create barriers to progress. Nevertheless, some participants noted that their communities are witnessing a transformation due to increased access to education for women, access to information, and the transition from traditional to modern attitudes.

A. Higher Education Leading to Empowerment

“In our Spanish community, women are educated so they are able to handle and express themselves confidently.”

B. Community Changes:

“In the older generations, if you are being abused or women always want to keep the family together. But with the new generations this is now changing. There are more separations. Now, people do not care what is their family thinking. This does not mean that it is not happening. In many families women stay quiet and suffer.”

C. Male Survivors of Violence:

“If a man acknowledges being physically and emotionally abused by his wife, everyone in the community will laugh at him. So, men deny being abused.”

“In the Chinese community, disclosing emotional, financial, and sexual violence remains a challenge. Because it is not obvious, and difficult to identify, people deny it.”

D. Ethno-Specific Services:

“We don’t have Filipino language speaking counsellors especially in areas such as addictions and crisis counselling.”

“In dangerous situations Korean families do not have any specific place to go.”

Question Five Summary

Community-specific challenges in addressing domestic violence involve higher education empowering some women, changing attitudes towards family unity in newer generations, male

survivors facing societal reluctance to acknowledge abuse, and the lack of ethno-specific services for languages and cultural needs.

Question Six: List the Barriers to Access Domestic Violence Supports During the Pandemic

Most communities indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic was a barrier. As everything remained closed and the shelters limited the intake of individuals, everything remained challenging. Fear of infection of the virus meant that no one wanted to go to shelters. The discussion presented the following:

A. Increased Stress:

“For the Hispanic community, it was worse during the pandemic as everything remained closed. The shelters did not received people, and everyone was falling sick. So, the stress increased as everyone remained at home together. Individuals were engaging in drinking alcohol.”

“For the Arab community, we could not even go out if there was a fight. That was a barrier. Everything and all problems were doubled.”

“In the South Asian community, there was an increased stress due to existing multi-generational households. There was less time to concentrate on work.”

“In the Chinese community losing jobs during the pandemic increased stress.”

“I think for the Korean community it was the loss of human interaction. They lost their job. Children stopped going to classes and it was just online classes. So, there was no interaction with their friends. It socially isolated.”

B. Restricted Access to Services:

“For the Arabic community, people were afraid of getting infected. So, the victims were reluctant to go to shelters. There were no shelters. Usually when we called there were waiting list of one or two months. We couldn’t go out with friends as well. Zoom was a God send and we are thankful but face to face is different.”

“An inherent barrier for the South Asian community is that the pandemic prevented the ability to just go walk into a facility and say I need help.”

“For those in the Black community, we found that the services are not answering the phone. And you could not even physically go there and knock on the door and say hi.”

“For the Arab community, we found that language barriers was a huge factor.”

C. Challenges of Technology and Loss of Employment:

Participants from the Chinese, Korean and Arab communities indicated that technology and lack of computer literacy impacted reaching out for help; this was a barrier for the communities to access support, as only some could connect via Zoom. Lack of access to computers was another barrier to reaching services.

D. Challenges to Acknowledging Domestic Violence

Many participants from the Black community indicated that pandemic increased the difficulties to acknowledging domestic violence:

“The community is so private where domestic violence is concerned. And gatherings are cancelled.”

“Domestic violence went up in every community, not only in our Arab community. Because people were living with each other and there was no escape. Some people were able to work on their issues, because they have time or resources to do it. They were getting help on how to cope.”

Question Six Summary

During the pandemic, accessing domestic violence support was hindered by closed services, limited shelter intake, increased stress, fear of Covid-19, language barriers, and technological challenges. Acknowledging domestic violence became harder due to privacy concerns and cancelled gatherings.

Question Seven: Discussion on Domestic Violence Among Sexually Diverse Individuals

Most participants acknowledged that their communities are not ready to address sexual diversity. Subsequently, this made acknowledging domestic violence among sexually diverse individuals difficult. Participants stated that the issue was due to a lack of direct interactions with those who were sexually diverse.

A. Lack of Acceptance and Acknowledgement:

“In the Hispanic community, I do not have close connections or family friend.”

“This is a big topic for Spanish community as no one says they face this. I think we are not ready as a community.”

“I don't know in the Filipino community, I haven't heard any experience, where an LGBTQ member is from our community, or if there is any support for LGBTQ community in terms of domestic violence.”

“In the Chinese community people try to avoid talking about it. I know that not lots of people accept it, but it exists. In our culture, people may not easily accept. It is very difficult to accept, if they are your family members. Very difficult. Sometimes they are not accepted.”

B. Shame and Restrictions of Religion:

“In the Spanish community culturally, we have men and women and relationship between them are normal. And sometimes we are not prepared to accept other. It is not only culturally, we are talking about religiously and our faith and many other factors.”

“For member of the Columbian community, it is cultural, and religious. Where I came from it is a big issue.”

“The Chinese community is still learning how to accept the LGBTQ community.”

“In my Nigerian community it is not an open conversation and those who are affected we don't know as they cannot be identified. So my community does not know if there are any issues.”

“In our Afghan community if you go back home right now, people with different sexual orientation could be punished. Such individuals are considered bringing shame, a punishment from God, a curse.”

“In the South Asian community, we do not really recognize them because of fear of many factors like community factor and then obviously the religion. The stigma attached to a being the member of the LGBTQ community.”

“The Korean community in general is not to open anyway to talk about it.”

“In the Black community, sexual diversity is not something people talk about.”

Some participants from the South Asian communities denied that there were sexually diverse members:

“No, no no no, there are none.”

“The community does not even accept them.”

Some participants indicated that intersecting community shame and parental expectations play a role:

“In the Arab community there is a lot of shame, and they don't want to address this. It is really hard to accept. It is heartbreaking because the expectations are very high for your child. That is the most taboo things to talk about. It is completely unacceptable to talk and to acknowledge or to discuss.”

Question Seven Summary

Recognizing domestic violence within sexually diverse populations faced hurdles due to community unpreparedness, lack of interactions with diverse individuals, shame, religious constraints, and societal stigma.

Strategies For Change

Towards a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon of domestic violence, in the discussions, all participants suggested strategies for change. These strategies include suggestions for engaging communities for campaigns, initiating discussions on human rights and respectful relationships as a catalyst for domestic violence discussions, conducting needs assessments for capacity building in each community, aligning with the momentum gained due to the pandemic for acknowledging anxieties and stress, designating physical community resources for community workshops on healthy relationships, involving community members on program planning and facilitation, increased funding to programs, hiring specific ethnic therapists and counsellors, expanding and intersecting domestic violence with mental health and other suggestions.

Strategies for change:

1. Aligning With Impact of Covid on Community to Discuss Stress and Anxiety

The Black community reported an escalation in drug use, including street drugs, and increased partying among youths. Additionally, the COVID pandemic led to more socializing among young people. However, this has also increased conversations among the community that focus on stress and anxiety and the challenges of the pandemic, which could mark the beginning of a more significant trend. These things are just coming to the surface, and people are starting to be comfortable talking about it.

2. Capacity Building and Deliberate Conversations and Campaigns

Capacity building includes engaging in and enhancing individuals' and organizations' knowledge, skills, and abilities to address and prevent domestic violence among ethno-cultural communities effectively. Towards this, capacity building could involve various activities such as providing training and education to mainstream service providers, community members and leaders, promoting and evaluating cultural competency and sensitivity, and increasing access to resources and services. A critical component of capacity building is working collaboratively with community stakeholders to develop culturally appropriate strategies for addressing domestic violence and promoting healthy relationships. For example, participants from the Korean community indicated a lack of opportunities to have open health community dialogues on domestic violence. They suggested having deliberate inter-community collaborative cultural conversations such as this research study on domestic violence.

Overall, the goal of capacity building for domestic violence in ethno-cultural communities is to empower communities to prevent and respond to domestic violence in a way that respects cultural differences and promotes safety, healing, and justice for survivors. Supporting the above, participants from the South Asian community indicated a need to explore capacity building. Capacity building is the number one challenge among the leaders. Expanding on this idea the Chinese community suggested to focus on one aspect of domestic violence at the beginning such as

rights as a permanent resident and information sessions on physical violence, and ways to keep evidence. This is crucial as many individuals could be unfamiliar with the legal system and their rights. Fear of deportation prevents individuals from seeking help. Addressing these concerns by organizing information workshops on immigration policies, collaborating with immigration lawyers, offer on-site pro bono services, could assist individuals in navigating the system better and accessing the available supports. The following are some participant suggestions:

“Having discussions on physical violence should be the first step.”

“Educating our community on how to keep evidence, such as doctors’ notes is required.”

“It is important to have community information sessions on immigrant rights. When people think they do not have legal status, they are easily threatened.”

“Need for campaigns. There is a need to become more visual more visible the campaign has to be loud; you know. We need assistance on how to address and get-together and make a conscious campaign to make a dent.”

Supporting the idea of campaigns, participants from the Hispanic community suggested the following:

“A campaign for wearing a specific colour of shirt. This means if I am wearing a shirt in this color, I am not okay. So, you do not have to verbalize it. Often you do have the chance to verbalize.”

“Developing a special sign so if you are even chatting with your friend, you can use it.”

“Reaching out to staff at restaurants.”

“Something like having census and distributing information.”

“Post flyers everywhere at public sites”

Participants from the Chinese community stated it was essential to link domestic violence to mental health:

“More discussions need to happen on domestic violence and mental health. This would be on the grounds that perpetrators have mental health issues. Because for normal people it should be normal to respect your spouse.”

Participants from the South Asian community reported strategies they have used to increase awareness on domestic violence in their communities:

“The Royal Women’s Cultural Association had taken a procession out in the community. We were the first people to initiate and raise voice against violence. We had guest speakers. There was a lot of awareness raised during 2014. We had even translated a book regarding resources in English, Hindi and Punjabi.”

Participants from the Chinese community indicated that a community-supported hotline:

“We have a Chinese community hotline that is supported by the community. We get (a) lot of phone calls. We have professionally trained people who support the callers. If the situation gets bad then of course the courts are involved. In our community we know that most of the violence arises out of contradictions. In our community, if things get severe, most people would reach out to professionals as now many individuals from our community are going into social work and psychology. But we know that there is no simple solution.”

Members of the Hispanic community often find the police are not helpful and suggest the need for a special unit who are culturally trained:

“Availability of resources in the Chinese community.”

“This includes seniors as well. Usually, seniors in my community suffer in silence. Our community is aware of Alberta works and of financial assistance. We also have the Chinese community centre that provides assistance and case management help. We also know resources like Distress Centre for emotional counselling. If people are educated and have the language skills, they also go online. The only thing is that people do not want to break their family.”

3. Ethno-Specific Resources

As ethnocultural communities are understood to be groups of people who share a common ethnic or cultural background, domestic violence within these communities may be influenced by cultural norms and values, which can sometimes make it difficult for survivors to seek help or for service providers to address the issue effectively. Immigrants can face unique challenges when addressing domestic violence, including language barriers, lack of familiarity with the legal system, fear of deportation, and limited access to resources. Thus, to develop effective strategies, it is important to consider these specific challenges and develop suitable culturally appropriate

interventions by involving community members. Developing such collaborative strategies thus requires customizing intervention strategies to address specific challenges. The following are some initiatives suggested by participants:

Increasing cultural competencies:

The Korean community suggested increased opportunities for improving cultural competencies; for example, an assessment that includes resettlement and immigrant specific issues that do not question family reunification, labelling, and not challenging a woman's decision to stay with their partner.

Recruiting ethno-specific counsellors:

The Filipino community indicated that they have a lack of addiction and crisis counsellors. Often their community is informed, and they can converse in English. However, the community mentioned that this impacts their ability to explain themselves, given the uniqueness of their language.

Participants from the Arab community indicated an increasing need to have counsellors from their communities specifically work with men:

“Men, they know they have their issues and they have their anger and they come from a background that also they were victimized themselves. And they help. But don't know where to go to seek that help. If they talk to other men, they will be considered not man enough to control the situation. So that's more pressure on them. We need to have somebody from the community that has cultural knowledge about the whole culture, you know where the background.”

Program development and facilitation with community members:

“For the Black community, it is important for us as community members to get out there. Community members need to see me as I look like them, and they need to see you, if you look like them.”

Need for designated inner-city spaces for holding discussions:

“There is not a designated space for the Black community that's available, and where people can stop by for coffee or just be there. A comfortable space for people to gather and visit. We need a

center for the Black community that is open during the day for people to join. So, people can come and see informally. There are active associations, but they are not really being used to their full potential. The question is who's going to be there during the day who's going to open.”

Participants from the Black community stated that having designated space would allow for continuous community programming and allow discussions on alternate parenting styles:

“Need for consistent and continuous community programming is needed. It just doesn't stop with one event. As the research says once a child sees this once and that is one too many.”

“When we say now that hitting a child and abuse is wrong, some older community members say, ‘well, it happened to me and I turned out good’. So, there is a need for discussions on alternative parenting styles to the ones suggested by elders.”

Some participants indicated that they have community associations and community events that are targeted to celebrate and not hold discussions on domestic violence:

“In our Black community, especially our cultural community if we get together it is because it's some sort of celebration- it's a celebration side of life or celebration of a birth or to hang out or to you know it is not to talk about domestic violence.”

Need for funding:

“Everybody has jobs right. We are volunteers in the evening. So it would take a huge collaboration as there needs to be a commitment to hiring. So people can come and get information and if they want they could liaise. The Black community usually meets at church which does not offer the appropriate place to talk. So, funding and venue is required.”

Recognition of pre-migration history and availability of immigrant centric trauma-informed care.

Most participants suggested collaboration with settlement and mainstream agencies to provide counselling on resettlement stressors. Participants suggested:

“Centers for integration and those that works with integration need to look at the psychological effect of that. Today, there are problems on the behavior in school, and other big issues but you don't know the past history of those who come here.”

“More attention needs to be given on what are some of the challenges for those that come as immigrants to the country. I am not saying that immigrants are not doing well, but I am suggesting that there are special cases, and we need to include the background.”

Participants from the Filipino community indicated that collaboration with settlement and mainstream agencies would assist in prevention and knowledge building between service providers and those new to Canada:

“Before they can access the resources, what we want our community members to know what they can access. Before a situation escalates to crisis, the prevention programs should be in collaboration with the immigrant serving agencies.”

Participants from the Korean community supported this thought:

“Korean organizations are here to help, and we would love to have liaison between the actual bigger organizations that have more resources and can help our community members. Only having interpreters is not enough as often their attitude is they are tired of doing this. We can have more help from older organizations to help our community members.”

Participants indicated that different attitudes and beliefs, including the reality of culture shock, need to be acknowledged. For example, a few community leaders said:

“And to me, for years have been saying yes, yes, immigration. Canada will bring the people in, but these people that you bring, you have to acknowledge where they're coming from. The cultural shock and the trauma that people experience they have new. They need workshops to talk about it. There needs to be counselling for recognizing the stress that they come in. They must work hard everyday and pay bills. That is all there is. Then it just becomes a whole lot of mess”

4. Highlighting Safety and Family Wellbeing to Address Community Shame and Ostracism

All participants addressed fears of experiencing personal and family shame and community ostracism as critical factors in addressing domestic violence. Participants indicated that collectivistic cultures tend to prioritize the family's reputation and honour over the individual's safety. For example, a participant from the South Asian community stated:

“As a facilitator of domestic violence groups, I have observed people do not want to come out. Most women are very fearful there of their spouses finding out. There is a fear even to join virtual classrooms. They do not feel comfortable. The question is what if my husband hears me talking about domestic violence. Even talking about domestic violence to raise awareness is difficult as women are scared. I am not saying that they are not brave or strong but circumstances are such that they are not ready to take a step or even consideration that these groups are just for awareness. We need to encourage people to take steps. There is a fear of being ostracized.”

There is a need to emphasize the importance of safety and well-being for all family members to overcome cultural barriers. Highlight the negative impacts of domestic violence on all family members' physical and mental health and discuss how violence can negatively impact the family's reputation. Some participants indicated a continuous series of community discussions. For example, participants from the Black community stated:

“Some people are just waiting for someone to ask them that question to start talking. The challenges are that nobody really talks about it, nobody asks, and so there is a need for community-wide group discussions.”

“So of course, they know domestic violence is into their relationships and a cycle continues. If they're not conscious that this is domestic violence, it could ruin your life and you could go down a really challenging path. So the community needs to sound an alarm really loudly to explain that if you do not address it, it is going to be part of your lives, and it will keep reoccurring. And if we don't do something, the cycle is not going to break.”

Participants from the Black community stated that it is the norm for other stressors to be prioritized over focusing on domestic violence:

“Like people are so busy that they are not really asking those questions they don't really notice, because we all go on and on.”

5. Using Alternatives and Focusing on Human Rights for All Rather Than Focusing on Cultural Rules

Participants suggested focusing on the universal human right to live free from violence and abuse. Addressing domestic violence requires understanding the power dynamics between individuals, particularly concerning gender. It is thus necessary to incorporate interventions that acknowledge domestic violence is never acceptable, regardless of cultural norms or beliefs, rather than solely focusing on cultural differences. For example, participants from the Afghan community suggested using sports as an opportunity to advocate human rights for all and gender equality:

“We need to educate and teach communities and families. And invite women. Afghan women do not participate in sports, and should be able to enjoy their Canadian life, and rights as a human

being. Boys are given those rights. Encourage women to participate in different things and be equal to boys. Offer them a chance for education.”

Participants from the Chinese community indicated using school curriculum to initiate discussions on gender equality among young children. This would enable children to become aware and educate themselves and their families:

“We need to start young perhaps from grade one. Most of us learn from mothers. Bring the topic in the curriculum so that when they go home, they could bring their ideas and thoughts to their parents and mother.”

The above was supported by members of the Black community:

“We need discussions in schools.”

“I believe that in the schools is a good starting point, because kids they're the ones that comes and talk at home when they recognize it, they will be able to say this is domestic violence, therefore, they can break a cycle.”

Some participants stated increased outreach to youth associations and centres:

“In domestic violence really got to look at the youth and go to the youth institutions.”

This strategy was stated to be preventative for youths who could end up being incarcerated:

“For our Black community, the community centers need to have loud discussion. Because this is just the first step to preventing bad stuff from happening. Especially preventing a youth from being incarcerated.”

This strategy was indicated to be a tool to aid in initiating dialogues on domestic violence among the community. For example, a participant and a community leader suggested using education as a tool to empower community:

“In the Chinese community we educate our callers. We tell them that God helps those who help themselves. So, if you don't call out then you cannot be helped. This is the first you need to teach our community is that if you don't call out for help nothing could be done. Everyone in our community knows that honour is a good thing, and if you share domestic violence incidences it brings shame to your family.”

Given the importance of religious leaders, participants indicated the need to collaborate with them to spread the message of nonviolence and respect for all:

“We really got to work with faith leaders. They can help us to break the cycle of violence and have conversations in the churches or other community places.”

Participants from the Arab community supported the above idea of collaborating with religious leaders:

“Including religious leaders could be important as they can assist to differentiate between religion and traditions. I know that my prophet said, “don’t slap”. It is important that we stick to only religion. Religion is a good balance as the law in Canada is inspired by religion. The prophet also says you do not slap your children, and we know he is not joking. The equality between men and women is also mentioned. But for this someone has to dig deep and engage in conversation.”

“It is accepted that there are issues. Now the question is how to change and fix the internal community issue and reverse what is currently prevailing in the community. As community leaders we have some influence, but we all agree that the community really counts on their religious figure- be it a Christian or a Muslim community. Our community generally do not rely on the system to fix internal issues. This should be really highlighted.”

While supporting the above idea, some participants from the South Asian community identified some difficulties:

“In the South Asian community, we need to work with religious leaders. Resources are available in various languages, so I won't say that the language barrier because in Alberta, we always publish in different languages. I don't know our spiritual leaders should tell about these resources. To the men yes, but for the women, I don't know how to reach to them because most are home makers and often not working outside. So they are often unaware of their rights and resources. So the main issue is how to reach out to this group of women.”

There were many discussions on the appropriateness of using the term domestic violence to increase awareness. A few participants agreed on continuing to use this term:

“I think we need to call a spade a spade. I need think we need to define domestic violence. I need it to be that serious. I don't want it to be sugar coated. I don't because that is trouble so don't sugar-coat it. It is domestic violence. When they are charged in court, this is what the judge uses right? We could change and can call it something else for fun and have discussion but this domestic violence.”

Some participants suggested incorporating domestic violence issues with other relevant and persistent community concerns to aid in community involvement:

“I know it has to be intertwined with other things, in order to get people talking about it. There are places that need to have it, maybe, domestic violence, falls the banner of different topics.”

“It is a stigma and people would not come out. So, the question is how we bring it out in discussions. I don't know, but this is a very good statement that you can intertwine it with other community issues.”

Some participants from the Korean community suggested asking women to ask for help on parenting and disciplining as a mode to discuss domestic violence:

“We would suggest having workshops on disciplinary issues for ease with talking about domestic violence. This is a really big thing in our communities. Even if a woman is suffering and is under a lot of different stresses and problems, she would be hiding. And they won't talk about it. So instead, women can say they have a disciplinary issue, and ask for help.”

Participants from the Arab community suggested using media as a medium to engage the community in discussions:

“Because our community, they don't use books, they are not readers. In our community we don't read we just watch. Engaging the community by showing a video clip and drama. It will really impact the community. I see increased role of social media to initiate discussions and enlighten the community.”

“I would say more awareness with storytelling. In our community if we start to hear it more it begins to make an impact. Slowly but surely, I think we can make an impact.”

Participants from the Arab community suggested creative ways to reach out to men as they are struggling with concerns of violence and abuse and are unable to share:

“You know we assume that men in our community do not accept help. That is wrong. I have men asking to seek help. Sometimes they were forced to come to seek help because the court mandated. But then they begin to open up and say that they don't want their wife or anyone to know that they are also struggling. They have their issues.”

Most participants suggested increased community collaboration and initiating activities with Calgary Police Services. For example, participants from the Arab community suggested:

“There should be some change in the system. It needs to become more accessible or less threatening just within the community. Something needs to be done, so that they could either learn to open up and start trusting the system better.”

Participants from the Black community suggested a different hotline than the available emergency phone number:

“Have a resource phone number like 211 instead of calling the CPS. The first thing is when we call the police it is never just going to go straight. CPS can charge you whether you want to charge a spouse or not. There are other resources, such as the Y or sheriff King. I have this imagination that when things are happening and we call the emergency phone number, the CPS coming in with guns blazing. But if there is an alternate phone number, everyone at the centre will know that the call is for domestic violence. So may be a mediator or a social worker shows up first. But I am not naive, there are some horrible domestic violence out there and no social worker wants to walk into violence right so but there's something that we can think about.”

6. Cultural Connotations

In some cultures, men are seen as the head of the household and have more power and control over their wives and children. To address this issue, it becomes crucial to educate both men and women about the importance of mutual respect in an intimate relationship, the negative consequences of gender inequality, and effective communication strategies. Thus, it is critical to approach the issue of domestic violence in ethno-cultural communities with sensitivity and respect for cultural differences. However, it is also important to avoid using culture as an excuse for violence. By emphasizing human rights, incorporating a gender-based analysis, working with cultural brokers, and promoting education and awareness, strategies can be developed that respect cultural diversity while also addressing the issue of domestic violence. The above is important, as stated by participants from the Arab community:

“This is a delicate issue. You do not want to put the man on a defensive. It is important for people, especially newcomers to know that services are available. The immediate reaction would be that these people are trying to my power away, teach my wife, and interfere in my family to rebel against me. This is also the reason services should be available in their own native language. The man will realize that we are not cheating on him. We are not trapping him and he will choose the law as he knows women have all the right to stay or to leave. This is the law.”

Some participants suggested having an outsider from the community collaborate with community leaders. This would address the fear of confidentiality. For example, participants indicated:

“If there are opportunities to speak to a complete stranger who is not from their community, they might get more comfortable and open up to talk about abuse.”

7. Changes with Younger Generation

Participants indicated that residing in Canada for decades is now ‘westernizing’ and influencing their community. Access to education, the younger generation is aware of and open to seeking support from local community resources. For example, participants from the Chinese and the Korean community stated:

“Women have a higher education than before. They want to ask and look for some help.”

“It is getting a lot better because well we've been westernized for last 50 years. There are still people who have some conservative traditional thoughts. Education is now with all these things. Most people know that women and men are same, equal and I would say on the same level.”

8. Need to Engage Trusted Community Leaders to Address Issues of Confidence, Trust, and Fear

Participants stated to address issues of fear, lack of trust, confidentiality, trusted community leaders should be engaged for program development and facilitation. For example, the Arab community stated:

“In the Arab community, the right help should be from people of trust who have the expertise. There is a need for more Arabic social workers. We need people from our community who know the community. They can show other communities how to help our community.”

9. Community Education on Healthy Communication Strategies, Resettlement Stressors, Meaning of Emotional Violence and Legal Implications

Most participants acknowledged that taking steps to address occurrences of domestic violence is challenging and involves ongoing community education:

“I don't know if in the Arab community, the community leaders have the knowledge of how to tackle this kind of issue. It is not an easy issue on all levels. And second, it is about dealing with a shameful thing. Also, the community is not ready, unfortunately, to face and talk about domestic violence openly and to find solutions. So, each community member turns to the other to participate. There will be hesitation and rejections. We have to be more creative in finding ways to educate our communities about this issue. The only way people will listen and pay attention to the whole domestic violence issue is when they hear the severe punishment of the one family members, because of he or she just did some harm to the other family member.”

“But the culture is changing even in Arab countries. Things are different now. They are thinking differently. So domestic violence or violence in general, it takes different shapes these days. Men and families living here are becoming aware of this.”

“For most Arab community members, we come here with same behaviours (as in our countries of origin). We do not know, as domestic violence is hidden for us. People do not want to say it. Better education for letting men and women know what situations could be termed as domestic violence situations is needed.”

“In our Korean community we still need a lot of education on what is domestic violence and what can happen within a family. There is a need to recognize violence perpetrated by women as well.”

“In the Black community there is a need to develop social emotional skills. To develop your self esteem and have a social awareness. There are people who went to refugee camp or grew up outside and then came to Canada, so for them the integration phase is different. Something we do in the community is firstly, you got to know what the pressures are and where are they coming from. What are the stressors of life in Canada. Then you can help them to start addressing the issues including emotional issues in Canada.”

“I personally do not want it to be a bias in our funding because we must do it. There needs to be a systematic needs assessment of my Black community. Decide how big or small should it be. We have to be very careful.”

Some participants stated that community education should also include those who are mandated to attend counselling sessions:

“In the Korean community, it is important that those who are mandated by courts or referred by children's services, understand about domestic violence. With education we tell them that it's not just the physical aspect. It is also essential to educate that woman can do these kinds of things also.”

“In our Filipino community, we think the concern to resolve domestic violence has to come out naturally in settings such as counselling. If it comes out when a client is mandated, then it is probably not natural and forced right.”

“In our Chinese community young girls need to be guided to talk about emotional violence. But that's very hard for and a big issue for our families. In the Chinese cultures, they don't want to share to the some stranger about the family issues.”

“For the Filipino community in Canada, the system is very different from how the police system works back in our country. If the crime is personal, and the person drops the charges there is no crime, and there is no charge because there is no one complaining now. In Canada many people will pressure the women, to drop the charges. Your husband, your children, your community, your relatives and the woman is pressured to do that. But the community does not understand that even if they dropped the charges it does not automatically drop because the judges are going to make the decision. The husband or the wife will say I dropped the charges already, but there are still charges. The police or judges are still pursuing the case. This is confusing as the parents think there are no charges, and they will get back together, not realizing that actually there is still a charge against them and they cannot breach the order. Which means they can go to jail. That is where a lot of these issues in terms of children, child protection and violation of the order. This is where it education is very, very important because It is really different from how we understand the system that we have back home and how the system works in.”

In conclusion, the strategies for change within ethno-cultural communities regarding domestic violence and related challenges are centered on fostering open dialogue, enhancing skills, and promoting awareness. By aligning with the impact of COVID-19, building capacity through education and campaigns, utilizing ethno-specific resources, and emphasizing family wellbeing, these approaches would collectively aim to create a positive shift towards safety, equality, and the fostering of respectful relationships. Additionally, focusing on human rights, respecting cultural nuances, engaging younger generations, involving trusted leaders, and prioritizing education would contribute to this transformative process. These strategies reflect a balanced and culturally sensitive approach to address domestic violence while honoring the diversity and strengths of each community.

Summary and Future Studies:

This study, guided by the Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach, underscores the significance of inclusive and interactive collaboration within a social justice framework. Active engagement with nine diverse community groups in Calgary, enabled rich discussions and insights. While some questions highlighted the intricate nature of domestic

violence perceptions stemming from cultural norms, intergenerational dynamics, and fears of isolation, others illuminated the complex web of barriers inhibiting access to support services. Through these discussions, common themes emerged, revealing shared challenges and nuances faced by different ethno-cultural communities.

Furthermore, participants' strategies for initiating change within their communities offer valuable insights into effective interventions. These strategies encompass a diverse range of actions, from nurturing open dialogue and skill enhancement to harnessing ethno-specific resources and prioritizing family well-being. An alternate approach for future consideration could be to conduct studies with more focused questions on specific topics to ensure greater clarity in the discussion. Additionally, presenting the questions in a different order may be beneficial to ensure that each question elicits different responses.

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