Conceptual framework and reflexivity for the examination of the engagement process in a sensitive qualitative research

As a part of my doctoral study, the central goal of this presentation is to discuss potential methodological challenges and strategies in examining the engagement of Turkish perpetrators during the domestic violence intervention process. Although this research does not aim to detail the biographies or long-term life histories of individuals, the examination of perpetrators' engagement during three stages of an intervention programme is still a lengthy process because they are described as a hard to reach population. The obstacles to this sensitive research topic might be associated with the lack of time and unique characteristics of potential participants. For instance, there may be an insufficient amount of time to follow up perpetrators' engagement in an intervention process; perpetrators may be unwilling to participate in research; there may be a high drop-out rate in the programmes; and these men experience denial and minimisations of their violent behaviour. In highlighting such obstacles, an attempt is made to identify the strengths of implementing the grounded theory approach and reflexivity in this qualitative research by exploring men's invisible experiences in relation to their engagement in an intervention process. The presentation starts with an overview of key terminology and then argues about the importance of building a conceptual framework which provides philosophical assumptions and guides the methodological selection for this sensitive research. It then focuses on the ways in which such strategies and tools in the grounded theory approach and reflexivity might play a significant role in examining participants' process of engagement in domestic violence perpetrator programmes.

Introduction

This introduction outlines key terminologies of domestic violence, intervention programmes and engagement processes. These main terms in the research allow readers to get an overview of the process and circumstances that potential participants might experience. It then moves on to discuss the conceptual framework, methodological concerns and potential strategies by concisely highlighting the need for reflexivity. The next section begins by describing domestic violence in order to understand potential participants' core issues.

Although several definitions of domestic violence exist and these have arisen out of different contexts, this research uses the description of domestic violence by the UK Home Office as this research will be conducted in the UK. Domestic violence is a contested term as it includes "psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional violence" (Home Office 2013, p. 2). The Home Office (2013) defines domestic violence as:

> any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality, includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional violence (p. 2).

This definition emphasises the key elements of controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour. The Home Office (2013) describes controlling behaviour as the manipulation and isolation of survivors' support and other resources which results in dependency and dispossession. Once the definition of domestic violence has been given, I will give a brief overview of current domestic violence perpetrator programmes in order to gain a better understanding of the strategies that are applied to men's non-violent behaviour in the intervention process.

The structure and techniques in domestic violence perpetrator programmes might clarify the roles of programme providers and perpetrators in the process of intervention programmes. Many researchers have highlighted the importance of these programmes in providing safety to survivors. For instance, Westmarland & Kelly (2013) note that the visibility of violent men is crucial in preventing and ending the incidence of domestic violence. This idea is critical for this research because the main goal is to explore major issues of male perpetrators' engagement during intervention programmes. The literature argues that this engagement needs to be investigated to ensure the safety of survivors (Blacklock 2001; Burton et al. 1998; Lees & Lloyd 1994; McConnell & Taylor 2014; Sullivan 2006; Westmarland et al. 2010; Westmarland & Kelly 2013). While highlighting the importance of the investigation of men's engagement in interventions in terms of their accountability and survivors' safety, I will give a brief overview such strategies these programmes often apply. This presentation allows us to understand that many perpetrators might implement potential strategies in certain circumstances during the process of the interventions.

The influence of the Duluth Men's programme (Pence & Paymar 1993), cognitive behavioural therapy, gestalt and invitational models (Jenkins 1990) led to the implementation of domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK (Phillips et al. 2013). These influences stem from the earlier work on perpetrators in the US (Phillips et al. 2013). They make a compelling case that a co-ordinated community response system should engage effectively in domestic violence perpetrator programmes to increase the understanding of domestic violence. In the UK, domestic violence perpetrator programmes are developed by the voluntary sector

and probation service programmes for convicted offenders (Home Affairs Sixth Report 2008).

In domestic violence perpetrator programmes, the Duluth model curriculum highlights the role of culturally-reinforced attitudes of power and control over women. The integrated domestic abuse programme is defined as multi-modal and includes strategies like "motivational enhancement, cognitive behavioural therapy, rational emotive behaviour therapy, stress inoculation, relaxation training, skill training and relapse prevention" (Bowen 2011, p. 118). This programme is developed based on nine themes, each one taught over a three-week period. It aims to improve perpetrators' understanding of their controlling behaviour and to explore non-violent behaviours (Bullock et al. 2010). The main purpose of these programmes is to eliminate violent behaviour towards women and children because these behavioural patterns are all viewed as a conscious means of control by male perpetrators (Bowen 2011). Thus, many intervention programmes consist of management risk including risk assessment, proactive abuser management, and stricter victim contact from women safety services (Bullock et al. 2010). In indicating the structure of domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK, I will give a brief overview of a cultural context model from US intervention programmes for black and minority ethnic perpetrators. The main focus of this research is to examine Turkish men's engagement in the interventions so this overview is vital to examine how unique settings and processes might be beneficial for this study population within this cultural context model.

Almeida & Hudak (2002) noted that perpetrators' power and privilege in their communities first need to be changed in order to end their abusive acts toward their partners or family members (Almeida & Hudak 2002). In considering men's privilege

and power in the community, the cultural context model in the interventions focuses on promoting safety for family members by decreasing entitlements in relation to men's power in the communities (Almeida & Hudak 2002). This approach seems to increase survivors' empowerment and rights as the cultural context model emphasises that men's violent behaviour can be stopped by understanding "social institutions that sanction and reinforce systems of power, privilege and oppression" (Almeida & Hudak 2002, p. 10-25). Whilst the status of power that men hold in a community seems to contribute to their violent behaviour towards their families, the social problems of these families also need to be considered to understand the overall picture of domestic violence. Almeida & Hudak (2002) have put forward a compelling argument in this regard. They conclude that:

> "the disjoining of domestic violence from other social problems such as corporate abuse of employees, racial profiling, youth violence and addiction maintains the family as a private and isolated system designed to care for its members without legitimate support of larger systems" (p. 26).

The techniques used to understand the systems of privilege and oppression in such settings might be beneficial to apply to black and minority ethnic perpetrators during the interventions (Almeida & Hudak 2002). Almeida & Hudak (2002) argue that if perpetrators start to think about their experiences of privilege and oppression in their numerous interactions, they are able to examine their privilege and oppression in their intimate relationships, in particular their abusive behaviour toward their partners. Likewise, Donnelly et al. (2002) highlighted that the facilitator plays a significant role in helping men to understand the strong link between their experiences of oppression in work or other settings and their abusive acts toward their partners. This unique technique might help men to describe their abusive behaviour as a result of a notion of privilege or oppression. Likewise, the acceptance of privilege and oppression in different settings and constructions may allow men to

start to think about their power and privilege status in their intimate relationships. This is a vital point in terms of men's engagement in the intervention process because it shows their perceptions about privilege and oppression in a larger context. In addition to the definition of domestic violence, brief information about domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the UK and the cultural context model in the US, the next section discusses the construction of goals in relation to engagement in the process.

Engagement issues in the process of interventions

The term 'engagement' in intervention programmes in relation to participants' motivational dynamics and stages of change will be presented. Austin & Vancouver (1996) describe the properties of goals and their unique stages as "goal establishment, striving processes, and goal-content taxonomies" (p. 338). They highlighted that these processes are linked to individuals' environments, socio-ecological factors and genetic processes. These issues help to understand the theoretical explanations of the structure of goals. In addition to this brief information on the stages of goals, this section clarifies the term 'engagement' in intervention programmes in relation to participants' motivational dynamics and stages of change.

Several researchers (Comfort et al. 2000; Daly et al. 2001; Fiorentine et al. 1999; Prado & Pantin 2006; Terra et al. 2007) describe engagement as group participants' attendance in any group-based intervention programme (in Roy et al. 2011). However, Roy et al. (2011) argue that attendance alone in a programme in defining participants' engagement fails to describe influences on participants and results of engagement processes in a group session. They argue that attendance appears to be a prior condition for engagement but other external factors need to be considered.

Reasons for being motivated to change among perpetrators might stem from wishing to avoid the consequences of behaviour, such as criminal justice penalties including prison sentences (McMurran 2002). In domestic violence perpetrator programmes, the facilitators' non-controlling tactics might contribute to building trust with perpetrators. For instance, Hernandez (2002) has paid attention to the difficulties of building trust while promoting men's motivation to implement such techniques to stop violent behaviour. Although the facilitator might experience obstacles to building trust and engaging with the men, the group members in the intervention programme might help to encourage the application of such useful tools to end abusive acts (Hernandez 2002). This motivation from group members might be perceived as a powerful technique because these men have had similar experiences. However, Hernandez (2002) emphasises that the facilitators only let participants share their deconstructive acts in a supportive way in order to encourage other group members to take responsibility for their violent behaviour. The engagement assessment approaches contribute to understanding which characteristics and stages impact individuals' engagement. In the following section I will give an overview of how the grounded theory approach might help to explore individuals' invisible perspectives and experiences in the social processes.

Corbin & Strauss (2008) describe a process as an "ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems" (p. 96). From this definition, process might include individuals' unique feelings and interactions in their lives (Birks & Mills 2015). According to Birks & Mills (2015), the investigation of a social process is often perceived as a feature of the grounded theory approach. This section clarifies the ways in which the grounded theory approach might contribute to examining individuals' interactions, beliefs and perspectives within

social processes. For instance, Charmaz (2014) argues that participants' actions in the processes might be examined with the grounded theory method by understanding their unique meanings. Charmaz (2011) notes that "the logic of grounded theory leads to: defining relevant process, demonstrating their contexts, specifying the conditions in which these processes occur, conceptualising their phases, explicating what contributes to their stability and/or change and outlining their consequences" (p. 361). Thus, the examination of the process seems to be a central goal in grounded theory approaches because it highlights the importance of relationship dynamics in the phenomenon by focusing on the process. As a result, grounded theory enables the researcher to interpret participants' experiences and actions while investigating the questions of how and why in building a theory (Charmaz 2011). Whilst the grounded theory approach contributes to building a theory about men's engagement in interventions, understanding men's change behaviour in the process of interventions is complicated. However, this research focuses on men's engagement in the interventions rather than their process of change. This indicates the importance of a conceptual framework by highlighting the credibility of understanding the phenomenon.

Conceptual Framework and Methodological Approaches

The conceptual framework plays a significant role in building in-depth knowledge by implementing the grounded theory approach. For instance, Strauss & Corbin (1998) have argued that conducting an initial literature review is very beneficial to the research following grounded theory principles. These strengths include theoretical orientation, a leading overarching research question, building a theoretical sampling and sufficient credibility (in McGhee et al. 2007). Likewise, McCallin (2003) stated that the researchers should apply a robust literature review before data collection in

order to provide the rationale of the study and make a contribution in the field with new knowledge. Given the importance of literature review and building conceptual framework, the following section seeks to document the conceptual framework for this research by examining two major theories within feminism.

The literature review suggests the application of intersectionality theory as it acknowledges how race, gender and other social structures shape individuals' behaviour (Bograd 2006). The literature review also suggests the application of feminist-informed gender theory to gain a richer way of understanding men's power, masculinity and patriarchal dynamics in the context of engagement in the intervention process. As such, for the purpose of this research, I will focus on two theoretical forms that are the basis for a coherent conceptual framework for thinking about men's constructions of engagement in intervention processes. These theoretical forms are intersectionality theory and feminist-informed gender perspectives. The two chosen approaches differ greatly. Whilst feminist perspectives are all informed by an attention to patriarchal gender roles, masculinity, power and control behaviour in violent men's intimate relationship, intersectionality suggests various intertwined dimensions of power and oppression on a larger community level. Thus, intersectionality plays a significant role in analysing the interactive relationship between perpetrators' social categories and power, gender dynamics and violent behaviour in combination.

Methodological concerns

There are methodological concerns in examining men's engagement in intervention processes and interactions with their family members and programme providers. Whilst the section above emphasises the importance of applying an initial literature review and building a conceptual framework, this section moves on to discuss

specific obstacles in researching men's engagement in domestic violence intervention programmes by considering their complex relationships. Methodological concerns are likely to focus on two areas: the timeframe and participants' unique perceptions and experiences. On the first of these, there are obstacles to exploring men's engagement throughout long-term intervention processes. In the context of domestic violence perpetrator programmes, there are unique challenges as many men drop-out of programmes or they might be unwilling to share their experiences during the many stages that they go through. As a doctoral student, I also have limited time during which I can examine this process of engagement. As for the second, the constructing theories about intervention processes among Turkish perpetrators is also challenging as there is no evidence on this particular research topic.

This study may need more time to develop an effective relationship with participants (Cohen et al. 2013). One of the biggest obstacles could be the recruitment of participants as perpetrators for this study. In order to get Turkish perpetrators who have just migrated to London to take part in this research, it is essential to build a sense of trust with them. To build a long term relationship with them will take time and might be difficult for the researchers to accomplish (Preloran et al. 2001). Importantly, distrust could be the most significant barrier to recruiting black and minority ethnic participants (Jensen & Laurie 2016; Preloran et al. 2001; Yancey et al. 2006). If men experience discrimination, feelings of vulnerability, and fear of negative repercussions from the intervention programmes, they may be unwilling to participate in the research (Jensen & Laurie 2016). I will attempt to develop a relationship of trust with participants by increasing communication and having shared goals (Yancey et al. 2006). Participants' cultural backgrounds might influence the

rate of participations. For instance, Egharevba (2001) suggests that researchers should be aware of participants' different perceptions and definitions of their experiences in relation to their culture. In doing so, I will consider potential cultural and traditional backgrounds of participants in relation to their engagement in the intervention process.

Studies about the methodological challenges that exist when addressing engagement and experiences of perpetrators in intervention programmes are limited in the context of intervention processes. To reduce these potential challenges, I will consider participants' unique socio-cultural context during data collection and analysis (Yoshihama 2000). Similarly, this research strives to consider participants' socio-cultural characteristics in the research questions. However, this consideration might take time in terms of building relationships with participants during the recruitment process.

Overall, generalisability, credibility, reliability and building rapport and trust with potential participants seem to be the key limitations of this research. However, strategies for providing reflexivity may decrease these potential weaknesses. These strategies include peer review; debriefing sessions for participants; triangulation; and memo-writing. The following section gives an overview of certain strategies in grounded theory approach that might be helpful to examine the engagement in the interventions.

Potential strategies

The main principles of data analysis in the grounded theory approach include developing codes, categories, memos and constant comparison (Ng & Hase 2008). The process of data collection and analysis will be done concurrently. This allows the

complex and raw data to be organised and made sense of in order to understand participants' perspectives. Selective coding, categorising, comparative analysis and memo writing might be vital in examining perpetrators' engagement in the interventions.

Selective coding

Strauss & Corbin (1998) describe selective coding as a "process of integrating and refining the theory" (p. 143). Selective coding contributes to building more abstract level data analysis and identifies a major pattern in the data. For instance, this research integrates categories and revises and organizes memos to build and refine the theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

This research moves from description to conceptualization by describing "dimensional extremes" (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 152). For instance, men's meanings of engagement in interventions might be related to their own motivations, the influences of family, community members and so on. This research will use diagrams for the integration by describing concepts and their relationships in a logical and clear way as these integrative diagrams present the data in an abstract way. In order to refine the theory, this research reviews the internal consistency and logic of the theoretical scheme and develops poor categories (Strauss & Corbin 1998). This research will develop a category sufficiently by demonstrating properties and dimensions and as well as variations in a concept in order to avoid any potential bias on my part (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

The conditional relationship guide which is developed by Scott (2004) might be a useful tool in understanding more complex patterns. This tool describes emic and etic definitions in a collective way and tries to understand participants' various

interactions (Scott & Howell 2008). The research applies conditional relationship guide in order to contextualise perpetrators' engagement issues and relationship with categories in the intervention process.

Theoretical saturation of a theory requires that no more new properties and dimensions emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin 1998). This refinement process may include the following questions: "in the participants' perspective, how does this phenomenon proceed, with what variability and what conditions, in both macro and micro environments?" (Scott & Howell 2008, p. 13). However, this process is not straightforward because some ideas might not fit the theory, and this needs to be realised. It is important to illuminate the ways in which the abstract conceptualisation fits the raw data to understand participants' actions in certain circumstances (Heath & Cowley 2004; Strauss & Corbin 1998). Similarly, Dey (1999) highlights that theoretical codes reflect the broad range of perspectives on data at the conceptual level.

The major approach for a validating scheme seems to be to "go back and compare the scheme against raw data" (Strauss & Corbin 1998; p. 159). Another way is to ask participants to read it and comment on it. However, this approach is inappropriate for this sensitive research because the perpetrator may not be able to recognize and describe their hidden perspectives in relation to the theoretical explanations. The application of a reflective coding matrix allows the central phenomenon to be defined holistically (Scott & Howell 2008). While theoretical coding is beneficial in analysing the conceptual level of categorizations, memos provide key identifications and observations of the research (Gilgun 2015). As a means of highlighting the issues of theory saturation and refinement of theory, much evidence on memo-writing is presented in the next section.

Memo writing

Memo writing helps this research to elaborate the processes, biases, experiences (Charmaz 2006) my thoughts, hunches, related questions and ideas (Bowen 2008; Strauss & Corbin 1998) in the interview transcripts to develop analytical categories. Likewise, these ideas will be helpful in setting up a conceptual framework in theoretical saturation process by identifying participants' activities and interactions during memo writing (Goulding 2002; Roulston 2014; Thornberg & Charmaz 2014). In memo writing, I will compare and contrast a great number of concepts and patterns which will allow me to develop classifications (Heath & Cowley 2004; Strauss & Corbin 1998). Further, this provides the classification for a large number of coding (Charmaz 2006). This memo writing provide not only my observation of the interviews but also theoretical and methodological notes to achieve an analytical perspective on the research process and improve my examination of the participants' experiences and perspectives. For instance, I will ask myself the following questions: How do perpetrators believe that they engage in interventions? How do they describe this engagement? In which ways are their conceptions of engagement reflected in various circumstances? How do their constructions of their experiences enhance engagement during the intervention process? What consequences stem from their constructions of engagement? The grounded theory approach increases the degree of participants' voices as much evidence has employed this approach to understand the sensitive and invisible issues among perpetrators (Edin et al. 2008; Frost & Connolly 2004; Frost 2004; Tilley & Brackley 2005; Stanley et al. 2010).

Comparative analysis

Carrying out grounded theory procedure will be beneficial to the development of concepts which help me to understand unique experiences and perspectives on

perpetrators' engagement in interventions. Comparative analysis examines the experiences in certain circumstances and events as suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1998). In applying the constant and comparative method, this research attempts to simultaneously work on the data analysis between transcripts and codes (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Theoretical comparisons allows this research to understand the meanings of acts, events and experiences; to explore potential properties and dimensions; to gain abstractions and to consider potential biases and viewpoints (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

The constant comparative method allows the research to compare codes with other codes, incidents with other incidents and to identify the similarities and differences in order to enable the improvement of concepts (Strauss & Corbin 1998). This method plays a significant role in identifying perpetrators' unique feelings and thoughts in certain circumstances in relation to their engagement in interventions. For instance, the research by Wuest & Merritt-Gray (1999) applied a constant comparative method by providing dense descriptions of the process in data and its relationship with pre-existing conceptions in the literature. This application helped Wuest & Merritt-Gray (1999) to create a theory. Similarly, Bowen (2006) highlights the importance of examining the relationship between data from interviews and initial literature review in order to sensitize concepts to theory. Thus, comparative analysis enables this research to conceptualise the data by comparing data against other data and itself (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan 2004; Ezzy 2002) and improve the theoretical saturation (Bowen 2008). Reflexivity also provides effective analysis of power dynamics between the researcher and participants in this sensitive qualitative research. I will conclude by discussing the importance of reflexivity in decreasing

power relations and being aware of the influence of identities on this research process by highlighting the positionality.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity may help to conceptualise the unique cultural and social backgrounds of the participants and researchers in relation to power dynamics during the research. For instance, the research's assumptions and biases might play a significant role in assessing the potential participants and preparing questions for the interview. However, being aware of all these assumptions and the influences of certain identities appears to be crucial in reducing potential power issues throughout the research process (Holloway & Biley 2011; Kolb 2012; Woodby et al. 2011). If the researcher describes his or her position in terms of gender, race, socio-economic status and so forth, this may allow the researcher to prepare for the interview sessions with this awareness. Thus, this section argues that the researchers' understanding of their positions and philosophical background might allow them to design the research in a sensitive way and analyse the interviews efficiently.

Reflexivity has enabled me to recognise my potential biases, roles and influences on the research process and minimise them by focusing on participants' viewpoints and experiences (Finlay 2002). Reflexivity helps reduce my potential bias by making me aware of my relationship with participants during the research (Holloway & Biley 2011; Kolb 2012; Woodby et al. 2011). Dimensions of reflexivity include the meanings of race, gender, culture, class, socio-economic status, religion, emotional strength and physical appearance (Mertens & Ginsberg 2008; Towson & Pulla 2015). Bourke (2014) highlights that these dimensions may influence the research process. This reflexivity allows me to examine my awareness of various dimensions that are related to the relationship with research participants (Pillow 2003). In

addition to these recognitions, I will be aware of the influences that arise from my position and subjective ideas without trying to reduce them in order to achieve objective results (Ezzy 2002; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

Reflexivity in the grounded theory approach appears to reduce potential obstacles in examining perpetrators' engagement in domestic violence perpetrator programmes. In this brief presentation of my methodological concerns and strategies, it have been emphasised key issues of reflexive work in the qualitative research process. The main reason for highlighting reflexivity is to show how the qualitative researcher needs to be aware of the potential power relations between the researcher and participants that often influence data collection and the interpretation of the data.

Conclusion

This presentation has clarified how the grounded theory approach and reflexivity might play a significant role in examining the social processes, in particular focusing on perpetrators' engagement in domestic violence intervention programmes. However, many obstacles are faced in this sensitive research including the limited timeframe and the nature of potential participants' identities related to their unique experiences of domestic violence. Furthermore, their potential denials about their violent behaviour and high rate of drop-out from these programmes are the major obstacles. In highlighting these obstacles, the central problems of exploring male perpetrators' experiences in the process of intervention centre on gender and insider-outsider positions as I am a female researcher. This has highlighted the importance of reflexive work in being aware of my identities and potential influences on the research process. As a result, this presentation clarifies the obstacles more than it does the solutions. This in itself indicates the need to develop unique

strategies for these types of sensitive areas of research in terms of understanding

participants' perspectives and experiences in the process of intervention.

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