

Coercive control tactics used against children experiencing domestic violence and areas of future improvement

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BACKGROUND

Coercion: "the use of force or threats to compel or dispel a particular response" (Stark, 2007)

Control refers to "structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and command that compel obedience indirectly" (2007)

Coercion + Control = Condition of "unfreedom" experienced as entrapment

Past research has disregarded children as active participants, and labeled them as witnesses to the abuse, rather than primary victims, alongside the victimized adult

Children were not seen as credible to relay accurate descriptions
In most cases of domestic abuse and family disturbances, children were either willingly, or unwillingly assuming active roles within the abuse (Stark, 2018)

Recent research has focused on children's accounts of their experiences with coercive control, but lacks descriptive exploration of methods targeting children, especially within a Canadian context. Research has also not accounted for child survivors describing actions and methods of improvement based on their experiences

Research Question: What types of manipulation and coercive control tactics are used against children while experiencing domestic violence and abuse? And what do survivors advise for areas of improvement to aid individuals in similar circumstances?

METHODS

7 interviews of adults reflecting on childhood experiences with domestic violence

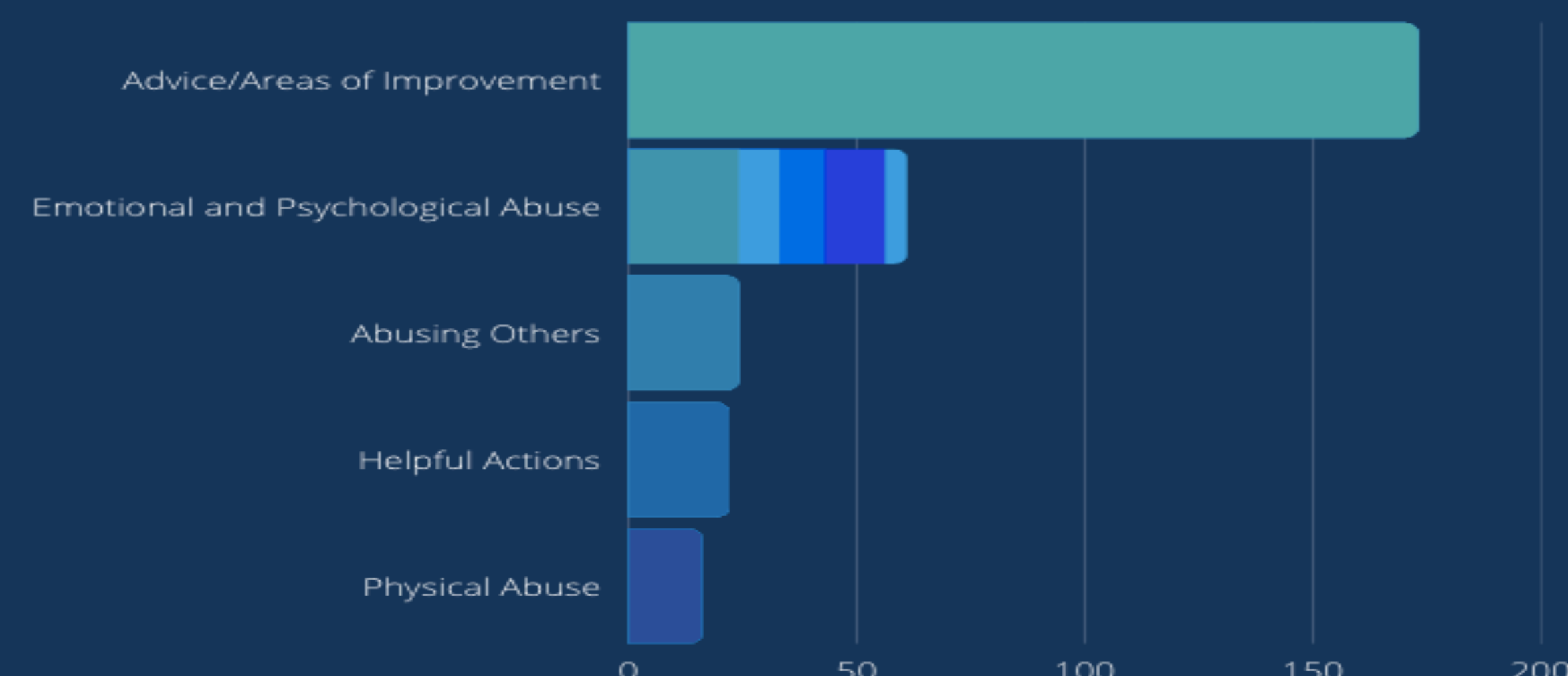
- Sample included Indigenous, Rural/Remote/Northern, Immigrant/Refugee and/or children exposed or killed in domestic violence context
- Part of study by Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative (CDHPI) with vulnerable populations funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
- Recruitment based on whether the survivor ever feared for their life during their experience

Interviews took on a narrative-style approach

NVIVO- organizing and analyzing important factors using coding files

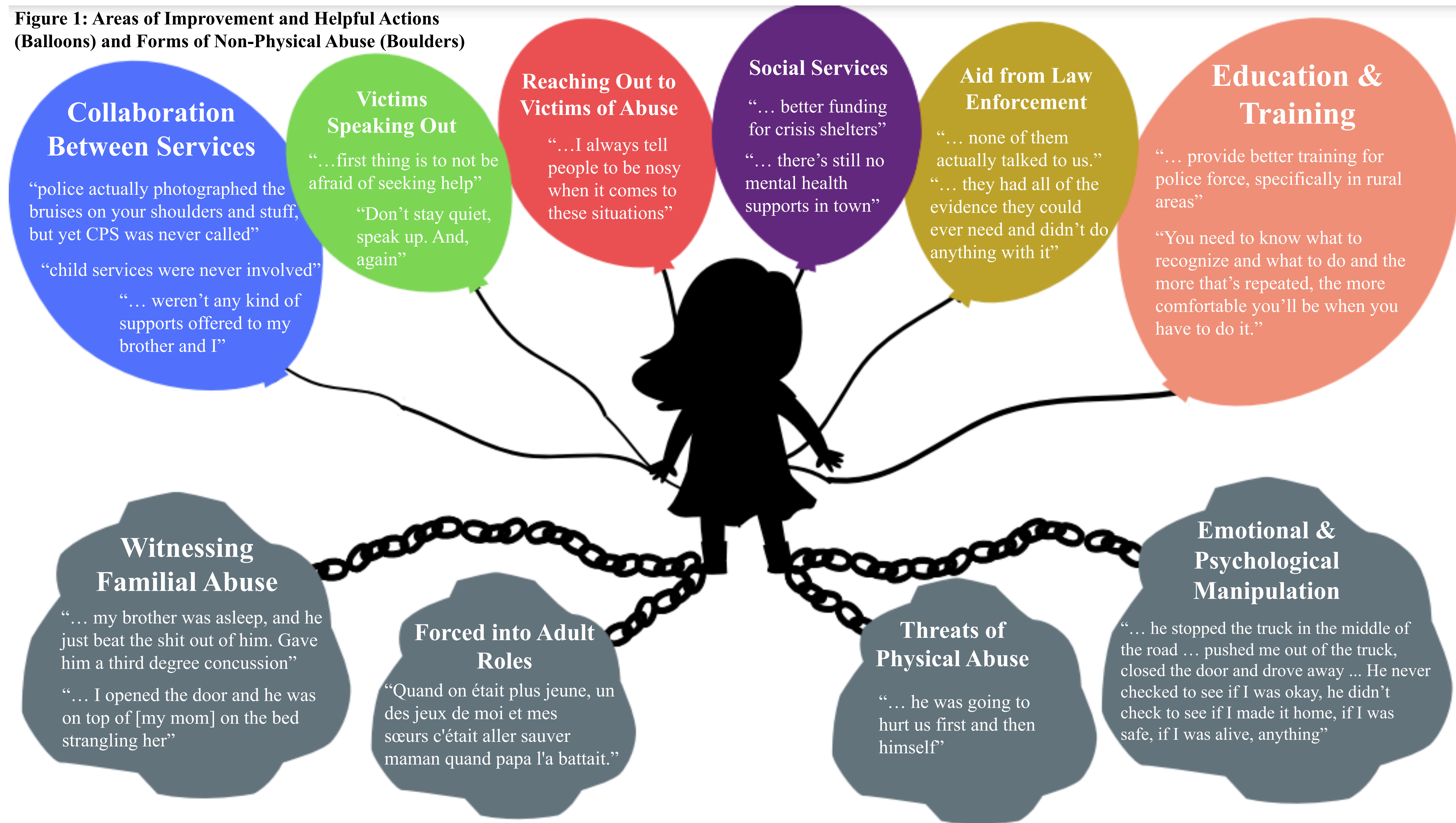
- Emotional and Psychological Abuse (Absence & Neglect, Threats, Corruption, and Verbal Abuse)
- Physical Abuse
- Abusing Others
- Advice/ Areas of Improvement
- Helpful Actions

Graph 1: Amount of Excerpts for Each Coding File



RESULTS

Figure 1: Areas of Improvement and Helpful Actions (Balloons) and Forms of Non-Physical Abuse (Boulders)



DISCUSSION

Education

Enhance Resources

Risk Assessment & Management

Mitigate Long-Term Effects

The themes and excerpts provide insight into gaps in our systems

- Primary goal → Educating the public and identifying issues of domestic violence present in society
- Secondary goal → Ensuring appropriate steps and measures are taken to protect survivors

Understanding underlying goals and objectives of coercion tactics and corresponding behaviors used against children will aid in early identification and intervention

- Identify early warning signs of the various forms of child abuse in circumstances of domestic violence
- Enhancing and creating resources so service providers are better equipped to intervene and assist minors in their experiences with domestic violence
- Earlier intervention will assist in mitigating long-term effects of child abuse

REFERENCES



Applied Psychology & Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

This study is being conducted by a master's student enrolled in an OISE program. This study is not run by or affiliated with OISE and OISE does not endorse this poster.



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