

Beyond the Gender Line: Public Insights on Legal Protection for Male Victims of Domestic Violence

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Abstract

In the Philippines, domestic violence has always been perceived as a women's and children's issue. However, there is a slowly growing number of cases involving male victims that remain underexamined and often undocumented. This study explores public perceptions of domestic violence against men (DVAM) and whether there is a need for legislation that criminalizes such abuse in the country. Using the qualitative sociological approach, the study surveyed eighty-seven ($n = 87$) participants from various sectors, selected via snowball sampling. Data were gathered through open-ended and semi-structured online questionnaire and analyzed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Findings reveal varied perspectives of DVAM by the participants, which are categorized in three major thematic categories: legal, cultural, and psychological perspectives. Legally, participants stressed the absence of protective measures for male victims, the need for gender-neutral laws, and DVAM as a human rights issue. Culturally, machismo construct, gender stereotypes, and social stigma contribute to the silencing of male victims, influenced by complicated power dynamics in relationships. Psychologically, responses point to emotional and mental abuse for male victims, lack of awareness and underreporting of DVAM, and personal witness accounts of violence. Further, participants also expressed mixed reactions to the proposed law criminalizing domestic violence against men – from strong support to skepticism. Legislative recommendations drawn from public insights are offered, emphasizing the need to recognize and protect all DVAM victims regardless of gender. These findings aim to provide insights to policy discourse, promote inclusivity in law, and challenge culturally embedded gender norms in the Philippines.

Keywords: domestic violence against men, male victims, gender inclusivity, legal protection, human rights

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Introduction

Domestic violence is considered a social problem that has been plaguing the Philippines for so long. The growing number of victims of this kind of violence prompted the Congress of the Philippines to pass a law that protects the victims of domestic violence – albeit only for women and their children. In 2004, Republic Act No. 9262, also known as the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act, was enacted, recognizing the harsh realities they face in abusive domestic relationships. This landmark legislation penalizes acts of violence against women and their children (VAWC) committed by their husband, former husband, or any person who has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom the woman has a common child.

According to the Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and their Children (n.d.), the enactment of the said social legislation is a result of less than a decade of unflinching advocacy and lobbying by women advocates, policymakers, other stakeholders, and the women victim-survivors themselves. It was a collective effort from different stakeholders in society.

Understandably, the Philippine government provides high regard to these vulnerable sectors, a constitutional guarantee from the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Several constitutional precepts on the welfare of women and children are enshrined in the Philippines' fundamental law.

In addition to the constitutional and statutory provisions, the Philippine government also vows to end violence and discrimination against them. R.A. 9262 reiterates this policy by exerting “efforts to address violence committed against women and children in keeping with the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution...other international human rights instruments of which the Philippines is a party.”

Under R.A. 9262, the State prohibits the commission of the physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence against women and children. The victims may also avail of remedies such as temporary and permanent protection orders. The successful prosecution of the crimes under R.A. 9262 may make the perpetrators face graduated penalties and fines.

However, Filipino men now ask, “How about us? What protection does the State provide us when the offender is a woman whom we had dating, romantic, or sexual relationship with?”

In the Philippines, domestic violence has always been perceived as violence against women and children. This leads to the normalization of the idea that “domestic violence” is exclusively equivalent to “violence against women and children.” However, some advocates say that violence against men also exists in Philippine society. The common perception that women are always the victims of domestic violence leads to the inaction and inattention of this relevant issue of male victimization (Junio, 2014).

In a nutshell, domestic violence against men deals with abuse experienced by men in a domestic or family home setting, either in marriage or cohabitation. In some other countries, violence against men is punishable, but statutes depend on jurisdictions. Intimate partner violence (IPV) against men is generally less recognized by society than IPV against women, which can act as a further block to men reporting their situation (Lupri & Grandin, 2004). Furthermore, domestic violence against men is experienced by men of different ages in a domiciliary setting.

Incidentally, violence against men is not given more attention than violence against women, which may become a factor why men do not report their dilemma. In the Philippines, the lack

of statistics on the male domestic abuse seems to be the problem why this kind of violence is unattended by the authorities. However, antidomestic abuse advocate Nano Manahan cited the rise of the incidence of male abuse in the country (Castillo, 2018). Twelve to fifteen out of every 100 couples in the Philippines are abused by their wives. He strongly believes, as tackled in his book, that the search for genuine gender equality, which is at the center of human rights issues, should convince everyone to discuss and address the reality that “there are men in relationships who are also victims of domestic violence, thus, they equally need attention and help (Castillo, 2018).”

However, there was a big disparity as to the latest data on violence against men and women as obtained from the PNP Crime Information Reporting and Analysis System (PNP CIRAS) in May 2021. More than 8,900 women suffered a form of domestic violence under R.A. 9262, while only 21 incidents of violence committed against male victim-survivors by family relatives or intimate partners were recorded by the PNP on that same year (VERA Files, 2022).

The study is grounded on Gender Role Theory, which provides an all-inclusive lens through which the cultural, legal, and perceptual dimensions of violence against men can be examined and understood. The theory posits that societal expectations dictate behaviors considered appropriate for men and women. These gender roles shape the way individuals perceive themselves and others in social contexts (Eagly, 1987).

Although violence against men is a controversial area of research because of the non-conformity of some feminists in terms of gender symmetry and battered husband syndrome, the researcher attempts to expound the implications of authorities’ non-attention to this problem.

Research Questions

The paper aimed to analyze whether there is a need to enact a statute that provides protection to men who experience domestic abuse in different settings. It sought to determine the existing views and perceptions of the public about domestic violence against men and their reactions on the proposed statute criminalizing domestic violence against men.

Methodology

With the goal of exploring the public’s insights and perceptions regarding domestic violence against men (DVAM) in the Philippines, the present study utilized a qualitative research in sociology. Eighty-seven (n = 87) participants took part in the study. They belong to various sectors of society, including students, professionals, educators, parents, and members of civic organizations. The participants were chosen using snowball sampling. Moreover, the participants were all of legal age.

Using Google Forms, data were collected through an open-ended and semi-structured online questionnaire. The instrument was duly validated by three experts on law, gender, and sociology. Data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, adhering to the ethical research principles of privacy, consent, and voluntariness.

Results and Discussion

1. Existing views and perceptions of the public about domestic violence against men

This section presents the results of the thematic analysis of participants' responses regarding their views and perceptions about domestic violence against men. The findings are organized into the following three major themes, with sub-themes supported by participants' answers to open-ended questions, namely:

1.1 Legal Perspectives

- 1.1.1 absence of protective measures for male victims
- 1.1.2 the need for gender-neutral laws
- 1.1.3 DVAM as a human rights issue

1.2 Cultural Perspectives

- 1.2.1 machismo construct
- 1.2.2 gender stereotypes
- 1.2.3 social stigma

1.3 Psychological Perspectives

- 1.3.1 emotional and mental abuse for male victims
- 1.3.2 lack of awareness and underreporting of DVAM
- 1.3.3 personal witness accounts of violence

Legal Perspectives

One of the emerging themes that came to light from the responses of the participants of the study is the legal perspectives. Participants emphasized three interrelated subthemes: (1) the absence of protective measures for male victims, (2) the need for gender-neutral laws, and (3) the framing of DVAM as a human rights issue.

Absence of Protective Measures for Male Victims

Despite the lack of statistics in the Philippines, the absence of protective measures for male victims is a grave concern that warrants closer attention by government authorities. As stated by Jimenez (2022), there is a scarcity of statistical reports that pertain to men as victims of domestic violence in the country. Even the Supreme Court of the Philippines, in the landmark case *Garcia v. Drilon*, assailing the constitutionality of Republic Act No. 9262, admits that “no reliable estimates may be obtained on domestic abuse and violence against men in the Philippines because incidents thereof are relatively low and, perhaps, because many men will not even attempt to report the situation.”

As a matter of fact, the only data available from government offices and civil society groups are statistics on women and children victims of domestic violence. This leads to the participants' disappointment over the lack of legal protection for male victims of domestic violence in the Philippines. One respondent stated, “It is sad that there's no law for this but if it is violence then it is a crime and it should be punished.” Some participants believed that domestic violence “can happen to anyone regardless of gender” and that “men should have the same protection as women have.” Hence, they call for the enactment of a law penalizing DVAM “because they have their right also,” and this should be “implemented immediately.”

Several participants expressed the belief that “violence has no gender” and that “protection from domestic violence should be universal, not selective.” They called for the creation of gender-neutral or inclusive laws that recognize abuse as a crime regardless of the victim’s sex or gender identity. These views show a noteworthy legal asymmetry. While R.A. 9262, also known as the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004, provides all-encompassing remedies and penalties for violence committed against women and their children, such a law excludes male victims from its protective scope.

The exclusion of men from the legal framework on anti-domestic violence has been the subject of study and commentary by researchers (Agarwal, 2024; Badua-Oquendo, et al., 2023; Casibua, 2018; Jimenez, 2022; Junio, 2014; Nabe & Chavez, 2025; Romualdez-Valtos, 2024). The absence of protection mechanisms for men contributes to the underreporting of abuse, as male victims often believe that the law will not recognize their experiences. Further, Nabe and Chavez (2025) call for immediate legislative reforms to recognize equal protection of domestic violence laws, including men, which would ensure equal protection of the law.

The Need for Gender-Neutral Laws

Based on the qualitative analysis, a salient subtheme was identified in the data concerning the call for gender-neutral domestic violence legislation. This means that women, children, and men are treated alike or similarly. One participant remarked on his or her belief that “the law should be fair to both men and women,” rejecting “double standards” in defining and prosecuting acts of abuse. Another respondent sees violence against men and women as “an equally serious problem and therefore shall be treated equally.” According to the participants, such a constricted legal view discounts the fact that violence can be inflicted by and against persons regardless who they are.

Singh and Yadav (2025) explain that the principle of gender neutrality in law is vital in upholding equality, eliminating discrimination, and promoting inclusivity. A fully gender-neutral legal system is not only a matter of language modifications but also systemic and cultural transformations to ensure fair and inclusive legal protections for all individuals, regardless of gender identity. While changes in words are commendable, the real battle lies in the implementation and inculcation of gender-free concept.

In the Philippines, government instrumentalities, including courts and lawmaking bodies, have heeded the call for gender-neutral policies in all government processes and transactions. For instance, in 2022 and 2024, respectively, the Supreme Court and the House of Representatives promulgated guidelines on the use of gender-fair language and a gender-fair language guidebook. However, as early as 2005, the Civil Service Commission issued CSC Memorandum Circular No. 2005 enjoining all public officials and employees to use non-sexist language in all official documents, communications, and issuances.

In 2022, Senate Bill No. 211 was filed in the Senate of the Philippines to amend R.A. 9262. The proposed measure seeks to render household violence genderless or gender-free. This guarantees that all individuals—*regardless of gender*—are equally protected under the law. The bill was archived due to the transition of new Congress.

While the country has yet to adopt a fully gender-inclusive domestic violence framework, the enactment of the Safe Spaces Act of 2018 (Republic Act No. 11313) is a welcome step toward a gender-free society. It also represents a progressive step toward gender equality. This law

broadens protection against gender-based sexual harassment in public spaces, workplaces, educational institutions, and online platforms—extending safeguards not only to women but also to men and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Despite these progressive approaches, biases in society still continue to influence the enforcement of gender-neutral laws. According to studies (Karakurt et al., 2013; Karystianis et al., 2024; Malik & Nadda, 2019; Nabe & Chavez, 2025), male victims of domestic violence and abuse are less likely to report crimes due to stigma, societal expectations, stereotypes, and lack of available support services. To address these challenges, it is required that there be comprehensive legal training, public awareness campaigns, and stronger institutional mechanisms to ensure that gender-neutral laws translate into real-world protections for all individuals (Singh & Yadav, 2025).

DVAM as a Human Rights Issue

Every person has the inherent and inalienable right to live free from fear, harm, and abuse. Thus, human rights play a very critical role in legal talks on domestic abuse. When one group—such as male victims—is omitted from protection and security, it weakens the very essence of human rights, which is universality. Hence, participants’ acknowledgment of DVAM as a human rights issue is very telling on the principle that justice must be inclusive and must uphold equality for all. A paradigm shift is then advocated—from gender-specific frameworks toward inclusive, human-centered approaches.

There is no doubt that any form of violence is considered a human rights issue. Jimenez (2022) believes that intimate partner violence (IPV) is concededly a human rights violation and a global public health issue. This shows the need to reframe DVAM as an issue of equality, not exceptionality.

Participants emphasized that “every human being should be treated fairly despite gender” and that “men and women are human beings that should have equal rights in being safe and not harmed.” These views from the participants frame domestic violence not only as a criminal or moral issue but as a fundamental human rights issue. This is an infraction of the right to dignity, security, and equality of a person enshrined in both municipal and international laws.

Numerous researchers have noted that human rights frameworks must evolve to acknowledge non-conventional victims of abuse, including men and members of the LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more) community (D’souza, 2023; Outright International, 2013; Pathak, 2020; Poticano & Sasot, 2024). Pathak (2020) does “not deny the bitter reality that women are still the target of violence and cruelty but on the other side, almost the whole transgender population and certain men are also subject to brutishness. The rights of these other communities have to be also recognized with the progressive evolution in socio legal framework (p.174).”

Also, violence against men was eloquently explained by Senior Associate Justice Mario Victor F. Leonen, to wit:

...even those in marginal cases deserve fundamental constitutional and statutory protection. We should be careful that in correcting historical and cultural injustices, we may typecast all women as victims, stereotype all men as tormentors or make invisible

the possibility that in some intimate relationships, men may also want to seek succor against acts defined in Section 5 of Republic Act No. 9262.

Cultural Perspectives

The traditional gender norms are deeply embedded in Philippine culture. The participants' statements bring to light three interrelated subthemes: (1) the machismo construct, (2) gender stereotypes, and (3) social stigma.

Machismo Construct

Machismo, or hyper masculinity, is defined as “a culture that encourages an extreme masculine identity, characterized by a series of beliefs that allow for dominant attitudes and behaviors constructed to preserve and strengthen male dominance over women” (Villarreal, 2023). Degusman (2017) described the Philippines as a “macho-centric.” According to him, many Filipinos even encourage their children to be aggressive and to groom a tough-guy image because they are obsessed with the idea of being macho.

The qualitative data reveal that suppressing the existence of male victimization is a manifestation of machismo construct, a social idealization of masculine strength, dominance, and invulnerability. This births from masculinity ideology which refers to “beliefs, constructs and conceptualizations of norms and roles of being men” (Balane & Tirol, 2015).

Several participants recurrently pertained to men as “macho,” “dominant,” “protector,” “tough,” and “masculine,” explaining that “men are expected to be strong both physically and emotionally.” A participant said that “it may sound unusual in Filipino culture but there should not be a double standard.” This is an implication that deep-seated views about male control prevent the recognition of male susceptibility.

Additionally, participants expressed in their statements that most of the time, men who are victims of violence are treated as “just a joke” and “often laughed at.” These words or phrases are part of social conditioning that may lead to emotional repression, as men process the idea that expressing pain or seeking help slowly weakens their masculinity. Hence, the outcome is a culture of silence.

Machismo is not just a personal or gender identity issue, but also a cultural and structural one. The idea that “men should be dominant” and that they are “strong and tough” validates the belief that men cannot be injured or emotionally affected. This gender stereotype leads to normalization of abuse against men and trivializes it as humor and stripping it of seriousness and legitimacy. As an outcome, men who are victims of abuse are doubly marginalized: first, as victims, and second, as people who break the rules of masculinity in society.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are closely related to the machismo ideal – men as dominant and women as passive or vulnerable (Kite et al., 2008; Omojemite et al., 2024). Several participants echoed this observation, stating that “men are always regarded as the abuser or the dominant in the household.” This cultural bias establishes domestic violence as a “women’s issue,” discounting men from both social and legal protection.

As explained by the participants, gender stereotypes continue to dictate societal expectations about masculinity and femininity in Filipino culture. Many statements point to the deeply-embedded notion that “men are expected to be strong both physically and emotionally” and that “men are ‘macho,’ ‘dominant,’ ‘masculine’ etc.” This belief creates a hierarchy in which strength and control are attributes of men, while emotion and vulnerability are assigned to women. Popular media also helps spread this idea. As one participant stated, “In movies and television dramas, the man is always the villain. So when they become real victims, no one believes them.”

Connell’s (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity posits that the dominant ideals of manhood are socially constructed and maintained through power relations that privilege male dominance while punishing male vulnerability. In addition, Wedgwood et al. (2023) explain that the idea of hegemonic masculinity is usually defined as a set of personal characteristics, rather than as a social position in a gender system where men generally have authority and power.

Similarly, cultures that place a high value on accomplishment and competition tend to maintain strict gender roles, according to Hofstede’s (2011) cultural dimension of masculinity. In this framework, women are portrayed as naturally weak and reliant, whereas males are burdened with both demonstrating power and hiding weakness. Indeed, in their study, Stewart et al. (2021) noted that despite continuous efforts to attain gender equality, there is a growing emphasis on the necessity of addressing harmful and out-of-date gendered stereotypes and norms in order to support societal and cultural change through individual behavioral and attitude changes.

Social Stigma

Social stigma largely contributes to gender inequality. The word *stigma* is related with a negative social connotation. Too, it is typically described as a mark of shame, deeply entrenched in the idea of a generalized collective type (Vecchio-Camargo et al., 2022).

A weather of disbelief and mockery surrounding male victimization resonates with the participants in their responses. They expressed that “society finds it easier to believe women as victims. Men, on the other hand, are doubted and mocked.” This misconception that “men cannot be victims, only aggressors” should be struck down from the community’s mental faculty. Male victims experience an internal conflict between personal suffering and community expectations which subscribe to the psychological cost of obeying the unwanted masculine standards.

Trivialization of DVAM has been observed by the participants. “People often assume it’s a joke,” one remarked. This quashes their sad experiences and also maintains a cycle of silence, where male victims encounter ridicule and thus choose not to come forward. Victims’ experiences can be analyzed through the lens of Erving Goffman’s concept of a spoiled identity. This pertains to an identity that leads to stigma: the experience of exploring life with a characteristic that is profoundly discrediting (Goffman, 1963). Thomas Scheff (2006), as cited in van de Ven and Pemberton (2021), postulates in his analysis of Goffman that a spoiled identity may be interpreted as an experience of shame.

Psychological Perspectives

Aligned with slowly growing body of global literature on gender-based violence (Badua-Oquendo et al., 2023; De Sousa, 2022; Nabe & Chavez, 2025; Scott-Storey et al., 2023), the results confirm that men who experience intimate partner violence always struggle internally due to the conflict between their lived reality as victims and the rigid social expectations of masculinity.

Emotional and Mental Abuse for Male Victims

As pointed out by the informants, DVAM extends beyond physical injuries. It also comprises emotional, mental, and psychological torture on the part of the victim that destructively affects victims' self-worth and welfare. As one participant stated, "Domestic violence against men...can be physical, mental, and emotional. It can cause trauma." Thus, the invisible wounds inflicted cause lasting emotional damage. The experiences of humiliation, manipulation, and degradation that erode their confidence and identity were described by one interviewee, saying that "Even words can hurt. The insults and daily humiliation can break one's spirit and self-confidence."

In the findings, the recurring theme is the participants' acknowledgment that both men and women deserve respect and fair treatment in relationships. "A man also needs respect and should receive fair and equal treatment from everyone," expressed one respondent. This response shows a longing for equality and empathy that overcomes traditional gender roles. Yet, many participants admitted that such recognition remains elusive in a society that equates masculinity with toughness and stoicism. One participant described, "Men also experience emotional manipulation. They get gaslighted too," indicating the experience of psychological control or "gaslighting," where victims are made to question their own reality.

Misdirection, denial, lying, and contradiction are some of the manipulative techniques used in gaslighting, a type of psychological and emotional abuse that is performed on an intimate partner with the goal of destabilizing the victim or survivor (March et al., 2025). Psychological literature on emotional abuse reveal that constant criticism, humiliation, and control can cause anxiety, depression, and trauma comparable to or worse than physical harm (Björnsson et al., 2020; Dye, 2019; Hart et al., 1996; Yun et al., 2019).

Lack of Awareness and Underreporting of DVAM

A recurrent insight among participants was the low level of awareness and underreporting of DVAM. As one respondent stated, "It exists but not everyone knows it does. It's rarely or never on the news." Another shared, "Lack of statistics or numbers is another reason why there is no law yet." These responses point to a systemic problem of invisibility, in which both the public and institutions fail to recognize male victimization as a legitimate social issue. In fact, even the Philippine National Police or any government agencies, for that matter, do not possess any concrete government data on male victims of domestic violence.

A nationwide survey conducted by the University of Mindanao-Institute of Popular Opinion (UM-IPO) College of Criminal Justice Education (CCJE) found that roughly three out of 10 Filipino men had been victims of domestic violence committed by their wives (Patumbon, 2024), which is a considerable rise over earlier research. Just 12 to 15 couples out of 100 reported suffering this kind of abuse in 2018. Hence, it is an established fact that there is no

official report and still a little research (Badua-Oquendo et al., 2023) on domestic violence against men in the Philippines. Globally, studies confirm that men underreport domestic abuse due to shame, fear of disbelief, and stigma (Ambrozewicz et al., 2024; Jovanoski & Sharlamanov, 2021; Surve, 2022).

As participants noted, “many are in denial about it” and “men are embarrassed to admit to be victims because of this macho image.” This is a reflection of Goffman’s (1963) concept of stigma management, where people hide experiences that conflict with societal norms. Persons who are “discredited” have a visible stigma, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or physical impairment. Individuals with a “discreditable” stigma, such as mental illness and HIV infection, are considered discreditable. Thus, these phrases are used to describe the stigmatized attribute’s visual prominence (Chaudoir et al., 2013). However, DVAM may be both considered discredited and discreditable stigma depending on how males look male victimization.

Moreover, the absence of official data on DVAM in the Philippines perpetuates policy inaction. Because government agencies and societal norms categorize domestic violence primarily under women and children, cases involving male victims remain unrecorded or misclassified. In the long run, this could result in learned invisibility, where social systems overlook a type of victim.

Personal Witness Accounts of Violence

Several participants shared personal witness accounts of domestic violence involving men. They acknowledge that DVAM happens. Their narrative accounts reveal the real and often overlooked nature of DVAM. One respondent revealed, “I have witnessed such from my neighbors and was really feeling sorry for the guy.” Another said, “Men can be abused too, not only girls.” These statements serve as a blunt but necessary correction to societal bias of exclusive male dominance. They directly challenge the “dominant conception” that only women are victims.

Some respondents shared firsthand experiences of seeing male abuse in their respective communities. One witness noted, “I have witnessed such from my neighbors and was really feeling sorry for the guy.” One particularly telling statement was, “I was really shocked when I saw it firsthand. The fear in the guy’s eyes was different — you wouldn’t expect that something like that could come from a woman.” These narrations can serve as qualitative evidence that DVAM occurs within ordinary households, though it often remains unseen or minimized by the community.

In many cases, neighbors or friends may sympathize but refrain from intervention due to fear of social backlash or disbelief. As one interviewee said, “As a witness, what is the right step to take? Sometimes I’m also afraid that I might become the target if I speak up about the situation.” This is consistent with the bystander effect (Darley & Latané, 1968), where the diffusion of responsibility leads to public apathy. In the context of DVAM, this results in an ethical paradox: people recognize abuse but fail to act because cultural norms discourage involvement in “private” family matters. According to Campos-Mercade (2021), “the bystander effect is the phenomenon that people are less likely to help others when they are in a group than when they are alone.”

Participants' Mixed Reactions on the Proposed Statute Criminalizing Domestic Violence Against Men (DVAM)

Skepticism Toward the Proposed Law on Domestic Violence Against Men (DVAM)

Although a number of participants expressed agreement with the idea of passing a law on anti-DVAM, some conveyed reservations and uncertainty. They also felt doubtful and hesitant about its necessity, effectiveness, implementation, and feasibility. Their skepticism reveals lingering social and cultural notions that domestic violence is predominantly a women's issue, and that men, by virtue of their perceived strength, are less likely to need protection.

Moreover, this skepticism stems from the fact that there are existing laws that already provide sufficient protection for men. For instance, any violence inflicted on any person, regardless of gender, are penalized under the Revised Penal Code as defined in different offenses such as slight physical injuries, less serious physical injuries, serious physical injuries, maltreatment, attempted homicide, frustrated homicide, attempted murder, frustrated murder, grave threats, grave coercion, unjust vexation, among others. For emotional damages and psychological torments, the male victims may even get protection from the Civil Code of the Philippines under Articles 19, 20, and 21.

Support and Advocacy for the Proposed Law on DVAM

In contrast, quite a number of participants strongly supported the enactment of a statute criminalizing domestic violence against men. Their statements highlight values of fairness, equality, and universal human rights. This group viewed the proposed law as a corrective measure to ensure that justice applies equally to all, regardless of gender.

These responses articulate a vision of legal equality and inclusivity. Participants viewed the proposed law as essential in dismantling the perception that men cannot be victims of abuse. Their advocacy echoes global trends toward gender-neutral domestic violence laws.

Supporters' responses reveal a growing awareness among Filipinos of gender parity and shared accountability, signaling an emerging cultural shift. For them, the law represents not merely a legal remedy but also a symbolic affirmation that violence against anyone—male or female—must be condemned and punished.

Conclusions

Violence in all forms are unacceptable and should not be a norm in society. Violence knows no gender, race, age, bounds, and limits. While domestic violence in the Philippines is traditionally viewed as a women's and children's issue, there is a documented, albeit underexplored, issue of DVAM. The qualitative results of the study show that public insights are the most noteworthy driver for needed legal and cultural reform.

In addition, deeply rooted cultural nuances, particularly machismo and gender stereotypes, hinder disclosure and legal recourse for male victims. They could not open up for fear of isolation and mockery. Tied with stigma, this cultural reluctance considerably contributes to the underreporting of this type of cases. Thus, legal reform must be attended with targeted social interventions.

The mixed response of the public, ranging from strong support to skepticism regarding a law penalizing DVAM, proves the complexity whether to pass a new law or amend the existing one. It concludes that a successful legal reform must prioritize legal inclusivity by expanding protection to all victims without undermining the established legal safeguards for women and children. Therefore, the time for gender-neutral legislation is long overdue.

Although legislative reform is encouraged, legal balance must be taken into consideration. Thus, the government should prioritize the enactment of a standalone, comprehensive domestic violence law that uses gender-neutral language in its definitions of abuse. Finally, the proposed law must explicitly state that it does not diminish, repeal, or replace the specific provisions and support structures provided to victims under R.A. 9262 to ensure continuity of specialized services.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that Grammarly, an AI-assisted writing software, was used in proofreading and refining the language used in the manuscript. The usage was limited to correcting grammatical and spelling errors and rephrasing statements for accuracy and clarity. The author further declares that, apart from Grammarly, no other AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate content in writing the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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