

The Role of Law Enforcement in the Implementation of Legislations Related to Intimate Partner Violence in Canada

Cheenu Sharma (j0478510)

Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV), also referred to as domestic violence, encompasses actions by a current or former intimate partner that may cause or result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm (Stewart et al., 2020). Additionally, some authorities now recognize stalking and financial abuse as forms of IPV (Stewart et al., 2020). This research paper investigates the role of law enforcement in the implementation of existing IPV-related legislation in Canada, critically analysing both its strengths and limitations.

Background

In 2019, statistics revealed that over 100,000 Canadians aged 15 to 89 experienced IPV, accounting for nearly 30% of all violent crimes reported to the police, a 6% rise from 2018 (Burczycka, 2019). Despite legislative advancements and increased societal awareness, IPV cases continue to be largely underreported, with victims facing numerous barriers to disclosing their experiences (Heron & Eisma, 2021). Qualitative analyses revealed that police officers encounter various challenges when responding to IPV, which include obstacles at systemic, organizational, and individual levels (Saxton et al., 2022). Therefore, the research aims to answer a quintessential question as *how effectively law enforcement is playing role in implementing and enforcing current IPV-related legislations in Canada?*

Methods

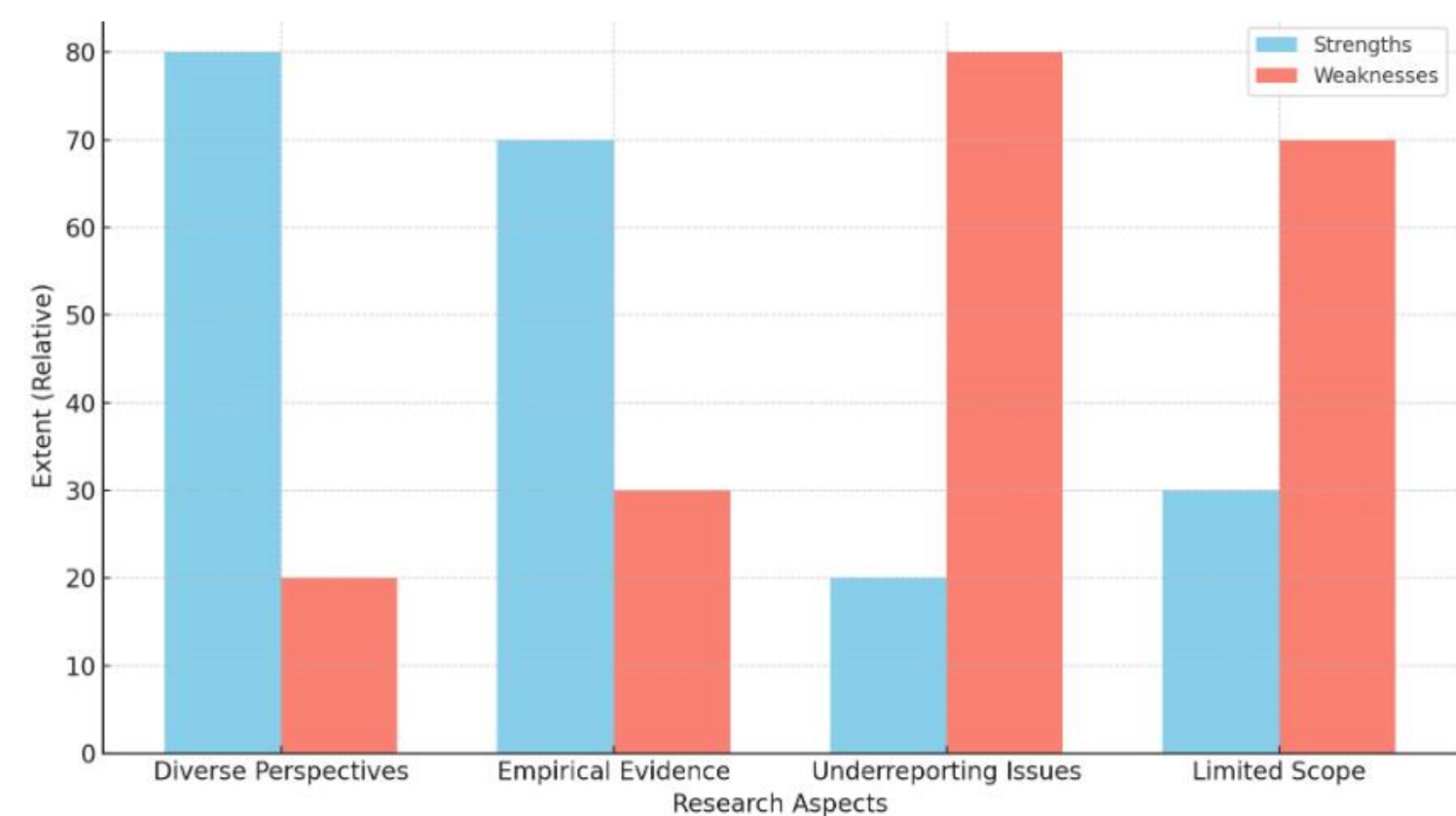
This study will employ a *secondary method approach* which will involve qualitative content analysis of existing literature. This approach will provide a comprehensive overview of current trends, legislative gaps, and survivor experiences. As the study involves secondary sources only, direct ethical concerns related to confidentiality are minimal. However, care will be taken to ensure that any representation of survivor’s experiences is respectful and avoids further stigmatization or sensationalism.

Results/Findings

The research highlights notable strengths as well as weaknesses as shown in Figure 1. Data from sources such as the Canadian Homicide Survey and the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCRS) underscore a substantial discrepancy between police-reported and self-reported IPV incidents, with significantly lower police-reported cases (Stewart et al., 2020). In 2016, 79% of police-reported IPV cases involved female victims, with males making up 80% of those charged. While heterosexual relationships make up 82% of reported IPV cases, male same-sex IPV is also significant, comprising about 55% of incidents (Stewart et al., 2020). This finding points to the limited scope in police recognition and reporting, which may hinder effective intervention as shown in Figure 2. Police data also show that IPV extends beyond physical violence to include psychological abuse and control tactics, with 8% of women and 6% of men reporting such behaviors. Despite this, many IPV cases go unreported due to fears of retaliation, shame, or a lack of trust in police responses (Stewart et al., 2020; Saxton et al., 2022).

Figure 1

Title: Strengths and Weaknesses of Research on IPV



Note: The chart highlights four key aspects: Diverse Perspectives, Empirical Evidence, Underreporting Issues and Limited Scope.

Discussion

One of the most pressing insights is that while law enforcement agencies play a central role in the immediate response to IPV, the effectiveness of their intervention is highly constrained by systemic and organizational barriers. The findings from Saxton et al. (2021; 2022) emphasize the emotional toll on officers dealing with IPV, which points to an overlooked aspect: the psychological support for law enforcement. A prominent new insight is the necessity of moving beyond the traditional gendered approach to IPV, where male perpetrators and female victims are presumed to be the norm. Dutton (2010) and Winterdyk et al. (2017) highlight the limitations of this paradigm, as it fails to consider male victims, LGBTQ+ relationships, and cases where violence may be bilateral. Embracing a more inclusive approach acknowledges that IPV is not confined to a single narrative but rather exists in diverse and complex forms.

Conclusions or Recommendations

In conclusion, this research paper explores the multifaceted nature of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Canada, examining the effectiveness of existing legislation and its interaction with law enforcement practices. The findings underscore an urgent need for comprehensive legislative reforms, revealing that current laws and policing strategies often fall short in addressing the complexities of IPV. Future research should prioritize long-term, in-depth studies to assess the lasting effects of intimate partner violence (IPV) on survivors and the sustainability of current interventions. Understanding how individual’s experiences evolve over time and evaluating the effectiveness of various support systems will offer insights crucial for shaping policies and practical approaches.

References

Burczycka, M., *Section 2: Police-reported intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018, in Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2018. 2019, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Statistics Canada.* <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00018/02-eng.htm>

Dutton, D. G. (2010). The gender paradigm and the architecture of anti-science. *Partner Abuse*, 1(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.1.1.5>

Heron, R. L., & Eisma, M. C. (2021). Barriers and facilitators of disclosing domestic violence to the healthcare service: a systematic review of qualitative research. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 29(3), 612-630.

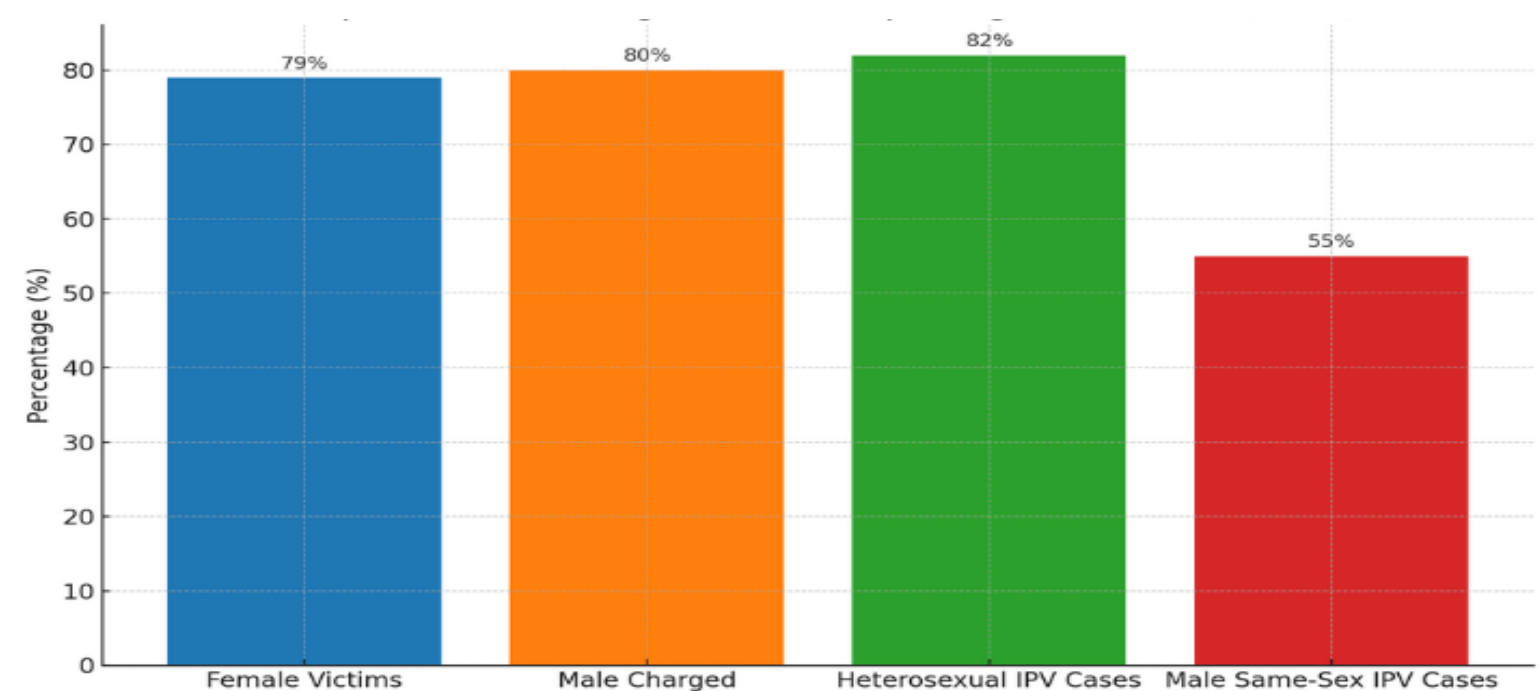
Saxton, M. D., Jaffe, P. G., Dawson, M., Straatman, A. L., & Olszowy, L. (2022). Complexities of the police response to intimate partner violence: Police officers’ perspectives on the challenges of keeping families safe. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(5-6), 2557-2580.

Stewart, D. E., MacMillan, H., & Kimber, M. (2020). Recognizing and responding to intimate partner violence: An update. *Canadian Psychiatric Association.* <https://www.cpa-apc.org/wp-content/uploads/IPV-EN-2.pdf>

Winterdyk, J. (Ed.). (2017). *Crime prevention: international perspectives, issues, and trends*. CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group.

Figure 2

Title: Scope of Police Recognition and Reporting in IPV Cases (2016)



Source: Stewart et al., 2020