Chapter 41

ICTs and Domestic Violence (DV): Exploring Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

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ABSTRACT

The use of information communication technologies (ICTs) to empower individuals through social support, help-seeking, and help-providing activities is finding its place in healthcare delivery. ICTs, in particular, offer access to timely and relevant information that domestic violence victims and organizations can tap into. Thus, this article explores the use of ICTs for providing and facilitating support and care-giving services to victims/survivors of domestic violence with online communities and other groups.

INTRODUCTION

As a communications medium, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) could connect geographically dispersed individuals without the constraints of time or space. Thus, individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ethnicities can share information and communicate with other individuals or groups (e.g., online community) at one time over the Internet. Online communities—where individuals with similar interests and/or experiences come together to interact—can benefit from CMC as a tool for seeking, gaining, and sharing knowledge and experiences. It is these communities—groups of individuals with similar interests and experiences who are connected using information communication technologies (ICTs) and whose conversations are facilitated through CMC use—that makes these ICTs a valuable tool for social support. Thus, this article proposes, the need to explore the use of ICTs; specifically, the role of CMC as a support medium for victims/survivors of domestic violence (DV). DV is an issue critical to healthcare and the overall general well-being of women, their families, and societies in general (Olaniran & Rodriguez, 2013).

BACKGROUND ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

ICTs offer access to timely and relevant information, which allows DV organizations to serve as advocates and respond to specific cases of abuse (Hamm, 2001). Online DV organizations also provide other advocates with health and support information in order to better facilitate and provide a solution to victims/survivors of DV and other related types of sensitive healthcare issues (Campbell, Sy, and Anderson, 2000; NCIPC, 2003). The amount of information available online is also used to provide online training for individuals and organizations that deal with violence against women (VAW). A specific focus in this paper is the use of ICTs for providing and facilitating support and care giving services to victims/survivors of DV. Traditionally, ICT use in healthcare and healthcare delivery, primarily focus on hospital settings such as health care givers interaction with one another and patients or pharmacies and other agencies such that issues surrounding telemedicine and informatics are a commonplace. Notwithstanding, the Center for Disease and Control (CDC) classifies domestic violence as a serious *public health issue* (2008). According to CDC (2017), domestic violence is a serious, yet preventable, public health problem affecting more than 32 million Americans—over 10% of the United States population (CDC, 2008, 2017). The intimate partner violence (IPV) alone affecting more than 12 million people each year. Women are disproportionately impacted (CDC, 2017).

National Domestic Violence Statistics

- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (CDC, 2017).
- 1 in 10 women in the United States will be raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime.
- An estimated 9.7% of women and 2.3% of men have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime (CDC, 2017).

    Other Domestic Violence Data

- Female victims of intimate partner violence experienced different patterns of violence than male victims.
- Female victims experienced multiple forms of these types of violence, male victims most often experienced physical violence. Most of this victimization starts early in life.
- Approximately 80% of female victims experienced their first rape before the age of 25 and almost half experienced the first rape before age 18 (30% between 11-17 years old and 12% at or before the age of 10).
- About 35% of women who were raped as minors were also raped as adults compared to 14% of women without an early rape history.
- 28% of male victims of rape were first raped when they were 10 years old or younger (see CDC, 2017).

Studies have also demonstrated the impact of intimate partner violence on the endocrine and immune systems through chronic stress or other mechanisms (Breiding, Black, & Ryan, 2008; Crofford, 2007; Leserman & Drossman, 2007). The problems include but not limited to Fibromyalgia, Irritable bowel syndrome, Gynecological disorders; Pregnancy difficulties such as low birth weight babies and prenatal

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