



# THE ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF USM STUDENTS TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMALES

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**Abstract:** Due to lockdowns and stay-at-home measures in combating COVID-19 worldwide, the number of domestic violence cases have increased tremendously since 2020. In order to eliminate domestic violence against females, it is imperative to better understand the background of domestic violence against females, as well as the societal institutions that promote its persistence. This study aimed at determining and analysing the perception and awareness level of USM students on domestic violence against females. The result showed that USM students have a strong awareness of different types of abuses. Among those six categories, 72.4% of the respondents strongly agreed with physical abuse as a form of domestic violence and had the largest mean 4.667 while 38.1% of respondents strongly agreed with stalking as a form of domestic violence with the lowest mean 3.905. However, the result also revealed that the majority of the students are unaware that the illness-based violence is one of the causes of domestic violence as opposed to the other five causes. We also found that there exists a significant difference of percentages of responses between strengthening laws and legislations against domestic violence as a potential solution (73.34%) with the mean of 4.686. This shows a rather alarming signal that USM students are generally too dependent on law and have the mindset that law can overcome domestic violence issues. Recommendations to improve the students' awareness on this matter are presented accordingly.

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### 1. Introduction

Domestic violence is a universal social phenomenon reaching across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions which can happen to anyone either men or women of all ages, races, religions and incomes (Turhan, 2020; Reif et. al, 2020). Domestic violence can come in various forms such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, isolation and stalking (Plumptre, 2021). It originates from gender inequality and patriarchal norms, which create unstable power dynamics in relationships, and are potentially exacerbated by factors such as monetary pressure and uncertainty about the future (D'Cruz, 2020). Any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to inflict bodily, sexual or psychological injury or suffering to women is considered violence against women.

The World Health Organization (2021.a) has revealed that approximately one out of three women in the world is affected by intimate partner abuse. Domestic violence against females is a serious issue yet common across culture, religion, class and ethnicity. It is geographically widespread, deep-rooted and can devastatingly affect the females' health as well as physical and psychological welfare (Plumptre, 2021). In recent years, it has attracted wide attention from all walks of life (Yaw & Mohammed, 2013). The medical community is paying close attention to this issue because of its severe effects on females' mental, physical and social health and may result in remarkable morbidity and mortality (Sarkar, 2010). Its consequences to individuals, to health systems, to society and to gender relations is enormous, not to mention its perpetuated existence is definitely morally indefensible.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence has become more critical than ever before with the stay-at-home and lockdown measures as the world combats the pandemic (Mukundan, 2020; Qistina, 2020). It is found that more than 9,000 cases related to domestic violence have been reported in Malaysia from March 2020 until August 2021 (Rahim et. al, 2021). Despite the prevalence of such violence, it has not been customarily acknowledged and has remained invisible, making it a hidden social problem (Sarkar, 2010). This is due to the traditional perception that it is a private family matter and should not be disclosed to outsiders (Mwale et. al, 2021). The hidden nature of this problem hinders the females from getting necessary help promptly, concurrently leading to increased severity and frequency of the violence. Thus, this study was carried out to understand the



perceptions of students in USM with regard to domestic violence against women and girls. The result of the study is crucial to help the researchers to understand how much the students care and emphasise about the domestic violence issue happening in today's society which would then enable the researchers to assist the Malaysia government and USM higher-ups to outline the solution to increase the awareness among the students.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Global issue on domestic violence against females**

According to WHO (2021.b), approximately 27% of ever-married or partnered women of reproductive age between 15 to 49 years in the world have witnessed domestic violence at least once in their lives, based on the latest available data of 112 countries from 2005 to 2018. In addition, nearly 13% of ever-married or coupled women aged 15 to 49 years have suffered domestic violence in the past 12 months. However, the most recent global estimate for domestic violence in the UN SDG database has indicated that a higher percentage of women aged 15 to 49 years experienced domestic violence in the previous 12 months, which is nearly 18%. WHO (2021.b) concluded that low-income countries have a higher rate of domestic violence issues than high-income countries. A systematic review conducted by Piquero et. al (2021) and a search intensity index of domestic violence related topics by Berniella and Facchini (2021) revealed that cases related to domestic violence have become more rampant worldwide during COVID-19 pandemic due to the facts that many people have become unemployed as many companies have to cut their labour cost to deal with the pandemic.

### **2.2 Malaysia issue on domestic violence against females**

In Malaysia, there is a lack of adequate and equivalent national data on domestic violence against women and girls as there is an absence of comparable data on the prevalence, nature, causes and effects of violence against women and girls (Shuib et al., 2013). By the same token, Ghani (2014) claimed that there are several underexplored areas in Malaysian research on domestic violence against women and girls such as the impact of domestic violence against women and girls. It is believed that the findings of empirical research will be critical in initiating any possible solutions to this issue. The only known nationwide study on domestic violence against women and girls was carried out by WAO between 1990 to 1992. Based on the findings, approximately 39% of Malaysian women aged 15 and onward, or 1.8 million women, had experienced domestic violence. Nonetheless, domestic violence against women and girls in Malaysia remains to be largely unreported (Dandavati, 2017).

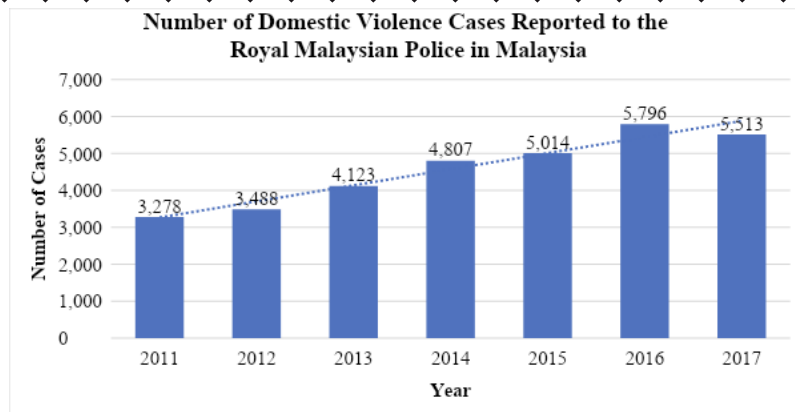


Fig.1 Total Domestic Violence Cases in Malaysia (2011-2017) (WCC, 2020)

Besides that, although the Domestic Violence Act 521 was successfully put into effect in 1994 to provide protection under the law for domestic violence victims, WAO (2009) claimed that it does not protect victims as well as it should. Owing to the fact that the number of reported domestic violence cases under RMP was an increasing trend from 2011 to 2017 based on Fig. 1. To highlight, among the reported cases of violence from 2000 to 2018, domestic violence was the highest case reported in the past 19 years based on WAO (2020). Additionally, in accordance with the data from the WCC (2020) as obtained from the RMP, domestic violence against women and girls remains an issue in Malaysia. For the reason that statistics from 2013 to 2016 revealed that nearly 74% of all reported cases of domestic violence against women in Malaysia as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Domestic Violence Victims in Malaysia by Gender (2013-2016) (WCC, 2020)

Year	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2013	3055	74%	1068	26%
2014	3545	74%	1262	26%
2015	3744	75%	1270	25%
2016	4299	74%	1497	26%

To highlight, in Malaysia, women aged 26 to 35 years are the most likely victims of domestic violence based on Table 2 although as per UNDESA survey results, younger women and girls aged 15 to 29 years are the most likely victims of domestic violence worldwide. Whereas, the average percentage of domestic violence against women and girls in Malaysia decreases with age after the age range of 26-35. Furthermore, according to Table 3, Malay women and girls are the most likely victims of domestic violence in Malaysia, accounting for 60% of all victims. Diversely, in Malaysia, Chinese women and girls are the least likely to be victims of domestic violence, with a rate of 9.40%.

Table 2. Average Percentage of Domestic Violence Rates Against Women & Girls by Age in Malaysia  
(2013-2017) (WCC, 2020)

Age of Group	Percentage
< 25	18.60%
26 - 35	33.40%
36 - 45	21.80%
46 - 59	17.00%
> 60	9.20%

Table 3. Average Percentage of Domestic Violence Rates Against Women & Girls by Race in Malaysia  
(2013-2017) (WCC, 2020)

Race	Percentage
Malay	60.00%
Chinese	9.40%
Indian	19.40%
Others	11.20%

### 2.3 USM issue on domestic violence against females

Following the research findings of Attalla & Rome (2020), there is a low prevalence of domestic violence among university students in Selangor. Nonetheless, based on a diverse literature review of numerous relevant research papers and journal articles, there is a limited study on domestic violence issue against USM female students. However, USM KANITA has taken the initiative in researching domestic violence against women in Malaysia. KANITA is a centre of excellence in USM for research, co-creation of knowledge, advocacy and community engagement, utilising and promoting a gender and social equality framework (KANITA, 2020). To cite one example, a KANITA study on domestic violence against women revealed that an estimated 9% of ever-partnered women in Peninsular Malaysia have witnessed domestic violence in their lifetime (Shuib et al., 2013). In short, the studies largely focused on the matter of domestic violence as it relates to Malaysian gender equality, as well as the legal avenues and support available in Malaysia to deal with such jurisdictions.

### 2.4 Potential forms of domestic violence

Domestic violence, as per Jung (2020), could take many forms aside from physical abuse, such as psychological, emotional, sexual, or economic abuse. According to the UN (2021), the Power & Control wheel is a notably useful tool for comprehending the overall pattern of violent and aggressive behaviours accommodated by an abuser in order to develop and maintain control over a partner or any other victim in the family. It consists of eight nonviolent power and control tactics; coercion and threats, intimidation, economic abuse, emotional abuse, male privilege, isolation, children abuse, and minimizing, denying, and blaming which are used in conjunction with the violence of intimate



terrorism. Nonetheless, the abuser will not use all of these tactics at the same time but will utilize a combination of those that they believe will fit best for them (Johnson, 2009). In short, domestic violence could be broadly categorized into 6 forms namely:

#### 2.4.1 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is defined as constant criticism, insulting one's capabilities, name-calling or other verbal abuse, disrupting a partner's relationship with the children, or refusing to let a partner contact friends and family (UN, 2021). It includes using words to embarrass or make others feel inferior directly or through the use of online or social media applications (WCC, 2021). Nevertheless, in accordance with WAO (2021), using technology application to insult a partner is categorized as digital abuse under domestic violence.

#### 2.4.2 Financial abuse

Financial abuse or economic abuse involves making or aiming to make a person economically dependent by withdrawing access to money, maintaining complete control of financial resources and/or prohibiting attendance at school or employment (UN, 2021). By the same token, WCC (2021) defined financial abuse as restricting a person's financial independence or access from bank accounts, including limiting or refusing to give adequate money for living expenses or depriving a person's income.

#### 2.4.3 Physical abuse

In accordance with the UN (2021), physical abuse includes grabbing, hitting, burning, pinching, kicking, shoving, slapping, biting, hair-pulling, denying medical treatment or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force on a partner.

#### 2.4.4 Psychological abuse

Based on the UN (2021), psychological abuse includes intimidating others, threatening physical harm to oneself, one's partner, or one's children, destroying pets and property, playing "mind games," or forcing partners from visiting, speaking or seeing friends or family members.

#### 2.4.5 Sexual abuse

According to WCC (2021), the use of sex to manipulate or embarrass the victim is known as sexual abuse. This includes bullying the victim into participating in unsafe sex or sexual activities in which she does not want to engage.

#### 2.4.6 Stalking

Stalking is defined as any pattern of abuse that has no valid purpose other than to harass, humiliate, or intimidate the victim. UN (2021) stated that stalking usually will escalate from time to time. With regard to this, WAO (2021) categorized this form of domestic violence under social isolation.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

A mixed-method approach which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods was used to carry out this study. Quantitative method approach was carried out by collecting data through a



structured online questionnaire survey and statistical analysis in presenting the respondents' profile and other pertaining characteristics such as years of study, gender, and race.

### **3.2 Participants**

A total of 152 respondents aged between 19-25 enrolling in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at USM have voluntarily participated in this study. The respondents comprise of first year and final year students.

### **3.3 Instruments**

A questionnaire form which consists of 31 questions and is divided into 6 distinguished sections, A to F which include; demographic information, general perception towards domestic violence, awareness on potential form of domestic violence, general perception on causes of domestic violence against female, general perception on effects of domestic violence against female, defining possible actions to curb domestic violence against female. Linear scale ranging from 1 (strong disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to answer Section B-F. The questionnaire form was developed using an online application namely Google Forms and the link to the form was distributed randomly to USM students via email. They were asked to complete the questionnaire form that comprises three sections. 105 students participated and filled up the questionnaire form and the responses were loaded to SPSS software for further analysis.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

Once the data is collected, the data from the questionnaire survey form is then analysed and processed using a software developed by the International Business Machines (IBM) known as SPSS version 26.0. All the data obtained from each section of the questionnaire survey form undergo a reliability test to determine the degree of consistency in which to further understand whether the questions asked are measuring the same latent variable. Besides that, data from each section were analysed to calculate their means, standard deviation allowing the researchers to come out with rankings for the answers chosen by the respondents. The ranks of each response from each question will help researchers in troubleshooting in discussion and making a better conclusion regarding which is apparently the best choice out of all the choices given.

## **4. Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Demographic profile of respondents**

A total of 105 students involved in this study. Table 4 illustrates the demographic profile of respondents in term of their gender, age, ethnicity, and years of study.

Table 4. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Item		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	41.9
	Female	58.1
Age	<19 years old	0.8
	19-25 years old	95.2
	>25 years old	4.0
Ethnicity	Malay	35.2
	Chinese	51.4
	Indian	11.4
	Arab	1
	Melanau	1
Years of study	1	12.4
	2	36.2
	3	39.0
	4	12.4

#### 4.2 Reliability test for the data

The reliability test is carried out on the sample size of 105 respondents by using Cronbach's alpha. Each section of the questionnaire undertakes the reliability test to determine the degree of internal consistency in which to understand whether the questions are measuring the same latent variable. The reliability coefficient of '0' means there is no correlation between the questions called no internal consistency whereby the reliability coefficient of '1' means perfect correlation called complete internal consistency. In this study, Cronbach's alpha value for the questions in Section B, C, E, F and G are in the range of 0.632 to 0.759 as shown in Table 5. The alpha values are higher than the average value of 0.60. Hence, this indicates that there is great internal consistency for the questions developed for this study.

Table 5. Result of Reliability Test

Section	Item	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
B	General perception towards domestic violence.	0.696	4
C	Awareness on potential forms of domestic violence.	0.759	6
D	General perception on causes of domestic violence against females.	0.632	6
E	General perception on effects of domestic violence against females.	0.751	5




F	Defining possible actions to curb domestic violence against females.	0.714	5
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#### 4.3 Perception and awareness on domestic violence against females

This section reports the response results of section B-F in which each section contains four to six items or aspects with individual codes as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6. List of sections and items with individual codes

Section	Code	Item
B	B1	I am aware that SDG5 is about Gender Equality.
	B2	I am aware that ending all violence and exploitation towards females is the main goal of SDG5.
	B3	I am aware that domestic violence against females is a global issue.
	B4	I am aware that domestic violence against females has risen during the COVID-19 pandemic.
C	C1	I am aware that physical abuse is a form of domestic violence.
	C2	I am aware that psychological abuse is a form of domestic violence.
	C3	I am aware that financial / economical abuse is a form of domestic violence.
	C4	I am aware that emotional abuse is a form of domestic violence.
D	D1	Learned behaviour (eg. learn through direct observation) contributes to domestic violence.
	D2	Cultural issues contribute to domestic violence.
	D3	Illness-based violence (eg. Alzheimer's disease, psychosis) contributes to domestic violence.
	D4	Desire for power and control of abusers contributes to domestic violence.
	D5	Low self-esteem of either the abuser or victim contributes to domestic violence.
	D6	Alcohol and drug abuse by abusers contributes to domestic violence.
E	E1	Victims will experience negative effects physically.
	E2	Victims will experience negative effects psychologically.
	E3	Victims will experience negative effects financially.
	E4	Victims will experience negative effects on their work/career.
F	F1	Strengthening laws and legislations against domestic violence is a potential solution.
	F2	Establishing support groups for survivors of domestic violence is a potential solution.
	F3	Providing skills training and employment assistance for survivors of



	domestic violence is a potential solution.
F4	Increasing awareness campaigns and publicity about domestic violence is a potential solution.
F5	Having higher education is a potential solution.

#### 4.3.1 General perception towards domestic violence

Table 7 indicates that every respondent has their own views on the issues related domestic violence against females in various aspects. By referring to Table 7, the majority of the respondents (36.2%) agreed that they are aware that SDG5 is about Gender Equality (B1) and 24.8% of respondents strongly agree with the B1 aspect. However, the table also illustrates that the mean score of B1 is only 3.667, which is ranked as the lowest score when compared to other aspects. It demonstrates that respondent's awareness of the B1 aspect is the lowest, implying that many USM students are still unaware that SDG5 is about Gender Equality. This statement can be reinforced that 11.4% of the respondents disagreed with the B1 aspect and 3.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they are aware of the B1 aspect as presented in Table 7.

Furthermore, 42 out of 105 respondents (40%) agreed that they are aware that ending all violence and exploitation towards females is the main goal of SDG5 (B2) and 28.6% respondents strongly agreed with this aspect. However, 4 out of 105 respondents (3.8%) strongly disagreed that they are aware of the B2 aspect and 8 out of 105 respondents (7.6%) also disagreed with this aspect. The disagreement of the respondents regarding B2 aspect has lowered down the mean score and the ranking of B2 to the second last place of the total ranking .

In contrast, over half of the respondents (56.2%) strongly agreed with the B3 aspect, which is "I am aware that domestic violence against females is a global issue". This aspect is supported by 30.5% of the respondents as they agreed with this aspect too. Table 6 shows that only 1.9% of the respondents disagreed with the B3 aspect and no one strongly disagreed with this aspect. This makes the mean score of B3 aspect become very high which is 4.41 and it naturally ranked as the first place among all the aspects . As mentioned previously, the higher the mean score, the higher the level of awareness of the respondents on respective aspect. Therefore, B3 is an aspect that has the highest level of awareness among respondents which means the vast majority of the USM students are aware of this global issue.

Other than that, Table 7 also shows that nearly half of the respondents (45.7%) strongly agreed that they are aware of the issue of raising cases of domestic violence against females during COVID-19 pandemic (B4). Moreover, 28.6% of the respondents also agreed with this aspect. Just 6.7% of the respondents disagreed with this aspect and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the B4 aspect. As a result, the mean score of B4 is quite high which is 4.133 and it is ranked as second place among all the aspects. Thus, it can be indicated that B4 is also an aspect that is mainly emphasized by the USM students.

Table 7. Responses for general perception towards domestic violence

Item	Percentage of Responses (%)					Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
B1	3.8	11.4	23.8	36.2	24.8	3.667	1.089	4
B2	3.8	7.6	20.0	40.0	28.6	3.819	1.054	3
B3	0.0	1.9	11.4	30.5	56.2	4.410	0.768	1
B4	0.0	6.7	19.0	28.6	45.7	4.133	0.951	2

#### 4.3.2 Awareness on potential forms of domestic violence

In accordance with Table 8, most of the respondents (72.4%) strongly agreed that physical abuse is a form of domestic violence (C1) and 23.8% of the respondents agreed with this aspect too. Only 2 out of 105 respondents (1.9%) disagreed with this aspect and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the C1 aspect. Therefore, C1 aspect is ranked as the first place with a mean score of 4.667.

Similarly, 70.5% of the respondents strongly agreed with the C2 aspect which means they are strongly aware that psychological abuse is a form of domestic violence and this aspect is supported by another 21% of the respondents as they agreed with this aspect as well. In addition, just 1.0% of the respondents disagreed with this aspect and no one strongly disagreed with the C2 aspect. Thus, Table 5.6 demonstrates that the mean score of C2 is relatively high which is 4.610 and it stands a third place among all the aspects in Section C.

44 out of 105 respondents (41.9%) strongly agreed that they are aware that financial abuse is a form of domestic violence (C3). However, 2.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that financial abuse is a form of domestic violence and this aspect is supported by 1.0% of the respondents as they also do not agree that financial abuse is a form of domestic violence. As a result, the mean score of C3 is 4.181 which puts it in fifth position of the total mean score ranking.

Next, more than half of the respondents (61%) strongly agreed with C4 aspect which is emotional abuse is a form of domestic violence and this aspect is supported by 33.3% of the rest respondents by indicating that they also agreed with this aspect. Besides, none of them strongly disagreed with the C4 aspect and just 1 out of 105 respondents (1.0%) disagreed with this aspect which means he or she is unaware that emotional abuse is a form of domestic violence. Hence, the mean score of C4 is 4.543 which is the fourth place in the overall ranking.

Other than that, 80 out of 105 respondents (76.2%) strongly agreed that sexual abuse is a form of domestic violence (C5). Besides, 14.3% of the remaining respondents also agreed that sexual abuse is a form of domestic violence. Just 1.9% of the respondents do not agree with the C5 aspect. Due to the high level of agreement on the C5 aspect, the mean score of C5 is quite high which is 4.648 and placed the second of the overall ranking, implying that many USM students are aware that sexual abuse is a kind of domestic violence.

On the contrary, only 38.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that stalking is a form of domestic

violence (C6) and supported by 23.8% of the respondents. In addition, 31.4% of the rest of the respondents remained neutral with this aspect. However, 3.8% of the respondents disagreed with this aspect and 2.9% of the rest strongly disagreed with this aspect as well. Due to the low level of agreement among respondents regarding this aspect, the mean score of C6 is only 3.905 and it is the lowest rank among all the aspects in Section C.

Table 8. Response for awareness on potential forms of domestic violence

Item	Percentage of Responses (%)					Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
C1	0.0	1.9	1.9	23.8	72.4	4.667	0.615	1
C2	0.0	1.0	7.6	21.0	70.5	4.610	0.672	3
C3	2.9	1.0	13.3	41.0	41.9	4.181	0.907	5
C4	0.0	1.0	4.8	33.3	61.0	4.543	0.636	4

#### 4.3.3 General perception on causes of domestic violence against females

The findings were presented according to six (6) causes of domestic violence against females, which are 1) learned behaviour, 2) cultural issues, 3) illness-based violence and, 4) desire for power and control of abuser, 5) Low-esteem of either the abuser or victim and 6) alcohols and drugs abuse by abuser. For each of the domestic violence against females, the percentage of responses for each of the causes are computed and shown in Table 9. To further analyse the data, respondents' perceptions toward the cause of the domestic violence are also compared based on the achieved mean scores (descriptive analysis).

Table 9. Responses for the causes of domestic violence against females

Item	Percentage of Responses (%)					Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
D1	0.00	4.76	17.14	34.29	43.81	4.171	0.882	4
D2	1.90	3.81	24.76	34.29	35.24	3.971	0.965	5
D3	1.90	4.76	23.81	45.71	23.81	3.848	0.907	6
D4	0.00	0.95	5.71	32.38	60.95	4.533	0.651	1
D5	0.95	3.81	13.33	39.05	42.86	4.190	0.848	3
D6	0.95	0.95	9.52	25.71	62.86	4.486	0.786	2

For D1, the data in Figure 9 shows that the majority of the respondents (78.10%) strongly agreed and agreed that learned behaviour, specifically learned through direct observation contributes to domestic violence. About 17.14% of the respondents remain neutral with this statement whereby



only five respondents disagreed that learned behaviour is the cause that contributes to domestic violence.

For D2, the survey data shows that most of the respondents (69.53%) strongly agreed and agreed that cultural issues led to domestic violence against females. Only six respondents (5.71%) strongly disagreed and disagreed with this statement and the rest of them (24.76%) marked 'neutral'.

For D3, the data indicates that a significant number of respondents (69.52%) strongly agreed and agreed that illness-based violence such as Alzheimer's disease and psychosis have led to the occurrence of domestic violence whereby, only minority of them (6.66%) did not see that it is the cause that led to domestic violence. About twenty-five respondents (23.81%) perceived 'neutral' with this statement.

For D4, the data shows that ninety-eight respondents (93.33%) strongly agreed and agreed that the abuser's desire for power and control is the key cause of domestic violence. Although most of the respondents are pessimistic about the cause of abusers' desire for power and control, some are still optimistic about such conditions. The data shows that only one respondent disagreed with this statement whereby the rest of them (5.71%) marked 'neutral'.

For D5, the survey data indicates that the majority of the respondents (81.91%) strongly agreed and agreed that low-esteem of either the abuser or victim is one of the causes that leads to domestic violence. About 4.76% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed this is the cause that contributes to domestic violence while the rest of them (13.33%) keep a neutral perspective toward this statement.

For D6, the data shows that nearly 90.00% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that alcohol and drug abuse is the main factor that causes domestic violence. However, there are two respondents (1.90%) who disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement whereby, 9.52% of the respondents marked 'neutral'.

The computed data indicates that D4 holds the highest mean score of 4.533 (SD = 0.651), implying that the respondents perceived the abuser that desire for power and control is the key cause that contributes to domestic violence. Subsequently, D2 (alcohols and drugs abuse) are the second critical cause that contribute to the domestic violence in which it holds second higher mean score of 4.486 (SD = 0.786) among these causes whereby D5 (low esteem of either the abuser or victim) is the third key cause that lead to domestic violence, in which achieved the third higher mean score of 4.190 (SD= 0.848).

On the other hand, D1 (learned behaviour) is perceived as less critical in contributing to the domestic violence, in which holds the mean score of 4.171 (SD = 0.882) and ranked at fourth place whereby D5 (cultural issues) achieved the mean score of 3.971 (SD = 0.965) and becomes the fifth critical factor that cause domestic violence against females. Last but not least, the majority of the respondents perceived that illness-based violence is the least critical factor that leads to domestic violence.

Overall, most of the respondents perceived that four causes (D1, D4 - D6) are the key causes that contributed to the domestic as these causes achieved the mean score of 4.000 and above whereby,

D2 and D3 are perceived less critical that lead to domestic violence as the achieved mean score is approaching 3.000 (neutral). Among these causes of domestic violence, D4 is perceived as the key cause that contributes to domestic violence while D3 is the least critical cause that leads to domestic violence.

#### 4.3.4 General perception on effects of domestic violence against females

The survey's findings were presented according to five (5) negative effects of domestic violence against females, which are 1) physically, 2) psychologically, 3) financially and, 4) work or career, and 5) growth development. For each of the negative effects, the percentage of responses are computed and shown in Table 10. To further analyse the data, respondents' perceptions toward the effects of domestic violence are also compared based on the achieved mean scores (descriptive analysis) where the ranking on the effects are also presented accordingly.

Table 10. Responses for perception on effects of domestic violence against female

Item	Percentage of Responses (%)					Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
E1	0.00	1.90	4.76	16.19	77.14	4.686	0.655	2
E2	0.00	0.00	4.76	17.14	78.10	4.733	0.542	1
E3	0.95	3.81	21.90	31.43	41.90	4.095	0.936	5
E4	0.00	0.95	6.67	32.38	60.00	4.514	0.667	4

For E1, the data shows that the majority of the respondents (93.33%) agreed and strongly agreed that the victims will experience negative effects physically from domestic violence. About five respondents marked 'neutral' with this statement whereby, a minority of the respondents (1.90%) disagreed that the victim will encounter negative effects physically when they face domestic violence.

For E2, it is found that 100 respondents (95.24%) agreed and strongly agreed that the victim will experience negative effects psychologically when they encounter domestic violence whereby only five of them (4.76%) remained neutral based on their perspective.

For E3, the survey data shows that the majority of the respondents (73.33%) strongly agreed and agreed that the victim that encountered domestic violence will experience negative effects financially whereby 21.90% of them perceived neutral with this statement. On the other hand, a minority of the respondents (4.76%) did not perceive identically as the other respondents in which they marked disagree and strongly disagree with this condition.

For E4, the data reported that most of the respondents (92.38%) agreed and strongly agreed that victims who faced domestic violence will experience negative effects on their work or career. About seven respondents (6.67%) marked 'neutral' with this statement while the rest of them (0.95%) did not see it as the effect experienced from domestic violence.

For E5, the survey data indicates that up to 92.38% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed

that the children from the household that experienced domestic violence will be affected negatively, specifically their growth development. Although the majority of the respondents are pessimistic with it, there are still two respondents who are optimistic with the statement in which marked 'strongly disagree' whereby, the rest of them (4.76) retained neutral.

The computed data indicated that E2 (negative effect psychologically) holds the highest mean score of 4.733 (SD = 0.542) in which from the respondent's perception, they perceived that negative impact on the psychology is the critical negative effect from domestic violence. Then, E1 (negative effects physically) is the second key effect that resulted from the domestic violence against the victims in which it holds second higher mean score of 4.686 (SD = 0.655) among these effects whereby E5 (negative effects on growth development) is the third key effects heralded by domestic violence, in which achieved the third higher mean score of 4.619 (SD= 0.752).

On the other hand, E4 (negative effects on work and career) is perceived as less critical effects impacted from domestic violence, which holds the mean score of 4.514 (SD = 0.667) and ranked at fourth place. Last but not least, the majority of the respondents perceived that the negative impact on financials is the least critical effects that heralded by domestic violence. Table 10 also shows that E2 achieved the lowest mean score of 4.095 (SD = 0.936) and ranked at the last place.

Overall, most of the respondents perceived that all these effects (E1 - E5) are critical effects impacting the victim who encountered domestic violence as all the effects achieved the mean score above 4.000. E2 is perceived as the most critical effect to the victims who faced domestic violence while E3 is the least critical effect among these effects.

#### 4.3.5 Possible actions to curb domestic violence against females

The findings were presented according to five (5) possible actions to curb domestic violence against females, which are 1) strengthening laws and legislations, 2) establishing support groups for survivors, 3) providing skills training and employment assistance for survivors and, 4) increasing awareness campaign and publicity, and 5) having higher education. To further analyse the data, respondents' perceptions toward the possible actions to curb domestic violence are also compared based on the achieved mean scores (descriptive analysis) where the ranking on the possible actions are also presented accordingly.

Table 11. Responses for possible actions to curb domestic violence

Item	Percentage of Responses (%)					Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree			
F1	0.00	0.00	4.76	21.90	73.34	4.686	0.560	1
F2	0.95	1.90	7.62	34.29	55.24	4.410	0.793	4
F3	0.00	0.95	9.52	34.29	55.24	4.438	0.706	2
F4	1.90	0.95	10.48	27.62	59.05	4.410	0.863	3
F5	0.95	3.81	15.24	24.76	55.24	4.295	0.929	5





For F1, the data in Table 11 shows that neither one of the respondents disagreed nor strongly disagreed that strengthening laws and legislations is the possible actions to curb with domestic violence. On the other hand, majority of the respondents (95.24%) perceived that it is a valuable actions to curb the domestic violence against females whereby only five respondents (4.76%) are still keep neutral perspective with this statement.

For F2, the data reported that there are ninety-four respondents (89.53%) who strongly agree that establishing support groups for survivors of domestic violence can curb domestic violence. About 2.85% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with this action while the rest of them (7.62%) marked 'neutral'.

For F3, the data shows that the majority of the respondents (89.53%) agreed and strongly agreed that one of the actions is to curb domestic violence whereby only one respondent is pessimistic with this perception. On the other hand, about 9.52% of the respondents remain neutral with this statement.

For F4, the survey data indicates that up to 86.67% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that increasing awareness campaigns and publicity about domestic violence would be an ideal action to curb this issue. Nonetheless, about eleven respondents (10.48%) marked neutral with this statement and the rest of them (2.85%) perceived disparately with other respondents.

For F5, the data shows that a significant number of respondents (80.00%) agreed and strongly agreed that having higher education is the possible action to combat domestic violence whereby, minority of them (4.76%) did not agree with this statement. On the other hand, about sixteen respondents (15.24%) keep neutral with this statement.


The computed data also shows that F1 (strengthening laws and legislations) holds the highest mean score of 4.686 (SD = 0.560) in which from the respondent's perception, they perceived that the government should strengthen the relevant laws and legislation to curb domestic violence. Subsequently, F3 (providing skills training and employment assistance for survivors) is the second effective action to combat domestic violence against the females in which it holds the second higher mean score of 4.438 (SD = 0.706) among these possible actions.

On the other hand, both F4 (increasing awareness campaign and publicity about domestic violence) and F2 (providing support groups for survivor) achieved the identical mean scores of 4.410 but with different score of standard deviation which are SD = 0.863 and SD = 0.793, respectively, Thus, F4 and F2 ranked at the third and fourth place accordingly. Last but not least, F5 (having higher education) achieved the lowest mean score of 4.295 (SD = 0.929) compared to the other four identified actions. Overall, most of the respondents perceived that all these possible actions (F1 - F5) are the effective initiative to curb domestic violence as all these actions achieved the mean score of 4.000 and above. Among these possible actions, F1 is perceived as the most effective action to curb domestic violence while F5 is the least effective action.

## 5. Conclusion

The study was conducted to identify the perceptions of USM students towards domestic violence against women and girls. There are three objectives has been established in this research. The first





objective is to explore the potential forms of domestic violence. To achieve this objective, the literature has focused on the potential forms of domestic violence via extensive review of various related journal articles and books. This accomplished by having a few questions for the respondent to answer via online platform. Based on the result, most of the respondent have the strong awareness of the different potential forms of domestic violence which include physical abuse, psychological abuse, economical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and stalking. This implies that most of them are aware of domestic violence issues and can classify those violence into different forms or categories. Based on the result, majority of them strongly agreed that these 5 actions are suitable for curbing the domestic violence against female and girls.

It is undeniably crucial in ensuring that people continue to be aware of and understand the domestic violence against female. Hence, it is important to conduct future research on this issue. As mentioned in literature, domestic violence might affect the victim psychologically. Those psychological effects include depression, fear and anxiety, OCD and PTSD. These effects are long-lasting and might affect the females' whole life. For future research, issues with regard to the mental health of the female victims can be studied. The data obtained will be useful for psychiatrist to treat those victims in the future.

Other than that, different races have different culture groups. Certain cultural group would lead to the prevalence of domestic violence. For future study, researcher can determine how those culture group can lead to domestic violence. Other than that, researcher can determine which specific cultural group will have the highest potential to lead the prevalence of domestic violence. Take note that to prevent the bias of the data, a big sample size is required for such research. This is because there are many different culture groups in Malaysia and this is a sensitive issue to be researched in this country. Therefore, a bigger sample with equal number of respondents coming from different cultural groups is recommended.

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