

Research plan

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Introduction

Question: What explains domestic violence rates in NSW local government areas?

From a long time, it is under discussion if domestic violence is a curse, a cause of ignorance, or just a result of fear of coming out! according to me it is the combination of all the above that initiates or keeps domestic violence to continue (Tolman, R.M. and Raphael, J., 2000). It is defined as a behavioural pattern in a relationship where one overpowers the other and affects the victim's life in a sexual, physiological, economical or emotional way. (Walby, S., 2004). Domestic violence also called as domestic abuse consist of frightening, intimidation, manipulating, injurious acts, as well as blaming. It more often than not leads to huge losses as well as fatality. It is not just related to an intimate partnership but can be found in any kind of relationship example father and son, son and father, husband and wife or wife and husband. (Smith, L.J., 1989). It is irrespective of any age, gender, faith or class. (Johnson, M.P., 2005). Domestic violence cases have been on a rise in NSW local government areas in the past 20 years and I will explain why using pertinent arguments.

Hypothesis: The working theory behind this concept of domestic violence is outlined in two broad categories: the gender of the offender/victim, and their living conditions. For instance, over-consumption of alcohol may lead to an event of abusive behavior exerted by drunk man victimizing a woman. A model will be used to test the following theories to determine which factors are the most influential and lead to high rates of domestic violence in NSW local government areas. 1. The gender of offender and the victim: While domestic violence is attributed with the fact that the majority of the victims are women, this research intends to explore the percentage of men being victimized by incidents of domestic violence focusing on the the gender differences of the perpetrator as well. 2. The living conditions of the offender and the victim: Socio-economic status(income), financial conditions(unemployment rate), the marital status(sole parents) and the effect of alcohol are believed to be the predictors having a strong correlation with domestic violence.

Literature and theory

There are several plausible factors which lead to incidents of domestic abuse. There are myriad of arguments that women have been the major victims of domestic violence in Australia however, recent studies and surveys conducted Australia wide, it was found 35% of the victims were men out of which many were not even considered to be a serious case because of the perspectives and stereotypes of the modern world (Barber, C.F., 2008) Australian Broadcasting corporation in 2017 claimed that every third victim of domestic violence are adult males. This data was further supported by the Statistics bureau of Australia (Kumar A., 2005)

However, being said that adult males are also found on the other side of this, Dunkley and Phillips in 2015 mentioned that most domestic violence happens between people who are in an intimate relationship, caused by low income or unemployed males. Patterns show the pressure cooker built by the society, was often blasted on the females in the relationship, this statement was eventually backed by the personal safety survey in 2016 concluding that women are at least twice as likely to face domestic violence then men. (Pagelow, M.D., 1992). Adding to the injury, the non-English speaking regions have a much higher rate of domestic violence than English speaking regions (Cox ,2015). The people at risk are mostly with a financial crisis, a health condition not allowing them to operate on full pace (Stavrou et al. 2016). The reports from domestic violence between 2013-2017 points to alcohol as the reason for domestic violence, as aboriginal and Torres strait islander women facing more than 32 times what non-indigenous women face. (Semahegn, A. and Mengistie, B., 2015)

According to the arguments presented above, it is clear that the domestic violence is the curse caused by negligence and ignorance of the society because of the cloud of stereotypes created by themselves and the lack of education and awareness among the local people of NSW. In this 21st century the measures to bring domestic violence to an all-time low are under way by education, awareness and immunity with support to the victims.

Data and methodology

Data collection: The data being used for this research work is collected from different sources. A key source for collecting data pertaining to gender categorization and the effect of alcohol is extracted from the dataset presented by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOSCAR) for the year 2016. BOSCAR is a statistical and research agency which looks into the crime investigation of criminal acts. This has further been aligned with the Census dataset presented by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the year 2016. If the working model delivers decently accurate results, the research will undertake 2020 data for further consideration ensuring consistent timelines for the ‘Census data’ as well as the ‘criminal incidents dataset’.

Data preprocessing: The BOSCAR dataset is present in xlsx format and all the separate files are combined for easier interpretation of the timelines. For data with the missing values or values with ‘na’ have been calculated as the average number of victims for the corresponding age-group. All the datasheets for different LGA regions were combined together for comprehensive analysis.

Methodology (Model fitting): This research intends to carry out a thorough investigation between all the factors affecting domestic violence. To begin with, a linear regression model will be built to understand the correlation between independent variables like - ‘unemployment rate’, ‘gender’, ‘alcohol_consumption’, ‘sole_parent’, ‘population_count_by_region’ and the dependent variable which is the ‘number_of_criminal_offences’. These will be categorized by gender, by region and by year such that the percent of male victims will be calculated as a total of both the genders. Since the data is speculated at a surface level at the moment, an extensive and thorough analysis may imply adoption of a different model (eg. Poisson model because of the distribution of mean, variance and count variables).

Confounding variables: It is important to understand if the variables(independent and dependent variables) have a causal effect between them or if they are confounding factors. For instance, a theory suggests that unemployed people are generally inclined towards over-consumption of alcohol. This implies ‘unemployment_rate’ could be a confounding factor, where ‘alcohol_consumption’ is the independent variable and ‘number of criminal offences’ is the dependent variable.

Expectations and limitations

After extensive experimentation, it is expected that the linear regression model built will be accurate to test the following hypothesis: 1. Males form a significant percentage of victims. 2. Alcohol consumption, unemployment, being a sole parent, financial crisis are strong predictors of domestic violence.

The limitations to this experiment are assumed to be as follows: 1. Insufficient background and relevant knowledge of economic factors may cause bias during experimentation. 2. Availability of limited data can cause discrepancies while building the model.

These limitations will be worked upon with alternative approaches during the entire course of experiment. Further investigation would be necessary to dig into the causes and effects of domestic violence in different local regions of NSW.

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