Title: ‘An investigation into the attitudes and awareness of domestic abuse and levels of abuse among young women in Ireland’

Elaine Goldsberry

A dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement for the B.A. (Hons) Degree in Health Promotion

April 2014

Waterford Institute of Technology

Department of Health, Sport and Exercise Sciences

School of Health Sciences

Waterford Institute of Technology
Statement of originality and ownership of work

Department of Health, Sport and Exercise Science

B.A. (Hons) Health Promotion _____ (Please select one)
B.A. (Hons) Exercise and Health Studies _____

Name (block capitals)..............................................................

I confirm that all the work submitted in this dissertation is my own work, not copied from any other person’s work (published or unpublished) and that it has no previously been submitted for assessment on any other course, in any other institution.

Signed.................................................................

Date.................................................................

Student Number..............................................

Address.................................................................
..............................................................................
..............................................................................
..............................................................................
........................................................................

Word processor word count...............................
Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to thank my thesis supervisors both Gillian Stewart and Michael Hanlon for their guidance and professionalism at all times throughout my research.

To my friends and family I am grateful for everything that you have done for me. Without your continuous advice, support and sacrifices, it would not have been possible to achieve this meaningful endeavour.

I would also like to extend my deepest appreciation to Women’s Aid for their help, encouragement and provision of support materials. They provide vital support and services to women throughout Ireland. Also I would like to acknowledge the various bodies that were kind enough to facilitate me by providing literature for this research.

Finally a word to the thousands of Irish women living with domestic abuse every day

‘Nach bhfuil tú dearmad.’
**Table of Contents**

List of Tables ................................................................................................................................. v.
List of Figures ................................................................................................................................. vi.
List of Abbreviations ...................................................................................................................... vii.
Abstract ......................................................................................................................................... viii.

1.0 **INTRODUCTION** .................................................................................................................. 2.

2.0 **LITERATURE REVIEW** ...................................................................................................... 4.
   2.1 The Concept of Domestic Abuse ............................................................................................ 4.
   2.2 Prevalence of Domestic Abuse ................................................................................................ 5.
      2.2.1 Global Prevalence of Domestic Abuse .............................................................................. 5.
      2.2.2 Domestic Abuse Prevalence in Ireland ............................................................................. 6.
   2.3 The First Signs - Dating Violence .......................................................................................... 8.
   2.4 Health Implications of Domestic Abuse and Dating Violence ............................................... 9.
   2.5 Attitudes and Domestic Abuse ............................................................................................... 10.
      2.5.1 The Link Between Attitudes and Domestic Abuse .......................................................... 10.
      2.5.2 Women’s Attitudes and their Subjection to Abuse ........................................................ 11.
      2.5.3 Men’s Attitudes and their Perpetration of Abuse ............................................................ 12.
      2.5.4 Community Attitudes and Social Norms ..................................................................... 13.
      2.5.5 Attitudes to Domestic Abuse in Ireland ........................................................................... 14.
   2.6 Summary and Rationale ......................................................................................................... 15.
      3.6.1 Research Questions ......................................................................................................... 16.

3.0 **METHODOLOGY** ............................................................................................................... 18.
   3.1 Research Design .................................................................................................................... 18.
   3.2 Study Population and Sampling ............................................................................................. 18.
   3.3 Concepts Measured ................................................................................................................ 18.
   3.4 Measurement Tool .................................................................................................................. 18.
      3.4.1 The Questionnaire ........................................................................................................... 18.
   3.5 The Pilot Study ....................................................................................................................... 20.
   3.6 Data Collection Procedures .................................................................................................... 20.
      3.6.1 Data Analysis .................................................................................................................... 21.
   3.7 Ethical Considerations .......................................................................................................... 23.
      3.7.1 Informed Consent ............................................................................................................. 24.
4.0 RESULTS .................................................................26.
   4.1 Breakdown of Study Participants ..................................26.
   4.2 The Warning Signs of Domestic Abuse .................................27.
   4.3 Behaviours Regarded as Domestic Abuse .............................28.
   4.4 Awareness of Support Services ......................................30.
   4.5 Awareness of Statistics of Domestic abuse in Ireland ..................33.
   4.6 Prevalance of Domestic Abuse ......................................35.
   4.7 Disclosure of Domestic Abuse ......................................39.

5.0 DISCUSSION ..............................................................44.
   5.1 Overall Findings .....................................................44.
   5.2 Behaviours Regarded as Domestic Abuse .............................45.
   5.3 Recognising the Warning Signs ....................................45.
   5.4 Prevalence of Domestic Abuse ......................................46.
      5.4.1 Psychological Abuse ..............................................46.
      5.4.2 Domestic Abuse Prevalence among Participants and the Labelling of
           Behaviours as Abuse ..............................................47.
      5.5.2 Women’s Knowledge of Female Victims of Domestic Abuse ..................49.
      5.5.3 Personal Experience of Abuse and Knowledge of Other Female Victims
           of Domestic Abuse ..............................................49.
   5.6 Age as a Risk Factor for Domestic Abuse .............................50.
   5.7 Perceptions of the Prevalence of Domestic Abuse in Ireland ..................52.
   5.8 Awareness of Support Services ......................................53.
   5.9 Response to Domestic Abuse in Others ................................54.
   5.10 Conclusion ..........................................................55.
   5.11 Limitations ..........................................................55.
   5.12 Reccomendations ....................................................56.

Reference List ........................................................................58.
Appendix A ...........................................................................65.
Appendix B ...........................................................................69.
List of Tables

Table 1. Age and relationship status of participants ..................................................26.

Table 2. Age category and relationship status of participants .................................26.

Table 3. Perceived warning signs of domestic abuse .............................................27.

Table 4. Comparison of the perceived severity of ‘name calling’ and ‘anger because of male friends’ between age categories .........................................................29.

Table 5. Comparison across relationship categories for the perceived severity of abuse in the scenario ‘Socialises every weekend without his partner/girlfriend/wife’ .................................................................30.

Table 6. Experience of abuse and familiarity with Women’s Aid and women’s refuges .................................................................................................................33.

Table 7. Comparison of domestic abuse experienced by participants across relationship categories ..................................................................................................36.

Table 8. Participants experience of physical domestic abuse and knowledge of a woman who has experienced or is experiencing domestic abuse ................38.

Table 9. Experience of domestic abuse and disclosure of domestic abuse by a friend/relative/other to participants .................................................................38.

Table 10. Reported ‘other’ response on knowledge of abuse experienced by a friend/relative/other .........................................................................................40.

Table 11. Education on domestic abuse .................................................................42.
List of Figures

Figure 1. Perceived level of severity of domestic abuse in the given scenarios ..................28.

Figure 2. Participants’ familiarity with support services .................................................31.

Figure 3. Participants’ familiarity with support services across age categories ...............32.

Figure 4. Participants’ perception of the occurrence of domestic abuse in Ireland ...........33.

Figure 5. Participants’ perception of the age that is most at risk of domestic abuse ........34.

Figure 6. Participants’ familiarity with terminology .........................................................34.

Figure 7. Domestic abuse experienced by participants .....................................................35.

Figure 8. Age of women that were known by participants to be in an abusive relationship at time of the study ..........................................................37.

Figure 9. Participants’ reported response on receipt of knowledge that a friend/relative/other may be experiencing domestic abuse ..................................................39.

Figure 10. Relationship comparison in reported responses on receipt of knowledge that a friend/relative/other may be experiencing domestic abuse ...............................41.
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERSI</td>
<td>the Economic and Social Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>General Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSC</td>
<td>the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIT</td>
<td>Waterford Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

Overview: To assess the attitudes towards and awareness of domestic abuse and also to assess the prevalence of abuse in a sample of young women in Ireland and women known to them.

Methods: Cross-sectional self-reported data was obtained from a sample of women (n=187) between the ages of 18 and 25 years from Waterford Institute of Technology

Results: Findings show that a high number of young women have experienced both psychological and physically aggressive behaviours in romantic relationships. The most common aggression experienced was jealousy (58.8%) while (28.5%) experienced minor physical abuse and (13.9%) experienced physical abuse which caused injury. Strong attitudes exist against all forms of aggressions, however, it emerged that young women may be defective in labelling their own experience of domestic abuse and also in risk perception.

Conclusion: Psychological and physical violence is common among young relationships in Ireland. Despite a good understanding as to what behaviours constitute domestic abuse and what the warning signs are, and despite strong anti-violence supportive attitudes, young women emerge as a high risk group. It is paramount that more awareness campaigns and educational programs are implemented to raise awareness among this high risk group.

Key Words: Domestic abuse, dating violence, psychological abuse, attitudes, perceptions.
Chapter 1
Introduction
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The term ‘domestic abuse’ is generally perceived to mean the abuse of a woman who is in an intimate relationship with a man (Buckley, Whelan, & Holt, 2006). It is a reasonably new branch of research, the growth of which has accelerated over the past thirty years due to the growing interest of academics eager to gestate, understand and put into theory this multifaceted phenomenon (Buckley et al., 2006). However, despite the fact that domestic abuse has received much attention in recent times, domestic abuse itself often goes unnoticed and it fact it remains part of the fabric of many cultures and societies worldwide (Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995).

Domestic abuse has been recognised as a violation of human dignity and a serious breach of women’s rights (Campbell, 2002). It does not discriminate. It knows no ethnic, social, geographical or cultural boundaries and can affect any person in any society at any point in their lifetime. However, its prevalence and particular characteristics vary across countries due to the social norms and cultures that exist (Azam Ali & Bustamante Gavino, 2008). Furthermore, increasing evidence suggests that domestic abuse is more common among younger women (Bradley, Smith, & Long, 2002; Hird, 2000; Howard, Trevillion, & Agnew-Davies, 2010; Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995; Watson & Parsons, 2005). It is important to acknowledge that domestic abuse is a problem faced; not only by women, but that men too suffer abuse at the hands of their partners. However in the majority of cases men are the perpetrators of abuse and women’s violence against men is more often than not, associated with self-defence (Reed & Elizabeth, 2008; WHO, 2002). Research shows that women are far more likely than men to be subjected to multiple forms of abuse, including serious physical injuries, stalking, psychological abuse, threats, sexual violence and violent deaths (Walby & Allen, 2004). Society creates an idealisation of the home being a place of warmth, safety and solace. In reality however, women are more likely to be assaulted and killed in their own homes, at the hands of family members than in any other circumstances (Gelles, 1997).

Differing terminologies are used to describe physical, sexual and emotional abuse which takes place within the context of romantic relationships. However, many of these terms are criticised for negatively labelling women by describing them as ‘battered wives’ or ‘victims’ or by identifying the abuse as occurring within the ‘domestic’ sphere which may in turn trivialise the abuse as being ‘just a domestic’ (Buckley et al., 2006). Domestic abuse,
spousal abuse, domestic violence, dating violence, battered wives and intimate partner violence are just some of the terms which are used interchangeably but refer to the same pattern of abusive behaviour. Acknowledging the difficulty in terminology, for the purpose of this research the term ‘domestic abuse’ will be used and it is defined as when

‘One person tries to control and assert power over their partner in an intimate relationship. It can be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or financial abuse.’

(Women's Aid, 2013)

Furthermore this research will also refer to ‘Dating Violence’ as being essentially the same except that it relates to abuse which occurs in the relationships of non-cohabitating young people. The terms domestic abuse and dating violence refer to any form of abuse (perpetrated or threatened) of a physical, sexual or emotional nature.

Attitudes and perceptions relating to domestic abuse play a role in men’s perpetration of abuse, the victim’s response, as well as, define the level of support received from family, friends and neighbours and also determine the level of services provided by governments and non-governmental agencies (Horgan, Muhlau, Mc Cormack, & Roder, 2008). Although research on the prevalence of domestic abuse is one aspect of prevention, it is recognised that addressing attitudes toward and awareness of, domestic abuse is a key contributor to effective primary prevention (WHO, 2002). Increasing research on domestic abuse is revealing that these patterns of behaviour emerge in immature relationships, often among teenagers as young as thirteen (Hird, 2000; Gelles, 1997; Matud, 2005) and with this in mind targeting young people and changing their attitudes towards violence is paramount. Furthermore, although there have been Irish studies conducted with the general population, little gender specific research has been carried out that focuses on the attitudes of young women specifically. Keeping in mind that attitudes towards abuse and adopting a low tolerance of violence are key factors in the prevention of domestic abuse, the aim of this research was to target young Irish women specifically, to ascertain their awareness and attitudes towards domestic abuse and also to document levels of abuse among the population group.
Chapter 2
Literature Review
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a review of published literature on domestic abuse. This chapter will firstly provide an overview of the concept of domestic abuse. It will explore the prevalence rates both here in Ireland and worldwide and it will highlight the subsequent physical and mental health consequences which result. Secondly, it will explore the complex relationship between attitudes and domestic abuse and the significance of attitudes in its prevalence. Finally it will examine attitudes to domestic abuse within an Irish context.

2.1 The Concept of Domestic Abuse

Conceptualising domestic abuse is fraught with difficulties. It has been a topic of discussion for policy makers, feminists and health care workers since the 1970s as women’s groups demanded that the psychological, physical, sexual and financial abuse of women be recognised (Harne & Radford, 2008). Domestic abuse is an extremely broad concept which refers to patterns of behaviour that encapsulate any physical, verbal or sexual act that violates a woman’s body, self-worth or sense of trust. According to Gelles and Strauss (1988) domestic abuse is not a clinical or scientific term but rather a concept and even after years of debate no consensus exists internationally as to how it should be defined. Furthermore, although abuse is rooted in idealisations of dominance, as a single explanatory cause this is inadequate and Heise (1998) describes domestic abuse as being a multifaceted phenomenon caused by a mix of situational, personal and socio-cultural factors.

Domestic abuse rarely occurs in only one form and the majority of victims are subject to multiple forms of abusive behaviours. Furthermore, substantial research has continually highlighted a series of traits that define the experience of abuse for women and conceptualise abusive relationships as a continuing process of entrapment and reduced coping ability (Ludermir, Schraiber, D’Oliveira, Franc, & Jansen, 2008; Smith, Earp, & DeVellis, 1995). Ludermir et al. (2008) carried out a quantitative study in two areas in Brazil among women aged 15 to 49 years as part of a WHO multi-country study. Results showed that one of the most common forms of abuse reported by the women who took part in the study was a combination of physical and psychological abuse followed by sexual, physical and psychological abuse all co-existing. The co-existence of abuse was also highlighted in an earlier qualitative study carried out in Nicaragua by Ellaberg et al. (2000). Results showed
that 94% of women who reported experiencing physical abuse were also subject to humiliation and verbal abuse, while 36% of women were often beaten and forced to have sex (Ellaberg et al., 2000).

### 2.2 Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

#### 2.2.1 Global Prevalence of Domestic Abuse.

Quantifying domestic abuse worldwide is not a simple process because of the inconsistency in definitions, under-reporting and the fact that it is inextricably linked to social and cultural norms. Worldwide, domestic abuse will be experienced by one in three women at some point in their life, it accounts for one quarter of all violent crimes and it has the highest rate of repeated victimisation than any other violent crime (Walby & Allen, 2004; World Bank, 1993).

Prevalence studies on domestic abuse reveal large variations in the levels of abuse between countries and within settings. The newest statistics from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) who recently undertook a random sample study of 42,000 women across 28 EU member states found that 22% of women have experienced sexual or physical violence and 32% have experienced psychological abuse in a relationship (FRA, 2014). Alhabib Nur and Jones (2010) carried out a systematic review of 134 worldwide studies on the prevalence of domestic abuse among women aged 18 to 65 years. The studies were mainly population based or carried out in community or healthcare settings. Researchers concluded that the prevalence of domestic abuse ranged from 1.9% in Washington to 70% in Hispanic women in the southeast of America. Moreover, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), results of 48 population-based studies from around the world revealed that between ten percent and 69% of women were physically assaulted by a male partner at some time in their lives (WHO, 2002). Clearly evidence indicates that although trends do vary, domestic abuse is a problem affecting women in societies worldwide.

There are also often large discrepancies in the prevalence of domestic abuse within and between settings. Woman experiencing domestic abuse are often overly represented within health care settings due to the nature of abuse (Alhabib, Nur, & Jones, 2010; Bradley et al., 2002; Nuamann, Langford, Torres, Campbell, & Glass, 1999; Richardson et al., 2002) and in the previously discussed review by Alhabib et al. (2010) domestic abuse was most reported in
studies carried out in psychiatric and gynaecology clinics. While in a UK study carried out among 1,207 women over the age of 15 years recruited from 13 randomly selected GP practices in east London, 41% of the participants reported having been physically assaulted by a present or previous partner (Richardson et al., 2002). This number was at the higher end of the scale in comparison to similar studies carried out in primary care settings and reflects the health consequences that domestic abuse can induce. However, it could be questioned whether the low response rate (55% of those approached) of women in the study led to either an underestimation or an over estimation of domestic abuse prevalence. It is possible that those women who declined to take part in the study were non-abused women and that women who had been abused were more likely to respond, or on the other hand, there is a possibility that the women who declined to participate did so because of fear or shame.

**2.2.2 Domestic Abuse Prevalence in Ireland.**

As in many countries, the existence and extent of domestic abuse in Ireland has largely remained a hidden problem within our society. Nonetheless, there is evidence to show that a serious problem exists (Buckley et al., 2006). Our home is a place we consider safe, a place of refuge where we can hide from the world yet this notion is shattered for thousands of Irish women who suffer at the hands of their partners. Women’s Aid estimate that one in five Irish women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives with over 200,000 women being at risk of sexual, physical or emotional abuse at any time (Women’s Aid, 2013; Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995). However, although some research has been carried out in Ireland, there is a lack of precise, transparent and systematic information available.

There have been two national studies focusing on domestic abuse prevalence in Ireland yielding conflicting results. The first study, ‘Making the Links’ commissioned by Women’s Aid was carried out to investigate the scope of Irish women’s experience of domestic abuse. Of the 575 women included in the study who had ever been in a relationship with a man, 18% reported that they had experienced at least one form of abuse at some point in their lives. The most commonly reported form of abuse was psychological (13%) followed by threatened and perpetrated physical violence (nine percent) (Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995). An important point to highlight is that this particular study was conducted using postal questionnaires. Therefore, underestimation of domestic abuse is a possibility due to the likelihood that some of the women who did not respond may have failed to do so because they experienced fear or
anxiety with regards to the anticipated outcome of taking part. In the same year ‘Making the Links’ was published, Garda Síochána statistics documented 3,986 reported incidents of domestic abuse with 837 of these incidents resulting in arrests (Farrelly, Heller, Sheridan, Hordan, & Clancy, 2001). By 2004 this figure had risen drastically to 6,229 reports of domestic abuse with 1,104 arrests and 538 criminal convictions for violent acts (Watson & Parsons, 2005).

In 2005 the National Crime Council of Ireland in association with the ERSI carried out the first national study of domestic abuse among men as well as women using a nationally representative sample of 3,077 people. However, this study measured severe abuse as opposed to once-off events and results showed that one in seven women had experienced severe abuse of a physical, sexual or emotional nature. Furthermore, only one in five of these victims reported the abuse to the Gardaí. Domestic abuse was more prevalent among young people, with one quarter of domestic abuse cases in women occurring among teenagers and 60% of all domestic abuse occurring when victims were under the age of 25. Furthermore, physical abuse emerged as the most commonly reported form of abuse (Watson & Parsons, 2005). This study found a lower prevalence rate than that of the previous study by Kelleher and O’Conner (1995). However, as stated previously, the findings relate to patterns of repeated severe abuse which would be likely to require intervention from the criminal justice system and did not include minor or isolated incidents (Watson & Parsons, 2005). Although it is important to draw distinction between severe abuse and minor incidents as to not create a misleading picture of domestic abuse, the exclusion of these less severe incidents may have resulted in inaccurate findings.

A more recent survey carried out among patients attending their GP in Galway found that 39% of woman had experienced domestic abuse and three out of the 18 women who were pregnant at the time of the study were experiencing domestic abuse (AMEN, 2006). These findings mirror an earlier piece of research also carried out among women attending their GP in Dublin. Similarly, 39% of the 1,692 female respondents had experienced violence of some degree and half of that number had been physically injured (Bradley et al., 2002). While the prevalence of domestic abuse recorded during the two mentioned GP studies was double that of the national study carried out by Watson and Parsons (2005), this is probable due to the previously discussed reality that women who experience abuse are often overly represented within the medical system (Alhabib et al., 2010; Bradley et al., 2002; Nuamann et al., 1999;
Richardson et al., 2002). Another limitation which must be acknowledged is the fact that all the studies referred to relied on self-reported information. There is the always the risk of recall bias when information is voluntarily given. Overall, from the research reviewed no exact statistics can be established on the prevalence rates of domestic abuse in Ireland although it is evident that a serious problem does exist.

2.3 The First Signs - Dating Violence

While domestic abuse can occur at any age, research has suggested that young women from their late teens to their early twenties are at a greater risk of domestic Abuse victimisation than at any other age (Walby & Allen, 2004; Watson & Parsons, 2005). As mentioned, 60% of women in the 2005 national study who had experienced severe domestic abuse were under the age of 25 and 25% were under the age of 19 when first abused (Watson & Parsons, 2005). The phenomenon of abuse in immature, non-cohabitating relationships, or ‘dating violence’ as it is often referred to, has become an increasing subject of scholarly investigation; however most research has taken place out outside of Ireland.

One of the first ever studies that focused on the prevalence of abuse in courting relationships was conducted by Makepeace (1981) on 202 first and second year students in a medium sized US university. The results of this pioneering study showed that at least one in five participants had experienced physical violence in a ‘courting’ relationship and 61% of the participants knew of someone who had been physically abused by their partner. Furthermore, young women were far more likely to be victimised than young men (Makepeace, 1981). This landmark study led the way for further research in the area. However, like abuse in adult relationships, measuring exact prevalence rates is difficult and subsequent research has yielded inconsistent results (Lewis & Fremouw, 2001). The first ever empirical study of relationship abuse among adolescents was carried out at two secondary schools in the UK (Hird, 2000). It revealed high levels of violence in dating relationships among adolescents as young as 13. Approximately half of the 487 students, aged 13 to 19, reported aggression and more than half of the female participants reported having experienced psychological, sexual and/or physical violence (Hird, 2000). In addition to the limitation that self-reported data creates, a further limitation to this study is the young age of the adolescent participants. These
relatively inexperienced individuals may not have had the capacity to appropriately identify abusive behaviours, particularly sexual aggressive behaviours.

Adolescence is an emotionally turbulent period of transition and the exploration of dating and romance can become central in the lives of many teens. Furthermore, this period of development increases vulnerability to abuse (Collins, 2003). Teenage dating relationships are often unstable and are characterised by cycles of breakup and reconciliation. Aggressive behaviours are often seen as quite ‘normal’ for an adolescent couple but these unhealthy behaviours are often precursors to more serious abuse in later life (Hird, 2000; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Matud, 2007, Munoz-Rivas, Grana, O'Leary, & Gonzalez, 2007). Matud’s comparative study on the psychological impact of domestic abuse in the Spanish Canary Islands (2005) revealed that of the 240 women in the case group who experienced domestic abuse, for some it started as young as 13. Furthermore, the women endured abuse for between one and 43 years, indicating that the pattern of abuse may be ongoing or may escalate over time. In addition, although abuse can be very serious, adolescents experiencing dating violence rarely tell their parents and less likely so seek out help from formal services (Ashley & Foshee, 2003). Ashley and Foshee (2003) found that 66% of the female adolescents involved in their study who had experienced abuse did not seek out help from any source. Moreover, only six percent of victims disclosed the abuse to a school nurse or a hospital worker.

### 2.4 Health Implications of Domestic Abuse and Dating Violence

Domestic abuse can lead to a multitude of physical and mental health consequences and according to the WHO, it is responsible for five to twenty percent of the healthy years lost in women aged between 15 and 44 (WHO, 2002). It is the most frequent cause of injury among women and is associated with increased time spent within a medical care system due to the high occurrence of chronic and serious illness (Howard et al., 2010; Webster, Pedrosa, & Lopez, 2012). In a 2012 prospective study of domestic abuse among an emergency department population in Sydney, of the 239 woman who agreed to take part in the research 102 had experienced threats or violence at the hands of their partner. Moreover, 24 of these women had presented at the emergency department because of acute injuries received due to domestic abuse (Webster et al., 2012). Worldwide, domestic abuse is as much a cause of
death and incapacity as cancer and two women a day will fall victim to its ugliest manifestation; murder (WHO, 2002; Walby & Allen, 2004). Furthermore according to Women’s Aid (2013), since 1996, 117 of the 196 women who have been murdered in Ireland were killed in their own homes and of the resolved cases, 75 (53%) of women were murdered by a present or previous partner.

An in-depth review of the mental and physical health consequences of domestic abuse is beyond the scope of this literature review, however, some of the most frequent sequelae include; broken bones, facial and neurological trauma, gynaecological problems, sexually transmitted diseases, substance misuse, eating disorders, post traumatic stress disorder, mental health problems, suicide, and unwanted pregnancy (Campbell, 2002; Matud, 2007, Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001; Walby & Allen, 2004). Silverman et al., (2001) revealed that adolescent girls who experienced domestic abuse were four to six times more likely to have ever become pregnant in comparison to their non-abused peer counterparts. The study also showed that they were eight to nine times more likely to have attempted suicide in the year previous to the study (Silverman et al., 2001). These findings echo those of Ackarda and Neumark-Sztainerb, (2001) who found significant associations between domestic abuse and suicide with over 50% of participants who disclosed dating violence having also attempted suicide. Other associations highlighted were low self-esteem, poor emotional well-being and disordered eating to including the use of laxatives, diet pills and binge eating.

2.5 Attitudes and Domestic Abuse

2.5.1 The Link between Attitudes and Domestic Abuse.

Monitoring domestic abuse prevalence is one aspect of prevention, however another important aspect of prevention is the monitoring of peoples understandings and attitudes (WHO, 2002) as there is a mass of evidence in support of the theory that attitudes play a causal and fundamental role in domestic abuse. Breckler, (1984), drawing on human behavioural theories such as that of Rosenberg and Hovland, (1960) and Ajzen and Fishbein, (1980), states that attitudes are a predisposition to human behaviour. Furthermore, according to Peace, (2009) violence and abuse-supportive attitudes are a leading cause of the perpetration, victimisation and response to domestic violence at an individual and community
level. Attitudes and beliefs are critical in determining the level of support that a woman will receive from family, friends, bystanders and support services (Horgan et al., 2008). Societal norms respecting the acceptance of domestic abuse manifest in attitudes such as victim blaming, a lack of empathy for the victim and a refusal to become involved when incidents are witnessed. In addition, societal consensus regarding matters such as gender and culture determines the degree to which people adhere to stereotypical myths about men and woman and domestic abuse (Horgan, et al., 2008; Peace, 2009).

In the 2008 quantitative Irish Study on Attitudes to Domestic Abuse in Ireland carried out by Horgan et al., participants reported a low tolerance towards domestic abuse with 32% reporting that it was very likely and 33% reporting it was likely that if they saw a stranger being assaulted by a partner in public they would intervene. While Watson and Parsons (2005) also revealed a high awareness of domestic abuse and reported a high level of willingness to help a woman experiencing domestic abuse when the individual became aware of it. Furthermore, in Beeble, Bybee and O'Sullivan’s study which explored the factors which influenced the type of support provided to survivors of domestic abuse (2008), those with strong attitudes against the perpetration of violence and who strongly endorsed the criminal justice intervention for perpetrators were more likely to give help to those who experienced domestic abuse. However, there are limitations to this study. In regards to help giving, it is unclear how the help was initiated. The individual experiencing abuse may have requested help or it may have been offered by the participant based upon their judgement. The former may have resulted in the participants being unduly influenced and resulted in inaccurate findings. A further limitation which exists is the uncertainty of the relationship between the help giver and the individual experiencing domestic abuse. Thus, in this particular study, it is unclear if help seeking behaviours were dependent on the relationship between the participant and the individual experiencing domestic abuse (Beeble, et al., 2008).

2.5.2 Women’s Attitudes and their Subjection to Abuse.

Women’s’ attitudes to their own experience of domestic abuse determines the action which they take in response. Women who have been conditioned to have violence-supportive understandings are more likely to blame themselves for the abuse and are less likely to report it to the relevant authorities (Pease & Flood, 2008). Furthermore, woman who adopt traditional gender roles are more likely to be submissive and keep silent about their abuse
(Peace, 2009). In a comparative study carried out in the US between US-born Women and Mexican-born women, results showed that those women who had more traditional gender-role rooted beliefs were less likely to report abuse (Harris, Firestone, & Vega, 2005). Moreover, some women often do not realise that they are experiencing abuse because the stereotypical representations or myths about domestic abuse prevent women from recognising and actually naming their experience as abuse (Ahmada, Driver, & McNally, 2009; Peace, 2009; Pease & Flood, 2008). Often women are afraid to report domestic abuse because they feel that they may be blamed for the abuse by friends and family or not taken seriously by the authorities. They have the belief that by reporting and seeking out help they will bring shame on themselves and their families (Ahmada et al., 2009; Peace, 2009; Heise, 1998; Pease & Flood, 2008) as was revealed by Ahmada and associates qualitative ‘barriers to help seeking among South Asian immigrants’ (2009). Researchers working on this Canadian study found that one of the most commonly occurring reasons for not reporting domestic abuse to the authorities was the social stigma attached (Ahmada et al., 2009). However, in that study, the participants were recruited from counselling services in community-based centres and the views of women who did not seek out such services are not represented. As stated by Pease and Flood (2008), it must be pointed out, that although a woman’s attitudes play a role in her help seeking behaviours and ultimately her removing herself from an abusive relationship, by no means does a woman’s attitude play a causal role in her victimisation and to assume so would be victim blaming.

2.5.3 Men’s Attitudes and their Perpetration of Abuse.

Research consistently suggests that an adherence to rigid gender roles significantly increases the risk that a man will adopt abusive behaviours (Heise, 1998; Pease & Flood, 2008). Patriarchy, misogynistic and traditional beliefs, where men think that they are the dominant sex and that they have the right to oppress women, play a key role in the perpetration of domestic abuse. Pakistan is a patriarchal society, it encourages men to adopt a dominant attitude and domestic abuse is seen as a private matter and accepted as a response to misbehaviour on the woman’s part (Fikree & Bhatti, 1999). In a study carried out among 176 Pakistani men almost half of the participants reported that men have a right to beat their wives (Fikree, Razzak, & Durocher, 2005). Furthermore, Shaikh (2003) found that out of 216 women who took part in a study in two hospital settings in Rawalpindi and Islamabad in
Pakistan, only seven women reported never experiencing any form of domestic abuse. That equates to nearly 97% of women experiencing domestic abuse. Caution must be taken however when generalising these results. As a convenience sampling method was carried out within a hospital setting; over representation and bias are probable.

Although it is acknowledged that men’s perpetration of violence against women is fuelled by individual ideologies of domination and female subordination, both the attitudes of men and women are woven within social norms. Thus, the society itself which nurtures these beliefs, consequently must also be to blame.

2.5.4 Community Attitudes and Social Norms.

Although domestic abuse occurs in all societies, it includes a broad range of abusive behaviours that are enmeshed within a cultural and social milieu (Pick, Carmen, & Barker-Aguilar, 2006). According to Radzik’s paper on Collective Responsibility and Duties to Respond (2005), individuals, who may not themselves act abusively, may nevertheless hold beliefs which support violence and abuse thus contributing to the creation of an environment which encourages others to engage in abuse. Furthermore, this can result in non-perpetrators of abuse, abusing and they are said to be ‘morally tainted’ (p464).

Domestic abuse is rooted not just in the perpetrator’s attitude, but also in a wider context of social norms. Pease and Flood (2008) argued that social norms are profoundly significant in the sanctioning and the prevention of domestic abuse because society is the context in which domestic abuse occurs. Domestic abuse will continue in societies which encourage attitudes supportive of abuse. If an individual strays from the beliefs adopted by the society in which they live, they risk social disapproval (Pease & Flood, 2008), so in order to change individual attitudes firstly social norms need to be addressed (Salazar, Baker, Price, & Carlin, 2003). Salazar et al. (2003) carried out a case control study on the effects that domestic abuse policies have on social norms in Georgia in the US. They found strong support for the hypothesis that understandings of criminal justice policies directly influence peoples’ attitudes towards the criminal justice response and also indirectly affect attitudes of victim blaming, both of which underpin social norms relating to domestic abuse.
In many developing countries the problem of domestic abuse is aggravated by the cultural norms and attitudes which are tolerant of men dominating women and which encourage a power imbalance, like the previously discussed example of Pakistan (Pick, Carmen, & Barker-Aguilar, 2006). The WHO carried out a multi-country study on domestic abuse and interviewed 24,000 women in 15 sites within 10 economically, geographically and culturally diverse countries. Results showed that the lifetime prevalence of abuse was between 15% and 71%. Although the environments where the study took place varied greatly, statistics revealed that violence against women is a stark reality and is a widespread occurrence in all countries and communities. However, in this study a different and more severe pattern of abuse emerged in settings more tolerant of violence and where there was greater gender inequality and little empowerment of women (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006)

2.5.5 Attitudes to Domestic Abuse in Ireland.

In the 2008 study on Attitudes to Domestic Abuse in Ireland, the overall awareness of domestic abuse reported by the 2,008 participants was very high and participants displayed a low tolerance of abuse (Horgan et al., 2008). However, although the results were encouraging as far as attitudes and awareness were concerned, young women aged between 18 and 25 were represented by a mere 71 of the 2008 participants and among this age group awareness was lowest. Furthermore, an Amnesty International commissioned study in Northern Ireland reported disturbing findings. Results showed that domestic abuse is commonplace among Northern Ireland students and attitudes and awareness levels were revealed as being very low with a high level of ‘victim blaming’ relating to all forms of violence against women. The study recruited 700 students from the University of Ulster campuses in Northern Ireland. Results revealed that 40% of the students reported that they knew of a female student who had been physically abused by a partner, 82% were unaware of any support services available to them and 75% reported that they would not know what advice to give someone who confided in them that they were being abused. Also 46% of students believed that a woman is partially to blame for sexual assault (Amnesty International, 2008). Results from both these mentioned studies reveal worrying statistics. Furthermore, they highlight a sizeable gap for future research into young women’s attitudes towards domestic abuse in the Republic of Ireland and the possible implementation of prevention strategies among this age group.
2.6 Summary and Rationale

Domestic abuse is a global social and health concern. Although it often remains hidden away behind closed doors no society on earth is free from domestic abuse. Women are, on a daily basis, subject to sexual violence, humiliation, beatings, assaults, and psychological and emotional attacks in their own homes; places of supposed solace and refuge away from the harsh world outside. Worldwide, those who continuously emerge as being most at risk are younger woman and teenage girls. The situation in Ireland is no different. One in five Irish women will be victimised by their partner or husband at some point in their life, with young Irish women, being most at risk.

There are many factors which can influence the prevalence of domestic abuse. Women’s and men’s attitudes both play a significant role in determining domestic abuse prevalence, as does society and social norms. Women who are accepting of violent behaviour and adhere to rigid gender roles are more likely to be abused. Men’s adherence to the same rigid gender roles and their ideologies of male dominance and female subordination fuel violent behaviours. Furthermore, when society itself normalises domestic abuse this provides a platform for it to occur.

Research into awareness of and attitudes towards domestic abuse is an important first step towards its prevention. With this in mind, it is important that we raise awareness and change the attitudes in Irish society regarding domestic abuse. Although national research on attitudes and awareness has been conducted on the general population, no study in the Republic of Ireland has concentrated on those most at risk; younger women and teenage girls. Hence, this research will be conducted on a sample of young Irish women between the ages of 18 and 25.
2.6.1 Research Questions.

How aware are young women of the warning signs of domestic abuse?

This study aims to determine if young women have the capacity to identify the first signs of an abusive relationship, and to understand that they are being abused when they are involved with an abusive boyfriend/partner/husband.

What do young women define as ‘abuse’?

This study will assess what young women classify as abuse. It aims to determine if young women understand that emotional, psychological, financial and physical violence are all part of the multifaceted phenomena which is domestic abuse.

How aware are young women of support services available?

This research will determine if young women know where to go to access help if they were to find themselves in a crisis situation.

How aware are young women of the Irish statistics surrounding domestic abuse?

This study should give some understanding of young women’s awareness of the levels of domestic abuse in Ireland.

What is the level of domestic abuse experienced by the sample of young women studied and women known to them?

This study aims to determine the level of abuse among the study sample and persons known to them.
Chapter 3
Methodology
3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research study conducted employed a cross-sectional study design. It was partially retrospective but mainly focused on current attitudes and awareness levels and was carried out using self-reporting questionnaires.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study population were young Irish women aged 18 to 25 years. The study sample was chosen using a non-probability, convenience sampling technique to overcome time and financial constraints. The sample consisted of 200 women in total. In February and March 2014 women from Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) Campus were surveyed. Women were approached at random in the business building and also in the tourism and leisure building. Women who were approached but were outside of the target age group were excluded. This sampling technique helped gain an understanding of attitudes towards and awareness of domestic abuse, as well as assessing the level of abuse experienced among those sampled and persons known to them but it did not allow for complete representation of the entire population of young Irish women aged 18 to 25 years.

3.3 Concepts Measured

Attitudes, level of knowledge pertaining to domestic abuse, awareness of support services and levels of abusive behaviours experienced among those sampled and persons known to them were recorded.

3.4 Measurement Tool

The concepts were measured using a self-administered questionnaire. Questionnaires are a very convenient method of obtaining large amounts of information. Also with regards to the research topic, surveys and questionnaires have emerged as being the most commonly used measurement tool in previous studies and given the sensitive nature of the subject, women may have felt uncomfortable disclosing information in an interview or focus group.
3.4.1 The Questionnaire (Appendix A)

This questionnaire was designed corresponding with information obtained from the two national Irish studies carried out by Kelleher and O’Conner (1995) and Watson and Parsons (2005). Two questions, one on female homicide and one on the warning signals of domestic abuse included statistics obtained from Women’s Aid (Women’s Aid, 2014). Also two questions were modified from the questionnaire designed for the National Study of Domestic Abuse in Ireland (Watson & Parsons, 2005). Compiling a new questionnaire was necessary because although there are many questionnaires available online and in research articles, many of them refer to domestic abuse prevalence, contain questions of an explicit nature or would not be suitable to use with my target population.

The questionnaire consisted firstly of a demographic section, followed by five sections, 1-5 separately measuring general knowledge; perceptions of behaviours considered abuse and perceptions of the warning signs; reactions to disclosure; personal experience of domestic abuse and awareness of support services, respectively. Overall the questionnaire consisted of 19 questions. Section 1 contained eight questions pertaining to participants’ general knowledge of domestic abuse and its prevalence in Ireland. Three multiple choice questions and five dichotomous questions were included with two of the dichotomous questions requesting that further information be disclosed. Section 2 aimed to assess participants’ knowledge as to what they classified as abuse and what they perceived as warning signs of abuse. There were two positive and negative ordered category questions in section 2, with each question containing a number of statements. Section 3 contained two questions, both comprised of a dichotomous section followed by a multiple choice section. The first question related to the prevalence of domestic abuse in persons known to the participant and the subsequent action taken by the participant, if any. The second was a question which focused on a hypothetical situation, as to what action would be taken by the participant if they became aware of someone in an abusive relationship. Although it is acknowledged that the use of hypothetical questions is not reliable in questionnaires, this question was modified and taken from The National Study of Domestic Abuse in Ireland and believed to be relevant and of use as it addressed the participants’ perceived action that would be taken on finding out about domestic abuse in another woman. Section 4 of the questionnaire consisted of one question with eight ordered category questions addressing the participants’ own experience of abuse. However, few detailed questions were included in this section as it was believed to be
unethical and a possible cause of distress for some participants. Finally in section 5 there were four questions addressing awareness of support services and education on domestic abuse. The participants’ knowledge of support services and organisations was assessed using two dichotomous questions followed by one dichotomous question addressing the participants’ previous education on domestic abuse. Finally one ordered category question assessed the perceived need for further awareness programs.

3.5 The Pilot Study

The pilot study took place on February 10th 2014 in WIT room TL244 (A). The pilot study was designed to test the quality and ease of understanding of the questionnaire. Four women aged 21 years completed the questionnaire and reported feedback. No complications regarding the quality of the script arose and the feedback concluded that the questionnaire was easily understood and suitable for the population sample chosen.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The research study was carried out in WIT on the 13th, 25th, 27th and 29th of February and on the 5th and 6th of March, 2014. On the 25th February 150 women were approached randomly in the business building. Following confirmation that they were in the age group of 18 to 25 years, the purposes of the research were clearly explained, and when the women indicated that they understood and were willing to participate, their consent was explicitly obtained by use of a consent form (Appendix B). On consent the participants were given the questionnaire and also received an information pack supplied by Women’s Aid (the national domestic abuse organisation) which contained contact details of support services available to them if they were affected in any way by the nature of the study. Each participant then filled out their questionnaire in purposely sectioned-off booths. This ensured participants’ privacy and enabled them to be as honest and open as possible. On completion each participant placed their questionnaire in the sealed box provided to ensure their complete anonymity. This box was not opened until all questionnaires had been gathered that day. The same procedure was used on the other dates in the tourism building when 50 students filled out their questionnaires in rooms TL249, TL244 (A) and TL244 (B). Following the collection of all 200 questionnaires, 13 were deemed void due to highly inadequate completion. The data
from the remaining 187 questionnaires was analysed in SSPS using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures.

3.6.1 Data Analysis

Description of the participants (n=187) was carried out on the variables of age and relationship status using frequencies. Crosstabs was used to assess the relationship status breakdown of each age. For statistical analysis, participants were sub-divided into two age categories, 18-21 years (n=109) and 22-25 (n= 78) years. Descriptive statistics (frequencies) was carried out and Crosstabs was then used to compare the relationship status of the two age categories. Participants were further divided into two relationship categories. Frequencies was used for single participants (n=96) and those in a relationship (n=91) of some description i.e. those either dating, in a long term relationship, married, or engaged.

RQ1. How aware are young women of the warning signs of domestic abuse?

The participants’ awareness of the warning signs of domestic abuse was measured using frequencies (Appendix A, question 14). A comparison of the level of awareness of the warning signs of domestic abuse across the two age categories was assessed using Crosstabs. The significance of the difference in awareness of the warning signs of domestic abuse between the two age categories was assessed using a non-parametric Man Whitney U Test. The four answer options for question 14 (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) were recoded into two options (agree and disagree) and a further comparison of the awareness levels of the warning signs of domestic abuse (with two answer options) across the two age categories was assessed using Crosstabs. Using a non-parametric Chi-Square test (chosen because the measurement of the DV is nominal) significance was assessed between the two age categories for the awareness of the warning signs of domestic abuse.

RQ2. What do young women define as ‘abuse’?

The 0-5 scale answer option for question 11 addressing the participants’ perception of the severity of domestic abuse in the given scenarios was recoded to a severity scale (not domestic abuse, mild to medium, medium to severe and very severe). A description of the participants’ perception of the level of severity of abuse in the given scenarios (question 13)
was assessed using frequencies. The participants’ perception of the level of severity of domestic abuse in the given scenarios was compared across the two age categories (18-21 years and 22-25 years) using Crosstabs. Significant difference was assessed between the two age categories for the perceived severity of abuse in the given scenarios.

RQ3. How aware are young women of support services available?

The description of the level of awareness of support services (questions 16 and 17) was assessed using frequencies. The level of awareness of support services was assessed across the two age categories using Crosstabs. Significant difference was assessed between the two age categories for awareness of support services using a non-parametric Chi-Square test. Crosstabs was used to compare familiarity with Women’s Aid and with a women’s refuge between those participants who had experienced some of the more serious behaviours considered abuse and those who had not (the answer options for abuse experienced were recoded from, never rarely, sometimes, often and very often into two options, no and yes).

The description of participants’ own reported response on knowing of domestic abuse experienced by a friend/relative/other was carried out using frequencies. Significant difference was assessed between the two relationship categories (single and relationship) for the reported response to a possible disclosure of domestic abuse using a non-parametric Chi-Square test.

RQ4. How aware are young women of the Irish statistics surrounding domestic abuse?

The description of the level of awareness regarding the prevalence of domestic abuse (questions 3, 4 and 5) was carried out using frequencies. An assessment of the general awareness of domestic abuse terminology (questions 6, 7 and 8) was carried out using frequencies.

RQ5. What is the level of domestic abuse experienced by the sample of young women studied and women known to them?

A description of the level of abuse reportedly experienced by the participants was assessed using frequencies (question 13). Using Crosstabs the level of abuse was compared across the two relationship categories (single and relationship). Frequencies measured the prevalence of domestic abuse in persons know to the participants and also the number of women known to
have left an abusive relationship. Crosstabs was used to assess the age of the women known to be in an abusive relationship at the time of the study (question 9 and 10). Frequencies assessed the relationship of these women to the participants’. Descriptive statistics (frequencies) was used to quantify the number of participants who declined answering section 4 (questions addressing personal experience of abuse).

The five answer options for the two questions addressing physical abuse in question 15 (never, rarely, sometimes, often and very often) were recoded into two options (no and yes). Using Crosstabs a comparison of the percentage of participants who had experienced physical abuse (causing injury and not causing injury) and who knew of a woman in an abusive relationship or who knew of a woman who had left an abusive relationship, was made across the percentage of women who never experienced physical domestic abuse. It is important to note that the element of physical abuse was used to make this comparison because in the present study it was one of the most serious elements of domestic abuse participants’ were questioned about and serious psychological or sexual abuse was not addressed. Using a non-parametric Chi-Square test, significant difference in whether participants knew of a woman in an abusive relationship or knew of a woman who left an abusive relationship was assessed between those who had experienced physical abuse (causing injury or not causing injury) and those who had not. Using Crosstabs, a further comparison of the percentage of women who had experienced a disclosure of domestic abuse by another woman was made across those women who experienced physical abuse and those who had not. A Chi-Square test was used to assess the significant difference between the two groups.

A frequency analysis was conducted for questions 18 and 19 which addressed previous education on domestic abuse and the perception that there is a need for more awareness programs addressing domestic abuse.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the research Women’s Aid were contacted regarding the study topic. They were very interested in the piece of research and they provided 200 information packs with support publications for all of the study participants. Women’s Aid also received a copy of this research on completion. Giving the respondents information on support services
addressed the sensitive nature of the study and ensured that any participant that may have been affected in any way had information on referral services if they needed it.

Due to the nature of this research, prior to commencing the study, the questionnaire was closely examined by both my thesis supervisor and the head of WIT Health Science Department. For ethical reasons no questions on sexual violence or serious psychological abuse were included in the questionnaire because it was believed that this could have been a cause of considerable distress to the participants. The questions that did address physical violence were vague and did not explicitly go into detail about the types of violence experienced or injuries received. They were worded in a way as not to cause distress by avoiding certain terms such as ‘choking’, ‘battering’ or ‘punching’. Furthermore, immediately before Section 5 of the questionnaire, which addressed the participants’ experience of domestic abuse, a written statement clearly informed participants that the section contained questions of a sensitive nature and that they could omit this section if they wished to do so. Finally to ensure complete the anonymity of each participant, questionnaires were completed in a sectioned-off, private area or in an empty classroom. On completion each participant placed their own questionnaire in a sealed box.

3.7.1 Informed Consent (Appendix B)

Prior to taking part in the study all participants were requested to read an informed consent form ensuring them that their information would be completely anonymous, would be used in the strictest of confidence and they were under no obligation to take part in the study if they did not wish to do so. The Women’s Aid national helpline number was also included on the informed consent form.
Chapter 4

Results
4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Breakdown of Study Participants

The study participants (n=187) were broken down by age and relationship status as illustrated below in Table 1. The mean age of the participants was 21.3 years with a range of 18-25 years. Approximately half (48.7%) of the participants were single while 0.5% of participants were married. The participants were sub-divided into two age categories, 18-21 years of age (n=109) and 22-25 years of age (n=78) (Table 2). Approximately half (50.5%) of the younger category were single, 0% were married and 20% were dating while 1.3% of the older category were married and 3.8% were engaged. The participants were further sub-divided into two relationship categories, single (n=91) which represented 48.7% of participants and relationship (n=96), i.e. those either dating, in a long term relationship, married, or engaged which represented 51.3% of participants.

Table 1. Age and relationship status of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in years (n=187)</th>
<th>Single (%)</th>
<th>Dating (%)</th>
<th>Engaged (%)</th>
<th>Long Term (%)</th>
<th>Married (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n= %)</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Age category and relationship status of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Single (%)</th>
<th>Dating (%)</th>
<th>Engaged (%)</th>
<th>Long Term (%)</th>
<th>Married (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21 Years</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25 Years</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 The Warning Signs of Domestic Abuse

Question 12 (see Appendix A) addressed the participant’s awareness of the warning signs of domestic abuse. Correct answers (see Table 4, highlighted in bold) represented an awareness of the typical warning signs of domestic abuse. The mean percentage of correct answers for the 18-21 year age category was 70.8% (with a range of 28.6%-85.2%). For the 22-25 year age category, the mean percentage of correct answers was 68.65% (with a range of 28.6% - 82.9%). Using a Chi-Square test, no significant difference was found (p>0.05) for the identification of the warning signs of domestic abuse between the two age categories. There was a significant difference (p<0.05) in the perception that jealousy is a warning sign of domestic abuse between the two age categories. While 71.4% of 18- to 21-year olds agreed with the statement ‘a man who gets very jealous for no reason is not abuse’, 36.7% of 22-to 25-year-olds agreed with this statement. It should also be noted that before collapsing the dependent variable from four options (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) to two (agree and disagree), using a Mann Whitney U test, a significant difference (p<0.05) was found between the two age categories for the perception that loosing ones temper is a sign of domestic abuse. Within the 18-21 age category, 40.7% of participants disagreed with the statement ‘it is a sign of domestic abuse if a man loses his temper easily over silly things’ while 27.3% of the 22- to 25-year-olds disagreed.

Table 3. Perceived warning signs of domestic abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘A man who is cruel to animals is a warning sign he could be abusive in a relationship’</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It is normal for arguments to get out of hand every now and then it does not mean it is abuse’</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Throwing or smashing things in anger is not a sign of abuse’</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It is a sign of domestic abuse if a man loses his temper easily over silly things’</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘A man who gets very jealous for no reason is not abuse’</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>71.4*</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘A man threatened to hit his wife but did not so it is not abuse’</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘If a man abused his last girlfriend it doesn’t mean he will abuse his next girlfriend’</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05 between 18-21 and 22-25 age categories

Bold type indicates answers which demonstrate an awareness of the typical warning signs of domestic abuse.
4.3 Behaviours Regarded as Domestic Abuse

With regard to physical abuse, hitting and kicking were reported as ‘very severe’ abuse by 75.3% of participants and pushing was reported as ‘very severe’ by 46.7% of participants. Approximately half (48.9%) of the participants reported viewing restriction of money by a partner/boyfriend/husband as a ‘very severe’ and 40.9% reported viewing it as a ‘medium to severe’ form of domestic abuse. with regard to emotional abuse, 58.1% of participants reported regular name calling as a ‘medium to severe’ abuse and 21% reported it as a ‘severe abuse.’ When the two scenarios which are not typical examples of domestic abuse were excluded (‘does not let his girlfriend/partner/wife watch what she wants on the television’ and ‘socialises every weekend without his girlfriend/partner/wife,’) the mean percentage of those who perceived typical domestic abuse scenarios as ‘not abuse’ was 1.6% (with a range of 0%-10.2%).

![Figure 1. Perceived level of severity of domestic abuse in the given scenarios](image-url)
No significant difference (p>0.05) was found between the two age categories for the majority of variables addressing the perceived severity of abuse in the given scenarios. Table 4 shows 2 exceptions, ‘name calling’ and ‘anger because of male friends’. Using a Mann Whitney U test, a significant difference was found (p<0.05) in how severe ‘name calling’ was perceived between the two age categories with the 22- to 25-year-olds viewing it as more severe than their 18- to 21-year-old counterparts. Similarly using the same test, a significant difference (p<0.05) was found in the perception that ‘anger because of male friends’ constitutes as domestic abuse between the two age categories and the 22-25-year old participants were more inclined than the 18- to 21-year-olds to perceive it as very severe abusive behaviour (25.6%).

Table 4. Comparison of perceived severity of ‘Name calling’ and ‘Anger because of male friends’ between age categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18-21 years old</th>
<th>22-25 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=108 (%)</td>
<td>n=78 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name Calling</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Domestic Abuse</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild to Medium Abuse</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium to Severe Abuse</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Severe</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>28.2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anger Because of Male Friends</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Domestic Abuse</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild to Medium</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium to Severe</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Severe</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>25.6*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05 between 18-22 and 22-25 year old age categories

No significant difference (p>0.05) was found between single participants and those in a relationship for the majority of variables addressing the perceived severity of abuse in the various scenarios. A Mann Whitney U test, showed a significant difference (p<0.05) for how severe a man who ‘socialises every weekend without his girlfriend/partner/wife’ was perceived as abuse between the two relationship categories (Table 5). Of the single participants, 25.6% reported it as ‘not domestic abuse’ compared to 12.5% of those participants in a relationship.
Table 5. Comparison across relationship categories for the perceived severity of abuse in the scenario ‘Socialises every weekend without his partner/girlfriend/wife’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socialises every weekend without his partner/girlfriend/wife</th>
<th>Single n=96 (%)</th>
<th>Relationship n=91 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Domestic Abuse</td>
<td>25.6*</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild to Medium Abuse</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium to Severe Abuse</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Severe</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05 between the two relationship categories

4.4 Awareness of Support Services

The percentage familiarity with support services for women who are victims of abuse ranged from 5.3% to 66.3% (Figure 2) with a mean percentage familiarity of 20.9%. Familiarity with Women’s Aid, the national organisation for women suffering domestic abuse was reported by 63.3% of participants. Approximately one quarter (22.6%) of participants reported an awareness of a women’s refuge in the area where they live and 14.4% of participants were familiar with Oasis House (the Waterford refuge for women)
In general, the overall percentage familiarity with support services was slightly higher among the 22- to 25-year-old age category (Figure 3). However, a Chi-Square test showed no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the two age categories in whether or not they were familiar with support services. The mean percentage familiarity with support services for the 18- to 21-year-olds was 20.4% and for the 22- to 25-year-olds was 22.7%.
Of those women who had themselves experienced some of the common abusive behaviours, awareness was slightly higher for Women’s Aid and women’s refuges with approximately 77% of those who experienced physical abuse causing injury reporting familiarity with Women’s Aid and 72.3% of those who reported they were stopped from seeing their family or friends reporting the same (Table 6).

**Figure 3** Participants familiarity with support services across age categories
Table 6. Experience of abuse and familiarity with Women’s Aid and women’s refuges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familiar with Women’s Aid</th>
<th>Experienced physical abuse causing injury (%)</th>
<th>Experienced physical abuse not causing injury (%)</th>
<th>Experienced abusive name calling (%)</th>
<th>Stopped from seeing friends or family (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes n=29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes n=83</td>
<td>Yes n=132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No n=151</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar with a women’s Refuge</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Irish Domestic Abuse Statistics

The correct statistic for domestic abuse in Ireland (1 in 5 women, Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995) was reported by 42.2% of the study participants (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Participants’ perception of the occurrence of domestic abuse in Ireland

Almost half (49.5%) of the participants reported that they perceived there to be an equal risk of domestic abuse at any age as seen in Figure 5 and 6.5% of participants correctly reported that the age most at risk of domestic abuse is 20-24 years (Watson & Parsons, 2005).
Questions 6, 7 and 8 of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) addressed the participants’ awareness of terminology. Approximately one third (32.6%) of the participants reported being familiar with the term ‘adolescent dating violence’ while 59.9% reported being aware of the term ‘intimate partner abuse’ as can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Participants’ perception of the age that is most at risk of domestic abuse

Figure 6. Participants’ familiarity with terminology
4.6 Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

Approximately 3% (n=6) of the participants chose not to complete section 4 of the questionnaire (Appendix A) which addressed the participants’ experience of abuse. The combined percentage for those who reported rarely, sometimes, often and very often to question 15 reveal that over one quarter (28.5%) of study participants had experienced physical abuse to some degree at some point in their life which did not cause them injury. Approximately 1 in 7 (13.9%) participants reported that they had experienced physical violence to some degree at some point in their life causing them injury (Figure 7). Jealousy was the highest reported abusive behaviour with over half (58.8%) of the participants reporting that a boyfriend/partner/husband had expressed jealously for no reason to some degree at some point in their life.

![Figure 7. Domestic abuse experienced by participants](image)

When the levels of abuse were compared across the two relationship categories, of those in a relationship no participant reported that they had experienced ‘physical abuse causing them injury’ ‘very often’, 12% reported ‘sometimes’ and 1% reported ‘often’ as can be seen in Table 7. Of the single participants, 5.7% reported having experienced ‘physical abuse causing
them injury’ ‘sometimes’ and no participant reported ‘often’ or ‘very often’. For all variables except one which addressed the participants experience of jealousy, the percentage of participants who answered having ‘never’ experienced the mentioned abusive behaviour at some point in their life was higher among the single participants (highlighted in bold) with a mean percentage of 70.2% (range of 40.4% - 87.5%). The mean percentage of women in a relationship who answered ‘never’ was 63.5% (range of 42.4% - 80.4%). The percentage who reported ‘often’ (highlighted in bold) to the questions addressing domestic abuse prevalence was higher among those in a relationship, with a mean of 7.3% (range of 1.1% - 10.9%) while the mean percentage of those single participants who reported ‘often’ was 4.5% (range of 0% - 9%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single (n=96)</th>
<th>Relationship (n=91)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never (%)</td>
<td>Rarely (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has had her phone or emails checked against her wishes</td>
<td>Single 67.4 15.7 7.9 6.7 2.2</td>
<td>Relationship 58.7 17.4 12 9.8 2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has been stopped from seeing her friends or family</td>
<td>Single 73 10.1 12.4 4.5 0</td>
<td>Relationship 72.8 10.9 8.7 6.5 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has had her belongings destroyed</td>
<td>Single 85.4 6.7 4.5 2.2 0</td>
<td>Relationship 79.3 8.7 6.5 4.3 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has experienced abusive name calling</td>
<td>Single 62.9 11.2 16.9 6.7 2.2</td>
<td>Relationship 45.7 16.3 23.9 12 2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/partner/husband expressed jealousy for no reason</td>
<td>Single 40.4 27 19.1 9 4.5</td>
<td>Relationship 42.4 18.5 19.6 10.9 8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has experienced physical abuse causing injury</td>
<td>Single 87.5 6.8 5.7 0 0</td>
<td>Relationship 80.4 6.5 12 1.1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has experienced physical abuse not causing injury</td>
<td>Single 77.5 9 11.2 2.2 0</td>
<td>Relationship 65.2 14.1 12 6.5 2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.** Comparison of domestic abuse experienced by participants across relationship categories

*Bold text highlights the instances where ‘never’ is selected most often by those in the single category and ‘often’ is selected most often by those in the relationship category*
Approximately 60% of participants reported knowing a woman who had left an abusive relationship in the past and approximately one quarter (27.6%) of participants reported knowing a woman in an abusive relationship at the time of the study with 20.8% being either a friend or relative. Of the known women in an abusive relationship, almost half (48.9%) were reported being between the ages of 21-30 years of age (Figure 8).

![Figure 8](image)

*Figure 8. Age of women in an abusive relationship at time of the study that were known to participants*

Participants who had experienced domestic abuse themselves were statistically more likely to know other women who had experienced domestic abuse (Table 8). Approximately two thirds, (67.9%) of women who had experienced physical abuse causing injury knew of a woman who had left an abusive relationship in the past and 44.8% of participants who had ever experienced physical abuse causing them injury reported knowing a friend, relative or other woman who was in an abusive relationship at the time of the study in comparison with 23.3% of participants who had never experienced physical abuse causing injury knowing of the same. Using a Chi-Squared test, a significant difference (p<0.05) was found in whether or not the participants knew a woman in an abusive relationship at the time of the study between participants who had experienced physical abuse (in both groups, causing injury and not causing injury) and those participants who had not.
Table 8. Participants’ experience of physical domestic abuse and knowledge of someone who has experienced or is experiencing domestic abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has experienced physical abuse</th>
<th>Answered ‘yes’ to ‘do you know a woman in an abusive relationship at the moment?’ (%)</th>
<th>Answered ‘yes’ to ‘do you know a woman who has left an abusive relationship?’ (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>causing injury</td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong> n=29</td>
<td><strong>44.8</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>No</strong> n=151</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has experienced physical abuse not causing injury</td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong> n=52</td>
<td><strong>38.5</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>No</strong> n=129</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05 between those participants who have experienced physical abuse (causing injury and not causing injury) and those who have not

With regards to domestic abuse disclosure by other women, of those participants who had themselves experienced physical abuse causing injury 44.8% had, had a disclosure of domestic abuse by a friend/relative/other and 48.1% of women who experienced domestic abuse not causing injury had the same (Table 9). A Chi-Square test confirmed a significant difference (p<0.05) in the disclosure of domestic abuse by a friend/relative/other between those who had experienced physical abuse (not causing injury) and those who had not.

Table 9. Experience of physical abuse and disclosure of domestic abuse by a friend/relative/other to participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experienced physical abuse causing injury</th>
<th>Answered ‘yes’ to ‘has a friend/relative/other talked to you about being in an abusive relationship’ (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong> n=29</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong> n=151</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experienced physical abuse not causing injury</th>
<th>Answered ‘yes’ to ‘has a friend/relative/other talked to you about being in an abusive relationship’ (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong> n=52</td>
<td><strong>48.18</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong> n=129</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05 between those who have experienced abuse not causing injury and those who have not
4.7 Response to Domestic Abuse in Others

When the participants were questioned about their response to knowledge about domestic abuse experienced by a friend/relative/other, 18.6% of participants reported that it was likely that they would report it to the Gardaí while 7.1% reported that they would not get involved, as illustrated in Figure 9. Overall, the most common reaction the participants reported that they were likely to have was to talk to the individual about their situation (91.3%).

![Figure 9](image)

**Figure 9.** Participants’ reported responses on receipt of knowledge that a friend relative/other may be experiencing domestic abuse.

Of those who reported that their response would include doing ‘other’, 33.3% said that they would tell the woman’s relatives and 25% said that they would advise them to leave the relationship (Table 10).
Table 10. Reported ‘other’ response on knowledge of abuse experienced by a friend/relative/other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n= 14 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell them to get a baring order</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggest that they get help from a professional</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell their family members</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would depend on the situation, I would not want to put anyone at risk</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer support</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell them to leave the relationship</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reported responses to knowing of domestic abuse experienced by a relative/friend/other were compared across the two relationship categories as illustrated in Figure 10. Using a Chi-Square test, a significant difference (p<0.05) was found between the two relationship categories in whether or not they reported that they ‘would not get involved’. Of the single participants 11.4% reported that they would not get involved while 3.2% of those in a relationship reported the same
Figure 10. Relationship comparison in reported responses on receipt of knowledge that a friend/relative/other may be experiencing domestic abuse
*p<0.05 between single and relationship categories

Questions 18 and 19 (Appendix A) addressed education on domestic abuse and the need for more awareness programs. Less than one third (27.4%) of the participants reported never having any education on domestic abuse as can be seen in Table 11. When asked how important the provision of more awareness programs on domestic abuse was, a majority, 88.7% of the participants, reported perceiving it was very important and 11.3% perceived it as important.
Table 11. Education on domestic abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(n=187)</th>
<th>Yes n= %</th>
<th>No n= %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you had education on domestic abuse?</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5
Discussion
5.0 DISCUSSION

The objective of this research was to evaluate young women’s attitudes to domestic abuse. It proposed to determine the behaviours young women consider to be abusive in a relationship and their perceptions of the warning signs of domestic abuse. It also aimed to determine the awareness of the prevalence of women’s victimisation in Ireland and the familiarity with support services available. Finally, it aimed to assess the typology and levels of aggression experienced by the sample group of women and also to assess abuse in persons known to them. In this chapter the overall findings will be discussed in relation to previous research, with an emphasis on Irish research in the area of domestic abuse and dating violence.

5.1 Overall Findings

The overall findings from this research reveal that the majority of young women showed a good awareness of the typical behaviours that are generally acknowledged as warning signs of domestic abuse. A high level of understanding was reported regarding the nature of behaviour which can be classified as abuse and all aggression typologies were well recognised. In addition, awareness of the prevalence of domestic abuse in Ireland was in line with other research which has shown younger women are more inclined to believe it uncommon. Worryingly, very few participants were aware that young women are more at risk than any other age group. Familiarity with support services was also relatively low and although familiarity with Women’s Aid was high, the majority of young women reported not being familiar with a women’s refuge in the area where they live. The level of maltreatment and aggression experienced by the sample was higher than the national average but consistent with previous research which identifies this sub group, women in their late teens and early twenties, as a high risk category (Watson & Parsons, 2005). In addition, results mirror previous research with regard to responsiveness to abuse experienced by other women (Horgan et al., 2008). The most reported response to a hypothetical scenario of knowledge of domestic abuse in a woman known to the participants’ was that participants would talk to the woman involved about their situation. Finally, the majority of participants reported that they feel there is a need for more awareness programs directed towards young women regarding domestic abuse.
5.2 Behaviours Regarded as Domestic Abuse

An overwhelming majority of participants recognised most of the suggested behaviours as mistreatment (Figure 1). As well as physical violence, the emotional and financial aspects of abuse were well acknowledged with regular name calling reported as a ‘medium’ to ‘very severe’ abuse by approximately 80% of participants and the restriction of money by approximately 90%. Horgan et al. (2008) revealed similar figures in their national study when 96% of women 18 to 24 years of age reported frequent name calling as abuse. These are positive findings as the extent to which abusive behaviours are labelled as such and the level of acceptance of these behaviours form an important part of the circumstance in which domestic abuse occurs (Horgan et al., 2008; Pease & Flood, 2008; Walby & Allen, 2004). In addition, previous international research has shown that there is a tendency for the psychological aspects of abuse to be overlooked or disregarded (de Lourdes et al., 2014, Walby & Allen, 2004). The present study supports previous Irish research which shows that young Irish women have the competence to recognise the multifaceted nature of domestic abuse and findings indicate that the difference in the perception that emotional trauma, and not only physical aggression, constitutes domestic abuse was relatively small. However, despite this recognition, rates of abuse are still high, the attitude behaviour-relation appears to be low and inconsistent and this questions the significance of attitudes as a predictor of abuse (which will be discussed later in the discussion). In addition, an interesting finding was that nearly half of the participants viewed a woman not being allowed to watch what she wants on television as abuse, data which may question the overall reliability of results.

5.3 Recognising the Warning Signs

Women’s Aid recognise a range of behaviours such as jealousy, a short temper, a previous history of violence, name calling and verbal attacks; which may signal that a relationship is becoming unhealthy (Womans Aid, 2014). This research found that for most of the behaviours mentioned the majority of women displayed sensitivity to the typical signals of maltreatment (Table 3). This is a promising finding as recognising the first signs of abuse is paramount in its prevention because when women are capable of anticipating abuse it can help them to take proactive steps (Murphy & McDonnell, 2008).
However, a finding which did emerge was that 18- to 21-year-old women were less likely than 22-to 25-year-old women to perceive the majority of behaviours as warning signs, suggesting that there is a greater recognition among the older participants. Previous research has shown that younger women often have difficulty identifying the signs of abuse in their first romantic relationships (Rodríguez-Franco et al., 2012). This may be because their perception of abuse in dating relationships is distorted due to inaccurate or stereotypical information they receive (Bleakley et al., 2009) or because they confuse abusive behaviours as signs of affection, which is especially evident in teenage dating relationships (de Lourdes Cortés Ayala, 2014). Moreover, some young women actually ignore the warning signs because of a wish to protect the positives in the relationship (Harned, 2005). Although this research has shown that younger women are less likely to identify the warning signs of abuse, it should be noted that the responsiveness to warning signs was not explored in the present study and it is not known whether a disconnection exists between the labelling of the warning signals of domestic abuse and the participants’ underlying experience of them. Therefore, no conclusions can be made as to whether the older participants were more responsive to warning signs of abuse despite a higher recognition of them, compared with the younger age group.

5.4 Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

5.4.1 Psychological Abuse.

Data revealed that nearly half of the women had experienced abusive name calling, just under two fifths were aware that they had their phone or email account checked, over half had experienced jealous behaviour without cause and over a quarter had been prevented from seeing their friends or family (Figure 1). In previous studies Kelleher and O’Connor (1995) found that 13% of Irish women had been subject to mental aggressions as well as physical violence and in the ‘National Study of Domestic abuse of Men and Women in Ireland,’ respondents reported that emotional abuse which caused distress, fear and a loss in confidence was often worse than any physical violence experienced (Watson & Parsons, 2005). McCauley et al. (1995) found long-term psychological suffering is an element of ‘the battered woman’s syndrome and women themselves often describe the intertwined nature and connectedness of the emotional and the physical aspects of abuse (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). Although the present research did not address mental health outcomes, any act of
abuse which includes embarrassment, humiliation, shame, fear, control or assertion of dominance is not without a psychological impact (Humphreys, 2007). Therefore, it is a possibility that the abusive behaviours experienced by the women in this study could have caused considerable psychological distress.

Although the contextual or situational factors of partner aggression were not examined in the present study, it has been argued by Munoz-Rivas et al. (2007) that young adults often perceive certain behaviours such as provoking and verbal abuse as normal interactions within relationships, part of solving conflict and keeping the other person romantically interested. Furthermore, many behaviours are often used in the context of joking. Therefore, this could explain the high incidences reported and reinforces the importance of examining aggressions from a situational perspective, to determine the context and motivation of these behaviours and to differentiate serious abusive or true aggressions from those which may be used in a joking context. However, these behaviours should not be condoned or accepted as normal, as to do so may be seen as legitimising more serious abuse.

5.4.2 Domestic Abuse Prevalence among Participants and the Labelling of Behaviours as Abuse.

Despite generating results which show that the participants have a high competency in the ability to identify abusive behaviours, the findings from this study place domestic abuse prevalence (Figure 7) higher than the national average, one in five women (Kelleher & O'Conner, 1995), but in line with other literature on domestic abuse and dating violence among young people. Straus, (2004) found that 29% of the students in his study had perpetrated violence against their partner and a more recent study among students in Northern Ireland revealed a 40% domestic abuse prevalence rate. However, in the latter study a strong ‘blame culture’ was evident among students and the justification of violence and aggression was common (Amnesty International, 2008). In the present study however, more than a quarter of participants reported that they had experienced minor physical aggression and nearly 14% reported physical abuse which caused them injuries. In contrast to reported prevalence rates, violence-supportive attitudes were minimal (Figure 1). Over 95% of participants reported kicking to be ‘medium’ to ‘very severe’ domestic abuse with a majority reporting that it was ‘very severe’ and 90% regarded pushing as ‘medium’ to ‘very severe’ abuse. These findings suggest that while the majority of women reported negative attitudes
towards abusive behaviours there was a high percentage of women who actually experienced them. Therefore, it is possibility that those experiencing abuse actually reported intolerance to abuse as a term. However, their capacity to recognise and label abuse may be defective as there seems to be a mismatch between their experience of abusive and their ability to label it.

It must be noted that although for the majority of aggressions women in a relationship were more likely to report that they had experienced the abuse ‘often’ in comparison to the single participants, no differentiation was made between present and past relationships when personal experience of abuse was examined. Therefore it cannot be stated for certain if the participants were tolerant of abusive behaviour despite having reported conflicting attitudes or if they left the relationship when the abuse started, congruent with their unsupportive attitudes towards abuse.

An alternative explanation for the apparent detachment between the participants’ attitudes towards abuse and their personal experience of it is the argument presented by Fabrigar et al. (2005). The theory contradicts most human behavioural theorists who state that attitudes are a predisposition of human behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Breckler, 1984; Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). Instead Fabrigar et al. (2005) suggest that attitudes are temporary, created at any point in time and will not necessarily be expressed similarly on another occasion. Furthermore, Potter (1998) argues that people can often express different attitudes even in the same conversation and that a person’s mood can also have an influence on their attitude. This hypothesis suggests that attitudes may have been influenced by varying factors and thus a mismatch resulted. Overall the significance of young women’s attitudes as an important predictor in the likelihood that they will experience abuse in the present study is weakened.

Attention must also be drawn to the six participants who declined to answer the questions on their personal experiences. It is unclear whether this caused an over-estimation or under-estimation of domestic abuse and it is a possibility that these women were being, or had been victimised and declined taking part due to feelings of fear, embarrassment or shame, therefore rates of prevalence may be even higher than those generated.
5.5.2 Women’s Knowledge of Female Victims of Domestic Abuse

To indirectly gain extra information about the prevalence of domestic abuse the participants were questioned about other individuals in abusive relationships. Approximately 20% of participants reported that they knew of a friend or family member (27.6% knew of any woman) who was in an abusive relationship at the time of the study. This figure is lower than the 2010 Eurobarometer report which revealed that 29% of women knew of a woman in their family or circle of friends who was experiencing domestic abuse (European Commission, 2010). In addition, results are considerably lower than the most recent European study where approximately 39% of European women (41% of Irish women) reported that they were aware of a woman within their circle of friends or family that was in a violent relationship (FRA, 2014). One explanation for this difference is based on the disclosure of abuse. Previous research has shown that violence within relationships, especially young dating relationships more often than not, goes undisclosed because of the stigma attached (Ashley & Foshee, 2003; Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas, & Engel, 2005; Pease & Flood, 2008). Therefore even though the Eurobarometer report and recent FRA study revealed higher numbers of women reporting that they knew of a friend or relative experiencing abuse, it does not necessarily mean that the present study reflects a lower abuse prevalence rate. It may simply represent lower levels of abuse disclosure and results may have been different if other age groups were included in the study. Similarly, results from the two mentioned European studies cannot confirm if the prevalence of abuse has risen in the four years between the studies or if the rise is due to a decline in the taboo and stigma associated with domestic abuse, resulting in increased disclosure. Taking results from all studies into account no conclusions can be made as to whether there has been a change in attitudes towards disclosing personal experience of abuse or a change in prevalence rates.

5.5.3 Personal Experience of Abuse and Knowledge of Other Female Victims of Domestic Abuse

With respect to participants who reported experiencing abuse themselves being familiar with other women in the same situation, results are in line with previous research which links the two (European Commission, 2010; FRA, 2014). Women who reported that they had experienced physical abuse in a relationship were significantly more likely to know someone else who was in an abusive relationship (Table 8). These results support those of the FRA
(2014), which found a strong correlation exists. Both the present study and that of the FRA appear to support the premise that women who have experienced domestic abuse themselves may be more aware of or attentive to, the situation and more likely to recognise the signs of mistreatment in others (FRA, 2014). However, another explanation which was found when disclosure of abuse was analysed, (Table 9), was that participants who experienced physical abuse were more likely to have abuse reported to them by another woman in comparison to non-abused women. This suggests that women who are experiencing abuse are more likely to confide in other women who are or were abused. Evidence suggests survivors of abuse are often more egger to help others because they have shared experiences and have an understanding as to what would be helpful to them (Beeble et al., 2008). As Borkman (1976) states, personal experience instils a competence or proficiency which increases a person’s ability to help others. This argument provides counter-evidence against the theory that abused women have a heightened recognition of abuse in others. However, although abuse disclosure by other women was addressed, this study did not explore specifically how the participants’ came to know about the abuse experienced by others or whether or not the women who disclosed abusive relationships were aware of the participants own experience of abuse.

5.6 Age as a Risk Factor for Domestic Abuse

Consistent with previous literature (Watson & Parsons, 2005), findings show the risk of experiencing domestic abuse is heightened during adolescence and young adulthood. The reported prevalence rate among participants was high (Figure 7) and when questioned about the age of persons known to be in an abusive relationship, participants reported that nearly half of the women were between 21 and 30 years of age (Figure 12). These numbers are similar although slightly lower than the findings from the first ever study on dating violence, where 61% of university students reported knowing of someone who had been physically abused by their partner (Makepeace, 1981). In addition, Walby and Allen (2004) found that for all forms of domestic abuse, those under the age of 25 years were more likely to be victimised.

Much research has highlighted the extent to which younger men are more violent than their older counterparts (Farrington, 1992; Farrington, 1998; Garbarino, 2000). The human developmental process can bare significance in an individual’s attitude towards violence
(Pease & Flood, 2008) and the theory of “Emotional Intelligence” has within literature been linked to violence, domestic abuse and relationship quality (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Winters, Clift, & Dutton, 2004). It has been shown that there is a strong relationship between men with low emotional intelligence and an increased tendency to abuse. Winters et al. (2004) revealed that ‘batterers’ scored significantly lower on the Emotional Quotient Inventory compared with non-abusers. As emotional intelligence is notably low in young adults (Maddocks, 2011) this may explain the increase in young men’s propensity to abuse, hence, younger women may be at an increased risk and this may have contributed to the high prevalence among this subgroup (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006).

A further argument to explain the high prevalence of abuse among the young women is associated with lack of relationship experience. Teenagers and young adults are inexperienced in negotiation and communication skills which can lead to poor coping strategies such as the use of physical or verbal abuse. Young men who have an inability expressing their feelings may use aggressive behaviours to express themselves (Laursen, & Collins, 1994). Furthermore, peers can also influence dating violence behaviours among young people as they play a key role in a couple’s social life. For many reasons, teenagers and young people often act differently in front of their friends, including the use of aggressive behaviours (Molidor, & Tolman, 1998). However in the present study, a point which should be acknowledged is that while nearly half of the women known by participants to be in an abusive relationship were reported to be between the ages of 21 and 30 years, the participants themselves were young. Although not definite, it is probable that this influenced the age of the victims known to the participants.

Worryingly, given the high reported prevalence rates of domestic abuse among young women in the present study, only 6.5% of participants perceived that women 18 to 24 years of age were more at risk of domestic abuse, while approximately half believed there to be an equal risk at all ages (Figure 5). A disparity between actual risk and the perception of risk has been found in previous research (Shah, 2012). Furthermore, risk perception is linked to lifespan development. The very characteristics of young peoples’ emotional and cognitive development means they are are defective in risk perception (Fisher, 1980; Lalor, de Róiste, & Maurice, 2007) which may explain the participants poor risk judgement. The relationship between risk perception and behaviour has received little attention in domestic abuse literature but has been researched extensively in the area of health behaviour. Domestic abuse
can be associated with negative health behaviours because of the mental and physical health consequences associated with it (Hendy et al., 2003). Furthermore, in the area of health behaviour change, Brewer et al. (2004) states that according to the behaviour motivation hypothesis, perceiving an increased risk for a negative event will lead to the adoption of behaviours in order to reduce that risk. This suggests that strong efforts need to be made to raise young women’s consciousness of their increased risk of domestic abuse; furthermore a point to note is that 88.7% of participants themselves reported that they believed increased awareness campaigns to be very important.

5.7 Perceptions of the Prevalence of Domestic Abuse in Ireland

Just over two fifths of the sample reported correctly (Figure 4) that one in five women in Ireland experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives (Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995). However, just under a third reported that they believed the incidence to be one in eight women and worryingly, approximately 13% reported one in thirty. Similar research has illustrated the same tentative conclusion; that younger women are less likely to be aware of the commonness of domestic abuse (Horgan et al., 2008; Salazar et al., 2003). Horgan et al. (2008) found that although approximately half of women aged 18 to 24 viewed domestic abuse as ‘fairly common’ this age group was more likely to view it as ‘not very common’. The cumulative experience of abuse across an individual’s lifespan could explain why older women view it as more common, however in the present study there was a limited age range, hence comparisons between age groups were not possible.

With respect to the results that were generated, it is a possibility that media coverage has influenced the awareness of domestic abuse. In 2012 Women’s Aid launched its ‘One in Five’ national campaign highlighting the prevalence of domestic abuse in Irish society (Women’s Aid, 2012) and the ‘Man Up’ campaign was launched by Safe Ireland. This received much media attention and support from several politicians, sports people, celebrities and media presenters (Safe Ireland, 2014). In the recent FRA study 49% of Irish women reported seeing or hearing an informative advertisement opposing violence against women (FRA, 2014). Furthermore, Keller, Wilkinson, & Otjen (2010) found that media campaigns were effective in raising women’s awareness. This may provide evidence that media coverage has heightened the awareness of domestic abuse within the Irish public and that in the absence of such media attention the FRA study and the present study may have revealed
even lower statistics. This argument does however represent proof of the effectiveness of media campaigns in raising awareness.

5.8 Awareness of Support Services

The overall awareness of domestic abuse support services was low with the exception of Women’s Aid, where two out of three women reported familiarity with the organisation (Figure 2). However, only 22.6% of participants were familiar with a women’s refuge in the area where they live, results which are significantly lower than that of the 2005 national study where 61% of women under the age of 30 reported knowledge of a refuge (Watson & Parsons, 2005). The present results are worrying given the extent of the abuse reported by the participants. Although the awareness of Women’s Aid and a women’s refuge was in fact higher among those participants who had experienced abusive behaviours (Table 6), the participant’s responses to their own experiences was not further investigated so conclusions cannot be made regarding the use of formal services. While Fugate et al. (2005) found that a significant number of women experiencing abuse were unaware of support agencies; this research also found that not all women in abusive relationships will necessary contact organisations despite awareness of them. Moreover, the reasons which have been documented include a preference for informal support, lack of a recognition for need of assistance from formal services (Watson & Parsons, 2005; Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995), feelings of fear, embarrassment and an absence of the readiness to end a violent relationship (Fugate et al., 2005). With reference to the lack of familiarity with the other organisations, four out of eight organisations that were mentioned were based in the south east of Ireland. Individuals who are not ordinarily residents in this part of the country and who were unfamiliar with these organisations may however, be aware of similar services in their own local area.
5.9 Response to Domestic Abuse in Others

Little research has been done on how individuals respond when they learn of domestic abuse experienced by others (Beeble et al., 2008). Family and friends are most often the first point of disclosure (Cosc, 2010). Informal networks have a crucial role in buffering victims from the effects of an abusive relationship. They influence a woman’s perception of her situation and the action that she takes (Goodkind, Gillum, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2003; Walby & Allen, 2004). The data from the present study is favourable as far as attitudes to domestic abuse experienced by others are concerned and is similar to other Irish research (Horgan et al., 2008; Kelleher & O’Conner, 1995; Watson & Parsons, 2005) in that it indicates a low tolerance for abuse and an eagerness to help a woman in need. The most common reported reaction to hypothetical knowledge of a woman being abused, reported by 91.3% was that it was most likely that they would talk to the woman involved about her situation while only 7.1% reported that they would not get involved (Figure 8). Results were similar to Watson and Pearson (2005), where 95% of women under the age of thirty reported that they would talk to their relative or friend if they were being abused. In the same study only 77% of those over 60 years of age reported that they would do the same. Collectively, both studies provide evidence that younger people may be more willing to help. Beeble et al., 2008 found that age was a strong predictor of individuals’ willingness to help a woman experiencing domestic abuse and suggests that young people are veering away from ideologies inherent of a male dominated culture, typical of past generations (Beeble, 2008).

However, while the present study shows a high willingness to help, 7.1% still said that they “would not get involved”. This is a worrying finding as other literature has hypothesised, negative reactions to abuse may impede the help seeking behaviours of those who are being abused (Trotter & Allen, 2009). In the present study women who were not in a relationship were more likely to report that they “would not get involved” (Figure 9). These findings suggest that those who may have experienced similar situations have a greater capacity to relate to others in the same situation (as previously mentioned in the discussion). Empathy has in previous research been linked to a willingness to help (Batson et al., 1991). However, other research has indicated that even when domestic abuse is perceived to be severe there is often an unwillingness to get involved when the victim is anything other than a close friend or relative. In Horgan et al. (2008), while the majority of participants (94%) reported that they would help a friend, only 38% reported that they would help a neighbour. In the present study however, when participants’ were questioned on their reactions to receiving knowledge
of abuse in another woman, it referred to any woman and findings may have differed if the nature of the relationship was clearly defined. Another possible explanation revolves around social norms. In other cultures, where pervasive societal myths that encourage victim blaming exist, men and women are more tolerant of abuse (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). While results have shown that strong anti-violence beliefs exist, WIT has a large culturally diverse population (WIT, 2014). National and cultural norms may, although by no means for definite have had an influence on the reported responses to domestic abuse experienced by others.

5.9 Conclusion

This study has indicated that a large majority of young women exhibit high levels of understanding of the complex nature of domestic abuse, the behaviours which classify as abuse and the warning signs of abuse. However, domestic abuse prevalence was reported high and it appears that the mere recognition of what constitutes abuse does not appear to have, in and of itself, decreased the prevalence of abuse, indicating that a disconnection between attitudes and the labelling of abusive behaviours may exist. When compared with previous Irish research there is no strong evidence to suggest that there has been any significant shift in the attitudes of young Irish women towards domestic abuse over the past decade. In addition, risk perception is low and strong efforts need to be made to increase young women’s awareness of their own risk of abuse. Finally, current findings are no different from previous literature on dating violence and domestic abuse which identifies age as a risk factor and provides evidence that strong efforts need to be made to help protect young women. Furthermore, it supports previous literature which reveals the stark reality that domestic abuse and dating violence is commonplace among young women in Irish society.

5.10 Limitations

In preparing this research it has been acknowledged that a number of limitations exist. Limited access to study participants reduced the reliability of the findings. It was originally proposed that the study would be carried out in four educational institutions but due to the nature of the study and concerns expressed by the institutions’ this was not possible. In addition, the convenience sampling method chosen represents a bias and results of this study cannot be generalised across the whole population of young woman aged 18 to 25.
Furthermore, in comparing findings across previous national studies, a 187-participant study cannot be accurately compared with a study of tens of thousands of women.

With regard to the questionnaire, the inclusion of certain questions would have allowed a more detailed analysis to be made, such as distinguishing between past and present experiences of abuse. Moreover, four out of eight of the services mentioned in question 17 (Appendix A) are based in the south east of Ireland, therefore, results may not be a true reflection of the awareness of support services as the participants’ ordinary residing address may not be the in south east.

Due to ethical reasons it was not possible to address certain aspects of the research topic which limited the researcher’s ability to determine certain trends and relationships. These include the age of onset of abuse, specifics of abuse, and the relationship between participants’ attitudes towards domestic abuse and its warning signs, and their reaction to their own experience of them. With respect to self-reported data, reporting bias is probable, especially given the nature of the research topic and possible problems include selective memory, under reporting and exaggeration by participants.

5.11 Recommendations

While this study could serve as an important first step in addressing domestic abuse as it has identified the attitudes, beliefs and prevalence of abuse of an important sub-group which is most at risk of abuse in Irish society, a larger, more detailed piece of research is necessary. Such research would refine our picture of young women’s perceptions of domestic abuse and give a much clearer depiction of their experiences. As attitudinal research plays a fundamental role in creating public policy, improving services to protect women and in the prevention of domestic abuse, continued research on attitudes is needed. Furthermore, given the nature of attitudes and how they can be changeable, longitudinal research could provide better insights for the crafting of public policy, services, education and awareness campaigns. Investigating the context of dating violence in young people is also important. While aggression is not acceptable in any relationship, it is necessary to clarify the context in which it occurs as not to give an inaccurate picture of domestic abuse prevalence among young women. Another aim of Irish research would be to target young men whose attitudes play a fundamental role in the domestic abuse. To the researcher’s knowledge no study has been
conducted with this sub-group specifically. In addition, this study has raised the question of the relationship between violence and emotional intelligence and this is an area of research which could be further developed.
Reference List


Please read all questions carefully and answer each question as truthfully and honestly as you can.

1. Age __________


3. How common do you think domestic abuse is in Ireland? (Tick the relevant box)
   1 in 3 Women ☐ 1 in 5 Women ☐ 1 in 8 Women ☐ 1 in 30 Women ☐ 1 in 100 Women ☐

4. Which age group do you think is more at risk of being in an abusive relationship in Ireland?
   (Circle which one applies)
   <19 yrs ☐ 20-24 yrs ☐ 25-29 Yrs ☐ 30-34 yrs ☐ 35+ yrs ☐ Equal risk at any age

5. Since 1996 of the resolved murder cases, how many women in Ireland do you think were killed by a partner or ex partner? (Circle which one applies)
   Approximately 10% ☐ Approximately 30% ☐ Approximately 50% ☐ All of them ☐

6. Have you ever heard of the term ‘adolescent dating violence’? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Have you ever heard of the term ‘pregnancy related violence’? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Have you ever heard of the term ‘intimate partner abuse’? Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Do you know of anyone in an abusive relationship at the moment? Yes ☐ No ☐
   If yes are they a Friend ☐ Relative ☐ Other ☐
   What age are they? __________

10. Do you know anyone who has left an abusive relationship? Yes ☐ No ☐
    If yes are they a Friend ☐ Relative ☐ Other ☐
    What age were they when they left the relationship? __________
Section 2

11. On a scale of 0 - 5 (0 = not domestic abuse, 1 = the lowest severity of domestic abuse and 5 = the highest severity), how severe do you think the level of domestic abuse is in the following scenarios. Read them carefully. (Tick the relevant box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When a boyfriend/partner/husband.....</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hits or kicks his girlfriend/partner/wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls his girlfriend/partner/wife names on a regular basis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets annoyed when his girlfriend/partner/wife socialises without him</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not let his girlfriend/partner/wife watch what she wants on the television</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throws objects at his girlfriend/partner/wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes his girlfriend/partner/wife feel anxious or nervous often</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets angry if his girlfriend/partner/wife is talking to or is friends with another male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to know the passwords to his girlfriend/partner/wife’s email or social network accounts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialises every weekend without his girlfriend/partner/wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushes his girlfriend/partner/wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuses his girlfriend/partner/wife of flirting or having affairs for no reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricts his girlfriend/partner/wife's access to money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Do you agree with the following statements? Read them carefully. (Place a tick the relevant box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A man who is cruel to animals is a warning sign that he could be abusive in a relationship&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is normal for arguments to get out of hand every now and then, it does not mean it is abuse&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Throwing or smashing things in anger is not a sign of abuse&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A man who gets very jealous for no reason is not abuse &quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is a sign of domestic abuse if a man loses his temper easily over silly things&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A man threatened to hit his wife, but he did not, so it is not domestic abuse&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;If a man abused his last girlfriend it doesn't mean he will abuse his next girlfriend&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 3

13. Has any friend/relative/other talked to you about being in an abusive relationship?

Yes ☐  No ☐

If yes

Did you? (Tick all that apply)

- Talk to them about their situation
- Talk to their boyfriend/partner/husband
- Tell the Gardaí
- Found out more about this type of situation
- Contact an organisation for those who experience abuse
- Did not get involved
- Other

If other, please specify action taken.

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

14. If you thought a friend/relative/other was in an abusive relationship would you? (Tick all that apply)

- Talk to them about their situation
- Talk to their boyfriend/partner/husband
- Tell the Gardaí
- Try find out more about this type of situation
- Contact an organisation for those who experience abuse
- Would not get involved
- Other

If other, please specify the action you would take.

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Section 4

The following section contains questions of a sensitive nature. As you are not obliged to answer any question which you do not wish to do so, you may continue to Section 5 now if you wish. Otherwise please read the following carefully.

15. Answer the following questions by placing a tick in the relevant box.

+---------------------------------+----------------+----------------+----------------+----------------+----------------+----------------+----------------+----------------+----------------+
| Has a boyfriend/partner/husband ever used physical force (e.g. pushing, kicking, slapping) **causing you injury**? (e.g. bruising) | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
| Has a boyfriend/partner/husband ever used physical force (e.g. pushing, kicking, slapping) **which did not cause you injury**? | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
| Has a boyfriend/partner/husband ever called you abusive names? | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
| Has a boyfriend/partner/husband ever destroyed your belongings? | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
| Has a boyfriend/partner/husband ever stopped you from seeing your friends or family? | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
| Has a boyfriend/partner/husband ever checked your emails/ phone against your wishes? | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
| Has a boyfriend/partner/husband expressed jealousy for no reason? | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |

Section 5

16. **Do you know of a refuge for women whom are victims of domestic abuse in your area?**

   Yes [ ] No [ ]

If **yes** what is it called?  __________________________________________________________

17. **Have you ever heard of the following?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women's Aid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonas Housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEND (men ending domestic abuse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oasis house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Ireland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The South East Domestic Violence Intervention Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVE (men over coming violence)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. **Have you ever had any education on domestic abuse**

   Yes [ ] No [ ]

If **so where?**  __________________________________________________________

19. **In your opinion how important is it that more awareness programs addressing violence against young women are made available?** (Tick which applies)

   Unimportant [ ] Slightly Important [ ] Important [ ] Very Important [ ]
My name is Elaine Goldsberry and as part of my Health Promotion fourth year dissertation I am carrying out a study on the attitudes and awareness of domestic abuse and the levels of abusive behaviour in young relationships. By filling out this questionnaire you are consenting to take part in the study and the use of all information given. All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence at all times and you will not be requested to disclose your name at any stage. On completion of the questionnaire you will then place it in a sealed container which will only be opened when all questionnaires have been gathered. This procedure guarantees your complete anonymity. Information will be kept for six months prior to the completion of the study and it will then be destroyed. You are under no obligation to take part in the study and you do not have to answer any question if you do not wish to do so. The questionnaire will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete and you may stop at any time. If you have any queries regarding this study you may contact my thesis supervisor Michael Hanlon at mhanlon@wit.ie.

If you have been affected in any way by the subject addressed in this study the Women’s Aid national free helpline is available on 1800 341 900.

Would you be willing to take part?