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An Investigation of Sibling Abuse in Trinidad: Raising Awareness

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the prevalence and recognition of psychological and physical sibling abuse in Trinidad, given the endemic of domestic violence that exists. This work shows that Trinidadians are aware of this form of family violence and rarely attempt to normalize its occurrence, excepting within their own family dynamic. Through interviews, questionnaires and local quantitative and qualitative secondary data, the main causes were proven to be parental preferential treatment paired with minimal parental supervision and intervention. Effects were widespread affecting intra- and interpersonal relationships in both positive and negative ways. Lastly, communication and further education on sibling abuse would facilitate greater healing within the family unit.

Keywords: sibling abuse, sibling rivalry, sibling bullying, family unit, domestic violence

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Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were more than six thousand reported cases of domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago (“The scourge of Domestic Violence”). The mass quarantine measures implemented in early 2020, perhaps, exacerbated this plight (Mohammed) but many more cases go unreported when victims are shamed or threatened, resulting in statistics that are unrepresentative of the true dilemma (“The scourge of Domestic Violence”). Several researchers claim that sibling abuse is an even more common and under-reported form of family violence (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 148, Caffaro 36, Hoffmann and Edwards 185, Yu and Gamble 2717). Although there may be a dearth in updated empirical research (Morrill-Richards and Leierer 28), the literature suggests that approximately 60-80% of American children experience sibling abuse (Caffaro 36, Straus and Gelles in Yu and Gamble 2718 & Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 150, Hoffman and Edwards 1103). Conversely, an apparent lack of public information, updated or otherwise, exists on the experience of Trinidadian children with sibling abuse, much less Trinidadian adults. Given that domestic abuse is an endemic problem in Trinidad and Tobago (“The scourge of Domestic Violence”) and that sibling abuse is more prone to occur in abusive familial environments (Caffaro 37, Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 151, Haelle), there should be numerous, comprehensive studies on this family violence in Trinidad and Tobago, readily available to the public. This thesis paper seeks to reduce this gap in the literature by investigating the causal factors of psychological and physical sibling abuse, the impact on victims, perpetrators and other family members together with viable pre-emptive or remedial strategies in Trinidad.

Rationale

The researcher initially began researching sibling abuse out of mere curiosity as an older sibling who frequently argues with their younger siblings. However, the paucity of qualitative and quantitative data, specifically regarding Trinidad, inspired the researcher to conduct their own study, to enhance documentation and raise awareness of this form of family violence among the public.

Thesis Statement

In Trinidad, it is possible that all members of the family unit normalize and ignore psychological and physical sibling abuse despite its prevalence and considerable impact on familial bonds but acknowledgement of its severity can greatly reduce its occurrence.

Parameters

This study is limited to Trinidad due to the researcher's limited access and ability to investigate other areas. The researcher also chose to focus on psychological and physical sibling abuse, thus, excluding sexual sibling abuse, for several reasons. Firstly, sexual abuse is an extremely delicate topic and victims are usually transparent with trusted individuals only (*Annual Report 2021-2022* 13), which decreases the probability of the researcher gathering accurate data through anonymous questionnaires or, even, interviews with acquaintances. Secondly, it is possible that the lack of reports of sexual sibling abuse stems from the shame and guilt of victims, perpetrators and other family members who failed to notice (Yu and Gamble 2719, Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 150), which suggests an acknowledgment of sexual sibling abuse as abnormal and deviant (Gibbons 4). The researcher aims to alleviate this ignorance, which surrounds physical and psychological sibling abuse and enables their dismissal.

Objective

The objective of this study is to investigate and raise awareness of the impact of psychological and physical sibling abuse on the family unit in Trinidad.

Main Research Question

What are the causes, effects and feasible solutions to sibling abuse?

Subsidiary Research Questions

1. Why are other members of the family unit unable or unwilling to identify and address abusive behaviour between siblings?
2. How does family dynamics and conflict within the household affect the relationship between siblings?
3. How does sibling rivalry develop into sibling abuse?
4. How can sibling abuse be prevented or resolved?

Definition of Terms

Domestic Violence- “Any act or omission by persons who are cohabiting that results in serious injury to other members of the family/household” (Wallace, in Jackson, 2007).

Family Unit- A kinship unit consisting of a group of individuals united by blood or by marital, adoptive, or other intimate ties whose form and structure varies widely across regions and cultures. (“Family”)

Sibling Abuse- A repeated pattern of aggression intended to inflict pain, where one sibling takes the role of the aggressor to disempower another sibling the other.

Sibling Rivalry- Reciprocal conflict over a lack of balance between two siblings

Sibling Bullying- Persistent threatening and aggressive physical behaviour or verbal abuse directed toward a sibling, especially one who is younger, smaller, weaker, or in some other situation of relative disadvantage. (“Bullying”)

Methodology

Primary data was collected in two forms: a questionnaire and interviews. Then, this data was compared to various secondary sources that included online journal, magazine and web articles from international academics along with local newspaper essays from experts and statistics and cases from national governmental and non-governmental organizations. The methods to collect primary data were used because they were time and cost-efficient while secondary sources were moderately accessible via the internet or upon request.

Chapter Outline

This thesis paper consists of four chapters. Chapter One addresses the frequency and awareness of sibling abuse in Trinidad. Chapter Two outlines the causes while Chapter Three discusses the effects of sibling violence. Lastly, Chapter Four lists preventative strategies and solutions to sibling abuse. In each chapter, the findings are analysed and compared to secondary sources from the Literature Review to identify trends or variances.

Literature Review

In conducting this research, the investigator examined various literatures that agreed that sibling abuse is the most prevalent, yet undisclosed form of family violence; ahead of child abuse (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 148) and, even, intimate partner violence (Caffaro 36, Hoffmann and Edwards 185, Yu and Gamble 2717). Caffaro (36) posits that the lack of reported cases of sibling violence stems from both ignorance, as family members commonly dismiss the abuse as “normal sibling rivalry” and, established family norms, as these belligerent acts between siblings are qualified as appropriate conflict-resolution strategies. Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (153) corroborate Caffaro’s views and further add that families may try to blame the victim, protect the perpetrator or handle the abuse as a “private family matter”, out of denial or embarrassment, instead of reporting these cases to relevant authorities, who can help resolve the issue.

According to Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (149), parents commonly dismiss psychological sibling abuse as “normal sibling rivalry”. Psychological sibling abuse consists of persistent acts that rile up or distress the victim, such as name-calling, teasing, intimidating, insulting and intentional damage to the victim’s belongings (Hoffmann and Edwards 186, Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 149, Yu and Gamble 2719). In addition, EndCAN remarks that parents typically discount physical sibling abuse as “normal roughhousing”. Physical sibling abuse includes harmful acts that range in severity from shoving and hair pulling to choking and stabbing, for instance (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 150). Finally, parents sometimes minimise sexual sibling abuse as “normal childhood curiosity” (EndCAN). Sexual sibling abuse is any sexual act between siblings that is not age-appropriate (Yu and Gamble 2719) or incidental (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 150). These acts may be physical, for example, coerced fondling, masturbation or intercourse, or non-

physical, for example, indecent exposure of the perpetrator to the victim or vice versa, sexual leering or the forced viewing of pornographic material (Yu and Gamble 2719). Altogether, it would appear that all presentations of sibling maltreatment can be “normalized” and ignored within the family unit, perhaps, due to its regularity (Caffaro 36). Local secondary data, obtained from one governmental organization- the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch (CAPA) of T&T Police Service (Appendix B, C)- and two non-governmental organizations- T&T Coalition against Domestic Violence (CADV) (Appendix E) and Conflict Women TT (Appendix F)- prove that all forms of sibling abuse occur in Trinidad.

Continuing, the occurrence of sibling maltreatment can be understood through the feminist, conflict and social learning theories. To begin, the feminist movement drew attention to the taboo topic of family violence in the 1970s (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 148) by emphasizing how “the patriarchal organization” of society, at large, and the family system, in particular, is overtly linked to male-female domestic violence (Hoffman and Edwards 187). In a patriarchal family arrangement, authoritative and domineering natures are considered key features of masculinity, aggression as a form of conflict resolution and control by men is culturally accepted, and power hierarchies are determined by gender, age, physical strength and social power within families (Hoffman and Edwards 187-188). Thus, the feminist theory presumes that male siblings are more likely to use violence to exert power and control over their female and younger siblings, in an effort to validate their masculinity. Older brother-younger sister dyads appear particularly susceptible to severe physical conflict (Yu and Gamble 2721, Hoffmann and Edwards 188) as the male sibling is both older and, typically, stronger in this dynamic, while younger brothers may challenge the authority of older sisters by using physical strength, an act that is reinforced by established patriarchal norms (Hoffmann and Edwards 188). From the feminist perspective, the need to exert power may also arise out of a feeling of powerlessness and lack of control in instances where older

siblings are weak and helpless against parents' physical punishments but are stronger than and capable of punishing their younger siblings (Hoffmann and Edwards 188, Caffaro 37). This scenario effectively creates a cycle of abuse within the home and an abuse of power between siblings that is exacerbated and encouraged by inadequate parental supervision and intervention (Yu and Gamble 2721). It is possible that patriarchy can explain the high rates of domestic violence in Trinidad. The researcher will determine to what extent this social system promotes sibling abuse in Trinidad as the feminist theory proposes.

Comparatively, the conflict theory postulates that family members may use aggression to resolve conflict (Hoffman and Edwards 188), which originates from competition for limited resources (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 151). From this theoretical perspective, conflict may arise among siblings when there is a clash of interests regarding the use of shared resources, such as food, space, toys and emotions (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 151). While Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (151) agree with Hoffmann and Edwards' (188) inference that siblings may employ violence to take charge of these shared valuable resources, they disagree on the reason that their interests may clash. Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (151) posit that a clash of interests is more likely between siblings with similar interests and personalities but Hoffman and Edwards (188) argue that the opposite, i.e. differing interests, leads to clashes. Siblings may also compete for the resources of parental attention and affection (Hoffman and Edwards 188, Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 151), which can be limited, in instances where parents show favouritism and differential treatment of children (Caffaro 40) through comparing their children, choosing sides in sibling arguments or consistently penalising a specific child (Caffaro 37, Haelle). These acts by parents can lead to jealous rivalry between siblings (Hoffman and Edwards 188), which siblings may seek to resolve using violence. This paper will examine how often conflict among Trinidadian siblings result in violence, to either prove or disprove the conflict theory.

Multiple researchers maintain that sibling rivalry is a “normal” and “mostly harmless” part of childhood “in mild forms” (Caffaro 36, Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 149, EndCAN). Rivalry may be inevitable as siblings live in comparative environments where other household members assess and juxtapose them (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 149). It can even lead to strong sibling attachments in functional environments (Caffaro 36) where family members encourage emotional expression, promote respect for others and compromise, model healthy conflict resolution in their own relations and enable siblings to settle conflict, albeit in a healthy manner, with minimal external intervention (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 149). However, normal rivalry can escalate into abuse, where violence is continuous and compounded and there is a clear victim and perpetrator (Yu and Gamble 2718), if parents encourage hostile behaviour in conflict resolution (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 149) and fail to monitor their children sufficiently, which prevents them from recognizing when their mediation is necessary (Caffaro 36). This study will investigate and gather opinions on the prevalence of sibling rivalry escalating into sibling abuse among Trinidadian siblings.

Moreover, social learning theory proposes that behaviour is acquired through observation and emulation of influential individuals’ actions and consequent reinforcement of this behaviour (Hoffman and Edwards 188-189). Thus, the social learning perspective hypothesizes that when children observe or experience psychological and physical abuse, particularly at the hands of parents or older family members who the child respects and admires, they are likely to model this behaviour when engaging with their siblings (Hoffman and Edwards 189). Reinforcement of these violent acts, whether directly, through positive responses such as approval, or indirectly, through a lack of punishment, increases the probability of these actions being repeated or worsened (Hoffman and Edwards 189).

Next, sibling abuse affects both victims and perpetrators in a variety of ways. Evidently, physical sibling abuse can result in victims suffering from visible injuries (Hoffman 186) in the immediate term. However, the psychological effects of abuse on the victim are greater and more enduring. Victims may encounter developmental delays in cognition, language development and motor coordination (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 1152). They may also suffer from anxiety, minimal self-confidence (Caffaro 42), which can lead to suicidal ideation (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 152), depression, trust issues and substance abuse (Hoffman 187). Yu and Gamble (2722) corroborate these effects and further specify sibling abuse that occurs during middle childhood may precede anxiety and depression around early adolescence while psychological sibling abuse that occurs throughout childhood and adolescence may precede anxiety during young adulthood. The literature assumes that victims are more likely to engage in abusive relationships throughout their lives and that they are more prone to aggression and delinquency (Yu and Gamble 2722). Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (152) add that victims of sibling abuse are at a higher risk of being arrested as juvenile runaways or adult criminals than persons who have not suffered from sibling abuse.

Similarly, perpetrators may also suffer from developmental delays, minimal self-confidence, substance abuse (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 152), and delinquency (Yu and Gamble 2722). In addition, child perpetrators of sibling abuse are predisposed to developing conduct disorders and antisocial behaviour during adolescence (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 152, Yu and Gamble 2722) and are also likely to repeat abusive patterns within romantic partnerships during adulthood (Yu and Gamble 2722). This thesis paper will also focus on the effects of sibling abuse on victims and perpetrators in Trinidad. The researcher will also attempt to gather more comprehensive data on the impact on the abuser as the literature is scarce from this perspective.

Finally, several clinical psychologists suggest solutions and prevention strategies. Caffaro (42) emphasizes awareness programmes to educate parents and teachers on the severity of sibling abuse. These programmes should outline warning signs of imminent abuse in sibling interactions together with intervention and prevention techniques. Caffaro also proposes various forms of therapy, including individual, group and family therapy, which would facilitate the family's healing. Haelle further suggests mediation, communication, strong family connections, establishment of rules for appropriate behaviour and non-punitive disciplinary methods within the family unit.

CHAPTER 1: The Scope and Awareness of Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

To collect the public's opinions on sibling violence and, simultaneously, raise awareness, the researcher created a questionnaire comprised of twenty-two close-ended and fifteen open-ended questions. This questionnaire was distributed both online and offline. Fifteen physical questionnaires were returned in conjunction with ten online questionnaires, which generated an 83% collection rate.

The researcher also conducted interviews with Dr Jean Antoine-Dunne, a university lecturer and fellow researcher of sibling abuse, Ms Ann Diaz, a mediator, and Ms Abel Alexis, a ChildLine counsellor.

Presentation of Data

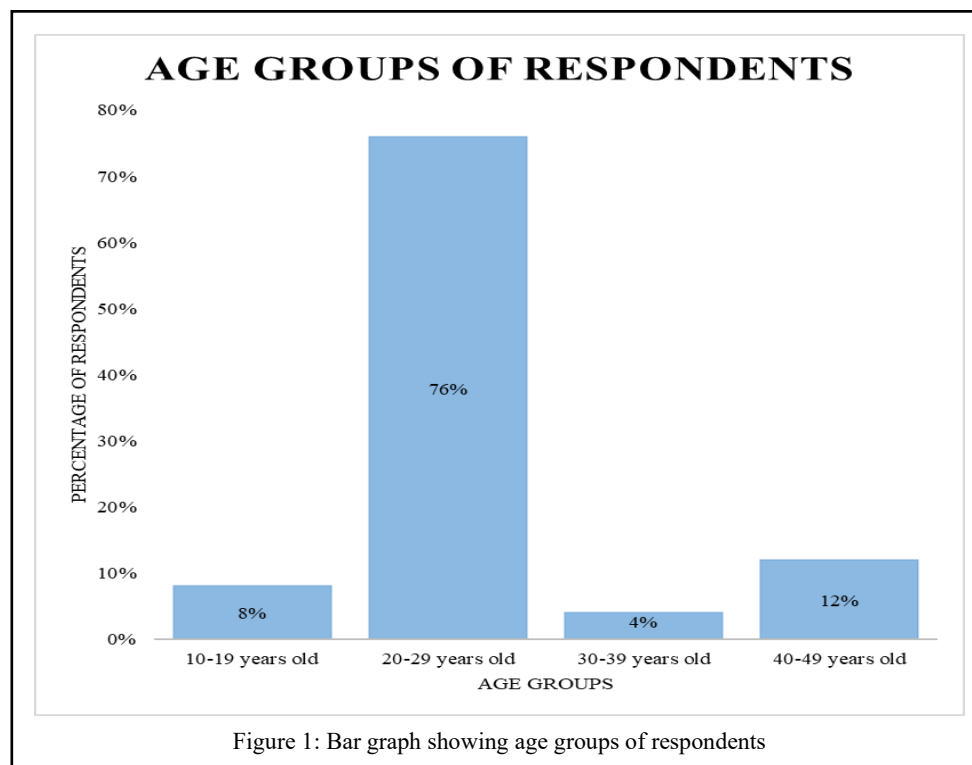


Figure 1 reveals the age groups of the respondents: 8% were 10-19 years, 76% 20-29 years, 4% 30-39 years and 12% 40-49 years.

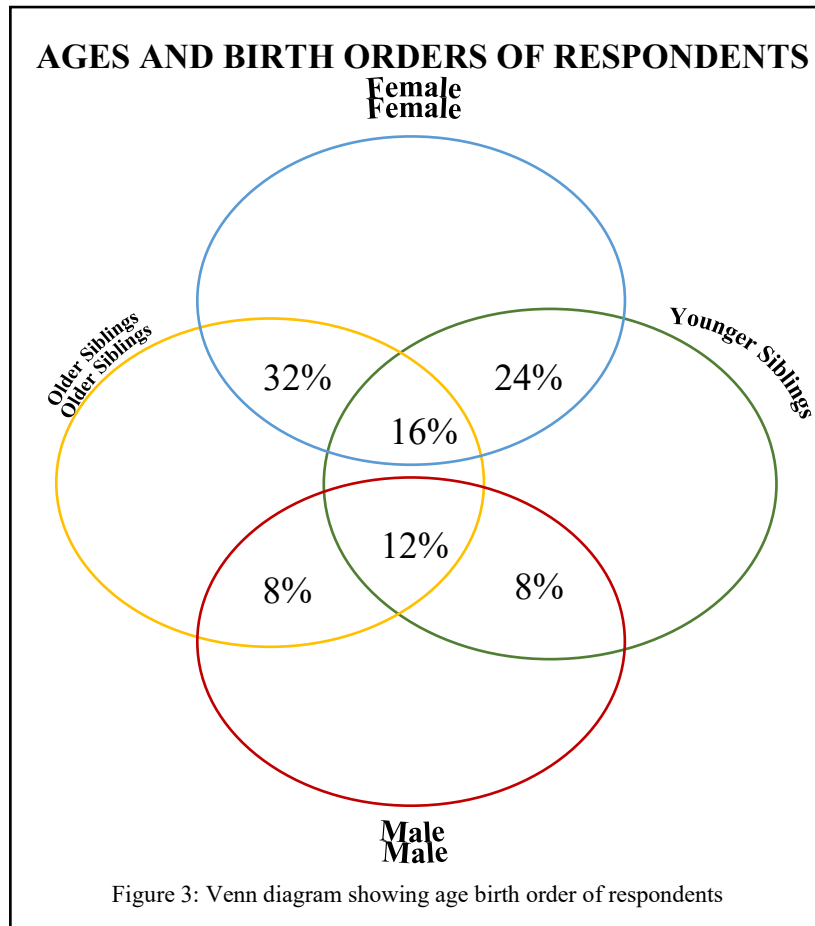
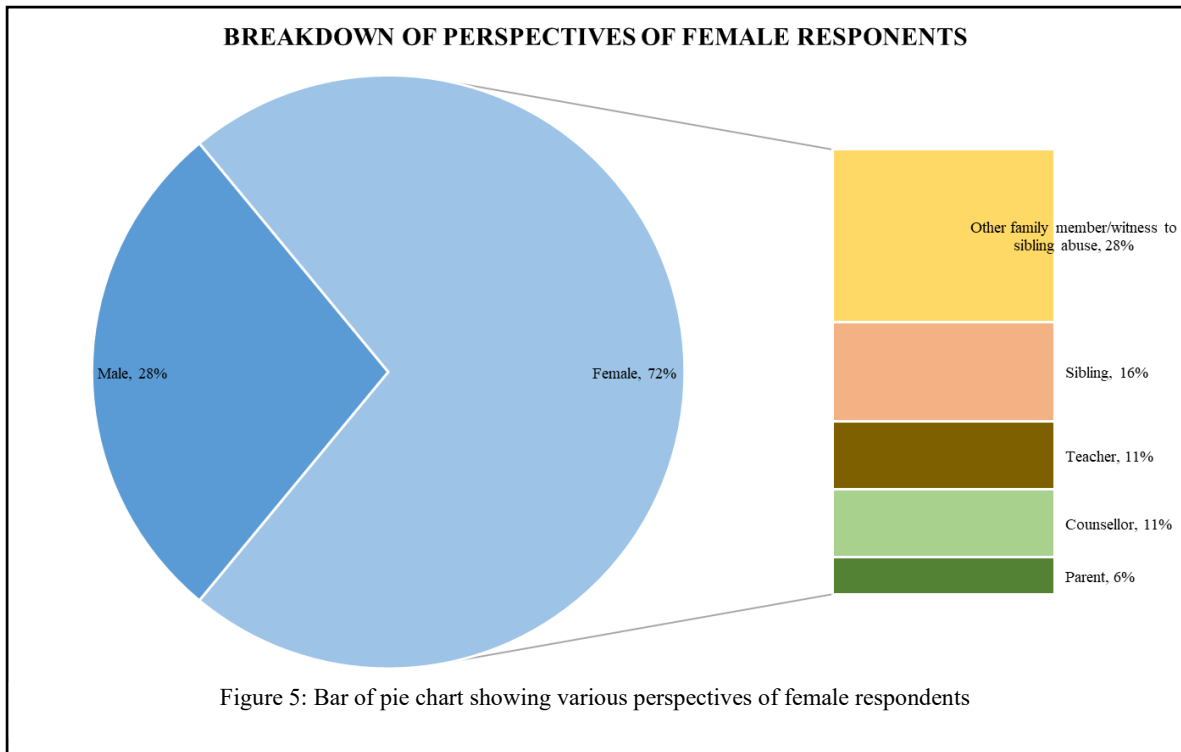


Figure 2 depicts the ages and birth orders of respondents. Of the 25 respondents, 72% were females, which comprised 32% older siblings, 24% younger siblings and 16% middle siblings. The other 28% were male, which comprised 12% middle siblings and 8% both older and younger siblings.



Further, Figure 3 presents additional perspectives of the female respondents, 28% responded from the perspective of other family members or witnesses to sibling abuse, 16% as siblings, 11% as teachers, 11% as school counsellors and 6% as parents.

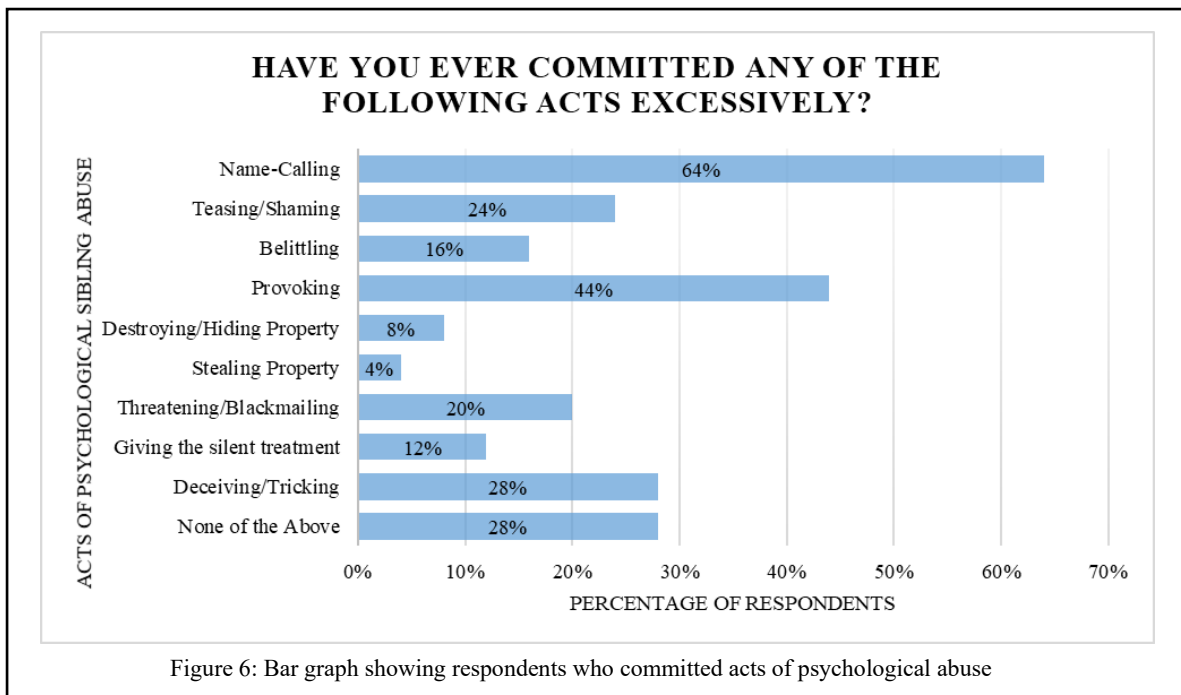


Figure 4 reveals that name-calling was the most commonly committed act (64%), in excess, which would classify this behaviour as a form of psychological abuse. Other common acts included provocation (44%), deception/trickery (28%), humiliation (24%) and threats/blackmail (20%). Less common acts were belittlement (16%), silent treatment (12%), destruction/concealment of sibling’s property (8%) and theft of sibling’s property (4%). Conversely, 28% of respondents never committed these acts.

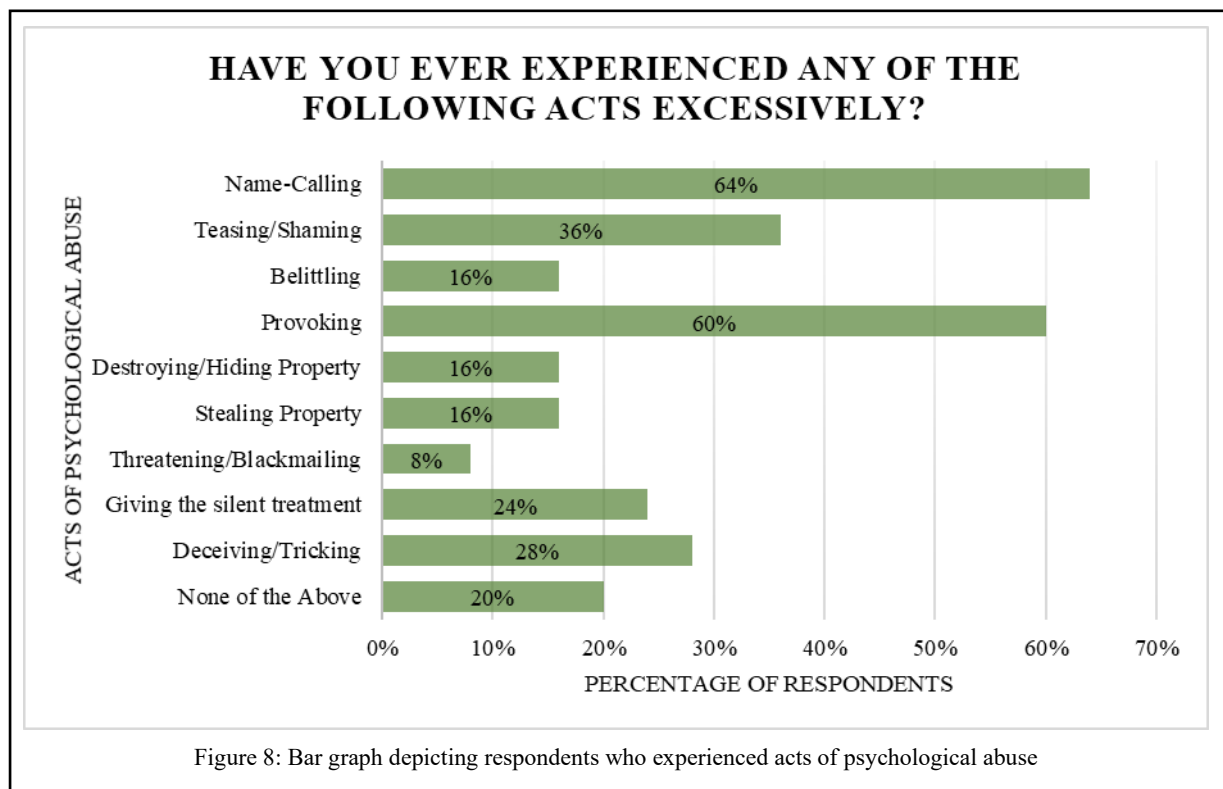


Figure 5 shows that name-calling was also the most commonly experienced act (64%) among respondents. Other common acts included provocation (60%), humiliation (36%), deception/trickery (28%) and silent treatment (24%). Less common acts were belittlement, destruction/concealment of sibling’s property and theft of sibling’s property (16%) as well as threats/blackmail (8%). Conversely, 20% never experienced these acts.

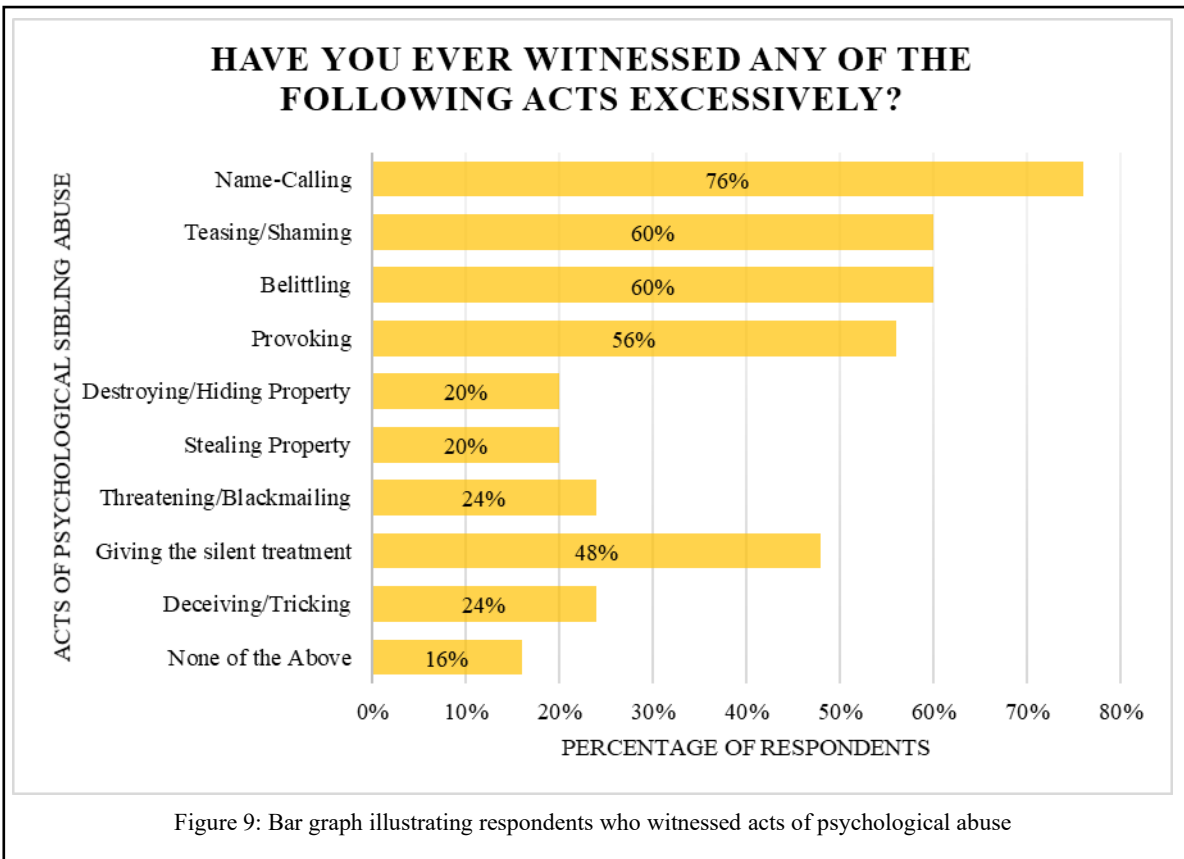


Figure 6 shows that name-calling was the most commonly observed act (76%) among respondents, followed by humiliation and belittlement (60%), provocation (56%) and silent treatment (48%). Other acts included threats/blackmail and deception/trickery (24%) and destruction/concealment of sibling's property and theft of sibling's property (20%). Contrastingly, 16% never witnessed these acts.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIRTH ORDER AND
ROLE IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SIBLING ABUSE**

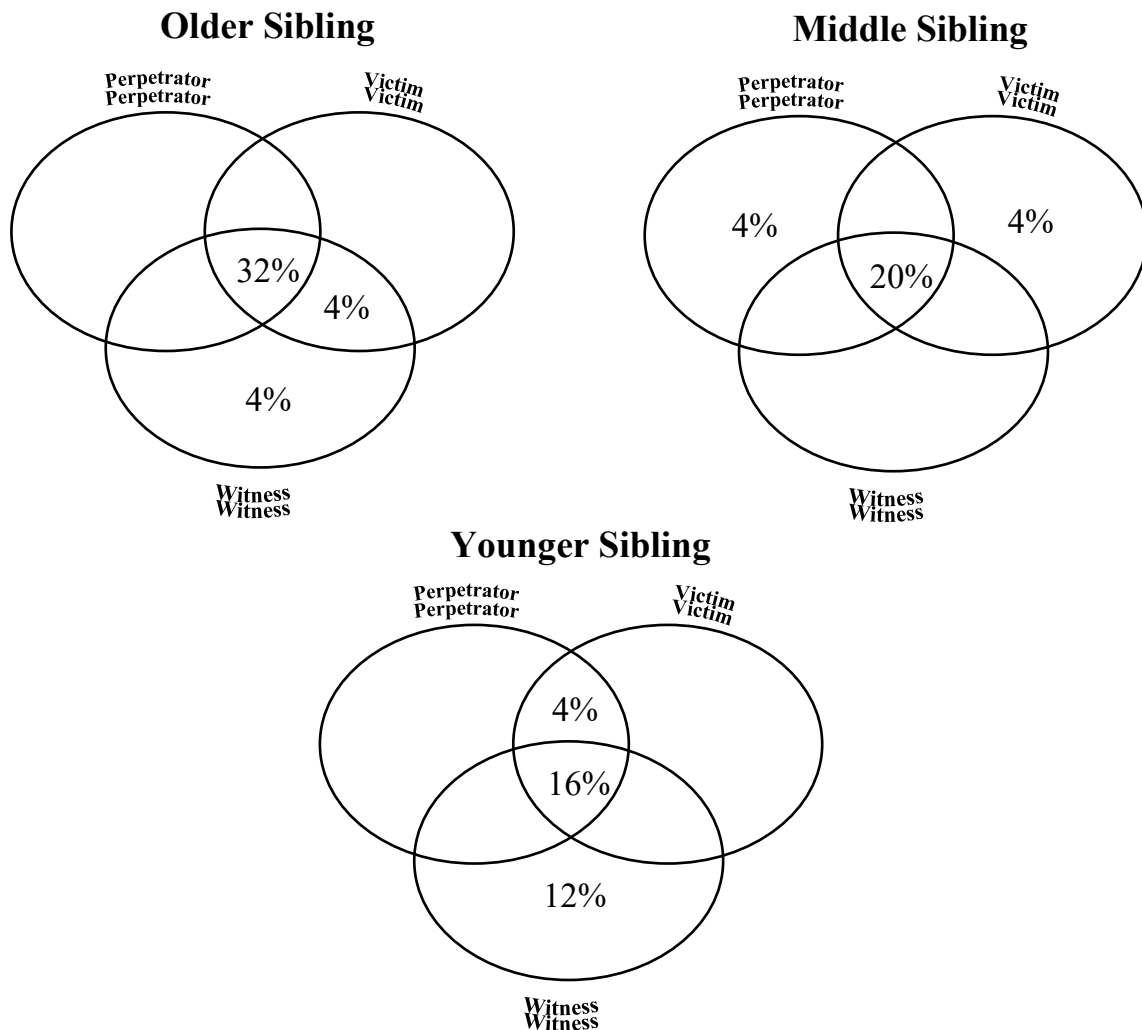


Figure 10: Venn diagrams depicting birth order and role in psychological sibling abuse among respondents

Figure 7 outlines the relationship between birth order and role in psychological sibling abuse. Among respondents who were older siblings, 32% were victims, perpetrators and witnesses of psychological sibling abuse simultaneously, 4% were victims and witnesses and 4% were witnesses only. Of the middle siblings, 20% occupied all three roles while 4% were perpetrators or victims only. Lastly, among younger siblings, 16% played all three roles, 12% were witnesses only and 4% were perpetrators and victims.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND ROLE
IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SIBLING ABUSE**

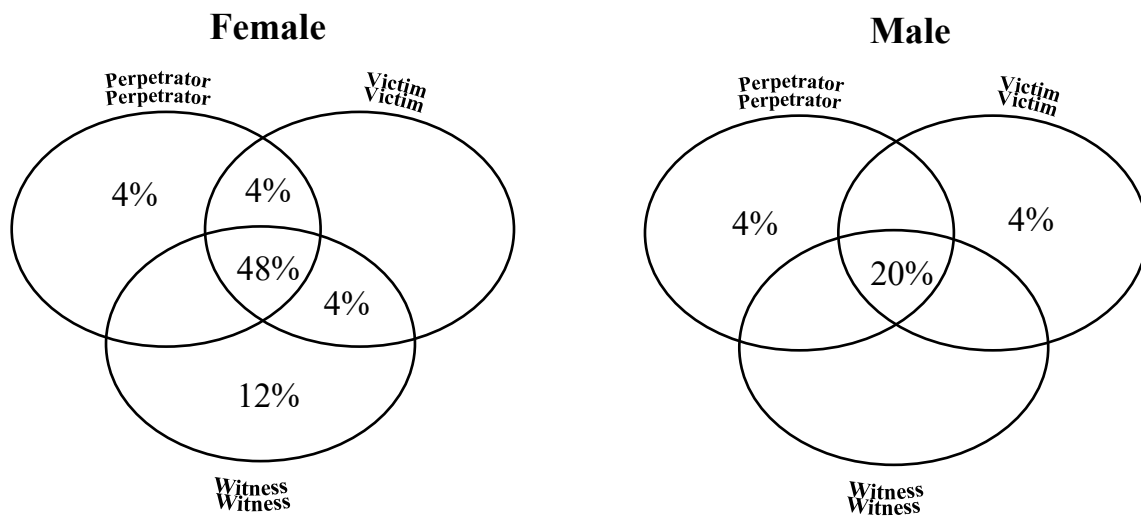


Figure 11: Venn diagrams depicting gender and role in psychological sibling abuse among respondents

Figure 8 outlines the relationship between gender and role in psychological sibling abuse. Among female respondents, 48% were victims, perpetrators and witnesses of psychological sibling abuse simultaneously, 12% were witnesses only, 4% were perpetrators only, 4% victims and witnesses simultaneously and 4% both victims and perpetrators. Of the male respondents, 20% played all three roles while 4% were victims only and 4% were perpetrators only.

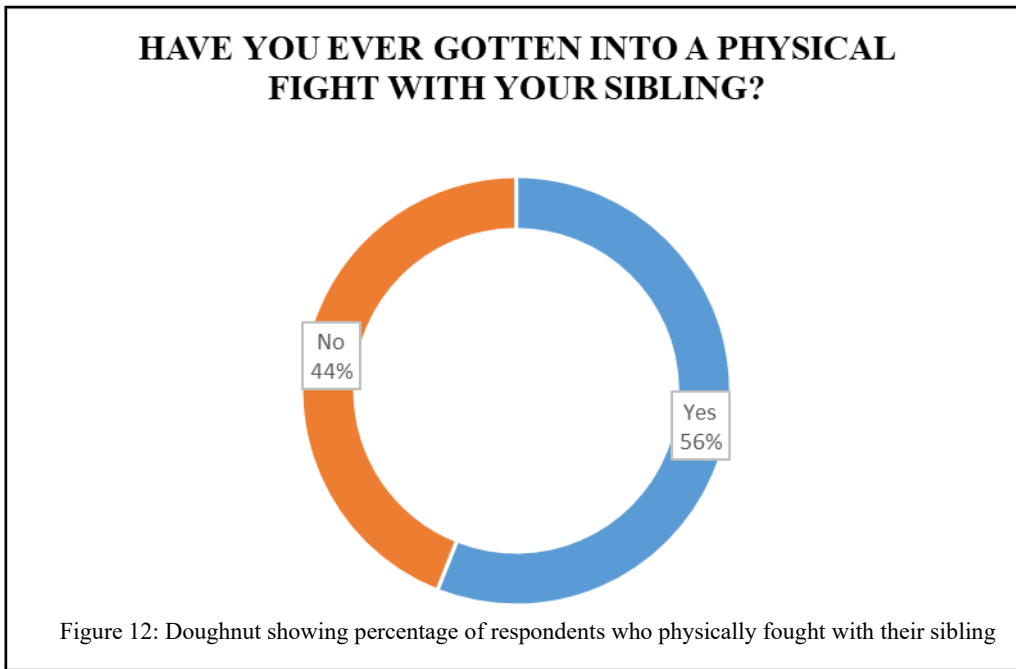


Figure 9 illustrates that 56% of respondents physically fought with their sibling while 44% have not.

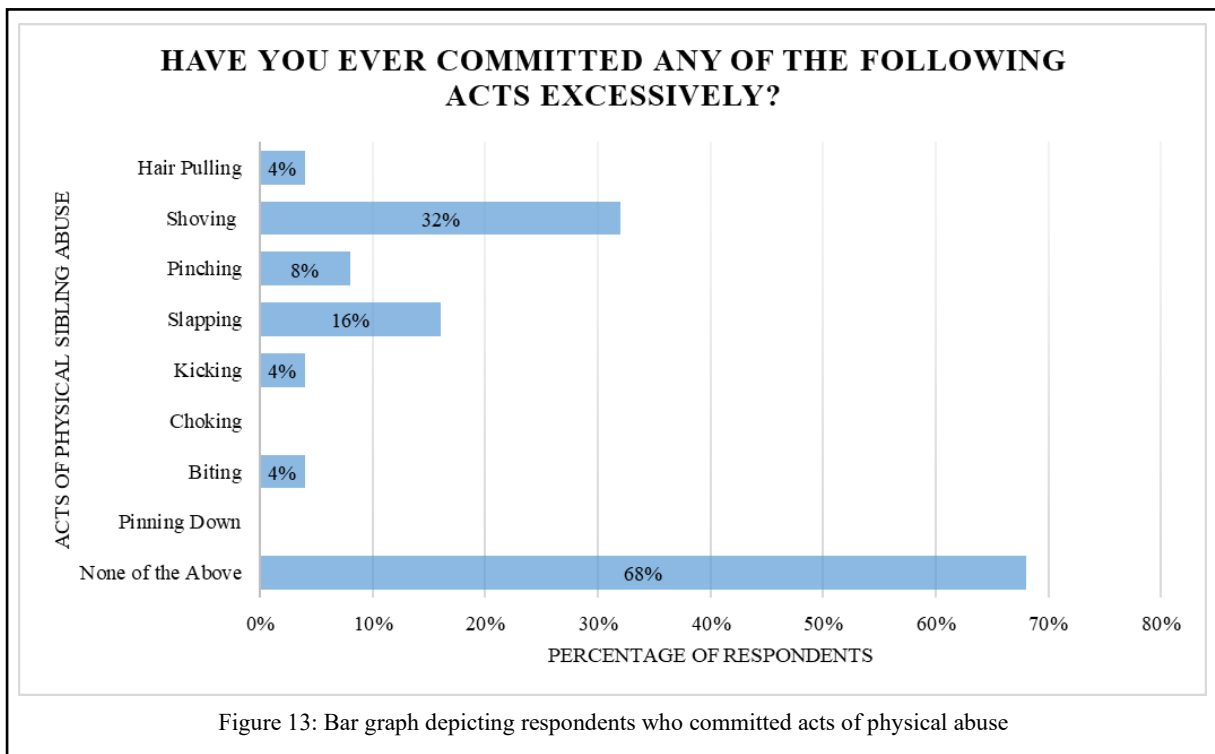


Figure 10 reveals that the majority (68%) of respondents never committed any acts of physical abuse, which included choking or pinning down another. Nevertheless, the most

commonly committed act was shoving (32%), followed by slapping (16%), pinching (8%) and hair pulling, kicking and biting (4%).

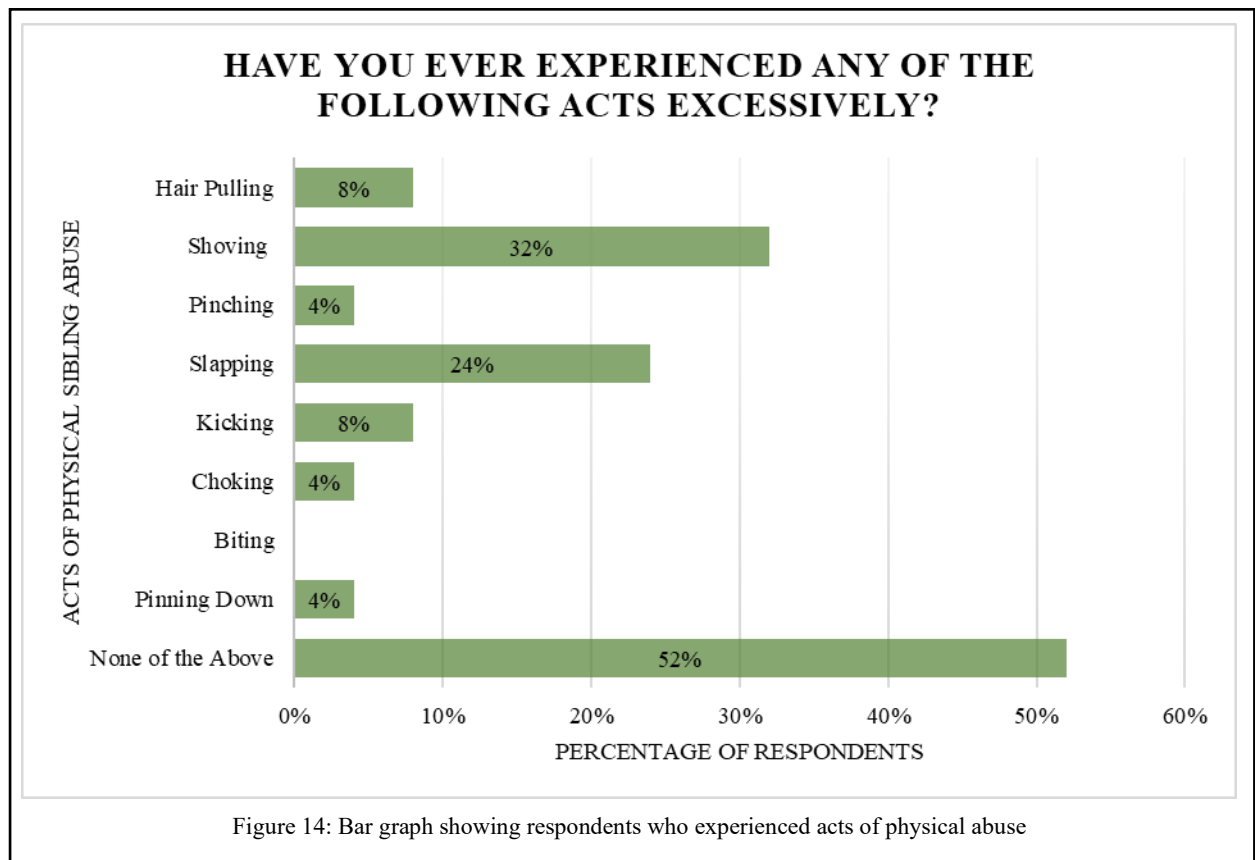


Figure 11 shows the majority (52%) never experienced acts of physical abuse, which included biting. Nevertheless, the most commonly experienced act was shoving (32%), followed by slapping (24%), hair pulling and kicking (8%) and pinching, choking and pinning down (4%).

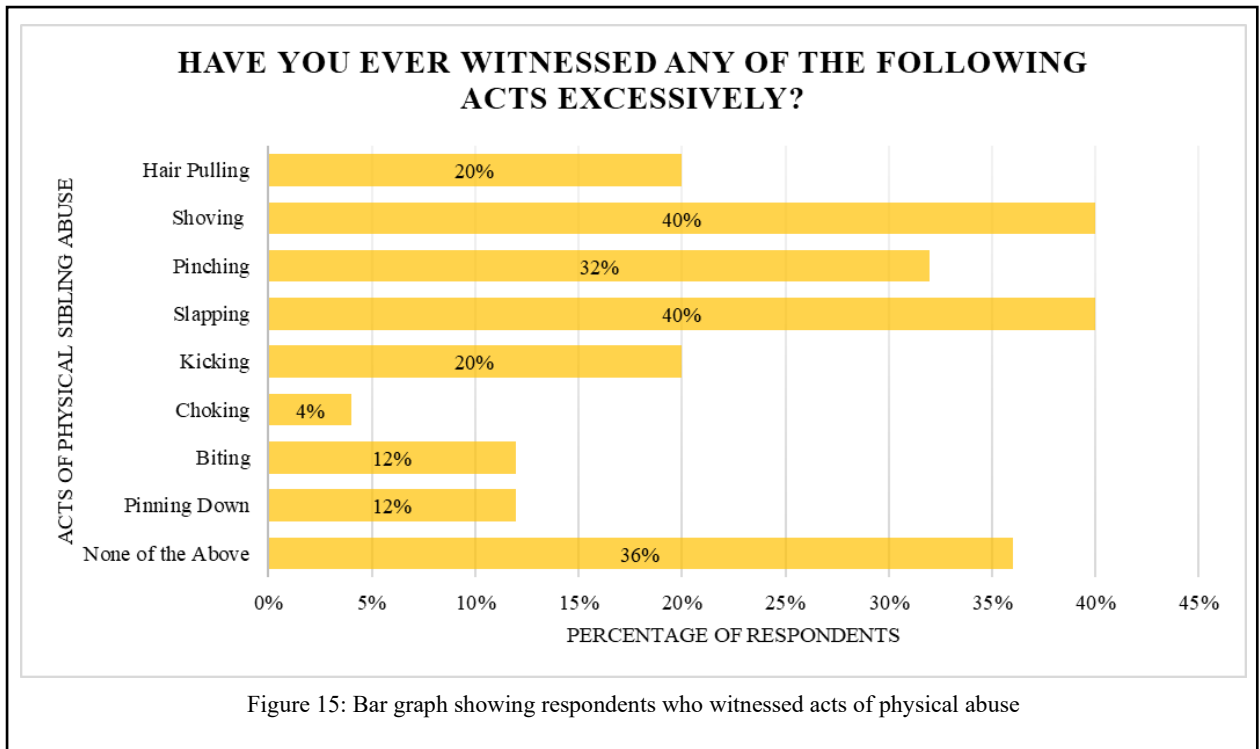


Figure 12 shows that shoving and slapping were the most commonly observed acts (40%) among respondents. Other common acts included pinching (32%), kicking and hair pulling (20%) while less common acts were biting and pinning down (12%) and choking (4%). Conversely, 36% never witnessed any of these acts.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIRTH ORDER AND
ROLE IN PHYSICAL SIBLING ABUSE**

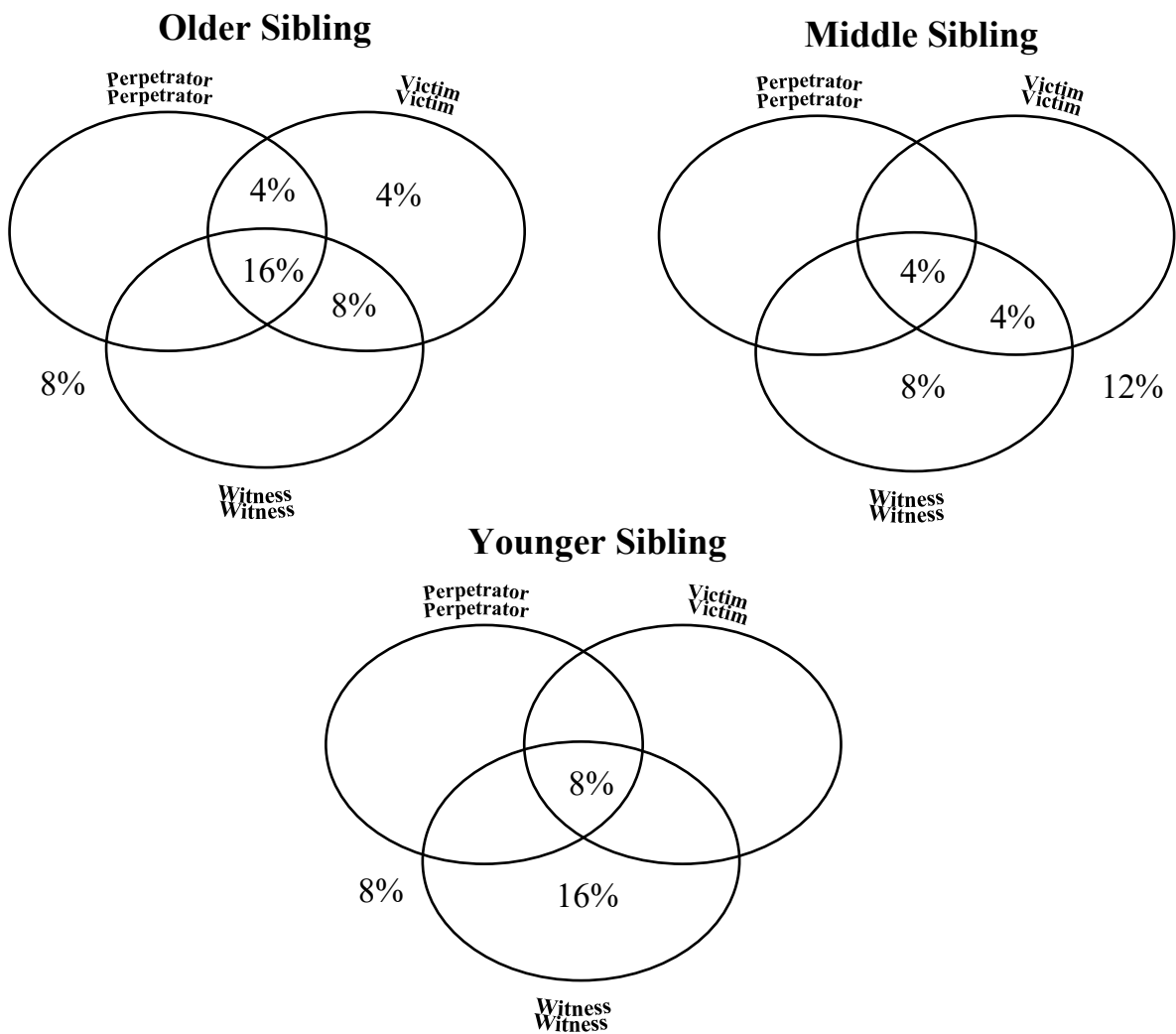


Figure 16: Venn diagrams illustrating the birth order and role in physical sibling abuse among respondents

Figure 13 outlines the relationship between birth order and role in physical sibling abuse. Among respondents who were older siblings, 16% were victims, perpetrators and witnesses simultaneously, 8% were victims and witnesses, 4% were perpetrators and victims and 4% were victims only while 8% played none of the three roles. Of the middle siblings, 12% filled none of the roles while 8% were witness only, 4% were victims and witnesses and 4% played all three roles. Lastly, among younger siblings, 16% were witnesses and 8% played all three roles while 8% played none.

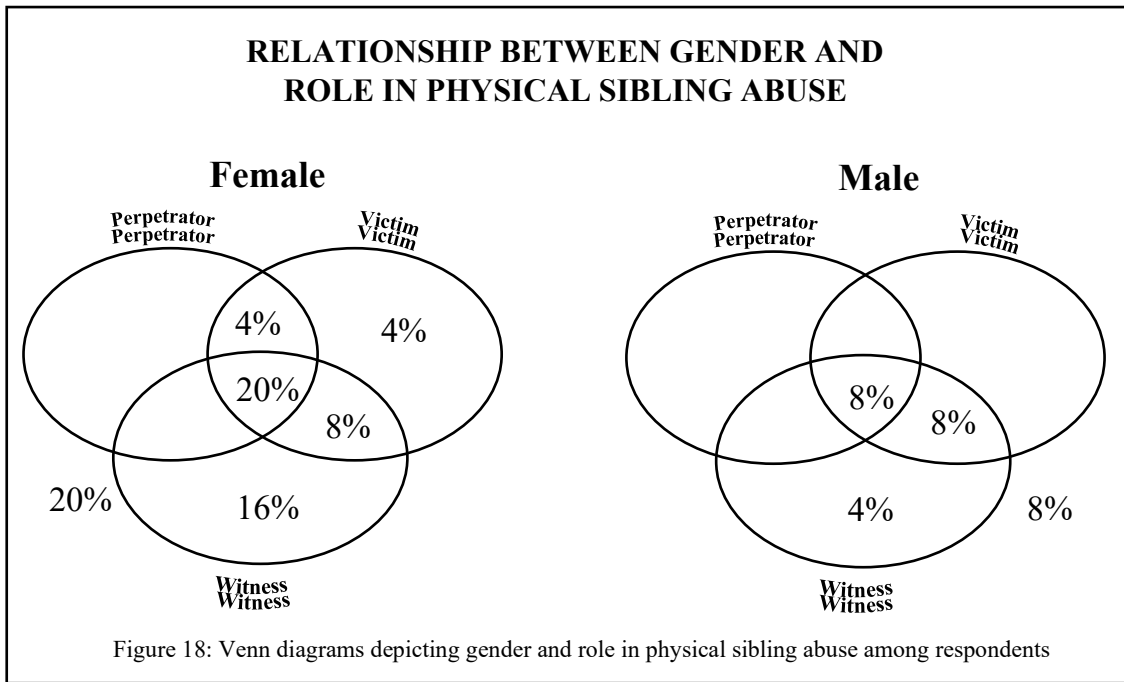


Figure 14 outlines the relationship between gender and role in physical sibling abuse. Among female respondents, 20% were victims, perpetrators and witnesses simultaneously, 16% were witnesses only, 8% were victims and witnesses and 4% were both victims and perpetrators and victims only while 20% played none of these roles. Of the male respondents, 8% played all three roles, were victims and witnesses while 4% were witnesses only while 8% played none of the roles.

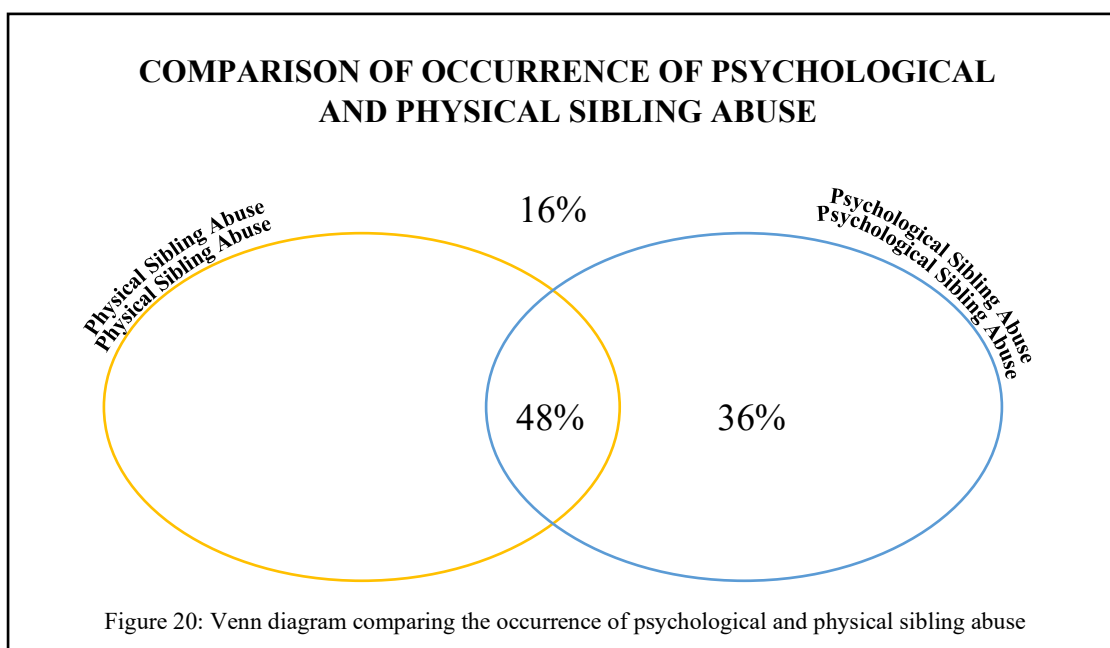


Figure 15 shows 48% of respondents were involved in both psychological and physical sibling abuse, 36% in psychological sibling abuse only and 16% in neither.

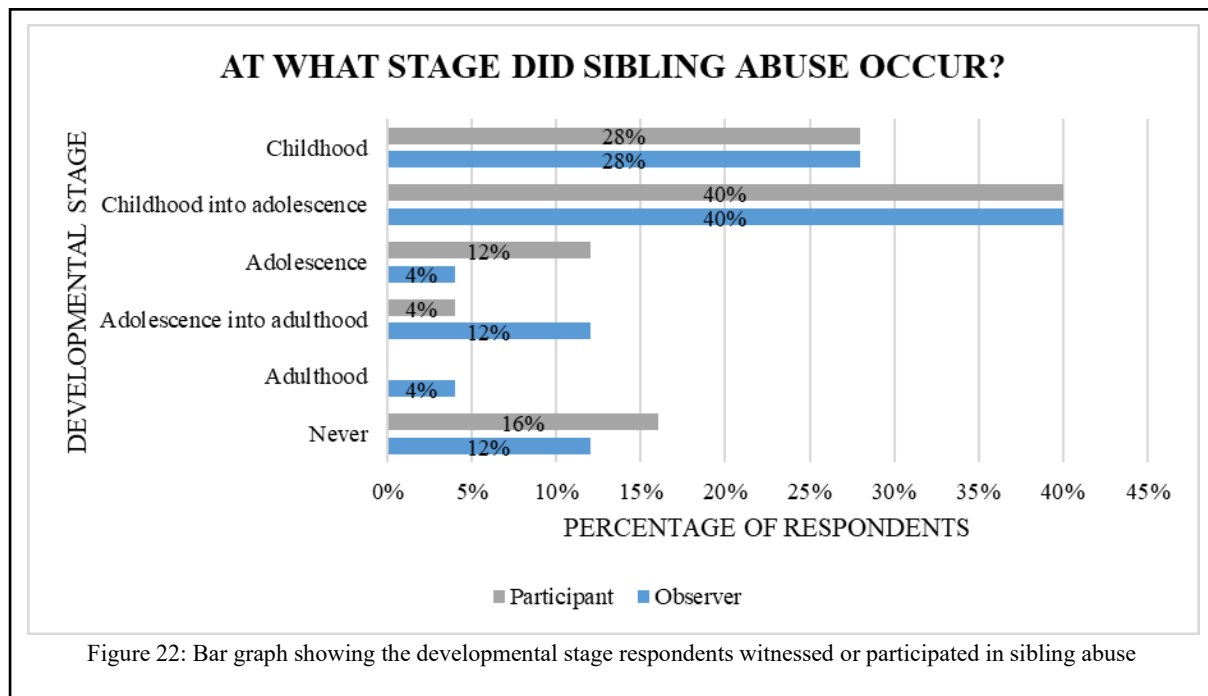


Figure 16 shows that sibling abuse occurred most often pre-adulthood, as respondents either participated in or observed sibling violence during the transitional period between childhood and adolescence (40%) and childhood (28%). 12% of respondents were involved in sibling abuse during adolescence and 4% from adolescence into adulthood while 16% were never involved in this dynamic. Contrastingly, 4% of respondents witnessed sibling abuse occurring between adolescent siblings, 12% from adolescence into adulthood and 4% between adult siblings while 12% never witnessed sibling violence.

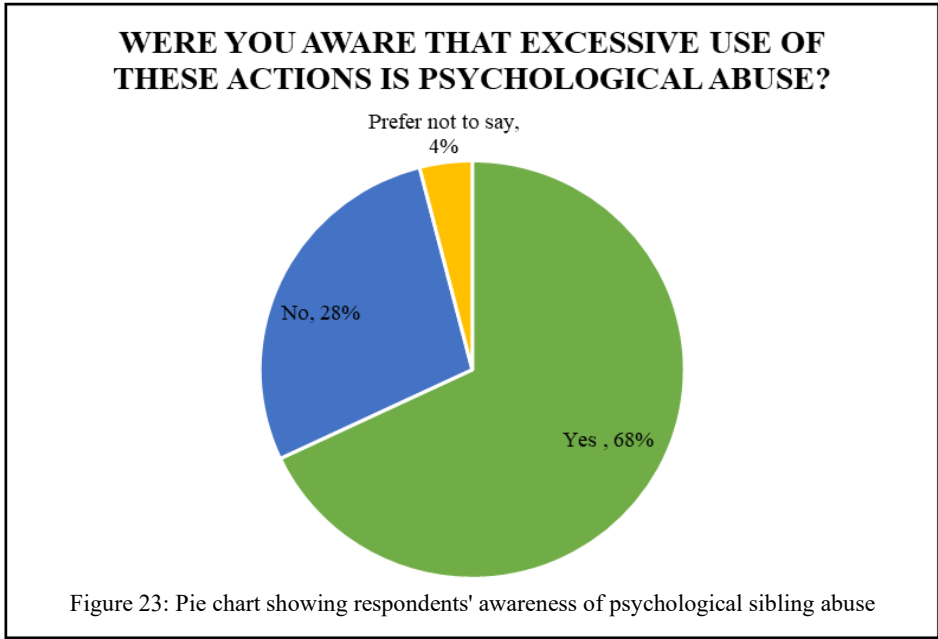


Figure 17 reveals that 68% of respondents knew the acts outlined in Figures 4-6 were psychologically abusive while 28% did not know and 4% preferred not to say.

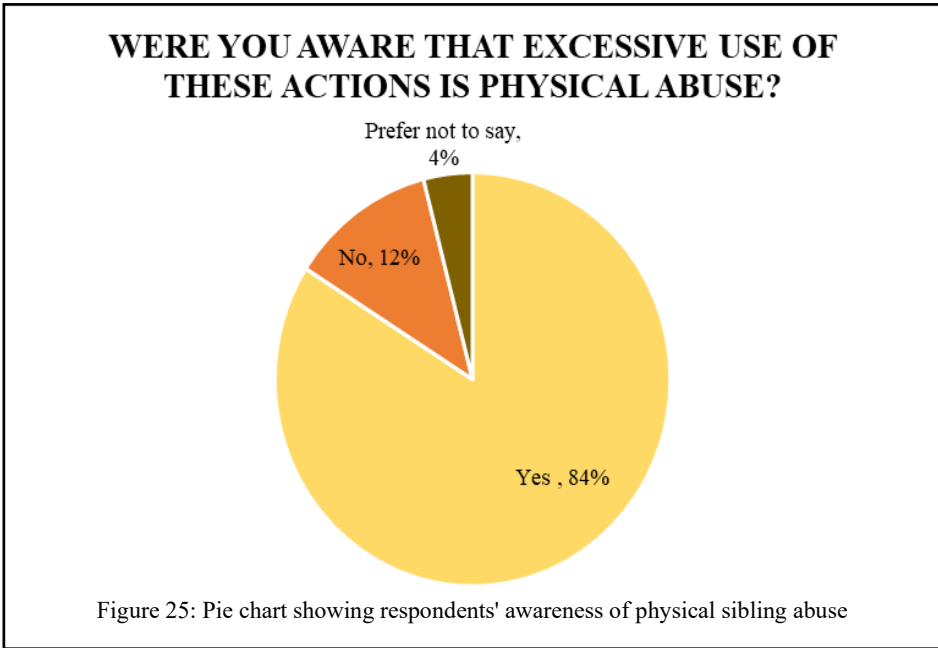


Figure 18 illustrates that 84% of respondents knew the acts outlined in Figures 10-12 were physically abusive while 12% did not know and 4% preferred not to say.

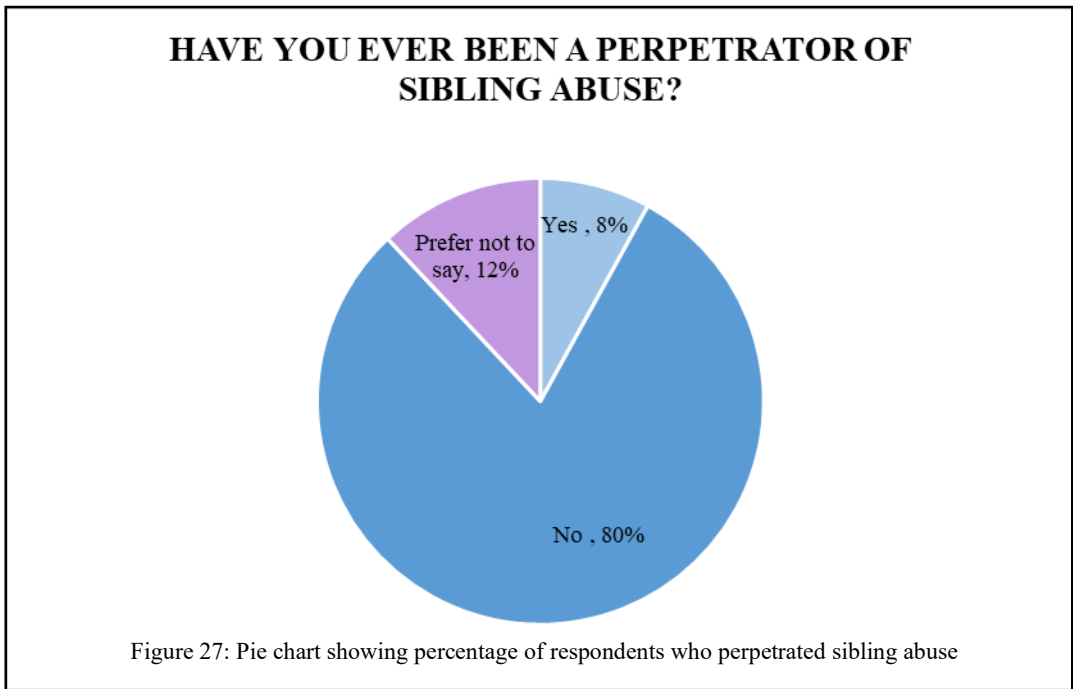


Figure 19 shows the majority (80%) of respondents did not view themselves as perpetrators of sibling abuse while 12% preferred not to say and 8% did believe they had perpetrated sibling abuse.

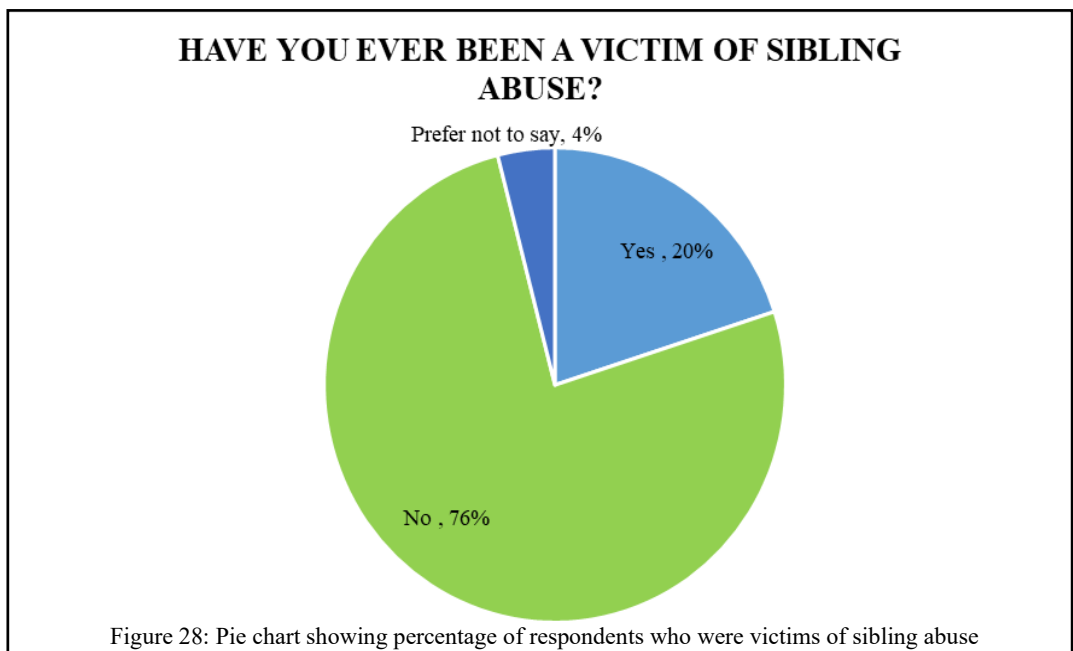


Figure 20 reveals the majority (76%) of respondents did not view themselves as victims of sibling abuse while 20% did and 4% preferred not to say.

Sample Population of Questionnaire Respondents

The investigator obtained responses largely from female young adults who were older siblings although there were a few male respondents and a variety of older, middle and younger siblings as well. Notwithstanding, the perspectives of female school counsellors, teachers and other family members, such as cousins and parents, were gathered.

Scope of Psychological Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

It is evident from the gathered responses that psychological sibling abuse is prevalent in Trinidad as the majority of respondents had committed, experienced and witnessed these acts excessively, with the most frequent being insults, provocation and humiliation. According to the primary data, female, older siblings played all three roles of perpetrator, victim and witness most often. However, this data could be skewed as the majority of respondents were female, older siblings. Thus, secondary data is referenced to gain a more generalized understanding.

Firstly, Mohammed slightly contradicts primary data as her account involved a male, older sibling perpetrating psychological abuse on their female, younger sibling (appendix F) while CADV's three cases involved all male perpetrators and two-thirds female victims (appendix E) although no specific information was provided on the birth order of perpetrators and victims as CADV's data was victim-focused. Secondly, CAPA's data both supports and negates primary findings. CAPA grouped cases of psychological sibling abuse under two categories: threats and malicious damage, or the intentional destruction of sibling's property. Among the reported cases of "assaults & beatings/threats", 52% had female perpetrators while 48% had male perpetrators. Contrastingly, the majority (61%) of perpetrators of malicious damage were male and 39% were female (appendix B). Once more, CAPA lacked data on the birth order of perpetrators because their data was perpetrator-focused. Thus,

although the data is inconclusive on the relationship between gender, birth order and the tendency to perpetrate psychological sibling abuse, it is evident that this form of abuse is widespread.

Scope of Physical Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

Comparably, physical sibling abuse in Trinidad appears quite rampant as the majority of respondents witnessed these acts, particularly, slapping, shoving and pinching. Most respondents had also fought with their siblings, however, only a few admitted to either committing or experiencing physically abusive acts in excess, which suggests that these fights were singular or rare occurrences. Additionally, some discrepancies appeared in the responses of Respondent A, a younger, female sibling. While Respondent A claimed that she had never physically fought with her sibling, she admitted to committing and experiencing excessive acts of physical sibling abuse, however, it is possible that there was an error in interpretation of the question.

Once more, female, older siblings played all three roles of perpetrator, victim and witness most often. CAPA's data supports the primary findings as female perpetrators predominated reported cases of assaults/beatings and murder over the last three years (appendix B). In fact, only female perpetrators were involved in fatal cases. Overall, there were more cases of female-perpetrated physical sibling abuse, although more male perpetrators caused bodily harm to their sibling, with the use of a firearm, i.e. shooting, or without, i.e. malicious wounding. In contrast, CADV (appendix E) and Mohammed's data (appendix F) involved physical sibling abuse where perpetrators were male and victims were mostly female, as aforementioned. Nevertheless, the abundance of cases presented by CAPA (appendix B) in addition to the primary data suggests that, not only is physical sibling abuse widespread in Trinidad, but that this form of abuse tends to be perpetrated by females.

Overview of Psychological and Physical Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

The gathered data clearly shows that psychological and physical sibling abuse is prevalent in Trinidad with a tendency for female-perpetrated abuse, particularly, of the physical kind. Furthermore, a comparison of physical and psychological sibling abuse shows that while some respondents were only involved in the latter, physical sibling abuse never occurred without psychological sibling abuse, which suggests that the latter triggers the former. Thus, greater awareness could prevent the occurrence of severe and, even, fatal cases of physical sibling abuse.

Furthermore, the majority of questionnaire respondents stated that they both engaged in and witnessed these abusive dynamics among siblings predominantly from childhood into adolescence. In contrast, the personal account, given by Mohammed (appendix F), involved two adolescent siblings while the three cases, recorded by CADV (appendix E), involved adult clients. Similarly, the data provided by CAPA (appendix C, D) revealed that sibling abuse occurred across all developmental stages, with the greatest cases of psychological and physical abuse occurring among adults, specifically those between 30-39 years. This data further highlights the epidemic occurrence of sibling abuse, particularly in adulthood.

Awareness of Psychological and Physical Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

Most respondents knew that the acts they committed, experienced or witnessed were psychological and physical abuse. Notably, respondents who were aware of psychological abuse included four individuals who were never perpetrators or victims of psychological sibling abuse but had witnessed this form of abuse, which suggests that cognizance of these abusive acts reduces the likelihood of committing them. On the other hand, the respondent who inflicted, suffered and witnessed the greatest variety of psychologically abusive acts

deemed not to answer this question directly. A number of inferences can be made about this decision, such as guilt, denial or confusion.

Despite their involvement in and awareness of sibling abuse, the majority of respondents did not consider themselves victims nor perpetrators of this form of family violence while a small percentage preferred not to say. Again, this information suggests that respondents may feel guilt, denial or confusion as they can acknowledge from a general viewpoint that these acts were abuse but not in the context of their personal relationships.

On the other hand, CAPA confounded threats, i.e. a form of psychological abuse, with assaults/beatings, i.e. a form of physical abuse. This misclassification impedes accurate representation of sibling abuse in official reports and can also explain the inundation of this category of offence, which was the most common over the three-year period, as it really accounts for two different forms of abuse.

CHAPTER 2: Causes of Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

Presentation of Data

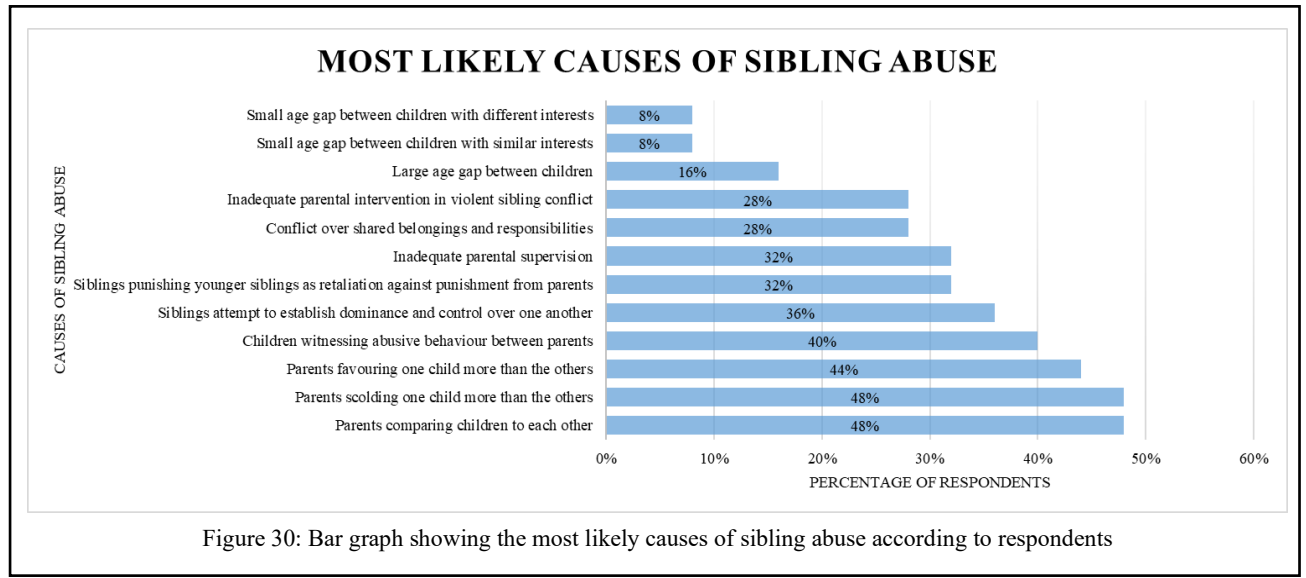
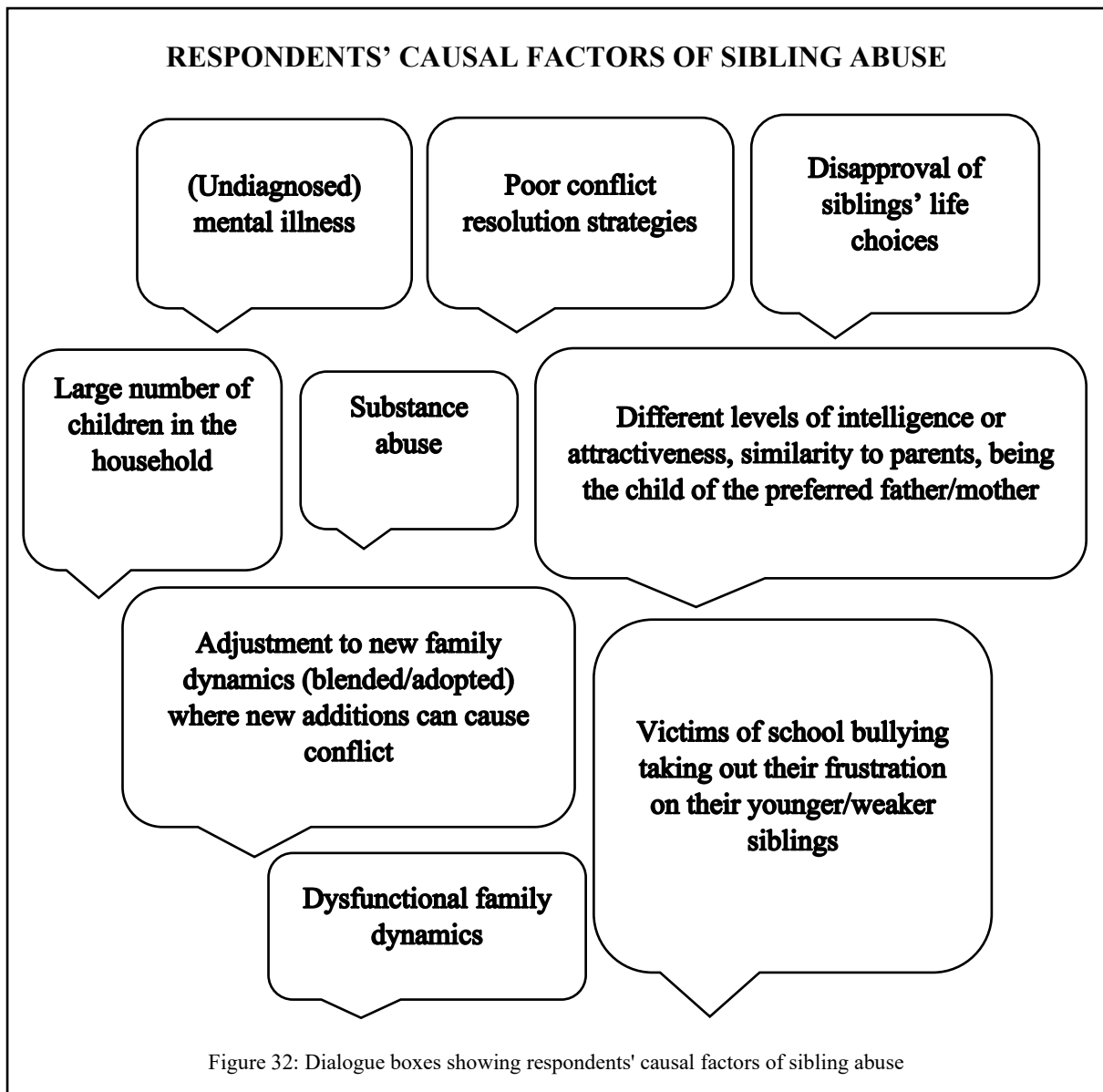


Figure 30: Bar graph showing the most likely causes of sibling abuse according to respondents

Figure 21 shows that the majority of respondents agreed that preferential treatment by parents is a leading cause of sibling abuse, as 48% said parents making comparisons among children or scolding one specific child constantly would result in sibling violence while 44% claimed that parents favouring one specific child constantly would lead to conflict. 40% believed sibling violence stemmed from modelling observed abusive behaviour among parents, 36% from attempting to dominate or control, 32% from retaliating against parental punishment and another 32% from having inadequate parental supervision. According to respondents, the least likely causes of sibling abuse were conflict over shared belongings and responsibilities (28%), inadequate parental intervention (28%), large age gaps (16%) and small age gaps, regardless of whether siblings possess similar or different interests (8%).



Respondents also suggested additional causes of sibling abuse, which included substance abuse, (undiagnosed) mental illness, poor conflict resolution, disapproval of siblings' life choices, adjustment to new family dynamics and victims of school bullying who become perpetrators of sibling violence out of frustration and hurt. Respondents also suggested causes such as a large number of children in the household, different levels of intelligence/ attractiveness, similarity to parents, and instances where the primary caregiver prefers one child's parent to the other.

IS SIBLING VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY AMONG OLDER BROTHER-YOUNGER SISTER DYADS?

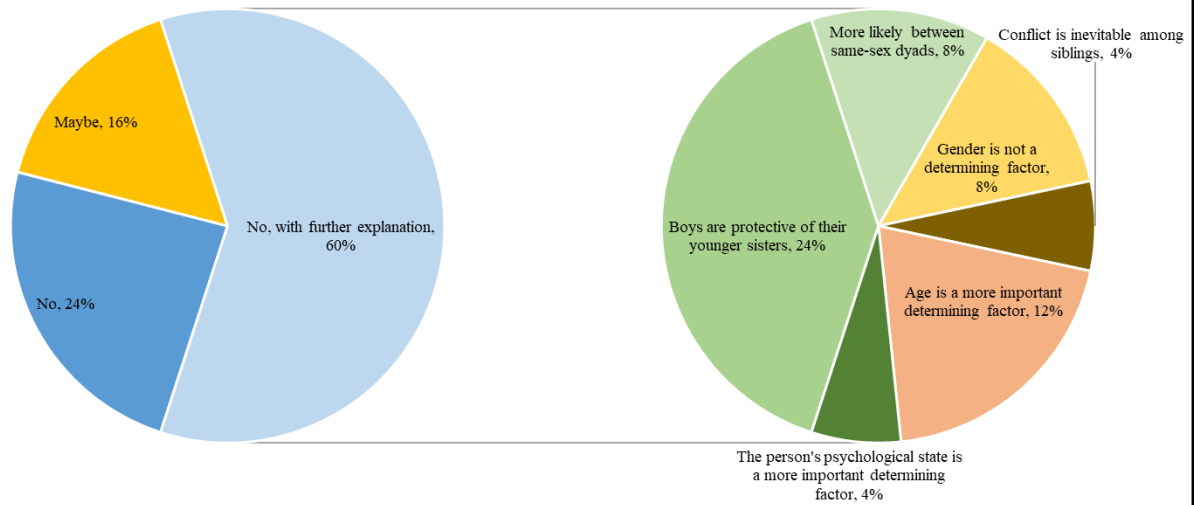


Figure 33: Pie of pie chart showing respondents' views on a main proposition of the feminist theory

Figure 23 shows that none of the respondents believed that sibling abuse is more likely between older brother-younger sister dyads. 16% admitted that abuse may occur in this dynamic while the remaining 88% denied all possibility, with 60% stating various reasons: 24% said that boys tend to be more protective of their younger sisters rather than abusive, 12% claimed that age is a more important factor than gender while 8% said gender was generally an unimportant factor. In contrast, just as many respondents stated that abuse was more probable among same-sex sibling dyads. Lastly, 4% suggested conflict is inevitable among siblings and another 4% that one's psychological state is a better determining factor.

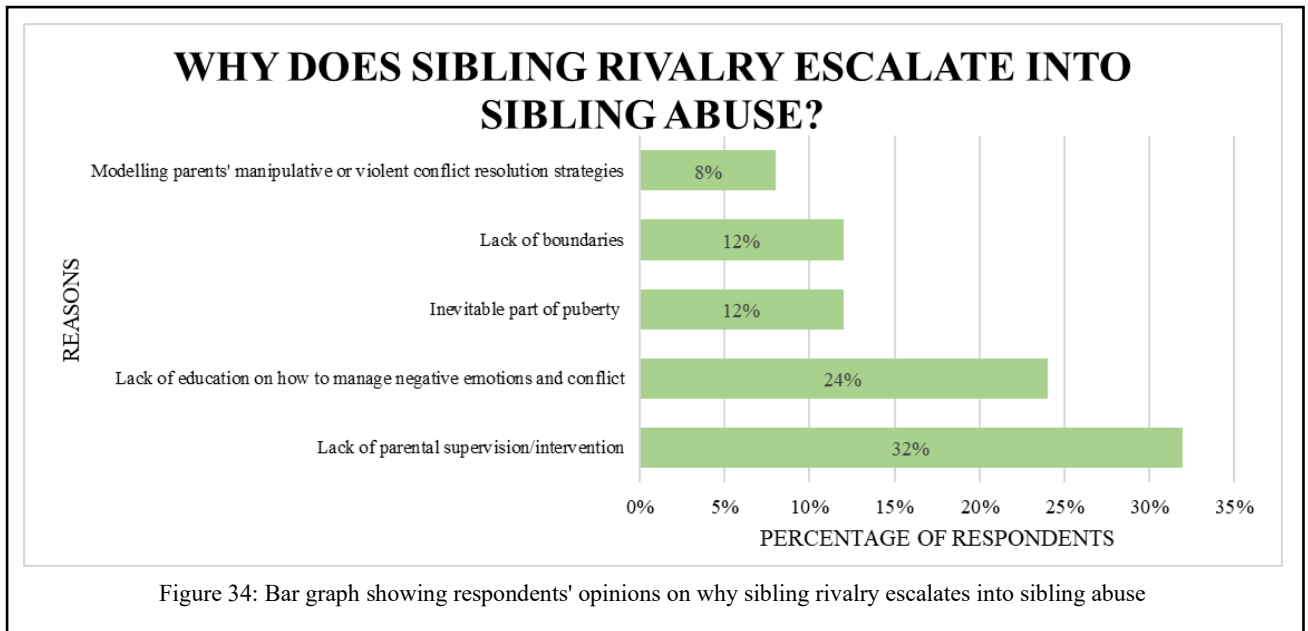
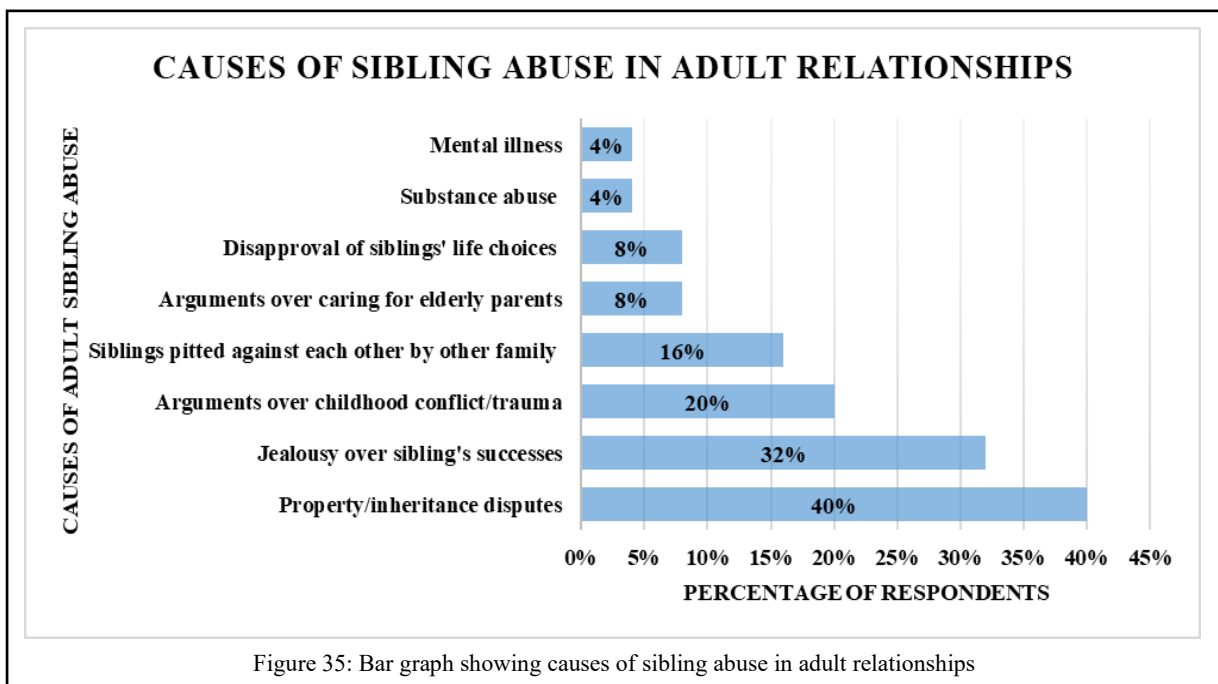


Figure 24 reveals the respondents' opinions on why sibling rivalry escalates into abuse. The majority (36%) agreed that abuse results from accumulated tension between siblings, 32% blamed parents' inadequate supervision and intervention while 24% said insufficient knowledge on emotional management and conflict resolution. 12% claimed this was an inevitable part of puberty, another 12% attributed abuse to a lack of boundaries and 8% said children modelled observed (violent or manipulative) conflict resolution strategies.



Respondents suggested probable causes of abuse among adult siblings, where leading factors were property/inheritance disputes (40%), jealousy (32%) and past trauma (20%). Other factors included conflict instigated by other family (16%) and disagreements over parents' geriatric care (8%) while previously suggested causes such as mental illness (4%), substance abuse (4%) and disapproval of siblings' life choices (8%) were restated.

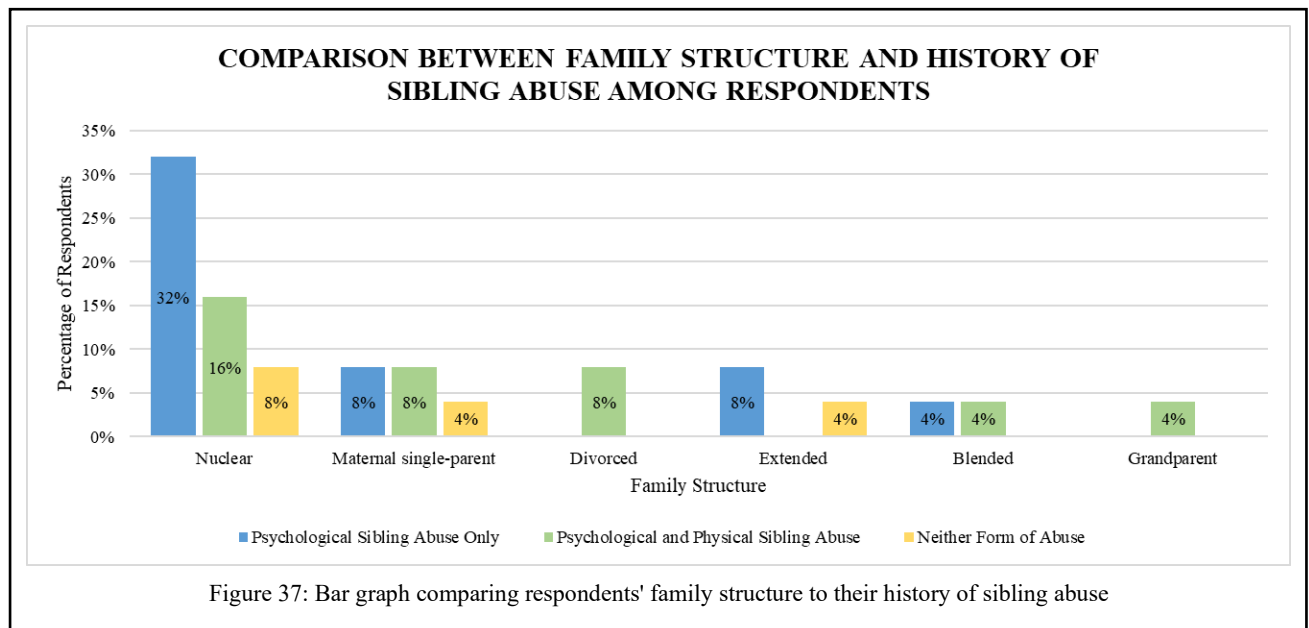


Figure 26 shows the relationship between the respondents' family structures and the occurrence of sibling abuse. Psychological sibling abuse happened in nuclear (32%), single-mother and extended (8%) and blended (4%) family types while both psychological and physical sibling abuse occurred in nuclear (16%), single-mother and divorced (8%) and blended and grandparent (4%) households. In contrast, non-abusive sibling relationships developed in nuclear (8%), single-mother and extended (4%) family structures.

Analysis of Data

To begin, the respondents' views largely aligned with the literature review's findings on the causal factors of sibling abuse. In particular, respondents agreed with the conflict theory, where sibling abuse is generated from competition for parents' attention and approval.

Further, respondents demonstrated a fundamental understanding of the motives behind sibling abuse as they suggested circumstances that were not even considered by secondary sources, such as numerous children, new additions to the household (in adopted or blended families), different levels of intelligence or attractiveness among children, similarities to parents and being the offspring of the primary caregiver's preferred partner. These factors may either limit parents' ability to supervise all children sufficiently or lead to favouritism, which can foster sibling conflict as Caffaro and Hoffman and Edwards outlined. Diaz also elaborates that sibling abuse may arise out of cultural tendencies to avoid these difficult conflicts. Thus, it can be inferred that causal factors can be internal, external and, even, catalysts to other factors.

Moreover, respondents suggested (undiagnosed) mental illness or substance abuse, which is corroborated by CADV's data (appendix E) and Mohammed's personal account (appendix F) respectively. Alexis elaborated further on the latter, theorizing that individuals could attempt to regulate emotions, like anger, through alcohol and drug consumption, however, some of these vices could amplify emotions, thus, exacerbating the issue.

Then, respondents' suggested that victims of school bullying and individuals who disagree with their siblings' life choices can become perpetrators of sibling abuse. From the feminist perspective, the former can be perceived as an attempt to establish dominance when the individual feels powerless while the latter is an attempt to re-establish control over another's actions. Although some causal factors support the feminist theory, all respondents refuted Yu and Gamble & Hoffman and Edwards' proposition that older brother-younger sister dyads are most susceptible to physical sibling abuse. Some respondents described conflict as "inevitable" among siblings regardless of gender or age. On the other hand, according to most respondents who elaborated on their answer, older brothers are more

protective of their younger sisters rather than abusive. Alexis adds that the siblings' environment may be a better determinant than gender. Furthermore, CAPA's data (appendix B) revealed that 52% of perpetrators of sibling abuse were female, which included all fatal cases of sibling abuse reported within the last three years. Conversely, some local secondary sources do support Yu and Gamble & Hoffman and Edwards' theory, such as CADV's cases of sibling abuse (appendix E) where all perpetrators were male and victims were mostly female together with Mohammed's account (appendix F) where abuse occurred between an older brother-younger sister dyad. Alexis also surmised that control and over-involvement, which can lead to psychological abuse, can be misinterpreted as protectiveness in these particular relationships.

In her interview, Alexis ascertained that many Trinidadians misconstrue sibling abuse as "rivalry" that can be resolved among siblings, or "necessary" as siblings learn important life skills, such as resilience and strength, through these fights. While a few respondents verified Alexis' comment by describing the escalation of rivalry into abuse among siblings as "an inevitable part of puberty", the majority of respondents' suggestions correlated with the views of Kiselica and Morrill Richards, Caffaro and Yu and Gamble. Respondents further specified the previously overlooked factor of established boundaries, which would reduce competition for shared resources and, thus, moderate sibling conflict. The insightful responses of the majority of respondents continue to indicate a significant comprehension of the genesis of sibling abuse.

While all online secondary sources investigated sibling abuse solely within the context of children and adolescents, all local secondary sources documented abuse, particularly severe or fatal cases, that occurred in adulthood. Thus, this researcher gathered primary data on this under-explored subtopic to reduce this gap in the literature. Firstly,

respondents speculated on the causes of adult sibling abuse, with the majority suggesting property/inheritance disputes as the leading factor. This supposition is substantiated by CADV's data (appendix E), where all three cases of sibling abuse were rooted in property disputes. Others agreed factors, such as mental illness, substance abuse and differing moral principles, could provoke sibling abuse at any developmental stage while other reasons included jealousy, conflict instigated by past trauma, other family, or contention over parents' geriatric care. Admittedly, there is no further secondary data to support much of the causal factors surmised by questionnaire respondents; therefore, these suppositions remain mere hypotheses and require further quantitative data.

Another factor that could have little impact on the probability of sibling abuse is the family structure as both types of sibling abuse occurred in multiple family structures, including nuclear, single-mother, divorced, blended and grandparent households. Mohammed's account also involved siblings living in a single-mother household. However, some respondents who lived in similar households never experienced sibling abuse.

In summary, although some respondents attempted to normalize the occurrence of sibling abuse, the majority exhibited a profound grasp of its causes, which multiple secondary sources supported in the literature review. Further, some tenets of the feminist theory may hold little weight within the context of Trinidad, as the most violent cases of sibling abuse were female-perpetrated; however, power struggles occurred between siblings, regardless of gender. In contrast, the conflict theory is quite applicable to Trinidadian siblings as competition for limited resources was a leading cause, according to respondents and most respondents also understood the distinction between sibling rivalry and abuse. Lastly, future research can prove or disprove respondents' theories on the genesis of sibling abuse in

adulthood, of which there are numerous, local cases, and further explore the relationship between family structure and the likelihood of the occurrence of sibling abuse.

CHAPTER 3: Effects of Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

Presentation of Data

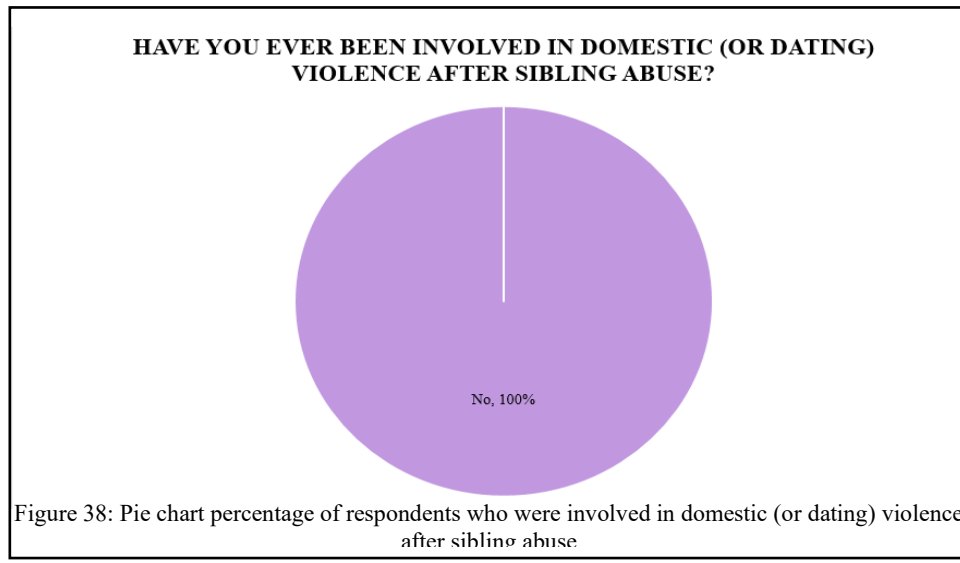


Figure 27 reveals that none of the respondents was perpetrators or victims of domestic (or dating) violence after any involvement in sibling abuse.

HOW DID YOU FEEL AS A WITNESS TO SIBLING ABUSE?	
<i>Response</i>	<i>Percentage of Respondents</i>
Sad	32%
Upset/disappointed in parents	16%
Neutral because viewed violence as a normal part of the sibling relationship	12%
Scared	8%
Uncomfortable	8%
Worried/concerned	8%
Compelled to correct the abuse as the oldest sibling	4%
Helpless as the youngest sibling	4%
Annoyed (with the perpetrator)	4%

Laughed as experiences of abuse were related in a joking manner	4%
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Table 1 showing effects of sibling abuse on witnesses

Table 1 reveals that respondents had a plethora of reactions as witnesses to sibling abuse. Most respondents experienced negative feelings such as sadness (32%), disappointment in parents (16%), fear, discomfort and worry (8%), together with helplessness and annoyance with the perpetrator (4%). Meanwhile, other respondents were neutral as they believed violence normally occurred in the sibling relationship (12%), some were compelled to correct the abusive behaviour (4%) and others laughed as the abuse was related as a joke (4%).

DO YOU THINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SIBLING HAS AFFECTED YOUR VIEW OF YOURSELF?	
<i>Response</i>	<i>Percentage of Respondents</i>
No	52%
Yes, negatively affected my self-esteem	20%
Maybe	8%
Yes, I see myself as a protector and role model	8%
Yes, I see myself as wicked and manipulative and I feel guilty towards my siblings	4%
Yes like all core relationships	4%
Yes, positively affected my self-esteem	4%

Table 2 showing effects of sibling relationship on self-perception

Table 2 illustrates respondents' views on how the sibling relationship influenced their self-perception. The majority (52%) believed this bond had no impact on their self-view while 8% were undecided. However, some (8%) believed that, as a core relationship, this bond inevitably influenced their self-image. Positive impacts included feeling like a protector and role model (8%) and higher self-esteem (4%). Inversely, negative impacts included lower self-esteem (20%) and feeling wicked, manipulative and guilty (4%).

DO YOU THINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SIBLING HAS AFFECTED OTHER RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUR LIFE?	
<i>Response</i>	<i>Percentage of Respondents</i>
No	52%
Yes, healthy communication and conflict resolution methods manifested in adult relationships	12%
Maybe affected relationship with parents as there was favouritism	8%
Yes like all core relationships	8%
Created conflict with other family members, e.g. disputes with parents over treatment of younger siblings	8%
Developed a warm and caring disposition with everyone as the oldest sibling	4%
Developed trust issues	4%
Developed people-pleasing tendencies	4%

Table 3 showing the effect of sibling bond on other relationships

Table 3 shows the respondents' opinions on how the sibling relationship affected other relationships in their life. The majority (52%) believed that sibling relationship had no effect on other dynamics while 8% admitted that, perhaps, parental favouritism impacted their bond with their parents. Conversely, some believed that this core relationship affected other relationships both negatively and positively. Positive impacts included healthy communication and conflict resolution methods (12%) along with a congenial disposition (4%) while negative impacts included conflict with other family members (8%) and development of trust issues and people-pleasing tendencies (4%).

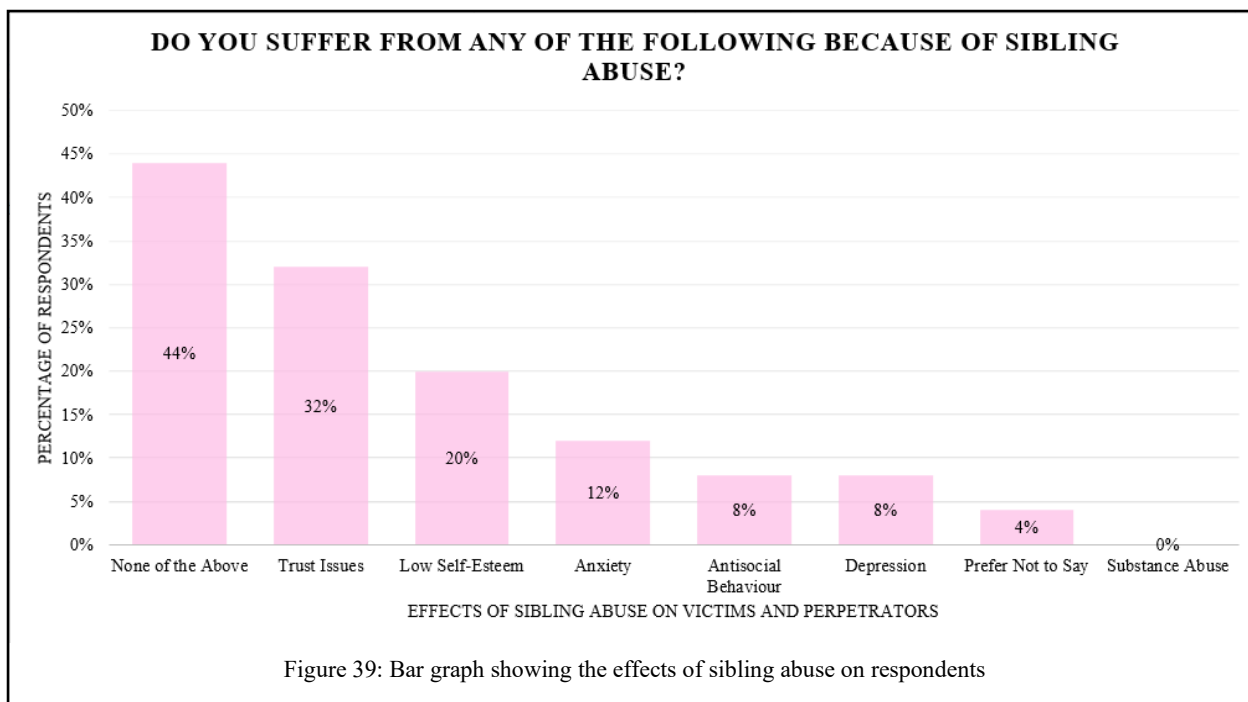


Figure 28 illustrates that some respondents suffered from trust issues (32%), low self-esteem (20%), anxiety (12%), antisocial behaviour and depression (8%) while 4% did not answer directly and 44% experienced none of these effects.

DOES SUSTAINED CHILDHOOD CONFLICT AFFECT ADULT SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS?	
<i>Response</i>	<i>Percentage of Respondents</i>
Yes, learned behaviour and patterns will continue to manifest in adulthood conflicts if siblings do not change	36%
Siblings can become estranged	28%
Dependent on whether the siblings can mature and learn to resolve conflict in healthier ways	12%
No	12%
Siblings can lose trust in each other	12%
Siblings can lose respect for each other	8%
Siblings can grow closer because of these violent childhood conflicts and laugh about them as adults	4%

Table 4 showing the effects of childhood sibling abuse on adult sibling relationship

Table 4 shows the respondents' views on how recurrent childhood conflict can affect adult sibling relationships. 12% believed that childhood conflict had no effect on adult sibling relationships while an equal amount claimed the answer was dependent on the siblings' ability to learn better conflict resolution strategies as adults. However, the majority believed that childhood conflict could influence these dynamics both negatively and positively. Negative impacts included learned patterns persisting into adulthood (36%), estrangement (28%) and loss of trust (12%) and respect (8%) while positive impacts included strengthening of the sibling relationship (4%).

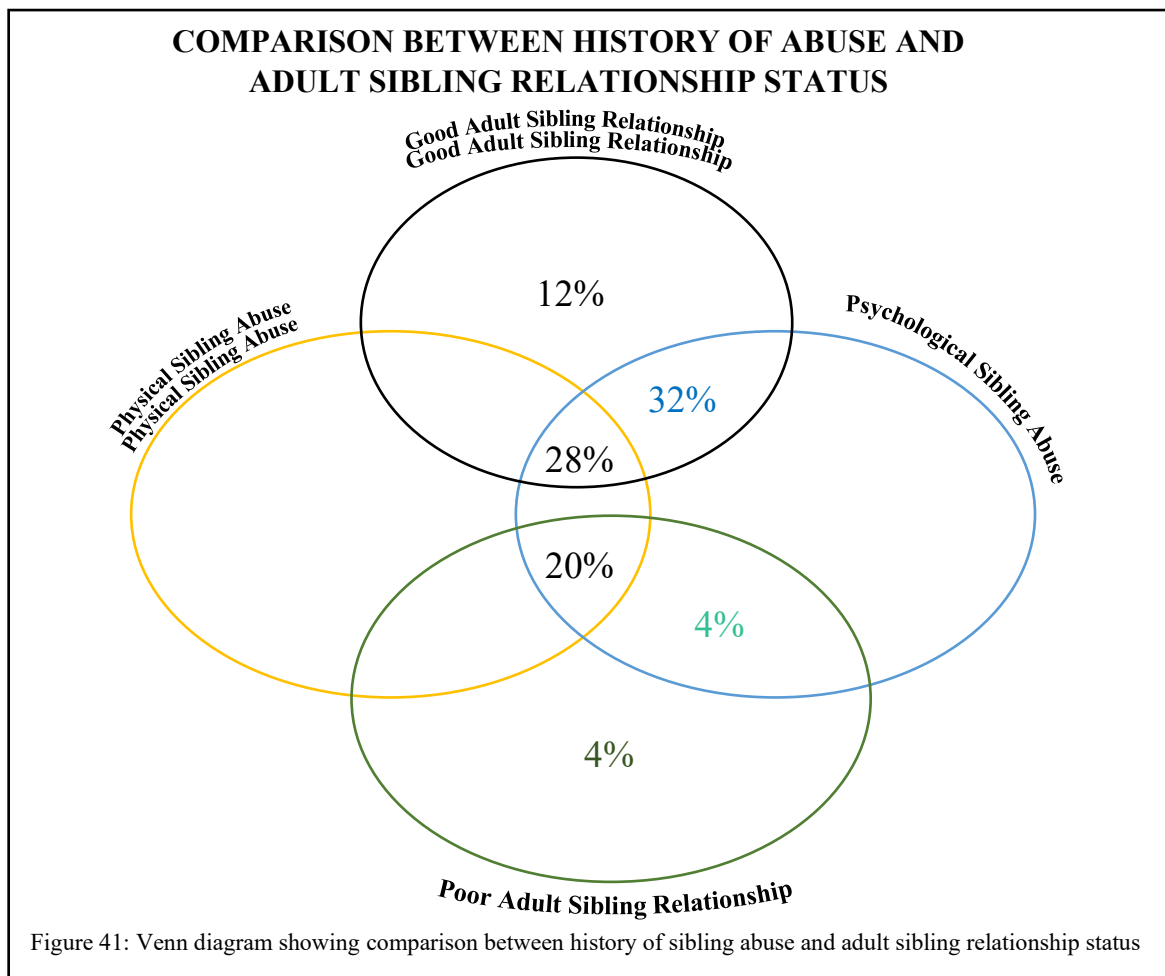


Figure 29 shows that the majority (72%) of respondents have good adult relationships with their siblings, whether no sibling abuse occurred (12%) or whether psychological abuse (32%) and, further, physical abuse (28%) occurred. On the other hand, 4% of respondents had

poor adult relationships with their siblings, despite having no history of sibling abuse, while psychological abuse occurred in 4% of cases and, further, physical abuse occurred in 20% of cases where siblings currently had poor adult relationships.

Analysis of Data

The plausible effects of sibling abuse on victims, perpetrators and witnesses were explored. Firstly, concerning the victim, Alexis lists physical effects (bruises) and emotional effects (low self-esteem and trust issues) which corresponds with Caffaro and Hoffman's arguments. She further adds that victims may retaliate, isolate themselves from relatives or feel neglected or abandoned if the abuse is ignored. According to Diaz, another consequence of unaddressed violence is gradual resentment. Conversely, Antoine-Dunne suggests that, instead of animosity, victims, especially those who became "surrogate parents", may feel obligated responsibility and altruism towards their siblings. She also adds that victims have a higher probability of involvement in domestic violence, which aligns with Yu and Gamble's arguments. Saliently, however, none of the questionnaire respondents experienced this form of abuse subsequent to sibling violence. Further, interviewees did not consider life-altering effects noted by Kiselica and Morrill-Richards, such as developmental delays and suicidal ideation, which demonstrate how dire the effects of sibling abuse can be.

Secondly, Alexis lists effects such as delinquency, high probability of victimizing future partners and substance abuse as effects on perpetrators while Antoine-Dunne mentions conduct disorders and antisocial behaviour, which align with Kiselica and Morrill-Richards & Yu and Gamble's findings. Further, Mohammed's account provides evidence that perpetrators continue abusive behaviours in other relationships. Although it is a severe effect, developmental delays in perpetrators were also overlooked by primary sources.

Thirdly, as witnesses, respondents experienced mostly negative reactions towards perpetrators, parents or the abuse itself. On the other hand, those who had somewhat positive or neutral reactions misperceived sibling abuse as “normal”, which highlights the under-acknowledged severity of this issue. Further, older siblings within the household may feel obligated to intervene and discipline the sibling dyad as evidenced by one respondent’s experience. Inversely, Alexis surmises that other relatives may avoid the household with sibling abuse, especially relatives who fear abuse or poor influence on their own dependents.

Few respondents believed the sibling relationship influenced their self-perception. Notwithstanding, among the minority, low self-esteem was a dominant effect. Conversely, respondents also cited positive impacts on their self-image, such as high self-esteem, despite the occurrence of sibling abuse. In particular, older siblings who both perpetrated and experienced psychological sibling abuse viewed themselves as protectors and role models, which marginally supports Antoine-Dunne’s views that victims are conditioned to nurture their siblings.

Similarly, few respondents believed the sibling relationship impacted other relationships. Among this minority, the dominant effect was positive, i.e. the learnt skill of communication and conflict resolution transferring to other relationships while others stated sibling conflict led to general trust issues, people-pleasing tendencies and strained the parent bond. Alexis also theorizes that, as parents, survivors of sibling abuse can be either permissive or hyper-vigilant of abuse between their children depending on their positive or negative view of its effects. Notwithstanding, both approaches can exacerbate sibling abuse as abusive acts can intensify with no intervention while over-involvement in sibling conflict can lead to differential treatment of children and, still, trigger sibling abuse.

Conversely, it is noteworthy that the majority of respondents then admitted to suffering from trust issues, low self-esteem, anxiety, antisocial behaviour and depression subsequent to sibling abuse, when prompted. This is in contrast to the handful who mentioned some effects voluntarily, which suggests that, when the information is provided and further consideration given, respondents can identify the effects of sibling abuse on their intra- and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, respondents explored the effects of sibling abuse between adult siblings. The majority agreed that sustained childhood conflict would influence the adult sibling relationship, in mostly negative ways, as abusive childhood patterns would persist and intensify, if conflict remained unaddressed and siblings lacked maturity. Antoine-Dunne and Diaz corroborated these views. Others believed adult sibling relationships could lack connection both physically, through estrangement, and emotionally, through distrust and resentment. However, despite these opinions, the questionnaire's statistical data shows that the majority of respondents currently maintain good sibling relationships in adulthood despite their involvement in childhood sibling abuse. Contrastingly, one respondent was estranged from their stepsiblings in adulthood despite no history of sibling abuse. The former suggests that respondents did mature and ceased abusive dynamics while the latter indicates that childhood abuse may actually have no impact on the adult sibling relationship.

Succinctly, sibling abuse is generally an unpleasant experience for all parties involved, with copious, durable impacts on victims and perpetrators and multiple, brief impacts on witnesses. Initially, most respondents could not identify their sibling bond's effect on their intra- and interpersonal relationships and believed this effect was insubstantial but, when presented with the data, respondents revealed that they suffered all major effects of sibling violence, except substance abuse. Meanwhile, some respondents continued to

normalize the occurrence of sibling abuse. Both instances highlight the need for greater discussion and education on this topic. Conversely, there were some positive effects on internal and external bonds, even after sibling abuse occurred, due to proper communication and conflict resolution. Respondents then experienced strengthened sibling bonds and, by extension, improvement in all relationships, which emphasizes the importance of effective remedial strategies, more of which are discussed in the following chapter. Lastly, the respondents maintain good sibling bonds in adulthood subsequent to sibling abuse although they theorized that sibling abuse between adults would impair the relationship.

CHAPTER 4: Solutions to Sibling Abuse

Presentation of Data

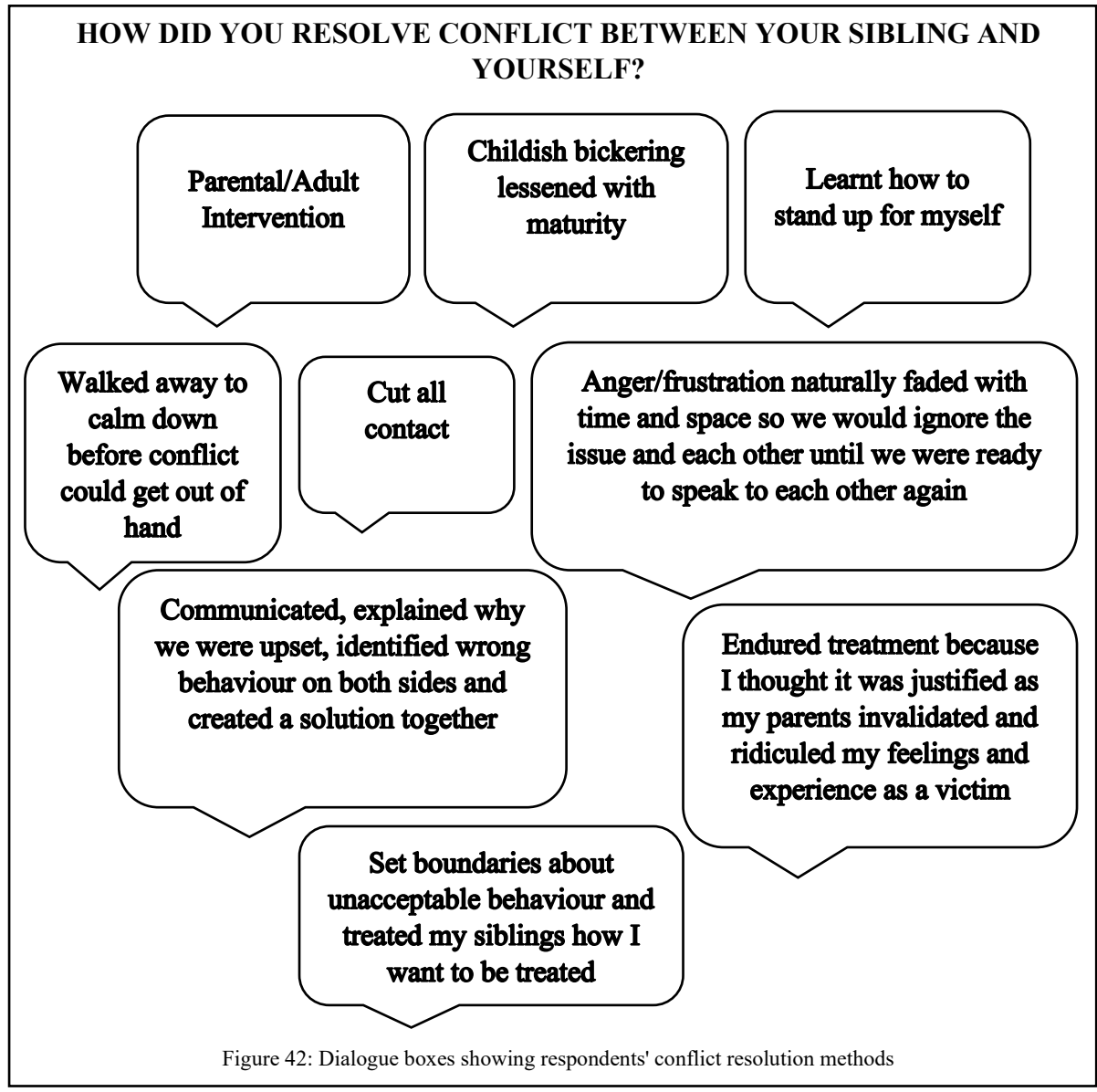


Figure 30 illustrates respondents' methods of conflict resolution in their sibling relationships, which included healthy practices, such as communicating about the issue, setting boundaries, standing up for oneself and cooling down. Conversely, others employed harmful techniques like severing contact completely, enduring maltreatment and blaming themselves or ignoring

the issue and each other until the source of the problem was forgotten. External forces such as parents or other adults also intervened to resolve conflict in some cases.

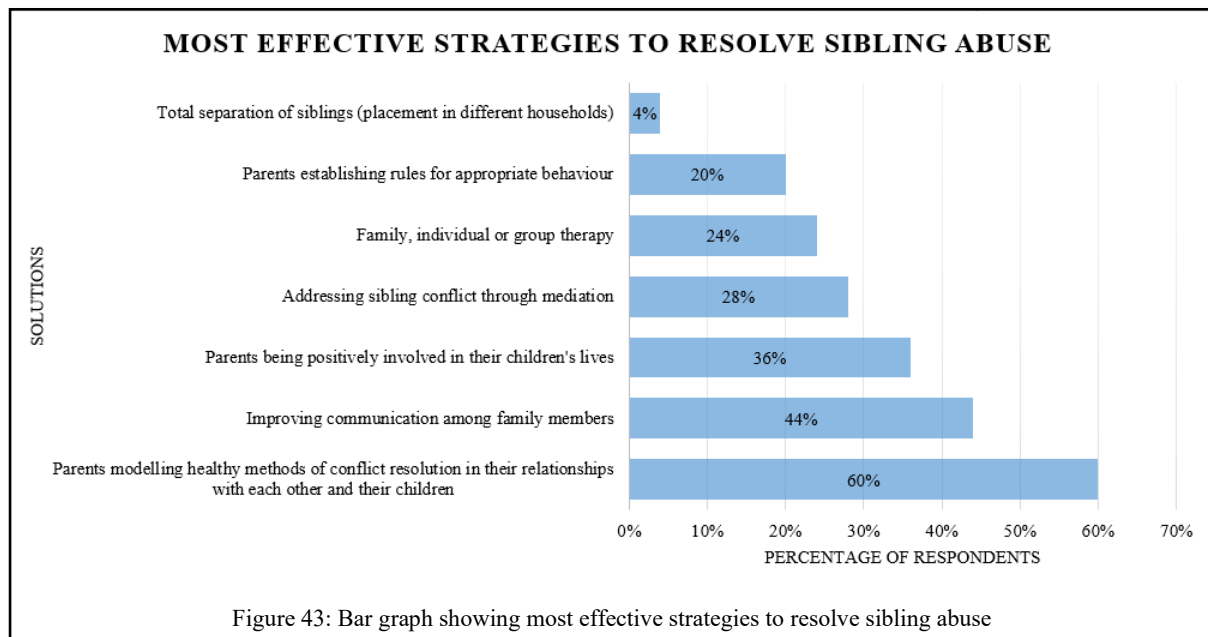


Figure 31 reveals that, according to 60% of respondents, the most effective pre-emptive method or solution to sibling abuse is parents modelling healthy conflict-resolution methods with each other and their children, followed by improvement of communication among family members (44%), positive parental involvement in children’s lives (36%), mediation (28%), therapy (24%) and establishment of rules for acceptable behaviour (20%). Inversely, only 4% of respondents said that total separation of siblings was very effective.

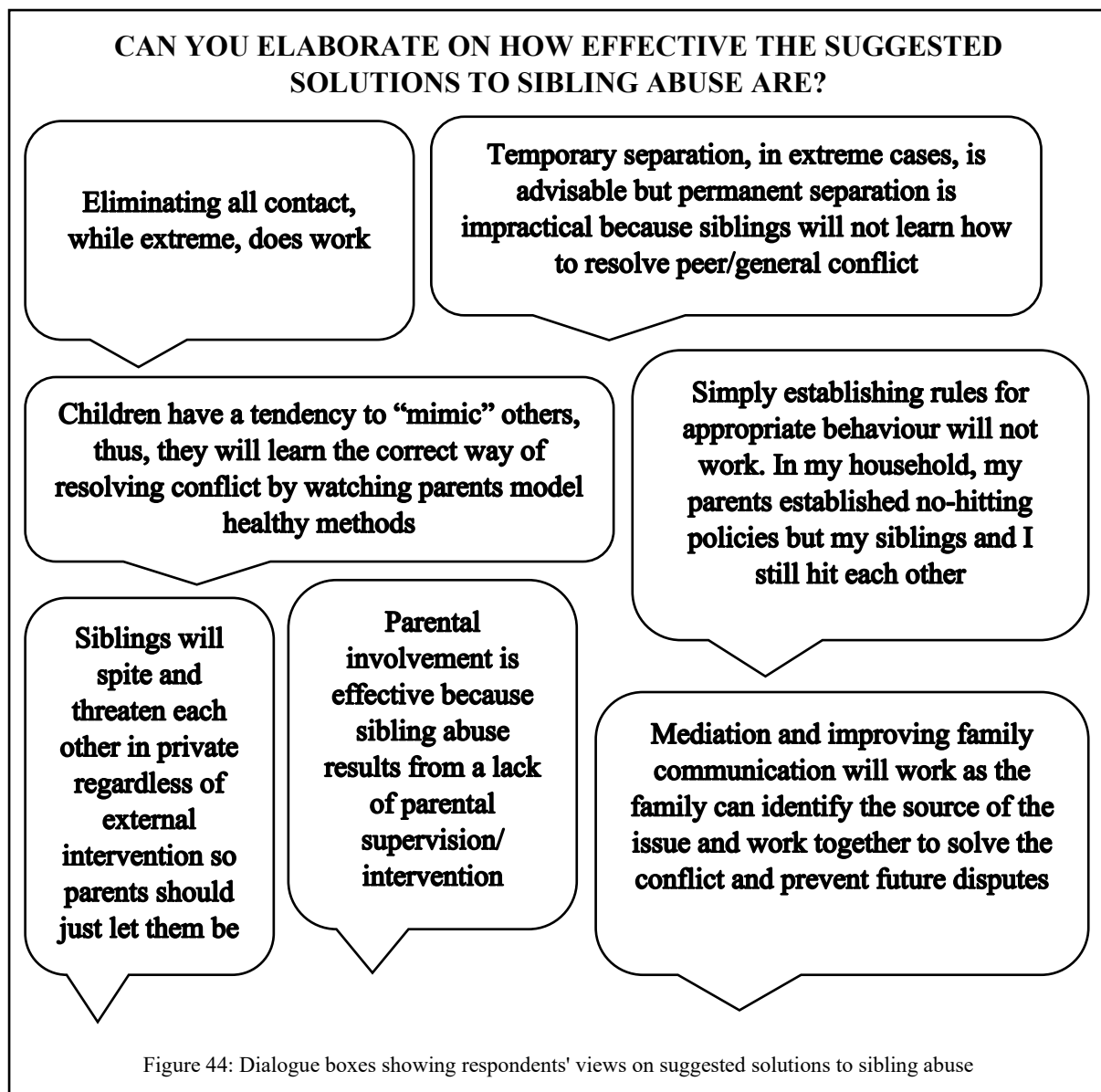


Figure 32 presents respondents’ perspectives on suggested remedial strategies. Most expanded on why certain solutions were effective, for example, parents should provide healthy models of conflict resolution strategies as children would imitate this behaviour. Further, with increased involvement, parents could supervise and intervene in conflict before any sibling abuse occurred while mediation and communication would enable the family unit to identify and resolve the root of the issue. Inversely, other respondents expanded on why certain solutions were ineffective, for example, parental involvement and establishment of rules could not prevent sibling abuse in their opinion and experience respectively. Lastly,

some respondents stated the total separation of siblings were effective, although quite extreme, while others believed this method would delay siblings' development of conflict resolution skills and, ultimately, cause more harm than good.

Analysis of Data

While some respondents employed healthy communication and set boundaries to resolve conflict, as suggested by Haelle and corroborated by Diaz, most rarely addressed issues but allowed time and space to heal any tension between them instead. Diaz expounds that children tend to dismiss conflict and abuse easily and maintain a close relationship while Alexis agrees with respondents who stated that conflict lessened with age and maturity due to more relaxed power hierarchies, less shared resources, such as living spaces, and greater understanding.

Nevertheless, respondents conceded that various strategies suggested by Caffaro and Haelle would be effective, particularly parents modelling these healthy conflict resolution methods in their relationships with each other as siblings would imitate their interactions, whether positive or negative, among each other. It is possible that siblings learnt to dismiss conflict and non-verbally agree to maintain relationships through observing the interactions of adults around them. However, this strategy can prove ineffective in situations where resentment builds instead of a mutual agreement to forgive and "forget".

Conclusion

The main findings of this study illustrate that psychological and physical sibling abuse is prevalent in Trinidad and, largely, perpetrated by females. Although the minority normalize these sibling interactions, the majority possess a profound comprehension of the theoretical causes and effects of this abuse. However, a distinct gap exists between their understanding and acknowledgement that this abuse occurred in their personal relationships. Undoubtedly, education and awareness programmes on sibling abuse would help bridge this gap. Lastly, sample respondents maintained good sibling relationships into adulthood through addressing and ignoring conflict, however, the latter can cause more harm than good in all interpersonal relationships. Thus, it is important that parents demonstrate healthy communication and encourage direct, verbal conflict resolution among their dependents.

Future Directions

Many gaps in the literature still exist that can be further explored by future researchers, including but not limited to the effect of gender, age and family structure on the probability of sibling abuse.

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Appendices

Appendix B: CAPA Reports of Sibling Abuse from 2020-2023

		CRIME AND PROBLEM ANALYSIS BRANCH			
<p style="text-align: center;">Matco Building #112 Henry Street, Port of Spain REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO</p>					
DATA ON VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY SIBLINGS					
OFFENCES	2020	2021	2022	2023	Grand Total
MURDER	4	2	3	0	9
ASSAULT & BEAT / THREATS	263	305	242	35	845
INDECENT ASSAULT	0	1	1	0	2
MAL DAMAGE	13	15	13	3	44
MALICIOUS WOUNDING	6	9	3	0	18
SEXUAL OFFENCE	7	13	4	1	25
WOUNDING/SHOOTING	1	4	0	1	6
Grand Total	294	349	266	40	949

DATA ON VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY SIBLINGS BY SEX					
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OFFENCES	2020		2021		2022		2023		Grand Total	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
MURDERS	0	4	2	0	3	0	0	0	9	0
ASSAULT & BEAT / THREATS	135	128	159	146	128	114	19	16	441	404
INDECENT ASSAULT	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
MAL DAMAGE	8	5	3	12	6	7	0	3	17	27
MALICIOUS WOUNDING	0	6	1	8	0	3	0	0	1	17
SEXUAL OFFENCE	5	2	13	0	4	0	1	0	23	2
WOUNDING/SHOOTING	1	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	2	4
SUB TOTAL	149	145	179	170	142	124	21	19	495	454
TOTAL	294		349		266		40		949	

Telephone 1 (868) 625-5148
 Provisional Figures 22.03.2023

Facsimile 1 (868) 625-4710


**Appendix C: Breakdown of CAPA Reports by Age Group of Female Perpetrators
(Excluding Sexual Offences)**

Age Group	Category of Offence					Grand Total
	Assault & Beat/Threats	Malicious Damage	Malicious Wounding	Murder	Wounding / Shooting	
0-9	2	-	-	-	-	2
10-19	23	-	-	-	-	23
20-29	78	1	-	2	-	81
30-39	137	4	-	4	1	146
40-49	106	9	-	2	-	117
50-59	44	1	1	1	-	47
60-69	30	1	-	-	-	31
70-79	8	-	-	-	-	8
80-89	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown	13	1	-	-	-	14
Grand Total	441	17	1	9	1	469

**Appendix D: Breakdown of CAPA Reports by Age Group of Male Perpetrators
(Excluding Sexual Offences)**

Age Group	Category of Offence					Grand Total
	Assault & Beat/Threats	Malicious Damage	Malicious Wounding	Murder	Wounding / Shooting	
0-9	1	-	-	-	-	1
10-19	11	1	-	-	-	12
20-29	57	4	4	-	1	66
30-39	108	13	3	-	2	126
40-49	92	4	3	-	-	99
50-59	68	4	3	-	1	76
60-69	40	-	2	-	-	42
70-79	8	-	1	-	-	9
80-89	1	-	-	-	-	1
Unknown	18	1	1	-	-	20
Grand Total	404	27	17	0	4	452

Appendix E: CADV Reports of Sibling Abuse in 2022

Makaylah Scott <makaylahscott16@gmail.com>

Request for Statistics and Cases of Sibling Abuse in Trinidad

Social Worker <cadvttsocialworker@gmail.com>
To: Makaylah Scott <makaylahscott16@gmail.com>


Tue, Mar 21, 2023 at 4:13 PM

Hi Makaylah

Hope this helps with your research


- There were three (3) individuals that sought support via CADV for sibling abuse in the year 2022.
- Clients consisted of one (1) male and two (2) female
- Clients' ages are twenty-six (26) male client , thirty-seven (37) and thirty-eight (38).
- Perpetrators were all male
- All clients reported that they experienced both physical and verbal abuse.
- All cases had property disputes as one of the causes of abuse. There was also one report of abuse due to untreated mental illness.

Kind regards



Tamika Benard
Social Worker
Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Tel : 624-0402 / 627-6844 Ext 214
<https://coalitionagainstdomesticviolence.org/>

Appendix F: Asiya Mohammed's Personal Account of Sibling Abuse

Makaylah Scott <makaylahscott16@gmail.com>

Request for Statistics and Cases of Sibling Abuse

Asiya Mohammed <asiya@conflictwomen.com> Mon, Mar 20, 2023 at 4:17 PM
To: Makaylah Scott <makaylahscott16@gmail.com>

Dear Makaylah,

Thank you. Excellent research and much needed. Unfortunately in our years of work we are yet provide support in a sibling abuse case. While we have dealt with quite a number of intimate partner cases, spousal abuse, child sexual abuse by an elder family member/ friend, rape cases etc, even cases of domestic violence by sons against mother, we have so far not dealt with sibling abuse. If that changes I will let you know. There is however one case I am aware of. Here are the details:

Age of victim: 15
Age of perpetrator: 17
Family structure: single parent household
Type of violence: Physical, emotional
Cause: Fear, anger, jealousy, lack of father figure in household, substance abuse
Effect on victim: Low self-confidence, believed the negative comments of the perpetrator
Effect on perpetrator: Went to abuse his wife physically and emotionally. Never faced consequences for sibling abuse and later on his marriage ended in divorce
Family members: Uncle interrupted physical abuse between siblings, Aunt provided a safe space for victim for several days. Mother tried to provide support for victim and perpetrator as best as she knew how. No justice served. Case not reported to the police.

Sibling abuse is an important type of abuse that goes unreported/ underreported because of the stigma. Please reach out to other first responders (CADV, The Shelter, FPATT etc) who may have additional information/ more experience in sibling abuse cases. Good luck and feel free to share your research when complete. With gratitude.

Best wishes,
Asiya S. Mohammed
CEO, Conflict Women, Ltd.
www.conflictwomen.com
Tel: +1 868 721 9852
Email: asiya@conflictwomen.com
Skype: asiya.mohammed

Appendix G: Email Interview with Dr Jean Antoine-Dunne

- 1. According to Kiselica and Morrill Richards, conflict between siblings is a natural stage of the developmental process and is bound to occur, particularly during childhood. Given this information, what are some distinctive markers between normal sibling conflict and sibling abuse that you may have noted in your research on this topic?**

I think ganging up against one individual is a good sign. This happens very gradually. It leaves the victim powerless.

- 2. Why do you think sibling conflict (such as sibling rivalry) is allowed to exacerbate into sibling abuse?**

One possibility may be that in many families one individual takes on a caring role or becomes some kind of surrogate parent, who then turns into a kind of door mat. In the same way that parents are often blamed, the sibling who assumes that role becomes the carrier of responsibility and blame, but without the significant difference of respect or love traditionally given to parents. Added to this is the fact that sibling rivalry escalates into a surge for power and the “carer” has to be removed from the position of assumed and perceived power. There is a double bind: responsibility leading to blame; and responsibility becoming a direct symbol and line to power. The sibling has to be taken down. I do not think it is a matter that anything is ‘allowed’, but that the signs are not read. I may also add that this situation may often occur where the parent is herself or himself either weak or powerless or absent, hence the reason that one child takes on the role of surrogacy.

- 3. Do you think there are any notable factors (other than ignorance) that can explain the tendency of the Trinidadian family unit to ignore or minimize abusive behaviour between siblings?**

I do not think that this is a TRINIDADIAN problem. One might add that it could well originate in the fact that one parent families or families where the parent or parents cannot cope or do not want to cope, lead to a child being given too much

responsibility at too early an age and that might then transfer to a situation as I have described. I have seen similar incidents in Ireland.

4. Based on your own research, do you think abusive behaviour established during childhood will continue into an adult sibling relationship?

Absolutely. You have siblings ganging up against one individual, and making demands. There is continued and conditioned blame. I know of one instance where a woman was told by her siblings that she was responsible for everything that had gone wrong with all the others; as incredible as this may sound. Often the only escape is removal from the family environment. The abused individual often becomes increasingly unsure of herself or himself and possibly ends up in an abusive marital relationship.

5. Sibling relationships can be one of the most influential relationships in one's life (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards, 2007). Therefore, in what ways do you think sibling abuse can affect the victim and the perpetrator as well as their relationships with others?

Oh I think that abused individuals and in particular individuals who suffer sibling abuse, are affected throughout their lives. They are conditioned to become both carers and doormats and to accept blame and responsibility. They often lack the instincts for self-preservation. They see themselves as second. They are classically conditioned for entering into other abusive relationships.

I think those who are perpetrators often become bullies. But they are also very skilled at hiding this., having practised for a lifetime. I also believe from observation that they develop key skills for managing others.

Appendix H: Email Interview with Ms Ann Diaz

- 1. Have you mediated any cases of sibling abuse in Trinidad? If yes, have you noticed any trends/patterns in these cases (such as type or cause of abuse, age gap or gender of siblings, family structure, living dynamics, etc.)?**

NO we do not mediate any form of violence. What we have seen is verbal abuse that is related to some particular events e.g. for property or inheritance, or asset distribution.

- 2. Do you think there are any notable factors (other than ignorance) that can explain the tendency of the Trinidadian family unit to ignore or minimize abusive behaviour between siblings?**

I think it may have its genesis within cultural backgrounds, its links may not be in ignoring but more in avoidance because we tend not to deal with difficult to manage conflicts.

- 3. Do you think adult siblings tend to minimize abusive behaviour between themselves, specifically abuse during childhood? If yes, do you think this tendency can perpetuate the cycle of sibling violence, as the adult siblings are also unable to identify patterns and fail to intervene like older family members should have done during their childhood?**

Again, this question may be answered not because they tend to minimize but more so they may avoid difficult conversations and as a result quite a bit of conflict goes unaddressed.

- 4. In your experience, what are the short-term and long-term effects of abuse on the victim, perpetrator and other members in the family unit (such as the parents, other siblings, grandparents, etc.)?**

In this context a definition of abuse would have assisted with the responses to these questions. Abuse whether physical or verbal impacts both victims and perpetrators. Siblings have a tendency of putting aside abuse, not necessarily forgetting it but choosing to move on while maintaining their relationships. This is not always the case as sometimes the intensity of the abuse may cause parties not to want to let go of the hurt as easily. In this way the relationships may be strained causing long-term residual effects. As a result there is resentment that is maintained unless there is an intervention of sorts where parties get the opportunity to talk it out. Once it is talked out however there is a softening of positions and opportunity for restoration.

5. In your professional opinion, what are some effective strategies to prevent or resolve sibling abuse?

Effective communication, dialogue and discussion. Siblings somehow have more patience with each other and are more willing to let difficult situations go. This is not as readily seen with spouses.

Appendix I: Phone Interview with Ms Abel Alexis

1. Have you ever dealt with any cases of sibling abuse in Trinidad? If yes, have you noticed any trends/patterns in these cases (such as type or cause of abuse, age gap or gender of siblings, family structure, living dynamics, etc.)?
2. Do you think there are any notable factors (other than ignorance) that can explain the tendency of the Trinidadian family unit to ignore or minimize abusive behaviour between siblings?
3. Do you think sibling conflict, especially physical conflict, is more likely during childhood and lessens with maturity?
4. Do you think adult siblings tend to minimize abusive behaviour between themselves, specifically abuse during childhood? If yes, do you think this tendency can perpetuate the cycle of sibling violence, as the adult siblings are also unable to identify patterns and fail to intervene like older family members should have done during their childhood?
5. One of the theoretical frameworks that can explain the occurrence of sibling abuse is the feminist theory (Hoffman and Edwards 187-188), which presumes that violence among siblings occurs in an attempt to exert power and establish dominance, especially among older brother-younger sister dyads. Do you agree with this theory?
6. In your experience, what are the short-term and long-term effects of abuse on the victim, perpetrator and other members in the family unit (such as the parents, other siblings, grandparents, etc.)?
7. In your professional opinion, what are some effective strategies to prevent or resolve sibling abuse?
8. Do you think solutions, such as therapy and counselling, are viable in the context of Trinidad, given the stigma that can surround therapy and mental health here?

Turn-it In Receipt