

Sexual and Psychological Abuse of Men in Heterosexual Relationships in The Bahamas

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Abstract

This paper describes the treatment of heterosexual men in The Bahamas by their intimate partners. An internet study surveyed 335 married and 922 unmarried men in The Bahamas who were currently in intimate relationships with women. The study found that behaviours of concern were inflicted by women on their male partners both inside and outside of marriage. Overall, 14% of respondents reported experiencing sex against their will. Married and unmarried men were equally likely to report experiencing unwanted sexual intercourse in their current relationship, and unmarried men were more likely than married men to have been physically hurt by their current partner. Married men who admitted to being victims of unwanted sexual intercourse by their wives were more likely to report having been physically hurt by their wife than those who had not experienced unwanted sex. Psychological abuse was more evident for unmarried than married men. These findings suggest that men may need more help in coping with abuse than is commonly recognized. Investigating why abusive behaviours, including unwanted sex, were more common outside of marriage than inside of marriage may be a useful area of future research in the Bahamian community.

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Introduction

In The Bahamas, as elsewhere, the abuse of men by their female intimate partners appears to have attracted less attention than the abuse of women by their male intimate partners, although this is changing (see, for example, Đurđević et al., 2022). These attitudes are not uncommon, despite the fact that women abuse men (Oliver, 2007) and this abuse can vary depending upon the community (Harwell et al., 2003; Murty et al., 2003) and

the sexual orientation of partners (Gilchrist et al., 2023). In The Bahamas, these perspectives probably arise from the prevailing attitudes towards masculinity in the nation which depict men as being strong and able to look after themselves, and who can denominate women; male dominance is rooted in both cultural and legal aspects of Bahamian society (Bethell-Bennett, 2016). However, these attitudes seem to ignore the historical fact that male slaves were at risk of being sexually abused by their male and

female overseers or enslavers, who also viewed the Black male as hyper-sexual (Foster, 2011). This perspective may be important when considering violence today and attitudes towards sex, as it remembers a continuum with the colonial past of The Bahamas (Bethell-Bennett, 2016; Martin-Mack, 2012).

Bahamian males have long been expected to engage in sexual acts from an early age and almost certainly prior to marriage (Otterbein, 1963). Such attitudes, which are predicated on the male as the initiator, or aggressor even, are not unique to The Bahamas. As such they reflect the wider imbalance of power between men and women, which has resulted in conventions being adopted by the United Nations and other international groups to protect women (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979). While The Bahamas has signed conventions to protect women, it has yet to fully implement them (Bethel, 2019).

Concern over the treatment of women by their male intimate partners has been an ongoing issue in The Bahamas and is one which makes national headlines (Rolle, 2022), but not the reverse. Societal attitudes around women's concerns have resulted in groups which advocate for women's issues (for example the Bahamas Crisis Centre and the Zonta Club of Nassau) being given higher profiles than those which advocate on male issues, unless they are associated with crime, such as murder or drugs (such as The Family People Helping People Project, The Hope Centre, and the Bahamas Association for Social Health). An unintended consequence of this is to push issues associated with the abuse of males in The Bahamas into the background. Data from the United States give a window on the extent of male sexual abuse with various sources reporting that around 11% of men suffer interpersonal violence

(National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d.), and higher figures have been reported from Africa, 39% in urban Nigeria and 27% in Zambia (Chukwuma, 2021), which suggest that male abuse should not be ignored.

Sexual abuse is typically viewed as being initiated by men and inflicted upon female victims. This is despite studies, including one from The Bahamas, indicating that girls can engage in controlling behaviours of their boyfriends at an early age (Nicolls et al., 2014). Mental health issues are a concern to health officials and associated acts of harm such as suicide that may arise from poor mental health (Bahamas Ministry of Health & Wellness, 2023). While poverty is associated with reduced mental health, so too is domestic violence (Carroll et al., 2016), and by association, sexual abuse. While there is a higher rate of suicide in males than females in The Bahamas, the causes of this are not clear (Hutcheson & Major, 2016) but might include sexual abuse. Therefore, the role which abuse within sexual relationships can have on mental health (Fielding et al., 2023) should not be overlooked. These issues can be made worse by men being less likely than women to report their abuse and so receive help (Al-Asadi, 2021). Although violence inflicted on women was the major focus of Bahamas National Task Force for Gender-Based Violence (2015), the abuse of males is also a concern.

Sachs-Ericsson et al. (2014) highlight the hidden long-term harm which sexual violence can cause victims such as reduced self-esteem, psychological, and physical health. Psychological abuse can contribute to victims remaining in abusive relationships (Sackett & Saunders, 1999), and so effectively trapping the victim in a harmful relationship. Mahoney and Williams (1998) demonstrated that when sexual abuse occurs within marriage, the effects can be worse for

the victim, as the expected trust between husband and wife is violated. Therefore, in studying abuse it is useful to distinguish the marital status of participants.

Beside the issue of sexual abuse is that of adultery or infidelity in intimate partner relationships. *Sweethearting* is long-standing within Bahamian society (Otterbein, 1963; Grant, 1999). Prior to the 2000s sweethearting or adultery was found to be relatively common within marriage in The Bahamas (Grant, 1999). In the Dominican Republic, 38.7% of men in stable relationships were found to have other partners in the previous 12 months, likewise, 7.8% of women were unfaithful (Luft, 2017). The lack of exclusivity, particularly within marital relationships, may cause tensions within the marriage and so result in psychological abuse, and silent suffering (Atapour et al., 2021). Infidelity may result in partners refusing sexual advances from their intimates to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, which may introduce tension into the relationship. We might conjecture that tensions may arise between unmarried partners, when one partner seeks sexual encounters with others when the other partner is expecting the relationship to be exclusive.

Scott-Storey et al. (2023) have indicated the general lack of information surrounding the sexual abuse of men. This study is an attempt to extend our knowledge in this area in a society, which in common with other communities, hyper-masculinity prevails (James & Davis, 2014). However, it should be noted that in the United States sexual abuse is associated with a “less masculine (more feminine) identity for both males and females” (Burke et al., 1988, p. 272) which challenges the commonly held view in the Caribbean concerning sexual abuse (James & Davis, 2014).

Therefore, this study was undertaken to obtain a working estimate of the percentage of married and unmarried men in The Bahamas who are sexually abused by their current female intimate partners, wives or girlfriends. Secondly, we wished to determine if Bahamian men are psychologically abused by their intimate partners. Consequently, we wished to show that sexual violence in The Bahamas is a cocktail of behaviours which men experience beyond any physical injuries and thereby help to raise awareness of sexual violence directed towards men.

Methodology

The target population was adult men (aged 18 years or older) living in The Bahamas and currently in intimate relationships with women. An internet-based survey based upon the survey of Fielding et al. (2023) was used which included the Hurting, Insulting, Threatening, Swearing (HITS) index of Sherin et al. (1998) as an indicator of domestic violence, and a psychological abuse scale (Sackett & Saunders, 1999; slightly modified to make the questions culturally appropriate for The Bahamas, for example the words used for name calling).

We used the term sexual abuse as “any sexual activity that occurs without consent. Also referred to as sexual assault or sexual violence, it includes unwanted sexual touching, forced oral sex, and rape, among other sexual acts” (“Sexual abuse”, 2023, para. 1). This definition was stated on the survey form so all participants could respond using a uniform understanding.

Although the psychological scale was devised with females in mind, it was used in this study, with minor modification so that the results from this study could be compared with those from a previous study by Fielding et al. (2023) which examined the abuse of

females by their male intimate partners. Questions were asked about the respondents' marital status and selected behaviours of the wife/female partner. In recognition that relationships can be dynamic, questions focused only on current partners (irrespective of the duration of the relationship) and their behaviours, and so the data do not reflect lifetime experiences of abuse. (Men who were not in an intimate relationship at the time of the study were omitted from the study.) When men had multiple current partners (in the last 12 months), they were asked to answer the questions as they related to the woman with whom they most recently had sexual intercourse. A question regarding the effect of COVID-19 on participants was included in recognition of the impact of the pandemic on interpersonal violence (Fielding & Ballance, 2020; Peitzmeier et al., 2022). The project was approved by the University of The Bahamas' Institutional Review Board.

Students at University of The Bahamas used their social media networks to contact potential respondents, and this seeded a snowball sample. Data were collected between January and March 2023. The target was to obtain information from 2,600 men so that at least 300 married males would be included in the sample. Obtaining data from around 300 married men would allow for a level of error, of about 3%, in estimating a proportion of around 10%. The figure of 10% was chosen based upon a study on the sexual abuse of women by Fielding et al. (2023).

Results

A total of 2,868 persons entered the survey and nine refused to participate. After cleaning the data to reflect the target population, males, aged 18 and over, living in The Bahamas and currently having a relationship with a female intimate partner, 1,288 responses were retained. Overall, 335 or 26.6% of respondents were married, and the remainder (925) were either unmarried or engaged, and the overall median age was 28.7 years. The modal educational level was some high school or less (33.8% of 1,095 responses). The modal length of time of participants' being in this intimate relationship was between one and five years (27.5% of 1,225 respondents).

Activities within the current relationship

Two related questions, focused on consent in sexual intercourse, were used to allow for any reluctance of respondents to admit to sexual abuse (Mahoney & Williams, 1998). Overall, 10.4%, 95% CI [7.4, 14.1] of married men indicated that they had experienced sexual intercourse against their will and 14.4%, 95% CI [10.9, 18.5] of married men reported having been sexually abused by their wives (Table 1). Sexual abuse was equally likely inside as outside of marriage. Being a victim of physical harm (being hit) was more prevalent outside than inside of marriage (Table 1).

Table 1 *Married and Unmarried Men Reporting Selected Victimization (%)*

Activity	Married	Unmarried	<i>p</i>
Subject to unwanted sex	10.4%	9.9%	.806
Sexually abused ^a	14.4%	16.3%	.259
Physically hurt	15.5%	26.1%	.002

Note: a Yes or probably yes; *p* from χ^2 test

Of 1,288 men, 59.5% had only one current partner, compared to 9.2% who had over five. Of 1,208 men, 10.1% reported that their female partner(s) also slept with other men and a further 13.2% probably did, and 48.7% did not. Proportionally more married men had one partner than unmarried men (82.7% of 335 married men compared to 52.4% of unmarried men, $\chi^2 = 96.2$, $n = 1,257$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$). Married men were more likely to be sure that their partner was faithful than unmarried men (56.4% of 326 married men and 45.8% of 884 unmarried men were sure that their partners were faithful, [$\chi^2 = 28.9$, $n = 1,210$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$]). Overall, 60.7% of 270 married men with one partner knew that she was not having sex with another man, and in the case of 733 unmarried men the corresponding figure was 62.4%.

Table 2 confirms the association with marriage and having children; however, this takes place in a society where men have children and sexual intercourse with women outside of their current relationship (see, Table 2). While 56.2% of 308 married men knew that their wife was not having sex with another men, as many as 43.8% of wives may have been committing adultery (participating in another sexual relationship) as some married men were not sure. Almost one in 10 married men knew that their partner was adulterous.

Of the unmarried men, 3.5% ($n = 906$ men) reported having a relationship with a woman whom they knew was married, and another 3.2% were not sure if the woman was married. Men reported that their female partners had had children and relationships with other men (Table 2).

Table 2 *Married and Unmarried Men Reporting Activities about their Partner (%)*

Activity in the relationship	Married	Unmarried	<i>p</i>
Male respondent had children with current partner	74.3%	10.3%	< .001
Female partner had children with other men	23.2%	21%	.64
Female partner has sex with other men, yes, probably yes	15%	26.3%	< .001

Note: *p* from χ^2 test

Given the association between the abuse questions in Table 1, which reflect sexual intercourse without consent, we focus on unwanted sex.

Violence in the relationship

Physical violence was more common outside than inside of marriage (15.5% of married men compared with 26.1% of unmarried men were physically hit by their partners, Fishers' Exact Test, $n = 1,103$, $p < .001$). Experience

of physical violence was also linked with unwanted sex, but not marital status, Table 3. Being in a relationship where the female partner had sex with other partners or made the respondent have unwanted sex was associated with an increased HITS score (sex with other partners (analysis of covariance, $F_{3, 1,079} = 82.1$, $p < .001$) unwanted sex, (analysis of covariance, $F_{3, 1,084} = 43.2$, $p < .001$) compared to when the female did not act in these ways.

Table 3 Ever Physically Hurt by Female Partner, % Within Marital Status of Respondents being Physically Hurt and Subject to Unwanted Sex.

Experience of physical violence	Male respondent subject to unwanted sex		<i>p</i>
	Married	Unmarried	
Hurt	20.8%	21.6%	> .99
Not hurt	8.4%	6.4%	.31

Note: *p* from χ^2 test

In the case of men who experienced unwanted sex, they were more likely to have also suffered physical violence from their wives than men who had not experienced unwanted sex, *OR* = 2.61, 95% CI [1.1, 6.22]. When married men were not subjected to physical harm, they were no more likely to have had against their will than unmarried men (*OR* = 1.35, 95% CI [.78, 2.33]).

Overall, 18.8% of 32 married men who had suffered unwanted sex indicated that they would leave the relationship if they could, compared to 7.4% of 269 married men who had not experienced unwanted sex ($\chi^2 = 5.86$, $n = 301$, $df = 2$, $p = .053$).

Psychological abuse

The Profile of Psychological Abuse scale of Sackett & Saunders (1999) scores each item: 1 for *never*, to 7 for *daily* frequencies, so lower values indicate less frequent psychological abuse. Cronbach's α for the psychological abuse scale was .92, indicating acceptable reliability. Psychological abuse was correlated with the HITS score ($r = .74$, $p < .001$) and so indicating an association between domestic violence and psychological abuse. To provide a frame of reference of the psychological abuse scores, we summarise the overall scores in Table 4.

Table 4 Mean Psychological Abuse Scores of Men

Aspect	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	Minimum score	Maximim score
Overall psychological abuse score	43.1	.69	21	147
Jealous control	18.7	.27	8	56
Ignore	9.4	.18	5	35
Ridicule traits	8.9	.19	5	35
Criticize behaviour	6.1	.12	3	21

An ANCOVA, with effect of COVID-19 and the age of the respondent as covariates, was used to estimate the physiological abuse scores in relationships where the man had

unwanted sex, after accounting for infidelity in the relationship, Table 5. (These covariates were used in response to concerns raised by Stewart et al. [2021] about negative effects of

COVID-19 on mental health). These analyses indicated that the level of psychological abuse was typically higher when men experienced unwanted sex and that unmarried men who had sex against their will had higher abuse scores than unmarried men who had unwanted sex. We should note the higher psychological abuse score for unmarried men subjected to unwanted to sex (63.9; Table 5) compared to the overall psychological abuse score (43.1; Table 4). In some dimensions of psychological abuse (Jealous Control and Ridicule Traits dimensions), the abuse score was statistically higher for men who had sex against their will (ANCOVA using age group and effect of

COVID-19 as covariates, $p \leq .002$). For the Jealous Control dimension there was a statistical difference between the abuse scores for married and unmarried men ($p < .001$), with married men having a score of 18.9 ($SEM = .82$) and unmarried men, 22.3 ($SEM = .51$) and also for the Ridicule Traits score, married men, 9.1 ($SEM = .62$) and for unmarried men 11.6 ($SEM = .37$). Table 5 also indicates that the pattern of psychological abuse varied by the dimension of the abuse as the Ignore dimension showed a strong unwanted sex by marital status interaction.

Table 5 Mean Psychological Abuse Scores of Men

Dimension of abuse	Unwanted Sex		No Unwanted Sex		Interaction <i>p</i>
	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	
Overall Psychological Abuse Score	49.3	63.9	40.2	41.7	.011
Jealous Control	21	26.1	16.8	18.6	.073
Ignore	11	13.4	8.7	9.1	.125
Ridicule Traits	9.7	14.7	8.5	8.5	< .001
Criticize Behaviour	7.7	9.1	6.2	5.7	.047

Note: Adjusted means, using age group and effect of COVID-19 as covariates.

As would be expected with the high correlation between psychological abuse and the domestic violence score, domestic violence scores were higher when men reported sex against their will ($p < .001$) and there was no difference between the scores of married and unmarried men ($p = .14$); however, there was a significant interaction ($p = .03$; ANCOVA, age and COVID-19 effect as covariates).

When respondents indicated that either they or their partners had sexual relations with more than one person in the previous 12

months, the psychological abuse score increased significantly ($p \leq .001$), presumably indicating the increased tension within non-monogamous relationships, as seen in Table 6.

An elevated psychological abuse score, 61.4, was associated with wanting to leave the relationship, compared to 37.1 for those who did not want to leave, and 50.7 for those men who were unsure if they wanted to leave (ANCOVA, $F_{2, 964} = 104.6, p < .001$).

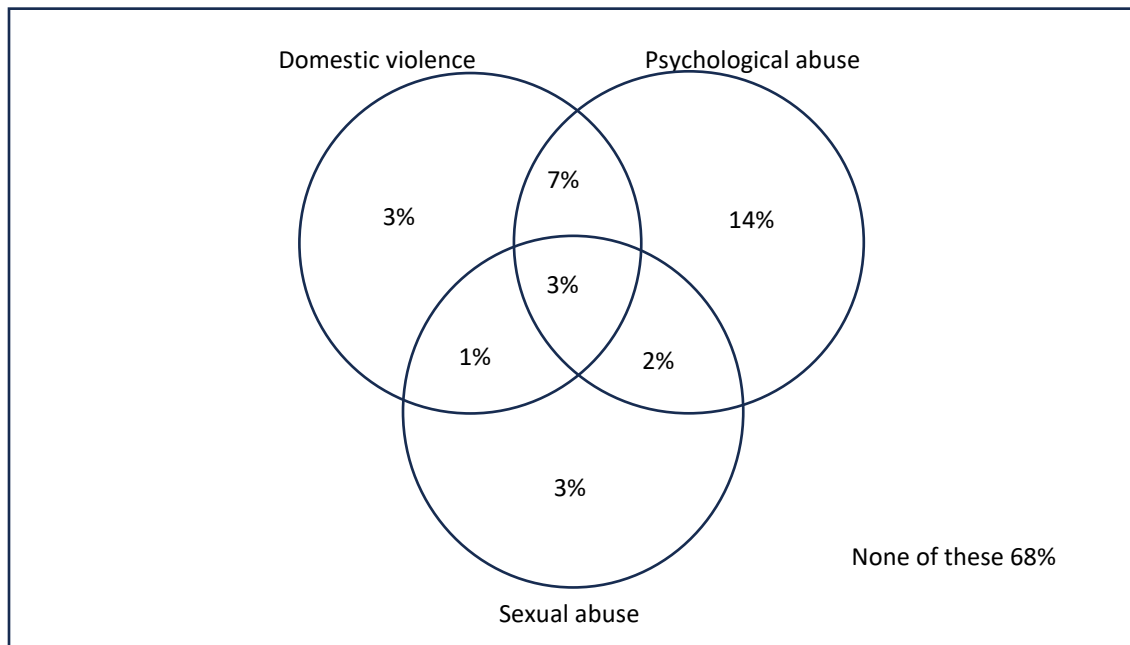
Table 6 *Psychological Abuse Scores Associated with Number of Partners*

Psychological Abuse Scores	Current number of female partners of male respondent					
	1	2	3	4	5	> 5
<i>M</i>	45.5	49.7	45.7	51.3	42.9	56.1
<i>SE</i>	1.26	1.77	2.41	3.06	4.62	2.33
Female partner had sex with other men during the relationship with respondent						
	Had sex	Did not have sex	Unsure, probably		Do not know	
<i>M</i>	52.3	37.8	57.9		46.2	
<i>SE</i>	2.73	1.79	2.30		2.18	

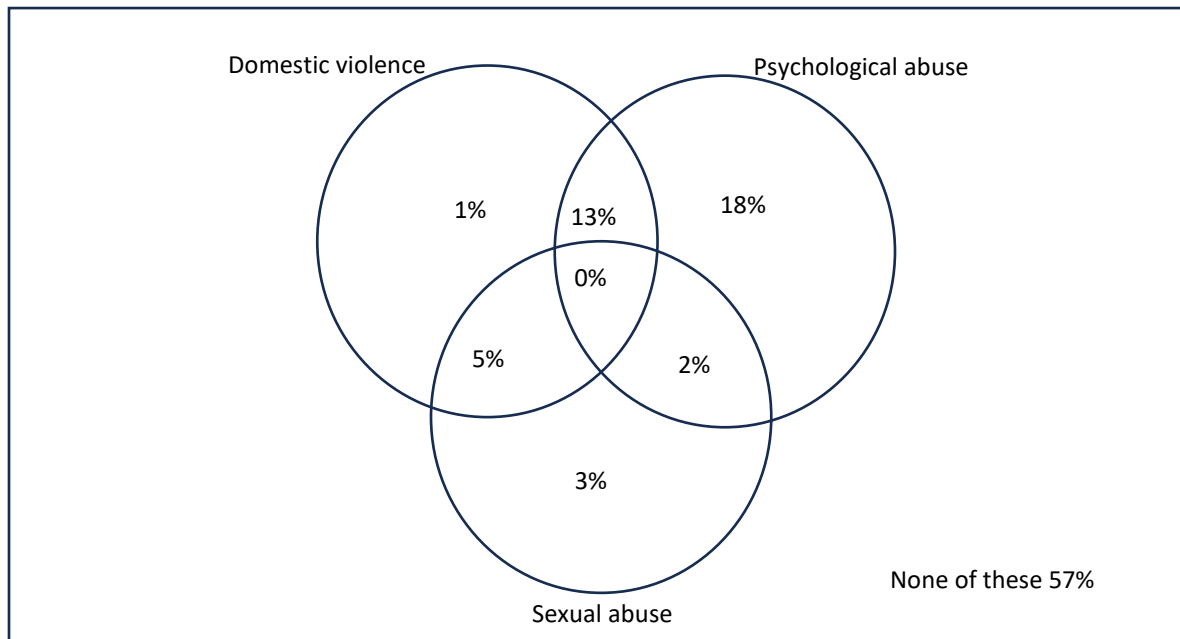
Note: Means adjusted using respondent age, marital status, and effect of COVID-19 as covariates.

The overall picture of abuse is summarised in Figure 1, for married men and Figure 2 for unmarried men. For simplicity, men were considered unabused if their scores were below 11 for the domestic violence (HITS) score (Sherin et al., 1998), and below the mean psychological score, so they can be

considered to be in the higher or lower risk groups of these forms of abuse. In each group, the importance of psychological abuse, and its overlap with domestic violence is evident. Conversely, in both groups, few of the respondents were victims of both sexual abuse and domestic violence.

Figure 1 *Married Men Being Subject to, or at Higher Risk of, Three Forms of Abuse (%)*

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 2 *Unmarried Men Being Subject to, or at Higher Risk of, Three Forms of Abuse (%)*

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Discussion

A limitation of the methodology was that it was an internet-based study. Consequently, not all males within The Bahamas would have been able to participate in the study. The World Bank estimates internet penetration at 87% (World Bank, 2020) so care must be made in applying the results to the wider population of The Bahamas. A convenience sample, which was used in this study, is also subject to potential bias. Further, the study reports self-assessments of abuse, which may have introduced further bias. There are numerous scales for assessing psychological abuse (Rodríguez-Carballeira et al., 2014) which have strengths and weaknesses (Follingstad, 2009). It can be reasonably anticipated that another psychological abuse scale would have produced different figures; however, we conjecture that the inferences from the results would be similar to those we report. One advantage of the scale used in this study was that it was fairly short, and so this

should have facilitated participants in completing it. When discussing the psychological abuse associated with sexual abuse, we note other factors such as age (Twenge et al., 2019) and COVID-19 (Stewart et al., 2021) are important. Consequently, these factors were used as covariates in our analysis of psychological abuse.

A bias is evident in the age distribution of men compared to the percentage of married men in the country (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2012). However, when the distribution of married men by age from the 2010 census was used to adjust the overall percentage of married when who had experienced sex against their will, the adjusted figure was 9.8%, which is within the confidence interval of the study estimate. This suggests that the bias within marital status may not be of concern. We should note that this study was undertaken at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may have

resulted in higher numbers of participants reporting abuse compared to pre-pandemic levels due to elevated abuse associated with the pandemic (Gilchrist et al., 2023).

The percentage of men who were sexually abused was in line with the 8.1% reported by the Bahamas Ministry of Health (2019). Some differences emerge in the abuse which males received from their female intimate partners compared to that inflicted upon female intimate partners by their male partners. Fielding and Ballance (2022) estimated that 13.8% of married women and 6.3% of unmarried women had been victims of unwanted sex in their current relationship. These figures indicate a different pattern of the use of sexual coercion by women inside and outside of marriage compared to men (see Table 1). This difference may arise because of the protection which men have from accusations of rape within marriage, due to the so-called marital rape exception in the *Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act (1991)*. However, why women in The Bahamas force their partners to engage in sexual intercourse would be a topic for future research.

It is apparent that men in married and unmarried relationships have different experiences of abuse from their intimate partners. While the prevalence of sexual violence and experiences of domestic violence tend to be similar for married and unmarried men, their experiences of physical violence are different. This study replicated the association between domestic violence and sexual abuse reported by earlier studies from The Bahamas, such as Plumridge and Fielding (2009) and Fielding et al. (2023). Thus, abuse between partners, can spill over to have effects beyond the partners (Johnson, 2016). As reported by Gibby (2021) abused males find it difficult to build relationships with others. Therefore, this requires awareness of the wider effects of

interpersonal violence not only in the household, but in society.

Men are subjected to both physical violence and sexual abuse, and unmarried men are at higher risk of physical harm than married men. This may be a manifestation of the frustrations that arise when the relationship is not exclusive. Despite men reporting that they were abused, not all of them felt able to leave the relationship. This is associated with comparatively few sexually abused men reporting their abuse to the authorities (Fielding & Ballance, 2022). This in turn makes it difficult for them to receive the help which they need. Reports in the newspapers confirm how society and the stigma of male sexual abuse can conspire to discourage men to leave abusive relationships (Fielding & Ballance, 2022). This is important as research on women has indicated that sexual violence related stress is associated with other forms of self-harm (Brockdorf et al., 2023). Further, the association with masculinity and self-harm should not be overlooked (Green et al., 2018), and this may be of relevance to The Bahamas given the higher rate of suicide in the male than female Bahamian population (Hutcheson & Major, 2016), so actions associated with elevated self-harm, are of concern.

Males in this study reported lower levels of physical abuse from their partners than women from their male partners (Fielding et al., 2023). However, men in this study reported higher psychological abuse scores than compared to women (Fielding et al., 2023). This suggests that the experiences of abuse by men and women in intimate relationships are different. The data indicate that women compensate for any physical advantage that their partners may have when it comes to physical violence, by using

psychological abuse when attempting to exert power and control within the relationship, a finding which is consistent with other studies, for example in Italy (Ghinassi et al., 2021). As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, women use levers of control to a similar extent in both married and unmarried relationships. These findings are consistent with research on male abuse elsewhere (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001), and so reinforce the fact that males are subject to interpersonal violence.

The effects of psychological abuse of men by their partners has been described by Hines and Malley-Morrison (2001); these include anger, revenge seeking and depression. Each of these aspects can result in behaviours of concern, including violence and suicide. So, the consequences of male abuse can be felt beyond of the relationship, which is contrary to what has been stated by government officials in The Bahamas (The Official Nassau Guardian Ltd., 2017). Attitudes such as these can result in abused men, and women, not seeking the advice they need for themselves and their relationship. This failure puts the abused person at risk of harming themselves and others.

Sexual abuse is not only associated with physical harm or confined to any geographical location (Agarwal et al., 2022). Williams et al. (2021) demonstrated the trauma which is associated with even one experience of rape in the lives of Bahamian women. While the mental and psychological harm associated has been demonstrated in the literature, and is acknowledged in The Bahamas (Bahamas Crisis Centre, n.d.), this study allows us to appreciate the psychological abuse which women can inflict upon men. The higher Jealous Control score associated with unmarried men emerges from the controlling behaviours found in student

relationships (Nicolls et al., 2014) and demonstrates how aspects of childhood relationships can persist into adulthood. In the case of polygamous relationships between Zulus, such relationships can result in hatred and other behaviours of concern between the women, which may also negatively affect their children (Zondi, 2007), and so indicates that the consequences of having multiple partners can be detrimental to the partners and their children. This provides an interesting parallel with men in The Bahamas with multiple partners as they are subject to more severe psychological abuse than men with one partner. What causes this increased level abuse would be a topic for further research.

One outcome of the tension in relationships associated with sexual abuse becomes evident with men wanting to leave them, and this desire is associated with increased psychological abuse. However, as pointed by Sackett and Saunders (1999), psychological abuse can make it difficult to leave abusive relationships. The percentages of abused men, married or unmarried, wanting to leave the relationship were lower than in the case of women in a comparable situation (Fielding & Ballance, 2023). We might conjecture that this difference may arise because the men are less likely than women to suffer physical violence, but this could be an area for future research.

Government of The Bahamas data indicate that many men have multiple partners (Bahamas Ministry of Health, 2019). This finding was repeated in this study where male and female partners were not always faithful to their current intimate partner irrespective of their marital status. This study demonstrated the lack of exclusive relationships most clearly when women had children with other men. Fielding et al,

(2023) showed that men had had children with other partners, so both men and women have other relationships involving unprotected sex. Despite the sexual health concerns associated with unprotected sex (Wang et al., 2014), men were not always dissuaded in having relationships with women who have had children with other men. Infidelity of women was reported to be practised by 29.2% of married Bahamian women in an earlier study (Grant, 1999), a figure not out of line with that found here. However, both these figures are above the 13% of women who commit adultery in North America (Wang, 2018).

As others have noted, Stavrova et al. (2022), infidelity can be the last stage of a deteriorating relationship. Given the association between sexual abuse and domestic violence (Fielding et al., 2023), sexual abuse is likely to be a demonstration of an already failed relationship. The wider tensions, beyond psychological abuse, which infidelity brings to an intimate relationship in the Bahamian context require further study. Further studies in The Bahamas, could usefully look at factors such as employment

and income and their possible effects on intimate partner violence, as undertaken in Jamaica (Fraser, 2019).

This study on men in intimate relationships has demonstrated that they were abused by their female partners. It has shown the association of behaviours of concern and abuse, particularly psychological abuse. As such, the study not only contributes to an under-researched aspect of male abuse (Das et al., 2022) but has indicated that sexual abuse of men has effects which can persist because of their physiological abuse. Further, as in other communities, for example, Nigeria (Aborisade, 2023), there is a need to encourage abused men to seek the help which their abuse requires. Successfully engaging abused persons to participate in interventions that result in both females and males treating their intimate partners with greater respect would be beneficial to not only each other, but the wider society, due to the negative impact on the economy which psychological abuse can have on the victim's work (Thompson et al., 2022).

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