

## Coping strategies of females as victims of domestic violence: A literature review

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### ABSTRACT

Coping strategies play an important role for women victims of violence in dealing with the psychological impact of violence. Their ability to develop effective strategies will influence their level of resilience and recovery. However, little research has directly examined this topic. It is important to understand the diverse coping strategies used so that intervention programs can strengthen adaptive coping for the long-term recovery process. This study aims to inventory the various coping strategies of women victims. This research utilized a literature review to review previous research. Scientific articles were searched from databases with the keywords 'coping strategies', 'domestic violence', 'resilience', and 'female victims'. From ten related literatures, a variety of coping strategies were found. While some were not adaptive, religious coping and social support increased long-term resilience. Intervention programs to strengthen constructive coping are needed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Women victims of domestic violence often experience prolonged trauma as a result of the repeated violence. They need a variety of strategies to deal with the emotional problems and distress caused by the incident (Han et al., 2022; Kusumawaty et al., 2024; Sani & Pereira, 2020). Coping strategies include avoiding the problem, seeking social support, reflecting, and practising self-relaxation (Carvalho et al., 2019). Unfortunately, not all coping is constructive. Some are maladaptive, such as self-blame, avoidance of solutions, and even substance abuse (Carvalho et al., 2019; Puente-Martínez et al., 2019). This phenomenon should be studied in depth to support the complete recovery of victims.

Appropriate coping strategies are vital for victims to manage negative emotions and chronic stress due to the traumatic violence experienced (Carvalho et al., 2019). Constructive coping can provide a buffer of internal strength to get through difficult times, function optimally and bounce back (Han et al., 2022). Conversely, if coping is ineffective, it risks decreasing resilience and slowing down the recovery process (Jardin & Jaluague, 2022; Simonič, 2021). Therefore,

enhancing adaptive coping through interventions supports them to be better prepared to face obstacles, bounce back from failures and move forward despite difficult conditions (Anjali Sahai & Ritu Sharma, 2016).

Coping strategies can be defined as cognitive and behavioural efforts aimed at reducing, managing, or confronting physiological, emotional, or psychological distress arising from situations of threat, loss, or challenge (Han et al., 2022; Nyklicek, Ivan; Vingerhoets, 2011). For women victims of domestic violence, coping strategies play a very important role to help deal with the physical, emotional, and social impacts of the violence experienced (Piccinini et al., 2023). Adaptive coping such as seeking social support and focusing on problem solving has been shown to increase their resilience to bounce back and adapt positively after traumatic events (Sani & Pereira, 2020). In contrast, maladaptive coping such as avoidance, self-blame or substance use can worsen mental health and hinder long-term recovery (Lieghio, 2017; Sani & Pereira, 2020). Therefore, efforts to promote healthy coping are essential to support victims' empowerment to face the challenges of life after violence.

The inadequacy of literature studies on coping strategies of women victims of domestic violence has limited the contribution of knowledge. In fact, an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon at hand is needed so that targeted support programmes can be designed, but, unfortunately, direct studies are still very rare. It is important to review the literature on coping strategies of women victims of domestic violence to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and challenges faced in recovering after traumatic events. The findings of this study are useful for developing evidence-based intervention models that suit the real needs of victims and the social context of the community.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Secondary data derived from relevant previous research was collected and analysed through the literature review method. The aim is to gather a range of coping tactics commonly used by women victims in dealing with the impact of violence, and find coping tactics that are adaptive and non-adaptive. This will then be used to support the design of empowerment programmes that strengthen coping effectively.

After establishing clear research objectives, the next step was to determine the inclusion criteria, including: studies that focused on the coping strategies of women victims of domestic violence, articles published in peer-reviewed journals, research that used quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods, publications in a language that the researcher understood. The literature search strategy was conducted by identifying relevant sources of information. Relevant keywords for the search may include 'coping strategies,' 'domestic violence,' and 'female victims of domestic violence' and 'resilience.' After the search strategy was applied, the search results were screened for relevant studies. This process involved two stages, the first stage being a review of titles and abstracts to eliminate irrelevant studies, the second stage, reviewing the completeness of texts that passed the first stage of selection to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. The next step was to systematically extract data from the selected studies. The extracted information included basic study information (author, year of publication, title), research design (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed), key findings relating to coping strategies.

Assessment of study quality is important to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. The quality assessment tool used was the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) for qualitative and quantitative studies. This assessment involves evaluating the research design, methodology, data analysis, and potential bias. Once the data has been extracted and the quality of the study assessed, the researcher synthesises the findings. In this literature review, the synthesis was conducted in a narrative manner that involved combining the findings of various studies to identify key themes, patterns, and relationships between factors that influence coping strategies.

The synthesised results are discussed to provide insights into the coping strategies of female victims of domestic violence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the literature review show that women victims of domestic violence tend to use emotional coping strategies such as crying and self-blame to deal with acute stress. They also often avoid problems by running away or avoiding meeting with their abusers. However, religious coping strategies and seeking support from family or close friends have been shown to improve their resilience in the long term. Unfortunately, maladaptive coping such as using drugs or alcohol can worsen their psychological condition and complicate their recovery process. The following are the results of the review of references related to the coping strategies of women victims of domestic violence.

**Table 1.** Literature review table

No	Journal Identity and Authors	Objective	Method	Results	Conclusion
1.	Meerambika Mahapatro Sudhir P. Singh (2019) Coping strategies of women survivors of domestic violence residing with an abusive partner after registered complaint with the family counseling center at Alwar, India Journal of Community Psychol. 2019;1-16. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22297">https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22297</a> (Mahapatro & Singh, 2020)	To analyse mediation coping strategies between informal and formal coping strategies as a result of contextual factors and associated psychological distress.	A prospective intervention with a 4-month time span for awareness building, counselling, and personalised advice for each case. Baseline and endline assessments with SRQ-20 and in-depth interviews.	There are differences in impact of domestic violence, psychological distress, and coping strategies; women with informal support systems had better coping outcomes and reduced psychological distress.	Women use avoidance strategies and passive coping strategies when under abuse Institutional support for women survivors of domestic violence can improve survivors' well-being
2.	Mehmet Ali Balkanlioglu Zeynep Ozinci (2022) Intimate Partner Violence Incidents and Solutions Reported by Turkish Couples in Long-Term Marriages: An Exploratory Qualitative Study. Qualitative Sociology Review, 28(3), 126-143. <a href="https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.18.3.06">https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.18.3.06</a> (Balkanlioglu & Ozinci, 2022)	investigating the relationship between IPV and marital duration in the Turkish context and exploring couples' perceptions, experiences, and solutions regarding IPV	Qualitative study, data collection tools were semi-structured interviews, observation notes taken during interviews, and a socio-demographic questionnaire.	Psychological violence was most commonly reported. Men and women can be both perpetrators and victims of psychological violence.	IPV partner experiences, personality traits, decision-making and problem-solving approaches, adaptation strategies, motivation, privacy, family members, and socio-culture should be explored.
3.	Milca Ramaiane da Silva Carvalho Jeane Freitas de Oliveira Nadirlene Pereira Gomes Luana Moura Campos Lilian Conceição Guimarães de Almeida Luana Rodrigues Santos Coping strategies for domestic violence:	To understand the coping strategies that women involved with alcohol and/or other drugs use to cope with domestic	Qualitative research through interviews on strategies adopted to deal with domestic violence. The content of the	Women victims of domestic violence try to have conversations; seek family and institutional support and take responsibility and blame for the assaults suffered.	A woman in a situation of domestic violence and involvement with alcohol and/or other drugs confronts her partner, tries to dialogue, and seeks family and

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	Testimony of women involved with drugs. Esc Anna Nery 2019;23(2):e20180291 <a href="https://doi.org/10.1590/2177-9465-EAN-2018-0291">https://doi.org/10.1590/2177-9465-EAN-2018-0291</a> (Carvalho et al., 2019)	violence.	interviews was recorded on a digital device and transcribed in full.		institutional support as a coping strategy.
4.	Marc van der Putten Ameer Nur-E-Jannat (2022) Coping with domestic violence: Women's voices in Bangladesh. Journal of Health Research Vol. 36 No. 1, 2022 pp. 77-88 <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/JHR-02-2020-0026">https://doi.org/10.1108/JHR-02-2020-0026</a> (van der Putten & Nur-E-Jannat, 2022)	To explore and describe women's experiences of perceptions of domestic violence and the ways in which they cope.	In-depth interviews with 25 women who experienced domestic violence, facilitated by a semi-structured questionnaire.	Women adopted a variety of responses to domestic violence. Two key aspects: emotionally-driven approaches and violent approaches to violent situations.	Some women demonstrate more proactive ways of produce resilience in the midst of violent environments, and to be passive in coping.
5.	Farzaneh Rashidi Fakari Mahbobeh Ahmadi Doulabi Tahereh Mokhtaryan-Gilani Alireza Akbarzadeh Baghban Sepideh Hajian (2022) A survey of coping strategies and resilience in women victims of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Tehran, 2020 Brain Behav. 2022;12:e2730. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.2730">https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.2730</a> (Rashidi Fakari et al., 2022)	To investigate coping strategies and women of domestic violence in the COVID-19 epidemic in Tehran, 2020.	A descriptive-analytical study on demographic information forms, socioeconomic status questionnaire, domestic violence questionnaire, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, and Endler coping strategies questionnaire.	There were statistically significant differences in using problem-orientated strategies, emotional with sexual, and avoidance with physical violence. Coping styles were associated with all types of violence	The use of problem-orientated coping strategies is associated with levels of violence, rigidity, abuse, power, and control struggle. Coping is a moderation process of a stressor.
6.	Fengsu Hou J. D. Catherine Cerulli M. B. E. Marsha N. Wittink Eric D. Caine M. A. Jennifer Thompson Stone2 Peiyuan Qiu (2022). Rural Chinese Women's Recognition of Intimate Partner Violence and their Potential Coping Strategies: A Qualitative Study. Journal of Family Violence, 37(4), 613-628. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-021-00302-4">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-021-00302-4</a> (Hou et al., 2022)	Describe Chinese rural women's perspectives on IPV, exploring potential coping strategies utilised based on their responses to the scenarios, so as to inform the development of interventions to address and reduce IPV among rural women in	Qualitative method with phenomenological approach	Majority participants denied having a violent relationship while blaming the victim, playing the role of a bad wife, and being poorly educated. Participants suggested resolving IPV by repairing the relationship, empowering, surviving, doing chores, and seeking help from others.	Chinese cultural factors strongly influence the proportion of rural women in China who can identify IPV and will seek legal assistance. Most participants attributed victim blaming to IPV.

No	Journal Identity and Authors	Objective	Method	Results	Conclusion
7.	Alexis Winfield, N. Zoe Hilton Julie Poon, Anna Lee Straatman Peter G. Jaffe. (2023). Coping Strategies in Women and Children Living with Domestic Violence: Staying Alive Journal of Family Violence <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-022-00488-1">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-022-00488-1</a> (Winfield et al., 2023)	China. To explore the safety strategies used by mothers and children in the face of severe domestic violence.	A total of 77 severe domestic violence survivor interviews were conducted. Qualitative methods through interviews with survivors of domestic violence were conducted.	Mothers and children worked together to reassure and keep each other safe, and made plans to leave their abusers.	Safety planning for mother-child dyads can be based on coping strategies include distraction, calming down, intervening in the violence, turning to a trusted person, or physically distancing themselves from the abuse.
8.	Frank Darkwa Baffour Emmanuel Brenyah Adomako Portia Darkwa Baffour Margaret Henni (2022) Coping Strategies Adopted by Migrant Female Headload Carriers Who Experienced IPV VICTIMS & OFFENDERS 2022, VOL. 17, NO. 1, 139-159 <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2021.1923601">https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2021.1923601</a> (Baffour et al., 2022)	To explore the coping strategies used by 20 head-bearers (Women who carry a load in a pot on their head for a fee) who survived IPV.	Qualitative data for this study was collected from 20 participants. In-depth data was collected 50-60 minutes through semi-structured interviews	The carriers adopt strategies of apologising or fighting back; remaining silent; seeking support from family, friends, or institutions; engaging in prayer and hope; and leaving the relationship.	Their narratives consisted of a mix of coping strategies compared to the majority of those who had been (or still were) in abusive intimate relationships for two years.
9.	Masarah Mohamad Yusof Azlinda Azman Paramjit Singh Jamir Singh Mahathir Yahaya (2022) A Qualitative Analysis of the Coping Strategies of Female Victimization After Separation Journal of Human Rights and Social Work (2022) 7:84-90. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-021-00199-5">https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-021-00199-5</a> (Yusof et al., 2022)	To identify how victims of domestic violence utilise coping strategies to deal with the challenges and stresses of separating from their partners. to separate from their partner	In-depth interviews using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Actions taken including filling time, positive thinking, seeking formal services, religious approaches, and sharing problems were successful in reducing stress and worry	The victims of domestic violence use five forms of coping strategies to reduce stress problems after divorce. These strategies consist of filling time, positive thinking, seeking formal services, religious approaches, and sharing problems with informal systems.	All victims acknowledged that these forms of behaviour prevented them from dwelling on the problems caused by their husband's violent behaviour, to help boost the victim's confidence to survive.
10.	Wilber Karugahe Jessica Lambert (2021) Gender, role in domestic violence as victim or perpetrator and coping	To investigated the extent to which men and women,	The Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI) scale is used to measure	There are statistically significant differences between victims and	Males and females alike engage in social strategy, problem-solving, and avoidance at

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	strategies in Uganda: implications for gender-inclusive Asia Pacific Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy, (2021)12:1, 58-72, DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/21507686.2021.1876113">https://doi.org/10.1080/21507686.2021.1876113</a> (Karugahe & Lambert, 2021)	Uganda:	victims and perpetrators of domestic violence in an urban sample in Uganda, use coping strategies.	coping strategies with three subscales of avoidance, supportive, and problem-solving strategies.	perpetrators in terms of problem solving and social coping strategies.	the same degree. Appropriate coping strategies will help counsellors offering counselling services.

Some coping strategies used by women who are victims of domestic violence are emotional coping techniques such as crying, self-blame, and brooding may provide temporary relief, but do not really solve the underlying problem or get them out of the violent situation. It may worsen mental state with time. In addition, the second approach is avoidance and denial. Actions such as social withdrawal, using substances, or thinking about the abuse are ineffective because they prevent active problem-solving. These conditions cause women to remain in the context of violence.

When effective support networks are in place, behaviours such as seeking social support from friends, family or counselling have even been shown to relieve stress and help people thrive after trauma (Sere et al., 2021). However, actual support can be limited by stigma. It is recognised that religious or spiritual ties help some women survive difficult situations. Interpreting doctrine, however, also sometimes indirectly supports survival in an abusive marriage (Mahapatro & Singh, 2020). The review found that the development and availability of formal community resources such as women's shelters, protection orders, counselling are important to offer alternatives for women to cope with and exit violence (Han et al., 2022; Mahapatro & Singh, 2020). But outreach must consider socio-cultural barriers (Baffour et al., 2022). Comprehensive interventions are needed to simultaneously address women's intrapersonal coping abilities, social networks, and social barriers through empowerment, education, and reform of gender-based power systems (Güler et al., 2022).

It can be inferred that victims of domestic violence tend to use emotional coping to deal with acute stress, including crying, blaming themselves, or confiding in friends. They also often avoid problems by running away or avoiding their abusers. The coping strategies of religiosity and seeking social support were shown to improve long-term resilience (DeSa et al., 2022; Yusof et al., 2022). However, maladaptive coping such as excessive self-blame, drug or alcohol use was found to worsen the condition and slow recovery. Therefore, it is necessary to help promote healthy and effective coping.

Many researchers refer to Lazarus and Folkman's (Carvalho et al., 2019; Zuhriyah et al., 2023) coping theory of stresses and vulnerabilities in examining the coping strategies of domestic violence victims. This theory explains that coping is a fluid cognitive and behavioural attempt to manage a stressful situation through reappraisal and adjustment efforts. Reappraisal consists of primary appraisals of threats and resources, and secondary appraisals of coping effectiveness (Sere et al., 2021). Coping is categorised into problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Sere et al., 2021; Stensvehagen et al., 2022). This theory provides a framework for understanding stress and coping dynamics in domestic violence victims facing ongoing threats. Reappraisal and goal-appropriate coping can assist them in optimising resources to adapt positively (Rashidi Fakari et al., 2022).

Based on previous research, it was revealed that women victims of domestic violence tend to use emotion-centred coping strategies in dealing with the traumatic impact of the violence

experienced (Karakurt et al., 2022; Mahapatro & Singh, 2020). They often cry, get angry, or blame themselves to divert feelings of acute stress (Sukeri & Man, 2017). This coping helps to vent negative emotions briefly but does little to definitively resolve the problem. Moreover, the continued build-up of emotions risks worsening the victim's psychological state (Mahapatro & Singh, 2020). Therefore, problem-centred coping needs to be improved to promote better recovery.

Paternalistic culture often positions women as weak parties who must submit to male power (Irmansyah et al., 2020). This has an impact on the coping characteristics that develop in women victims of domestic violence. They tend to suppress negative emotions to avoid further conflict. However, the accumulation of emotions for a long time without concrete problem solving, makes emotion-centred coping the most effective choice for many victims (Sukeri & Man, 2017). In fact, this strategy is less helpful for long-term recovery. The role of culture in influencing coping patterns needs to be mitigated for the welfare of victims (Han et al., 2022). Emotion-centred coping strategies used by victims of domestic violence due to paternalistic culture, result in long-term mental and physical disorders. The accumulation of unaddressed stress leads to depression, anxiety, and even somatic illnesses (Carvalho et al., 2019). This complicates the process of trauma healing and self-empowerment (Mahapatro & Singh, 2020). In addition, victims find it difficult to break away from violent relationships due to low self-esteem and a sense of empowerment. They are trapped in a continuous cycle of violence (Taccini & Mannarini, 2023). Therefore, strengthening adaptive coping through gender empowerment is necessary to support victims to restore their dignity. A culture that supports equality is also needed.

Several studies mention the influence of stigma in determining victims' coping strategies. Social stigma often forces victims to suppress emotions in order to remain silent and resigned (Batool et al., 2022; Taccini & Mannarini, 2023). In addition, the shame caused by stigma fosters self-blame and problem-avoidance behaviours (Saraswati, 2020). As a result, victims find it difficult to receive psychosocial support. The internalisation of stigma makes victims prefer to mourn alone rather than seek support (Díez et al., 2018). Therefore, stigma reduction is necessary in increasing healthy coping options for victims.

The strategy of socializing with family and neighbors is one of the local cultural ways of dealing with domestic violence. Strengthening social networks as a form of attachment to the values of community solidarity which becomes inner strength for victims. Carrying out religious rituals such as prayer, zikr, and praying is part of acculturation to cultural spirituality in psychological strengthening. Relying on traditional treatment is often the choice for victims of domestic violence to avoid social stigmatization due to reporting violence. Sticking with local wisdom "just keep quiet" is sometimes the best choice to avoid further conflict in the midst of a patriarchal culture that is still strong.

The results of this research can map various coping strategies that have been used by women who are victims of domestic violence based on the results of previous research. By reviewing various literature, various coping strategies will be collected that can be used as references. Appropriate coping strategies are critical to the recovery of women victims of domestic violence. Problem-centred coping and social support need to be enhanced so that victims can adaptively cope with their trauma. Excessive use of emotion-centred coping will only worsen her psychological condition. In addition, efforts to increase religious and meaningful coping must be accompanied by an understanding of human rights. Victims' coping choices also require the support of a social environment without stigma. Optimisation of coping strategies will facilitate victims to bounce back and be free from a life of continuing harm.

## CONCLUSION

Many studies have shown that coping strategies influence the stress levels and recovery of domestic violence victims. In general, problem-centred coping and social support are effective in reducing the impact of trauma. However, excessive emotion-centred coping and avoidance may

worsen the victim's condition. In addition, patriarchal cultural influences and stigma still limit healthy coping options. Therefore, interventions that integrally promote adaptive coping are necessary for the long-term well-being of victims coping strategies of female as victims of domestic violence by involving various relevant stakeholders. This literature review is limited to the research results available in the sources searched, so it may not cover all relevant information. Limitations also arise because the amount of literature referenced is still limited, so the findings are not comprehensive.

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