

# Application of Systematic Thinking in Domestic Violence

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## Abstract

It is believed that solutions to sustainability challenges may only be developed via the system thinking. System thinking offers an approach that considers the whole systems and takes all the interrelationship of factors into consideration when developing problems. The purpose of this essay is using the wicked problem of domestic violence to demonstrate it is critical in developing long term solutions through system thinking in order to solve this wicked problem properly. Therefore, the best long term consequence may be obtained via the selection of best long term solutions. In the following paragraphs, this essay will discuss what is domestic violence, its causes, potential solutions, tradeoff, in order to demonstrate that it is a wicked problem. After that the system thinking may be used to consider different variables, boundaries, current trends that affect the determination of methods to deal with domestic violence. At the end, a conclusion will sum up the main finding in the essay.

## Keywords

System Thinking, Domestic Violence, Causes and Solution of Domestic Violence

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## 1. Introduction

All linkage and interaction of different factors of sustainability challenge will be examined for identifying different impact of actions and make the wise decisions. Problem solvers can also understand the change of the patterns, and apply a more rigorous analysis for solving the sustainability challenges too (Senge, 2006). Most of the sustainability challenges could be wicked problems while these problems may not be solved permanently, instead taming these problems may be a better alternative due to their complexity and conflicts involved. Attempting to deal with these problems may potentially generate another problem at the system, if problem solvers fail to take all changing factors of system into consideration (Alford & Head, 2017).

## 2. What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is defined by the NSW government as the violent, abusive, as well as intimidating behaviour in a relationship amongst partner, carer or family member. Besides, the domestic violence is not just limited to physical abuse, and it can be extended to different types of abuse, such as verbal abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, social abuse, or even sexual abuse and harassment and stalking. All of these abuses have the behaviours related to controlling, dominating, humiliating and scaring other person (NSW Government, 2017). However, the domestic violence never stops because of different reason, such as the fear and income dependence to the abusive partners, kids, lack of support from family, the hope for changes, or even social barriers that prevent victims. Even worst, most of the victims may leave the abusive partner, but then return back to the abusive partner before they are permanently leaving due to different reasons (Women against abuse, 2015). Domestic violence is a serious social problem. On the one hand, its existence directly endangers the physical and mental health and life safety of victims, leading to unhappiness in mar-

riage, family and children's growth. On the other hand, it is easy to cause vicious criminal cases, endanger social security and stability, and increase the social crime rate. Therefore, it is obviously that domestic violence is a complex issue that may be hard to solve directly with simply one solution of leaving.

### 3. Causes and solution of domestic violence

Different types of domestic violence may have different causes that may require different solutions to deal with. The roof of the causes on domestic violence may be taken into consideration for dealing with domestic violence, such as family backgrounds of abusive partner, workplace pressure, cultural influence, and so on (Goldsmith, 2017).

It is unfortunate to find that there are more than 15 per cent of young people experienced domestic violence in Australia according to Queensland Domestic Violence Taskforce cited in DVPCGC (2017). Wolfe et al. (2003) also empirically validate statistics from 41 studies regarding the direct relationship amongst emotional and behavioural problems of children, and their exposure to domestic violence of children. The emotional and behavioural problems of children may facilitate their violent behaviour to their partners in future.

The child of abusive may have higher potential of being violent in the future, because of their tension, anxiety, anger and sadness that cannot be taken out. These may eventually cause emotional and psychological trauma of child, but even worst that they may replicate violent behaviour as their violent parents in order to protect themselves and release their emotion and psychological trauma (Cohodes et al., 2016). These may become a trap that could never end from current generation to next generation, because domestic violence has become a learned behaviour. The trap starts from domestic violence to relationship broken, child replicating of violent behaviour, and another case of domestic violence when the child grows up. Therefore, separating from the abusive partner with the victims and kids may only solve the issue partially, additional assistance and care are also needed not only for the victims of domestic violence, but also the child as well (DVPCGC, 2017). It demonstrates the difficulty of solving domestic violence by any single method and more comprehensive approach may be implemented and deal with it according. For example, report to the local women's federation or relevant institutions that the relevant institutions responsible for women and children have the obligation to combat domestic violence; the party may also directly report the case to the local public security organ, if the party is seriously injured, litigant may report the case as intentional injury; apply directly to the local court for a life protection order, and use legal coercive means to protect life safety. However, these methods can not fundamentally solve this complex social problem, but can only solve some serious situations.

### 4. Why domestic violence is a wicked problem?

Domestic violence as a significant sustainability issue that are so complex and conflicting for solving, and different views of domestic violence may exist and may lead to different ways of solving this wicked problem. Therefore, there are no rational or one single decision making processes for dealing with the wicked problems (Alford & Head, 2017).

Government agencies, Community Legal Centres NSW has promoted the rights and responsibility of victims of domestic violence to apply for divorce, while legal aid may be eligible for victims who have financial hardship (Community Legal Centres NSW, 2017). However, encouraging victims leaving their abusive partners may cause other problems, such as issues of emotional and mental development of children, the financial difficulties, causing another case of domestic violence if abusive partners getting married again, and so on. It seems that the problems are changing and influencing more people. The best illustration is the evidence that children from two partner family do have a better wide range of outcomes that children from single parent family. The evidences are shown from statistics of high rate on school drop out rate, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency for single parent child (Berlin, 2004).

It is obviously lack of definitive formulation on solving the wicked problems because of uniqueness in each case of domestic violence. Solving domestic violence is not simply a choice of leaving or staying with the abusive partners, but it is a social issue that domestic violence is not a consequence and not the cause. For example, the perpetrators of domestic violence may have aggressive behaviour because of their exclusion from labor market causing permanent unemployment, social disadvantages and isolation, life dissatisfaction, drinking habits, and so on (Flood & Pease, 2006). The government may need different policies to deal with domestic violence with different cause of the aggressive behaviour of the perpetrators.

The victims, abusive partners, related parties, and society may all be involved in dealing with domestic violence, while different judgment may cause different solutions which could cause related parties to be either better off or worse off. Without reporting, even the government responsible for public services has implemented wide variety of strategies to deal with domestic violence in Australia for some decades, but it is not proved to be successful even if large amount of resources has been involved (Pahl, 2016).

The non-reporting of domestic violence are because victims may feel shame, embarrassed. Different of community

attitudes regarding domestic violence may also influence the disclosure rate too (Parliament of Australia 2017). However, there are different projects in Australia that could compete for funding from Australia government that may prevent more resources to be allocated to assist victims, such as Medicare and education funding (Coorey, 2017). Besides, any effort to deal with domestic violence could have caused different unexpected consequence and the influence could be permanent for all stakeholders. There are no single root cause leading to the domestic violence that problems may never solve out completely. In this case, the domestic violence may need to be solve with the system thinking (Alford & Head, 2017).

## 5. The application of System thinking

The domestic violence is a wicked problem that fulfils the criteria of difficulty to solve and taming negative effects from domestic violence may be the best alternative (Alford & Head, 2017). System thinking is a tool for finding the relevant connection and interaction of causes and effects of domestic violence, so as find out the best way to deal with domestic violence that are in the best interest of the present and future generation in society. Different potential solutions may be considered in order to develop innovative and flexible solution for dealing with domestic violence, while multiple root causes as well as the interdependencies of the domestic violence may be considered in the following (Alford & Head, 2017).

There are different factors influencing the problem solving in the domestic violence. The community attitudes toward violence may have great influence on the strategies developed to deal with domestic violence in our society. The attitude of male toward women, the attitude of tradition gender role, the difference in the male domination society are all variable that could made perpetrators considering violence as a legitimized method to resolve conflict (Flood & Pease, 2006). The community support on general equality is also another variable that could lead to boundaries in developing solutions to deal with or even to prevent the occurrence of domestic violence (VicHealth, 2009). These not only cause the violence as a method to deal with family issues, but also demotivate female victims to report violence. The above mentioned variables in a community do indicate that strategies of solving domestic violence should have involved the determination of community attitude and implement strategies to promote gender equality or enhancement of female social status (Morgan & Chadwick, 2009).

Gender equity may be well promoted in global but it does not implement as expected for solving domestic violence. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2017), there are more than 35% women in the world that are currently experiencing different type of violence, and this violence could have cause serious and long lasting negative effects on the sexual health, reproductive ability, as well as mental health of these women. Although the WHO has encourage different government to implement legal reforms and introduce new policies to offer assistance to the victims of domestic violence, such as financial support, offering safe place for victims, health services, increasing media attention, and so on, issues of domestic violence still exist. Different non-profit organization also contributes in promoting gender equity to minimize domestic violence via education program, prevention programs, and consultation.

However, gender equality is not improved because gender gap varies from countries to countries, especially in the developing areas due to their poor education, healthcare and employment opportunity for women according to World Economic Forum (2016). In addition, United Nations (2013) claims that improving female's social status through political and commercial world may not necessary increase the status of women at home, while the societal and institutional norms in society still play a great influence on women. Therefore, promoting gender equality may not necessary solve or minimize domestic violence in our society with higher female status.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has demonstrated that domestic violence is a wicked problem that no single methods can be solved and people may only try to tam the negative effectives, because of its complex and conflicts in dealing with the issue. System approach has been applied to determine different variables and current trend in related to domestic violence. Solving domestic violence may need to consider different stakeholders, factors, and the whole social system. For instance, divorce with perpetrators may offer a short term method for victims to prevent further damage of violent behaviour, but the long term negative influence on children may be serious (DVPCGC, 2017). Government may need to allocate more social resources to support the victims and children in different perspectives, either finance or healthy mental development, but there are competing projects in society that may prevent government to offer further assistance (Berlin, 2004). The enhancement of gender equality may offer a long term solution to deal with domestic violence, and improve social status of female in global (Illinois, 2014). However, the community attitude towards violence may still influence the short term effectiveness of developing strategies to reduce domestic violence (Flood & Pease, 2006). Although there are still no best method to deal with domestic violence in our society, the system thinking do allow deci-

sion maker to critically evaluate different factors and develop solution to sustainability challenges, such as the domestic violence.

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