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Perspective of survivors in perpetrator programme outcome evaluation: results from a case example in the Italian context

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Abstract
Perpetrator programmes have been widely developed in recent years. Despite this, their outcomes remain controversial. The main challenge in evaluating perpetrator programmes is the lack of suitable tools. The "Impact Outcome Monitoring Toolkit" was developed to overcome this challenge. This study analyses the outcomes of a perpetrator programme in Italy. Forty-four participants were included; twenty-two were enrolled in a perpetrator programme, while the remaining twenty-two were their (ex-) partners. Results showed that emotional abusive behaviour was more prevalent than physical and sexual abusive behaviour, especially according to (ex-) partners. Consistency in the men's and (ex-)partners' reporting of physical violence was demonstrated. Psychological abuse was reduced according to both, albeit in different ways. These results suggest that the men's views about their physical abusive behaviour are more reliable than expected. The impact of violence on victims decreased by the end of the programme, although some emotional impact remained. Perpetrator programmes need to pay particular attention to psychological violence and coercive control, as they might remain difficult to detect for the men while still having an impact on the victims/survivors. Victims' safety and well-being increased by the end of the programme. These results are promising in terms of reduction of violent behaviour and suggest further steps for perpetrator programmes to increase victim safety.

Keywords: perpetrator programmes, outcome, victim/survivor perspective, safety, impact

1. Introduction

As part of a coordinated community response, perpetrator programmes are in a unique position to fight against gender-based violence (GBV). Research on the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes has been widely developed in recent years (Vall *et al.*, 2023b; Travers *et al.*, 2021) and quality standards have been proposed (WWP EN, 2023). These advances have been accompanied by a wealth of research on their outcomes. Despite this progress, the outcomes of the research on perpetrator programmes have been controversial because of methodological challenges and mixed findings (i.e. different tools have been used to measure outcome, different definitions of outcome across studies, etc. have made it very difficult to compare results across studies) (Babcock *et al.*, 2004; Gondolf, 2003; Lilly-Walker *et al.*, 2016; Vall *et al.,* 2023b).

There has been a paradigm shift in perpetrator programmes' outcome research. The focus has moved from conceptualising outcome as recidivism to a more comprehensive understanding of outcome including for example the impact of this violence (Hamberger *et al.*, 2016; Hester *et al.*, 2023). In this context, Hester and Myhill (see, for example, Hester *et al.*, 2010, 2023; Myhill, 2015, 2017) have proposed to integrate the measurement of behaviours including non-physical forms of coercion such as isolation, intimidation, humiliation, extreme jealousy, etc.; and the impacts that they produce (such as anxiety, extreme fear, diminished space for action, etc.). Kelly and Westmarland (2015) proposed the inclusion of seven different measures of success, moving beyond the analysis of behaviour change. Along these lines, recent studies have found interesting results where despite the reduction of violent behaviours after the perpetrator programme, some impacts related to emotional coercion still remained (Vall *et al.*, 2023a).

One of the main challenges when evaluating perpetrator programmes is the lack of suitable tools to measure outcomes (Kelly and Westermarland, 2015). Reviews on the outcomes of perpetrator programmes have obtained inconclusive results because the methodologies and the tools used in the studies are often very different and do not allow for comparison (Akoenski *et al.*, 2013; Babcock *et al.*, 2004; Feder *et al.*, 2008; Vall *et al.*, 2023b). In this context, a new standardised tool to assess the outcomes of perpetrator programmes has been proposed to overcome this challenge (see for example: Vall *et al.*, 2021, 2023a).

Another important challenge is the methodology used to analyse the outcomes of perpetrator programmes. It is crucial to include the perspective of the victims / survivors (Gondolf and Beeman 2003; McGinn *et al.*, 2021; Travers *et al.*, 2021). If the safety and wellbeing of victims is one of the main objectives of perpetrator programmes, then it should also be included as a measure of outcome. Therefore, in this context, their perceptions about their safety and well-being are crucial. Moreover, studies have found that survivors tend to have a more objective perception of the abusive behaviour than perpetrators (McGinn *et al.*, 2021; Vall *et al.*, 2021, 2023b). These results highlight the need to include the triangulation of data from multiple sources (Lilly-Walker *et al.*, 2016) including victims / survivors.

Analysing the process of change has also been deemed important (Päivinen *et al.*, 2016), therefore, information on the outcome must be collected at several time points during a perpetrator programme and not just at the beginning and at the end of it.

A perpetrator programme's outcome research model has been proposed by Lilley *et al.* (2016), which includes an understanding of outcome as a process, the triangulation of data and a comprehensive conceptualisation of outcome that moves beyond the measurement of recidivism rates and behaviour change. A recent systematic review by (Vall *et al.*, 2023b) analysed the compliance of several articles that assessed the outcomes of perpetrator programmes with Lilley *et al.*'s (2016) proposed model. Results showed that only 12 out of 46 studies (26.1%) used more than one source to obtain recidivism rates. In terms of outcomes, less than one-third of the studies considered accounts from (ex-) partners. Some studies used other measures of outcome beyond behaviour change, while a few included a pretest-posttest measures. Therefore, these studies did not follow the recommendations of the model (Vall *et al.*, 2023b).

This study analyses the outcomes of a perpetrator programme in Italy, following the model proposed by Lilley *et al.* (2016) and adopting a victim-centred approach. Therefore, the victim's perspective is included, and outcome is understood in a broad

sense (including measures such as impact of violence, safety of the victim, etc.), and data is collected longitudinally throughout the programme.

2. Methods

Participants and setting

Participants in this study were 42 men who were enrolled in the Centro Ascolto Uomini Maltrattanti Onlus (CAM), a psycho-educational programme for male perpetrators of gender-based violence in Florence, Italy. The programme is part of a multi-agency approach against gender-based violence. Inclusion criteria for participating in the programme were the following: demonstrate at least some motivation prior to participation in the programme, a minimum of accountability for abusive behaviour, agreeing to not misuse alcohol nor use drugs during the programme, having sufficient knowledge of language and cognitive skills to follow the content, and agreeing to limited confidentiality and allowing the facilitators to contact the (ex-)partner. The CAM psychoeducational programme is based on principles from Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy and the Duluth Model. The focus of work is based on gender-specific power and control dynamics, gender stereotypes, accountability/responsibility for violence, the effects of violence on the victim / empathy towards the victims, fatherhood, and developing social skills. This is a group programme with semi-open/rolling groups[1], and a mixed-gender team of facilitators. Sessions are offered weekly, and last for 90 minutes. The programme has a total length of 22 sessions conducted over 30 meetings (some sessions last more than a meeting). The CAM programme includes integrated partner contact, where the (ex-)partner is contacted at the beginning of the programme, in the middle and at the end of it. Participants were from a wide range of ages (see Table 1), with the majority between the ages of 31 and 50 (61.9%). Most of them were full-time workers (83.3%) and had a middle-low income level (83.3%). None of them had severe mental disorders or cognitive impairment. Regarding the relationship status, half of the men reported being in a relationship, either living together or separated (52.4%). Others had ended the relationship or were in the process of breaking up (35.7%) or reported being unsure about it (11.9%). Most men reported having 1 or more children (83.3%), mainly between 5 and 9 years old (51.4%). Within this age bracket, only 5.7% of the children lived with their parents. Also, almost all the children (71.4%) had witnessed violence at some point, as reported by their parents. The programme received referrals through a wide variety of routes, with voluntary self-referral accounting for 23.8% (n=10) of referrals, with men hearing about the programme through various forms of publicity, such as posters or advertisements online. There was a high number of men that were sign-posted to the programme by (ex-) partners and/or family members (i.e. they were pressured to attend by their partner/ex-partner (n=8; 19.0%) or by friends or family (n=5; 11.9%)). Other referral routes were mandatory, such as child protection (n=5; 11.9%), criminal courts (n=3; 7.1%), civil courts (n=4; 9.5%) and restorative justice (n=2; 4.8%). Finally, some men were referred via the following channels: counselling/mental health services

[1] Groups have two window sessions that allow men to join. These two sessions are in the first half of the programme. After session 12 (second window sessions) groups become closed and do not allow for other men to join.

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(n=3; 7.1%), relationship counselling services (n=3; 7.1%), addiction services (n=3; 7.1%) and health services (n=2; 4.8%).

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of male perpetrators

Variable	Level	Freq	N	%
Age	22 - 30	3	42	7.1
	31 - 40	12	42	28.6
	41 - 50	14	42	33.3
	51 - 60	11	42	26.2
	over 60	2	42	4.8
Employment status	Full time employment	35	42	83.3
	Part time employment	2	42	4.8
	Unemployed	5	42	11.9
Income level	Comfortably managing	4	42	9.5
	Regular treats and saving or holiday	10	42	23.8
	Occasional treat or save	10	42	23.8
	Managing essentials, no left over	11	42	26.2
	Struggling essentials	7	42	16.7
Relationship status	Together and living together	10	42	23.8
	Together but living apart	12	42	28.6
	Relationship ended and living apart	12	42	28.6
	In the process of splitting up	3	42	7.1
	I am not sure	5	42	11.9
All-time response[a]	Yes	22	42	52.4
	No	20	42	47.6
Children	Yes	35	42	83.3
	No	7	42	16.7
Number of children	1	12	35	34.3
	2	11	35	31.4
	3	12	35	34.3
Children age[b]	0-4	13	35	37.1
	5-9	18	35	51.4
	10-14	6	35	17.1
	15-18	9	35	25.7
Children witnessed violence	Never	10	35	28.6
	Often	10	35	28.6
	Sometimes	15	35	42.8

[a] Note. Participants that have answered the questionnaires at all times (T1, T2, and T3). Some participants might miss some time-response.
[b] Note. Proportions of children age category are not exclusive.

The reasons for participating in the programme were also diverse. A high number of men reported internal reasons, including: to stop using violence (n=16; 38.1%) and/or abusive behaviour (n=18; 42.9%), wanting their (ex-)partner to feel safe around them (n=19; 45.2%), wanting their (ex-)partner (n=16; 38.1%) and/or child(ren) (n=6; 14.3%) to not be afraid of them, improving their couple relationship (n=14; 33.3%), to be a better father to their children (n=11; 26.2%). A small proportion of external reasons were obtained, such as being referred as part of criminal court (n=3; 7.1%) or by family court (n=1; 2.4%) sentences, or being referred by child protection services (n=5; 11.9%). A small number of men also reported fearing being left by their partner (n=6; 14.3%) or fearing returning to prison as reasons for joining the programme (n=2; 4.8%). It is important to note that of those men who completed the three measurements (n=22) approximately half

reported internal reasons, such as: wanting to stop using violence (45.5%), to stop using abusive behaviour (50.0%), wanting their (ex-)partner to feel safe around them (50.0%) and wanting their (ex-)partner not to be afraid of them (45.5%).

Measures

The *Impact Outcome Monitoring Toolkit* questionnaire of the "European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP EN)" was used in this study. This instrument comprises ten versions of the questionnaire, slightly adapted in relation to the treatment phase (five versions: T0-before starting the programme, T1-at the beginning of the programme, T2-in the middle, T3-at the end of the programme, and T4-follow-up) and in relation to the respondent (two versions: client and (ex-)partner). Due to the aim of this paper, we focused on the responses to the questionnaire for perpetrators and (ex-) partners at Times 1, 2 and 3. The scales included were the following: violent behaviour (emotional, physical and sexual), impact of the violence on (ex-)partner and child(ren), (ex-)partner's safety and client's reasons for violence. All the items on the scales of the violent behaviour, impacts, police call-out, and (ex-)partner's fear were equivalent across the clients' and
(ex-)partners' questionnaires. Anxious and depressed feelings were reported by (ex-)partners and the reasons for violence were reported by clients. The first scale (*Violent behaviour*) contains 29 items divided into three sub-scales regarding three types of IPV: emotional (13), physical (14) and sexual behaviour (8). These sub-scales assessed the frequency of each violent behaviour through a 3-point Likert scale ("Never", "Sometimes", "Often"). The second scale (*Impact of violence on (ex-)partner*), comprises 16 items about the physical and emotional impacts on the (ex-)partner, through a dichotomic scale ("Yes", "No). The third scale (*Impact of violence on children*) includes 11 items about the situation and angry feelings towards the parents of the child(ren), also with a dichotomic scale. The fourth scale (*(Ex-)partner's safety*) includes three frequency sub-scales: police call-outs ("Not at all", "Once", "2-5 times", "6-10 times", "More than 10 times"), (ex-)partner's anxious feelings and (ex-)partner's depressed feelings ("Never", "Not often", "Sometimes", "Often", "Always"). Finally, the fifth scale (*Client's reasons for violence*) consists of 17 items about the internal attribution (locus of control) of the reasons for violence. This tool was translated to Italian by a bilingual expert, then it was back-translated and the final translation was discussed with a group of experts.

Data collection and analysis

The data was obtained through intentional sampling (Hibberts *et al.*, 2012). Responses from the clients and (ex-)partners were collected at the beginning of each round of the programme. The procedure used to collect the answers differed for each group. Clients responded to the questionnaire on-site and on paper. They did it alone, but a facilitator was present in the room to assist with any questions or clarifications they might have. Partners and ex-partners were contacted at the beginning of the programme to inform them about the content and methods of the programme, the support services available to them in case they needed them, and also to learn about their experience of violence and their assessment of the outcomes of the programme. Thus, (ex-)partners responded to the questionnaire because of their involvement in the process. Responses were collected either over the phone or face-to-face depending on the availability of each case.

Statistical analysis was performed using the *SPSS* version 29.0. Due to the completion rate (see Table 1), only data from 22 couples was included in the analysis. Responses from clients (n = 22) were paired with the data from their (ex-)partners (n = 22). Within-groups comparison tests were carried out to analyse the outcomes of the programme, examining time differences in T1, T2 and T3. Between-groups comparison tests were conducted to analyse possible differences between clients' and (ex-)partners' perceptions. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to ascertain the normality in the sample distribution. Because the data was not normally distributed ($p<.05$), the Friedman's test was performed to assess within-groups analysis across the programme time points. Additionally, Conover's post-hoc test was performed to analyse paired-time comparisons in significant results of Friedman's test. Also, the corrected Cohen's effect sizes (1992) were calculated by subtracting the mean difference between T1 and T3 measurements. Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to analyse the between-groups comparison. Finally, Spearman's correlation coefficient was computed to analyse the possible linear relationship between the types of violent behaviours reported by clients and (ex-)partners.

Ethical considerations

All participants were informed about the study and informed consent forms were obtained from all men and their (ex-)partners that participated in this study. Moreover, the project was approved by the Review Board at WWP EN; approval code: 20160315.

3. Results

Violent behaviour and its impact

Emotional, physical and sexual violence were assessed, according to both clients and (ex-)partners. Within-groups comparisons (see Table 2) showed that emotional and physical violence decreased significantly ($p<.05$) across all three measures, according to both clients and (ex-)partners, with a large effect size. Conover's post-hoc tests were carried out to analyse paired-time differences. On the one hand, the results obtained indicated that emotional violence (see Figure 1) decreased significatively between T1 and T3, according to both clients (T-Stat=4.097; $p<.001$) and (ex-)partners (T-Stat=2.754; $p=.011$). Data from (ex-)partners also showed a significant T1-T2 decrease (T-Stat=2.852; $p=.008$). On the other hand, physical violence (see Figure 2) decreased significantly only between T1 and T3 according to clients
(T-Stat=2.913; $p=.008$), whereas based on information from (ex-)partners the decrease was significant between T1-T2 (T-Stat=3.634; $p<.001$) and T1-T3 (T-Stat=3.520; $p=.002$). As seen, (ex-)partners perceived the decrease in emotional and physical violence more pronouncedly between the beginning (T1) and the middle of the programme (T2), while men's perception was more linear (see Figures 1 and 2). However, non-significant decrease in sexual violence was obtained, as very low levels were scored at baseline (see Figure 3). As it can be seen in Table 2, the emotional abusive behaviour is the one that remained the most prevalent at the end of the programme.

Figure 1. Emotional behaviour decrease reported by clients and (ex-)partners.

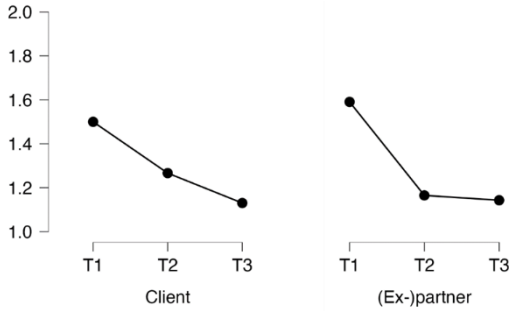


Figure 2. Physical behaviour decrease reported by clients and (ex-)partners.

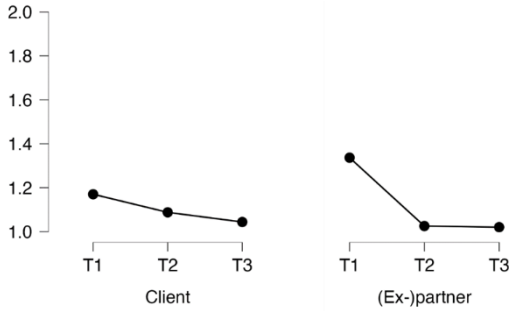
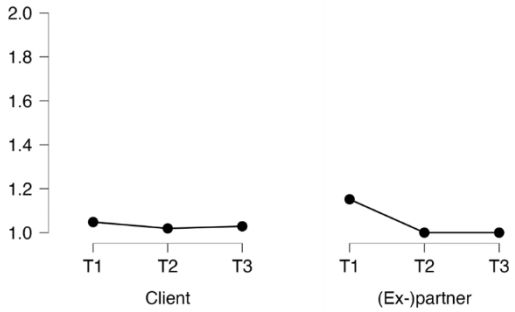


Figure 3. Sexual behaviour decrease reported by clients and (ex-)partners.



The impact of the violence on both the (ex-)partner and child(ren) was also assessed. The impact decreased, although this decrease was not significant ($p>.05$) for the (ex-)partner across the three measurement points (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Impact on (ex-)partner reported by (ex-)partners and clients.

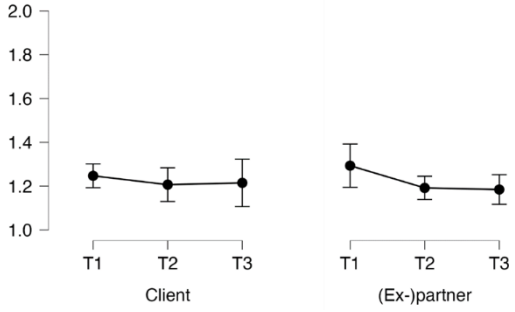


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Table S1 in Appendix shows that the impacts that decreased the most were feelings of sadness, loss of trust towards the men, physical impacts such as injuries, psychological impacts such as feelings of not being able to cope, fearing for their life, and having to defend their pets. Other impacts remained the same or increased such as loss of trust, feeling afraid, lost confidence in herself. In terms of the men, at the end of the programme, they seemed to gain awareness of the impact of abuse in relation to victims' feelings of sadness, fear of the men and fear for their own life, loss of confidence, and feelings of isolation.

Regarding the impact on children, Table S2 in Appendix shows that there is increased awareness from the men of the impact of their behaviour on children. By the end of the programme, the number of men that think the children were not affected by the abuse decreases. Moreover, the number of men and (ex-)partners that state that their children are upset with the men also decreases at the end of the programme. However, one third of victims still think their (ex-)partner is not aware of the impact of their behaviours on the children.

Table 2. Within-groups comparison in violence and its impacts.

Variable	Group/ Time[a]	Mean	SD	Friedman's value	p-value[b]	Cohen's d[c]
Emotional violence	C1	1.50	.24			
	C2	1.27	.21	16.67	<.001***	1.518
	C3	1.13	.28			
	P1	1.59	.39			
	P2	1.17	.23	10.42	.005**	1.599
	P3	1.14	.17			
Physical violence	C1	1.17	.14			
	C2	1.09	.14	8.26	.016*	1.023
	C3	1.04	.08			
	P1	1.34	.31			
	P2	1.03	.07	16.55	<.001***	1.707
	P3	1.02	.04			
Sexual violence	C1	1.05	.16			
	C2	1.02	.05	.50	.779	.187
	C3	1.03	.08			
	P1	1.15	.34			
	P2	1.00	.00	6.00	.051	.773
	P3	1.00	.00			
Impact on (ex-)partner	C1	1.25	.10			
	C2	1.21	.13	2.78	.249	.219
	C3	1.21	.19			
	P1	1.29	.19			
	P2	1.19	.17	4.04	.132	.643
	P3	1.18	.15			

[a] C= Client; P= (Ex-)partner; 1= Time 1 (at the beginning of the programme); 2= Time 2 (in the middle of the programme); 3= Time 3 (at the end of the programme).
[b] *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.
[c] Cohen's d (1992) indicates de size effect between Time 1 (pre) and Time 3 (post): d=.2 (small); d=.5 (medium); d=.8 (large).

Between-groups comparison test was carried out to analyse differences between clients and (ex-)partners at each time point. The Mann-Whitney U test showed a significant difference in physical violence reported at Time 1 (U=336.0; p=.028). (Ex-)partners (M=1.37) reported higher levels of physical violence than clients

(M=1.19). Additionally, there was a significant difference in emotional violence reported at Time 2 (U=144.0; p=.030), with greater levels reported by clients (M=1.24) than (ex-)partners (M=1.12).

Relationship among types of violence reported by clients and (ex-)partners

Spearman's correlation (see Table 3) showed the existence of a relationship between emotional and physical violence according to clients. A significant correlation was also found between emotional and sexual violence according to (ex-)partners. Between the groups, agreement was only found for both clients and (ex-)partners with regard to physical violence. Thus, the higher the frequency of physical behaviours reported by a client, the higher the frequency reported by their (ex-)partner.

Table 3. Spearman's correlations among the frequency of violent behaviour of both groups.

Type of violence	Emotional client	Physical client	Sexual client	Emotional (ex-)partner	Physical (ex-)partner
Physical client	.525*	—			
Sexual client	.369	.395	—		
Emotional (ex-)partner	.188	.398	.250	—	
Physical (ex-)partner	.234	.603**	.224	.338	—
Sexual (ex-)partner	.113	.208	.088	.446*	.323

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

(Ex-)partner safety

Frequency of calls to the police and fear of (ex)partners were assessed for both groups. Feelings of anxiety and depression were assessed only for (ex)partners. Within-groups comparison (see Table 4) showed that the frequency of calls to the police decreased although not significantly (p>.05), according to both clients and (ex-)partners, with a medium effect size. (Ex-)partner's fear of the client decreased over time with a medium effect size, although only significantly according to clients' data. In this sense, Conover's test demonstrated T1-T2 and T1-T3 significant decreases (T-Stat=2.284; p=.031). It is worth noting that there was a slight increase in fear between the beginning (T1) and the middle of the programme (T2), perhaps due to the increased awareness of fear in their (ex-)partner as a result of the therapeutic effect. Between-group analysis showed that there were no significant differences (p>.05) between clients' and (ex-)partners' perceptions of police call-outs and (ex-)partner's fear of the client. According to (ex-)partners, their anxious and depressed feelings decreased over time, with a medium effect size, although this was not statistically significant (p>.05).

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Figure 5. (Ex-)partner's fear reported by clients and (ex-)partners.

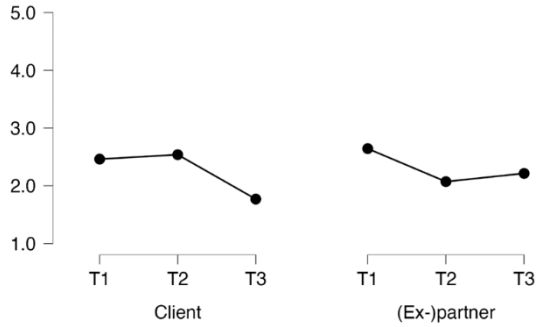

Table 4. Within-groups comparison in (ex-)partner's safety.

Variable	Time/ Group[a]	Mean	SD	Friedman's value	p-value[b]	Cohen's d[c]
Police call-outs	C1	1.15	.38			
	C2	1.08	.28	.50	.779	.245
	C3	1.08	.28			
	P1	1.36	.75			
	P2	1.14	.36	3.85	.146	.746
	P3	1.00	.00			
(Ex-)partner's fear	C1	2.46	.88			
	C2	2.54	1.05	6.84	.033*	.704
	C3	1.77	1.01			
	P1	2.64	.84			
	P2	2.07	.83	4.44	.109	.469
	P3	2.21	1.05			
(Ex-)partner's anxious feeling	P1	3.21	.58			
	P2	2.93	.73	2.77	.250	.733
	P3	2.71	.73			
(Ex-)partner's depressed feeling	P1	2.29	.73			
	P2	2.21	.70	.632	.729	.298
	P3	2.07	.73			

[a] C= Client; P= (Ex-)partner; 1= Time 1 (at the beginning of the programme); 2= Time 2 (in the middle of the programme); 3= Time 3 (at the end of the programme).
[b] *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.
[c] Cohen's d (1992) indicates de size effect between Time 1 (pre) and Time 3 (post): d=.2 (small); d=.5 (medium); d=.8 (large).

4. Discussion

This study has integrated the perspective of the victims when analysing the outcome of a psychoeducational perpetrator programme based in Italy. The outcome analysis followed Lilley's *et al.*, (2016) proposed methodology. The inclusion of the (ex-)partners' perspectives strengthened the reliability of the detected changes, for example, this study demonstrated consistency in the men's and (ex-)partners' reporting of physical violence, and a reduction of psychological abuse was also detected according to both, albeit in different ways. The sexual abusive behaviours did not show a statistically significant decrease, however this might be due to the fact that levels of sexual behaviour reported at the beginning of the programme were very low. These results may suggest that sexual violence within intimate

relationships is still a taboo which is difficult for the victims to identify. Moreover, it is also a difficult aspect to disclose at the very beginning of the programme when the therapeutic relationship has not yet been well established.

Most of the research on the outcomes of perpetrator programmes analyses changes comparing the beginning and the end of the programme. However, this type of research is not able to account for the *process* of change. Our results have shown that behaviour changes seem to occur slightly differently for men in the programme and their (ex-)partners. For the latter, the main change happens during the first half of the programme, whereas for men change is still significant until the end of the programme. This outcome is particularly relevant, and it needs to be further investigated to be able to interpret its meaning. However, it is consistent with outcomes in psychotherapy that suggest that change can be more pronounced at the beginning of the therapeutic process (Owen *et al.*, 2015), this early response has been found to be maintained at therapy termination and follow-up (Haas *et al.*, 2002).

With regard to the relationship among different types of violent behaviours, it is relevant that there was a correlation between both the views of the men in the programme and their (ex-)partners' on reported physical abusive behaviours. This suggests that men's self-reports might be more reliable than previously expected. Similar results were obtained in the Mirabal project (Kelly and Westmarland, 2016) in which some men at follow-up still admitted exerting some violence and abuse. Similarly to our study, the authors of the Mirabal project concluded that it was the combination of women and men's accounts that yielded new insights on the change processes. It is also noteworthy that this correlation was not observed with emotional and sexual abusive behaviours, indicating that the men and their (ex-)partners do not share similar views about those abusive behaviours. From our results it seems clear that during the first two months the physical violence stops, which has a huge impact on both the men and the (ex-)partners. Psychological violence is still problematic by the end of the programme; men are still less aware of psychological violence at the end of the programme and so the reduction of this behaviour is lower. For this reason, it is crucial to obtain the victims' perspectives, as already proposed by McGinn *et al.* (2021), so that perpetrator programmes can consider these discrepancies and develop more tailored interventions.

Similarly to what has been found in previous research (Vall *et al.*, 2021, 2023a), the decrease in violent behaviours was accompanied by a decrease of the impact of violence. This decrease was not statistically significant according to the (ex-)partners, but this might be due to the low number of participants or to the lack of follow-up measurements. The remaining impacts on victims seem to be related to the coercive control they suffered. In addition to findings in previous research, emotional coercion still has an effect at the end of the programme (Vall *et al.*, 2023a). These results suggest that perpetrator programmes need to pay particular attention to psychological violence and coercive control, as they might remain difficult to detect for the men in the programme and they might still have an impact on the victims/survivors. Moreover, in follow-up procedures, once the programme has finished, there needs to be more focus on this type of violence. After-care initiatives are very relevant for both the men in the programme and for the (ex-)partners.

The impact of the violence on the children improved in several aspects, especially in terms of emotional well-being. Men in the programme seemed to gain more awareness of the impact of their behaviour on children. This is a very important result in terms of their responsibility towards their own abusive behaviour. According to Prochaska & DiClemente (1984) stages of change, for change to happen there needs

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to be awareness and recognition of the "problem", moving from the precontemplation stage towards to contemplation stage. Changing from the former to the latter increases motivation towards taking further steps for change and accountability. However, despite this, one third of victims still think their (ex-)partner was not aware of the impact of their behaviours on the children. Therefore, the views of the men in the programme and those of victims/survivors' about the impact of the violent behaviour on children differ considerably at the end of the programme. This is consistent with previous research that pointed out the need for perpetrator programmes to focus more on the impact of violence on children (McConnell *et al.*, 2017; Kelly and Westmarland, 2015). It is crucial for perpetrator programmes to reflect on how to increase the focus of perpetrator programmes on parenting, and how to further develop the work on parenting, for example through additional programmes with a specific focus on fatherhood Along these lines, following this result, the CAM has now started a perpetrator program focused on fathering for men who commit violence towards their (ex-)partners.

Finally, victim safety and well-being improved throughout the programme but not significantly according to the (ex-) partners. Similarly to our results, Kelly and Westmarland (2015) also found that some victims might not feel safe at the end of the programme. Therefore, it is crucial to include victims' perspectives on their own safety and to assess it throughout the programme. This also suggests that aftercare is important, and that a programme should not end too abruptly. Furthermore, post-programme safety planning and relapse prevention groups may be useful to increase victim safety.

Limitations and Proposals for Future Research

This study has some limitations, with the loss of participants over time being an important one. The research was based on the data available for each time point, with fewer (ex-)partner responses in each time point. For this reason, to compare results within couples, we had to exclude information from the men when we did not have answers from their (ex-)partners. For future research, it is recommended to analyse data from all men and compare the data from men with (ex-)partner information with those where we do not have (ex-)partner responses in order to establish different profiles.

The use of self-reported data is subject to recall bias, for future studies it is recommended to collect further data to be triangulated with the self-reported data, such as for example the professional views or official data, among others.

Another limitation is the lack of qualitative information in order to obtain a more comprehensive understating of the impact of violence. Moreover, qualitative data could also help to explain the different views of men and their (ex-)partners about the process of change. Some hypotheses about these different views that could be explored in further research could be that the men may have felt like they were still changing during the second half of the programme because they were in a process that was not finished, or, perhaps, for survivors it may have felt too soon to say that things were that much better, and also they needed further support after the programme. Future research should include qualitative information and integrate it with the quantitative results.

Appendix

Table S1. Prevalence of impacts on (ex-)partner reported by clients and (ex-)partners at T1 (pre) and T3 (post).

	Pre				**Post**			
	Client (n=22)		**(Ex-)partner (n=22)**		**Client (n=14)**		**(Ex-)partner (n=14)**	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
(Partner) felt angry/shocked	15	68.2	9	40.9	5	35.7	7	50.0
(Partner) felt sadness	12	54.5	14	63.6	10	71.4	5	35.7
(Partner) stopped trusting (client)	11	50.0	8	36.4	2	14.3	2	14.3
(Partner) lost respect for (client)	9	40.9	2	9.1	6	42.9	3	21.4
Made (partner) want to leave (client)	9	40.9	2	9.1	4	28.6	1	7.1
(Partner) felt anxious/panic/lost concentration	6	27.3	8	36.4	4	28.6	5	35.7
Made (partner) feel afraid of you	4	18.2	1	4.5	5	35.7	4	28.6
(Partner suffered) injuries such as bruises/scratches /minor cuts	4	18.2	7	31.8	2	14.3	0	0.0
(Partner) had to be careful of what they said/did	4	18.2	11	50.0	3	21.4	8	57.1
(Partner suffered) depression /sleeping problems	3	13.6	3	13.6	3	21.4	2	14.3
(Partner) felt unable to cope	3	13.6	6	27.3	1	7.1	2	14.3
(Partner) felt worthless or lost confidence	2	9.1	2	9.1	2	14.3	3	21.4
(Partner) felt isolated /stopped going out	1	4.5	5	22.7	4	28.6	2	14.3
(Partner) feared for their life	2	9.1	6	27.3	2	14.3	1	7.1
(Partner suffered) injuries needing help from doctor/hospital	2	9.1	3	13.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
(Partner) self-harmed/felt suicidal	2	9.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Didn’t have an impact	1	4.5	1	4.5	2	14.3	3	21.4
Made (partner) worried (client) might leave	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	7.1	0	0.0
Made (partner) defend self/children/pets	0	0.0	5	22.7	0	0.0	1	7.1

Note. Items have been ordered according to the prevalence of impact reported by clients at T1 (pre).

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Table S2. Prevalence of impacts on child/ren reported by clients and (ex-)partners at T1 (pre) and T3 (post).

	Pre				**Post**			
	Client (n=16)		**(Ex-)partner (n=15)**		**Client (n=9)**		**(Ex-)partner (n=8)**	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
(Client) doesn't live with the child/ren but he sees them regularly	6	37.5	–	–	4	44.4	3	37.5
(Client) doesn't think child/ren was/were affected by the abuse	4	25.0	6	40.0	1	11.1	3	37.5
(Client) lives with the child/ren	3	18.8	–	–	3	33.3	1	12.5
One or more of the children is currently registered with the state child protection as in need of protection because of the violence/abuse in the intimate partner relationship	3	18.8	2	13.3	2	22.2	0	0.0
The courts or state child protection have stopped (client) from living with the child/ren	2	12.5	2	13.3	1	11.1	1	12.5
The courts or state child protection have stopped (client) having contact/access with the child/ren	2	12.5	0	0.0	1	11.1	0	0.0
One or more of the child/ren is angry or upset with the (client)	1	6.3	6	40.0	0	0.0	1	12.5
(Partner) won't let (client) see the child/ren	0	0.0	–	–	0	0.0	0	0.0
(Client) has applied to the court for contact with the child/ren	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	11.1	0	0.0
Child/ren have been removed and are being looked after by foster parents	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
One or more of the children is angry/upset with the (partner) because of what's happened	0	0.0	2	13.3	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note. Items have been ordered according to the prevalence of impact reported by clients at T1 (pre).

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