

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

Journal homepage: http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/

Mate Crime Victimisation Against People with Disabilities: An Exploratory Study in Sarawak, Malaysia

Tharshini Sivabalan*, Faizah Mas'ud and Dolly Paul Carlo

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Individuals with disabilities are highly exposed to mate crime victimisation than their non-disabled counterparts. This research aims to identify mate crime victimisation among people with disabilities in Sarawak, Malaysia. Data was quantitatively collected among 151 respondents from various governmental and non-governmental organisations in Kuching, Kota Samarahan, and Asajaya that provide residential care, medical attention, training, work opportunities, basic education, and rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities. It was found that most respondents (females between 18 and 28 years old) experienced mate crime victimisation, particularly financial abuse ($F_{2,148} = 5.905$, p = .003) and sexual abuse ($F_{2,148} = 10.234$, p = .001). It is deemed important to identify mate crime victimisation against such individuals with sufficient proof to enable law enforcement agencies and policymakers to develop optimal approaches and programmes that complement the needs of individuals with disabilities and alleviate potential mate crime victimisations.

Keywords: Disability, exploitative, friendship, Malaysia, mate crime, vulnerability

ARTICLE INFO

Article history: Received: 27 July 2021 Accepted: 23 February 2022 Published: 30 May 2022

 $DOI:\ https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.30.2.05$

E-mail addresses: stharshini@unimas.my (Tharshini Sivabalan) mfaizah@unimas.my (Faizah Mas'ud) pcdolly@unimas.my (Dolly Paul Carlo) * Corresponding author INTRODUCTION

A recent increase in criminology literature on mate crime victimisation against people with disabilities has been identified (Doherty, 2020; Macdonald, 2021; Mcdonald, 2015; Thorneycroft, 2017). Generally, the term "mate crime" denotes a heinous action perpetrated against individuals with disabilities by people who are considered "friends" or "close acquaintances" (Landman, 2014; S. D. M.

ISSN: 0128-7702 e-ISSN: 2231-8534 Thomas et al., 2019). The Association for Real Change (2013) defined mate crime as intentional and repetitive behaviour following power imbalances between the victim and perpetrator. Landman (2014) stated that most cases related to mate crime victimisation are under-reported as such incidents occur in private spaces (homes rather than public spheres) and are instigated by people whom the victim trusts. For example, a mate crime case was reported in the small town of Cornwall, England, in 2006 where Steven Hoskin, a man diagnosed with severe learning difficulties, was tortured, abused, and killed by his "friends" ("Man 'bullied to death", 2007).

Mate-abused victims might display multiple behavioural shifts such as weight loss, self-isolation, and frequent mood swings (Association for Real Change, 2013). Apart from immediate psychological and health impacts, such individuals may also suffer from low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety in adulthood (Chatzitheochari et al., 2016; Takizawa et al., 2014). Besides, several studies have demonstrated that sexual abuse is more prevalent among disabled children and women following multiple risk factors such as limited sexual education, social isolation, communication barriers, and reduced physical defences against abuse (Amborski et al., 2021; Barron et al., 2019). In addition, O'Malley et al.'s (2019) study revealed that children with disabilities are 3.4 times more at risk of experiencing neglect, abuse, and bullying at school (a mate crime type) than their nondisabled counterparts.

The Association for Real Change (2013) launched the Safety Net project in 2013 to prevent mate crime victimisation against people with learning disabilities and uncovered some real-life cases that showed how the individuals were abused. Some of the reported cases are presented as follows: (i) a woman with learning disabilities was pimped out by her boyfriend, (ii) a man proposed to a woman with learning disabilities and frequently made her pay for his daily expenses, (iii) an alcoholic befriended a rich man with learning disabilities to become the victim's sole beneficiary and inheritor, and (iv) a woman with learning disabilities was continuously abused by her paedophile boyfriend. Wissink et al. (2015) stated that compared to their non-disabled counterparts, individuals with learning disabilities tend to experience a wider range of victimisation, including physical abuse (exertion of force to control an individual), sexual abuse (sexual exploitation or coercion into prostitution), emotional abuse (individual manipulation or misleading a person to experience a sense of worthlessness), and financial abuse (stealing, lending, and labour exploitation).

Pestka and Wendt (2014) conducted a small-scale qualitative study by interviewing five women with learning disabilities to examine their experiences with mate crime victimisation. It was found that all the respondents had been exploited by their peers during childhood. Meanwhile, Douglas and Hurpur's (2020) study involving six respondents revealed that physical abuse

(often to the point of hospitalisation) and financial abuse are common among women with learning disabilities. Finally, McCarthy (2017) stated that most individuals with learning disabilities are vulnerable to mate crime victimisation since many of the perpetrators would initiate a "friendship trap" at the beginning of the relationship and persistently attempt to please the victim before displaying controlling behaviours (violence and abusive acts).

Individuals with disabilities (specifically people who are blind, deaf, autistic, or diagnosed with multiple disabilities) encounter persistent social disadvantages, particularly those related to gender-based violence, given the complexities in comprehending information on sexuality, puberty, and healthy relationships (Gordon et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2012). Individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) are subjected to discrimination or emotional abuse at school, work, or social situations following their disclosure of gender identities and sexual orientations (Duke, 2011; P. Thomas,

2011). Additionally, Muller et al. (2008) and Gravell (2012) noted that the "cuckooing" phenomenon is also common in mate crime victimisation cases where perpetrators (usually close acquaintances) take over the homes of individuals with disabilities by treating them as their property.

Mate Crime Victimisation

Although friendship increases an individual's sense of belonging and alleviates loneliness, particularly during hardships, the concept of "friendship" is often utilised to exploit disabled individuals in mate crime. As mate crime victimisation can occur in several forms, the general population needs to understand different victimisation types. Fisher et al. (2016) note that victimisation can be categorised into three primary components (see Table 1).

People living with disabilities are 1.5 times more at risk of being bullied throughout their lives than their non-disabled counterparts (Fisher et al., 2012). Fisher et al. (2012) stated that the bullying types encountered by individuals with

Table 1 Components of victimisation

Victimisation type	Sub-components of victimisation
Bullying	 Verbal bullying (harmful oral or written communication, taunting or teasing). Relational bullying (public embarrassment, threats, or spreading rumours). Property damage (alteration, property vandalism, or theft).
Child abuse	 Sexual abuse (inappropriate touching or fondling). Physical abuse (internal injuries, broken bones, scratches, burns, cuts, blisters, or bruises). Emotional abuse (terrorising, verbal assault, ignoring or isolating a child). Neglect (leaving a child alone at home).
Criminal Victimisation	Property crime (larceny, theft, arson, vandalism, or burglary).Physical and sexual assault (physical harm and sexual contact without consent).

Source: Fisher et al. (2016)

disabilities could change over time from overt verbal bullying to victim exploitation (stealing money and goods or name-calling). Additionally, Capaldi et al. (2012) mentioned that the high risk of victimisation against individuals with disabilities originates from multiple interconnected reasons such as (i) limited educational opportunities, (ii) history of mistreatment in childhood, and (iii) communication barriers to reporting abuse. Moreover, multiple studies have also implied that risk factors, such as inadequate self-defence skills, low social competence, and unsupportive peer networks, instigate mate crime victimisation against people with disabilities (Basile et al., 2016; Landman, 2014; Turner et al., 2011).

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) revealed that men and women with physical, emotional, and mental disabilities are highly exposed to sexual coercion and unwanted sexual incidents (Basile et al., 2016). Similarly, Mitra et al. (2016) implied that sexual violence is prevalent among disabled high-school and college students. For example, Davies et al. (2015) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2017) discovered that men and women between 12 and 65 years of age with disabilities tend to become victims of sexual violence and sex trafficking compared to their nondisabled counterparts. Apart from physical, sexual, financial, and psychological abuse, disabled people also experience care-related abuse by friends, service care providers, or close acquaintances, in which: (i) the perpetrator gets angry if the victim fails to appreciate the provided care, (ii) the

perpetrator refuses to offer appropriate care in inducing compliance, (iii) the perpetrator withholds medication or overmedicates for the victim's adherence, and (iv) the perpetrator continuously threatens the victim to obey instructions (Fitzsimons et al., 2011).

Previous research has established a strong link between learning disability and the risk of victimisation. Specifically, insufficient understanding of exploitation, dependency on the perpetrator, fear of harm if a report is made, and communication deficits increase the victimisation risk of people with learning disabilities (Doherty, 2020; Sivabalan et al., 2018; Wissink et al., 2015). Besides, most sexual assault perpetrators tend to victimise individuals with learning disabilities as this population is less capable of reporting the offences (Doherty, 2020). Additionally, Landman (2014) implied that mate crime victimisation is common among people with learning disabilities who often live alone as they are easily controlled or harassed. On another note, Bowen and Swift (2019) revealed that women with learning disabilities are more willing to "accept" abusive relationships following the fear of being abandoned by their partners.

Many individuals with hearing disabilities reflect negative self-image and psychosocial development following limited abilities to express emotions and life experiences (Calderon & Greenberg, 2003; Marschark, 2007; Traci & Koester, 2003). As a result of such circumstances, a report generated by the Texas Health and Human Services (2016) shows that

there are four common forms of abuse against people with hearing disabilities, namely, (i) intimidation (the perpetrator uses threatening expressions or physical gestures to intimidate the victims), (ii) isolation (the perpetrator isolates the victim from resources or opportunities for help by controlling communication channels and excluding them from social situations or conversations), (iii) manipulation (the perpetrator attempts to exploit information or circumstances and control the victims), and (iv) shaming (the perpetrator continually criticises the victim's inabilities).

The key determinants of mate crime victimisation are the individual's strong desire to establish meaningful friendships or intimate relationships. Ambitious About Autism (2015) stated that autistic individuals often experience social isolation and difficulties developing friendships. For example, such individuals tacitly accept bullies or abusers who behave in degrading ways due to full reliance on the critical support (basic physical needs) provided (Niehaus et al., 2013; P. Thomas, 2011). Despite extensive research in Western nations to understand the nature of mate crime victimisation, the notion remains novel in crime and disabilities studies within Malaysia. In addressing the research paucity, this study aims to identify mate crime victimisation against individuals with disabilities in Sarawak, Malaysia.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

(i) To identify the demographic profiles

- of mate crime victims in Sarawak, Malaysia.
- (ii) To examine the differences between disabilities (hearing, physical, and learning disabilities) and types of offences (financial, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse) against people with disabilities in Sarawak, Malaysia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect data among 151 respondents to examine the differences between disability and offence types against people with disabilities. Specifically, 20 closed-ended questions were developed based on current crime and disabilities studies (Doherty, 2020; Garland, 2011; McCarthy, 2017; McNicholas et al., 2020). The survey encompassed two primary components, namely, (i) demographic profiles and (ii) mate crime experiences (financial, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse).

The survey questions were comprehensibly phrased to increase the respondents' understanding, reduce ambiguities, and facilitate quick responses. Content and face validity were also assessed to ensure that the developed instrument reflects the measured phenomena. In this study, face validity was incorporated to obtain subject matter expert feedback to validate all the instrument items. Three panels were selected based on their expertise in disabilities and crime-related studies.

Table 2 summarises the panel comments on face validity.

Table 2 Summary of panel comments on face validity

No.	Comment (s)
1.	Format acceptable
2.	Improvise/simplify sentence structure
3.	Reduce the number of items

Several amendments were made to the instrument items post-panel feedback. Meanwhile, content validity was performed using the Content Validity Index (CVI). In the study context, favourable ratings by two expert panels and a CVI score exceeding 0.78 indicated that the developed questions were relevant to the study topic. Table 3 presents the reliability value of the instrument.

Table 3
Reliability value of the instrument

Variable	Cronbach's alpha (a); n = 151
Financial abuse	.70
Physical abuse	.69
Emotional abuse	.81
Sexual abuse	.75

Sample and Location of Study

The study data were gathered at various governmental and non-governmental organisations in Kuching, Kota Samarahan, and Asajaya that provide residential care, medical attention, general nursing care, training, work opportunities, basic education, guidance, and rehabilitation for people with disabilities regardless of sex, race, and creed.

A total of 151 respondents with various disability types (hearing, learning and physical) from (a) Sarawak Society for the Deaf, (b) The Sarawak Cheshire Home, (c) Community Rehabilitation Centre, Sri Satok, (d) Community Rehabilitation Centre, Petra Jaya, (e) Community Rehabilitation Centre, Kem Penrissen, (f) Community Rehabilitation Centre, Harmoni Asajaya, (g) Mental Health Association Sarawak, (h) Kuching Autistic Association, and (i) CBR Centre, Kuching voluntarily participated in this research.

Procedure

The researchers distributed survey questions to the respondents upon obtaining permission from the agencies. As the respondents comprised of individuals with different disability types, some practical issues were considered to mitigate participation barriers. For example, respondents conveyed the study objective directly through clear and comprehensible conversations. Some of the respondents have learning disabilities, and the questionnaire was prepared in a comprehensible format with large font size and simple language. The respondents' family members, agency staff, or caregivers were only allowed to engage in this study as facilitators rather than substitutes for the respondents' opinions or views.

The researchers complied with the Office for Disability Issues, Government of the United Kingdom (Farmer & Macleod, 2011) while conducting this study. Table 4 presents the researchers' communication methods based on the respondents' disability

types. Respondents were also briefed on their rights to confidentiality. For example, all the respondents were reminded not to write their names or other personal information on the study materials. Notably, no time limit was fixed to address the survey questions. The respondents spent approximately 20 to 30 minutes completing the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The obtained data were analysed with the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistical Package. Meanwhile, the ANOVA test was employed to examine the differences between disabilities and offences (financial, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse) against people with disabilities.

Ethical Consideration

The respondents' participation in this study was completely voluntary, and individual responses were recorded anonymously. The study objective was also clearly stated in the questionnaire. The respondents were required to sign the consent form preparticipation with no provision of benefits or incentives.

RESULTS

The study results were presented in two primary sections, namely, (i) demographic profiles and (ii) differences between types of disabilities and types of offences (financial, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse) against people with disabilities.

Demographic Profile

A demographic profile essentially represents respondents' basic information. Based on the descriptive analysis, most respondents were females (62.9%) between 18 and 28 years old (49.7%). Additionally, most respondents were Malay (39.1%), single (93.4%), diagnosed with learning disabilities (57.6%), had been victimised by friends (84.7%), and had known the perpetrators for over five years (62.3%). Table 5 presents the respondents' demographic profiles.

Table 4
Communication methods based on disability types

No.	Disability types	Communication methods
1.	Hearing Disabilities	Clear and loud voice projection while communicating. Assistance by a sign language translator. Written communication with respondents, particularly individuals with severe hearing disabilities or without hearing aids.
2.	Physical Disabilities	The respondents' family members, agency staff, or caregivers were only allowed to engage in this study as facilitators rather than substitutes for the respondents' opinions or views.
3.	Learning Disabilities	Individuals with mild physical difficulties did not require much support for research participation. Repetition was essential for some individuals to absorb much information at one time. Illustrations and symbols enable some respondents to understand the word's meaning.

Table 5

Demographic profile

<u> </u>		
Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	56	37.1
Female	95	62.9
Age		
18-28 years old	75	49.7
29-39 years old	63	41.7
40-50 years old	13	8.6
51 years old and	-	-
above		
Ethnicity		
Malay	59	39.1
Chinese	57	37.7
Iban	14	9.3
Bidayuh	17	11.3
Melanau	4	2.6
Marital Status		
Single	141	93.4
Married	10	6.6
Disability Type		
Hearing	41	27.2
Learning	87	57.6
Physical	23	15.2
Perpetrator		
Friend	128	84.7
Partner	23	15.3
Years of Knowing t	he Perpetrato	or
1–2 years	21	13.9
3–4 years	36	23.8
Over 5 years	94	62.3

Differences between Types of Disabilities and Types of Offences Against People with Disabilities

A significant difference was identified based on the ANOVA results between the type of disability (hearing, learning, and physical) and types of offences (financial and sexual abuse). Meanwhile, no significant differences were determined between the disability types mentioned above with physical and emotional abuse.

Differences Between Disability Types and Financial Abuse

The first study hypothesis is presented as follows:

H₁: There is a significant difference between disability types and financial abuse against people with disabilities.

The ANOVA results in Table 6 outline a significant difference between disability types and financial abuse against people with disabilities ($F_{2,148} = 5.905$, p = .003). A posthoc comparison with Scheffe was selected to assess group variances. Resultantly, the mean score for learning disabilities (M = 1.9356, SD = 0.13466) proved significantly distinct from hearing disabilities (M = 1.8146, SD = 0.27346) at 0.05 significance level. Regardless, no significant differences were determined between hearing-physical disabilities in terms of financial abuse.

Differences Between Disability Types and Sexual Abuse

The second hypothesis is presented as follows:

H₂: There is a significant difference between disability types and sexual abuse against people with disabilities.

The ANOVA results in Table 7 indicate a significant difference between disability types and sexual abuse against people with disabilities ($F_{2,148} = 10.234$, p = .001). A post-hoc comparison with Scheffe was selected to evaluate group variances.

Table 6
Differences between disability types and financial abuse against people with disabilities

			Homogeneity of variance test		ANOVA		
Disability type	Mean	Std. deviation	Levene statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.	
Hearing	1.8146	0.27346	5.905	0.04	5.905	0.03	
Learning	1.9356	0.13466					
Physical	1.9130	0.16870					
Group differences							
Disability type	Mean	a.	95% Confidence interval				
	differences	Sig.	Lower-bound		Upper-bound		
Hearing-Learning	-0.12100*	0.004	-0.2086		-0.0334		

Table 7
Differences between disability types and sexual abuse against people with disabilities

			Homogeneity of variance test		ANOVA		
Disability type	Mean	Std. deviation	Levene statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.	
Hearing	1.7195	0.29152	8.876	0.01	10.234	0.01	
Learning	1.9167	0.18935					
Physical	1.8587	0.24802					
Group differences							
Disability type	Mean	Sic	95% Confidence interval				
	differences	Sig.	Lower-bound		Upper-bound		
Hearing-Learning	-0.19715*	0.001	-0.3049		-0.0894		

Resultantly, the mean score for learning disabilities (M = 1.9167, SD = 0.18935) proved significantly distinct from hearing disabilities (M = 1.7195, SD = 0.29152) at 0.05 significance level. No significant differences were identified between hearing-physical disabilities and learning-physical disabilities in terms of sexual abuse.

DISCUSSION

Individuals with disabilities are often conceptualised as pathologically vulnerable to criminal exploitation in criminology (Bernama, 2021; Quarmby, 2011; Thorneycroft, 2017). Since most mate

crime victims are humiliated, exploited, and mistreated by their perpetrators, such occurrences may adversely impact the victims in multiple ways following prolonged exposure to exploitative relationships (Forster & Pearson, 2020). In line with Forster and Pearson's (2020) statement, the findings obtained from this study revealed that most of the respondents had been victims of financial abuse where the perpetrators (friends or partners) developed friendships or relationships in the initial stage and later displayed harmful and aggressive behaviours to control the respondents.

Based on the information provided by the Ann Craft Trust (2012), financial abuse denotes a form of exploitation where the perpetrators: (i) force the victim to withdraw money from cash machines for personal utilisation, (ii) pressure the victim to change wills and transfer properties or inheritances, (iii) steal money from the victim, (iv) misuse the victim's property, or (v) take the victim's benefit or pension money without permission or knowledge. Past research conducted by the Ann Craft Trust (2012) and Landman (2014) revealed that individuals with learning disabilities are prone to financial abuse as most victims encounter difficulties in acquiring essential life skills (e.g., reading, writing, or money management) and are financially manipulated. In addition, several studies revealed that people with learning disabilities could not learn specific life skills quickly and require additional help than their non-disabled counterparts, thus exposing themselves to financial abuse (Buhagiar & Lane, 2022; Doherty, 2020; McNicholas et al., 2020).

In the mate crime victimisation and financial abuse contexts, factors such as being "familiar with each other" might have hindered the respondents' ability to acknowledge that people they have known for many years (friends, acquaintances, or confidants) are financially abusing them. For example, approximately 14.6% of the respondents conceded that their friends had used all the credit on their mobile phones without even informing them. In addition, low exposure to victimisation types, communication barriers, and limited

capacities to interpret "dangerous signals" might have led to such incidents. Thus, the findings obtained through this study indicate a dire need to empower individuals with learning disabilities with knowledge of support identification and obtainment techniques in constrained circumstances.

Regarding the prevalence of financial abuse among individuals with hearing disabilities, Doherty (2020) stated that perpetrators attempt to abuse victims with hearing disabilities by excluding the individuals from conversations on financial decisions, misusing a power of attorney, or manipulating financial decisions. Donovan et al. (2018) and Deaf Hope (2021) highlighted that financial abuse occurs when the perpetrators' greed for money supersedes their ability to remain caring, honest, and fair with disabled friends, acquaintances, or confidants. Following the study outcome, approximately 10.6% of the respondents with hearing disabilities admitted that their friends had been taking their money without permission. Likewise, around 11.3% of the respondents revealed that their friends would only visit them when benefit money is received from the Malaysian Social Welfare Department. It is foreseen that insufficient exposure to online or ATM banking contributes to a high reliance on friends, acquaintances, or confidants for financial affairs, thus leading to perpetual financial abuse. Although most respondents have experienced multiple incidents of mate crime victimisation over months or even years, such occurrences were not detected for various reasons.

Thus, there is a need to develop criminal justice intervention to validate the notion of mate crime offences, particularly in Malaysia (under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), to reduce attempts to exploit victims with various manipulative tactics.

Besides financial abuse, many respondents have also experienced multiple forms of sexual abuse perpetrated by their friends or partners. In general, sexual abuse denotes an unwanted and forceful invasion that induces fear, disbelief, term shock, post-traumatic stress disorder, negative self-evaluation, anxiety, depression, and lifelong guilt among victims (American Psychological Association, 2016; McCarthy, 2017). Doherty (2020) mentioned that women with learning disabilities are highly exposed to many potential abusers, including male friends and live-in partners, compared to the general population. Much research stated that sexual abuse against individuals with learning disabilities occurs due to (i) the victim's poor communication skills in disclosing the perpetrator's information, (ii) the victim being continuously threatened by the perpetrator, (iii) the victim's delayed language development, and (iv) a high sense of shame and guilt (Bowen & Swift, 2019; Doherty, 2020; Landman, 2014; Wissink et al., 2015). Additionally, Fisher et al. (2016) and Reid (2016) stated that the perpetrators of sexual assault possibly select individuals with learning disabilities as potential victims based on the individuals' vulnerability, powerlessness, and incapability of reporting such offences.

Approximately 21.2% of the respondents with learning disabilities revealed that their friends had shared pornographic content through social media platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook). In comparison, 13.9% of the respondents with hearing disabilities disclosed that their friends had attempted to touch or kiss them without their consent. In this vein, various interconnected risk factors involving a sense of powerlessness, communication deficits, or inability to self-protect might have instigated the co-occurrence of such tragic incidents. Besides, Gravell (2012) and McCarthy (2017) highlighted those individuals with hearing disabilities continue to be the "silent population" of sexual assault due to the power imbalances and incongruent control dynamics which hinder victims from reporting such incidents to relevant authorities (the police, social welfare officers, social workers, counsellors, teachers, parents, siblings, or relatives).

CONCLUSION

Stereotypical perspectives that categorise individuals with disabilities as "vulnerable" and "powerless" amplify cruelty and exploitation against this population. Hence, the data obtained from this study should be utilised as a starting point to empower people with disabilities and locally monitor mate crime victimisation cases. Multiple-level approaches should be implemented for optimal reporting and investigating mate crime victimisation among people with disabilities, particularly in Malaysia. It is deemed essential to impart self-protection

skills, such as knowledge of seeking support when abused by friends or close acquaintances. Furthermore, the central government and local authorities need to develop an inclusive mainstream service by including mate crime training at the school level to optimise information access and encourage individuals living with disabilities to lodge reports if abused (Doherty, 2020). In decreasing mate crime victimisation rates, a collaborative approach with the disabled community, social justice system, and social service providers are necessary for a standardised practice to ensure zero tolerance towards mate crime victimisation among people with disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors want to acknowledge all the respondents and social service agencies, including the Sarawak Society for the Deaf, The Sarawak Cheshire Home, Community Rehabilitation Centre, Sri Satok, Community Rehabilitation Centre, Petra Jaya, Community Rehabilitation Centre, Bengkel Seri Sarawak, Kem Penrissen, Community Rehabilitation Centre, Harmoni Asajaya, Mental Health Association Sarawak, Kuching Autistic Association, and CBR Centre, Kuching for allowing the researchers to conduct this study.

The authors also wish to thank Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) for approving this research under the Small Grant Scheme (F06/SGS/1952/2020) and for financially supporting the project.

REFERENCES

- Ambitious About Autism. (2015, November 17). *Mate crime*. https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org. uk/about-us/media-centre/blog/mate-crime
- Amborski, A. M., Bussieres, E., Vaillancourt-Morel, M., & Joyal, C. C. (2021). Sexual violence against persons with disabilities. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838021995975
- American Psychological Association. (2016). *Sexual abuse*. https://www.apa.org/topics/sexual-assault-harassment
- Ann Craft Trust. (2012). What is financial abuse. https://www.anncrafttrust.org/what-is-financial-abuse/
- Association for Real Change. (2013). Mate crime. https://arcuk.org.uk/safetynet/
- Barron, I., Allardyce, S., Young, H., & Levit, R. (2019). Exploration of the relationship between severe and complex disabilities and child sexual abuse: A call for relevant research. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 28(7), 759-780. https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2019.1645782
- Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., & Smith, S. G. (2016). Disability and risk of recent sexual violence in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(5), 928-933. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.303004
- Bernama. (2021, January 6). Six nabbed over suspected abuse, death of disabled toddler. https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/01/655034/sixnabbed-over-suspected-abuse-death-disabled-toddler
- Bowen, E., & Swift, C. (2019). The prevalence and correlates of partner violence used and experienced by adults with intellectual disabilities: A systematic review and call to action. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 20(5), 693-705. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017728707

- Buhagiar, S., & Lane, C. A. (2022). Freedom from financial abuse: Persons with intellectual disability discuss protective strategies aimed at empowerment and supported decision-making. *Disability and Society*, 37(3), 1-25. https://doi.or g/10.1080/09687599.2020.1833312
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2017). *Crime against persons with disabilities (2009-2015)*. https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0915st.pdf
- Calderon, R., & Greenberg, M. T. (2003). Social and emotional development of deaf children. Oxford University Press.
- Capaldi, D. M., Knoble, N. B., Shortt, J. W., & Kim, H. K. (2012). A systematic review of risk factors for intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*, 3(2), 231-80. https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.3.2.231
- Chatzitheochari, S., Parsons, S., & Platt, L. (2016). Doubly disadvantaged? Bullying experiences among disabled children and young people in England. *Sociology*, *50*(4), 695-713. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515574813
- Davies, L., Ford-Gilboe, M., Willson, A., Varcoe, C., Wuest, J., Campbell, J., & Scott-Storey, K. (2015). Patterns of cumulative abuse among female survivors of intimate partner violence: Links to women's health and socioeconomic status. *Violence Against Women*, 21(1), 30-48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801214564076
- Deaf Hope. (2021). *Deaf power and control wheel.* http://www.deaf-hope.org/domestic-violence/ power-and-control-wheel/
- Doherty, G. (2020). Prejudice, friendship and the abuse of disabled people: An exploration into the concept of exploitative familiarity (mate crime). *Disability and Society*, *35*(9), 1457-1482. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1688646
- Donovan, C., Macdonald, S. J., & Clayton, J. (2018). New direction in gate reporting research: Agency, heterogeneity and relationality.

- *Sociological Review*, *24*(2), 1360-7804. https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780418798848
- Douglas, H., & Hurpur, P. (2020). Intelectual disabilities, domestic violence and legal engagement. *Disability and Society*, 31(3), 305-321. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.20 16.1167673
- Duke, T. S. (2011). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth with disabilities: A metasynthesis. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8(1), 1-52. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2011.519181
- Farmer, M., & Macleod, F. (2011). Involving disabled people in social research: Guidance by the office for disability issues. Office for Disability Issues, Government of the United Kingdom. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321254/involving-disabled-people-in-social-research.pdf
- Fisher, M. H., Corr, C., & Morin, L. (2016). Victimization of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the lifespan. *International Review of Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 51, 233-280. https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.irrdd.2016.08.001
- Fisher, M. H., Moskowitz, A. L., & Hodapp, R. M. (2012). Vulnerability and experiences related to social victimization among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 5, 32-48. https://doi.org/10.1080/19 315864.2011.592239
- Fitzsimons, N. M., Hagemeister, A. K., & Braun, E. J. (2011). Interpersonal violence against people with disabilities: Understanding the problem from a rural context. *Journal of Social Work in Disability and Rehabilitation*, 10(3), 166-188. https://doi.org/10.1080/1536710x.2011.596437
- Forster, S., & Pearson, J. (2020). Bullies tend to be obvious: autistic adults' perceptions of friendship

- and the concept of "mate crime". *Disability & Society*, *35*(7), 1103-1123. https://doi.org/10.10 80/09687599.2019.1680347
- Garland, J. (2011). Difficulties in defining hate crime victimization. *International Review of Victimology*, 18(1), 25-37. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758011422473
- Gordon, J. S., Poder, J. C., & Burckhart, H. (2017). Human rights and disability – interdisciplinary perspectives (1st ed.). Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Gravell, C. (2012). Loneliness and cruelty: People with intellectual disabilities and their experience of harassment, abuse, and related crime in the community. Lemos & Crane.
- Jones, L., Bellis, M., Wood, S., Hughes, K. McCoy, E., Eckley, L., Bates, G., Mikton, C., Shakespeare, T., & Officer, A. (2012). Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *The Lancet*, 380(9845), 899-907. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(12)60692-8
- Landman, R. A. (2014). A counterfeit friendship: Mate crime and people with learning disabilities. *The Journal of Adult Protection*, *16*(6), 355-365. https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-10-2013-0043
- Macdonald, S. J., Donovan, C., & Clayton, J. (2021). I may be left with no choice but to end my torment: Disability and intersectionalities of hate crime. *Disability and Society*, 30(3), 353-367. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1928480
- Man 'bullied to death' by gang. (2007, June 13). BBC News. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/cornwall/6748647.stm
- Marschark, M. (2007). *Raising and educating a deaf child*. Oxford University Press.
- McCarthy, M. (2017). What kind of abuse is him spitting in my food: Reflections on the similarities between disability hate crime, so-called 'mate'

- crime and domestic violence against women with intellectual disabilities. *Disability and Society*, 32(4), 595-600. https://doi.org/10.1080/096875 99.2017.1301854
- Mcdonald, S. J. (2015). Community fear and harassment: Learning difficulties and hate crime incident in the North-East of England. *Disability and Society*, 30(3), 353-367. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1009000
- McNicholas, C. I., Orpinas, P., & Raczynski, K. (2020). Victimized for being different: Young adults with disabilities and peer victimization in middle and high school. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(19-20), 3683-3709. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517710485
- Mitra, M., Mouradian, V. E., Fox, M. H., & Pratt, C. (2016). Prevalence and characteristics of sexual violence against men with disabilities. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *50*(3), 311-317. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2015.07.030
- Muller, E., Schuler, A., & Yates, G. B. (2008). Social challenges and supports from the perspective of individual with Asperger Syndrome and other Autism Spectrum Disabilities. *Autism*, 12(2), 173-190. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361307086664
- Niehaus, S., Krüger, P., & Schmitz, S. C. (2013). Intellectually disabled victims of sexual abuse in the criminal justice system. *Psychology*, 4(3), 374-379. https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2013.43A054
- O'Malley, G., Irwin, L., Syed, A. A., & Guerin, S. (2019). The clinical approach used in supporting individuals with intellectual disability who have been sexually abused. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 47(2), 105-115. https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12259
- Pestka, K., & Wendt, S. (2014). Belonging: Women's living with intellectual disabilities and experience of domestic violence. *Disability and Society*, 29(7), 1031-1045. https://doi.org/10.1080/0968 7599.2014.902358

- Quarmby, K. (2011). *Scapegoat: Why we are failing disabled people*. Portobello Books.
- Reid, J. A. (2016). Sex trafficking of girls with intellectual disabilities: An exploratory mixed methods study. *A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 30(2), 107-131. https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063216630981
- Sivabalan, T., Zakaria, E., & Amin, A. S. (2018). Exploring coping strategies of mother in taking care of a child with cerebral palsy disability. *Akademika*, 88(2), 121-134.
- Takizawa, R., Maughan, B., & Arseneault, L. (2014).
 Adult health outcomes of childhood bullying victimization: Evidence from a 5-decade longitudinal British birth cohort. American Journal of Psychiatry, 171(7), 777-784. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2014.13101401
- Texas Health and Human Services. (2016). *Deaf and hard of hearing*. https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing
- Thomas, P. (2011). Mate crime: Ridicule, hostility, and targeted attacks against disabled people. *Disability and Society, 26*(1), 107-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2011.532590
- Thomas, S. D. M., Nixon, M., Ogloff, J. R. P., & Daffern, M. (2019). Crime and victimization

- among people with intellectual disability with and without comorbid mental illness. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12598
- Thorneycroft, R. (2017). Problematising and reconceptualising 'vulnerability' in the context of disablist violence. In N. Asquith, I. Bartkowiak-Théron, K. Roberts (Eds.), *Policing encounters with vulnerability* (pp. 27-45). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51228-0_2
- Traci, M., & Koester, L. S. (2003). Parent-infant interactions. A transactional approach to understanding the development of deaf infants. Oxford University Press.
- Turner, H. A. Vanderminden, J., Finkelhor, D., Hamby, S., & Shattuck, H. (2011). Disability and victimization in a national sample of children and youth. *Child Maltreatment*, 16(4), 275-286. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559511427178
- Wissink, I. B., Van Vugt, E., Moonen, X., Stams, G. J. M., & Hendriks, J. (2015). Sexual abuse involving children with an intellectual disability: A narrative review. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 36, 20-35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2014.09.007

