

Research Article

# Identification of Recovery Pathways for Children and Women Victims of Domestic Violence among Malaysian

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**Abstract:** This research examines recovery processes for children and women affected by domestic violence in Malaysia, aiming to identify effective recovery models for societal application. Domestic violence, which is widespread in Malaysian society, causes significant psychological, emotional, and physical harm to victims, particularly women and children. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews and analysed with NVivo software to identify themes in participants' recovery experiences. The findings reveal that recovery is a complex, multifaceted process requiring integrated strategies encompassing safety, psychological, and legal dimensions, alongside empowering interventions. While shelter services and crisis interventions are vital during the initial stages, long-term recovery necessitates sustained mental health support, economic empowerment, and educational opportunities. Barriers such as discrimination, limited awareness of resources, and legal vulnerabilities further complicate rehabilitation, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive and context-specific strategies. The study recommends strengthening legal frameworks, increasing funding for shelters and domestic violence services, launching public awareness campaigns, and incorporating domestic violence education into school curricula to promote early prevention. Ultimately, this research enhances understanding of effective recovery practices, fostering long-term stability and success for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Malaysian Women and Children, Legal Protection and Advocacy, Support Systems and Resources, Community Engagement and Empowerment.

## 1. Introduction

Family abuse is recognised as a global issue transcending region, culture, and socio-economic status, with devastating effects on victims, particularly women and children. In Malaysia, both urban and rural environments present unique challenges and opportunities for delivering recovery processes to survivors. This research aims to assess the status of recovery goals for women and child victims of domestic violence, including those in shelters or after discharge, child survivors and witnesses, and the key stakeholders involved in providing support services [59]. Evidence suggests that women survivors from urban and rural areas encounter distinct demographic barriers and facilitators influencing their recovery from domestic violence [43]. While urban settings may offer more immediate access to services, these efforts are often hindered by prejudice and bureaucratic inefficiencies [51].

In rural settings, access to professional mental health services is often limited due to restricted geographical accessibility and cultural barriers that discourage individuals from seeking professional help [55]. This study aims to compare the needs and realities of urban and rural populations to develop contextual and effective interventions. The primary population group for analysis comprises participants who are currently or were formerly in domestic violence shelters [55]. While shelters initially provide basic security, they should also foster healing and personal growth [35]. Insights from these survivors are invaluable for understanding effective shelter operations, therapeutic care practices, and post-shelter support systems [26].

Caregivers of domestic violence survivors often face isolation and require a unique form of care that addresses not only psychological and emotional needs but also developmental issues. Such perspectives are essential for restoring child-focused programs that can help break the vicious cycle of violence and foster the growth of children into healthy individuals. Key individuals involved in the healing process, such as shelter staff, counsellors, legal advisors, and social workers, play a

central role. Both firsthand experiences and professional insights are valuable for identifying best practices and pinpointing weaknesses in existing approaches [38]. Understanding the challenges faced by these professionals and the resources they need can lead to improved training, support, and better coordination among organisations and agencies involved in service delivery [28].

Another critical player in the recovery process is community leaders and representatives from NGOs who are involved in mobilising resources, raising awareness, and advocating for change. Their efforts contribute to reintegration and community-based interventions, which are essential for long-term recovery and stability [24]. Officers who interact directly with victims must be equipped to handle domestic violence cases effectively. Their role in implementing protective measures and connecting victims to relevant services is vital [23]. Various authorities, including policymakers and government officials, have the authority to develop and implement policies that support survivors of domestic violence [65]. The dedication of these individuals to strengthening the legal and social protection framework is crucial for promoting non-violence and ensuring the availability of effective recovery services [44].

By studying survivors' narratives and analysing the logistics of the work carried out by service providers, policymakers can develop effective, evidence-based policies that may prevent domestic violence and enhance the quality of support offered to victims [45]. Therefore, understanding the recovery journey for women and child victims in Malaysia must be approached from multiple perspectives, considering the various services and support structures available [6]. This study, which addresses the gap between urban and rural areas and seeks to bridge the divide between these communities, aims to connect survivors, helpers, leaders, and lawmakers. Ultimately, this work will contribute to the development of reliable and efficient strategies for combating violence and supporting survivors, ensuring that in the future, no one will have to endure violence again [8].

Here are three research questions and three research objectives in

table1 related to identifying recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia.

**Table 1: Research Questions and Research Objectives**

Research Questions	Research Objectives
What are the current gaps in legal protection and support services for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia?	To evaluate the effectiveness and identify gaps in the current legal framework and support services for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia.
How effective are the existing shelters, crisis services, and psychological support systems in meeting the needs of domestic violence victims in urban and rural areas?	To assess the adequacy and impact of shelters, crisis services, and psychological support systems in providing comprehensive care and support to victims of domestic violence across different regions.
What are the key factors influencing community engagement and empowerment in supporting the recovery and reintegration of domestic violence victims in Malaysia?	To analyse the role of community engagement and empowerment initiatives in enhancing the recovery and reintegration of victims of domestic violence, and to identify best practices for effective support.

This qualitative research aims to identify recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia, considering the needs and experiences of survivors across both urban and rural populations. The study focuses on current and former shelter residents, including child survivors and witnesses, as well as key service providers such as shelter workers, counsellors, legal representatives, social workers, community leaders, NGO workers, police, policymakers, and government officials. The purpose of the study is to examine existing support systems, identify shortcomings in services provided to these individuals, and assess the effectiveness of current recovery interventions. Additionally, the study seeks to gather both qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions to develop site-specific recovery plans. By highlighting recent strategies and advocating for policy improvements, this research aims to enhance the efficacy and resilience of survivors, promote their rights, and ensure the provision of adequate, long-term support to facilitate their recovery and reintegration into society.

The research gap in this area does not primarily lie in the need to distinguish and identify the recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia, a topic that has been insufficiently explored. Instead, the gap pertains to understanding and analysing the differences in the needs and experiences of survivors, which stem from the unique characteristics of the specific context. Previous studies have rarely provided a clear comparison between urban and rural contexts, nor have they adequately explained the factors that may serve as enablers or barriers within these communities. Moreover, there has been insufficient involvement of multiple professions and community stakeholders, which are crucial to the recovery process. This is particularly evident in research on child survivors and witnesses, where there is a notable lack of effective, child-focused recovery programs. Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to the long-term recovery needs of individuals who have previously resided in shelters, with most research focusing only on the initial stages of protection and assistance. This study seeks to address these gaps by offering a comprehensive and detailed exploration of recovery trajectories, alongside the identification of appropriate and beneficial care strategies for survivors.

## 2. Literature Review

The identification of recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia involves examining psychological, social, and legal interventions. Research underscores the significance of providing tailored support services, community-based programs, and strong legal frameworks to promote healing and facilitate the reintegration of these vulnerable populations into society. These interventions are essential in addressing the complex needs of survivors and ensuring their long-term well-being and stability.

### 2.1 Legal Framework

The legal mechanisms defining recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia are complex and designed to provide comprehensive protection for victims. The foundational legislation remains the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) 1994, which ensures that survivors, both current and former female shelter residents as well as rural and urban survivors, have access to immediate

protection and legal assistance, such as obtaining protection orders quickly. Over the years, amendments to the DVA, including the introduction of emergency protection orders and clearer definitions of domestic violence, have improved its effectiveness, positively impacting both urban and rural areas by recognising various forms of abuse [9]. For child survivors and witnesses, the Malaysian Child Act 2001 takes into account the child's best interests, ensuring that any child exposed to domestic violence receives necessary protection and rehabilitation [56]. This act complements the DVA by focusing on the specific needs of children, facilitating their psychological recovery and reintegration into safe environments [53]. The professionals who assist victims, such as shelter staff, counsellors, legal aid providers, and social workers, play a critical role in ensuring the effective implementation of these legal frameworks. Capacity-building programs are essential for these professionals, enabling them to explain legal processes and provide trauma-informed care [22]. The legal system also necessitates intersectoral coordination, making recovery an intersectoral endeavour [32]. Grassroots implementation of these laws is carried out by community leaders, NGO members, and police officers [49], ensuring the independence of departments responsible for both protecting victims and preventing future cases [19]. Policymakers and government officials continuously review and refine these laws to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness [33]. Therefore, Malaysia's evolving legal framework aims to create supportive conditions for survivors, engaging various stakeholders to bridge the gap between legal provisions and the actual assistance provided to those affected [62].

### 2.2 Support Services

The challenges in identifying recovery processes for female and child victims of domestic violence in Malaysia are critical to ensuring that survivors regain their strength after experiencing abuse [20]. It is essential to provide support services tailored to the specific needs of urban and rural women survivors, current and former shelter residents, child survivors, and witnesses [58]. These services should encompass physical, emotional, and psychological recovery, and should be accessible regardless of the individual's location [25]. Key service providers, including shelter staff, counsellors, legal aid professionals, and social workers, play a central role in offering essential services such as medical treatment, security, protection, counselling, legal assistance, and support for healing [42]. These services help survivors regain control over their lives and promote self-reliance [18]. Continuous training and support are provided to service providers to ensure they are well-equipped to meet the multifaceted needs of survivors. Community leaders and NGO officials contribute to creating supportive environments by organizing awareness campaigns, providing materials, and facilitating survivor support groups [50]. Law enforcement agencies and policymakers must collaborate with support groups and caregivers to introduce and enforce protective measures, ensuring a safe space for survivors to report their cases [66]. Furthermore, government officials must allocate sufficient financial resources and develop policies to support these programs [1]. When developing and implementing comprehensive policies, specific attention should be given to healthcare, education, and employment to aid the reintegration of survivors into society. The identified stakeholders can collaborate to create a robust support system that determines recovery trajectories and enhances the resilience of women and child survivors of domestic violence in Malaysia [11].

### 2.3 Community and Educational Programs

Efficient educational and community programs aimed at uncovering the recovery patterns of domestic violence victims, particularly women and children in Malaysia, are essential for their empowerment and healing. These programs focus on women survivors in both urban and rural regions, including those currently in shelters, as well as child survivors and witnesses [41]. Key strategies include multi-professional and multi-sectoral collaboration among shelter workers, counsellors, legal aid service providers, social workers, community members, NGO representatives, police, policymakers, and government officials [60]. An example of a successful initiative is the Women's Aid Organization (WAO), which provides a comprehensive support system, including receiving centres, shelters, information, counselling services, and legal assistance. WAO's "Empowerment Program for Women Survivors" equips survivors with the skills needed to secure employment, pursue education, and access group or individual counselling, fostering long-term psychological stability and independence [37]. Such individualized programs have proven to be instrumental in improving the futures of survivors by enhancing their autonomy and psychological well-being.

In rural regions, the "Kampung Safe" program has demonstrated effectiveness. This community-based initiative focuses on educating local leaders and law enforcement officers about domestic violence and how to support those affected by it [29]. The involvement of community-based volunteers (CVEs) has bolstered this approach by fostering local collaboration and inclusion, leading to increased reporting rates and improved access to services [40]. Children's educational campaigns, such as those led by NGOs like "Children's Rights and Protection," also play a crucial role. These initiatives aim to assist both child victims and witnesses of domestic violence. They provide children with safe spaces in schools and community centres where they can share their experiences and receive counselling [57]. This evidence underscores the need for a three-pronged strategy combining education, community involvement, and policy reform to address and reduce domestic violence against women and children in Malaysia [67].

### 2.4 Recovery Pathways

The identification of effective recovery paths for children and women experiencing domestic violence in Malaysia must consider the unique needs of urban and rural populations. These pathways involve a range of services for shelter residents, child survivors, and witnesses [70]. Recovery processes for urban survivors may include access to appropriate shelters, counselling, and legal support, with crisis centres collaborating with NGOs, legal advisors, and social workers to address survivors' multiple traumas. Rural survivors face additional challenges due to limited specialised services and social stigma. Mobile counselling and community-based support systems, facilitated by local NGOs and community leaders, can offer culturally appropriate care [36]. Child survivors and witnesses require long-term counselling, with schools and community centres providing safe spaces for support and education [31]. Key service providers, including shelter staff, counsellors, and legal aid providers, are trained in trauma-informed care and legal awareness to ensure optimal emotional and legal support [13]. Furthermore, collaboration with police, policymakers, and local authorities is crucial for effective law enforcement and survivor assistance [61].

### 2.5 Challenges and Recommendations

Understanding recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia involves several challenges. Female victims in urban and rural areas face different societal perceptions and resource availability, influenced by varying male attitudes [16]. Rural survivors often lack access to shelter facilities and specialized services, making it difficult to receive timely help [52]. While urban survivors may have greater service access, their recovery can be hindered by stigma and legal challenges. Child survivors and witnesses require mental health interventions, but Malaysia faces a shortage of trained child counsellors and mental health professionals, compounded by the impact of COVID-19 [14; 68]. Shelters and social services are often overwhelmed, limiting the effectiveness of care. Increased funding for shelters, especially in rural areas, and enhanced training for counsellors, legal professionals, and social workers are crucial [4; 7].

Collaboration among NGOs, police, and community leaders can improve the environment for survivors, encouraging them to seek help and participate in programs. Policymakers must focus on legal reforms to ensure justice for survivors [10]. Large-scale awareness campaigns can also raise societal support for victims, fostering changes in the economic and social recovery systems [2]. Figure 1 illustrates the key components involved in addressing domestic violence in Malaysia. Central to the framework is the crucial role of the legal setting in providing support services. When combined with community and education

programs, these services enhance the recovery options available to survivors. The framework also highlights emerging issues and offers suggestions for improving the effectiveness of interventions and the agencies supporting victims of domestic violence.

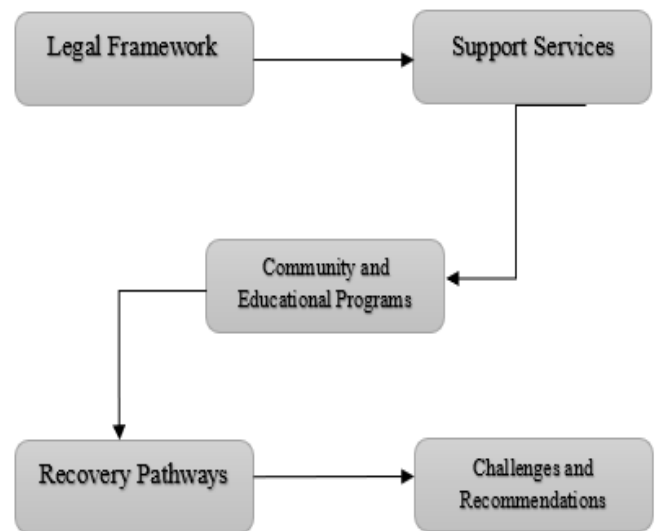


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Addressing Domestic Violence in Malaysia

## 3. Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative research methodology is employed, with NVivo software used for data analysis. The target population includes women affected by domestic violence in urban and rural areas, child survivors and witnesses, service consumers and providers, advocates, community heads, NGO officials, police, policymakers, and government departments. Semi-structured interviews are conducted to explore participants' experiences within the crisis, available services, limitations, and recommendations for future recovery. Thematic analysis, coding, member checking, and triangulation are used to ensure the accuracy and richness of the data. Ethical considerations, including consent, privacy, and participant support, are adhered to throughout the study. The findings aim to contribute to the debate on the effectiveness of existing policies and mechanisms for survivors, offering insights for improving the situation in Malaysia. Data collection methods include interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys, capturing perspectives from policymakers, regulators, industries, environmentalists, academic researchers, and business owners.

Quantitative data will be transcribed and transformed into qualitative data for analysis, with themes being created to infer across different stakeholder groups and countries. To ensure validity and reliability, data triangulation and member checks will be employed. The sample comprises 22 participants, selected from various levels of experience, ranging from ordinary personnel to managers. This sample size is deemed appropriate for a qualitative study, as it allows for a detailed analysis of participants' perceptions and experiences. Consent will be obtained from all participants, and their identities will be kept confidential. Ethical criteria will be strictly followed throughout the research process. Table 2 presents the demographic profiles of the participants.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Participants

Category	Participants	Sub-Category	Selection Criteria	Key Insights
Women Survivors	P01	Urban Women Survivors	Accessed Urban Shelters, Legal Aid, Counselling	Urban-Specific Challenges, Support Needs
	P02	Rural Women Survivors	Accessed/Attempted Rural Support Services	Rural-Specific Challenges, Accessibility, Cultural Barriers
	P03	Shelter Residents	Currently Living in Shelters	Shelter Experience, Immediate Support Needs
	P04	Former Shelter Residents	Transitioned Out of Shelters	Long-Term Recovery, Reintegration Challenges
Child Survivors and Witnesses	P05	Children in Shelters	Living in Shelters	Immediate Safety, Psychological Impact
	P06	Children Receiving Counselling	Accessing Counselling Services	Counselling Effectiveness, Support Gaps
	P07	Adolescents in Schools	Witnessed Domestic Violence, in School Programs	Impact of Educational Programs, Awareness Levels

**Table 2:** Demographic Profile of Participants (cont...)

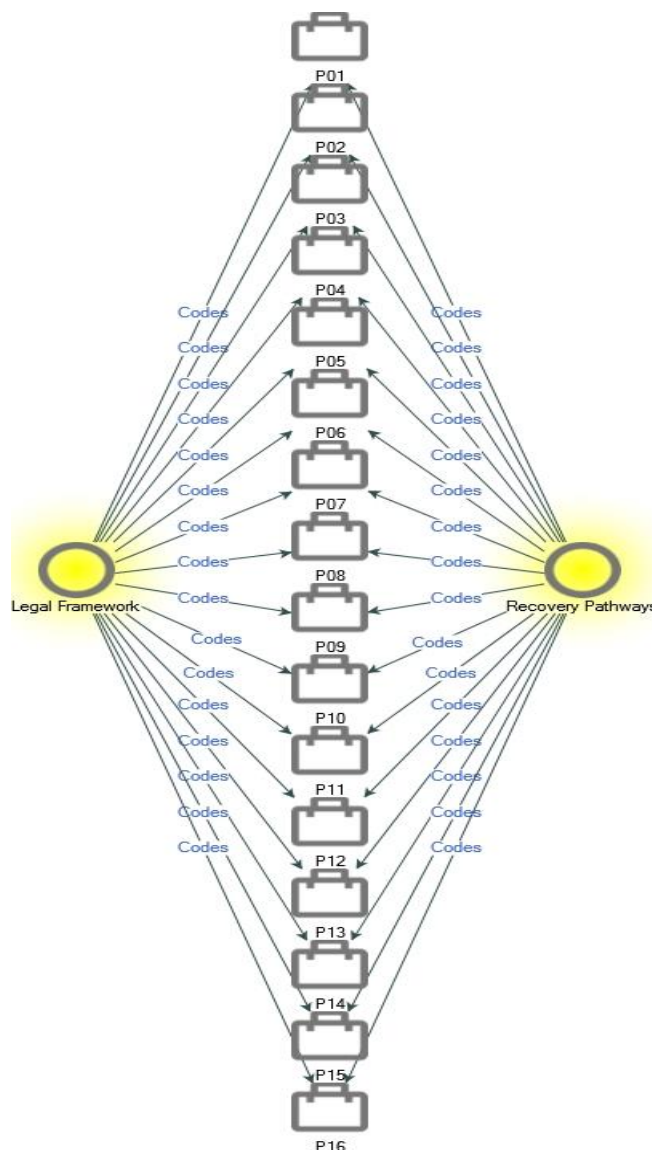
Category	Participants	Sub-Category	Selection Criteria	Key Insights
Service Providers and Professionals	P08	Shelter Staff and Administrators	Direct Shelter Experience	Service Delivery Challenges, Improvement Suggestions
	P09	Counsellors and Psychologists	Trauma Care Experience	Psychological Support Effectiveness, Best Practices
	P10	Legal Aid Providers	Providing Legal Aid	Legal Challenges, Access to Justice
	P11	Social Workers	Experience with Domestic Violence Cases	Case Management, Support Gaps
Community Leaders and Advocates	P12	NGO Representatives	Focus on Domestic Violence Advocacy	Program Effectiveness, Policy Recommendations
	P13	Community Leaders	Influential Figures in Communities	Community Attitudes, Local Support Mechanisms
	P14	Law Enforcement Officers	Experience in Domestic Violence Response	Law Enforcement Practices, Training Needs
Policy Makers and Government Officials	P15	Government Officials	Involved in Policy Implementation	Policy Impact, Coordination with NGOs
	P16	Policy Makers	Focus on Social Justice, Women's Rights	Legislative Gaps, Policy Development Challenges

The data collection in this study involved semi-structured interviews with participants, using a set of general questions aimed at understanding their views on recovery pathways for women and children victims of domestic violence in Malaysia, with a focus on comparative analysis of circular economy legislation. The questions were designed to encourage participants to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas, rather than just their perceptions of the research topic. To ensure clarity and relevance, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of similar respondents, which helped validate the participants' understanding and ensured the questions were appropriate. Based on feedback from the pilot participants, the research team refined the questions to align with the study's objectives. The subsequent interviews were then carried out separately with each participant group, either face-to-face, via phone, or through online video conferencing, depending on the participants' preferences. This flexible approach allowed for active participation and contribution, as the interviews were scheduled at a convenient time for the participants.

**4. Data Collection**

The study aims to utilise interviews to explore the support systems and challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence, as well as other relevant stakeholders. Participants will be categorised into female survivors, child survivors, observers, practitioners and researchers, community and advocacy groups, and policymakers. The interview questions will facilitate comparisons between urban and rural women, women's shelter experiences, the efficacy of counselling, service delivery, and general perceptions regarding community attitudes and policy gaps. Demographic information such as age, gender, geographical location, occupation, and years of experience will be collected to inform the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The primary benefit of this approach is the identification of existing gaps in the support infrastructure. A semi-structured interview format will be employed, allowing for flexibility in probing deeper into issues related to the study and gaining an understanding of participants' perspectives. Each interview will be audio-recorded with participant consent, and the recordings will be transcribed verbatim. Data analysis will involve categorising findings and grouping them by thematic areas to uncover common patterns across the different stakeholder groups. This approach will facilitate the generation of valuable insights and recommendations, ultimately aimed at improving the identification of recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia.

Figure 2 illustrates the complex relationship between the legal system and the recovery processes in combating DV in Malaysia. The pathways from P01 to P16 represent various components and phases of the legal and support structures within society. The arrows indicate the direction of influence and the impact that legal provisions and support services can have on the recovery processes. It is important to note that the codes correspond to specific forms of intervention, legal protections, or assistance mechanisms critical for the recovery and support of survivors. This framework emphasises the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the response required to effectively address the issue of domestic violence.



**Figure 2:** Interconnection of Legal Framework and Recovery Pathways for Domestic Violence

Figure 3 illustrates the perspectives of community and educational programs towards the issue of domestic violence in Malaysia, highlighting the challenges and suggestions identified. It underscores the importance of these programs in addressing the causes, prevention, and control of domestic violence. The feedback loop between these programs is represented by the arrows, showing how the challenges encountered serve as input for refining and enhancing recommendations in the overall intervention strategy for domestic violence cases.

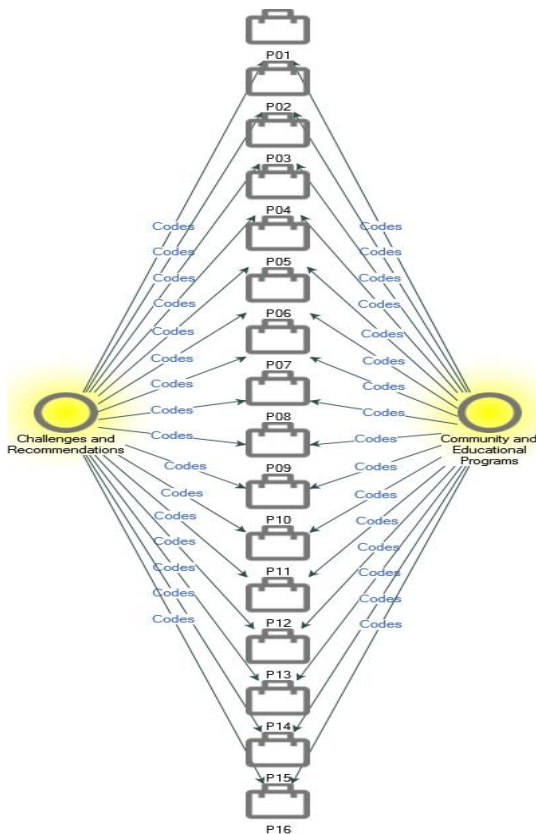


Figure 3: Interconnection of Community and Educational Programs and Challenges and Recommendations

Figure 4 illustrates how support services influence the challenges and recommendations necessary to address domestic violence in Malaysia. It outlines how identified support services, such as counselling, shelters, and legal aid, interact with the specified challenges. The arrows depict the reciprocal influence, whereby improvements in the effectiveness of these services generate new recommendations to tackle existing challenges, ultimately enhancing the provision of assistance to survivors of domestic violence.

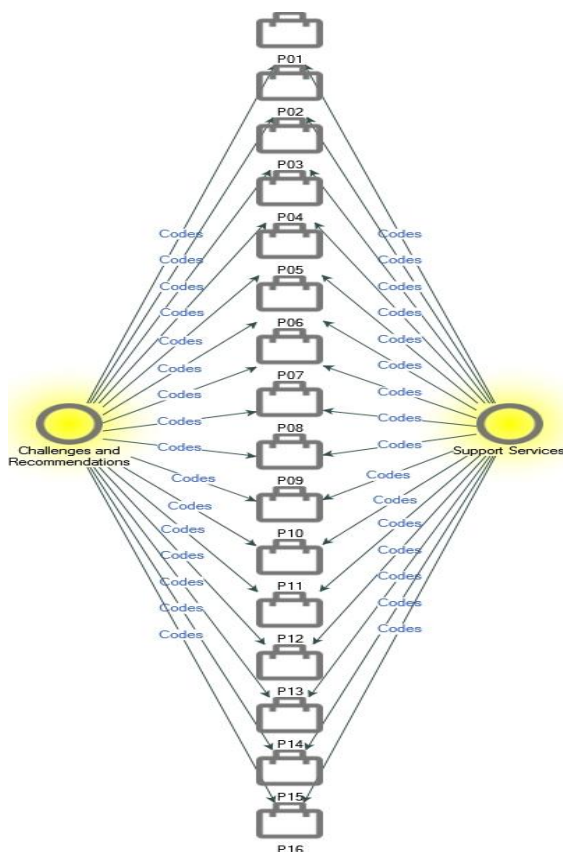


Figure 4: Interconnections of Support Services and Challenges and Recommendations

Table 3 provides a systematic outline of guidance for conducting interviews concerning domestic violence in Malaysia. It lists the fundamental topics and questions, along with thought-provoking prompts designed to elicit detailed and meaningful responses from participants. These guidelines ensure that all relevant aspects are addressed, including the legal treatment of individuals, available resources, stimuli, support groups and programs, and the chosen recovery pathways.

Table 3: Interview Guidelines

Legal Framework
Can you describe your knowledge of the Domestic Violence Act 1994 and Child Act 2001?
What are the key legal protections currently available to victims of domestic violence?
In your experience, how effective are the Protection Orders in preventing further abuse?
What challenges do victims face when accessing legal aid and services?
What changes or additions would you recommend to enhance the legal framework for domestic violence victims?
How can the enforcement of existing laws be improved?
Support Services
What types of support services are available to domestic violence victims in your area?
Can you describe the services provided by shelters and crisis centres?
How accessible are these services to victims, especially in rural areas?
What are the main challenges faced by victims in accessing medical and psychological support?
What gaps do you see in the current support services?
What additional services or improvements do you think are necessary?
Community and Educational Programs
What community awareness programs are currently in place to educate about domestic violence?
How effective do you think these programs are in changing attitudes and behaviours?
Are there any school-based programs that address domestic violence and teach healthy relationship skills?
How do you think these programs are impacting young people's understanding of domestic violence?
What additional community or educational programs would you recommend?
How can these programs be improved to better support victims and prevent violence?
Recovery Pathways
What are the key steps in ensuring immediate safety for victims?
How effective are the shelters and safe houses in providing the necessary support?
What types of psychological support are available to victims? Are they sufficient?
How do you support victims in rebuilding their social networks and community ties?
What programs are in place to help victims achieve economic independence?
How successful have these programs been in supporting victims' long-term recovery?
Challenges and Recommendations
What are the biggest challenges you face in supporting domestic violence victims?
How do cultural, social, or economic factors impact the recovery of victims?
What changes would you propose to improve the current support system?
How can collaboration between government, NGOs, and communities be strengthened?
What are your key recommendations for enhancing the legal framework, support services, and community programs?
How can policy makers and stakeholders better address the needs of domestic violence victims in the future?

## 5. Analysis

The assessment of recovery pathways for domestic violence victims in Malaysia reveals significant variation in the experiences of women based on their geographical location, whether they reside in urban or rural areas, or are children in shelters. This highlights the need for more extensive support programs, long-term reintegration plans, and effective coordination among service providers, community advocates, and policymakers. However, several challenges remain, including cultural

stigma around seeking help and legal barriers. Addressing these issues requires enhancing support services, increasing awareness among police and service providers, implementing policy and legislative reforms, and raising public awareness of domestic violence and its victims to reduce negative cultural acceptance.

### 5.1 Transcription and Data Preparation

The first step in the data analysis process was transcription, where all recorded interview tapes were transcribed in full. Each interview was transcribed in meticulous detail, capturing not only the spoken words but also gestural expressions. To ensure accuracy and authenticity, verbatim

transcription was employed. In line with the study's anonymous nature, participants' names were removed from the recorded interviews and pseudonyms were assigned. It is important to note that the resulting transcripts were clean and appropriately prepared for further analysis. Table 4 presents the coding and thematic analysis framework used for the qualitative data derived from interviews on domestic violence in Malaysia. It outlines the codes, categories, and themes that were identified through a systematic process. This framework helps uncover patterns and insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the legal factors, service systems, clients, community, and recovery options, as well as the challenges and recommendations related to domestic violence programs.

Table 4: Coding and Thematic Analysis

Step	Description
Preliminary Coding	Development of a coding framework based on research questions and objectives. Identifying meaningful segments in the interview data and assigning codes to represent themes or concepts.
Inter-Coder Reliability	Ensuring consistency in coding across multiple researchers. A subset of interviews was coded independently by different researchers, and any discrepancies were discussed and resolved to enhance the reliability of the coding process.
Refinement of Codes	Iterative process of refining and improving the coding framework based on discussions and consensus-building among the research team.
Thematic Analysis	Systematic analysis of the coded data to identify recurring themes and patterns. Exploring relationships between different codes and understanding their relevance to the research objectives.
Organization	Organizing themes into meaningful categories for a comprehensive understanding of the data. Providing a basis for interpreting the data and drawing conclusions.

## 6. Results

Through an in-depth examination of the interview data, three major themes emerged from participant narratives: (1) Legal Protection and Advocacy, (2) Support Systems and Resources, and (3) Community Engagement and Empowerment. This section explores these themes, highlighting how purposeful collaboration aids in identifying recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia.

### Theme 1: Legal Protection and Advocacy

Clear recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia require strong legal frameworks and support systems. This is particularly crucial for women survivors across both urban and rural contexts, including current and former shelter seekers, child survivors, witnesses, service providers such as shelter staff, counsellors, legal aids, social workers, and stakeholders including

community leaders, NGO workers, police officers, lawmakers, and government officials [54]. Legal provisions, such as the Domestic Violence Act 1994, form the foundation of survivor protection and healing [12]. However, issues with enforcement and awareness persist, especially in rural areas where survivors face additional challenges due to inadequate legal aid and support services [27]. Effective advocacy, led by community leaders and NGOs, is essential to raising awareness and bridging these gaps. Legal aid providers and social workers are vital in assisting survivors with legal procedures and ensuring they receive necessary protection and support [30]. Furthermore, cooperation among police officers, policymakers, and government officials is critical to improving the implementation of protective laws and service delivery. Only through this multi-faceted approach can effective recovery pathways be created for all women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia [34]. Figure 5 illustrates the percentage distribution of legal protection and advocacy across various groups. The x-axis represents different categories, including service providers, women survivors, child survivors, community leaders, and policymakers, while the y-axis shows the proportion of legal protection and advocacy available to each of these groups.

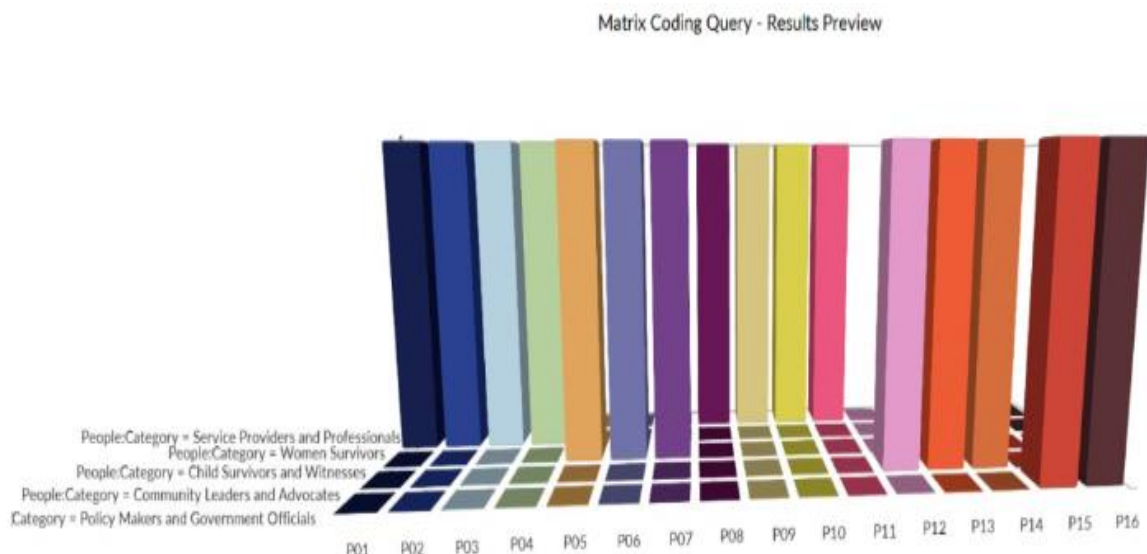


Figure 5: Percentage Results for Legal Protection and Advocacy

### Theme 2: Support Systems and Resources

This suggests that the availability of recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia necessitates a two-tiered approach that accounts for the rural/urban divide [47]. A variety of resources can be employed in the recovery process, and comprehensive strategies must address the needs of current and former shelter residents, children who are survivors or witnesses, and the various

service providers, including shelter staff, counsellors, legal assistants, social workers, and community leaders [39]. Urban women have easier access to shelters and resources, while survivors in rural areas face significant challenges due to their distance from cities and many service providers. Therefore, the need for mobile outreach programs and community-based initiatives to bridge these gaps in support for rural women is evident. Service providers must also undergo training to address the cultural and socio-economic challenges that limit access for

rural victims [46]. Specifically, policymakers and government officials should allocate more funds to shelters, ensuring they are sustainably financed in both urban and rural areas, along with counselling services and legal assistance. Strengthening recovery support systems would, therefore, significantly aid Malaysia's recovery processes, offering survivors the opportunity and means to live free from violence [5]. Figure 6 illustrates the availability of support systems and resources,

highlighting community and educational programs. Each program, represented by bars from P01 to P16, reflects the level of government support, with the height of the bars indicating the degree of support provided. On the left, the categories of support systems and resources are listed in the following format: Challenges and Recommendations, Community and Educational Programs, Legal Framework, Recovery Pathways, and Support Services.

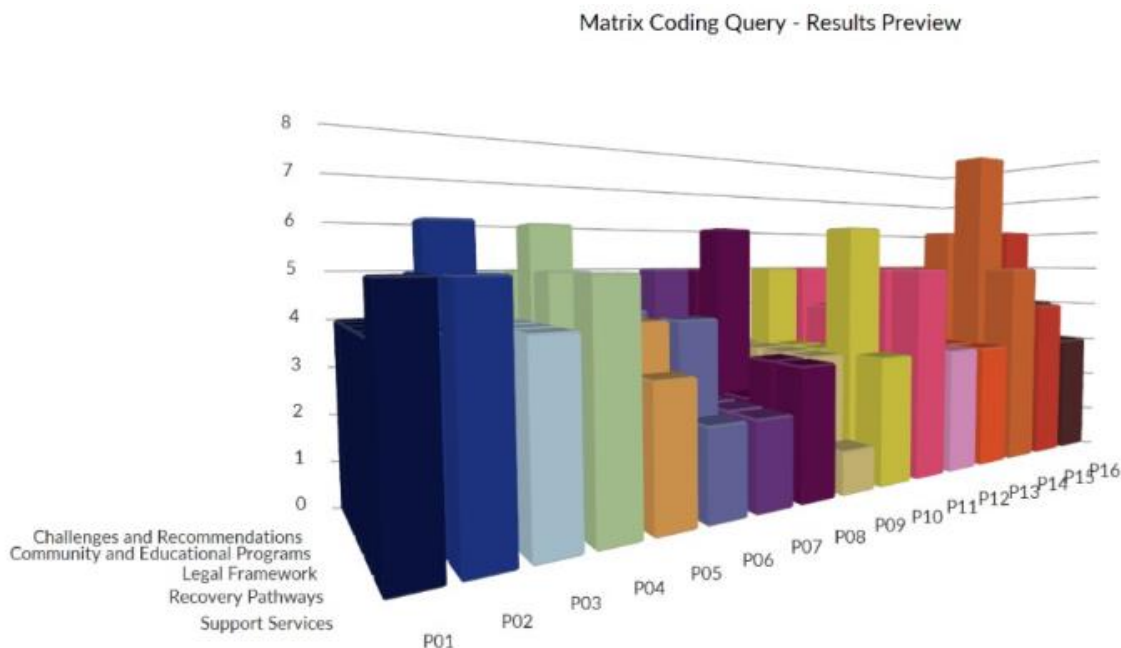


Figure 6: Percentage Results for Support Systems and Resources

Theme 3: Community Engagement and Empowerment

Engaging and empowering the community in the identification and promotion of recovery for women and children victims of domestic violence in Malaysia forms the central focus of this research [63]. The challenges faced by female survivors, particularly those currently or previously housed in shelters, as well as child survivors and witnesses to violence, vary significantly, necessitating the development of tailored interventions [64]. Recovery processes, therefore, depend on service delivery across multiple sectors, including shelter staff, counsellors, legal aid providers, and social workers, among others [17]. For example, Wahab and colleagues conducted a study examining the support provided to domestic violence survivors, highlighting that empowerment activities must address both urban and rural populations to ensure sustainable approaches [69]. Similarly, community leaders and non-governmental organisations play a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for policy changes that support survivors [21]. Organizations

such as the Women's Aid Organization in Malaysia exemplify how the collaborative efforts of police officers, lawmakers, politicians, and government representatives can create protective environments and establish robust support structures [48]. Furthermore, efforts aimed at providing education and economic empowerment for survivors have proven to be effective. For example, programs that offer skills training and financial literacy not only help women rebuild their lives but also equip them to cope with long-term challenges [15]. When a multi-sectoral approach is implemented from the grassroots to higher levels of government, and when activities are informed by cultural and contextual factors, it becomes easier to develop a recovery process for survivors of domestic violence [3]. Figure 7 presents three distinct bar charts depicting community engagement and the degree of empowerment by various groups and program areas. Each bar represents the percentage of engagement or empowerment, with the height of the bar indicating the level of involvement. The chart includes categories such as women survivors, children survivors, support services, recovery pathways, and other program areas.

Matrix Coding Query - Results Preview

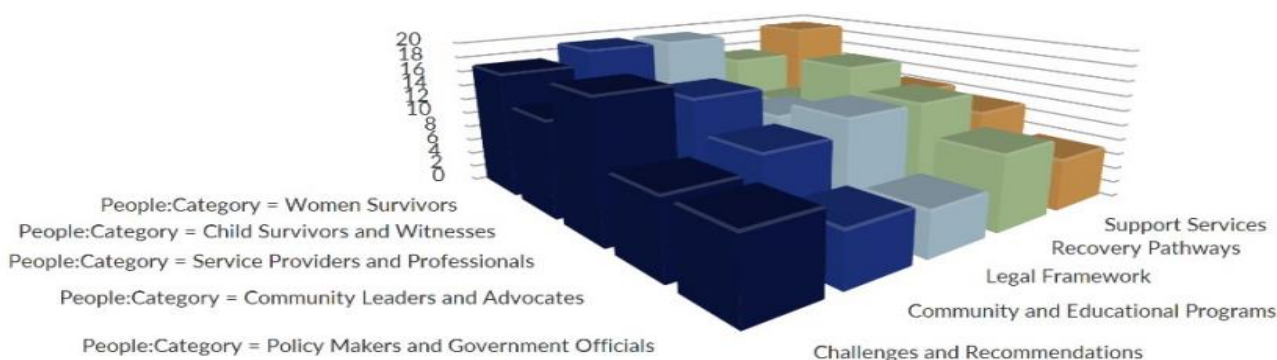


Figure 7: Percentage Results for Community Engagement and Empowerment

Table 5 highlights three core themes: Legal Protection and Advocacy, which focuses on the law and advocacy for rights and

compliance; Support Systems and Resources, referring to the availability and effectiveness of support provided to individuals or groups; and

Community Engagement and Empowerment, which emphasizes encouraging community participation and empowering individuals to advocate. Together, these themes encompass all the relevant issues related to legal regulation, resources, and community involvement for the study.

**Table 5: Themes**

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Theme 1: Legal Protection and Advocacy
Theme 2: Support Systems and Resources
Theme 3: Community Engagement and Empowerment

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## 7. Discussion

This study examines recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia, highlighting a differentiated approach based on whether victims reside in urban or rural areas. Both groups, including current and former shelter residents, child survivors, and witnesses, benefit from the support services provided by shelter staff, counsellors, legal aid, social workers, local leaders, NGOs, the police, policymakers, and governmental authorities. This distinction is crucial for the formulation of targeted interventions, as specific factors differentiate urban and rural settings. Urban areas tend to have more established facilities, with shelters that are well-equipped and offer easy access to specialised services. Survivors in urban environments have greater access to counselling, legal, and medical assistance, with most facilities located nearby. These services are often more comprehensive, addressing multiple aspects of survivors' lives simultaneously. For instance, shelters in large cities may offer group counselling, educational sessions, and employment training, enabling survivors to rebuild their lives more effectively.

Another factor contributing to the more readily available access to services in urban areas is the accessibility of most urban facilities and infrastructure via public transport, which eliminates many logistical barriers. In contrast, many shelters are located in rural areas, where the organisations managing them often receive limited funding, resulting in services for survivors of domestic violence being restricted. However, in rural areas, the strong sense of social cohesiveness, particularly in countries with large agricultural sectors, means that individuals are more likely to be surrounded by people willing to offer assistance. Traditional and religious leaders play a significant role in mobilising communities, raising awareness about survivors' rights, and advocating for relevant legal cases. These leaders can easily gather community members and facilitate support mechanisms, ensuring that survivors are protected. While some child survivors or witnesses of domestic violence may require interventions similar to those needed by children affected by other forms of trauma, there is evidence supporting the necessity of specialised interventions for these children. Additionally, programmes that cater to the psychological care, education, and social re-adaptation of survivors are needed, tailored to the specific needs of both urban and rural settings. For example, school-going children may receive emotional support through their educational institutions, meaning that schools and other educational establishments such as colleges can also serve as crucial points of counselling and intervention.

To address the complex needs of domestic violence survivors, it is essential to enhance the capacity of teachers and school counsellors to identify the signs of trauma and respond appropriately. Additionally, organizing support programs, such as physical activities at community stadiums or other forms of group support, can significantly aid child survivors in their recovery. These programs often involve a broad range of service providers, including shelter staff, counsellors, legal representatives, and social workers. To effectively address the challenges of domestic violence, it is crucial to ensure that these professionals receive ongoing training, particularly in dealing with complex cases. Urban service providers typically have access to a wider range of specialized training and collaborations with other agencies, while rural service providers often rely on localized and context-specific training. Strengthening the network among service providers across different regions can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, which can improve the quality of services offered to survivors. Law enforcement officers, policymakers, and government agencies play vital roles in formulating recovery plans for women experiencing domestic violence. Law enforcement is critical to ensuring survivor safety and combating violence effectively. Training police officers to handle domestic violence cases with care and efficiency is imperative. Policymakers must integrate mechanisms that enhance legal provisions and the enforcement of laws protecting survivors. Furthermore, shelter and support services require adequate funding and support from government officials, particularly in rural areas where resources are often limited.

Stakeholders such as NGO representatives and community-based organizations play a crucial role in addressing the gaps in services and advocating for the rights of survivors. Recovery pathways can be

enhanced through collaboration and negotiation between NGOs, government bodies, and local communities. NGOs are pivotal in providing specialized services, such as legal assistance, psychological support, emergency shelters, and educational campaigns aimed at reducing violence and challenging the stigmatization of survivors. Therefore, the recovery process for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia must be underpinned by multifaceted strategies that are adaptable to both urban and rural settings. These strategies should be tailored to the unique needs and resources of each environment, ensuring comprehensive and effective support for survivors.

## 8. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the need for diverse and context-specific recovery pathways for women and children victims of domestic violence in Malaysia. Urban areas are better equipped with resources, such as counselling, legal services, medical support, and vocational training, which help survivors overcome their experiences. However, rural areas face challenges in mobilizing resources but benefit from community leaders and local support networks, which play a crucial role in creating a protective environment for survivors. Children who witness or experience domestic violence also require targeted care, including psychological support, education, and social services. Schools and counsellors should be trained to recognize trauma and assist affected children. Service providers in both urban and rural settings need continuous professional development to better support survivors. Collaboration among police, lawmakers, social workers, NGOs, and community leaders is essential to strengthen legal frameworks and improve service delivery. Law enforcement should be trained to handle domestic violence cases sensitively and efficiently. Adequate funding and resources should be allocated to shelters and support services, particularly in rural areas. Overall, an integrated approach involving all stakeholders is necessary to support survivors' recovery, ensuring that they can rebuild their lives and achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

## 9. Implications:

### 9.1 Practical Implications

The identification of recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia involves several practical implications. Translating targeted service provisions, such as counselling and legal assistance, into recovery and empowerment initiatives can significantly aid in the healing process, fostering a sense of agency and independence for victims. Incorporating domestic violence awareness into the school curriculum can help intervene early in children's lives, recognizing and addressing the effects of violence before they manifest in later stages. Strengthening collaboration between governmental bodies and NGOs can ensure a more effective distribution of resources, improving the coordination of services and interventions, thereby maximizing their impact. Offering specific certification for healthcare providers and social workers will enhance the quality of care and intervention, ensuring professionals are adequately trained to meet the unique needs of domestic violence survivors. Moreover, establishing safe houses and shelters, both as short-term havens and long-term homes, is crucial for providing victims with a secure space for recovery and reintegration into society. These shelters act as critical support systems for survivors seeking safety and stability. By implementing these measures, Malaysia can foster a more supportive environment for domestic violence victims, focusing on both prevention and recovery while ensuring access to essential resources and services.

### 9.2 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contribution of outlining the recovery trajectory for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia has implications in several key domains. Firstly, it highlights the shortcomings of existing theoretical models that fail to incorporate trauma-informed care, stressing the importance of understanding how an individual's recovery is shaped by the specific support they receive. Secondly, it underscores the gap in interdisciplinary approaches, particularly in integrating findings from psychology, social work, and legal studies to create more comprehensive models for the recovery of domestic violence victims. Thirdly, it challenges existing theories on social support structures, proposing the inclusion of culturally adapted standards and the active involvement of community organizations. Moreover, the research advocates for the development of new theories focusing on preventive education, particularly targeting childhood and early years' education, as a foundation for long-term recovery. Collectively, these



implications contribute to advancing our understanding of recovery processes and the effectiveness of support systems in addressing the needs of domestic violence survivors.

## 10. Limitations and Future Suggestions

### 10.1 Limitations

The study on identifying recovery pathways for children and women victims of domestic violence in Malaysia encounters several limitations. Firstly, as a theoretical model, the research may lack sufficient and up-to-date data, which could affect the validity of the identified recovery pathways. Secondly, the study may not cover all aspects of the victims' experiences due to the cultural, economic, and geographical differences that exist within Malaysia. Additionally, the predominant use of qualitative methods introduces the potential for subjective bias, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The research could also face challenges in assessing the effectiveness of existing recovery programs, as the scope and implementation of these programs vary across different regions. Lastly, ethical considerations, particularly concerning the maintenance of confidentiality when working with victim data, may constrain the data collection and analysis process.

### 10.2 Future Suggestions

Future research should address the limitations identified in this study by using more extensive and diverse data to strengthen the definition of recovery trajectories for victims of domestic violence. It may be beneficial to expand the research beyond two regions within Malaysia to capture the varying needs of victims in different cultural environments, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of recovery pathways. Additionally, adopting a mixed-methods approach could help balance the existing literature's reliance on qualitative data by incorporating more quantitative data, which would enhance the generalizability of the results. Future studies should also focus on evaluating the effectiveness of recovery programs through parallel and retrospective analyses, incorporating surveys from both victims and the officials providing services. Ethical issues can be addressed by implementing strict measures to protect participant data and fostering public trust. Finally, improving intervention effectiveness could be facilitated by developing research partnerships with local organizations and policymakers, ensuring that findings are directly applicable to enhancing support systems for survivors.

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