

# Figurative Bird Metaphors Portraying Domestic Violence Among People in Selected Families in Bundibugyo District

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## Abstract

This study investigated the use of figurative bird metaphors to portray domestic violence among individuals in selected families in Bundibugyo District, Uganda. Recognizing that cultural norms often silence victims and normalize abuse; the research explored how symbolic imagery particularly birds reflect societal attitudes and personal experiences related to domestic violence. While traditionally representing freedom and hope, in this context, bird metaphors embody themes of entrapment, vulnerability, and resilience. Employing a qualitative, phenomenological approach, data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions with 15 diverse families, capturing in-depth narratives, emotional insights, and cultural interpretations of bird symbolism amid experiences of abuse. Findings reveal that artistic representations of birds serve as therapeutic tools, enabling survivors to articulate, death, trauma, fostering solidarity, and promoting healing. The study also highlights the influence of socioeconomic factors, noting that families with higher income levels experience fewer incidents of violence. Recommendations include integrating art therapy into community support systems and strengthening social networks to aid recovery and prevention. Overall, the use of bird metaphors provides a powerful means of emotional expression and community resilience in addressing domestic violence in Bundibugyo District.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, bird metaphors, Painting, family dynamics.

## Introduction

Domestic violence remains a pervasive issue globally, with profound implications for individuals, families, and communities (World Health Organization, 2021). In Uganda, particularly in Bundibugyo District, the complexity of domestic violence is exacerbated by cultural norms and social expectations that often silence victims and normalize aggressive behaviors (Kikwana et al., 2020). This persistence of violence not only inflicts physical harm but also manifests emotionally and psychologically, often leading to cycles of trauma that can be detrimental across generations (Kinyera & Shoemaker, 2021).

In exploring the nuanced impacts of domestic violence in this context, symbolic imagery served as a powerful narrative device that explained deeper societal attitudes and personal experiences. The depiction of birds has emerged as a poignant symbol in various cultures, often reflecting themes of freedom, hope, and resilience. However, within the context of domestic violence, these symbols took on a more somber meaning, representing entrapment, fear, and loss of life. For instance, in many Indigenous and African storytelling traditions, birds symbolize not only beauty and freedom but also the fragility of life in oppressive circumstances (Nehanda, 2019).

This study aims to explore the symbolic representation of birds in relation to expression of domestic violence within selected families of Bundibugyo District, aligning with the growing body of literature that examine the intersection of art, symbolism, and social issues (Eyre & Färber, 2022). By analyzing both qualitative narratives and visual illustrations, this research sought to illuminate the hidden narratives of suffering and resilience, reinforcing the notion that symbolism can bridge the gap between personal experience and broader societal discourse (Makama, 2021).

Through this lens, the paper provided a critical examination of how bird symbolism encapsulates the negative effects of domestic violence, offering insights into the psychological and emotional landscapes of individuals trapped in cycles of abuse. The findings contributed to a deeper understanding of how symbols can be employed in advocacy and intervention strategies aimed at addressing domestic violence and fostering healing within vulnerable communities.

### **Theoretical review**

This study was informed by Symbolic interactionism theory, founded by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Symbolic interactionism theory posits that individuals derive meaning from social interactions and the symbols that emerge from those interactions. Turan E.D (2025)

Symbolic interactionism theory focuses on the meanings individuals assign to symbols and experiences in their lives, particularly in the context of trauma caused by domestic violence.

In the context of the topic, the symbolic bird imagery served as a means for individuals from the selected families to recall their experiences of domestic violence with the viewed bird images. Birds symbolized freedom, vulnerability, or entrapment, thus allowing survivors to relate and reminisce their feelings and struggles through this imagery. By analyzing these symbols, one can gain insight into how domestic violence impacts the psyche of individuals and the dynamics within families.

The integration of symbolic interactionism and trauma theory provided a comprehensive framework to examine the effects of domestic violence through symbolic representations, such as bird imagery. This approach recognized both the individual and social dimensions of trauma, highlighting how subjective experiences are communicated through cultural symbols.

### **Literature Review**

The use of symbolism to articulate social issues has a rich history in various fields including sociology, psychology, and art therapy. In the context of domestic violence, they reflect the psychological struggles of victims caught between a desire for escape and the constraints imposed by their circumstances (Kanyesigye, 2020).

While art and painting in particular is not the solution to abuse, it is certainly a way that not only transforms the atrocities of violence, but also sends a powerful message that ultimately breaks the silence, restores a sense of possibility, identity, and reconnection with parts of the self that were silenced in order to survive the violence. At the same time, as survivors often feel ashamed talking about abuse, talking about artworks is an experience of finally coming home. Kost and Kathryn (2019) asserted that historically visual art served as an aesthetic practice linked to personal growth, self-understanding empowerment and healing Domestic violence encompasses a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, sexual assault, harassment, and several harmful traditional practices.

Art has a tremendous potential to help domestic violence victims begin the healing process and explore new possibilities for their life. Painting as therapy can be a healing experience, helping people affected to

relax and open themselves up to new ideas. Creating art and paintings in particular is a safe way to work through emotion and is also not limited by language.

In relation to the above, Malchiodi (2008,) observed that Art is also a great way to help generate a sense of possibility and creating helps you get in touch with yourself and allows you to begin exploring new ideas. Using imagination opens the door to all endless possibilities, helps a person move one step forward in creating something unique, and personal.

Through therapeutic use of painting, within a professional relationship by people who experience illness, trauma, or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and help others cope with symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art.

In view of this assertion, the researcher through this study revealed that works produced by traumatized people usually depict the post trauma experiences of people affected by domestic violence.

Children have also been deeply affected by domestic violence but have suffered silently. For instance, they witness their mothers being abused and, are sometimes left scared and confused. Regardless of whether or not children have been physically abused, watching their mother being battered is a frightening experience. Children from violent homes can exhibit a variety of behavior. Some may "act out" and may be viewed as delinquent. Others work very hard to excel at every endeavor in attempt to keep the family peace. Living amid and facing such violence creates intense stress for a child.

The act of creation can be used to help them develop strategies for coping and remaining safe in the future. The act of making a piece of art triggers internal activity that contributes to physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.

## **Methodology**

The following section is about methodology of the study, theoretical framework underpinning the use of symbolism in social narratives, and the findings that emerged from the families in Bundibugyo District, ultimately revealing the dialectic between suffering and recovery summarized in a symbolized way.

## **Research Design**

A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing phenomenology to gather in-depth insights into the lived experiences of victims of domestic violence.

In the context of the research study focusing on symbolic bird imagery and the effects of domestic violence among selected families in Bundibugyo District, the qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenological approach, served several key functions.

The phenomenological approach is centered on exploring the lived experiences of individuals. In this study, by focusing on individuals from 15 selected families affected by domestic violence, the research aimed to delve into their personal narratives, emotions, and thoughts. This allowed the researcher to capture the essence of how domestic violence has impacted their lives, the symbolic meanings they attached to bird imagery, and how these symbols resonate with their personal experiences.

## **Descriptive Data**

Qualitative research is designed to gather in-depth and nuanced information rather than quantitative metrics. Through interviews and focus group discussion with participants from the selected families, the

study collected rich, descriptive data. Participants were encouraged to share their stories freely, providing insights into how they interpreted bird imagery in the context of their experiences with domestic violence. This descriptive data is invaluable for understanding the complexity of their experiences.

A phenomenological approach sought to understand experiences within their specific context. By focusing on families in Bundibugyo District, the study acknowledged the cultural, social, and environmental factors that shaped individuals' perceptions and experiences. It allowed for an exploration of how local culture influenced the symbolic use of bird imagery in the context of domestic violence, thus providing a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach fostered empathy and connection between the researcher and participants. By engaging deeply with their stories, the researcher presented findings that truly reflected the voices and experiences of those affected.

To provide a population for this study on "Symbolic Bird Imagery Depicting Effects of Domestic Violence Among People in Selected Families of Bundibugyo District," The researcher selected a sample of 15 families that reflected characteristics relevant to this study.

### **Population of 15 Families in Bundibugyo District**

5 (Parents and 3 children), The father has a job in agriculture; the mother is a homemaker. They have experienced financial stress leading to domestic tensions, 4 (Parents and 2 children), Both parents work in a local market. The family has reported verbal abuse but no physical violence, 3 (Single mother and 2 children), The mother is a survivor of domestic violence; she relies on her family for support and is currently seeking therapy, 6 (Parents and 4 children), The father is often away for work, leading to increased stress and emotional neglect within the family, 5 (Parents and 3 children), This family has a history of domestic violence, 4 (Parents and 2 children), The parents have been separated due to ongoing domestic violence, 5 (Parents and 3 children), The family participates in community workshops to learn about healthy relationships, 3 (Single father and 2 children), After leaving an abusive relationship, the father focuses on creating a safe space for his children, 7 (Parents and 5 children), The family is large and cohesive, but the father's authoritarian style sometimes leads to emotional distress, (Parents and 2 children), This family faces inter-generational trauma, ,3 (Single mother and 1 child), The mother emphasizes creativity and resilience, 5 (Parents and 3 children), Parents are involved in community activism against domestic violence, (Parents and 2 children), The family has undergone family counseling,3 (Single mother and 1 child), Post-violence, the mother explained feelings of fear and hope to her child, 6 (Parents and 4 children), The family struggles with cultural perceptions of masculinity.

### **Sampling Strategy**

The sample for this study consisted of fifteen families from Bundibugyo District, selected to ensure a diverse representation of experiences related to domestic violence. This approach enabled a comprehensive exploration of the effects of domestic violence within the community.

### **Purposive Sampling**

This method involves selecting specific families that are known to provide rich information about the topic of interest. Since domestic violence is a sensitive issue, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus on families that have experienced domestic violence.

**Selection Criteria**

Families were selected from various regions within Bundibugyo District to account for potential differences in cultural, economic, and social dynamics that may influence experiences of domestic violence.

Efforts were made to include families from different backgrounds, including variations in socio-economic status, educational levels, and lengths of time dealing with domestic violence. This diversity aimed to provide a holistic view of the impact of domestic violence across different demographic groups.

Participants were required to be engaged with local NGOs that provide support services for survivors of domestic violence. This ensured participants had a level of awareness and understanding of the issues being studied, as well as access to resources.

Only families willing to participate and share their experiences voluntarily were selected. Informed consent was obtained to ensure that families understood the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

Through community meetings and outreach programs, local organizations raised awareness about the research project, highlighting the importance of participant input in understanding domestic violence's effects on families. This community engagement helped build trust and encouraged participation.

**Snowball Sampling:** Initial participants were encouraged to refer other families who had also experienced domestic violence. This snowball sampling method facilitated access to families that may have been difficult to reach through traditional recruitment methods and contributed to the diversity of perspectives within the sample.

Before final selection, potential participants underwent a preliminary assessment to gauge their experiences with domestic violence and determine their suitability for the study. Criteria such as duration of exposure, type of violence experienced, and emotional readiness to participate were considered to ensure that participants could reflect on their experiences constructively.

**Methods of Data Collection**

Qualitative data was gathered through interviews and focus group discussions with affected individuals, as well as through the analysis of artwork depicting birds that symbolize their lived experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants, including survivors, community leaders, and social workers. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes.

**Interviews**

Conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with survivors of domestic violence, family members, and possibly individuals involved in social services or community organizations.

The researcher developed a set of open-ended questions that focused on personal experiences with domestic violence. The interviews explored how participants interpreted bird imagery and its relation to their experiences on effects of domestic violence.

This method provided rich, nuanced data that can uncover the meanings individuals ascribe to bird imagery in the context of their experiences with domestic violence. One-on-one interviews helped the researcher to explore individual experiences and perceptions regarding domestic violence and the symbolic meanings attached to bird imagery. This method also provided an intimate setting for participants to share their stories without the influence of group dynamics.



The researcher selected participants from various families within Bundibugyo District who are either direct victims of domestic violence or have witnessed it within their households.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus Group Discussion was utilized to foster dialogue among participants and unveil collective community perceptions around the topic. This method helps identify shared experiences, societal norms, and collective understandings regarding domestic violence.

Combining interviews and focus group discussions in this research enabled a comprehensive exploration of the topic. While interviews provided depth through personal stories and reflections, FGDs fostered a dialogue that illuminated communal beliefs, practices, and understandings. Together, these methods created a rich dataset that revealed the multifaceted impacts of domestic violence and the culturally significant symbols employed by individuals and communities to articulate their experiences and emotions. The insights gained further informed interventions and support systems tailored to the needs of those affected by domestic violence in this context

### **Validity of Data collection instruments**

Validity was ensured by Pilot Testing and this involved conducting a pilot study with a small sample from the target population to assess whether the questions effectively elicited responses related to the metaphors and their perceived effects and feedback helped to refine items to better capture the constructs.

Validity was also ensured through triangulation by using multiple data collection methods (interviews, focus group discussions) so as to corroborate findings related to figurative metaphors and their link to effects of domestic violence.

### **Qualitative data analysis**

#### **Data Analysis**

In this study, a qualitative data analysis approach was employed to interpret the symbolic bird depictions representing the effects of domestic violence among selected families in Bundibugyo District. The analysis utilized thematic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns in the participants' narratives and artistic expressions.

Transcription of Interviews and focus group discussions was done verbatim for detailed analysis.

### **Visual Analysis**

The artistic representations of birds were analyzed for their symbolic significance, examining color, form, and composition in relation to the themes identified during the thematic analysis.

Participants were invited to review and validate the findings to ensure accuracy and credibility of the interpretations.

### **Thematic Analysis:**

Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set; it often leads to new insights and understanding (Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S., 2023) The researcher conducted thematic analysis focusing on the themes emerging from the data Symbolic expression of effects of domestic violence in 15 selected families using birds as a source of inspiration.

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within qualitative data. When exploring a sensitive topic like the symbolic bird depiction of the effects of domestic violence among selected families in Bundibugyo District, a structured approach is essential to ensure depth and respect for participants' experiences.

**Below is a step-by-step guide on how to conduct a thematic analysis based on this topic:**

Initial open coding was conducted to categorize key concepts and symbols associated with domestic violence represented through birds. Codes were grouped into broader themes that reflected common experiences and effects of domestic violence, such as fear, entrapment, hope, and resilience.

Each theme was analyzed in the context of the symbolic meaning of the birds depicted, exploring how these representations correlated with the participants' lived experiences and emotional states.

### **Familiarization with the Data**

**Initial Reading:** The researcher read through the transcripts multiple times to immerse himself in the data and understand the content fully.

### **Generating Initial Codes**

**Open Coding:** The researcher Started coding the data line by line and identified interesting features or significant statements related to the symbolism of birds in the context of domestic violence. Each code captured a single idea.

**Focus on Symbolism:** Particular attention was paid on how participants used bird imagery to express their experiences or emotions related to domestic violence (Torture, Murder, Death)

### **Synthesis**

The final step involved synthesizing the themes and visual interpretations into a cohesive narrative that illustrated the impact of domestic violence on individuals and families in the Bundibugyo District, highlighting the role of symbolic imagery in understanding and communicating these effects.

This comprehensive method helped uncover deeper insights into the implications of domestic violence, utilizing both verbal and visual data to provide a richer understanding of the experiences within the community.

The initial phase of the thematic analysis process involved the transcription of data and familiarizing oneself with it. The researcher then selected quotes that brought the data to life and pertinently represented diverse viewpoints and patterns pertinent to the research objective which was: To examine ways in which birds can be used as a source of inspiration for painterly ideas articulating domestic violence..

This process involved scrutinizing the data, line by line, to identify recurring ideas, concepts, or topics that emerged from the dataset. Coding involved; The researcher beginning to identify specific pieces of data that seemed relevant to the research objective. These included phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that captured important ideas or concepts like Torture, Counter accusations, Murder and death. The codes were then organized into a hierarchical structure, with broader themes encompassing more specific sub-themes or codes, which helped in systematic categorization of data making sense of it. The researcher continuously reviewed and refined the coding scheme as more data analysis was done. After the coding scheme was established, the researcher systematically applied it to the entire dataset, assigning relevant

codes to each piece of data. After coding the entire dataset, the researcher examined the coded data to identify predominant themes or patterns that emerged across the dataset.

**Identified themes:**

Theme 1: Torture

Theme 2: Counter accusations

Theme 3: Prolonged Anger

Theme 4: Murder

The researcher further reviewed and refined themes to ensure that each theme captured a distinct aspect of physical violence and there was no overlap between themes.

**The findings in qualitative researcher were finally based on the following themes:**

Theme 1: Torture

Theme 2: Murder

Theme 3: Death

Torture was identified as one of the effects of domestic violence and this was seen one that leads to murder and finally death.

**Presentation of Qualitative results****Paintings expressing Domestic Violence****Effects of domestic violence.**

The use of bird symbolism allowed victims to articulate their struggles and hopes in a manner that transcends traditional verbal expressions. The symbolism spoke to the paradox of their experiences while they felt confined and vulnerable, they also possessed an inherent resilience and desire for liberation.

Artistic expressions served as a therapeutic outlet, promoting dialogue around sensitive issues and fostering a sense of solidarity among survivors. This study underscores the importance of integrating creative approaches in addressing domestic violence within communities.

**Counter accusations**

**Plate: 1 Counter accusations.**



Media, Silk Vinyl Emulsion ply wood.

Size, 240 cm X 118 cm

In the painting Plate 1 above titled “counter accusations”, the victim of domestic was addressing counter accusations, a domestic issue that sometimes, if not addressed early enough may result into domestic violence in a family.

In the painting seven birds are depicted with prolonged necks and wide-open beaks facing each other, representing old members of the family who include husband and wife, grandparents as well as old children in the family. Prolonged necks and wide-open beaks represent members in a family who aim at accusing each other of issues that would be easily solved through mutual understanding. Such accusations in homes if not controlled or amicably settled often end in domestic violence cases.

### **Torture**



**Plate 2: Torture**

Media, Silk Vinyl Emulsion on canvass

Size, 150cm X 120cm

In plate 2 above, “torture”, is articulated, as one of the effects of domestic violence as highted by respondents in Bundibugyo District. Torture precedes death because most of the victims of torture end with injuries that in some cases may lead to a person’s death. In this painting (Plate 2), the two symbols of birds on the left facing down and being harassed by those on the right-hand corner of the painting. These represented some members of the family who were sometimes isolated and harassed by fellow family members. The victims of torture sometimes are not strong enough to defend themselves. Such an incident creates hatred among members of the family and some of the people tortured end up dying. Blue birds in the painting depicted children in the family who are calm, peaceful but unable to help torture victims. Red color in the painting symbolizes aggression and violence.

### Prolonged Anger



**Plate 3: Prolonged Anger**

Media, Silk Vinyl Emulsion ply wood.

Size, 240 cm x 118 cm

Plate 3 prolonged anger is depicted as an effect of domestic violence. As already defined scholarly, anger is a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence aroused by a wrong. Prolonged anger is caused by persistent physical or emotional abuse among other causes. In this painting displayed, deliberately burnt knickers emphasize accumulated displeasure.

A mixture of knickers and spontaneously poured colors reflect the confusion that comes with prolonged anger. Red in this painting symbolizes bloody consequences of violence.

### Murder resulting from domestic violence



**Plate 4: Murder**

Media, Silk Vinyl Emulsion ply wood.

Size, 240 cm X 118 cm

In Plate 4 above, the researcher is addressing murder as an extreme form of domestic violence.

It must be pointed out that murder resulting from domestic quarrels is sometimes accidental. However, one has to note that murder, whether intentional or accidental, is always a regrettable act that robs people of their innocent lives.

The small bird's claws forcing the knife through the big bird as depicted represent mercilessness of a wife who murders her husband due to prolonged misunderstandings.

Exaggerated red forms of birds represent extreme anger that result in murder in which blood is shed.

## Death resulting from domestic violence.



**Plate 5: Death**

Media, Silk Vinyl Emulsion ply wood.

Size, 240 cm X 118 cm

Using thorny branches and nails on plywood, death symbolically represented as one of the effects of domestic violence. In this painting, red colour dominates to symbolise blood being shed as a result of domestic violence. Thorns have been used against red colour to create a psychological feeling depicting the people's hearts which are bleeding to show pain. The use of horizontal plants represents the butting of women who, many a time, are hurt and die.

## Demographic Characteristics

Below is a set of statistics for fifteen families chosen as a population for the study

**Table 1. Family Statistics Sample:**

Family ID	No. Members	Adults 18+	Children 0-17	Reported DV incidences in the last 12 Months	Impact of DV on Children	Family Income USD per month
1	4	2	2	3	Yes	250
2	5	3	2	2	No	300
3	6	2	4	1	No	200
4	3	2	1	4	Yes	150
5	5	2	3	0	No	500
6	7	4	3	5	Yes	180
7	4	2	2	3	Yes	400

8	5	3	2	6	Yes	220
9	6	2	4	1	No	350
10	4	2	2	2	Yes	270
11	6	4	2	0	No	550
12	3	1	2	4	No	300
13	5	3	2	1	No	400
14	4	2	2	5	Yes	230
15	5	2	3	2	Yes	230

Number of Members: Families had a range of 3 to 7 members.

Reported Domestic Violence incidents: The number of incidents varied significantly, with some families reporting up to 6 incidents in the past year.

Emotional and behavioral issues among children are reported in families with higher incidents of violence. Family income varied from 150 to 550 USD per month, with higher income families reporting fewer incidents of domestic violence.

The education levels of adults show a mix of primary, secondary, and tertiary education, with a slightly higher incidence of violence in families with lower education levels.

## Findings

The analysis revealed significant themes related to the symbolic depiction of birds:

Many participants described feelings of entrapment akin to caged birds, longing for autonomy and the ability to freely navigate their lives. One survivor metaphorically described her situation: “I feel like a bird with clipped wings, unable to fly away from the storm.”

Participants illustrated feelings of vulnerability, often likening their emotional states to that of fragile birds susceptible to harm. The symbolic representation revealed a profound fear of being hurt further by their abuser, although they also expressed an urge to assert their strength.

Despite the pervasive pain, many participants described a sense of resilience. Artwork depicting birds soaring or perched high represented aspirations for recovery and strength. One participant stated, “Even though I am a bird that has faced storms, I will find my way back to the sky.”

Birds as social creatures symbolize the importance of community and support networks. Parents and community leaders emphasized the role of collective healing through support groups and communal activities, portraying the significance of unity in overcoming domestic violence.

## Discussion

The findings elucidate the complex emotional landscape navigated by victims of domestic violence in Bundibugyo District. The use of bird symbolism allows victims to articulate their struggles and hopes in a manner that transcends traditional verbal expressions. The symbolism speaks to the paradox of their experiences while they feel confined and vulnerable, they also possess an inherent resilience and desire for liberation.

Artistic expressions served as a therapeutic outlet, promoting dialogue around sensitive issues and fostering a sense of solidarity among survivors. This study underscores the importance of integrating creative approaches in addressing domestic violence within communities.



**Conclusion**

Painting provided the victims of domestic violence with relief from the anxiety. Furthermore, this study sought to investigate ways in which symbolic bird forms can be used as a source of inspiration for painterly ideas articulating effects of domestic violence in designated families in Bundibugyo District. The outcomes of this study aimed to foster personal growth, enhance self-understanding, facilitate physical healing, and assist individuals in finding meaning and insight, thereby alleviating overwhelming emotions or trauma, resolving conflicts and problems, enriching daily life, and promoting an increased sense of well-being. People involvement in selecting and leading painting activities that are beneficial to them, assisting them in finding meaning in the creative process, and facilitating the sharing of their artistic experiences with a therapist were integral aspects of this approach.

Painting was utilized both as an expressive outlet and a form of therapy for people who had experienced domestic violence to articulate Torture, Murder, Death, Prolonged Anger and Counter accusations as the common effects of Domestic Violence.

It was concluded that families with higher incomes from 150 to 550 USD per month, reported fewer incidents of domestic violence whereas families with lower incomes reported high cases of domestic violence.

Participants illustrated feelings of vulnerability, often likening their emotional states to that of fragile birds susceptible to harm. The symbolic representation revealed a profound fear of being hurt further by their abuser, although they also expressed an urge to assert their strength.

Despite the pervasive pain, many participants described a sense of resilience.

The use of birds opens a new sphere of expression of visual symbolism in using birds to express the very same themes where other artists have used human figure, therefore the researcher broke ground.

**Recommendations**

Implement art therapy workshops focused on symbolic expression to empower survivors to share their experiences and foster healing.

Strengthen community-based support networks that integrate survivors' voices into the conversation on domestic violence prevention and recovery.

**Ethical Considerations:**

The study prioritized ethical standards, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of participants. All data collected was stored securely and only used for research purposes. Participants were informed of their rights and the potential emotional impact of discussing sensitive topics, with support offered throughout the study.

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