

Graduate Students' Experience in an Interpersonal Violence Course

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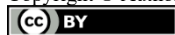
Abstract: *The purpose of this descriptive case study was to explore the experiences of graduate students who participated in a newly designed elective social work course specifically focused on interpersonal violence content within the United States. Ten graduate students participated in this course and completed surveys before and after taking the course. Six of the 10 students participated in individual interviews at the conclusion of the course. Most students agreed that they would likely encounter interpersonal violence in social work and related practice sectors, and they reported overall increases in knowledge areas after completion of the course. Three primary themes were identified through qualitative analysis, including students reflecting on their responsibility as social workers, changes in knowledge, and action-oriented strategies. The findings indicate that interpersonal violence education may be an important mechanism for improving workforce preparedness and advancing the profession's commitment to human rights and social justice. Expanding required interpersonal violence training within social work curricula could better equip future practitioners to support survivors. Implications in relation to the study's pilot findings suggest that dedicated interpersonal violence coursework may enhance student preparedness and support the development of a more competent workforce equipped to respond to violence across practice settings.*

Keywords: *Interpersonal violence; social work; graduate higher education; intimate partner violence; sexual violence*

Interpersonal violence is a violation of human rights and an umbrella term for multiple types of violence between individuals, families, and communities. Interpersonal violence includes intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence, child maltreatment, elder abuse and other types of violence. Interpersonal violence is a high-profile topic across multiple disciplines, including criminology, public health, medicine, epidemiology, and the social sciences (van Breen et al., 2024).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025), social workers held approximately 751,000 jobs in 2023; globally, there are estimated to be over three million social workers (Salsberg et al., 2017). Conventional wisdom dictates that most social workers will encounter interpersonal violence during their practice, especially given the social work profession's focus on serving vulnerable populations and commitment to upholding human rights. However, the majority of U.S. baccalaureate and master's-level social work programs do not require any coursework focused on interpersonal violence (Renner & Driessen, 2023). As a result, there may be a critical lack of knowledge and preparation among many social work graduates and practicing social workers in various sectors who are working to prevent violence and uphold human rights.

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The purpose of this article is to share descriptive research findings and emerging knowledge from Master of Social Work (MSW) students who completed a recently designed semester-long social work course on interpersonal violence, with a focus on IPV. Students in the course could participate in a research component which was designed to assess changes in perceived preparation to screen and provide referrals to individuals who experience various types of interpersonal violence. This course was directly informed by the authors' prior research exploring the lack of interpersonal violence content in U.S. social work programs (Renner & Driessen, 2023). The findings from this descriptive study are meant to inform future teaching, scholarship, and practice. This study may also serve as an example for social work and related faculty (e.g., psychology, mental health, counseling) who are interested in developing a similar course.

Background Literature

Prevalence of Interpersonal Violence Types

IPV is defined as physical, sexual, stalking, or psychological violence by either a former or current intimate partner (Breiding et al., 2015). Approximately 1 in 3 females and 1 in 6 males within the U.S. have experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Zhang Kudon et al., 2026). Contact sexual violence is a measure that includes rape, sexual coercion, and/or unwanted sexual contact (Zhang Kudon et al., 2026). It is estimated that 19.7% of women and 4.4% of men in the U.S. experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Zhang Kudon et al., 2026). Global estimates indicate that approximately 25.8% of ever-married/partnered women aged 15-49 years and 24.7% of ever-married/partnered women aged 15 years and older have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former husband or male intimate partner at least once in their life (World Health Organization, 2025).

Child maltreatment includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect by a parent or caregiver (Leeb et al., 2008). In 2024, there were 532,228 victims of child abuse and neglect nationally (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2025). Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 2 children will experience some form of violence each year (Pan American Health Organization, 2024).

Elder abuse involves physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse and neglect by a caregiver towards an older adult (Hall et al., 2016). According to a U.S. national survey, 1 in 10 aging adults has experienced a form of elder abuse (Rosay & Mulford, 2017) and results are likely higher than what is reported. In a 2017 systematic review of studies across 28 countries, researchers estimated 1 in 6 aging adults (age 60 and older) had experienced some type of abuse within the previous year (Yon et al., 2017).

Ongoing and Increasing Demands for Social Work Responses

At multiple timepoints over the past few decades, scholars have advocated for more education and training to support practitioners in responding to IPV and sexual violence

(Crabtree-Nelson et al., 2015; Danis, 2003; Fedina et al., 2018; Gilfus et al., 2010; Jury, 2022; McMahon & Armstrong, 2012; Voth Schrag et al., 2019), child maltreatment (Ross et al., 2022; Tufford et al., 2019), and elder abuse (Bows & Penhale, 2018; Donovan & Regehr, 2010; Herrenkohl et al., 2022; Policastro & Payne, 2014). Interpersonal violence also recently received additional attention with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for increased awareness and preparedness to support individuals who may have experienced violence, along with better supporting practitioners and advocates (Jenney et al., 2021; Ragavan et al., 2022; Smith-Clapham et al., 2023; Wood et al., 2022).

Most social workers will encounter survivors of interpersonal violence when working with individuals, families, and communities in a variety of settings and contexts, including fields of mental health, medical or healthcare, substance use, education, and child welfare. However, most social work students do not receive education and training in their academic programs to prepare them to respond to interpersonal violence as practitioners (McMahon et al., 2013; Renner & Driessen, 2023). Neither the U.S. Council of Social Work Education's 2022 Educational Program Accreditation Standards, the National Association for Social Workers (NASW), or the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) have specific requirements around addressing interpersonal violence; although, the NASW's (2021) *Code of Ethics* and IFSW's (2018) *Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles* include explicit values to be upheld by social workers that include the dignity and worth of the individual, challenging discrimination and institutional oppression, promoting human rights, and social justice.

For more than 20 years, social work scholars have advocated for specific trauma-informed content related to these forms of violence to support social work students, practitioners, and those impacted by violence in their homes, families, and communities (Colarossi & Forgey, 2006; Crabtree-Nelson et al., 2015; Danis, 2003; Fedina et al., 2018; National Initiative for Trauma Education and Workforce Development, 2021). Simultaneously, researchers have demonstrated the lack of knowledge and readiness among social work students and practitioners to appropriately screen, intervene, and refer individuals impacted by interpersonal violence (Black et al., 2010; Childress et al., 2024; Postmus et al., 2011). A recent survey of BSW and MSW programs across the U.S. revealed that only 25.4% of BSW programs had a course specific to IPV and 34.2% of MSW programs had a course specific to IPV. However, none of these programs required a course on IPV (Renner & Driessen, 2023). As such, many social work students complete their degree with limited knowledge of how to appropriately screen and respond when working in interpersonal violence.

MSW Programs and Interpersonal Violence Content

Some researchers have explored MSW students' experiences with interpersonal violence-focused courses and assessed their perception of preparation related to IPV. In one study, researchers administered a version of the Physician Readiness to Manage Intimate Partner Violence Survey (PREMIS; Short et al., 1996), that had been adapted and validated for social workers (see Connor et al., 2011), to recent MSW graduates (n=205) to measure students' perceived preparedness, perceived knowledge, actual knowledge and

assessed students' education and training on IPV while attending both their MSW program and engaging in post-graduation work. The results indicated that students who received IPV-focused education and training were more prepared to respond appropriately in the field (Fedina et al., 2018).

In a survey of MSW program directors (n=79), 46.8% of the directors reported that their programs offered an entire course on child maltreatment and this course was required in three programs (Renner & Driessen, 2023). An entire course on elder abuse was only offered in five programs (6.3%) and was an elective option for students. However, over 80% of the programs stated that their program had required courses in the foundation level of the MSW program that included content on child maltreatment, such as practice courses, human behavior, and social welfare policy, among others, and 58.2% reported content being included at the advanced level. Exactly 67.1% stated that their programs required courses in the foundational level of the MSW program that likewise included content on elder abuse, such as practice courses, social welfare policy, diversity, among others, and 35% reported content being included at the advanced level. Content on child maltreatment and elder abuse was reported to include definitions and statistics, legal and reporting responsibilities, theories, screening and assessment, and interventions.

Scholars have also advocated for specific content areas and curriculum changes to be made with respect to educating social work students on topics related to interpersonal violence (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Gilfus et al., 2010). Some of these topic areas include screening and assessment, general knowledge and theories, interventions, referrals, trauma-informed approaches, and policies, among others (Childress et al., 2024; Fedina et al., 2018; McMahon & Armstrong, 2012; McMahon et al., 2013; Murphy & Ouimet, 2008; Tufford & Dylan, 2025).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the experiences of MSW students who participated in an interpersonal violence course, primarily designed to support students' knowledge and readiness to respond to IPV in the field. Other types of violence that were briefly covered in the course included sexual violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse. Our research questions were: What is the perceived level of preparation among MSW students who completed a course that was designed to prepare them to respond to interpersonal violence in the field? How did students' participation in the course impact their knowledge and opinions of interpersonal violence? And, how do MSW students situate the importance of responding to interpersonal violence in the field of social work?

Course Description

This three-credit elective course met in-person seven times, between August and October 2022. Class sessions, which were 3 hours long, were held weekly, during the evening, with online learning components in-between sessions. A total of 10 MSW students were enrolled in this course. The objective of the course was to provide students with an understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal violence. Course content was

primarily focused on IPV, but content on sexual violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse were included. The course was offered within the MSW curriculum during the fall 2022 academic semester.

Course readings, discussion, and assignments focused on interpersonal violence across micro, mezzo, and macro perspectives. Course content concentrated on key historical events, political and social movements, policies, research, theoretical perspectives, and evidence-based practices. For example, the first two sessions were dedicated to exploring definitions, key historical activist movements, and critical theories with which to apply to future topics and classes, including intersectionality, socio-ecological, feminist-, and trauma-informed approaches. Within these approaches and given what is known about interpersonal violence and trauma statistics, we provided trauma warnings and students were encouraged to practice self-care both during and after sessions. Later class sessions covered topics related to screening, assessments, safety planning, interventions, the legal system, and review of local and national resources and referrals to best support individuals impacted by interpersonal violence. Throughout the class discussions, the students and instructor critically reflected on the role and impact of the social work profession on aspects of interpersonal violence, including ethical considerations, social justice and social change concerns, and the application of critical theories to analyze the various systems of oppression, power, and control that shape these topics. Course assignments provide students opportunities to practice screening and assessment, safety planning and therapeutic interventions, and research specific topics, such as the role of technology in stalking, teen dating violence, safe housing, among others, through a systems-based lens.

This course was predominantly designed by the first author, in consultation with the second author and active engagement across the literature and practice areas. Two guest lecturers were included in the course delivery. The first guest speaker, who was the second author, joined the class on its first session and focused on definitions and concepts, research trends, and drew attention to broad issues within the field of IPV. The second guest speaker was a local expert who specializes in training and education of those responding to IPV. They joined the class during the third session and provided content related to the local context, coalitions, considerations, and future directions in the area.

Method

This mixed methods case study included pre- and post-course surveys with follow-up interviews after the course completion. The study materials and proposal were reviewed by the first author's Institutional Review Board, which determined that the study was exempt based on the low-risk nature of the research.

Students in the Course

A total of ten students ($n=10$) were enrolled in this course, consented to participate in this study, and completed pre- and post- surveys. Six students ($n=6$) consented to follow-up interviews. The average age of participants was 30.6 years old, with a range of 22 to 42 years old. Most participants identified as female ($n=9$), with one student identifying as male

($n=1$). Students identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual/straight ($n=8$), gay ($n=1$), or bisexual ($n=1$). The racial identity of participants included White ($n=6$), Black or African American ($n=2$), and Hispanic, Latin(a/o/x), or Spanish ($n=2$). Students enrolled in the fall 2022 course were in their second to last academic semester and would be graduating in the spring 2023 semester. No student in the course was interning at agencies with explicit focus on interpersonal violence and none of the students had professional work experience supporting individuals impacted by interpersonal violence.

Measures

Pre- and Post-Course Surveys

A pre-course survey was used to assess each student's knowledge prior to participating in the course, and a post-course survey was used to assess each student's knowledge at the completion of the course. The post-course survey was identical to the pre-course survey, except for one additional question, which was "What content areas would you have liked more focus and inclusion of in this course?"

The pre- and post-course surveys included closed and open-ended questions that focused on a variety of topics. The open-ended questions were used to ask students to define and describe interpersonal violence, IPV, sexual violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse, and to describe the role of social workers and related disciplines in responding to these different topics. Closed questions were used to ask students to indicate their level of preparedness (1 = *not at all prepared* to 5 = *very prepared*) to assist individuals in addressing situations, to screen for, and make appropriate referrals for individuals impacted by interpersonal violence, IPV, sexual violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse. All items in these surveys were developed by the two authors, informed by our combined years of research and practice experiences in these topic areas.

Interviews

After the course ended, six students completed a semi-structured follow-up interview with the first author. The interview was intended to gather in-depth information about student experiences, perspectives, and reflections of the course, concepts included, and opinions around the social work profession, such as the relation of the course to professional values and ethics. Example questions included, "Can you tell me about your experience(s) of participating in the course?" and "How would you describe your knowledge of interpersonal violence before participating in this course and after?" Interviews ranged from 29 minutes to 45 minutes, with the average interview length being 39 minutes. All interviews were video recorded via Microsoft Teams and transcribed through the software program, Temi. Each participant was given the opportunity to review their transcripts to provide any additional reflection, comments, and to member-check.

Data Analysis

Univariate analyses were used to summarize survey items. The process of qualitative data analysis included analyzing the survey's open-ended responses and interviews. Using

thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), an iterative process began that included multiple readings of the data, memoing of reflections and initial themes, and referring back to the original data as themes were developed into the final codes. Rigor and trustworthiness were addressed by researchers engaging through dialogue and debriefs regarding any data discrepancies, and member-checking.

Results

Survey Data

Participation in the interpersonal violence course elicited several increases in perceived preparation to assist, screen, and provide referrals and gains in the knowledge of legal requirements surrounding most types of violence. Table 1 presents the mean responses for each survey item on the pre-course and post-course surveys for the 10 students in the course.

Table 1. Pre-Course and Post-Course Mean Responses for Violence Survey Items

Item	<i>M* (SD)</i>	
	Before	After
How prepared are you to assist individuals in addressing situations of...		
interpersonal violence	2.4 (0.70)	3.9 (0.57)
intimate partner violence	2.5 (0.71)	3.8 (0.79)
sexual violence	2.3 (0.82)	3.6 (0.84)
child maltreatment	2.7 (0.82)	3.7 (0.82)
elder abuse	2.6 (1.17)	3.5 (1.27)
How prepared are you to screen for...		
interpersonal violence	2.4 (0.84)	4.0 (0.47)
intimate partner violence	2.4 (0.84)	3.9 (0.57)
sexual violence	2.1 (0.88)	3.7 (0.68)
child maltreatment	2.4 (0.70)	3.7 (0.68)
elder abuse	2.2 (1.14)	3.6 (1.12)
How prepared are you to make appropriate referrals for individuals impacted by...		
interpersonal violence	2.4 (0.97)	3.8 (0.92)
intimate partner violence	2.4 (0.97)	3.7 (0.95)
sexual violence	2.3 (0.95)	3.5 (0.85)
child maltreatment	2.6 (0.97)	3.8 (0.92)
elder abuse	2.3 (1.06)	3.4 (1.35)
How well do you know the legal requirements in your state of practice regarding mandatory reporting of...		
interpersonal violence	2.3 (1.06)	3.7 (0.68)
intimate partner violence	2.3 (0.82)	3.8 (0.63)
sexual violence	2.4 (1.26)	3.8 (0.79)
child maltreatment	2.7 (1.16)	4.0 (0.82)
elder abuse	2.1 (0.74)	3.6 (1.27)

*Scale: 1 = *not at all prepared* to 5 = *very prepared*

Students reported their likelihood of working with individuals who experienced interpersonal violence was a mean of 90% (range = 70-100, $SD = 10.27$). Similarly, high percentages were reported for the likelihood of working with individuals who experienced IPV ($M = 85\%$, range = 50-100, $SD = 19.44$), sexual violence ($M = 82\%$, range = 30-100, $SD = 20.84$), and child maltreatment ($M = 77.3\%$, range = 20-100, $SD = 23.35$). The lowest likelihood was attributed to working with individuals who experienced elder abuse ($M = 49.5\%$, range = 20-750, $SD = 16.74$).

Interview Data

Analysis of the six student interviews yielded three themes. These were: 1) responsibility as social workers, 2) changes in knowledge, and 3) action-oriented strategies. Each theme is briefly elaborated upon below, with supporting quotes from student data.

Responsibility as Social Workers

Students reflected on how they felt a sense of responsibility as social workers to respond appropriately to individuals impacted by interpersonal violence—and that this responsibility was rooted in the profession's *Code of Ethics*. Students also believed that it was inevitable that social workers would encounter interpersonal violence in practice; and, as such, they had an obligation to be prepared to respond. Students frequently referred to the *Code of Ethics* in relation to feeling responsible as social workers to respond to interpersonal violence. One student summarized,

As social workers, one of the ethical principles that we are committed to upholding is our primary goal to help people in need and to address social problems. We should “care” about this issue [interpersonal violence] as it is significantly impacting a population and we have a duty to draw on our knowledge, values, and skills in order to help people in need.

Another student said, “As social workers, we must protect our clients by advocating to prevent abuse of any kind. It is our ethical responsibility to educate, advocate, and raise awareness to bring social change.” Another student shared, “Social workers have an obligation to respond to interpersonal violence when they encounter such instances.” Many of the students reflected on their responsibility as social workers to include a belief of “caring” for individuals, families, and communities impacted by violence that stemmed from the *Code of Ethics*.

Changes in Knowledge

In this theme, students reflected on changes in their knowledge related to interpersonal violence over the course of the class. These changes included personal self-reflections, such as noticing their own biases or stereotypes, as well as students pursuing special topics, including social media and technology, gender roles, and financial abuse, within interpersonal violence that were of particular interest to them. One student said, “Understand and know your biases and be comfortable with the uncomfortable.” A student

also shared, “This course made me realize to consider being a sexual assault or domestic violence social worker in the future.” With respect to how their perspective toward survivors changed, one student stated, “I was the one who used to say, what, why don’t you get out? Why are you still there? It [the class] was literally like an eye opening for me.” Several students voiced that they wanted more education for themselves, and they believed their fellow students and colleagues should receive similar education not only through formal coursework but also through trainings throughout their careers. One student shared,

I do think that this course should be a requirement, and I think that we’re kind of doing a disservice to students by not, and . . . to feel like we’re not prepared and feel like we’re not doing the right thing because we haven’t been properly prepared. I think, like I said, taking this class did make me feel more prepared. But again, like I said, not everyone had to take this class.

Action-Oriented Strategies

Students expressed action-oriented strategies they could engage with to appropriately address and respond to interpersonal violence in their future practice. Students reflected on how to screen and safety plan with clients, and thought about appropriate resources and referrals. Students also described the importance of meeting clients where they are at, specifically in approaching their work through empathy, active listening, holding space, and relationship-building. A student said, “The role of social workers in encountering or responding to interpersonal violence would be to ask as many questions as possible to gather all [of] the information possible to proceed and find the right resources to give [to] that person.” Another student reflected,

It is important to meet the client where they are at. Acknowledging their strengths and understand their vulnerability. Sometimes we will just need to be in the present moment with them and wait until they are ready to take the next step.

Through the course, the students reported learning tangible, actionable strategies that they could engage with to support individuals impacted by interpersonal violence. Students had initially expressed a sense of “not knowing what to do” if a client were to disclose about interpersonal violence. However, they increasingly grew in confidence about how to best support and engage in prevention and intervention efforts. For example, a student reflected, “Holding space and saying, here are the resources that I can help map onto it, but I can hold space.”

Discussion

In response to scholars’ ongoing calls for more education and training to address social workers’ preparedness to appropriately recognize, respond, and intervene with clients that experience interpersonal violence, we focused on the experiences of MSW students enrolled in a newly designed elective course. This course was developed by the authors based on their previous research, trainings, and practice experience in areas of IPV, child maltreatment, sexual violence, and elder abuse. The primary focus of the course was to

enhance the preparation of graduate social work students with respect to screening and intervention.

At the conclusion of the course, students reported increases in perceived preparation to assist, screen, and provide referrals for individuals and families experiencing violence. Students also reported greater knowledge of legal requirements surrounding most types of violence. Most students believed that they would encounter and/or work with people impacted by various types of interpersonal violence, furthering support for including interpersonal violence courses in social work curricula. Through the interview data, students shared reflections on how they believed that social workers and related disciplines in mental health and healthcare have a responsibility to respond to interpersonal violence in practice and that they will inevitably encounter it. Students noted how this responsibility directly stemmed from the NASW's (2021) *Code of Ethics*. They recommended that educators and practitioners demonstrate how seriously they take these values by increasing their efforts to become better equipped to respond to interpersonal violence. Students also described various changes in knowledge that they experienced throughout the course. They described personal reflections, specific subtopics of interpersonal violence that they further explored, and called for the course content to be required for all students and practitioners. Finally, students identified specific strategies that they needed to focus on in their post-degree careers. These strategies included awareness of screening and safety planning, and the importance of adherence to key social work practice skills, such as meeting clients where they are at through listening, empathy, and building trusting relationships.

Overall, students were invested in the topics covered, particularly when sharing their realizations of how little knowledge they had about these topics prior to the course. Although appreciative that the course was offered in their program, students expressed frustration that the course was offered as an elective rather than a required course. Students likewise expressed wanting to gain more confidence in using some of these skills in practice and discussed how the profession should support ongoing educational training needs of social workers specific to interpersonal violence. This student viewpoint aligns with the Grand Challenges for Social Work (2026) that is focused on *Building Healthy Relationships to End Violence*. All schools of social work have been encouraged to become involved in the Grand Challenges since their formal launch in 2016. There is increasing momentum, but the integration of content on interpersonal violence into programs and required courses remains limited. A 2020 survey of social work programs at all levels (i.e., Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Social Work) received a 23.1% response rate, and of those respondents, only 68% ($n=51$) integrated the Build Healthy Relationships to End Violence Grand Challenge (Ward et al., 2023). This effort simply must improve, because the majority of baccalaureate and master's social work program directors believe that students will encounter interpersonal violence at some point in their practice (Renner & Driessen, 2023).

The findings from this study align with previous research that explicitly calls for the need for more education and training in this area (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Black et al., 2010; Crabtree-Nelson et al., 2015; Danis, 2003; Fedina et al., 2018; Gilfus et al., 2010; McMahon & Armstrong, 2012; Postmus et al., 2011; Renner & Driessen, 2023). Scholars have not only called for more education but have continued to demonstrate the positive

impact of education and training courses on increasing students' readiness and preparedness to respond to interpersonal violence in practice, as well as research that has shown how similar types of courses can be effective for changing attitudes around interpersonal violence-related myths and biases that impact practice decisions (Fisher et al., 2021). Educators may consider even simply integrating tangible tools, such as appropriate screeners, local resources and referrals, and safety planning, to empower students and increase their sense of preparedness.

We recognize that social work educators are faced with continual revisions to courses and curricula to keep up with changing needs within the field of social work. The pressure to cover the wide variety of topics relevant to students, clients, instructors, and the field at the desired level of depth and breadth is daunting, and difficult to achieve. For those educators and programs that wish to increase their content focused on interpersonal violence at the bachelor or master's levels, researchers have noted the lack of a systematic curriculum that covers these topics and should be considered to help strengthen and evaluate the effectiveness of course design and content (Fedina et al., 2018; Gilfus et al., 2010). For their courses, whether elective or required, social work educators should consider how to incorporate various special topics that are relevant and current to the practice of responding to interpersonal violence, such as the significance of social media and technology.

Although our findings contribute to emerging knowledge in designing graduate courses focused on interpersonal violence, several study limitations are worth noting at this preliminary stage. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings and only reflects the perspectives of students from one course. Data were collected in the forms of both quantitative and qualitative measures to increase trustworthiness, but the pre-post survey data coupled with one interview may not yield the desired depth of findings. Likewise, we were unable to conduct multiple paired sample t-test to analyze pre- and post-course changes due to the small sample size so statistically significant changes in perceived preparation and knowledge could not be stated. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the limitation that the teacher of the course also was the one conducting the interviews. In the future, to help mitigate potential bias, researchers should consider having a different member of the research team conduct the interviews. In future efforts, researchers should consider increasing sample sizes, designing a more rigorous and robust study, and identifying strategies to conduct follow-up interviews after more time has passed since course completion (e.g., after students have completed their degree and are engaged in practice).

Conclusion

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to assess the experiences of MSW students who were enrolled in a newly designed elective course on interpersonal violence. Researchers continue to demonstrate the need to better support novice and experienced social work and related practitioners in their ability to appropriately screen, respond, and intervene with individuals, families, and communities that are negatively impacted by interpersonal violence, which is a human rights issue. Educators in social work programs

have an opportunity and responsibility to help educate, train, and support students in receiving essential content on interpersonal violence during their formal education, along with providing ongoing support and training in their post-graduation practice.

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