

Telecare Protection System for domestic violence victims assessment: Insights from Portugal

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Telecare protection systems for domestic violence

Several policies and strategies in situational prevention of domestic violence aiming to:

- increase the protection of victims
 - raise the risk of detection of offenders
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- Electronic surveillance of the offender
 - House protection
 - Victims provided with alarm devices
 - Including emergency telephone connections, common in some Western countries

Telecare protection systems for domestic violence

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Portuguese telecare protection system (TPS)

- **Judicial protection order** decided by a **judge or a prosecutor** when certain special circumstances are present: e.g., significant risk of violence; victim with low social support
- Integrated into the **national legal framework for the DV prevention** (Law 112/2009, September) with **several institutions involved**
 - **Central management:** Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género (CIG)
 - **Monitoring service:** Portuguese Red Cross (PRC) - regular follow-up contact with the victim
 - **Police** action to support the victim in case of emergency
 - Several **other institutions and agencies**, prosecution services and courts, and victims' support institutions which comprehend the National Network Against DV.

Portuguese Telecare protection system for domestic violence

Portuguese TPS protocol

- **Decision** on the judicial protection order
- Police provide victim with the **alarm device**
- In case of danger, the **victim activates** the alarm device
- Alarm activates a **connection with the monitoring center (CVP, PRC), and the police forces** go after the victim.
- **Periodical follow-ups** with victims (emotional support) are made by the monitoring center.
- The measure **only ceases** with a court decision or directly by request of victims.



- TPS increasingly applied since 2011.

Telecare protection systems for domestic violence

BUT does it work?

Effectiveness (and efficiency) evaluations are needed for situational preventions in:

- Protecting victims and preventing revictimization
- Satisfying victims
- And other outcomes

Previous studies:

- Walker (2001): mixed results, but emphasised potential advantages in protecting DV victims
- Lloyd et al. (1994) reviewed a DV project (Merseyside Police) – positive feedback of interviewed victims, who reported an increased feeling of safety.
- Römken (2006), about a Rotterdam application of the AWARE program – small samples – victims felt safe at home.
- MacKay (2011) and Taylor & MacKay (2011), about the Australian Bsafe program – some victims expressed a sense of threat.
- Prenzler & Fardell (2016, 2017), about the Bradford Staying Put Project (UK) – reductions in police records of DV incidents; victims emphasised the relevance of having the program and reported increased feelings of safety.
- Breckenridge et al (2014), about the SHLV Prog (Australia) – victims reported feeling safer, and police reported low alarm activation
- Malgesini et al. (2017, about the ATENTRO (Spain) 90% of the victims evaluated positively the program
- Natarajan (2016), about the TecSOS (London, UK) – victims considered phones to be very convenient and to have reduced their fear of being victimised.

Empirical study

Aim

- To assess the Portuguese Telecare Protection System TPS, taking into account victims' perceptions

Method

- Study focused on 3346 telecare protection orders (**Jan 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019**)
- Informed consent to participate obtained.
- **Data collected** through **telephone interviews** conducted by research team members fully trained.
- Geographical distribution of the sample quite similar to the current pattern of inhabitants of the different regions in Portugal.
- Data processed and analyzed using statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics v29.

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Measures

- **Sociodemographic** characteristics
- Participants' **knowledge** and **expectations** regarding the TPS
- **Assessment** regarding **police** and **monitoring center actions** – questions about the demeanour, behavior dimensions –, and about **expectations fulfilment**
- **Outcome evaluation** – participants' **satisfaction** with services and procedures, feelings of **safety**, and self-reported **re-victimization**

And also, but not in this presentation...

- Assessment of the TPS implementation (emergency calls, emotional support calls, false alarms, technical calls, device substitution, calls not answered)

Empirical study

SAMPLE of victims

- Mainly women (95.9%)
- Age: M=44.40 (SD=13.51), 26-45 years old (45.6%), 46-65 years old (39.8%)
- Mostly divorced (53.2%) or single (30.4%)
- Low education levels – 60.8% under 9 years of schooling
- Relatively high unemployment rate (20.5%)
- Mainly Portuguese, foreigners only 6.5%
- Two groups of victims:
 - TPS Group – N=171 victims,
 - CG group (control) – N=100 victims.

Empirical study

RESULTS

• Evaluation of ACTIONS

POLICE

- **Demeanour** and **behaviour** dimensions highly evaluated – less evaluated issues concerning the criminal investigation.
- **Expectations fulfillment**, higher as well.
- **TPS better** than controls

Monitoring center CVP (PRC)

- Demeanour and behaviour highly evaluated.

	Police		t	p	CVP TPS (N = 147)
	TPS (N = 171)	CG (N = 100)			
	M (SD)	M (SD)			M (SD)
Demeanour ($\alpha = .98, .96, .97$)	4.40 (.94)	4.12 (1.21)	2.00	.048	4.68 (.73)
Courteous and respectful	4.40 (.99)	4.11 (1.29)	1.77	.078	4.73 (.69)
Understanding	4.41 (.98)	4.25 (1.23)	1.10	.273	4.67 (.75)
Appear concerned	4.38 (1.02)	3.93 (1.42)	2.74	.007	4.64 (.79)
Take time to listen	4.44 (.92)	4.23 (1.17)	1.54	.126	4.61 (.84)
Take situation seriously	4.38 (.98)	4.07 (1.33)	2.06	.041	4.67 (.76)
Behaviour ($\alpha = .83, .84, .84^a$)	4.17 (.87)	3.51 (1.10)	5.02	<.001	4.55 (.75)
Reacted quickly enough	4.15 (1.18)	3.75 (1.39)	2.42	.016	4.48 (.98)
Inform properly	4.51 (0.91)	4.12 (1.45)	2.39	.018	4.58 (.98)
Support properly	4.41 (.97)	3.82 (1.55)	3.45	.001	4.52 (.94)
Protected properly	4.36 (1.09)	3.49 (1.64)	4.72	<.001	4.49 (.92)
Investigated properly	3.87 (1.37)	3.23 (1.67)	3.17	.002	
Speak to you separately from the perpetrator	4.50 (1.16)	4.34 (1.33)	1.05	.294	
Question any witnesses present	3.63 (1.61)	2.86 (1.92)	3.35	.001	
Search for or ask to see evidence	3.65 (1.56)	2.91 (1.89)	3.23	.002	
Regular contact					4.75 (.81)
Explained how the device works					4.31 (1.38)
Properly activated emergency services (N = 47)					3.94 (1.63)
Provide necessary support during difficult emotional times (N = 29)					4.17 (1.47)
Indicated other aid institutions (N = 59)					3.69 (1.72)
Expectation fulfilment	4.05 (1.22)	3.50 (1.53)	3.08	.002	4.36 (.99)

Note. Scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

^aThe last three items were not included in the dimension behaviour due to the lower number of answers.

Empirical study

RESULTS

- Evaluation of OUTCOMES

Satisfaction

- Generally: high levels of satisfaction.

However...

- Lower satisfaction** concerning police response in **emergency calls**, despite being relatively high the percentage of victims who were very satisfied or totally satisfied (61.4%)

Satisfaction with...	M (SD)		% Very satisfied (4) or totally satisfied (5)		
	TPS	CG	TPS	CG	p
Implementation of the TPS	4.22 (1.09)		80.1		
Information provided at the time of the TPS decision	4.57 (.86)		92.4		
Information provided at the time of device delivery	4.63 (.83)		92.4		
Device Functioning	4.42 (.92)		84.8		
CVP monitoring centre service	4.60 (.78)		92.3		
Policing (TPS, N = 133; CG, N = 100)	4.21 (1.18)	3.81 (1.18)	78.2	66.0	.019
Police response in emergency calls (N = 44)	3.68 (1.73)		61.4		
Other agencies' response in emergency calls (N = 10)	4.30 (1.34)		80.0		

Note. Scale ranging from 1 (totally dissatisfied) to 5 (totally satisfied).

Empirical study

RESULTS

- Evaluation of OUTCOMES

Safety

- With police actions, TPS victims safer than GC victims ($p < .001$)

However...

- Most of the safety indicators do not show significant differences between TPS and Control.

	TPS (N = 171) M (SD)	CG (N = 100) M (SD)	t	p
Police actions made the victim feel safer	4.15 (1.16)	3.37 (1.61)	4.05	<.001
CVP actions made the victim feel safer	4.34 (1.00)			
Unsafe feelings (in general)	2.87 (1.35)	3.00 (1.32)	.76	.445
Fear of DV	3.48 (1.55)	3.21 (1.52)	1.38	.170
Risk of DV victimisation	2.63 (1.43)	2.44 (1.48)	1.04	.301
Precautionary measures	3.41 (1.54)	3.96 (1.41)	3.00	.003

Note. Scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Empirical study

RESULTS

- Evaluation of OUTCOMES

Revictimization

- TPS victims significantly less physically victimized than CG victims ($p=.034$)
- New episodes of sexual offences reported only by TPS victims.
- No significant differences between TPS and CG in the revictimization rate

	TPS (N= 171)		CG (N= 100)				
	N	%	N	%	χ^2	p	OR (95% CI)
Re-victimisation	51	29.8	33	33.0	.297	.585	1.159 (.682–1.969)
Type of violence							
Physical	12	7.0	15	15.0	4.48	.034	2.338 (1.047–5.222)
Verbal	49	28.7	33	33.0	.565	.452	1.226 (.720–2.089)
Sexual	2	1.2	0	0	1.178	.278	.628 (.573–.689)
Threats	45	26.3	29	29.0	.229	.632	1.144 (.660–1.982)
Attacks on dignity	39	22.8	18	18.0	.878	.349	.743 (.399–1.385)
New complaint N(TPS) = 51; N(CG) = 33	30	58.8	21	63.6	.195	.659	1.225 (.497–3.020)

Concluding remarks

- ✓ **TPS being applied since 2011 and go upper in the number of cases**
- ✓ **Victims report very positive feedback regarding the ACTIONS of the police and of the monitoring center. The same regarding expectations fulfillment. BUT TPS better than controls.**
- ✓ **OUTCOMES – satisfaction**
 - ✓ **Despite generally high satisfaction levels, victims are less satisfied with the police responses to emergencies. Needed: better resource allocation aiming to improve emergency responses.**
 - ✓ **TPS better than controls.**
- ✓ **OUTCOMES – safety and revictimization**
 - ✓ **No significant differences in safety and revictimization between TPS and controls, except in physical violence where no differences were identified.**

Concluding remarks

- ✓ TPS being applied since 2011 and go upper in the number of cases
- ✓ Victims report very positive feedback regarding the ACTIONS of the police and of the monitoring center. The same regarding expectations fulfillment. BUT, TPS better than controls.
- ✓ OUTCOMES – satisfaction
 - ✓ Despite generally high satisfaction levels, victims are less satisfied with the police responses to emergencies. Needed: better resource allocation aiming to improve emergency responses.
 - ✓ TPS better than controls.
- ✓ OUTCOMES – safety and revictimization
 - ✓ No significant differences in safety and revictimization between TPS and controls, except in physical violence where no differences were identified.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- Possible bias? Respondents may have been the victims who were overall more satisfied with the measures and those who decided not to take part in the survey to be more critical of the system.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- Include qualitative research with victims benefiting from TPS measures to provide an in-depth analysis of victims' experiences with the protective system.

Article



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