Author’s response to reviews

Title: A qualitative exploration of 'thrivership' among women who have experienced domestic violence and abuse: Development of a new model

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Author’s response to reviews:

Thank you for the positive comments on our manuscript. We have considered each of them as indicated in red below. We think that the revised manuscript is much improved as a result.

Recommendations 1:
- A minor comment:

Authors have underlined some words in the middle of the sentences. Headings are also underlined such as Findings, The Thrivership Process, etc. I think it is not necessary. This has been amended accordingly.

- Abstract: The authors suggest that DVA is a "gendered phenomenon." This minimizes the experiences of men who have experienced DVA in intimate relationships. While this is noted in the limitations, it would be beneficial to engage this this in the introduction and perhaps re-word this sentence in the abstract, as it will be the first thing readers will be exposed to. It is okay to focus on heterosexual women here, but careful language should be used to explain why and that this is not a phenomenon that applies only to heterosexual women. The term ‘gendered phenomenon’ has been removed from the abstract, and lines 1 – 3 of the abstract have been amended accordingly. Additional information has been added about DVA/IPV being experienced by men and women, with some statistics on male-experienced DVA in the UK. Justification has been given for the focus on heterosexual women in the introduction via highlighting that the majority of IPV/DVA is still experienced by women.
Introduction: The introduction would benefit from a more detailed explanation of DVA. What is DVA? What sorts of things constitute DVA (physical and emotional abuse?) While there are bits in the first few paragraphs that can lead readers to draw a conclusion about this, it would be good to provide a clear definition for readers. This has been addressed by adding in the UK cross-governmental definition of DVA and some examples, which can be found in the second paragraph of the introduction.

P3, Lines 44-48: This definition of thriving does not seem relevant to the paper and kind of threw me off while reading, specifically the plant's life cycle and birth and fertility bit. If authors want to use this, they should better tie it to DVA. This part of the introduction has been amended accordingly.

Methods: In general, the methods could use more detail to give us a better picture of the sample and, therefore, to the applicability of the results. I found myself often wondering about the sample as I read the paper. This has been addressed in the recruitment and participant section of methods; more details of the participants and the DVA-service have been included.

Recruitment: A clear statement of the eligibility requirements is crucial, even if it is not extensive. If the only eligibility requirement was they utilize services from this specific DVA service provider, then authors should state that and give a brief explanation of the types of services they provide or the profile of their clientele. I understand the need for privacy and anonymity, but the paper suffers from the lack of this information. Additionally, if the authors know anything about the women who were not able to participate, and if they in some way differed or didn't from those that did participate, it should be stated that here. Who are the women we are reading about? Some further details on the participants and the eligibility criteria has been added to the recruitment section.

Participant details: It is mentioned that one participant was still with the perpetrator but no other information is given about this participant. How was her data used? Was it included with the others? This has been addressed in the participant details section. This brings up, again, the bigger question about the sample and who the women in your study are. What stages were they at in the experience of life post-DVA? This has also been included in the participant details section. Are they speaking from experience (have they all reached thrivership at some point)? Is it possible to reach thrivership when still in a relationship with the DVA perpetrator? This point has been addressed in the first section of the ‘findings’ – once participants had reached ‘survivor’ they were no longer with the perpetrator.

Data collection: The authors provide information on focus group data collection but not the interviews. More detailed info is needed here - what questions were asked, how were
qual tools developed, how did FGs differs from interviews, if at all, etc. These questions have now been answered in the Data Collection section.

- **Data Analysis**: Again, more detail is needed to ensure rigor in the analysis process. Why where there three rounds of coding, and what happened in between each round? Who conducted these rounds of coding? Was there a codebook and, if so, how was it developed? No software was used but how did you organize your data? Did you use coding matrices? Additionally, more information about participant feedback is necessary here. Did they mostly agree with your findings? How was their feedback incorporated? How many times did you engage them for feedback? This section is substantially lacking. I would include as much as possible about your process. More detail on the analysis of data, including addressing the issues highlighted here, has been added.

- **Findings**: In general, this section is organized well and good quotes are used to illustrate findings. My main comment is, again, about the sample. The findings would be better contextualized if we knew more about the women in the sample. How long had it been since they had experienced DVA. What stages were they in? Were they speaking about violent abuse, psychological abuse, both? Details on this have been added to the ‘participant details’ section. (I understand they are not always mutually exclusive, but that can also be stated.)

- **P5, Line 42**: Would be interesting to know what the two women who disagreed thought. Details on the discussion around this have been added to the initial section of the findings on in the second paragraph under ‘the thrivership process’.

- **P5, Line 48**: I find it interesting that women disliked the term “victim” and that it was still used and included in the model. Why? This is also covered in the additions to the ‘thrivership process’ section of the findings.

- **P8, Line 10**: Styles on quotes are inconsistent throughout the results (some IDs italicized, some not; dash used changes throughout). Needs editing for consistency. All quotes have been checked – IDs are all non-italicized and dashes are now consistent.

- **P12, Line 21**: The quote from participant 25 was used in a previous section of the results. This quote has been removed.

- **P12, Line 35**: Is the statement about self-forgiveness in the early stage a direct finding from the focus groups? It is not clear. This sentence has been changed to clarify.

- **P13, Line 25**: The outlier finding here is interesting. I would suggest adding more of these throughout the results (if there are any in the data).

- **Discussion**: The discussion would be strengthened by providing more concrete recommendations. Specifically, how can this model be used to help women thrive after
DVA? What are the implications for research, for public health practice, for clinical practice? Some of these things are alluded to, but I did not walk away with a clear sense of the ways in which this new model could be implemented. Some further details have been added towards the end of the discussion on this. Seeing as how this topic is so important for women's health, it would be good to provide more concrete recommendations. I also think it's worth bringing men into this conversation. While I agree that it is very important to support women in thriving after DVA, I think it's important to be cautious not to frame this in a way that makes it seem like helping women thrive after DVA is the ultimate goal - the ultimate goal should be to stop FVA from happening at all. I understand that is not the topic of this paper, but I do think it needs to be addressed, even not extensively so. Including some conversation around perpetrators and upstream factors that could stop DVA from happening at all would be useful here. There is some mention about education, but is that enough? This has been addressed in the discussion.

Recommendations 2:

- Line 11-14 (abstract). This is more or else an implication of the study's findings. Consider moving this sentence to the conclusion section of the abstract. This has been removed from the background section.

- Line 15 (abstract): The first sentence under the methods section could be more complete. Could add "in the focus group discussion". Alternatively, the authors could consider merging the first two sentences of the methods section. The first two sentences have been merged.

- Line 27: consider replacing "women" with "participants.

- The limitations section needs to be revised and the following issues addressed: Line 38-42 (the last part of this section) is currently framed more as an area for further studies than as a limitation. This has been moved in to the ‘discussion’ section.

- Line 30: it is not clear why the authors used a first-person pronoun here although the study has multiple authors. Thank you for highlighting this – it has been edited to ‘IH’ as that was the individual the participant spoke to. Also, the information captured here in Line 27-37 although is relevant, the authors do not explicitly explain how these events could have impacted the results of the study.

- Page 14-15 (Line 54-): Consider moving the discussion about the model (I think it should be called "proposed model" throughout the paper – ‘proposed model’ has now been added throughout) to the findings section. Ideally, the discussion section of a manuscript
should only discuss results/findings already presented and not the place to introduce new information. – Thank you for highlighting this concern. Thank you for this feedback. We feel that the discussion of the model in the main ‘Discussion’ section does not introduce new information as the key components and features of the model are discussed in detail in the previous ‘Findings’ section. As per convention we have also not introduced any new material in to the conclusion. The discussion section is laid out in this way to allow for a comprehensive exploration of how our findings relate to previous research in this area and can be applied to practice; we think that readers will enjoy reading the discussion section to help contextualise the findings.