Potential Pathways for Prevention: Understanding the Intersections of Violence against Women and Children in the Family

SVRI September 2017: Sophie Namy¹

Co-authors: Catherine Carlson (Co-PI)², Kathleen O’Hara³, Janet Nakuti¹, Paul Bukuluki⁴, Julius Lwanyaaga⁵, Sylvia Namakula⁵, Barbrah Nanyunja¹, Milton Wainberg³, Dipak Naker¹, Lori Michau¹

¹ Raising Voices; ² University of Alabama; ³ Columbia University; ⁴ Makerere University; ⁵ Independent Consultant
IN REALITY...

Communities

Families

Children

Men

Women
AND YET...
(POLICY, PROGRAMMING & RESEARCH)
LEGITIMATE HESITATIONS

Intersections came into focus at SVRI 2013 (Alessandra Guedes). Since then discussion has grown, revealing possibilities and hesitations:

• Different actors & frames, women’s rights/feminism & child protection
• Distinct life-phases with unique expectations for behavior and autonomy
• Power dynamics not the same (woman-man; adult-child)
• Sensitive terrain, risk stigmatizing (or infantilizing) women?

Can integrated approaches balance and account for these nuanced concerns?
NEED FOR DEEPER EXPLORATION
(THE INTERSECTIONS STUDY)

Quantitative
To what extent does IPV-VAC co-occur in our communities (caregiver-child pairs)?

Qualitative
How & why does intersecting IPV-VAC manifest in the family?

Aspirational
What positive dynamics do family members aspire toward?

* Partnership between Raising Voices, Columbia Univ & Makerere Univ; funding from SVRI
Qualitative: How do women, men, girls and boys experience intersecting IPV-VAC in their daily lives?
METHODS

• 16 FGDs & 20 IDIs with girls, boys, mothers & fathers (Kampala)

• Participatory techniques (illustrated vignettes) & ‘task-focused’ exercises

• Ethical protocols for researching VAC & VAW closely followed; child protection partner; redirect to positive at the end

n=55 adults & 51 children aged 10 to 15 (data collection Dec 2015)
KEY LEARNING 1:
IPV & VAC don’t only overlap – they can also be profoundly intertwined, triggering cycles of abuse. Disclosures suggest 4 patterns:
When the father turned to the children, the mother cried so much . . . because here [earlier] she had endured the pain from his beating, because she knew that the children were safe. But when he turned to the children, she even put her hands on the head and wailed aloud . . . She was not crying because he had beaten her, but because he was beating her children. (mother-FGD)
Once the children hear your husband shouting at you, they will also start despising you. Like a child can even start telling you that ‘I will report you to Daddy.’ Do you get that? That means that the child despises you, and thinks that you are a nobody who is always shouted at or beaten. (mother-IDI)
Sometimes their mother annoys you. You grab and hold her [in a way that causes pain], and when your child . . . notices she runs to hold you or the mother while at the same time crying, and because of anger you end up kicking that child as well. But it comes out of high anger. The children will always take their mother’s side, because they spend more time together. Generally, it is because of anger that children also are affected by our fights. (father-FGD)
If I am the mother, at times I might have had misunderstandings with the father. By the time [the child] comes back home, I am already angry over what the father has done to me . . . instead of comforting the child, you just start to beat the child, because of the other anger that you still have. (mother-FGD)

Fathers or mothers manipulate children as retaliation (against each other); Women redirecting violence from husband (given circumscribed agency in patriarchal context).
KEY LEARNING 2:
The patriarchal family structure is a cross-cutting risk that normalizes many forms of violence:

• Violence to “discipline” & enforce gender norms
• Violence as expression of masculinity (“naturally like that;” “transforming shame into anger”)

Diagram:
- Normalization of Violence
  - Violence as discipline
  - Violence as an expression of masculinity
  - Violence to enforce gender norms

- Patriarchal Family Structure
  - Rigid gender & childhood norms
  - Hierarchy (sex & age)
  - Control over subordinate members
Sometimes it is right [to shout at your wife], because there are times a wife behaves like a young child at home. If you are not tough with her, she might fail to understand. There are things that she does, and you feel that you have to shout at her to put a stop to it . . . You scare her a little bit . . . It is appropriate. (mother-IDI)

[My parents] only beat us if we have done something wrong, but if no mistake has been made, they do not do anything to us . . . I do not have anything [else] to say. If they beat me, it is because I have done something wrong. I accept that. (son-IDI)
KEY LEARNING 3:

Some important moments emerged, when violence was contested:

- IPV in front of children consistently rejected
- A few children renounced IPV, arguing that women are “mature adults”
- Justifications for VAC appeared more deeply entrenched (when aligned with normative boundaries of acceptability)
Intersecting Violence in the Family

**Perpetration of Violence & VAC**
- Bystander trauma
- Negative role modeling
- Protection & further victimization
- Displaced aggression

**Normalization of Violence**
- Violence as an expression of masculinity
- Violence as discipline
- Violence to enforce gender norms

**Patriarchal Family Structure**
- Rigid gender & childhood norms
- Hierarchy (sex & age)
- Control over subordinate members

**Alcohol, poverty & other exacerbating factors**
MOVING FORWARD

**Independent VAW and VAC programs:**

- Consider intersections-specific patterns when developing training content and coms materials
- Encourage reflection about harmful effects of direct & indirect experiences of violence

**Integrated VAW-VAC prevention:**

- Start with a feminist frame to address patriarchal norms & abuses of power
- Go beyond what we know: experiment with innovative programming
Towards a feminist understanding of intersecting violence against women and children in the family

Sophie Nanyondo, Catherine Carlson, Kathleen O’Hara, Janet Sylvia Namakula, Barbara Nanyunia, Milton L. Weinberg, Dipali

Overview

Although the problem of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a global issue, most research programs have focused on VAWG in isolated rural communities. Several factors, including the intersections of structural violence, poverty, and gender inequality, contribute to the high levels of VAWG in these communities. This study aims to explore the intersections of structural violence, poverty, and gender inequality in the context of VAWG in rural communities. The study findings suggest that intersecting violence is a complex phenomenon that requires a multi-disciplinary approach to address.

Box 1: VAWG in the Family

Violence against women and girls is a global issue that affects millions of women and girls worldwide. In many countries, women and girls are subjected to various forms of violence, such as physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence. In rural communities, VAWG is particularly severe, with high levels of violence against women and girls being reported. The study findings suggest that intersecting violence is a complex phenomenon that requires a multi-disciplinary approach to address.

Raising Voices is a non-profit organization that has been working to prevent VAWG in rural communities. While we understand that violence is an individual and structural issue, and that there is no single solution, it is critical to address the root causes of violence against women and girls. Raising Voices is committed to working with communities and partners to address VAWG in rural communities.

References


* * *

INTERESTED IN READING MORE?

www.raisingvoices.org
Thank you!