Exploratory analysis of relationship quality, its predictors & its association with intimate partner violence among rural couples in Rwanda

Sangeeta Chatterji, Erin Stern, Kristin Dunkle, Lori Heise
IPV & Relationship Quality

- Relationship quality is a precursor to healthy behavior for couples (Conroy et al., 2016)
- IPV lowers relationship satisfaction and stability
- Few studies include men
- Studies conducted in North America, Europe
- Relationship could be cyclical for men
IPV prevention programme funded by DFID Rwanda, implemented by CARE Rwanda, Rwanda Women’s Network, Rwanda Men’s Resource Centre from Aug 2014-Aug 2018

Implemented in 7 districts in 3 provinces of rural Rwanda:

1. Participatory training with couples (couples curriculum)
2. Community-based activism with sub-set of trained couples
3. Support to survivors of IPV through women’s safe spaces
4. Training and engagement of opinion leaders
Methods

- Data from evaluation of couples curriculum

- Quantitative:
  - ACASI questionnaires with face-to-face option in Kinyarwanda
  - Waves: baseline, 12m midline
  - Sample: 1583 women, 1557 men

- Qualitative:
  - 3 intervention sectors
  - 28 interviews of men & women at baseline & midline
Relationship quality measure

- Five items
  - Relationship satisfaction
  - Well cared for
  - Respected partners
  - Trusted partners
  - Partners trusted them
- Cronbach alpha of 0.86
Factors associated with relationship quality among women

- Physical and/or sexual IPV: -0.40
- Control: -0.08
- Fear: -0.96
- Conflict: -0.21
- Couple Communication: 0.12
- Decision-making power: 0.69
- Control over sex: 0.06
Factors associated with relationship quality among men

- Physical and/or sexual IPV: -0.34
- Conflict: -0.24
- Couple Communication: 0.14

WhatWorks
TO PREVENT VIOLENCE
Results: No effect

- Relationship duration
- Number of children
- SES
- Membership in treatment/control group
Qualitative findings: Consequences of IPV

- Negative impact on respect, love, stability
- Men were able to identify consequences after training

There is nobody who was born to be beaten. If you beat me, will that make me respect you? For example, a man comes home scolding you, in that case can the relationship be strong? (FC02W)

Because of what I was doing [IPV] to her, she was not... even when I was sober, when I arrived at home and greeted her, she could not respond to me. (MC04NM)
Establishing intimacy

I talk to him and tell him “Me, I wish to live with somebody who can cheerfully converse with me, one who will not be busy when he arrives at home, who will allow ourselves to have a conversation, who will ask me how I spent the day, how my work was and how I suffered…” (FC01N)

Communication about sex

The fact that whenever I want to have sexual intercourse, she also has sexual desire to have sex with me because we prepare each other and as a result we do it and we enjoy it. (MC05EE)
I cannot allow that any young man visits us and stay at home for so long because I know that he dislikes that. So, when your husband dislikes something and that you do it, you are spoiling your relationship (FC02E)
Gestures of affection:
- Verbal gestures
- Buying things

Spending quality time together

Sharing household tasks

If I have been working alone in the marsh land when she stayed at home, when I arrive at home, she tells me “I bought some sorghum drink, but I kept some for you” and for that we both have deeper feelings for each other thanks to that good action (MC01EE)
Limitations

- Lacked standardized measure of relationship quality
- Participants not asked about impact of IPV on relationship quality, rather asked about impact of the intervention on relationship quality
- Social desirability bias
Strengths

- Social desirability bias mitigated through ACASI data collection, external field researchers
- No difference in IPV prevalence by interview via ACASI or face to face
- Includes data from men
- Most studies conducted in North America & Europe
Conclusion

- IPV negatively impacts relationship quality for men & women
- Role of shared power
  - Communication
  - Decision-making
  - Consent for sex
- Men were able to link IPV with lower relationship quality post-training
- Benefits-based approach in curriculum can improve relationship quality
Thank You!