Bridging the divide: Understanding the intersections of violence against women and children

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Presented by Shanaaz Mathews and Lauren October
Study Team

Shanaaz Mathews; Aislinn Delany
Lauren October & Kerryn Rehse
Background

• Prevailing social and cultural context drive both VAC and VAW
• Confirms the intersections and overlap of these forms of violence particularly in the home
• But, very few interventions focus on these intersections
• There is a need to understand the social norms that drive these intersection to inform the development of programmes
Study Aim

To examine community perceptions of violence against women and children, the social norms that underpin these forms of violence, and how families commonly experience these intersecting forms of violence.
Methods

Qualitative methods used to explore how community members perceived these intersecting forms of family violence and how normative beliefs and interpersonal dynamics fuel violence in the family.

Explored the perspectives of young people (14 -18 yrs); adult women and men through focus group discussions.
WHAT DID WE FIND?
Shared risks
Normalisation of violence

- For many violence was so common that it became invisible or “part of life”
- Various forms of violence “masquerades” as socially acceptable even encouraged
- Young people had a heightened awareness “there is violence everywhere you are walking there is violence”
- Gendered way of talking about violence among young people
- However, young people are clear GBV should not to be tolerated
Women and children are silenced and blamed

- Normalisation means that women and children do not get the support they need when they disclose abuse
- Violence in the home is viewed as a "private matter"
- Reluctance to intervene "tomorrow she is back with the same man again"
- Several described families silencing or even blaming women and children
- Power dynamics in the home deter women and children from disclosing
Social norms that affect men’s role

- The belief that “the husband must hit” the wife was still described as a common belief and widely tolerated.
- Participants described how violence towards intimate partners are justified when women did not behave in an “appropriate” way.
- The role of provider was described by both male and female participants as being central to perceptions of ‘being a man’.
- Control of family financial resources by men even when they were unemployed was common.
- “Die vrou moet die geld gee” highlighting the position of men vis-à-vis women where intimate relationships are predicated on power men have over women.
Parenting and the position of children

- Harsh, punitive and inconsistent parenting common in the accounts
- Children’s ability to be emotionally close to parents and disclose what is happening in their lives is impacted
- Silences around sex and sexuality drives the hidden nature of CSA
- The use of physical punishment still remains widespread
- Many argued that corporal punishment is justified under certain conditions
“I am a parent and I don’t believe in corporal punishment but it can be effective, you know. When you do it the right way, of course...there isn’t a right way but, I mean, you hit a child on the bum and that should be, you know...not beating you up and you ending up with broken ribs or broken bones or hand marks or whatever the case may be. That is not right.”
[Youth leader stakeholder]
Recommendations

- Address the **normalisation of VAW and VAC** in communities through participatory engagement processes that tackle the patriarchal social norms that drive violence.
- **Unresolved trauma** as a driver of violence is highlighted and requires community based to recognise and respond to this urgent need.
- **Gender transformative programming** is key with a focus on;
  - Economic empowerment and poverty alleviation
  - Promoting positive parenting to reducing harmful forms of parenting and fostering responsive parenting practices
  - A focus on men and boys that include women and girls to shift gendered practices in the home.
- **Mainstreaming of programmes** through institutions or systems to address the problem at scale
Thank you!

To read the report and download other resources on the intersections of VAC & VAW follow this link:

http://www.ci.uct.ac.za/ci/intersections/repository