



OVERCOMING OBSTACLES: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES IN COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Since women and children are often the main victims because of their vulnerability and inability to stand against people in situations of positions of power, violence against women and their children, or VAWC, is a growing concern in communities. In order to protect women's and children's rights, the R.A. No. 9262 or the Violence Against Women and Their Children Act was passed in 2004. educates women about their rights and protects children from abuse in any form in the Philippines.

Using a qualitative method, this study concentrates on in-depth interviews with participants in VAWC programs, such as Philippine National Police (PNP), barangay officials, and civilians. The objective is to evaluate the impact of these programs in preventing and lessening violence against women and children and to make recommendations for how to make them better.

It's important to recognize the challenges facing programs that seek to prevent violence against women and children since it makes it easier to determine the ineffective aspects of the programs. By being aware of these challenges, we can develop strategies to enhance the programs and increase the effectiveness of safeguarding sensitive persons. Additionally, it guarantees more complete satisfaction of the requirements of women and children and a wise utilization of resources.

KEYWORDS: Violence Against Women and Children Act of 2004, Philippine National Police, Violence, Republic Act 9262, Programs

INTRODUCTION

Violence is the use of physical force to hurt, abuse, harm, or destroy. World Health Organization definition of violence, it is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group of community, that results or has a high probability of causing injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (Hittle, 2022).

According to research published in 2021 by the Office of Women's Health, violence against women raises the chance of mental illness as well as major physical health issues. Abuse and violence have an effect on families and children in addition to women. Early exposure to violence increases the likelihood that children would carry on the abuse cycle as adults, either as offenders or victims. Further research by Smith et al. (2017) highlights that children who see or experience violence are more likely to face behavioral and mental health problems, which lends credence to this intergenerational cycle of abuse.

Feminist Theory study of Conway, et al (2016), the theory posited on violence which gender blind and without a feminist lens inevitably results in the presentation of the dominant patriarchal perspective. Consequently, the way male subjects perceive violence is exhibited, thereby rendering the theory partial. A feminist perspective however provides a deeper understanding of violence by analyzing how it is connected to, and embedded in, patriarchal structures of power. Research

over more than 30 years from around the world clearly indicates that domestic abuse as understood and defined is primarily perpetrated by men against a female partner of ex-partner (Rivano, 2022).

According to Sullivan, C. M., & Hodge, D. R. (2021), This review explores the long-term mental health consequences of child abuse, including the development of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It synthesizes recent research findings to understand how childhood abuse impacts mental health over the lifespan. Recent advances in trauma-informed care for survivors of child abuse were also conducted. It discusses the principles of trauma-informed care and evaluates their effectiveness in supporting recovery and improving outcomes for abused children (Lundy, M., & Lanktree, C. B., 2021).

According to Atienza (2020), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has vowed to continuously implement protective programs and services for victim-survivors of violence against women and children (VAWC). The DSWD said it provides the following assistance to victim-survivors of abuse: psychosocial care, psychosocial counseling, psychological/ psychiatric tests, provision of professional health services, referral for medico-legal examination, and provision of mechanisms for protection from mental, emotional, physical, sexual abuse, and other forms of exploitation. Under Republic Act (R.A.) 9262, the 12 agencies



under the Council are mandated to 'formulate programs and projects to eliminate VAWC based on their respective mandates, develop capability programs for their employees to become more sensitive to the needs of their clients, and to monitor all VAWC program.

This study aims to give awareness about anti-VAWC Programs to the public especially to Barangay officials and residents through the help of the police officers. It aims to acquire knowledge on how beneficial the programs to the community. Lastly, it also aims to give awareness and improve the challenges to police officers who implements the anti-VAWC Programs for the innovation and betterment in connection with the implemented anti-VAWC Programs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Examine the common types of violence against women and children (VAWC) in home, institutional, and community settings to learn about their trends, root causes, and effects on victims.
2. Analyze the variety of Anti-VAWC programs that are presently being carried out by different entities, including governmental bodies, nonprofits, and neighborhood associations, emphasizing their approaches, outcomes, and opportunities for development.
3. Identify and analyze any challenges that law enforcement officials, social workers, and program managers encounter while putting Anti-VAWC programs into practice. These problems may include a lack of resources, legal roadblocks, and cultural hurdles and provide suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the program.

METHODS

The study utilized qualitative methods to fully examine the subject matter. To obtain detailed information about the participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences, the researcher used intense interviews, which are open-ended and generally unstructured. Purposive random sampling was used to identify ten participants, who were picked based on their suitability for the research and capacity to offer insightful responses.

An interview guide served as the primary data collection tool, with unstructured questions designed to gather essential information. The interview questions focused on identifying the challenges faced by law enforcers in implementing Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) programs. Participants, including law enforcers from the Women and Children's Protection Desk, barangay officials, and residents of Pangasinan responded based on their knowledge and experiences.

The researchers sought permission to record the interviews, and the collected data were carefully analyzed using the thematic method. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to find and analyze patterns and trends in the collected data. In this approach, the data was examined to uncover common themes and ideas that arose from the participants' responses. In

order confirm and collect the study's conclusions, researchers analyze the raw data in order to obtain and arrange relevant details from participant responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter represents the results and discussion of gathered data about Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) Program. The data pertain the narrative of the program, to the participants based on their experience on the program and also on how they implement the program.

1. What are the common types of violence against women and children (VAWC) occurring in home, institutional, and community settings, and what are their trends, root causes, and effects on victims?

PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE

According to the information provided by participants, physical abuse is the most common VAWC performed since it begins with a simple misunderstanding and progresses to physical assault. Economic, sexual, and psychological abuse are also being inflicted since these instances and the typical times they happen to differ and the victims are primarily housewives and youths.

Participant's husbands are abusing them, threatening to kill them. They are also prohibited from working. This is what's commonly called domestic abuse or intimate relationship violence. This kind of violence encompasses both physical and psychological abuse, when victims experience beatings or other physical harm. In psychological abuse, victims are made to feel intimidated and afraid for their lives. Another form of control and economic abuse is when someone restricts their ability to work in an effort to lessen their financial autonomy and independence.

2. How are different Anti-VAWC programs currently being implemented by government bodies, nonprofits, and neighborhood associations, and what are their approaches, outcomes, and areas for improvement?

Anti-VAWC activities include conducting lectures, visiting VAWC desks, and distributing pamphlets. Concerning VAWC activities, informational conversations for citizens, and Talakayan sa Hapagkainan. The Republic Act No. 9262, also referred to as the "Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004," is brought to the public's attention through these acts.

BARANGAY INITIATIVES

A number of efforts in the participant's community aim to reduce violence against women and children (VAWC). Every barangay has a designated VAWC desk where they actively participate in awareness-raising activities. To make sure that everyone in the community is informed and aware, these include talks and lectures that are not just aimed at women but also include males.

Programs are made to inform and empower both men and women, assisting them in identifying warning signs of abuse



and comprehending their rights and obligations. The programs encourage a group effort to stop violence and make the world a safer place by involving males in these awareness-raising events. The goal is to increase awareness of VAWC in the community and to motivate proactive efforts to stop abuse and assist victims.

TALAKAYAN SA HAPAGKAINAN

Through the simple and casual "Talakayan sa Hapagkainan" Program, local residents can speak with police officers face-to-face about domestic issues. In an open forum, the show profiles both offenders and victims and examines the root reasons of violence.

Based on participant feedback, the "Talakayan sa Hapagkainan" is done on a regular basis. Officers facilitate the conversations at these gatherings as everyone in the neighborhood eats together. This strategy is thought to be successful because it encourages community members to cooperate and participate more. A communal feast's relaxed atmosphere promotes involvement and openness which facilitates discussing and comprehending the problems surrounding violence in the neighborhood.

EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS

The local council invited community people to take part in educational seminars about violence against women and children (VAWC) as part of our symposium program. The purpose of these symposiums is to raise public awareness of VAWC and to educate residents on the relevant legislative framework, which is Republic Act 9262, which tackles violence against women and their children.

Comprehensive explanations of Republic Act 9262, which provides victims of domestic violence with legal safeguards and processes, are provided to participants. The goal of the public education seminars is to educate individuals about their rights, readily available resources for help, and what to do if they or a loved one becomes a victim of violence. The program's objective is to increase public knowledge of this law and its meaning so that individuals can recognize and report instances of misuse when they happen.

3. What challenges do law enforcement officials, social workers, and program managers face when implementing Anti-VAWC programs, including issues such as resource limitations, legal obstacles, and cultural barriers, and how can these programs be made more effective?

The challenges that implementers confront include the issue of government funding needed to maintain program operations and the issue of cases being dropped.

RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Due to limited resources, the barangay often discovers it difficult to assist when financial problems occur and may need to refer cases to government agencies. This is especially true when there aren't enough finances available for the budget.

When putting programs into action, issues with teamwork and the successful completion of tasks usually surface. For

example, setting up talks and lectures necessitates the provision of basic supplies including food, gear, and transportation. It is difficult to meet these logistical requirements with just barangay money. Although the participants are dedicated to their tasks, they are also limited financially and may not always be able to cover the entire cost of running the program. In order to close these budgetary gaps, it becomes necessary to ask the Local Government Unit (LGU) for assistance. Obtaining the extra funding required to carry out programs successfully and guarantee that they are well-supported and able to achieve their goals requires active engagement with the local government.

In general, working with government agencies to augment the barangay's resources is necessary to address financial obstacles in program implementation. This ensures that programs are not only doable but also successful in accomplishing their objectives.

DISCONTINUANCE OF ACTION

According to the participants, even when a lawsuit has already been filed in court, situations usually conclude when a woman's husband makes amends with her. The woman may decide to withdraw the complaint if her spouse makes amends and gets back together. The issues when the participants deal with tend to involve cases that never get to court. Most of the time, people would rather have their occurrences formally documented than file a lawsuit. For instance, they don't really want to press charges against their husband or live-in partner—instead, their main goal in reporting domestic abuse to the barangay is to record the incident.

Also, there are instances where victims don't fully participate with the offered support services. When their partners mistreat them, they might merely report the abuse to the barangay for documentation's sake; they might not pursue legal action or look for more help. The impact of programs intended to offer assistance and legal remedies may be impeded by this lack of collaboration, which could result in many instances going unresolved and neglected in the court system.

COMPREHENSIVE COUNSELLING SERVICES

It is extremely difficult to address the psychological effects of violence on victims and children; to do so, professional and well-coordinated psychological and therapeutic institutions are needed. Anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder are among the severe emotional trauma that victims of violence frequently endure. These conditions can have a long-lasting effect on the victims' general and mental health.

It is crucial to include licensed psychologists and other therapeutic specialists who can offer individualized interventions and continuous assistance in order to effectively support their rehabilitation and guarantee a healthy future. These professionals are able to provide vital therapy and counselling services that are tailored to the particular psychological requirements of survivors, assisting them in their recovery and life reconstruction. In order to have a thorough support system that addresses the psychological repercussions that are both short-term and long-term, coordination between various groups is essential.



CONCLUSION

The results and discussion allowed the researchers to come to a number of important conclusions. Firstly, physical abuse is the most common kind of violence against women and children (VAWC), primarily due to the fact that victims often become financially reliant on their male partners, who have more power over them. This vulnerability is further increased by the fact that a large number of victims are ignorant of the rights and legal protections that are available to them. Second, the Women and Children's Protection Desk is now implementing a number of anti-VAWC programs, including "Talakayan sa Hapagkainan," talks, symposiums, lectures, and barangay visits, all of which are frequently accompanied by the handing out of educational pamphlets. These programs seek to assist and increase community awareness. Yet the primary challenge is the lack of funds necessary to keep these efforts going strong. This budget limitation reduces the overall effectiveness of the VAWC programs, along with the action discontinuing in certain situations and inadequate comprehensive counseling services. The resources available for VAWC efforts are further restricted by the local government's concentration on additional programs and activities, underscoring the necessity for further attention and assistance to solve these pressing problems.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to improve the response to violence against women and children (VAWC), the researchers make a number of recommendations. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the local government unit should first put in place thorough information-dissemination initiatives to enlighten the public about the legal rights and safeguards that are afforded to women and children. Ensuring victims are informed of their rights and accessible assistance would be facilitated by this. In order to combat VAWC, it is recommended that proactive programs be developed. One such program might involve weekly visits to various barangays to spread knowledge about Republic Act No. 9262 at the Police Station's Women and Children's Protection Desk (WCPD). Third, in order to sustain the continuous operations of the Women and Children's Desk in the city, it is important to obtain financial contributions from non-governmental groups. Fourth, the researchers suggest an action plan that consists of quarterly meetings, livelihood projects, free legal advice, public awareness campaigns, and religious seminars. These programs should be planned with victims' and survivors' rehabilitation and basic needs in mind. It is advised to form partnerships with mental health groups for specialist counseling and create a planned fundraising strategy to guarantee sustainable funding in order to address the issues with counseling services and financial support. Future researchers should make use of this work as a guide when they undertake additional research on VAWC in order to expand on current understanding and improve intervention techniques.

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