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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HARSH PHYSICAL, PARENTAL DISCIPLINING DURING CHILDHOOD AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG MEN IN NYERI COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a prevalent problem that threatens the societal welfare both in developed and developing nations. Most efforts to alleviate it have focused on women victims of male perpetrated IPV. Despite increasing media reports of men experiencing IPV, there is paucity of information on the prevalence of such victimization and the risk factors associated with it especially in Kenya. This study sought to establish the prevalence of IPV and its relationship with harsh physical parental disciplining during childhood among men in Nyeri County.

Methods: *Ex post facto* correlational design was utilized while a multi-stage probability sampling was used to arrive at the sample. A questionnaire comprising of two tools the IPV scale and the harsh discipline scale were used to collect data. Focus group discussions were also used to collect qualitative data. Correlations between harsh parental disciplining and IPV were established using Pearson's Product Moment correlation Coefficient.

Results: High prevalence of IPV among men was reported. Of the three types of IPV reported that is physical psychological and sexual IPV, psychological IPV was the most prevalent. A significant positive relationship between harsh parental disciplining and experience of IPV was established.

Discussion: Parental education as well as counselling for parents involved in IPV were recommended in an effort prevents exposure of children to harsh physical disciplining.

Introduction

Definition

According to the World Health Organization (2002) intimate partner violence (IPV) can be defined as any behaviour in an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in that relationship. It comprises of actions within a current or former intimate relationship (whether of the same or opposite sex) that cause physical, psychological or sexual harm to a partner as noted by Centre for Disease Control (CDC, 2006). According to Archer (2002) and Centre for Diseases Control & Prevention (2009) IPV includes four types of violent behaviours that occur between two people in a close relationship. These include physical abuse, sexual abuse, threats of physical or sexual abuse as well as emotional/psychological abuse.

Prevalence

The USIAD (2014) toolkit for integrating gender based violence prevention and response into economic growth projects observed that global prevalence of IPV is staggering. However, the report noted that available statistics at national, multi-national, and global levels set the context and make a compelling case that cannot be ignored.

Consequences

The experience of IPV is traumatizing and has lots of negative effects. According to Cook (2009) the consequences of IPV are significant, long-term and also impact the health and well-being of the victim's family and community. It is evident from literature that people who experience traumatic events have a high risk for suffering a wide range of psychological disorders. Such people may exhibit symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) such as depression, self-blame, low self-esteem, anger, anxiety, sexuality problems as well as frequent body aches and other somatic complaints (Romano and Luca, 2001; Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen & Stevens, 2011). Others are at a high risk of alcohol/substance abuse. This is besides the physical consequences of IPV including injuries or even death. This indicates that IPV is both a physical and a psychological problem. Certainly, such consequences have financial implications to both the individuals concerned and to the nation's budget. According to USAID (2014) all forms of violence are costly and negatively impact economic growth and poverty reduction efforts. This ultimately hinders the achievement of national and the Millennium Development Goals. It further indicates the need for IPV to be addressed.

Female versus male victims of IPV

In an intimate relationship, any partner male or female can be a victim or perpetrator of IPV. Over the years, women have been seen as the sole victims of IPV and men as the perpetrators. Actually, IPV has been synonymous to violence against women (VAW) (Brody 2008; Carmo, Grama & Magalhaes 2011). On the other hand, studies focusing on perpetration of IPV have focused mostly on men as the perpetrators. It has always been thought that women would only

assault their male partners in self-defence (Brodus 2008; Carmo, Grama & Magalhaes 2011). Dutton & White (2013) noted that this “gender paradigm” was reinforced by numerous studies which focused only on “male perpetrators” and “female victims”. Such studies have shown only one side of the coin leaving the other side of male victims and female perpetrators undiscovered. There are increasing reports of men being victims of IPV perpetrated by female intimate partners (Hines & Douglas 2012). Attempts to understand the IPV phenomenon can therefore focus on either the perpetrator or victim perspective. Given that a lot more studies have focused on men as perpetrators of IPV and women as the victims, this study focused only on the male victim perspective.

Risk factors

In examining the risk factors associated with victimization to IPV, several factors have been identified by various studies that focused on female victims. The most commonly included risk factors are socio-demographic in nature, such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, employment, and relationship status (Fang & Corso (2008); Franklin, Menaker & Kercher (2011). Several studies have also examined parental related factors. These include witnessing parental intimate partner violence and/or experiencing harsh physical parental disciplining and low levels of parental involvement in the family-of origin (Franklin, Menaker & Kercher (2011); Gass et al (2010). Whether or not these factors can be correlated to male victimization to IPV, is a fact that needed to be established. Gass et al (2010) asserts that the dearth existing in international data on examination of the different factors that place both genders at risk for perpetration and victimization is evident. The need to investigate the risk factors for IPV cannot therefore be over emphasized.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite being an old, well researched, harmful but preventable phenomenon, IPV continues to transverse through generations (WHO 2002, CDC 2006). The consequences of IPV are dire and costly. They range from minor to major physical injuries and even death; psychological distresses including anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorders (PSTD), drug and substance abuse among others. Limited research efforts have focussed on victimization of males to IPV despite literature suggesting that it actually exists (Arias, Ileana, and Phaedra Corso 2005; Gass, Stein, Williams & Seedat 2010; Hines & Douglas 2011). On the other hands, risk factors for male victimization to IPV are grey area. There is evidence from literature that some early childhood parental factors are associated with victimization of women to IPV. These parental factors include harsh physical discipline, parental neglect and exposure to parental IPV. There is insufficient evidence on whether the same factors are associated with victimization of males to IPV. This paper sought to establish the relationship between male IPV and harsh parental disciplining.

Methodology

The study utilized an *ex post facto* correlational design. A sample of 412 male respondents was recruited through multi-stage sampling method to respond to questionnaires while 30 were recruited for the focus group discussions. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Scale which contained modified items borrowed from the compendium of assessment tools for IPV by Thompson, Basile, Hertz & Sitterle (2006) was used to collect data on IPV. It assessed victimization of the participants to IPV as well as the forms of IPV that they had been subjected to. It comprised of 30 items covering for the types of IPV namely physical, sexual, and psychological IPV.

To counteract the effects of self-reports such as the possibility of biasness, three focus groups each comprising ten male respondents were used to collect qualitative data. The local leaders facilitated the recruitment of these men to enhance representation across the Locations in the three Sub-Counties. A schedule with a few open ended questions was used to gather data from the FGDs.

Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics and with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies and percentages were computed and the data presented using tables, charts and figures. The relationship between the variables was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and were used to determine the relationships between harsh physical parental disciplining, parental involvement and victimization to male IPV. Partial correlations were also conducted for harsh parental disciplining and IPV while controlling for alcohol and substance abuse. Data collected through the focus group discussions was transcribed, coded and then analyzed thematically and then presented using narrative formats.

Results

The results have been presented in the following section beginning with the demographic data of the participants followed by the descriptive findings of the two variables studied; IPV and harsh parental physical disciplining as well as the results of the correlation between the two variables. Results from the focus group discussions are presented alongside the quantitative results.

Demographic Characteristics

A total of 442 male participants from Nyeri County were included in the study. 412 responded to the questionnaires while 30 of them participated in the focus group discussions. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents directly and hence the return rate was 100%. Data was collected on the respondents’ demographic characteristics. Table I reports the findings.

Table I: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

<u>Age</u>		<u>Marital Status</u>			<u>Education Background</u>			
Categories	F	%	Categories	F	%	Level	F	%

No response	3	.7	No response	2	.5	No response	7	1.7
18-25 years	20	4.9	Living with the partner	344	83.5	No formal education	9	2.2
26-35 years	122	29.6	Divorced	2	.5	Primary school	121	29.4
36-50 years	154	37.4	Separated	45	10.9	Secondary school	182	44.1
51-65years	113	27.4	Widowed	16	3.9	Post -secondary	93	22.6
			Cohabiting	3	.7			
Total	412	100	Total	412	100	Total	412	100

Descriptive Findings on the variables

In this section the descriptive data on IPV and HPPD is presented respectively.

Table I: Forms of IPV and their Prevalence

	All Forms of IPV Combined	Physical IPV	Sexual IPV	Psychological IPV
Those exposed	87.9%	25%	21.8%	84.2%
Those not exposed	12.1%	75%	78.2%	15.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

The findings in Table 1.1 indicate that the most of the respondents experienced some of form of violence. The most prevalent form of violence experienced was however psychological at 84.2%. Findings from focus group discussions support the quantitative data findings on prevalence and forms of IPV. These are excerpts from some of their responses;

“Yes men in Nyeri are beaten it is not a lie. Some men go home very late because they fear to be beaten.” (*Mukurweini respondent 1*)

“Many more men are denied food by their spouses *na hapo tu ndio wananyimwa ile mambo ingine....* (And in the same way they are denied conjugal rights)” (*Mukurweini respondent 2*)

“Only very few men are beaten physically and in most cases such are the men who do not take their responsibilities seriously and do not have family virtues or those who have already been beaten up by life” (*Mathira East respondent 1*)

The discussions also confirmed that the respondents were subjected to psychological IPV more than to physical and sexual forms of IPV.

“Some women are able to get some odd jobs that give them money at the end of the day. She then buys food cooks for herself and the children and they leave none for the man of the house.” (*Mathira East respondent 2*)

“Many spouses live in separate bedrooms or in other cases wives sleep in their children’s bedroom”. (*Mathira East respondent 3*)

Descriptive findings on HPPD

Table1.2: Descriptive Findings on Harsh Physical Parental Discipline (HPPD)

Paternal HPPD		Maternal HPPD	
Exposed	Not Exposed	Exposed	Not Exposed
76.7	23.3	73.8	26.2

Majority of the respondents had experienced harsh physical discipline from both the parents (76.7% by fathers & 73.8% by mothers). However, fathers were perceived to be harsher than the mothers. Findings from the focus group respondents supported the quantitative findings on the relationship between harsh physical discipline and victimization to IPV. Respondents reported that they were mostly disciplined by their mothers because the fathers worked away from home most of the times. The respondents also noted that other discipline measures were utilized by their parents such as being sent away from home or being denied food whenever they did something wrong. Most of them reported that their mothers also used verbal reprimands.

These are some of their excerpts.

“Boys were beaten like beans ruthlessly while girls were mostly talked to”(Respondent *Mukurweini 8*)

“Fathers were hardly at home and so most of the disciplining was done by our mothers. I cannot remember being beaten by my father”(Respondent *Mukurweini 6*)

Correlation between HPPD and IPV

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient(r) was used to test the null hypothesis; there is no statistically significant relationship between harsh physical parental disciplining during childhood and IPV amongst men in Nyeri County. Table 4.12 presents the results of the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient computation at a significance level of 0.05.

Correlation Matrix of HPPD and IPV.

	Maternal Physical Discipline	Paternal Physical Discipline
Victimization to IPV	.210**	.141**
Physical IPV	.102*	.099*
Sexual IPV	.185**	.115*
Psychological abuse	.199**	.123*

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation significant at 0 .05 level.

N=412

When analyzed separately, both paternal and maternal harsh physical disciplining were significantly, positively correlated to victimization to IPV at correlation coefficients $r=.141$ & $r=.210$ respectively at $p < .05$. Maternal harsh physical disciplining had a higher correlation to victimization to IPV than paternal harsh physical disciplining. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

There was a significant correlation for all the three forms of IPV with both the paternal and maternal harsh discipline at $p < .05$ level. The findings also revealed that physical disciplining had a higher correlation to psychological IPV in both paternal and maternal cases ($r=.199$ & $.123$ respectively) as compared to its correlation to physical and sexual IPV. Physical IPV had the lowest correlation to harsh physical disciplining for both maternal and paternal cases. Maternal harsh physical disciplining had higher correlations to all the three forms of IPV than had paternal harsh physical disciplining.

Discussions

87.9% prevalence of IPV among men revealed by this study was high compared to those of Gass, et al. (2011) who found only 20.9% men acknowledge victimization in South Africa and of KNBS (2014) where one out of every ten men was reported to have experienced IPV. Stephenson's (2009) study indicated 100% prevalence of male IPV. However his sample was

quite small comprising of only 24 men and was conducted through online questionnaire. All the same, these studies signal that IP is a concern that should not be ignored.

Such high prevalence of IPV in the County of study in could have been linked to the empowerment of the women in the region. The same men reported that women in the region were more empowered from their childhood and were more likely to get formal jobs than them. The men also claimed that women had access to cheaper financial facilities from government funds. Consequently, many women in the region were the breadwinners in the home and therefore more powerful. Cage and Hutchinson suggested that in an intimate relationship, the partner who has less access to resources has less power and is more prone to abuse compared to the one with more access. This shows the need for their empowerment through education and resource mobilization which the respondents recommended as an intervention measure to curb IPV.

An evaluation on forms of IPV experienced by the respondents showed that psychological violence was the most prevalent (84.2%) compared to physical (25%) and sexual (22%) forms of IPV. This implies that the men were more likely to be verbally abused, threatened, stalked or emotionally abused by their partners than they were likely to be beaten or sexually harassed. This concurs with prior studies including Hines and Douglas (2011), Anderson (2009) as well as Straus (2004) which reported that men are subjected to all forms of IPV but mostly to psychological and least to physical and sexual IPV. Hines & Douglas (2010) also reported that 95% of female perpetrators used controlling acts, death threats and other forms of threats. This could be because women are less physically aggressive when compared to men and hence are less likely to use physical or even sexual violence.

The prevalence of psychological IPV against men implies that there are high chances for them to suffer silently. This is because psychological form of IPV is less likely to be noticed and to be addressed compared to physical IPV. Most media reports focus only on physical IPV commonly referred to as husband battering. This poses the danger of trivializing other forms of IPV especially psychological which has no physical evidence but causes equally damaging psychological effects. Due to its psychological effects, psychological IPV can lead to further vulnerability to victimization. In consensus with this Stith, et al. (2012) reported that psychological abuse was the most harmful form of IPV and its effects were long lasting. The effects included disorderly behaviour and substance abuse. Such effects can also lead to re-victimization. This implies that there is a possibility that male victimization to IPV may persist and hence the need to establish measures to deal with it.

With regard to the relationship between harsh physical parental discipline and victimization to IPV, results revealed significant positive correlation between the two variables. Similarly, all the three forms of IPV tested were positively correlated to paternal and maternal harsh physical

discipline. This means that as harsh physical discipline increases the so does the risk for victimization to IPV.

Literature supports the relationship between harsh or corporal discipline in the family of origin and involvement in IPV during adulthood (Enherenshaft et al 2003; Renner & Slack 2006). This is because children who grow up in families where violence or physical aggression is used learn that violence is a proper means of communicating displeasure. They also learn to use it when displeased by others or condone it when others use it on them. The use of violence during childhood also hinders development of necessary survival qualities such as a healthy self-esteem and self- efficacy without which they consequently become more vulnerable to victimization. In support of this, most participants reported to have experience harsh parental physical discipline.

Use of harsh physical discipline that translates to physical and/or emotional abuse challenges secure attachment building between the primary caregiver and the child. Erik Erickson noted in his theory of psychosocial development that the relationship of a child with the primary caregiver forms the basis on which the child builds future relationships (Feldman 2000). It implies that the men may not have developed secure attachment because of the parents' use of violence on them which is likely to have instilled fear in them. In the same way, their adult relationships are insecure and characterized by anxiety. Dutton et al (2009) on the other hand noted that from an attachment perspective, when a child becomes a victim of parental violence their confidence in the parents' availability and responsiveness is challenged.

The results of this study also revealed that the relationship between maternal harsh physical disciplining and IPV was higher in all the three forms of IPV compared to that of the paternal harsh physical disciplining. This is despite the fact that fathers were reported to be harsher than the mothers. This implies that there is a higher risk of male victimization to IPV associated with maternal harshness to the boys than there is with paternal harshness. This supports the findings of Gass et al (2010) who observed that men who reported being victimized to IPV were more likely to have suffered physical abuse subjected by female perpetrators. Dutton and white (2013) observed that the mother's use of aggression contributed to the child's externalizing problems, especially if the child was a boy. They also observed that boys were most at risk for physical violence from their mothers.

This reveals the role the relationship between boys and their mothers during childhood plays in marital relationships during adulthood. It also explains the role of models in social learning whereby men whose mothers were harsh and violent are likely to marry partners who are harsh and violent. The low correlation between paternal harsh physical disciplining and victimization to IPV compared to the maternal correlation emphasizes the significant role of the father in disciplining children and especially sons. It therefore suggests the need for fathers to be actively involved in the upbringing of their children as well as the need for training in parenting skills.

Conclusion

The study revealed high prevalence of victimization of males to IPV. Psychological IPV was the most prevalent though. This indicates the need for male IPV to be addressed. There are possibilities of male victims of IPV continuing to suffer IPV in silence since the effects of psychological IPV are not immediate and not easily observable as well. The positive correlation between IPV and harsh parental physical disciplining during childhood not only supports the findings of past studies but indicates the need for parental training. This study recommends counselling of all the victims of IPV, parental training to foster the use appropriate disciplining measures and equal gender empowerment. This will enhance equality and limit the chances for victimization due to gender inequality. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will thereby be easier with a society where there is less IPV. Studies on risk factors for male victimization to IPV and Female perpetration of IPV are among the recommendations of this paper for further research.

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