



The role of guidance and counseling in raising awareness and preventing violence against women and girls

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Abstract: Violence against women is a widespread problem. It impacts many people around the world. It threatens their safety and self-respect. This paper looks at how guidance and counselling can help. Counseling can create awareness and stop violence. It is key to helping survivors. It offers support and encourages change. The paper also looks at problems with counseling programs. Some issues are shame, culture, and lack of access. There is also not enough support from groups. Some things work well to stop violence. These include trauma care and school programs. Online help and teamwork are also useful. More money and training are needed for counseling. Strong rules and policies can help. Better counselling can create safe spaces. It can help survivors and prevent violence.

Keywords: Violence against women (VAW), guidance and counseling, awareness, prevention, survivor support.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Violence against women (VAW) is a worldwide concern that impacts millions, transcending cultural, social, and economic divides. This issue encompasses multiple types of abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological violence, frequently rooted in entrenched gender disparities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around one in three women globally will encounter physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives, underscoring the critical need for effective intervention measures.

Guidance and counseling are vital in tackling violence against women (VAW) by raising awareness, offering psychological assistance, and empowering individuals to identify and combat abusive circumstances. Counselors, educators, and mental health professionals play a significant role in preventive measures by providing individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to recognize risks, seek assistance, and cultivate healthy relationships. It is imperative to incorporate guidance and counseling within educational settings, workplaces, and community initiatives to establish a supportive atmosphere for survivors and to avert future occurrences of violence.

Awareness rising involves a wide range of activities aimed at enhancing understanding of the causes and effects of various forms of violence. It seeks to confront and change the attitudes, beliefs, and societal norms that permit violence against women (VAW), while also informing individuals about pertinent laws, policies, services, and rights. To convey these messages, awareness raising strategies utilize multiple channels, including television, radio, podcasts, exhibitions, billboards, performances, online platforms, comics, magazines, theatre, music, posters, art, social media, workshops, and community discussions or debates.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the role of guidance and counseling in increasing awareness and preventing violence against women (VAW). Through a review of current literature, policies, and exemplary practices, the paper seeks to underscore the significance of counseling services in tackling the psychological, social, and legal dimensions of VAW. Additionally, it offers an analysis of the obstacles encountered in the execution of counseling programs and suggests approaches to improve their efficacy.



3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the significance of guidance and counseling in enhancing awareness of violence against women (VAW).
2. To recognize the obstacles and difficulties that hinder effective counseling in the context of addressing VAW.
3. To suggest strategies for enhancing guidance and counseling approaches aimed at preventing VAW.

4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In the field of gender studies, theories concerning violence against women encompass a range of concepts aimed at elucidating the reasons behind men's use of physical, emotional, and sexual violence towards women. The following theories address this issue:

1. *Social learning theory:*

This theory posits that violence against women is a product of social construction rather than an inherent trait in men. It is suggested that such behavior is instilled in men through societal and cultural influences. For example, when a boy observes his father perpetrating violence against his mother, he may replicate this behavior in his future relationships. He internalizes violence as a means of addressing conflicts and exerting dominance over women. As this behavior is both observed and learned, it appears that there are no societal taboos against its enactment towards women.

2. *Personality characteristics theory:*

This theory posits that individuals who perpetrate violence against women may suffer from mental health issues or personality disorders. It suggests that certain men exhibit heightened hostility, aggression, and a deficiency in empathy, making them more likely to commit acts of violence against women. Additionally, it is noted that some men may develop specific personality traits as a consequence of experiencing physical or emotional abuse during their childhood, which can further perpetuate violence against women.

3. *Resource theory:*

The resource theory suggests that men commit violence against women to maintain their hegemonic position and retain full control over resources like money, assets, and power. According to this theory, when a man is unemployed and a woman earns more, he feels that his masculinity is challenged, and out of frustration and to maintain his dominant position, he uses violence against women.

4. *Biological theory:*

According to the biological theory, violence directed towards women is considered a natural occurrence, attributed to the inherent biological differences between genders. This theory posits that elevated levels of testosterone in men contribute to their tendencies towards rationality and aggression. Conversely, women are characterized as being more emotional by nature. Additionally, there are distinctions in brain chemistry between the sexes. Consequently, the theory implies that it is a natural tendency for men to perpetrate violence against women.

5. *Feminist theory:*

Feminist theory posits that violence against women is a direct result of patriarchy, a social structure where men exert control and authority over society, relegating women and other marginalized groups to subordinate roles. Within this framework, women are expected to comply with male authority. The prevalence of male dominance globally is viewed by feminist theorists as a primary factor contributing to violence against women. To address this issue, the theory advocates for the dismantling of patriarchal systems and the establishment of equal rights for both men and women.

6. *Culture theory:*

This theory posits that violence against women is fundamentally embedded in cultural practices. Culture is characterized as a distinct lifestyle embraced by a community. In certain cultures, women occupy a subordinate role and are regarded as objects. Within these cultural frameworks, women are not viewed as equals to men but rather as sources of entertainment. Consequently, such beliefs contribute to the normalization of violence against women, perceiving it as an integral aspect of the culture.

5. REPORT

Gender-based violence (GBV), also referred to as violence against women and girls (VAWG), represents a global crisis impacting one in three women throughout their lives. The statistics are alarming:

- 35% of women worldwide have faced either physical and/or sexual violence from intimate partners or non-partner sexual violence.
- Approximately 7% of women globally have been sexually assaulted by individuals who are not their partners.
- Intimate partners are responsible for nearly 38% of all female homicides worldwide.
- An estimated 200 million women have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting.

The ramifications of this issue extend beyond the immediate trauma experienced by survivors and their families; it also imposes substantial social and economic burdens. In certain nations, the economic impact of violence against women is

estimated to reach up to 3.7% of their GDP, which is more than double the expenditure most governments allocate to education.

Neglecting to tackle this problem carries significant implications for future generations. Research indicates that children raised in environments marked by violence are more likely to become either victims or perpetrators of violence themselves. A notable aspect of gender-based violence is its indiscriminate nature, transcending social and economic divides, thereby affecting women and girls from all backgrounds. This critical issue necessitates attention in both developing and developed nations.

To effectively reduce violence against women and girls, a community-oriented, multi-faceted strategy is essential, involving ongoing collaboration with various stakeholders. The most successful initiatives focus on addressing the root causes of violence, including societal norms related to gender roles and the acceptance of violence.

6. ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN ADDRESSING VAW

Guidance and counseling are essential in combating violence against women (VAW) by offering psychological support, enhancing awareness, empowering survivors, and promoting systemic reforms. Victims of VAW frequently endure trauma, anxiety, and depression, which make counseling a vital resource for emotional recovery and resilience development. Through trauma-informed care and therapeutic methods, counseling assists survivors in processing their experiences, cultivating coping strategies, and restoring their self-esteem. Furthermore, guidance initiatives play a significant role in preventing VAW by educating individuals and communities on gender equality, consent, and nonviolent conflict resolution. Educational institutions and community organizations conduct workshops and awareness campaigns aimed at challenging detrimental gender norms and fostering healthy relationships. In addition, counseling services empower survivors by providing them with legal information, financial assistance, and career advice, enabling them to reclaim control over their lives. Crisis intervention, which includes risk assessment and safety planning, is another vital component of counseling, ensuring immediate protection for those in danger. Beyond individual support, counselors advocate for policy changes, improved mental health services, and training programs for law enforcement and healthcare professionals to enhance responses to VAW incidents. By incorporating guidance and counseling into comprehensive legal, healthcare, and community frameworks, societies can establish safer environments where women are protected, supported, and empowered to escape cycles of violence.

7. PRINCIPLES FOR COUNSELING ON ISSUES RELATED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

1. Counselors should consistently aim to listen to the survivor's experiences with the intent of affirming her feelings and perspectives, rather than seeking to ascertain the factual accuracy of those experiences.
2. Counselors ought to attentively consider the language the survivor employs to articulate her experiences, gradually assisting her in identifying them as acts of violence.
3. Counselors must respect the survivor's autonomy in determining the pace at which she shares her experiences, engages in healing, and navigates her challenges. The survivor's perspective should be central to understanding her story and formulating an appropriate response.
4. Women are not merely passive victims of violence; they actively resist it. Counselors should focus on empowering these women by recognizing their strengths, resilience, and dedication to effecting change.
5. Counselors must approach the survivor's apprehensions regarding seeking counseling services and the potential repercussions with sensitivity and validation.
6. Counselors should consistently reassure the survivor that, while she cannot control the violence—which rests solely with the perpetrator—she can always explore strategies to enhance her personal safety.
7. Counseling interventions should take into account the client's cultural background, community dynamics, and individual values.
8. Counselors should treat the initial session as if it were the final one, ensuring that it includes gathering essential history, prioritizing the survivor's safety, and connecting her with vital resources and support networks.
9. When engaging with individuals who perpetrate violence (such as men or other family members), counselors must clarify that violence or abuse is not a result of the perpetrator's inability to control their actions. Instead, it is a conscious choice made by the perpetrator to exert power and control over their partners. It is essential to emphasize that the survivor is never to blame for the violence inflicted upon her.
10. It is essential to denounce the violent or abusive actions and attitudes of the perpetrator; however, it is crucial to recognize that such violence does not define their entire identity. Every individual, including those who commit such acts, deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

8. CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW)

Although guidance and counseling play a vital role in combating violence against women (VAW), numerous obstacles impede the successful execution of these programs. These obstacles can be classified into social, institutional, economic, and policy-related factors that restrict accessibility, effectiveness, and long-term viability.

1. Social and Cultural Obstacles

In numerous communities, entrenched cultural norms and gender stereotypes perpetuate the normalization of violence against women, which complicates the process for survivors seeking counseling. Victim-blaming attitudes can further deter women from reporting incidents of abuse or pursuing professional assistance. Additionally, the fear of social stigma and potential retaliation often silences survivors, thereby diminishing the availability of counseling services. In certain cultures, traditional beliefs may also discourage women from seeking help outside the family unit, as the preservation of family honor and privacy is frequently prioritized over individual health and safety.

2. Restricted Access to Counseling Services

Many women, especially those living in rural or underserved areas, encounter substantial obstacles in obtaining professional counseling services, primarily due to a shortage of qualified counselors and mental health professionals. Geographic isolation, inadequate transportation options, and high costs associated with services create challenges for survivors in obtaining timely assistance. Moreover, in some low-income nations, mental health services are not incorporated into primary healthcare systems, leaving survivors with limited avenues for psychological support.

3. Inadequate Funding and Resources

The successful execution of effective counseling programs necessitates sufficient financial backing, appropriate infrastructure, and qualified personnel. Unfortunately, numerous organizations and governmental bodies face challenges due to inadequate funding, resulting in limited staffing, subpar facilities, and a shortage of materials for awareness initiatives. In the absence of reliable financial support, many counseling efforts struggle to reach a broad audience or offer sustained assistance to survivors.

4. Fragile Legal and Institutional Frameworks

The absence of robust legal and policy structures can greatly hinder the efficacy of counseling programs aimed at addressing violence against women (VAW). In certain nations, laws pertaining to domestic and gender-based violence may be poorly enforced or insufficient to safeguard survivors. Furthermore, inadequate collaboration among counselors, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and legal entities can lead to delayed interventions, compromised confidentiality, and insufficient support for those affected.

5. Stigma and Distrust in Counseling Services

Numerous survivors are reluctant to pursue professional counseling due to concerns about judgment, potential breaches of confidentiality, or a general mistrust of service providers. In various communities, counseling is often perceived as a resource exclusively for individuals with severe mental health issues, rather than as a supportive avenue for those dealing with trauma. This viewpoint discourages women from seeking assistance, especially in cultures where discussing personal or familial matters with outsiders is considered inappropriate.

6. Insufficient Awareness and Education

A significant number of women remain unaware of the existence and advantages of counseling services. In some instances, survivors fail to identify psychological abuse as a form of violence, which prevents them from seeking help. The lack of comprehensive public awareness campaigns and the absence of violence against women education in school curricula exacerbate this issue. Without widespread understanding, survivors and their families may not recognize the crucial role that counseling can play in their healing and empowerment.

7. Secondary Trauma and Burnout in Counseling Professionals

Counselors and mental health practitioners who assist survivors of violence against women (VAW) frequently encounter emotional fatigue, secondary trauma, and burnout as a result of the demanding nature of their roles. In the absence of adequate support, training, and self-care practices, numerous counselors find it challenging to deliver consistent and high-quality care. Additionally, insufficient staffing and excessive workloads exacerbate the high turnover rates observed among professionals in this sector.

9. BEST PRACTICES STEERING COUNSELING INITIATIVES TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

1. Upholding Confidentiality: Counselors are obligated to protect the survivor's right to confidentiality by ensuring that any information shared by her remains undisclosed to third parties without her explicit consent. They should limit their inquiries to those that are pertinent to assisting the survivor, avoiding any pressure to disclose information that is not



essential to the counseling process. Additionally, counselors must be cognizant of the boundaries of confidentiality, such as legal requirements to report instances of sexual assault to law enforcement.

2. Fostering Sensitivity and Honoring Diversity: Counselors should consistently strive to develop sensitivity in addressing the survivor's physical, emotional, and psychosocial needs. It is essential for counselors to recognize the varied backgrounds of survivors, including factors such as caste, class, religion, sexuality, and marital status, and to understand the disadvantages that may arise from these differences. The counselor must uphold the survivor's dignity by employing a non-judgmental and non-discriminatory approach throughout their interactions.

3. Valuing Survivor's Autonomy: Counselors must maintain an egalitarian relationship with the survivor at all times. They should make every effort to avoid imposing their opinions or decisions on her. It is crucial for counselors to acknowledge that the survivor is the most qualified individual to assess her own circumstances, thereby reinforcing her agency in making decisions at every stage of the counseling process.

4. Denouncing Violence: Counselors must unequivocally denounce all forms of violence. Their interventions should empower the survivor to confront various types of violence, as well as the patriarchal inequalities and power dynamics that perpetuate such issues. Responsibility for the violence should be placed solely on the perpetrators, ensuring that the survivor is not held accountable for the violence she endures.

5. Prioritizing Safety: Counselors must consistently work to ensure the physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and social safety of the survivor.

6. Reducing Harm and Enhancing Support: Reducing harm entails employing only those intervention methods that do not inflict additional damage on the survivor. For instance, this includes avoiding practices outside one's area of expertise, placing blame on the victim, or failing to provide sufficient services and referrals. It is essential for counselors to guarantee that the survivor receives the highest quality of services and support necessary for their recovery.

7. Awareness and Self-Care: Counselors should maintain an awareness of their own beliefs and biases to prevent these factors from negatively impacting their interactions with survivors. Additionally, it is crucial for counselors to prioritize their own well-being to ensure that any personal issues do not detract from the effectiveness of their counseling efforts.

10. CONCLUSION

Violence against women (VAW) continues to be a pressing global issue that necessitates a comprehensive strategy for both prevention and intervention. This study underscores the vital importance of guidance and counselling in raising awareness, assisting victims, and averting future incidents of violence. Counselling services offer not only psychological and emotional support but also empower individuals through education, advocacy, and crisis intervention techniques. By promoting awareness of gender equality, nurturing healthy relationships, and challenging detrimental social norms, guidance and counselling play a crucial role in disrupting the cycle of violence. However, the execution of counselling programs encounters numerous obstacles, such as social stigma, cultural barriers, a shortage of trained professionals, insufficient funding, and weak institutional backing. To enhance the effectiveness of these services, it is imperative to incorporate counselling into educational frameworks, bolster community involvement, broaden digital interventions, and advocate for supportive policies. A trauma-informed, survivor-centered approach that fosters collaboration across legal, healthcare, and social services is essential for achieving comprehensive and sustainable solutions. By strengthening these services, increasing accessibility, and investing in professional development, we can significantly improve efforts to prevent violence, support victims, and cultivate safer, more equitable communities. Future research and policy initiatives should prioritize the expansion of these programs, ensuring that every woman has access to the guidance and support necessary to live free from violence.

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