

How social norms contribute to physical violence among ever-partnered women in Uganda

Aloysious Nnyombi
Edith Nantongo

Intimate Partner Violence

- IPV is "any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors (WHO)
- A global public health and human rights concern.
- About 3 in 10 ever-married women in Ethiopia experience one type of IPV in their lifetime (Chernet & Cherie, 2020).
- In Uganda, the lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual IPV among ever-partnered women is 56% (UBOS, 2021).
- Intimate partner physical violence among women stands at 45% (Ibid, 2021).

The role that social issues play in shaping health outcomes

- The idea that social factors influence behaviour is not new.
- There is limited understanding of how social factors influence human behaviour.
- Thus, it is common for programmes to assume that it is enough for people to engage in behaviour if they are supported to adopt positive gender attitudes.
- Target the individual and not their circle of influence.
- In the case of intimate partner physical violence, men are provided with information on what violence is and asked to stop perpetrating violence.
- Notably, there is less consideration of how socio-cultural context makes IPV obligatory, acceptable and appropriate.
- Social and gender norms construct [shape] men's aspirations [and barriers] for the perpetration of intimate partner violence.

Social Norms



Unwritten rules about what is acceptable in a given society or group of people (“reference group”)



Examples: In my community, people expect young men to beat their wives in given circumstances



Often maintained by positive and negative social sanctions

Social Norms as Beliefs

1. What people
believe others do

**(Descriptive norms or
empirical expectations)**

2. What people believe
others approve and
disapprove of

**(Injunctive norms or
normative expectations)**

Kallgren, C. A., et al. (2000). "A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: When Norms Do and Do not Affect Behavior." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 26(8): 1002-1012.

**Social norms
regulate what
behaviour is
“normal”**



A Social Norm is **NOT** a personal attitude.

Attitudes are personal or independent: individual and internally motivated.

Social norms are social or interdependent: collective and extrinsically motivated.

Attitudes do not necessarily reflect behaviours.

The reactions (and expected reactions) of other people who matter to us can be very important in conditioning behaviour.

Social norms influence...



Child Marriage
(Lee-Rife et al. 2010)



Female Genital Cutting
(Mackie and LeJeune, 2009)



Family planning
(Bongardt et al. 2016)



Women's Economic Empowerment
(Marcus, 2018)



Child Vaccination
(Sato and Takasaki, 2019)



Intimate partner violence
(Bass et al. 2016)



Handwashing
(White et al. 2020)



Maternal Health
(Kuzara et al. 2019)

Examples of harmful social norms



I wouldn't like to smoke (attitude), but I ought to do it (norm) to look cool



I wouldn't like to drink that much (attitude), but hey: you have got to fit in so I do (norm)!



I can't wear a helmet when cycling (norm) – that's just for the geeks!



I would like to defend that person that is bullied at school (attitude), but I don't want to be seen with him (norm) because everyone think s/he is a nerd (and would disapprove of me)



I would like to report the teacher that hits the child (attitude) but nobody does it (norm) and I think others would stop talking to me and call me a "policeman"

Methodology

Qualitative research design

Qualitative vignettes
used in FGDs and IDIs

SNAP framework




Findings

Descriptive Norms


- Husbands beat their wives under given circumstances
- No one should intervene when a husband beats his wife
- Men that pay the bride price own and control their spouses
- Experience of physical violence is a domestic matter that should not be shared

Injunctive Norms

- A wife should tolerate physical violence perpetrated by the husband
- Women have to behave in a way that upholds men's domination
- Men and women perform different roles
- Reporting physical abuse to the police casts an evil spell on the family



Social norms
build a local
discourse that
organizes
physical violence
as a domestic
and private
matter.



- No one should intervene when a husband beats his wife.
- Experience of physical violence is a domestic matter that should not be shared.
- Reporting physical abuse to the police casts an evil spell on the family.

“

Treating violence as a domestic and private matter pushes discussions on the perpetration of physical violence out of the public realm.

”





Social norms
organize physical
violence as a
constituent part
of women's life
worlds.



- Husbands beat their wives under given circumstances.
- A wife should tolerate physical violence perpetrated by the husband.
- In this context, physical violence means love and care, which presents moral justifications for men's perpetration of violence.



Social norms
define
appropriate
boundaries for
physical violence
and associated
practices.



- Although physical violence is treated as a private matter, the informal rules allow one to report a case of violence to state authorities once her experience goes beyond what is considered appropriate.

Conclusions

- Norms organize physical violence as a domestic and private matter, as a constituent part of women's lives, and define appropriate boundaries within which male partners perpetrate violence.
- Social norm-shifting interventions that deconstruct physical violence as a private matter, advance the de-normalization of physical violence and dismantle acceptable boundaries within which violence happens can cause tremendous achievements in addressing physical violence among ever-partnered women.



EASTERN AFRICA
AGENCY, SOCIAL & GENDER NORMS
LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Eastern Africa Agency, Social and Gender Norms Learning Collaborative

The EALC?

- The EALC was launched in 2020 as a network for professionals interested in social and gender norms research and practice
- Currently, the EALC works in partnership with Agency for All project to generate evidence on the influence of Agency in shifting social and gender norms using SBC approached and frameworks
- Research results from the Agency for All project are utilized in the LC to strengthen the discourse around social norms and agency in Eastern Africa



Objectives of the Eastern Africa LC



- **Facilitate Cross-Learning and Networking**
 - **Contribute to Policy Development**
- **Create learning platforms**
 - **Build Capacity**

Who can be members in the EALC?

- Membership is open to individuals and organizations from the Eastern Africa countries including; **Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia**
- Those with an interest in agency, social and gender norms research and practice



Benefits of Joining

- Networking and collaboration
- Engage in convenings and events
- Lead technical discussions
- Disseminate and amplify work
- Co-create resources
- Gain access to a community of technical experts





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JOIN OUR LC

To join the EALC, visit our LinkedIn page –

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/eastern-africa-social-and-gender-norms-learning-collaborative/>

and Simply fill out an online membership form_and register on

<https://forms.gle/mJjME1nX9mVHQ8Zi6>



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Thank you