

Women's Awareness on the Law on Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children

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Abstract - The Republic Act No. 9262 otherwise known as Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 provides the legal framework of the country's effort to address violence committed against women and children in keeping with the fundamental freedom guaranteed under the Constitution and the Provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This study determined the awareness on Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Law among women of Village Looc, Mandaue City, Philippines in 2011. This study utilized the descriptive-correlational design. The respondents were 96 women who were selected through purposive sampling with the inclusion criteria that they must be at least 16 years old and living with a partner. Majority of the respondents were 25-65 years old, single with live-in partner, has 0-3 children, high school graduates and belonged to the low monthly income bracket. Most of the respondents expressed that they have acquired awareness on intimate partner violence from watching television. Majority of the respondents were aware of the intimate partner violence in RA 9262. There was a significant relationship between the modes of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and level of awareness of the respondents on RA 9262. This study concludes that full awareness on RA 9262 through the modes of IEC is necessary to ensure protection of women and their children.

Keywords - RA 9262; women; children; intimate partner violence; IEC; anti-violence, violence against

INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence is a major public health problem affecting thousands of women each year. This kind of violence involves abuse of female partners which is the most widespread form of family violence. The assault against women and their children result in physical injuries and sexual trauma, as well as emotional and psychological problems which are often severe and long lasting (Bonomi 2008).

The term intimate partner violence refers to a patient of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and violence that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners. Intimate partnerships include current or former dating, married, or cohabiting relationships or heterosexuals, lesbian women, or gay men. It is a purposeful behavior, directed at achieving compliance from, or control over, the targeted person. The violence is part of a system of coercive control that may also include financial coercion, threats against children and other family members, and destruction of property (Stuart 2005).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th edition revision) or DSM-IV-TR by the American Psychiatric Association, has categorized physical abuse of adult such as intimate partner violence under the section of Problems Related to Abuse or Neglect wherein the focus of clinical attention is harsh abuse of one person by another (Antai-Otong 2003). Abuse threatens women's health and human rights throughout the world. Women of all races, ethnic backgrounds, and ages are subjected to forced abortion, rape, female genital mutilation, and other acts of violence, often at the hands of their partners or persons known to them (Rebullida 2006).

Studies reveal long-term health problems that are associated with intimate partner violence and these include chronic neck or back pain, migraine, stammering, visual and hearing loss, sexually transmitted diseases, stomach ulcers, frequent indigestion, diarrhea or constipation. Moreover, victims experience emotional health effects such as depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse and posttraumatic

stress disorder (Stuart, 2005). Estimates are that more than 25% to 50% of men and women worldwide (from adolescents to the elderly) have suffered physical assault by a partner at least once in their lifetime. The number is even higher when psychological abuse and other violations of rights are considered. It is difficult to collect statistics on female to female, female to male, and male to male abuse because of the lack of reporting. Women are abused, raped, tortured, or beaten, by their husband, boyfriend, girlfriend, male or female lover, former partner, estranged partner, and most of this abuse goes unreported, even when injuries are severe enough to require treatment. Prior partner abuse increases the risk of it recurring during pregnancy (Keltner 2007).

Between 25% and 44% of women report a history of intimate partner violence (IPV) in their adult lifetimewith many suffering depression coinciding with their abuse experiences. Studies have identified symptoms of depression as mediating the relationship between intimate partner violence victimization and subsequent adverse events in women, such as suicide attempts and further victimization and depression later in life (Bonomi 2008).

From 90% to 95% of domestic violence victims are women, and one in three women in the United States is estimated to have been beaten by a spouse at least once. Each year, as many as 5.3 million women in the United States experience a serious assault by a partner. Eight percent of US homicides involve one spouse killing another, and 3 of every 10 female homicide victims are murdered by their spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend. An estimated 324,000 women experience violence while pregnant (Videbeck 2011).

In the Philippines, as elsewhere in the world, the data on violence against women and their children (VAWC) is a growing public health concern. In three years, the reported incidents of women or children being abused in Central Visayas reached close to 20,000, with about 17,000 cases in Cebu City. Close to 4,000 cases where villages assisted the complainants were reported to the Cebu City Women and Family Affairs Commission (CCWFAC) in 2010 alone. In the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), 828 such cases were recorded in 2010, the highest in Central Visayas. Based on the comparative summary of VAWC between 2008 and 2010, the figures have increased. In 2008, a total of 5,996 VAWC cases were reported.

The figure ballooned to 8,850 the next year. The records for 2010 were incomplete, but these indicated 4,751 cases. That is a total of 19,597 cases in three years. Most cases are for battery, which includes physical, psychological, emotional and economic abuse (Awit 2011).

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem, Congress passed Republic Act No. 9262 which took effect in March 2004. The Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act is a result of many years of advocacy of victim-survivors, women's rights and human right advocates, non-government organizations, and government agencies led by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. RA 9262 was passed to provide relief and redress to women and children who are victims of the abuse (Aquino 2005).

In Looc, Mandaue City, Philippines, Police Station 5 has recorded 31 cases of physical injuries in relation to RA 9262 from 2008 to 2010. It was likewise observed by the researchers in three instances that women experience verbal abuse and ridicule from their partners. The incidence of abuse is considered a growing concern to the society. Because most abused women do not seek direct help for the problem, knowledge on their level of awareness regarding the law that provides them protection is essential in providing assistance and holistic care to these clients. Hence, this study determined the awareness of women on Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Law. The findings served as the bases for a proposed action plan.

FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on three legal bases: fundamental freedom guaranteed under the Constitution; provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and Republic Act 9262 or Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act of 2004. "Violence against women and their children" refers to any act or a series of acts committed by any person against a woman who is his wife, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom he has a common child, or against her child whether legitimate or illegitimate, within or without the family abode, which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, or economic abuse including

threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment or arbitrary deprivation of liberty(www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2004/ra_9262_2004.html, 2012).

Specifically, the study determined the profile of the respondents, the IEC materials encountered by respondents in acquiring awareness regarding the Intimate Partner Violence in RA 9262, and the significant relationship between the profile and the level of awareness. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.

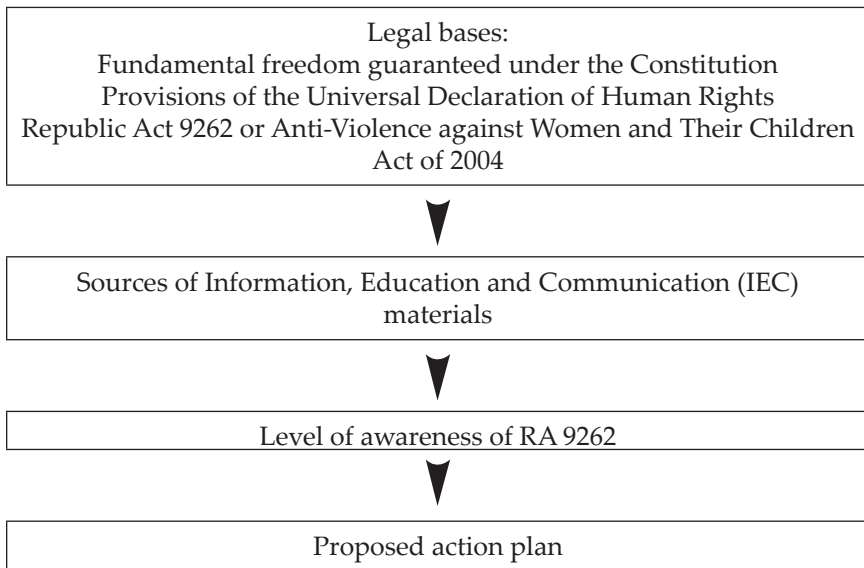


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study determined the women's awareness on Republic Act 9262, the Anti Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilizes the descriptive-correlational design to determine the level of awareness on the Anti-Violence Against Women and

Their Children Law among women in Village Looc, Mandaue City, Philippines. Looc is one of the partner communities of the University of Cebu approximately 1.5 kilometers from the heart of the city with a land area of 897,747 square meters. The consists of 15 sitios with a population of 16,128 and 3,580 households based on the 2010 census. The 96 respondents were women, at least 16 years old and above, and living with a partner.

This study utilizes a researcher-made questionnaire. It is based on the Republic Act No. 9262, known as The Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act of 2004. This questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the profile of the respondents which includes the age, civil status, number of children, highest educational attainment and the sources of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials encountered by respondents in acquiring awareness regarding the Intimate Partner Violence in RA 9262. The second part is composed of 25 statements which determined the level of awareness of the respondents on RA 9262. In this part, the respondents were instructed to place a check mark to the corresponding number that appropriately determines their level of awareness regarding the law.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of age, civil status, educational attainment, monthly family income. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents were 25-65 years old, single with a live-in partner, has 0-3 children, high school graduates with less than 5,000 Philippine pesos monthly family income. The table also shows that majority of the respondents have acquired their awareness on intimate partner violence in RA 9262 from television. Most of the respondents expressed that they have acquired awareness on intimate partner violence from watching television.

Health Education is a process whereby knowledge, attitude and practice of people are changed to improve individual, family and community health. Health education is a basic health service and every member of the health team shares responsibility in providing health education. The sequence of steps in health education includes

creating awareness, motivation and decision making action to practice health services. Information refers to the provision of knowledge; Communication involves the exchange of information. Education constitutes the change in knowledge, attitude and skills. Health education makes use of supplementary aids and devices. These educational materials are aids to a cooperative health program and helps verbal instructions such as: leaflets, brochure, comic handouts, flyers, audio-visual aids, bulletin boards, billboards, posters, streamers, radio, television, and multi-media presentation (Reyala 2000).

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Variables	F	%
Age		
18-25 (young adult)	30	31.3
25-65 (adult)	66	68.8
Total	96	100
Civil status		
Single with live-in partner	50	52.1
Married	42	43.8
Separated	4	4.2
Number of children		
0-3	81	84.4
4-6	12	12.5
7-9	3	3.1
Total	96	100
Educational attainment		
Elementary level	6	6.3
Elementary graduate	10	10.4
High school level	27	28.1
High school graduate	29	30.2
College level	20	20.8
College graduate	4	4.2
Total	96	100

Continuation of Table 1

Monthly family income		
Less than 5,000 Philippine pesos	63	65.6
5,001-10,000 Philippine pesos	26	27.1
10,001-20,000 Philippine pesos	5	5.3
More than 20,000 Philippine pesos	2	2
Total	96	100
Sources of IEC		
Television	62	64.6
Radio	39	40.6
Print Media	11	11.5
Social Networking	10	10.4
Seminars	1	1

Table 2 presents the awareness of the residents on intimate partner violence in RA 9262. The respondents were less aware on the following indicators: (1) Any victim who suffers from BWS should be diagnosed by a psychiatric expert or a clinical psychologist. This will also help the victim in obtaining a just decision in her case; (2) If the courts have proven that the offender is guilty of the crime, he may be imprisoned and will be obliged to pay a fine in the amount of not less than One hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00) but not more than three hundred thousand pesos (Php300,000.00); (3) It is acknowledged that women who have retaliated against their partners or who commit violence as a form of self-defense may have suffered from battered women syndrome (BWS); (4) The offender will be obliged to undergo mandatory psychological counseling or psychiatric treatment and shall report compliance to the court; (5) Battered women syndrome refers to a scientifically defined pattern of psychological and behavioral symptoms found in women living in battering relationships as a result of cumulative abuse.

Many women who have experienced IPV develop a recognized pattern of psychological symptoms called battered women syndrome. These symptoms are usually transient but are observed in a recognizable pattern in women who have been physically, sexually,

or seriously psychologically abused by their partner. Components of battered women syndrome are consistent with PTSD. It is usual for abused women to experience flashbacks to the violent incidents, and when the intrusive memories are too overwhelming. The statistics and consequences of violence and abuse require nurses to prepare for collaboration necessary to the coordination of effective interventions with victims and perpetrators of violence and abuse (Antai-Otong, 2003).

Furthermore, the table illustrated that the respondents have less awareness on the protection and relief granted to victims of IPV as well as the penalty for the perpetrator and the mandatory psychiatric or psychological treatment that an abuser must undergo according to the Republic Act 9262. This implies that awareness on IPV on the Republic Act 9262 needs to be strengthened further. According to Rebullida (2002), awareness of a Republic Act will only be obtained by way of mass media, conferences, and seminars, referrals, and information relayed through individuals and non-government institutions.

Table 2. Awareness on intimate partner violence in RA 9262

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The law seeks to address the prevalence of violence against women and children (VAWC), abuses on women and their children by their intimate partners like husband or ex-husband, live-in partner or ex-live in partner, boyfriend/girlfriend or ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend, dating partner or ex-dating partner	2.78	Aware
2. Violence against women and children (VAWC) is classified as a public crime.	2.85	Aware

Continuation of Table 2

3. Violence against women and children (VAWC) refers to any act or a series of acts committed by any person against a woman who is his wife, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom he has a common child, or against her child whether legitimate or illegitimate, within or without the family abode, which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, or economic abuse including threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.	2.90	Aware
4. Physical violence refers to acts that include bodily or physical harm.	2.96	Aware
5. Sexual violence refers to an act which is sexual in nature, committed against a woman or her child. It includes , but is not limited to: Rape, sexual harassment, acts of lasciviousness, treating a woman or her child as a sex object, making demeaning and sexually suggestive remarks, physically attacking the sexual parts of the victim's body, forcing her/him to watch obscene publications and indecent shows, forcing the woman or her child to do indecent acts and/or make films thereof, forcing the wife and mistress/lover to live in the conjugal home or sleep together in the same room with the abuser;	2.98	Aware
6. Sexual violence includes but is not limited to acts causing or attempting to cause the victim to engage in any sexual activity by force, threat of force, physical or other harm or threat of physical or other harm or coercion;	2.85	Aware
7. Sexual violence includes prostituting the woman or child.	2.88	Aware
8. Psychological violence refers to acts or omissions causing or likely to cause mental or emotional suffering of the victim such as but not limited to intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, public ridicule or humiliation, repeated verbal abuse and mental infidelity;	2.84	Aware
9. Psychological violence includes causing or allowing the victim to witness the physical, sexual or psychological abuse of a member of the family to which the victim belongs, or to witness pornography in any form or to witness abusive injury to pets, or to unlawful or unwanted deprivation of the right to custody-and/or visitation of common children;	2.69	Aware

Continuation of Table 2

<p>10. Economic abuse refers to acts that make or attempt to make a woman financially dependent which includes, but is not limited to the following: withdrawal of financial support or preventing the victim from engaging in any legitimate profession, occupation, business or activity, except in cases wherein the other spouse/partner objects on valid, serious and moral grounds as defined in Article 73 of the Family Code;</p>	<p>2.49</p>	<p>Less Aware</p>
<p>11. Economic abuse includes deprivation or threat of deprivation of financial resources and the right to the use and enjoyment of the conjugal, community or property owned in common;</p>	<p>2.46</p>	<p>Less Aware</p>
<p>12. Economic abuse includes destroying household property;</p>	<p>2.49</p>	<p>Less Aware</p>
<p>13. Economic abuse includes controlling the victim's own money or properties or solely controlling the conjugal money or properties;</p>	<p>2.36</p>	<p>Less Aware</p>
<p>14. A dating relationship refers to a situation wherein the parties live as husband and wife without the benefit of marriage or are romantically involved over time and on a continuing basis during the course of the relationship;</p>	<p>2.70</p>	<p>Aware</p>
<p>15. Sexual relations refer to a single sexual act which may or may not result in the bearing of a common child;</p>	<p>2.83</p>	<p>Aware</p>
<p>16. Women are allowed to secure village protection order and/ or temporary or permanent protection order from the courts;</p>	<p>2.59</p>	<p>Aware</p>
<p>17. Women can also file an independent civil action for damages and criminal action for the violation of RA 9262;</p>	<p>2.63</p>	<p>Aware</p>
<p>18. A Protection Order is prescribed in the Anti-VAWC Act to prevent further abuse of or violence against a woman. It also provides her relief from the said abuse or violence;</p>	<p>2.79</p>	<p>Aware</p>
<p>19. The relief granted under a protection order serves the purpose of safeguarding the victim from further harm, minimizing any disruption in the victim's daily life, and facilitating the opportunity and ability of the victim to independently regain control over her life. The provisions of the protection order shall be enforced by law enforcement agencies;</p>	<p>2.48</p>	<p>Less Aware</p>

Continuation of Table 1

20. Anyone of the following may also file the protection order in behalf of the victim/s: Parent or guardian; grandparents, children and grandchildren; relatives (aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws); local officials and DSWD social workers; police, lawyers, councilors, punong village or village kagawad; therapists and health care providers (nurses, doctors, village health workers); any two people who come from the city or municipality where VAWC happened and who have personal knowledge of the crime;	2.76	Aware
21. It is acknowledged that women who have retaliated against their partners or who commit violence as a form of self defense may have suffered from battered women syndrome (BWS);	2.22	Less Aware
22. Battered women syndrome refers to a scientifically defined pattern of psychological and behavioral symptoms found in women living in battering relationships as a result of cumulative abuse;	2.35	Less Aware
23. Any victim who suffers from BWS should be diagnosed by a psychiatric expert or a clinical psychologist. This will also help the victim in obtaining a just decision in her case;	2.05	Less Aware
24. If the courts have proven that the offender is guilty of the crime, he may be imprisoned and will be obliged to pay a fine in the amount of not less than One hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00) but not more than three hundred thousand pesos (Php300,000.00);	2.06	Less Aware
25. The offender will be obliged to undergo mandatory psychological counseling or psychiatric treatment and shall report compliance to the court.	2.29	Less Aware
Grand Mean	2.61	Aware

Table 4 reveals that there was a significant relationship between the sources of IEC materials and level of awareness of the respondents

on IPV. The relationship was moderately positive. This is supported by Bandura who postulated that behavior occurs as a result of the interplay of cognitive and environmental factors (Antai-Otong 2003). Bandura further explains that learning occurs by simply observing and that one of the basic models of observational learning is the symbolic model, which involves real or fictional characters displaying behaviors in books, films, television programs, or online media (Gordon 2001).

Similarly, according to health belief model, cues to action are also modifying factors and are provided by activities such as mass media campaigns, advice from others, and literature such as newspaper or magazine article. The likelihood of taking a recommended preventive health action is thus a composite of individual perceptions and modifying factors (Taylor 2005).

Table 4. Relationship between socio demographic variables and level of awareness on intimate partner violence in RA 9262

Variables		Value	Approx. Sig.	Interpretation
Age and level of awareness	Phi	.134	.631	No significant Relationship at $\alpha = 0.05$
	Cramer's V	.134	.631	
	Contingency Coefficient	.133	.631	
Civil status and level of awareness	Phi	.324	.121	No significant Relationship at $\alpha = 0.05$
	Cramer's V	.229	.121	
	Contingency Coefficient	.308	.121	
Family size and level of awareness	Phi	.292	.226	No significant Relationship at $\alpha = 0.05$
	Cramer's V	.206	.226	
	Contingency Coefficient	.280	.226	
Highest educational attainment and level of awareness	Phi	.452	.186	No significant Relationship at $\alpha = 0.05$
	Cramer's V	.261	.186	
	Contingency Coefficient	.412	.186	
Monthly income and level of awareness	Phi	.333	.301	No significant Relationship at $\alpha = 0.05$
	Cramer's V	.192	.301	
	Contingency Coefficient	.316	.301	
Source of information and level of awareness	Phi	.715	.015	Significant Relationship at $\alpha = 0.05$ Moderate positive
	Cramer's V	.413	.015	
	Contingency Coefficient	.582	.015	

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, residents of Looc, Mandaue City were aware of the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Law. Sources of IEC influenced their level of awareness on Intimate partner violence in RA 9262. The researchers recommend the following: continuing education on economic abuse and battered women syndrome; continuous determination of incidence of intimate partner violence

in the community; enforce programs for women that includes increasing training and opportunities to improve self-esteem and negotiating skills; deliver assistance for clients to find opportunities for employment and to conduct skills and development programs for women to improve their talents and abilities; and, promote advocacy that includes referrals to social services and community agencies.

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