

Men and Caring: Sexual and Reproductive Health related partnership and fatherhood behaviour of men associated with MASVAW in Uttar Pradesh, India

By

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Introduction

Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) was established in response to increased acts of VAW in UP. This research will explore the behaviour change of men who are associated with MASVAW in their relationships with their spouses and children. It will also look at the interventions that have brought about this behaviour change. Uttar Pradesh (UP) the most populous and fourth largest state is located in Northern India bordering Nepal. The female sex ratio is at 908 per 1000 men as compared to 940 per 1000 men for the whole country (Ministry of Home Affairs 2011). Women have a life expectancy of 56.4 years, less than country profile of 61.4 years; even men's life expectancy is higher than women at 57.7 years (Department of Planning 2005).

The Problem

UP has poor social development indicators, 31.55% of the population live below poverty line. Women's literacy level for the state is ranked as number 31 out of 35 states, where women's literacy rate is 59.26% (appendix 1) as compared to men at 79.24%,. When women are not educated they are usually not working and are of low socioeconomic status which puts them at risk of Violence against Women (VAW) (Kalaca 2010). The state is ranked as number one with reports on VAW which totals 22.4%, the violence acts include rape, dowry murders, bride burning, domestic violence, sexual harassment, molestation and kidnapping. Crime cases against women increased by 19.5% in 5 years from 1996 to 2000 and of all the atrocities that occurred in India between 2006 and 2009, 55% were reported from UP

Patriarchy is believed to be one of the contributing factors to the problem of VAW. UP has a caste system where people are grouped according to their castes, in order of hierarchy. People are supposed to be born, marry and die within their category. The state has Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of 359 per 100 000 live births as compared to 212 per 100 000 live births for the country, it is among the five states with high MMR (Ministry of Home Affairs 2011). Men have been considered to have a pivotal role in issues concerning reproductive health of women. Most of the men usually have control over most of the family decisions which include when to have sex and when to have children.

Rationale of the study

Issues of VAW have always been considered as women's issues where most of the activities helping to reduce the act focused on women despite the men being perpetrators. Interestingly in 2001, a campaign which involves men also based in UP was initiated in response to increased cases of VAW. This campaign is known as Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW).

MASVAW is a men's movement around gender equality and is a member based network of about 175 individuals and 100 organisations, campaigning against VAW in UP and Uttranchal. The campaigners, which include activists running human rights Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), University Lecturers, journalists, and doctors believe that VAW is not only women's issue but a larger social issue and human rights violation, therefore the need exists to create a more gender equitable society. The campaign aims at providing men with different ways of expressing masculinity, increasing awareness of different forms of VAW and motivating men to shun violence, protest against violence, support survivors and provide new role models.

The network also works with men to promote responsible partnership between the man and his wife, to improve women's reproductive health and rights.

Literature Review

There are different researches that have been done which involved men in women's reproductive health issues in India and Asia but less has been done on interventions and fatherhood. A thorough literature review was done on VAW, Men's involvement in women's reproductive health, Spousal relationship, Fatherhood and Interventions.

Study design and Methods

Aim

To explore the change in behaviour of men associated with MASVAW in their relationship with their spouses and children and the interventions that influenced this behaviour change in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Objectives

- a. To explore how men who are involved with MASVAW play out their roles related to spousal partnership and fatherhood.
- b. To explore men and women's perceptions of how men's behaviour has changed through their involvement with MASVAW in relation to partnership and caring.
- c. To identify which interventions have influenced behaviour change in men involved in MASVAW.

Methodology

Qualitative research design was used because the study was looking at human behaviour. The research aimed at exploring the change in behaviour of men who are associated with MASVAW. Qualitative approach was ideal for this.

Methods

The data was collected using IDI as it allowed the respondents to talk in their own words. Respondents were interviewed individually using a topic guide which had probing and prompting questions.

Data collection

The researcher was in India from 27th April to 18th June 2011 and data collection was conducted from 13th May to 21st June 2011.

Data collection tool

Data collection was conducted using a topic guide. Development of the tool started while the researcher was in Liverpool and was finalised when the researcher arrived in India. MASVAW secretariat and CHSJ helped with the relevant areas of discussion.

Training

The research assistants were trained in data collection on taking consent, interview techniques, to summarize to ensure validity of data collected.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used as the research required participants who have experience with MASVAW so that they can share their experiences. The MASVAW secretariat and district coordinators helped with the identification of the respondents.

Respondent criteria:

- The men were members of MASVAW for a minimum of 2 years.
- The men were married before becoming members of MASVAW.
- Only wives of men in the study were included.
- The couples had a child born during the period the man had been a member of MASVAW.

Data analysis

The data analysis was done manually using the framework analysis which consists the following stages: Familiarisation, Coding, Searching for themes and Charting.

Ethical Consideration

The proposal was submitted to Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in February 2011 and approval was granted in April 2011. It was also submitted to the institutional ethics committee of Centre for Health and Social Justice in India where it was also approved.

Limitations

Language barrier – the official language of the study site is Hindi and the researcher had problems to communicate with the respondents directly. Recruiting both man and spouse was problematic because it was difficult to find both of them at home due to other engagements hence could not recruit fifteen couples as planned.

Findings

Personal details

The age range of the respondents was 24 to 38 years of which the men's age ranged from 27 to 38 years while women ranged from 24 to 35 years. All the male respondents were educated, the least being a diploma and the highest PhD. For the female respondents; 18.2% were illiterate. 90.9% of the male respondents were employed. 63.6% of the female respondents were house wives while 18.2% were farmers.

Knowledge of Violence Against women

All the respondents acknowledged that VAW exists in their communities. They mentioned acts of violence as being either physical or emotional. The men were considered to be the main perpetrators of violence where they do not respect the rights of women. Acts such as dowry burning, rape, mental torture and suppressing women's voices were mentioned. Some of the respondents also mentioned that violence against women is also perpetrated by women whereby a woman violates the rights of other women.

Spousal partnership

Both the male and female respondents agreed that the violence is increased by the belief that the men are superior to women which disrupts the partnership between man and spouse.

In this research it was found that the majority of the respondents consider their wives as partners. They make decisions concerning their family together as a couple. Most of the women also felt that the husbands respect them and they always have mutual agreement to perform most of the activities in the home.

Husband's availability

The male respondents were either in an employment or in university. The time the men spent at their work place varied but had an average of eight hours. The structure of the family also determined the time the man would spend with his wife. When they are in an extended family the couples spent less time together while those in a nucleus family had a longer time together.

Man's role as spouse

The majority of the men said they help their wives in the duties which the society considers should be done by women. It was also found that the men had different roles when it comes to issues of decision making on different aspects in their families, contraceptive use, during pregnancy, labour and delivery. The structure of the family also had a role on how they play their roles. Some of the respondents living in an extended family said they had problems to do certain roles as they were not allowed by other family members because they were men. A male respondent said:

Decision making

The majority of the respondents said they make decisions together as a couple, they mentioned issues like buying household items as well as deciding on needs for the home. It was further found that most of the men had a responsibility to decide on sexual relation, the men initiated for the couple to have sex. Even though the men decide on having sexual relation, they still get consent from the spouse. All the women said they have never been forced to have sex and they always have consensual sex in their marriages.

Some of the male respondents still felt that as a man, the decisions in the family have to be made by them of which some of the female respondents also concurred. They felt that whatever a man decides is important and should be respected these included sexual relations.

Interestingly it was found that some of the women also take a role in deciding when to have sex.

One female respondent initiated to have sex after delivery of their child.

Contraceptive use and family size

The study found that the men have a role in using the contraceptive whereby they are taking the burden away from the wives. It was found that most of the couples discussed and agreed on the method of contraceptive to use. Amongst the couples there were three methods of contraceptive being used. Majority of the couples were using condoms, while a few used the menstrual cycle and the rest had a vasectomy. The couples using the menstrual cycle as a method of contraception gave different explanations on how to use the method when they were asked.

Caring during pregnancy, labour and delivery

Majority of the respondents talked about the men being involved when the wife was pregnant

which also involved caring for the wife. It was found that the majority of the male respondents escorted their wives to hospital for prenatal care. The men also had the responsibility of deciding the hospital for the wife to get antenatal care depending on the income which was mostly provided by the man. Some of the men even helped their wives with house hold chores such as cutting vegetables and making the bed when the wife was pregnant. Even the female respondents also talked about the help the men rendered to them when pregnant.

Wives mobility

Majority of the male respondents were of the opinion that there is no problem for the woman to go outside the home unaccompanied and the wife is not supposed to get permission but rather inform the husband to arrange for housekeeping especially when leaving in a nucleus family.

The female respondents had different views, they said they are required to get permission from the husbands when going out and the wives think they have an obligation to get permission from the husbands. Some of the women said they do not go out without their husbands.

Man's role in the home

Earning money was one of the important responsibilities for a family man. The respondents were of the opinion that when a man earns money, it helps to keep the family together. The integrity of the family is maintained by the man. He also is supposed to love his wife, children and other family members. The majority of the women said that they rely on their husbands and could not be able to provide for their families in the absence of the husband.

Fatherhood

All the couples had children and the majority of the respondents had no preference of the sex of children they had. A few respondents had preference for the sex of their children.

Early childhood

It was found that the majority of the respondents were involved in the care during early childhood. The majority of the respondents said the men had been waking up at night to help with taking care of the child to feed or change nappies.

Despite the majority of the men helping in the care of their children, it was also found that some of the men are not involved in the care. Some respondents said that, the men do not participate due to other engagements.

The structure of the family also affected on how the man would be involved in child care. When living in an extended family the men had problems to have access to help with caring for their children since other family members also help.

Father-child relationship

The majority of the respondents acknowledged having a good relationship with their children. Even the female respondents said the children were more attached to their fathers of which some male respondents disagreed as they said the children were more attached to their mothers. The mothers also considered that the father guides on how to take care of kids.

Changes in the behaviour of the men

Most of the male respondents were sensitive to issues of women's rights before joining MASVAW. Still more the majority of the men said that MASVAW has helped them to

understand how important it is to respect women. Most of the male respondents attributed their behaviour to MASVAW especially on the way they treat their wives. Some mentioned that they have become more caring and familiar to wife and children.

The majority of the female respondents did not know MASVAW but knew that their husbands were involved in social work though they did not know what they do. Most of the women believed that their husbands were sensitive to issues of women's rights. None of them mentioned physical abuse in their marriages despite one husband revealing that he used to beat his wife. Even though the women could not attach the change in behaviour of the husband to association with MASVAW, some of the female respondents observed change in behaviour in their husbands where they revealed that they have observed a difference in the way the husbands handle issues in the family.

Perceptions on association with MASVAW

The respondents perceived that to go against the norms of the society is a challenge. The communities do not understand why the men would perform activities which should always be done by women. People have grown up with the belief that men are superior to women hence failure to understand why a man could help with house work and play with his children. The men are being criticised by other family members and the neighbourhood.

Interventions

The interventions of MASVAW that have helped the men to change in their behaviour which were most cited by the respondents were workshops. The workshops helped the men to understand about women's rights and reach out to other men.

Conclusion

The relationship of the man and his spouse can have either a positive or negative effect on the reproductive health of the woman and growth of his children. A poor relationship may result into poor health seeking behaviours while a good relationship may benefit the woman's health as most of the decisions on woman's reproductive health are done together. Men in this study have shown responsibility in respecting their wives. They consider their wives as partners where they make most of the decisions together as a couple. They are being involved in the reproductive health of their wives. Some escort their wives to hospital for antenatal care and were present during labour and delivery. They are also developing relationship with their children where they are being involved in raising their children. They do not only have the responsibility of supporting their children economically but also take part in other aspects of their children's lives like feeding, changing nappies and even playing with them.

Inasmuch as we may say that some of these men have changed, it still needs to be investigated further as there may be other contributing factors apart from their association with MASVAW. All the men were educated which could be one of the contributing factors for the men to behave the way they do.

Recommendations

MASVAW should try to reach out to men with low education as studies have shown that men with less education are prone to abuse their wives.

Asking someone to talk about their behaviour may allow the respondent to talk about their

positive side. In terms of further research, an observational study will objectively identify the change in behaviour. The participants will not be able to pretend if the observation is done for a period of time.