



2014 Annual Conference of the European Network on Gender and Violence (ENGV)

The European Network on Gender and Violence is a network of over 160 researchers from several disciplines and countries. It supports exchange and collaboration among scholars and professionals who address violence, gender, prevention and related issues. The network holds annual conferences to facilitate interdisciplinary discussion of the latest European research in the field. Participation of young scholars and professionals is highly welcome!

Valletta 21 - 23 April 2014 -Department of Gender Studies, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta support from Commission on Domestic Violence, Ministry of the Family and Social Solidarity, Malta and National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, Malta

For information about the European Network on Gender and Violence, please go to

<http://www.engv.org/home.html>

THEMES: Gender, Violence and PREVENTION

Discourses and Representations

Health, mental health and help-seeking

Perspectives on coping and empowerment

Data collection and networking

Forms and contexts of violence/abuse

Policy impacts

Responding to abuse: Specialist sector, health care sector, criminal justice and education system

Interest group: ENGV website and next conference

The discourse around violence requires language understandable to stakeholders, i.e. meaning of domestic for example; who are victims, survivors or perpetrators. This discourse is aimed at educationalists, VAWG and child welfare practitioners, policy makers, researchers and students. With the LGTB community, the abuse and violence discourse, terminology needs to include intimate partner violence and abuse. Yet again the question of gender neutral violence continues to arise although there is a strong argument for the necessity to continue studying gender biased violence and abuse.

It is to be recognized as a public social issue rather than just violence between individuals, with far reaching consequences that is manifested in different forms even outside the household, such as stalking. Over the years there has been an emergence and reconfiguration of VAWG as a public issue. The many variables leads to complexities and challenges that need creative approaches to construct effective prevention programmes both from an educational point of view as well as policing.

As can be imagined, the traumatic effect on adult survivors brings its toll, let alone on minors who are constrained to coping with decisions made for them for their safety but which have far reaching bio-psychosocial impacts.

There is a consensus regarding the need for children and young people to learn about violence against women and girls. Ever since the 1980's education work on prevention has been voiced in order to provide stakeholders with comprehensive contributions to knowledge and understanding in this area. Programmes need to put together research and key lessons for practice that offer insights that underpin the theoretical debates addressing the complexities and challenges of developing, implementing and evaluating educational work to prevent VAWG.

Further more the importance of evidenced based research is necessary for policy makers and specialists working in the field of domestic abuse and violence.

SALIENT POINTS:

- Visual representations in campaigns through the media need to transmit a contextual aspect. Visual discourses need changing; moving away from images of battered women as if it is solely a women's issue to messages that show social responsibility, empowerment and solidarity and moral support - that life without violence is possible. The focus of the media should be on primary prevention through transfer of knowledge by targeting all elements involved, including (voiceless) children, men and women, education and regulation.
- Conceptualising non-violent relationships as relationships of acknowledgment in the context of culture and professional work. Non-violent heterosexual relationships can be categorised as: 1. traditional family arranged relationships 2. romantic love 3. partnership based relationships. The values attributed to non violent relations are respect, affection, personal space. The task of a partnership is the ability for conflict solving and compromise. Personal abilities include: interest in other, accepting other. The main issue is to be included in the decision making process while trust and jealousy are main difficulties to be tackled.
- There is a connection/association between abuse and mental health. While there are trends that cover the area of mental health in this regard there are also individual differences that need to be taken into consideration. Because the phenomenon of abuse is a traumatic experience it can become a chronic stressful experience leading to mental health issues. The measure of stress can be done through cortisol evaluation of salivary specimen collection - a cost effective analysis. The profile of victims/ survivors of violent intimate partner relationships is that of shame, guilt and extreme anxiety.
- Seeking help and the helping process from supporting agencies are being researched for more effective outcomes. Victims seeking help from substance abuse clinics or DV organization can

be actively supported to end the violent relationship through coaching, can consolidate old and new life and move forward.

- Through educational and school based prevention programmes domestic violence can be tackled in order build awareness of prevention and channels of help especially the important factor of social support networks as well as internal self-regulation with subtle control mechanisms such as positive self talk.
- The coping process is enhanced when empowerment via trauma specific concepts are kept in the forefront of the approach towards a violent-free lifestyle such as new connections, empowerment, in relationship not in isolation. The main negative concept is all embracing self-devaluation where the victim is silent, fear of judgment (i.e. bad mother), ongoing use of justification.
- Cultural environment has impact whether an individualistic or collectivist society; the shared burden of domestic violence – family members or workplace colleagues. The cost of the phenomenon both monetary and health wise both physical and mental.
- *FRA* a European Union Agency for Fundamental rights, it provides the EU institutions and Member States with independent, evidence-based advice on fundamental rights. It recently carried out the first European wide survey on VAW. Both the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament, in addition to several international organisations such as the Council of Europe, have highlighted the need for comparable data on violence against women as a basis for developing evidence-based policy responses.
- The feasibility of collecting comparable national administrative sources on VAW at EU level, developing new generations of surveys, research cooperation, protecting data in time of austerity and of costs were themes discussed regarding research projects.
- ‘Living under the radar’ covered a number of aspects connected to visibility -of women living out their life as a mother. The media and social media’s is involved in the portrayal of females as women and mothers with the concept of idealization of motherhood/ mothering. Women are the main caretakers of children’s interests. While in some societies or cultures mothers are source of power.
- On the other hand the social web can be used against violence and for prevention. While teen dating violence can be perpetuated on the web, social communities can combat with support groups by creating environments for socialization between genders as well as gender identity work.
- Recognizing health care workers in the collecting of data is another important step in evidence based research. General practitioners in health centres or community nurses can contribute enormously to introductions to prevention strategies, as channels of referrals, as guidance for help seeking. There is the need for training of these personnel.
- Research into effects on children as victims/survivors of domestic has so many variables that no significant findings have come up. As yet little is known about what is effective and whether it is what the parents want rather that what children want

p.s powerpoints had to be sent to participants.

Here are some links www.policypress.co.uk

www.engv.org/home.html

www.mensworkinc.com

www.womensaid.org.uk