

Problems Encountered by PNP Women and Children's Desk Officers in Handling Cases of Violence Against Women

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Abstract - *This research determined the problems encountered by PNP Women and Children's Protection Desk (WCPD) officers in dealing with cases of violence against women. Specifically, this intends to present the common cases of violence committed against women in the cities of Batangas Province; to determine the problems encountered by PNP WCPD; to test the significant differences on the problems encountered by WCPD when grouped according to three cities; and to propose action plan to alleviate the identified problems in handling cases of Violence Against Women and Children. This study used the descriptive method of research in gathering data in order to describe and find out the problems encountered by the PNP Women's desk officer in responding to the cases of violence against women. The descriptive research is fact finding with adequate interpretation and deals with questions based on on-going, recent or current phenomenon as its name says describing what exists. The researchers utilized 100% of the total population of the PNP women's desk officers in Batangas Province (Batangas, Lipa and Tanauan). They are the ones who are knowledgeable enough to answer the problems posed in the present study. The respondents are 30 years old and above from different Cities of Batangas such as Tanauan, Lipa, and Batangas and most of them are married. The failure of the victims to reveal the true facts is the number one problem encountered by WCPD investigators. There is no significant difference on the problems encountered by the respondents when grouped according to their profile. The three cities in Batangas may continue organizing, researching and finding ways to alleviate the problems*

encountered by PNP WCPD in handling cases of violence against women.

Keywords: *Women and Children Protection Desk, Violence against Women*

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women (VAW) appears as one of the country's pervasive social problems. According to the 2008 National Demographic and Health Survey conducted by the National Statistics Office, one in five Filipino women age 15-49 has experienced physical violence since age 15. It is indeed alarming that despite efforts to address the concern, VAW persists. When the NSO conducted the 2008 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), the survey introduced different types of violence that were done to women or experienced by Filipino women at least once their lives. The types of violence that were indicated were: physical violence, sexual violence, physical violence during pregnancy, and spousal violence. The results of the survey revealed that women in the Philippines experience all sorts of violence. 14.4 percent of married women were said to have experienced physical abuse from their spouse, while about one-third (or 37 percent) of separated or widowed women admitted to experiencing abuse. In the issue of sexual violence, one in twenty-five women age 15-49 (who have had sex) has experienced being forced into sexual intercourse at least once. The numbers on physical violence during pregnancy showed that four percent of women (who have ever been pregnant) have experienced physical violence from their partners during pregnancy. The incidents of abuse increased slowly with the number of children living, decreased slightly with age and education level, and degenerated steadily with wealth quintile. Finally, in terms of spousal abuse, 23 percent of ever-married women experienced emotional and other forms of non-personal violence. One in seven ever-married women experienced abuse and violence from their husbands, while eight percent were sexually abused. Patterns in the frequency of spousal violence were found to be similar with the violence experienced by women ages 15-49 (but most likely higher among separated, widowed, and divorced; currently married women who have been married

more than once, and in CARAGA region, Central Visayas, and in SOCCSKSARGEN). The survey also revealed that spousal violence declined as the husband's age, education, and wealth quintile increased. In relation thereto, Republic Act 9262, the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act of 2004 penalizes the commission of violence against women and children (VAWC). It defines VAWC as any act or series of acts committed by any person against women who is his wife or former wife, or with whom the person has or had a sexual dating relationship, or with whom he has had a common child. Additionally, it provides for penalties for violence committed against his child whether legitimate or illegitimate, within or without the family abode, which results in (or is likely to result in) physical or psychological harm or suffering. Also, economic abuses including threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment or arbitrary deprivation of liberty are penalized. Among others, it provides for the security of the complainant and her family through the protection orders from the barangay and court. Furthermore, it recognizes "battered woman syndrome" (BWS) which refers to a scientifically defined pattern of psychological or behavioral symptoms found in women living in abusive relationships as a result of cumulative abuse, as an acceptable defense for actions committed by a victim as a result of battering.

On the other hand, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defined "violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (UNODC, 2010).

It may take place whenever there is an imbalance of power relationship which oftentimes, men imposed of their masculinity and now became their traditional and cultural trademark. Since, then, violence against women is now a global issue of all societies (Handbook on effective police response to violence against women, 2010).

In many societies, it is difficult for a woman to report violence and pursue legal action because of the following reasons: fear for her own safety and safety of her children; fear that her children will be apprehended or taken away by the husband; influence of her extended family, emotional attachment and loyalty to the abuser; low self-esteem and self-blame; religious values or pressure from cultural community; economic dependency on the abuser; and lack of legal information about their rights and laws. On the other hand, authorities are one of the factors why abused woman does not report the crime (Violence against women in relationships: information bulletin for police, 2006). Some people think that police's action is always characterized by distrust and tension (Sadusky, 2001). Police officers always demand the battered women to give factual information through a thorough investigation to pursue the case. This is because once the case is filed in the court dropping off the case would no longer be possible. This put the abused women in significant dilemmas as they weigh the consequences of their actions (Sadusky, 2001). Furthermore, according to Annan (1999), as cited by Sadusky (2001), abused women only think that police protection and presence may only give negative impact on their communities since violence against women is the most shameful human rights violation.

It is in this context that the Women's Desks of the Philippine National Police was established by virtue of Republic Act No. 8551, otherwise known as the Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998, to administer and attend to cases involving crimes against chastity, sexual harassment, abuses committed against women and children and other similar offenses.

Pursuant to Republic Act No. 8551, mandating the establishment of Women's Desks in all police stations, a total of 1,669 Women and Children's Desks have been established as of 2001, manned by 2,259 PNP personnel. On March 9, 2006, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to expedite the recruitment of 400 new policewomen or "lady cops" to strengthen the Women's Desk in the country's police stations.

To ensure the effective implementation of the law, twelve (12) agencies specifically tasked to formulate programs and projects to eliminate VAWC based on their respective mandates, develop capability programs for their employees to become more sensitive to the needs of their clients, and to monitor all VAW initiatives were convened to form the Council. These agencies are: Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG); Civil Service Commission (CSC), Commission on Human Rights (CHR); Philippine Commission on Women (PCW); Department of Justice (DOJ); Department of Health (DOH); Department of Education (DepEd); Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE); Philippine National Police (PNP); Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC); National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

The researchers chose to conduct the study due to the increasing number of abuse women and children. They were bothered by the alarming increase of violent- related involving women and children. Likewise, they are concerned and curious on how policewomen assigned in WCPD handle these cases. As future law enforcers, this study will give them a better grasp of their future functions and prepare them with the challenges they will encounter once they are already in the service, specifically, future policewoman who is in greater chance of becoming WCPD personnel. Moreover, it is the hope of the researchers that through this study they can contribute in providing solution to the problem by

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the problems encountered by PNP Women and Children's Protection Desk (WCPD) officers in dealing with cases of violence against women. Specifically, this study aimed to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of age and civil status; to describe the problems encountered by PNP WCPD; to test the significant differences on the problems encountered by the WCPD when grouped according to three cities; and to propose action plan to alleviate the identified problems in handling cases of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC).

METHODS

Research Design

The researchers used the descriptive method of research in gathering data in order to describe and find out the problems encountered by the PNP Women's desk officer in responding to the cases of violence against women. The descriptive research is fact finding with adequate interpretation and deals with questions based on on-going, recent or current phenomenon as its name says describing what exists, (<http://www.amazon.co.uk>).

Participants of the Study

The researchers utilized 100% of the total population of the PNP women's desk officers assigned in the three cities of Batangas Province. In Batangas City there were 10, Lipa City has 10 and Tanauan City has 10, with a total of 30. They were requested to answer the prepared questionnaire.

Instrument

The main instrument utilized in this study is a self-made questionnaire which was based on the gathered literature. The questionnaire has (2) parts; Part one pertains to the profile variables in terms of age and civil status; Part two describes the problems encountered by desk officers dealing with VAWC cases.

Procedure

This study was conceptualized by the researchers through the help of their adviser. During the initial process, the researchers read books, journals, manuals, PNP operational manuals and published materials. Likewise, internet was also for in looking for reliable references. Through the help of their adviser, the main problem and the objectives of the study were conceptualized. The construction of instrument followed, and later validated by the thesis adviser. After getting the approval of the offices of WCPD in the three cities of Batangas province, the dissemination of questionnaires was done, and thereafter it was retrieved, analyzed, tallied and tabulated.

Data Analysis

The data gathered by the researchers were tallied, encoded and interpreted using different statistical tools. These include frequency distribution, weighted mean and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The above mentioned tools were used based on the objective of the study. In addition, the data were treated using statistical software, PASW version 18 in order to analyze the result of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profile

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
26-30 years old	12	40.00
31-39 years old	17	56.70
40-49 years old	1	3.30
Civil Status		
Single	13	43.30
Married	17	56.70

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of the respondent's profile variables in terms of age, gender and civil status. As to age of PNP personnel assigned in Women and Children's Protection Desk, 31-39 years old is the highest with a frequency of 17 or 59.70 percent and 40-49 years old has the lowest with a frequency of 1 or 3.30 percent. In terms of civil status, most of them are married with frequency of 17 or 56.70 percent while 13 or 43.30 percent are single.

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As seen from the table 2, the over-all rating of the respondents' on the problems encountered on dealing with violence against women and children is to the discharge of their duties was verbally interpreted often with a composite mean of 2.67. Among the items cited, victims failed to reveal the true facts ranked first with a weighted mean of 3.27 and verbally interpreted often.

The researchers believed that the reason for this is the victims are afraid because they were threatened that if she will file complaint, she will be smitten. And likewise the victim is still on the state of shock so she cannot reveal information as to the true facts. This was confirmed by the researchers during interview with one of the victims of violence.

Table 2. Problems Encountered by Desk Officers Dealing with Violence Against Women and Children in the Discharge of their Duties

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Victims failed to reveal the true facts.	3.27	Often	1
2. Fear of reprisals from supposed respondents	2.87	Often	3.5
3. Lack of victim's resolve to bring the respondent to justice	2.67	Often	7
4. Uncooperative witnesses	2.77	Often	5.5
5. Apprehension of the victim about total absence of support in case suspect is detained	2.87	Often	3.5
6. Desk Officer lack of knowledge about the provision of R.A 9262	1.87	Sometimes	10
7. Lack of police protection to complainants	2.33	Sometimes	8
8. Legal constraints in the arrest of respondents.	2.77	Often	5.5
9. Lack of initiative of Desk Officers to provide assistance to complainants	2.30	Sometimes	9
10. No source of fund to support the need of the complainant's family during the period of investigation or trial	2.97	Often	2
Composite Mean	2.67	Often	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 – 1.49 = Never

During initial response, in terms of receiving complaint one of the major concerns of WCPD officers is the uncooperativeness of the caller/abused woman. WCPD officers revealed that some of the abused women are hesitant to open the full details of information. This is because most of the abused women were still in the state of shock after they experienced violence. They also consider this event as a humiliating part of their lives, thus, they find it difficult to reveal the private issue (UNODC, 2010).

No source of fund to support the need of the complainant's family during the period of investigation or trial ranked second with weighted mean of 2.97 and verbally interpreted often. Fear of reprieve from supposed respondents and apprehension of the victim arrest to the absence of support in case suspect is detained, have the same rank of 3.5 with a weighted mean of 2.87 and verbally interpreted often.

It was followed with the same rank of 5.5 apprehension of the victim about total absence of support in case suspect is detained and legal constraints in the arrest of respondents with a weighted mean of 3.27 and verbal interpretation often.

These are just some of the realities that contribute to the vulnerability of Filipino women to Violence against women. An even greater problem is the lack of concrete information to show the extent of Violence against women in the country as many cases of violence against women often go unreported due to women victims' "culture of silence." Many of the victims are ashamed to relate their experiences while others tend to dismiss their ordeal as a result of their lack of faith in the country's justice system caused by frustrations over the lack of results in filing complaints (Philippine Commission on Women).

On the other hand, some items were verbally assessed as sometimes such as lack of police protection to complainants, lack of initiative of Desk Officers to provide assistance to complainants and Desk Officer lack of knowledge about the provision of R.A 9262 which obtained the lowest mean values of 2.33, 2.30 and 1.87 respectively.

Violence is, however, preventable. Although no silver bullet will eliminate it, a combination of efforts that address income, education, health, laws and infrastructure can

significantly reduce violence and its tragic consequences. First and foremost, abusive behavior towards women must be viewed as unacceptable. Communities need to have an important role in defining solutions to violence and providing support to victims. And men must be engaged in the process too, as agents of change standing alongside women to end violence, according to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).

Table 3. Difference of Responses on the Problems Encountered by PNP Women and Children’s Desk Officers in Handling Violence Against Women in the Discharge of their Duties When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Profile Variables	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Age	0.075	0.928	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.309	0.759	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Based from the result, all computed p-values were all greater than 0.05 alpha level, thus the researchers fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference on the problems encountered by the respondents dealing with violence against women and children when grouped according to age and civil status. This means that the problems encountered are the same across each profile.

Table 4. Proposed Plan of Action

Key Area	Objectives	Implementation	Person Responsible
Victims failure to reveal the true facts	To encourage the victims to reveal the true facts	Seminar about the Anti-Violence against Women and Children Act of 2004	PNP Management WCPD Officers
Lack of fund to support the need of the complainant	To provide fund to WCPD for them to support the needs of complainants	Government should support the needs of WCPD	Other support groups of PNP/DSWD/P CW

Table 4 (cont). Proposed Plan of Action

Key Area	Objectives	Implementation	Person Responsible
Lack of cooperation from witnesses and witnesses and	To encourage the witness to cooperate	Regular Seminar and Trainings for Females as well as families	WCPD Officers
Inadequacy in terms of manpower	To add additional quota for PNP to strengthen the manpower	Government should required the PNP to add additional quota for new recruit members	PNP Management

The table presents the action plan proposed by the researchers to reduce the problems encountered by PNP women and children's desk officer in handling cases against women in the 3 cities in the Province of Batangas.

CONCLUSION

The respondents are 30 and above years old from different Cities of Batangas such as Tanauan, Lipa, Batangas and most of them are married. The WCPD investigators, problems encountered in dealing with VAWC is the failure of the victims to reveal the true facts. there is no significant difference on the problems encountered by the respondents when grouped according to their profile. An action plan was proposed based on the result of the study.

RECOMMENDATION

The three cities in Batangas may continue organizing, researching and finding ways to alleviate the problems encountered by PNP WCPD in handling cases of violence against women. The WCPD officers may conduct seminar, forum and consultation with female residents of three Cities in Batangas (Tanauan, Lipa, and Batangas) about the Anti-Violence against Women and Children Act of 2004. That Punong Barangay be encouraged to use their power to issue Barangay Protection Order as immediate relief to victims of VAWC. Additional police

women may be assigned to WCPD section to effectively discharge their services and handle VAWC cases. The proposed action plan may be adopted and may be utilized after its approval by the three Police Stations in the Batangas, Tanauan, and Lipa Cities. That future researchers may engage in related studies to validate the reliability of the results of this study.

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