



# Model of factors at play in the perpetration of violence



Introducing an interactive model for  
understanding violence against  
women, violence against children and  
sexual orientation violence

# Purposes of this model

- To make current research knowledge about conditions that influence perpetration more accessible to policy and practice;
- To capture the complexity and different paths of influence that may lead up to violence;
- To show similar and different trajectories towards forms of violence;
- To stimulate thinking about what might be done to reduce or prevent violence.

# Cautionary Words

- These are not causal explanations, but a **probability** model: What makes it more likely that individuals will use certain forms of violence?
- It is a **confluence** model, that is, it shows how factors flow together to make perpetration the likely outcome.
- It is a **research-based** model, and there are major gaps in the (empirical) research! We can only model what we know about.

# Forms and fields of violence

- The model condenses the many forms of violence into 9 categories:
  - ♦ In the field of violence against women: (1) rape/sexual coercion, (2) partner violence/stalking, (3) sexual harassment, (4) trafficking, (5) „harmful traditional practices“,
  - ♦ In the field of violence against children: (6) child abuse and neglect, (7) child sexual abuse, and (8) child sexual exploitation, and finally
  - ♦ Violence based on sexual orientation (9).

# Why these categories and factors?

- The **categories** are based on availability of research knowledge about perpetrators.
- The **factors** are drawn from summaries of a vast amount of research on the most prevalent forms of violence using sophisticated statistical methods.
- But for some forms of violence, research on perpetration is very scarce.
- Existing research is also selective: Much of it has been done with easily accessed groups (mothers, imprisoned sex offenders, college students).

# Factors at play on four levels

- Factors are defined by integrating research results across forms of violence; 24 „main factors“ emerged from clustering similar variables.
- The focus is on factors that could be influenced by ***policy*** or practical intervention
- The factors are located on four ***levels***, depending on where their major impact appears: Macro (society), Meso (institutions, agencies, social environments), micro (face-to-face social groups), and ontogenetic (individual life history).

# Overall structure of the model

- A „**perpetration model**“ allows you to choose one or more forms of violence and see what factors have a weak, moderate or strong influence.
- The same information can be looked at from the „**factor perspective**“ : When designing interventions, this perspective can suggest what forms of violence might be reduced.
- For six main forms of violence, there are „**path models**“ showing the interplay among factors.

# Some things to keep in mind

- A model allows you to grasp multiple levels in one image, and to see patterns
- But for this, it has to condense accumulated research knowledge into key visual elements, and to simplify them.
- Reality is much more varied and diverse than what any model can show.
- Practitioner experience and local knowledge can modify the picture: Use this creatively!

# Some limitations of the model

- There is considerable research on perpetration for IPV, sexual assault/ rape, and child maltreatment in families. Perpetration of all other forms of violence is under-researched.
- The evidence is strongest on the individual and micro levels, but empirical findings cannot be understood without reference to institutions and societal power relations and values.
- Comparison across areas of research is not possible; thus, the explanatory power of a factor is always to be seen relative to that field of research.

# Purpose of path models

- Dynamic modelling with path models shows the confluence of factors across all four levels.
- Path models let us see how factors may interact – they are not a causal chain of determination.
- These models could only be constructed where there is enough research on how individuals become perpetrators.
- Most important: there are different pathways that can lead to using the specific form of violence in question. The model builds these paths one by one.

# Some points worth noticing

- The „routing“ in different pathways tends to be weighted towards levels of factors at play.
  - For some individuals the path leading to VAW, VAC or SOV is strongly influenced by their childhood or individual life histories
  - For others, the trajectory towards perpetrating violence may be set in train by societal values and prejudices and driven by peer approval or discriminatory environments

# Combine and compare

- Different forms of violence may be related, or have similar sources, or they may occur together. The model offers three combined path models:
  - Rape and child sexual abuse have similar roots, but perpetrators are likely to „choose“ one;
  - Intimate partner violence and child abuse and neglect often occur together, but also separately;
  - Sexual harassment and sexual orientation violence happen in different contexts, but seem to share some similar sources.

# Using combined models

- In the combination models, the overview of all the interconnections is followed by
  - only common factors that appear in both models,
  - only the path model of each form of violence.
- This allows you to compare how they might be related, and to consider strategies that might address both forms of violence.
- NOTE: These combination models are near the outer edge of our research knowledge!

# How NOT to use this model

- The model is a tool for strategic thinking – no more, but no less. Do not mistake the factors at play for „causes“ of violence!
- The „interventions“ in the path models are strategic possibilities; do not mistake them for straightforward „Do this!“ recommendations.
- Do not be disappointed: The model does not tell you how to put an end to violence. This is a task for many actors at multiple locations!

# Where to find more information

- If you plan to explore the models on your own or use them for a presentation/seminar, please have a look at the technical manual on this CD Rom (linked on the introduction page)
- If you are interested in the full literature review see „Review of research“
- If you would like a short overview of the levels, factors and interventions, see „Factors, levels and interventions“



And now: return to front page,  
open the model and discover...

