

Combining research and practice: VAC and VAW programme adaptation in South Africa

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Background

Violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) are endemic in South Africa. They share similar risk factors, co-occur within households, and are prevalent in communities with hegemonic social norms that promote both types of violence. Evidence suggests that there are few programmes that successfully address VAC and VAW jointly. We therefore need investment in shared learning across the VAW and VAC sectors to build strategic programming that targets both forms of violence. The objective of this paper is to describe an intersectional collaborative approach that informed the adaptation of a programme targeting both VAC and VAW.

Methods

The Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, in partnership with MOSAIC, a community-based NGO, conducted baseline research to explore how community members conceptualise men's violence against women, and caregivers' use of violence against children in families in two communities in South Africa. Using a co-design approach, the researchers and practitioners used the research findings to consider how it resonated with current programming and what adaptations were required. A community advisory board consisting of practitioners guided both the research and programme adaptation.

Discussion

Practitioner based knowledge and ways of thinking have often not been considered in programme development and adaptation processes. This adaptation process involved collective thinking between practitioners and researchers while also considering the experiences and opinions of community members affected by violence. Our focus for programme adaptation centred on four main areas: (1) a programme mapping exercise to determine which of MOSAIC's current prevention programmes could be adapted to incorporate an intersections prevention focus; (2) building MOSAIC's capacity to understand the nature of programme adaptation using an implementation science lens, as well as a focus on conceptual understanding of models such as a life course approach and gender transformation ; (3) a co-created and research-informed programme theory of change; and (4) co-designing an adapted violence prevention intervention informed by the research findings and practitioner experience.

Conclusions

Collective thinking through meaningful engagement processes has the potential to address the gap between research and practice in the Global South.