



Expanding knowledge of intergenerational violence in the Philippines. A commentary on Kim et al. (2023)

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Understanding intergenerational effects of intimate partner violence (IPV) is critical for preventing future transgenerational transmission of trauma, as well as treating individuals and families who are already impacted. Despite availability of data on witnessing parental IPV and directly experiencing IPV in national demographic and health surveys, research on these issues in Southeast Asia has been limited. This study offers important insight into this issue in the Philippines.

While the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in the Philippines offers more than a decade's worth of nationally-representative data on witnessing parental IPV and personal experiences of IPV, this study offers a first-time analysis of these measures, using data from women who participated in the most recent DHS, administered in 2017. The authors find that women exposed to parental IPV had more than twice the odds of both experiencing and perpetrating IPV. Further, those who witnessed IPV were more likely to report the combination of IPV victimization and perpetration than to report either victimization or perpetration alone. These findings align with prior research documenting witnessing IPV in parental relationships as a key risk factor for women's victimization from IPV in adulthood, in sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia (Ackerson & Subramanian, 2009; Fry et al., 2012; Mootz et al., 2022; Stake et al., 2020). It also extends prior research that demonstrates an association between witnessing parental IPV as a girl and using IPV (i.e., perpetration) as an adult woman, an area of inquiry that has largely been limited to studies from high income countries (HICs) or on male perpetration alone in low and middle income country (LMIC) contexts (Fonseka et al., 2015; Islam et al., 2017; Kimber et al., 2018).

We know from cross-national research conducted in other countries that numerous negative effects result from witnessing IPV as a child. These include developmental delays, adverse physical and mental health outcomes (e.g., headaches, depression), and risk behaviors (e.g., substance use), and those who witness IPV are often child victims of family

violence, as well (Anderson & van Ee, 2018; Bacchus et al., 2017; Kieselbach et al., 2021; Louis & Reyes, 2023; Ravi & Black, 2022; Walker-Descartes et al., 2021). Findings from the authors' work contribute to the evidence that intergenerational impacts of IPV are substantial, and IPV prevention and intervention efforts not only help women but also support children and families (Anderson & van Ee, 2018), demonstrating the importance of such efforts for the Philippines. Prior research from the country, with youth from one metropolitan area in the Philippines found almost half of adolescents had witnessed physical IPV, which, in turn, increased risk for depression. Male participants who witnessed bidirectional parental IPV were more likely to report bidirectional psychological aggression with peers as young adults (Hindin & Gultiano, 2006; Mandal & Hindin, 2013).

The issue of reciprocal IPV has received less attention in LMIC contexts including the Philippines, and even in this study, the authors do not comment on it, perhaps because the data available cannot presume reciprocal violence in the current relationship and at the incident level. Qualitative research from the Philippines has documented that reciprocal violence is indicative of violence escalation, is more likely in situations where male partner alcohol misuse and unemployment create tensions, and with women engaging in violence as a means of self-defense or retaliation for male-initiated abuse (Fehringer & Hindin, 2014). Notably, lower wealth and male alcohol use were predictors of IPV perpetration and victimization in the current study as well.

Quantitative and qualitative research from other country contexts, largely HIC settings, document similar gendered findings with regard to reciprocal IPV, highlighting escalated risk for injury in contexts of reciprocal violence (Pu et al., 2022; Whitaker et al., 2007). Understanding the prevalence and experiences of reciprocal IPV may offer important insight into these issues for women in the Philippines, and even data on co-occurrence of reported IPV victimization and perpetration would be useful. Importantly, in preparation of this commentary,

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we sought to identify research that uses DHS data and provides such insight, as IPV victimization and perpetration are standard questions included in DHS for most country contexts offering the survey. We could not identify a single paper. The higher risk for such occurrence for those reporting witnessing IPV, seen in this study, as well as findings from aforementioned research documenting escalated risk for injury in cases of reciprocal violence, requires further attention.

In sum, this study highlights the need for greater attention to IPV and its intergenerational effects, and recognizes that these effects can include IPV perpetration and well as victimization for women. We need more research to understand the contexts and experiences of reciprocal violence in the Philippines and elsewhere to improve our understanding of these concerns. Nonetheless, the findings from this study demonstrate that we must prioritize programs and policies that support victims of IPV including children witnessing IPV and prevent IPV for subsequent generations.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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