

Building Leadership Through Partnerships: Using Concept Mapping to Develop Community Capacity to Address Gender-Based Violence

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What is The Purpose of This Study/Review?

- Our study describes an academic–community partnership formed to help the leaders of a community-based organization (CBO) identify the critical elements for a leadership training program to address gender-based violence (GBV) in communities with high levels of precarious employment and little access to institutional supports.
- The research partnership consisted of the leaders of the CBO, several academic researchers, and a team of “community animators,” or community researcher trained in conducting research activities.
- Concept mapping methods were used to generate and prioritize a list of resources and skills individuals from the targeted communities felt they would need to address GBV that happened at work and home.
- While the findings directly influenced the content of the leadership program, the community partners found the process to be of equal benefit.

What Is the Problem?

- Despite the increased publicity surrounding workplace sexual harassment, women in temporary, low-wage jobs with few or no benefits are particularly vulnerable to experiencing GBV and its ramifications, both at home and at work. While some workplaces have initiated GBV response programs, the nature of precarious employment (e.g., few/no benefits, low wage, dangerous working conditions) and accompanying informal workplaces (e.g., private homes, warehouses, small businesses) preclude workers from having access to these programs, and likely discourage employees from seeing workplaces as a source of support. Thus, community-based and community-driven responses will be needed to provide support for women experiencing GBV in these populations.

What Are the Findings?

- The findings from the concept mapping activities suggested that participants believe that informal leaders from their communities who want to address issues of GBV would benefit from having skills and resources related to *addressing workplace violence*.
 - They suggested that a program that covered topics such as employee and survivor support and resources would be likely to draw participants to such a program.
 - Participants’ focus on workplace violence may have been related to our initial emphasis on precariously employed individuals, but it is also likely that this is a less-sensitive form of GBV providing an entry point from which to initiate discussions about other forms of GBV, including violence initiated by partners and family members.

- The CBO leaders who co-led this research felt that the process of engaging members of the community (including the community animators) in prior to the launch of the programs was equally useful to the development of the program as the findings were.
 - They were able to build relationships and make connections they may not have made otherwise and allowed them to have a very successful program launch, with roughly one-third of program participants having been part of the concept mapping process, either as animators or as participants.

Who Should Care Most?

- The findings from our study are important for groups interested in developing community-driven approaches for addressing GBV. While the specific findings of our study may not be generalizable beyond low-wage communities and predominantly Latinx individuals, we believe that that the process of engaging communities was critical to our success. Our work highlights the platform that community driven research can provide in response to GBV.

Recommendations for Action

- Academic–community partnerships can be useful for soliciting input and buy-in from especially marginalized communities prior to launching programs in the area.