

Applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model to Psychosocial Interventions for Sexual Assault Survivors: A Case Study of Resource Availability and Utilization in Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract

Survivors of sexual assault face numerous challenges that significantly impact their recovery, including physical and psychological trauma, societal stigma, and inadequate access to essential services. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) recovery centers play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by providing comprehensive medical, psychological, and legal support. These centers serve as critical resources for survivors, offering a safe space for healing and recovery. This study utilizes Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model as the conceptual lens to analyze the multifaceted influences on survivor recovery. This model emphasizes the importance of understanding the various systemic levels micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono that interact to shape the experiences of survivors. By applying this framework, we can better understand how different factors contribute to or hinder recovery efforts. The focus of this research is to explore how Bronfenbrenner's model informs psychosocial interventions across multiple systemic levels. By examining each level of the ecological model, we can identify specific areas where interventions can be enhanced to better support survivors of GBV. This approach highlights the interconnectedness of individual experiences and broader societal factors in shaping recovery outcomes. The study reveals significant gaps in resource availability within GBV recovery centers. For instance, only 42.86% of centers have adequate private rooms to ensure confidentiality for survivors, while 71.43% have trauma forms available for documentation. These findings indicate that effective survivor-centered care requires consistent access to immediate resources. Additionally, limited inter-organizational collaboration was noted, with only 14.29% of centers utilizing referral directories, undermining comprehensive support for survivors. In conclusion, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model provides a structured approach to understanding and addressing gaps in recovery services for sexual assault survivors. By recognizing the interplay between various

systemic levels, stakeholders can implement targeted interventions that enhance resource availability and improve overall recovery outcomes. Systemic improvements are essential for creating a more supportive environment that fosters healing and empowers survivors on their journey to recovery. The study recommends that enhance micro-system resources by increasing the availability of counseling standard operating procedures (SOPs) and Post-Rape Care (PRC) kits. Improve meso-system linkages through effective referral mechanisms among recovery centers and community organizations. Address exo- and macro-system gaps with policy reforms that promote survivor-centric legislation and increase societal engagement in GBV issues. Adapt interventions to meet the chrono-system's temporal needs by designing flexible care models that respond to the evolving stages of survivor recovery. By implementing these recommendations, we can work towards a more integrated and effective support system for survivors of gender-based violence.

Keywords: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, Psychosocial, Interventions, Sexual Assault Survivors, Resource Availability, Utilization, Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers

Introduction

Sexual violence remains a pervasive and deeply troubling issue in Kenya, with staggering statistics underscoring the urgent need for effective interventions. The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) reports that over 40% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lives, while 25.5% suffered such violence within the past year (Kenyan News Agency, 2024). Additionally, the Violence Against Children Survey (2019) reveals that 15.6% of women surveyed endured childhood sexual violence, often experiencing multiple incidents before reaching adulthood. In 2021 alone, 8,149 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) were reported, with females constituting 92% of victims (KIPPRA, 2022). These figures reflect not only the widespread nature of sexual violence but also the multifaceted challenges survivors face, including stigma, fear of reporting, social exclusion, and threats to their safety (Bond & Davis, 2024).

The profound psychological, physical, and social consequences of sexual violence demand comprehensive and contextually relevant responses. Survivors often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, substance abuse, and disrupted social functioning, making recovery complex and multifaceted (Zinzow, Littleton, Muscari & Sall, 2022). In this context, Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers (GBVRCs) serve as crucial hubs for post-assault care, offering medical treatment, psychological counseling, legal support, and education to survivors (Kassim, 2022). These centers aim to provide safe spaces where survivors can begin healing while accessing multidisciplinary services. However, despite their critical role, GBVRCs in Kenya, including those in Uasin Gishu County, face significant challenges such as understaffing, inadequate medical supplies, and insufficiently trained personnel, which hinder their effectiveness (Onkoba, 2023).

This study applies Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to explore how psychosocial interventions can be optimized within GBVRCs to better support survivors of sexual assault in Uasin Gishu County. Bronfenbrenner's model, with its emphasis on the multiple environmental systems influencing an individual—from immediate family to broader societal contexts—provides a valuable framework for understanding and addressing the complex interplay of factors that affect recovery from sexual violence. Applying this model is crucial to

designing holistic, culturally sensitive, and sustainable interventions that can effectively engage survivors, their families, communities, and institutional stakeholders.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance the utility and effectiveness of psychosocial interventions by identifying gaps and opportunities within existing recovery centers. Understanding resource availability and utilization through an ecological lens can guide policymakers, healthcare providers, and community leaders in strengthening support structures. This study is particularly beneficial to survivors who often navigate a fragmented support system, as well as to practitioners who seek evidence-based approaches to improve care delivery. Furthermore, by contextualizing interventions within Uasin Gishu County, the study offers insights that can inform similar efforts in other regions facing comparable challenges.

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to a more responsive and integrated model of care that not only addresses the immediate needs of sexual assault survivors but also fosters long-term resilience and social reintegration. Addressing sexual violence requires not only clinical and legal interventions but also a deep understanding of the social ecosystems that shape survivors' experiences. Thus, this study fills a critical gap by bridging theory and practice in the fight against gender-based violence in Kenya.

Research Gap

Survivors of sexual assault often face a range of psychological outcomes, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. A meta-analysis revealed that 74.58% of individuals met diagnostic criteria for PTSD within the first month following an assault, with this figure decreasing to 41.49% by the twelfth month (Steenkamp et al., 2021). This indicates a critical need for timely and effective interventions that can support survivors throughout their recovery journey.

Current interventions often focus on specific aspects of recovery such as psychological therapy or medical care without adequately addressing the interconnectedness of various systems that influence recovery outcomes. For instance, while psychosocial interventions like Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) have shown effectiveness in reducing PTSD symptoms, there is limited understanding of how these interventions interact with other support systems available to survivors (Dworkin et al., 2023). Moreover, high dropout rates from treatment programs raise concerns about the accessibility and effectiveness of current support mechanisms.

A comprehensive system-level approach is essential for several reasons. Survivors require coordinated access to medical care, legal assistance, and psychological support. Fragmented services can lead to gaps in care and increased distress. Interventions must consider the broader sociocultural context influencing survivors' experiences. Community-based approaches that challenge harmful norms can enhance support for survivors. Implementing TIC principles across all systems interacting with survivors can mitigate the risk of retraumatization and foster healing. Negative social responses to disclosure significantly impact recovery trajectories (Hossain et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how different systems interact with survivors' experiences is crucial for developing effective support strategies.

Objective

To examine resource availability and usage in GBV recovery centers using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

Significance

A systems approach to designing interventions for survivors of sexual assault is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of support services and improving recovery outcomes. A systems approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of different components within the intervention framework. By considering the broader context in which survivors exist, including their social networks and community resources, interventions can be tailored to meet diverse needs more effectively.

Implementing a systems approach facilitates the integration of multiple services, such as medical care, legal assistance, and psychological support. This integration is essential for providing comprehensive care that addresses all aspects of a survivor's recovery journey. By breaking down silos between different service providers, a systems approach ensures that survivors receive holistic support that is responsive to their unique circumstances.

The effectiveness of interventions is often influenced by sociocultural factors that shape attitudes towards sexual violence. A systems approach allows for the incorporation of community-level strategies that challenge harmful norms and promote positive behaviors. By addressing these sociocultural dimensions, interventions can foster an environment that supports survivors and encourages them to seek help.

Utilizing a systems approach encourages the application of evidence-based practices across various levels of intervention. Programs designed with a comprehensive understanding of the systemic factors influencing sexual violence can achieve more significant behavioral changes among participants. By grounding interventions in rigorous evaluation and evidence, practitioners can enhance their effectiveness and ensure they are meeting the needs of survivors.

Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, also known as the Ecological Systems Theory, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various environmental influences on human development. This model emphasizes that an individual's growth is shaped by a series of interconnected systems, ranging from immediate surroundings to broader societal structures. Bronfenbrenner's model is structured around five key systems which are microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem.

In Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, the microsystem represents the most immediate environment in which an individual interacts. For survivors of sexual assault, this includes their direct relationships with counselors, medical staff, caregivers, family, and friends. These interactions play a crucial role in shaping the survivor's recovery experience and overall mental health outcomes.

Survivors often disclose their experiences of sexual violence to individuals within their microsystem. The nature of these interactions can significantly influence recovery trajectories. Positive social reactions from informal supporters such as family and friends are associated with better mental health outcomes post-assault. Supportive responses can foster feelings of safety and validation, which are essential for healing (Jaffe et al., 2022).

Conversely, negative social reactions, such as disbelief or victim-blaming, can exacerbate feelings of shame and isolation, leading to worse long-term recovery outcomes. Survivors who encounter negative responses may experience increased symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression (Braun et al., 2024). This highlights the importance of training for those in the microsystem to provide empathetic and informed support.

Counselors and medical professionals are often the first point of contact for survivors seeking help. Their responses can either facilitate or hinder recovery. Effective counseling that incorporates trauma-informed care principles is vital in helping survivors process their experiences and navigate their emotions. Studies have shown that interventions such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based approaches can lead to significant improvements in PTSD symptoms among survivors (Symes et al., 2024).

Medical staff also play a critical role in providing immediate care following an assault. The quality of medical care received can impact a survivor's willingness to seek help in the future. Survivors who experience compassionate and respectful treatment from healthcare providers are more likely to engage with follow-up care and support services (Munnik, 2023).

Meso-system encompasses the interconnections between various settings that influence an individual's experiences and recovery. For survivors of sexual assault, this includes the relationships and interactions between recovery centers, community groups, and referral agencies. These interrelationships are crucial for providing comprehensive support and facilitating effective recovery processes.

Recovery centers, such as Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers (GBVRCs), serve as pivotal hubs for survivors seeking assistance. They provide immediate medical care, psychological support, and legal guidance. The effectiveness of these centers is enhanced when they maintain strong connections with community groups and referral agencies (Braun et al., 2024). For instance, recovery centers often collaborate with local organizations to offer holistic services that address the diverse needs of survivors, including housing, employment support, and counseling.

Community groups play a vital role in the meso-system by fostering a supportive environment for survivors. These groups can include peer support networks, advocacy organizations, and educational initiatives aimed at raising awareness about sexual violence (Hossain et al., 2024). By working closely with recovery centers, community groups can help disseminate information about available resources and encourage survivors to seek help. This collaboration can also promote community engagement in prevention efforts, thereby reducing stigma and fostering a culture of support for survivors.

Referral agencies are essential in connecting survivors to various services within the meso-system. These agencies can facilitate access to legal assistance, mental health services, and social support programs. Effective communication between recovery centers and referral agencies ensures that survivors receive timely and appropriate care (Proença et al., 2022). For example, when a survivor visits a recovery center, staff can coordinate with referral agencies to arrange follow-up appointments or connect them with community resources tailored to their specific needs.

The exosystem encompasses the broader contextual factors that indirectly influence an individual's development and experiences. For survivors of sexual assault, this includes institutional policies, organizational support structures, and community resources that may not directly involve the survivor but significantly impact their recovery journey. Policies at local, regional, and national levels can shape the resources available to survivors (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For instance, laws regarding sexual assault reporting, victim rights, and access to healthcare services directly affect how survivors navigate their recovery. Institutional policies in healthcare settings can determine the quality of care provided to survivors. For example, guidelines that mandate trauma-informed care can enhance the support that medical staff offer to survivors during treatment.

Organizations such as non-profits, advocacy groups, and governmental agencies play a crucial role in providing resources and support for survivors (Hossain et al., 2024). These organizations often facilitate access to legal assistance, counseling services, and emergency housing. The effectiveness of these organizations can be influenced by funding levels, staffing, and training programs. For example, organizations with well-trained staff who understand trauma can provide better support to survivors compared to those lacking such training. Community resources such as shelters, hotlines, and support groups are vital for survivors seeking assistance. The availability and accessibility of these resources can significantly influence a survivor's ability to recover. Local government initiatives aimed at preventing gender-based violence and supporting survivors can create a more supportive environment for healing (Van der Burg & Young, 2024). For instance, community awareness campaigns can help reduce stigma and encourage individuals to seek help.

The exosystem's indirect influences can have profound effects on a survivor's recovery experience. Access to social services such as mental health support and financial assistance can ease the burden on survivors as they navigate their recovery. However, if these services are underfunded or poorly coordinated, survivors may struggle to obtain the help they need. A survivor's workplace environment can also impact their recovery. Supportive workplace policies that allow for flexible leave or provide access to counseling services can facilitate healing. Conversely, unsupportive environments may lead to increased stress and hinder recovery. Policies within schools and universities regarding sexual assault prevention and response can affect student survivors. Institutions that implement comprehensive support systems tend to create safer environments for students affected by sexual violence.

The macro-system encompasses the overarching societal norms, laws, and cultural attitudes that shape the environment in which individuals live. For survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), these macro-level factors play a significant role in influencing their experiences, recovery processes, and access to support services.

Many societies exhibit norms that normalize or trivialize violence against women and marginalized groups. This normalization can manifest in attitudes that blame victims for the violence they experience, which discourages survivors from seeking help. Research indicates that victim-blaming attitudes are prevalent and contribute to the social acceptability of GBV, making it difficult for survivors to report incidents or access support services (Bermek et al., 2023).

Societal norms often reflect patriarchal values that perpetuate inequality between genders. These norms can devalue women and LGBTQ individuals while promoting toxic masculinity, which reinforces aggressive behaviors and diminishes the perceived severity of GBV. Such cultural attitudes create environments where abuse is minimized or excused (Dabby & Yoshihama, 2021).

Survivors frequently face stigma related to their experiences of violence, leading to fears of retaliation or social ostracism. This stigma can deter individuals from disclosing incidents or seeking assistance from formal support systems. The fear of being judged by service providers further complicates the willingness of survivors to engage with available resources (Hanmer et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of laws addressing GBV varies significantly across different countries and regions. In some contexts, legal frameworks may be inadequate or poorly enforced, leaving survivors without necessary protections or recourse for justice. For example, laws that fail to recognize forms of violence such as emotional abuse or coercive control can leave many survivors without legal protection. Institutional policies within law enforcement and judicial systems often impact how GBV cases are handled. Survivors may encounter barriers such as lack of trained personnel, insufficient resources for investigation, and a culture within law enforcement that may not prioritize GBV cases. These factors contribute to a culture of impunity where perpetrators are not held accountable (Canton, 2021). The availability and accessibility of support services are influenced by macro-level policies. In many regions, particularly rural or underserved areas, there may be limited access to healthcare, legal aid, and counseling services for survivors of GBV. This lack of resources can exacerbate the challenges faced by survivors seeking help.

The chrono-system refers to the dimension of time, encompassing the temporal dynamics that influence an individual's development and experiences. For survivors of sexual assault, this includes their journey through trauma and recovery over time, highlighting how various factors interact across different stages of their healing process. The recovery journey for survivors of trauma is often described in stages or phases, reflecting the non-linear nature of healing. Understanding these phases can help illuminate the temporal dynamics involved in recovery. The initial phase focuses on regaining a sense of safety and stability. Survivors may take days to weeks to feel secure after an acute trauma, while those with chronic trauma may require months or years. Establishing safety is crucial as it lays the foundation for further healing (Qazi, 2024).

In this phase, survivors begin to process their trauma, which may involve recounting their experiences and expressing emotions related to the event. This stage is essential for integrating the traumatic experience into their life narrative without being overwhelmed by

it. The duration of this phase can vary significantly among individuals (Campodonico, Varese & Berry, 2022).

Survivors work towards redefining their identity and future after trauma. This phase involves creating new relationships and finding meaning beyond the trauma. Successful navigation through this stage can lead to empowerment and a renewed sense of agency (Clark-Taylor, 2022).

Trauma exposure can disrupt circadian rhythms, leading to issues such as sleep disturbances and increased stress sensitivity. This disruption, referred to as posttraumatic chronodisruption, can exacerbate symptoms of PTSD and hinder recovery efforts over time. Understanding these temporal dynamics is crucial for developing effective treatment strategies that consider the timing of interventions.

Recovery from trauma is rarely a linear process; survivors may experience fluctuations between different phases of recovery. It is common for individuals to revisit earlier stages as they encounter new challenges or triggers related to their trauma. This non-linear trajectory underscores the need for flexible therapeutic approaches that accommodate individual experiences. The impact of trauma can accumulate over time, affecting various aspects of a survivor's life, including mental health, relationships, and overall well-being. Long-term exposure to stressors can lead to chronic health issues, emphasizing the importance of early intervention and ongoing support throughout the recovery journey.

Methodology

Study Design

The study employs a qualitative document analysis approach, which involves systematically examining various documents to extract meaningful insights about the experiences and needs of survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) within recovery centers. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of the context, processes, and outcomes related to GBV recovery services. The qualitative nature of the study emphasizes understanding the nuances and complexities of survivor experiences rather than merely quantifying data. This approach is particularly beneficial in exploring sensitive topics like GBV, where personal narratives and contextual factors are critical for understanding.

By analyzing existing documents such as center records, observational notes, and referral directories, the study can gather rich data that reflects the operational realities of GBV recovery centers. This method allows researchers to identify patterns, themes, and gaps in service provision. The integration of a systems perspective aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, which considers multiple levels of influence on survivor recovery. This perspective helps to contextualize findings within broader societal, organizational, and interpersonal frameworks, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting survivors' access to resources and support.

Study Area

The research focuses on seven Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers (GBVRCs) located in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. These are Kapteldon, Kesses, Ziwa, Burnt Forest, Turbo, Huruma

and County Hospital. This area has been selected due to its unique socio-cultural dynamics and the prevalence of GBV incidents reported in recent years.

Uasin Gishu County is home to a diverse population with varying cultural attitudes toward gender roles and violence. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for assessing how they impact survivors' experiences and service utilization. The selected recovery centers provide a range of services aimed at supporting survivors, including medical care, psychological counseling, legal assistance, and social support. Analyzing these centers allows for insights into the effectiveness and accessibility of services available to survivors. The study area is characterized by active community groups working towards addressing GBV issues. This engagement can influence how services are perceived and utilized by survivors.

Data Sources

The study utilizes multiple data sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the recovery centers' operations and their impact on survivors.

Center Records

Data collected from center records includes information on essential resources such as Post-Rape Care (PRC) kits, referral directories, and trauma registers. Analyzing this data helps identify resource gaps and areas for improvement in service delivery.

Observational Data

Observational data involves qualitative notes taken during visits to the recovery centers. This data provides insights into daily operations, staff interactions with survivors, and the overall environment within the centers. Such observations are crucial for understanding how institutional practices affect survivor experiences.

Qualitative Notes

Qualitative notes gathered from staff interviews and informal discussions provide additional context regarding operational challenges, survivor needs, and community perceptions surrounding GBV services. These insights enrich the analysis by highlighting lived experiences that may not be captured through quantitative measures alone.

Analytical Approach

The analytical approach involves categorizing and analyzing data according to the five systemic levels outlined in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chrono-system. This structured analysis enables a comprehensive understanding of how different levels influence survivors' recovery experiences.

Analytical Framework

Microsystem: Examining direct interactions between survivors and service providers within recovery centers. This includes analyzing counselor-client relationships and immediate support received.

Mesosystem: Exploring interrelationships between recovery centers, community groups, and referral agencies. This level assesses how these entities collaborate to provide comprehensive support for survivors.

Exosystem: Investigating indirect influences such as institutional policies that affect service delivery at recovery centers. This includes examining organizational support structures that facilitate or hinder access to resources.

Macrosystem: Analyzing broader societal norms, laws, and cultural attitudes toward GBV that shape the context in which recovery services operate. Understanding these influences is critical for identifying systemic barriers faced by survivors.

Chrono-System: Considering temporal dynamics in survivors' journeys through trauma and recovery over time. This level examines how different phases of recovery impact service utilization and overall healing processes.

Findings

Micro-System

The analysis of the micro-system reveals critical observations regarding the physical and procedural resources available to survivors within the recovery centers. The finding that 42.86% of centers have adequate private rooms indicates a significant shortfall in providing a safe and confidential environment for survivors. Private rooms are essential for ensuring that survivors feel secure and respected during their interactions with healthcare providers and counselors.

Additionally, the 71.43% availability of trauma forms suggests that most centers have established protocols for documenting trauma-related information. However, this figure also implies that there may be inconsistencies in how trauma is recorded and addressed across different centers. The presence of trauma forms is crucial for effective assessment and tailored interventions, as they guide the care provided to each survivor.

These observations highlight the necessity for effective survivor-centered care, which relies on consistent access to immediate resources such as private spaces and comprehensive documentation processes. Without adequate facilities and standardized procedures, survivors may experience barriers to receiving appropriate care, which can hinder their recovery journey. The findings suggest a need for investment in infrastructure and training to ensure that all recovery centers can meet the basic requirements for providing quality support to survivors.

Meso-System

The meso-system analysis reveals a concerning lack of inter-organizational collaboration among the recovery centers. With only 14.29% of centers utilizing referral directories, it is evident that many organizations are not effectively communicating or coordinating with one another to provide comprehensive support for survivors. This limited connectivity can lead to fragmented services, where survivors may not receive the holistic care they need.

The findings underscore the importance of enhancing collaboration among recovery centers, community groups, and referral agencies. Poor connectivity within the meso-system can undermine comprehensive support systems, leaving survivors without access to essential resources such as legal assistance or specialized counseling services. To improve outcomes for survivors, it is crucial to establish formal partnerships and communication channels between organizations to facilitate seamless referrals and integrated care.

Exo-System

The exo-system analysis highlights significant gaps in institutional support structures affecting recovery services. The availability of institutional policies is reported at 42.86%, indicating that many centers lack clear guidelines or frameworks for addressing GBV effectively. Furthermore, only 28.57% of centers have lockable cabinets for safeguarding sensitive survivor data, raising concerns about confidentiality and data protection.

These insights suggest an urgent need to strengthen organizational infrastructure within recovery centers. Developing comprehensive institutional policies can provide a framework for consistent service delivery, while investing in secure storage solutions for sensitive information can enhance trust between survivors and service providers. By prioritizing these areas, organizations can improve service continuity and ensure that survivor data is handled with the utmost confidentiality.

Macro-System

The macro-system analysis identifies critical societal issues impacting GBV recovery efforts. Societal stigma surrounding sexual violence continues to be a significant barrier for survivors seeking help, as fear of judgment or retribution can prevent them from accessing necessary services. Additionally, insufficient governmental oversight contributes to gaps in resource allocation and support systems for GBV survivors.

To address these macro-level challenges, it is essential to advocate for public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing stigma associated with GBV. These campaigns can help shift societal attitudes and encourage more individuals to seek help without fear of judgment. Furthermore, policy-driven resource allocation is necessary to ensure that recovery centers receive adequate funding and support from governmental bodies, enabling them to provide comprehensive services tailored to the needs of survivors.

Chrono-System

The chrono-system analysis reveals that survivors experience varying stages of recovery over time, highlighting the need for adaptable interventions that can respond to their evolving needs. Recovery is not a linear process; instead, it involves navigating different phases that may require different types of support at various points in time.

Given these dynamics, it is crucial to design programs that cater to both immediate needs (such as medical care) and long-term recovery goals (such as psychological counseling). Interventions should be flexible enough to accommodate the unique journeys of each survivor while providing ongoing support throughout their recovery process.

Discussion

The application of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various systemic levels that influence survivor recovery from gender-based violence (GBV). Each level micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono interacts to shape the experiences and outcomes of survivors.

Micro-System: This level focuses on the immediate environment of the survivor, including interactions with counselors, medical staff, and caregivers. Adequate resources such as private rooms and trauma forms are essential for creating a supportive atmosphere. The findings indicate that improvements in these areas can enhance the quality of care, fostering trust and safety for survivors during their recovery process.

Meso-System: The meso-system encompasses the relationships between different organizations involved in supporting survivors. Limited inter-organizational collaboration can hinder comprehensive care, as evidenced by the low utilization of referral directories. Enhancing connectivity among recovery centers, community groups, and referral agencies is crucial for providing holistic support that addresses all aspects of a survivor's needs.

Exo-System: Institutional policies and organizational support structures play a significant role in shaping the services available to survivors. The findings highlight inadequate support for policies and resources aimed at safeguarding survivor data and ensuring service continuity. Strengthening these institutional frameworks is vital for creating a reliable support system that protects survivors' confidentiality and promotes effective service delivery.

Macro-System: Societal norms, laws, and cultural attitudes toward GBV greatly impact survivor experiences. The presence of stigma and insufficient governmental oversight can deter survivors from seeking help. Advocacy for public awareness campaigns and policy-driven resource allocation is essential to address these macro-level challenges and foster a more supportive environment for survivors.

Chrono-System: The temporal dynamics of recovery emphasize that survivors experience different stages over time. Adaptable interventions that respond to the evolving needs of survivors are necessary to facilitate healing throughout their recovery journey. Programs must be designed with flexibility to accommodate both immediate and long-term recovery goals.

Barriers to Effective Interventions

Despite the potential benefits of a systems approach, several barriers impede effective interventions for GBV survivors:

Coordination Gaps: Limited collaboration among organizations leads to fragmented services and missed opportunities for comprehensive support. Many centers do not utilize referral directories, which can prevent survivors from accessing necessary resources.

Resource Availability: Inadequate access to essential resources such as trauma kits, private spaces, and trained personnel hampers the ability to provide quality care. The lack of

institutional policies further exacerbates these challenges by failing to establish clear guidelines for service delivery.

Societal Attitudes: Stigmatization of GBV survivors creates an environment where individuals may feel ashamed or fearful of disclosing their experiences. This societal stigma can deter survivors from seeking help or utilizing available services.

Practical Applications

To address the identified barriers and enhance support for GBV survivors, practical applications at different systemic levels are essential:

Micro-Level: Increase the availability of trauma kits and private spaces within recovery centers. Ensuring that all centers are equipped with adequate resources can improve the quality of care provided to survivors.

Meso-Level: Develop referral networks and partnerships among recovery centers, community organizations, and referral agencies. Establishing formal collaboration can facilitate seamless access to comprehensive support services for survivors.

Macro-Level: Advocate for survivor-centric legislation and funding initiatives aimed at addressing GBV. Engaging policymakers in discussions about resource allocation can help create a more supportive legal framework that prioritizes the needs of survivors.

Chrono-Level: Build flexible, stage-sensitive care models that adapt to the varying needs of survivors throughout their recovery journey. Programs should be designed to provide both immediate assistance and long-term support tailored to individual circumstances.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model offers a structured framework for understanding the multifaceted influences on survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and the gaps in recovery services. By examining the interplay between various systemic levels—micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono—this model highlights how individual experiences are shaped not only by immediate interactions but also by broader institutional, societal, and temporal factors. The findings from this study underscore the importance of adopting a holistic approach to address the needs of survivors effectively. Each systemic level presents unique challenges and opportunities that must be considered in designing interventions aimed at improving recovery outcomes.

Recommendations

To enhance recovery services for GBV survivors in Uasin Gishu County, the following recommendations are proposed:

Enhance Micro-System Resources:

Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Establish clear SOPs for counseling and trauma-informed care within recovery centers. These guidelines should ensure that all staff members are trained to provide consistent, empathetic support to survivors.

Increase Availability of Post-Rape Care (PRC) Kits: Ensure that all recovery centers are adequately stocked with PRC kits and other essential medical supplies. This will enable prompt and effective medical responses to survivors' needs.

Improve Meso-System Linkages:

Establish Effective Referral Mechanisms: Develop comprehensive referral directories that facilitate collaboration between recovery centers, community organizations, and legal aid services. Regular training sessions can help staff understand how to navigate these networks effectively.

Foster Inter-Organizational Partnerships: Encourage collaboration among various organizations working with GBV survivors to create a more integrated support system. Joint initiatives can enhance resource sharing and improve service delivery.

Address Exo- and Macro-System Gaps:

Implement Policy Reforms: Advocate for legislative changes that strengthen protections for GBV survivors and ensure adequate funding for recovery services. Policies should prioritize survivor-centric approaches that enhance access to care.

Increase Societal Engagement: Launch public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing stigma associated with GBV. Engaging community leaders and influencers can help shift cultural attitudes and encourage more individuals to seek help.

Adapt Interventions to Meet the Chrono-System's Temporal Needs:

Design Flexible Intervention Models: Develop programs that can adapt to the varying stages of recovery experienced by survivors. Interventions should be responsive to immediate needs while also providing long-term support options.

Monitor Recovery Progress Over Time: Implement systems for tracking survivor progress throughout their recovery journey. This data can inform ongoing adjustments to interventions, ensuring they remain relevant and effective.

Final Thoughts

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards creating a more supportive environment for GBV survivors in Uasin Gishu County. Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model as a guiding framework will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding survivor experiences and promote effective strategies for enhancing recovery services.

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