

## Rethinking Domestic Violence: Filipino Men as Victims of Abuse

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According to a 2002 World Health Organization (WHO) report, intimate partner violence occurs “in all countries, all cultures and at every level of society without exception” (Krug et al., 2002, as cited by Conway, 2008, p.3). “The report affirmed that although women can be violent towards their male partners and violence occurs also between partners of the same sex, the “overwhelming burden is borne by women at the hands of men” (Conway, 2008, p.3). Although this is a fact, the notion that women are the ones who are always victimized tends to lead to the negligence or invisibility of the issue of male victimization.

In the Philippines, patriarchy sets the standard of gender roles in the society, which makes the presence of male victims in an intimate partner relationship largely unrecognized. Thus, cases of men being victims and women as aggressors in an intimate partner relationship are perceived as impossible. Moreover, social institutions such as hospitals, police, and local government institutions, tend to focus more on providing protection to women and children victims of domestic violence. This neglects the possibility of men being victims in spousal abuse.



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Due to their invisibilization, male victims of violence are largely unrecognized in data and statistical reports in the country regarding domestic violence. Despite reports and statistics on male victims of violence, news articles and documentaries aired in the country’s local television station featured the phenomenon of battered husbands in the country (Junio, et al., 2014).

Furthermore, policies and laws enacted in relation to domestic violence only recognizes women and children as potential victims of such, while men as perpetrators of abuse. The country’s law on domestic violence, which is Republic Act 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children, promotes the safety, empowers, and protects women and children victims from any form of violence. The law only recognizes

women and children as victims of abuse. It does not recognize men being victims, but as perpetrators of abuse.

“Prior to the creation of RA 9262, the Philippines already had related laws where domestic violence or intimate partner violence would fall under” (Junio, et al., 2014, p.65). These laws are: a) Revised Penal Code of 1930; b) Family Code of 1988; c) Republic Act 8369, also known as Family Courts Act 1997; and Republic Act 8353, or the Anti-Rape Law of 1998.

The provisions for physical injuries of the Revised Penal Code (1930) and Family Code (1988) are both gender-neutral: it does not specify the sex of the victim or the offender. However, in terms of support measures for the victims, they are not as comprehensive as RA 9262. “The physical injuries category of the Revised Penal Code only penalizes crimes, which resulted from physical violence... it cannot be used to acquire protection orders. The Family Code, on the other hand, only deals with custody and conjugal property issues (Junio, et al., 2014, p.66)”.

The Family Courts Act of 1997 provides a section where it covers domestic violence. “Section 5 states that domestic violence is under the jurisdiction of family courts. Furthermore, in support of RA 9262, the victims that are considered in this section of the law are specifically women and children (Junio, et al., 2014, p.67)”

“Judging from most of the laws and reports in the Philippines, domestic violence is clearly targeted to women and children victims. Although there are leeways for battered men when it comes to some laws, the primary law of the Philippines on domestic violence only deems women and children as the ones in need of protection (Junio, et al., 2014, p.67).” Is it time for men to be included in the policy framework of the Philippines? Let us all remember that violence does not discriminate: it does not choose its victims. It is time for us to rethink violence.