Overview and Research Question

Alberta Men's Network (AMN) is a community committed to non-violence, supporting healthy masculinities and gender equity by identifying and working within them.

In 2016, AMN and the University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work designed and implemented the Alberta Men's Survey (AMS) as a violence primary prevention assessment.1,2

Key findings from over 2000 Alberta men included:

- 96% reported that men “need support for well-being and healthy relationships.” 3
- 66% indicated that peer support groups would be beneficial supports. 4

These findings served as a guide for the implementation of AMN’s projects, including the project of focus, to provide opportunities for peer support and learning through culturally relevant community engagement.

Research Question:

What are men’s experiences and stated transformative impacts from the Men’s Wellbeing Group?

Preliminary Findings

A total of 7 Alberta men from Bhutanese, Ethiopian, Iranian, Peruvian, Mixed-European, Nepalese, and Venezuelan backgrounds attended the final focus group, which was also recorded as a digital story. All participants were male-identified, some in fathering roles, occupying various professional roles, and representing a diverse age range. The men identified and shared several learnings on healthy relationship skills as well as multiple personal benefits that they gained from participating in the group. Included in the evaluation, the men shared their recommendations on how these groups should be hosted in the future. From their insights, six key themes emerged.

Relational Accountability

One of the key learnings articulated by the men was taking accountability for themselves in their relationships with others. This greater sense of responsibility was noted as participants expressed a newer sense of management over their communication with others.

Safe and Supportive Spaces

Men shared that the group provided the necessary nurturing connections to support healthy masculinity. Because safety was established and experienced within a shared space, men felt heard and supported when expressing their feelings.

Caring Self & Well-Being

Men identified the need for self-care and well-being practices in their lives. They commented that self-awareness is important when it comes to inner work including taking responsibility for their emotions.

Personal Growth

Men shared that personal growth or the idea of working towards and/or becoming the person that they would like to be through self-work as a key learning and experience. This included the realization of how they viewed masculinity and what drives those views.

Emotions

Men shared that the group process allowed them to express different emotions about their own lives. They felt “empowered by the group.”

Self Care & Wellness

Men shared that the group process helped them take care of themselves. They learned that they could be more mindful about their own emotional and physical well-being.

Implications and Next Steps

This research supports that transformative learning with men is an effective primary approach to addressing violence and promoting well-being.8

Men need supports and services that foster their well-being to develop greater self-awareness of how they enact their relationships with themselves and others.

A key component of violence prevention is healing work; hence men require these spaces and opportunities to both address and heal from traumatic experiences including migration, racism, and gender oppression. Establishing an environment of healing, support, and the sharing of experiences with other men, are important qualities for the group.

Further, these environments foster spaces for men to discuss and question alternative viewpoints and embodiments of masculinity, which the men participants viewed as both beneficial and needed.

Highlighted in the findings was how accountability relates to both self-work (growth, healing) and being responsible in relationships with others. Further discussion and research is needed on how men’s programming can prioritize these areas of skill building.

Underscored in these findings is the need for further training to equip diverse ethnocultural community leaders to implement primary prevention peer-based groups for men within their own communities.

Next Steps for this Project:

- Disseminate the findings through a community brief, digital infographic, two digital stories, and a research paper.
- Collaborate with community partners to support the trained leaders to facilitate the MWBG within their own communities.

References:


Noemi Ramirez-Escobar, Noemi.ramirezescobar@ucalgary.ca

Liza Lorenzetti, MSW, RSW, Ph.D. lilar@ucalgary.ca

Preventing domestic violence within collectivist cultures: A community-based well-being group for men.

Authors: Ramirez Escobar, N., Thomas, S., Lorenzetti, L., Olphant, F., Halvorsen, J., Khatiwada, K., Bousanti, A., Benavides, S., Kariki, B., Chirino Baker, V., & Naraval, J.

Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that we are on Indigenous homelands and express our gratitude and appreciation for the Indigenous people who live here and have shared their land and teachings. We are honoured to live and build community on the traditional homelands of the Niitsitapi: the Siksika, Kainai and Piikani; their Treaty 7 cognosatories: the Tsuut’ina and the Nakoda Nations; the Métis Nation (MNA Region 3) and those who call Calgary (Mohkinstsis) home.

Literature Review

Violence against women (VAW) is a pervasive social issue in Canada that transcends socio-cultural, faith, and economic groups.

Men are the primary perpetrators of domestic and gender-based violence (GBV), the participation and engagement of men in preventing and ending VAW and all forms of violence is critical.5,6,7

In addition to women, girls, and everyone on the gender spectrum, hetero-patriarchal gender norms and expectations have negative impacts on men and boys.6,8

Attending to intersectional oppression, childhood/intergenerational trauma, and systemic barriers are part of an overall primary prevention strategy.4,5

There is an absence of services focused on the prevention of GBV within immigrant and ethnocultural communities in Canada. Meaningful and impactful change approaches must include training and capacity-building efforts to equip ethnocultural communities to implement culturally relevant peer-based groups within their own communities and assist men in accessing services.10

Project Implementation

Objective: To train community-based men leaders from diverse ethnocultural communities in Alberta (Bhutanese, Ethopian, Filipino, Iranian, Mexican, Peruvian, Mixed-European, Nepalese, Venezuelan) to work with other men as trained peer supports and facilitators.

Theoretical Framework: Post-Colonial theory and Intersectionality. Postcolonial theory focuses on challenging how common knowledges, social norms, and power relations are prescribed by colonialism.11,12 While intersectionality centers on the intersecting structural oppressions which construct day-to-day lived experiences. This theoretical framework allows us to examine ethnocultural diverse men’s well-being within the context of a colonial and globalized world.13

Process: 10 sessions, 2-3 hours each.

Session Topics:

Overview and Research Question - Session 1

Research Question - Session 2

Self-care and Well-being - Session 3

Personal Growth - Session 4

Safe and Supportive Spaces - Session 5

Dedicated Time for Healing - Session 6

Implications and Next Steps - Session 7

Methodology

Upon completion of the 10th session, one focus group was held on Zoom. Men who participated in the well-being groups were recruited to participate in the post-training focus group.

Critical narrative inquiry (CNI) was used as the methodology for this study. CNI focuses on storytelling and accounts for complex human situations and fine distinctions that can be made between situational factors within research.14

The preliminary data analysis was completed by three members of the research team and was analyzed both thematically and through the construction of stories among participants. The complete analysis and member checking with participants is still in process.

Implications and Next Steps

This research supports that transformative learning with men is an effective primary approach to addressing violence and promoting well-being.8

Men need supports and services that foster their well-being to develop greater self-awareness of how they enacting their relationships with themselves and others.

A key component of violence prevention is healing work; hence men require these spaces and opportunities to both address and heal from traumatic experiences including migration, racism, and gender oppression. Establishing an environment of healing, support, and the sharing of experiences with other men, are important qualities for the group.

Further, these environments foster spaces for men to discuss and question alternative viewpoints and embodiments of masculinity, which the men participants viewed as both beneficial and needed.

Highlighted in the findings was how accountability relates to both self-work (growth, healing) and being responsible in relationships with others. Further discussion and research is needed on how men’s programming can prioritize these areas of skill building.

Underscored in these findings is the need for further training to equip diverse ethnocultural community leaders to implement primary prevention peer-based groups for men within their own communities.