Promoting positive male gender socialization among migrant male youth living in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya: Applying appreciative inquiry to gender-based violence prevention efforts

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Abstract

Detrimental gender norms that influence male perpetrated gender-based violence against women are enhanced in times of forced migration and refugee resettlement. While a variety of factors in these contexts contribute to male adoption of harmful notions of masculinity and subsequent controlling and violent behaviors towards women, a variety of protective factors may exist to counteract this tendency and reduce gender-based violence perpetration. This research sought to understand how social and structural factors in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya could be leveraged to promote positive male gender socialization among refugee youth.

This study employed a two-phased qualitative data collection approach to best explore these factors among predominantly South Sudanese migrant male youth living in Kakuma Refugee Camp. The Appreciative Inquiry leadership theory served as the base conceptual framework for the study methodology.

Key findings from this study were categorized into four core themes: 1) Kakuma structures that promote positive male gender socialization and positive male/female interactions, 2) male gender socialization among refugees in Kakuma and what factors affect this development process, 3) perceived characteristics of the ideal man in Kakuma society and how this “real man” should relate with women in the community, and 4) recommendations for promoting positive male gender socialization in order to avert GBV perpetration behaviors.

The study’s results suggest a change model to promote positive male gender socialization that averts GBV perpetration behaviors among male youth in Kakuma. Specifically, the plan for change elevates men as leaders in order to facilitate change amid complexity by building on the constructs of freedom, information, culture, and relationships to influence male gender identity.