

# Gendered Pathways to Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) Awareness: The Structuration Theory Analysis

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## Abstract

This study is anchored on Structural Theory, and it aims to determine how structural (education, occupation, income), cultural (sociocultural norms, religious beliefs), and institutional (media exposure, educational intervention) factors influence community awareness of the nature of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC). Quantitative research design was utilized, with cross-sectional survey data collected from 167 respondents and analyzed using inferential statistics. Results from t-tests, ANOVA, and hierarchical and moderated multiple regression analyses indicate that institutional resources (media exposure) are the most powerful drivers of awareness, cultural factors (patriarchal sociocultural norms) are the primary constraints, and structural factors (educational attainment) are the key enablers of awareness of the nature of violent acts and the legal protections available to victims. The findings also reveal a duality within cultural structures, highlighting that the influence of religious beliefs on awareness is positive while the influence of the sociocultural norms within traditional communities is negative. Moreover, sex moderates these pathways for awareness. On one hand, it enhances the effect of media on legal awareness and the effect of religious belief on awareness of violent acts. On the other hand, it weakens the influence of patriarchal sociocultural norms on both types of awareness. These findings advance an understanding of the primary drivers and barriers to VAWC awareness and the importance of media, cultural intelligence, and gendered structuration. Based on this understanding, integrated strategies that leverage institutional factors in culturally intelligent ways, gender-specific programs to counter the patriarchal attitude towards violence against women and children, and institutionalizing VAWC education are key to increasing community awareness of VAWC.

**Keywords:** *gender-based violence, community awareness, cultural norms, media influence, structuration theory*

## Introduction

Violence against women has remained one of the world's most significant social issues. According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in three women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime [1]. However, the magnitude and actualization of violence against women vary in different settings [2-3]. More frequently, this variation occurs due to cultural, socio-economic, and demographic considerations [4]. For instance, in the Philippines, despite national legislative protective measures—with the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act (RA 9262)—many women still endure various forms of violence, with gaps as large as the law and

awareness of such law at the community level [5-6]. Thus, it is vital to understand not only prevalence but also awareness of violence.

Additionally, another sociological construct relates to empowerment. Many of the constructs that support structure rather than agency indicate that within these settings, women are unlikely to act on their own to empower themselves for greater protection and, with their reduced empowerment, find themselves increasingly vulnerable [7-8]. For example, people who witness violence against women suffer health issues from psychological determinations that go beyond physical well-being [9-10]. Therefore, it becomes clear that another avenue to address this issue may be through legal empowerment or increasing the awareness of legal protection against such actions. [11-12].

Previous research has investigated this topic and posited that the most important variable to consider for determining awareness of violence against women is socioeconomic status. For instance, those who are low-income are less aware due to their limited education and information accessibility with institutional awareness [13]. However, these only warn of the issue of material access translating to increased awareness. Instead, these findings only further the notion that structural advantages come into play regarding non-material concerns of awareness, such as values, cultural constructs, and ethical considerations [14-15]. Additionally, some cultural constructs and values affect the awareness of violence against women. For example, many people in various parts of the world seem to have their awareness and tolerance for violence against women mediated by these constructs. Their response to such violence is based on these patriarchal constructs, family dynamics, and expected male rights, which severely diminish reporting intentions [16]. In contrast, another determining factor found in numerous studies is that institutional channels of information—most notably, media and classroom exposure—reveal that awareness steadily increases over time with recognition of gender-based violence through these forces [17]. However, differing levels of such impactors have been revealed by more recent findings based on socioeconomic and cultural differences [18,11]. Thus, there is a need to further investigate the impacts of institutional channels and exposure to this information over a longer period than previous studies and relative to structural and cultural conditions.

Apparently, there are still gaps in the research that need to be addressed. Many research studies have examined various predictors of awareness of VAWC, but few studies operate on a comparative analysis perspective, seeking to research from the same comparative perspective the relative significance or importance of each of the three domains, respectively. Even fewer studies exist that explore the difference in awareness of acts of violence from VAWC awareness of legal-institutional awareness, as they are separate but aligned. Even fewer studies exist that look at awareness differences by sex, as this comparative analysis perspective seeks to research the difference in awareness to fill this gap, as the difference in sex as a factor of biological sexes crafts different trajectories for awareness. Thus, this study fulfilled a need for a new source to contribute to the literature on the topic by taking a multivariate, theory-driven approach that simultaneously looks at these three domains while looking at these dimensions of awareness relative to sex awareness of VAWC. Where current research ends, this study aimed to build upon it and incorporate a multitude of elements that will bridge previous studies together, and also contribute to what is currently unknown regarding awareness of VAWC. Overall, this study can therefore lend an integrating approach to the literature and current research on the field of VAWC awareness, as it looks to take the field beyond mere descriptive studies, and instead, to a better understanding of how awareness of VAWC functions as a socially constructed phenomenon.

### *Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the structuration theory. It states that an individual's awareness of an issue is a result of the interplay between social structure and human agency [19]. In the context of this study, an individual's awareness of VAWC issues, in terms of their knowledge of violent acts and their awareness of their rights and protection mechanisms, is a result of the interplay of structural factors such as their education, occupation, income, and age; institutional factors such as media exposure and educational interventions; and cultural factors such as the gender norms they have been exposed to and the beliefs they have internalized regarding violence. Furthermore, the concept of sex as a moderator of the relationship between institutional factors and VAWC awareness is reflective of the gendered power relations embedded in social structures. These power relations condition how individuals experience and internalize information that institutions disseminate about violence and what responses they give to it.

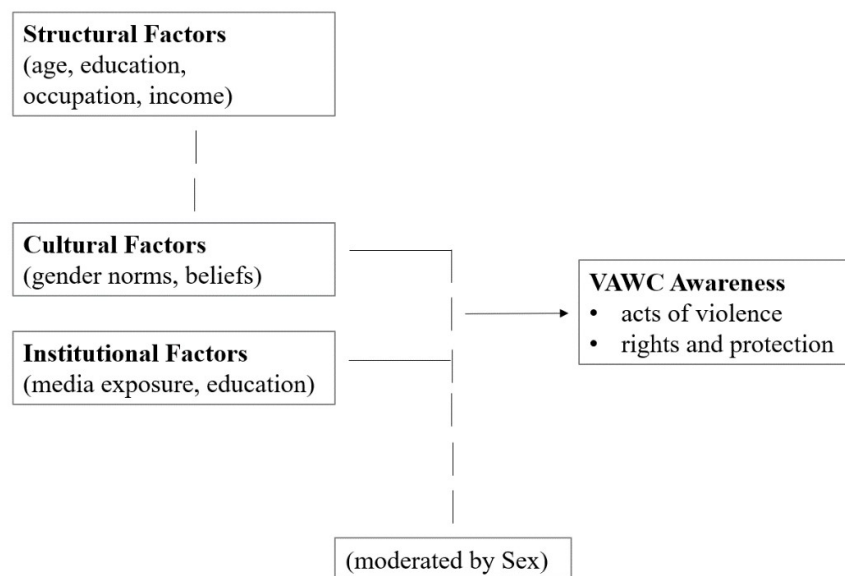


Figure 1: Conceptual Paradigm

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the extent to which structural factors such as age, sex, education, occupation, and income contribute to variations in knowledge of and awareness of VAWC;
2. To determine the extent to which cultural factors such as sociocultural influence and religious beliefs independently impact awareness of VAWC;
3. To evaluate whether institutional factors can enhance the awareness of VAWC across different socioeconomic and cultural contexts;
4. To identify the dominant predictors of awareness of VAWC, and
5. To examine whether sex moderates the relationship between the predictors and VAWC awareness.

### Methods and Materials

#### Research Design

A quantitative research design was used in this study, as well as inferential statistical methods. The use of this design, approach, and type of analysis helped to enable the determination of the factors that are related to, or that affect the levels of awareness that individuals have of VAWC, or the analysis of the relationships or associations that exist between those factors and variables. These approaches, methods, and techniques were determined to be the most appropriate based upon the objectives of the study.

#### *Study Site and Study Population*

The study population was composed of 167 individuals who were enrolled in the Multi-Level Training for Industrial–Community Advancement and Building (MULTICAB) program that was implemented by NEMSU's Department of Industrial Technology and that affects individuals enrolled in any one of the Department's eight academic majors. These individuals have constituted the population of interest in this study.

#### *Instrument*

The instrument that was used to obtain data in this study was a structured questionnaire that was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was composed of a series of questions that correspond to the various variables and factors that were analyzed in relation to each other within this research project. For instance, one section of the questionnaire contains questions related to the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondent. In another section, questions are asked that are related to the respondent's awareness of VAWC, both in terms of awareness of acts of violence itself and legal rights and protection mechanisms associated with VAWC. Furthermore, additional sections and corresponding questions are included in order to assess the role that cultural factors or influences, media-based awareness campaigns, or educational or community-based intervention efforts have had on respondent awareness levels. Each question utilizes a Likert-type scale to assess the different response options of the respondents. The questionnaire was presented to experts in areas related to the project to ensure its content validity. In addition, reliability testing, such as Cronbach's alpha, was used to ensure reliability.

#### *Data Collection*

The data to be used for this study was collected after obtaining approval from the relevant authorities and with the consent of those who were to complete the questionnaire or from whom that information was to be collected. In accordance with ethical research guidelines, participation in this research project was determined to be voluntary; anonymity and confidentiality were assured for those who participated; and no personally-identifiable information was collected.

#### *Variables in Research Study*

The main dependent variable or factor that was examined in this study was the awareness that individuals have of VAWC, in terms of both their awareness of violent acts as well as their awareness of legal rights and protection mechanisms. The independent variables that were observed and analyzed were the structural, cultural, and institutional factors that may affect such awareness levels. Thus, additional variables included as part of these factors included demographic, socioeconomic, cultural, media-related, and educational factors.

#### *Data Analysis*

Once data were obtained from the questionnaires and surveys, they were subjected to a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical tests. The purpose of the inferential tests is to determine whether any differences exist between the study populations/sub-populations or within the variable itself compared to the other variable (i.e., mean score differences (independent samples t-tests) or test whether variables are related (i.e., correlation tests). In addition, more complex tests were run to assess which of those predictors were the most statistically significant for VAWC awareness levels and VAWC relative attitudes (i.e., regression analyses). Sex was included as a third variable in these tests.

## Results

**Table 1**

*Group Differences in VAWC Awareness by Demographic Characteristics (Structural Factors)*

| Characteristic              | n   | AVA<br>(SD)   | M | Test<br>Statistic | p-value | ALP<br>(SD)   | M | Test<br>Statistic | p-value |
|-----------------------------|-----|---------------|---|-------------------|---------|---------------|---|-------------------|---------|
| <b>Sex</b>                  |     |               |   |                   |         |               |   |                   |         |
| Male                        | 62  | 3.82<br>(.41) |   | t = -2.17         | .031*   | 3.79<br>(.45) |   | t = -1.89         | .060    |
| Female                      | 105 | 3.95<br>(.39) |   |                   |         | 3.90<br>(.42) |   |                   |         |
| <b>Education</b>            |     |               |   |                   |         |               |   |                   |         |
| Elementary                  | 31  | 3.72<br>(.44) |   | F = 5.72          | .001**  | 3.68<br>(.48) |   | F = 4.83          | .003**  |
| Secondary                   | 73  | 3.89<br>(.40) |   |                   |         | 3.86<br>(.42) |   |                   |         |
| Tertiary                    | 58  | 4.02<br>(.35) |   |                   |         | 3.99<br>(.39) |   |                   |         |
| Graduate                    | 5   | 4.10<br>(.32) |   |                   |         | 4.08<br>(.35) |   |                   |         |
| <b>Post-hoc<sup>1</sup></b> |     | T > E, S      |   | T > E, S          |         |               |   |                   |         |
| <b>Occupation</b>           |     |               |   |                   |         |               |   |                   |         |
| Unemployed                  | 125 | 3.88<br>(.41) |   | F = 1.23          | .269    | 3.84<br>(.44) |   | F = 1.87          | .173    |
| Employed                    | 42  | 3.96<br>(.38) |   |                   |         | 3.93<br>(.41) |   |                   |         |
| <b>Income (PHP)</b>         |     |               |   |                   |         |               |   |                   |         |
| ≤10,000                     | 31  | 3.75<br>(.45) |   | F = 2.15          | .121    | 3.71<br>(.49) |   | F = 2.08          | .129    |
| 11,000-21,000               | 9   | 3.92<br>(.38) |   |                   |         | 3.88<br>(.41) |   |                   |         |
| 22,000-43,000               | 2   | 4.05<br>(.30) |   |                   |         | 4.02<br>(.32) |   |                   |         |

*Note.* N = 167. AVA = Awareness of Violent Acts; ALP = Awareness of Legal Protections; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.<sup>1</sup>Tukey HSD post-hoc tests: T = Tertiary, E = Elementary, S = Secondary. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

Table 1 suggests that the community's various socio-demographics and socio-economic conditions either correlate or do not significantly correlate with their VAWC awareness levels, yet, more importantly, it's the direction that matters. Moreover, the study's finding that awareness levels are significantly and positively correlated with the level of education of members of the community is

supported by a body of literature and knowledge that educated social awareness is essentially awareness [20]. Finally, the non-significant findings of other factors, ideally determined to be socio-economically related, suggest that these findings are not of immediate relevance to awareness levels. Thus, this means that this is a secondary factor showing which factors are most influential on awareness by determining that gender and education are significant correlates of awareness, as compared to other socioeconomic-related factors that were not significantly related to VAWC awareness.

**Table 2**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Cultural Norms on VAWC Awareness*

| Predictor                 | AVA            | ALP            |                |                |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                           | Step 1 $\beta$ | Step 2 $\beta$ | Step 1 $\beta$ | Step 2 $\beta$ |
| <b>Structural Factors</b> |                |                |                |                |
| Education                 | .342**         | .261**         | .328**         | .248*          |
| Occupation                | .098           | .075           | .105           | .082           |
| Income                    | .121           | .096           | .127           | .102           |
| <b>Cultural Factors</b>   |                |                |                |                |
| Socio-cultural influence  | —              | -.287**        | —              | -.274**        |
| Religious belief          | —              | .184*          | —              | .192*          |
| <b>Model Statistics</b>   |                |                |                |                |
| R <sup>2</sup>            | .154           | .231           | .148           | .225           |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>   | .138           | .208           | .132           | .202           |
| $\Delta R^2$              | —              | .077**         | —              | .077**         |
| F for $\Delta R^2$        | —              | 7.89**         | —              | 7.76**         |

*Note.* Standardized beta coefficients are shown. AVA: Awareness of Violent Acts; ALP: Awareness of Legal Protections.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

The final hierarchical regression proceeds in Table 2, which differentiates socio-cultural domains, which respond to VAWC awareness, separate from educated, occupational, and income structural domains that overwhelmingly recognized awareness in Table 1 (see above). Accordingly, with structuration theory where culture is a system of rules and distinctions that constrain and enable agency [19], it's recognized that pre-control of the structural domain, inclusion of culture accounts for a significant additional amount of variance for both awareness outcomes ( $\Delta R^2 = .077$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Culture as an independent source that includes one's placement in socio-economic parameters. However, competing findings emerge regarding culture.

Socio-cultural influence, defined as a scale measure of agreement with traditional and patriarchal gender roles, provides a negative independent effect on awareness ( $\beta = -.287$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Such a finding is echoed by overwhelmingly patriarchal-realigned studies that indicate this inequitable distribution legitimizes violence against women, empowers violence against women stigma over justice for violence against women, and silences ability to speak about the issue in public, all of which muzzle an agent's ability to recognize violence against women—at the community level [21]. Yet cultural structures are not black and white, and religious belief operates as a significant independent measurement with a positive impact on VAWC awareness ( $\beta = .184$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This competing force within the cultural realm denotes that religiosity is not uniformly connected to gendered violence awareness.

Thus, culture is a contested structure, and agents possess competing normative schemes from which they may operate—some that obscure violence against women and others that illuminate it. Finally, the last step is to neutralize education, where education is still found significant—despite control over culture—( $\beta$  remains significant compared to pre-control at .342 compared to .261)—the structural dyad is reinforced—education is an intellectual resource that can combat patriarchal means of silencing by empowering agents with their rights and appropriate legal recourse; however, it also substantiates the educated agent's ability to appropriately navigate culture [20].

**Table 3**  
*Moderated Effects of Institutional Channels on VAWC Awareness*

| Predictor                         | AVA     |      | ALP     |      |
|-----------------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|
|                                   | $\beta$ | p    | $\beta$ | p    |
| <b>Main Effects</b>               |         |      |         |      |
| Media exposure                    | .312**  | .001 | .298**  | .002 |
| Educational intervention          | .284**  | .003 | .271**  | .005 |
| Socioeconomic status              | .251**  | .008 | .243*   | .011 |
| Cultural norms                    | -.194*  | .032 | -.186*  | .039 |
| <b>Interaction Effects</b>        |         |      |         |      |
| Media $\times$ SES                | .152    | .098 | .168    | .078 |
| Education $\times$ SES            | .127    | .175 | .142    | .141 |
| Media $\times$ Cultural norms     | -.185*  | .042 | -.178*  | .049 |
| Education $\times$ Cultural norms | .104    | .247 | .118    | .199 |
| <b>Model Fit</b>                  |         |      |         |      |
| R <sup>2</sup>                    | .294    |      | .286    |      |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>           | .254    |      | .246    |      |
| F                                 | 7.35*** |      | 7.08*** |      |

*Note.* Standardized beta coefficients are shown. SES = Socioeconomic Status. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 3 presents the moderated regression results for institutional channels of information. Thus, it's important to recognize that for both institutional channels—institutionalized media exposure ( $\beta = .312$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and educational efforts ( $\beta = .284$ ,  $p < .01$ )—are confirmed as powerful, direct predictors of greater VAWC awareness. This is consistent with structuration theory that positions institutions as creators of authoritative and allocative resources from which persons learn plausible constructions to bolster their awareness and, thus, reconstruct social realities [19]. Furthermore, contemporary studies suggest that prolonged institutions, formalized media, and educated efforts over time better facilitate awareness, legal literacy, and attitudinal change regarding gender-based violence [22]. But due to the interaction effects, this level of awareness does not operate as effectively everywhere.

Specifically, and as an interesting finding, there is a significant negative interaction between media exposure and cultural norms ( $\beta = -.185$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which suggests that where awareness is most raised from awareness efforts pioneered from media, it is significantly impacted in spaces conditioned by an over-empowered presence of traditional socio-cultural norms. This has been increasingly noted in recent cross-national and community-based studies for violence prevention [23]. Culture is a durable normative framework from which institutionalized messaging emerges; if such messaging does not align with local moral frameworks and gendered realities, it runs the risk of being deemed irrelevant

and illegitimate. Thus, these findings support that awareness frameworks from the top are not sufficient. Institutional interventions need to be culturally relevant and logistically appropriate to local normative frameworks, taking universalized messaging and contextualizing its communicative efforts instead of seeking to short-circuit entrenched cultural logics.

**Table 4**

*Multivariate Regression Analysis of VAWC Awareness Predictors*

| Domain               | Predictor              | B (SE)          | $\beta$ | t     | p        | 95% CI             | Rank |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------|-------|----------|--------------------|------|
| <b>Demographic</b>   | Sex (Female)           | .062<br>(.045)  | .085    | 1.38  | .170     | [-.027,<br>.151]   | 8    |
|                      | Age                    | -.003<br>(.004) | -.042   | -0.75 | .455     | [-.011,<br>.005]   | 10   |
| <b>Structural</b>    | Education              | .128<br>(.038)  | .246    | 3.37  | .001**   | [.053,<br>.203]    | 3    |
|                      | Occupation             | .071<br>(.051)  | .088    | 1.39  | .166     | [-.030,<br>.172]   | 7    |
|                      | Income                 | .089<br>(.047)  | .124    | 1.89  | .060     | [-.004,<br>.182]   | 5    |
| <b>Cultural</b>      | Socio-cultural         | -.156<br>(.041) | -.258   | -3.81 | <.001*** | [-.237, -<br>.075] | 2    |
|                      | Religious belief       | .102<br>(.043)  | .168    | 2.37  | .019*    | [.017,<br>.187]    | 6    |
| <b>Institutional</b> | Media exposure         | .193<br>(.039)  | .317    | 4.95  | <.001*** | [.116,<br>.270]    | 1    |
|                      | Education intervention | .142<br>(.042)  | .234    | 3.38  | .001**   | [.059,<br>.225]    | 4    |

#### Model

#### Summary

$R^2 = .352$ ,

Adjusted  $R^2 =$

.312,  $F(9, 157) =$

8.76,  $p < .001$

*Note.* B = Unstandardized coefficient; SE = Standard error;  $\beta$  = Standardized coefficient; CI = Confidence interval. Rank based on absolute  $\beta$  values. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 4 demonstrates the multivariate model, the results of which explain the total variance (35.2%) and give a general view of the duality of structure among these factors. Among the predictors that have shown statistical significance, institutional factors are paramount in establishing the knowledge of VAWC among the social spectrum. The most robust indicator of VAWC awareness came from the media exposure of respondents. This aligns with existing research because it shows the importance of mass media in raising awareness of social issues. Media exposure as a social consciousness is more modern and indicates that socio-cultural influence is the second-strongest predictor of awareness, albeit with a negative relationship. Thus, patriarchal culture is still the norm, and it becomes a significant force that continues to constrain awareness. Nevertheless, this shows that institutional factors are more powerful than structural and cultural factors, indicating the importance of formalized efforts to distribute knowledge of social issues. The third strongest factor is the structural factor of education, indicating that while structural and cultural factors are important, there is alignment with the institutional factor prioritization. The fact that education outranked other structural factors shows the critical nature of formal education and how it remains a vital structure to enable social change.



**Table 5**  
*Moderating Role of Gender in VAWC Awareness Formation*

| Model                    | Predictor               | AVA       | ALP       |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|
|                          |                         | $\beta$   | p         |
| <b>Main Effects</b>      | Sex (Female)            | .087      | .168      |
|                          | Education               | .245      | .001**    |
|                          | Media exposure          | .312      | <.001***  |
|                          | Cultural norms          | -.194     | .032*     |
| <b>With Interactions</b> | Sex                     | .091      | .152      |
|                          | Education               | .194      | .012*     |
|                          | Media exposure          | .258      | .003**    |
|                          | Cultural norms          | -.152     | .085      |
|                          | Sex × Education         | .168      | .079      |
|                          | Sex × Media             | .142      | .141      |
|                          | Sex × Cultural norms    | -.208     | .034*     |
|                          |                         |           |           |
| <b>Model Statistics</b>  |                         |           |           |
|                          | R <sup>2</sup>          | .278/.312 | .267/.305 |
|                          | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | .262/.284 | .251/.277 |
|                          | $\Delta R^2$            | .034*     | .038*     |
|                          | F for $\Delta R^2$      | 3.12*     | 3.48*     |

*Note.* Standardized beta coefficients are shown. Model 1: Main effects only; Model 2: Includes interaction terms. AVA: Awareness of Violent Acts; ALP: Awareness of Legal Protections. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 5 also reveals that the sex of the individual has significantly interacted with media exposure in impacting the awareness of legal protections ( $\beta = .231$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the adherence of cultural norms in impacting the recognition of violent acts ( $\beta = -.208$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Recent research in gender studies research reveals that women are found to be more receptive to legal information that pertains to protections against violence, as the laws are enacted with the female gender as a consideration [23, 24]. As RA 9262 was enacted as a legal measure primarily to protect women against violence, media messaging regarding this law is found to be more impactful for female recipients of the media message. On the other hand, men are traditionally raised within social structures that normalize the occurrence of violence against women. As a result, men who have been raised within these gendered and socialized norms are found to have diminished awareness of VAWC, as their sensitivity towards these issues is reduced [23]. These findings are reflected in Asian societies like the Philippines, where these gendered social structures are deeply embedded [25]. This additional finding is another aspect of VAWC awareness. Media channels have been effective in raising awareness of the legal protections women have against VAWC. In contrast, the gendered social norms of men hinder their awareness of VAWC.

## Conclusion and Implications

This study presents a comprehensive, multivariate investigation of the determinants influencing community knowledge of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC), resulting in three key findings with substantial implications for theory and action. Initially, it delineates a distinct hierarchy of influence: institutional channels, especially media exposure, are the most potent catalyst; patriarchal cultural norms represent the principal obstacle; and formal education functions as a crucial structural facilitator. Secondly, it reveals a significant duality in cultural factors: religious belief enhances consciousness, yet traditional sociocultural norms inhibit it, thereby contesting uniform perspectives on culture. Thirdly, it empirically illustrates gendered moderation: the route to awareness is fundamentally influenced by sex, with media being more effective in enhancing women's understanding of legal rights, while traditional norms more significantly impede men's acknowledgment of violent crimes. These findings require a multifaceted, evidence-based approach: creating culturally customized media to mitigate normative opposition, establishing gender-specific educational initiatives to tackle distinct hurdles, and embedding VAWC knowledge inside official educational curricula. This comprehensive strategy offers a clear framework for policymakers to improve community awareness by concurrently utilizing supportive structures and reforming restrictive ones.

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### **Ethics Statement**

The ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects were followed in the conduct of this study. Before any data was collected, ethical approval was acquired from the relevant institutional authority. All respondents gave their informed consent, and participation was entirely voluntary. Anonymity and secrecy were guaranteed to participants, and no individually identifiable information was gathered. Participants were made aware of their freedom to leave the study at any moment and without consequence.

### **Disclosure of AI Use**

During manuscript preparation, only language editing, grammatical correction, and formatting assistance were provided using artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technologies. Research data generation, analysis, interpretation, and modification of the study's scientific content were all done without the assistance of AI techniques. The authors alone are in charge of all conceptualization, data analysis, interpretation, and findings.

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