

Impact of Gender-Based Violence towards Men in Kenya: The Case of Men in Kiambaa Sub County, Kiambu

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Abstract

The overall objective of this study was to explore the impact of gender based violence and its impact on men in Kiambaa, Kiambu County. The specific objectives were to; To establish existence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County, to determine the prevalence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County, to evaluate the factors promoting gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County and to analyze the impact of gender based violence among men in Kiambaa Sub County. The study applied the descriptive survey research design. Data was collected from primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data related to the number of gender based violence cases reported, the contributing factors to gender based violence and other information assisted in making conclusions about the study objectives. Primary data was collected using survey questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Data collected from the survey were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The data obtained was then presented in tables of frequencies, bar charts and percentages. The findings of the study were expected to shed more light into impact of gender based violence among men in Kiambaa Sub County. The study established that gender based violence towards men exists in the area and is of high prevalence. The study further found out the factors promoting GBV against men to be power, relations, cultural practices and traditions, lack of access to economic resources, lack of political will to eradicate it and poorly implemented legislation. In addition, the findings obtained showed that the impact of gender based violence against men was mostly negative and varied based on the individual. The study thus recommends the formation of empowerment and support groups to help curb gender based violence against men and to support the affected men.

Key Words: *Gender-Based Violence, Gender-Based Violence towards Men in Kenya, Kiambaa Sub County, Kiambu*

1. Introduction to the Study

In recent years, there has been increasing concern about gender based violence against men, women and children in both developed and developing countries. This violence has been acknowledged worldwide as a violation of the basic human rights of individuals. An increasing amount of research highlights the health burdens, intergenerational effects, and demographic consequences related to it (United Nations General Assembly, 1998). Gender-based violence occurs across all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, and in many societies, including Kenya, women for instance are socialized to accept, tolerate, and even rationalize domestic violence and to remain silent about such experiences (Zimmerman, 1994: 18).

Gender based violence takes place at all levels of society and within all social classes. It takes place at homes, work places, on the street with strangers, schools, churches, and all around us. This kind of violence can take many forms, encompassing a wide range of human rights violations including physical aggression or assault, or threats thereof; sexual abuse, rape, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive, covert abuse and economic deprivation of the family. On the other hand, domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse, and intimate partner violence (IPV), is a pattern of behavior which involves the abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family (FIDA, 2002).

Gender based violence and abuse is not limited to obvious physical violence. It can also mean endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment, and stalking. In a patriarchal society like Kenya, violence against women is actually recognized as one way of disciplining one's wife. In fact, even the society socializes a woman to anticipate this discipline. This deeply engrained belief about gender roles and marriage have encouraged the practice (FIDA, 2009). The reporting of gender related abuses has been negatively skewed towards abuses on men. By contrast, men under-report their own abuses due to fear and avoidance of legal consequences, the tendency to blame their partner, and a narrative focus on their needs and emotions during reporting. Furthermore, cultural factors have had a great influence on men's under-reporting of their own violence. In cultures where men are considered the head of households, wife battering for instance may be not perceived as a serious behavior that needs to report. The government agencies and civil society organizations have not done much in sensitizing communities on the impact of violence towards men and the subsequent impact of violence on the economic deprivation of families in terms of the financial losses, use and misuse within and outside the family set-up (Mucheru, 2014).

In Kenya, during the post electoral violence period of 2008, there were many reports of violence against men in the form of forced circumcision, rapes and other humiliating experiences of a sexual nature. At least 2.1 million men are abused daily by women in Kenya, according to a new report by Maendeleo ya Wanaume (Mawa). The gender based watchdog has consequently raised the red flag over the increasing figures which it says have reached alarming levels. Mawa chairman Ndiritu Njoka, in a report on GBV indicated that the number of men who were abused daily by their spouses increased from 1.5 million in 2009 to 2.1 million in 2013 (Daily Nation, 2013). Notably, abuse against men is carried out in all manner and forms including battering and inflicting of bodily harm. Abuse also constitute to the denial of the man as the head of the house and being forced to do menial jobs like cooking, laundry and baby-sitting among other domestic chores all constitute abuse (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2014). Nairobi County is said to be leading the counties where men are domestically abused with 82 Per Cent of those interviewed confessing to being a survivor of emotional, physical and economic violence. Kiambu, Mombasa, Nyeri and Kirinyaga make up the other top five counties where violence towards men is rampant while minimal cases were reported in West Pokot, Turkana, Taita Taveta and Elgeyo Marakwet counties (Mucheru, 2014).

2. Statement of the Research Problem

Over the past few years, there have been many reported cases of violence towards men at a domestic level. In Kenya for example, there are various news items in the media of men being battered by their wives, injured or even being killed. There are unconfirmed reports too showing that some men after buying investments for their families get killed by their wives

who seek for freedom. Additionally, cases of sexual and gender based violence perpetrated against men have increased. Gender based violence spans from manifest physical abuse and sexual violence, to subtle violations such as verbal abuse and deprivation of their entitlements within the family. However, response to these reports has been limited, as existing evidence and programs have primarily focused on prevention and response to female survivors of GBV.

Many men have been dehumanized, and the effect of this has been trivialized by the very society in which they play significant social and economic roles. Men today suffer both physically and psychologically through being battered, dispossessed, killed, maimed and verbally abused in violent intimate relationships. This study therefore sought to assess the impact of gender-based violence towards men in Kenya with a case study of men of Kiambaa Sub County in Kiambu County.

3. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to explore the impact of gender based violence and its impact on men in Kiambaa, Kiambu County.

The specific objectives were to:

- i. To establish existence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County.
- ii. To determine the prevalence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County.
- iii. To evaluate the factors promoting gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County.
- iv. To analyze the impact of gender based violence among men in Kiambaa Sub County.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by social learning theory, peacebuilding theory and Burton's human needs theory of conflict resolution.

4.1 Social Learning Theory

The theory holds that all the activities human beings engage in is attained through learning. Particularly, the learning in human is mainly from observing the behavior of others and from imagining the consequences of our own actions. Example, children copy the behavior they have observed from others. The theory holds that violence is a coping mechanism learned through observation or experience. Modelling is a contributory factor to learning violent behaviour as well (Burton, & Sandole, 1986). Hence, the theory holds that the likelihood of repeated abusive behaviour is contingent upon reinforcement. The theory thus assumes that through learning and observing, individuals are able to attain characteristics which they did not initially have. Thus, the theory's proposition to the study the gender based violence against men is through mainly a learning process. That is, the scenario maybe as a result of one individual who practiced it so as to exercises command, which was later emulated by others.

4.2 Peacebuilding Theory

The peacebuilding theory was espoused by Lederach (2001). According to Lederach, gender violence is an indication of lack of peace in the society. To eliminate gender based violence, peacebuilding programs must be undertaken simultaneously at numerous levels of the society, especially at the grass roots level; critical issues must find response while broader structural change is envisioned and set in motion; and finally, short term needs and long term vision must be linked. The theory recognizes the important role played by civil society fighting gender based violence against men. According to this theory, civil society are situated in such a way

that they are able to link the grass roots level to the highest levels of decision-making. This linkage is two way in that the decision makers can also channel policy decisions through the civil society to the citizens. Citizenly support is critical to government for governance purposes.

Peacebuilding is used as a method for post-war regions/states in order to erase or minimize previously causes of conflict. In order for peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts and operations to be truly successful, it has to include comprehensive efforts to consolidate peace, identify and support structures within the fragile society. This process will advance a sense of confidence and wellbeing among people. Through talks, negotiations, agreements and most important, integration, ending civil strife can be the only chance for survival. Efforts may also include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation. An important element in the definition of peacebuilding is the work toward reconciliation. It means that peacebuilding should incorporate citizens for the purpose of integration that is separated ethnically or by other means and civil society play crucial role in peacebuilding (Lederach 2001).

4.3 Burton's Human Needs Theory of Conflict Resolution

This theory operates on the premise that a pre-condition for the resolution of any form of violence is that fundamental human needs be met (Burton and Sandole, 1986). Burton and Sandole (1986) adopted eight fundamental needs which included control, security, justice, stimulation, response, meaning, rationality and esteem/recognition. Burton and Sandole (1986) introduced additional need which was role-defense; that is the need to defend one's role. They called these ontological needs and regarded them as a consequence of human nature, which were universal and would be pursued regardless of the consequence. Hence, according to this theory gender based violence is perceived to have resulted from competition over scarce resources as a result of common needs. Consequently, to overcome gender based violence, community empowerment and equal distribution of resources were critical. The theory therefore argues that gender based violence is a result of some human needs not been met.

5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (figure 2.1) illustrates how some elements under study relate with, and influence others.

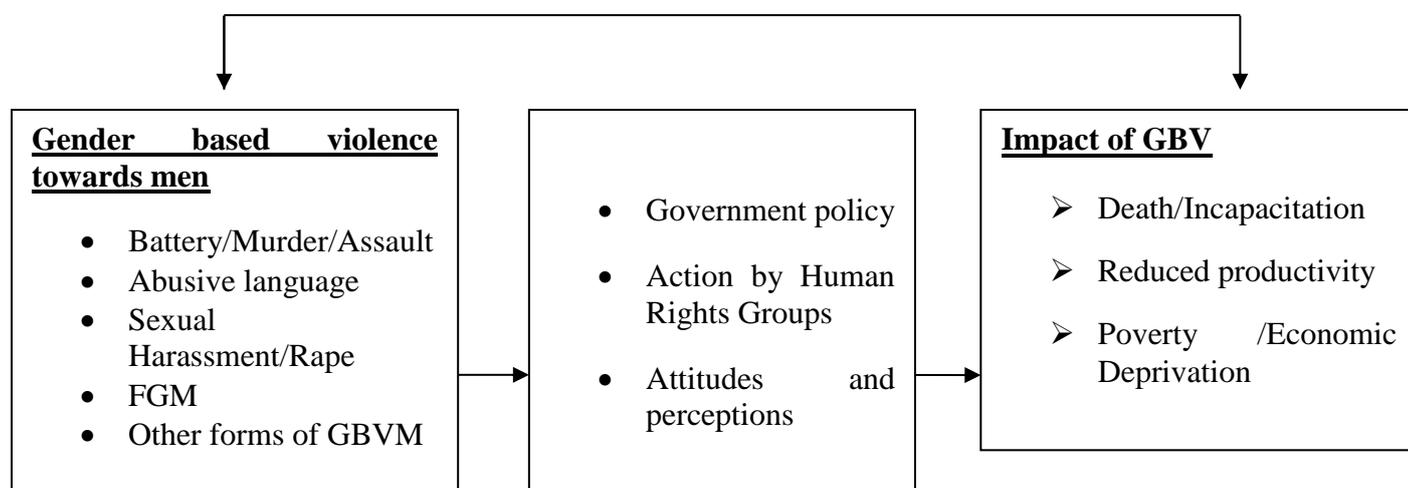


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

6. Research Methodology

The study applied descriptive survey research design where it sought to describe the concept of gender based violence among men in Kenya. Survey design was used since not all men in Kenya was studied but only the sampled men from Kiambaa Sub County. Descriptive design was adopted to enable collection of the data targeting at describing the study variables. The study population was the residents of Kiambaa Sub County. According to 2009 National Census, Kiambaa population was 158,918 with male population of 79,297 and female 79,621. The unit of analysis was adult males aged 18 years and above. Primary data was collected using survey questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

7. Research Findings

The study sought to the existence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County. The results obtained showed that 56% of the respondents affirmed the occurrence of GBV while the remaining 44% indicated that the area did not have cases of GBV. Due to most of the respondents confirming the occurrence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County, gender violence was an issue at Kiambaa and hence the study was justified. In determining the prevalence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County, the findings showed that the incidents were common in occurrence. Particularly, the interviews conducted showed that the cases were being reported at least twice per week or even more. In addition, not all cases were being reported as some men opted to remain silent about the ordeal. Thus showing that GBV was not a new incident in the areas as it occurred frequently as confirmed by at least 50% of the respondents.

The study also sought to determine the factors promoting gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County. The factors included; power, relations, cultural practices and traditions, lack of access to economic resources, lack of political will to eradicate it and poorly implemented legislation. In addition, lack of empowerment was established contribute minimally to the occurrence of gender based violence whereas financial dependence contributed the most. This showed that the factors varied depending on the individuals involved and the exact situation in hand. The study was meant to establish the impact of gender based violence among men in Kiambaa Sub County. The study found a negative impact of gender

based violence against men. Particularly, gender based violence led to emotional trauma, a feeling of lack of self-worth, lack of discontent, dissatisfaction, mental depression, fear, mental stress and confusion on not knowing exactly to do. The respondents also indicated that the most prominent effect of GBV against men to be both depression and fear. The GBV against men also led to more severe negative consequences including broken marriages and engagement in heavy alcohol and substance abuse which sabotages relationships completely.

8. Conclusions

There is existence of gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County. This is contrary to the expectation that gender based violence is towards women only. The study concludes that the gender based violence towards men manifests in various ways with domestic violence being the predominant. This leads to both physical and emotional torture to the victims involved. This shows that it is an issues that requires addressing so as to prevent its negative impacts. The study concludes that gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County is highly prevalent. This is due to the incidents occurring to as high as twice or more per week. This makes Kiambaa area to be one of the highly prevalent areas in the country on gender based violence towards men. As such the study concludes that gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County occurs often despite not all cases being reported.

The study concludes that poor relations, cultural practices and traditions, lack of access to economic resources, lack of political will to eradicate GBV and poorly implemented legislation are the main factors promoting gender based violence towards men in Kiambaa Sub County. This factors have contributed to the number of incidences increasing in the area The study thus concludes that gender based violence towards men does not occur as a result of various reasons. The study concludes that gender based violence among men has a huge negative impact on men. GBV against men leads to both physical and emotional stress. It also leads to emotional trauma, a feeling of lack of self-worth, lack of discontent, dissatisfaction, mental depression, fear, mental stress and confusion on not knowing exactly to do. In addition, the study concludes that the most prominent effect of GBV to be both depression and fear.

9. Recommendations

From the findings, several recommendations are made. First, the study established that gender based violence towards men exists in the area and is of high prevalence. The study thus recommends the formation of empowerment and support groups to help curb this issue. This will not only enable sensitization of the issues but also enable the individuals know how to prevent them from occurring. The study also established that the male victims of domestic violence deserve the same recognition, sympathy, support, and services as do female victims. The study thus recommends that the male victims should be listened to and cared for. Male victims also must be encouraged to come out and speak out their situations. Because men are traditionally thought to be physically stronger than women, they might be less likely to talk about or report incidents of domestic violence in their heterosexual. The study also established that there is scarcity in legislations protecting gender based violence towards men from occurring. The study thus recommends that effective legislations to curb gender violence against men must be put in place and enforced. Law enforcement agents should also accept that husband battering and other forms of domestic violence against men is a reality, from which men are to be protected.

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