

# Kenya: Manifestation of Domestic Violence in the Central Highlands

Lilian Wanjiku MACHARIAH

**Abstract.** Domestic violence is a pervasive social issue worldwide and a human rights concern, affecting both men and women globally. In Kenya, for instance, approximately 4 women and 1 man per 1,000 people experience intimate partner violence yearly, with intimate partner homicides affecting 1,181 women and 329 men. Despite significant efforts to combat domestic violence, cases have been increasing, taking different forms such as emotional, physical, and psychological abuse. The study was conducted in Nyeri County, one of the counties in the central highlands of Kenya. Cases of domestic violence have been rising each year in Nyeri County, Kenya. This study sought to investigate how cases of domestic violence manifest in Nyeri County. Respondents included household heads, assistant chiefs, police, religious leaders, NGOs, village elders, and sub-county administrators. Data was collected through interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. The study found that domestic violence manifests through verbal insults, physical injuries, financial deprivation, sexual violence, and female genital mutilation, with divorce and separation often resulting from these abuses. The study concludes that both men and women in the county have suffered due to domestic violence in their families. The study recommends empowering both men and women in Nyeri County through education, awareness programs, and legal support to counter domestic violence.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, pain, suffering, gender-based violence.

Lilian Wanjiku MACHARIAH  
National Defence University, Kenya (NDU-K)  
E-mail: drmacharia@ndu.ac.ke

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## Introduction

In virtually all sectors, women face disadvantages in development across many societies globally. Such widespread discrimination against women stems from inequality, denial

of rights, and often gender-based violence in various forms. Domestic violence remains an endemic social problem in many, if not all, countries worldwide. As noted by Mutahi (2017), despite its widespread impact on both genders, women represent the majority of victims, while men are the primary perpetrators.

According to UNIFEM (2012, cited in Mutahi, 2017), violence against women has historically been a common feature of all human societies. Notably, in many countries and cultures worldwide, women have traditionally been subjected to severe physical, sexual, and psychological abuse within families. According to the United Nations (UN, 1993), gender-driven domestic violence affects both men and women, often resulting in physical and sexual suffering for victims.

As explained by Mongare, Obonyo, and Parsitau (2018), domestic violence, also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV), encompasses battering, spousal abuse, dating abuse, and family abuse. These behaviors involve violence perpetrated by one partner against another within families, cohabitation, marriage, or dating relationships.

While domestic violence is a global issue, it remains particularly persistent in the United States, making it an endemic problem. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV, 2020), nearly 10 million adults experience domestic violence annually, with women and girls disproportionately affected. Domestic violence in the US is fueled by several factors, including education level, stereotypes, cultural violence, and a history of marital violence in either men or women. Reports indicate that domestic violence affects both men and women. Specifically, about 22% of women and 7% of men in the US have reported experiencing various forms of domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Despite the existence of policies and laws to address this issue, many victims have reported difficulty accessing assistance from the relevant authorities.

The African continent has not been spared from the profound impacts of domestic violence, especially on women. Notably, all regions of Africa have experienced a significant share of domestic violence, which has long constrained the socio-economic development of most, if not all, countries on the continent. For instance, in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria, domestic violence has intensified, manifesting in forms such as wife-beating, which is regarded as a means of instilling discipline (Mutahi, 2017). This is largely driven by women's profound reliance on men for survival. Additionally, these societies are predominantly patriarchal. Such cultures tend to confine women to subordinate roles, making them even more vulnerable. The persistence of domestic violence in Nigeria has been attributed to the perception of domestic violence as a private matter, weak laws, and the underreporting of cases.

As noted by Macharia and Simiyu (2023), the sociocultural dynamics in Nyeri County have created conditions that foster domestic violence. According to Njoroge (2016) and Mucheru (2014), Nyeri County has recorded numerous cases of domestic violence, many

of which are severe. Consequently, the high prevalence of domestic violence shows no signs of declining, with women disproportionately affected. As argued by Bitrus-Ojiambo and King'ori (2016), domestic violence remains highly prevalent in Nyeri. According to them, this is attributed to higher education levels, which lead to competition between partners within households, especially when both seek decision-making authority. Such confrontation leads to unnecessary conflict and may escalate into domestic violence.

## **Methodology**

The study was conducted in Nyeri County, located in the central highlands of Kenya. It serves as the administrative center of the Central Province of Kenya. The study employed descriptive and analytical research designs. The study was guided by Berkowitz's (1978) frustration-aggression theory and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. The study population included 384 household heads, 12 assistant chiefs, 15 police officers, 30 faith-based organization representatives, 12 community-based organizations (CBOs)/NGOs, 3 sub-county administrators, and 20 village elders. This brings the total to 476 respondents. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and census sampling techniques.

Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Quantitative data from closed-ended questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Qualitative data from interviews, FGDs, and open-ended questionnaires were analyzed thematically and presented using thematic narrations and verbatim excerpts. Data collected from observations were presented using photos and descriptions.

The study focused on Nyeri County, Kenya, with the objective of examining how domestic violence manifests in the study area. The study covered all the sub-counties in Nyeri County. The study period spanned from 2010 to 2022. The year 2010 was selected because it marked the beginning of increased media coverage of domestic violence cases in Nyeri County. Additionally, 2022 was selected as it was the year the study was conducted, and cases continued to be reported. The 10-year span provided insights into the research questions. Data collection took place from March 2022 to September 2022.

## **Results and Discussion on Manifestation of Domestic Violence**

The study sought to investigate how domestic violence manifests in Nyeri County. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Manifestation of Domestic Violence

Manifestation of conflicts	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Cumulative agreement	Rank
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	
Verbal insults	5(1%)	4(1%)	0(0%)	298(87%)	77(20%)	375 (98%)	1
Divorce/separation	10(2%)	0(0%)	271(71%)	95(25%)	95(25%)	366(96%)	2
Physical injuries	18(5%)	24(6%)	04(1%)	228(59%)	110(29%)	338 (88%)	3
Psychological Torture	20(5%)	319(8%)	11(3%)	218(57%)	104(27%)	322 (84%)	4
Financial Deprivation	34(9%)	47(12%)	12(3%)	194(51%)	97(25%)	291 (76%)	5
Sexual violence	54(14%)	77(20%)	23(6%)	130(34%)	100(26%)	230 (60%)	6
Female genital mutilation	102(27%)	86(22%)	84(22%)	44(11%)	68(18%)	112 (29%)	7

Source: Field data, 2022

### 1. Verbal insults

Table 1 indicates that 298 (87%) agreed that verbal violence is the most critical manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County, moreover, 77(20%) of the participants strongly agreed on the same issue. Contrarily, 5(1%) participants strongly disagreed that verbal violence is the most critical manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County while 4 (1%) of the remaining participants disagreed.

This study well indicates that verbal insults are the main manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County. Additionally, the study confirms that the most utilized verbal cues that manifest violence in Nyeri include insults and sarcasm. In an FGD with elders in Kabaru, they stressed insults and word-calling as the main types of violence in the area. The village elders pointed out that this can be detected mostly when there is a disagreement between the couples.

One of the elders stated that:

*As elders, we are used to hearing couples insulting each other after having a little misunderstanding. In case the conflict among the couples is not solved amicably or there is no mediator to help them the situation might escalate to domestic violence. A few days ago, we had been invited by certain couples to help them solve their conflict. When we reached there, we requested them to explain their problem to us as we tried to find the solution. One thing I noted as they talked, is that they insulted each other and their tone changed every now and then. There was a lot of use of insults and sarcasm (FGD with village elders, 4 April 2022).*

Verbal violence is becoming increasingly common among Nyeri County residents. The use of verbal violence depends on the context. However, it has been observed that verbal violence extends beyond individual households, especially in cases involving multiple couples. In most scenarios, this form of violence is directed at men. In an attempt to

defend themselves, men might confront their wives, thus leading to physical violence. In an interview with the assistant chief from Mahiga village in Othaya constituency, he said that:

*Verbal violence is a common thing in this village. This form of violence can occur from anywhere especially when the couples are uncontrollable. However, the nature of verbal violence might be different depending situation that led to it or the occasion. For instance, when in public the violence might be limited by societal morals while in a house the couples are unrestricted. In most cases, women are the mastermind of verbal violence which prompts men to respond physically if the situation is not controlled (personal communication with an assistant chief, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2022).*

Verbal violence often leads to domestic violence because when one of the couples feels defeated verbally, they look for an option. The option readily available for couples is physical violence. In this case, both men and women are victims.

According to Jones & Gardner (2002), verbal communication, to some extent, is one of the mechanisms used to express a person's inner feelings. For example, through tone, you can tell whether a person is angry, happy, anxious, or in another emotional state. In most scenarios, tone variation is often a key indicator, as a raised tone is often associated with violence (Jones & Gardner, 2002). However, tone is just one component of verbal insults that can be used as a criterion to determine whether an individual is violent. Graham-Bermann et al. (2010) support Jones & Gardner (2002) by stating that verbal insults are an indication of domestic violence. Unlike Jones & Gardner (2002), Graham-Bermann et al. (2010) focus on the selection of words in communication among different genders. The words used express how an individual feels about another person. For example, a husband and wife communicate differently when they are happy or angry. An aggressive person will use unpleasant words to hurt the other person. Unlike in interactions between nonviolent people, communication in such cases is often marked by hostility. The choice of words often includes insults, sarcasm, and hyperbole.

## ***2. Divorce / separation / isolation***

The results in Table 1 show that 10 (2%) strongly disagree, and 8 (2%) disagree that domestic violence manifests in terms of separation and or divorce. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents, 366 (96%) agreed that this is a major form of manifestation. This is an indication that there are many cases of separation, divorce, and isolation as a result of domestic violence in the study area, making divorce/separation the second highest level of manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County.

The social impacts of domestic violence cut across all societal sectors ranging from the community to household levels. The blaming of the victims, loss of duties, social stigmatization, social rejection, loss of life, violation of fundamental human rights and the perpetuation of violence as permitted by some socio-cultural norms and practices are just but a few manifestations of the grave social impacts related to violence.

Violence against individuals, whether women, girls, men, or boys, can have significant social consequences for the victims, their families, and communities. Social effects include withdrawal from the broader community, which leads to difficulties in seeking employment and education, all of which stem from lowered self-esteem. Children raised in families that experience domestic abuse are likely to adopt violent norms, contributing to a culture of violence. They grow up in violent environments, which affects their personal development and causes them to struggle with functioning normally in society. Affected individuals often feel inferior or helpless and are driven to their breaking point.

Men are also victims of domestic violence, with 18% of men reporting such violence to the authorities (Nthiana & Odhiambo, 2021). The social consequences of violence against men include broken marriages and substance abuse, including alcoholism, which can damage relationships. Society can undermine male victims by intimidating them and portraying their perceived weakness for being victims of violence by a woman. Research indicates that in Kenya, an estimated 2.1 million men experience violence daily (Nthiana & Odhiambo, 2021). This has affected their social life by making them feel inferior. For instance, men in Nyeri County have faced violence from their wives, with complaints that they fail to provide for their families and deny conjugal rights, often due to alcoholism. Through an interview with the assistant chief, he confirmed that it is indeed true that this violence against men exists. He said that:

*Valentine Mugure took a knife, stabbed his husband on the left shoulder, and cut off his private parts after asking for money from her to go on a drinking spree with friends in the early morning hours. This man has never been the same again. He cannot even sit in men's barazas (personal communication with an assistant chief, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2022).*

The case from Nyeri highlights that men experience violence, which leads to social consequences such as broken marriages and alcoholism. Domestic violence has also impacted women and girls in Nyeri County, who face sexual harassment that results in unwanted and premature pregnancies. The social impact of this is that teenage mothers often drop out of school, significantly disrupting their social lives. A sub-county administrator in Kieni said that:

*Teenage pregnancies increased due to an upsurge in domestic violence, and we received reports from girls aged 12-18 years who were pregnant after running away from their homes because of domestic violence. They get married or go to stay with their male friends who end up mistreating them as they look desperate. However, many cases remained unreported because of fears that they would suffer shame and judgment from society (personal communication with a sub-county administrator, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022).*

Socio-cultural norms and practices have been found to provide a haven for the perpetuation of domestic violence against both women and men. However, women are disproportionately affected by such violence compared to men. In many patriarchal

societies, outdated practices and beliefs about masculinity are often permitted. This has led to the reinforcement of gender inequality and sexism, which in turn has caused spiraling social impacts. For instance, social stigmatization and isolation directed toward victims of domestic violence, especially women, have hindered their social interactions and prevented them from assuming leadership positions.

A study conducted in Ghana revealed that women's social interactions are closely linked to their ability to demonstrate wisdom in their decisions. A woman who has experienced intimate partner violence is often viewed as unwise for permitting her partner to harm her or for encouraging violence, leading to a loss of respect. The study further found that violence against women has a profound impact on social cohesion, as it undermines the community's sense of belonging and disrupts community engagement (Dickson, Ameyaw, & Darteh, 2020). Respondents in the study noted that victims of violence, particularly women, tend to withdraw from leadership positions and communal activities, putting their leadership status at risk. The victims were also found to disengage in attending education facilities, visiting marketplaces, and the use of public means of transportation to avoid public stigmatization that results from past occurrences.

In Nyeri County, men who have gone through GBV find it hard to report or share. An elder confessed during an FGD that he has been going through pain because his wife is very violent. She fights him and threatens to tell the entire community that the man is infertile, and that the two children the family has belong to his brother. The man rarely goes to social meetings as he has no courage to be with people.

Several studies conducted in various parts of Kenya have highlighted the increase in domestic violence incidents. The factors fueling such violence, according to these studies, include unequal power relations, economic burdens, and drug and substance abuse, among others. Some studies have also attempted to link domestic violence to children's academic performance in schools. The findings from these studies show a strong connection between domestic violence and the learning progress of children. For instance, both young girls and boys from families affected by domestic violence often experience poor academic performance. This is largely attributed to the psychological trauma these children endure. Additionally, young girls who have been victims of sexual violence tend to feel demoralized, abandoned, and have difficulty concentrating in class.

### ***3. Physical injuries***

According to Table 1, 18 (5%) strongly disagree, and 24 (6%) disagree that physical forms of violence do not form a large part in the manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County. Most of the respondents were for the idea that domestic violence is highly manifested through acts of physical violence. The results indicate that 228 (59%) agreed, and 110 (26%) strongly agreed that the cases of physical violence witnessed in Nyeri County were a sign of domestic violence. However, 4(1%) of the respondents were



unable to relate the issue of physical violence and domestic violence; hence they said they did not know.

The most widely cited definition of physical violence by researchers refers to any act with the potential to inflict physical harm on the victim. According to Carlson et al. (2000), such acts can include physical beatings, pushing, grappling, shoving, and the use of lethal weapons. When people think of domestic violence, physical abuse or violence is typically the first concept that comes to mind. Physical abuse is the primary method used by abusive partners to gain and maintain control over their partners. Abusers engage in actions that instill constant fear, leaving their victims with no choice but to comply with their demands within the controlled environment they are subjected to. While physical violence is the most recognized form of domestic abuse in society, it may not always be present in every abusive relationship. Mucheru (2014) notes that if physical violence occurs early in a relationship, its intensity tends to increase over time, worsening unless addressed. Different forms of physical abuse include punching, hitting, slapping, kicking, strangling, using threatening weapons, and denying medical treatment.

Based on the results, it is evident that physical abuse is a manifestation of cases of domestic violence in the county. In an interview with assistant chiefs, they highlighted many cases they have been dealing with relating to physical abuse. According to the assistant chiefs, young marriages suffer the most since most of the people they have dealt with are from middle-aged adulthood. The following are some remarks said by one of the assistant chiefs in an interview.

*My office has handled many cases, especially by women reporting their husbands based on assaults. The young couples have been having these challenges based on the cases I have dealt with since they seem not to understand each other or their interests well. Most of these cases come from arguments or differences in conjugal rights. Most of the men who have been brought into my office feel entitled to their women, and thus in case their wives tell them they are not ready for it, it turns out to be a fight. Sometimes the arguments get ugly since some women have scars that they will never erase (personal communication with an assistant chief, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022).*

Based on the above remarks, it is evident that physical abuse in Nyeri County is rampant. One can conclude that men in this country use physical abuse to make their wives submissive. Whenever disagreements arise, sometimes the partners use physical force to instill pain in the partners. During the interviews with CBO leaders, a woman who sells groceries happened to be a victim of physical violence. She narrated how her boyfriend used a sharp machete to chop off her hands, just because he was told by a friend that she was cheating on him.

Police Officers from the National Police Service also affirmed this allegation in an interview. Most of them confirmed that they had arrested many people due to cases of physical abuse. In addition, those in charge of significant business entities also affirmed the case of physical abuse in the community. For example, one village elder who is a local investor and owns



various shops around Kamakwa center, Nyeri, confirms that he has encountered physical abuse, especially amongst his employees.

*I remember when I was at one of the businesses and noted that one of my employees was late. They were all expected to report at 0800, but she was already an hour late. Once she showed up, I had to ask for an explanation of why she was late. She explained that she was in the hospital, and looking at her, there were visible bruises on her face and hands. She explained that they got into a fight with her spouse last night. This describes how serious the issue is (FGD with Village Elders, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

Most of the NGOs in Nyeri County campaign against domestic violence. These NGOs agree with the idea of Churchill (2018) that all these victims of domestic violence have major struggles emotionally, psychologically, and mentally which affects their daily living and social interactions.

Sub-county administrators also agreed that the issue of physical harassment has been there based on the reports they get from most assistant chiefs and police commissioners in their areas. Unless something is done, the sub-county administrators agreed that these cases will continue rising, and the community will continue being affected. Most people in Nyeri County have suffered from physical abuse, especially from their immediate partners.

Residents of Nyeri County agreed that there have been cases of physical violence against women. This is mostly evident when the man is drunk and unable to defend himself. However, there are other cases where the women try to engage in physical fights with their spouses whenever they disagree. Village elders pointed out they have handled cases of domestic violence against men in their villages. In an FGD with elders from Kihome Village, Othaya Sub-county, they were sorry for the young couples they see daily struggling to have peaceful families.

Survivors of domestic violence often sustain severe injuries, and these victims can be either men or women. Domestic violence is recognized as a critical issue in both public health and human rights (Falschung, 2018). Governments worldwide have implemented various actions to address this issue, including policies and public educational programs aimed at reducing domestic violence. Domestic violence also contributes to increased death rates, as acts such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological exploitation by perpetrators can lead to victims succumbing to their injuries. For example, Majengo Slum in Nyeri County is particularly vulnerable to domestic violence due to the daily challenges residents face, including inadequate housing, poor healthcare, low education levels, and high unemployment rates (Githaiga, 2020). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, domestic violence involves any action that deprives an individual of their freedom by inflicting injury or harm.

A study conducted by Shimba and Magombola in Arumeru, Tanzania, revealed that the majority of respondents had sustained injuries resulting from physical abuse, including

beatings, burning, attacks with weapons such as knives, and choking. Some also suffered injuries from sexually related incidents, such as rape and coerced intercourse (Shimba & Magombola, 2021). Strangulation and head injuries from being slammed against walls were also found to leave permanent marks and cause long-lasting pain. Men were identified as the primary perpetrators of these acts, with many being either intimate partners or siblings of the victims. It is tragic that women suffer at the hands of men who should be the ones protecting them.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in its 2005 report observes that woman beating is the commonest form of physical violence. For instance, it established that half of the Tanzanian women and almost three-quarters of Ethiopian women in rural areas reported beatings by their husbands or other closest partners (WHO, 2005). Another report published by the United Nations Population Fund in 2008 asserted that the right of a husband to inflict physical injury or intimidation on his wife emanated from firmly held beliefs. It goes on to note that even the societies where women tend to enjoy certain privileges, they are not free from slaps from their spouses. Another report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women revealed that certain cultural practices still render women submissive to their husbands and other males. The inferiority of women makes them undervalued and disrespected by their male counterparts (Spraos, 2008).

In some extreme cases, women are viewed as objects, which often manifests in practices such as dowry payments and wife inheritance. For instance, a study conducted by the US-based Human Rights Watch in Uganda found that some families justify the forceful inheritance of women, believing that they contributed to the bride price. After being inherited, these women lose their material wealth. The study further found that the families of the women were reluctant to repay the dowry, and if the women had brothers, they were left with limited options but to force their sister back into her matrimonial home (Kimani, 2007). In such cases, women are subjected to physical abuse, and society has normalized such actions.

The results of this study align with those of a study conducted by Dickson et al. (2020), which identified factors such as age, education level, and wealth status, among others, as justifiable reasons for Ghanaian men and women to permit wife-beating. The study further revealed that physical violence in Ghana often manifests in various forms, with slapping and attacks using sharp or blunt objects being the most common. It also found that the implications of such violence are severe, ranging from induced abortion and injuries to health conditions such as anxiety and gynecological issues (Dickson et al., 2020). Women were identified as the primary victims, and low birth weights were among the prominent factors that prompted the Ghanaian government to intervene by enacting laws to protect the rights of women and children.

#### 4. Psychological torture

Table 1 analyses cases of psychological manifestations among the residents of Nyeri County. Based on the table, 20 (5%) strongly disagree, and 31 (8%) disagree that the issue of psychological disorders in the county manifests as domestic violence. However, most respondents believe that the problem of psychological disorders prevalent in the county manifests in domestic violence. According to the results from the questionnaires, 218 (57%) respondents agree, and 104 (27%) strongly agree with this idea. In addition, 3% of the study population posed with this question claimed not to know the issue of psychological disorders in the county concerning domestic violence.

According to Kelly (2004), psychological abuse is a response to chronic verbal or physical aggression. Psychological manifestations are witnessed once the victims cannot tolerate the experiences they are going through in terms of domestic violence. Sometimes the victims of domestic violence find it challenging to continue being in such a relationship; hence either run or stay but are deformed entirely in terms of social interactions, mental health, and personal characteristics, among others. According to Tsirigotis & Luczak (2018), psychological manifestations take place in different forms, such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, excessive fear of the oppressor's gender, and mistrust.

From the results presented in Table 1, it is clear that there are elements of psychological manifestation in the community, meaning that the issue of domestic violence is rampant. In an interview with the NGOs and CBOs, the study found that psychological manifestation problems cannot be doubted. Based on the CBO members interviewed, most women in the county showed elements of psychological issues. Hence it can be concluded that most of the domestic violence victims in the county are women. The following is a statement made by an assistant director of KIGWA, a CBO in Kieni sub-county.

*Women empowerment is in high demand in this country. We have noted a sequential need for help amongst women of this county based on the psychological manifestations they portray. In most of the events we have held in the community, women are always on the front line. There is this belief that men are always good leaders and women should follow. Based on our conversations with some of them, it is evident that they had been harassed to the extent that they believe they are not supposed to speak or act if their husbands or men are in the picture. Therefore, there is a need to boost the esteem of these women and make them able to stand their ground and make good choices. Women need to be united and come up with substantive groups through which they can get funds for self-development, among others, and not only rely on their husbands. Some women in this area no longer have self-esteem. They cannot even lead in prayers in a village meeting because they are psychologically tortured (personal communication with a CBO leader, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022).*

Religious leaders agree with the other respondents in the study that there have been a lot of psychological issues among the victims of domestic violence. It is not easy to live with an

abusive person in the same house. The spouse should be a partner, a lover and a companion. During the interviews, one pastor pointed out that:

*It becomes very stressful to have the same partner as a violator of your rights. One of the church members has become mentally ill since her husband started beating her up. She no longer has a social life. She cries a lot during the services. In fact, we had to take her to the hospital last year and she was admitted (personal communication with a religious leader, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022).*

In an interview with some police officers from the national police service, they confirmed that women had been struggling with expression of issues in the community. Most of police officers agree with the idea of Tsirigotis & Luczak, 2018, that in most cases of domestic violence, the women being beaten or harassed by their husbands are not the ones who call for help. They are usually too stressed to come out and express what they go through in the hands of their spouses. One of the police officers made these remarks in the interview.

*Referring to the case mentioned about the arrest we made in the Majengo area, it is not the woman who was being oppressed who called in for help but a neighbor who confessed to having heard the arguments and crying for help almost daily. Based on our investigation, it was not the first or the second time that a woman was harassed by her husband. She had fresh wounds from the beatings of that night but also had other healed scars on her body, especially her neck, hands, and back. The shocking thing was that she had withheld the information concerning the harassment by her husband. One could argue that her husband had threatened her not to say anything, or she had low self-esteem to the extent that she thought the police would not have listened to her. Therefore, there is a need to address this issue of violence based on the psychological manifestations described by the events around us (personal communication with a police officer, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

It is widely recognized that physical, sexual, and economic violence often have dire consequences on an individual's psychological well-being. Imperatively speaking, psychological violence typically stems from other forms of violence. Researchers have attempted to describe psychological violence as verbal humiliation directed at one's partner and, at times, may involve forced actions to dominate or manipulate a partner. Several studies have collected and analyzed data on both physical and psychological violence and found that the prevalence rates of psychological violence are higher compared to other forms of violence (Shimba & Magombola, 2021). It can manifest in various forms, such as verbal insults, harassment, defamation, or coercion.

In Africa, defamation, a form of psychological violence, has become widespread, a situation further exacerbated by advancements in technology. With greater access to platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, individuals have become accustomed to using their phones, making it easier for online abusers to spread and share defamatory messages. In Kenya and South Africa, for example, numerous defamation cases have been filed in various courts. While several cases have been heard and decided, many remain

unresolved, meaning that justice has not been served for the victims. Furthermore, most African countries have enacted a series of laws to regulate defamation, such as Kenya's Defamation Act.

Victims of violence often experience verbal insults, with the majority being women and young girls. Studies conducted by various researchers have shown that stigmatization and verbal attacks are frequently directed at people living with disabilities, HIV/AIDS patients, and, particularly, sex workers. These attacks typically manifest as name-calling and the degradation of the victim's social status. The situation becomes even more distressing when such abuse is inflicted by a spouse. The Metropolitan Sanctuary for Children with Disabilities, an organization that supports disabled individuals in Nyeri County, highlights the prevalence of psychological torture among people with disabilities. According to one of their officials, this form of abuse is especially painful because individuals with disabilities often lack the power to defend themselves. Their spouses subject them to psychological torment, making them feel less than human.

After undergoing other forms of violence such as physical and sexual violence, victims suffer psychological torture as revealed during the study. When an individual is physically abused and becomes disabled, he lives with permanent psychological torture. During the interviews with CBO officials, one lady who owns a daycare center narrated how her husband burned her after a disagreement. She was lucky she did not die, but she now lives with a disability.

Another form of psychological abuse is harassment, which is particularly common in workplaces where a husband and wife work together in a business. Harassment can manifest in both physical and sexual forms. Numerous studies and surveys have found that women are the primary targets of harassment, especially in the workplace. For example, a cross-sectoral survey conducted by Msimanga et al. (2023) found that women are the primary targets of sexual harassment. On average, 56% of women experienced verbal harassment, and 38% experienced physical harassment. The study further revealed that the underlying reasons for the prevalence of sexual harassment include inadequate policies to prevent it, as well as the underreporting of incidents by victims due to the fear of losing their jobs or facing further retaliation (Msimanga et al., 2023).

In Nyeri County, this is still evident. Partners take their differences to the workplace, and this is psychologically torturing. In most cases, the partners use bad language when talking to each other at the workplace. It is humiliating to have a partner insult his wife in front of customers or employees, just because they disagreed at home.

Domestic violence can also lead to significant health and psychological problems for victims. Gender-based violence (GBV) can take various forms, including intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault, and stalking. The psychological impacts associated with GBV include anxiety, mood disorders, somatization disorders, trauma, mental disturbance, and suicidal behaviors (Sewalem & Molla, 2022). In an interview with a psychiatrist from Nyeri District Hospital, who is also an official of Maendeleo ya Wanawake, she explained that

mental distress resulting from GBV can be characterized by emotional suffering, which often includes symptoms of depression such as sadness, loss of interest, hopelessness, and anxiety, marked by tension and restlessness. These symptoms can also be accompanied by physical effects such as headaches, insomnia, and lack of energy. According to a study by the Canadian Women's Foundation (2023), women who have experienced GBV in the form of physical violence are more likely to experience major mental health issues such as depression. Additionally, 50% of these women have sought treatment for mental health problems.

Although men are the main perpetrators of GBV in Kenya, there has been a rise in cases of men experiencing the same in Nyeri County. A report by Nthiana & Odhiambo (2021) in the Star Newspaper revealed that 2.1 million men go through GBV daily. According to an interview with the village elders, men experience GBV through inflicted bodily harm, battering, and sexual violence.

Gender-based violence (GBV) in men can lead to negative outcomes such as drug abuse, alcoholism, broken marriages, and even suicide. In interviews with several assistant chiefs from Nyeri County, they raised concerns about the increasing number of suicides related to GBV in the region. They noted that many men from the Kikuyu tribe tend to suffer in silence when exposed to GBV, as they believe it is taboo for a man to be battered by a woman. This silence can lead to severe mental and physical health problems. In contrast, the assistant chiefs observed that women are less likely to experience severe health and psychological issues, as they are more likely to open up about their experiences, enabling them to seek help before the situation escalates.

A study conducted by UN (2016) found that violence against women—particularly rape, coercive sexual intercourse, female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages, polygamy, and unwanted pregnancies—are prevalent in many Kenyan societies and contribute significantly to the high rates of sexually transmitted infections, particularly HIV. Another study also highlighted that physical injuries from such violence lead to severe mental and behavioral health issues, including depression, anger, self-blame, suicidal tendencies, post-traumatic stress disorders, and stress-related illnesses, all of which result in deteriorating health conditions. Victims of domestic violence, especially women, are more likely to experience somatic symptoms related to depression, panic, and respiratory illnesses. Furthermore, unwanted pregnancies and forced abortions are also common reproductive health problems arising from a lack of negotiating power over contraceptive use.

The results of this study revealed an increase in violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic, following the introduction of stringent measures, such as lockdowns, by governments worldwide to curb the spread of the virus. Psychological abuse was found to be the most prevalent form of violence against women, with perpetrators of intimate partner violence—particularly men—weaponizing the fear and anxiety caused by the pandemic. Some even restricted victims from carrying out basic hygiene practices, such as handwashing (Opanasenko et al., 2021). This study also found a strong relationship between psychological health and the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly affecting those



who had experienced domestic violence. These findings align with a German survey that reported an unprecedented rise in intimate partner violence, which in turn led to significant mental health burdens, even in highly industrialized Western countries.

### ***5. Financial deprivation***

Table 1 demonstrates that 34 (9%) of the participants strongly disagreed that financial deprivation is a major manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County while 47 (12%) of disagreed on the same. It is only 12 (3%) of the participants stated that they did not know the answer. On the other hand, 194 (51%) of the participants agreed that financial deprivation is a major manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County while 97 (25%) of the total participants strongly agreed.

According to Li et al. (2019), financial deprivation is a critical indicator of domestic violence in modern society, particularly within families. Financial deprivation typically occurs when couples fail to support each other financially or when one partner, usually the father or mother, is solely responsible for all financial obligations due to disagreements or family conflicts. This imbalance can lead to depression in one or both parents, which may escalate into serious confrontations. Novokshonova et al. (2019) further noted that economic hardship, exacerbated by job losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, has also contributed to an increase in domestic violence.

The results of the study revealed that some individuals deliberately deny their partners financial assistance, even when they are financially well-off. For example, during a disagreement, a father may refuse to buy food, pay bills, or even provide for the children's education. In response, the mother may resort to finding alternative means to financially support the family, which only escalates the conflict.

As shown in Table 1, domestic violence in Nyeri County is significantly manifested through economic measures. In interviews with key respondents, it was noted that spouses often use economic deprivation as a form of punishment, especially following disagreements. These conflicts are most commonly triggered when bonuses are being paid. One of the Assistant Chiefs stated that:

*Most of the women in Nyeri County are complaining that most of their men are not meeting the financial needs of their families. Even though the Othaya constituency is rich in resources such as tea and coffee, most of the families are still struggling to put food on the table. This is because when bonuses are paid there is always disagreement in the family between the spouses. As a way of showing dominance in the family, men opt to go to lavish places to enjoy life using the same money they received as a bonus of tea and coffee. This means that the family is left with nothing to cater to their needs, and this becomes a significant indicator of conflict which may escalate to domestic violence (personal communication with an assistant chief, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2022).*



Some of the men in Nyeri County are polygamous as they still hold some vital traditional African practices. There are instances where men try to make an effort to marry a second wife which brings commotion between the spouses. Women refuse to accept such moves, and as a way of revenge, men might refuse to educate their children. Since some of the women in Nyeri depend on their men, children end up being uneducated since their mothers cannot afford to pay fees on their own. In an FGD, an elder pointed out that;

*Some of the children in Nyeri County drop out of school while in primary school or sometimes they do not even go beyond class 8. This mostly is caused by their father when they neglect their parental role or even refuse to pay high school fees as a result of parental disagreement. This might affect the children for the rest of their lives since most of them become drug addicts* (FGD with village elders, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2022).

Education plays a critical role in empowering society especially economically. Those who are educated can be creative and come up with ideas on how to improve their livelihood. With education, it is possible for one to secure a meaningful job thus improving their livelihood. Therefore, it is unfortunate that spouses use economic deprivation to punish their partners, and innocent kids suffer the consequences.

Men have also been affected by financial punishment from their partners. Nyeri County is a community that was historically matriarchal. Thus, women still have a big say in decision-making. Whenever a man does not have enough financial muscle, he has a probability of suffering financially when a disagreement arises. The empowered women take advantage and punish the men.

Domestic violence is a global issue, affecting both poor and wealthy nations. It can take many forms, including sexual, physical, economic, or emotional abuse, and can occur in various settings such as schools, workplaces, communities, and homes. Although no one should have to endure domestic violence, this research demonstrates that it impacts people of all genders in Nyeri County. In an interview with the Sub-county Administrator for Kieni West, he highlighted the increasing number of men becoming victims of domestic violence, despite being the primary breadwinners in many Kikuyu families. Domestic violence is a violation of human rights and should never be overlooked, given its serious and far-reaching consequences.

Domestic violence has led to a wide range of repercussions for the economic development of the region in which it occurs. According to data from the World Bank (nd.), most governments in the world lose between 1.2% and 2% of their GDP due to the loss of productivity from violence. The costs are also increasing due to the money spent on educating society about domestic violence in developing countries. Moreover, the economic well-being of families experiencing domestic violence is negatively affected. For instance, a young woman was sentenced to 30 years in jail for killing her husband in Nyeri County (Gichure, 2020). The man was the sole provider for the family and sold miraa to

cater to his family's needs. In this scenario, the economic loss affected not only the family but also the revenue collected from the taxes he paid to the County Government of Nyeri.

At the global level, the economic impact of domestic violence is significant. According to UN Women, violence against women costs the global economy approximately \$1.5 trillion (UN Women, 2016). Additionally, the World Bank has reported that violence against women can reduce the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by up to 3.7% in some countries (The World Bank, n.d.). The pandemic period saw a marked increase in domestic violence against both women and men, exacerbated by the challenging economic and social conditions that contributed to this surge in abuse. The Human Rights Watch, in its report, criticized the Kenyan government's response to domestic violence, particularly its failure to provide adequate support for survivors, especially in terms of financial assistance (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

The study revealed that the economic burden on survivors of domestic violence arises from medical expenses, reporting the abuse to relevant legal authorities, and productivity losses resulting from both minor and serious injuries. These losses are compounded by premature mortality, which further exacerbates the economic strain. As found by the study, this situation leads to a wastage of resources that could otherwise be directed toward more productive sectors, ultimately hindering national economic growth and development.

Across Africa, there is a rising prevalence of economic violence, driven by a variety of factors. Studies conducted in the Sub-Saharan region highlight that a significant number of men make financial decisions independently. This trend is largely attributed to deeply ingrained patriarchal norms that favor men's financial control over women's. In this context, men are often seen as the primary financial decision-makers, while women are frequently considered less capable of managing sustainable finances.

Economic abuse is a widely reported issue, with women forming a significant portion of the victims. Several studies have highlighted that many countries in the Sub-Saharan region have a high percentage of women working in the informal sector, where they are subjected to poor working conditions. These conditions include long working hours, lack of economic incentives, discriminatory practices, and an increased risk of poverty. Despite their hard work, these women often face harassment from their male partners, who deny them basic needs, particularly after conflicts.

The implications of economic violence are profound, ranging from widespread poverty to the disempowerment of women, which restricts their access to independent means of survival. Poverty, in turn, violates fundamental human rights, including access to education, food, healthcare, housing, political participation, and freedom from violence (WHO, 2013). Additionally, financial stress and tension within the household can lead to physical violence. For example, arguments over household control can escalate into wife battering. Economic abuse can also contribute to discrimination and foster sexual exploitation (Fowle, 2008).

## 6. Sexual violence

Table 1 indicates that 54(14%) strongly disagree and 77(20%) disagree that sexual violence is not a major manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County. However, the majority of the respondents 130(34%) agree, with 100(26%) strongly agreeing on the same statement. A small percentage of 23(6%) indicated that they do not know.

Muleneh et al. (2021) argue that sexual violence is a significant form of domestic violence, manifesting in various ways, including sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, gang rape, forced pregnancy or abortion, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and prostitution. As highlighted by several researchers, sexual violence extends beyond rape, often involving sexual coercion, where the victim may be pressured into sex. Perpetrators may use their influence to force victims into sexual acts. Societal attitudes have, unfortunately, normalized violence as an accepted part of life. Within a domestic setting, sexual violence typically occurs when a partner is sexually harassed or coerced due to their gender.

The findings of the study reveal that domestic violence in Nyeri County often manifests through sexual violence. In focus group discussions (FGDs) with village elders, participants highlighted that spouses have experienced cases of sexual molestation. This occurs when a partner is forced to engage in sex without their consent. One of the elders said that:

*Women have been complaining that their husbands are sleeping with them after a fight. They forget that sex should be voluntary. They force their wives into the act even after beating them, claiming that it is their right to be given conjugal rights. Since women are physically weak, the men overtake them in bed and have their way. This makes the women feel intimidated (FGD with village elders, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022).*

Sexual violence is becoming a weapon men use in the study area to oppress their wives. There have been reported cases where husbands force their wives into the act in a public area. Such violence humiliates the woman and makes her obey what the man says to avoid a repeat of such actions in the future. During the interviews with a police officer from Ndathi police station, Kieni East constituency, he said that:

*There is a day we were called upon to arrest a middle-aged man who raped his wife in public. They were having a conflict because the man wanted his wife to surrender her earnings so that he could go and drink alcohol. When the woman refused, they started chasing each other on the road. When the man approached the wife, he threw her on the ground and started raping her. As he was doing the heinous act, the woman was crying bitterly trying to get out of the man, but it was in vain. The man told her that he would do that in public to shame her so that next time she would obey her without questioning. It was a very embarrassing moment in the village as it happened in front of children and youths. We arrested the perpetrator, but the wife refused to come to the station, and we had to release the man (personal communication with a police officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022).*

Similar incidents have been evident where the man sexually violates the wife in front of the children so as to make sure the woman submits to his demands. This mostly happens when the man is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Men have been using sexual molestation to force their wives to do what they want, as they know that a woman will do anything not to be sexually ashamed.

The results of the study indicate that men have not been left out of sexual violence. Nyeri County has been on the media screens since 2010 with many cases of domestic violence against men in the county (Mutahi, 2017). During the interviews, the respondents pointed out that they have witnessed men being harassed sexually by their partners. This mostly occurs when the men are under the influence of alcohol or are mentally ill. During an interview with a Caritas leader, an organization that helps to uplift the vulnerable people in the society, he had this to say:

*Men in Nyeri County are never safe in the hands of bad women. Men are mostly harassed when they do not have the capacity to defend themselves. I remember a case I handled, where a man was harassed by his wife in public. The wife claimed that the man was very useless. She inappropriately touched his private parts and said that he could not perform. The woman continued to say that the man was better off castrated as he had not been fulfilling his duties as the man of the house (personal communication with an NGO leader, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022).*

Africa, especially the Sub-Sahara region has long been considered the epicenter of domestic violence, including sexual violence. Most of the studies have been dedicated to the prevalent rates of sexual violence in most of the countries within the Sub-Sahara region, and have exhibited a sorry picture as the studies reveal high prevalence rates. This is attributed to factors ranging from and not limited to the poor implementation of national, regional, and even international instruments that seek to protect the victims of domestic violence, the patriarchal nature of some African societies in sexual relationships which favors the males over the detriment of the female counterparts remain the major factor that has perpetuated domestic violence (Zuo, 2018). When some men are angry, they hardly consider the woman as a partner. Rather, they perceive her as a sexual partner and can use sex to punish her. Such men also use sexual harassment to humiliate women, as revealed by the results of this study.

Research conducted by Steele et al. (2019) in Rustenburg District, South Africa, identified rape as the most common form of sexual violence. The study found that rape and other forms of sexual violence are linked to education and income disparities, gender inequality within intimate partnerships, and societal norms surrounding patriarchy and violence (Steele et al., 2019). The research further revealed that rape contributes significantly to both mental and physical health problems, including unintended pregnancy, substance and alcohol abuse, as well as psychological issues such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide. Sadly, in some cases, the offense of rape can be mitigated through mediation, which diminishes the seriousness of the crime (Sandu, 2014).

Additionally, a study led by Kawuki et al. (2021) revealed a prevalence rate of sexual violence of 24.3% among a sample of 5,259 Ugandan rural women. The study found that sexual violence was more prevalent in rural areas due to the unique social dynamics that exacerbate domestic violence in these regions. Similarly, another study by Kawuki and colleagues identified key factors contributing to sexual violence, including educational disparities, wealth status, physical abuse by husbands, control over health-related decisions, and the frequency of husbands' drug abuse (Kawuki et al., 2021).

Most research on sexual violence has primarily focused on women, often neglecting the male victims of such violence. This has led to a significant gap in addressing sexual violence against men, who are also victims. Cultural stereotypes, which often reinforce male sexual dominance in many societies, have contributed to the underreporting and lack of attention given to male sexual violence. The forms of sexual violence against men include anal or verbal rape, infliction of pain to the male genitalia, forced sodomy, castration, and even incest. Unfortunately, much of this violence goes unnoticed due to the victims' reluctance to speak out and the widespread underreporting of such acts.

Contemporary African societies have faced complex conflicts that have resulted in unprecedented humanitarian crises, with gross violations of fundamental human rights being widely reported in conflict-affected nations. The evolving nature of warfare has seen humans being used as weapons of war, and this trend has extended into domestic settings. Sexual violence has been employed as a weapon of war, with women and young children being the primary victims. However, men and young boys have also become victims, with some coerced into perpetrating rape. Reports from countries such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo have highlighted the disturbing increase in the use of men as tools of war, a practice that is unfortunately also observed within households.

## ***7. Female genital mutilation (FGM)***

According to Table 1, the results indicate that 102 (27%) of the respondents strongly disagree that FGM manifests in conflicts, while 86 (22%) disagree. Cumulatively, 29% of the respondents agree that FGM is a manifestation, with 44 (11%) agreeing and 68 (18%) strongly agreeing. The results indicate that 84 (22%) do not know whether FGM manifests during conflicts.

The results from questionnaires indicate that the majority of the respondents, with a cumulative of 49% feel that FGM is not an issue in the county, and if it is there, it is not related to conflicts. This can be attributed to the civilization and modernization that has taken place in the country. Most of the African countries have learned that FGM is dangerous (Muthoga, 2014). The government of Kenya has been working hard to make sure that every girl is safe from such oppressive and primitive practices that endanger the lives of women. As a result, cases of FGM have reduced in most parts of the country including Nyeri County.

However, there are people who still believe that uncircumcised women are immature and behave like small girls. As indicated by the results from questionnaires, 29% agree that FGM is there, and is used as a weapon against women. Muthoga (2014) argues that the ideology of using FGM as a weapon during domestic violence came up in the early 2000s, and was brought up by the *Mungiki* sect. The *mungiki* members argued that formal education was neo-colonialism and that Africa should go back to the traditional practices and forms of education. In their argument, both boys and girls should undergo circumcision for them to graduate to adulthood. They claimed that women were failing to respect their husbands because they did not go through the transition period, which they believed should be circumcision (Wachira, 2015). As a result, they campaigned for immediate circumcision of any woman who dared disagree with her husband. Consequently, many cases of FGM have been happening in the county illegally.

The results of the study agree with a study conducted by Wachira (2015) that FGM is a manifestation of GBV in Nyeri County. It is unfortunate that women are forced to go through illegal practices just to make them submit to their husbands. Some of the women report the cases, while others suffer in silence. During an interview with an assistant chief Ndathi sub-location, he agreed that there are men who have been deceived that circumcised women are humble and submissive. Thus, some force their wives to face the knife so that they can toe to the lane. The assistant chief said that:

*I have witnessed several women being forced to go through traditional circumcision. There are two brothers in this village who forced their wives to do the same. It was very bad as it was done at night without the consent of these women. The brothers said that their wives have become big-headed. They no longer treated them with respect, and they needed to dehorn them by circumcising them. One of the women bled very badly and had to be taken to the hospital. The woman reported the case to the police, and we have an ongoing case. It is unfortunate that most women who go through such heinous acts do not even report the case. The humiliation makes them remain in the house and do what their husbands want (personal communication with an assistant chief, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022).*

According to the Agikuyu culture, an adult woman who was not circumcised was referred to as *Kiriigu*. Kibicho (2006) points out that this was a shameful name that no one wanted to have. Thus, all girls would be circumcised to move to adulthood. In the modern world, women circumcision is illegal. However, men in Nyeri County have been claiming that they need to have properly “matured” women, and this will only occur if they undergo FGM (Kibicho, 2006). Such arguments arise when there is continuous domestic violence. The men start to feel like the woman did not mature properly, and that is why she is arguing with the man. During an FGD, an elder had this to say:

*Circumcision was meant to act as a bridge from childhood to adulthood. Most of the families in this village are forcing their women to go through it because they believe they are not mature. I was surprised the other day when an old woman came to my*



*house and requested me to make sure all women in this village were circumcised. She believed that the women were disrespecting their husbands because they were still immature. I reminded her that such actions are illegal, and she should never think of it or encourage anyone to do it. To my surprise, she told me that she had already circumcised two of her daughters-in-law and that they were now good wives who never argued with their husbands (FGD with village elders, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022).*

A shocking revelation was given by a leader of a women's group who pointed out that she was forced to go through FGM after her husband claimed that she was no longer submissive. The cases have been there, and women are facing a lot of pain in silence. The respondent stated that:

*My husband brought people at night to circumcise me. He claimed that I no longer obey him. He also said that I usually behave like he is my equal. The people he came with forced me to remain silent until they were done with me, or else they would kill me. I reported the case to the police the next morning. My husband threw me out of his home (personal communication with a CBO leader, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022).*

The results of the study further revealed that police officers have been recording cases of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the area, a practice closely linked to domestic violence. Many women who have reported these cases explained that they underwent FGM due to conflicts with their spouses. The Officer Commanding Station (OCS) at Ndathi Police Station mentioned that most women who experience FGM are often coerced by their husbands as a result of ongoing domestic conflicts.

Numerous studies have highlighted that Africa experiences a significant proportion of domestic violence, largely due to the socio-cultural and religious practices prevalent in many African societies. According to Adogho et al. (2021), FGM is typically performed by unqualified practitioners and involves the harmful removal of the external genitalia, either partially or entirely. It is a brutal practice that causes severe injuries to the female genitalia. For a woman to endure such physical and emotional trauma simply because of a disagreement with her spouse is deeply inhumane and dangerous to her health.

The international community, through the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, has long recognized Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a gross violation of human rights and is committed to finding sustainable solutions to this menace. It is estimated that nearly 200 million women and girls worldwide have become victims, with Africa bearing the highest proportion of these cases (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2019). Researchers and health practitioners have focused much of their efforts on understanding why the prevalence of FGM is particularly high in Africa compared to other regions. Many studies, including the results of this current study, agree that FGM is deeply rooted in cultural practices. In many African societies, women are placed under the control of men. Despite pragmatic measures aimed at reducing FGM, these societies continue to uphold the practice due to deeply ingrained



societal rules that enforce women's submission to male authority. This has contributed to limited progress in addressing FGM.

A study by Ahinkorah et al. (2020) found a connection between FGM and economic status. Wealthier women are less likely to undergo FGM compared to their economically disadvantaged counterparts. The study also revealed that FGM practices are particularly prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, where socio-cultural factors play a significant role in perpetuating the practice and discouraging victims from reporting it. The study further pointed out that circumcised women are often viewed as more valuable in certain societies, where they are seen as better suited for inheritance purposes (Ahinkorah et al., 2020). Additionally, other studies have found that Guinea has the highest prevalence of domestic violence related to FGM, while Mali ranks similarly in the prevalence of FGM among girls. In contrast, countries such as Niger, Togo, and Tanzania have reported lower rates of FGM, particularly among girls.

### **Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

The study sought to examine the manifestation of domestic violence in Nyeri County. The results indicated that cumulatively 375 (98%) of the household heads agreed that conflicts manifest in a verbal manner. The verbal manifestation comes in the form of insults and name-calling between the partners. The physical manifestation was ranked second, with a cumulative number of respondents 338 (88%) agreeing that there is physical abuse in domestic violence cases. People are injured through beatings, stabbings, hot liquids such as water and porridge, cut with sharp objects, or hit with blunt objects. In addition, 230 (60%) of the respondents agreed that violence manifests sexually. This is mostly denial of conjugal rights or forcefully accessing them.

The results of the study further indicated that domestic violence manifests in terms of denial of economic assistance. According to the study, 291 (76%) of the respondents agreed that partners deny each other financial assistance when there is a disagreement. This affects the daily running of a family, including food, school fees, and medical care among other necessities. Psychological torture is also among the major manifestations of domestic violence in Nyeri County. Cumulatively, 322 (84%) of the household heads pointed out that domestic violence is seen by the psychological status of the victims of domestic violence. Victims become mentally sick as a result of continuous violation of their rights and humiliation by their spouses. Some end up in the hospitals, with a few going completely mad and going to the streets. Social manifestation in terms of divorce and separation was also noted, with a cumulative agreement rate of 366 (96%). This shows that there are many broken families as a result of domestic violence.

The results of the study revealed that there is still the practice of female genital mutilation as a way of punishing disobedient women. A small percentage 112 (29%) of the respondents agreed that FGM occurs in some areas when the spouse, with the support of family or

friends, forces the woman into the practice, claiming that she will become mature and respect her husband.

The study found that the prevalence of domestic violence in Nyeri County is high, and thus concludes that both men and women in the county have been subjected to pain and suffering in their families due to the violence. There is evidence of suffering in terms of physical injuries, with many victims sharing experiences of psychological torture.

The study recommends that both men and women should be empowered in Nyeri County. Empowering one gender makes the other one vulnerable, especially in a community that has been fighting over dominance between men and women. The woman in Nyeri is more empowered by socio-cultural dynamics, and that is why the man feels endangered.

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