



## **International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)**

A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal

ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)

ISJN: A4372-3142 (Online) ISJN: A4372-3143 (Print)

Volume-IV, Issue-VI, May 2018, Page No. 21-29

Published by Scholar Publications, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

DOI: 10.29032/ijhsss.vol.04.issue.06W.365

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### **Gender-Based Domestic Violence against African Men:**

#### **A Case of the Gusii of Kenya**

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#### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to assess the status of gender-based domestic violence in Kenya with specific reference to Gusii men by their spouses. The study sought to interrogate the patterns, causes and impacts of gender-based domestic violence against Gusii men by their intimate partners. Stratified random sampling was used to select four out of six Gusii clans and from which stratified purposive sampling was used to select 180 participants. Data were collected using interviews and focus group discussions. The data were analysed descriptively and thematically based on a gender framework. The study findings reveal that Gusii men encounter varied and multiple forms of violence. However, verbal abuse, stalking, denial of meals, and sex registered the highest rates of abuse. It was established that gender-based violence against Gusii men during evenings was higher than morning, and spouses were the leading perpetrators of gender-based violence motivated by economic and financial factors. The study established that male victim of domestic gender-based violence prefer to remain silent rather than report abuse. Male victims of GBV are likely to prefer self, family and religious intervention. The study established that gender-based violence against Gusii men has adverse effects at the individual level.*

**Keywords:** Men, Gender, Gender-Based Violence, Intimate Partner Violence and Denial

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#### **Introduction:**

Intimate Partner Violence is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) at the household level. It has been conceptualised as relational behaviour by a present or ex-partner that causes or can potentially result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviours, including financial abuse (WHO, 2010). Studies show that gender-based domestic violence is a persistent intersectional phenomenon that cuts across geographical regions, races, ethnicities, classes, religions and sexes (Dicola & Spaar, 2016; McCarthy et.al., 2018; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and ICF Macro, 2010).

GBV/IPV is a pervasive inhuman practice, public health concern and a costly affair resulting from unequal power relations between men and women (National Gender and Equality Commission, 2017). Baseline surveys and studies on domestic gender-based violence establish that women and young girls form the majority of victims while men and boys experience it to a lesser extent (Gender Violence Recovery Centre, 2018). Men have been portrayed in these studies as the main perpetrators of GBV. Even though men form the other significant percentage of victims and survivors of GBV, interventions and investigations on their experiences of GBV are scanty and fragmented (National Gender and Equality Commission, 2017).

Gender based violence has historically been addressed from women and girls' standpoint. Gender based violence against men and boys has been ignored due to cultural stereotyping that masculine violence (Meloy, Mohandie, & Green, 2011). Little is known about gender-based

violence against men at the household level despite the magnitude of the problem. Ayodele (2017) investigated the socio-cultural drivers of male victimisation in domestic contexts in Lagos, Nigeria and established that men remain trapped in abusive relationships due to lack of resources and societal stigma. A survey by the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) (2016) found that the percentage of male victims of gender-based violence who sought medical treatment was lower than that of women. This survey raised several critical questions on the undocumented cases of GBV against Kenyan men in relation to causes, forms and impacts.

A study by Silberschmidt (1999) on gender antagonisms among the Gusii men and women revealed that both the Gusii men and women are frustrated by each other. However, women's frustrations are different and increasing, whereas their husbands' socio-economic conditions are becoming worrisome. This study laid the foundation for understanding the cultural legitimacy of wife beating among the Kisii. The study further established that the Gusii man was quickly losing his main role as household head and provider, whereas the woman's identity and socio-economic position were getting enhanced. The study did not adequately interrogate the impact of declining masculinity and women's rising socio-economic status on gender antagonism among the Gusii and its subsequent impact as a driver of GBV.

Existing studies on GBV in Kisii have paid attention to women's experiences as victims of GBV (Nyabuto, 2007). This study seeks to explore gender-based violence against Gusii men by interrogating the forms of GBV, root causes and impacts at an individual level. The study is aimed at informing various stake holder on the other face of GBV that needs attention in research, policy consideration, funding, and integrative intervention.

### **Research methodology:**

The findings reported here were conducted among the Kenyan Gusii men and women between January and April 2018. Four clans were selected through stratified random sampling, selecting four out of six Gusii clans, taking account of rural and urban areas of Kisii County. A total of 180 respondents were sampled through stratified purposive sampling techniques. The sample size was drawn from the general public, teachers, medical officers, religious leaders and security agents who had experienced GBV. The selection criteria for the sample for Gusii men and women were being a resident of Kisii County for more than 18 years, born in Kisii, speaking the *Ekegusii* language and having a national identification card. Respondents aged 62 years were assumed to be sexually inactive and were excluded.

Primary data were obtained through participative methodologies that included in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions. Questionnaires with open and closed questions were used to generate responses on the social and economic background of the respondents, forms of violence, rate of exposure, causes of violence and the impacts of gender-based domestic violence against Gusii men. Secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished documents. Both primary data and secondary data were compared, triangulated and analysed descriptively and thematically.

### **Research results:**

#### **1. Characteristics of the respondents:**

Table 1: Age distribution of the respondents

| Age range | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 18-26     | 22        | 12.2%      |
| 27-35     | 58        | 32.2%      |

|       |     |       |
|-------|-----|-------|
| 36-44 | 54  | 30%   |
| 45-52 | 30  | 16.7% |
| 53-61 | 16  | 8.9%  |
| Total | 180 | 100%  |

Source: Researchers' Survey (2018)

Table 1 establishes that most of the respondents were in their productive ages, accounting for 91.1% of the total sample size. The elderly men and women formed a tiny minority of 8.9%. This reflects the demographic reality of the county and Gusii population, in which a critical section of the population is in their productive years while a small fraction is in the ageing category.

Table 2: Marital status of the respondents

| Marital Status     | Men       |       | Women     |       | Total |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|
|                    | Frequency | %     | Frequency | %     | %     |
| Single (courtship) | 10        | 5.5%  | 18        | 10%   | 15.5% |
| Married            | 48        | 26.7% | 60        | 33.3% | 60%   |
| Divorced           | 4         | 2.2%  | 3         | 1.7%  | 3.9%  |
| Separated          | 12        | 6.7%  | 5         | 2.8%  | 9.5%  |
| Widow/Widower      | 6         | 3.3%  | 14        | 7.8%  | 11.1% |
| Total              | 80        | 44.4% | 100       | 55.6% | 100%  |

Source: Researchers' Survey (2018)

As illustrated in Table 2, most of the respondents were married (60 %). Respondents who were single and, in a relationship accounted for 15.5%. Widows or widowers accounted for 11.1%, while those who were separated accounted for 9.5%. Respondents who were divorced were the least, with 3.9% of the total number of informants.

Table 3: Respondents' sources of income

| Main source of income | Men       |            | Women     |            | Total |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-------|
|                       | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | %     |
| Salary                | 45        | 25%        | 30        | 16.7%      | 41.7  |
| Family Business       | 5         | 2.7%       | 6         | 3.3%       | 6.1   |
| Own Business          | 12        | 6.7%       | 56        | 31.1%      | 37.7  |
| Husband/wife          | 18        | 10%        | 8         | 4.4%       | 14.4  |
| Total                 | 80        | 44.4%      | 100       | 55.5%      | 100   |

Source: Researchers' Survey (2018)

The respondents were asked about their main sources of income over time. Table 3 establishes

that the majority of the respondents were dependent mainly on salary as the main source of income (41.7%). However, male respondents (25.0 %) were more depended on income from salary for sustenance than women (16.7%). The majority of the female respondents (31.1%) owned businesses compared to male's (6.7%) business ownership. The table illustrates that both men (2.7%) and women (3.3%) relied on family business with women having a slightly higher dependency. However, establishess that majority of men were more depended on their wives' source of income (10%) while women's dependency on partners income accounted for 4.4%. Based on combined salary and own businesses ownership, men account 31.7% while women account for 47.8%. Consequently, women have more economic autonomy and options. The respondents noted that women have more control over their income including that of their partners (FGD 1: 19/4/2018; FGD 2: 26/4/2018).

## 2. Patterns of gender-based violence against Gusii men

Table 4: Distribution of forms of gender-based violence against Gusii men

| Form of violence      | Extent (Frequency & Percentage) |           |            |            | Total |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|
|                       | Very Large                      | Large     | Moderate   | Least      | %     |
| Physical              | 4(2.2%)                         | 20(11.1%) | 120(66.7%) | 36(20%)    | 100%  |
| Psychological         | 15(8.3%)                        | 37(20.6%) | 84(46.7%)  | 44(24.4%)  | 100%  |
| Verbal                | 56(31.1%)                       | 78(43.3%) | 26(14.4%)  | 20(11.1%)  | 100%  |
| Threats               | 14(7.8%)                        | 55(30.6%) | 68(37.8%)  | 43(23.9%)  | 100%  |
| Rape/wife inheritance | 6(3.3%)                         | 26(14.4%) | 42(23.3%)  | 106(58.9%) | 100%  |
| Denial of sex         | 32(17.8%)                       | 43(23.9%) | 72(40%)    | 33(18.3%)  | 100%  |
| Denial of meals       | 36(20%)                         | 40(22.2%) | 32(17.8%)  | 72(40%)    | 100%  |
| Stalking              | 20(11.1%)                       | 72(40%)   | 36(20%)    | 52(28.9%)  | 100%  |

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

The informants observed that men are subjected to various forms of gender-based violence by spouses (FGD 1: 19/4/2018; FGD 2: 26/4/2018). Table 4 establishes that the leading forms of domestic violence against men are verbal abuse (74.4%), stalking (51.1%) denial of meals (44.2%) and denial of sex (41.7%). Other significant forms of violence against Gusii men were issuance of threats (38.4%), psychological abuse (28.9%), physical abuse (23.3%) and sex coercion (17.7%). As illustrated in table 4, men victims of gender-based violence experience rape or wife inheritance and physical violence at lower rates.

Table 5: Distribution of violence locations among the Gusii people

| Violence locale | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Home based      | 98        | 54.4%      |
| Place of work   | 38        | 21.1%      |
| Public spaces   | 16        | 8.9%       |
| When on transit | 28        | 15.6%      |

|       |     |      |
|-------|-----|------|
| Total | 180 | 100% |
|-------|-----|------|

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

From table 5, it was established that most forms of violence occur at home (54.4%) and in work places (21.1%). The respondents observed that gender- based violence against men when on transit was higher than the violence they experienced while in public spaces. Low levels of violence against men in public spaces was attributed to the Gusii patriarchal ideology which limits women verbal space in public spaces.

Table 6: Recurrence of gender-based violence against Gusii men

| Mode of violence | Extent     |            |           |           | Total |
|------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
|                  | Very large | Large      | Moderate  | Least     | %     |
| Morning          | 25(13.9)   | 32(17.8%)  | 39(21.7%) | 84(46.7%) | 100%  |
| Daytime          | 12(6.7%)   | 26(14.4%)  | 34(18.9%) | 108(60%)  | 100%  |
| Evening          | 27(15%)    | 68(37.8%)  | 54(30%)   | 31(17.2%) | 100%  |
| Daily            | 8(4.4%)    | 56(31.1%)  | 23(12.8%) | 93(51.7%) | 100%  |
| Weekly           | 16(8.9%)   | 87(48.3%)  | 48(26.7%) | 29(16.1%) | 100%  |
| Monthly          | 37(20.6%)  | 120(66.7%) | 18(10%)   | 5(2.8%)   | 100%  |
| Yearly           | 48(26.7%)  | 129(71.7%) | 2(1.1%)   | 1(0.6%)   | 100%  |

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

The respondents observed that gender-based violence against men was more severe during the evenings (53.3%) and during the morning sessions (30.7%). Men are likely to experience low levels of gender-based violence during the day time (21.1%). The study established that although a significant population of men experience gender-based violence on daily basis (35.5%), the probability of gender-based violence occurrence increases with time. The respondents established that on monthly basis a significant section of men experience some form of violence. Of the 80 male respondents 81.3% observed that they experience some form of violence on a weekly basis.

### 3. Causes of gender- based domestic violence against Gusii men

Table 7: Causes of gender-based domestic violence against Gusii men

| Cause of violence | Extent     |            |           |           | Total |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
|                   | Very large | Large      | Moderate  | Minimal   | %     |
| Stress            | 9(5%)      | 88(48.9%)  | 58(32.2%) | 25(13.9%) | 100%  |
| Sexual reasons    | 32(17.8%)  | 90(50%)    | 20(11.1%) | 38(21.1%) | 100%  |
| Finances          | 24(13.3%)  | 102(56.7%) | 17(9.4%)  | 37(20.6%) | 100%  |
| Personal hygiene  | 26(14.4%)  | 56(31.1%)  | 19(10.6%) | 79(43.9%) | 100%  |
| Drug abuse        | 33(18.3%)  | 87(48.3%)  | 6(3.3%)   | 54(30%)   | 100%  |

|                        |          |            |           |            |      |
|------------------------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|------|
| Insecurity             | 7(3.9%)  | 28(15.6%)  | 13(7.2%)  | 132(73.3%) | 100% |
| Polygamy               | 2(1.1%)  | 65(36.1%)  | 34(18.9%) | 79(43.9%)  | 100% |
| Socialization          | 5(2.8%)  | 16(8.9%)   | 23(12.8%) | 134(74.4%) | 100% |
| Age                    | 8(4.4%)  | 24(13.3%)  | 46(25.6%) | 102(56.7%) | 100% |
| Health status          | 2(1.1%)  | 36(20%)    | 60(33.3%) | 82(45.6)   | 100% |
| Unfaithfulness         | 16(8.9%) | 78(43.3%)  | 53(29.4%) | 33(18.3%)  | 100% |
| Economic reasons       | 12(6.7%) | 118(65.6%) | 36(20%)   | 14(7.8%)   | 100% |
| Change in gender roles | 14(7.8%) | 65(36.1%)  | 80(44.4%) | 21(11.7%)  | 100% |

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

Table 7 establishes that GBV against Gusii men is largely attributed to economic reasons (72.3%), finances (70%), and sexual issues (67.8%) as the leading causes of gender-based domestic violence against Gusii men. Other significant causes of gender-based violence against men were drug abuse (66.6%), stress (58.4%), unfaithfulness (52.2%) and personal hygiene (45.4%). Changes in gender roles (43.9%), polygamy (37.2%) and health status (21.1%) significantly lead to IPV against Gusii men. It can also be established that age (17.7%) and socialisation (11.7%) are not main drivers of violence against Gusii men by their partners. The respondents observed that the rising status of women has led to increasing female headed households (FGD 2: 26/4/2018). This has resulted in changing gender roles at the household level that have created conflicts that have been severe to the men folk (FGD 1: 19/4/2018; FGD 2: 26/4/2018). The study also established that men in polygamous unions are likely to suffer from gender based domestic violence as compared to monogamous unions (FGD 1: 19/4/2018; FGD 2: 26/4/2018). The respondents noted that men suffer some forms of violence due to their health status. Men suffering from diseases such as HIV/AIDS particularly are ignored and blamed for the HIV/AIDS status of their spouses even they are not to blame (FGD 1: 19/4/2018). It was established that Gusii men also experience GBV due to age and socialization issues.

Table 8: Perpetrators of gender-based domestic violence against Gusii men

| Perpetrator    | Extent     |           |            |            |      |
|----------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------|
|                | Very large | Large     | Moderate   | Least      | %    |
| Father         | 8(4.4%)    | 19(10.6%) | 58(32.2%)  | 95(52.8%)  | 100% |
| Mother         | 21(11.7%)  | 32(17.8%) | 112(62.2%) | 15(8.3%)   | 100% |
| Father in-law  | 1(0.6%)    | 3(1.7%)   | 15(8.3%)   | 161(89.4%) | 100% |
| Mother in-law  | 3(1.7%)    | 11(6.1%)  | 25(13.9%)  | 141(78.3%) | 100% |
| Brother        | 18(10%)    | 24(13.3%) | 40(22.2%)  | 98(54.4%)  | 100% |
| Wife / partner | 36(20%)    | 86(47.8%) | 30(16.7%)  | 28(15.6%)  | 100% |
| Sister         | 2(1.1%)    | 6(3.3%)   | 14(7.8%)   | 158(87.8%) | 100% |

|                 |          |         |           |            |      |
|-----------------|----------|---------|-----------|------------|------|
| Concubines      | 3(1.7%)  | 4(2.2%) | 12(6.7%)  | 161(89.4%) | 100% |
| Brother in-laws | 2(1.1%)  | 4(2.2%) | 26(14.4%) | 148(82.2%) | 100% |
| Sister in-laws  | 3(1.7%)  | 2(1.1%) | 5(2.8%)   | 170(94.4%) | 100% |
| Son             | 6(3.3%)  | 18(10%) | 27(15%)   | 129(71.7%) | 100% |
| Daughter        | 2 (1.1%) | 6(3.3%) | 9(5%)     | 163(90.6%) | 100% |

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

The informants were asked on the occurrence and main perpetrators of GBV against Gusii men. A total of 52 (65%) male respondents observed that they had experienced some form of violence from their partners on weekly basis. As illustrated in Table 8, the main perpetrators of gender-based violence against men were their spouses (67.8%), their mothers (29.5%), brothers (23.3%) and fathers (14.4%). Daughters (4.4%), sisters (4.4%), sister in-laws (2.8%), brother in-laws and concubines (3.9%) have lower risks as drivers of GBV against Gusii men. The study revealed that in-laws and daughters are the least perpetrators of gender based domestic violence against men. Additionally, the respondents cited concubines, as the others source of domestic violence against accounting for 3.9%. The informants concurred that there were multiple perpetrators of GBV against men at the household level on temporal basis (FGD 1: 19/4/2018; FGD 2: 26/4/2018).

#### 4. Impacts of gender-based domestic violence

Table 9: Distribution of immediate reactions to violence by Gusii men

| Response to violence | Frequency | Total % |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Self defence         | 35        | 19.4%   |
| Violence             | 24        | 13.3%   |
| Silence              | 88        | 48.9%   |
| Withdrawal           | 15        | 8.3%    |
| Crying               | 6         | 3.3%    |
| Reporting abuse      | 4         | 2.2%    |
| Feelings of hatred   | 8         | 4.4%    |
| Total                | 180       | 100%    |

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

The informants were asked on how Gusii responded after exposure to GBV by their current or former partners. As illustrated in Table 9, the immediate reactions to gender-based domestic violence against men was silence (48.9%), use self defence mechanisms (19.4%) and others resort to violence (13.3%). Male victims of GBV also withdrew (15%), developed feeling of hatred for self and perpetrator (8%) and a minority report their abuse to authorities (2.2%). The respondents observed that male victims of gender-based domestic violence do not report abuse against them despite perpetrators being well known to them (FGD 1: 19/4/2018; FGD 2: 26/4/2018). This silence and underreporting of gender-based violence against men is attributed to the Gusii culture that limit the male victims of gender-based violence based on masculine ideologies that

reconstruct men as strong. Male victims of GBV are mainly silent due to stigmatization that will result after reporting cases of violence against by their spouses.

Table 10: Sources of help to Gusii male victims of gender-based violence

| Source of Help           | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Family members           | 50        | 27.8%      |
| Police/chiefs            | 6         | 3.3%       |
| Religion leaders/prayers | 17        | 9.4%       |
| Keep to self             | 107       | 59.4%      |
| Total                    | 180       | 100%       |

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

As illustrated in Table 10, male victims of gender-based violence (59.4%) would still keep to self and rethink possible ways to navigate the abuse from a partner. A section of male victims of GBV (27%) will alert family members, 9.4% seek intervention of religious leaders. The study reveals that male victim of gender-based violence trust kin and religious leaders and spiritual intervention as compared to the local administrators and police (FGD 1: 19/4/2018; FGD 2: 26/4/2018). The respondents observed that the local administrators and police ignore cases of gender-based violence against men or handle them casually.

Table 11: Impacts of gender-based violence on male victims

| Main impacts of gender-based violence | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| homicide                              | 9         | 5%         |
| Adultery                              | 32        | 17.8%      |
| Polygamy                              | 13        | 7.2%       |
| Depression                            | 43        | 23.9%      |
| Physical injury                       | 39        | 21.7%      |
| Separation                            | 28        | 15.6%      |
| Divorce                               | 16        | 8.9%       |
| Total                                 | 180       | 100%       |

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2018)

The respondents were asked on the impacts of GBV on Gusii men by their partners. As illustrated in Table 11, mmajority of the respondents observed that gender-based violence against main mainly led to depression (23.9%), increased cases of physical injuries (21.7%) and adultery (17.8%). Other severe results of gender based domestic violence against the men are separation (15.6%), divorce (8.9%) and homicide (5%). The study established that gender-based violence against Gusii men is likely to drive them entering into polygamous unions (7.2%).

#### 4. Conclusions and implications:

The study established that marital status had a direct relationship with gender-based violence against the Gusii men. The study established that married men are mainly exposed to various

forms of violence. The study revealed that the main perpetrators of gender-based domestic violence against Gusii men are spouses. The study established that forms of gender-based violence against the Gusii men are verbal and stalking. The study established that majority of Gusii men encounter violence at home on weekly basis and mostly during evening hours.

The study established that the main causes of gender-based domestic violence against the Gusii men are premised on economic, financial and sexual factors. The study established that male victim of gender-based domestic violence immediate reactions are maintaining silence, self-defence or resorting to violence. Majority of the male victims of gender-based violence keep to self and do not seek for help. In cases where the male victims seek help it is mainly from the family members or religious guidance. Only a small percentage of male victims of gender-based domestic violence consider to file reports of abuse against them to the local administrators or police. Gender-based domestic violence against Gusii men results in depression and in severe cases homicide. To the family it leads to separation, divorce, extra marital liaisons and new polygamous unions. Generally, gender-based violence against men is a very expensive affair to the individual and family.

The study recommends that both the national government and county governments in Kenya need to pay attention to raising cases of gender-based violence of all forms including that facing men. The national and county government need to:

- Declare gender-based violence against men as public health problem, undertake baseline surveys of gender-based domestic violence against at county or ethnic level with the aim of understanding their forms, manifestations and causes; and,
- Assess whether existing strategies and mitigation strategies to combat gender-based violence address the whole gender framework including men; and, initiate awareness programs that advocate for elimination of all forms of violence against both men and women.

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