



Domestic Violence in Nyeri County, Kenya: What and When?

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a worldwide problem affecting many households. Nyeri County, one of the 47 counties in Kenya has, according to reports, experienced a steep increase. Nyeri County has experienced tremendous development, and therefore, changes in terms of education, occupation, and economic activities, making it one of the richest counties in Kenya. With these changes in levels of education, strong cultural adjustments, and increased economic endowment, the expectation is that there should be harmony in the homes. Contrary to that, there is a lot of domestic violence as captured by scholars and the media. This study sought to investigate three things namely; when the violence takes place, the types of violence, and why the violence takes place. The study was underpinned by the frustration-aggression theory and the social learning theory, where descriptive and evaluative research designs were used. The following respondents were sampled to participate in the study: 384 household heads, 12 assistant chiefs, 15 police officers, 30 religious leaders, 12 NGOs/CBOs, 3 Sub-county administrators, and 20 village elders. Primary methods of data collection were questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 to give frequency distribution, means and percentages, and findings were presented using tables, graphs, and charts. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic narrations, with findings presented using narrations and descriptions. The study found out that the cases increase when the farmers receive the coffee bonuses, when learners are going back to school and fees is needed, during the festive seasons and traditional festivities, as well as during the drought season. The study concludes that domestic violence is evident throughout the year, but there are times when the cases increase as a result of conflict in the gender roles. In this case, therefore, the study recommends that there should be a social talk on the gender roles in the study area so as to ease the adamant rise and spread of domestic conflicts related to the various sets of culturally defined and allocated sex roles. Further, there is need to empower both men and women in Nyeri county so that no gender feels threatened by the other. This will go a long way in ensuring that there is peace and stability in families and social relationships.

Key words: Domestic Violence, Gender, Peace, Social Cultural Dynamics

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Njenga and Njoroge (2021), domestic violence occurs at all societal levels and within all societal classes. Thus, it can occur to infants, children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and the elderly. It can occur at home, learning institutions, and on the streets (Njenga, & Njoroge, 2021). The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2014) adds that it takes several forms that encompass varying actions which violate human rights including verbal abuse, sexual molestation, physical aggression, threats, intimidation, economic deprivation, and emotional abuse among others (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2014).

On the other hand, the term domestic violence which is also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence, battering, spousal abuse, dating abuse, or family abuse is a behavioral pattern that involves violence perpetrated by one partner against his/her intimate partner, within a family, a cohabitation, marriage, or a dating relationship/courtship (Mongare et al., 2018). Traditionally, domestic violence has been occurring against women across all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The society forces women to accept, rationalize, and tolerate violence against them, and remain silent in the name of submission. They should not talk about their experiences even if they are emotionally, physically, and/or psychologically tortured.

Domestic violence has remained a persistent problem in the United States of America (USA) for quite a long time, making it an endemic situation in most American societies. Recent statistics have shown that nearly 10 million adults experience domestic violence annually with women and girls being the most affected group (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV], 2020). Domestic violence has greatly impacted both genders since the abused or victims stem from either gender. Regarding this, numerous factors have been found culpable of exacerbating the already dire situation and they include but are not limited to education level, stereotype, cultural practices as well as the history of marital violence of either the victim or the abuser's family genesis. To unravel the sociocultural dynamics that fuel domestic violence, Pan et al., (2006) conducted a study that targeted immigrants from the city of San Diego in the State of California. Three communities namely; Somali, Latino and Vietnamese were sampled through a needs assessment strategy. The study established that domestic violence was a grave concern across the



three communities with many participants acknowledging its frequent occurrences. Similarly, the sampled communities perceived domestic violence as intergenerational and mainly focused on the physical aspect of violence. For instance, in the Somali culture, domestic violence is limited to physical violence and implicates all family members. The changing gender roles were found as the greatest contributor to persistent domestic violence across Somali families, a factor that was attributed to the alteration of the power dynamics upon securing refuge in the United States (Pan et al., 2006). The US immigration laws tend to be favorable to women than men which in turn makes men feel helpless and useless owing to the fear of losing their stature as breadwinners, making most of them resort to violence to reclaim their lost control over the family. For the Vietnamese, domestic violence is seen as a confidential family matter that is indispensable. The study established that the persistent domestic violence across Vietnamese families was a result of economic stressors that widened the economic inequality of both genders. On the other hand, Latinos reported gradually changing gender roles as the greatest contributor to domestic violence. In a nutshell, the study linked the persistent domestic violence, especially among the migrants to some sociocultural dynamics such as strict gender roles, unemployment, cultural identity, and spirituality among others (Pan et al., 2006). A similar picture is painted on the typical households of the Americans with most of these dynamics playing a huge role in perpetuating the menace of domestic violence.

The African continent has not been insulated from the rippling devastations of domestic violence, especially on women. Notably, all the African regions have had a fair share of such violence that ever since has impeded the socio-economic development of a swath of the continent. Quite a similar picture is painted in the Middle East as highlighted in the correlational study by Kisa et al. (2021). The study noted that domestic violence, especially violence against women remains a common phenomenon in both Northern Africa and Middle Eastern countries and serves as an impediment to women's equality and security vis-à-vis their legitimate right to enjoy fundamental freedoms. The study revealed that the regions consist of a multi-ethnic society that is mostly patriarchal, noting that women are disadvantaged by the masculine nature of their societies, rendering them vulnerable to domestic violence. For instance, countries like the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia embed religious rules in their national laws which have huge impacts on women's perception of domestic violence. Additionally, high illiteracy, pervasive poverty, and low family labor force among others have contributed to the high prevalence of domestic violence in both regions. This is further worsened by the conservative and widespread masculine gender attitudes which significantly impact the status of women. In Northern Africa, domestic violence is inherently linked to the structure of the family. Precisely, the region is largely patriarchal with family serving as the realm of male domination, where women's roles are reduced to child education and rearing. However, societal changes that empowered women through education and job accessibility culminated in a new wave of conflict within the family which was accompanied by new gender negotiations within the family set-up (Kisa et al. (2021). The situation was worsened by the combination of economic stagnation, unemployment and superficial form of religiosity all of which ushered in a period of masculinity crisis in the region which in turn led to intense violence, especially domestic violence (Gichango, 2020). In West Africa, especially Nigeria, domestic violence has been on the rise. Traditionally, like many African countries, most of the domestic societies consider wife and children beating as a form of instilling discipline. This is largely necessitated by the over-dependence of women on men for survival. Additionally, the societies are largely patriarchal which has dealt a blow to women who are considered subordinate. Domestic violence is regarded as a means of enforcing conformity to societal norms as further enabled by privatization of the vice across most societies in Nigeria thus shielding such violence from external scrutiny (Mutahi, 2017). Consequently, the persistent culture of silence over domestic violence strengthens stigmatization rather than condemnation of the perpetration of such crimes. Such among other factors have made domestic violence thrive in most of the Nigerian societies, making it an endemic problem.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nyeri County is one of the richest counties in Kenya, and this can be attributed to the changes that have occurred in the community including economic empowerment, high literacy rates, and the industrious culture and horticultural farming zeal among the residents. This means that there has always been a good flow of income in that region. With all the resources, it can be deduced that people in the region do not struggle to get basic things such as food, shelter, and education among other critical things for survival. According to Muhindi (2012), Nyeri is one of the counties with the highest educated individuals in Kenya. As such, education in the region has brought about cultural adjustment and economic empowerment. Unlike in other counties in Kenya, women in the region have greatly been in the forefront seeking education for better means of living. With all this in place, the general society has set some expectations which are normally common among the educated and economically stable societies, one of these being the existence of harmony in homes within Nyeri County. Contrary to the expectations, Nyeri has experienced an increase in domestic violence. Bitrus-Ojiambo and King'ori (2016) argue that a high level of education brings about competition between the father and mother in the house as a result of power rivalries especially in decision-making



processes. Such competition causes unnecessary disagreements that in many cases usually escalate to violence in the house. Scholars such as Bitrus-Ojiambo and King'ori (2016) and some media houses in Kenya have clearly indicated that despite the high level of education and economic stability in Nyeri County, domestic violence still exists. Therefore, the prime interest of this study is to assess when domestic violence is heightened in Nyeri County, Kenya.

In Nyeri County, the high prevalence of domestic violence is far from receding. Notably, Nyeri is one of the Kenyan counties that have and continue to post a remarkable stellar economic performance. It has experienced tremendous development, and therefore, changes in terms of education, occupation, and economic activities, making it one of the richest counties in Kenya. With these changes in society, there is a high level of education which has highly contributed to the holistic empowerment of both genders, thus making some of the women secure the most stable jobs that were primarily held by men, cultural adjustments which have seen the decline in male domination, exchange of gender roles among other inevitable changes. Notably, cultural adjustments have imprinted severe changes in the feminine perception which in turn has influenced the dynamics of domestic violence. Again, economic endowment and empowerment have contributed significantly to the independence of both genders since even women have become a reckoning force in various economic sectors that drive the development of the county.

1.2 Research Objective

The main objective of the study was to assess when the cases of domestic violence increase in Nyeri County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Literature Review

The first official definition of GBV was done in 1993 when the UN General Assembly defined GBV as: Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (United Nations, 1993).

Further, the UN General Assembly added that:

Violence against women (VAW) is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to the domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women. VAW is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men (United Nations, 1993).

According to Bhuvanendra and Holmes (2014), the term domestic violence which is also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV), battering, spousal abuse, dating abuse and family abuse is a behavioral pattern that involves violence perpetrated by one partner against his/her intimate partner, within a family, a cohabitation, marriage, or a dating relationship/courtship.

Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) (2014) defines gender-based violence as:

Any act that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life perpetrated against a person based on socially-ascribed (gender) differences between males and females (GVRC, 2014).

Bitangora (1999) adds that gender-based violence mostly refers to the harm inflicted to a person or people in the society because of belonging to a certain gender. In most of the countries, gender-based violence affects females as they are considered defenseless in comparison to the males (Bitangora, 1999). According to UN Economics and Social Council (2017), women in some countries have been restricted by the law and culture from participating in developing the economy. This has been the reason behind the motive to restructure the law and educate women so that they can withstand the different types of violence they have been subjected to.

In most cases, domestic violence is limited to physical violence. However, Mongare et al. (2018) argue that GBV also includes stalking, kidnapping, endangerment, harassment, trespassing and unlawful imprisonment. In fact, in most patriarchal societies such as Kenya, the society accepts violence against women as a "correct" way of disciplining a wife. The patriarchal society socializes the woman to accept and anticipate such discipline (Mutahi, 2017). As a result, such practices are deeply engrained in the society and the woman should take such punishment from the husband positively.

In most societies, women have since time immemorial been properties of men (Meyersfeld, 2010). When a girl is born, she becomes the property of her father and automatically takes her father's name as the surname. When the woman gets married, the status changes and she becomes the property of the husband (Bhuvanendra & Holmes, 2014). In most cultural affiliations, the woman moves from her father's home and joins the husband and starts living there as the man's property. As a result, the woman is entitled to do everything that the man wants her to do without questioning (Mutahi, 2017). In case the woman fails to obey her husband, she is battered or punished for her actions.



Olufunmilayo (2004) adds that the woman is supposed to apologize to the man and try behaving well so that she will not receive punishment (Mucheru, 2014; Olufunmilayo, 2004).

According to Flemke and Allen (2008), domestic violence against men is not something new in history. Nonetheless, the worrying issue is the increase in the rate of domestic violence against men in different societies. Psychological abuse, sexual harassment and physical battering are the most common typologies of abuse that men in the current world are going through (Flemke & Allen, 2008). Apparently, thousands of men irrespective of their age, color, race, and religion live under the threat of domestic violence (Mongare et al., 2018). However, most of the men do not report the cases because they fear stigmatization that comes with such cases. Unfortunately, there are few and in many cases no efforts to stop domestic violence against men (DVAM) in many countries.

In the Middle East Countries, women are not allowed to enjoy some privileges such as driving and going for higher education. King Salman, from Saudi Arabia in May 2017 issued a directive which aimed at empowering women in attaining the highest education level, taking jobs, or undergoing surgery to beautify themselves (Wald, 2017). However, this action was not received positively as the society is not yet ready to empower the women. Carr (2007) argues that women are expected to remain in the silent world where they can be oppressed without raising alarm. Consequently, Salman received a lot of political and religious criticisms because of his action. It is unfortunate that even in the 21st century, the world is still struggling to attain equality and zero domestic violence.

Mucheru (2014) argues that in most societies, domestic violence against women is acceptable as part of culture. Women have been oppressed for many ages with the society taking the harassment and oppression as a cultural practice that is acceptable and unquestionable (Mucheru, 2014). However, in the recent years, men have also become victims of domestic violence. The rate of domestic violence perpetrated by women against men is rising, creating alarm to the entire world. The cultural belief that men should be strong and should not be battered makes the men more vulnerable. They go through hard times as they cannot report the cases to the authorities or to the family because they will be depicted as “incomplete men” (Mongare et al., 2018).

Domestic violence is a general term that entails all harmful actions directed to an individual based on their gender. Violence can appear in various forms including forced marriages, sexual violence, domestic violence, femicide, female genital mutilation, and emotional violence (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019). Domestic violence is the most common form of violence (Kangas et al., 2015). It commonly involves partners in romantic relationships but can also occur between siblings or between a child and the parent. According to the United Nations, Gender-based violence (GBV) contributors include gender inequality, dangerous norms, and power abuse. The available data on GBV reveals that one in every three women, among about 730 million women worldwide, have been exposed to physical or sexual violence or both at least once in their lifetime (UN Women, 2021). These statistics focused on women aged 15 years and above. Domestic violence is a significant threat and causes adverse effects, evident in all countries globally.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), statistic results in 2010 on the Kenyan population reveal that the victims usually know perpetrators in most domestic GBV cases. Only 6% of the perpetrators are strangers (KNBS, 2014). KNBS also reported that 47% of women aged 15-49 years had been victims of physical or sexual violence. The number of individuals who have prior exposure to domestic violence increases with age. 35% of them are aged between 15 and 19 years, while 54% are between 40 and 49 years (KNBS, 2014). Domestic violence also occurs in individuals of Kenya's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. However, the Kenyan Government has not been more open about this type of abuse.

Several cases of domestic violence have been reported in Nyeri County. For instance, Kimani (2007) reports an incident of domestic violence. In 1998, a Kenyan police officer, Felix, went home and demanded meat for his supper. The fact that there was none in the house made him beat up his wife, and she incurred brain damages and became paralyzed. The wife died five months later during her birthday. The media extensively covered that story, which led to mass protests. The Kenyan government then passed on a protection bill against wife-beating and other ways through which domestic violence is perpetrated.

Central region of Kenya has witnessed rampant increase in the rise and spread of domestic violence, which sometimes leads to early and untimely deaths. The violence is associated with consumption of illicit brew, alcohol, drug abuse, and poverty. Unlike other parts of Kenya, Kiambu County and Nyeri County are recording higher incidences where men are being affected by the domestic violence occurring in the regions. Mutahi (2017) depicts that 3.8 women and 1.3 men per 1000 have experienced domestic violence. However, this statistic is changing as the number of men rapidly increases in comparison to the ladies (Mutahi, 2017). In the year 2012, about 500,000 men experienced beating from their wives; hence, there has been need to bring different mechanisms to end such trends despite increase in female superiority. The current study aims at investigating the contribution of sociocultural factors in promoting the prevalence of domestic violence so that the appropriate steps can be suggested.

Most of the scholars as indicated in the above discussion (Bhuvanendra & Holmes, 2014; Bitangora, 1999; Mucheru, 2014; Njenga, & Njoroge, 2021) focus on domestic violence against women. Thus, the studies fail to



investigate the role played by women as perpetrators thereby exhibiting a gap on scholarly work on the same. There are cultural dynamics that have made women to become perpetrators of domestic violence as well. A lot of concentration and resources have been directed to the empowerment of the girl child consequently leaving out the male child in opportunities that would have been considered appropriate for their growth and empowerment as well. In this case, violence at home has become a two-way occurrence. Women perpetrate violence as men do the same. Further, they did not try to investigate the time of the year when the cases of domestic violence increase or reduce. Thus, it is the prime interest of this study to investigate whether the patterns of domestic violence are the same throughout the year.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was underpinned by a conceptual framework borrowing ideas from the frustration-aggression theory and the social learning theory. The two theories complemented each other in meeting the objectives of the study. The elements of each theory were tied together to form a conceptual framework.

2.2.1 Frustration-aggression Theory

Frustration-aggression theory was developed by scholars such as Dollard, Miller, and Doob among others in the early 1930s and later reformulated by Berkowitz in the late 1960s. According to the theory, aggression largely stems from frustrations, especially when individuals fail to attain their goals. In its first hypothesis, the theory postulated that frustration preceded aggression with the latter being the absolute consequence of the former. Barely two years after its formulation, scholars led by Miller and Sears restructured the hypothesis to denote that while frustration necessitated the need to react, some form of aggression is one possible outcome. Dollard and colleagues asserted that frustration is a condition that existed when an objective suffers distortion while aggression is conceived as an act whose intention is to inflict injury or pain (Breuer et al., 2015) Attached and deeply linked to the theory is displaced aggression which describes a response to a frustration that is directed towards individuals who bear no responsibility for the interference in the attainment of one's objective. For instance, a man may be humiliated in his workplace but is incapacitated to respond in the fear of losing a job and may instead redirect his anger and frustration on the family. Naturally, the requirements for frustration to lead to aggression differ between various forms of aggression which may include but are not limited to direct, indirect, or physical aggression.

2.2.2 Social Learning Theory

The profound development of social learning theory is largely attributed to the influential works of Albert Bandura. As averred by Bandura (1986), people tend to observe behaviors either directly or indirectly mainly from social interactions with others. The theory holds that everything that we undertake has been learned. Much of the learning in mankind stems from behavioral observations of other people's actions as well as from imagining the dire consequences of our actions (Wren, 1982). Similarly, it conceives learning as an evolutionary process that is aided by social imitations that are inherently linked to close contacts, coping, and adapting to a superior understanding of concepts coupled with the role of model behavior. It postulates and recognizes that aggressive behaviors may be conceived by an individual during the growth period or can be emulated through practice from bad influencers (Belanger, 2011). Relating to behavior, the theory mainly focuses on both psychological and environmental factors as the greatest influence on a person's behavior. The theory is underpinned by several assumptions; that people learn mainly through observations and imitations; the rewards, especially punishment that may arise from one's actions pose direct effects on both learning and observations; that behaviors are influenced by the processes of meditation and that change is not necessarily brought by learning. Therefore, the theory comprehends violence as an emulated mechanism that is carried through observations or experience. Additionally, the intergenerational passage of violence remains the critical component of the social learning theory.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Nyeri County, Kenya. The study employed descriptive and evaluative research designs. The study was guided by the frustration-aggression theory by Berkowitz 1960s, as well as the social learning theory by Bandura 1986. The study population included 384 household heads, 12 assistant chiefs, 15 police officers, 30 faith-based organizations, 12 COBs/NGOs, 3 sub-county administrators, and 20 village elders. This makes a total of 476 respondents. The respondents were sampled using purposive, simple random and census techniques.

Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Qualitative data from interviews, FGDs and open-ended questionnaires was analyzed thematically and presented using thematic narrations and verbatims.



The study focused on Nyeri County, Kenya, with an objective of examining the socio-cultural factors influencing domestic violence in the study area. The study covered all the Sub-Counties in Nyeri County. The periodization of the research study dates from 2010 to 2022. The year 2010 is selected because it is the time the media started reporting many cases of domestic violence in Nyeri County. In addition, 2022 was selected because it is the year the study was conducted and cases are continuously being reported. The span of 10 years gave answers to the research questions. Data collection was conducted from the month of March, 2022 to September, 2022.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

In this study, 384 questionnaires were distributed among household heads, and all the 384 were returned. 12 assistant chiefs, 15 police officers, 30 faith-based organizations, 12 COBs/NGOs, 3 sub-county administrators were interviewed. Similarly, 20 village elders participated in focus group discussions. This indicates that there was 100% response rate.

4.2 Time When Domestic Violence Increases

To understand the extent of domestic violence, the study sought to investigate when domestic violence cases are higher. Thus, household heads were treated to an open-ended question requiring them to write when the domestic violence cases are higher than normal times. The results are discussed in this section together with responses from other key respondents.

4.3 During Coffee and Tea Bonuses

When farmers in Nyeri receive their bonuses, domestic violence tends to increase especially between the husband and wife in the house. This is mainly caused by disagreements that tend to occur while budgeting for the money received. As the head of the house, men feel that it is their mandate to manage the money and, women should wait to be given what to use. On the other hand, women feel that men are unfair as they tend to misappropriate their money luxuriously. It is worth noting that most of the time, children end up suffering when the bonuses are misused and at times they are involved in the commotion as well. In other scenarios, the violence might escalate and lead to divorce. In an interview with a church elder it was pointed out that:

Most domestic fights in this area occur during tea and coffee bonus time. Bonuses have been a major cause of domestic violence, especially in the area where coffee and tea are mainly planted. Like here in Othaya, we recorded more than twenty-three cases of domestic violence in last week because of the mini bonus. It is interesting to note that mini-bonuses were paid on last week on Monday. Most of those conflicts were based on accusations that men in the house are misusing money with commercial sex workers who have come from other counties to get their share. Women feel that they are the ones who will suffer after their husbands have misappropriated the funds. I found it reasonable because women and their children take part in maintaining their coffee and tea, but it is unfortunate that once the bonuses are paid, they get nothing. However, men defend themselves on the ground that they are the heads of the family, and therefore, their decision is final (Interview with religious leader, 8th April, 2022).

The area assistant chief agreed with the church elder on matters to do with domestic violence which tend to occur after the payment of bonuses. The assistant chief stated that:

It has been hectic for us because we have to deal with ever-escalating cases of domestic violence especially when bonuses are issued. Sometimes we even have to seek the intervention of religious leaders who play a pivotal role in eradicating and solving domestic violence. This week we have a case where a woman received a bonus and used all the money to take her mother to the hospital against the will of her husband. When the husband realized that he became violent which led to a serious injury to the woman who up today is still hospitalized. We are still expecting more such cases because most of the tea factories are still issuing bonuses to their farmers (Interview with assistant chief, 8th April, 2022).

Bonuses have been identified to be one of the causes of domestic violence not only in Nyeri but also in other counties such as Kiambu, Murang'a, Kirinyaga and Kericho. According to Mwayuli et al., (2019), in Kiambu, domestic violence has been a norm when tea bonuses are shared. Most of such occurrences are caused by bonuses that are issued at a specific time in the area. The whole family takes part in their farm maintenance but when the bonuses are paid, they do not get their share, which leads to disagreement (Mwayuli et al., 2019). The disagreement might lead to domestic violence which is manifested through different dimensions. Some other times, divorces might occur.



3.2 Back to School Season

There have been conflicts in the families when a lot of money is required to take children to school. As providers, men are usually under a lot of pressure, as they have to cough a lot from their pockets. In most families, both the man and the woman contribute something. As a result of the financial strain, couple disagreements tend to occur. The spouses blame each other for the financial strain. In Nyeri County where majority of the residents are farmers, conflicts have been high when children are going back to school.

In addition to that, there is a lot of confusion about the current education system in Kenya. The confusion is caused by the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the introduction of Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). Covid-19 altered the normal academic year and in effort to cover up time lost during the quarantine period, the ministry of education tended to shorten terms. With the short academic term that means parents had a short duration of time to look for school fees. Lack of school fees led to disagreements in most of the homesteads in Nyeri County. While interviewing the Nyeri sub-county administrator it was revealed that:

School fee is becoming a big challenge in most families due to joblessness caused by Covid-19. We have received a big number of parents who opt to seek our intervention as they want us to support them financially so that they can afford to pay fees. On Monday I received a case where parents were fighting. When we made a follow-up in the process of trying to solve the conflict, we realized that the father has been unable to pay fees for his child. The child has been at home for a whole week and this was so stressful for the mother. The mother felt that the father was not doing enough to provide basic things such as school fees to his children. Domestic violence related to stress that occurs during back to school is increasing (Interview with sub-county administrators, 21st March, 2022).

In an interview with the NGO leader, he echoed the words of the Nyeri sub-county administrator. The NGO leader had the following to say about back to school period:

Back to school period is so stressful for most of the parents because schools expect students to report back and have to pay a certain amount of money. As an NGO that works toward eradicating domestic violence, we have established that during back to school period, domestic violence tends to be rampant. Currently, we have over fifteen cases that are under investigation. We are also monitoring the health condition of the man who came home drunk and had not paid fees to his children. The woman was agitated when her man who came home drunk yet their children had not yet reported back to school. They had a fight, and the man was severely injured (Interview with NGO leader, 1st June 2022).

According to Mwangi (2017), most of the domestic violence in Nyeri is related to the inability of the parents to meet the daily needs of their children. School fees are one of those basic needs that fathers are expected to cater for. However, it is becoming difficult for them due to the high rate of unemployment. On the other hand, Nyambura (2014) notes blame games between the father and mother in the homes exist when it comes to school fees payment with neither agreeing to take responsibility. In case one of the parents is unable to pay the fee as expected the blaming game tends to emerge and later escalates to domestic violence.

4.4 Festive Season

During the festive season like Christmas, most families spend a lot as it is time to come together for celebrations. The expectation in every family is very high as the head of the family must provide for them. In a situation where the father cannot afford to cater for the festive season, many women tend to feel like he has failed as the head of the family. During the festive season, a high number of domestic violence cases is reported due to the disagreement that occurs in families more so in relation to budgeting.

While I was interviewing a CBO leader, he outlined that:

Being the leader of a community-based organization, I can testify that there are high cases of domestic violence during the festive season. As we are talking, I am handling a case of a church elder from Chinga who was assaulted by his wife on Christmas day after he stated that he has no money to facilitate the Christmas festive. It all started with an insult between the elder and his wife and later ended up being a tragic scenario that led to serious injuries. It was reported that the woman poured kerosene on her husband and set him on fire and later disappeared. The woman is still on the run even though the police are still investigating the occurrence (Interview with CBO head, May 19, 2022).

A youth leader agreed with the CBO leader on matters to do with the occurrence of domestic violence during the festive season. The youth leaders had the following to say:

As a youth leader, I have seen the pattern in which domestic violence occurs in this village. Every year, there is a tendency for domestic violence to increase during December which is the main festive season among the Nyeri residents. For example, at the beginning of the last December, I had a case where the parents of a certain boy who was to be circumcised were having a conflict. The man stated that he cannot facilitate financially the circumcision of his son until the mother proves that the son belonged to him biologically. The mother took that as a claim of infidelity on



her part and she lost her control and attacked the man causing very serious injuries. Such cases are common in the region because some men are running away from their responsibilities (Interview with CBO head, May 19, 2022).

Mutahi (2017) states that the December festive seasons are critical as every family has an intention of creating memories out of it. Most important is the passage of rites such as circumcision. Such activities come with a lot of pressure and might be the root cause of domestic violence in case parents were not prepared for it financially (Mutahi, 2017). On the other hand, there are men who totally fail to take their responsibilities on the ground that leaves all responsibilities to the helpless mother. Mwangi (2017) adds that even though the role of circumcising was a docket bestowed on men, most of them in Nyeri have neglected that role as they mostly spend their time in clubs drinking. Mothers are left feeling helpless as they know nothing about circumcision and in that case, they end up expressing their disappointment to their men violently. This becomes a trigger to domestic violence.

4.5 During Traditional Functions

Generally, traditional occasions are one of the pivotal aspects of the African culture. Regardless of the modernity being witnessed in the current society, there are some cultural practices that are still held so dearly in the heart of many residents from Nyeri. Such cultures include activities such as dowry payments. It is worth noting that dowry payment is a role solely left to men in most African cultures. As such, Nyeri county is an epitome of places exhibiting such a cultural expectation. However, due to the high level of poverty and the influence of western culture, most men are no longer taking some traditions such as dowry payment seriously.

During an interview with a police officer, he stated the following.

Ulipaji wa mahari umefjia mno katika jamii ya leo. Kwa pande nyingine wazazi wamefanya ulipaji mahari kitega uchumi kwao. Hii inamaanisha ya kwamba kuna mgogoro unazuka baina ya mume anafaa kulipa mahari na wazazi wa msichana. Kwa mara nyingi utapata wazazi wa msichana hutumia mtoto wao kuwaitishia mahari kutoka kwa mumewe. Hili jambo huleta mgogoro baina ya bwana na mke kwenye nyumba. Tafaruku kama hii huweza kusambaratisha jamii na kuleta vita na kisha baadae utengano (Payment of dowry in current society has decreased while on the other hand, the in-laws have commercialized it. This creates a disagreement between men and their in-laws. In some scenarios, parents use their daughters to demand dowry from their husbands thus leading to conflict in the house. Due to this kind of pressure, some men tend to become violent, especially in situations where they cannot afford to pay dowry. Domestic violence might escalate and later end in divorce.) (Interview with police officer, 2nd April, 2022).

On another occasion where a religious leader was interviewed, he pointed out that:

As a church we find it difficult to solve the cases that are related to traditions, more so on dowry payment. We have experienced domestic violence where dowry paid is not shared equally among the parents and this affects even the marriage of the young couples. A good example is a case where a dowry was paid and the father of daughter went to the nearby town and spent all of it with his friends. The mother became furious and stated that her daughter will not be married. The man as the head of the house, on the other hand, claimed that his orders are final and that her daughter must be married as planned. The man became violent and broke the hand of his wife and later chased her away. We intervened and we are still trying to sort that issue (Interview with religious leader, 18th April, 2022).

Although change is inevitable, dowry payment has become the most constant thing in modern society. Due to benefits related to dowry payment parents have made it mandatory regardless of the economic situation of the spouses (Mwangi, 2017). In a situation where one is unable to pay dowry the in-laws feel like they have been robbed and this might create a grudge not only between the parents of both sides but also between the couples. Such grudges provide a basic platform where hatred and disrespect can thrive. Lack of respect in home especially to the men prompts them to be violent.

4.6 Drought Season

Recently, drought has become a common thing in Kenya whereby it comes with a lot of suffering to families. Some parts of Nyeri County, especially Kieni Sub-county, often experience severe drought which means individuals have to go for long distances to get water or even food. This implies that the effort of every family member is needed during the time of drought for survival. Any slight misunderstanding caused by the effects of drought such as lack of water, pasture for the animals or even food for the family can therefore become a trigger to domestic violence. Just like any other male-dominated society, most of the men in Nyeri opt to assume that it is the role of women to prepare meals and fetch water to be used at home. On the other hand, women feel that they deserve to be assisted since everyone in the family needs water and food and should therefore engage in the efforts put towards getting the same. Such a misunderstanding becomes an epitomical point that leads to domestic violence.



In an FGD with village elders, one of them commented that:

During the time of drought, women must walk for a long distance to look for water. Some even have to carry their babies with them because they have no one to help them as men consider such roles as traditionally female-oriented. Other than searching for water, women have taken the role of feeding their animals as well as preparing meals for the family. This entire role is done by women with men offering little or no assistance. As a result, women tend to be mean and as a way of saving themselves from the tedious role of fetching water, they might try to economize it, something that anger most of the men. This creates tension because some men in Nyeri consider orders from women as disrespect (FGD with village elders, 4 April, 2022).

In another FGD with a village elder he conquered his colleague as he stated the following:

We have had a case where domestic violence occurred between a husband and a wife as a result of what they said was the misuse of the water. The wife claimed that she has been walking for a long distance carrying a baby to search for water to be used at home while the man was in the local town passing time with other men. When the man came home, he used the water in watering some vegetables in the kitchen garden. This angered the wife and she decided to confront her husband. Luckily, neighbors came to separate them before any injuries occurred. Such occurrences tend to increase every time when there is a prolonged drought (FGD with village elder, 8th March, 2022).

Nowadays, the weather pattern has become unpredictable. This means that one cannot tell when the drought will come thus the occurrence catches most of the people unaware. Scrutinized from the family level, this affects mostly women as they are house managers as per the African culture (Muluneh *et al.*, 2019). Men become unbothered but at the same time expect women in their homes to sort everything. Women, on the other hand, are trying to pressurize men as a way of ensuring that they offer assistance to curb the impacts of drought. Nyeri men do not take such pressures lightly. Hence, domestic violence becomes an absolute outcome.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study sought to investigate the time when domestic violence is on the rise in Nyeri County. The results indicated that there are increased cases during coffee and tea bonuses, during the back-to-school period, during the festive season, during the traditional festive season, and when the county is experiencing drought. During the coffee bonuses, men misuse the funds that the family worked hard to earn for a whole year, and this brings conflicts. When children are going back to school, there is financial strain, and this increases the probability of disputes at the family level. Traditional festive seasons such as circumcision also bring disagreements, mostly because of the change of gender roles and financial demands during these periods.

5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that both men and women should be empowered in Nyeri County. Empowering one gender makes the other 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, thereby making the man feel endangered.

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