

Cultural And Socio-Economic Determinants of Domestic Violence Among Abanyala Women in Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract- Domestic violence against women remains a pervasive global issue, with Kenya experiencing significant rates of intimate partner violence. This study examined the cultural and socio-economic determinants of domestic violence among Abanyala women in Kakamega County, Kenya. To establish the causes of domestic violence among Abanyala women within the Anglican Church community context. A descriptive survey design was employed with 239 respondents from five Anglican churches in Malaha Parish. Data collection utilized structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, analyzed using SPSS version 26.0 for descriptive statistics and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Cultural practices emerged as primary determinants, with bride price payment (30.1%), acceptance of wife beating (28.5%), and male promiscuity acceptance (25.5%) being the most significant factors. Socio-economic factors included alcoholism (25.1%), financial disagreements (17.6%), and poverty (15.1%). The study revealed complex interactions between traditional practices and contemporary economic pressures creating conditions conducive to domestic violence. Domestic violence among Abanyala women results from multifaceted causation involving deeply embedded cultural practices and contemporary socio-economic stressors. Effective interventions require comprehensive approaches addressing both cultural attitudes and economic factors simultaneously.

Indexed Terms- Domestic violence, Cultural practices, Socio-economic factors, Abanyala women

I. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence against women affects approximately one-third of women worldwide according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022). Sub-Saharan Africa records among the highest rates globally, with nearly 50% of women in some African countries experiencing intimate partner violence during their lifetime (Devries et al., 2023). In Kenya, the 2022 Demographic and Health Survey indicates that 41% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence, with higher rates in rural areas (KNBS, 2022).

The Abanyala community, a sub-tribe of the larger Luhya ethnic group in western Kenya, represents a unique cultural context where traditional practices intersect with modern socio-economic pressures. Located primarily in Kakamega County, the Abanyala people maintain strong cultural traditions while experiencing rapid social and economic changes that may influence gender relationships and domestic violence patterns.

Despite legal frameworks prohibiting domestic violence and various intervention efforts, domestic violence among Abanyala women persists, suggesting that causation involves deeply embedded cultural practices and contemporary socio-economic pressures requiring systematic investigation. This study aims to establish the causes of domestic violence among Abanyala women of Kakamega County, examining how cultural practices and socio-economic factors contribute to intimate partner violence within this community.

The research addresses: What cultural practices contribute to domestic violence among Abanyala women? What socio-economic factors perpetuate domestic violence? How do these factors interact to create conditions conducive to domestic violence? The significance lies in informing culturally appropriate intervention strategies while contributing to broader understanding of domestic violence determinants in African contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in radical feminist theory, which analyzes domestic violence as a manifestation of patriarchal power structures that systematically subordinate women (Brownmiller, 1975). According to Dworkin (1988), patriarchal structures operate through cultural traditions, economic systems, and social institutions that maintain male privilege while limiting women's autonomy and resistance options.

2.2 Cultural Determinants

Cultural practices significantly contribute to domestic violence across African contexts. Research from Uganda found that 84% of respondents believed there was a strong connection between bride price value and domestic violence (Hague et al., 2017). Traditional marriage transactions create perceptions that women are "bought" into men's households, reducing their autonomy (Kaye et al., 2016).

Traditional gender role expectations contribute by creating rigid hierarchies positioning men as household heads with authority over women. Cultural teachings about male headship and female submission can be misinterpreted to justify physical discipline of women (MIFUMI, 2017), normalizing wife beating while discouraging women from seeking help.

2.3 Socio-Economic Determinants

Alcohol consumption represents a primary risk factor, with women whose husbands frequently drink experiencing significantly higher violence rates (Schafer & Koyiet, 2018). Economic stress creates multiple pathways including threats to masculine identities when men cannot fulfill provider roles, increased household tension, and reduced options for

women to leave abusive relationships (Roy et al., 2019).

Recent analysis of Kenya's 2022 Demographic and Health Survey found women in the poorest wealth quintiles faced significantly higher intimate partner violence odds (BMC Public Health, 2024). Economic hardship creates cycles where men resort to alcohol as coping mechanism, increasing domestic violence risk through impaired judgment and aggression (Gitau et al., 2020).

2.4 Research Gaps

While substantial research exists on domestic violence causes globally and within African contexts, limited studies examine specific cultural and socio-economic determinants affecting particular ethnic communities in Kenya. The Abanyala community represents a unique context requiring empirical investigation.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design and Area

This study employed a descriptive survey design in Malaha Parish, Mumias Diocese, Kakamega County, and western Kenya. The target population comprised 700 Anglican Church members from five local churches, selected to provide representative access to the Abanyala community within an institutional framework.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Stratified sampling ensured representation across demographic groups. Using Morgan and Krejcie's (1970) table, 248 respondents were targeted, achieving 96.4% response rate (239 participants). The sample included KAMA members (60), Mothers' Union members (150), other married individuals (37), and clergy (1).

Data collection utilized structured questionnaires for congregation members and interview schedules for clergy, incorporating both closed-ended questions for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions for qualitative insights.

3.3 Data Analysis and Ethics

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 26.0 with descriptive statistics. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Triangulation enhanced reliability and validity. Ethical clearance was obtained from Kibabii University and NACOSTI, with informed consent from all participants.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

The sample comprised 59.0% female and 41.0% male respondents, with 35.6% aged 36-45 years. Education levels showed 41.0% secondary, 28.0% tertiary, and 18.8% primary education. Most respondents (62.3%) had over 10 years Anglican Church membership, with 84.5% participating in church spiritual groups.

4.2 Cultural Practices Contributing to Domestic Violence

Cultural practices emerged as primary causes. Table 1 presents the prevalence of different cultural factors.

Table 1: Cultural Practices Perpetuating Domestic Violence

Cultural Practice	Frequency	Percentage
Payment of bride price	72	30.1
Acceptance of wife beating	68	28.5
Acceptance of male promiscuity	61	25.5
Polygamy	38	15.9

Bride price payment emerged as the most significant factor (30.1%). Qualitative findings revealed how marriage transactions create ownership mentalities, with one respondent explaining: "When my husband paid bride price for me, his family constantly reminds him that he 'bought' me and therefore I must obey everything he says."

Acceptance of wife beating (28.5%) demonstrated persistent cultural attitudes normalizing physical violence. Traditional teachings position men as household heads with authority to use physical force when women fail to fulfill expectations regarding domestic duties or respect.

4.3 Socio-Economic Factors

Socio-economic factors represented contemporary challenges interacting with traditional practices. Alcoholism emerged as the most significant cause (25.1%), with multiple pathways including impaired judgment, increased aggression, economic strain, and social dysfunction. One respondent described: "My husband is a completely different person when he drinks. He becomes angry about everything and blames me for all his problems."

Financial disagreements (17.6%) and poverty (15.1%) represented additional significant contributors. Economic stress threatens traditional masculine identities when men cannot fulfill provider roles, creating frustration redirected toward wives through violent behavior.

4.4 Interaction between Factors

Complex interactions emerged between cultural practices and socio-economic factors. Cultural practices provide frameworks for justifying violence, while socio-economic factors serve as immediate triggers escalating tensions into actual violence. Alcohol consumption removes inhibitions while cultural acceptance provides justification. Traditional gender role expectations combined with economic pressures create volatile situations where cultural permission intersects with economic frustration.

4.5 Community Awareness

High awareness levels were documented, with 74.1% "very much aware" of domestic violence cases. However, significant underreporting persists due to cultural factors, shame, and fear. Various forms were identified: physical violence (71%), verbal abuse (65%), economic neglect (58%), emotional abuse (45%), and sexual violence (23%).

V. DISCUSSION

The findings provide comprehensive evidence that domestic violence among Abanyala women results from complex interactions between cultural practices and socio-economic pressures. Bride price payment as primary cultural cause (30.1%) aligns with Uganda research (Hague et al., 2017) documenting how marriage transactions create ownership mentalities.

Cultural acceptance of wife beating (28.5%) demonstrates how traditional gender hierarchies normalize violence, supporting radical feminist frameworks analyzing domestic violence as systematic patriarchal enforcement. Alcoholism as leading socio-economic cause (25.1%) corresponds with extensive Kenya research documenting alcohol as primary risk factor (Schafer & Koyiet, 2018).

The documentation of complex interactions validates ecological theoretical models emphasizing multifaceted causation requiring comprehensive intervention approaches. Traditional practices provide ideological justification while economic factors serve as immediate triggers, suggesting effective prevention must address both cultural attitudes and precipitating factors simultaneously. High community awareness (74.1%) combined with underreporting reflects broader challenges where shame and stigma prevent help-seeking despite problem recognition, indicating interventions must address cultural barriers while providing accessible support services.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence among Abanyala women results from multifaceted causation involving complex interaction of cultural practices and socio-economic factors. Cultural practices, particularly bride price payment, wife beating acceptance, and male promiscuity tolerance, create ideological frameworks normalizing violence. Socio-economic factors, especially alcoholism, financial stress, and poverty, serve as immediate triggers escalating cultural tensions into actual violence.

The persistence of traditional gender hierarchies combined with modern economic stressors creates volatile situations increasing women's vulnerability. The findings support theoretical frameworks analyzing domestic violence as systematic gender inequality enforcement rather than isolated individual problems, indicating effective interventions must address structural and cultural factors perpetuating violence within the Abanyala community context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Education: Develop comprehensive programs challenging harmful cultural practices while promoting alternative interpretations protecting women. Address bride price practices, traditional gender roles, and attitudes normalizing violence.

Economic Interventions: Implement targeted alcoholism interventions and economic empowerment initiatives reducing male frustration over economic inadequacy and female dependency trapping women in abusive relationships.

Cultural Sensitivity: Ensure interventions are culturally appropriate, working within existing frameworks while challenging harmful practices through acceptable mechanisms maintaining community acceptance.

Multi-Agency Collaboration: Establish comprehensive response networks integrating traditional leadership, religious institutions, governmental agencies, and civil society organizations addressing multifaceted causation.

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