



Unveiling the silent voices of Gender Based Violence [GBV]: A glimpse of gender-based violence against men in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study examines gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Uganda, with particular attention to its forms, causes, and consequences. Guided by hegemonic masculinity theory, muted group theory, plus power and control theory, the study explores how dominant gender norms, discursive exclusion, and non-physical strategies of domination shape men's experiences of abuse and contribute to its underreporting in Uganda. Using a narrative inquiry approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 Ugandan men aged 18 years and above who were married, divorced, or separated. Participants were selected using a combination of convenience and purposive sampling techniques. The data were analyzed thematically using MAXQDA 2020, resulting in three major themes: forms of GBV, causes of GBV, and consequences of GBV against men. Findings reveal that the primary causes of GBV against men include poverty, group pressure, adultery, family background, and female social support networks. The study further indicates that GBV against men manifests in multiple forms, including physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, and economic abuse. Consistent with power and control theory, many of these abuses were non-physical and aimed at exerting domination and control over male partners. The consequences of such violence included psychological trauma, financial losses, suicidal ideation, and marital separation. Hegemonic masculinity norms and muted group dynamics further emerged as key factors that silenced male victims, discouraged reporting, and limited institutional recognition of men as legitimate victims of GBV. These findings signify that GBV against men in Uganda is real, multifaceted, and underreported. It is driven by power dynamics and gender norms. A possible mitigation mechanism for GBV against men calls for inclusive policies, recognition, and responsive support systems nationally. The study recommends fair and inclusive hearings for all GBV victims, increased advocacy for men's rights, expanded victim counseling services, and greater involvement of cultural and religious institutions in GBV prevention and response. To enhance awareness among policymakers and stakeholders, further research on GBV against men in Uganda and other global contexts is strongly recommended.

Keywords: Gender, Men, Silence, Uganda, Victims, Violence

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "gender" describes the socially and culturally constructed, dynamic distinctions between women and men, boys and girls, both within and between cultures, as well as within the same household. These distinctions are evident in the way that men and women conceptualize roles, responsibilities, access to resources, opportunities, constraints, needs, perceptions, views, as well as in their interdependent relationships (Ocheme et al., 2020). While Gender Based Violence (GBV) also known as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a global concern mainly perceived as a gender crime against women by men. Numerous scholars defined Gender Based Violence (GBV) as any behavioural actions between intimate partners that can cause physical, psychological or sexual damage to either partner (Enakele, 2019; Tshoane et al., 2024). Notably, GBV further extends to verbal abuses, humiliation, threatening violence and coercive control within relationship (Hines & Douglas, 2010). Nonetheless, majority of research to date indicates that the most significant reported forms of gender abuse primarily directed towards women are physical and sexual abuses. For instance, 36% of Zambian women reported having been physically abused since their age of 15 years. Whereas 39% of women and girls get married before turning 18 years, and 20% of them experienced sexual abuse before the age of

18 years (Chibwili, 2023; Chunga & Nedi, 2022). It is worth noting that GBV has potential impact on the victims which may exceed healthy to economical and it is alleged that regardless of gender identity, victims of spousal violence may engage in risky behaviours such as increased drug use, smoking, suicidal thoughts and mental illness (Chattopadhyay et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, existing studies stress that it is very difficult to draw the statistical data of Gender-Based Violence against men. This is because many of these cases remain silent and go unreported due to negative reactions like criticism, harassment from others, fear of not getting help, fear of stigma, shame, financial barriers, ignorance of available services, fear of retaliation, lack of law enforcement action, and attitudes toward violence as a normal part of life (Chunga & Nedi, 2022; Leburu, 2023). Yet, the prevalence of GBV is attributed to a number of factors such as cultural or traditional practices, drug abuse, poverty, infidelity, and misunderstanding among the family members. For example, financial difficulties in marriages can lead to family strife or violence against intimate partner. It is evident that economic insecurity is connected to the use of unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse, which are linked to a number of GBV practices (Mazhambe & Mushunje, 2023; Thelma, 2024). GBV against men in particular is more associated to low education level, low income, illicit drug use, cultural set up of some ethnic groups, child marriage, female dissatisfaction with relationship and family background like child exposure to violence (Waila et al., 2022).

Though GBV against men is globally a perceived phenomenon, fewer studies have been conducted about it hence making its information limited. Furthermore, fewer men report abuses against them by women despite the pain they receive as they see reporting such abuses to be shameful or lowering their masculine (Watson & Parsons, 2005; Sousa, 2022). Orthodoxly, men are not entitled to the same degree of basic community support, empathy or sympathy that women are by virtue of their gender, men actually endure silent abuse at the hands of women (Enakele, 2019). As research on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) started in 1970s, there have been reports of women physically attacking their male partners. Studies also show that the occurrence of conjugal violence is equally common among males and females. Based on some literatures, violence against women have been declining in some parts of the world unlike that of women against men (Hines & Douglas, 2009).

Conversely, in many African countries, men experience silent tortures causing depression and anxiety partly due to social and cultural set up of African societies. It is professed in many African communities that if a man complains about being harassed by women, it demolishes his image of manhood and it is a sign of exposing his weakness. According to Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) (2022), it is commonly believed that in African men do not cry and such beliefs make them to endure multiple forms of abuses from their partners. For instance, violence against women and girls is the focus of the legal system in South Africa. The reality and scope of GBV against boys and men are severely marginalized by this dynamic, which is problematic. For a variety of reasons including the stereotype that men are strong and are the head of the homes and women are weak, obedient and submissive, female violence against men has largely gone unreported and silenced. As a result, society, law enforcement and the legal community frequently mock reports of GBV against men and boys (Mphatheni & Mlamlala, 2022). Men in particular have less possibility of physical and sexual abuses compared to women. However, the psychological effects of GBV on males tend to affect them economically such as losing properties, paying medical bills, and judicial costs (Waila et al., 2022).

Generally, above scholarly work demonstrates that gender-based violence is a complex, socially constructed phenomenon affecting both women and men respectively. Although women experience higher rates of physical and sexual violence, men are significantly affected by psychological, economic and verbal abuse that often remains hidden and underreported in the media and police. Deeply rooted African cultural norms, hegemonic masculinity, stigma, and weak institutional responses contribute significantly to the silencing of male victims, particularly in African contexts such as Uganda. Factors such as socioeconomic stressors, substance abuse, cultural practices, and family backgrounds further exacerbate the prevalence of GBV against men in Uganda and Africa in general. Consequently, existing literature underscores the need for inclusive GBV frameworks, balanced research attention, and responsive support systems that recognize men as legitimate victims without undermining efforts to protect women.

1.1 Research Objective

- i. Exploring the different forms of GBV against men in Uganda
- ii. Identifying the different causes GBV against men in Uganda
- iii. Ascertaining the consequences that emerge from GBV against men in Uganda
- iv. Proposing potential mechanisms for overcoming GBV against men in Uganda

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Gender-based violence is a complex and pressing social issue that necessitates cooperation and dedication to eradicating it. According to Kaur (2025), there is no single theory that can be so comprehensive to cover every situation,

every nation, and every cultural context but instead a combination of theories ranging from social, psychological, cultural and ethical among others are employed. This study is anchored in Hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), Muted group theory (Ardner, 1975; Kramarae, 1981), and Power and control theory (Pence & Paymar, 1993; Stark, 2007), with insights from African masculinity and GBV scholarship (Morrell, 1998; Silberschmidt, 2001; Ratele, 2013). Together, these perspectives explain the persistence, invisibility, and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Uganda.

2.1.1 Hegemonic Masculinity Theory

Current views on men, gender, and social hierarchy have been greatly influenced by the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which was primarily developed by R.W. Connell during the 1980s. The concept has proven helpful in creating a link between professional practice discussions about men and boys and the growing field of men's studies research (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity theory conceptualizes masculinity as a hierarchy of socially constructed ideals that privilege dominance, control, heterosexual authority, and emotional restraint (Connell, 1995). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) further argue that hegemonic masculinity is context specific and sustained through cultural institutions and everyday practices.

Notably, African scholars extended this framework by demonstrating how masculinity on the continent is deeply shaped by economic instability, cultural expectations, and post-colonial power relations. Morrell (1998) and Silberschmidt (2001) show that African masculinities are often tied to men's ability to provide materially and maintain authority within households. When men fail to meet these expectations due to poverty, unemployment, or social change, they may experience what Silberschmidt (2001) terms a "crisis of masculinity."

Whereas in the Ugandan context, this crisis manifests in men's reluctance to disclose victimization, as admitting abuse undermines their culturally sanctioned masculine identity. The findings of this study, particularly psychological abuse, sexual denial, and public humiliation align with Ratele's (2013) assertion that violence and silence are central to how masculinity is performed and policed in many African societies. Thus, hegemonic masculinity provides a critical lens for understanding why GBV against men is normalized, hidden, and socially dismissed in the Ugandan context.

2.1.2 Muted Group Theory

Muted group theory has received a lot of attention from feminists who were interested in the nature of language since its establishment by anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener in the late 1960s (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). According to this theory, dominant groups systematically silence subordinate or non-conforming groups by controlling discourse, language, and meaning (Ardener, 1975; Kramarae, 1981). Male GBV victims constitute a discursively marginalized subgroup, especially within African GBV frameworks that predominantly focus on women and girls, despite the fact that men frequently hold dominant social positions.

A narrow-gendered understanding of violence is reinforced by the fact that policy, advocacy, and media narratives seldom consider men as victims, according to African GBV scholars (Ratele, 2013). Institutional responses to GBV in Uganda, such as shelters, legal pathways, and psychosocial services, are primarily focused on female victimhood, depriving men of appropriate spaces for communication.

The systematic silencing of male victims, the lack of male GBV narratives in research and policy, and the mockery experienced by men who try to report abuse are all explained by muted group theory. This study directly challenges this discursive exclusion and helps "de-mute" marginalized voices by using a qualitative methodology focused on men's lived experiences.

2.1.3 Power and Control Theory

According to Power and Control Theory, GBV is a patterned strategy of dominance that is applied through physical, psychological, sexual, and economic means (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Furthermore, Stark (2007) broadened this understanding by highlighting non-physical forms of abuse that trap victims through the concept of coercive control. African research on intimate partner violence shows that social support, cultural legitimacy, and institutional sympathy are more important factors in determining power in relationships than physical strength (Silberschmidt, 2001). This is in line with the study's conclusions that GBV against men in Uganda frequently manifests as psychological, sexual, and economic violence rather than just physical violence. Power and control theory therefore allows this study to frame GBV against men as a relational and structural phenomenon, challenging assumptions that men's physical strength shields them from the abuse. It also reinforces the legitimacy of male victimhood within African context where power may be exercised indirectly through social networks and cultural norms.

This theoretical framework encompassed with, hegemonic masculinity theory, muted group theory, plus power and control theory, as enriched by African masculinity scholarship, provide a comprehensive framework for understanding GBV against men in Uganda. Hegemonic masculinity explains cultural pressures that discourage disclosure; muted group theory illuminates discursive and institutional silencing; whereas power and control theory

reveals how abuse is enacted beyond physical violence. It is worth noting that this integrated framework situates GBV against men as a socially constructed, culturally regulated, and power-driven phenomenon, supporting the study's call for inclusive GBV policies, survivor centered intervention and context-sensitive prevention strategies in Uganda.

2.2 Empirical Review

According to the existing literature on gender-based violence and other studies on gender equality, women have received more attention than men (Watson & Parsons, 2005; Sousa, 2022). Therefore contrarily to many of the existing studies which have focused on women, this study aimed at unveiling the silent voices of men who are abused by their female partners by revealing. Empirical review in this section presents literature related to the study objectives, with emphasis on forms of GBV against men, causes of GBV against men and effects of GBV against men in a global and African contexts.

2.2.1 An overview of Gender Based Violence in Uganda

Uganda is a low developed country located in the great lakes region of East Africa with a population of around 46 million people according to Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2024 National Housing and Population survey. Uganda is considered among countries with highest rates of GBV in the world. For instance, the estimated rate of GBV against women in Uganda alone was 49.9% in 2017. This rate is significantly lower than the global and African averages. Though there was 6.1% decline in GBV cases between 2017 and 2018, a 3.1% increase in 2019 and a 9.8% increase in 2020 were observed. Furthermore, between January and June 2021, there were 48,650 GBV cases, approximately 1142 cases per month, compared to 6,867 cases per month in 2019 and 7,541 cases per month in 2020 which indicates steady increase of the GBV practices (ACTV, 2024; Ocheme et al., 2020). Furthermore, based on GBV data collected in 2019 and 2020, North Central Uganda, South Central, Busoga and Bugisu sub regions had the highest cases while Karamoja and Bunyoro sub region had the lowest cases respectively (UNFPA, 2021). According to the Ugandan Ministry of Health (MoH), there is shortage of data on GBV and though population-based survey data on violence against women is available in Uganda, information on sexual and other types of violence against women and girls, as well as the commission of such violence by men, is still limited (MoH, 2019)

Existing studies indicate that GBV in Uganda is mainly attributed to; social inequality, the absence of effective conflict resolution procedures, poverty, male and female alcoholism, and cultural norms such as child marriage, bride prices, inadequate counselling, and peer pressure and drug abuse. Other elements that have influenced the GBV domain and patterns include gender inequality, religious sectarianism, vigilante justice, and a lack of a common language among others (Ocheme et al., 2020). According to the Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) GBV is pervasive in the country and affects everyone, regardless of social, political, or economic standing. GBV happens in institutions, workplaces, communities, and families. However, GBV in families is frequently kept out of the public awareness and those who are affected tend to endure it silently due to ignorance of their rights and fear of the consequences of expressing the incidence (UBOS, 2024).

Scholarly work further indicates that though men experience GBV in Uganda, it is at lower rate compared to the women who almost 95% of them experience either physical or sexual abuse. It is further articulated that younger aged people are more victimised with GBV compared to the elder ones and those with low-income levels also suffers more compared to their counterparts (Nakayiza, 2014). Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is considered to be among the top forms of GBV in Uganda and its effects are enormous such as high risk for HIV infection, unwanted pregnancies and psychological problems among others. SGBV also leads to school dropouts, higher risk mother to child HIV transmission and socio- demographic challenges among young women (Mwine et al., 2022). Similarly, males can be equally be affected by the SGBV as they can be infected with HIV/AIDs due to unprepared sex which they tend to engage with stranger women. Additionally, men tend to go on run due to fear of committed offences hence affecting their economic set ups and loss of education for the young men who fear facing justice after impregnating school going girls.

In response to the surging rate of GBV and its effects in Uganda, the Ugandan government through the MoGLSD started the creation of a national policy to stop the phenomenon. The policy intends to promote a zero-tolerance atmosphere, offer survivors and victim's comprehensive response, care, and support services. Such efforts involve wide discussions with a variety of stakeholders such as Ministries, Departments, Local Governments, Religious entities and the civil societies (MoGLSD, 2019). Among the existing initiatives aimed at addressing GBV in Uganda include; National Action Plan on Elimination of Gender Based Violence 2016–2021; The National Action Plan on Women (2008); The National Referral Pathway for Prevention and Response to Gender Based Violence Cases in Uganda (2013); The National Guidelines on Establishment and Management of GBV Shelters in Uganda; The National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 1820, and Goma Declaration (MoGLSD, 2017) among others.

According to Nakayiza (2014), though the government of Uganda together with other parties are aware of gender-based violence and have made an effort to address it, a larger percentage of their work is devoted to saving



female victims and less to male victims yet the study of Mphatheni and Mlamlala (2022) asserts that addressing GBV against men is a prerequisite to addressing GBV against women and girls. This is because men who experienced GBV may have desensitized them to suffering and taught them to use violence as a means to an end hence making GBV and its consequences interminable. It is therefore of great importance for the stakeholders of GBV to prioritise gender abuse against men also if the phenomenon (GBV) is to be mitigated in the African societies.

2.2.2 Policy Milieu of Gender Based Violence

Policymakers at both national and international levels are responsible for keeping an eye on and assessing adopted policies, informing the parties impacted by them, and participating in policy discussions among others (UniSAFE, 2023). However, traditionally, politicians and professional planners knew policymaking, while other parties such as teachers, researchers, doctors, social workers, and mental health professionals have also become part of the policy makers (Azmat, 2014). Nevertheless, different policy makers such as the social workers, state governments, and international organizations have recognized the practice of gender-based violence and its effects and have taken a number of steps to address this phenomenon in response to concerns about it. Despite the fact that the consequences of GBV are the same for both male and females, women's empowerment has received much attention than that of men (Waila et al., 2022). To give women, adolescents, and girls better access to justice and protection mechanisms in the context of domestic violence, Colombia, for instance, passed specific legislation in 2021 regarding the establishment and function of family commissioners. Spain passed the so-called "Only yes means yes" law in 2022, which made it clear that explicit consent must be given before engaging in sexual activity and eliminated the distinction between sexual abuse and sexual aggression (Beck et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 also focused on political shift in terms of men's responsibility and participation in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2004, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) first intergovernmental body explicitly addressed the role and responsibility of men and boys (MoGLSD, 2017). In addition to international organizations, social workers and non-governmental organizations are making significant efforts to eradicate GBV by providing victims with broader protection and support services such as legal advice, work training, education, and orientations (Casique & Furegato, 2006). Astonishingly, it is awful that social workers have abandoned male victims in favour of women in many publications about gender-based violence (Leburu, 2023). For example, the study of Jeffrey et al. (2015) that aimed at ending GBV in America mainly focused on safety of the women and men were only engaged in because they are seen as the prone perpetrators of violence against women.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers employed qualitative research design and used narrative inquiry approach. This approach was deemed suitable for this study as recommended by Hunter (2006), who emphasized that this approach as a research mechanism it creates close relationship between the researchers and research participants hence leading to the acquisition of the desired information through story telling. Additionally, qualitative design helps the researcher capture feelings, opinions, and attitudes of the informants (Mbwete, 2025), and it was deemed relevant approach for the current study. The fact that this study was dealing with a complex research topic, to reach data saturation two different sampling techniques such as convenient and purposeful sampling suggested by Omona (2013) were employed. In this study, the 15 male participants were purposively and conveniently selected. Interviews were conducted between 15th October 2024 and 16th December 2024. Those interviewed were aged 18 years and above drawn from different parts of Uganda. Three of the participants were from central region (Buganda), five from Eastern Uganda (Busoga, Bugisu and Sebei), four from Western Uganda (Ankole and Rwenzori), one from North East (Karamoja) and one from North (Lango) respectively. With this sampling technique, researchers inquired from any adult male close to the researchers on whether they (adult male) had ever been tortured by intimate partners. Those who consented were briefed about the research topic and its objectives. However, for one to be interviewed was to be a male adult Ugandan above the age of 18 years and either married, divorced or separated. During interview process, open-ended interview questions recommended by Lahmar (2022) as suitable questions for obtaining thoughts and feelings or experiences of the participants like the male victims of GBV were used.

To prepare data for analysis, interviews were recorded using digital recorders after seeking permission from participants. Following thematic analysis, data collected was analysed using MAXQDA 2020 data analysing program. Additionally, recorded interviews were transcribed using Microsoft word program, frequently read by the researchers for familiarization, and later coded. Codes were later generalised to build themes as suggested by Dawadi (2020). The researchers reviewed themes generated frequently and finally four major themes were reached namely; forms of GBV against men, causes, effects and suggestions. To ensure credibility of this study, the researchers adopted multiple

mechanisms of rigor, such as peer debriefing and member check-up. Researchers also shared findings among themselves to avoid bias effects. Additionally, interview extracts from the participants were used in some areas necessary to support the interpretations of the study, as recommended by Eldh et al. (2020).

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Study findings reveal the demographic characteristics of the study participants such as age, marital status, education level and economic status. Participants had average age of 36 years with the minimum of 30 years and maximum of 66 years. Six of the participants had separated and nine were married though two of the married participants were in second marriage. Academically, majority of the participants (nine) had Bachelor’s degree, two had ordinary diplomas, three high school certificates and only one was a primary school leaver. Regarding economic activities and income level, participants were engaged in different economic activities such as driving, military work, service delivery, and machine operating hence earning different monthly income. Average income of the participants was 4.7 million Uganda shillings with maximum monthly income of five million Ugandan shillings and minimum of 0.25 million Uganda shillings.

4.1 Forms of GBV Against Men

Similar to the common forms of GBV against women, men reported sexual abuse, psychological abuses, and physical tortures, oral and economic abuses as indicated in graph (1). However, the ways in which men experiences some of the abuses appeared to be different from how women had experienced them. According to the study, men of all ages, socioeconomic backgrounds and educational or professional levels were susceptible to any kind of gender-based violence.

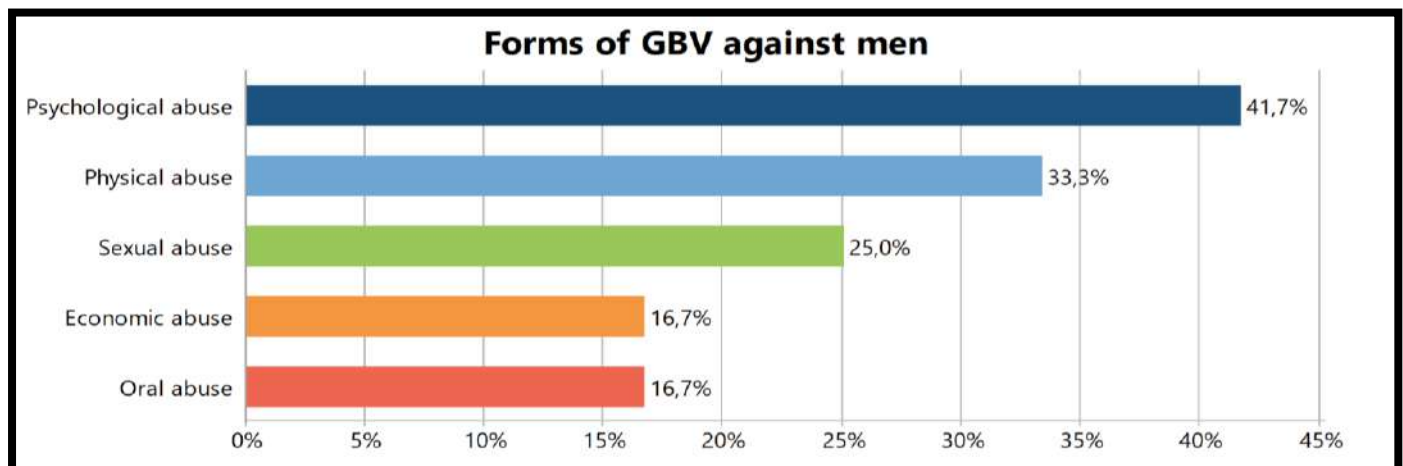


Figure 1
Sequences of GBV Among Men in Uganda

Psychological Abuse: The Istanbul Convention defines psychological abuse as the deliberate act which seriously impair a person’s psychological integrity by intimidation or threats. Constant criticism, constant devaluation of oneself, coercive control, constant stone walling, threats, isolation, public humiliation, and gas lighting are all examples of emotional abuse (Srivastav, 2021). The study found that psychological abuse is the most prevalent form of abuse against men in Uganda, affecting various income groups, youth and other age groups. The effects can persist even after infliction and can affect victims’ attitudes and trust in females. Men often view women’s physical weakness as a reason for psychological abuse, but women often fail to recognize the harm they cause. The predominance of psychological abuse aligns with power and control theory, which emphasizes coercive strategies such as humiliation, intimidation, and emotional manipulation as central mechanisms of intimate partner violence. In the case of men, these strategies frequently target masculine identity through public ridicule, constant devaluation, and attacks on sexual competence rather than physical vulnerability. Such abuse exploits hegemonic masculine expectations that men should be emotionally resilient, making psychological violence particularly damaging yet socially invisible.

Physical Abuse: Similar to the literature of Hines and Douglas (2009), this study discovered that a number of men in Uganda experience physical abuse from their intimate partners and it’s among the top forms of abuse after the psychological abuse. GBV is merely a cycle, as participants stated that physical abuse against men typically occurs as a reaction to fighting women. Since men are physically stronger than women are, women often use everything at their disposal, including knives, pangas, glasses, and even furniture, to fight back against men. This makes physical abuse

against men appear to be extremely deadly in most cases. Additionally, this study found that some women target men's genitals (private parts) in an attempt to denigrate their masculinity. Although men are socially perceived as physically dominant, findings from this study demonstrate that physical strength does not necessarily translate into relational power. Consistent with power and control theory, physical violence against men often occurs in moments where women mobilize weapons or target symbolic sites of masculinity, such as genital areas. However, hegemonic masculinity norms discourage men from framing such experiences as abuse, leading to normalization and silence.

Sexual Abuse: According to the study of Monye (2015), sex is a conjugal right of married couples regardless of the gender status, basis of marriage and is a sign of commitments between the two intimate partners. However, according to this study many men in Uganda are denied sex by their wives (female partners), which violates their conjugal rights. Men attribute sexual denial by females mainly on fornications and adultery practices done by their wives. Sexual denial affects men psychologically and forces them to undertake risk habits like buying prostitutes, taking drugs and marrying extra wives. Sexual denial and coercion function as mechanisms of control within intimate relationships. In patriarchal contexts where male sexuality is tied to authority and marital entitlement, denial of sexual access becomes a powerful tool for psychological domination. Hegemonic masculinity further complicates disclosure, as men fear ridicule and emasculation when discussing sexual victimization.

Oral Abuse: Oral abuse also emerged as a significant form of violence experienced by men in Uganda. Findings from this study indicate that men frequently face verbal attacks from their partners, particularly during misunderstandings or conflicts. Participants reported that many women use degrading language and false accusations with the intention of emotionally harming men, both within the home and in the wider community. One participant explained:

They can insult you in public, exposing your weaknesses and embarrassing you; that is how they fight back, and it affects you internally (MV 13, 26/11/2024).

Such verbal degradation reflects non-physical strategies of domination emphasized by power and control theory. At the same time, muted group theory helps explain why these forms of abuse are rarely recognized as gender-based violence when men are the victims.

Economic Abuse: Participants reported that many men lose their wealth to their female partners, particularly after separation and, in some cases, during marriage. Several participants alleged that women often divert their partners' resources to their own families or collaborate with new partners to appropriate the men's wealth. Consequently, victims are left economically stranded after losing their financial assets. In addition, some women reportedly destroy household property such as computers and mobile phones during conflicts, resulting in further financial losses as victims are forced to replace damaged items, thereby undermining their economic stability and progress. These patterns of economic deprivation reflect non-physical strategies of domination emphasized by power and control theory. Furthermore, muted group theory helps explain why such abuses are rarely recognized as gender-based violence when men are the victims, as institutional and societal frameworks often lack the language to conceptualize men as economically abused, reinforcing their discursive exclusion.

4.2 Causes of GBV Against Men

According to the findings of this study, GBV against men is catalysed by different facts some of which are those of GBV against women while others are different. Among the causes of GBV against men in Uganda included; fornication and adultery, group influence, social support, poverty and family background;

Fornication and Adultery: In many cultural and religious contexts, the terms fornication and adultery also known as 'zina' in Islamic teaching are frequently used to refer to illegal sexual relations. Concepts bring up moral and ethical issues, and different legal systems and societies may have different definitions and implications for them (Abbas et al., 2023). Many of the study participants stated that their female partners turn against them after getting affairs with other men. It was observed in this study that when a woman falls in love outside married or usual relationship tend to lose respect for the husband leading to conflicts. In addition, it was observed that when women start having sexual affairs with other men, they lose bedroom time for their husbands and can even cause sexual denial a practice hurts many of the men and they consider it as an abuse to them.

Poverty: Similar to the study of Ocheme et al. (2020), this study revealed poverty as one of factors insinuating GBV against men in Uganda. According to some participants, poverty can make them (men) fail to meet their responsibilities at home hence losing respect before their wives. In return, some women tend to offend their husbands without any fear since they see them as useless at homes.

Some of the things, which make women to change their attitude to us, is poverty. It is known in African settings that ladies are cared for so if she sees her fellow ladies being cared for and for you are failing to care for her, she can be patient a bit but time reaches and she asks that don't you see your fellow men, so poverty is not a good thing. (MV 3, 14/11/2024)

Social Support: Song and Zhang (2023) assert that social support is a network-based phenomenon and concept that has its roots in traditional sociological research and affects all mental processes and behaviours. Similarly, this study observed that GBV against men in Uganda is partly due to social support, which females get from community members and institutions. Participants revealed that females are supported by both males and female members of the Ugandan society, policy makers and law enforcers which give them moral to torture men with hope of sympathy and no or less criticism.

For us men even quarrelling with women is a shame. People can ask you why you quarrel and behave like a woman. So, in such social environment or set up you find that women behaviours are less criticised in the community, which gives them courage to misbehave. (MV13, 26/11/2024)

Family Background: According to sociologists, the family is a fundamental social institution. With a known goal and a foundation in a comparatively stable set of values, social institutions are miniature systems of social behaviour (Amy, 2022). Similarly, some participants in this study blamed their intimate partners' wrongdoings on their family backgrounds. According to the study, women from chaotic homes are more likely to be violent and harm their male partners in various ways. This study also found that because cultural behaviours vary among tribes, cross-cultural marriage could also lead to ongoing instability at home. In addition to the aforementioned, domestic violence may result from the two intimate partners' disparate economic backgrounds. For instance, a woman may not respect her husband and may even abuse him if she comes from a wealthier family than he does.

Group Influence: Viki and Abrams (2012) assert that the group can affect behaviour by motivating each member to lessen any differences between their present situation and that of a respected social group. Similarly, findings of this study observed that some female partners learn torturing their male partners from groups and friends who make them think that the habit is desirable and healthy.

Group influence as you know are prevalent in communities. We stay with many women groups, so whichever information they hear from other ladies, they take them for granted and say that no one can command them. In turn they are misled by other women who may be enjoying their marriage (MV14, 3/12/2024)

4.3 Effects of GBV Against Men

Based on the study findings, GBV against men has significant negative effects on men and beyond. Such effects include the rise of risky behaviours, development of suicidal thoughts, separation and divorce, economic losses and psychological trauma.

Rise of Risky Behaviours: Risky behaviours are those that can negatively affect an individual's overall development and well-being, according to Rory and Matthew (2014). These behaviours include those that have the potential to have a chain reaction of negative consequences, such as substance abuse and fighting. In line with the findings of Chattopadhyay et al. (2023), this study found that GBV against men could lead to the adoption of risky behaviours like alcoholism, physical altercations, and multiple relationships as means of reducing stress and depression among the victims. Such habits generate further problems like poverty, spread of HIV/AIDs, imprisonments and escalation of domestic violence. For example, after drinking alcohol some men decide to fight their wives hence making GBV a recycling phenomenal among intimate partners in Uganda.

Development of Suicidal Thoughts: Similar to the literature of Chattopadhyay et al (2023), findings of this study indicate that GBV can lead to the development of suicidal thoughts among the victims regardless of the gender status. Study findings indicate that suicidal thoughts are resorted to by male victims of GBV as ways to cope with their suffering or as a reward for the suffering they endure. Some men believe that the only way to end the pain they endure is to kill their wives. While others think that killing themselves is a viable option to deal with the extreme pain they endure. Accordingly, adverse life experiences, individual differences, and the psychological effects of GBV on men can result in death, which is consistent with the study of Rory and Matthew (2014).

Separation and Divorce: According to the findings of this study, GBV against men can lead to divorce or separation among the married couples. In the process of seeking peace, some men decide to leave their established homes and marry other women or even stay single and only buy prostitutes to meet their sexual desires a step, which tend to affect family members like women and children as they lose support from the father.

Some men stop going back home or even leading to divorce in some families. Some men may not officially divorce but may become irresponsible and abandon their families adamantly (MV1, 18/10/2024)

Economic Loses: GBV can hinder an individual victim's economic development and result in some financial losses. According to the study participants, some women use home furnishings as a mean of harming men, while others use them as weapons during physical altercations. Additional financial losses result from paying police fees in the event that one-partner reports, while others must pay for medical expenses following physical harm done to one another. Some men loose courage of working after losing their marriage, which hinders both their personal and the nation's overall development.



Psychological Trauma: Findings of this study observed that due to pain and stressful events such sexual abuse or denial and disrespectful practices experienced by men from their intimate partners affects men mentally as they try to deal with such unusual incidences. As a result, de Guzman and Bosch (2007) noted that some men get health complications such as loss of appetite for food, which lead to further malnutrition related cases, brain malfunctioning, and development of bad thoughts. According to some of the participants severe torture from women can cause permanent mental effects and make a man to live as useless or non-supporting life throughout.

It psychologically tortured me to the extent that up now when I remember about her deeds, I completely lose appetite for women. If, I have just eaten I can even get hungry, in fact being tortured by a woman whom you loved and trusted can also affect your future plans like working hard for family. You can lose love for the children whom you had with her or you can even do unnecessary things. One day I even thought of killing that woman because of the anger she was inflicting on me (MV 2, 7/11/2024)

It is worth to point out one limitation of this study that, since only a small number of people were interviewed, the results of this study may not be generalized, even though they are crucial and align with some previous research. Instead, comparable studies should be conducted in other regions of the world for better understanding of the tragedy.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study discovered that there is a high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Uganda, manifested through psychological, physical, sexual, oral, and economic abuse. Although Uganda's legal and policy frameworks, such as the Domestic Violence Act (2010) and the National Policy on Elimination of Gender-Based Violence (2016), acknowledge GBV as a human rights violation, implementation and public discourse largely frame GBV as a women centered issue. From the lens of hegemonic masculinity theory, dominant social constructions of masculinity in Uganda emphasize male strength, authority, and emotional restraint, making it socially unacceptable for men to present themselves as victims. These norms discourage reporting and contribute to the invisibility of male survivors within formal protection systems though the phenomenon cause significant consequences to different classes of men and other members of the society. Among the reported consequences included psychological trauma, economic loses, marriage breakdown, development of suicidal thoughts and rise of risky behaviours, which affects the spheres of men's life.

5.2 Recommendations

In response to these findings, this study recommends a coordinated and inclusive approach aligned with existing Ugandan policy frameworks. First, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) should strengthen the implementation of the National Policy on Elimination of GBV by explicitly recognizing men as potential victims and ensuring that GBV prevention and response programs are gender-inclusive. This would address the communicative silencing identified by muted group theory and promote equitable access to justice. Further more, law enforcement agencies, particularly the Uganda Police Force Family Protection Units, should receive specialized training to recognize and handle cases of GBV against men without bias. Such training should challenge hegemonic masculinity norms that discourage male reporting and instead promote survivor-entered approaches consistent with the Domestic Violence Act (2010).

Culturally grounded interventions should also be supported through collaboration with cultural institutions, religious leaders, and local council courts, which may play a central role in family dispute resolution in Uganda. These institutions should be empowered to address GBV as a violation of human dignity rather than a private family matter, while promoting non-violent and equitable gender relations. Lastly, scholars are encouraged to conduct further empirical research on GBV against men and its social, cultural, and psychological implications. Such evidence-based research will equip policymakers with a more comprehensive understanding of GBV as a gendered phenomenon rooted in power and control, thereby informing inclusive policies and prevention strategies that recognize and address violence against all genders.

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