

Domestic Violence a Threat to Marriage Institution in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Reflection on Some Cases in Rwenzori Region Western Uganda

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Abstract

Background: Gender based violence (GBV) is acknowledged worldwide as a violation of Basic Human Rights. Increasing research has highlighted the health burdens, intergenerational effects, and demographic consequences of such violence (Doss, Meinzen-Dick, Quisumbing, & Theis, 2015). The recent data from Uganda National Bureau of statistics 2023 has shown that gender based violence is still on increase in Uganda irrespective of all efforts and interventions put in place to curb the vice. Specific objectives of this study included: to collect the available data and scenarios on Domestic Violence Cases among partners in Rwenzori Region Western Uganda, to establish the effect of domestic violence on the marriage institution, and to document the analytics on the extent of domestic violence within the marriage institution in Uganda. **Methods:** The study employed exploratory design where secondary data was obtained from the available documents including the 2024 National Population and Housing Census (NPHC), the Rwenzori West Regional office documents, the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development and Knowledge for Change organisation. This secondary data was collated with Primary data collected by use of both questionnaires and interviews. Three questionnaires were used for this study namely: Woman's Questionnaire, Man's Questionnaire, and Community Development Officers Questionnaire. **Results:** Based on the data collected and the results on the cases and scenarios of GBV, Studies have shown Uganda having one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Common forms include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual violence, and economic deprivation. Relating to results on the cases obtained from Rwenzori Region, presented herein, there is growing scholarly and legal evidence that domestic violence in Uganda is often linked to land and property disputes, especially in matrilineal communities where access to and control

over land is primarily male-dominated. Legal institutions are often biased against women, and customary courts prioritize male inheritance claims. **Conclusion:** Domestic violence has deeply undermined the integrity and stability of the marriage institution in Uganda by normalizing abuse, weakening marital bonds, increasing divorce, silencing victims and undermining child welfare.

Keywords

Domestic Violence, Marriage Institution, Intermittent Partner, Threats

1. Introduction

Gender based violence (GBV) is acknowledged worldwide as a violation of basic human rights. Increasing research has highlighted the health burdens, intergenerational effects, and demographic consequences of such violence (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; García-Moreno, Pallitto, Devries, Stöckl, & Watts, 2023). As defined by the United Nations, GBV is any act of violence that results in physical, sexual, economic, psychological harm or suffering to women, girls, men, and boys, as well as threats of such acts, coercion, or the arbitrary deprivation of liberty. GBV is widely acknowledged to be of great concern in Uganda from the Human Rights, Economic, and Health Perspectives.

A number of legal and policy frameworks have been adopted in Uganda to combat Gender based violence including; The 1995 Constitution of Uganda; The Domestic Violence Act 2010 and its regulations 2011, The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010 and its regulations, The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009, The National Policy on Elimination of Gender Based Violence in Uganda, 2019 among others. Uganda has, in addition ratified a number of international and regional instruments to address GBV in the Country. Some of these include: The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW (1979); The United Nations Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993 and The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa, 2003 (Republic of Uganda, 1995; Republic of Uganda, 2009; Republic of Uganda, 2010; Republic of Uganda, 2019; United Nations General Assembly, 1993).

One common form of gender-based violence is intimate partner violence, which refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviours. This is commonly known as domestic violence. This definition covers violence by both current and former spouses and partners (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; WHO, 2017). This study therefore focused on domestic violence, a form of gender-based violence.

1.1. Problem Statement

The recent data from Uganda National Bureau of statistics 2023 has shown that

gender based violence is still on increase in Uganda irrespective of all efforts and interventions put in place to curb the vice. The report presents several forms of violence that still persist with threatening percentages. According to the report, physical or sexual violence reveals 44% of women and 39% of men between the ages 15 - 49 have experienced physical violence while 17% of women and 6% of men have ever experienced sexual violence.

Again, in the same report, 9% of women who have ever been pregnant have experienced physical violence during one or more pregnancies (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024). The report further reveals 54% of ever-married women and 34% of ever-married men have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their current or most recent spouse/partner. This has led to injuries due to spousal violence among those who have ever experienced spousal violence where 34% of women and 33% of men are reported to have sustained some form of injury. This has been evidenced by partners seeking help where 32% of women and 31% of men who have ever experienced any physical or sexual violence sought help to stop the violence.

Irrespective of the data above, there is an increase in single-parent households and increased rate of marriage breakdown in the married. One therefore wonders to whether this could cause a threat to the marriage institution. This study therefore examines Domestic violence as a threat to the marriage institution in sub-Saharan Africa taking a study from Rwenzori Region Western Uganda.

1.2. Purpose of This Study

This study purposely explored how domestic violence cases are threatening the marriage institution in Uganda taking a study from Rwenzori Region.

1.3. Specific Objectives

- 1) To collect the available data and scenarios on Domestic Violence Cases among partners in Rwenzori Region Western Uganda.
- 2) Establish the effect of domestic violence on the marriage institution.
- 3) To document the analytics on the extent of domestic violence within the marriage institution in Uganda.

1.4. Significance

This study is hoped to provide policy makers and program managers with information for planning, designing, monitoring, and evaluating marriage related programs, policies and interventions effectively. It will also generate other relevant development frameworks that fit marriage institutions at national, regional and international level.

2. Methodology

The study employed exploratory design where secondary data was obtained from

the available documents including the 2024 National Population and Housing Census (NPHC), the Rwenzori West Regional office documents, the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development and Knowledge for Change organisation. This secondary data was collated with Primary data collected by use of both questionnaire and interviews. Three questionnaires were used for this study namely: Woman's Questionnaire, Man's Questionnaire, and Community Development Officers Questionnaire. Basic demographic information was also collected on the characteristics of each person listed, including their age, sex, marital status, education, and relationship to the head of the household.

There are nine (9) Districts in Rwenzori Region. All these districts participated in the study. Four (4) districts had four (4) sub counties, three (3) districts had (3) sub counties and two (2) districts had five (5) sub counties. In each sub county, two participants were selected i.e. one male and one female as mapped by the Community Development Officer. This gave a total of 82 questionnaire participants both male and female. The total male and total female was the same number of 41. The two people selected in each sub county were based on their role in those sub counties of family welfare officers based at the sub counties. Again, each district has a District Community Development officer who is charged with Community welfare and liaison. All the nine (9) CDOs participated in the study. The self-reporting nature of the questionnaire ensures privacy and encourages honest responses, which is important when addressing sensitive topics such as domestic violence (Mertens, 2014).

Interviews were conducted particularly interfacing with the victims of domestic violence. This interview was carried out by principle investigator (PI) with the assistance of Community Development Officers. The community development offices assisted in identifying victims of domestic violence since most of the cases are reported in their offices.

Secondary data related to domestic violence was extracted from the 2024 National Population and Housing census which were collated with other existing data from Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development and Rwenzori West Regional Police office. Knowledge for change organization provided cases and scenarios of domestic violence that were already being handled by their organization. The data processing operation was done by registering and checking for inconsistencies, incompleteness, and outliers. Data editing and cleaning included structure and consistency checks to ensure completeness of work. The P I took the central role of conducting secondary data editing.

Data Processing was carried out where Demographic Survey data had to undergo a quality test through the support of the peer review team comprising representatives from the British Academy. The peer review aims at assessing the data processing procedures and overall data quality. This was done through document review, consultative meetings and actual data processing and analysis. The team established that the researcher had significantly improved its position regarding data processing and derivation of associated indicators. The review team then recommends the paper for publication.

3. Research Findings

According to the 2023 Uganda Police Annual Crime Report, 15,184 people were survivors of domestic violence, with 10,792 of them being female adults. Additionally, a 2020 survey by U.N. backed local authorities found that 95% of women and girls in Uganda had experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, after turning 15. In the Bugisu Sub-region, between April and September 2024, 325 cases of domestic violence were reported, with 161 cases not followed up by the complainants. In 2024, police statistics recorded 864 cases of domestic violence in Rwenzori West—making it the 3rd highest region in Uganda after North Kyoga with 1,497 cases and Rwizi with 1,291 cases. Much as Uganda as a whole recorded a 4% drop in domestic violence cases in 2024, Rwenzori West has remained a hotspot. These figures underscore the ongoing challenges in addressing domestic violence in Uganda.

Statistical data from the questionnaire presented here in **Table 1** represents the views and opinions of men, women and CDOs that participated in this study. Several structured statements were presented to them in a questionnaire and were requested to give their responses in how they agree or disagree with the structures' statements. From the responses generated, (raw data presented in **Table 1** below), CDOs overwhelmingly acknowledged all the statements prevailing in domestic violence. Women followed suit in the response acknowledging acceptance of domestic violence as spelt out in the statements in **Table 1**, with a standard deviation of 3.47. However, men though they also acknowledge domestic violence existence in families, their response remained average with a standard deviation of 5.33. This implies that much as they acknowledge, they tend to be submissive reporting such issues to the public.

Table 1. The views of men, women, and CDOs on domestic violence.

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	Mean	SD
Men	23	36	29	36	31	27	26	31	30	19	28.80	5.33
Women	38	34	40	39	39	37	35	36	37	28	36.30	3.47
CDOs	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9.00	0.00
S1	Domestic violence is very high in Rwenzori Region.											
S2	Most cases of Domestic violence relate to land and family inheritance.											
S3	Women and girls experience the highest level and form domestic violence.											
S4	Most cases reported to police are not followed by complaints.											
S5	Community condemns reporting domestic case to police.											
S6	Domesticated men fear reporting cases to police.											
S7	There are a growing number of single marriages in Rwenzori region.											
S8	Domestic Violence has also led to some death of some victims.											
S9	Young generation reluctant to engage in permanent relationships.											
S10	Domestic violence has created fear for engaging in marriage relationship.											

Relatedly, some GBV cases have been established by reaching out to the victims to extract the ground facts from the affected. Four cases are being presented in this paper all explored in Rwenzori Region.

Case GBV (1) was a result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) presented as symptoms during a counseling service session. It was about a 38 year old woman from Kigoyera in Kabarole District. She presents with symptoms of Post-Traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, which she sustained from the brutal attack by the friends of her husband during night hours in 2021. This led to the amputation of one of her hands due to the severe damage caused by the perpetrators. She reports overwhelming emotions of abandonment and neglect by the husband who later disappeared and left her with the responsibility of looking after 5 children and one grandchild. She expressed with anger and disappointment which makes her think of committing suicide or abandons the children (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1997).

She is struggling with social stigma and lack of basic needs to take care of herself and the children. She earns a living through farming; however she reports that the burden of 6 children is overwhelming her since she has one hand with no money to support her pay workers. She reports that her husband became alcoholic and engaged in many relationships after the amputation of her hand, and he physically abused her several times if she could raise her voice to question his behaviors. She thinks that her husband was behind the injury of her hand. That he neglected her due to the disability which she sustained in an effort of saving him from the perpetrators. She expressed that her husband's behavior of infidelity led to the loss of her hand when the perpetrators had come to take vengeance on him, and she felt culprit of circumstances. She continues to wonder why he has to abandon her and live her stay with six young children who have currently dropped out of school due to lack of school fees, no basic needs and she is weak with only one hand.

GBV (2) is about an old woman aged 75 years from Bugaaki Kabarole District. She presents with symptoms of PTSD which resulted from family violence after the death of her husband 10 years ago. She reports that her hand was cut off by the brother in-law who wanted to grab land her husband left for her and the children. That this condition has overtime created overwhelming emotions of fear, anger, extended grief and rejection that has never been treated. She expressed that life is had with one hand since she has to depend on agriculture in order to get money for her basic needs and the children (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1997).

She stays with one of her children and 2 grandchildren. She thinks that due to the death of her husband, the family in law especially the brother to her husband wanted to send her away from the family by grabbing her land. It's of this reason that he attacked them to kill her. He extremely injured her to the extent of chopping off her hand and causing other physical injuries on other parts of her body. She broke down while expressing this traumatic experience. She denied any support from the same family but acknowledged help from her own brothers and sisters to access medical attention. Due to high level of vulnerability, she reports

that she couldn't stay at the said land but rather with the help of her family and local authority, she sold off the land for her treatment and to relocate to another place. During this session, she expressed that life is hard for her with one hand, as she was left with the responsibility of raising children amidst a hostile environment. She appears frustrated and overwhelmed with life.

CBV (3) is about an old man aged 48 years from Kigaraale in Kyenjojo District. This comes as a result of himself sharing experience of resilience. He lost his left hand at 16 years due to a violent land conflict involving his uncle and a neighbor. This traumatic event has left him with persistent feelings of shame, guilt, and low self-esteem, exacerbated by societal stigma. He struggles with functional limitations, frustration over unfulfilled potential, and unresolved trauma from the incident. Despite finding solace in his faith and roles as a teacher and catechist, he still faces challenges with emotional resilience, social isolation, and adjusting to life with one arm. He acknowledged that his disability has posed significant challenges, particularly feelings of inadequacy and frustration about unfulfilled potential. Alex opened up about his struggles with self-esteem, noting that societal stigma often exacerbates his feelings of isolation. However, his role as a teacher and catechist has given him a sense of fulfillment and purpose. He takes pride in positively impacting his community through education and spiritual guidance.

Data explored from the interview guide on the effect of domestic violence on marriage institution reveals that there is constant fear, manipulation, and trauma destroys emotional safety in the marriage. Victims become emotionally detached and also suffer from anxiety and depression. It was clearly mentioned trust, once broken by violence, is difficult to rebuild (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1997).

Data also shows that once there is violence, it often escalates conflicts and reduces the ability to communicate or solve problems constructively. Many marriages affected by domestic violence end in separation or divorce, and sometimes under dangerous or traumatic conditions. The Victims (often women) suffer long-term physical injuries and chronic health issues. They also experience Psychological effects including PTSD, low self-esteem, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Children who witness domestic violence are likely to suffer emotional trauma and behavioural problems. It affects parenting styles and the overall family environment, often creating cycles of violence that carry into future generations. It challenges traditional and cultural views of marriage as a safe, loving, and respectful union (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1997; Black et al., 2019; Koenig et al., 2003).

In communities where domestic violence is widespread, public confidence in marriage as an institution is lost. Victims remain in abusive marriages due to financial dependence or lack of economic empowerment. The abuser controls finances as a means of manipulation and control, creating power imbalances. Domestic violence cases have led to legal interventions, for example restraining orders, arrests, stigma and social isolation often affecting victims and sometimes even the family as a whole. Domestic violence erodes the core values and purpose

of marriage. It damages the well-being of individuals, harms children, and weakens the social fabric that supports healthy family life.

The analytics of domestic violence and its effect on marriage institution stems from trends and experiences from the available data. According to the 2022 Demographic and Health Survey report, 56% of the married women aged 15 - 49 are reported having experienced some form of Intermittent Partner Violence (IPV) i.e. physical, sexual, or emotional. Emotional IPV alone affects 38% of married women. Again, a 2025 Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC, 2025) report confirms 56% of married women aged 15 - 39 still endure gender based violence. Uganda Police alone recorded 15,184 domestic violence survivors in 2023 and 10,792 were women, with 249 domestic-related deaths where 113 were female (Gubi, Nansubuga, & Wandera, 2020).

From the Social cultural and normative context, 58% of women and 44% of men say wife-beating can be justified under certain conditions. Afrobarometer (2022)'s data shows 62% of Ugandans considers domestic violence a private matter, not criminal while over 54% fear reporting cases will lead to social stigma. It is further reported that male partners who are jealous, controlling, or intoxicated significantly raise IPV risk. Women who have been exposed to IPV in their childhood are more likely to experience IPV in adulthood—indicating intergenerational cycles (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015; Wandera et al., 2015; Gubi et al., 2020).

Domestic Violence Act (Republic of Uganda, 2010) Establishes legal recourse, but enforcement is poor—low awareness among law enforcement and few prosecutions. There are Justice System challenges related to reporting hindered by stigma, limited training, few shelters, weak forensics, and low conviction rates. Reforms underway 2020 national survey (VAWG) prompted amendments to improve legislation addressing marital rape, bride price, child marriage, and improved police/family protection unit measures.

4. Discussion of Results

Based on the data collected and the results on the cases and scenarios of GBV, Studies have shown Uganda having one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Common forms include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual violence, and economic deprivation. This is supported by Uganda Demographic Housing Survey (UDHS) report (2016) that presents 56% of women aged 15 - 49 having experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. Koenig et al. (2003) in the journal Social Science & Medicine documents the high prevalence of domestic violence in Rakai District and linked it to poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes (Gubi, Nansubuga, & Wandera, 2020; Wandera, Kwagala, Ndugga, & Kabagenyi, 2015).

Land ownership is both a cultural and economic pillar of marital stability in many African societies. In several documented cases, particularly among widows and divorced women, disputes over land inheritance or marital property escalated into violence, triggering psychological trauma and PTSD. "Land ownership in

many African societies serves as both a socio-cultural and economic foundation of marital stability. The denial of women's rights to land—particularly among widows and divorced women—frequently leads to disputes and violence, with significant psychological repercussions including trauma and symptoms of PTSD” (Yngstrom, 2002; Doss et al., 2015; Adoko & Levine, 2008). In this case, the survivor reported persistent PTSD symptoms after being violently disinherited by her husband's relatives following his death. The condition worsened due to prolonged legal battles and homelessness. The overlap of domestic violence and land conflict makes it difficult to disaggregate causes of trauma and assess their individual impacts on marriage dissolution. It was observed that Land-related gender-based violence is a common feature in patriarchal land tenure systems across Sub-Saharan Africa, especially where customary law overrides statutory protections (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1997).

Relating to results on the cases obtained from Rwenzori Region, herein presented, there is growing scholarly and legal evidence that domestic violence in Uganda is often linked to land and property disputes, especially in patrilineal communities where access to and control over land is primarily male-dominated. In many parts of Uganda, widows and orphaned children face violence and eviction from their marital homes or land after the death of a husband/father. Male relatives of the deceased often claim ownership of the land, leading to domestic conflict, threats, and sometimes physical assault. This agrees with Ahikire & Madanda (2011) in the study “Property Rights and Gender Justice in Uganda: A Comparison of Land Rights and the Oil Industry”. It highlights how customary land tenure systems deny women land rights and expose them to domestic and gender-based violence. Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU) documented multiple cases (especially in Lango and Teso regions) where women were beaten, threatened, or chased away from land during family disputes. Domestic violence is used as a tool to assert economic dominance, especially when women attempt to claim independent ownership or control over land and other resources. When women acquire land through development projects or government schemes, some men respond with intimidation or violence. This is also in line with Izama & Kibanja, (2017) in the article “The Intersection of land, Gender and Conflict in Uganda” (Makerere University Research Series) show that gendered land disputes are often embedded in domestic power struggles (Yngstrom, 2002; Doss, 2015; Andersson Djurfeldt, 2020).

While this study offers valuable insight into how domestic violence undermines the marriage institution in Rwenzori Regions-Sub-Saharan Africa, there were some pronounced limitations when considering findings from the survivors. They exhibited symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) most especially where trauma was closely entangled with land disputes, cultural norms, and systemic injustices. For example, one of the female survivors for instance, was unable to recount the full sequence of events surrounding her violent eviction after a marital conflict over land. This is in line with (Jewkes et al., 2015; García-Moreno et

al., 2006) who argued that survivor testimonies are critical for understanding the lived experiences of domestic violence. Studies have consistently noted limitations stemming from underreporting, recall bias, and fear of social stigma factors that are especially pronounced in patriarchal and rural contexts such as the Rwenzori Region of Sub-Saharan Africa (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1997).

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC, 2025) and Uganda Law Reform Commission (2015) have repeatedly reported that property-related domestic violence is common, especially where legal literacy is low. Legal institutions are often biased against women, and customary courts prioritize male inheritance claims. The UN Women (2017) in their report “Access to Justice for Women Survivors of GBV” found that 31% of rural women reported land conflict as a driver of domestic violence in their households. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC, 2020) found that 42% of GBV cases reported in Adjumani and Yumbe refugee settlements were linked to land disputes. Therefore, Domestic violence in Uganda is not only about physical or emotional control, but also about resource control, especially land and property

Most PTSD-related insights were drawn from individuals who had sought counselling or legal redress—typically the most affected or empowered survivors. This introduces a bias that excludes those silently enduring trauma, especially in rural or underserved communities. The findings may overrepresented severe cases, limiting generalizability. Due to weak health systems and limited psychosocial support in Rwenzori region and many Sub-Saharan countries, many survivors never access counselling services, and thus, their realities remain undocumented. “Studies on PTSD in domestic violence contexts frequently rely on data from survivors who have accessed counselling or legal services, which inherently introduces selection bias. This sample often excludes individuals silently enduring trauma, especially in rural or marginalized settings, and may lead to an overrepresentation of severe cases, thus compromising the generalizability of findings” (Campbell, 2002; Herman, 1997; Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Equally, due to the risk of re-traumatisation, researchers had to navigate carefully, often avoiding deeper probing into land disputes or abuse histories. Ethical sensitivity restricted the depth of inquiry. In trauma-affected regions or land-dispute hotspots, research into domestic violence must always be trauma-informed hence limiting the aggressiveness of investigation.

Analytics on the extent of domestic violence within the marriage institution in Uganda is justified by its consequence on the married. Black et al. (2019) in their article Prevalence and Correlates of Intimate Partner Violence against Women in Conflict-Affected Northern Uganda. Spouses are exhibiting controlling behaviours for example, restricting social contact, accusing each other of infidelity, solicitation of whereabouts are all significantly increasing IPV risks. There is Excessive drinking by partners where 40% reported drunkenness is strongly correlates with physical IPV. Moses et al. (2021) in their article “Socioeconomic Factors and Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence among Ever Married Women in Uganda:

Pathways and Actions for Multi-component Violence Prevention Strategies” points out that women who saw their fathers beating their mothers are significantly more likely to experience IPV themselves hence an intergenerational pattern. Women aged 15 - 24 are at higher IPV risk than those 25 - 34 and marrying before 18 is common, and marrying young is linked to higher IPV incidence. Lower wealth or unemployment raises IPV risk, while employment and professional occupations reduce it. Bride price payments, reflecting unequal power dynamics, are all associated with increased domestic violence. Parity correlates positively with IPV and women with more children face higher risk.

Until recently, Uganda lacked specific laws addressing domestic violence or marital rape. Cultural norms often justified wife-beating under certain circumstances. Surveys show widespread acceptance of male dominance and justification of wife-beating. For instance, 70% - 90% believed physical discipline is sometimes acceptable. Practices like bride price reinforce women’s subordinate status. Divorce laws are biased where women must prove severe misconduct, while men face fewer constraints. Over half of married women experience abuse far above global averages for low and middle-income countries (37%). IPV is driven by interpersonal dynamics say alcohol, control, socioeconomic stresses i.e. poverty, powerlessness, cultural norms (patriarchy, bride price), and legal shortcomings. Empowering women economically and socially, employment and property rights reduce IPV risk. Target male behaviours alcohol abuse, controlling patterns, and attitudes need addressing. Shift norms and community education to de-normalize violence remains crucial. Strengthen legal protections and enforce domestic violence laws, enhance women’s divorce and property rights.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Domestic violence has deeply undermined the integrity and stability of the marriage institution in Uganda by normalizing abuse, weakening marital bonds, increasing divorce, silencing victims and undermining child welfare. To restore marriage as a safe, respectful, and nurturing institution, multi-sectoral interventions are needed for example legal reforms, education, economic empowerment, and cultural transformation.

IPV remains alarmingly common, with more than half of married women reporting abuse. There is a substantial gap that exists between law and practice for instance cultural acceptance persists, stigma deters reporting, and enforcement is still weak. There are also risk factors including partner control, alcohol, past exposure to violence, and socio-economic issues.

Uganda has managed to improve legislative progress, but effective enforcement and societal shift are lagging. To effectively curb gender-based violence (GBV) among the married, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV), a multilevel and multidisciplinary approach is essential. Strengthen domestic violence laws to clearly criminalize all forms of IPV, including marital rape, which remains inadequately addressed in many legal systems. Enforce existing laws through police

training, gender desks, and community policing to ensure survivors can report violence safely and confidently (Ahikire & Mwiine, 2011).

Need to regulate and reform harmful traditional practices, such as bride price, which perpetuate male ownership over women. Mass media and community dialogues to challenge and change patriarchal beliefs that normalize wife-beating or control over women should also be condemned. Promote positive masculinity programs that teach men conflict resolution, empathy, and non-violent behaviours. Engage religious and cultural leaders to publicly denounce IPV and support peaceful family relationships. Provide access to income-generating activities, vocational training, and financial literacy to reduce women's economic dependence on abusive partners. Introduce safe savings groups and microfinance programs with integrated IPV awareness education.

Support women's access to land and property rights, especially after separation or widow. Integrate GBV and relationship education in schools and adult literacy programs, teaching both men and women about rights, consent, and healthy relationships. Raise awareness on legal rights and services available to victims of IPV through local radio, posters, community workshops, etc. Create mobile and rural outreach teams to reach out to women in remote areas with counselling and referral services. Train health workers to screen for IPV and refer survivors to appropriate services confidentially and safely. Support fatherhood initiatives to promote nurturing, non-violent parenting and family roles. Strengthen national data collection (e.g., through the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey) on IPV to monitor trends and effectiveness of interventions. Encourage community-led research and survivor testimonies to inform culturally relevant solutions.

6. Limitations

Several limitations arose that affect the scope, reliability, or generalizability of this study. Cultural taboos around discussing domestic violence and marital issues limited participants' willingness to share truthful or give complete information. There was Underreporting and biased data due to fear, shame, or societal pressure. There was difficulty in quantifying the extent of the problem or analyzing trends over time. Use of qualitative methods such as interviews limited generalizability while quantitative methods ought to miss nuanced, context-specific insights. There was also a challenge in balancing depth (qualitative) and breadth (quantitative) of analysis. For instance, interviewing survivors posed ethical risks, which included retraumatization and exposure to further harm. This limited the pool of participants and restricted the types of questions asked. Finally, findings from one region, or community may not be applicable to others due to socio-cultural, economic, and legal differences. This limits the external validity of the study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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