

THE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A
CASE STUDY OF THE SUBA COMMUNITY ON RUSINGA ISLAND

JOSEPHINE ANYANGO OBONYO

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DEDICATION

To my late parents Ruth and Peter Obonyo, my husband Gilbert, and children Louis, Kevin, Peter and Gabriel Wandago.

A special dedication to my late sister Alice for her selflessness.

DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented to any other institution for a degree.

Josephine Anyango Obonyo



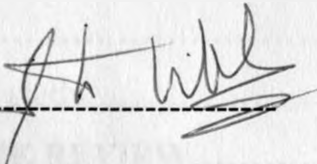
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This thesis has been submitted with our approval as university supervisors.

Prof. Simiyu Wandibba

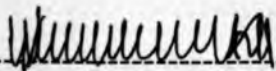


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Dr. Wilfred K. Subbo



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
List of Case studies.....	vii
Acknowledgement.....	viii
Abstract.....	ix
Acronyms.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 A historical perspective of the Abasuba.....	3
1.3 Cultural practices.....	5
1.4 Problem statement.....	10
1.5 Objectives of the study	12
1.5.1 Overall objective.....	12
1.5.2 Specific objectives.....	12
1.6 Rationale of the study.....	13
1.7 Assumptions of the study.....	13
1.8 Scope and limitations of the study.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2 The enculturation process	15
2.3 Conformity to a belief system	18
2.4 Societal expectations and traditions versus the private sphere.....	20
2.5 Women's right to property.....	23
2.6 The practice of wife inheritance.....	26
2.7 Marital rape.....	28

2.8	The role of patriarchy in violence against women.....	30
2.9	Women’s attitudes and perceptions.....	33
2.10	Theoretical framework.....	35
2.10.1	Feminist theory.....	35
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....		37
3.1	Introduction	37
3.2	Research site.....	40
3.3	Research design.....	43
3.4	Study population and units of analysis.....	44
3.5	Sample size and sampling strategy.....	44
3.6	Methods of data collection.....	45
3.6.1	Secondary sources.....	45
3.6.2	The survey method.....	45
3.6.3	Semi-structured interviews	45
3.6.4	Key informant interviews	46
3.6.5	Narratives and case histories	46
3.6.6	Focus group discussions.....	47
3.7	Data processing and analysis.....	47
3.8	Ethical considerations.....	48
3.9	Problems encountered in the field and their solutions.....	49
CHAPTER FOUR: FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON RUSINGA ISLAND.....		51
4.1	Introduction.....	51
4.2	Socio-demographic profile of the respondents.....	51
4.2.1	Age distribution of respondents.....	51
4.2.2	Gender of the respondents.....	52

4.2.3	Marital status.....	52
4.2.4	Level of education.....	53
4.2.5	Sources of income.....	55
4.3	Forms of violence.....	56
4.3.1	Physical violence	57
4.3.2	Emotional violence.....	62
4.3.2.1	The most common forms of emotional violence.....	63
4.3.2.2	The unforgiving nature of men when women err.....	75
4.3.3	Sexual violence.....	75
4.4.1	Most common forms of sexual violence.....	75
4.4.2	Forced marriages and fulfilling burial rights.....	77
4.5	Economic violence.....	81
4.5.1.1	Most common forms of economic violence.....	81
4.5.1.3	The power of older women.....	84
CHAPTER FIVE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENCULTURATION AND VIOLENCE.....		89
5.1	Introduction	89
5.2	Impact of enculturation on physical violence	89
5.3	Impact of enculturation on emotional violence.....	92
5.4	Impact of enculturation on sexual violence	98
5.5	Impact of enculturation on economic violence.....	103
CHAPTER SIX: EFFECT OF WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN		107
6.1	Introduction.....	107
6.2	Women's perceptions of physical violence.....	107
6.3	Women's perceptions of emotional violence.....	109

6.4	Women’s perceptions of the practice of polygyny and widow inheritance and their role in emotional violence.....	110
6.5	Women’s perception of sexual violence.....	114
6.6	Women’s perceptions of economic violence.....	121
CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION		
7.1	Introduction.....	125
7.2	Summary	125
7.3	Conclusion	133
7.4	Recommendations.....	137
	REFERENCES.....	138
	Appendices.....	145
	Appendix A: Survey questionnaire.....	145
	Appendix B: Semi-structured interview guide	152
	Appendix C: Key informant interview guide	153
	Appendix D: Focus group discussions guide.....	154

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Age distribution of respondents.....	51
Table 4.2 Level of education of respondents.....	54
Table 4.3 Relationship to head of homestead.....	56
Table 4.4 Forms of physical violence.....	57

LIST OF MAPS AND FIGURES

Map 3.1	Location of Suba District.....	38
Map 3.2	Location of Rusinga Island.....	39
Figure 4.1	Gender of respondents.....	52
Figure 4.2	Marital status of respondents.....	53
Figure 4.3	Respondents' source of income.....	55
Figure 4.4	Existence of physical violence.....	56
Figure 4.5	Existence of emotional violence.....	62
Figure 4.6	Existence of sexual violence.....	75
Figure 4.7	Existence of economic violence.....	81
Figure 5.1	Influence of enculturation on physical violence.....	89
Figure 5.2	Influence of enculturation on emotional violence.....	93
Figure 5.3	Influence of enculturation on sexual violence.....	98
Figure 5.4	Influence of enculturation on economic violence.....	104
Figure 6.1	Respondents' perceptions of physical violence.....	107
Figure 6.2	Respondents' perceptions of emotional violence.....	110
Figure 6.3	Respondents' perceptions of sexual violence.....	115
Figure 6.4	Respondents' perceptions of economic violence.....	121

LIST OF CASE STUDIES

Case 4.1: A wife whose husband disciplined his wives and children alike	61
Case 4.2: A witness to her mother-in-law's inheritance	64
Case 4.3: A middle-aged woman tormented through polygyny	69
Case 4.4: A woman 'caught in the act'	71
Case 4.5: Middle-aged woman forced to have sex with a stranger.....	79
Case 4.6: A woman made to carry the economic burden of her family.....	86
Case 4.7: Polygynist who has never engaged in any gainful employment.....	87
Case 5.1: A woman twice widowed and whose in-laws refused to inherit her	95
Case 5.2: A woman physically and sexually assaulted and married forcefully	102
Case 6.1: A woman forcefully carried away into marriage.....	117
Case 6.2: A woman who struggled to get an inheritor.....	119

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to explore the forms of violence against women on Rusinga Island and how it relates to enculturation and the women's perceptions of it. The study sought to address the following research questions: What forms of violence against women exist on Rusinga Island? To what extent is the violence against women a result of enculturation? And, does women's socialization make them perceive the violence against them as normal, hence influencing its perpetuation? The overall objective of the study was to explore the forms of violence against women on Rusinga Island and the relationship between the violence and enculturation. The specific objectives were to determine the forms of violence against women on Rusinga Island, to investigate the relationship between this violence and enculturation and to establish the perceptions of women regarding the presumed harmful beliefs and practices that perpetuate violence against women. The study was guided by the radical feminist theory which analyses patriarchy as the primary cause of women's oppression.

Data were collected using the survey method, semi-structured interviews, direct observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Data from the survey were analyzed using the SPSS computer programme and the findings presented in tables of frequencies, percentages and bar charts. Qualitative data were sorted out, tabulated and interpreted in relation to the research objectives. The findings are presented using verbatim quotes and narratives.

The study found that physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence against women exist to a great extent on Rusinga Island. All these forms of violence are greatly fuelled by the deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, practices and perceptions

that not only help to perpetuate the violence, but also make it difficult to eradicate the vice. Various traditional beliefs and practices are a great source of violence for women. These include the present day practice of polygyny, which is very common in the study area, wife inheritance, forced marriage and practices around burial rites for widows who have not yet been inherited. Others include the traditional practices surrounding young women who have reached puberty, as they are considered to be impure and polluting, with the perceived ability to cause a spell or doom, and wipe away an entire homestead.

The study, therefore, concluded that violence against women exists in various forms which include physical, emotional, sexual and economic on Rusinga Island. Violence against women is perpetuated by the way the people are socialized to believe that men have unlimited rights over women, particularly wives.

The study, therefore, recommends sensitization of the community as a whole on human rights in general, and on the rights of women in particular. Similarly, women should be encouraged to report incidents of violence to relevant authorities. Finally, various cultural beliefs and practices that perpetuate violence against women should be reconsidered and alternative rites prescribed by clan elders.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
COVAW	Coalition on Violence against Women
CREAW	Centre for Education Awareness for Women
DEVAW	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GOK	Government of Kenya
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
KNHRC	Kenya National Human Rights Commission
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Violence against women is any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (UNIFEM, 2008:4 a). The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women in the continent on its part defines violence against women as "all acts perpetuated against women which cause or could cause them physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm including the threat to take such acts; or to undertake the imposition of arbitrary restrictions or deprivation of fundamental freedoms in private or public life in peacetime or during situations of armed conflict or war" (COVAW, 2009:8). Violence does not happen spontaneously. It grows out of unequal and exclusive society and out of institutional and social control. Women all over the world face violence in their daily lives in ways that have no direct parallels for men. The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women noted that this violence could be perpetrated by assailants of gender, family members and even the "State" (UN-Habitat, 2002; UNIFEM, 2008a).

Harmful cultural practices are forms of violence that have been committed against women in certain communities and societies for so long that they are considered part of accepted cultural traditions. These violations include widow inheritance, female genital cutting, dowry murder, so-called 'honour killings', early marriage and physical, beating among others. They lead to death, disability and physical as

well as psychological harm for millions of women annually (Sweetman, 1998; UNIFEM, 2008b). According to Amnesty International (1997), Kenya's cultural practices, such as bride wealth, wife inheritance, female genital cutting and discriminatory land and property rights have internationally been recognized as violations of women's rights that hamper women's and national development. The fear of violence experienced by women is a result of a series of cultural, social and political causes. This violence is deeply rooted in the inequality that exists between men and women in our patriarchal societies. These feelings of fear and insecurity end up controlling and restricting women in their social and economic activities. It also limits their freedom and fundamental rights (Amnesty International, 1997:2).

Two essential factors underlying violence against women and girls are their subordinate status to men and the general acceptance of interpersonal violence in society. According to Sen (1998), the use and meaning of violence is connected with power. It is broadly the case that in most societies, social, economic, political and interpersonal power remains with men. In this context, violence is an expression of power, a means through which people seek control. Victims of violence are more often than not chosen because of their gender and the message is domination. According to Bunch and Carrillo (1992:22), cross-cultural research suggests the existence of male violence against women in all societies and across time. Heyzer (1998:84) has pointed out that research findings all over the world have shown that violence against women occurs throughout their lives. It can extend from pre-birth and infancy (for example, sex-selected abortion common in India and infanticide) to old age (for example, violence against widows and elder abuse). While this reality is a world-wide phenomenon, what vary are the degree of gravity and forms of suppression from community to community. Moore (1988:32)

argues that biological differences between men and women take significance only within culturally defined value systems. The actual treatment of women and their relative power and contribution vary enormously from culture to culture, and over different periods in the history of particular cultures.

1.2 A historical perspective of the Abasuba

The Abasuba are a heterogeneous group of non-Luo people of South Nyanza whose origins are the Baganda or the Basoga, and who came to their present home by various routes. The name “suba” is derived from the word “zuwa” which means “foreigner” in Luganda dialect which is spoken among the major clans of the Abasuba in the present Suba District and on Mfangano Island in particular. They settled on Rusinga Island, Mfangano Island and along the South Nyanza lake region in the present day locations of Gembe, Kaksingri and Gwassii. There are twelve clans which include Kaswanga, Kamasengre, Waware, Wanyama, Wakinga, Waganda, Wakula, Kaksingri, Gembe, Kakimba, Wiramba and Wagasi. Most of the Abasuba in Kenya live in the present Suba, Migori, Kuria and Gucha districts. They have nine clans that include Wamohoro, Waikoma, Wagoreme, Wakira, Wategi, Waisenge, Wasimbeti, Watabori and Waimera (Ayot, 1977:5, 1978:20).

According to the Abasuba migration myths, these people came from Uganda and settled at Yimbo near Ramogi Hills, before they moved to South Nyanza thereby forming the last wave of migration from Uganda into Kenya after the Luo community. Part of their reasons for migration were conflict between them and the Baganda, internal wrangles among themselves, search for pasture due to increased population, new fishing grounds, and outbreaks of animal and human diseases

such as small-pox, *ndira* (cholera), *nyalolwe* (sleeping sickness) and rinderpest (Ayot 1977, 1978; Ogot, 1967).

The Suba people were patrilineal, with male wielding power. Leadership, however, was hierarchically administered from the family to the community where the chief elder was the leader. His roles included settling intra-societal conflicts, taking part in peace talks between his community and other communities, administering punishment to the community's criminals, and presiding over societal rituals and prayers, both for thanks giving and during calamities. He was commander-in-chief of the community's army in times of war. The chief elder's position was not hereditary but awarded due to the individual's personal qualities, influence, skills, experience and achievements. He was assisted by a council of elders in carrying out his duties (Abuso, 1985:85).

The Abasuba believed in god who is a father to all people called *Enyasaye*, *Rioba*, *Emungu* or *Enyakoi*. However, god was not perceived to be directly involved in the everyday affairs of the world; rather he was perceived to have delegated these duties to the lesser gods such as the living dead and other beings in the heavens. For this reason, the ancestors were revered and had to be appeased at all times by, among other ways, adhering to cultural beliefs and practices at whatever cost, failure to which it was believed that a curse would befall a family or an entire clan. Old men were thought to be closer to the ancestors and so in times of crisis the society they prayed to god through the ancestors and other gods to grant the society's needs. For this reason, old people in this society were highly respected. The Abasuba worshipped everything that appeared super-natural, including the *rioba* (sun) (Ayot, 1977:296).

The Abasuba believed in the omnipresent powers of benevolent and beneficent spirits which inhabited everything. *Jojuogi* (witches) were also believed to use spiritual powers either for harm or for the good of the people. Hippopotamuses, snakes and other wild animals were believed to be sacred and were not to be harmed in any way as they were considered god's messengers. When they came to the house, a *jabilo* (magician) was consulted to reveal the cause of their visit. The Abasuba clans had totems, in the form of wild animals which were believed to have been their daughters, but due to some mishap turned into totemic animals such as *engwe* (leopard), *engoge* (baboon) and *kikondo* (monkey). These animals were neither to be eaten nor killed even if they destroyed crops (Ayot, 1977:8).

1.3 Cultural practices

1.3.1 Marriage practices

The institution of marriage was revered by all among the Abasuba, and it was mandatory for both males and females. The Abasuba believe in exogamous marriage, and so girls have to marry outside their clan. The totemic belief united this otherwise heterogeneous society, since marriage and relations are defined in terms of clans. For example, clans that share the same totemic animals do not fight or inter-marry, while clans with different totemic animals inter-marry and are, therefore, related through marriage bonds (Okumu-Oloo, 2006:7).

The predominant type of marriage among the Abasuba was polygyny since a man's wealth was judged by the number of wives, size of the herd of livestock, number of children, number and size of houses and granaries in the homestead, and the size of land. Marriage in this community promotes a woman's status, while

divorce and separation lowers her social status and these are evident in the practices women are accorded even in death. In addition, divorce and separation are not allowed. A marriage relationship in this community is permanent once established and the couples are united in death if they became divorced or separated. For this reason, should a separated or divorced woman die, her body is returned for burial to her former husband's clan, family or lineage (Okumu-Oloo, 2006).

A man took additional wives, with the first wife proposing a woman whom she found appropriate. This could include her own blood sister (serial polygyny), or a close or distant relative. Alternatively, other relatives such as uncles could propose for the man, women whom they felt were good for him, or the man could marry any lady that he admired. The man's wealth and ability determined the number of additional wives he took. Levirate and sororate marriage were allowed when a husband or wife died, respectively. Payment of bride wealth was mandatory before one lived with a woman (Okumu-Oloo, 2006; Abuso, 1985).

1.3.2 Initiation and enculturation

The Abasuba community performed *sero* (circumcision) on boys and girls after which they were given *mbese* (age-set) names. Unlike in most communities, the circumcision ceremonies had no defined age or intervals although one had to undergo the rite upon reaching puberty. Cowards were looked down upon and laughed at, and those circumcised while old were fined. The enculturation process took place throughout one's life and was done by everybody and everywhere in the community. The youth were instructed by their grandparents whose huts acted as village schools and common sleeping place for the youth. Here, they learnt about

traditional norms, duties, history, values and discipline, among other things. Learning was through the use of songs, proverbs, stories, riddles and tongue twisters. This made learning easy as it was both interesting and entertaining (Ayot, 1977; Abuso, 1985).

1.3.3 Division of labour

Division of labour was on the basis of sex, age, physique, skills and risk involved. Women and children had the duty of cooking, looking after children, smearing houses with cow dung, fetching water and firewood. The men and boys, on the other hand, built houses, hunted and went to war. Other duties for the boys and men included fishing, herding livestock, clearing the farmland and making boats (Abuso, 1985).

There was a high degree of discipline in the community due to the retribution mechanisms that were put in place for offenders which included fines, caning, public ridicule, being ostracized and gossip. Fear of taboos also ensured law and order was maintained as people feared the repercussions of breaking any. People struggled to be industrious and to behave well as this attracted praise and respect from elders and other members of the society. This made everyone strive to behave well and appear upright. People were bound by their unwritten philosophy of life, which was, however, accepted by the entire community without reservations. The male youth were soldiers who used *tong'* (spears), *kuodi* (shields), and *asere* (arrows) in times of war. The *osumba* (clan elders), on the other hand, were greatly united against *wasigu* (enemies). Their unity was imperative as it motivated all youth to fight as one community (Ayot, 1977; Abuso, 1985).

1.3.4 Death and burial practices

According to Okumu-Oloo (2006: 8), death among the Abasuba was not feared by old people; it was, to them, a beautiful moment and glorious end, for they knew they were going to receive a warm welcome from their forefathers, relatives, friends, and ancestors in the world below. It is for this reason that it was common to hear mourners sending greetings to relatives who were long dead through the deceased. An old man could call his children at the time of death to instruct them on what to do once he was dead; he blessed the children and commanded them to perform his burial rites in a certain way. Whereas the dying viewed death as a passage to the world below, to those left behind, death was a cruel and sad moment. Mourning was soon followed by burial. A homestead head with cattle was buried in *kund dhok* (a cattle kraal), but ordinarily, a male family head was buried on the right hand side, outside the house of *mikayi* (the senior wife). A married woman, on the other hand, was buried on the left hand side of her house. In times of crisis, the family offered prayers and sacrifices at the *kibaga* (graveyard). Married sons who die before *golo ligega* (building their own homesteads) are buried near their *simba* (hut) on the right hand side lying sideways on their right sides. Deceased daughters-in-law are buried on the left hand side of their husbands' huts while lying sideways on their left sides and their heads facing away from the main gate. This clearly illustrates the fact that burial among the Abasuba was a serious matter, and family members' places of burial were predetermined in different sections of the homestead, with the notable exception of the *wagogoni* (daughters of the home) (Okumu-Oloo, 2006:36).

It was a taboo to bury a married woman who died before being beaten by her husband. In such a case, the widower had to slap or cane the dead wife before

burial. The beating revealed the marriage status of the deceased woman, that is, she was still under the authority of her husband. The beating also signifies the husband's love for the wife even in death. Sons who died having attained maturity age but still not married and those divorced, were accorded middle social status burials. However, to show that the society does not tolerate mature men or divorced ones to be buried without marrying, pain or punishment was symbolically inflicted on the dead bodies by pricking their buttocks with thorns. These thorns were not removed upon burial. This served as a warning to the divorced and unmarried mature men in society to marry at the right time, failure to which their bodies and spirits would be embarrassed upon death (Okumu-Oloo, 2006:36).

Daughters have no burial places in the homestead. Divorced daughters and girls in their stage had their bodies buried outside their parents' homestead fence. This is because they are considered to be like wildcats in the society, and just as wildcats are a threat to homesteads since they kill chicken, these women are a threat to the homestead too. They are considered 'outsiders' and should be buried outside the clan, specifically *kachuogi* (in their husbands' homesteads). Their burial in their father's homestead is thought to cause or spell doom and a source of bad omen to the concerned family. It is believed that burying them within the homestead would affect the ladies in the homestead and they would continue divorcing and dying in their father's homestead. Such burials are, therefore, conducted as a last resort when the concerned in-laws have refused to reclaim 'the body of their wife' (Okumu-Oloo, 2006:37).

Alternatively, society recommends that an unmarried girl at puberty should be buried at her brother-in-law's place as 'his wife'. This is also referred to as ghost

marriage. Sometimes arrangements were made with the concerned son-in-law that he be given a girl to marry after agreeing to bury his sister-in-law. In addition, an unmarried daughter-in-law can be buried at her grandfather's home as *chiege matin* (his 'small wife'). This is because there is a joking relationship between a grandfather and granddaughter where the former refers to the latter as his 'small wife'. Therefore, the grandfather is 'free' or allowed to bury his granddaughter as his 'small wife' (Ayot, 1977; Okumu-Oloo, 2006).

The Abasuba neighbour the Luo who are numerically and culturally superior to them. As a result of this, the Abasuba have basically been assimilated by the Luo and, therefore, their cultures are fairly similar today. They, however, still have some traits which distinguish them from the rest of the Luo (Ayot, 1977:16).

1.4 Problem statement

Documented evidence, observations and statements confirm that millions of women and girls world-wide are systematically subjected to culture-related violence in the name of identity. Even the worst forms of violence continue to be tolerated as inevitable and women bear life-threatening acts with apathy and silence as part of their culture. The prevailing patriarchal system built on the ignorance and economic vulnerability of women encourages and preserves practices that are gruesome in order to subjugate women. The socializing process of boys and girls is constructed to instill a feeling of inferiority and fear in girls and women and this process is fiercely guarded as part of culture maintained for social cohesion (UNIFEM, 2008).

Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. According to UN-Habitat (2002), culture-related violence

is also a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women. Its effects range from physical injuries and mental problems to death. It has been noted, for example, that abused women suffer from both health and psychological problems. They have significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression and somatic complaints than women who have not suffered abuse (Jaffe, 1986:32). Jaffe further argues that such women are often paralyzed with terror from the ever-present threat of an attack or a ritual and are more likely to commit suicide as compared to those who have not been abused.

Despite years of activism by feminists determined to put an end to male violence against women, it is steadily on the increase because it is specifically linked to the politics of sexism and male supremacy. Women across all regions, ages, religions, classes, and political affiliations are vulnerable to violence and their safety is neither guaranteed in the home nor in public (Sen, 1997:68). Unwritten customary laws as well as social and community expectations can and do exacerbate the extent and incidences of violence against women as COVAW (2009) established. Personal accounts of women in various publications show the nature and impact of culture-related violence against women. Culture-related violence against women continues to be a global problem that kills, tortures and maims. It is present in many communities and cuts across cultures, class, education, income, ethnicity and age.

Despite the existence of regional and international women rights instruments, women are still victims of selective violence as a result of their gender. Subordination of women is universal and since this condition is not inherent in the biological differences between sexes, an alternative explanation must be found (Moore, 1988).

Although a great deal of feminist theory and literature declares a connection between negative gender attitudes and violence against women, very few studies have addressed the direct relationship between harmful cultural beliefs and practices and violence against women to confirm the association. Furthermore, there appears to be a huge gap in the literature regarding the causal connection. It is against this backdrop that this research was conducted in an attempt to establish the reasons behind the increasing cases of violence against women despite the various intervention mechanisms already put in place by various agencies. This study, therefore, sought to answer the following questions:

1. What forms of violence against women exist on Rusinga Island?
2. To what extent is the violence a result of enculturation?
3. Does women's socialization make them perceive the violence against them as normal?

1.5 Objectives of the study

1.5.1 Overall objective

To explore the forms of violence against women on Rusinga Island and the relationship between these and the people's enculturation.

1.5.2 Specific objectives

1. To determine the forms of violence against women on Rusinga Island.
2. To investigate the relationship between violence and enculturation.
3. To establish the perceptions of women regarding the presumed harmful beliefs and practices that perpetuate violence against women.

1.6 Rationale of the study

The prevention of culture-related violence against women is likely to be successful if the causal relationship is established and recourse measures put in place including awareness creation for both women and men. This study aimed to contribute to other related studies to enhance knowledge and educate society on the existence and magnitude of the vice. It is further hoped that the study will inform interventions by various interest groups in the area of sexual and culture-based violence. In addition, policy makers in the area of gender will have additional knowledge, which they may use for better planning in a gender sensitive manner.

1.7 Assumptions of the study

The study was based on the following assumptions:

1. That violence against women exists in the study area.
2. That the said violence is as a result of cultural beliefs and practices of the community.
3. That the violence is harmful to the socio-economic wellbeing of women and society.
4. That women, who are mainly the victims of harmful cultural practices and beliefs, are passive recipients of culture-related violence against them.

1.8 Scope and limitations of the study

The study focused on the forms of culture-related violence against women on Rusinga Island. It attempted to find out the relationship between this violence and enculturation. Finally, the study aimed to establish the perceptions of women

regarding the presumed harmful beliefs and practices that perpetuate violence against women. The study was guided by radical feminist theory.

There were a number of problems which we encountered in the course of data collection, but they were, however, not insurmountable. We experienced problems with language because the dialect spoken in the study area was slightly different from the researcher's. It was worse with the much older respondents. This problem was solved through the use of research assistants from the area to translate the difficult words.

Despite spirited attempts to create a good rapport with respondents, some of them answered the researcher with such caution that bordered on mistrust. The presence of familiar research assistants, however, made them to open up more. Movement from one location to another was a challenge given the terrain and the harsh weather conditions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a review of the literature that is divided into two parts. The first part examines cultural beliefs and practices and their impact on socialization of the individual from childhood to adulthood. The second part explores the various ways in which cultural beliefs and practices perpetuate violence against women. After the literature review, the chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks that guided the study.

2.2 The enculturation process

Enculturation is the process through which children learn the culture that guides the life of members in society or the process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another. Even before they begin to communicate in the language of their society, those around them have begun to mould their behaviour so that it conforms to the rules of living that make up their culture. Anthropologists have for long argued that enculturation occurs partly by initiation and partly by teaching through language. Much of what is learned informally is done automatically, without awareness or concentration and with little or no feeling, when these informally learned rules for doing things are broken, anxiety mounts rapidly in all present until someone acts to deal with the rule of violation. This is referred to as formal learning (Crapo, 1990:22).

Customs are also taught through talking about and without expressing disapproval or disappointments of the learner's rule breaking behaviour. Instead, this new way

of acting is explained by giving the logical reason that lies behind it. This form of learning is referred to as technical learning. Due to the emphasis on explaining the rationale, little emotion is associated with material learned in this way, and it may be replaced readily by new technical ways of dealing with the same situations. However, when it comes to formal learning, one is conscious of the rules, since talking about them was part of the learning. Formal ways of doing things are endowed with deep feelings by the participants and their violation leads to tremendous insecurity in those who rely on them to order and structure their lives. Since strong emotions are associated with them, adherence to the custom as taught is important. Formally learned customs are slow to change. Men and women are thus socialized differently in every society. Females are socialized to be submissive and docile while males are taught to be aggressive and dominant, which leads to hyper masculinity. When there is a general belief that males are dominant and women are subservient, an adversarial environment which is supportive of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence against women is created (Crapo, 1990:23).

It does not necessarily require one to be a participant observer of social life to appreciate that a child learns the basic habits of its group from its parents. It receives its first rewards and frustrations in the family and not in the clinic or playgroup. It manifests its first aggression in reference to these same parents who not only give it care, but also must force it, stage by stage, to abandon earlier goal responses in order to develop the skills needed for living in its own group. It is in the family where most children first learn the meaning and practice of hierarchical authoritarian rule (Hooks, 1984:37). Muchoki (2008), in his study of rape perpetrators in Kenyan prisons, concluded that the way children are nurtured

determines what kind of adults they become. All human qualities result from a complex interaction between nature and nurture (Muchoki, 2008: 101). Dollard (1967) in his study of *Socialization in America* observed that a lot of effects of childhood training and childhood experiences are felt in the character and habits of adults. When a child meets his culture, he meets an organized way of life, a set of problem solutions, which have served to adapt his group in some manner to its natural world. These solutions to learning of culturally appointed habits begin early and run through a series of stereotyped situations. This goes on to indicate that the violence meted out on women under the guises of culture is learned from the families or the immediate group/society to which one belongs or has grown up.

Broom and Philip (1989:92) maintain that the child has an imperative need to evoke positive feelings from his parents or parent surrogates. Clinical studies have found that failure to evoke love in the parents may result in an inability to love and in what has been called “fear” of loving. They further assert that in less extreme cases “the failure to evoke love results in anxiety, in a sense of uncertainty, threat, and personal inadequacy” (Broom and Philip, 1989:92). In situations of neglect, deprivation, and rejection, the child may come to think of himself as inadequate; because he is involved, he may think of himself as inherently unlovable. This is to say that a lot of aggressive adults who abuse women probably hardly experienced parental love as infants or as children generally. Their feeling of inadequacy then translates into violence (when they feel threatened or belittled or offended). Mbaluka (2002) found from her research on abuse of children that gender-based violence contributes greatly towards children’s violations in the privacy of the family whenever they witness abuse on their parents (especially mothers), and this shapes the kind of people they grow up to become. Ondicho (1993:36-37) has

argued that men use physical violence to sustain their authority over women. The explanation is that if some amount of corporal punishment is not inflicted on wives, even wives for whom they have affection, the wives cannot obey and respect their husbands. Violence against women under the guise of culture can lead to unhappy and unfulfilled marriages and relationships. The result is unhappy children devoid of the attention, love and affection that is necessary for proper development (Mbaluka, 2002:35).

Hooks (1984:123) argues that most men who are violent against women are not seeking help or change. “How can they feel that their acceptance and perpetration of violence against women is wrong when society rewards them for it?”, she poses. This is because male violence is glamorized; it is made entertaining and sexually titillating through the electronic media. The more violent a male actor is, the more attention he is given. This violence is affirmed and rewarded. The more violent the character, the more he receives love and affection from women. His violence is portrayed as a gesture of care, of his “love” for women and for humanity. A child who grows up exposed to such violence comes to appreciate it as the norm and that to appear “macho”, one has to behave in the same way. It is also this equation of violence with love in many cultural set-ups that makes it difficult to motivate most people to work to end culture-related violence against women (Hooks, 1984:123)

2.3 Conformity to a belief system

An ideology has two main interacting components: a sub-system of beliefs and a sub-system of feelings. Beliefs are the means by which people make sense of their experiences; they are a people’s inner reactions, emotions or desires concerning experiences. Although beliefs are judgments about facts, they are not always the

result of rational analysis of experience. Emotions, attitudes and values - all aspects of the feeling-systems may determine what people choose to believe. Within limits set by the necessities of survival, persons may choose to believe what is pleasing to believe, what they think they want to believe and what they think they ought to believe. On the other hand, once people are concerned about the truth of a new set of beliefs, they may change some of their previous feelings to make it easier to maintain those new beliefs (Crapo, 1990; Service, 1971).

The knowledge of a society is taught to its children either implicitly or explicitly as the proper way of understanding the world. We obtain full acceptance as members of our group by conforming to the ways in which others think. Cultural ideas are imposed on us through rewards for conformity and punishment for deviance. Individuals who violate their culture's rules for proper thinking are likely to experience punishment ranging from a mild reproof or laughter to severe sanctions such as banishment, imprisonment or death. Widespread adoption of a system of beliefs gives people a sense of identity as a group. As people discuss their beliefs, they may begin to think of their shared ideas as a symbol of their identity as a people (Edgerton, 1971; Crapo, 1990). Other relevant concepts that go hand in hand with the belief system include the following:

Ideal versus real culture: Ideal culture refers to the ways in which people describe their way of life. Real culture, on the other hand, refers to the actual behaviours people engage in. Culture is a system of ideals for behaviour. People do not always follow the guidelines of their culture. Sometimes individuals violate cultural ideals about proper communication behaviour, sometimes for personal

gain at the expense of others; but most of the time, failure to conform to cultural ideals is not consciously intended (Edgerton, 1971:88).

Attitudes: Attitudes are statements of preferences, likes and dislikes to more generalized than specific emotional reactions to situations. Attitudes are general tendencies to seek or avoid types of experiences (Edgerton, 1971:89).

Values: Value refers to the part of a feeling, a sub-system of an ideology. It includes feelings about what should or should not be, what is good and what is bad. Values include the moral imperatives in dealing with other humans. They also include feelings about right and wrong that do not directly affect interpersonal relations but may affect one's relationship with nature or the supernatural. The values of different cultures can be amazingly diverse to the extent that what is held to be supremely desirable by members of one society may be despised by another (Edgerton, 1971:89).

Feelings and beliefs tend to strengthen each other. Our feelings may be the motivation for believing things for which no objective support exists. Beliefs may, in turn, validate our feelings. When we believe that our feelings are the same as those which other people experience in the same situation, we are more confident in our judgment. Recognizing that our feelings are shared by others also supports our sense of belonging to a definable group (Edgerton, 1971:90).

2.4 Societal expectations and traditions versus the private sphere

Harmful cultural practices that constitute violence against women include violence in the private sphere which comes in the form of denial of property, wife-beating and marital rape. These directly contribute to economic, physical and sexual

violence for women. Culture-related violence also occurs in the public sphere and in a way that is evident to and may involve the wider community under the guise of adhering to cultural beliefs and practices. These occur in the form of widow inheritance, property inheritance, forced and early marriage. There exists a gender system in families which is based on inequality in the public world, which is reflected in the private world and needs to be recognized, addressed and challenged. A family is affected and influenced by the wider society to which it is part. It thus follows that family members are not free to organize their relationship in a way that they alone negotiate and decide upon. Instead, they are influenced and, therefore, limited by societal expectations and traditions. Among families, there is variation in the extent to which each deliberately decides to adhere to tradition or develop new ways of conducting family life. Given a society which discriminates so clearly between men and women, it follows that many rules will prescribe differences in male and female behaviour and attitudes and as per traditions (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

According to Sweetman (1998:5), “women are statistically safer in the street than they are in their homes”. Many cultures have considered the marital relationship in particular and the family generally as a private area in which others should not interfere, and with the freedom of the male household head to control events and discussions and to punish challenges to his authority. Among many communities in Kenya, a wife is considered the property of the husband and the wider community in general and he therefore has a right to ‘discipline’ her (as one would a child) without question. Coupled with this is the notion in some cultures that disciplining a wife is a sign of love. This profound unease with interfering in the

'private sphere' of the home has been carried over into the ideologies of organizations. It is shared by institutions including the police and the judiciary.

Even in countries where violence against women is recognized as a crime, only a small population of survivors report these crimes to the police. Discussions at world conferences on women in Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985) recognized domestic violence as an obstacle to equality and an intolerable offence to human dignity (Heyzer, 1998). In 1985, the United Nations General Assembly passed its first resolution on violence against women, advocating concerted and multi-disciplinary action. Dobash and Dobash (1980) have established that domestic violence, including wife-beating, is gender-based, because violence against women in the family is rooted in the control men have over women in different societies. Thus, women being generally subordinates in the patriarchal systems which prevail in most parts of the world are rendered powerless and defenseless in the face of domestic violence.

Mbaluka (2002) in her research on reported cases in Nairobi Province between 2000 and 2001 found that some police officers were quite negative about the issue of violence against women and women's human rights in general. They consider it a *'family affair'* and want little to do with cases of domestic violence. Their major assumption is that "*after all, the woman may withdraw the case*" (Mbaluka, 2002:34). According to Hooks (1984:124), male violence against women in personal relationships is one of the most blatant expressions of the use of force to maintain domination and control. Unlike other forms of violence, it is the most overtly condoned and accepted, even celebrated in some cultures. Society's acceptance and perpetration of that violence helps maintain it and make it difficult

to control and eliminate. That acceptance can only be explained in part by patriarchal rule supporting male domination of women through the use of force.

Hooks further argues that men's need to dominate women (socially constructed by the ideology of male supremacy) coupled with suppressed aggression towards employers and the outside world in general who 'rule' over them (men) make the domestic environment the centre of explosive tensions that lead to violence (Hooks, 1984:124). Women in this case become the targets because there is no fear that men will suffer or be severely punished if they hurt the women, especially if the victims are their wives or lovers. They would, however, be punished if they attacked, for example, their employers or police officers. Hooks, thus, maintains that until men and women cease equating violence with love, understand that disagreements and conflicts in the context of intimate relationships can be resolved without violence and reject the idea that men should dominate women, male violence against women will continue and so will other forms of violent aggressions in intimate relationships (Hooks, 1984:124).

2.5 Women's right to property

Women's rights to property are unequal to those of men in Kenya, which exposes them to economic violence. Their rights to own, inherit, manage, and dispose of property are under constant attack from customs, laws, and individuals - including government officials - who believe that women cannot be trusted with or do not deserve property. The devastating effects of property rights violations include poverty, disease, violence or toleration of it, and homelessness which harm women and their children. Human Rights Watch (2003:3) has observed that uncertainty regarding access to the necessities of life is likely to affect women's social

attitudes. It is commonly held that insecurity may generate fear of deprivation, inability to take risks, willingness to subordinate oneself to others, and a desire to strengthen family ties and to have large families. Although such attitudes can result in part from poverty, they can also contribute to poverty by preventing women from taking action to strengthen their economic position. Such actions would otherwise include obtaining more education, forming voluntary associations of women, being politically active, demanding access to vocational training, credit and childcare facilities and taking more economic risks (Human Rights Watch, 2003:3).

Many women are excluded from inheriting, evicted from their lands and homes by in-laws, stripped of their possessions, and forced to engage in risky sexual practices in order to keep their property. When they divorce or separate from their husbands, they are often expelled from their homes with only their clothing. Married women can seldom stop their husbands from selling family property. A woman's access to property usually hinges on her relationship with a man. When the relationship ends, the woman stands a high chance of losing her home, land, livestock, household goods, money, vehicles, and other property. These violations have the intent and effect of perpetuating women's dependence on men and undercutting their social and economic status (Human Rights Watch, 2003:3).

Uche (1978:129-130) asserts that a wife has a right in law to pledge her husband's credit for necessities suitable to her way of life up to a reasonable level commensurate with the income of the household. She adds that according to section 35 (1) of the Law of Succession, CAP 72 of the Laws of Kenya, a widow is entitled to:

a) The personal and household effects of the deceased absolutely.

b) A life interest in the whole residue of the net intestate (without a will) estate provided that the surviving spouse is a widow, which interest shall terminate upon marriage to any person. This means that the widow has the right to her husband's property with or without a will. She, however, relinquishes her right to the estate of her deceased husband upon remarrying.

However, this is hardly ever the case as more often than not, the widow ends up being disinherited by her in-laws. A complex mix of cultural, legal, and social factors underlies women's property rights violations. Kenya's customary laws, largely unwritten but influential local norms that coexist with formal laws, are based on patriarchal traditions in which men inherited and largely controlled land and other property, and women were 'protected' but had fewer property rights. Past practices permeate contemporary customs that deprive women of property rights and silence them when those rights are infringed. Kenya's constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, but undermines this protection by condoning discrimination under personal and customary laws. Women's property rights abuses are not exclusive to one social class, ethnic group, religion, or region. This is not to say that no women inherit, own, or control property, but rather that the problems cut across populations (Human Rights Watch, 2003:2).

Currently, women find it almost hopeless to pursue remedies for property rights violations. Traditional leaders and governmental authorities often ignore women's property claims and sometimes make the problems worse. Courts overlook and misinterpret family property and succession laws. Women often have little awareness of their rights and seldom have means to enforce them. Women who try

to fight back are often beaten, raped, or ostracized (Mwagiru and Karuru,1998; Human Rights Watch, 2003:2).

Were (1991:80) asserts that it is necessary for the society in general to rethink old values and traditions, particularly in respect of gender roles and rights. He cites the example of women's access to land as this would make their self-improvement efforts more successful and viable. He further argues that in Siaya District in particular, women's access to land is tied up with land tenure which discriminates against women. White (1984:34) has observed that in Western Kenya, women have access to land only within their husband's households, so that 20th Century marriages may have remained intact precisely because wives had no other way to support themselves and their children.

2.6 The practice of wife inheritance

Wife inheritance is a worldwide practice, and a number of Kenya's communities embrace the tradition albeit in varied forms and degrees. It is especially popular among groups in western Kenya such as the Abasuba, Luo and the Luyia. Among the Luyia communities, the eldest son would inherit his father's widows, but not his own mother. Several terms have been used to describe this form of remarriage following the loss of a husband. Some of the terms include widow/wife inheritance, levirate marriage and sororate marriage. Wife inheritance, also known as bride inheritance, is a type of marriage in which a widow marries a kinsman of the late husband, often his brother (CREAW, 2008:16).

Wife inheritance and cleansing practices take a number of different forms depending on the clan. Among the Luo community in western Kenya, non-sexual

wife inheritance, whereby the coat of an inheritor is placed in a widow's house overnight to symbolically cleanse her. This generally applies to widows beyond childbearing age. Second, there is inheritance involving long-term sexual relations, typically with a brother of the deceased, in what amounts to a marriage. Third, there is a combination of cleansing and inheritance, whereby a widow first has sex with a social outcast (known as a *jater* in Dholuo) who is paid to have sex with her to cleanse her of her dead husband's spirits, and is then inherited by a male relative of the dead husband. Fourth, there is cleansing alone, where a widow has sex with a *jater* to cleanse her, but her relationship with the *jater* does not develop beyond that encounter (CREAW, 2008:16).

KNCHR (2007) in its study established that the current practice of *ter* or widow inheritance has been misinterpreted and distorted as old and young widows are forced to go through it. It argues that the original practice required that anyone who had reached menopause was not supposed to be cleansed physically through sexual intercourse. The process in this case was only symbolic. The would-be cleanser, *jater*, went to her house in the evening to join the family for supper and after which he would go away leaving behind his coat, a hat or a walking stick. Whatever he left behind, he would collect the following day after consuming a calabash of *nyuka* (porridge).

Women's property rights closely relate to wife inheritance and cleansing rituals in that many women cannot stay in their homes or on their land unless they are inherited or cleansed. According to one women's rights advocate, "Women have to be inherited to keep any property after their husbands die. They have access to property because of their husband and lose that right when the husband dies" (Human Rights Watch, 2003:3). Wife inheritance is often portrayed as an act of generosity in that the widow will have a man to 'look after' her and confer the

legitimacy of being in a male-headed household. But men clearly benefit not just from their inherited wife's labour and childbearing potential, but also from the property the deceased husband leaves behind (Mwagiru and Karuru,1998).

2.7 Marital rape

Marital rape cuts across cultures and races. In most communities, it is a taboo topic; it simply does not exist and even contemplating discussing the topic as a woman is totally out of question as marriage automatically gives the husband a right to demand for conjugal rights irrespective of the wife's consent. Women who experience violence in marriage or in a cohabiting relationship or rape by acquaintances or by strangers, often find themselves unwilling actors in another form of 'violence', the undoubted harm endangered by the criminal 'justice' process. In this process, the defendant is innocent until proven guilty, and this fundamental pillar of justice is vigorously guarded (Edwards, 1989:32). Edwards further argues that by contrast, in cases of violence and sexual violence, the position of the complainant is unique. Rape complainants and domestic violence complainants are accused and maligned and in the adversarial contest, they find that their conduct is 'on trial'. Fewer men plead 'not guilty' to domestic violent assault than to rape, but blaming the victim is nevertheless frequently the basis of any explanation offered to the court in mitigation. Women victims who know their aggressors have many reasons for fear. Their first fear is retaliation from the aggressor (Edwards, 1989:32; Gelles, 1972:28). Walker (1979:64) found that domestic violence, which includes rape, often escalated when a woman called the police, and even when men were prosecuted they were left free to assault their wives/cohabitees again.

Armstrong (1998) established in her research on gender violence in Zimbabwe that 36% of the battered women interviewed had also been forced to have sex by their husbands. Seventeen per cent of men interviewed who beat their wives also admitted to forcing them to have sex. She further argues that:

There is an ambiguity and conflict over the issue of forced sex in marriage and a contradiction over whether it is possible in customary law, for a man to 'rape' his wife. 'Culturally', a wife is expected to have sex with her husband and it is said he is entitled to decide when and how, but the disagreement is over whether a man can enforce his 'right' to sex through force. Some men were a bit confused by the question, and were not sure whether they had ever forced their wives to have sex, largely because of the 'cultural' expectation of female passivity (Armstrong, 1998:350).

Culture, according to Armstrong, is an argument often used to silence women. This, she explains, to be in situations where 'culture' is claimed to be the source of sexual norms of female sexual passivity leading to all her protests on sexuality and abuse being considered unjustified, untraditional or simply western and therefore bad. Armstrong further asserts thus:

The conceptual idea that a wife in a customary marriage can be raped by her husband does not even exist because all sex within marriage is considered "consensual", whether or not a woman consents. This is true because in some parts of Africa, marriage results in a woman's physical person and her sexuality becoming part of her husband's property (Armstrong, 1998:353).

A widely quoted study in Scotland found that 25% of violent crimes reported to the police were assaults against wives or girlfriends, and that most rape is committed on women known to their assailants and rarely by strangers. This fact has always functioned to nullify the allegations of rape to varying degrees, leading to very

lenient sentences except in cases of rape accompanied by an unusual degree of violence (Edwards, 1989:36). The remedies available for a wife raped by a spouse/husband, however, are few in law and even fewer in its practice. The notion of spousal immunity persists in most countries. Edwards (1981:32) has shown that husbands in the UK were exonerated for using violence on wives in pursuit of *the right to sexual consortium*.

2.8 The role of patriarchy in violence against women

A patriarchal society is characterized by a culture that shapes and supports male dominance in society. All human societies appear to have similar characteristics in relation to the positions and roles they ascribe to women (Mwagiru and Karuru, 1998). Most human societies are patriarchal and male centred. This, in effect, implies that these societies primarily mainly cater for the rights of men. Violations of women's rights are often sanctioned by cultural practices and cultural customs. Cultural ideologies both in industrialized and in developing countries often provide legitimacy for violence directed against women. Men's control over family wealth, for instance, places decision-making authority in their hands, leading to male dominance and patriarchy rights over women and girls (UN-Habitat, 2002:6).

Hooks (1984:36) argues that the family, both traditional and modern, reflects the dualistic values of hierarchy and coercive authoritarian control which are exemplified in the parent-child, husband-wife relationships. It is in the family that children learn group oppression against themselves as non-adults, and where they learn to accept supremacy and group oppression of women. It is here that they learn that it is the male's role to work in the community and control the economic life of the family and mete out physical and financial punishments and rewards,

and the females role to provide the emotional warmth under the economic rule of the male. She further asserts that it is in the family that “the relationship of super ordination- subordination, of superior-inferior, or master-slave is first learned and accepted as ‘natural’ (Hooks, 1984:36).

Even in families where no males are present, children may learn to value dominating authoritative rule via their relationship to mothers and other adults, as well as strict adherence to sexist-defined role patterns. Hooks has stated that the family exists as a space wherein we are socialized from birth to accept and support forms of oppression. Even as we are loved and cared for in families, we are simultaneously taught that this love is not as important as having power to dominate others. Hooks (1984:38) holds the view that power struggles, coercive authoritarian rule and brutal assertion shape family life so that the family itself is often the setting of intense suffering and pain.

Perelberg and Miller (1990:1) argue that throughout history, the genders have been perceived in a polarized way, although both have also been regarded as possessing contradictory attributes. On the one hand, women have been seen as the source of all goodness and the origin of wisdom, knowledge or life itself. On the other hand, they have also been seen as dangerous, morally and sexually polluted, superstitious and capricious or unpredictable and impulsive. Men, however, have been perceived to be in opposition to both categories. Sweetman (1998:56), therefore, summarizes that there is need for cultural change as laws alone cannot protect women from male violence, and that the fear of violence and crime experienced by women is a result of deeply-rooted inequality that exists between men and women in our patriarchal societies.

2.9 Women's attitude and perceptions

Hooks (1984) asserts that despite years of activism by feminists determined to put an end to male violence against women, it is steadily on the increase because violence against women is specifically linked to the politics of sexism and male supremacy, the right of men to dominate women. Female abuse is renewed as an "institutional expression of male domination manifested within the family and currently reinforced by the institutions, economic arrangements and sexist division of labour within capitalistic society" (Hooks, 1984:123). Hooks further argues that the problem was often exacerbated by the fact that women also believed that a person in authority has the right to use force to maintain authority. Some of the women in these families exerted coercive authority over their children, sometimes with random acts of violent aggression for no clear reason or through systematic verbal abuse. This violence is not unlike male violence against women and children, even though it may not be as prevalent (Hooks, 1984:124).

Women have paid a great cost. Whenever they speak out about violations of their rights, they are told that they are becoming 'western' or that they are adhering to the views of international agencies. It is disturbing that issues of violence against women are escalating in Africa, largely due to the increasing conflict on the continent. There are the old forms of culturally-based violence, as well as those emerging from socio-economic disparities. Female genital cutting (FGC) and discriminatory inheritance laws, for example, deprive women of certain basic rights, and expose them to human rights violations (Mwagiru and Karuru, 1998:85).

Men's violence cannot be ended because it is rooted in unequal relations of power between men and women and women's resistance to that control. In this sense, patriarchy becomes a structural explanation for all male violence against women. Patriarchy has at its disposal a whole range of techniques and mechanisms of control, among them force and physical violence. The notions of male superiority and suppression of women are perpetuated by the role models of male dominance and subordinated women, which are omni-present in the environment in which children grow up and particularly emphasized by the electronic media through stereotypical advertisements and movies. As such, socially and culturally constructed perceptions lead to the acceptance and tolerance of violence against women by both women and men (Edwards, 1987:38).

2.10 Theoretical framework

According to Christine et al. (1990), theories by definition are formulations of the relationships of the underlying principles of phenomena that have been observed and verified to some degree. A theory, therefore, provides a systematic way of dealing with a problem. The purpose of this section is to make a link between theory and the study.

2.10.1 Feminist theory

The theoretical and political frameworks of feminist thoughts emerge from some of the classical traditions of social and political theory. Feminist theory emphasizes having equal opportunities for both men and women in society. This theory attempts to activate the everyday events of women and men's lives in an analysis that links our personal collective experience to an understanding of the structure of gender relationships in society and culture (Anderson, 1997). Three major

theoretical perspectives have been developed in feminist theory, namely, liberal, socialist and radical feminism. All these theoretical perspectives take gender as their central framework. This study was, however, guided by radical feminist theory.

Radical feminist theory analyses patriarchy as the primary cause of women's oppression. Some of the proponents of this theory, who include Susan Brownmiller (1975), Andrea Dworkin (1988) and Eva Figes (1970), emphasize the use of power relations to explain violence against women. Brownmiller, for example, placed rape at the threshold of human history as an exercise of male power over women. Other proponents of this theory include Mary Daly (1978), Kate Millet (1970), and Jean-Paul Satre (1966). This theory looks at the devaluation of women in all patriarchal societies as evidence of the centrality of patriarchy in determining women's status.

Radical feminists argue that patriarchy emerged through men's control of female sexuality and this explains men's violence against women and the many cultural practices designed to control female sexuality (Anderson, 1997:48). It maintains that society is a repertoire of manoeuvres in which male subjects establish power over female subjects. Radical feminists also hold the view that issues such as marriage are an imposition of male power over women, and that women are mere objects of men playing their fantasies with the result being a heightening of male aggression and passive acting out of feminist resentment. This results in conflicting if not hostile relations between the sexes. Millet (1970:28) sees male domination in what she terms 'sexual politics' where politics means "power structured relationships, arrangements by which one person is controlled by another" as a matter of dominance of men and subordination of women.

Radical feminist theorists maintain the position that women are always the slaves and men always the masters. Satre, Beauvoir and Millet all hold the view that consent is gained through socialization with brute force being used such as in wife beating and rape at times. Tillitating descriptions of violence against women in the media and pornography are all ways of using violence to assert male power. This could explain why domestic violence and rape in particular are the most common forms of gender violence. Proponents of this theory also argue that a master will tolerate no reform that threatens his role as master. In a patriarchal society, male dominance must be maintained at all costs, because the person who dominates cannot conceive of any tolerance but to be dominated in turn. A lot of violence against women is usually because of women trying to resist this domination.

Proponents of the theory portray women everywhere and in every age as oppressed, not only by laws, cultures or by economic arrangements, but also by violent men prone to sexual assault, maiming and even murder. The theory of patriarchy itself proclaims the universality of male dominance deeply rooted in male consciousness. These theorists blame men for all tribulations faced by women as stated by Figes (1970:14):

Men assert their power in all areas. In the sex act, they assume the 'natural' most advantageous position for male pleasure. In religion they co-opt the priesthood and make the gods masculine, leaving women as passive onlookers. In economic life, they confine women to bourgeois marriage and make a cult of the house wife.

This can help us to explain why women generally feel oppressed by the menfolk and why a lot of them (women) tend to condone the violence they are subjected to without seeing the need to complain or to do something to change their situation. Figes (1970:16) argues that the only way out of female violence and oppression is

to “fight back to cease futile diplomatic maneuvering and to force the aggressor to stop”.

Radical feminist theory blames the male sex drive and anatomy for violent rape. Brownmiller (1975:86) explains that the male sex urge is not dependent on female receptivity as it is in other animals. He asserts thus:

A man’s genital anatomy means that he can rape;...when men discovered women were afraid...they were able to institute a ‘conscious’ process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear.

2.10.2 Relevance of the theory to the study

Although radical feminism tends to be an extreme variant of feminism that presupposes that the male person is not only evil but also at best unnecessary, it becomes relevant to the study as it captures the very core of the topic of study, which is male violence on women and some of the underlying factors as analyzed in the literature review. It, for example, analyzes pornography as the ideology of female domination. Pornography degrades women and is a serious violation of women’s dignity. It also supports the assertion that socialization of the child plays a great role in whether he/she grows into a violent adult or not. Daly (1978:56), for example, states that “Men are murderous, sadistic and assert their power over women in violent ways”. She cites the experiences of Chinese foot binding and the African genital mutilation as examples of deliberate violence on women in order to satisfy the pleasures of men. This theory lends credence to the assertion that violence against women crosscuts time and race. It clearly brings out the relationship between patriarchy and violence against women, and the fact that enculturation plays a major role in perpetuating the violence against women.

CHAPTER THREE

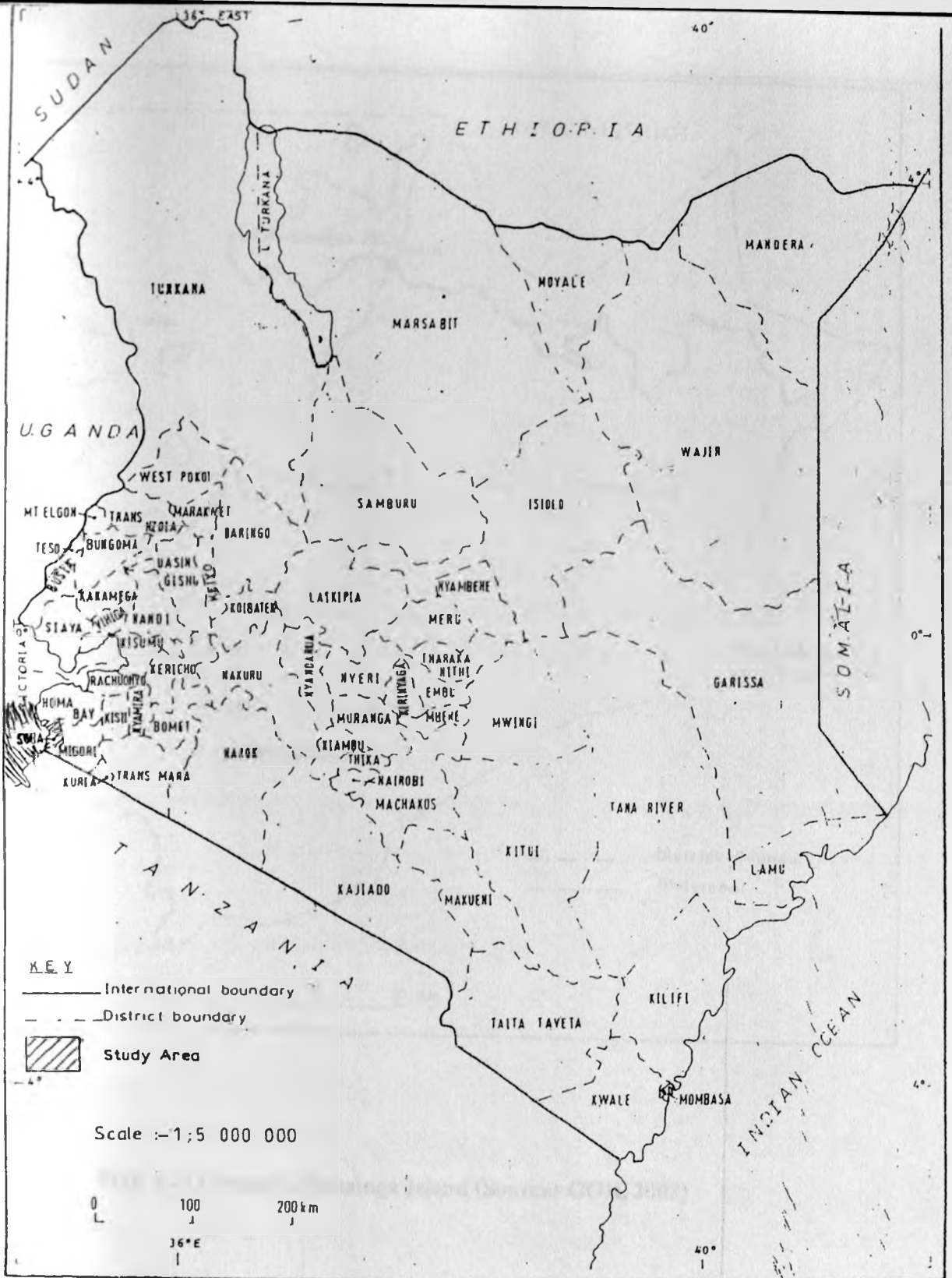
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

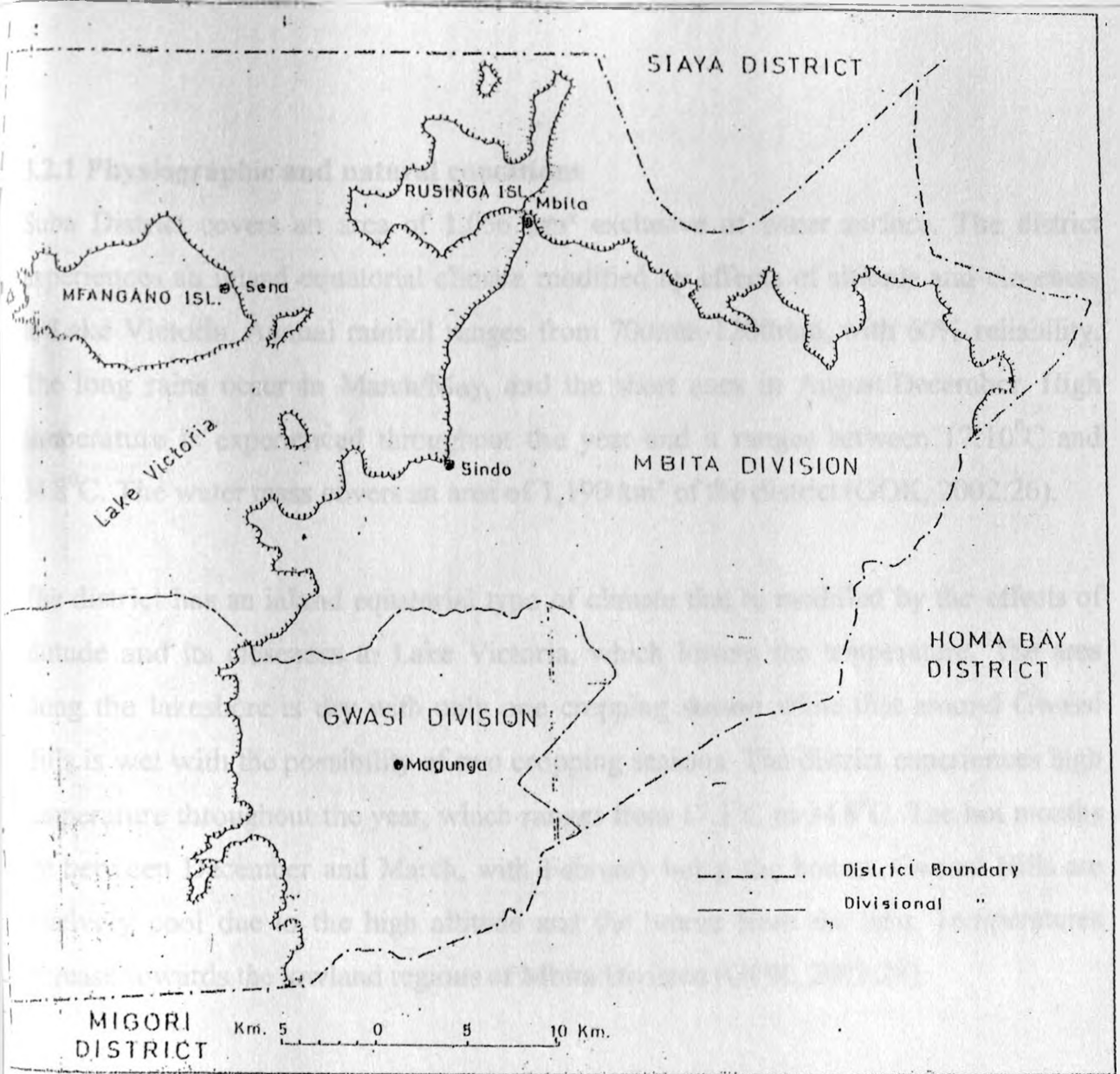
This chapter is divided into four sections, namely, description of the research area, sampling design, methods of data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Research site

The geographical area of this study was Rusinga Island in Suba District which is one of the twelve districts in Nyanza Province (Map 3.1). It is located in the South-Western part of Kenya along the shores of Lake Victoria. It borders Bondo District to the North across the lake, Homa Bay District to the East, Migori District to the South, and the Republic of Tanzania to the South-West (Map 3.2). The district has 16 Islands with the largest ones being Rusinga and Mfangano. Rusinga Island lies in Mbita Division which covers an area of 211.0 km² of the District, and has among the highest population density of 90 persons per km² (GOK, 2002). According to the 1999 population census, Suba District had a total population of 155,666, with a growth rate of 2.5 per cent between 1989 and 1999. The 2009 population census, on the other hand, reveals a total population of 214,463 with a growth rate of 3.19 per cent with females being slightly more than the males. This indicates an upward trend in growth rate (GOK, 2002).



Map 3.1: Location of Suba District in Kenya (Source: GOK, 2002)



Map 3.2: Location of Rusinga Island (Source: GOK, 2002)

3.2.1 Physiographic and natural conditions

Suba District covers an area of 1,056 km² exclusive of water surface. The district experiences an inland equatorial climate modified by effects of altitude and closeness to Lake Victoria. Annual rainfall ranges from 700mm-1200mm, with 60% reliability. The long rains occur in March/May, and the short ones in August/December. High temperature is experienced throughout the year and it ranges between 17.10⁰C and 34.8⁰C. The water mass covers an area of 1,190 km² of the district (GOK, 2002:26).

The district has an inland equatorial type of climate that is modified by the effects of altitude and its closeness to Lake Victoria, which lowers the temperature. The area along the lakeshore is dry with only one cropping season while that around Gwasssi Hills is wet with the possibility of two cropping seasons. The district experiences high temperature throughout the year, which ranges from 17.1⁰C to 34.8⁰C. The hot months are between December and March, with February being the hottest. Gwasssi Hills are relatively cool due to the high altitude and the breeze from the lake. Temperatures increase towards the lowland regions of Mbita Division (GOK, 2002:28).

3.2.2 Poverty

Poverty is widespread throughout the district. It is estimated that about 50% of the district is poor. The poverty situation is attributed to diverse factors which include low farm yields due to use of uncertified seeds and lack of fertilizers, which are considered expensive, and bad weather conditions which occur regularly. Other factors include poor infrastructure as the road network is very poor, making transportation of goods and services quite difficult especially during the rainy season. Inaccessibility to credit facilities caused by very few commercial banks operating in the district has curtailed the saving culture of the people, while at the same time discouraging growth in various businesses. Lack of electric power is as a result of the district not being connected to

the national grid. This has the effect of hampering development of small-scale industries and the establishment of welding units, mechanical works, cooling plants and information technology (GOK, 2002:29).

The main types of poverty experienced in the district are food and material poverty. Food poverty manifests itself in malnutrition and it is common among mainly children born to single mothers. Material poverty cuts across gender lines affecting both men and women when it comes to accessing social services like education and health facilities. This has forced many children to drop out of school and many people to seek cheap health services from magicians and herbalists. HIV/AIDS has worsened the situation in this area because of the huge hospital bills incurred by the infected and the affected. As at 2002, 34 per cent of antenatal mothers had tested positive. It has been established that 90 per cent of the youths become sexually active at a tender age creating fertile ground for the spread of the disease (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010:31).

3.2.3 Gender inequality

In some areas in the district, women are literally against change because they perceive it as being disobedient to their husbands. Attitudes like these make them perform household chores and gardening while the men sit idle or go out in the pretext of looking for money to support the family. The backbreaking work done by these women is viewed by society as being the rightful duty of a woman. In the fishing industry, fishermen have developed a unique mode of life along the beaches which includes a culture of wife inheritance, whereby women who come to buy fish are forced to identify with a man in what is

generally termed *jaboya*. In many cases, men are not accountable for whatever money they earned through fishing or employment to women (GOK,2002:32).

3.2.4 Agricultural and economic activities

Agricultural activities in the district include cash crop farming of groundnuts, sunflower, and horticultural crops such as tomatoes, cabbages, onions and sukuma wiki. Subsistence cultivation includes crops such as maize, millet, sorghum, cassava, cowpeas and finger-millet. The inhabitants rear livestock such as cattle, poultry, goats, sheep, pigs, donkeys, and bees for both local subsistence and for sale. People are also engaged in fishnet and boat making and repair, cloth making, haircutting, bicycle and watch repair, shop and hotel keeping, fishing and fish mongering. The district has a high fishing potential due to its close proximity to Lake Victoria. It also has some minor deposits of copper, zinc and lead. Sand and building stones are available for building purposes. In addition, the district has beautiful scenery of Gwassi and Gembe hills, the scenic beauty of Lake Victoria, sport fishing on Rusinga Island and a wide variety of birds on various islands. There is also Ruma National Park with a varied wildlife. Lastly, there is Nyamgontho historical scene in Gwassi. All these form tourist attraction points in the district (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010:41).

Most residents of Rusinga Island make their living from subsistence agriculture (maize and millet), as well as fishing. The district is endowed with fresh water Lake Victoria which covers 37% of the district. The lake provides abundant fish and about 75% of the total fish that Nyanza Province produces comes

from the district. The chief catches are Nile Perch (55%), Tilapia (9%), and *Argentia (omena)* (36%). The fish produced here is exported to big towns such as Kisumu, Nairobi, and Mombasa as well as to the neighbouring districts (GOK, 2002:42).

3.2.5 Transport and communications

The district has poor impassable murram roads especially those in Gwassu Division. Even the main road in the district which runs from Homa Bay to Mbita point is not tarmacked. Other parts of the district are connected by rural access roads, while Mfangano has no roads at all. The district is connected to Homa Bay, Siaya, Bondo and Kisumu through water transport on Lake Victoria. The same case applies to the manner in which the district is connected to the Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. Motor boats, dhows, and ships which either belong to the government or to individuals are used to transport people and goods to their destinations. Postal and telecommunication services are confined to the divisional headquarters, while there are Mfangano and Rusinga airstrips to facilitate air transport. The whole district has minimal electricity supply currently limited to private institutions and shopping centres (GOK, 2002:52).

3.3 Research design

This study combined a descriptive and cross-sectional methodology and utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Fieldwork was conducted for a period of six months in two phases. In the first phase, data were collected using a structured questionnaire which was administered face-to-face. This involved interviews with women and men aged 16 years and 18 years and

above, respectively, on their perceptions and experiences of violence against women with regard to traditional beliefs and practices. The second phase involved the collection of qualitative data by conducting focus group discussions, semi-structured and key informant interviews, and narratives. Direct observation throughout the entire duration was also utilized as a method of data collection.

3.4 Study population and unit of analysis

The unit of analysis is the entity that is described for the purpose of aggregating its characteristics in order to describe some larger group or abstract phenomenon (Peil, 1995). The study population consisted of women and men who were 16 years and above and who reside on Rusinga Island. This is because women and men on this Island generally marry around that age and culturally qualify to be adults. The unit of analysis was the individual woman who was 16 years and above and an adult man who was 18 years and above.

3.5 Sample size and sampling strategy

The study applied the simple random sampling procedure that generates numbers, or otherwise identifies cases strictly on the basis of chance. It is a sampling technique where each element of the larger population has an equal probability of being chosen (Schutt, 1996: 168).

To get a representative sample, all the sub-locations were given identification numbers and four of them were selected using the lottery method. The sample was then selected equitably from the four sub-locations of Kaswanga, Wanyama, Waware South and Kamasengre West. A total of 68 respondents were interviewed.

3.6 Methods of data collection

3.6.1 Secondary sources

Secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished sources by researchers who were involved in work on similar or related topics to this study. Published articles, official government documents, theses, newspapers and magazines and the internet were collected continuously till completion of the thesis.

3.6.2 The survey method

This was conducted through a standardized questionnaire (Appendix A). Respondents were asked to respond to a set of both open-ended and closed-ended questions touching on the society's and their own opinions, attitudes, views, knowledge and perceptions and experiences regarding gender, culture and violence against women. The survey method was appropriate since it provided for the direct interaction between the respondents and the researcher. It had the second advantage in that all respondents were asked exactly the same questions in the same order, making it possible to compare the responses hence increasing reliability.

3.6.3 Semi-structured interviews

Through the use of in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to get detailed information for the study as they provided clarity on certain issues concerning the study. It provided for rich and authentic data on culture and violence against women. It allowed the researcher great flexibility in the questioning process. It gave the researcher control over the interviewing situation, while the spontaneous

reactions yielded vital supplementary insights and information relevant to the study. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) was used to collect the data.

3.6.4 Key informant interviews

Key informants are selected because of the specific information they have and their most important contribution is their well considered interpretation of complex events (Peil, 1995). Face-to-face interviews conducted among a purposively selected group of elderly male and female members of the community who could talk easily and had a good understanding of the topic in question. A key informant interview guide (Appendix C) was used to collect the data. The interviews provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as both male and female key informants explained issues from their own perceptions, which helped in data analysis and interpretation.

Although this method had its own limitations which included unfocused conversations with sometimes irrelevant information being given, it provided vital information on the cultural beliefs and practices of the Abasuba.

3.6.5 Narratives and case histories

Narratives and case histories were generated from respondents who showed greater interest and had experiences that were of interest to the study. Given the fact that the topic under discussion was on social issues that touched on every respondent's life, utmost sensitivity was required. This technique provided insights into experiences, fears and the magnitude of the violence from the victims' perspectives, and the repercussions thereof. Other issues that were addressed

included their views and perceptions, recourse mechanisms and key obstacles to the eradication of the vice. Twelve narrations were recorded using a voice recorder.

3.6.6 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with both men and women across the age divide. The FGDs were used to explore explanations for some of the observed behaviour, beliefs and perceptions in the community. They were vital in corroborating and consolidating findings already gathered from all other methods. All the FGDs were conducted by the researcher with the assistance of the field researchers. They were all tape recorded and later transcribed. The discussions focused on the general understanding of and perceptions of culture and violence against women.

A total of five FGDs were held with one being held in each of the four sub-locations, of Kamasengre West, Waware South, Wanyama and Kaswanga, and an additional one targeting the fishermen and the fishmongers along the beaches in order to corroborate and to get their point of view on issues that were repeatedly raised concerning them in the course of data collection. Each group had ten members consisting of members of the community with the exception of the latter group which had twelve members. A FGD interview guide (Appendix D) was used to guide the discussions.

3.7 Data processing and analysis

Data from the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to generate frequencies and percentages which are

presented in tables and bar charts. Data from key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and narratives were sorted out and interpreted in relation to the research objectives, to enable the researcher to provide overall interpretation of the findings showing how thematic areas and issues relate to one another. These themes included:

1. Forms of violence against women
2. The relationship between enculturation and violence against women
3. Effect of women's beliefs and perceptions on violence against women

The use of verbatim quotes was used not only for the purpose of emphasis and authenticity, but also in order to ensure that the actual meaning of the statements by informants is not lost in general translation.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher received all the necessary approvals from the relevant authorities. A research permit was granted by the National Council for Science and Technology. This was presented to the education officer in Mbita who approved the research. Copies of the approval certificate were also given to the local area chiefs under whose sub locations the research fell. Before all this, however, the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies approved the research proposal.

Consent of respondents was sought before commencing the interviews. Further consent was sought from participants before tape-recording interviews. Full explanation of the purpose of the research activity and expectations of the researchers from respondents took precedence.

The study ensured a high degree of privacy and confidentiality from the data collection stage to storage. During data collection, for identification, the survey respondents' names were only included with their approval. This ensured that only the research team knew the identity and location of respondents just in case a revisit for clarification of issues was needed. Recording of interviews was also only done with the approval of the respondents. This was necessary in order to save time with translation of difficult words left for later.

3.9 Problems encountered in the field and their solutions

A number of problems were encountered in the course of data collection; however, these were, not insurmountable. We experienced problems with language because the dialect spoken in the study area was slightly different from the researcher's. It was worse with the much older respondents. This problem was solved through the use of research assistants from the area to translate the difficult words.

Transport was a major problem because the study area is an island and with a rugged terrain that made it difficult to access some areas. This problem was made worse by the fact that public transport in the area is unreliable. We, therefore, decided to hire the services of motor bike riders who, though expensive, were available on demand most of the time.

Despite clarifying our mission and intentions from the onset, we still got a lot of requests for interventions and handouts both on the respondents' own behalf and on behalf of other relatives in similar situations on matters affecting women. We, however, made it clear to them that we were unable to promise or provide the requested assistance, but gave them references of relevant state and non-state actors who could look into their issues.

The weather was, to say the least, punishing. The sun was always out very early and by 9.00am, it was scorching, such that digging was done between midnight and 6.00am in order to keep in-doors during the day. This worked both for and against us, because though this setting ensured that we found the respondents mostly resting at home because the hot sun limited their movements during the day, we had to brave the very sun in order to reach them.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
...	10	20
...	15	30
...	20	40
...	25	50
...	30	60
...	35	70
...	40	80
...	45	90
...	50	100

CHAPTER FOUR

FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON RUSINGA ISLAND

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings. The findings are based on data collected through the survey, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, direct observation, narratives and case studies. The chapter starts by outlining the social and demographic profile of the respondents.

4.2 Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

4.2.1 Age distribution

Of the total number of 68 respondents, 28% were in the 16-25 age category. Eighteen per cent were in the 26-35 age category, 26 % were in the 36-45 age category, 13% were in the 46-55 age category, while 15% were in the 56 and above age category (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Age distribution of respondents

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
16-25	19	28
26-35	12	18
36-45	18	26
46-55	9	13
56 and above	10	15
Total	68	100

4.2.2 Gender of the respondents

Figure 4.1 below indicates that 58% of the respondents were female while 42% were male.

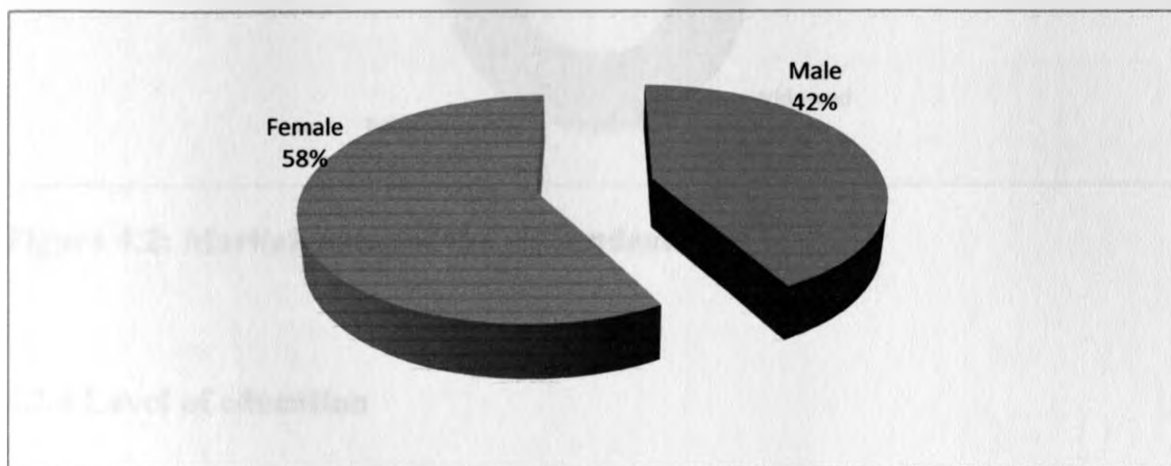


Figure 4.1: Gender of the respondents

4.2.3 Marital status

All the respondents had been married at some point, and 35% were still married, an indication of how the marital union is upheld in this community. About a third (32%) of the respondents who were married were in polygynous marriages, an indication that the practice of polygyny is fairly common. Eighteen per cent of the respondents were widowed, with 6% female respondents in levirate marriages and 7% males in similar unions, while 2% were separated. *Wagogni* (daughters who have reached puberty and married or not) constituted 4% of the respondents (Figure 4.2).

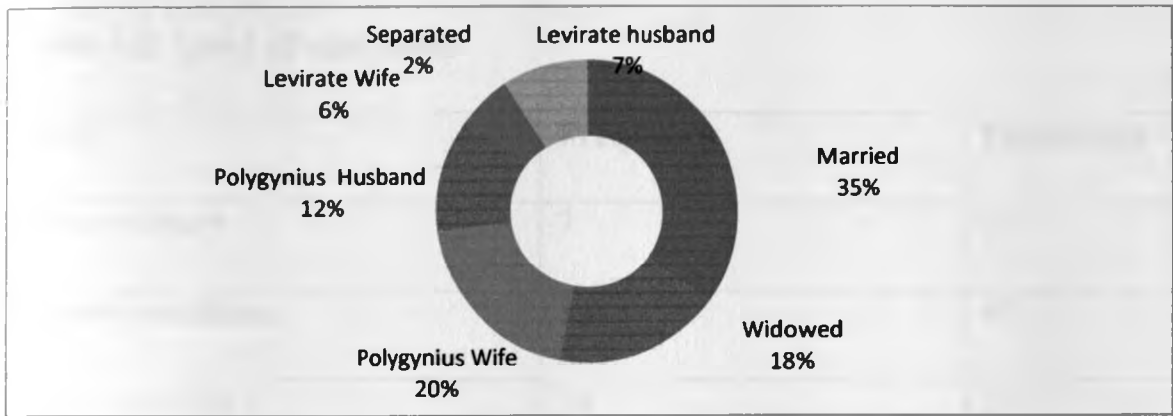


Figure 4.2: Marital status of the respondents

4.2.4 Level of education

The level of education was generally low. Nearly half (47%) of the respondents had only primary education, 10% had no formal education at all, and 21% had joined secondary school but not completed. Only 12% had completed secondary education, and a mere 10% had attained college level of education (Table 4.2). This could be an indication of low commitment to education, such that young people on the Island find time to marry as early as at the age of 16 years when ideally, they should still be in school. Education is also known to help people make rational decisions in the family and at the community level. The absence of it in almost half of the respondents signifies a loss of the benefits accrued through education to the society. This in turn could have far reaching negative social and economic implications to the whole community in the long run.

Table 4.2: Level of education

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Below primary	7	10
Primary certificate	32	47
Below secondary	14	21
Secondary certificate	8	12
College education	7	10
Total	68	100

4.2.5 Sources of income

Forty-five per cent of the respondents had neither formal employment nor a regular source of income, and were mainly dependent on subsistence farming. This situation was not helped by the fact that the climate is mainly hot and dry for most of the year with only one harvesting season. Most families find it extremely difficult to retain the harvest until the next season leading to long periods without adequate food. This led 14% of the respondents to either depend on relatives or to conduct small-scale businesses in their homes, by the road side or at the local trading centres.

Respondents who were in small-scale businesses and formal employment formed 13% and 16% of the respondents, respectively. The most common businesses consisted of buying of *omena* (dagaa) from the fishermen at the lake in the wee hours of the night and selling it locally. The other common business the women were engaged in was shop-keeping and vending of fruits, vegetables, sugar cane, grains and *sukari nguru* (jaggery). All the women were, however, inevitably

involved in subsistence farming with digging being done between midnight and day break due to the extreme heat during the day. The men, on the other hand, were mainly involved in fishing activities which took place mostly at night. The much older men in many cases were not involved in any meaningful economic activities and spent the better part of the morning at the lake taking an extended bath which involved a long swim. Their afternoons were spent sitting together at the village meeting point mainly at a local shop, posho-mill or shopping centre commonly referred to as *centre*, which nearly every village has, as they discuss the day's events. These meeting points and the bathing points known as *dhonam* doubled up as the 'local *kamukunji*' where issues affecting members of the clan, *jogwen'g* were discussed and verdicts issued. Such matters ranged from indiscipline cases and theft to disputes among clan members. This group mostly depended on relatives, mainly grown children, for financial and medical support both for themselves and for their much younger children, some younger than their own grandchildren as a result of the practice of polygyny and levirate marriages (Figure 4.3)

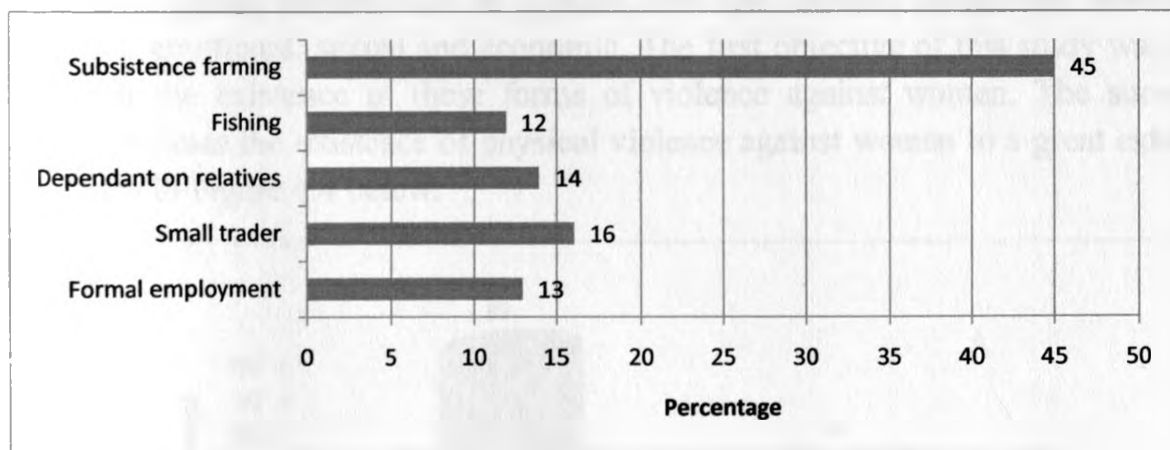


Figure 4.3: Respondents' sources of income

The results in Table 4.4 below show that 53 per cent of the respondents were wives while 43 per cent were household heads. None of the respondents fell in the category of a son living in their parents' households, the reason being that most sons who were of age had their own homes. This goes to show that men marry early in this community. Daughters were 4 per cent given that mature daughters are married off with a rare exception of a daughter who had prolonged her visit or a separated one.

Table 4.3: Relationship to head of homestead

Relationship	Frequency	Percentage
Homestead head	29	43
Wife	36	53
Daughter	3	4
Son	0	0
Total	68	100

4.3 Forms of violence

4.3.1 Physical violence

Violence against women can be divided into four distinct categories, namely, physical, emotional, sexual and economic. The first objective of this study was to establish the existence of these forms of violence against women. The survey results indicate the existence of physical violence against women to a great extent as shown in Figure 4.4 below.

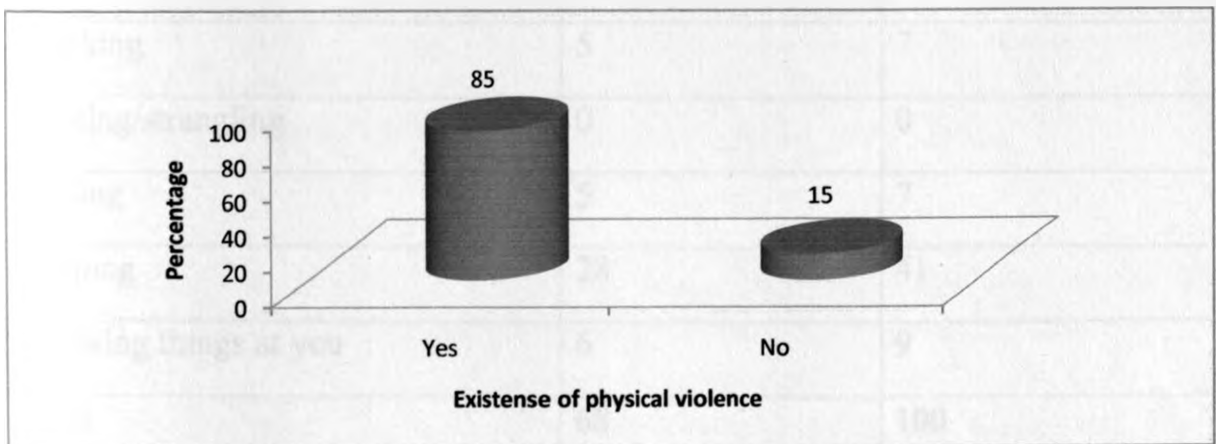


Figure 4.4: Existence of physical violence

Figure 4.4 shows that 85 per cent of the respondents indicated that physical violence against women exists in this community while 25% indicated the contrary.

Respondents were asked to give their views on the common forms of physical violence against women in this community. Their responses (Table 4.5) show that slapping was the most common at 41 per cent. Hitting with an object or stick was rated at 22%, spanking and kicking (15%), although rare, were also used to discipline women. Throwing things at someone accounted for 6% of the respondents, while punching accounted for 3%. Ten per cent of the respondents said that they had neither experienced, nor witnessed any form of physical violence in the study area, a position strongly disputed in all focus group discussions.

Table 4.5: Forms of physical violence

Form	Frequency	Percentage
No response	7	10
Punching	2	3
Hitting with object or stick	15	22
Spanking	5	7
Choking/strangling	0	0
Kicking	5	7
Slapping	28	41
Throwing things at you	6	9
Total	68	100

Choking and strangling as a form of disciplining women was shown at zero per cent. Findings from focus group discussions indicated that men in this community

beat their wives as a form of disciplining them and to instil respect and to some extent fear in the women, but are careful not to kill or cause permanent physical damage to them. A reason put forward for this was that if one harmed one's wife in the course of disciplining her, then there would be no one to prepare meals and take care of the home and the children. The burden would then fall on his shoulders or that of his mother's in case she was still alive.

Ondicho (1993:36), in his study of battered women in Nairobi, found that the most common form of physical violence included beating with a rod, strap, whip or hands, kicking, dragging and locking outside or in the room. He further established that this right to batter women is, however, controlled by society as only reasonable force is permitted. He, however, did not quite establish at what point in the traditional sense that force crosses the line of reasonable amount, although frequent or severe beating is abhorred and the husband must not break the skin of a woman while beating her.

It turns out that despite the practice of polygyny being common in this community, most men are reluctant to hand over children to step-mothers unless it was inevitable, like in the case of death of the biological mother. In many cases, her relatives (of the dead woman) would give him a replacement, who would either be a sister or a cousin of the deceased. Such a person was believed to be able to act in the best interest of her sister's children as compared to a step-mother.

Additionally, past studies have reported that wife beating and other forms of physical, verbal and psychological violence 'appear to be tolerated' among the neighbouring Luo community by whom the Abasuba are both linguistically and culturally influenced (Olungah 2006:209). Ondicho (1993:36) established that generally under customary law, both in patrilineal and matrilineal societies, wife beating is regarded as a justifiable form of chastisement and a tool of discipline. He further states that a husband has a right to chastise his wife for misconduct such as breach of any precept in the husband-wife relationship or failure in her wifely

duties, among others. The existence of physical violence was further evidenced by selected comments by respondents whose translations are given literally as below:

Ng'ama dhako kokoso to gocho di romi ma kendo ng'ato nyalo makoni miafuni ninego dhako (If a woman makes a mistake, then the beating can be so much to a point that people might ask you if you are out to kill her). **(Male, 65+ years, Kamasengre East Sub-location)**

Dhako nyaka ilide matin eka lwor bet e dala. (You must at least chastise your wife with a stick to ensure respect in the home). **(Male, 42 years, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

Del nyaka donje eka kwe betye. (There must be beating in order to have peace). **(Male, 45 years, Wanyama Sub-location)**

Youri ka otamo chwore to igoyagoya to chwore ok bi penji. (If your sister-in-law cannot be controlled by her husband, then you can just beat her up and her husband cannot question you). **(Male, 48 years, Waware Sub-location)**

A respondent in his sixties who is a husband to three and a levirate husband to three widows insists that without *kede* (a stick), there can be no peace in the homestead. Moreover, he insists that the only way they have managed to ensure peace in the entire village is because a woman just like a child can be disciplined by any man and the husband cannot question that.

Dhako igoyo gi n'gato ang'ata to chwore ok ting' dwonde. (A woman can be beaten by anybody and her husband will not raise his voice). **(Male, 70+ years, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

The above retort is best captured through the experience of this 58-year-old in-depth respondent who could not conceal her bitterness while recalling her experience with physical violence more than twenty years ago, and yet she says the memories and embarrassment from the incident are still fresh in her mind.

Kayuocha nene oketa gigoch kawuoda oringo chwat kanene gigoyo nyithi Kamasengre gijowadgi ma gihinyo. Nene giketori mine ma nyithigi ok obiroto okgiwe. To wuoda kende ema nene ok oduogo kamoponde kabura pokorumo. Nene ichuadi elela gikayuochi niricho mar yathini to ok ifuol. Wuon'gi hang'e nene orieye kane oduogo. Bende gweng'ni dak nene teke ni wan joma mon! (I endured beating from my in-laws

[mere clansmen and not her husband's brothers] when my son evaded punishment after they attacked children from Kamasengre [nearby village] and hurt them. It was declared that mothers whose sons ran away from the punishment would not be released. It is only my son who never surfaced from his hiding place before the meeting ended. You are beaten in public by your in-laws for your child's mistake and you don't dare cough. His father later 'straightened' him when he surfaced. Life has been very tough for women in this village). **(58-year old female, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

The fact that male in-laws are at liberty to 'discipline' women in this community is further illustrated by an incident observed by the researcher in Wanyama Sub-location in February 2011. During this incident, a father-in-law was chasing after a daughter-in-law (in her late twenties) in broad daylight with a walking stick in his hand, while she was screaming as she ran towards the road, holding on tight to the baby in her arms in an effort to catch an approaching vehicle out of the Island. Meanwhile, her older child who was about five years old ran behind them crying. She managed to catch the *Matatu*, but her now wailing son was left behind.

Of interest to note was the fact that villagers looked on without intervening and were instead surprised at the amount of attention I gave the incident. This included even my research assistant who was present. The victim's husband who was also present, did not even bother to get involved, and instead simply watched them from a distance by the entrance to their homestead. He only reached out for his sobbing son's hand from the grandfather when they reached him, and led him into the homestead without uttering a word.

On inquiry as to the cause of all the drama, I was informed that the father-in-law was fed up with the behaviour of the daughter-in-law of sulking and spending the nights outside her tiny one-roomed hut since the day her husband (in his early thirties) brought in a second wife into his house (the same hut), slightly over a week earlier.

The focus group discussants were unanimous that the reason for the general lack of interest by villagers was because such incidents are common and tolerated. In the words of my research assistant and a lady in her fortys who witnessed the incident:

Wach ma kang'ato ok idonje. (You do not interfere in matters of a family).

On my next visit two weeks later, the woman had neither returned to her home nor to her child. This incident, besides illustrating the fact that a woman can be disciplined by any male member of her extended family, also brings out the untold psychological effects that violence has on the children.

One woman further narrates her experience with physical violence that involved the entire family and one which she chooses to refer to as *rieyo dala* (disciplining entire members of the home) as follows:

Case 4.1: A wife whose husband disciplined his wives and children alike

*I got married at the age of 19 years through an arranged marriage. My late husband mainly worked away from home and would come occasionally at least once in a month. He always lived in town where he worked and usually lived with the youngest wife at any given time. That meant that being the eldest of five wives', my chances of ever visiting him in town were close to nil. This ended up being the case until he passed away several years ago. Due to his long absence and *mon gi nyithindo modhuro* (the huge number of wives and children [5wives and over thirty children]), *oketo bura* (he would hold a court) whenever he came visiting. During these sessions, everyone would report any wrong-doing committed against them while he was away. He would also come loaded with a list of accusations and counter-accusations reported to him through letters or by word of mouth through the many clansmen who visited him in town in search of jobs. We women (wives) were mainly punished for fighting and bickering among ourselves which was mostly common with the younger wives.*

He would make a ruling on each case and offenders would be made to lie down on the ground and spanked on the buttocks according to their offences. All the women and children would be given the same treatment. The worst part of this treatment that became routine whenever he visited was when he at times resorted to punishing both the mother and child for an offence committed by the child, but one which he felt the mother could have easily prevented. As a woman, you had to obey his orders and none of the wives could dare protest or answer him back. Any effort to intervene on behalf of a child under punishment only resulted in more and intense spanking. I, however, harbour neither bitterness nor

grudges against my late husband because *dhako chalo nyathi* (a wife is like a child to a husband). I still agree with his approach to discipline given that some of my co-wives were even younger than some of my older children. This form of disciplining by my husband ensured that his homestead was peaceful by and large despite his long absence and the many wives and children. I have witnessed a lot of *dhao gikoko* (quarreling and fighting) in many polygynous homes today that are a result of *dichuo ok ochung' matek* (weakness of the man). (Female, 69 years, Waware South Sub-location)

The above case clearly illustrates the mindset of people in this community and the older generation in particular, who clearly hold the view that a woman is like a child and hence lacks a voice both within the home and in the community. This goes on to explain the reason why a mother cannot intervene not only for her child but also for herself with the firm belief that a man is the head of the home, his long absence notwithstanding, and his word is final.

4.3.2 Emotional violence

Emotional violence against women was reported to be high. Figure 4.5 below shows that whereas 78% of the respondents indicated that emotional violence existed in the community, 16% disagreed, while 6 per cent gave no response.

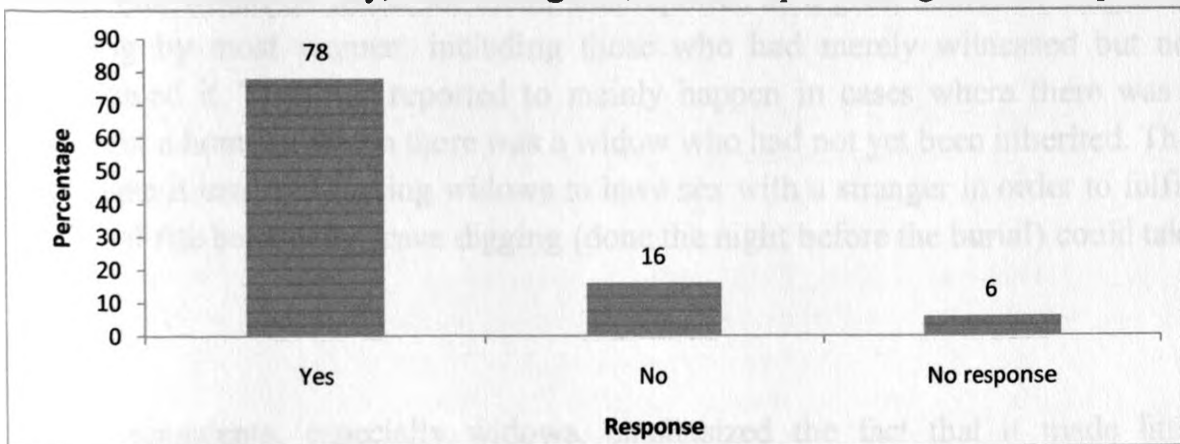


Figure 4.5: Existence of emotional violence

4.3.2.1 The most common forms of emotional violence

The most common forms of emotional violence reported were humiliation, infidelity, threats of being sent back home and traditional practices surrounding burial rites. Some of the reasons advanced for this include the fact that women are not supposed to complain, while others indicated that it is a result of existing cultural values. Such violence as humiliation was effected through 'disciplining' women in front of children and other people in public as enumerated in case study one above, and forcing women to have sexual intercourse with strangers in order to perform a cultural rite. Open infidelity culminating in polygynous marriages was reported to be through husbands bringing other women home and, subsequently, casually introducing them as new wives to their wives. This came out as a great source of emotional turmoil for many female respondents along with the constant bickering and infighting among co-wives which many described variously, but summarized simply as *olo chuny to banji matek* (disheartening and emotionally draining) by a 36-year-old woman from Kaswanga Sub-location. Others included threats of being sent back home (to her parents), or being chased away whenever a woman erred.

The practice of widows being required to get a *jater* (levir) on a very short notice, or else one would be found for them, was reported as a great source of emotional suffering by most women, including those who had merely witnessed but not experienced it. This was reported to mainly happen in cases where there was a funeral in a home in which there was a widow who had not yet been inherited. This is because it involves forcing widows to have sex with a stranger in order to fulfill a cultural rite before the grave digging (done the night before the burial) could take place.

Most respondents, especially widows, emphasized the fact that it made little difference in terms of emotional turmoil and the deep embarrassment it caused whether the *jater* was sought out for them, or whether they had approached one themselves under such circumstances. This is because of the fact that everyone in the village, including one's own children, knows what is going on (the fact that the

sexual act was taking place between the widow and a *jater*). The following case study clearly illustrates this scenario:

Case 4.2: A witness to her mother-in-law's 'inheritance'

Nyaloka, 49, has been married for the last 32 years and has spent all those years on the Island. She has been widowed twice and had to bury her second husband who was a *jaboya* under extremely strange and difficult circumstances by the roadside (discussed in detail in case study 5.1). She narrates the experience of her mother-in-law aged 90+ years who was a 9th wife and currently semi-blind but a teetotaler in her own right. The said mother-in-law is seated a short distance away from us by the extremely dusty roadside shaded from the scorching sun by a shrub and seated on a *leso* which is spread on the dusty ground because there is no grass around. It is dusty because of the biting drought experienced on this Island most of the year. The dust is not made any better by the numerous motor cyclists riding along the dusty road especially on Thursdays which are market days at the main trading centre of Mbita which is about 5 kilometres away. She is busy selling *tiang'* (sugarcane) mainly to school children from the nearby Wanyama Primary School only a stone's throw away. After Nyaloka finishes narrating her own experiences (case study 5.1), she asks me if her mother-in-law whom I had earlier interviewed before her had narrated to me her experience on inheritance to which I respond in the negative. She then offers to explain what happened as follows:

When my brother-in-law passed away several years after my mother-in-law had been widowed, it became apparent that my mother-in-law had to perform the inheritance rite before her son could be buried. She, however, had no objection to performing the rite as requested by the elders given the fact that she was advanced in years too and understood the culture well. It was the night before the burial and promptly, an in-law was 'fetched' and brought to her hut and the door was closed behind them. In as much as everything in the homestead appeared to be moving on smoothly and everyone pretended not to take note of the on-goings in the hut apart from four elderly men who deliberately kept vigil at the door to confirm that an actual sexual act had taken place as required by tradition, the tension in the homestead was palpable.

Despite the tension, we were not allowed by tradition to comment aloud on the matter as that was like a parent to me and my other sisters-in-law. The situation

was not made any better by the fact that it was the last night before the burial and as per tradition, unlike the other nights, many people including in-laws from the *wagogni* (daughters of the home) come to *ruo piny* (for the wake). It was worse for my husband and my other brothers-in-law who only opened up months later on the shame and embarrassment that the incident caused them. Eventually after what seemed like eternity, and towards the wee hours of the morning, the *jater* opened the door and left followed closely by the elders at the door. My mother-in-law, however, did not leave the hut until the following morning. (49 year old daughter-in-law and her over 90 year old mother-in-law, Wanyama Sub-location)

When I stopped by her mother-in-law's 'shop' on a later visit and sat with her chewing *tiang'* by the dusty roadside under the scorching sun as I waited for my research assistant to arrive, I attempted a brief informal interview with her on the subject. To my surprise, she not only corroborated her daughter-in-law's story, but also summarized the shame and embarrassment that comes with it in these words, "*wang'i ok rom gi mar ng'ato bang mano, iwuotho mana kichwoyo wang'i e lowo nyaka wichwil*" (Your eyes cannot come into direct contact with someone after that, you just walk with your eyes firmly fixed on the soil until people forget). Asked about the man in question, she retorted, "*kata wang'e ema nene ok arango, ng'ech ta ng'eye*" (I did not even bother to look at his face but I knew him). A very long and awkward silence followed this remark during which she seemed to be buried deep in thought. I was eventually relieved when two school children came to buy some cane.

The shame and embarrassment experienced in her case, and that of many other women in her situation, was explained in the focus group discussions to be as a result of the fact that unlike in other cases of wife inheritance which occurs soon after the mourning period and which are done discreetly, this was done with the full knowledge of everyone in the village. This was not made any easier by the presence of visitors, especially the in-laws from *wagogni* (daughters of the home).

Most female respondents who were in polygynous marriages, commented bitterly on the torment that they have to undergo when their husbands take in new

brides. Polygyny emerged as the norm rather than the exception in this community. The practice was reported to be still very common even among young people aged 30-40 years for men and as young as 16 years for women. It seemed to constitute the highest emotional violence among women across the age divide. Respondents, both male and female, across the age divide and living in polygynous set-ups summed their experiences as follows:

Doho ng'eche en lweny. (The term *doho* [polygyny] means war). **(60-year-old man, Kamasengre Sub-location)**

The comments below, come from a man in his late thirties from Wanyama Sub-location and already with two young wives both below thirty years. His initial first wife in her early thirties left him when he took in a second wife who is the current first lady, as he refers to her:

Doho ok kelkwe. (The practice of polygyny does not bring peace).

Dondruok ng'eny e dala mar doho. (There is too much bickering in a polygynous homestead). **(68-year-old female, Wanyama Sub-location)**

An interesting perspective on the practice of polygyny came from a man in his sixties with two surviving wives out of three and several children. He laments on how jealousy and in-fighting among his wives, in an effort to outdo each other led to witchcraft, which he claims has destroyed his and many other families around him.

Doho ema iyudo ni nyiego ma juok aye, to laro lowo ng'eny. Mon ma wakendo ema kelo juok e dala kaeto rano nyithiwa. (It is in polygynous homes that you find the practice of witchcraft due to jealousy and there is a lot of fighting over land. It is the women we have married who have brought witchcraft to our homes to destroy our children). **(65-year-old male, Kamasengre Sub-location)**

Another man with two surviving wives out of three maintains that:

Doho en dak matek, nitie moko mimuonyo amuonya, nyaka itwe chunyi. (Living in a polygynous family is tough; you just have to swallow some things. You must tighten your heart). **(46-year-old female, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

A majority of the victims of this type of violence talked of “combining tears and prayers till they fall asleep”. The emotional torment that polygyny visits on the first wife when the second one arrives can be best captured by these statements from three respondents:

Ilemalema nyaka nindo teri. (You just keep praying till you fall asleep). **(36-year-old, female Kaswanga Sub-location)**

Kanene chwora okelo dhako manyien to onindo kodo eiot ka, begino ne lit. Ilemo to iyuak ma nyaka nindo teri. (When my husband brought in a new wife and he slept with her here in the house, that incident was really painful. You pray and you cry until you fall asleep). **(39-year-old female, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

Ndalo mokwongo iyuakayuaka kasto ban'ge to ilemalema manyaka nindo teri. (The initial days you cry and cry and afterwards you just keep praying till you fall asleep). **(28-year-old woman, Wanyama Sub-location)**

These statements were all given in reference to the fact that the first wife usually has to bear the torment of more often than not, sharing the same room with her husband and his new bride at night, for the period before the new wife gets her own house. This period could last for even a year or more as the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed.

It, however, emerged from the women that the tables soon turn on the new bride, when the husband decides to give his first wife some attention, and the new wife cannot take it. This scenario is best captured by the following case study on a woman who is a first wife and the behaviour of her co-wife when her husband finally decided to share her bed.

Case 4.3: A middle-aged woman tormented through polygyny

Apondi has been married for 14 years but has been childless. She chose not to dwell on her childlessness and the shame and heartache it has brought her in a

society which, according to her, associates childlessness with witchcraft. She, however, had this to say about her marital experience:

I have never known peace in my marriage since the time it became apparent to me and my husband that I could not bear him children. He made it clear to me immediately that he intended to get another wife as soon as possible as his age mates' children were already going to school. He made good his threat within a record three months.

*One evening when I was from the market and was just about to start preparations for the evening meal, he arrived with a younger lady than me whom he promptly introduced to me as *nyieka* (co-wife) and he asked me to prepare a good meal. I was lost for words and did not know how to react to the situation. I knew polygyny was rife in this community as I don't come from far myself and my late mother was a second wife. I had, however, sought consolation all along in the fact that my mother-in-law was an only wife to my late father-in-law. But nothing in the whole world ever prepared me for this moment. I don't know for how long I stood at the entrance of this kitchen and only realized that my face was drenched in tears and the *omena* that I had held in my hands had poured on the floor when my mother-in-law walked in on me. She did not seem to be surprised at the turn of events, an indication that she had been forewarned unlike me. Without saying a word, she walked into her own hut and left me in my confused state.*

Later after I had collected myself, I made an attempt to cook but all in vain. My hand kept shaking and hot tears rolled down my cheeks and eventually I gave up altogether and just sat by myself on the kitchen floor and watched the fire die down. My husband came to the kitchen, looked at me and without a word, headed for his mother's hut. I was surprised that he did not reprimand me. I do not know how long it took but after some time, I could hear them eating and chatting in my hut. To my surprise, my husband came and asked me to join them at the table but I did not even have the courage to respond either way. I just sat there.

*Eventually it was time to go to bed and *bende chunya nene ochandore* (my heart was really troubled). There was no way I could sleep on the kitchen floor given that it barely had a door. So I gathered myself and went into my hut only to find that our two thin mattresses had been separated with one on the floor and the other on the bed. *Chunya nene osonyore matindotindo* (My heart literally broke into tiny pieces) when my husband pointed to me the floor as my bed for the night. No words can explain what I went through that very moment. *Ikiani iyuag minu mosetho kata wuoru mondo okonyi* (You don't know whether to cry out your late*

mother's name or cry for your father to come and rescue you). The only *nyangile* (tin lamp) in the house was soon put off and my husband and his visitor went to bed.

If I had thought his announcement earlier was a shocker, no words can describe what followed. What I went through that night frozen in shock and anger on the seat while my husband slept with his guest in the same room only divided by a thin curtain, *enigma digombi ni mana ng'ama ojogi kabisa* (is an experience that you can only wish for your worst enemy). This went on for the next four nights. By the third night, I had gathered enough courage to lie on the mattress punctuating my tears with prayers till morning *ilemo to iywak ma nyaka nindo teri* (You pray and you cry until you fall asleep) and wondering how much longer I was going to hold up like this. On the fifth night, my husband showed my co-wife the floor and it was sweet revenge!

Unlike me who wept and prayed through the night during the last four agonizing nights, my co-wife could not handle it. Immediately I started *nindo* (sleeping) with my husband, she suddenly got up from the mattress and opened the door to our hut and sat right there at the entrance leaving the door wide open. *Nene ochung' e mattress gotieno to oyao dhot to oweyo nono kawanindo kasto obet e wang' dhot nyaka gokinyi.* (She would get up from the mattress at night, open the door and sit at the entrance with the door wide open till morning while we slept).

My husband did not intervene and she literally sat there through the night with audible sobs coming from her direction. This went on for the next three nights until my husband showed me the floor again. We lived like this for two good years until she eventually got her own hut that you see over there. It has been six years since, but the pain of that experience is lodged deep in my heart. I think it is this experience that made me develop high blood pressure at a young age because the tension was palpable *chunyi imako mana edhogi sechete* (you are always holding your heart in your mouth all the time!).

I don't know what got into her heart (co-wife) because she gave me her first child to raise as my own. He is now five years and he calls me *mama* and even shares my bed while she takes care of the other two. I thank God for that. *To kata kamano* (But even though), no one deserves that kind of experience. **(A 36-year-old woman, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

Things are no different even in the case of additional wives who come in to ensure that the man of the house has offspring in case the first wife cannot

bear him any as clearly illustrated by this respondent who was married as a second wife because the first one was barren:

Dondruok ng'eny, dhako maduon'g onge nyathi koro chuna mar tedo nikech nyithindo to en obet ka orang'o wan'g dichuo. (There is too much quarelling; the first wife has no children so I have to do all the cooking while she sits staring at our husband's face). **(27-year-old female, Kamasengre Sub-location)**

Apparently, the first wife has to go through the same experience every time her husband brought in a new wife which from the research went to as high as six times as one respondent stated:

Mokwongo nene litna, to kanene ochopo mar adek to koro onge gima nene obadha ma okelo nyaka mar auchiel. (Initially I was hurt, but when the number reached three I didn't care anymore and he brought them until the sixth one). **(58-year-old, Waware Sub-location)**

Interestingly, it seems the men are clearly aware of the psychological torment and the deep emotional violence that they visit upon women through the practice of sleeping with more than one woman in the same house as clearly illustrated by a comment from this respondent, who confessed to not only having done it twice when he married his second and third wives, but also to being a husband to three women all alive, and a *jater* (levir) to four different women in the village:

Dhako maduon'g nindo ok ter. Ok onyal nindo. In di nindi? Kata an okdan'g anindi ka n'gato nindo gichiega e bathe kanyo nikech iwinjo gima timore. (The elder wife does not fall asleep. She cannot sleep. Would you sleep if you were the one? Even I cannot fall asleep if someone was sleeping with his wife close by as you can hear all that is going on). **(70+ year-old man, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

Discussants during the focus group discussions were, however, equally, divided across age and gender on the relevance of polygyny in this day and age. Whereas some argued that it is outdated, a source of emotional turmoil for women, only encouraged immorality, and a great contributor to poverty in the community, others argued that the practice of monogamy is a foreign ideology brought by the white man, and that the practice of polygyny was the solution to infidelity and the

spread of HIV/AIDS. The fact that some of the latter arguments came from even young people (25-40year-olds), is an indication that polygyny is a practice that is in this community to stay for a long time.

4.3.2.2 The unforgiving nature of men when women err

The in-depth interviews, surveys and FGDs revealed that the practice of polygyny is characterized by open infidelity in the process of acquiring the additional wives counting upto ten in some cases. The situation is not made any better by the fact that most men in levirate marriages are more often than not also in polygynous ones. As a result of the many numbers of wives and the tendency of the men to live away from home in many cases, the women are bound to stray. The paradox is that unlike the women who are not even allowed to question when a new woman is brought into their homes and introduced as a co-wife, the men are intolerant of infidelity among their multiple wives and act swiftly and ruthlessly to cover their 'shame'. This scenario was clearly illustrated by an incident narrated by the following respondent in her late thirties.

CASE 4.4: A woman 'caught in the act'

My sister-in-law who is 42 years old, was until very recently the second wife to my brother-in-law. He has been living in town with the third wife and rarely comes home, while she toils and fends for herself and her four children with little if anything from him in terms of financial support. She has been extremely patient with him mainly because this was not her first marriage and her first child was from her previous marriage. She often says that this makes the thought of her starting afresh elsewhere unimaginable. She has been surviving through small-scale trading in omena which she buys from the fishermen during the wee hours of the night (2.00 -5.00am), dries them in the mid-morning sun, and sells them at the 'centre' in the afternoon.

During the period of quarantine of the lake (which happens approximately every three months to allow time for the fish to grow and reproduce) she, just like other women in the same trade, are forced to look for an alternative source of income. As for her, she opts to make mandazis and sell on the beaches and at 'centres'. It was in the course of her rounds selling her mandazis that an in-law noted that she disappears into one of the mabati structures that houses a jaboya for longer than

necessary, and decided to lay a trap for her, leading to her being 'caught red handed' in the 'act' one morning.

Despite her husband's absence and the circumstances leading to her infidelity notwithstanding, the clan elders including our in-laws held a very urgent *bura* (meeting), and promptly declared her ostracized, something which her husband simply came to rubberstamp a few days later, and ensured that she left, leaving her young children under the care of our aged and ailing mother-in-law. This indirectly means that the burden of fending for these children in actual fact rests with us *nyiekene mane dalaka, nikech dayono ok nyal* ('co-wives' who are around as that granny can't). Her crime was magnified by the fact that she chose to cheat on her husband with an outsider. Her punishment could not have been so harsh had she been caught with a clan member, as the case has been for other women in similar circumstances in the past in this village. **(Female, 37 years, Kamasengre Sub-location)**

These accounts show that polygyny no longer serves its traditional role of providing economic and psychological needs for widows and orphans. The focus group discussions revealed that whereas in the traditional context it was meant to ensure that there were enough hands to till the land, ensure continuity of a lineage as infant mortality rate was high, and guarantee bride wealth in exchange for the girls, the current practice only serves to satisfy the sexual appetites of the men at the expense of the sanity of the women and children involved. This was explained to be as a result of the constant feuding currently witnessed in polygynous homes, the lack of land to till and put up homes as mortality rates are low, and the fact that the tradition of bride wealth is rarely practised.

Discussants were unanimous that, traditionally, such incidents as revealed above were unheard of since *wuon dala* (the head of the home-stead) had his *abila* (private hut), in which he slept with one wife at a time, and in which he also entertained his new wives.

The place of the practice of polygyny in the present day set-up among members of the community is best summarized by sentiments echoed by this key informant:

Doho ne ber chon nikech jinene tin, chiemo nene n'geny, ji nene tho, tho nene n'geny to nyithindo matindo nene okdagi. Sani doho tek. Somo okelo shida, kech n'geny to dondruok n'geny e kind mond doho. (The practice of polygyny was good before because people were few, food was in plenty, people were dying, there was too much death and small children were dying a lot. Right now the practice of polygyny is difficult. Education has brought problems, there is rampant hunger and there is a lot of bickering among co-wives). **(62-year-old male, Wanyama Sub-location)**

The cultural beliefs and practices relating to *wagogni* (daughters of the home) was also cited as a great source of emotional violence for women in this community. Practices such as ensuring that such daughters must leave the home before the digging and planting season begins as they are considered as polluting and likely to cast a bad omen on the harvest, expose them to harm. This is given the fact that more often than not such women, especially the separated ones, a common occurrence among the study population, end up unwillingly going back to their husbands for lack of options. This, in most cases, is irrespective of the initial cause of the separation which ranges from physical violence to infidelity. The practice of leaving the homestead before the season begins apparently also applies to married daughters who have come to visit. This practice was supposed to ensure that such daughters do not stay away from their marital homes for too long as that could cause problems with the in-laws.

Okumu-Oloo (2006:39), in his study of the burial practices among the Abasuba of Rusinga Island, observed that divorced daughters and ladies in their puberty have both social and biological links with members of their parents' homesteads. They are, however, considered to be like *ogwan'ge* (wild cats) and are not expected to be buried in their father's homestead. Burying them in the homestead is thought to cause or spell doom to the concerned family and lead ladies from the affected homestead to continue divorcing and dying. The other common practice is that of burying such women outside the homestead upon their death without elaborate funeral practices as is the practice in this community (Okumu-Oloo, 2006:39). This is mainly common in cases where there is divorce and the estranged husband or his

family in case he is deceased cannot accept the body for burial. The alternative to this is either for such bodies to be given to an elder married sister or aunt who is willing to accept it for burial in her home. In the absence of that, the estranged husband or his relatives is/are coerced or enticed to take the body for burial. Part of this explanation is that, as observed by Okumu-Oloo (2006:39), “divorce and separation are not allowed ...a marriage relationship in this community is permanent once established and the couples are re-united in death if they were separated or divorced”. Such burials are without much fanfare with the woman’s relatives striving against all odds to make the function appear as normal as possible as observed by this researcher.

This last option is usually resorted to due to the fear of the spirits of the dead woman haunting the family and more so the remaining girls should she be buried in the home. For this reason, should all the three options fail, then such women are buried outside the homestead at the front along the fence with their heads facing away from the homestead. There was no clear agreement in the focus group discussions on whether the right or the left side of *dho rot* (the front gate) to her father’s homestead is the proper burial position.

Some of these sentiments are captured clearly by comments from these respondents:

Mgogo kodhi wuoro ok gol pur ka mgogo ni e dala. Nyaka odhi kamoro eka oduog ka osegol pur. (If a married daughter goes to visit, digging cannot begin if she is in the home. She has to go somewhere and only come back after the season has started). **(52-year-old female, Kamasengre East Sub-location)**

Mgogo moweyo chuore nyaka wuog edal ki golo pur. (A daughter of the home who has left her husband must leave the home before the digging season can begin). **(56 year old male, Waware Sub-location)**

Such practices end up forcing *wagogni* to stick with abusive spouses if married, and the unmarried to get married come-what-may, and in many cases to end up with marital partners whom they do not fancy. This situation is further fuelled by the

socialization process in the community which is geared towards marriage and teaches the importance of marriage in one's life. Among the Luo, part of the teaching and socialization emphasizes the need for women to be obedient wives, good mothers and obedient servants of society who must confer with their husbands at all times (Olungah, 2006:104).

4.3.3 Sexual violence

The findings presented in Figure 4.6 below indicate that 79 per cent of the respondents agreed that sexual violence existed in the community while 21 per cent disagreed.

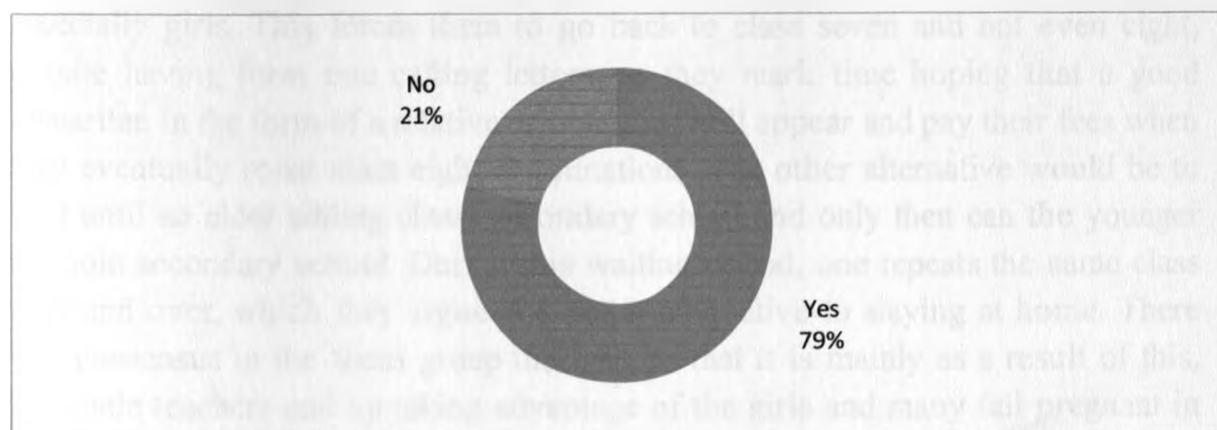


Figure 4.6: Existence of sexual violence

4.4.1 Most common forms of sexual violence

The most common forms of sexual violence in the study area include attempts to have sex with a woman against her will and being forced to have sex with someone else, for example, an in-law in order to fulfill a cultural obligation. A good example of this is the traditional practice surrounding burial rites, leading to women being made to have sex against their will with either a stranger or a known relative (who qualifies as her brother-in-law), as a form of a sham marriage, in order to fulfill a cultural rite. There was consensus among all discussants, both male and female, that marital rape does not exist in this community as a husband

has absolute right to have sex with his wife unless she is sick. On the other hand, a wife has no right to deny her husband sex unless she is unwell. They further argued that the practice of polygyny ensures that wives eagerly await their turns to entertain the husband and therefore the question of forced sex in marriage does not arise. In this community, the term rape does not exist and I was, in fact, instructed not to use it in this study.

Cases of transactional sex were also reported in the focus group discussions. This, however, was not common among married women, but among school girls who despite being 16 years and above were still in primary school. This was reported to be as a result of the high rate of *nwoyo* (repeating classes) throughout primary school due to lack of school fees for transition to secondary level for many pupils, especially girls. This forces them to go back to class seven and not even eight, despite having form one calling letters, as they mark time hoping that a good Samaritan in the form of a relative or politician will appear and pay their fees when they eventually re-sit class eight examinations. The other alternative would be to wait until an elder sibling clears secondary school and only then can the younger one join secondary school. During this waiting period, one repeats the same class over and over, which they argue is a better alternative to staying at home. There was consensus in the focus group discussions that it is mainly as a result of this, that male teachers end up taking advantage of the girls and many fall pregnant in the process. The researcher was privy to a case during the field work which was being handled by the District Education Office. In this case, a pupil who was repeating her class eight for the second time due to lack of school fees was impregnated by a male teacher and her guardian had reported the matter to the District education office who were in the process of taking disciplinary action against the teacher. The irony was that in the meantime, the said teacher was carrying on with his duties as usual.

There was further consensus among discussants that this problem was partly due to the common practice of polygyny in the community, leading to high numbers of children per household whose needs, including education, the parents were unable to meet effectively. It was also blamed on the high cases of AIDS orphans in the community. The cases of AIDS orphans were blamed on two main cultural

practices. The first one is polygyny in cases where the husband disappears for long periods with the youngest of the wives, while the rest of the wives are left at the mercy of men in the village. There was actually a joke during the focus group discussions that most people in this community are not even sure who their real fathers are and that it is a safe secret with the mothers. The second is the cultural practice of widow inheritance, which was reported to have led to many cases of grandmothers in their sunset years testing positive for HIV. This only complicated matters for the orphans who were mainly left under the care of these old women.

Unfortunately, in cases where a choice has to be made as to who transits to the next level of schooling, if the choice is between a boy and a girl, then preference is inevitably given to the boy with the excuse that the girl will after all get married, and will only help her husband's family. Unfortunately, these sentiments came from discussants across both the age and sex divide during the focus group discussions.

4.4.2 Forced marriages and fulfilling burial rights

Sexual violence that involves forced sex was reported to be common in cases of forced marriages and in fulfillment of burial rights. The forced marriages in this case are not about marrying off underage girls like is often the case in most communities, but grown-up women for various reasons. The practice of a father giving his daughter's hand for marriage to a wealthy person, more often than not to a much older man in order to sort out a financial problem commonly related to school fees for her male siblings or in return for a handsome bride wealth payment and other financial benefits, is still common. There are also cases where a father gives his daughter's hand for marriage to a debtor when he is unable to pay off a debt. In such cases, the father receives an additional payment in the form of cash and *gima wuotho gi tiende* (an animal). The woman has no option but to submit to the demands of her father.

In case she refuses, she will forcefully be taken to her suitor's house and people will keep vigil outside the house to ensure that sexual intercourse takes place between her and her suitor. Once this has taken place, the woman cannot go back to her parents' home because *oonge ringer* (she has lost her virginity). This scenario is best captured by this comment from a key informant:

Nene ok adwar ng'atno nikech nene en jadoho to nene oduong'na ahinya. To mbesene nene okawa githuon to baba na oyie, magitera kaode magibet e dhot kagichiko itgi mondo giwinj kabende gimoro otimore. kanene otieko to nene oyao dhot magidonjo neno giwan'ggi ni otimore ma koro adak a daka nyakasani.(I did not want that man because he was a polygynist and was much older than me. But his age mates took me forcefully with the consent of my father, and then they took me to his house and stood guard outside the house to ensure that something (sexual intercourse) took place. Once he was through, he opened the door and they came in to confirm that something had happened and so I just stayed until today). **(38-year-old female, Kamasengre Sub-location)**

In this case, her father owed her husband-to-be (now deceased) money and an additional payment had been received including cattle, but she was reluctant to go and live with the man. What stands out is the fact that in most cases where abuse of one nature or another has taken place, as in the above case, the women refer to their partners as *ng'atno* (that man) despite many years of marriage and irrespective of whether the men are dead or still alive.

Sexual violence related to fulfilling burial rites is common. This came out as a double-edged sword for women because the burial rituals are not limited to only those in her matrimonial home, but also in her parents' home as evidenced by these two respondents' comments:

Nene atamora ter aming'a bang' tho chuora, to kanene awinjo ni ok anyal dhi iko babana nikech ok otera to nene ayie ma otera gi jaboya ma kayuocha nene okelona. (I had refused to be inherited for a long time after my husband died, but when I learnt that I could not bury my own father because I was not inherited, I gave in and fulfilled the rite with a stranger [fisherman] who my in-laws brought for me). **(48-year-old female, Kamasengre Sub-location)**

Kanene kwarwa otho to nene gitamore ninyaka tera eka ike. Nene gidhi magidwaro jater magichuna matieko kode chik ka kayuocha obet oko kachiko itgi kabende gimoro otimore. (When my father-in-law died, they refused to bury him unless I was inherited. They went and brought a levir and they forced me to perform the rite with him while they sat outside to ensure that the sexual act actually took place). **(39-year-old female, Wanyama Sub-location)**

Sexual violence against women in this community is best captured by the following case study as narrated by the victim and corroborated by key informants who witnessed it.

Case 4.5: Middle-aged woman forced to have sex with a stranger

Nyakakrigu had been married for the last 33 years. She spent most of her married life in Nairobi where she worked. She has, however, lately spent most of her life shuffling between the city and the village as she has to seek medication from the city after being retired on medical grounds. She says that married life for her was good despite her husband taking a second wife until he suddenly passed away in 1994 and narrates her story as follows:

Soon after my husband's death, I together with my co-wife were required to perform traditional rites which included shaving of the head, among other things. I, however, refused to perform these rites because I knew that performing them would mean that one had to perform other rites that would follow later, and which I was not prepared to do. My co-wife who was much younger than me and educated up to college level and in formal employment, on the other hand, did not decline. My decision caused a lot of tension in the village but luckily for me, I had to leave for the city as I had to report back to work after my leave.

Two years later, my brother-in-law passed away and naturally I attended the funeral with my children. I had anticipated some problems but not to the extent that actually occurred. The night before the burial, I was approached by my only remaining brother-in-law together with other village elders and asked to choose a jater from among my in-laws either from within or without the homestead. They made it clear to me that the grave digging ceremony would not commence before that was done. I flatly refused and told them that much. They tried to persuade me but I was adamant after which they left my now dilapidated hut (from years of

neglect) in a huff banging the door behind them. I remained seated in there for a while pondering my next move.

I do not recall how long I sat there, but the next thing I remember was the door being swung open, and in entered a shabby looking man whom I did not recognize, and the door was promptly locked behind him from outside. In a matter of seconds, before I could fully comprehend the meaning of all this, the man had pounced on me and was 'sleeping with me'. I find it difficult to explain my immediate reaction as everything happened too fast for me, but I cannot however forget the stench from the man as it made my stomach turn. I could not scream because my greatest fear when I eventually realized what was happening was my children finding out what was going on. Within no time, the man whom I now realized was a *jaboya* was through with his mission and was calling on the men waiting outside to let him out.

Nothing in the whole world ever prepared me for that moment even though I was aware it happens to widows in the area. But my greatest worry still was my children's reaction when they would hear of it. How was I going to face them and with what explanation? When I eventually collected myself, I packed a few of my belongings, gathered enough courage and stepped outside to the glare of several *weng'e* (eyes) in the dimly lit homestead which created a semi-darkness for which I was extremely grateful as they were using paraffin lamps. The homestead was full of people including in-laws from *wagogni* as it was the night of the wake. I found my three children seated in their grandmother's hut and asked them to follow me to my hut. When they entered, I made them change their clothes extremely fast and disappeared with them into the darkness with all eyes following us and not knowing how I would make it to the mainland at that hour of the night. By the grace of God, however, and with hot tears freely rolling down my cheeks, I covered the 15 kilometres on foot in the darkness and with my children without even realizing.

We spent the rest of the night at the bus park and took the very first bus out of the 'centre' in the morning for Nairobi. It took me several years to gather the courage to forgive my in-laws and to visit the village. But eventually, through the persuasion of my now grown children, I visited the home upon the death of my brother-in-law and that is when I was forced to re-live my experience afresh albeit only mentally. Although it was a painful experience having to go back to that homestead during yet another funeral, it surprised me that I felt much better after the visit. *Dokna kanyo nene ogonya!* (My visit there made me experience closure!). That is part of the reason I am able to talk about it so freely because for many years, I could not. **(52-year-old woman, Waware South Sub-location)**

4.5 Economic violence

The results in Figure 4.7 below indicate that 62 per cent of the respondents agreed that economic violence existed in the community while 38 per cent disagreed.

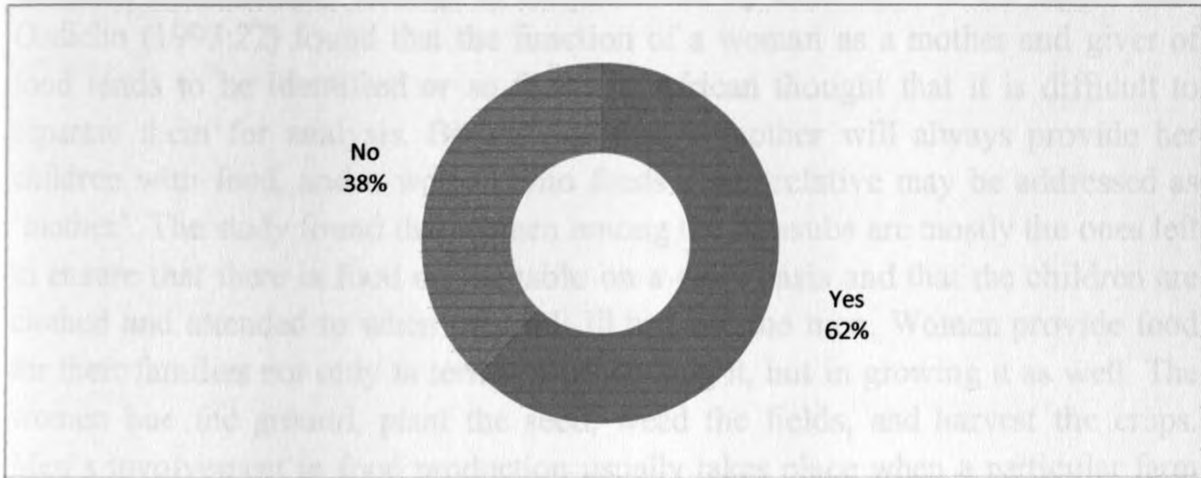


Figure 4.7 Existence of economic violence

4.5.1.1 Most common forms of economic violence

The socio-cultural attributes of this community predispose women to economic violence. The most common form of economic violence is whereby most women are left to solely fend for the children despite their husbands still being alive and active. This is characterized by cases where the men go to towns in search of jobs but rarely remit money for their family's upkeep back in the village. There was consensus among discussants during the focus group discussions, that the greatest economic *sand* (injustice) that most women endured in this community, was a situation where the husband is alive and around but chooses not to engage in any gainful economic activity, thus leaving the burden of fending for the family entirely upon the wife/wives. There was further consensus that this was a very common practice on the Island.

The reason for this is that maintenance of the home and providing the day-to-day needs of a child among the Abasuba on Rusinga Island is considered generally the duty of the woman with the man coming in to assist on matters that involve huge finances and tasks, most notably payment of school fees. The common saying in

this community is that *nyathi en mar dhako* (a child belongs to the woman). This, however, turns out to apply only as far as upbringing of the children is concerned. It changes drastically in case the woman wants to leave the marriage. In this case, the child automatically belongs to the man and, by extension, to the whole clan. Ondicho (1993:22) found that the function of a woman as a mother and giver of food tends to be identified or so fused in African thought that it is difficult to separate them for analysis. Because of this, a mother will always provide her children with food, and a woman who feeds a non-relative may be addressed as 'mother'. The study found that women among the Abasuba are mostly the ones left to ensure that there is food on the table on a daily basis and that the children are clothed and attended to when they fall ill and not the men. Women provide food for their families not only in terms of processing it, but in growing it as well. The women hoe the ground, plant the seed, weed the fields, and harvest the crops. Men's involvement in food production usually takes place when a particular farm area no longer produces optimal crops, and men are called upon to clear new fields. This perception is best captured by the following comment from two in-depth interviewees:

Ere kaka dwatingre ji ariyo niwatero nyathi esuptal kata nikoro awuok ni adhi dware chiemo, mano to koro tij dhako en ang'o? To kata kiketo nikoro maendeleo owacho, atimoni dhako mane to aweyo mane? Mano gima ok timore. (How can we 'carry ourselves' two people that we are taking a child to the hospital, or that now I have left to go and look for food; now what would be the work of a woman, even if we put it that development has said, which among my wives would I do it for and which one would I fail to do for? That cannot happen). **(43-year-old male, Kamasengre Sub-location)**

An okan jadoho, to ndalo moko nene atemo niakony jaoda gitijene mag ot nikech aonge tich to en oloko e chira Weche manene awinjawinja koa kuom mbesena gijodongo nyaka deye nene oroma ma ating'obada. To seche moko podi akonyega akonya giweche mag suptal. (Me, am not a polygynist, but some time ago I tried to help my wife with her household chores because she trades at the market while I don't have a job. The words I heard from my age mates and elders including grannys were enough and I 'put my hands in the air' (surrendered). But

sometimes I still just help her on issues to do with the hospital). **(37-year-old male, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

A majority of such men who abandon their responsibilities turned out to cut across the age divide and could not bring themselves to get involved in the most commonly practised economic activity of fishing. Ironically, some of their women are involved in fishing activities through buying *omena* (dagaa) from the fishermen at the beaches and selling it locally. This, however, also involves being at the beaches at ungodly hours (between 2am and 5am depending on whether the moon is bright or not). This they do in order to ensure that there is food on the table for their husbands and children. The exception was in cases where the man of the house is a fisherman since he is under obligation to bring home part of his catch mostly *ngege* (tilapia fish), *mbuta* (Nile perch) or *omena*, after spending the better part of the night in the lake fishing.

In-depth interviews and FGDs revealed that whereas most women felt that their men were letting them down and burdening them unnecessarily and yet they are still strong and energetic, the men maintain that it is solely the duty of the woman to ensure that there is food on the table as the following comment illustrates:

Dhako mariek enma rito ode maber (A clever woman is one who takes good care of her home). **(70+ year old man, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

It is such attitudes that ensure that the women work extremely hard under the scorching sun that burns through most of the year on this Island as they compete to make their home as habitable as possible for the men and the meals as delicious as possible, while the men while away their time benefitting from the competition. The fact that the island enjoys only one harvesting season in a year does not help matters. It is for the same reason that such men, as the study revealed, can easily afford to have many wives ranging from two to five or even more without having to break a sweat.

The researcher's observation and the focus group discussions revealed that the common practice of polygyny has a big role to play in ensuring that women work

extremely hard to ensure there are adequate meals for their families, while the men idle around. This is because every wife is left to run her home independently since most polygynists in the study either do not have a steady source of income, are living with the youngest wife in town or have no income at all. In the process the women compete among themselves not only in an effort to make ends meet and feed their husbands and children, but also to impress the husband. For the polygynous husbands, despite their laid back attitude and the fact that they are averse to fending for their families, every wife is under obligation to serve him three square meals a day without fail. This literally means having several plates of *kuon* (*ugali*) and similar plates of the accompaniments depending on the number of wives. This reasoning in the community is best captured by these comments from a respondent:

Dichuo donjo mana eot ma irite maber .(A man only enters the house where his needs are met well). (40-year-old woman, Kamasengre Sub-location)

4.5.1.3 The power of older women

As Olungah (2006:209) observed among the neighbouring Luo, besides the husband and influence of men, a married woman falls directly under the influence and domestic authority of her mother-in-law and must be obedient to her and respect her at all times. He further argues that the relationship between these two sets of women is no different from that of co-wives as they tend to want to compete for the attention of son and husband, respectively. In this regard, daughters-in-law find their capacities to make independent decisions and chart their own destinies in matters affecting their nuclear families limited. This situation is made worse in a case in which the two women share the same homestead.

This set-up, coupled with cultural beliefs and practices, contributed a great deal to the economic violence experienced by women in this community. Older women, usually mothers-in-law or first wives, invoke tradition, which frustrate younger wives when it comes to tilling the land at the beginning of the planting season. Daughters-in-law still residing in the same homestead with their mothers-in-law are not allowed to embark on ploughing, planting or harvesting without the green light from their mother-in-law. This permission, however, is not just verbal. It

ails the older woman performing the necessary rites to allow for the activity in question to begin in her homestead. This means she has to *tieko kwer* (complete the necessary rites) with her man whether it is a levir or husband and then start the digging or planting before her married sons and their wives can do the same. In the absence of this, the children and their wives can do nothing but wait for the signal order to start digging. This practice has led many young couples to move out of their parents' homesteads and seek shelter in the nearby shopping centres in order to avoid being bound by their parents' timings and patterns. This increases the economic burden of the women, as life is more expensive at the centres and they cry the lack of space to put up a kitchen garden, hence having to shop for all their needs including vegetables. The relevance of moving to the centres was explained that once the sons are out of their parents' homesteads, they are not bound by the traditions. By so doing, it is believed that they become immune to *mbira* (the curse that befalls one for breaking a cultural taboo). The same case applies to resuming of conjugal rites among the married sons after a funeral in the home, which has to follow the same pattern of parents first, then the children follow suit in their order of birth.

It thus follows that harvesting cannot be started unless the head of the home is present. In case the weather does not allow for the crops to continue being left out in the fields, then the women are permitted to harvest on their own, but they cannot eat the harvest until he comes back, performs the appropriate rite with his wife and eats the first meal. This position is illustrated by the following respondent in her early thirties:

Dhako ok nyal chamo cham ka dichwo ok obiro. Ema omiyo nyithindo dak e centre nyaka wuongi bi eka gi tiek chike edala. (A woman cannot eat the harvest if the husband has not come back. That is why children are now going out to live at the shopping centre until their father comes back in order for them to fulfill the cultural rites in the home). **(32-year-old female, Wanyama Sub-location)**

The following two cases clearly capture the above scenarios of economic violence as experienced by two women.

the emotional roller coaster nothing much has changed. Our economic situation has only got worse due to more mouths to feed as my husband seems not to have been able to find any economic activity that suits him to date, despite the fact that most men in this village 'sleep' at the lake fishing. He seems happy and relaxed because we spoil him while fighting for his attention! But I have since wisened up and stopped fending for my co-wife and mother-in-law. (39-year-old woman, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Case 4.7: Polygynist who has never engaged in any gainful employment

*I was 24 years old when my first husband sent me away due to my inability to bear him children. I went back to my parents' home and lived there for two years before a new suitor came knocking in the name of a smart gentleman in midlife who came in the company of a group of in-laws that had come to pay bride wealth for my cousin. We got acquainted immediately and within six months, he had proposed to me to be his third wife. I was very excited to have a second chance at marriage for two reasons. The first reason was that it would help me throw away the ugly tag of *odhiodwogo* ('gone and came back' [this is a derogatory term used in reference to women who have either divorced or separated and gone back to their parent's home]). Secondly, it would possibly help me prove my first husband wrong about my inability to bear children.*

*A calf and a goat were sent to my former husband's home by my relatives as a sign that they had severed relations for good and that I was now free to re-marry. This issue is, however, still under contention and bothers me a lot even today as my former husband still claims me somehow. My parents accepted my bride wealth for the second time given the manner in which my first husband sent me away. Most of my relatives, however, kept off from the ceremony claiming that what my parents were engaging in was an abomination as I belonged to my first husband forever despite our differences because he had brought *gima wuotho gitiende* (something that moves with its own legs [meaning an animal]) to our home. I thereafter moved into my new home.*

No sooner had I settled in than I realized that the smart neat man I had been meeting in hotels, was not only jobless and had a large brood of children that he had no idea how his wives fed, but had also never held a job or been involved in any income generating activity in his life. My fate was, however, sealed as I could not go back to my parents for the second time, and I was also progressing in my years. I therefore had no option but to join the rest of the wives in fending for our husband whose daily routine involves: spending his entire morning having an

Case study 4.6: A woman made to carry the economic burden of her family

Twino is 39 years old and has been married for 11 years. She says the first two years of her marriage were among the happiest of her life as her marriage was what she describes as a love marriage. She met her husband when she was training as a nursery teacher. She was lucky to get a job soon after and got married almost at the same time. She narrates her experience as follows:

My husband was not employed at the time we got married, but we both hoped he would soon get involved in some economic activity. I took care of him and his mother with whom we shared a compound from my meager salary as a nursery teacher without complaining, as I loved my husband. Problems, however, started when after two years of marriage, I had not conceived. Whereas my husband did not put pressure on me, my mother-in-law's attitude changed and with time she started pestering her son to get another wife who could bear him children, given the fact that he was the first born son. Initially my husband was reluctant and even discussed his concerns with me. I, however, got alarmed in the fifth year of our marriage when my husband asked me to bring in my own younger sister who we had lived with during her secondary schooling, to be my co-wife and possibly bear him children. According to him, he found that to be more polite than to tell me that he wanted to get another wife. I, however, got the feeling he was choosing this option mainly because I was the bread winner.

I had expected challenges once I learnt of my inability to have children, but my husband's request not only reinforced the length at which he was prepared to go in order to have children, but also shook me to the core and sent me into a depression for about two weeks. In spite of all this, I was still the sole breadwinner for the family. I eventually weighed my options and decided to tell my husband to get another wife provided he stopped the talk about my sister. He very deliberately settled for a woman who already had a child as proof that she was not barren. The worst part of my experience, however, was the fact that I not only had to share the same single room with my husband and his new wife, with one person sleeping on the bed and the other on the floor on a rotational basis, the rhythm of which was decided by him, but was also the one putting food on the table for the now expanded family. This situation went on for more than a year including the period when the new wife was pregnant and beyond delivery. All the while, I was the one fending for all their needs with my meager salary as a kindergarten teacher.

It has been six years since my co-wife came, and apart from two more children and a separate hut for her which I helped construct when I could no longer stand

extended birth by swimming in the lake after his jug of nyuka (porridge) and whiles the day away at the local meeting point by the pong' (posho mill) after lunch discussing current affairs, before returning home to a hot meal just before sunset after which he will watch the sun gently disappear into the lake from his armchair while seated e dier dala (in the centre of the homestead).

*Although my state of barrenness has been a source of worry for a long time, I have lately come to view it as a sort of advantage considering the kind of life that I live. This is because I have no children to burden me further unlike my co-wives who have to toil harder to feed not only their children and our husband, but also a brood of grandchildren from both the sons and daughters as you can see who have fallen victims of teenage pregnancy. These children are so many that they sometimes seem like gilwar koa epolo (they have been literally poured from the sky). I sometimes help my co-wives with the children but the poor harvest doesn't make it easy kata chunyi ler (even though you have a clean heart). The situation is not made any better by the lack of a proper harvest year in year out. As for me, whenever, I feel the situation is too much for me, I pay my mother a prolonged visit as I have nothing to hold me back as such, and I come back feeling a bit better.***(44-year-old woman, Kaswanga Sub-location)**

The focus group discussions, however, revealed deep divisions between the sexes on the role of men in this community as far as bringing up children is concerned. The men in the groups who opposed this view were, however, accused by fellow discussants of being in denial of this fact despite the glaring evidence before them.

The case studies, illustrations and reports from focus group discussions clearly show the following: They demonstrate the existence of the various forms of violence in the study area which include physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence. This is demonstrated through first-hand experiences of the victims exemplified by the literal translations. They further demonstrate the role of socialization and the beliefs and perceptions of women in the violence they suffer.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENCULTURATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings on the impact of enculturation on the violence experienced by women. An analysis of the respondents' perceptions of violence against women showed that socialization greatly impacted negatively on women in relation to violence. This has led to instances where victims of various forms of violence are not even aware that they are being violated in the first place as they consider what they are going through as the natural order of things.

5.2 Impact of enculturation on physical violence

The study sought to determine the extent to which socialization was responsible for the physical violence experienced by women in this community and the respondents gave various answers as presented in Figure 5.1 below. Fifty-six per cent of the respondents felt that the effect of socialization was very high. Twenty-one per cent felt that the impact was high, 13% felt the impact was relative while 8% reported that the impact was low. However, 2% felt that there existed no link between socialization and the physical violence that the women experienced.

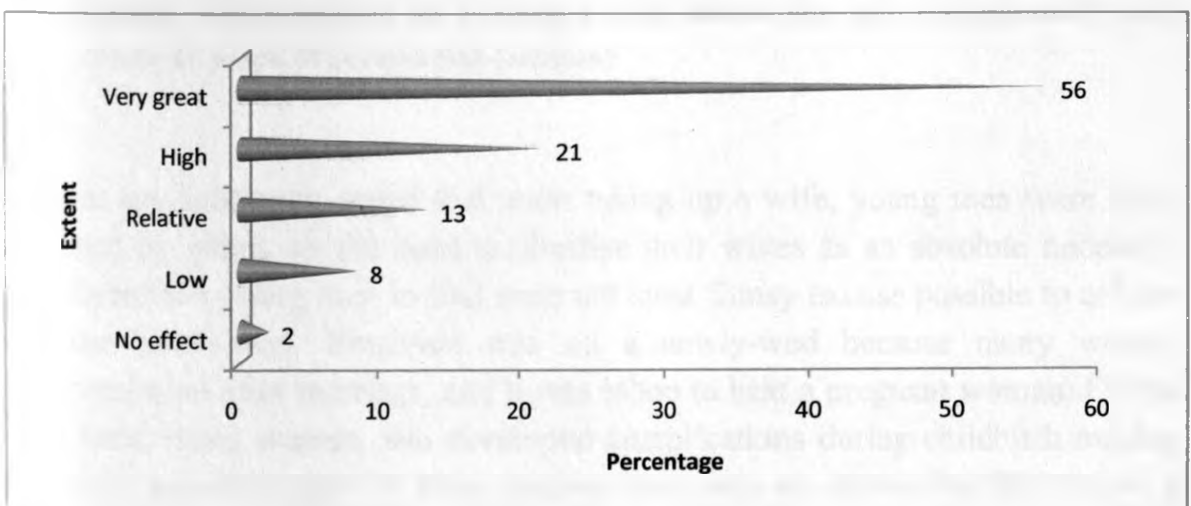


Figure 5.1: Influence of enculturation on physical violence

Over half (56%) of the respondents agreed that physical violence was common to a great extent due to cultural reasons. In their view, that was the common way of instilling discipline in women, and this started with their forefathers. It was, therefore, normal to subject a woman to physical beating.

The traditional belief that the spirits of a woman would come back to haunt the husband if she died *ka ok omule gi lwete* (before he touched her with his hands) had a lot of influence on wife beating. If a man never at least slapped his wife in life, then he must do it in death. Traditionally, if the case was such that a woman died before her husband lay a hand on her 'by at least slapping her', then he was made to take a stick and hit her corpse or slap it before she could be buried. There was consensus during the focus group discussions, that the belief was that if a man failed to do so, then should the wife be widowed, the levir (*jater*) could not do it too. A bad omen would then be cast on that family. In case the husband died first then, according to a key informant, the husband's hand (a corpse's hand) would be made to hit his wife's cheek in a symbolic beating. A 65-year old man had this to say during a key informant interview:

Dhako ma inyomo nyaka ichuade, nono to ka ok ichwade ka ong'ima to nyaka ichwade kata ose tho. Ng'ama dichuo ok nyal koso gimamiyo ochwado dhako, mana ka ohingi.
(You must beat a wife that you have married. Otherwise in case you do not do it while she is still alive, then you must do it when she is dead. A husband cannot miss a reason for beating a wife unless she has overpowered you).
(Male, 65 years, Wanyama Sub-location)

Another key informant stated that upon taking up a wife, young men were often reminded by elders on the need to chastise their wives as an absolute necessity. This forced the young men to find even the most flimsy excuse possible to at least slap the newly-wed. Emphasis was on a newly-wed because many women conceived soon after marriage, and it was taboo to beat a pregnant woman. On the other hand, many women also developed complications during childbirth making pregnancy a journey that for most families there was no return. For this reason, a man had to take the earliest opportunity to at least 'touch' (beat) his wife. A 62-

year-old husband to two deceased wives and two living ones, one of whom he inherited after his late brother 'slept' (died), explained this scenario in the following words:

An kanene anyombo jodongo nene okona ni dhako to nyaka amul gilweta kendo mapiyo, maka po ni otho kapok amule to abiro pado maiti. Gino nene omia lworu kaparapara ni onyalo mako ich ma otho konyuol kaka mine mang'eny manene aseneno. Koro nene ochuna dwaro makosa kwome mapamo lembe matek enyimji mondo ji one mondo ng'ato kik dum chien'gmoro ni a yomyoi.. Akanyo nene ok amule kendo nyaka thone nikech nene en dhako maneong'e weche mang'eny. Nyiekeni ema nene lelo. (When I got married, the elders advised me that I had to at least 'touch' my wife, meaning beating her. This I was advised had to be done as soon as possible lest I am made to slap her corpse should she die before that happened. That got me scared especially the thought that she may fall pregnant and die giving birth as I had seen it happen to many women. I was therefore forced to look for the slightest opportunity and I slapped her across the face in the presence of people. This I did to ensure that I am also not one day branded as a weakling. Since then, I never 'touched' her again until her death because she was a woman of few words. It is her co-wife here who is stubborn. (Male, 62 years, Waware Sub-location)

All discussants in the focus groups were in agreement that the in-laws knew whether or not a wife had been beaten by the husband because, for one, the homestead had houses close to each other and they were hardly sound-proof. Two, the woman/wife had to scream/wail when she was beaten by her husband and therefore everyone got to know when it happened. A man who did not occasionally discipline his wife was considered weak or as *dhako obet kwome* (one who has been 'sat on' by a woman). The extent of this belief and the effect it had on one's manhood can be seen not only in the above respondent's account, but also in this statement by a 40-year-old respondent:

Kanene agoyo chiegu mokwongo nikech nene ok oyie rwako nyieke, makoro okete gi koko mang'eny, nene ochako nduru kolworo dala mang'ima kang'ama thuol okayo kochiewo jiduto nyaka wuora kata kapoka mule maber. To nene aweye aweya ogo nduru nikech nene ang'eyo ni mano bende okonya tieko chick. Gima akia en ka po ni obende nene ong'eyo mano. (When I beat my wife for the first time when she could not

accept her co-wife and was always causing trouble, I had barely hit her when she went round the entire homestead screaming as if she had been bitten by a snake waking up everyone including my father. But I let her be because I knew she was helping me fulfill a traditional requirement. I am not so sure if she knew that too. (Male, 40 years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

The cultural belief that a man who does not beat his wife does not love her has a lot of influence on the physical violence experienced by women in this community. This calls for an occasional slapping for flimsy reasons in order to show that he cared about her. Of interest to note is the fact that even females in the focus group discussions and the survey seemed to concur with that position. The scenario is, however, best captured by the following statement by a 25-year-old respondent who is married, a mother of two and already has a co-wife:

An ang'eyo ni ka dichuo ok mul chiege kata matin to mano nyiso ni ok ohere. To mano ok onyiso ni oweya gi mbala. (Me I know that if a man does not 'touch' [meaning beat] his wife at all, then it is a sign that he does not love her. But this does not mean that he leaves me with permanent marks). (Female, 25 years, Wanyama Sub-location)

5.3 Impact of enculturation on emotional violence

This study sought to find out the extent to which socialization impacted on the emotional violence experienced by women in the Suba community and the respondents gave various answers as depicted in Figure 5.2 below. Forty-seven per cent of the respondents felt that the effect of socialization was very high. Twenty-four per cent felt that the impact was high, 8% felt the impact was relative while 15% reported that the impact was low. However, 6% felt that there was no link between socialization and the emotional violence that the women suffered.

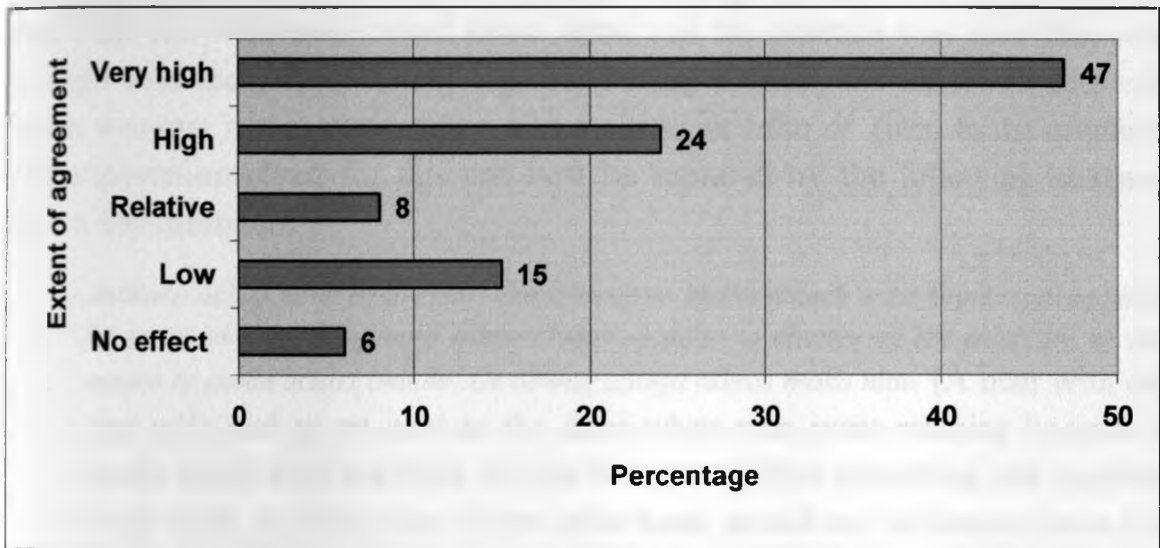


Figure 5.2: Influence of enculturation on emotional violence

Discussants in the focus group discussions were in agreement that emotional violence against women in this community is partly fuelled by men's lack of respect towards women due to their upbringing (men) which gave them the notion that women were there to serve but not to be reasoned with. This closely relates to the patriarchal nature of this community where the male figure is dominant and the female one subordinate. The discussants brought out clearly the fact that men felt that they are superior to women and women are therefore not meant to be heard. This sentiment is best captured by this statement by a 57-year-old male respondent:

Ng'amadhako wachang'o enyim dichwo? Ng'amomiye tekono? Mano timre mana ka dichuo bolo! (What can a woman say in front of a man? Who gives her that power? It is only possible if the man is gutless!). (Male, 57years, Wanyama Sub-location)

The traditional belief that a man who had one wife *ok wuo kama chwo obetye* (could not talk where men were seated), has a lot of influence on the current practice of *doho* (polygyny) which emerged as the greatest source of emotional violence to most female respondents. Olungah (2006:208) found that in polygynous set-ups among the Luo in Bondo, co-wives are at times sites for

individual discomfort and mental anguish. Findings indicate that, traditionally, a man with one wife was looked down upon and the practice was such that when *jodongo* (old men) were sitting together having a drink, the man with one wife, which was rare in this community, was made to sit *edho ot* (next to the entrance). The explanation given for this can best be captured by the following statement from a key informant:

Jadhako achiel nene bedo ebath dhoot ka chwo hudho nikech nene onyalo gweyo kong'o ka po ni oluonge ni gimoro otimo chiege. Jadoho to chunye ng'ich katakapo ni wach owuok ni jaode achiel onindo. Ok obwog ahinya nikech moko nitie. (A man with only one wife had to sit next to the door when men were relaxing because he could easily kick the drink in case he was told that something had happened to his wife. A polygynist, on the other hand, would not be shocked even if he heard that one of his wives had 'slept' [passed on] because he knows that others are there). (Male, 65-years, Wanyama Sub-location)

These sentiments and cultural beliefs are still held high in this community leading to the existence of polygyny even among young people. The focus group discussions revealed that the situation is not helped by the fact that most young people, both male and female, in such relationships argue that they come from polygynous homes and consider the practice of polygyny as the norm rather than the exception. This view is given credence by the following comment by a 32-year-old male in-depth interviewee whose main source of income is fishing and already has two wives:

Onyuola ma adong'o edoho ma ong'e kaka ng'ato nyalo keta ni adak gi dhako achiel. Kata en chiege to kamaka oaaaya! (I was born and brought up in a polygynous set-up and no one can make me live with one wife. Even if it is my wife, she might as well just leave!) (32-year-old man, Kamasengre West)

Interestingly, even some respondents who were educated up to college level were comfortable with being second or third wives as a result of their socialization. This is captured by this statement from an in-depth interviewee who was born and brought up on Mfangano Island but married on Rusinga Island. She is 43 years old,

a primary teacher and a third wife and says her mother was the fourth of four wives:

Dhi e school ok onyiso ni iwito chik. An minwa nene en dhako mar ang'wen to ok ane gima rach gi bet dahko mar adek bora ni ng'ato ka ng'ato odak to tedo kende. Akia gima mon moko gore niga! (Going to school does not mean that one abandons tradition. My own mother was a fourth wife and I see nothing wrong with being a third wife provided every woman lives in a different house and has her own kitchen. I don't understand what some women fight about!) (43-year-old woman, Waware North Sub-location)

A clash between cultural beliefs and practices and modernity leading to great emotional violence was evident in the study area. It was brought out clearly during the focus group discussions and exemplified during interviews with key informants. This is whereby women are required to fulfill certain traditional rituals and obligations that involve men, yet the very same men who demand that the rituals be performed are not prepared to play their part as required by tradition.

Whereas widows are required to be inherited within the traditionally stipulated period in order to be fully accepted back into the community, it turns out that due to awareness on HIV/AIDS and what the locals term as *mon mo somo* (women who have gone to school) refusing to allow their men to inherit widows, many widows are finding themselves cornered. Cases now abound where the in-laws are demanding that a widow be inherited and she is willing, but the brothers-in-law are not willing to do it themselves. This scenario is best exemplified by the following case study:

Case 5.1: A woman twice widowed and whose in-laws refused to inherit her

Nyakisumo has been married for the last 32 years and has spent all those years on the Island. She has been widowed twice and had to bury her second husband who was a *jaboya*. She narrated her experience as follows:

When my husband died six years ago, I knew very well that according to the traditions here, I had to be inherited. I had a brother-in-law and I therefore knew that it was only a matter of time before he would inherit me to *okao ting mag owadgi* (and carry the burdens of his brother). But this was never to be to my surprise. Time passed by and he would visit home and leave without saying a word about it. Eventually, I discussed the issue with my mother-in-law who approached him and he was categorical that he would not inherit me. I was at a loss as to what to do. He was even approached by elders and he refused. I therefore had to look for a *jater* beyond the homestead. The same case, however, happened with a few in-laws who were my late husband's cousins and who qualified to inherit me but they all refused.

Meanwhile, there were several things that I could not do in the village by virtue of having *chola* (a sign that one is a widow and still grieving). These included visiting any homestead and travelling among others, although there are some like not going to the lake which I chose to ignore because I had no one to fetch water for me. And even at the *wath mon* (water point specifically for women at the lake), my fellow women, including my own mother-in-law, avoided coming close to me and I was forced to move much farther away from them while bathing or doing my laundry. I felt isolated and like a prisoner in my own home and yet there was no one to provide for me and my children.

Finally, because I had to *tieko chike* ('finish traditions' [meaning adhere to traditions]) I decided to get an inheritor for myself. I therefore approached a male relative who was a fisherman and asked him to get for me a *jaboya*. He soon introduced me to one. When he visited my hut for the first time, it became a very big issue and my brother-in-law travelled all the way to come and warn me against entertaining strangers in the homestead and yet he was unwilling to take care of my needs himself. Despite all that was said which was a lot, I maintained the relationship with *ng'atno* (that man) and he eventually moved away from the beaches and came to live with me.

Unfortunately for me, the man fell ill last year (2010) and died one night in my hut. The first hurdle was the fact that the wall of my hut had to be demolished from the back side in order to remove the body from the house. This was because I was informed that as per tradition, a *jater* (levir's) body can neither pass through the main door nor the main gate to the homestead. The second and biggest hurdle was when the elders said that he could also not be buried in the homestead as per tradition. This meant that we had to *muomo chiel* (cut through the fence of the homestead) to remove the body from the homestead for burial outside. As if this was not enough *sand* (agony), the worst was when none of the

relatives was willing to participate in helping me bury him for fear of *chira* given that no one – not even me- knew exactly where he hailed from.

All I knew was that he was from *Samia ei dho boda* (Samia near the border) and no further details. Word was sent out to the beaches just in case anyone could trace his relatives in vain. For three days, I kept vigil next to the body outside the homestead from where the fence had been opened with little support from *jogweng* (villagers) who went about their business as if nothing had happened, and yet everything normally comes to a standstill in this village when there is a funeral around. My brother-in-law did not even bother to travel home. Eventually when we realized that his people could not be traced and the body was decomposing fast, with the help of my now grown sons and fishermen from the beaches, we identified a spot outside the homestead but *epuothwa* (within our parcel of land) and buried him. *Eliel ma podi nyien ma ineno e bath ndara kacha. Bende nene en ting matek!* (It is that fresh grave you see there by the roadside. It was really a tough task!) (49-year-old widow, Wanyama Sub-location)

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed the difficulty and embarrassment a widow undergoes in the process of getting a *jater*. The process they say is complicated by the fact that accepting to be inherited, which most women resist, is only the first step. The difficulty comes in with the requirement that a widow has to approach a prospective *jater*'s wife and try to convince her to let her share her husband. Most respondents who went through this process describe it as embarrassing especially when the *jater*'s wife is uncooperative as is common today. It turns out, however, that despite the wives' defiance, most men went ahead with the arrangement anyway, albeit secretly initially, until it came a time when it could not be kept as a secret any more. This respondent recounts her experience:

Kanene wuon pacho otho to nene ayudo jater mapiyo. To pek nene odonjo kanene ochopo ni adhi loso gi nyieka kaka chik dwaro. Bende wach ne tek to gikone nene odagi. Bang' mano to koro nene okuot ma ok olos koda kuom ndalo mang'eny ahinya. To gikone kata nene rachne to chwore nene oluwa motera lingling nyaka sama walose ni. (When my husband died, I got a man to inherit me very quickly. But the difficulty emerged when I had to talk to his wife as required by tradition. It was a tough discussion and eventually she declined. Afterwards she sulked and could not talk to me for a very long time. But eventually even though she did

not like it, her husband secretly inherited me and we are together until this moment that I am speaking to you). (48-year-old woman, Kamasengre West)

5.4 Impact of enculturation on sexual violence

The study sought to find out the extent to which socialization caused the sexual violence experienced by women in this community and the respondents gave various answers as presented in Figure 5.3 below. Sixty-five per cent of the respondents felt that the effect of socialization was very high. Twelve per cent felt that the impact was high, 8% felt the impact was relative while 6% reported that the impact was low. However, 9% felt that there was no link between socialization and the sexual violence that the women experienced.

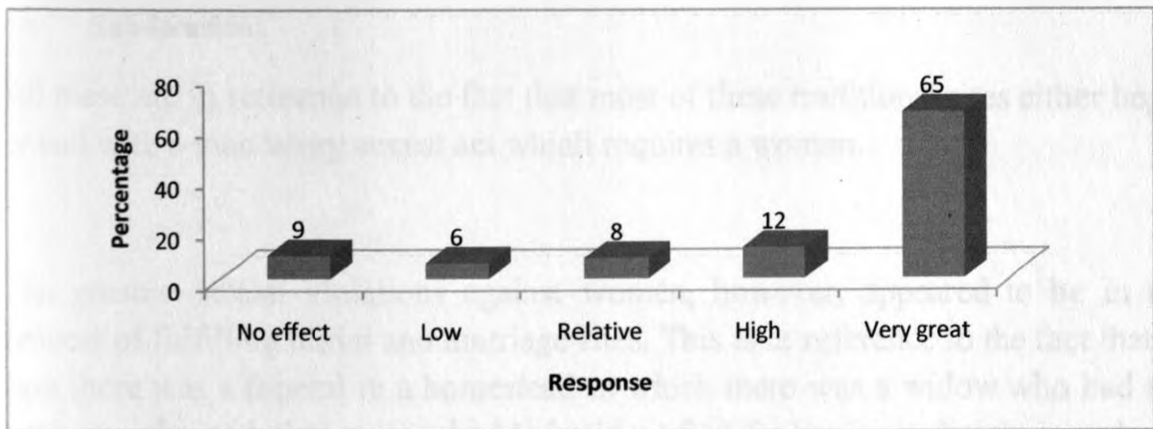


Figure 5.3: Influence of enculturation on sexual violence

The cultural beliefs and practices of the Abasuba appeared to have a great influence on the sexual violence experienced by women on Rusinga Island, as a majority (65%) of the respondents agreed that sexual violence was common to a great extent due to cultural reasons. They argued that community members subconsciously copied what they saw their parents doing as they were growing up.

The focus group discussions revealed that the women's fear of being neglected or abandoned when they became widows was also a great source of the sexual violation of women. This leads many to be unwilling participants in forced sham marriages which involve performing the sexual act in some cases even with a stranger in order to fulfill a traditional obligation. The existence of sexual violence against widows in particular in the process of fulfilling one cultural rite or the other, came out as a prominent source of sexual violence. The main reason for this is best explained by this statement by a respondent in his late fifties. According to him:

Mine e weg chik; dhako ematieko chik, itieko chike duto kuon dhako obed pur, goyo dala, duto dhako ema wuon chik. (It is the woman who is the custodian of traditions, it is the woman who completes traditions, all customs and practices are fulfilled through the woman, be it digging, building a new home, etc. In all, the woman is the custodian of tradition). (58-year-old man, Kamasengre West Sub-location)

All these are in reference to the fact that most of these traditional rites either begin or end with a mandatory sexual act which requires a woman.

The greatest sexual violations against women, however, appeared to be in the process of fulfilling burial and marriage rites. This is in reference to the fact that in case there was a funeral in a homestead in which there was a widow who had not yet been inherited, then a *jater* had to be identified for her immediately in order to fulfill the cultural practice of *ter* (wife inheritance) before the corpse could be buried. This could either be from among her in-laws or *jakowiny* (an outsider) who more often than not was a *jaboya*, a professional widow inheritor who has sex with the widow at a fee. This was, however, mainly common in cases where the dead person was the widow's father or brother-in-law. Two key informants and two survey respondents justified the relevance of such violations as follows:

Onge kaka liete ariyo nyalo bedo zi dala achiel. (There is no way one home can have two funerals). (Male, 68 years, Waware South Sub-location)

Mano liel chira omako manyaka otiek chik, odagi kata oyie. (That would mean that a curse has befallen the funeral and the widow has to be inherited whether she likes it or not). (Male, 70+ years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Chola ok ruaki gi ji ariyo edala makmana ka gin mond ng'ato achiel. (There can never be more than one widow in one home unless they are married to the same man). (Female, 90+ years, Wanyama Sub-location)

Nene wamiyo jakowiny roya ma otere (We gave a *jakowiny* a calf and he inherited her. (Male, 65+ years, Kamasengre West Sub-location)

The last one was in reference to his sister-in-law whom he could not inherit because, according to him, she had stubbornly refused to be inherited besides blocking her grown-up children from going about their business as usual due to her *chola* (sign that she was still mourning her late husband). He further explained the reason as to why this had to be done in the following words:

Jakowiny kata jowuoth nyaka ting liel eka igonyo nyithindo. (A commercial inheritor or an outsider has to 'carry the funeral' [clear all rites pertaining to it] in order to free the children). (Male, 65+ years, Kamasengre West Sub-location)

What was amazing was the fact that there were instances where it turned out that the *jater* and the widow to be inherited were incompatible for one reason or another leading to the sexual act not taking place. In such a case, the identified *jater* would announce that the act had failed to take place and a replacement would be sought immediately, who would ensure that the act was successful this time round. The elders would in this case consult and decide on who would be the suitable replacement while the widow waited inside her hut. The second *jater* once agreed upon would be sought even if it meant dragging him from his bed, and the wife had absolutely no say in this. This was emphasized by the following comments by an in-depth interviewee and a key informant, respectively:

Kotamore to ikelone yuore machielo ma idhi to ichiewo kinyiso ni 'ter otamore kowadu chung idhi itemye'. (If the act is not successful, then they bring for her another in-law who would be woken up and told that 'the sexual act has failed at

your brother's house, get up and go give it a try'). (Male, 60-year-old, Kamasengre West Sub-location)

Kater otamre to igolo jater gotieno to ikelo ng'at machielo manasechego. (If the sexual act fails to take place, then the levir is removed at night and another one is brought in immediately). (Female, 90+ years, Wanyama Sub-location)

In-depth interviews revealed that there were instances where the widow is at times given the option of identifying a *jater* herself. Though this initially sounded like a better option, it turned out to be an uphill task for the widows. Victims who have undergone such an experience and those who have witnessed it alike recounted the difficulty it entails. This they say is mainly because potential and qualified (not any man can inherit a widow as the lineage and age have to be put into consideration, and the *jater* has to be an equivalent of a brother-in-law), *joter* (inheritors) all refuse because, in the words of a 49-year-old respondent who is a teacher:

Onge ng'at ma pache long'o moyie mondo otiek kode kwer. (No one in his right mind can accept to be the one to be used for cleansing rites). (49 year old, Kaswanga Sub-location)

This in effect leaves widows, though willing to perform the inheritance act, with little or no option other than to accept whoever is offered to them.

In cases where a woman was forcefully taken away from her family by a suitor, the cultural beliefs and practices made it difficult for her to come back to her family as her suitor's people would keep vigil to ensure that sexual intercourse actually took place, a situation which makes her be considered *molil* (dirty), 'used' or 'wasted' and unable to gain acceptance back home as illustrated by the following in-depth interviewee and a key informant, respectively, who are both village elders:

Nyako kaose yua to iwacho ni oseketh ringre koro okodwogi e dala wuon nikech osekethore manyaka nyuome makata odagi kata oyie. (Once a girl has been forcefully taken by a suitor it is said that her body has been spoilt and so she cannot come back to her father's home as she is already spoilt and she

therefore has to get married whether she likes it or not). (Male, 70+ years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Ka oseter dhok to nyako chendo, chuno ni iyuyo nyako gi thuon. Gugu iyako. (Once the bride wealth has been paid and the woman is causing problems, the only alternative is to take her forcefully and ensure she stays there by all means). (Male, 60years, Kamasengre West Sub-location)

The following narration by a 69-year-old woman, illustrates the vulnerability of women in this community to physical, emotional and sexual violence which, in her case, she blames on the cultural belief that a woman has to be married come what may. Hers is a case of ‘the end justifies the means’. It further illustrates women’s total lack of voice even on issues that directly affect them:

Case 5.2: A woman physically and sexually assaulted and married forcefully

I hail from Waware village. I was barely 18 years old when one evening, my father announced that a suitor had been found for me in Tanganyika (Tanzania), and that all arrangements had been made for me to leave and meet him in two days’ time. I knew from my elder sister’s experiences that my feelings didn’t matter and that this was merely a point of information, and there was little I could do to change the situation. The only difference in my case was that I never noticed any sort of bride wealth negotiations take place before the announcement.

We finally set out for the two-day journey accompanied by two men. One was wuonwa (my father [father’s brother]) and the other turned out to be my brother-in-law to be. I was apprehensive throughout the journey and my anxiety grew worse as the rickety bus that we finally boarded seemed to finally reach its destination. We were led on foot by my brother-in-law to be, to a house after a long walk. On entering the house, I was introduced to ‘my husband’ (a burly man evidently more than twice my age) by the brother who had accompanied us. A woman appeared who was introduced as the first wife and she promptly disappeared into an inner room. No sooner had the introductions been finished, than ‘my husband’ announced that he did not like me and I should be taken back immediately as I was not sophisticated enough for him. He stood his ground and declared that we should leave immediately. I was asked to sit outside while my father and the other gentleman discussed for what appeared like eternity. Finally, my father

emerged looking furious with my luggage in his hand. We left and spent the night in a tiny lodge and left for Chula (the Island) the next morning. On arrival, my father (biological father) was furious and word spread out very fast through the village. It was in the course of expressing his anger that my father let out that he owed the suitor some money which was part of the reason I was taken to him. Not even my own mother knew that bit.

As if that was not enough, barely a fortnight after my arrival, one evening while walking in the village with my friends, I was forcefully carried away by men from Kamasengre village and taken into yet another suitor's hut. The same men kept vigil outside the hut through the night while he forcefully nindo koda (slept [had sex] with me). The next day, my sisters came and sneaked me away. Unfortunately, the men from the village got wind of it and caught up with us halfway to our village. The beating I got that day from those men I will never forget! My sisters were chased away and I was carried back into the same hut and locked up. My parents on the other hand did not bother to intervene. Soon bride wealth negotiations were conducted and I never went back to my parent's home which is a mere half an hour's walk.

My husband who had daughters my age and three other wives later died (she was the fourth wife, and her co-wives had children, some, who were older than her). My co-wives have all since passed on too. I was inherited by his cousin who died four years ago and I am the one taking care of dalani (this home) now. (69-year-old woman, Waware Sub-location).

5.5 Impact of enculturation on economic violence

The study sought to find out the extent to which socialization influences the economic violence experienced by women in this community and the respondents gave various answers as shown in Figure 5.4 below. Sixty-one per cent of the respondents felt that the effect of socialization was very high. Twenty-five per cent felt that the impact was high, 7% felt the impact was relative while 2% reported that the impact was low. However, 5% felt that socialization had no effect on the economic violence that the women experienced.

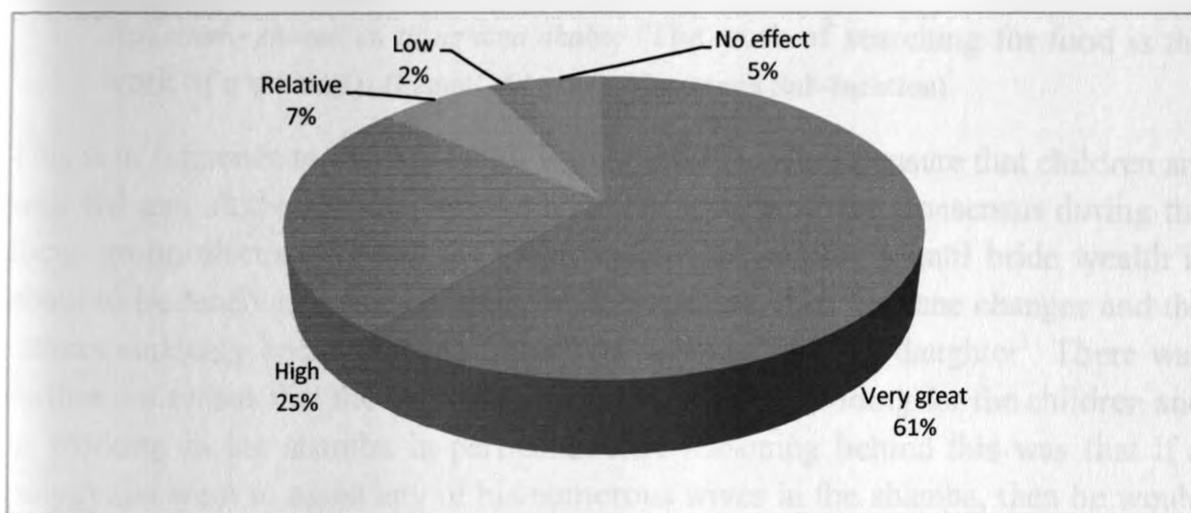


Figure 5.4: Influence of enculturation on economic violence

A majority (61%) of the respondents indicated that economic violence resulted from socialization. The most common example cited was of older women's cultural practice of refusing the younger wives to till the land. This, they explained, mainly happens if they (older women) felt that they were disrespected or in case they had had a disagreement and were purely influenced by tradition with no any other explanation. Inevitably, the 5% who argued that socialization had no impact on economic violence against women were men.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions indicated that most men in this community tend to leave the burden of running the family to the women. This is mainly with regard to ensuring that there was food on the table on a daily basis. Most respondents link this to the traditional practice among the Abasuba whereby the head of the household would sub-divide his land among his wives and every wife would be required to till the land and provide food for her family. The harvest would be determined by each woman's physical strength. It, therefore, means that if a woman was lazy, then her granary would be empty and her children would starve. This led to the need for many children per household to help in tilling the land. It is this imbedded practice of women being left to fend for the family that leads to comments such as these from both male and female respondents:

Nyathi en mar dhako. (A child belongs to the mother). (Male, 40-year-old Waware South Sub-location)

Tich dware chiemo en tij ng'ama dhako. (The work of searching for food is the work of a woman). (Female, 54 years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

This is in reference to the fact that it is the mother's duty to ensure that children are well fed and clothed as they grow up. There was, however, consensus during the focus group discussions that the child remains the mother's until bride wealth is about to be received or the child becomes a success, then the tune changes and the fathers suddenly become proud fathers of 'my son' or 'my daughter'. There was further consensus that the men were rarely involved in fending for the children and in working in the shamba in particular. The reasoning behind this was that if a polygynist went to assist any of his numerous wives in the shamba, then he would be viewed as favouring her and this would lead to conflict in the homestead. This scenario is best captured by the following statement by a 62-year-old respondent:

Kitemokonyo to ineno ni idok konchiel, to ok inyal konyo giduto. (If you try to assist, it is taken that you are favouring one side and yet you cannot help all of them). (Male, 41 years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Otherwise, the best a man could do was to instruct his children from other wives to assist a particular one with digging in case of a genuine reason such as childbirth or illness, she was unable to do or complete it on time. Most male members of the FGDs admitted to having taken part in such activities which they describe as backbreaking. The reality of this scenario is captured in this statement by a 41-year-old male respondent from Kaswanga Sub-location:

Our father insisted whenever he assigned us to dig any of our stepmother's shambas that we had to clear the entire field before we retired for the day unlike our own mother's shamba that we dug at our own pace and left for home whenever we felt tired. What was more annoying was the fact that most of our half-brothers whose mothers' shambas we worked on were much younger and were therefore not involved in the digging. Our only consolation was the amount of food, mostly 'nyoyo' kod 'nyuka mo twon' (boiled maize and beans and porridge with sugar), that would be awaiting us prepared in that particular house once we were through. (Male, 41 years, Kaswanga)

Men who are employed, assist by hiring someone to help with the digging which is considered the most difficult part of the agricultural process. This has been brought

about by the government's directive to ensure that all school-going aged children go to school. It is this culture of men sitting back while their women toil to feed the family that most men in this community have adopted without feeling any guilt. This leaves it as the duty of the women to strive hard to prove their physical strength in an effort to please their husbands and in-laws.

Research by Olungah (2006) among the Luo community in Bondo also found the perceived value of hard work among women in the Luo community. The Luo are numerically and culturally a superior community who neighbour the Abasuba. As a result of this, the Abasuba have basically been assimilated by the Luo and, therefore, their cultures are fairly similar according to him:

The socialization process in the community instills in women virtues of hard work and teaches women to be servants. It is common to find a woman who instead of worrying about her pregnancy and labour, is more concerned with her other children and the welfare of her home, garden, husband and livestock...the cultural requirement and the need for a woman to show her strength and might impose a certain burden on the female shoulders in the Luo community and they end up being too exhausted (Olungah 2006:106).

In conclusion we can say that enculturation greatly impacted negatively on the violence that women in this community suffer. This makes the perpetrators oblivious of the emotional impact of their actions on their victims, and the victims, on the other hand, being equally oblivious of the fact that there is an infringement on their rights, hence their reluctance to seek retribution against perpetrators.

CHAPTER SIX

EFFECT OF WOMEN'S BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss women's beliefs and perceptions in relation to violence against women in this community. The chapter gives a clear insight into how deeply rooted the problem is and how the beliefs and perceptions make it difficult to end this vice.

6.2 Women's perceptions of physical violence

Results depicted in Figure 6.1 below reveal that 37.5% of the respondents felt that the physical violence women experience in this community is normal, 45.8% were resigned to fate, while 16.7 % saw need for change.

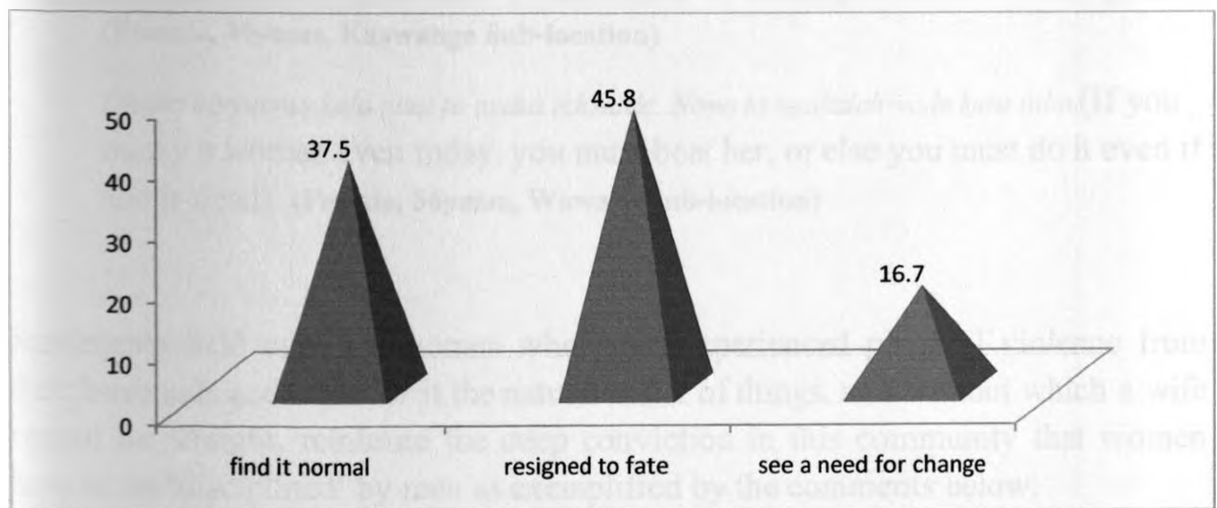


Figure 6.1 Respondents' perceptions of physical violence

Over one third (37.5%) of the respondents who felt that women find it normal argued that the perception was as a result of most women pretending that nothing had happened to them and sought no intervention even when it was obvious to everyone that they had been or are being physically abused. Some of those who argued that women felt a need for change, however, argued that most women who

are victims of abuse have no idea how to go about bringing this change, or are simply too shy to let people in on their abusive relationships. There were, however, a few reported cases of physical violence to the village elders, area chiefs and the police, an indication that some women desire change. The only set-back, however, is that little has been done in terms of retribution to the perpetrators of these cases. Nearly half of the respondents view the female victims of physical violence as totally resigned to fate. They, therefore, argue that the women accept what they are going through as part of life and thus live through their painful experiences silently.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed that many women in this community are socialized to believe that wife beating is necessary in order to maintain peace in a home. This was brought out clearly by views held by female respondents themselves as illustrated below:

Del nyaka donje eka kwe betie. (There must be beating in order to have peace).
(Female, 49years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Dhako kinyuomo kata sani to nyaka ichwade. Nono to nyakaichwade kata otho.(If you marry a woman even today, you must beat her, or else you must do it even if she is dead). (Female, 56years, Waware Sub-location)

Sentiments held even by women who have experienced physical violence from their husbands and consider it the natural order of things, and without which a wife cannot be straight, reinforce the deep conviction in this community that women have to be 'disciplined' by men as exemplified by the comments below:

Wan nene iketowa to wanindo piny gi iwa kitimo kosa, kata ka nyathini okoso, kata udhao ekindu to ichwado u gikedede esiandau uduto to kayuocheu rango. Sechemoko nene ichwadowa kata makosa en mar ng'atuchiel. Emaomiyo kwe nitie edalani kata wuongo ong'e. (We [wives] would be made to lie on the ground on our stomach if you made a mistake, or your child made a mistake or we quarrelled among ourselves and you would all be spanked while your in-laws watched. Sometimes we would all be beaten even though only one of us made a

mistake. That is why there is so much discipline in this homestead even though the owner is not around [dead]). (Female, 69years, Waware Sub-location)

She further makes it clear below that despite the beatings she endured as a young bride along with her co-wives, she harbors no ill feelings towards her late husband:

Ong'e gima amako nichwora kuom kede manene omiyowa nikech dhako chalo nyathi nichwore. An podi kata sani ayiegi gima nene otimo nikech mondene moko nene kata nyithinda madongo okwongo nigi. Gino nene omiyo dalaka nene nitie kwe kata wuongo nene budho oko kamano gi ng'enywano. Aseneno koko gidhao mang'eny e dala doho masani to mago duto timore mana nikech dichuo ok ochung' matek. (I harbour neither bitterness nor grudges against my late husband, because a wife is like a child to a husband. I still agree with his approach to discipline given that some of my co-wives were even younger than some of my older children. This form of disciplining by my husband ensured that his homestead was peaceful by and large despite his long absence and the many wives and children. I have witnessed a lot of quarrelling and fighting in many polygynous homes today that are a result of weakness of the man). (Female, 69years, Waware Sub-location)

When prompted further, she explained that what she means by weakness in this case is the fact that these men do not properly discipline their wives through beating and that is part of the reason the latter are unmanageable.

6.3 Women's perception of emotional violence

Results in Figure 6.2 below reveal that 43% of the respondents feel that women are resigned to fate as far as the emotional violence they experience is concerned. Whereas 18% consider their experiences as normal, 16% of the respondents see a need for change. Thirteen per cent, on the other hand, felt that women deserve what they are going through, while 10% did not respond to this question.

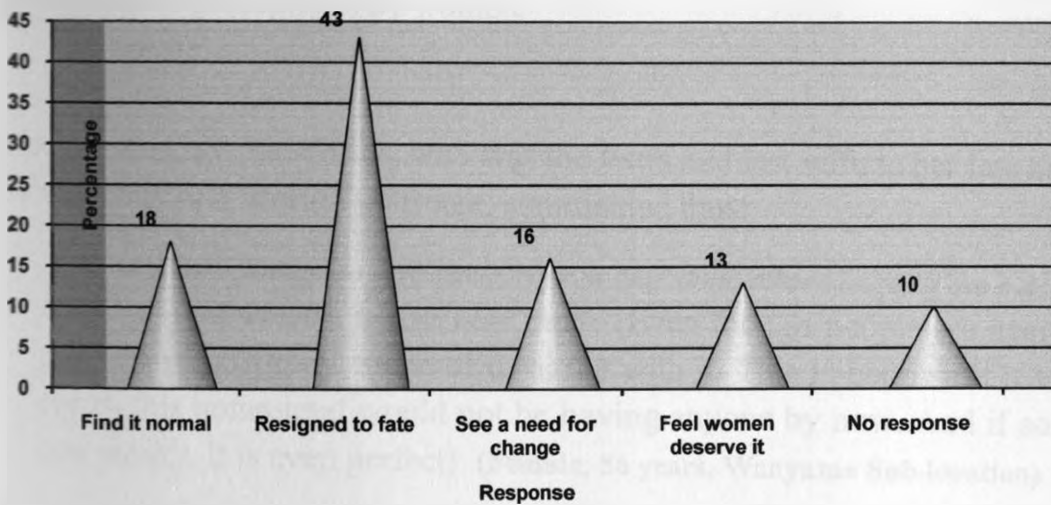


Figure 6.2: Respondents' perceptions of emotional violence

Whereas nearly two fifths(43%) of the survey respondents felt that most victims of emotional violence have resigned to fate, the focus group discussants were unanimous that emotional violence was a hidden problem and put the number of victims close to 100% of all married women. This, they argued, was due to their own personal experiences and the fact that unlike physical violence that is usually evident for all to see and 'hear' as it happens, emotional violence in most cases requires confession or revelation by the victims, which is rare.

6.4 Women's perceptions of the practice of polygyny and widow inheritance and their role in emotional violence

Survey and in-depth interview respondents, key informants as well as narrators portrayed both the practices of polygyny and wife inheritance as major sources of emotional turmoil for women in this community. However, despite all the bitter complaints of their emotional tribulations in polygynous marriages, and their suffering in the course of forced wife inheritance, a few women seemed to be quite happy and full of praise for the two cultural practices without which, they argued,

women would be worse off. Some of the views captured below clearly illustrate these beliefs and perceptions by women.

A respondent in her mid-fifties, who was the tenth and last wife to her late husband and is currently in a levirate marriage, commented thus:

Dohowani kata jiodage to wayiekode. Nikech ong' doho dikoro onge ng'ato e dalani. To kang'ato nikod mwandu to koro ober chuth. (Even though people are against the practice of polygyny, some of us agree with it. This is because if it was not for it, this homestead would not be having anyone by now. And if someone has wealth, it is even perfect). (Female, 56 years, Wanyama Sub-location)

In her case, it is safe to say that given the fact that she was the last wife to a reasonably wealthy man by local standards, considering that he has left behind several buildings at the main trading centre, she has little to complain about unlike several other respondents who reported that they were tormented through the practice of polygyny.

A key informant who is the first of two wives and widowed for seven years also feels that the practice of polygyny though not a perfect form of marriage, should be encouraged,⁹ and she gives her reasons below:

Kata kadala man gidoho nyaka iwinj anyany godhiambo kodhiambo, doho berne en ni kang'ato otho to iyudo ng'atma ilosokodo, kata idong kodo. (Even though in polygynous homesteads you must hear insults every evening, it has an advantage in that in case someone [the husband] dies, you can have someone to talk to or to remain with). (Female, 68years, Wanyama Sub-location)

This survey respondent who is the first of two wives, a situation she blames on her inability to give her husband a child, on the other hand, blames the practice of polygyny for what she refers to as *lweny mosiko* (perpetual war) in her home:

Ijamakosa sechete kata nyawadu ema okwinyi. (You are always the one to be blamed even when you are the one who has been attacked [by the co-wife]).
(Female, 36years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Just like the men, many women in the study did not seem to have a problem with the practice of widow inheritance. This was, however, mainly the case with those women who had experienced widowhood across the age divide and those who were in polygynous marriages. The comments below clearly capture, the women's perceptions of the common practice:

Ter osekonyo mond liete gikiye mang'eny e gweng' ma ka bed ni ok ter to dikoro ok gin dhano mikwano. (The practice of widow inheritance has helped a lot of widows and orphans in this village, such that if it was not for the practice, they would not be 'people who can be counted'). (Female, 37years, Waware Sub-location)

Jomasani mang'eny wuondore ni ok gidwar ter to bang' ndalo matin to iwinjo ni ng'ane kata ng'ane ineno kaluro kawuok e ode gokinyi mang'ich. To kinono maber to iyudo ni en chwor ng'ato, kata mbas nyathin,e kata ng'at ma gichik oluongo ni wuode. Koro mano gi ter moriere, ere maber? (Most people today pretend that they do not want to be inherited, but after a short time, you hear that so and so or so and so is seen sneaking out of her house early in the morning. And when you investigate properly, you find that it is someone's husband, or someone young enough or who qualifies [traditionally] to be her son. Now that compared to a 'straight' inheritance, which is better?). (Female, 42 years, Wanyama Sub-location)

The following statement (tongue lashing) from a female key informant widowed at the age of 35, and currently in a levirate marriage was in response to a question on her views on the practice of widow inheritance:

Unjomatindo ka ok udwar nichwou oter to udwaro ni mond liete otimre nade? Udwaro nigiba kagifwero twoche? To in sani kapo ni chwori odho sani kaka aneni nipodi itin to irwako pete, idwaro wacho ni ibiro dak kendi? Temye! (If you young people don't want your husbands to inherit widows, what do you want them to do? Do

you want them to roam around as they search for diseases? If your husband dies now as I can see you are still young and you are wearing a wedding ring, do you want to tell me that you will live alone [without a man]? Just try!). (Female, 57years, Kamasengre Sub-location)

Some women, despite having no objection to either the practice of polygyny or that of wife inheritance, however, had some reservations about them. Their only problem with these two set-ups seemed to emanate from the fear of contracting HIV/AIDS. This scenario is best exemplified by the experiences of the following two narrators as illustrated below.

The first narrator in her late sixties, is full of praise for both the practice of polygyny and levirate marriages but for one 'small' problem, as she terms it, while the second one who has no qualms being a third wife, only dreads her co-wife's infidelity.

A woman widowed, later inherited and now HIV positive

An nene atedo e dala mar doho to nene wang'eny makata ichandori to okine nikech ok in kendi. Ng'enywa no nene okonyo kanene wuon pacho onindo, nikech nene iyudo joma konyi yuak. To bang'e kanene ayudo yuora motera to nene opuonjona nyithindo ma ogolona dala morita maber. Kuom hawi marach kanyocha nyasaye oome nyaka chiliel manene otero machiegni to abende achako tuora, ekanene ayudoka an gituo maduong' gihikagi. (I got married into a polygynous home and we were many such that even if you had problems you did not realize because you were not alone in it. Our big number came in handy when the 'owner of the home' [husband] 'slept' [died] because you found people to help you mourn. Afterwards, when I found an in-law to inherit me, he educated my children and he even built for me a home and took good care of me. Unfortunately, when recently 'God called him' [died] including one of the widows he had recently inherited [the widow also died] and I also started ailing, is when I found that I had the 'big disease' [AIDS] in my advanced age). (Female, 53years, Waware Sub-location)

A woman in a polygynous marriage living in constant fear of HIV

An dhako mar adek to wuon pacho nioko gidhako matin. Dhako maduong' nene osetho kata ka pok abiro edalani. Pek ma aneno eidakwa mar dohoni en mana ni nyieka mawangoni ok omako kanisa matek to be okoritore maber, yani obayoegweng'ka. To ode ema wuonpacho kwongoe pile kodonjo edalaka. Koro mano awinjo kamiya lworo mang'eny ni dipoka okelonwa two maduong' edalaka. Wuonpacho to kitemo nyiso toparomana ni ok idwar nyawadu. An tinde alemalema ninyasaye owarae e twono. (I am the third wife and the owner of this homestead is 'outside' [away] with the youngest wife. The first wife died even before I came to this homestead. The difficulty I see in this polygynous set-up is that my co-wife whom I am left with here is not strong in church and also 'is not taking care of herself' meaning that she is moving around [with other men] in the village. And it is her house that he always enters [sleeps in] first when he visits this home. Now this gives me a lot of fear that she might bring the 'big disease' in this homestead. As for the owner of the homestead, if you try to tell him, he just thinks you are jealous of your co-wife. Nowadays I just pray that God may save me from contracting that disease). (Female, 48years, Waware Sub-location)

The above accounts clearly demonstrate the deep fear and emotional turmoil that many women in this kind of set-up live with, knowing very well that they are continuously being exposed to diseases including HIV/AIDS and yet lack control of their situation. They also clearly demonstrate the fact that in spite of all that, the beliefs and perceptions of women in this community greatly contribute to the violence metted against them, a situation that can be attributed to their socialization.

6.5 Women's perceptions of sexual violence

Results presented in Figure 6.3 below reveal that just like emotional violence, nearly a half (46%) of the respondents feel that women are resigned to fate as far as the sexual violence they experience is concerned. This could be an indication that sexual and emotional violence are related in one way or another. Whereas 30% consider their experiences as normal, sixteen per cent of the respondents see a need

for change. Seven per cent, on the other hand, felt that women deserve what they are going through.

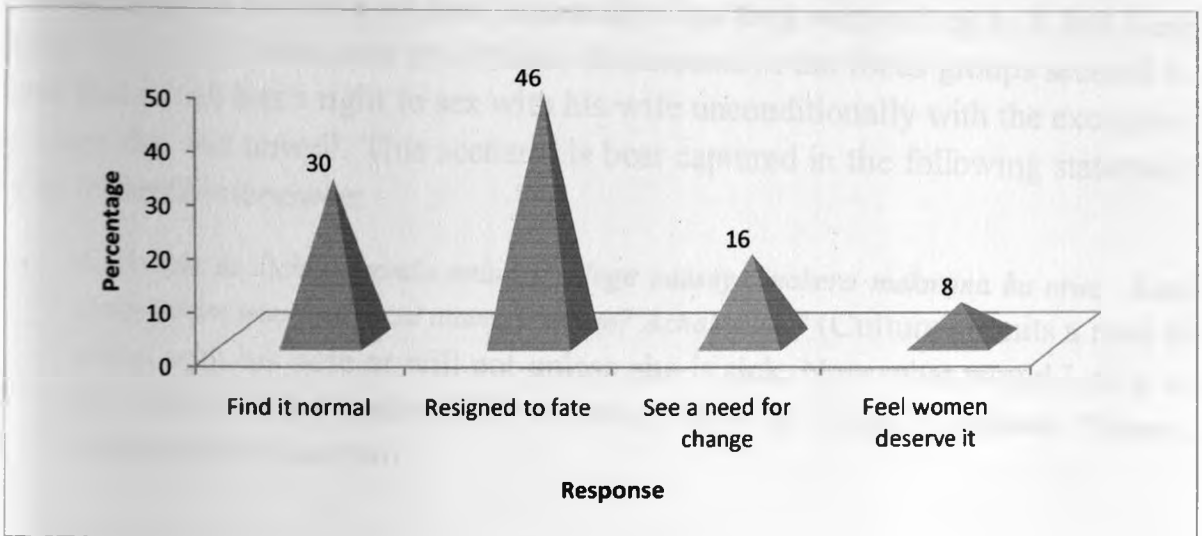


Figure 6.3: Respondents' perceptions of sexual violence

The study revealed an ingrained belief and practice by even the women themselves in this community that women have no alternative but a duty to comply and conform to tradition. The respondents (7%) who felt that the women deserve the sexual violence meted upon them were mainly arguing from the perspective of wife inheritance. They reasoned that women are clearly aware that it is the tradition in the community that a widow must be inherited upon her husband's demise, and yet some stubbornly attempt to fight tradition. They therefore feel that the women bring the problems upon themselves as illustrated by this in-depth interviewee's comment:

In kaka ng'ama dhako kaiseng'eyo ni iruako chola to itamori ter nang'o? Mano nyaka chuni gikone kidwaro tiek chik. (You as a woman, once you have known that you are wearing *chola* [a sign that you are a widow still in mourning], why do you refuse to be inherited? That means that you must be forced eventually when there will be need to observe tradition). (Female, 47years, Kamasengre Sub-location)

The most common forms of sexual violence cited were forced sex by a suitor which led to forced marriages and forced sex with a *jater* mainly during the funerals of in-laws. Marital rape sounded foreign although many women attested to being made to have sex by their husbands when they were not up to it, but were unable to say no. Both male and female discussants in the focus groups seemed to agree that a man has a right to sex with his wife unconditionally with the exception of when she was unwell. This scenario is best captured in the following statement by an in-depth interviewee:

Chik oyie ni dichuo mondo onind gichiege saasaya mohero makmana ka otwo. Koro tiang' akoni wuon pacho ni atamora nango? Achakonade? (Culture permits a man to sleep with his wife at will not unless she is sick. Now what would I give as an excuse to my husband for refusing? How do I start?). (Female, 38years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Many respondents who are victims of sexual violence, some of them in their sunset years, remembered the events with a lot of bitterness. Others appeared resigned to fate giving the impression that things could never have worked out any differently, and that those involved were only doing what had to be done as per tradition. Others still had no issues at all despite having been subjected to forced sex in the course of forced marriages that bound them by tradition not to escape. These views are clearly illustrated by the narrations and comments below, in which respondents and narrators hold contrasting views on their experiences and speak of the incidents that took place many years ago as if it were yesterday.

In the following narration, the narrator appears to be still struggling to come to terms with what happened to her so many years later in a case of forced marriage but whose traditional seal is forced sex, after which there is no turning back for the victim.

Case 6.1: A woman forcefully carried away into marriage

*I knew that man [her late husband] was interested in me for some time, but what he did to me left me in shock and I don't quite think I have recovered even today. I had been sent to the market at Mbita as it was a market day. I usually went with my cousins, but on this particular day I was all by myself. I saw him seated with his friends on my way to the market. On my way back, he was not present, but I noticed that his friends were exactly where I had left them. This did not surprise me as it was common for young men to idle at the market place on market days. *Wung' chieng' ne osechakopodho*. (The sun was fast setting) and I walked briskly with a basket *kodiedo* (balancing) on my head as I went past them.*

Suddenly, my basket was grabbed from behind and several hands lifted me onto a bicycle. Before I knew it, I was sandwiched between the rider and someone else seated behind me and we were riding away at a very fast speed. My attempts to scream were muzzled by a tight hand held against my mouth. We went past my own home which is not so far from Mbita. Their evil plan was assisted by the darkness which soon engulfed us.

*Our very long journey ended up at his father's homestead. We found him waiting outside his *samba* (bachelor's hut) into which he entered upon seeing us. I was taken straight there in full view of his parents and other older people yet no one bothered to intervene. The door was immediately bolted from outside. The room was a bit dark. Food was soon brought which I refused to touch while he ate heartily while all along I sat hoping that my brothers will get wind of what had happened and come to rescue me as I had seen it happen to other young women.*

*Before I knew it, he had grabbed me and shoved me on the bed and he was 'sleeping' with me and when he was through, he signalled to his cousins who were waiting outside all along and the door was opened. *Nene en lil moriwore gi wichkuot to koro eka law miloko bende iongogo* (It was a mixture of dirt and embarrassment given that you do not even have a change of clothes). I, however, knew that as was the practice, it was too late (not time wise) now for me to go back to my parents' home. Technically, he was now my husband because *waseriwo pien* (we had shared bedding) with him. Even though my brother came fuming with my other male cousins the next morning, they knew as well as everyone else in that homestead that I could not go back with them and bride wealth had to be collected because *ringra osekethe* (my body was now already spoilt (meaning that she had lost her virginity)). Bride wealth was soon afterwards paid to my parents. A total of 12 cows as was the *chik* (tradition) in those days. But we lived *maber* (alright) after I had settled in, my main problem*

being his decision to add several wives after that although they now keep me company in his absence. That is how I ended up in this gweng' (village) until I am now a widow. (Nyachula, 62years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

When I asked her whether she had the courage to face people soon after the incident, her response after a lengthy silence and an equally long sigh was:

Weche iweyo! (Some matters must be left to rest!)

I needed to get a clearer insight into her perceptions as far as her experience was concerned, and our interview went on as follows:

Interviewer: *Do you think what happened to you was a violation of your rights?*

Interviewee: *Even though I am aware that what was done to me was wrong, there was nothing I or anyone else could do about it, because after riwo pien (sharing bedding) no other man could accept you.*

Interviewer: *Do such marriages still take place? And if so, would you allow your daughter to be married in such a manner?*

Interviewee: *They are rare nowadays, but I still see fathers using their daughters to get out of debt, or marrying them off to wealthy men to get school fees for their sons. But if someone oyuaa ('pulled' [meaning forcefully married]) my daughter, I would not intervene, provided she has come of age, because we have many cases of young girls embarrassing their families by nyuol e dala (giving birth while still living with their parents).*

The above narrator had been widowed for the last four years (since 2007) and says she dreads a situation which she however foresees, in which she will be required to get a *jater* (levir) to inherit her, as she has no such plans. Her situation is, however, complicated by the fact that she was the first wife among three, and the other two co-wives have not only expressed interest in being inherited, but have already identified their levirs. However, she explains that she is fully aware that as per tradition, the two cannot go ahead with their plans of being inherited unless she leads the way (being the first wife). Of interest to note is the fact that she still refers to her late husband of over forty years as *jagono* ('that man!'). This clearly suggests lack of closeness despite the many years of marriage.

The above account further reveals the fact that the beliefs and perceptions of the community are so ingrained that although women may acknowledge the existence of some 'sort of violation' of their rights, they perceive these violations as the natural order of things given their socialization, for which little or nothing can be done about.

The following narrator has a much clearer and different view and perceptions from the above one on what is considered violence. Despite her difficult experience in an attempt to live up to tradition, she seems to be struggling to find fault with the experience she underwent. Her socialization and beliefs make it difficult for her to blame anyone despite what she went through. She briefly narrated her experience as follows:

Case 6.2: A woman who struggled to get an inheritor

Kanene chuora otho to nene ang'eyo ni nyaka tera nikech aaechulaka to chikewa chal. Yuora nene otamore tera kowachoni en jachristo. Gimane obwoga enni kanene kwarwa otho, to yuora achielno emanene ochulo jaboya ma obet kodiyo ite eikor ot gijowetene mondo owinj kabende gimoro otimore mondo gidhi gi land niweche koro beyo mondo okuny bur. Nene ok akecho, to gimanene omako dhoga nene en tim yuorano. (When my husband died, I knew that I had to be inherited as per tradition as I also come from this Island and the traditions are the same. But my only brother-in-law refused professing Christianity. It therefore came to me as a surprise when my father-in-law died and the same brother-in-law paid a *jaboya* and was among the in-laws with their ears tight against the wall waiting to confirm if the sexual act had actually taken place before they could declare the situation fit for the *bur* (hole [meaning grave]) to be dug. I was not angry. The only thing which puzzled me was the position my brother-in-law took). (Female, 44years Kamasengre Sub-location)

The following survey respondent who is barely in her twenties and already has an even younger co-wife who lives in town with their husband, on the other hand, has witnessed widows suffer not necessarily for refusing to be inherited, but for lack of in-laws willing to take up their role. She hails from the Island, is a mother of two

toddlers and was heavily pregnant during the interview. She has no problems with the practice of widow inheritance, but only decries the lack of *joter* from among the in-laws as the case should be and hopes, she will not suffer a similar fate should she be widowed.

Kayuochi ema ringi! To gikone gin ema gikeloni jakowiny, maginyiew kong'o ma ng'ato bedo kaging'iyō nigimoro otimore. Gima dakagomb ni otimorena to aseneno mang'eny makamano eigweng' ka. (It is your in-laws who desert you! And eventually they are the very same ones who bring for you an 'outsider', buy the drinks and place someone to watch and ensure that 'something' [sexual intercourse] has taken place. This is something that I would not wish to happen to me should I be widowed but I have witnessed a lot of similar cases in this village).
(Auma, 26years, Wanyama Sub-location)

A widow in her fifties narrated her difficulty in finding a levir when her husband passed on as follows.

An nene loso gi jater otama nikech luoro, to kayuocha ma dotera bende nene nioko, to joma odong' ma mbese wuonpacho gichik nene aluongo ni nyithinda. Ma adwaro mana ng'ato ema olosona gi jater. Ok en gima yot kaka ipare no! (For me talking to a levir was difficult because of shyness and my in-laws who could have inherited me were outside [abroad]. The remaining in-laws who were my late husband's age-mates traditionally only qualified as my sons. I, therefore, spoke to someone to approach for me a man to inherit me. It is not as easy as it is thought to be!). (Female, 50+years, Waware Sub-location)

The above three accounts clearly bring out the beliefs and perceptions of women in this community on issues that constitute sexual violations against women. Whereas some respondents and narrators decry the practice of wife inheritance as a source of torment and suffering, others embrace the practice and see nothing wrong with it, despite clear evidence that the same community (the men in particular) that demands that the cultural practices be fulfilled, is not prepared to help them live up to the cultural expectations.

6.6 Women's perceptions of economic violence

Results presented in Figure 6.4 below reveal that 54% of the respondents feel that women are resigned to fate as far as the economic violence they experience is concerned. Whereas 26% consider their experiences as normal, 16% see a need for change similar to responses to sexual violence. A mere 3%, on the other hand, felt that women deserve the economic hardships that they experience.

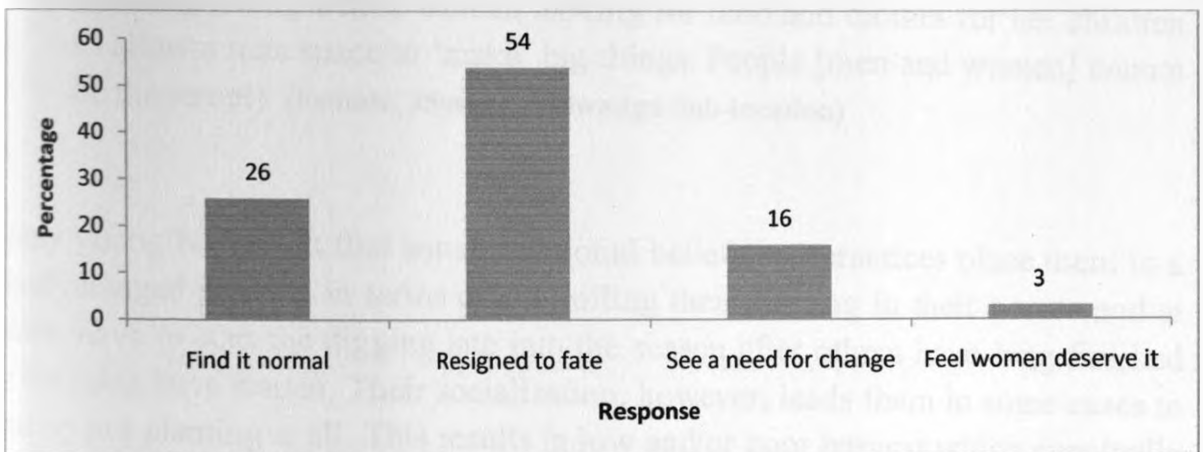


Figure 6.4: Respondents' perceptions of economic violence

A majority of women perceive the men's attitude of leaving the burden of raising the family entirely to them as violence against women. They, however, argue that they cannot also abandon their children in competition with the men. Respondents in the survey and focus group discussants also concurred with this position despite most male discussants disagreeing with the group terming it as violence against women. To them, it is just something wrong that happens but does not qualify as *sand malit* (violence). This line of argument is best captured by this statement by a respondent:

Okadagi ni mond gweng'ka mang'eny nigipek mar pidho nyithindo kendgi to chwogi podi ng'ima, to lakini mano okwanyal lwongoni sand malit! (I agree that most women in this village have a heavy burden of fending for their children alone yet their husbands are still alive, but we cannot call that violence!). (Male, 42years, Kamasengre Sub-location)

The above position was also supported by some female discussants during the focus groups, who felt strongly that the gender roles are well cut out, and it is proper for a woman to fend for the family in terms of food and clothing, while the husband takes care of 'big projects'. This line of thought is clearly illustrated by this comment by an in-depth interviewee:

An ok ane gimarach ka ng'ama dhako dwaro chiemo gi law ni nyithindo mondo oweni dichuo kinde oloskodo gik madongodongo. Ji ok nyal romre! (Me I do not see anything wrong with a woman looking for food and clothes for her children to allow a man space to 'make' big things. People [men and women] cannot be the same!). (Female, 35years, Kaswanga Sub-location)

Many young brides felt that some traditional beliefs and practices place them in a disadvantaged position in terms of controlling their farming in their homes and at times, have to start the digging late into the season after others have long finished or the rains have started. Their socialization, however, leads them in some cases to end up not planting at all. This results in low and/or poor harvest which eventually translates into increased poverty in the home. This is because, in such cases, the affected women are unable to survive with the harvest till the next season which unfortunately is a year later as planting is done only once on the Island due to poor rains.

This situation is blamed on either the first wife having differences with her co-wives and is therefore out to punish them, or mothers-in-law delaying the season for various reasons. These reasons came out as either a misunderstanding between the younger wives and the first one in cases of polygynous families, or a mother-in-law who is widowed and is yet to find a *jater* with whom she can open the season. Another reason is if *wuonpacho* (the head of the home) is away and has delayed in coming to 'open' the harvest season. This is because 'opening' involves having sexual intercourse with him. The interesting thing is that the first wife also ends up suffering similar consequences as her co-wives of starvation should she deliberately refuse to 'open' the season on time. It was, however, explained that in

most cases, she is either childless, or her children are grown up and independent. This situation is exemplified in a key informant's comments below:

Dhako maduong' emagolo pur edalu to kamon matindo ochuanye ma otamore golo pur to ginindo kech nyaka nyithigi gi mondlegi. Ka en ng'atma podio dak e dala wuongi to dayo emagolo pur to jomokoluo. (It is the first wife who opens the farming season, in case she disagrees with her co-wives and she refuses to open the season, then they all stay hungry including their sons and wives in that season, in case it is a man who still lives in his father's homestead, then it is his mother who opens the season and then the rest follow. (Female, 45years Waware Sub-location)

The impact of this situation is further captured by a comment by the following respondent in an in-depth interview:

Dawa nene osanda ahinya kanene podi awendo edalani. Saa a saya manene wachwanyore kode to otamore yawo pur machuno mar kwarwa biro eka ochak pur. (My mother-in-law really frustrated me when I was still a visitor in this home. Every time we disagreed she would refuse to 'open' the digging season. It would force my father-in-law to travel home and force her in order for her to start the digging). (Female, 42years, Kamasengre Sub-location)

Although in this particular case the mother-in-law invoked tradition in order to punish her supposedly stubborn daughter-in-law, traditionally, the father-in-law had to be awaited in order for the season to be 'opened'.

The above accounts clearly indicate that the women's perceptions and beliefs contribute to the perpetuation of economic violence against women in this community. Women's socialization, on the other hand, allows the violations against them to persist and to go unchallenged. This is brought out clearly by the fact that it is not just enough that the beliefs and practices that violate women's rights already exist, but the fact that it is women who, through their beliefs, use the existing laws to economically frustrate fellow women as demonstrated above.

What is worse is the fact that, more often than not, the affected parties are usually women who are closely related to them including daughters-in-law.

As far as physical, emotional and sexual violence are concerned, it has also been clearly demonstrated that the women's beliefs and perceptions, coupled with their socialization, ensure that the vices persist and to go unchallenged, a situation that requires external interventions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The objectives of this study were to determine the forms of violence against women on Rusinga Island, to investigate the relationship between this violence and enculturation and to establish the beliefs and perceptions of women regarding the presumed harmful practices that perpetuate violence against women. This section, therefore, summarizes the research findings and draws conclusions in relation to the above objectives.

7.2 Summary

7.2.1 Physical violence

The research findings reveal that physical violence exists to a great extent in this community, and that it is greatly fuelled by cultural beliefs and practices and the gender imbalance that exists in the community. The mindset of most people and the older generation in particular, is that a woman is like a child to her husband, and should therefore not be heard. Women are viewed as subordinate to men and hence beating was the common way of instilling discipline in them, a tradition which, they argue, started with their forefathers. It is, therefore, considered normal and it is acceptable to subject a woman to physical beating if she errs. The physical beating is, however, not limited to a husband alone as his father and brothers too are also at liberty to 'discipline' a woman who has erred.

Traditional beliefs such as the claim that the spirits of a woman would come back to haunt the husband if she died before he had at least slapped her, had a lot of influence on wife beating and physical violence against women in general. The belief is that if a man never at least slapped his wife while she was alive, then he must do it in death in order to avoid being haunted by her spirit. In addition, the belief that a man who does not beat his wife occasionally does not love her, has a lot of influence on the physical violence experienced by women in this community. This, therefore, calls for an occasional slapping on flimsy reasons in order to show that a husband loves his wife. It was, however, emphasized that traditionally the beating would not lead to maiming and grievous bodily harm as is evidenced today.

Women in this community, on the other hand, are socialized to believe that wife beating is necessary in order to maintain peace in the home. Sentiments held even by the women, including those who have experienced physical violence from their husbands, indicate that they consider physical violence against women as the natural order of things, and without which a wife cannot be 'straight'. Such sentiments reinforce the deep conviction in this community that women have to be 'disciplined' by men as illustrated in case 4.1 in chapter four. There are, however, a few reported cases of physical violence to the village elders, area chiefs and the police, an indication that women desire change. The set-back for victims who made an attempt to report cases of violence, however, was that little was done in terms of retribution.

7.2.2 Emotional violence

Emotional violence against women in this community is partly fuelled by men's lack of respect towards women due to their upbringing (men), during which they are taught that women are there to serve but not to be reasoned with. Women are not accorded the respect they deserve. This closely relates to the patriarchal nature of this society, and a clear case of gender power imbalance, where the male figure is dominant and the female one subordinate, a position unfortunately widely held by even the female members of the community.

The most common forms of emotional violence reported were humiliation, infidelity, threats of being sent back home and traditional practices surrounding burial rites. The traditional belief that a man who has one wife does not talk where men are seated (as he is not considered man enough), has a lot of influence on the current practice of polygyny in this community, which emerged as one of the greatest sources of psychological torture for most female respondents. The practice was reported to be very common even among young men aged 30-40 years. It seemed to constitute one of the highest forms of psychological torture for women across the age divide.

Most female respondents who were in polygynous marriages commented bitterly on the torment that they have to undergo when their husbands take in new wives. This is as a result of the manner in which polygyny is practised today, which entails open infidelity leading to polygynous marriages. In this case, men simply bring other women home and casually introduce them to their wife/wives as co-wives. This proved to be a great source of emotional turmoil for women living in

such relationships. A majority of the victims of this type of violence talked of 'combining tears and prayers till they fell asleep'. The reason behind this is mainly because it is currently a common practice for both women to sleep in the same single-roomed hut with one of them using a mattress on the floor, and the other on the bed with the husband. This, coupled with the constant bickering and infighting among co-wives in polygynous homes, was described variously by victims but summarized as simply disheartening and emotionally draining.

A clash between cultural beliefs and practices and modernity leads to great emotional violence. This is because women are required to fulfill certain traditional rituals and obligations that involve men, yet the very same men who demand that the rituals be performed, are not prepared to play their part as required by tradition. Cases now abound whereby, whereas widows are required to be inherited within the traditionally stipulated period in order to be fully accepted back into the community and to be allowed to go about their business freely, the brothers-in-law are not willing to inherit them. This is due to what locals refer to variously as modernity, awareness on HIV/AIDS and as *mon mosomo* (women who have gone to school). Thus, many widows are finding themselves cornered as the very same in-laws refuse to inherit them and instead bring them strangers as described in case 6.2 in chapter six.

Closely related to this is the practice of widows being required to get a leviron a very short notice, failure to which one is found for them. This was also reported as a great source of emotional torture by most women, including those who had merely witnessed but not experienced it. This mainly happened in cases where there was a funeral in a home in which there was a widow who had not yet been inherited.

7.2.3 Sexual violence

Women's fear of being neglected or abandoned when they become widows was cited as a great source of the psychological and sexual violation of women. This leads many to be unwilling participants in forced sham marriages that are traditionally qualified as *ter* (wife inheritance). The difficulty emanates from the fact that inheritance in this case involves widows being made to have sex sometimes against their will with either a known relative (who qualifies traditionally as her brother-in-law), or a *jakowiny* (an outsider), who more often than not was a *jaboya* who is a professional widow inheritor and does it (has sex with the widow) at a fee, in order to fulfill a cultural rite. This is usually done on the night of the wake, failure to which the grave digging (done the night before the burial) cannot take place. The worst part of this scenario is that in some cases it leads to rape in case the widow resists, as was the case for Nyakakrigu (case 4.5 in chapter four).

What was shocking, and a greater sexual violation, however, was the fact that in instances where it turned out that the *jater* (levir) and the widow to be inherited were sexually incompatible for one reason or another, leading to the sexual act not taking place, the *jater* announces that the act has failed to take place and a replacement is sought immediately. The replacement has the difficult task of ensuring that the act is successful this time round. The elders in this case consult and decide on who would be a suitable replacement while the widow waits inside her hut. The second *jater* once agreed upon is sought even if it means dragging him from his bed, and neither him nor his wife has any say in this.

The practices around burial rites, however, came out as a double-edged sword for women because the burial rituals are not limited to burials or deaths in her matrimonial home, but also in her parents' home. This means that a widow with *chola* (mourning sign) is not allowed to attend burials or even visit her parents' or siblings' homes. Given the importance accorded to funerals in this community, the thought of missing a funeral of a parent or a sibling, ensures that women comply with any conditions placed upon them in order to remove the *chola*. Most widows emphasized the fact that it makes little difference in terms of emotional turmoil and the deep embarrassment caused, whether the levir is sought for them, or whether they approached one themselves under such circumstances. This is because of the fact that everyone in the village, including one's own children, is aware of the goings-on in the hut surrounded by clan elders with their ears held tight against the wall to ensure that the *ter* has taken place as is often the case, when it is an 'emergency' wife inheritance.

Despite the above findings, the term rape does not exist in this community, This situation rendered the discussion of marital rape a taboo topic. It was wished away as an impossibility, since the husband has absolute rights to have sex with his wife unless she is sick while the wife, on her part, has no right to deny her husband sex unless she is unwell. The practice of polygyny was given credence by those in support of this position. They argued that the practice ensures that the multiple wives are always eagerly waiting for their turns to 'entertain' the husband and, therefore, the question of forced sex in marriage does not arise. This situation further subjects many women to both emotional and sexual violence due to their inability to negotiate for consensual and safe sex.

Sexual violence that involves forced sex was also reported to be common. This was mostly in cases of forced marriages. The forced marriages in this case are not about marrying off underage girls like is often the case in other communities but, rather, grown-up women for various reasons. The practice of a father giving his daughter's hand for marriage to a wealthy person, more often than not, to a much older man in order to sort out a financial problem commonly related to school fees for her male siblings, or in return for a handsome bride wealth payment and other financial benefits, is still common in this community.

There are also cases where a father gives his daughter's hand in marriage to a creditor when he is unable to pay off a debt. In such cases, the father receives an additional payment in the form of cash and *gima wuotho gi tiende* (an animal). The woman has no option but to submit to the demands of her father. In case she refuses, she would forcefully be taken to her suitor's house and people would keep vigil outside the house to ensure that sexual intercourse took place between her and her suitor. Cultural beliefs and perceptions, including those of the victim, made it difficult for such women to go back to their families as this situation makes them culturally *molil* ('used' or 'wasted') and unable to gain acceptance back home, or by any other man as was the case for Nyachula (case 6.1 in chapter six).

7.2.4 Economic violence

The most common form of economic violence in the study area is one whereby the husband is alive and around, but chooses not to engage in any gainful economic activity, thus leaving the burden of fending for the family entirely upon the wife/wives. Maintenance of the home and providing the day-to-day needs of a

family are considered generally the duty of the woman in this community. The exception is in cases where the man of the house is a fisherman, since he is under obligation to bring home part of his catch mostly *ngege* (tilapia fish), *mbuta* (Nile perch) or *omena* (dagaa), after spending the better part of the night in the lake fishing. The men, therefore, come in to assist in matters that involve 'huge' finances and tasks most notably payment of school fees. Funds for the so-called 'huge' tasks, however, turned out to be more often than not, solicited from fellow *jogweng*' (clansmen). A majority of such men cut across the age divide, and could not bring themselves to get involved in the most commonly practised economic activity of fishing. Ironically, some of their women are involved in fishing activities through buying *omena* from the fishermen at the beaches and selling it locally. This involves being at the beaches at ungodly hours (between 2am and 5am), depending on whether the moon is bright or not. The common saying in this community is that *nyathi en mar dhako* (a child belongs to the woman). Most women felt that their men were letting them down and burdening them unnecessarily and yet they (men) are still strong and energetic.

Besides the husband and influence of men, a married woman falls directly under the influence and domestic authority of her mother-in-law and must be obedient to her and respect her at all times. The relationship between these two sets of women is, however, no different from that of co-wives as they tend to want to compete for the attention of son and husband, respectively. In this regard, therefore, daughters-in-laws find their capacities to make independent decisions and chart their own destinies in matters affecting their nuclear families limited. This situation is made worse in cases in which the two women share the same homestead.

This set-up, coupled with cultural beliefs and practices, contributes greatly to the economic violence experienced by women in this community, whereby the older

women, usually mothers-in-law or first wives (in cases where they already have their own homesteads) invoke tradition, hence disallowing the younger wives to till land at the beginning of the digging season. Daughters-in-law still residing in the same homestead with their mothers-in-law are not allowed to embark on ploughing, planting or harvesting without the green light from their mother-in-law. This permission, however, is not just verbal. It entails the elder woman performing the necessary rites to allow for the season in question to begin in her homestead. This means that she has to *tieko kwer* (complete the necessary rites) with her man whether it is a levir or husband and then start the digging or planting before her married sons and their wives can do the same. In the absence of this, the children and their wives can do nothing but wait for the signal in order to start digging. There were, however, several cases reported in which the elder woman at times invoked tradition in this regard, merely to punish a daughter-in-law whom she felt disrespects her. This leads to untold suffering for her family due to insufficient or no harvest at all. The irony, however, is that in the process of punishing her daughter/s-in-law, the mother-in-law also shares their fate.

7.3 Conclusion

Violence against women exists in its various forms which include physical, emotional, sexual and economic in the study area. Violence against women is perpetuated by the way the people are socialized to believe that men have unlimited rights over women, particularly wives. The women themselves believe that their husbands have control over them including their sexuality. The deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, practices and perceptions not only help to perpetuate it, but also make it difficult to eradicate the vice. The beliefs and perceptions of

women in particular, ensure that perpetrators go unpunished. It is further fuelled by gender-based inequalities, through the ideology of male superiority with emphasis on dominance and the physical strength of both men and women.

Efforts to prevent violence and promote women's rights at the community level have the backing of international and regional human rights instruments and it was, therefore, encouraging to note that there are some community members and women in particular who are alive to the violation of their rights. These women, however, feel that despite their awareness of the violations and the need to see a positive change, they are helpless and are unaware of any recourse mechanisms beyond the village elders and the local area chief, whom they say are so far of little help due to their own socialization.

The practice of polygyny was found to be a great contributor to the emotional violence suffered by the women in this community. Whereas traditionally it was meant to ensure that there were enough hands to till the expansive land, ensure continuity of a lineage as infant mortality was high and to guarantee bride wealth, the current practice only serves to satisfy the sexual appetites of the men at the expense of the sanity of the women and children involved thereby exposing them to a lot of psychological and economic suffering. This is because of the constant feuding currently witnessed in polygynous homesteads, the lack of adequate land to till and put up homes due to reduced mortality rates, and the fact that the practice of paying bride wealth is rarely done today. Traditionally, incidences such as co-wives living in the same one-roomed hut and sleeping with their husband in turns in the same hut, as illustrated in the study were unheard of, since the head of the homestead had his *abila* (private hut), in which he slept with one wife at a time, and also in which he entertained his new wives.

Some community members hold the view that the practice of monogamy is a foreign ideology brought by the white man, and that the practice of polygyny is the solution to infidelity and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The fact that some of the latter arguments came from even young people (25-40 years) who profess Christianity, is an indication that polygyny in its current form and practice, is in this community to stay for a long time despite the negative aspects illustrated in the study.

Traditional beliefs and practices around daughters who have reached puberty, and irrespective of whether they are married or not, indirectly perpetuate violence against women. These include practices such as insisting that such daughters leave the homestead before the digging and planting season begins as they are considered as pollutants who may cast a bad omen on the harvest. This exposes them to harm given the fact that more often than not, such women, especially the separated ones, end up unwillingly going back to their sometimes abusive spouses due to lack of options, and irrespective of the initial cause of the separation.

The other common practice is that of burying such women outside the homestead, at a willing aunt's or elder sister's place, or at the grandfather's place as *chiege matin* (his young wife) upon their death. Such burials are conducted without elaborate funeral rites as is the practice in this community. This perpetuates violence against women. Due to the stress and embarrassment that this process entails, most parents pressurize their daughters into marriage, and insist that the married ones stick to the marriage irrespective of the conditions they live under. Many other women, being aware of the fate they and their families would suffer should they walk out of a marriage, reluctantly choose to endure years of abuse. The demeaning name used to refer to separated, divorced or unmarried daughters, that is, *odhi odwogo* and *ogogo*, respectively, does not make matters any better.

The practice of widow inheritance which is still very common in the study area proved to be a great source of sexual violation for women. This is brought about by their fear of being neglected or abandoned should they become widowed. This leads many to be unwilling participants in sometimes forced sham marriages with either a known relative, or a *jakowiny*, who more often than not was a *jaboya* in order to fulfill a cultural rite. Women are further exposed to sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS by the fact that in instances where it turned out that the *jater* and the widow to be inherited were incompatible for one reason or another, a replacement was sought for her immediately while she waited. This was in order to ensure that the inheritance (sexual act) was successful as per the cultural requirement.

Despite the above findings, the term rape does not exist in this community, as a husband has absolute right to have sex with his wife unless she is sick, and the wife has no right to deny her husband sex unless she is unwell. The practice of polygyny was given credence by those in support of this position, with ensuring that the multiple wives are always eagerly waiting for their turns to 'entertain' the husband and, therefore, the question of forced sex in marriage does not arise. This situation further subjects many women to both emotional and sexual violence due to their inability to negotiate for consensual and safe sex. Sexual violence that involves forced sex of grown-up women for various reasons was also reported to be common in cases of forced marriages.

Economic violence is partly fuelled by women's resilience as a result of the socialization process in the community which instills in women virtues of hard work and teaches them to be servants. Common statements such as 'a man only goes to the house where he is well taken care of', affect women negatively.

Polygyny, which is common in this community, has been demonstrated to create maternal competition for the attention and love of the husband and in the process burdening women economically and emotionally. It also creates negative competition and a lot of infighting among co-wives in an effort to prove a point to catch the husband's eye. As a result, the women work extremely hard under the scorching sun that burns through most of the year on the Island, while the men while away their time benefitting from the competition. The fact that the island enjoys only one harvest in a year does not help matters. It is for the same reason that such men as the study revealed, can easily afford to have many wives ranging from two to five or even more without having to break a sweat.

7.4 Recommendations

From the foregone findings and conclusion, the study, therefore, makes the following recommendations:

- Sensitization of the elders. Because elders are the custodians of culture, their sensitization on the various violations against women and their impact on the individual and the community would be vital.
- Re-socialization of members of the community. This would be necessary due to the deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, practices and perceptions which not only perpetuate violence against women, but also makes it difficult to eradicate the vice. This can be done through the Council of Elders.
- Alternative cultural rights are encouraged in the community to replace practices that lead to suffering of women in an effort to fulfill traditional requirements. These would include the practice of wife inheritance as currently done and those relating to unmarried women.

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APPENDIX A: Survey Questionnaire

Dear respondent, this questionnaire aims to collect information related to the cultural perspective of violence against women. The information given is purely for academic purposes only and will be treated as very confidential. Please respond to the questions according to the instructions given.

Biographical data

1. Date of interview Name of the location.....
2. Sub-location.....Respondent's name (optional).....
3. Age bracket (years)

16-25	()	26-35	()	
36-45	()	46-55	()	56 and above ()
4. Sex of respondent: Female () Male ()
5. Level of education:

Below primary certificate ()	Primary certificate ()	
Below secondary certificate ()	Secondary certificate ()	College education ()
6. Marital status:

Married ()	Widowed ()	Separated ()
-------------	-------------	---------------
7. Type of marriage: Monogamous () Polygynous () Levirate ()
8. Relationship to head of homestead

Head of homestead ()	Wife ()	Son ()	Daughter ()
-----------------------	----------	---------	--------------

 - a) If head of homestead (Please respond)

Total number of wives.....
Number of wives alive.....
Number of wives dead.....
 - b) If a wife (please respond)

Position in order of marriage (tick appropriately)
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

Relative ()

No effect ()

e) Please explain

.....
.....

f) How would you describe the perception of women towards the physical violence meted against them?

Find it normal ()

Feel they deserve it ()

Resigned to fate ()

See need for change ()

g) Please explain

.....
.....

PART C: EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

Now am going to explain to you about different types of behaviour that people often speak about as being abusive or constituting emotional violence. You might not feel that everything I ask about is abusive or constitute violence – that is ok. These include someone deliberately:

Preventing you from communicating with others (in the home or outside)

Limiting your movements outside the house and/or trailing your movements

Humiliating you in front of others, e.g., abusing you in front of your neighbours, friends, children, etc.

Calling you crazy or possessed and threatening to take you to a mental hospital or traditional healer

Threatening you with harm

Threatening to harm your children or other family members

Threatening to damage any of your belongings, e.g., clothes or shoes

Threatening to end your marriage /relationship

Threatening to kill you

Threatening to kill your children

Threatening to commit suicide if you don't do what he/she wants

(Husband) refusing to have sex with you

(Husband) forcing wife to have sex /marital rape

(Husband) withdrawing help in time of need, e.g., death, sickness, etc.

Persistently insulting your physical attributes, e.g., disability, your looks, your hair, your dressing,

awareness Persistently insulting your capabilities, e.g., your cooking, dressing, etc.

Threatening to tell your boss to sack you from your job

Threatening to evict you or take your house

Threatening to or destroyed your house

Denying you access to their homes

a) From what I have explained above, would you say that emotional violence against women exists in this community?

YES ()

NO ()

b) Which form of emotional violence would you say is most common in this community?

.....

c) Please explain

.....

.....

d) To what extent would you say that emotional violence against women witnessed and/or experienced (tick appropriately) in this community is as a result of enculturation / socialization.

Very great ()

High ()

Relative ()

Low ()

No effect ()

e) Please explain

.....

.....

f) How would you describe the perception of women towards the emotional violence meted against them?

Find it normal ()

Resigned to fate ()

Feel they deserve it ()

See a need for change ()

Please explain

.....
.....

How would you describe the perception of women towards the sexual violence meted against them?

- Find it normal ()
- Feel they deserve it ()
- Resigned to fate ()
- See need for change ()

Please explain

.....
.....

PART E: ECONOMIC VIOLENCE

Now am going to explain to you about different types of behavior that people often speak about as being abusive or constituting economic violence. You might not feel that everything I ask about is abusive or constitute violence – that is ok. These include someone deliberately:

- Denial of access to your shamba/land
- Denial of access to your business premises
- Preventing one from earning an income
- Taking money from one or one's purse without one's consent
- Being forced to ask others for money, food or clothing
- Withdrawing money from one's account without one's knowledge or consent
- Being forced you to sell one's belongings
- Others (please specify)

a) From what I have explained above, would you say that economic violence against women exists in this community?

- YES ()
- NO ()

b) Which form of economic violence would you say is most common in this community?

.....
.....

Please explain

.....
.....
.....

d) To what extent would you say that economic violence against women witnessed and/or experienced (tick appropriately) in this community is as a result of enculturation / socialization?

Very great ()

High ()

Relative ()

Low ()

No effect ()

e) Please explain

.....
.....

f) How would you describe the perception of women towards the economic violence meted against them?

Find it normal ()

Feel they deserve it ()

Resigned to fate ()

See need for change ()

g) Please explain

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU!

Appendix B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1) Probing points

- a) General understanding and perceptions of violence against women.
- b) Does physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence exist in this community?
- c) Types of cultural practices that involve mostly women.
- d) Causes of physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence.
- e) Do the cultural beliefs and practices have a role to play in this violence?
- f) Do the practices of polygyny, widow inheritance and beliefs around daughters specifically have any influence on violence against women?
- g) Perception of men on violence against women.
- h) Thoughts on wife inheritance specifically.
- i) Thoughts on marital rape.
- j) Beliefs and Perceptions of women on violence against women.
- k) Do women's beliefs and perceptions have anything to do with the violence meted against them?
- l) Suggestions on how to tackle identified harmful practices.
- m) What are some of the recourse mechanisms available for victims of such violence?
- n) If any, how effective are they?

APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What in your opinion is culture?
2. What in your opinion is violence against women?
3. How would you describe the place of women in this community?
4. Does violence against women exist in this community?
5. Does culture have a role to play in the violence meted against women?
6. Please describe any cultural beliefs or practices that you consider violate women.
7. What are some of the obstacles that the women in this community face in general?
8. What are your thoughts on the following: beliefs and practices around daughters, polygyny and wife inheritance?
9. What are your thoughts on the cultural practice of levirate marriages in its current form?
10. In your view, are there any benefits that can be derived from some of the cultural beliefs and practices today?
11. Are there any alternatives to some of the practices that violate women?

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Existence of violence against women in the community.
2. Most common form of physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence.
3. The impact of culture on violence against women.
4. The perceptions of women on the violence experienced by women.
5. The place of women in the community.
6. Recourse measures for victims of cultural violence.