



## NATURE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN KURIA EAST AND WEST SUB COUNTIES, MIGORI COUNTY, KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence is a global problem, affecting men, women, and children disproportionately. It deters optimal participation in social, political, and economic projects within the community and impedes sustainable community development. Despite government policies and interventions to mitigate GBV, it continues to be reported. This study therefore sought to determine the nature of Gender-Based Violence in Kuria East and West Sub Counties, Migori County, Kenya. The study was grounded on the social network theory and theory of constraints and employed a mixed-method research design. Stratified sampling technique was utilized to draw a sample of 165 respondents from a population of 282, while purposive sampling was adopted to draw participants for focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Data collection methods included questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis respectively. The study established physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, and female genital mutilation as the most conspicuous manifestations of GBV, underpinned by deeply entrenched social norms, and cultural practices. The study concludes that besides patriarchy, deeply entrenched norms continue to propel gender-based violence, among them physical violence. Based on these findings, the study recommends enhanced partnerships between Community-Based Organizations, governments, and security and law enforcement to create synergy and coordinated multi-agency response for GBV. The study also recommends that the existing laws, policies, and frameworks on GBV to reviewed and strengthened to ensure an efficient and effective response to GBV and adequate protection of survivors.

**Keywords:** Nature, Gender-Based Violence, Physical Violence, Sexual Violence, Emotional Violence, Female Genital Mutilation

### INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV), affecting men and women globally, is a violation of fundamental and inherent human rights (Muluneh et al., 2020). It encompasses any harmful act on an individual based on their gender or sex, including any acts that inflict physical, sexual, or mental harm, be they threats of such acts, coercion, and or deprivation of liberty (UNFPA, 2021). These

acts may be inflicted in private or public spheres, and include all forms of physical, sexual, and emotional acts of harm among others (Muluneh et al., 2020).

Globally, about 35% of women have been survivors of physical violence and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (Bhattacharjee et al., 2020). Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is the most common and prevalent form of GBV (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). IPV, as a form of GBV, exists in varied forms including all forms of physical acts of violence, sexual and emotional abuse, and such acts of violence are often recurrent over time (Sardinha et al., 2022).

An assessment of the European Union (EU) citizens' perceptions regarding GBV in November 2016 revealed that 29% of the respondents concurred that domestic violence against men is common in their country. 50% stated that domestic violence meted upon women is also common in their country (Murphy et al., 2018). Further, the same study revealed that 93% of the respondents in Portugal, 90% in Italy, 50% in Bulgaria, and 51% in the Czech Republic had similar sentiments of domestic violence meted out to women being common in their countries.

Forty-four percent of women aged 15–49 in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have experienced at least some type of GBV (Muluneh et al., 2020). Emotional violence (29.40%), physical violence (25.87%), and sexual violence (18.75%) dominate with the highest prevalence, with emotional violence being the most prevalent. (Muluneh et al., 2020)

Statistics from the 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) document that 34 percent of women and 27 percent of men in Kenya have experienced some form of physical violence since the age of 15 (KNBS, 2023). Similarly, the UN WOMEN report of 2015 revealed that the Nyanza region recorded 49.5% physical violence incidences, higher than the national average of 19.4% at that time (County Government of Migori, 2019). 179 cases of GBV were reported in Migori County in 2017, out of which sixty-nine percent of them were sexual abuse cases involving rape (Wilson, 2019). As of 2022, Migori County was ranked the third county with the highest incidences of GBV, at 53.1 percent (KNBS, 2023).

GBV is widely caused by male patriarchy, which predominantly with the help of gender and gender norms unequally shapes the power relationships between men and women (Bhattacharjee et al., 2020). Besides patriarchy and gender inequalities, GBV is also propelled by other factors such as sociocultural influences, attitudes, and norms which historically have tolerated, accelerated, and normalized violence (Muluneh et al., 2021).

Ali & Khan., (2014) emphasize how important community participation and empowerment are if the ability of a community to identify and resolve its internal problems is to be enhanced. Therefore failing to address the magnitude and hidden nature of GBV in Kuria East and West, and neglecting to address its impact on communities may limit and compromise the ability of survivors within Kuria East and West to optimally participate and contribute to social, political, and economic projects within the community, to relate with members within the community and to voice their opinions on various communal aspects due to the shame, stigma and isolation associated with being a GBV survivor. This study therefore sought to determine the nature of GBV in Kuria East and West Sub Counties, Migori County, Kenya.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to determine the nature of Gender Based Violence in Kuria East and West Sub Counties, Migori County, Kenya.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The following objective guided this study:

- i. To determine the nature of Gender Based Violence in Kuria East and West Sub Counties, Migori County, Kenya.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

The study was guided by the following research question:

- i. How does the nature of GBV manifest in Kuria East and West Sub Counties?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Nature of Gender-Based Violence**

According to Bradbury-Jones et al., (2019), GBV as one of the human rights violations exists in varied types, including various forms of physical, sexual, and emotional violence, and can occur throughout a person's life cycle from childhood to adulthood. In patriarchal societies especially, women face GBV due to insubordination, where the women's voice of reasoning has been diminished to the extent that they lack choices to resist violence (Heise et al., 2002). The author further reiterates that abuse of sexual nature meted out on women and girls, ranging from rape to other none physical aspects of sexual abuse that coerce women and girls to engage in unwanted sexual activities. Whereas the literature documents the varied forms of GBV, it is unclear whether the same applies to Kuria East and West. This study therefore sought to unearth the varied forms of GBV as experienced in Kuria East and West Sub Counties.

Statistics show that worldwide, about 35% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime(Bhattacharjee et al., 2020). Further, incidences of domestic violence against women in Europe were reported to be more than 100,000 in 2015. Eighty-two percent (82%) of these were women, demonstrating women are widely disproportionately affected by GBV (Murphy et al., 2018). Statistics in Kenya similarly reveal that approximately 45% of women and 44% of men between the ages of 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence, with widowed, separated, and divorced women experiencing greater violence (Government of Kenya, 2019). Armstrong et al., (2018)documentsexual violence as a domination tool, used to reinforce, perpetuate and maintain gender inequality.Sexual violence is equally common in the United States, with millions of people reporting either sexual abuse or stalking during their lifetime (Smith et al., 2018). Besides abuse of adults, sexual abuse of children is equally widespread(Heise et al., 2002). Despite literature demonstrating differential types of GBV affecting men, women, and children within the global perspective, there are limited studies on the disproportionate nature of GBV in Kuria East and West, a gap that needed to be filled by this study.

Traditional beliefs and practices that emphasize and reinforce control of women and girls have over the past years been termed as traditional harmful practices by International human rights institutions. FGM has consequently been internationally considered as a breach of human rights

and as such violence against women and girls (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2019). Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East have the highest prevalence of FGM practice. In most of the countries where it is practiced, girls undergo the before the age of 5, and between the ages of 5 and 14 (Onyango, 2016). The author reiterates that the pursuit for social acceptance within the community, patriarchy, gender norms as well as men's perceptions towards women's sexuality has over time reinforced FGM and led to its continued practice. Uncircumcised women are seen to have a lower social status and are shunned by peers and further banned from some social activities. The practice is often carried out by traditional circumcisers (Approximately seventy-three percent of the mutilations) while only 20% are carried out by medical professionals. This may result in immediate or future complications. Kuria East and West are among the sub-counties in Kenya with strong cultural practices. However, the extent to which these cultural traditions and practices contribute to the persistence of GBV is unclear and will be highlighted by this study.

Christine et al., (2005) noted that there exists a slim boundary between what is recognized and defined as GBV and what is considered a simple normal interaction between men and women. Some acts such as wife inheritance are not considered GBV because they are culturally acceptable to some societies. Similarly, Onyango (2016) also notes that certain acts of violence, for instance, emotional and economic abuse are in most societies not regarded as violence, and thus legal frameworks do not categorize them as criminal. Many people for instance still view IPV as a private matter, and women are often shunned and blamed when such violence occurs. This in turn creates social stigma which often deters the victims from seeking support and legal redress. This study sought to find out whether the same beliefs on violence hold in Kuria East and West. The existing literature does not further reveal the impacts of these beliefs on the persistence of GBV, and how it impacts on mitigation, thus the need for this study.

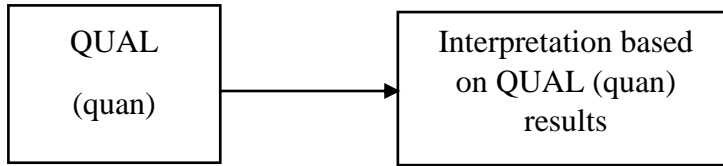
Bhattacharjee et al., (2020) note that GBV is a crime that happens mostly in private spaces, and with far-reaching consequences such as death and disability, as well as infections. It may also result in abortions and unwanted pregnancies in women and girls (Arango et al., 2014). Arango further notes that GBV may limit and or prevent the ability or extent to which survivors engage in meaningful social and economic development within their communities.

From the literature, GBV may manifest in different forms across different communities, happen in public or private spheres, and have far-reaching consequences. The nature of GBV in Kuria East and West with regards to who the perpetrators are, when and where the acts are committed however remains hidden and unclear, and needs to be unraveled by this study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The mixed method research design was used in the study. The research design stipulates the procedures to be used for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data to answer research questions (Creswell, 2009). Concurrent mixed method research design (QUAL + quan) approach incorporates both qualitative and quantitative forms of data separately and merges the datasets for the purpose of comparing and or combining results to obtain complementary data on the same topic to understand the research problem in breadth in depth (Pardede, 2019).



**Source: (Creswell, 2012)**

Incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative data was beneficial in gaining insights into the different aspects of research questions which required different types of data i.e. either qualitative, quantitative, or both. In assessing the nature of GBV, this concurrent mixed method research design was used because it enabled the collection and use of quantitative data to expand and complement qualitative data, with both qualitative and quantitative aspects of data collection and analysis done separately at the same phase and merged at the point of making interpretations and inferences.

### Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

#### Sample Size

For large populations, a representative sample is often chosen as it is less costly and time-friendly. The optimum sample size should be reliable and representative of the larger population (Djamba & Neuman, 2002). Sampling enables the selection of elements in the population to act as a representative of the entire population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

A sample frame of 282 was used to arrive at the study sample. The sampling frame gives a list of the actual cases or sampling units from which the sample will be drawn (Kothari, 2004). The study sample size was calculated using Yamane (1967) simplified sample size calculation formulae as below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n = sample size

N = Population size.

e = Margin of error of 0.05%

Therefore;

$$n = \frac{282}{1 + 282(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 165 \text{ respondents.}$$

Thereafter, systematic sampling was used to identify the individual respondents. The total population size was divided by the sample size to get the sampling intervals, in this case, 2. From every interval, every first person was included in the final sample.

In addition, 24 key informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their depth of knowledge on the topic of study. The key informants included 20 CBO personnel, 2 children officers, and 2 chiefs. The CBO personnel were selected because they are working in the CBOs

providing GBV mitigation-related services in the study area and are knowledgeable on the topic under study. The children officers and chiefs were included due to their direct involvement in dealing with GBV cases as duty bearers. The key informants were to provide expert information to cross-check the information given by respondents.

Finally, two Focused group discussions (FGDs), each comprising 8 to 12 purposively selected participants were conducted to collect more in-depth information to better understand the research topic and enrich the findings.

### **Instrumentation**

Questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focused group discussions were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

### **Questionnaires**

The researcher-administered questionnaires were carried out in a structured method, and this involved the use of a set of predetermined questions (Kothari, 2004). This method was administered to 165 respondents. The questions were developed and structured in line with the objectives of the study. Questionnaires were appropriate not only to obtain rich information on the topic of inquiry but also because the literacy levels of the respondents may be skewed. In anticipation that some of the respondents may not be able to understand, interpret, and respond to questions on their own, the researcher administered questionnaire method allowed for standardized explanations to all participants since the researcher asked the questions as she keyed in the responses.

### **Focused Group Discussion (FGDs)**

Focused group discussions were held to promote self-disclosure among participants in the form of discussions, and gather internal thoughts, beliefs, values, and opinions regarding the nature of GBV in Kuria East and West. Krueger, (2014) contends that 6 to 12 participants in a FGD are small enough for all participants to contribute and give their opinions, and large enough to illicit diverse opinions. Therefore, two FGDs, each comprising ten purposively selected participants were conducted.

Based on this, there were two FGDs, i.e. one FGD with male participants, and the other FGD with female participants. The segregation of FGDs in terms of gender was to ensure the males and females were comfortable enough to discuss GBV issues within the community from the perspective of each gender, as the Kuria community still has deeply entrenched gendered cultural norms and values. These participants were drawn from within the 12 wards in Kuria East and West sub-counties. In guiding the discussions, a focused group discussion guide was used.

### **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

Key informant interviews were used to gather in-depth and expert information from persons knowledgeable on the research topic. Twenty CBO personnel cutting across the various cadres, two children officers (1 from Kuria East and 1 from Kuria West), and two chiefs (1 from Kuria East and 1 from Kuria West) were purposively selected for the KII.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The reliability of a research instrument is demonstrated by its ability and the degree to which it produces consistent findings in repeated trials. Piloting with 30 respondents in Nyatike North Sub County was done to ensure the reliability of the instruments of data collection. The piloting was done in Nyatike North because of its similarity in terms of characteristics of the area and population to Kuria East and West Sub Counties.

The researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instruments. In using this methodology of estimation of reliability, with alpha values ranging between 0 and 1, the higher values indicate greater reliability of the research instruments. A coefficient of .83 was obtained; thus indicating that the research instruments were reliable.

To determine the validity of the research instruments, the tools were also subjected to content validation. The tools (key informant guides and focus group guides) were presented to the supervisors in the department for assessment of whether they (the tools) would meet the intended objectives. Their inputs and suggestions were then incorporated into the final research instruments.

Triangulation was also applied as both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments were used, thus enhancing the validity and credibility of the research findings.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The data was reviewed to ensure completeness of all responses, after which they were sorted and edited to remove and or correct errors, and ensure accuracy and consistency so that only relevant data is retained for analysis.

The qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis which involved transcription of audio-taped interviews, identification of emerging themes, coding, collating, and extracting emerging themes and sub-themes. This ensured key and relevant elements or thematic areas in GBV mitigation by CBOs were picked and correct inferences drawn during interpretation.

Quantitative data on the other hand were first tabulated and reduced to smaller categories of classes through coding using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Coding allows for the systematic reorganization of raw data into a format that is easy to analyze (Kothari, 2004). The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using frequency tables.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Nature of Gender-Based Violence**

The nature of GBV was looked into in three main fronts i.e. prevalent forms of GBV, perpetrators of GBV, and prevalent spaces of occurrences of GBV. Findings on the nature of GBV are given in Table 1 below;

**Table 1: Prevalent Forms of Gender-Based Violence**

<b>Forms of GBV</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Physical Violence	54	32.7
Female Genital Mutilation	41	24.8
Sexual Violence	34	20.6
Emotional Violence	24	14.6
Economic Abuse	12	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

Table 1 above provides a concise overview of the collected data concerning the prevalent forms of GBV as derived from the questionnaire. These statistics shed light on the nature and extent of GBV within Kuria East and West Sub Counties, offering insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals in these communities.

From the above data, physical violence presents as the most prevalent form of GBV among the participants, with 54 individuals (32.7%) reporting experiences of physical abuse, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is reported by 41 participants accounting for 24.8%, Sexual violence was reported by 34 participants (20.6%), emotional violence was reported by 24 participants accounting for (14.6%) and lastly, economic abuse reported by 12 participants accounted for (7.3%)

Physical violence, emerging as the most dominant form of violence constituting 32.7% is an indication of significant aspects of physical aggression within the community. This significant percentage aligns with global statistics of physical violence. As documented by the World Health Organization (WHO), physical violence as a form of GBV is widespread globally, affecting approximately 35% of women. This consistency in prevalence, and it being a global phenomenon, sheds light on the extent of physical violence as a form of GBV, exceeding geographical boundaries and cultural contexts.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), affecting over a quarter (24.8%) of respondents surveyed, is an indication of deeply entrenched cultural practices within the community. Internationally, FGM is categorized as an act of violation of inherent human rights and a form of GBV. The extent of its prevalence in Kuria East and West Sub Counties, as indicated by the data above, is a pointer to the existence of traditional harmful practices that fuel gender inequality and consequently pose significant health risks, among other risks, to women and girls. This finding resonates with Onyango (2016) who sheds light on the prevalence of FGM in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan, where norms and cultural beliefs have perpetuated FGM.

Additionally, the data reveal significant proportions of emotional and sexual violence, affecting 14.6% and 20.6% as reported by the respondents respectively. These percentages are a clear indication of the extent to which individuals within Kuria East and West Sub Counties face both emotional and sexual violence. Emotional abuse over time impacts the mental health and well-



being of the survivors. Similarly, sexual abuse, an extreme violation of individuals' rights, has physical and psychological consequences on the survivors.

While economic abuse emerges as a less reported form of GBV, accounting for 7.3% of respondents, under-reporting of this form of abuse could be a contributing factor. This is especially in consideration of the complex dynamics of economic dependence and control within relationships, particularly abusive relationships. Characterized by elements of financial control and manipulation, economic abuse increases the vulnerabilities of survivors, hindering them from seeking assistance and help to free themselves from abusive relationships and situations.

The study established physical violence and female genital mutilation as the most profound forms of violence in Kuria East and West Sub Counties. Drawing parallels with the insights from Bradbury-Jones et al. (2019), these findings affirm GBV's multifaceted nature, encompassing various forms spanning an individual's lifespan. Data from the FGDs similarly reiterated the predominance of physical violence within the region. During the discussion, a participant argued that;

*“Not a day passes without another wife getting beaten by the husband. The situation is bad. Especially for couples in their middle aged. There's just so much tension and anger. It seems like things escalate way too easily.” (Male, 52 years).*

From the above sentiments, physical violence is a normal occurrence within the region. The predominance of physical violence concurs with (Muluneh et al., 2020) who reiterates that physical violence is generally high in SSA countries. Anderson and Anderson (2008) reiterate that violence as a mechanism for social control is often used to perpetuate and reinforce female subordination and male dominance. Armstrong et al.'s (2018) insight regarding GBV as a tool for reinforcing gender inequality holds relevance. The findings lend credence to the presence of similar dynamics within the studied regions.

Concerning the high prevalence of FGM in Kuria East and West as unearthed by this study, it brings into play the role of cultural norms and practices in perpetuating violence. In congruence with Christine et al. (2005) and Onyango (2016), the findings spotlight the complex interplay between recognized GBV and culturally accepted behaviors. The findings of this study therefore highlight the persistence of deeply rooted cultural practices, in this case FGM, that perpetuate gender inequality and pose significant health risks to the community, particularly to women and girls. During the discussions, one of the participants said that;

*“I have four daughters. All are circumcised young. It is just how it's done here. No circumcision, no marriage, that's what the men say. I know some people want it to end, but it's a strong tradition, hard to break.” (Female, 46 years)*

These sentiments clearly depict the extent and prevalence of FGM as a form of violence within the study area. FGM, among other forms of violence, serves as an example of discrimination on the basis of sex. Okeke et al., (2012) documents that's it is not only used as a tool to manage and control women's sexuality, but also to determine the marriage ability of girls. As a consequence,

many mothers ultimately subject their daughters to FGM to shield them from community disgrace.

It was also established that whereas economic violence exists within the region, it's subtle. This, however, could also be attributed to low awareness of economic abuse as a significant type of violence, as well as its under reporting. These sentiments were echoed during the FGDs where one participant said;

*“He is my husband. The head of my household. I still have to ask permission for small jobs. Sometimes he doesn't allow me to go to work, insisting I stay at home. It's even worse with hotel jobs. He comes with me to 'check' the place and then tries to pressure me into quitting. It's like he controls everything.” (Female, 36 years)*

This gives an insight into the dynamic nature of economic dependence and control within abusive relationships. While economic violence may be low within the region, it could be a case of internalizing and normalizing financial control within the society, and the inability of the survivors to seek help and escape abusive situations.

To better understand the nature of GBV, it is crucial to examine not only the forms of violence but also the individuals responsible for perpetrating these acts. Identifying the perpetrators of GBV can provide deeper insights into the dynamics of abuse. Table 2 below offers a detailed breakdown of the perpetrators of GBV as reported by the study participants.

**Table 2: Perpetrators of Gender Based Violence**

<b>Perpetrator</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Intimate Partner	58	35.2
Other Family Member	49	29.7
Known Community Member	43	26
Stranger	15	9.1
Total	165	100.0

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

From the data, intimate partners constitute the largest proportion of perpetrators, accounting for 35.2% as determined by the respondents. With intimate partners denoting those in relationships, this data sheds light into the dynamics of violence within relationships. These findings are consistent with global trends of violence where IPV is recorded as significantly high across varied socio-economic backgrounds and cultural contexts. The high prevalence of IPV also brings to light the dynamics of power and control within intimate relationships.

Other family members as perpetrators of violence comprise 29.7%. Violence in the family set up include abuse of not only children, but also the elderly as well as abuse by siblings among others. The significance of existence of family members as perpetrators exposes the existence of intra-familial violence, where individuals suffer various forms of abuse within the confines of their

homes at the hands of relatives or household members. Such forms of household level violence often perpetuate cycles of trauma and intergenerational violence within families.

Known community members accounting for 26.0% as revealed by the data also represents a substantial proportion of perpetrators. These include who are well acquainted with the victims/survivors including friends, neighbours, and acquaintances among others.

Finally, strangers constitute a smaller yet notable proportion of perpetrators, representing 9.1%. While stranger violence often garners significant attention due to its perceived threat to public safety, it remains relatively less common compared to other forms of GBV.

The study established that intimate partners and family members are the major perpetrators of violence in Kuria East and West Sub Counties. These finding aligns with existing literature of Sardinha et al., (2022) who documents that intimate partners are often the perpetrators of many forms of GBV. This align with the sentiments from the key informants where one of them said;

*“In my experience, a majority of reported cases are domestic in nature. They happen within families, between partners, or people in relationships. I've dealt with many cases of husbands hitting their wives, and some of in-laws abusing and/or beating their daughters-in-law. But it's not entirely one-sided. I have seen a few cases where the wife was the abuser.” (Male, 46 years)*

Further, the findings mirror the discussions in the FGDs which equally alluded to intimate partners and family members being the predominant perpetrators of GBV. One of the participants reiterated that;

*“Most of the violence is between people who live together. It's husbands hitting their wives, or wives fighting with their husbands. But it's not always like that. Sometimes it's parents arguing with their children, or even siblings who get out of hand. It's like the tension builds up at home, and sometimes it explodes.” (Female, 29 years)*

Further insights as regards the nature of GBV in Kuria East and West are defined by the spaces of occurrences of these incidences as depicted in figure 3 below;

**Table 3: Prevalent Spaces of GBV Occurrences**

<b>Spaces</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Known Public Spaces	81	49.1
Private spaces	84	50.9
Total	165	100.0

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

The data reveal that GBV occurs in an almost near spit in known public spaces and private spaces, with known public spaces constituting 49.1% of reported cases and private spaces

comprising 50.9%. This finding reiterates the complex dynamics of GBV within the community, where individuals are vulnerable to harm in various settings, both public and private.

High percentage (49.1%) GBV in known public spaces raises concerns about public safety and security within the community. This shows the significant challenges of public safety and security within the community, where individuals are vulnerable to violence in shared spaces such as streets, parks, markets, and transportation hubs. Known public spaces include areas such as streets, markets, parks, and transportation hubs, where among other individuals, interaction with strangers is also high thus increasing the risks of violence. Factors such as inadequate lighting, limited surveillance, and a lack of effective law enforcement may contribute to the occurrence of GBV in public spaces.

On the other hand, the significant proportion of GBV occurring in private spaces highlights the pervasive nature of especially domestic violence within Kuria East and West Sub Counties. Private spaces include homes, households, and other residential settings where individuals should ideally feel safe and secure. Domestic violence remains a pervasive issue within many communities, characterized by power imbalances, coercive control, and cycles of abuse within intimate relationships and familial contexts.

This study established that GBV is not confined to the domestic sphere and can occur anywhere. It can occur in public spaces just as much as in private spaces. During the focused group discussions, one participant said;

*“Things are not good these days. People are mean at home, yelling and maybe not letting their wives work. Fights happen everywhere, at the market, by the water, and even in church! There's bad touching. It's like violence is just everywhere these days” (Male, 41 years)*

These sentiments illustrate the complex and multifaceted nature of violence within Kuria East and West Sub Counties. These findings are concurrent with Bhattacharjee et al., (2020) who noted that GBV is a crime that happens mostly in private spaces.

Given the above discussions and the study findings on the nature of GBV, the examination of GBV in Kuria East and West Sub Counties reveals the existence and prevalence of varied forms of GBV, with physical violence and FGM being the most predominant. The varied forms of violence are underpinned by intricate root causes, notably deeply entrenched social norms, cultural practices, pervasive poverty, and gender disparities. These factors create an environment where gender-based violence thrives. Disparities are discernible across genders, with females experiencing heightened vulnerabilities owing to factors like prevailing gender norms. It's interesting to note that such incidence occurs in an equal near split of private and public spheres, revealing that violence can potentially happen in ideally any setting. The perpetrators, invariably male, comprise a range of individuals, including family members and community affiliates, and specific occupational, with intimate partners contributing to the larger perpetrators.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

Based on the study findings, physical violence, sexual, emotional, economic, and FGM were established as the prevalent forms of GBV in Kuria East and West. These findings were mirrored by the respondents' responses where physical violence emerged as the most dominant type of GBV (31.1%), followed by FGM (24.6%), sexual violence (20.8%), emotional violence (15.3%) and economic violence (8.2%).

As regards the perpetrators of GBV, intimate partners, known family members, other community members, and strangers were established to be the common perpetrators. Respondents data revealed that intimate members were the primary perpetrators (32.8%), followed by other family members (31.7%), known community members (25.7%) and lastly strangers (9.8%).

With regards to the spaces where incidences of GBV frequently occur, the study interestingly revealed a slim difference in private and public areas of occurrence. The study showed that most GBV incidences occur in private spaces (50.8%), whereas those in public spaces account for 49.2%.

In conclusion, this study has unearthed significant comprehensive insights as regards the nature of GBV in Kuria East and West Sub Counties. Gender-based violence, affecting not only women and girls but also boys and men is widespread. Physical violence and FGM are predominant and prevalent in Kuria East and West Sub Counties, reinforced by social norms and cultural practices that continue to be upheld within the regions.

### Recommendations

1. The engagement of community members in designing and implementing GBV interventions need to be done within defined frame works to ensure that not only are retrogressive cultural norms and practices challenged, but also alternative norms and practices are designed and reinforced to ensure both relevance and acceptance within the communities.
2. Partnerships and synergy between community-based organizations, local government, and law enforcement agencies need to be enhanced and streamlined to create an effective and efficient multi-agency response for GBV
3. There's a need for the development and implementation of interventions that are culturally sensitive to specific communities to address GBV. The existing laws, policies, and frameworks on GBV need to be reviewed and or strengthened to ensure an efficient and effective response to GBV and adequate protection of survivors.
4. National and County Governments should review and or strengthen existing laws, policies, and frameworks on GBV to ensure an efficient and effective response to GBV and adequate protection of survivors.

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