

**COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A CASE OF SONI  
SUBCOUNTY, TORORO DISTRICT**

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## DECLARATION

I, Constance Nyachwo, hereby declare that this is my original work from individual effort and has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning for any award. It is a result of the work I learned as a social work student and the support from my research supervisor.


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## APPROVAL

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with my approval as a supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to everyone who has taught and moulded me from childhood to adulthood, my parents, friends and tutors who have always offered guidance and support to me which has enabled me to reach this far and for the big role they have played throughout my academic journey.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
LC	Local council
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VSLA	Village Saving and Loan Association
WHO	World Health Organisation



## **ABSTRACT**

Violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights violations across the globe, women have faced abuses of all forms and it takes place at all levels across different social statuses. It takes place worldwide in homes, workplaces, schools and communities, and refugee camps/settlements. This study was designed to establish the community-based approaches used in responding to violence against women in its formal and non-formal systems. The study also focused on social and cultural factors that perpetuate violence and constraints encountered in addressing violence against women. The study was conducted in Soni Subcounty Tororo district in Eastern Uganda. The study design was cross-sectional in nature and applied qualitative methods of data collection. A total of 20 respondents included women and girls between the ages of 15 to 49 and 5 key informants participated in the research. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and collected data were analysed qualitatively. The study findings indicated that various interventions and measures were being put in place and are being used to respond to violence for example creation of awareness, community dialogues, use of community combats and paralegals and community combats, empowerment of the women. Social and cultural factors like alcoholism and polygamy, bride price were dominant factors fuelling violence against women this was beefed up by poverty, corruption, low levels of education, social inequality which were constraints women faced when trying to fight violence. The study recommends focusing on the underlying causes of violence because most of the measures of the program are aimed at solving violence that already happened. Programs and interventions should be implemented after thorough research to ensure success, and adequate resources and government services should be brought closer to the sub-county and also support the available resources and organizations that are participating in the fight against violence in the community. Interventions should focus on the root cause of violence rather than the aftermath.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

This study investigated the community response to violence against women in Soni sub-county. This chapter presents the background of violence in Uganda and globally. It highlights the general overview of responses to violence against women. This chapter also further discusses the problem statement, scope of the study, significance of the study and justification of the study.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Violence against women is a global widespread crime and a violation of human rights. This indicates that it happens in all communities, and societies and crosses boundaries of culture, education, and social status which means that anybody can be a victim of violence (Capeda et al 2021). Violence against women is one of the most notorious crimes of humanity and yet least recognized and least reported due to the stigma that surrounds it and the sensitivity of the subject which restrains victims from reporting. (Heise 2018; watts 2002). This continues to happen yet the effects are devastating to women, women's health as well as their aspects of physical, mental, and social well-being in the community and society at large. It has long and short-term effects which greatly affect the woman and hinder her from fully enjoying her rights, and freedom in the community.

The United Nations declaration on violence against women defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results or is likely to result in physical, or mental harm or suffering of women. This includes threats of acts such as coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. Violence is an extreme form of aggression that manifests in many forms like rape, verbal abuse, domestic violence, forced marriages, murder and takes forms like murder, rape, FGM, and early marriages, human trafficking. It is compounded by media, lack of education and social cultural norms and poverty resulting into death, depression and poverty vulnerability. It undermines the freedom of victims, rights to security, and health (UNFPA 2021).

A 2018 analysis of the prevalence of data from 2000 to 2018 conducted by WHO found that nearly 1 in 3 or 30% of women have been subjected to physical or sexual violence. Further studies also indicate that a quarter of women aged between 15 to 49 years who have been in a relationship have been subjected to violence at least once in their life. Most of these are from low-income and war-torn countries in Asia, Africa, and South America (OECD 2019).

Violence against women is mostly a result of inequalities in the systems for example social, political, economic, and cultural factors. These factors jointly work to subordinate women leading to gender inequality (Moreno 2006). Gender inequality means having unequal rights and opportunities between men and women at all levels. This has been deeply ingrained in social and cultural systems which ascribe to male masculinity as superior to feminism. Social norms make it easy for perpetrators to commit crimes and get away with them (Fergus 2018; Krahe 2016). However much there is a rise in feminism and women's emancipation globally however far less has been done to tackle the underlying problem. Historically the issue would be tackled on an individual basis and individual relationships but this isn't enough since there is more to the Violence which includes the macro systems, mesa, and Exo systems (Hayes 2007; Kyegombe et al 2016, Michau 2007). Therefore, a lot has to be put into community awareness to gain response.

Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and peace around the world. Therefore, this needs to be voiced as hard as possible, community awareness and data collection, integrating community responses with public policy and programs are some of the steps that can be taken to improve and achieve a desired response to violence.

There is broad agreement that interventions should operate at multiple levels, from individual to societal. Interventional discourse should also move from a concentration on the needs of survival and acknowledgement that intervention should aim to transform the relations, norms, and systems that sustain gender inequality and violence of particular interest are interventions that aim to change norms that privilege controlling and aggressive masculine behaviour (Daruwalla, et al 2019).

Such interventions are usually termed 'gender transformative. It involves women, men, young people and aim to develop mass among community and members, leaders, and institutions to change discriminatory social norms, promote gender (UN Women 2010) suggests that for

effective community responses a coordinated community approach needs to be adopted. This approach involves the whole community actively participating and also engaging and utilizing community efforts in the fight against violence. It is vital to improve research in all areas to better understand how this violence affects different groups of women (PAHO 2018). Gender equality is hard to come by as seen in all countries in the world even where women and men have equal rights however when women are given the same opportunity as men they can flourish and become less vulnerable to violence (True 2012). Therefore, rigorous women empowerment and a fight against violence are a necessity and joint action is needed.

In sub-Saharan Africa states joined the global movement to fight against violence by setting up laws and policies that are meant to protect women and girls against violence, however, people barely get justice from these systems and many of them are forced to use the informal justice in the community like customary courts which are aligned to tribe, family or clan membership (Medie 2020). The sub-Saharan region of East Africa and south Africa have the highest rates of violence against women and this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has brought about lockdown .so many women have suffocated in their households during the lockdown.

A study of the United Nations reports on the state of the world population indicates that violence against women in Africa is rampant and reveals that this is mainly due to the existence of discriminatory laws and prejudicial and harmful customs that hide under the blankets of culture. Norms about marriage, the status of women, and social economic conditions contribute to determining the level of violence in Africa (Alesina et al 2016). Human rights in Africa is also characterized by widespread armed conflict, political repression, poverty, social inequality, and persecution of right defenders (Okereke 2006).

With South Africa having the highest rate of violence countries like Uganda, Zimbabwe, and the democratic republic of Congo also follows suit with over 20% of the people aged between 15 and 24 have reported violence from intimate partners (UNFPA 2018).

violence eradication is difficult even where national legislation on violence against women exists for example in Ghana, parliament passed the criminal code amendment bill banning all forms of ritualized enslavement (the air foundation 2005) however, ritualized forced labour practised exists and is still practiced in Ghana (Aird 2005). South Africa also has acts that help

to fight violence against women however they don't provide strategies or take into account social cultural and economic factors within which the violence is embedded. This indicates that most of these laws are just on paper. (Mogale, et al 2012). There is also little reference to and funding of Violence prevention and emergency response plan in Africa even during budgeting priority is given to other sectors and neglecting the sector responsible for issues concerned with women for example in Uganda the ministry of gender, labour, and social development is least funded compared to other sectors in the country.

In communities there are key factors that play important roles in considering response against Violence and these should not be taken for granted as more effort is needed to put across in the fight against Violence. (Raising voices 2002).

In Uganda, violence against women is increased despite the laws and policies that protect victims and survivors. This is due to social-cultural factors, urban poverty, and gender inequality to name but a few. It has further been escalated by the lockdown due to COVID-19. It became more pervasive because people lost jobs, and were frustrated additionally partners and cohabitants were locked together and had no money.

The 2016 Uganda demographic health survey revealed that up to 22% of women aged between 15 and 49 in the country experience a form of violence. This indicates that 1 million women are exposed to violence every year. Furthermore, regarding the 2014 census, the districts of Kitgum, Kasese, and Tororo ranked highest in violence against women statistics.

In Northern Uganda, violence against women has been geared up by the war it has also been on the tremendous rise in the displacement camps. This is mostly due to a breakdown in domestic relations. The majority of civilians continue to live in camps uncertain about their future and how to begin living and accepting violence that is committed against them (Okello & hovil2007).

Community mobilization and intervention have been put up by the government different Nongovernmental organisations and civil society organizations. This is mainly to boost community response and spread awareness of violence against women for example SASA! Raising voices aimed at preventing violence at a community level and working with the community (Michau 2007; Michau, et al). Despite all the efforts have been put up to fight by

different stakeholders but those efforts most times are frustrated by poor funding of violence against women programmers. Most of these programs are donor funded. In 2017 and 2018, the Ministry of labour's gender and social development budget on violence against women came from donors like Irish aid, and the UN however this is not sustainable since donors can pull out at any time.

Therefore, a lot is still needed in the country to put up a strong fight against violence against women. women who experience violence with their partners confront a political economy which undermines their access to justice even a women's rights agenda is working to develop, implement laws, policies that promote equality and empowerment (Ogland, et al 2014).

Soni Sub County is found in the Tororo district along the Tororo -Butaleja border. The majority of the people in the area are peasants who survive on subsistence production and the poverty levels are quite high. Many women in that area have been victims of violence and abuse because it is normalized. This is due to cultural factors and male dominance in the area. There is a belief that it is normal to be beaten by a husband and also the victims are intimidated to report because of societal judgments. The lower social economic status of women has been a risk factor for exposure to intimate partner violence (Amegbor, et al 2019). The area is situated at the extreme border and far from the municipality hence service delivery is limited and slow, and people end up stomaching their issues as perpetrators continue to act.

Preventing violence requires witnesses to come forward yet willingness to report is often undermined by social-cultural sanctions against those suspected of fabricating allegations. (Green, *et al* 2018).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Violence against women is a major and a complex social problem with far-reaching health consequences that need to be addressed (Moreno, *et al* 2005). However, women are at more risk of being abused and violated due to the interplay of factors like poverty, and weak laws. This can lead to long-term stress and hardship for a woman as it hinders her rights to the full enjoyment of life .it is an obstacle to achieving equality, development, peace and as well as fulfilment of women's fights. Though they have been efforts put up against violence against women, Community strategies to stop violence against women are always frustrated by norms

that legitimize male violence and male dominance (Krantz 2005; Fergus 2018; Krahe 2016). These in turn lead to the isolation of survivors and limited social support to seek help hence limiting the efforts that would have worked to fight the vice. Further studies also indicate that victims who seek care from health professionals often have needs that providers don't recognize, don't ask about and don't know how to address.

Woman violence in Soni is normal, the women who encounter violence are perceived as weak and accused of inciting violence. This accounts for low reports and documentation. The severity of the issue is still unknown as many women choose to suffer in silence due to fear of societal judgment. (Green 2018). Though a few cases have been reported to authorities and handled by the public, these are not effective as in most cases the perpetrator ends up walking away free, some people are still not aware that they are being harassed due to cultural dictates. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore community response mechanisms towards any form of acute violence that the women in the community face.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

To explore community-based response and the level of violence against women.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

- 1) To identify socio-cultural factors that accelerate violence against women.
- 2) To establish community measures that have been designed to fight violence against women.
- 3) To examine limitations faced by the community in addressing gender-based violence in the community.

### **1.4 Research questions**

1. What measures have been designed by the community to fight violence against women?
2. What social-cultural factors perpetrate violence against women?
3. What limitations have the community faced in addressing violence against women?

## **1.5 Scope of Study**

### **1.5.1 Geographical scope**

The study was based in Soni sub-county Tororo district and its villages and the content is limited to violence against women in Soni sub-county. The location of the study is suitable because of the high prevalence of violence in the area which has greatly affected and influenced the ways of life of the women.

### **1.5.2 Time scope**

The study was conducted for a period of one month. This will be the time range the area explored within the time the study takes place.

### **1.5.3 Content scope**

The study was mainly focused on how the community has responded to responses towards violence against women. It was done to assess how the community reacts to cases and issues and the different forms of violence which women face, how they solved the cases also how the community handled the perpetrators of violence. Focused on women both victims, who have not experienced any form of violence and the violence that they experience. It also focused on the stakeholders that work to protect women who have faced violence, the strategies they use and their success stories.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Violence against women has been happening for a long period a lot of strategies have been put up and more emphasis on the individual level other than the community as a whole.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to add knowledge to existing knowledge and interventions on how to address violence against women. There has been significant research and issues on violence but that doesn't mean it is fully covered a lot has not and is yet to be uncovered therefore this study is aimed at uncovering and adding more knowledge on interventions and forms of violence. This is because there are areas in Uganda facing violence, and the interventions that have been put in place do not reflect the factors that influence and cause Violence.



The study was done in hope that it will be crucial to the government and policymakers and add more knowledge and strategies. When more research and discoveries are made it helps to ease the work of government and policymakers and enables them to make decisions that rhyme with the current real problems faced.

The study should enable the student to attain a bachelor's degree in social work and social administration. This particular work is important to the social work profession and is a great requirement for a student's graduation.

This was carried out to encourage more community-based intervention strategies and also to put more emphasis on the education of the masses and awareness creation about violence against women to encourage more response.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is about the revision of literature analysing what has been written about violence by different authors per the objectives and research questions. Using a system theoretical framework. The researcher looks at how responses, sociocultural factors and constraints are faced in addressing the vice. The literature will be obtained from books, journals.

#### **2.1 Violence against women**

Violence against women refers to any harm or form of aggravation onto women and girls. violence against women contradicts the principles of dignity and rights against inhumane treatment. It's pervasive yet the least recognized form of injustice. Studies suggest that it is history repeating itself, this shows the historically unequal power balance between men and women since time immemorial women have always been viewed as a weaker sex.

Violence against women is a widespread problem in Uganda and this promotes gender inequality and human rights violation. It is a widespread problem affecting Ugandans in different areas like refugee camps, and villages. In 2016 demographic survey reveals that 22% of women in the country have experienced some form of violence. The most common forms of violence in Uganda are domestic violence and sexual violence. other forms that are underrated include cyberbullying and blackmail. Many celebrities have been victims where their private photos are exposed to the public and they are shamed.

Violence has far-reaching and devastating effects on the victim beyond physical injuries like depression, suicide, low esteem, and post-traumatic disorder. Violence against women and its effect is not new. However, it has been observed that violence against women forms a partner of behaviour which violates the rights of women, limits participation and Socialization and damages their health.

Some of the causes include substance abuse, discriminatory gender roles and widespread acceptance of violence by the community (World Bank 2020). violence is seen as a normal occurrence in some communities in Uganda and it may also be seen as a form of discipline for example wife beating where some women have been brainwashed to believe that they are not

loved if not beaten by their spouse. This has been reinforced by patriarchal systems of males being superior to women forever. Infact there is little research and interventions in the way patriarchy reinforces male dominance and privilege (S. Namy 2017).

Laws to curb this violence has been set up over the years, for example, the domestic violence act of 2010 and the gender-based violence act of 2016 but the laws are. subdued and most of them remain weak and don't entirely provide protection to victims. Many victims find it hard to get justice due to the barriers they face barriers that manifest in form of economic, sociocultural, and financial hindrances. More is still needed rigorous research is needed to guide the effective formulation and implementation of interventions to fight against this violence (Ellsberg 2005).

## **2.2 Social and Cultural factors that influence violence against women**

Violence against women happens in all societies, communities and groups. Socio-cultural factors dictate behaviours and acts by people in the community. Society tends to create unspoken rules which determine the status and relationships of women. The different social-cultural factors including norms, religious practices, beliefs and gender roles, bride price, female genital mutilation, alcoholism and drug use are all risk factors that increase the vulnerability of women towards violence all this work to lower the status of women. (Qaisarani 2010). In so many societies tradition has combined with greed to form the worst forms of injustice against women like wife burning, grabbing widow assets, wife beating.

According to Bloomquist (1989) Gender Based Violence can be seen as the result of patriarchal social constructs which define the relationship between women and men as one of subordination and domination. If an individual's identity is based on exercising control over another then that individual is likely to be tempted to make sure that their sense of control is maintained. The society's of powerlessness and societies emphasis on violent imagery increases the temptation to control women in order to assert manhood and a sense of personal power that is not being achieved outside of the home.

Most form of violence against women is a result of society dictating masculinity over femininity. Society has it that men are superior to women for example in some cultures it's okay for a man to discipline a woman, a woman isn't supposed to have more finances than to

the man, she is a homemaker who is supposed to make a marriage work and failure in marriage is blamed upon the woman.

Violence remains shrouded in cultural silence yet its effects are devastating to the victims (UNFPA 2021). Qaisarani (2010) argues that male dominance is taught from childhood as boys are not given the same opportunity and privileges as girls as evidenced by the way society treats a female and a male child. Therefore children grow up knowing their status in their community.

Kasyoka (2021) points out that women have been forced to tolerate and even rationalize violence that is meted out against them. Society is deeply engrossed in beliefs and gender roles and marriage which is coupled with violence. (Aye 2018) reveals this has deterred victims from seeking help. In most societies, women are seen as child bears, and they are responsible for taking care of their children and husbands. (Qaisarani 2010) adds that it is also a working couple between a working couple a woman is not supposed to rest after work she is supposed to continue house chores even though she is tired while the man rests.

(Kasyoka 2021) explains that Social and cultural factors create barriers for women who are seeking help in dimensions of political, social, and economic due to poverty, corruption and illnesses. An average woman is supposed to be submissive to her husband and docile. This explains why most abused women tend to be less educated and more dependent on men this puts them in a tough position where they cannot escape abuse (stay syndrome).

A (MIFUMI 2012) study reveals that In Uganda, socio-cultural factors like female Genital mutilation, and bride price have contributed to violence and have been greatly associated with intimate partner violence. (Akoeing 2003) adds that it is supposed to keep women at bay and reduces women's sexual pleasure and also the whole process is risky. Many girls end up dying due to excessive bleeding or some get infected and die to lack of proper treatment. Since FGM is unacceptable in Uganda, it is in secrecy and many girls suffer the consequences in silence it is a common practice in the Sebei region of Uganda. Many women in the district of Tororo and Kasese have suffered great domestic violence than in any other districts.

All women are prone to violence but some women are at a greater risk of violence compared to others for example elderly, women from the LGBTQ society who suffer from violence like correctional rape to correct their sexuality which is beloved to be a deviation from normal

sexual functioning., Refugees migrants and women from ethnic minorities. These groups face the worst form of violence compared to other women due to social-cultural dictates. Social constructs determine their position and put them at the lowest rank making them very vulnerable to violence

According to (Madanda et al, 2009) Violence is performed by relatives, partners, family or community. Norms and tradition can challenge violence or support it for example traditional and extended family may offer protection and safety but also be a form of insecurity to the women as most of them are deeply entrenched in social and cultural norms like widow inheritance, grabbing assets from widows, female genital mutilation and early marriages.

Lastly (Maguele, et al 2020) points out that it is important to point out once and ways of overcoming the Vice, violence as a result of sociocultural factors should be solved in that context of socio-cultural. Responses should also engage community-based engagement to enhance awareness, and socio-network and promote role models. Direct involvement if the community brings in positive results as the community knows better what they need and can easily pinpoint victims.

### **2.3 Response and prevention of violence**

Violence against women is a global problem and a violation of human rights and women's rights. Responses need to be undertaken to reverse the effects and mitigate future occurrences of violence against women, therefore, providing a haven for women (Garcia \_ Moreno 2015). It is very dangerous its effects are devastating to women as it hurts them and their families and the communities, they live in. (WHO 2018). The devastating effects can be mitigated not only by professional responses but also by the contributions of paraprofessionals and community workers. Community leaders play a key role in setting standards for acceptable behaviour and implementing justice for women.

Several approaches are effective for at least one form of violence and may be effective across multiple forms of violence. Therefore, different responses can be used to solve different cases of violence Eliminating violence is critical and vital for achieving the SDG health targets (WHO 2018). A study by 2010 study by UN WOMEN revealed that an effective response should include coordinated community response, coordinated community response programs

engage the whole community and entire community efforts to bring out an enhanced understanding of violence against women. Involving the community brings awareness and enables first-hand information to be retrieved. (Decker 2018) points that It empowers individuals and groups to facilitate change (Reena 2020) suggests that Primary approaches and interventions are done at the early stages mainly to change behaviours and attitudes towards women and ensure successful interventions and prevention of violence instead of focusing on the aftermath of the violence. Research has to be done on the beliefs and norms of different communities do as to implement the right response because what may work for one community may not work for another.

According to 2016 study by Michau she suggests the different five principles of prevention policy and programming which includes social-ecological reviews of violence, intervention, theory models based on evidence acquired and finally aspirational programming. This means that response should not be at individual level but should include the society because different system works together to subordinate women. 2018 further initiates that early intervention and response have the potential to reduce the rate and number of victims at the population level. He further states that based on early childhood mistreatment. Violence can occur in future as a result of imitating what happened during childhood hence all interventions.

Elimination of violence against women and girls is central due to the positive effect that arises out of it. Education and empowerment of women make them less vulnerable and they can stand up and stand firm in the face of violence of women-centred advocacy and involvement of women in the fight against violence and drafting of programs that encourage women's participation is important be taken as priority (Ellsberg 2015). Spotting women who are at a high risk of violence can be done using race ethnicity and age. Government can work out issues that subordinate women by spotting out the political social and economic structures (Moreno 2015) Tackling violence against women shouldn't be seen as an option it should be added to health programs and social programs of the country.

Every individual has an important role in challenging appropriate behaviours and violence taking into account the women's groups and community-based organizations which can bridge the gap between personnel and victims of violence (Grant & Marshall 2021) They can carry out community reaches and involve community activities in the programs can cause a dramatic

change in awareness, behaviour change hence reducing risks. Grass root organizations like MIFUMI should collaborate with the government. This is because these organizations are aware of vulnerable areas and have data about the violence they should be encouraged and given funding.

Lastly (Heidi 2016) encourages taking into consideration the aspect of women and girl-led groups and activism, organization and technocrats tend to shift from using women-led activism at the grass root level and instead resort to using experts to handle the matter. Experts most times miss out on the critical and first-hand Information which is acquired from the community.

## **2.4 Limitations to the fight against violence**

### **2.4.1 Lack of political will and leadership**

Governments tend to ignore violence against women as a priority. As they look at other issues which they think are of more importance. (UN women 2011). This has resulted in inappropriate laws, poor funding and bill that just end on paperwork. In Uganda, the Ministry of Gender, labour and social development are the least funded and it frustrates all efforts in the fight against violence. Most of the funding of the different organizations and also to the ministry tends to come from donor organizations which at least have stringent rules and so much competition for the limited funds among several organisations .

The laws and policies that have been set by the government and people in power do not entirely protect women from forms of violence, they are taken for granted for example the adoption of legislation to regulate marriage and divorce has been pending for a long time. In addition to that the marriage and divorce bill which fixes a minimum age for both sexes, gives women the right to choose partners but does not protect women from polygamy and bride price, violence keeps occurring despite the presence of these laws. The government has failed to fight corruption in courts and justice areas and many people end up using the customary courts or Informal but these customary courts don't offer the adequate justice and support victims need.

### **2.4.2 Gender inequality and social norms**

Gender Inequality and norms are a reason why violence keeps on happening. There is a direct correlation between norms and attitudes and condoning male authority and violence they work

hand in hand and determine the status of women in society. This has led to underreporting of notorious violence which makes it hard to get accurate data for planning gender fighting programs. (Htun & Jensenius 2020). The different gender stereotypes can be a hindrance to programs that have been set to eliminate violence against women. (Fontes & Plumer 2010) explains that norms can determine whether a victim will report violence or not or whether he will be discovered or not. This is to the fact that violence in one culture may not be in another, for example, Female Genital mutilation is seen as a culture among the sabinys in eastern Uganda and many girls will do it willingly believing it's right while others culture the practice maybe despicable for example Buganda elongate their labia minora instead of cutting it in a practice called "visiting the bush or pulling".

(Arisi & Oromareghake 2011) points out that Gender norms in many communities have it that women have to be dependent on men and submissive, however, (Ratcliffe et al 2007) further notes that this has lowered the income status of women and employment status as a result of gender biases. Women are not able to build assets yet asset building uplifts the standard of living. women with low status suffer violence due to dependency syndrome.

(Jejeebhoy& Santhya 2018) state that different strategies have been set up to challenge the complex community programs to fight violence against and to change the deeply entrenched gender issues however many women in the community are okay with violence as they see it as a norm and culture and the community also uses violence to reinforce " good girl behaviour. (Illika 2005; Sommer et al 2018). This makes the programs flop as many tend to ignore them in the name of preserving culture.

According to UBOS 2019, Gender stereotypes require continuous education and sensitization. Gender inequality limits the ability of women to fully participate and benefit from development programs in Uganda and the world at large due to the patriarchal religion and marriage institutions.

#### **2.4.3 Shortage and limited funding**

Financial woes and constraints have always affected the fight against violence. (Cauli 2009) suggests that violence against women tends to increase when there is financial retardation in the household and community. The same situation with the programs aimed to fight violence against women falls short of funding. Fighting violence requires a given amount of funding



and is very costly. A 2019 report by the World Bank organization estimates that most developing countries may have to use 3.7 % of their GDP more than what the government spend on education. Failure to address the vice leads to more costs in terms of health and labour.

In Uganda, grass root organizations are at the forefront of the fight against violence. In a 2021 survey by OXFAM, where 200 women's rights organizations were chosen and surveyed. It is estimated that 60% of them lacked funding and staff to operate and run the organization and programs. This makes it hard for them to access victims of violence in the zones of vulnerability. Local women's organizations receive a fraction of funding which hinders their active engagement in decision-making and burying opportunities to engage effectively in the fight against violence.

Various stakeholders and organizations have come forward to identify and fund the cause as they realize the crisis and the need to do away with it. Action aid (2019) argues that it is difficult to publicly find available data that shows funding for these programs it is therefore hard to hold organizations and donors accountable.

#### **2.4.4 Poverty among women**

Poverty is a contributing factor to violence against women as it only increases the vulnerability to violence. Various groups of women face violence on daily basis because they have fewer option for leaving violence. A 2020 study by UN Women reveals that Girls and women living in poverty face sexual exploitation, trafficking and g, intimate partner violence with little or no means of rescue.

According to (Muller, 2013) Poverty is a multidimensional aspect of life, its psychological, political and moral aspects. The lack of basic sustainable features of a functioning way of life can lead to irreparable damage. Poverty is the main obstacle to the full realization of women's equality -- manifesting itself in poor health, low levels of education, lack of access to potable water, food insecurity and unemployment. Poverty undeniably intertwines with violence. Its connection can be complex and difficult to influence.

Women and girls living in poverty may reside in unsafe and dangerous environments which increase of their risk to violence. They often have to walk long distances through isolated places to gather firewood or collect water and as a result, they are at risk of sexual assault.

Furthermore, women and girls in poverty are often tasked with countless household chores and this may create problems within the household which regularly leads to domestic violence. Sadly, these women and girls do not have many opportunities to leave violent relationships with their partners because they lack income and resources.

## **2.5 Gaps in the research**

The research emphasizes women-led programming which is led by the groups at grass root level but most of the interventions are expertise as experts are the ones who take over the whole process and dictate.

The research tends to focus on universal ways of addressing violence against women. The different universal theories and yet different societies may view the issue of violence in different formats hence not everything applies.

There is less focus on the inclusion of males in the fight against violence most of the research talks about women and men being left out yet they are the perpetrators and need to be taught too.

Most of the interventions stated are focusing on the late or after-effects of violence. Most literature is aiming at that yet there is a need for more emphasis on primary responses to violence.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter deals with how, where, and when the research was carried out, methodology refers to and involves discussing and analysing tools and data that have been collected. It includes the means of data collection, analysis, sampling techniques, different tools and methods that will be employed, data processing and analysis and ethical issues that will arise during the process of data collection.

#### **3.1 Study design**

The researcher adopted a qualitative study approach because it explores and provides an understanding of how a group of people in Soni Sub County respond to violence. The design was adopted because it provided a deeper understanding and detailed information about violence in the area and how the community responds. It also gives easy access to respondents and exploration of the cases of violence and the response to violence.

The researcher also adopted the cross-sectional design because it was appropriate for in assessing the level of community responses in addressing violence against women in the area. Several respondents were selected and key respondents were given a platform to give their opinions about violence against them and how the community responds to them.

#### **3.2 Study area**

The area of study Soni sub-county in Tororo district which is located in the eastern region of Uganda is an area with high rates of violence against women. Tororo district is bordered by Kenya to the East, Bugiri district to the west, Butaleja to the North and Busia to the south. According to the 2014 census, Tororo has a population of 41906 people. Soni Sub County is located at the extreme border of Tororo and Butaleja and is boarded by Kirewa, Nagongera, Budaka, and Peta sub-counties.

### **3.3 Study population**

The target population in the area included men, women, and local and community leaders. Koul (1998) defines the study population as all persons targeted in the study, the population will be chosen to be on their knowledge therefore study population refers to an entire group of individual events or objects having a common characteristic. The target population of the study were individuals aged 15 years and above both women and men since am exploring the responses to violence against women. The research intended to reach 25 respondents, however the researcher managed to get 20 individuals who provided the needed information for the research.

### **3.4 Sampling**

The sample size is a selection from the population of interest a sample size of men. In this study, purposive sampling was used and a total of four representatives from each village in the Subcounty from three villages of Kiwir, Mukuwa and Nagoke participants will be selected for the study.

Purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective s purposive sampling the research will be able to select participants based on the characteristics of the population of study or helped to go focus on the characteristics of the population that are of interest and can give the data needed for the Study men and women. Purposive sampling was chosen since the area of study is well known by the researcher it will also save time and provide needed and first-hand information from the respondents who are informed about the violence in the area.

### **3.5 Methods of data collection**

#### **3.5.1 In-depth interviews**

The researcher employed in-depth interviews using unstructured questionnaires with open-ended questions. This enabled the researcher to get more in-depth information on all the issues and responses the community takes against violence. The researcher interviewed and engaged with a total number of 20 respondents.

### **3.5.2 Key informant interviews**

The key informants who will be interviewed include two community combats workers of Mifumi, the police unit at the police station in Kirewa village, the Local council 1 chairman, the officer in charge at Kirewa police station, the LC 111 of Soni sub-county.

The interview guide will be used to get information from the respondent and the researcher will employ face-to-face interviews with the people.

### **3.6 Tools of data collection**

#### **3.6.1 Interview guide**

The researcher employed an interview guide to collect data using in-depth interviews, this tool enabled the researcher to get data from local community members, women, and men on the issue of violence and response to violence against women. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that enabled the respondents to have free expression.

#### **3.6.2 Key Informant guide**

This tool of data collection was mainly used for key informants who have been chosen to participate in this research, it was an effective tool to get information and data from the key informants, it consisted of open-ended but interrogative questions to help establish the opinions of the leaders and community heads concerning community responses to violence against women.

### **3.7 Validity and reliability**

The intended questionnaires and interview guide were first assessed to ensure that they were in line with the theme and objectives and questions of the whole research.

### **3.8 Document review**

This included the review of various reports and other materials with useful information for the formulation of the background and the development of research objectives and this method allowed the researcher to review a number of secondary sources of information for the study. This is because it is more cost-effective more cost effective than social surveys, in-depth

interviews or participant observation. The use of documentary methods refers to the analysis of documents in addition, Payne & Payne (2004) describe the documentary method as the techniques used to categorize, investigate, interpret and identify the limitations of physical questions. Any literature about the topic under investigation was reviewed to assist in the research.

### **3.9 Data Management**

Data management refers to the organizing of the raw facts collected, data checked and correcting errors in the data collected. This process ensures that data is made clean or free from any form of mistakes, data undergoes editing, checking for missing data, coding and data entry and finally data transformation. The researcher ensured to process her collected to minimal errors so as to attain and present data correctly.

### **3.10 Data analysis and processing**

Data analysis represented the whole process of handling, organizing and making sense of the data collected. The data was processed with uniformity, completeness accuracy and consistency. The qualitative data were interpreted and analysed by categorizing data into small sets of themes. This involved examining, analysing and interpreting themes into contextual data. The research also consisted of content and narrative analysis methods to get a consistent and clear interpretation of the data.

The narrative analysis involved making sense of the stories that were presented by the respondents from the interviews. This involved taking into account the context of each story presented and the different experiences and opinions of each respondent. The researcher listened to stories about how the community responded to cases of violence against women from correspondents, observed and made conclusions to the stories. Content analysis was also used this involved analysing interviews, audio, records, images and text categorizing behavioural data into texts and making sense of them.

### **3.11 Ethical consideration**

The data collection and research took place only after receiving consent from the participants. The correspondents were informed first about the intentions to get permission. Consent was given freely and voluntarily and respondents had to understand what was asked of them.

Confidentiality of the information given to the respondents and was highly respected as the researcher utilised pseudo names and subjects were free to withdraw from the research if it did not favour them or made them uncomfortable. Particular care was also given to vulnerable women with disabilities for example the deaf, blind and also those who have undergone trauma and are recovering.

Permission to conduct surveys and research in the area was sought from the responsible leaders of the areas in the sub-county. Respondents were also promised anonymity. This was a form of protection for the subjects from possible harm that would result from their participation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of this study, the demographic particulars of the respondents, lived experiences of women who experienced violence, the responses by the community members towards violence in the area, the measures that have been taken to solve the issue of violence in Soni sub-county, their limitation and evidence on how successful they have been in violence against women in Soni Sub- County. The chapter also presents the responses and key findings from the key informant interview the para social workers, The LC3 Chairperson and the LC1 chairperson of the village, and the OC of Kirewa sub-county police which happens to be the police station used by residents of Soni Sub- County, the names used in explaining the study are pseudo names meaning they are not the real names of the respondents.

#### **4.1 Characteristics of study participants**

The study comprised 20 respondents and 5 key informants and 15 respondents. The primary respondents were basing on their knowledge and experiences of violence the respondents were between the ages of 15 to 45. Most of them were still married to their partners despite all the violence that has been witnessed of them were still married, most of the women had married off at the early age of 16 years, and most of them relied on the peasantry as a source of livelihood. A few of the respondents owned small-scale businesses. Only four of the respondents managed to reach secondary school while the rest ended in primary or had no formal education at all. Most of the respondents were married off early from the tender age of 14 years and are still married, only 3 women were single and 1 woman was widowed. This showed that marriage is highly cherished in the sub-county.



**Table 1: Characteristics of respondents**

No	Name	Age	Number of dependents	Marital Status	Level of education	Source of livelihood
1	Adongo	28	04	married	O level	Tailor
2	Nyakecho	17	0	single	O level	Peasant
3	Achola	45	0	Married	No formal education	Peasant
4	Aboth	45	7	married	Technical	Carpenter
5	Namboozo	20	0	married	secondary	Peasant
5	Namunawa	36	3	married	secondary	Peasant/saleswoman
7	Okello	38	5	Separated	Primary	Peasant
8	Adongo	27	1	single	Primary	Peasant
9	Amal	25	0	Single	O level	Poultry keeping
10	Nyapendi	16	2	married	primary	hairdresser
11	Nyasuna	17	2	married	Primary	Housewife
12	Amita	40	3	Separated	No formal education	Peasant
13	Awor	45	4	widowed	Primary	Shop owner
14	Nyamiel	37	5	Married	Primary	Peasant
15	Abbo	32	3	married	Primary	Peasant

## 4.2 Community measures to fight against violence

In this part of the research, the research shows the different ways how the community responds to violence against women. It explores the violence in the area and how the community reacts towards it, the measures and actions that are used to prevent violence .

### 4.2.1 Community Dialogues

Community dialogue is a forum for community members to discuss their problems face to face and identify the root causes of a problem and derive solutions to the problems. The study revealed that community dialogue is a method that has been used in the Soni sub-county for solving many violent crimes because most people trust their local leaders this is because words can create an impact especially when used by people who have power and authority. The community dialogues are organized on and clan basis and extended family circles. Soni sub-county is a patriarchal society where men are put above women, women and girls are seen as inferior and it's easier to treat them with disrespect and violence. The dialogue is organized by community leaders and problems and solutions are brought to the round table by different community members.

Amal one of the respondents revealed that during the dialogue people talk about rights and laws and encourage peace in the community.

*“We are encouraged and given advice. Most of these dialogues even involve the police who teach us about our rights and how women should be treated and how we should handle anger. Most of the time we end these dialogues when the conflicting parties have reconciled”.*

These community dialogues have been effective in the fight against violence and they have helped to maintain harmony among the people. Community dialogues foster in communities the sense of being heard and understood despite the difference while gaining an insight and perspectives of others.

One of the respondents commented:

*“In these dialogues, everyone is given a platform all sides of the stories are heard. We are encouraged to speak our minds and bring suggestions to problems. When it involves the community, we are able to come to a resolution and get an understanding”*

Dialogues also provide an opportunity to collectively and creatively plan and implement systems that maximize and minimize disadvantages instead of resorting to potentially harmful and unhealthy competition.

#### **4.2.2 Use of police services**

The police is always there to maintain law and order and arrest and investigate cases. Soni Sub County does not have a police station yet because it's a newly created sub county, however they use the one for Kirewa Sub County. However, a study by American Refugee Council (2005) in northern Uganda established that there is an overwhelming distrust of the authorities and the police by the local community who are conservative and prefer to settle cases of sexual and gender-based violence like defilement, rape without the involvement of the police or local authorities. The study particularly established that this distrust is a result of the high level of corruption and nepotism associated with the police and local authorities. In addition, the victims or the community is are encouraged from reporting to the police or LC court because of the costs involved.

A respondent noted:

*“The police help is supposed to help victims of violence to but they help offered is not enough. they have helped some victims attain justice but most of the cases are not handled at all as most of them want payments first yet most of the victims are poor “They charge money for everything from transportation to making a simple statement and at in most cases they receive bribes from the perpetrator and dissolve the case.”*

The victim is left in fear once this happens and may be subjected to violence again for reporting the offender, this mainly happens with married people.

*“My son reported his father for beating me up. he was put in the cell, two days later we were shocked when he was released, he came back home and disowned his son and chased me from my marital home after beating me up again”.*  
*Nyapendi narrates.*

Police needs to be trained on how to handle such cases and properly supervised because they can be used as a channel for fighting violence against women. The corruption in the system needs to be monitored so as victims can easily report cases of violence instead of staying silent.

#### **4.2 3 Public punishment of offenders**

The public punishes the perpetrator this depends on the severity of the situation. This is more of a reaction to violence. The research revealed that people in the community tend to punish offenders of violence depending and the occurrence. In a situation where the violence causes severe physical harm to the victim, the community gets angry and pursues the offender, punishments include flogging Fines or chasing the offender out of the village. This has somehow created fear among offenders and has helped to reduce the violence in the sub-county.

Adongo recollects how the community saved her from her husband who was hacking her using a machete.

*My husband suspected me to be cheating with another man yet he is the one who had been caught with other people's women, he hacked me with a panga I managed to run but he had cut me so much, He was on the community and wanted list he had to pay for all the damages and also, he paid fine to my parents. He was also flogged and all his cattle were sold to cater for my treatment, I came back after a year and he has changed so much that I think it was a lesson to him*

This is one of the ways the community tries to prevent and avoid further violence against women. This acts as a lesson to the people as they would receive the same punishments in case, they practiced the same.

#### **4.2.4 Community volunteers and quasi paralegals**

A group of individuals were placed by MIFUMI organisation combats under the Mifumi Women Network in the different villages of Soni sub-county. These combats bridge the gap between the organisation and locals, Mifumi organisation placed representatives in the community to help them monitor any violence cases and reports. The study showed that knowledge from volunteers increased attitudes changed and increased confidence in women to stand up against violence.

Balbina is one such woman who reports;

*“I was put in charge of the Mukuwa village. I always solve a problem not only do I help women and counsel them but also children who are undergoing violence. We were trained and given the necessary skills on how to solve and handle cases of violence, we also help to do sensitization in different gatherings and we also help to follow up on an issue of violence.”*

Extensive training has to be done to equip these combats with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to handle cases of violence in the community. Women are able to report cases because they trust these volunteers. The volunteers are a sustainable resource for identifying and referring violence victims to, the organisation and service. Akoth who was a beneficiary of such narrates how her daughter was helped after a gang rape.

*“My daughter was a victim of gang rape it happened on Christmas night, and people were just laughing and calling her prostitute because she had gone to a disco, my daughter was broken, and the offenders were known people in the village. However, I have involved the combats in the community and they helped with court procedures which would have been hard for me. We got justice something that we had given up on. The combats are helpful for this community”.*

Community combats help to build a bridge between the organisation and the locals because they are the representation of the organisation as they organise community programs for the girls, women and families to teach women about their rights and how to fight for their rights (Betron 2001) With proper training and safety mechanism community volunteers are able to

raise awareness, facilitate and support survivors and potentially help to prevent harmful practices.

#### **4.2.5 Empowerment of women**

The study revealed that economic and social empowerment works hand in hand with women in involvement in leadership positions in the community. Economically empowered women have less worry about basic needs at home. This builds esteem and confidence among women which makes them participate in strategic development and also take up leadership positions. The study also revealed that organized groups give women an opportunity to take up leadership positions for example chairperson, treasurer and many more. Women who earn an income and help themselves and their families have means to get out of bad marriages or not to marry at all, when women have more options, this decreases their likelihood of being in an abusive relationship. (Rahman et al, 2011) Poor women are most vulnerable to violence.

*“I also think that economic empowerment programs have contributed towards us women in leadership. I would have never been the LC1 chairperson. If I was still worried about where to get basic needs. I am a mentor to so many women and am also taken as a leader because of my ability in society. When we have our money, we do not suffer from violence most women are stuck in marriages and endure violence because of the logistics that come along, it’s also because men make them feel that they cannot survive on their own”. Said the LC 1 chairperson of Kiwir*

The study revealed that empowerment programs have been very key in promoting empowerment, women have joined VSLA typical one called *mere* which is a rotating savings group. Many women have been able to support each other in farms, burials and also with daily basic needs from these economic groups. When women and girls are empowered to lead their lives and speak their minds and determine the choices vulnerability to violence reduces.

#### **4.2.6 Use of Customary Courts**

These courts have been used at the forefront for fighting violence and reporting cases. Many communities have a legal system that deals with violence and abuse at community level other than formal systems. The community leaders play a key role in setting standards of acceptable behaviour and implementing community level justice (Grant & Marshall 2019). Clan heads and local leaders (*kwar nono*) are tasked to ensure harmony within the clans therefore members are engaged in disciplinary committees. Women who have been severely battered or are facing

violence can report to these courts though most of them base their judgments on cultural norms and have little or no knowledge about the international declaration of human rights. The research revealed that they have been tremendous in solving marital affairs or any forms of violence that that cause that threaten the harmony of the clans.

*“I belong to the Lakwar clan and we are supposed to report any problems that we face to our head kwar nono we even have a full committee so if there are any violent cases the clan members come together and we resolve the cases, they do not charge money so many people prefer than the police station which is full of corruption” Nyamiel stated*

Victims who are found guilty are made to pay fines or punished in the public or chased from the clan. This has reduced violence because people fear the consequences of the clan. It is vital that all organisations and institutions within the society consider how they maybe condoning violence and what they can do to prevent it. These courts can be of good use hence they should incorporate with awareness programs and also encouraged to adopt a charter against violence which they can use to judge crimes of violence.

#### **4.2.7 Isolation of the victim from the perpetrator**

According to the study findings woman who is constantly experiencing violence in the community is removed from her danger zone and given a safe haven by the community members. Isolation of victims from danger zone or removing them from their offenders helps some victims who are stuck with no options to rescue. This involves identification of individuals who are in danger While holding the perpetrator accountable. This is majorly done by the paralegals with the community members who rise an alarm.

*“A woman who is constantly experiencing domestic violence is encouraged to go back to her parents and the partner is expected to go and pick her up from her parent's home after a dialogue which will involve counselling and guidance by the elders who come to a mutual agreement with them. Most of the times they are encouraged to stay at the LC chairman s home or a friend home.*

Balbina one of the combats also stated:

*“ MIFUMI also has shelter for the women who have been victims of violence. we I identify the victim and give them a counselling however when the vice happens repeatedly, we are forced to remove the victim and keep her in a safe zone as we investigate and help her seek justice. Victims in these shelters they are taught skills like tailoring, hair dressing, given counselling sessions so that they can recover and be able to stand and support themselves”.*

MIFUMI works hand in hand with the community to provide shelter to the victims of violence victims especially rape victims and victims of severe domestic violence isolation of the victim helps to remove her from danger as she recuperates, isolation also involves counselling of the victim and keeping in the designated safe shelters or encouraging the victim to go back parents' homes in the case of domestic violence. Community members also house their colleagues who facing violence.

#### **4.2.8 Counselling of victims**

The research revealed that counselling has been effectively used in the Soni sub-county to comfort victims of violence. This was done through community action teams who have been trained by MIFUMI. The study revealed that community reference groups like aunts, uncles, and clan heads also provided counselling and reconciliation services to women who have been affected and traumatized by violence. Counselling is at the individual level and at times they include the family members of the battered woman. Counselling is also performed by women elders in the village and the community combats.

#### **4.2.9 Creation of awareness in the community sensitization**

Education and enlightenment of individuals about violence are one of the strategies used to fight against violence in Soni Subcounty. This has also helped in changing and breaking the myths that people have about women. Soni is a patriarchal society, there were numerous beliefs about women some of which were extremely dangerous to the wellbeing of women. The attitudes that underpin domestic violence are often deeply rooted and hard to change and therefore rigorous awareness and awareness programs is needed to break the myths and misconceptions (Grant & Marshall, 2019).

A community paralegal said:

*“Awareness creation is a way to do away with these myths, we organize campaigns and gather people in churches, schools, and hospitals this activity is done every after two weeks in the different villages. We aim to inform people about the dangers they are exposing women to violence ”.*

The study revealed that women are now able to report violence cases like never before because they are now aware of their rights unlike before when most of them were just silent. In a strategy report by HM government (2016) it is revealed that engaging the public through

awareness campaigns and bystander programs can provide additional opportunities for victims of violence and abuse to receive help they need and tackling violence is a joint venture that cannot be done by the government or organisation alone. The study revealed The Mifumi organisation has placed community combats that teach women about their rights and needs .in trading centres, church gatherings. Everyone has an important role in challenging in appropriate behaviour.

#### **4.2.10 Formation of organized groups**

The study revealed that MIFUMI is working with 7 women groups and most of them they have supported the formation and ensured the sustainability of the groups. This helps women to easily access service and economic empowerment programs from organizations and government.” The programmer’s officer MIFUMI pointed out that it is easier to work with groups because a lot can be done as a group than individually working as an individual. Working with groups is also easy because it makes monitoring easy.

*"We encourage these women to form groups and support each other when it comes to needing for example financial support, when one has lost a loved one, these groups meet once every week to discuss they also provide an avenue for them to discuss violence against women".*

The study revealed that groups have a binding component that makes them support each other and work together to lift other women. Working in groups gives women a platform where they can discuss different issues of GBV and also find solutions for them as women.

#### **4.2.11 Capacity building and advocacy**

Capacity building and advocacy are done by MIFUMI through their community-based action teams. All these projects are geared towards empowering women to address violence. MIFUMI has mentored so many women leaders and also encourages community members to be involved in community development activities.

Namunawa who was one of the aspirants for the LC 1 position said:

*"My husband was against me joining politics because he thought only men would be entitled to politics, men were also against me when I campaigned for a position but later when dialogue was organized by MIFUMI he started supporting me and even campaigned for me".*



Women in leadership can advocate for the rest of the other women facing violence in the community. Many women mentored by MIFUMI have mentored other women and also encouraged them to get into politics and acquire leadership positions.

*“We build the capacities of women in groups as we encourage them to take up leadership positions for example group chairperson, treasurer and other leadership positions. We also support production capacity”.*

### **4.3 Limitations to the fight against violence**

#### **4.3.1 Corruption among the stake holders**

The study revealed that many forms of corruption affects both men and women but given the unequal gender relations in society women are in many settings exposed to corruption than men. (SIDA 2015) states that Corruption disproportionately affects those who are living in poverty and those who are poor, illiterate and do not know their rights. When a woman does not have enough funds to spare for the corrupt officials, they risk being exposed to physical abuse, sexual exploitation. Women lower status in society makes them vulnerable to corruption. The study revealed that there was a lot of corruption in the village committee starting to from the sub-county police, most perpetrators just spend a night in the police cell and as long as they're told to pay a little fine to the police officers they are released. There is no accountability for violent actions .

Towards women. This is because the cases are forgotten with time.

Amita recalls when she experienced such an incident:

*“My son reported his father who had beaten me up to the police, the man was released two days later claiming he was treated well and bragging about the many friends he has at the station he just had to pay small fine to get out of police. He later beat up his wife again for reporting him and disowned his son and the police didn't react.” I no longer trust the police because it does not offer protection to me when my husband comes back home, he just beats, me up in anger for reporting him, I become the village laughing stalk all my efforts are futile”.*

Such instances have made women stay silent for fear of judgment and loss of marriages. The victims are not given protection from their offenders and also do not get justice, this accounts for the low rates of violence cases at the police station and also to the courts of law.

### **4.3.2 Poverty**

The Study revealed that poverty exacerbates violence against women. Several women were suffering in silence because they are unable to make it out of abusive relationships due to their financial disabilities. Violence interrupts opportunities for education and employment. Most of the women depend on the peasantry and most of them are housewives with no formal source of income. This has left them vulnerable and largely dependent on men who feel they have power over them. Poverty and dependence are factors that aggravate violence by limiting both access to help, and choices for survivors who may not afford to pay for required services or will have to return to and depend on the abuser after receiving assistance.

One of the respondents in an in-depth interview narrated:

*“A woman was severely beaten to death by her husband after when she tried to divorce after an argument. The husband woman was reported to the court, but justice was never served because the deceased family could not afford court dues, the perpetrator walks around the village freely and with time the horrific incident is fading away from people's memories.” She is not the only one as many women run to their families for help when faced with violence however mist times they are chased back to return if the man was benefit as they don't want to lose their source of livelihood”.*

With such feedback, it shows how poverty has played a great role in the continuous violence that women suffer. The findings also indicated that women with no credible source of income are vulnerable to all sorts of violence. A woman can endure all sorts of violence because she has little or no option and feels vulnerable and unworthy without the abuser.

### **4.3.3 Low levels of education.**

The research findings revealed that women in the Soni sub-county are uneducated the biggest percentage did not go beyond primary school, and a few who made it to secondary did not finish O level, Education creates awareness Lack of education has limited opportunities and leaves women vulnerable, poor and ignorant about their wellbeing. The research revealed that most women. Many women were unaware of their rights due to illiteracy and they cannot change the systems that oppress them.

*“Women in this village are less educated, the highest most of them go is ordinary level otherwise most girls stop at primary school this is because of Poverty and poor-quality education in the village. The schools are in poor*

*condition and the secondary school is in Kirewa so children have to walk long distances daily. Many of them get tired and quit."* One of the police officers at the station

The low levels of education of females is also backed up by gender inequality in the society which promotes preference for boys in the family's education investment, the gendered division of household labour, and long distances to travel to school are only some of the structural barriers and discriminatory social norms that contribute to gender inequality in education. One of the main reasons for girls' low education is it is less valued. Girls with little or no education are highly vulnerable and get trapped in child marriages, sexual exploitation. An educated woman is able to negotiate power relations and make decisions pertaining to their safety, reproductive health and overall wellbeing. This is because education is an enlightenment and opens up one's mind to see the unnecessary evil that is being perpetrated onto women.

#### **4.3.4 Cultural norms**

The research revealed socio cultural norms are highly influential in shaping individual behaviour including the use of violence. Norms can protect against violence but can also support and encourage it. These come along with sanctions and rules which everyone has to abide by. Individuals who cherish, follow abide by these customary beliefs are rewarded by society as disciplined, in disciplined people are punished for not being obedient and society uses it reinforce good girl behaviour among women. (Sommer et al, 2018) Being a patriarchal society, the norms in the sub-county do favour the men and also encourage women to be submissive. Several norms like bride price and polygamy have turned out to be a nightmare for women .

Even though she wishes to leave a disrespectful marriage, the family will always pressure her into going back because of the dowry. A paralegal revealed in one of the interviews

*"So many young girls in the sub-county have been married off early at an early age when they are minors. Women have endured beatings in their marriages because the culture dictates that a good woman should be submissive to her husband and not annoy him When she is beaten up, they judge her harshly that she brought it upon herself to avoid embarrassment. Women decide to keep quiet and endure the violence."*

Women have continuously endured violence due to these norms that force them to act in a way that the society demands.

#### **4.3.5 Lack of awareness**

The research conducted revealed that so many people in the community were not aware of violence even though some were facing it, they had hard-lined and became used to the situation because they thought it was okay. The study revealed that many men get physical with their wives because other men are doing so. A man who does not “discipline” his wife is considered weak and a disgrace to masculinity.

One of the village committee members said:

*“When you don't beat her at least once you may not be considered a man. When you get into a quarrel and she shouts back at you will hear comments like beat her, if it were me I wouldn't t beat her, how can you let your wife rule you? A man who doesn't beat his wife is looked at as a weakling who is overpowered by a woman”*

Lack of exposure and awareness has kept women ignorant about their rights. Most women are subjected to violence without even knowing that it's a violation of their rights. They have come to terms with the harsh conditions and learned to live with them.

A good woman should not anger or do things that may make her husband angry she has to stay submissive not only to her husband but even to males around just like a sister should give respect to her brother men should be given respect so that they grow up knowing their positions.

Awareness is a crucial component and without it, people remain ignorant about certain crucial social aspects of life.

#### **4.3.6 High levels of Stigma and discrimination**

The research revealed that stigma and discrimination were a Great obstacle to the fight against violence against women the subcounty. According to Hartman & Bryce (2009) verbal abuse is not too high a price to pay for social approval and physical survival. The internalization of prevailing attitudes, which view women as inferior and domestic violence as a "man's right", also explains why many cases of domestic violence are never reported. The fear of being judged and isolated has terrified so many women because they come to be deemed as misfit and undesirable. This has created a breeding ground for the never-ending violence.

A respondent revealed:

*“When you face violence your husband beats you, and you become the talk of the village everywhere you go you just get people pointing fingers at you. It is o embarrassing to be beaten by a partner as people will always associate with and blame the woman for inciting violence themselves. My husband beats me and when I try to defend myself and beat him back, people claim am disrespectful and that am not submissive but how can I just let him beat me”*

Women are subjected to violence so many times so many violent crimes like rape, and verbal abuse but they cry alone. People who experience violence especially are seen as notorious, naughty and disrespectful. To have a good name, individuals decide to stomach all kinds of violence. This has been a great blockage because it is hard to determine the extent to which these women and girls are suffering.

#### **4. 4 The social cultural factors that contribute to violence.**

##### **4.4.1 Polygamy among men**

**The** study revealed that Polygamy is a norm that is greatly accepted in the Soni sub-county it being a patriarchal society. A man is allowed to marry two or more women as long as wants and "can buy") (MIFUMI 2012) Polygamy combines other factors like poverty, and ignorance to fully exploit women. Polygamy gives men power over women as men can see it as a way of controlling women. A man who has more than one wife is respected and given names of honour like *jamuluka*. The study also revealed that Women are lured into polygamous marriages due to ignorance, poverty, and peer pressure. Most polygamous men in the village are wealthy hence many girls go there with the hope of being taken and escaping poverty in their families. Polygamy moves along with the bride *price* a man gets married to several women as long as he can afford the payment .

Awor is one of the women in a polygamous marriage narrated:

*“My husband has than 3 women we all stay in one compound honestly this thing is hard but you get used, he expects us to worship him, and he does not care whether he hurts us or not. I simply don't mind he takes care of my needs and I feed well it is better than home where I was suffering.”*

Namboozo also commented:

*“We are two women married to my husband but it is hard because we have to work hard to impress him. people keep on comparing both of us. When you argue with him, he just gets annoyed and goes to my co wife. He is always saying insults and threatening to get another wife in case we anger him. It is very tiring and the competition is too much.”*

Polygamy has preserved violence in the Soni sub-county. It promotes submissiveness and creates competition with ion women as they all struggle to please their husband. Women in polygamous marriages .

#### **4.4.2 Early and forced marriage**

The study revealed that early marriage is still a norm. Early marriage deprives a child of enjoying her childhood. According to research, early marriage is a normal occurrence in the Soni sub-county, girls who married due to peer pressure and social expectations girls enter into marriage as early as 14 years. This has been geared up by the COVID Pandemic. A 2005 study on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) by Gulu District Working Group on sexual and gender-based violence established that pressure from parents and the community at large especially on the girl child for example “why are you still in school yet you already have big breasts, you are useless and a liability to the family”. Such statements have discouraged girls from continuing with school but instead choose to enter early marriages. In addition, Nyakecho a young girl who was planning to get married stated her reasons why she would engage in early marriage .

*“I stayed out of school for two years due to the pandemic; I have repeated classes so much, I can't continue school I already look mature, and I don't to see a reason for me to continue my peers are already married and people keep on pointing at me in the village”*

Community combat stated that many girls are also forced into marriages by their parents and the community.

Abbo also stated:

*“Girls start getting married at 14 years once a girl clocks 18 and she is still at her parent's home she will naturally feel pressured to due to the social pressure, people will start forcing her and advising her to get married a girl who takes long may be looked at as cursed.”*

Such scenarios have forced girls into marriages when they are not ready. Many of them are subjected to violence and endure because they do not want to be seen as a disgrace.

#### **4.4.4. The excessive consumption of alcohol**

The study revealed that Alcohol consumption presented a significant factor in the development of violence as it plays a greater role to contributing to aggression .the research revealed that alcohol is cherished among the Jopadhola and is always brewed and taken every evening, at parties, and social gatherings, Alcohol intake in the sub-county is not regulated for young children at the age of 7 years engage in alcohol intake and by the time they mature, it is already in their systems Alcoholism has contributed greatly to the violence in the village the rate of men drinking to women is more, Alcohol has used a means of doing away with inhibitions. It is also used as an excuse for violence, so many women have suffered in hands of men over alcoholism. Most of the women revealed how their partners subject them to violence any time they are drunk .

Akoth narrated:

*“My husband beats my co-wife and me, he is a drunkard, and whenever he comes home, we all look for other sleeping places. My husband has developed severe ulcers due to alcoholism, the children do not have clothes, and I make my small money but he will look for it and use it for alcohol, we are very poor”*

A partner who has been drinking will not be able to address an issue in a constructive manner since alcohol affects the cognitive functioning and judgment, the drinking partner may lose focus on giving an appropriate response to a perceived situation and resort to violence (Dostanic 2016)

The study shows that many girls and women have been victims of uncalled for violence in the community rape, insults and physical abuse and community members who use alcohol intake as an excuse to avoid accountability. This is because the community tolerates alcohol related crimes stating that the perpetrators were not in their right minds.

#### **4.4.5 Bride price**

Bride price is a form of payment given to a woman's family from her soon-to-be husband as an appreciation for upbringing. Bride price is just supposed to be a form of appreciation but it can be a channel used to impose violent acts on women. The

Research findings show, that many people with greedy intentions have married off their daughters at a young age to accumulate wealth and escape poverty. A MIFUMI (2012) study also cites bride price as challenge to fighting violence. Because men pay “highly” for the women they marry, concern is raised that men can do anything they want to women and get away with it. “A man will say he is beating his cattle - “paid as bride price”.

Nyawere whose daughter was a victim narrated her ordeal:

*“My daughter married off at 14 however instead of my husband looking for her to bring her back home, he instead frequented in-laws' home to demand bride price, he would go there at least twice a month, my daughter was being tortured by her husband. I had no say as a woman my opinion was not being taken. It was not until she was beaten and got a miscarriage that almost killed her that she was when she was saved. My husband was seeing my daughter as a source of wealth”*

Women are stuck in marriages because the men threaten to demand back their Bride price and yet the women cannot afford them. Bride wealth gives men power over women, In Soni, Cows are used as bride wealth and are very expensive for most of the women in the area to afford.

One of the paralegals noted:

*“If a woman divorce most of the men's relatives come to demand the bride price however most of them do not have the money to replace the cows so the woman's family forces her to go back to the marriage she is trying to escape because they don't want to do not want to return the wealth they attained from her union and also fear of having a divorcee which will deem them as misfit in society”*

MIFUMI in 2001 successfully this indicates how bride price traps women in violent filled situations.

#### **4.4.6 Social and gender Inequality**

Soni sub-county is a patriarchal society where it is believed men are superior to women. Predominant gender norms portray men as superior, dominant and decision-makers while women are considered subservient, passive and obedient. This inequality starts from childhood and is lifelong as portrayed by the disparity in treatment of both genders. Young girls are more vulnerable to violence, forced marriage and denied education than their male counterparts (Heise ,2007). Thus, women have difficulty negotiating daily activities as this is seen as questioning male authority. This is in a way that men have always determined everything from



leadership to daily activities. Women fall below men in social standing therefore they are expected to be submissive .

One of the respondents noted:

*"A man is the head of the household and he should be treated with the respect he deserves I train my male children to be heads and superior right from childhood when they clock 10 years of age, I don't let them sit with the female children, they have to sit with their father on table and learn how they are supposed to behave. If you let them sit together, they won't respect them"*

Women always need to be held responsible for marriage. A woman will always put in more effort in the marriage compared to the man, she will always be blamed for the failure of a marriage. (Qaisarani ,2010) Hence many women put in a lot of effort to ensure that the marriage works out and end up enduring all sorts of violence and pushing themselves to the breaking point.

*"A woman does not consider separation with the husband however violent he maybe. We women at times bring these beatings to ourselves. A man is entitled to many women just like our fore fathers had., I think girls of these days are just spoilt. These actions do not call for reporting and also as a woman when he comes back from his other marriages, I welcome him and treat him like a man in a home. I think women just shame themselves by reporting to the leaders."*

These beliefs have hindered the fight against violence, women. There is still a lot of beliefs that support social inequality that need to be debunked.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of the major findings

##### 5.1.1 Community measures taken to fight against violence

The research findings indicated that violence against women is still pervasive in the Soni sub-county and is normalized and seen as part of the life and social norms as the majority of the women were not aware of the violence that they are facing in Society. A lot of work is needed to change the attitudes and beliefs of people towards women.

The research findings also show that violence stems from childhood, with children being brought up in a patriarchal society with male dominance tendencies, they tend to grow up thinking that is how this is supposed to be. Many girls have witnessed violence from their siblings of the male gender despite being older. Society treats boy children in a superior manner compared to females.

The research findings also revealed that the responses to wards violence try but don't the root cause of violence. The interventions mainly focus on punishing the offender right them without removing the possibility of further violence making it a recurring act .

The research also indicated that the responses have at least put an impact on the individuals as women can report due to the presence of community combats. And paralegals and also with the extension of services from an organisation like Mifumi organisation. The report from Mifumi indicated that at least women are now aware of and report violence cases, especially severe domestic violence and rape, and child neglect cases... This has been a stepping stone and has helped in achieving some success.

It has also been noted that there are few research and empowerment programs for women. Many women are poor and cannot fend for themselves nor do they have access to or are aware of their rights. The research showed that many girls and women have endured violence in marriages due to poverty, lack of awareness, and parents telling their children to stick to their husbands even after being beaten severely.

### **5.1.2 Social norms that contribute to violence against women.**

Social norms are also a great contributor to violence. Many forms of violence were backed by the norms and beliefs of Soni. Women were expected to abide by the rule of law that is governed by society. Society dictates how an individual is supposed to behave and act. This study revealed how men in the Soni sub-county were given power over their women. A good woman was supposed to be submissive and respectful towards the male gender. The research also revealed that a woman who produced males was more respected compared to a woman.

The research findings indicated the need be done to change the mindsets of women and men in the community. A lot of preparation is needed for the community so that can embrace the good norms and do away with the toxic ones. Mifumi organisation has tried to do away with this by championing things like demand for bride price and also polygamy however with the polygamy petition still in court for 8years it shows how hard it is to do away with some traditions .

### **5.1.3 Limitations to the fight against violence**

The great limitations to the fight against violence like poverty, need to be outlawed so that women can be able to know their rights and the rate of violence can. Reduce. Corruption has been a great contributor to violence as women are not given protection from their offender's many women dear reporting due to judgments by people.

The research also revealed that many people in the villages do not have access to these services that can help them fight against violence. The services are available however they are not of the quality for example counselling, education, and sexual education. Hence aiding violence.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

It has been noted that violence is still prevalent in the area. A lot of rigorous activities need to be done to help fight against violence and need to be extended to the different villages, furthermore, the responses are lacking and don't solve the issue of violence concentrate on the aftermath instead prevention of the incidences.

Social norms are still the greatest contributor to violence in the area and a lot needs to be done to change the beliefs and perspectives about women. In the community. Changing these beliefs and ideologies can cause a great change in violence against women in the area.

Women empowerment and awareness need to be created and future research needs to be done to determine the actual rate of violence because women were not willing to speak up about what they face behind closed doors. There is still a lot that is unknown in the sub-county due to a lack of documentation.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

#### **To the community**

Encourage equality. I encourage the community members to treat people equally despite their gender. Male children should not be given special treatment by female children. Men should also learn how to appreciate their wife's efforts in the upbringing of the family. This will help to do away with gender inequality.

I encourage the community to always hold the perpetrator of violence accountable for their crimes. A collective community effort is needed to hold people accountable and recognize violence. This gives protection to victims and teaches lessons to many in that the vice cannot be repeated in future.

Encourage the inclusion of women. Women should be included in community dialogues, decision-making committees and also in community politics, this will help to empower women and encourage ideas of how to better the society, discrimination against women promotes low self-esteem and leaves women vulnerable to violence.

#### **To Non-Government Organisation**

Protection of victims. NGOs should always protect victims of violence after they have reported it, victims tend to face violence and backlash from the community and judgments. Many of them fear facing them hence they instead keep quiet and do not speak up offering protection. Shelter and counselling help to prepare them and their mindsets for the worst.

Woman empowerment. The organisation should put in woman empowerment programs that will help women attain financial freedom and also expose them to their rights. This will help to reduce the vulnerability of women towards violence.

Awareness creation. Awareness about violence and its causes needs to be done in the villages. Teaching the community about violence, Norms that cause violence and encouraging change in these norms helps to disguised violence and increase positive responses to ease violence .

### **To the government**

Extension of quality services to the community. The government should extend services to the people of Soni .it is on the border and far from the town. Quality services delay reaching hence forth depriving women of their rights.

Working with the organisation to incorporate government programs. The government should work with grass root NGOs to incorporate programs that are suitable for the population. This is because NGOs know the population better and is aware of their needs.

### **5.4 Areas of further research**

Further research can be done on comparing the different responses and seeing which is most appropriate for reducing violence against women.

Research should also be done on how to improve these responses so that they can tackle violence from the root not just solve the after math of violence as most of them do.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: In-depth Interview Guide**

My name is Nyachwo Constance student at Makerere University. Am conducting a study on community response to violence against women. Your contribution will be highly appreciated.

#### **SECTION A**

1. Tell me about yourself
- 2 How old are you?
- 3.) What is your marital status?
- 4). what is your level of education?
- 5) What is your source of Livelihood?

#### **SECTION B**

- 1). Have you ever witnessed or experienced any form of violence in the community from your spouse, family or community member?
- 2). How does the community react to a situation where a woman reports violence to the police? Is she blamed for the violence?
- 3) Occasionally in this community? Do the victims of violence get justice for the issue reported? Are the perpetrators arrested?
- 4) According to you, what more should be done in this community to create a haven for girls and women
- 5) If given a platform, what would you do to reduce violence in the sub-county?
- 6) What sort of support have you witnessed being given to the victims of violence by the community?

- 7) Which authority or organisation rendered this support?
- 8) Would you say the support received has helped victims heal and deal with the after-effects of violence?
- 9) If no, then what should be done to increase support in your own opinion

**INFORMATION ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS THAT CAUSE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

- 1) In case a woman reported cases of violence which has been done to her would you believe her?
- 2) How does the family treat women and girls who are victims of violence?
- 3) Give your reason for the response.
- 4) In your own opinion, do you think beliefs are a great cause of violence against women?
- 5) Have you experienced Violence in your home based on beliefs?
- 6) What cultural practices in this community cause violence against women?
- 7) In a certain community in Uganda, a man is allowed to exercise coercive power over his wife and the woman is expected to comply. Do you support it?

Limitation of violence against women

1. According to you, what is the main obstacle to the fight against violence in Soni Subcounty?
2. How has this obstacle contributed to the never-ending violence in the sub-county?

## **Appendix 2: Key Informant Guide**

Thank you for accepting to be participate in this research. My name is Nyachwo Constance am a student at Makerere University. Am conducting research in this area community responses to violence against women in this area. You have been gladly selected as one of the key informants to participate in the study due to the knowledge you have on the topic. Your contribution is highly appreciated

- 1) For the years you have spent in this community? What is the severity of violence against women in your community on a scale of 1 to 10?
- 2) What are the typical reactions of the community members when a person has faced violence?
- 3) How is the community engaged in the fight against violence?
- 4) As local leaders, what strategies have been put to counter the issue of violence against women?
- 5) Are their services or support available for women and girls that are victims of violence and what are those services?
- 6) How effective are those strategies in solving the issue of violence
- 7) From whom can women and girls seek support and assistance in case of a situation that threatens them?
- 8) What challenges and hindrances are faced when addressing violence in the community?
- 9) What needs to be done to improve positive community responses to violence?