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The Role of Church Leaders in Averting Gender Based Violence in Imenti South Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Gender based violence is violation of human rights and it is affecting men, women, and children spiritually, physically and emotionally. The church leadership is being looked at when it comes to averting violence at communal and family levels. However, in Kenya the role of church leaders in averting gender based violence has not been articulated in church spiritual and pastoral programs. The purpose of the study is to examine the role of the church leaders in averting gender based violence in Imenti South Sub-county. The study is guided by three objectives: establishing the role of church leaders in averting gender based violence in Imenti South Sub-county, examining the involvement of church leaders through pastoral programs in averting gender based violence in Imenti South Sub-county and assessing the influence of church leaders' advocacy against gender base violence in Imenti South Sub-county. The study is carried out in Imenti South Sub-County with a focus on church leaders under the National Council of Churches of Kenya. The study is based on descriptive survey design. The target population in this study included church leaders from different denominations and victims of gender based violence. Purposive sampling will be employed to sample 50 church leaders and 150 victims of gender based violence. Data was collected using questionnaires for church leaders and scheduled group interviews for gender based violence victims. The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively with the aid of the Statistical Package for social sciences (SPSS). The findings of the study shall be useful to the churches in Kenya on averting gender based violence through leadership.

Keywords: Gender based violence, church leader, sub-county, NCKK upper eastern region, guidance, pastoral, preaching, religious, teaching, involvement, violence, advocacy, instructional

1. Introduction

Gender based violence is a huge problem which affects men, women, and children in the world today. Being a serious problem to the society, gender based violence cuts across the economy, education, religion, race and health issues. For instance, Agostino (2015) reported that 70.2% of his respondents had been physically abused by their spouses, 63.2% had been sexually abused and 84.6% had been discriminated on the basis of gender. Bearing in mind that these practices affects the health and psychological wellbeing of the victims, a lot of time is wasted in managing these effects leading to low social and economic development of the society. While there have been global initiatives aimed at eliminating gender based violence, the problem has not yet been put under control. Moreover, the current initiatives do not cater for the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence. Therefore, this study examines the role of religious leaders in averting marital and gender based violence in Imenti South Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To find out the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence against women in Imenti South Sub-county, Kenya.
- To find out the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence against men in Imenti South Sub-county, Kenya.
- To assess the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence in Imenti South Sub-county, Kenya

3. Research Questions

- What is the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence against women in Imenti South Sub-county, Kenya.
- What is the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence against men in Imenti South Sub-county, Kenya.
- What is the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence in Imenti South Sub-county, Kenya

4. Significance of the Study

Domestic and gender based violence are common problems and practices in nearly all parts of the world. Since a big proportion of the global population are religious, then religious leaders can take this opportunity to curb this vice among the people. Spiritual teachings can be articulated to gender practices and relations to overcome such and other societal problems. The results of this study will therefore inform the community in this area on the major cause of marital and gender based violence and the need to prevent these societal problems. The concept of constitution and politics will also be explored to determine the course of action that victims of this violence should face. Finally, the research will offer an insight in the role of religious leaders in averting gender based violence in the study area. Since religious leaders have a significant role in shaping the moral of the followers, then their role in addressing violence could be a good tool for the victims and perpetrators. The study will also be significant in adding new knowledge to the existing knowledge on gender based violence.

5. Theory of the Study

According to Ajzen's (1991), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) predicts and explains human behavior in a specific contexts. The TPB focuses on the reasons that motivates people to perform a behavior on the basis that "the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely should be its performance" (Ajzen, 1991). According to this theory, it is important to understand the reasons that lead to peoples' intentions in order to be able to predict future involvement in a behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is one of the best theories for this study because it sets a model for humans' actions in which intentional behavior like the GBV is determined. The intentional behavior to abuse the other is determined by; attitudes and behaviors, subjective norms and perceived controls.

Attitudes and behaviors comprises of emotional feelings towards a certain behavior of either the victim or perpetrator. This connects the emotional feelings to the believing that abusing the other has intended outcomes like discipline, correction or revenge. Subjective norms are the opinions given by other people surrounding the perpetrator or the victim involved in gender based violence. These opinions or advices, leads to peer pressure and social pressure and these pressures can lead to abuses. Perceived control is the power of perception of the ability to perform a certain behavior. This contributes to both having the intention to perform an action as well as questioning whether the person would actually perform the action. In this study the theory of planned behavior is used to explain and predict the behavior of church leadership involvement in averting gender based violence. The use of PTB is adoptive enough to account for the dynamic and complex nature of Gender Based Violence. Furthermore, Church leaders role modeling, involvement through pastoral program and advocacy are all factors that can aid in averting Gender Based Violence (Alghazo, Y., &Alghazo, R., 2015).

6. Methodology of the Study

This research will employ descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design in this study will involve gathering of facts from a large population by interviewing and administering a questionnaire to a sampled group of church leaders and gender based victims. The design will systematically describe the attitudes, opinions, habits and inner feelings of the respondents towards gender based violence without influencing it in any way (Brink, Walt &Rensburg, 2006). Profoundly this design will provide a platform for a self-reported facts about respondents (Kuada, 2012) making it easier to gather data that describes their roles and experiences respectively. This design will make it possible for the research to describe events and then organize, tabulate and depict data collected. Further the data collected will be reduced into manageable form and further organized into patterns that emerge for easy of analysis and comprehension of the role of church leaders in averting gender based violence.

7. Findings of the Study

7.1. Roles of Church Leaders in Averting Gender-Based Violence

	Responses	
	N	Percent
Mentorship	5	10.2%
Enhance Awareness	17	38.8%
Addressing the cause of violence	1	2.0%
Advocate Adherence to Human Rights	1	2.0%
Being role model	16	36.7%
Help access justice	3	6.1%
Help people to Respect each other	1	2.0%
Addressing victims needs	1	2.0%
Total	45	100.0%

Table 1: On Roles of Church Leaders in Averting GBV

Table 1 shows the roles of church leaders in averting the gender-based violence. Majority 17 (38.8%) indicated that they create awareness followed by 16 (36.7%) who acted as role model. Other church leaders assisted by helping in accessing justice, enforcing respect between individuals and addressing the cause of the violence.

7.2. Actions of Church Leaders When GBV Cases Are Reported

	Frequency	Percentage
Guide the victims	15	33.30%
Give them moral support	10	22.20%
Educating them	3	6.70%
Being trustworthy	2	4.40%
Counselling	7	15.60%
Report to the authorities	4	8.90%
Understand and solve the problem	2	4.40%
Pray for them	2	4.40%
Total	45	100.00%

Table 2: Actions of Church Leaders When GBV Cases Are Reported

Table 2 shows the actions of the church leaders when gender-based violence cases are reported to them. From the study, majority 15 (33.3%) ascertained that they guide the victims. 22.2% (10) indicated that they give the victims moral support, while the remaining church leaders reported that they educate, counsel, report to authorities and pray for the victims proportionately.

7.3. Factors Promoting Reporting of GBV Cases to Church Leaders

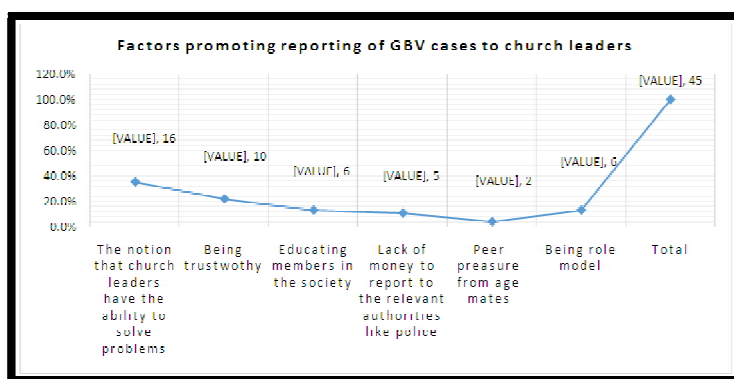


Figure 1: Factors Promoting Reporting of GBV to Church Leaders

Fig 1 above shows the factors that enhances reporting of gender-based violence cases to the church leaders. Majority of the respondents (35.6%) 16 ascertained that the subjects believe that the church leaders could solve problems. The remaining connoted that the church leaders are role models, peer pressure and lack of finances to report the cases to the authorities.

7.4. Availability of Pastoral Programs in the Church

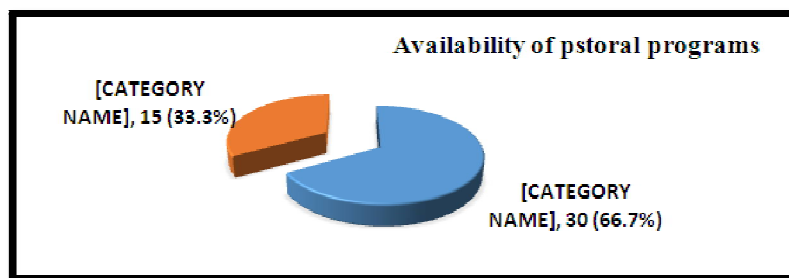


Figure 2: Availability of Pastoral Programs in the Churches

As shown from fig 2 above, 66.7% of the interviewed church leaders indicated that there existed pastoral programs that helped in addressing gender-based violence while 33.3% do not have the programs.

7.5. Pastoral Programs in the Church Aiding in Averting GBV

Programs	Frequency	Percent
Outreach	4	8.9
Organize crusade	2	4.4
Trainings on violence	4	8.9
Guidance and counselling	4	8.9
Gender equality programs	2	4.4
Seminars	6	13.3
Family visits	2	4.4
Bible study programs	2	4.4
Conference	2	4.4
Pastoral visit program	2	4.4
Others	15	33.3
Total	45	100.0

Table 3: Pastoral Programs in the Church Aiding in Averting GBV

From Table 3 above majority of the respondents 6 (13.3%) connoted that seminars are the most used church pastoral program. However, some respondents indicated outreaches, crusades, bible study programs, conferences and pastoral visits as installed programs in the churches for fighting gender-based violence. It was also revealed through the study that 33.3% (15) had no pastoral programs in the churches.

7.6. Effectiveness of Pastoral Programs in Averting GBV

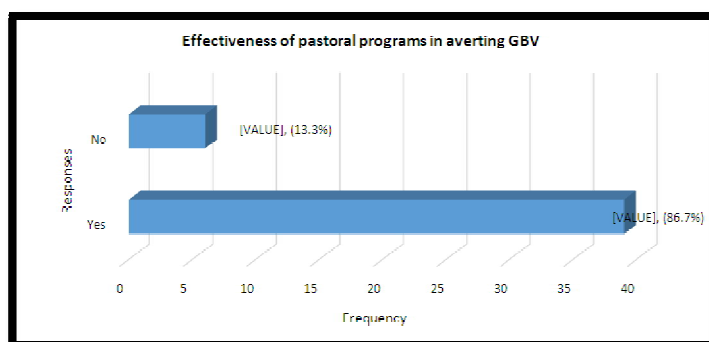


Figure 3: Effectiveness of Pastoral Programs in Averting GBV

Figure 3 shows the effectiveness of church pastoral programs. 86.7% of the of the respondents indicated that church pastoral programs are effective while 13.3% maintained that the programs are not effective in averting GBV.

7.7. Reasons Why Pastoral Programs Are Effective in Averting GBV

	Frequency	Percent
Help address family issues	6	13.3
Through awareness help victims get the information in an easier way	2	4.4
Victims tend to forget about their Cultural beliefs	1	2.2
Awareness help victims understand better	19	42.2
Outreach	5	11.1
Counselling help victims to avoid depression	3	6.7
Seek justice for victims	2	4.4
Divorce cases have reduced	1	2.2
Total	39	86.7
Not sure	6	13.3
Total	45	100.0

Table 4: Reasons for Effectiveness of Pastoral Programs in Averting GBV

Tables 4 above shows the reasons why pastoral programs are effective in averting gender-based violence. Majority of the respondents 19 (42.2%) felt that the programs help to create awareness about gender-based violence.

Others indicated that the pastoral programs help in avoiding depression through counselling and reduces divorce cases. However, 13.3% were not sure if the programs may help in averting gender-based violence.

7.8. Effective Pastoral Programs on Averting Gender-Based Violence

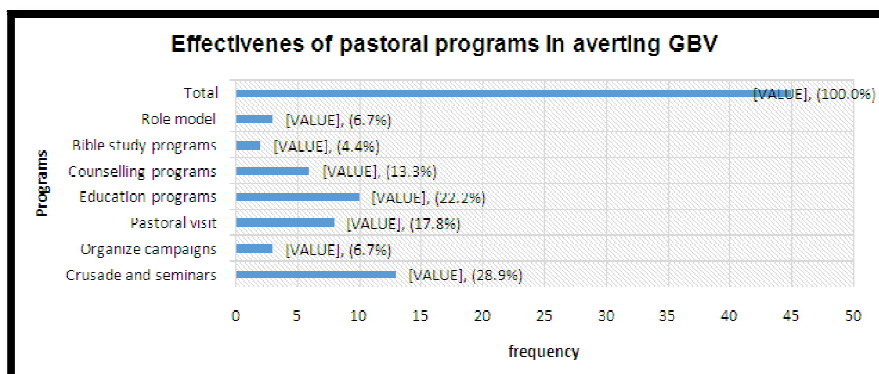


Figure 4: Effectiveness of Pastoral Programs in Averting GBV

Figure 4 above shows the effective pastoral programs used in averting gender-based violence. Majority 13 (28.9%) indicated that crusade and seminars help in averting gender-based violence. Others said bible study programs, counselling programs and education programs proportionately.

8. Conclusion of the Study

The findings of the study also revealed that majority of the church leaders 38.8% (17) have enhanced awareness on gender-based violence in the sub county. Some church leaders have acted as role models, and others fought for human rights, foster respects between individuals and helping in accessing justice. The leaders have fought gender-based violence by guiding the victims, giving them moral support and educating them on the importance of embracing positivity even when faced with tough conditions and seeking continuous God's deliverance. This conforms with the study by Njagi (2017) highlighting the roles of faith-based organizations in curbing gender-based violence in Nairobi county.

Through the study, it was also revealed that there exist factors that promote reporting of gender-based violence cases to church leaders. Majority of the interviewed church leaders ascertained that the fact they are trustworthy makes it simple for the victims to report the cases to them. Also, the study revealed that financial constraints compel the victims to approaching of church leaders. Other leaders mentioned that the fact that they are role model in the society and educating society members on gender-based violence has enabled the victims to report the cases to them. The study is in conformity with Njagi (2017) study which expanded on how the faith-based organizations enhances and influences the reporting of gender-based violence cases.

From the study, the findings from the church leaders' interview revealed that the NCK churches have pastoral programs with majority (66.7%) indicating that there exist pastoral programs. Some of the pastoral programs which came out in helping to avert gender-based violence included; outreaches, crusades, guidance and counselling, gender equity programs, family visits, seminars and pastoral visits. However, some church leaders 33.3% (15) indicated that they do not have pastoral programs in the churches to avert gender-based violence. This conforms with the findings from the interview schedule with the gender-based victims in this study who majority (24) reiterated that they are not sure whether such programs exist. The victims further maintained that they are not sure whether their churches advocate against gender-based violence since they had not heard of the programs. It conflicts with the study of Ramsey in (2016) which highlighted dramatic reduction of gender-based violence through church programs. The churches should enforce morals through teachings and bible studies as written in the Bible.

The interviewed respondents further ascertained that pastoral programs are effective in averting gender-based violence. Majority (86.7%) said that the programs are affective in averting gender-based violence. Some of the reasons mentioned included helping in addressing family issues, creating awareness thereby helping in eradicating staunch traditions that promotes gender-based violence such as female genital mutilation. The pastorals programs also help in counselling of the victims to avoid depression. The programs have also helped in reducing divorce cases.

The study further found out that the NCK church leaders have also formed partnerships with NGO's, held campaigns, mentored, created awareness in Imenti south sub county in attempts to assist in averting gender-based violence. This was done through bible study programs, crusades, organized campaigns, conferences, in case of female genital mutilation, in case of rape, in widows forums, and education days. This has helped in reducing gender-based violence cases such as sexual harassment, violence in marriage, traditional norms like female genital mutilation. Some of the interviewed gender-based violence victims (16) pointed that the experience traumatizes and didn't even wanted to recall. The study by Mukanangana et al., in (2014) revealed some of the effects of gender-based violence especially in women. This research conforms to Mukanangan's study since some of the victims reiterated their experiences on gender-based violence.

The study further revealed that traditions had major influence in gender-based violence. Issues such as wife inheritance, female genital mutilation, property inheritance like women lacking power to inherit their parents' property came out as some major causes of gender-based violence as connoted by Kubai (2014) on the causes and consequences of

domestic violence. The victims affirmed that the pastoral programs should be enforced in all the churches to create peaceful environment, advice couples and even children thereby helping in averting gender-based violence. Through the study, it is revealed that pastorals programs and instructional roles of church leaders to some extent has helped in averting gender-based violence in Imenti South Sub – County. Therefore, a study should be carried out to examine the extent to which NCKK churches have pastoral programs and their effectiveness in averting gender-based violence in Imenti south.

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