

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FAMILY STABILITY IN RWANYAMAHEMBE****SUB COUNTY, MBARARA DISTRICT, UGANDA***Mbirabiremu V.<sup>1</sup> and Kazibwe F.<sup>1</sup>**1 Bishop Stuart University, Mbarara, Uganda***Abstract**

The study was carried out in Rwanyamahembe Sub County in Mbarara district, Western Uganda. Descriptive research design was used to collect information using questionnaires for those people who were very busy with office work while other respondents were interviewed by the investigator at their own convenient time. The randomly selected residents and local leaders were interviewed about domestic violence and its consequences. The objectives of the study were to document the forms of domestic violence in Rwanyamahembe Sub-County and to establish the causes of domestic violence among families as well as to find out the effects of domestic violence on the people. It was revealed that most forms of domestic violence in homes ranged from physical confrontation like battering of children and fighting between partners to verbal insults. The effects of domestic violence were both physical and psychological to the victims. It was, however, noted that domestic violence in Rwanyamahembe is largely caused by both social and economic factors including poverty, low self-esteem and alcoholism. It was interesting to note that domestic violence has no boundaries regardless of social class. Investigations revealed that though poor families were violent due to limited resources, well to do families were violent over who should take control of the resources. Domestic violence was found to be an emotional unrest between individuals living together which could be resolved through mutual understanding.

**Key words:** Domestic violence, battering, alcoholism, mutual understanding, Rwanyamahembe, Uganda.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Domestic violence refers to “assaultive and coercive behaviours that adults use against their intimate partners” (Allen, 2012). In Africa the extent to domestic violence varies from countries to countries but Islamic countries like Nigeria have higher rates than non-Islamic countries because of their culture, which allows them to practice polygamy (Allen S, 2012; Tjaden, 2000). Domestic violence is universal and it occurs in all cultures and cities. A recent United Nations study on violence against children and women around the World showed that children and women are murdered and assaulted, sexually abused, threatened and humiliated within their own homes (Edleson, 2011). It is impossible to measure the true magnitude of domestic violence against women and children worldwide. There is a lack of data on the exact number of children and women victims because so much happens in secret and is not reported (Bomstein, 2012; Coker, 2012). However, data from 37 countries shows that 86 per cent of children and women experience physical punishment and/or psychological aggression (Hayward, 2012). Studies from some developing and developed countries including China, Colombia, Egypt, India, Mexico, and South Africa, indicate a strong correlation between violence against women and violence against children (Mikler, 2011; Osofsky, 2013). Studies have shown that children who witness violence may experience many emotional and behavioural problems, aggression, nightmares and poor school performance (Mitra, 2015).

In Uganda, like many other developing societies, domestic violence is on the rise at very alarming rates. In 2005 for example, the Uganda Police recorded 5693 cases of domestic violence countrywide making this alarmingly high considering that some cases are never reported. In

the same year, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics and demographic health survey reported that 65,000 children in Uganda suffered from abuses as a result of domestic violence hence affecting them psychologically (Kishor, 2010; Nanteza, 2012). Domestic violence has been experienced in many different forms such as physical, sexual and emotional among others (World Health Organization, 2012).

The effects of violent behaviour tend to stay with children long after they leave the childhood homes. Boys who are exposed to their parents' domestic violence are twice as likely to become abusive men than the sons of non-violent parents. Furthermore, girls who witness their mothers being abused are more likely to accept violence in their marriage (Seng, 2015; Schutte, 2012). Females who were exposed to their parents' domestic violence as adolescents are significantly more likely to become victims of dating violence than daughters of nonviolent parents (Hayward, 2012).

## METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was used to collect information using questionnaires for those people who were very busy with office work while other respondents were interviewed at their own convenient time. Quantitative methods were used to analyze statistical data in form of frequency counts and percentages. The study was conducted from five parishes making up Rwanyamahembe Sub-County of which three were from the urban centres and two from the rural area. These included Rwebishekye, Kakerere, Rutoma, Katyazo and Mabira. A total of 60 respondents were selected randomly from the entire study area to include household members and local leaders. Structured and unstructured questionnaires were used to capture primary data from the respondents. Interviews to collect qualitative data from community members who could not read and write were also used.

As shown in the figure 2 below, 25 (42%) of the respondents had not completed primary level of education, 18 (30%) had completed primary education, 10 (17%) had never gone to school, 5

## RESULTS

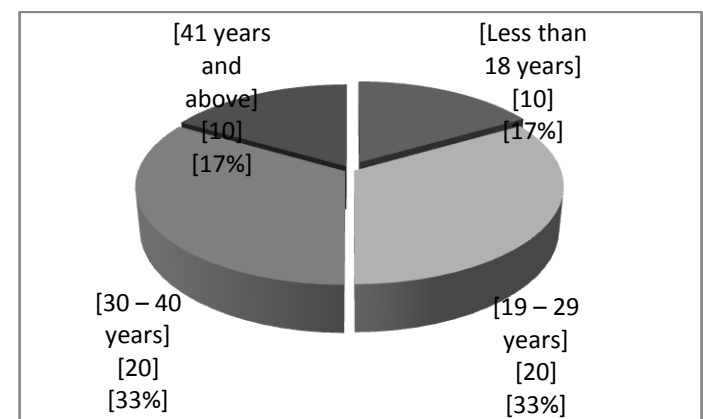
From table 1 below, 70% (42) respondents were females while 30% (18) respondents were males. All sexes included both children below 18 years since all age groups are equally affected by the wrath of domestic violence. Both sexes were interviewed for the purpose of gender balance since all are affected by domestic violence.

**Table 1: Gender of the respondents**

Sex	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Males	18	30
Female	42	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Primary data, July 2016*

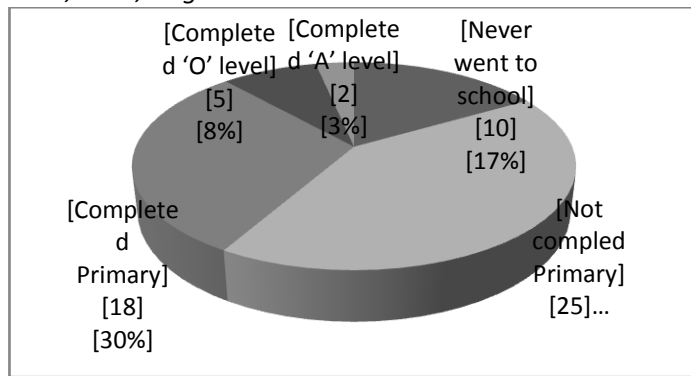
From figure 1 below, 10 (17%) of the respondents were aged less than 18 years, 20 (33%) respondents were between 19-29 years, 20 (33%) were between 30-40 years and 10 (17%) were between 41-50+ years.



**Figure 1: Age of the respondents**

*Source: Primary data, July 2016*

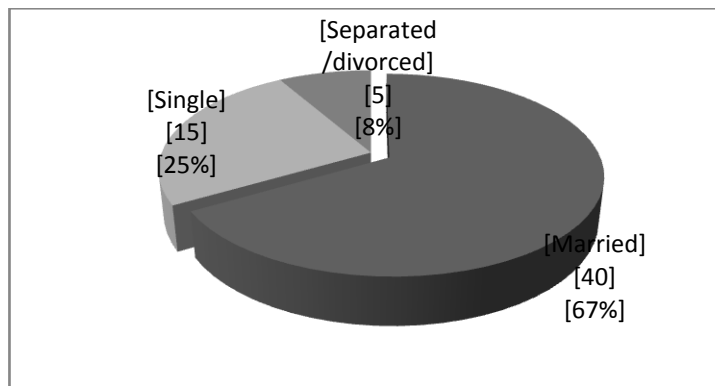
(8%) had completed O-level while 2 (3%) had completed A-level.



**Figure 2: Level of education for the respondents**

Source: Primary data, July 2016

As shown in figure 3 below, married respondents were 40 (67%). Single/unmarried respondents were also involved in the study and were 25 (25%). The study further involved the separated and divorced respondents who made up 5 (8%).



**Figure 3: Marital status of respondents**

Source: Primary data, July 2016

### Forms of domestic violence

With the help of both questionnaires and interviews, respondents were asked to mention the forms of domestic violence experienced among families in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county Mbarara district and their responses were captured and recorded as follows. Battering/spouse fighting was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) accounting for 27% (16), followed by marital rape which was also significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) and accounted for 22% (13). Other forms like child abuse was significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) accounted for 20% (12), partner abuse was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) at 18% (11). However economic control was not significant ( $p = 0.441$ ) though it accounted for 13% (8) as shown in the table 2 below.

**Table 2: Showing the forms of domestic violence in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county**

Responses	Freq (f)	Percent (%)	Coefficients	P-value
Battering/spouse fighting	16	27	.163	.000
Marital rape	13	22	.643	.000
Economic control	08	13	.013	.441
Partner abuse	11	18	.242	.000
Child abuse	12	20	.341	.001

Source: Primary data, July 2016

### Causes of domestic violence

From questionnaires and interviews, respondents were asked to identify the causes of domestic violence among families in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county and their responses were captured and recorded as shown in the table 3 below. Among the causes of domestic violence, alcoholism was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) and accounted for 32% (19), poverty was also significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) at 27% (16). Extra marital relations were significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) and accounted for 18% (11), poor self-esteem/anger was significant ( $p = 0.002$ ) accounting for 15% (9). Loss of wage earnings was negative though significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) accounting for 8% (5).

**Table 3: Showing causes of domestic violence in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county**

Responses	Freq (f)	Percent (%)	Coefficients	P-value
Alcoholism	19	32	.678	.000
Poverty	16	27	.723	.000
Extra marital relations	11	18	.321	.001
Poor self-esteem/anger	09	15	.237	.002
Loss of wage earnings	05	08	-.616	.001

*Source: Primary data, July 2016*

### Effects of domestic violence

Using both questionnaires and interviews, respondents were asked to mention the effects of domestic violence on families in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county and their responses were captured as shown in table 4 below. Separation and divorce was the most significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) effect of domestic violence in the area as mentioned by 17 (28%) of the respondents. Child neglect was also significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) and accounted for 22% (13). Prostitution was not so common however a significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) effect at 18% (11). Chronic depression was significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) accounting for 17% (10) while increase in crimes like theft, murder was uncommon though significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) as mentioned by 15% (9) of the respondents.

**Table 4: Showing the effects of domestic violence on families in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county**

Responses	Freq (f)	Percent (%)	Coefficients	P-value
Child neglect	13	22	.650	.000
Separation/divorce	17	28	.700	.000
Chronic depression	10	17	.360	.001
Prostitution	11	18	-.471	.001
Increased crimes.	09	15	-.546	.000

*Source: Primary data, July 2016*

### Solutions for domestic violence

Using both questionnaires and interviews, respondents were asked to suggest the solutions for domestic violence and their responses were captured as shown in figure4 below. Establishing income generating projects aiming at improving the incomes of both women and men at household level was significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) as mentioned by 16 (26%) of the respondents. Empowering of women was also significant ( $p = 0.002$ ) and accounted for 16% (10) and provision of counselling services in the area was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) as suggested by 24 (39%) of the respondents. However, law enforcement was not a significant ( $p = 0.213$ ) solution to domestic violence as mentioned by 10 (16%) of the respondents as indicated in (table5) below.

**Table 5: Showing the solutions to domestic violence in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county**

Responses	Freq(f)	Percent(%)	Coefficients	P-value
Providing counselling services in the area	24	40.0	.674	.000
Income generating activates for women	16	26.7	.368	.001
Women empowerment	10	16.7	.274	.002
Law enforcement	10	16.7	-.071	.213

Source: Primary data, July 2016

### Relationship between cause and form domestic violence among the households

These results indicate that there is statistically significant relationship between causes and forms domestic violence ( $X^2=1.360$ ,  $df=16$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Results indicated that out of 19 households, domestic violence was caused by alcoholism, 16 of the victims experienced battering and fighting while 3 experienced rape. Again the study revealed that of the 16 households where domestic violence arose from poverty, 10 of the victims were exposed to rape while 6 faced economic controls. Results also showed that of the 11 households where domestic violence arose from extra marital relations, 9 of the victims witnessed abuse from their spouses while 2 faced economic control. The study revealed that out of the 9 households where domestic violence is brought by poor self-esteem and anger, 7 witness child abuse and 2 witness partner abuse. It was further revealed that in 5 of the households where domestic violence results from loss of wage earnings, there is a lot of child abuse as shown in the table 5 below.

**Table 5: Showing relationship between causes and the forms domestic violence**

Forms of domestic violence						
Causes of domestic violence	Battering/spouse fighting	Marital rape	Economic control	Partner abuse	Child abuse	Total
Alcoholism	16	3	0	0	0	19
Poverty	0	10	6	0	0	16
Extra marital relations	0	0	2	9	0	11
Poor self-esteem/anger	0	0	0	2	7	9
Loss of wage earnings	0	0	0	0	5	5

<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>60</b>
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Source: Primary data, July 2016

### Relationship between form and effect of domestic violence on households

These results indicate that there is statistically significant relationship between form of domestic violence and its effect on households = ( $X^2=1.595$ ,  $df=16$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Results in table below indicate that out of 16 households where victims of domestic violence experienced battering and fighting, 13 witnessed child neglect and 3 separation and divorce. Results also indicate that out of 13 households where victims of domestic violence were forced into rape, ended up separating or divorcing. Again results indicate that out of 8 households where victims of domestic violence witnessed economic controls, 7 ended up with chronic depressions and on 1 decided to separate or divorce. The study further revealed that out of the 11 households where victims of domestic violence witnessed abuse from their spouses, 8 ended up in prostitution while 3 faced chronic depression. The study concluded that out of 12 households where children were abused, 9 had children who committed crimes like theft, killings among others while 3 joined prostitution.

**Table 6: Showing the relationship between form of domestic violence and its effect on households**

<b>Effects of domestic violence on households</b>						
<b>Forms of domestic violence</b>	<b>Child neglect</b>	<b>Separation /divorce</b>	<b>Chronic depression</b>	<b>Prostitution</b>	<b>Increased crimes.</b>	<b>Total</b>
Battering/spouse fighting	13	3	0	0	0	16
Marital rape	0	13	0	0	0	13
Economic control	0	1	7	0	0	8
Partner abuse	0	0	3	8	0	11
Child abuse	0	0	0	3	9	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: Primary data, July 2016

### DISCUSSION

The study revealed a lot of domestic violence among spouses in the age bracket of 30-40 years with respondents from low levels of education reporting high levels of domestic violence. Testimonies from respondents indicated that early marriages coupled with low level of education contributed highly to domestic violence. This was because most people with low education did not have stable jobs and were poor which contributed to

domestic violence. However, testimonies from respondents indicated that domestic violence did not have borders irrespective of education levels. Whereas domestic violence among illiterate class was caused by lack of resources and low levels of understanding, domestic violence in educated families was attributed to disagreements as to who should take control of resources in the family.

The study identified partner abuse as a common form of domestic violence represented by 58

respondents (96.6%). It was indicated that partner abuse was twofold hence both wife and husband suffered abuses in the same way but some men usually used their superior positions as family heads to abuse women. To some respondents, women used abusive language when men asked them for food and to wash their clothes. This happened more often where a woman was more educated and had a higher income than a man.

Alcoholism was the major cause of domestic violence represented by 59 (98%) respondents. Alcohol consumption physically destabilized the minds of individuals making them violent and led to selling of family property by drunkard husbands. In Rwanyamahembe poverty in most homes caused domestic violence as revealed by 56 (93%) of the respondents. Due to limited resources in the household, there was a lot of economic pressure on the heads of households. As a result, due to inability to meet family demands, most men became violent over small matters every time. Some respondents revealed that as a result of poverty, some wives in families offered sex for money to look after their families due to failure by their husbands to look after them. Anger and poor self-esteem among married couples as indicated by 49 (82%) respondents were another cause of violence in homes. Though children were not always part of this controversy, they were always the most affected by family misunderstandings of this nature.

Child neglect resulting from domestic violence represented 80% (48). Many children were neglected as a result of separation by their parents due to domestic violence. Some children ended up taking refuge in towns as street children and worse still some of them committed suicide because of harsh treatment from their step parents. As a result of constant fights and quarrels in families some children became traumatized.

Chronic depression was another effect of domestic violence in homes as it was reported by 57 (95%) respondents. Testimonies from respondents who happened to be victims of domestic violence indicated that as a result of torture from the oppressor who in most cases was a man, the oppressed usually lived in a condition of agony and

fear all the time. This condition traumatized many women in homes to the extent that a woman of 25 years looked like a 50-year-old.

Domestic violence also increased the rate of crimes reported by 51 (85%) respondents. It was found out that due to increased violence in families and increasing number of street children in towns; there was an increase in crime rates especially in urban areas and prostitution as revealed by 35 (58%) respondents. Prostitution came as a result of separation and divorce due to domestic violence. Victims who were in most cases women could not sustain themselves financially in urban areas and ended up selling their bodies for a livelihood. Again due to domestic violence, some young girls run into towns and started looking for survival strategies through sex. This was bound to have adverse effects on both individuals and the society at large since it increased the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS, Gonorrhoea, syphilis and other sexual related diseases.

Among the solutions to domestic violence in Rwanyamahembe Sub-county, respondents totalling to 24 (39%) called for the need to provide counselling services to individuals and families affected in the area. These services could either be given by spiritual leaders, trained social workers and elders in families. Laws aiming at protecting the welfare of women and children in families needed to be put in place as was mentioned by 12 (19%) of the respondents. Due to lack of strict laws that protect women and children in families in Uganda, men have always taken it upon themselves to continue harassing children and women in families.

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