

# Domestic Violence Against Women: Forms of domestic Violence against Women in Luanda sub-County Vihiga County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *Violence makes women become vulnerable and exposes them to many risks that are life threatening. The problem here is that in spite of these risks women stay in violent households. Descriptive survey research design was used to collect data through questionnaires. Data was analyzed using qualitative research methods that included descriptive statistics. Purposive sampling was used to select eight women who were staying in violent households. The conflict Tactics Scale Criteria (CTS) was adapted to ensure that the respondents were subjects of domestic violence. The objective of the study found that all the women (100%) interviewed had experienced physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse in their households. It was concluded that household violence was common. The results of the study were deemed useful to aid stake holders address issues of domestic violence in households.*

**Key Words:** Domestic, Violence, Luanda, sub-County

## Introduction

Violence exposes women to risks that make them vulnerable thus causing a threat to their lives. The most severe ones include death, severe physical injuries, mental illness, loss of income and property, separation or divorce. Lack of access to health services can cause death or long term effects following a small injury or illness. When exposed to violence, women develop long term and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which is a severe reaction to trauma. Trauma may lead to miscarriage in some cases and most of all psychological problems.

According to Atetwe, (2008), in Kenya, it is extremely difficult to obtain the prevalence rates of violence by husbands against their wives because the problem in many cases is still accepted as a cultural practice or a private affair and this is rarely reported to authorities. The explanatory study carried out in 2014 by University of Texas set out to examine the prevalence of violence by husbands against their wives in Maseno and Nairobi areas of Kenya. Of the 208 women who participated in the study 49.7% reported a history of violence. Prevalence rate for physical violence 12.9% and emotional violence 39.4% (University of Texas, 2014).

Abbot (1999) observes that all types of abuse are done for the purpose of gaining power and control over the victim. Power refers to the capacity to impose one's will on others regardless of any resistance they might offer. It thus refers to the capacity to influence, manipulate and control others. Forms of violence include: Physical, sexual, emotional or psychological and economic abuse.

Physical Violence is any act or threat intended to cause physical pain, injury, suffering or bodily harm. This can include: hitting, slapping, punching, choking, pushing and any other type of content that results in physical injury to the victim, depriving the victim of sleep or other functions necessary to live or forcing the victim to engage in drug/alcohol use against her will (Abbot, 1999). It can also include inflicting physical injury on to their targets, such as children or pets in order to cause psychological harm to the victim.

Schechter & Ganley (1995) observe that specific coercive behaviours are physical, sexual and psychological. They further observe

that, the significant importance on the reason why the perpetrator behaves the way he does is to control, which seems to be at the heart of what domestic violence is. Also this is done by emotional abuse (repeated verbal attacks) aimed at degrading, humiliating and injuring the sense and self.

Karuiki (2016) in a study carried out by Ongeti, Ogengo, Were, Gakara and Pulie (2016) in 2013 at the gender violence recovery centre (GVRC) of Nairobi Women's Hospital which receives patients from Nairobi City and its environs showed that gender violence increased across the years. The study revealed that 85.4% and 12.7% of the victims were sexually and physically assaulted respectively. FIDA reports that over 4000 domestic violence cases had been reported between January and June 2016 (Karuiki, 2016).

Sexual violence is any contract that abuses, humiliates, degrades, or otherwise violates the sexual integrity of the victim (Abbot, 1999). Sexual abuse is any situation in which force or threat is used to obtain participation in unwanted sexual activity. Coercing a person to engage in sexual activity against their will, even if that person is a spouse or intimate partner with whom consensual sex has occurred previously is an act of aggression and Violence (Abbot, 1999). Sexual violence is defined by the World Health organization (WHO, 1995) as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work. Abbot (1999) observes that marital rape is one of the most serious violations of women's bodily integrity.

Chyun, Fiona and Jonathan (2013) chose Kenya for a study on domestic violence because of its relatively high HIV gender prevalence ratio (Prevalence in women is around 1.9 times higher than that of men, higher than most population based studies in Africa). There is evidence that Inter partner violence is considered culturally acceptable. Results from the study indicated that men and women reported similar amounts of male perpetrated domestic violence and intimate partners as the most common perpetrators of sexual violence. It was discovered that there was a correlation between IPV and HIV (WHO, 2013).

Emotional abuse is one of the most prevalent forms of abuse of women by their intimate partners and its damage is unquestionably severe, undermining a woman's sense of worth and independence. It also diminishes a woman's ability to care and provide for her children and to participate in the workforce. The common denominators of abusers are personal, social and psychological not demographic (Miller, 1995b). Verbal abuse is a feature of emotional abuse. An article from Sweden states that this mechanism communicates worthlessness (Hyden, 1995). From a feminist perspective, emotional abuse is a means of establishing power and control over the victim in addition to enabling the abuser to maintain a system of psychological abuse behaviours that reinforce this power and control (Bustow, 1992).

Emotional abuse includes verbal attacks harassment, belittling, excessive possessiveness isolation of partner and deprivation of physical and economic resources (Miller, 1995b).

Johnstone (2002) notes that two additional emotions emerged – anger and frustration – and this was due to the fact that men also felt – a need to assert their authority. Johnstone (2002) further explains the stigma of physical abuse is so severe that very few abused women will admit to intimate partner assault, instead they lie and give substitute explanations for their state and injuries.

One significant way that abusive men interfere with a woman's ability to acquire resources is by preventing her from obtaining and maintaining employment. Research indicates that abusive men forbid, discourage and actively prevent their partners from working outside the home (Riger, Ahren, Blinkenstaff and Camacho, 1999; Tolman, 1989). There is also evidence indicating that abusers actively interfere with their partner's ability to find and maintain employment. Raphael (1996) described how abusive men sabotage their partner's efforts to find jobs by inflicting visible injuries, turning off the alarm clock, and refusing to provide childcare to prevent their partners from attending job fairs and interviews.

Women in abusive relationships have a difficult time maintaining their economic resources when their partners engage in behaviours that generate costs. Such behaviours include stealing, damage and destruction of possessions and household furniture (Brewster, 2003). Thus, women in abusive relationships are at risk for accruing personal debts when shared resources are under her name or both names. Economic abuse therefore can seriously impede women's economic physical and psychological health.

## **Research Methodology**

The study used a descriptive survey research design. This design was selected because it is used in collecting data from respondents in a wide area (Stuart and Rory, 2011).

The study was carried out in Luanda sub-County which is located in Vihiga County, Western region of Kenya. It lies between longitude 35° 30' and 35° 0'E and altitudes 0° and 0° 15'N. Luanda sub-County borders Emuhaya sub-County to the North, Vihiga sub-County to the East, Siaya County to the West and Kisumu County to the South. (Emuhaya and Luanda constituencies' strategic plan, 2013). Its' altitude ranges between 1,300m and 1,800m above sea level. (Vihiga Statagic Plan, 2012).

According to Roscoe as cited by Oso and Onen, (2008) a population is a collection of objects, events or individuals, having common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) explain that, target population is that which the researcher wants to generalize the results of the study. The target population of this study comprised of eight women from the rural area who had experienced household violence.

The population sample consisted of married women who were living in violent households. The researcher used purposive sampling to select the eight women who were living in violent households. This technique allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objective of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The conflict tactics scale criteria (CTS) (Strauss 1990) below was adapted to ensure that the respondents were subjects of domestic violence. The CTS helped the researcher to know that the relevant sample for the research topic had been sampled.

Does/did your husband/partner ever:

Push/shake or throw something at you?

Slap or twist your arm?

Punch you with his fist or with something that could hurt you?

Kick or drag you?

Threaten you with a knife or other weapon?

Did/does your husband ever say/do something to humiliate you in front of others?

Threaten you with harm?

The researcher developed a questionnaire based on the theme of the objective of the study that had both closed and open ended questions, Likert scale answers and yes and no answers were used to collect data from the 8 respondents. Section A of the questionnaire consisted of demographic information of the respondents. Section B answered the objective of the study and had a five Likert scale questions. The questionnaire was the most appropriate instrument due to its ability to collect a large amount of information in a reasonably short span of time and it was inexpensive (Kothari, 2012). It also guaranteed confidentiality of the source of information through anonymity, while ensuring standardization. The researcher self-administered the questionnaires so as to clarify any issues that were not very clear to the responded. Questionnaire administration was done over a period of one week in September 2006.

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables. Having gathered the data, using questionnaires, the researcher embarked on data analysis. This was in relation to the issues that arose from the forms of violence for women staying in violent households.

## Results and Findings

The study sought to investigate the forms of household violence that women had experienced in their life. All the 8(100%) women agreed to have experienced physical and emotional abuse. Another 6(75%) admitted having experienced sexual abuse and 5(62.5%) economic abuse. These findings agree with findings by Schecter & Ganley (1995) who observe that specific coercive behaviours are physical, sexual and psychological.

The study sought to investigate the kinds of crimes experienced by women in violent households. Rating the responses on a five point scale, respondents were therefore asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement relating to violent crimes. These responses were based on Very low (1), Low(2), Moderate (3), High (4) and very High (5). Table 4.2 shows the findings of the study.

**Table 4.1 Forms of violent crimes experienced by women**

<b>TYPES OF ABUSE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PHYSICAL ABUSE</b>					
Kicking or slapping					8(100%)
Dragging, Punch, Slap, twist arm			3(37.5%)	5(62.5%)	
Shoving or pushing, Attempted Strangulation,		1(12.5%)	1(12.5%)	3(37.5%)	3(37.5%)
using an object to harm/hit you, threaten to harm you		1(12.5%)	2(25%)	3(37.5%)	2(25%)
<b>SEXUAL ABUSE</b>					
Forced sex after physical assault	5(62.5%)	1(12.5%)	2(25%)		
Forced sex when ill or Tired	3(37.5%)	2(25%)	3(37.5%)		
Use of sexually derogative language, suffered STI's			1(12.5%)	2(25%)	5(62.5%)
<b>EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE</b>					
Verbally abused, called names, harassed, belittled outside home					8(100%)
Spouse used excessive force, over possessiveness isolation			1(12.5%)		7(87.5%)
Deprivation of physical/ economic resources			2(25%)	1(12.5%)	5(62.5%)
<b>ECONOMIC VIOLENCE</b>					
Prevented from working outside home	5(62.5%)	1(12.5%)	2(25%)		
Prevented from advancing education	6(75%)	2(25%)			
Prevented from finding employment	7(87.5%)	1(12.5%)			
Prevented from using farming resources	8(100)				
Destroyed family property		5(62.5%)	2(25%)	1(12.5%)	

**Source: Researcher generated from field data (2007)**

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The study revealed that all the eight respondents 8(100%) agreed to a very high level of having been physically abused by being slapped and kicked, 3(37.5%) agreed that they had moderately been physically abused and 5(62.5%) had highly agreed to have been dragged, punched, slapped and had their arm twisted. Another 1(12.5%) admitted to a low level, 1(12.5%) a moderate level, 3(37.5%) high level and another 3(37.5%) a very high level chance of being shoved, pushed and attempted strangulation. Findings from the study revealed that 1(12.5%) agreed to a low level, 2(25%) moderate level, 3(37.5%) agreed to a high level and 2(25%) a very high level experience of household violence where they were harmed using a sharp object by their spouse. These findings agree with findings by Schecter & Ganley (1995) who observed that specific coercive behaviours are physical, emotional, sexual and psychological.

Findings from the study revealed that 5(62.5%) women agreed to a very low, 1(12.5%) a low and 2(25%) agreed to a moderate level of forced sex after physical abuse. Another 5(62.5%) noted a very low, 2(25%) a low level and 3(37.5%) to a moderate level of forced sex when ill or tired. The study revealed that 1(12.5%) respondents agreed to a moderate, 2(25%) to a high and 5(62.5%) to a very high level use of sexually derogative language and that they had suffered STI's.

These findings reveal that the most common sexual abuses that the women experienced were use of derogative language and suffering from STI's. This shows that the spouses of these women were having extra marital affairs since all the women agreed to having been inflicted by STI's at different levels. These findings agree with studies carried out in South Africa which found that women's HIV status was associated with joint exposure to both physical and sexual intimate partner violence.

The study revealed that 8(100%) of the women agreed on a high level having been verbally abused, called names and belittled outside home. Another 1(12.5%) and 7(87.5%) respondents agreed to a very high level that their spouse had used excessive force, were over possessive and isolated them. Out of the eight respondents 2(25%) moderately agreed, 1(12.5%) highly agreed and 5(62/5%) agreed to a very high level that they were deprived of physical and economic resources. These findings reveal that all the eight respondents were emotionally abused by their spouses. This can be interpreted to mean that the spouses used emotional abuse to intimidate and exert power over their spouses. These findings agree with findings from a study by Busto (1992) which noted that emotional abuse is a mean of establishing power and control over the victim in addition to enabling the abuser to maintain a system of psychological abuse behaviours that reinforces this power and control.

Out of the eight respondents, 5(62.5%) agreed to a low, 1(12.5%) very low and 2(25%) agreed to a moderate economic violence where they were prevented from working outside home. Another 6(75%) respondents agreed to a low and 2(25%) to a very low economic violence where they were prevented from advancing in education. The study found that 7(87.5%) respondents agreed to a very low, 1(12.5%) to a low violence where they were prevented from finding employment. Another 8(100%) respondents agreed that there was a very low abuse where they were prevented from using farming resources. The study found that 5(62.5%) respondents agreed to a low, 2(25%) a moderate and 1(12.5%) agreed to a high level that their spouse destroyed property. The findings of this study revealed that economic violence was minimal. This can be interpreted to mean that the women being housewives mostly tilled the land and engaged in small scale businesses. Having not attained proper education, they had no opportunity to advance in education or work from home. The spouses were not providing for them and economically depended on their wives. These findings disagree with observations made by Riger et al.,(1999) who observed that men interfere with a woman's ability to acquire resources by preventing them from obtaining and maintaining employment, that abusive men forced, discouraged and actively prevented their partners from working outside home and actively interfered with their partners ability to find employment through sabotaging their efforts to find jobs, inflicting visible injuries, turning off the alarm clock and refusing to provide childcare to prevent their partners from attending job fairs and interviews ( Raphael, 1996, Riger, et al., 1999 and Tolman, 1989).

The objective of the study was to describe forms of domestic violence against women in Luanda sub-county Vihiga County, Kenya. All the 8(100%) women agreed to have experienced physical and emotional abuse. Another 6(75%) admitted having experienced sexual abuse and 5(62.5%) economic abuse. These findings agree with findings by Schecter & Ganley (1995) who observe that specific coercive behaviours are physical, sexual and psychological.

## Conclusions

The study found that women who live in violent households had experienced physical, emotional, economic and sexual abuse. The study therefore concluded that gender based violence was common in households.

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### Areas of further Research

The study found that women experienced physical, emotional, economical and sexual violence. A study should be carried out on men as victims of domestic violence.

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