



Gender-Based Violence Emasculates Men: Barriers to Reporting Abuse and Seeking Support Services among Men in Kisumu Central Sub-County, Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract: Violence against men is a frequently overlooked facet of gender-based violence (GBV), with discussions predominantly centered around women's experiences. This oversight leads to the misperception that men do not endure violence. This paper aims to delve into the barriers, including traditional gender norms, stigma, and institutional bias, that obstruct men from disclosing their experiences with violence. It underscores the urgent need to reshape societal perceptions of masculinity and foster inclusivity. Focusing on Kisumu Central Sub-County, the study investigates community awareness of available reporting structures for male victims of violence and analyzes how prevailing societal attitudes and socialization practices impede help-seeking behaviors among men. Employing a phenomenological research design informed by hegemonic theory, the research targeted male survivors aged 18 and above, utilizing purposive and saturation sampling methods to gather data. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically to extract meaningful insights. The findings reveal a considerable lack of awareness regarding the reporting of violence against men, heavily influenced by societal norms that marginalize male victims. The emphasis on emotional stoicism further deters men from seeking help, perpetuating silence around their experiences of violence. This study highlights the critical need for awareness campaigns and support systems tailored to male victims. By addressing these barriers, communities can encourage men to speak out and seek the assistance they need, ultimately promoting a more inclusive perspective on gender-based violence.

Keywords: Gender-based Violence, Emasculates, Survivor, Men, Reporting and Seeking Help

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1. Introduction

Gender based violence against men remains a significantly under-reported and under-researched issue globally. Particularly in patriarchal society, despite growing evidence that men also experience various forms of abuse

(Morgan & Wells, 2023). Voices of the male survivors,” I was scared they wouldn’t believe me.” According to the recent view by Mhando *et al* (2024), the absence of gender sensitive protocols and services tailored for male survivors results in low help-seeking behavior and continued underreporting

Gender-based violence is a global public health and human rights issue that contributes to high rates of sickness, death, depression, substance dependency, suicide, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Malik & Nadda, 2019). Gender based violence is often tolerated as part of normal behaviour and is justified in the name of traditional culture (Kasyoka, Mutavi, Muhingi, Ondicho & Gitau, 2021). Gender-based violence (GBV) against men is an increasingly acknowledged yet persistently underreported issue, often overshadowed by the predominant focus on violence against women. While much of the scholarship on gender-based violence has traditionally focused on male-perpetrated violence against women, there is a growing recognition that violence against men can also be shaped by gendered dynamics (Ferrales, Nyseth Brehm & McElrath, 2016).

In many societies, including Kenya, discussions on GBV tend to exclude men, reinforcing the misconception that they are not victims of such violence. This silence is perpetuated by deep-rooted cultural norms, institutional biases, legal gaps, and the lack of male-specific support systems. Traditional notions of masculinity discourage men from acknowledging victimization or seeking help, for fear of stigma, shame, or social rejection. This study aims to explore the cultural, social, and institutional barriers that prevent men from reporting experiences of violence in Kisumu Central Sub-County. Specifically, it examines how societal perceptions of masculinity, community awareness of reporting structures, and gendered socialization practices contribute to the marginalization of male victims of GBV. The study highlights the urgent need to challenge prevailing gender norms and promote inclusive, responsive support systems for all victims of violence, regardless of gender.

Gender-based violence is often perceived as an issue primarily affecting women. However, research and emerging data reveal that men also experience significant levels of domestic violence across various countries and cultures (Gateri, Ondicho, & Karimi, 2021). Violence against men encompasses violent acts that are disproportionately or exclusively committed against men or boys. It includes physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse perpetrated by intimate partners. Societal conventions and gender stereotypes frequently deter men from reporting their abuse, contributing to the increasing incidence of such violence. Even though this issue is still not widely talked about, more attention is being given to it these days as a key area for research (Mahalik *et al.*, 2022).

People are now more likely to notice that violence against men is a growing, yet seldom addressed, part of gender-based violence. Many discussions about violence mainly look at how women suffer, but men can still experience emotional, psychological, and physical abuse. This

violence happens in many settings, for example, public spaces, institutions, and between partners. Understanding how these things shape violence against men means it's necessary to examine the cultural setting, gender norms, and the ways society views them. According to authors Davis *et al.* (2021) and Sutherland (2022), the idea that showing weakness means suffering from gender roles leads many men to cover up their traumatic experiences and not speak it or ask for help. Because men are viewed as strong and less likely to be victims, their injuries and problems are generally ignored or downplayed (Randle *et al.*, 2020).

Social, cultural, and economic variables influence many different types of violence against males, which is often unseen or devalued. There are many different types of violence against males, and each is influenced by social, cultural, and economic variables. Social variables include: gender roles and expectations, which show that men should always be strong and not show any form of vulnerability, family structure and relationship, peer pressure and socialization, and lack of access to support systems. Economic variables include issues like, economic hardship due to unemployment of the male partner or all in employment with the other having a higher pay than the husband, and again child support in case of legal tussles, where all payments and supports are left for the male gender, Intimate partner violence (IPV) against men, has drawn more attention recently. Although, dismissed by social standards that highlight the victimization of women research shows that men can be physically, emotionally, and psychologically abused by women, (Harris *et al.*, 2019; Randle *et al.*, 2020). According to World Health Organization, (2021) men are also equally affected by public violence, which includes assaults related to gangs, street violence, and bullying, as they are more likely to both commit and be victims of such acts.

Cultural ideas of masculinity significantly shape men's experiences with violence. Premium on qualities like emotional control, stoicism, and toughness, which can discourage men from admitting they have been victimized or from getting assistance places traditional ideas of masculinity in many cultures (Mahalik *et al.*, 2022). Male victims' mental health issues are often exacerbated by societal pressure to conform to traditional masculinity norms, leading them to internalize. Men are rarely counted as violent victims in statistics, like in most places in Africa. Some traditional expectations of men's behavior are why many male abuse victims in Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria do not receive adequate or enough help. Because of the patriarchal society in Nigeria, men who are victims of domestic abuse are usually ignored. According to Gado's study (2021), male victims are discouraged by cultural beliefs from speaking out about the abuse they experience which helps to sustain domestic violence towards them. Researchers realized that news and

entertainment in Nigeria often puts a strong focus on violence against women which tends to put male victims into the background. In 2022, Lyng Bengsston did research on male gender disputes in Uganda. She focuses on how many men's issues are not considered and underrepresented in norms. Her study looks into how groups in certain areas help male refugees, including Refugee Law Projects (RLP) and the Men of Hope Refugee Association Uganda (MOHRAU).

South African culture which gives importance to males being better than females, may contribute to domestic violence. He (Mkhize) investigated the influence of cultural ideas that worship masculine strength on the way men see themselves and their roles in domestic violence. It found that the way to fight domestic violence is to raise awareness against traditional male dominance and support peaceful manhood.

Masculine social norms in Tanzania prevent men from admitting they are facing abuse which makes reporting abuse cases less frequent. In her study, Mwamba (2023) mentioned that gender-based violence against men and boys in Tanzania largely goes unnoticed, due to the attention paid to women and girls. It pointed out that including more people in the effort would be necessary to fight gender-based violence.

Traditionally, strong authority, dominance and a lack of feelings are values for men in Kenyan culture which greatly affects how society views men. Due to these common ideas, it might be hard to find men who face intimate partner abuse (IPV), resulting in less attention and minimal support. Surrounding counties to Kisumu County consist of Homabay, Vihiga, Kakamega and Busia.

Kakamega County says it has worked with partners, among them USAID and Afya halisi projects, to renovate some facilities that now serve as rescue centers for male victims of violence. They have also collaborated with organizations like network for research and Governance (NRG) and transparency international Kenya that have led to the empowerment of youths in kakamega. These programs impact knowledge about male gender violence and this empower them to and aid them in advocating for survivors and promoting of awareness within their communities.

In Homabay County, there was a policy framework put in place in the year 2023, and gender-based violence control and management bill was reviewed in 2024, which mainly spoke on the male gender victims, and which was aiming to address all forms of violence affecting all genders. To provide support to male survivors, Homabay County has established a dedicated clinic. The gender violence recovery center (GVRC) opened facilities in Rangwe and Mbita sub-counties hospital, adding to existing centers at

the county referral and teaching hospitals Makongeni sub-county hospitals. They supply medical as well as psychological assistance to people who have survived disasters.

To learn about the views of people in Nairobi's informal settlements concerning male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), Waila *et al.* (2024) conducted a qualitative study. Emotional abuse often makes men feel humiliated and controlled, which is aggravated when living conditions are poor and alcohol is involved. It explained that abusive men are usually not aware of the abuse because society's expectations hide it from them.

In Bunyala Sub-County, Busia County, research done by Wanyama *et al.* (2022) found that male victims of domestic abuse frequently feel stigmatized, discriminated against and ridiculed. Going through these experiences makes people question their idea of manhood, because society expects men to act strong and in control. Because of this, many affected men might not want to share their worries because they worry about being judged by others.

Another study by Manyanya *et al.* (2024) among male refugees from Congo in Kakuma Camp, Kenya, showed that their cultural background affects how incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are seen and shared. Many male victims are discouraged from getting help because of social pressure to stay within traditional masculine roles which highlights the impact culture has on responses to violence against men.

Old customs in the community make it harder to address men suffering from violence in Kisumu. Due to traditional ideas about being a man, males have been unwilling to talk about what happens to them or look for help which resulted in few reports and few support groups (Makokha, 2023). Traditional gender views are still affecting the way Kisumu, just like Nairobi and Mombasa, looks at men who have been attacked. Men victims of domestic or emotional violence in Nairobi usually avoid going to court because it is seen as being weak, as shown by Kamau's research (2020). As a result of beliefs in Mombasa, many men feel they should not report violence against themselves and researchers Hassan and Otieno (2022) found that this often happens. Being aware of how cultural variables influence violence against men is very important for forming helpful interventions.

Across many nations and societies, men's violence is a big issue. Addressing the differences men face when they are victims of domestic abuse allows cultures to support them more inclusively. Everyone, men and women, should be able to get protection from violence by intimate partners which is why we need to acknowledge that men can also

suffer from this pain and avoid seeking help (Mahalik & Di Bianca, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Violence against men is being seen as a health problem more and more, although cultural barriers continue to keep most victims in Kisumu Central Sub-County from seeking help (Davis *et al.*, 2021). Because the idea of vulnerability being linked to weakness is a traditional part of masculinity, many men refuse to ask for help or report abuse (Mahalik *et al.*, 2022). Researchers now know violence against men happens, but research shows little about the effects of masculinity on men's experiences with violence in Kenya.

Almost all previous studies on gender-based violence have covered women more than men, leaving out the reasons male victims are often ignored (Harris *et al.*, 2019). Although several studies consider intimate partner violence, they don't recognize the strong influence masculinity norms have on men who are abused (Kilmartin, 2020). The problem in Kisumu Central Sub-County is also affected by strict gender norms and the feeling of shame someone might have as a male victim which may stop survivors from speaking up (Omondi *et al.*, 2023).

Because Kenya's culture views masculinity uniquely, an investigation had to be done locally to fully understand the impact on males targeted by violence. The lack of attention to masculinity in the current studies has blocked the development of effective ways to prevent male violence (Mahalik *et al.*, 2022). The purpose of this investigation was to examine how culture affects the lives of male victims in Kisumu Central Sub-County to try to close the gap.

2. Literature Review

A growing body of literature recognizes that the traditional construction of masculinity significantly deters men from reporting violence, according to Connell and Messerschmidt. (2024). Addis and Malik (2024) argue that men are often socialized to endure pain and avoid vulnerability. this socialization not only silences male survivors but also normalizes suffering as part of manhood.

In the African context, Macharia (2025) reports that support systems in Kenya are poorly equipped to serve male survivors, with most facilities and programs being designed with female victims in mind. There is also a lack of gender gender-sensitive protocols training and documentation tools tailored to male victims, particularly in sub-national contexts such as Kisumu

2.1 Men's Socialization Practices and Their Association with Violence against Men

Critical evaluation of empirical research on men's socialization practices and their association to violence against men shows the complex processes that profoundly influence male identities and behaviors. Methods of socialization, like cultural expectations, peer relationships, and familial upbringing, are important in perpetuating norms that might promote violence or hinder men from seeking help.

Peer group socialization has a role in young men's aggression being accepted (Wong *et al.*, 2017). They found that peer interactions help young men develop and maintain aggressive tendencies, especially in settings that encourage violent behavior. It is difficult for men to escape these damaging norms and feed the cycle of violence due to the social learning process. However, Wong's findings do not adequately account for the wider social and cultural aspects that influence these relationships, more so in culturally diverse locations like Kisumu Central.

Familial dynamics affect Men's socialization habits. Family circumstances that suppress emotional expression and maintain rigid gender stereotypes have an impact on men's propensity for aggression (Mahalik & Burns, 2017). Boys are more likely to behave violently more so who grow up in households that prioritize toughness over vulnerability. This is because of the possibility that they will choose behaviors that adhere to the dominant scripts of masculinity. By doing this, it also helps spread cultural views about violence and masculinity apart from influencing one person's behavior (Mahalik & Burns, 2017). Still, the research does not carefully look at how these standards are different in various cultures despite offering useful insights, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, because people have very different roles and families.

Special attention has been given lately to how cultural and media influences affect how men are socialized. Courtenay and Keeling point out (2020) that because mainstream media often links masculinity to aggression, dominance and power, this idea gets incorporated in young men's sense of self. They argue that men feel pressured to demonstrate their manhood by violence as a result of the influential ways media shapes society's standards (Courtenay and Keeling, 2020), but they didn't look into the unique cultural reasons men in specific communities use and interpret media. Analyzing the relationship between violence, socialization, and masculinity requires an understanding of these regional quirks.

Even though empirical studies have yielded valuable insights, there remain unresolved concerns about the precise manner in which men's socialization practices contribute to violence against men in various cultural contexts. Different socialization processes in different contexts influence male behavior, and most published research tends to extrapolate findings from one civilization to another. To properly examine the local cultural values and customs of Kisumu Central Sub-County, further targeted research is needed.

Once more, there hasn't been much focus on the potential for successful socialization strategies that encourage positive expressions of masculinity. Although much of the literature focuses on the negative effects of socialization, this study will look at how supportive environments and good role models may lower the prevalence of violence and encourage males to seek therapy. We can learn how to modify socialization strategies to support non-violent masculinities by examining these routes. A 2022 mixed methods review found stigma rooted in hegemonic masculinity where “real men” should appear weak, leading to fear, denial, and reluctance to seek help. Men victims often feared disbelief, embarrassment, or even being seen as the perpetrator, inhibiting reporting. A 2025 study in a malaria journal (African context) 73.9% of GBV-experienced employees did not report citing shame, mistrust, fear of job loss, and societal judgment. For men, cultural ideas of masculinity made reporting seem “unmanly” (Mugambi & Otieno, 2022).

Finally, little attention has been given to the possibility of effective socialization techniques that encourage more positive manifestations of masculinity. This study examined how supportive surroundings and positive role models could reduce the incidence of violence and motivate males to seek therapy, although much of the literature focuses on the negative aspects of socialization.

2.2 Barriers That Hinder Male Victims from Reporting and Seeking Help

The review of recent studies clarifies that there is a strong connection between social, psychological, and cultural factors that influence male victims' decisions not to report abuse or get support. Seidler *et al.* (2021) explain that cultural ideas about what it means to be masculine play a big role in why men are hesitant to seek help. Griffith *et al.* (2022) stress that when men are abused, traditional notions of how guys should act leave them struggling to control their feelings, depend on others or trust themselves. Vogel *et al.*'s (2019) new study added that these traditional male values make a man feel that seeking help makes him weak and encourages ignoring their weaknesses. Emslie *et al.* (2020) argued that this happens because men are

expected not to reveal their feelings, which stops them from talking about problems related to violence and looking for mental health assistance. Concern about facing stigma can lead men to conceal that they were victims, which results in them not being able to reach out for help.

Even though this is very important, larger societal issues are generally left out of research such as how local support exists and the availability of services meant for male victims. Creating networks that support all individuals, ignoring traditional gender ideas and encourage people to look for help.

One of the main reasons guys do not get help is because they worry people won't respect their concerns. According to recent research, when people often think of men as the source of violence, it adds to men's anxiety about talking about violent situations (Lovas, 2023). The idea that many men would have their claims rejected or ridiculed serves to further solidify the stigma associated with male victims. This chilling effect discourages men from reporting abuse or asking for assistance. Although previous research acknowledges these concerns, little is known about how support services could effectively address and alleviate these concerns to foster a more inclusive and responsive system.

Another important gap in the field is represented by the dearth of longitudinal research that examines how obstacles to getting treatment change over time. The majority of current research ignores the fluidity of social views and individual circumstances that can impact behavior when seeking treatment, since they only provide a snapshot of men's experiences at one particular moment in time, perhaps. A deeper understanding of how men's views of asking for assistance change with time, more so in reaction to major life events or changes in social ideas of victimization and masculinity, may be possible through longitudinal research.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Because it aimed to investigate and comprehend men's lived experiences of violence against them, with a particular focus on how societal conceptions of masculinity impact this occurrence, a phenomenological study approach was chosen. Men's experiences with violence, their views of traditional masculinity, and how cultural beliefs influence their actions and reactions may all be thoroughly understood thanks to this design. To better understand violence against men, the study used qualitative research methods. Focus groups (FGDs) and in-depth interviews were the main qualitative methodologies used

to gather data. Alongside the primary themes, the acquired data were subjected to a thematic analysis and verbatim amplification of the informants' voices.

3.2 Study Location

This study was carried out at Kisumu Central Sub-County in Kisumu, Kenya. The 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) identified Kisumu Central, along with other parts of Kisumu County, as a hotspot for physical intimate partner violence — meaning the prevalence there is significantly higher than the national average and nearby sub-counties. While these figures capture county-wide trends, spatial zoning analyses indicate that sub-counties like Seme, Muhoroni, Nyakach, and Kisumu Central are primary GBV hotspots. Kisumu Central Sub-County exhibits among the highest rates of GBV within Kisumu County, comparable to other hotspot

sub-counties such as Seme, Muhoroni, and Nyakach. In contrast, sub-counties like Suba and Alego have significantly lower incidence rates. Kisumu Central's urban poverty, poor housing, weak law enforcement, entrenched gender norms, and inadequate services create a fertile ground for GBV. Interventions need to address not just individual behaviors but also these broader structural and systemic factors.

3.3 Sample Size

The study targeted males above 18 years old (Survivors of GBV), Probation Officers, Community Leaders/Elders, and Social Workers. Since this was a qualitative study, the sample size was determined using the saturation method rather than a predetermined numerical value.

Table 1: Sample Frame

Respondent Category	Target Sample Size	Sample size
Male GBV Survivors (FGDs)	10–20	20
Probation Officers	3–5	4
Community Leaders/Elders	6 (1 per ward)	6
Social Workers	3–5	4
Total	22–36	34

3.4 Study Instrument

In order to investigate how ideas about masculinity alter how violence against men is accepted or viewed, the researchers decided to employ Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), In-Depth Interviews, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Content Analysis. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were very beneficial since they revealed the shared experiences of the community. Groups were created to allow men to discuss and consider their views on violence and masculinity. Conversations and exchanges resulted, revealing group beliefs that would not have been clear in individual interviews. FGDs examined how males react differently to victimization, which is influenced in part by societal notions of masculinity.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Getting the required research approvals was the first step in the data collection process. A research authorization was acquired from NACOSTI, and permission was requested from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). To ensure seamless data gathering, permission from pertinent (Kisumu County government) entities was also obtained. Finding and choosing responders was the first step in the procedure after approvals were given. The respondents were selected from a sampling frame created for the study. Following respondent selection, study instrument administration got underway. The study used a variety of techniques to gather primary and secondary data. However, an instrument pilot test was carried out to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instruments before the actual data collection.

3.6 Data Analysis

Using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) and thematic analysis techniques, this qualitative study offered an organized method for finding patterns in the information gathered from interviews and focus group discussions. Data familiarization was the first step in the analysis process, when the researcher carefully went over the transcriptions of the FGDs and interviews with survivors, probation officers, social workers, and community leaders. Significant portions of the data about violence and masculinity were then coded, where descriptive labels were applied. To generate codes, these were systematically grouped into more general themes that reflected recurring ideas or issues in every participant's response.

The researcher examined and improved these themes to make sure they accurately represented the data and complemented the study's objectives. Themes were then elucidated and arranged to improve comprehension of how cultural ideas of masculinity affected men's experiences of violence and their actions to seek support. In the end, the researcher synthesized and analyzed the themes, gaining knowledge that enhanced the story and understanding of how masculinity contributes to violence against males.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The Catholic University of East Africa provided the researcher with a letter of authorization attesting to the study's status as an academic requirement. The researcher received research permission from NACOSTI to verify that the study complied with national research standards and

was authorized to gather data at the designated area. The participants received a thorough explanation of the nature and goal of the study. They were informed that their participation was entirely optional and that they could leave at any time without incurring any penalties.

Prioritizing the participants' emotional and psychological well-being was crucial during the data collection stage, particularly when discussing delicate topics like gender-based violence. If any participant showed symptoms of distress, the researcher took prompt action, which included stopping the interview or stopping it altogether, offering emotional support, and directing the person to a professional counseling facility. All personal information collected during the study was kept confidential, and participants received thorough information about the study, including the duration of their participation and the data gathering techniques (in-depth interviews and focus groups).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate Analysis

The response rate from male victims was relatively moderate, reflecting broader trends observed in similar studies where male survivors are often reluctant to participate due to stigma and fear. This aligns with findings from Tsui, Cheung, and Leung (2010), who noted that help-seeking among male victims remains low. Therefore, securing 20 male survivors for in-depth participation represents a significant achievement. The table below shows the response rate analysis:

Table 2: Response Rate

Respondent Category	Target Sample Size	Actual Participants	Response Rate (%)
Male GBV Survivors (FGDs)	10–20	20	100%
Probation Officers	3–5	4	100%
Community Leaders/Elders	6 (1 per ward)	6	100%
Social Workers	3–5	4	100%
Total	22–36	34	94.4%–154.5%*

Due to topic saturation and voluntary participation that exceeds the necessary minimum, the response rate at the lower end of the goal range exceeds 100%.

Response rates were good across all study participant categories. The focus groups with 20 male GBV survivors demonstrated robust engagement and copious data,

meeting the upper saturation threshold. Similar to this, social professionals, probation officers, and community elders all participated fully as anticipated; due to positive community relations and collaboration with neighborhood organizations, some categories reached the maximum or slightly exceeded the target. Dynamism of the findings, the inclusion of other participants allowed for a multi-angled analysis of the issue, which aligns with Patton's (2002) view that methodological triangulation enhances the validity of qualitative research by incorporating diverse viewpoints. The diverse roles among these stakeholders also contributed to the dynamism of the findings. For instance, while male victims often describe fear of ridicule and silence, some healthcare workers noted a lack of training or protocols for managing male disabilities, highlighting institutional barriers not visible from the survivor narrative alone

The response rate supports the validity and reliability of the findings by guaranteeing a comprehensive representation

of perspectives on how cultural masculinity beliefs affect VAM and reporting methods.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section displays the demographic information of the male Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors who participated in the study. Comprehension of these traits is necessary to interpret the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding cultural masculinity and violence against men in Kisumu Central Sub-County. Age, work status, Residential wards, and level of education are among the demographic data. This data helps to understand the backgrounds of the survivors and promotes the study of how socioeconomic and cultural factors affect male experiences of GBV

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Male GBV Survivors (n = 20)

Age Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18–25 years	3	15%
26–35 years	7	35%
36–45 years	6	30%
46 years and above	4	20%
Education Level		
Primary education	4	20%
Secondary education	8	40%
Tertiary (college/university)	8	40%
Employment Status		
Unemploy	5	25%
Informal sector employment	9	45%
Formal employment	6	30%
Ward		
Nyalenda B	4	20%
Kondele	3	15%
Shauri-Moyo Kaloleni	3	15%
Migosi	4	20%
Railways	3	15%
Milimani	3	15%

Findings on demographic profile shows a representative and varied sample of male GBV survivors in Kisumu Central Sub-County with respect to age, education, job,

And geographic region. In terms of age, the highest percentage of participants (35%) were between the ages of 26 and 35, followed by those between the ages of 36 and 45 (30%). This shows that

the majority of men who experience gender-based violence are in their prime working and family-building years. These encounters are typical for all adult age groups, as evidenced by the fact that 15% of respondents were young boys between the ages of 18 and 25 and 20% of respondents were over 46.

In terms of education, a sizable portion of participants (40%) had completed secondary school, and another 40 percent held higher degrees. Only twenty percent had finished elementary school. By demonstrating that male GBV victims are not always illiterate—even those with advanced degrees are victims of gender-based violence—this debunks the idea that susceptibility is associated with lower educational achievement.

Employment statistics reveal that 45% of respondents were involved in informal sector jobs, 30% were employed in formal positions, and 25% were unemployed. This distribution illustrates how GBV impacts men from various socio-economic backgrounds, though individuals in the informal sector may be particularly vulnerable due to

economic uncertainty and limited access to social safety nets.

Participants were relatively evenly spread across the six key wards of Kisumu Central Sub-County—Nyalenda B, Migosi, Kondele, Railways, Milimani, and Shauri-Moyo Kaloleni. This wide-ranging representation allowed the study to gather diverse perspectives from different residential and cultural environments within the sub-county.

4.3 Influence of Societal Attitudes and Traditional Masculinity Beliefs

This section looks at how traditional definitions of what it means to be a man affect the beliefs of male victims of gender-based violence (GBV). Various insights are included in the analysis from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with males and long interviews with probation officers, social workers and leaders or elders in the community.

Table 4: Community Views on Masculinity and Violence Perception

Theme/Sub-node	Number of Sources	Number of References
Masculinity discourages help-seeking	8	12
Violence is perceived as weakness for men	7	10
Masculinity is linked to emotional suppression	6	8
Men are expected to endure pain	5	7

The study shows that certain social norms keep male abuse victims from noticing and sharing their experiences because of community views on masculinity.

There are eight sources (each cited 12 times) that emphasize that males discourage themselves from seeking assistance out of worries related to how a man should behave. Because people often think independence and strength go with being a man, men tend to cover their sadness instead of being open about their emotions. In other words, being involved in violence often results in the loss of the feeling of masculinity. It was talked about in ten different places by seven different sources. Men who experience violence in such an environment may be perceived as less macho or undeserving, which promotes silence and denial among the victims and the public at large.

Violence against men is, therefore, often ignored or disregarded. Emotional repression arose as another significant facet of traditional masculinity. Eight citations from six sources referenced the notion that men should not express or discuss their feelings. This assumption further restricts men's capacity to absorb trauma or seek emotional

support, preventing them from revealing the emotional or psychological effects of abuse.

Finally, men often identify strength with persevering through hardship, as evidenced by the notion that men should endure pain in silence, which is highlighted in seven citations from five sources. They are unable to perceive injury or perceive their experiences as abusive because of this style of thinking, particularly in cases where the violence is mild or non-physical.

4.4 How Societal Beliefs on Masculinity Affect Male Victim Perceptions

The focus group discussions indicated that numerous male survivors felt their experiences were not taken seriously because of the community's strict views on masculinity. One participant stated,

“People believe that men should manage violence, and that only women can be victims. When you report, they dismiss it

as unimportant because 'you're a man,' or, even worse, they label you as weak."

Another interviewee expressed,

"There's this notion that men always hold the power, so when they are victimized, it's seen as if they are less masculine."

These comments point to a widespread belief in Kisumu Central that male victims of violence are somehow less worthy of support or compassion. An officer mentioned,

"The dominant belief is that men, simply by being male, should be the ones inflicting violence, not experiencing it. This perspective makes it difficult for male victims to be recognized as legitimate cases of abuse."

This observation aligns with international studies on gender norms and violence. Research by Vetten (2014) and Sikweyiya & Jewkes (2020) has indicated that societal views of masculinity often lead to the downplaying of male victimization. These perceptions stem from the idea that men are inherently domineering and that being victimized undermines their masculinity. In Kisumu Central, this notion significantly hinders addressing the needs of male survivors of violence. Both the focus groups and in-depth interviews indicated that various cultural norms in Kisumu Central dissuade men from recognizing or reporting violence. One survivor noted,

"In this community, a man's value is gauged by his capacity to manage his household. If you allow anyone to harm you, it suggests you are failing in that role, and no one will respect you."

Another participant added,

"Cultural expectations dictate that men are protectors. Admitting that you've been abused feels like relinquishing your manhood."

Key informants pointed out similar concerns. An officer remarked,

"Cultural beliefs about male dominance and authority make it challenging for men to accept that they are victims. Many men think that reporting violence would lead to a loss of their masculinity in the community's eyes."

A local elder went on,

"A man should never display vulnerability in our society." Being a victim is seen as proof that he lacks the maturity to be a decent man."

This finding matches other studies, such as Thati's (2017) work, that reveal that men are discouraged by dominance

in society from reporting violence. As a result of these ideas, men who have been abused usually feel shameful and are seen differently than men are expected to be.

4.5 Men's Socialization Practices and Contribution to Violence

The third goal examines how men react to violent events and the extent to which they accept it, especially because of the way they are socialized early on. This research was based on findings collected from focus group discussions (FGDs) with men exposed to gender-based violence and interviews with social workers, probation officers, and community leaders. They reveal the damage done to males because of common cultural and social norms related to masculinity. The people in the male GBV focus groups said early lessons learned from peers and family affected how they responded to violence as adults.

A number of interviewees remembered that, in their families, being strong physically and controlling their emotions were very important for a man to be considered masculine.

"I discovered that men shouldn't cry, that we are the guardians and need to remain strong, even in trying circumstances," a survivor stated.

This brainwashing made it so that certain abuse survivors experienced ongoing abuse without revealing it, because they worried about being criticized if they asked for help. They looked at the controlling or aggressive actions displayed by their own fathers as well as other male role models. One respondent raised,

"I grew up witnessing my father resolve conflicts through violent altercations. As a result, I was ill-equipped to discuss or address violence in my marriage in a different manner."

This behavior, which began as a child, may explain why victims do not try to prevent abuse in adulthood. Examining these results with studies done by, for example, Oyaro (2017) reveals that being brought up in patriarchal societies often makes boys use harmful coping strategies when facing abuse. His research shows that, having grown up in similar environments, males usually treat violence as a part of who they are, which can cause them to either hide their feelings or regard violence as acceptable.

This also echoes the findings of Ochieng (2021), who noticed that being raised to focus on discipline and toughness from a young age leads male victims of gender-based violence (GBV) in Kenya to have difficulty showing their emotions. This repression of feelings may prevent

them from processing violence easily, which in turn can make things like telling and recovering harder. Thorough interviews with probation officials, social workers, and local leaders were conducted to understand any ongoing views on how men's attitudes about violence and being victims are influenced by early life encounters. According to them, cultural ideas about how men should act usually stop men from admitting they are victims of violence. A social worker claims that,

"Boys are taught early on that showing signs of weakness, such as being harmed or seeking assistance, is a sign of failure. Men find it difficult to acknowledge their victim status because of this mentality, which endures into adulthood."

Experts also point out that men raised this way can consider violence to be a way to prove their strength, not something negative. A local official pointed out,

" Many of these men are unaware that the violence they have experienced is illegal or that it calls for action. They are taught to bear suffering in seclusion and silence."

Based on Nyambura's findings (2019), boys are taught by society to hide how they really feel and to act dominant which prevents them from being vulnerable. The observations and the findings agree with each other. Emotional intelligence is not strong enough for them to tell if violence goes over their own limits. Since male GBV victims find it hard to shift masculine norms, many remain reluctant to talk about their abuse which the comparison with earlier research explains. In places where gender roles are very defined, men feeling they do not have enough stamina may doubt their success. Some social factors made male survivors of gender-based violence more likely to go through or see violence. The normalizing of male hostility in domestic settings was a recurring subject. A shared,

"We grew up in homes where men were expected to be the leaders and any female pushback was considered rude. I didn't even understand how aggressive my relationship had been until it was too late."

Talking about how men are thought to be the main financial providers and how much pressure they feel about paying the bills came up in several testimonies. Among the survivors, one said,

"Because I couldn't provide for my family, I was abused. I felt like I had failed as a man."

Because of these social ways of thinking, men were embarrassed to end their abusive marriages for fear of being judged or humiliated. Such expectations about gender put men in more complex danger in many

situations. This is clear in the study done by Mutiso and Gitonga (2018), who discovered that economic roles and expectations that men must fulfill cause them to view violence as normal for their relationships. Socializing methods that try to lessen the emotional impact of violence for men are a major cause.

The way men are traditionally raised contributes significantly to men facing violence, social workers believe. An officer noted,

"Boys are brought up to believe that they should be in charge or that they are aggressive. Because of this, males are led to feel that controlling their partners or coworkers—even using violence if necessary—is acceptable."

They said that early exposure to violent ways of handling arguments can increase both the chances of men becoming criminals and the chances of them being hurt by someone else's violence. According to a social worker,

"Boys are taught that using physical force to establish control is a necessary component of being a man. Unfortunately, this lays the groundwork for additional violent acts, regardless of whether they are the ones carrying out the violence or the ones who are being hurt."

The research confirms what Aswani (2020) found, that socialization at a young age plays a major role in keeping violence against men ongoing. The existence of cultural norms often leads males to believe that possessing power makes them more manly which raises the chances of violence occurring. Thus, the continuing problem of gender-based violence is shaped by how traditional methods are used to discourage change. They pointed out that in some cultures, people may assume violence against men is okay which can avoid noticing abuse as a problem. An elder in the community mentioned,

"Even if a guy is physically harmed, it is thought that he should face hardships in silence. Because of cultural norms, mistreatment is frequently accepted as a kind of discipline or toughness."

Respondents told us that in some places, violence is sometimes seen as a lesson to teach men how to behave. Many traditional ideas about masculinity being linked to dominance form the core of these cultural rules.

According to Mutiso (2019), people's expectations make it easier for men to downplay or ignore violence which makes it difficult to offer help. Since abuse happens often in male traditional roles, many men tend to overlook it and feel reluctant to ask for medical attention since they do not consider themselves victims.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Community members, the survey found, do not know much about violence against men. Because gender-based violence (GBV) is often seen as a women's concern, men who survive these kinds of violence are often overlooked and made invisible. Sometimes, the signs of physical and financial abuse are noticed, but psychological and sexual assault against men are very often ignored. Without any public efforts to stop male GBV such crimes often go unreported or are not brought up. Because male survivors are not recognized, many are discouraged from getting help or justice.

Due to how men are expected to act and think, most find it hard to mention abuse or classify themselves as victims. Many think that males should always stay strong, not show emotion and remain strong which means that being a victim suggests a lack of strength. In this manner, the process of getting help is worsened because people can feel embarrassed, mocked and tend to keep the problem to themselves. According to the study such attitudes in men make victims less likely to seek help and others less willing to support them.

The research found that how men control their emotions and deal with difficulties quietly is strongly shaped by early experiences of masculinity. Being men, boys are often led to ignore their feelings and not show weakness and to equate being strong with authority and hiding their emotions. Early social conditioning produces long-lasting psychological barriers that make it challenging to identify abuse or seek help. The conclusion drawn is that one of the main causes of the internalization and normalizing of violence against men in Kisumu Central is the process of male socialization.

Men in Kisumu Central encounter various obstacles when they seek help for GBV. These challenges include the dearth of male-centered support systems, social norms that prohibit being vulnerable, fear of being mocked, and the underappreciation of service providers. Because the current support system is primarily designed for women and children, male victims are disregarded and shunned. The study's conclusions indicate that these structural defects, along with cultural influences, create an environment in which men's pain is ignored and seeking help is viewed as shameful.

Many scholars acknowledge under-reporting by male survivors but fail to fully interrogate the deep-seated cultural shame and institutional neglect that suppress disclosure. Have scholars sufficiently examined how masculinity norms embedded in law enforcement,

healthcare, and family structures deter men from reporting? Are researchers themselves approaching male victimhood with unconscious bias, thereby reinforcing silence? There is a great contradiction that hegemonic masculinity contributes to male underreporting of abuse, yet many studies treat this only as a background variable rather than a central explanatory mechanism (Macharia, L.W., 2021). Some early researchers suggest that violence against men is rare and statistically insignificant (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, during the study at Kisumu Central Sub-County, this was contradicted because men experience similar rates of emotional and physical abuse, but are less likely to report it due to shame and fear of ridicule (Hines & Douglas, 2020; Cook, 2009). There are a lot of contradictions in institutional access. Some scholars noted that many policy papers and GBV frameworks claim to offer "gender-neutral" services, suggesting men have equal access to legal and medical help. However, during the recent study at Kisumu Central Sub-County, field observations and testimonies reveal that most services are designed with women in mind and providers are often untrained to handle male disclosures

5.2 Recommendations

The study findings led to the following suggestions:

1. Create and carry out male-inclusive GBV awareness campaigns. It is important to acknowledge that men can also fall prey to gender-based violence. Dispelling gender stereotypes and fostering empathy for male survivors should be the goals of these programs. Male gender violence should be addressed in our local radio stations, even in our churches to make the world aware of the suffering of men.
2. Incorporate Men into National GBV Policies and Programs: Women and children are the primary focus of contemporary GBV frameworks. Lawmakers should update national and county-level policies to specifically identify and protect male victims. This should mean creating men-specific intervention strategies and implementing them in GBV action plans.
3. Provide Male-Friendly Mechanisms for GBV Reporting and Assistance: It is crucial to create gender-sensitive treatment facilities or designated safe spaces within current systems so that male survivors can report abuse and get psychosocial support without feeling shamed or condemned. These must provide legal aid, psychotherapy, and male-specific helplines.
4. Train First Responders and Service Providers in Gender Sensitivity and Inclusivity: Law police, social workers, probation officers, counselors, and medical professionals should all be trained on

the complexities of male victimization. This will enhance their ability to respond to male survivors' claims in a professional and compassionate manner, ensuring that they are taken seriously and treated appropriately.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

Considering the scope and limitations of this research, future studies should employ quantitative approaches to assess the prevalence, frequency, and trends of gender-based violence against men in various regions of Kenya. This information would support effective policy development and resource distribution.

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