

## Domestic Violence and Family Values in Mitooma District, Western Uganda

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**Abstract:** This article determines the relationship between Domestic violence and Family values in Mitooma district, western Uganda. The study adopted a descriptive research design which was both quantitative and qualitative as paradigms in order to describe the data and its characteristics [1]. A close ended questionnaire and an interview schedule were employed to garner information from the population. Data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, bar graphs and Pearson linear correlation coefficient. Findings showed that there was a positive relationship between Domestic violence and Family values. It was as well revealed that Domestic violence contributes to the Family values in Mitooma district. The study recommended that government should sensitize the citizenry to engage in income generating activities so as to try and reduce on poverty levels in society because it has been observed that poverty is the major cause of domestic violence in communities. Government should enact policies that help to reduce the occurrence of domestic violence in families. This can be done at sub-county levels as by-laws, at district level as ordinances and at national level as Acts of parliament in order to help people live at peace in society.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, Family values, poverty, Uganda.

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, in France, domestic violence has been viewed as a private family matter that need not involve the government or criminal justice intervention. Police officers were often reluctant to intervene by making an arrest and often chose instead to simply counsel the couple or ask one of the parties to leave the residence for a period of time [2].

In Germany, the courts were reluctant to impose any significant sanctions on those convicted of domestic violence because it was viewed as a misdemeanour offence. Activism, initiated by victim advocacy groups and feminist groups of the world, has led to a better understanding of the scope and effect of domestic violence on victims and families; and has brought about changes in the criminal justice system's response [4].

Opined that several projects have aided in filling the voids in justice system as it pertains to the protection of victims [7]. The Hope Card Project in America made an attempt to remedy several problems through the issuance of identity cards to victims of abuse. The cards are used to identify both parties in a domestic violence protection order and provide

additional resources to the victim through a voucher program for services. "There is no photograph on a protection order; so a photograph is a bonus, not a necessity. There are several methods used to obtain the photograph. Some jurisdictions have a photograph taken of the offender during the first hearing while both parties are present. Another method is for officers to take a photograph in the field or retrieve a booking photograph from their local jail. In a lot of cases the victim brings a photograph and it is scanned. Lastly, the new on line site has some state motor vehicle department photograph data bases connected for that purpose.

Observed that in Nigeria, domestic violence has got two forms which are direct or physical and indirect violence[2]. Direct violence ranges from unwanted physical contact to rape and murder while indirect violence includes destruction of objects, striking or throwing objects near the victim, or harm to pets [6]. In addition to physical violence, there is spousal abuse which includes mental or emotional abuse, verbal threats to the victims, children threats which range from explicit to implicit, detailed and impending implicit. Furthermore, there is psychological abuse that involves economic or social control; such as

controlling the victim's money and other economic resources, preventing the victim from seeing friends and relatives, actively sabotaging the victim's social relationships and isolating the victim from social contacts.

In Tanzania, domestic violence has serious implications on family stability especially on women and children. Whereas women take care of homes [4], men claim dominance over women and to everything that is of an advantage to the families. This has turned families into centres of crimes for which those in authority are unable to control. Besides that, conflict resolution has failed to take place due to the increased desire by men to dominate family properties and sources of income [2]. The kind of violence that takes place in families is perceived by those in authority as family affairs between men and women or relatives.

In Uganda, most risky behaviour takes place in families between a wife and husband, the children and workers at home. In homes, children are kicked, punched, hit or beaten up by parents for minor offences such as breaking a cup or spilling milk. Children are burnt or scalded with hot water. Properties which range from land and houses owned by the deceased are usually grabbed by the family members who feel they have the right to claim them. The grabbing of this kind destabilizes the once stable family. Brothers of the deceased attempt forceful inheritance to the widow against her will and consent yet the 1995 Constitution of the republic of Uganda affirms individual rights. This has escalated into violence particularly where a woman puts up a resistance. It is from such background that one would like to assess the impacts of such violence onto a woman, children and the brothers [6].

On a larger perspective, one would like to know its impacts on the community and the government because they are part of the family on a larger context. How the community and the government intervene in such domestic violence remains of great importance to the study. Besides that, article 32 (1) of [8] provides affirmative action to such marginalized groups. It states that the state shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history tradition, custom for the purpose of readdressing the imbalances that exist against them (Article 33(5)). It is therefore paramount to assess the impact of such domestic violence on such marginalized groups and how the state uses such instrument to defend the victims shall be revealed by the study [6].

In Mitooma District, domestic violence has been witnessed on varying levels ranging from children, males and females among stable families [6]. It is found in Western Uganda-the greater Bushenyi District with a population of 800,000 (48% males and 52% females)

majority of whom are peasant-elites. It is from this introduction that the study was sought to assess the impact of domestic violence on the family stability in Mitooma District.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research study employed a descriptive survey research design with both qualitative and quantitative paradigms in order to describe the situation and the sample. This was also intended to have representative samples of the areas of study. The study selected a total of 98 respondents (sample size) out of 130 participants (target population).The sample size was determined using a table developed by [5]. A structured questionnaire was utilised because it collects a lot of data within a little period of time [1]. Stratified random sampling was used to collect data because the researcher wanted to give equal chances to all categories of the participants. Purposive sampling was also employed so as to garner vital information from targeted people. Interviews were also utilised to collect the information that cannot be put down in writing [1].

The validity of the close ended questionnaire was assessed by using content validity Index by expert judges in domestic violence and family values. However, the validity of the interviews was reached at by interviewing important persons to validate the structured questionnaires [3].The reliability of the Questionnaire was assessed using cronbach's alpha coefficient formula .Nonetheless; the reliability of the interviews was reached at by prolonged conversations with participants [3]. Descriptive statistics tools and Pearson linear correlation coefficient were utilised to analyse data. Qualitative data was examined by categorising information into meaningful themes and sub- themes for easy interpretation in accordance to story guidelines [3].

## **RESULTS**

Findings in Table 1 below revealed that domestic violence occurred mostly in polygamous families 21 (20.4%) and cohabiting homes 21 (20.4%). It was revealed that almost 40 (39.3 %) of the participants were married monogamously. This meant that both polygamous and cohabiting homes / families witnessed trends of domestic violence, which were very brutal. It should be noted that in these families it was not only the husbands that bartered the wives, but also the wives fought amongst themselves and at worst poured sulphuric acid on their rivals. In most of these families however, witchcraft was named as the worst weapon especially by mothers against their co-wives and stepchildren. In monogamous families one can observe that there is some relative peace, suggesting that people can try to opt for monogamous families though they do not guarantee the peaceful coexistence of the people.

**Table-1: Marital status of the respondents**

Marital status	No. Of respondents	Percentage
Cohabiting	21	20.4%
Married monogamously	40	39.3%
Married polygamously	21	20.4%
Total	98	100.0

Source: primary data

One parish chief in Mitooma district stated:

*“Cohabiting men and women were mainly youths with very little experience of what marriage was. Most of them had to seek attention through harshly treating their wives. At Mitooma Health Centre, most of the cases reported were by young girls who were cohabiting with their boyfriends who either got them pregnant and married them or “stole” them from their families at a tender age”.*

This implied that the married youth face a lot of domestic violence since they are not sensitised a lot

on affairs of marriage before they get married.

**Occupation of the respondents**

Results from Table 2 below indicated that the respondents were mostly farmers or peasants 53 (52%), domestic workers 10 (9.8%), unemployed 12 (11.8) and business women 15 (15.7) who traded in agricultural produces and students were 8(8.7%). This implied that since a cross category of respondents were contacted, the data that was garnered was the right data to bring in the rigor in the research study.

**Table-2: Occupation of the respondents**

Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentages
Domestic workers	10	9.8%
Farmers	53	52%
Unemployed	12	11.8%
Business women	15	15.7%
students	08	7.8%
Total	98	100.0

Source: primary data

A chief administrative officer from Mitooma district stated:

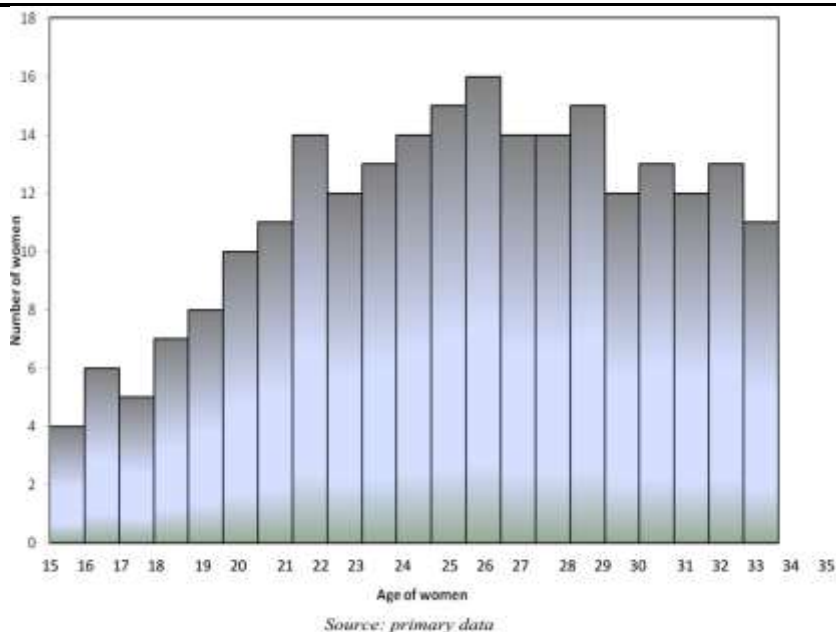
*“Most of the people in Mitooma district are farmers who cultivate either on farms or rear animals. A bigger percentage of the citizenry actively participates in agriculture but still suffers from the consequences of poverty. In most cases, most of the people grow coffee, which provides little for their basic needs and school fees for their children. Other groups also do some productive work like business in agricultural produces but still the profits are not enough for families.....”*

This suggested that poverty is still a major problem among the people of Mitooma district and it may be a major contributory factor for domestic violence in families in the same district. When a

husband wants to go to the bar to drink one or two bottles of beer or some local brew, he may ask the wife to give him some money got from agricultural produces and if the wife refuses, it may be a source of domestic violence. Of course, all this may be due to poverty.

**Age distribution of ever-married women**

Results in figure 1 below indicated that most women who were married were between the ages 15 and 35. This was reported by women in Mitooma District. Nevertheless, this meant that a good number of women were defiled by the time they got married. It suggested that such women amateurs in marriage were not able to tolerate and contain the incidences that could bring domestic violence and distort family values.



**Fig-1: Histogram indicating the Age distribution of ever-married women 15-35 years of age**  
Source: primary data

Results from Table 3 below showed that 40 % (38) respondents mentioned that they experienced violence once, 38% (37) respondents mentioned that they occasionally experienced violence 3-5 times, 11%(11) respondents mentioned that they frequently experienced domestic violence 6-20 times ,and finally 11%(12) respondents mentioned that very frequently experienced domestic violence more than 20 times .

This suggested that 60 percent of the respondents experienced domestic violence several times and 40% of the respondents experienced domestic violence at least once. This meant that families in Mitooma district are not stable.

**Table-3: Frequency of violence in Mitooma District, during the last 12 months according to severity (N = 98)**

Frequency	Moderate Violence % (N)	Severe Violence % (N)	Total % (N)
Once	18 (17)	22 (21)	40 (38)
Occasional (3 - 5 times)	10 (10)	28 (27)	38 (37)
Frequent (6 – 20 times)	2 (2)	9 (9)	11 (11)
Very frequent (more than 20 times)	0(01)	11 (11)	11 (12)

Source: primary data

The Deputy Chief Administrative Officer stated: *“Historically, domestic violence has been viewed as a private family matter that need not involve the government or criminal justice intervention. Police officers were often reluctant to intervene by making an arrest and often chose instead to simply counsel the couple or ask one of the parties to leave the residence for a period of time. The courts were reluctant to impose any significant sanctions on those convicted of domestic violence because it was viewed as a misdemeanour offence”.*

This implied that government has not been considering domestic violence as a serious offence and yet it distorts family values and stability. One

should note that a family is a first administrative unit in the government management hierarchy. Once the family is not stable, it means the whole nation is not stable as well.

Results from Table 4 below, revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between Domestic violence and Family values. ( $r=0.322^{**}$ ,  $P\text{-value}<0.01$ ), that Domestic violence contributes to the Family values in a positive manner. This matches with hypothesis that there is no a significant relationship between Domestic violence and Family values. And therefore the hypothesis was rejected. (\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed))

**Table-4: Relationship between Domestic violence and Family values**

	Items	MBZ predictor construct Domestic violence	MFP Dependant variable Family values
MBZ	Pearson Correlation	1	.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	98	98
MFP	Pearson Correlation	.322**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	98	98

Source: primary data

### Qualitatively, the relationship between domestic violence and family values in Mitooma district in Western Uganda was as follows;

The district speaker mentioned:

*As district officials, we have been receiving complaints about families that have been characterised with chaos wanting arbitration from us .In most cases, i have been helping the vice chairman to settle such confusing family conflicts.....*

This suggested that many families in Mitooma district are not stable and therefore, they need the divine intervention.

### DISCUSSIONS

The study findings showed that there is a positive significant correlation between domestic violence and family values. In brief, that domestic violence contributes to the family values in a positive manner. The finding was in consonance with the qualitative paradigm results where, participants said that there were many complaints of domestic violence contributing to unstable families in Mitooma district. Hence, affecting the family values generally in Mitooma district, in western Uganda.

The research study was in consonance with the findings of [4] who conducted a study on Domestic violence in Tanzania. He found out that domestic violence can really distort peace in homes. Besides, the research results matched with the findings of [2] who conducted a study on Male domination in societies. He found out that male domination was a leading cause of domestic violence in societies.

However, the study conducted by [7] on Clergy's response on Domestic violence revealed that women can contribute equally to the deteriorating family values by disrespecting their husbands especially if they take liquor in unmoderated ways.

### CONCLUSION

It may be summarized that there is a positive significant correlation between domestic violence and family values. In short, that domestic violence contributes to the nature of family values .Therefore, influencing relatively the family values. It is also true

that husbands and wives can equally contribute to the quality of family values. Nobody can be exonerated wholesomely because no one is an angel under the earth. Government should encourage the citizenry to engage in self-help projects in order to reduce poverty in their homes because this has been seen as a major cause of domestic violence leading to deterioration of family values in Mitooma district in Uganda. Government and Nongovernmental Organizations should also encourage and sensitize the population to try and always practice monogamous families because the rate of domestic violence may be minimized.

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