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THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN CURBING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: CASE OF KATHONZWENI SUB COUNTY, MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: *The occurrence of domestic violence remains a paradox in the society as it occurs in the family a place where people are expected to maintain intimacy and experience greater emotional support in their relationships. This research sought to investigate the Church's role in curbing Domestic Violence in Kathonzweni Sub County, Makueni County, Kenya. The specific objective of the study included determining the forms of domestic violence and the role the church plays in curbing this evil. It studies different modes of church's participation in curbing domestic violence in the region. The study used Descriptive Survey and the data from the field was purposively sampled. Data was presented in simple percentages, charts and graphs. The findings were used to reach a conclusion and give recommendations on the role of the Church in curbing domestic violence. The study found that incidences of domestic violence were common and rampant in the region such as wife battering, fighting, child abuse, physical assaults, intimidations. The church had been involved in curbing domestic related conflicts but the methods used did not adequately address domestic violence in the region. The study recommended behavior change campaigns, dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, sensitization of the masses and imposing of strict penalties for the perpetrators as measures to curb domestic violence.*

Key terms: Domestic violence, Church, Forms of violence, curbing violence

1.1 STUDY BACKGROUND

The family relationships include the following:- husbands, wives, ex- husbands, ex- wives, daters, ex-daters, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, children, cousins, parents in laws, brothers-in-laws, sisters-in-laws and caregivers. Wathen (2003) asserts that Domestic Violence is one of the most pervasive forms of violence in Kenya today and its impact escalating on family life which is the basic unit of the society. According to Wathen, these aftermaths of Domestic Violence may affect the family which is the basic unit of the society. Domestic violence is defined by Newton (2001) as emotional, physical or the sexual abuse between people who have at one time had an intimate or family relationship.

Globally, domestic violence remains an issue of discussion at international conferences. As observed by WHO (2010) the term ‘domestic’ includes violence by an intimate partner and by other family members, whether this violence takes place and in whatever form. Women worldwide continue to suffer, with estimates varying from 20-50 percent from country to country. Domestic violence is a health, legal, economic, educational, and developmental and above all a human rights issue. Worldwide, almost one third (30%) of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and sexual violence by their partner. In East Africa domestic violence has been reported widely. The East African countries, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have documented cases of domestic violence in communities including harmful cultural practices like child battery, domestic fights and violent games which have had adverse effects on children. In Kenya, quite a number of cases are recorded in the provincial administration offices with complaints of violence (UN, 2005). According to a baseline Survey carried out in Nairobi, incidents of violence takes place when the children are present. Such children are victims of Domestic Violence because they get emotionally stressed throughout their lives (FIDA, 2010). According to FIDA, over 4000 domestic violence cases have been reported between January and June 2016. There have been attempts studying this phenomenon of violence. Saul (2011) examined “the response of the Church to Domestic Violence: A silent or active voice to broken families”. Obwanda (2014) carried out a research on factors that lead to violence against women in Kibra’s Laini Saba, Nairobi County. She discusses violence against women as acts of gender-based violence that result in or likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts; coercion, arbitrary deprivation of private life liberty occurring in public or in private life (CEDAW, 1993).

As a religious leader of a local Church in Kathonzweni, one is expected to offer pastoral care to members of the congregation and sometimes to non-members of the Church, who come with various pastoral needs. Sometimes the members of the Church and the community expect a religious leader to have answers to various difficulties that people are facing. Generally people may shy off speaking out on certain private and domestic issues that are happening in their lives as individuals. One such unspoken issue in Kathonzweni may be the problem of domestic violence, especially against women, mothers and children. Men also cannot easily open up and talk about domestic violence against them especially to the public. They are ashamed of being beaten others knowing that they are by women. This would depict them as weak in a patriarchal society and as such not easy to know men affected by domestic violence. The observation by Mbiti (1969) that Africans are notoriously religious and that religion permeates every aspect of

their lives is true of the people of Kathonzweni sub county, Makueni County. The Church has over the years witnessed notable growth, spiritually, socially and economically. Right Rev. Martin Kivuva Musonde (2014) the former bishop of the Catholic diocese of Machakos (Machakos Diocese bulletin, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Domestic violence is rampant in the African society. The basic unit of the society that is the family is in disharmony because of women battering, increased sexual abuse, domestic wrangles and child abuse. Most cases of domestic violence within Kathonzweni go unreported therefore women, men and children continue to suffer. These experiences of violence may later replicate in the lives of the victims since little is done to the perpetrators and the victims are not assisted. Further, there seems to be no legal reform to help curb domestic violence in this particular region. The Church ought to play a leading active and visible role in the formation of society but this widely known perception is not yet evident in issues of concern such as domestic violence.

There has been extensive research on domestic violence and the role of the church in addressing the vice (Saul, 2011; Swart, 2011; Miriti, 2009 & Perila, 2006). However, little is known on the role the church plays in curbing and addressing domestic violence in Kathonzweni sub-county because it is rampant. Perila (2006) wrote an article on the role of catholic churches in preventing domestic violence globally. Miriti (2009) studied the role of the church in responding to domestic violence among its followers in Nairobi. Saul (2011) studied the response of the church towards domestic violence in USA. A study by Swart (2011) investigated strategies for coping with gender based violence: a study of young women in Kibera Kenya. There is no known study which has been carried out on the role of the church in addressing the vice of domestic violence in Kathonzweni sub-County. This study sought to bridge this gap in knowledge on the role of the church in Kathonzweni a typical dry and poverty stricken area in Makueni Eastern Kenya.

1.3 Critical Review of Theories

This study focused on five main theoretical categories: - Albert Bandura Social learning theory, Psychoanalytic theories of domestic violence, social theories of domestic violence, cognitive behavioral theories of domestic violence, and family and systems theories of domestic violence. Bandura (1973) asserts that social learning theory is often conceptualized as the 'cycle of violence' or 'intergenerational transmission theory'. When applied to family, the theory states that people model behavior that they have been exposed to as children. This theory is useful in this study as it sheds light on how an abused spouse may reach a state of helplessness and no longer sees the need to change the other spouse to stop the abuse. This state of helplessness can spill over to the young people and the abused spouse may neglect them. This translates further into withdrawal syndromes, aggression and pervasive behavior and in all other aspects of the children's life. They may also run away from their homes where the atmosphere is not conducive. Bandura (1961) observes that children model behavior through watching others. For example they can copy aggression from their parents and afterwards repeat the same thing as long as the role model was not punished for his/her actions. Bandura also adds that many acts of aggression or tragedies such as school shootings, murders, suicide etc. are linked to violent and gruesome television shows. Lastly the third concept states that the persons' behavior is not

changed even if something new is learnt. For example people committing crime the same way it happened before. Psychoanalytic theories focus on individual internal psychological processes that create a need to be abusive or to accept abusive behavior.

Forms of Domestic Violence

According to Jones (1994), violence is any act that causes the victims to do something they do not want to do, prevent them from doing something they want to do or causes them to be afraid. Hence violence need not involve physical contact with the victim, but verbal threats and psychological abuse can be equally destructive. Violence therefore is any destructive behavior, which is geared towards hurting another person.

Walker (1979) asserts that Domestic Violence or family violence may involve a wide range of behaviors such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, social abuse, spiritual abuse, economic abuse and child abuse.

Physical abuse includes direct assaults on the body, use of weapons, driving dangerously, destruction of property, abuse of pets in front of family members, assault of children, locking the victim out of the house and sleep deprivation. Physical abuse is the most visible form of domestic violence. According to Newton (2001) physical abuse includes pushing, hitting, slapping, choking, using an object to hit, twisting of a body part, forcing the ingestion of unwanted substances, and use of a weapon. Physical abuse also includes traditional practices harmful to women such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and wife inheritance. Bostock and Brewster (2003) asserts that sexual abuse is any sexual act where a person is forced to engage in sexual activities without their will. They may be forced with threats of physical violence or just enough fear to make them comply with their abusers' wishes. Bostock and Brewster adds that sexual abuse of adults covers a range of inappropriate sexual behaviors that cause physical distress or harm to an individual. Sexual abuse can be actual or threatened and causes physical and emotional damage. Sexual abuse can happen within a marriage. Marital rape is often unreported and unrecognized within a marriage even by those experiencing the abuse. Walker (1979) describes verbal abuse as continual 'put downs' and humiliation, either privately or publicly, with attacks following clear themes that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image and capacity as a parent or spouse. Due to emotional abuse in some cases this could lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Saltzman, 2002:160-163). Besides, social abuse is the systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends, moving to locations where the victim knows nobody, and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people - in effect, imprisonment. According to United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), domestic violence in Kenya has revealed high figures as indicated in a study carried out in eight provinces of Kenya (Prem&Essd, 2003). Among the findings of that study was that 41% of women have been sexually abused, 61% of women have been physically abused one time or several times as adults and that the peak period for physical and sexual abuse is between 21 and 30 years of age.

The Church Teaching on Domestic Violence

Pastors of the Catholic Church, USCCB (1992) in the United States state clearly and strongly that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form "Physical, sexual, psychological or verbal is sinful; often, it is a crime as well". The Catholic Church teaches that Violence against another person in any form fails to treat that person as

someone worthy of love. Instead it treats the person as an object to be used. The U.S conference of bishops comes into a consensus that violence against women in the home has serious repercussions for children. Over 50 percent of men who abuse their wives also beat their children. Children who grow up in violent homes are more likely to develop alcohol and drug addictions and to become abusers themselves. The U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), (1992) Pastoral Letter shows that very little is said or written about domestic Violence and abuse in our Church and that priests are not educated about it in seminaries. This letter speaks of Jesus' love and respect for women, and the biblical image of a kind, merciful and loving God. It names domestic violence a sin. It calls for clergy and lay Church workers to obtain training so that parishes can enhance victim safety and batterer accountability. This report further shows that the clergy and lay leaders need to provide helpful resources on domestic abuse through sermons, prayers, education and pastoral care. Besides, another important function the Church can serve is to tell the truth about women's experiences of abuse, to give a voice where there has been silence. For a battered woman in the pew to hear a prayer for all those living with abuse in the home breaks the silence. This may open the door for her to come forward seeking help. The same is true for a sermon addressing domestic violence or using it as an example (USCCB, 1992).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2258 explains that "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the creator, who is its sole end. In addition, the fifth commandment "do not kill" calls for respect of human life because it is sacred. According to *Daily Nation* Kenya, November, (2015), Pope Francis who is the head of the Catholic Church during his visit to Kenya spoke strongly against domestic violence and called on Kenyan men to "resist practices which foster arrogance". The pontiff also called for strengthening of family values. He emphasized Catholic teachings against abortion, which is outlawed in Kenya, except under special medical circumstances. The church teaching on Domestic Violence can serve as a resource for victims and abusers. The U.S Catholic bishops "When I Call for Help" letter ascertains that "Violence against women, inside or outside the home is never justified. Violence in any form- physical, sexual, psychological or verbal- is sinful; often it is a crime as well". The Church therefore calls for collaborative team spirit in curbing domestic violence by taking a public stand and participating in community efforts to address this social justice issue. A research carried out among the Lutheran Churches by the Lutheran World Federation, (2002) there is a growing concern that religion is often used as a tool to oppress women. If the Church is to transcend the vicious cycle of violence and prepare a transformed and transforming community of men and women, it needs to take the risk. The Church looks at violence against women as a sin against life, which should be named and condemned, as it disregards the image of God in the person affected, be it woman, man, girl or boy. As a community called to liberate all who are oppressed, the Church's imperative is to be involved in the liberation of men and women from a culture of violence to fullness of life and communion. To play a prophetic role, the Church needs to disturb the comfortable, and comfort the disturbed. The Church as a hope sharing, care giving instrument of God needs to offer hope and options for new life to victims, and opportunities for violators to repent reform and make amends.

1.4 Methodology

A total of 150 participants were targeted in this study but managed to collect data from 136

participants translating into a response rate of 90.6%. The response for the youths was very high because they could be easily gotten from the colleges and schools unlike parents and the rest. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a response rate of 50% is adequate, 60% is good and above 70% is excellent for a study. Therefore a response rate of 90.6% was considered very ideal for the study.

1.5 Findings

Response rate

| Questionnaires | Number administered | Collected | Response rate |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Youth | 105 | 105 | 100 |
| Parents | 30 | 26 | 86.7 |
| Interviews/FGDs | 15 | 5 | 33.3 |
| Total | 150 | 136 | 90.6% |

Gender of parents and the youth respondents

Majority of the youths who participated in this study were female (52%, n=55) and male youth only accounting for only 48% (n=50). The gender proportion for the parents was however, with male parents accounting for 54% (n=14) and female parents accounting for 46% (n=12). The two categories of respondents show good representation of each gender. Therefore, the views collected in this study were balanced as they were drawn from each gender.

Marital status of the respondents

A proportion of 94% (n=89) of the youths who participated and responded to this query on marital status were single at the time of the study and only 6% (n=6) were married. For parents 73% (n= 19) were married and 27% (n=7) were single. A further inquiry shows that 88.3% (n=91) of the parents of the youths who participated in this study were married, 10.7% (n=11) were single and 1.0% (n=1) had divorced. Therefore, the sample used in this study comprised of respondents who were youthful, married parents and single parents who increased the chances of getting a holistic view of the domestic violence phenomenon in the region.

Education level of the youth respondents

The education level of the youths was highly varied. Results indicated 84% (n=87) had reached secondary level of education, 9% (n=9) had reached primary school and 7% (n=7) had reached undergraduate level of education while 1% (n=1) had done graduate level of education. The mixture of the youth respondents also reflected a mix of youth education as well as age variation.

Age of the respondents

The findings show that 35% (n=9) of the parents who took part in the study were aged between 21-30 years, followed by 31% (n=8) aged between 41-50 years. A proportion of 27% (n=7) were parents aged between 31-40 years and lastly 8% (n=2) of parents above 50 years. In general, the age structure of the parents who participated in this study shows age distribution with middle aged parents with some few parents with extreme ages. This mixture of parents was useful in this study, as it gave an opportunity for different parents with different experiences to share their

views on domestic violence.

A proportion of 91% (n=95) of the youth who participated in the study were aged below 20 years. This category was followed by 6% (n=6) who were aged between the ages 26-30 years and 2% (n=2) aged between 21 and 25 years and another 2 youths (2%) aged more than 30 years. The findings indicated that most of the youths who participated in the study were less than 20 years. Thus they may not have been married and were still dependent on their parents and guardians. This was important to give their experiences as youth or children on issues revolving around domestic violence.

Occupation of the parents participants

A substantial number of the parents were teachers (48%, n=11), 28% (n=7) were farmers and third category were business persons (12%, n=3). Others in the sample were nurses (4%, n=1), saloonists (4%, n=1) and contractors (4%, n=1). This shows that parents who took in this study had diverse occupation with different life experiences which is typical of a real population.

Ward, Church and Position in the church

The study was carried in several wards in Makueni County such as Kathonzweni, Kithuki/Kitise, Mavindini and Mburo wards. The participants came from a variety of churches such as AIC, Catholic, GFBC, Neno Evangelism Centre, New Baptist Chapel, Redeemed Gospel Church and Salvation Army among others. The participants held various roles in the church. Some of the participants were Deaconess, Elders, Priests, Secretaries, Ushers, Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons, Youth and others were ordinary members. The respondents drawn for this study were therefore ideal to provide information on the role of the church in tackling domestic violence. This is because they had relevant information pertaining domestic violence, were educated and had wide experience in the field of work.

Incidences of domestic violence in Kathonzweni Sub County

The study collected information on whether cases of domestic violence were rampant in the sub-county. Data findings indicate that a total of 23 parents (88.5%) affirmed that cases of domestic violence were rampant in the sub-county. A proportion of 11.5% (n=3) of the respondents indicated that it was untrue that cases of domestic violence were rampant. None of the respondents denied that domestic violence did not exist in the area. According to the results, cases of domestic violence were rampant in the region. The results agree with the views of Wathen (2003) who observes that domestic violence is one of the most pervasive forms of violence in Kenya.

A question on the domestic violence incidences showed that 29% (n=22) of the respondents had witnessed domestic violence a month preceding the date of the study. This was followed by 25% (n=19) who had witnessed domestic violence one year before the study was done. A proportion of 19% (n=14) and 11% (n=8) of the respondents had experienced domestic violence three months and six months respectively before the date of the study. A further proportion of 5% (n=4) had experienced domestic violence a week before the study was done.

Approximately 64% (n=48) of the respondents had witnessed domestic violence six months

preceding the date of the study implying that incidences of domestic violence could be frequent in the region. The results agree with UN (2005) report which cited that a number of complaints reported in the provincial administration in Kenya were on domestic violence. Also FIDA (2017) over 4000 cases on domestic violence were reported between January and June of the year 2016 in Kenya showing that cases of domestic are prevalent in Kenya. The last incidences witnessed included child abuse, wife battering and abduction due to domestic related issues.

Peculiar forms of domestic violence among families in Kathonzweni Sub-county

The respondents were requested to indicate the common forms of domestic violence in the region. According to the findings 57% (n=55) indicated physical abuse was the most common forms of violence at homes. When asked about sexual abuse, 50.5% (n=46) indicated it was not a common type of domestic violence abuse. Further, 58% (n=53) indicated child abuse and 57% (n=53) wife battering (A form of physical abuse) as common forms of domestic violence in the region. The results concur with the views of Walker (1979) that domestic violence involved physical abuse, sexual abuse, and child abuse, emotional, social and psychological abuses. The findings show that all the four forms of domestic violence were common in the region.

When the respondents were requested to list the forms of domestic violence in the region, the most listed form of violence was physical abuse (76.6%, n=72), followed by child abuse (73.4%, n=69), sexual abuse (66.0%, n=62) and wife battering (59.6%, n=56). Others include fights (n=9) and husband battering (n=1). The results in table 4.2 thus show that physical abuse or battering was the most common form of domestic violence.

Table 4. 1 Forms of domestic violence

| | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
|---------------------|-----|---------|------------------|
| Physical abuse | 72 | 26.8% | 76.6% |
| Child Abuse/beating | 69 | 25.7% | 73.4% |
| Sexual abuse | 62 | 23.0% | 66.0% |
| Wife battering | 56 | 20.8% | 59.6% |
| Fighting | 9 | 3.3% | 9.6% |
| Husband battering | 1 | 0.4% | 1.1% |
| Total | 269 | 100.0% | 286.2% |

Perpetuators of violence

Table 4.3 shows that 61.4% of the respondents indicated that neighbors were perpetrators of violence and 59.4% cited relatives (such as uncles, aunties and grandparents) as the main perpetrators of violence. A proportion of 58.4% indicated that spouses were major perpetrators of domestic violence, 12.9% indicated parents while 12.9% talked about siblings as the major perpetrators of violence. The above findings show that Domestic violence is perpetrated by close family members such as spouses, parents, siblings and relatives.

Table 4. 2 Perpetrators of violence

| Perpetrators | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
|---|------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Neighbors | 62 | 27.2% | 61.4% |
| Relatives(uncles, aunties, grandparents) | 60 | 26.3% | 59.4% |
| Spouses | 59 | 25.9% | 58.4% |
| Parents | 13 | 5.7% | 12.9% |
| Siblings | 13 | 5.7% | 12.9% |
| Guardians | 8 | 3.5% | 7.9% |
| Step-mothers and in laws | 6 | 2.6% | 5.9% |
| Guardians | 3 | 1.3% | 3.0% |
| Politicians | 2 | 0.9% | 2.0% |
| Dishonest clergymen | 1 | 0.4% | 1.0% |
| Partners | 1 | 0.4% | 1.0% |
| Total | 228 | 100.0% | 225.7% |

To solicit more information, the respondents were requested to state those who had ever abused them. The results indicate that 44% of the respondents had been abused by their husbands, 44% by their ex-husbands, 50% by their wives, 38% by their lovers and 29% by their ex-lovers. The results imply that most of those who had ever been abused were abused by lovers or spouses indicating that domestic violence incidents were majorly occasioned by love and family related causes. This agrees with Newton (2001) ascertain that domestic violence was done by people who at one time had intimate or family relationship.

Confessions from victims of domestic violence in the region

Further findings shows that domestic violence was not a new phenomenon in Kathonzweni Sub-County. The study found that most of the respondents witnessed domestic violence between the years 2010 and 2018. Some indicated they witnessed domestic violence as early as late 1960s indicating that incidences of domestic violence were not new to the people in that region. Thus, those who were young as early as 1960's and experienced child abuse, could have developed violent behavior due to the violence they experienced and assimilated from their parents or caregivers.

For the women, they experienced violence from their husbands such as being beaten up by their husbands, bruised and chased away from their homes. Other domestic violence reported included assault and physical injuries, insults and intimidation, threats of murders among others. Further, the results indicate that men also experienced physical abuse from their wives. Some confessed they were beaten with cooking sticks, biting, others smashed with window panes and some denied conjugal rights. The results show that domestic violence was perpetuated by both men and women in the region. This shows that the problem of domestic violence is exercised by both men and female in the region implying that it has become societal. According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura (1973), domestic violence is learnt via observation, imitation and modeling. Therefore the issue may have become societal due to imitation and observation.

A further probe shows that after the domestic violence, victims reacted differently. Some had conciliation meeting after sometime to solve the issue, others ignored while some confessed that they forgave the perpetrators. Others retaliated and assaulted them back and others separated from their spouses. A number of the victims reported the perpetrators to different people whom they thought could help them such as to family members, to parents, priests, police and others to the assistant chief. The results show how different victims responded to domestic violence. Some of the victims retaliated, others were silent and others reported the culprits to the family, church leaders and local authorities. This may imply that all the family leaders, church leaders and local authorities in the region needed to be capacity build on ways of addressing domestic violence related cases since they all dealt with such issues.

A large number of the respondents (61.1%) indicated that they received no threats from the family members. However, 38.9% of the respondents who had been victims of domestic violence indicated that they faced threats from the family members. The threats were inform of battering, to be chased away if they reported while others threatened to ignore the issue if reported. Some confessed that the parents of the spouse were bitter with them for reporting their husbands to them. This shows that domestic violence cases may be very deeply entrenched but such cases are not reported due to the threats and reactions of the close family members.

Reporting violent cases

The respondents were asked to state whether they reported violent cases. Results indicated that half of the respondents (50%, n=10) reported the violently cases immediately it happened to the relevant people and authorities such as assistant chief, parents, parish priests and police among others. A good number of the respondents (50%, n=10) did not report the cases for fear that they could be attacked more and others feared that the incidence would spread among the rest of the neighbors. A number indicated they did not report to avoid being witnesses in a court of law.

Suggestions on how to curb domestic violence

Provision of counseling services: A great number of respondents suggested one of the ways of addressing the domestic violence was by providing counseling services to the affected to help in healing and to prevent revenge assaults from the afflicted.

Seminars on family life: This was suggested mostly on the churches to enlist provision of seminars on family life, handling of differences, importance of fidelity in marriage and ways of solving disagreements.

Campaigns against domestic violence: Campaigns against domestic violence were also suggested as important actions in handling domestic violence in the region. According to the residents this could be done through chief barazas or other platforms to sensitize and create awareness about the dangers of domestic violence and where to seek help incase such violence happened.

Actions on perpetrators of domestic violence: As a way of curtailing and discouraging the vice in the region, it was suggested that cases of such nature be taken seriously and proper legal and punitive measures be taken against the perpetrators of such violence. This would minimize the cases as well help rehabilitate some of the perpetrators especially those occasioned by impunity.

Sensitization of the law and the legal consequences: There is need for the mass to be sensitized on the legal position on violence and the legal consequences. This would act as a warning to the masses and they exercise caution when dealing with conflicting issues in their marriages. When the public is sensitized, then the fear of the legal course helps them to be more careful not to do mete violence against their spouses and family members due to the subsequent legal ramifications.

Methods used by the Church to curb domestic violence

Guidance and counseling: The church in the region participates by offering guidance and counseling to the victims of domestic violence. This has been done to help bring together and help in healing of the afflicted.

Sensitization programmes and seminars: The respondents cited that different churches held seminars about family life and enriched with teachings from the Bible about forgiveness and peaceful co-existence. Also some churches held sensitization programs to create awareness about the issue of domestic violence, how to handle such cases and even where to seek help incase such incidences happened.

Teaching on responsible parenthood: The church has held teachings and emphasized about the importance of responsible parenthood in the society. Some churches have also encouraged church weddings and its importance. The Catholic Church treats church weddings as a sacrament and encourages such in churches. Also the church teaches about morality and fidelity in marriage life.

Through mediation and arbitration: Some religious leaders in the region reported that they occasionally mediated between spouses and even arbitrated some cases. Through such some broken families were brought together and others. Also the church acts as a place to seek solace especially to the affected and the afflicted members of the region.

Through charity to the affected persons: Some churches in the region have provided charitable services to the affected people in the region mostly the vulnerable such as children by sponsoring them to school and catering for their school fees.

Partnering with State and Non-governmental agencies: Some Churches such as the Catholic Church enlisted the help of state agencies such as FIDA and Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC) to protect rights of the vulnerable persons in the society.

Teachings by the church in Kathonzweni

Behavior change: The respondents reported that church taught about change of behavior to better ways of solving conflicts in the families. The same has been taught to the parents and youth to be responsible people in their families.

Substance abuse: According to the respondents, churches in the region taught against drug abuse and irresponsible drinking which have been reported as some causes of domestic violence.

Fidelity in marriage: A great number of respondents reported that churches in the region taught about importance of fidelity in marriage which according to this study, had been cited as one of the major causes of domestic violence in the region.

Importance of prayer in families: The respondents also reported that church taught about the importance of prayer in families.

Family revivals: Another teaching from the churches in the region was on family revivals and how to bring back broken families as well as unity and peace in broken families.

Tolerance and forgiveness in marriage: Several respondents cited that their churches taught about the importance of tolerance in marriages and the virtue of forgiveness in families as a way of coping with other people.

Importance of love and respect in marriage: The study established that the church was highly involved on teachings about love and respect in families as a way of encouraging Christian families.

Importance of dialogue and communication in marriage: Another method used by the church to address the issue of domestic violence was through teachings on the importance of dialogue and clear communication in families.

Factors hindering the church in curbing domestic violence

Illiteracy and ignorance: The church faced challenges since some of the victims of the domestic violence never went to church were illiterate and stubborn which was not easy to reach out to them or even convince them on anything.

Failure by the affected to report: The respondents cited that most of the victims of domestic violence could not be helped since most of the cases went unreported. Also some of the victims hide some of the information about the incidences due to the fear of victimization. This lack of communication keeps churches in the dark yet such violations are happening in the families.

Limited capacity by the church: Sometimes the church has been ineffective due to limited capacities in terms of the personnel to do counseling, to hold the seminars or even to assist the affected persons.

Traditions and superstitions: Another factor which has largely limited the effectiveness of the church to curb domestic violence has been the entrenched belief in traditions, superstitions and culture.

Poor coordination with the legal system: The churches faced challenges in trying to coordinate with the legal system and other government agencies. This has limited the ability of the church to help the victims to have justice in court of law or with other government agencies.

1.6 Recommendations

Domestic violence is a widespread social vice recognized in the sphere of the society. Domestic violence is a social vice likely to have far reaching consequences to the society. The Church cannot choose to remain ignorant or silent about violence that we must, as Christians first acknowledge and then address. Therefore the study gives the following recommendations:-

Behavior change campaigns: As a way of addressing the rampant cases of domestic violence in the region, it is suggested that the church as well as the government occasions behavior change campaigns to help shape and instill positive behavior among the youths who later become parents. This is forward looking measure aimed at curbing such cases in future.

Addressing drug abuse menace: It is suggested that the problem of substance and drug abuse as well as irresponsible drinking be addressed to reduce incidences of domestic violence arising from intoxication.

The study also recommends **sensitization of the mass** on the domestic violence, causes, forms and the consequences of such incidences. Through the sensitization forums, it is expected that the masses will have knowledge on ways of coping with such cases, where to report and where they can get assisted in case they were attacked.

The study recommends that strict penalties be imposed on perpetrators of domestic violence in the region as well as tightening the legal framework to persecute the offenders. This would largely discourage cases of domestic violence in the region.

The study recommends that the church takes its guiding role in the society to educate, sensitize and help victims of domestic violence in the region if any. Also the church seminars and forums on family life be enriched and done frequently to help curb incidences in the region. It is suggested that domestic violence cases be solved using trained personnel so that they can be solved effectively and smoothly such as marriage therapists or organizations which deal with marriage issues.

Use of preventive measures being taken into account such as creating awareness of marriage encounter, marriage camps, use of Small Christian Communities (SCC) to introduce marriage lessons so as to appreciate marriage life and ways of coping with one another.

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