

## Cultural Norms and Values on Sexual and Gender Violence Among Congolese Male Refugees in Kakuma Camp Kenya

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### Abstract

*Sexual violence is a significant public health and human rights issue worldwide. Refugees and asylum seekers affected by armed conflict are particularly vulnerable. In Kenya, the extent of sexual violence in humanitarian settings remains underexplored. Although many organizations address gender-based violence, little is known about male refugees who are victims of sexual violence. This paper aims to identify how cultural norms influence sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) faced by Congolese male refugees in Kakuma Camp. The study adopted a mixed cross-sectional survey research design. The study population for this study included refugee male survivors of sexual violence within Kakuma refugee camp, Turkana West Constituency. purposive sampling was used to select male refugees who formed the sampling frame. Simple random sampling was used to select 382 male refugees and 6 key informants as the respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data. The key Findings revealed that Congolese male refugees in Kakuma experience various forms of SGBV, including physical abuse (46%), sexual abuse (33%), and psychological abuse (21%). Younger males (18-29 years) reported higher incidences of SGBV compared to older age groups. Cultural norms significantly impacted the reporting and perception of SGBV, with societal stigma and the pressure to conform to traditional masculine roles discouraging many victims from seeking help. The study concluded that addressing SGBV among male refugees requires a multidisciplinary approach that includes cultural sensitivity, awareness programs, and support systems tailored to the unique needs of male survivors.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Norms and Values, Sexual and Gender Violence

## Introduction

Sexual violence may be viewed as a global public health issue, a violation of human rights and, in egregious cases, may constitute a crime against humanity. It comprises sexual, emotional-psychological, physical, psychological and socio-economic violence as well as harmful cultural practices. In addition to its negative effect on victims' well-being and participation in society, sexual violence may have significant consequences on sexual, reproductive, physical and psychological health at the international level, such as the reported occurrence of afflicting refugees seeking protection (Mumba,2020).

Although violence has been with us since time immemorial, it was only in 1996 that the World Health Assembly Resolution (WHA 49.25) recognized the increasing importance of violence as a leading worldwide public health problem (Muller, & Shahrokh,2017). Violence is an extremely complex phenomenon that has its roots in the interaction of many factors - biological, social, cultural, economic and political and is mainly caused by unequal power relations. Gender, social inequalities and inequities are related to many of the risk factors of violence particularly at the societal level. These factors can exacerbate other risk factors that create conditions in which violence can thrive. Conversely increased equality and equity can multiply the effects of protective factors to reduce the level of violence.

Male identity and masculine norms are undeniably linked with violence, with men and boys disproportionately likely both to perpetrate violent crimes and to die by homicide and suicide (World Bank Group, 2022). While biology may play a role in shaping a tendency toward certain forms of violence, the “nature” of men and boys is not the sole predictor of their violent behaviors or experiences. Rather, boys and men are often raised, socialized, and/or encouraged to be violent, depending on their social surroundings and life conditions. The international community largely abdicates to domestic law jurisdiction over rape, sexual assault (including murder), forced prostitution and reproductive subordination.

The vulnerability of men and boys to sexual violence has been especially within camps, during military operations, in detention centres, or following abduction into primary paramilitary centres and while seeking refuge. However, it noted that little is known about the prevalence rate of sexual violence against men and the incidence is likely to be under-reported. Masculinity notions and gender discourses shapes how survivors and society make sense of sexual assault. In research literature up until 1980, the pronoun ‘she’ was used almost exclusively when referring to sexual abuse survivors (Big-Alabo, et al., 2022).

Kenya has been a home to many refugees since 1971. In recent years, Kenya has witnessed a great influx of refugees mostly triggered by protracted humanitarian crises in the neighbouring countries. The settlement design of main Kakuma camp comprises of four sections namely; Kakuma 1,2,3 and 4. Each section is divided into blocks and blocks divided into zones. Each zone has several households with mixed nationalities. Majority of those refugees have been absorbed into the refugee camps (Kakuma and Dadaab) and the surrounding areas. According to, Kenya Statistics Package (2022), as of 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2022, Kenya hosted 573,508 (Dadaab 233,661 – 40.7 %, Kakuma & Kalobeyei 248,929 – 43.4 % and Urban 90,918 – 15.9 % number of refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, DR Congo, Rwanda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burundi South Sudan, and Uganda among others. Even with these numbers' cases of SVM remain one of the under-reported incidences among Congolese male refugees and asylum seekers in Kakuma (UNHCR, 2021).

In Kakuma refugee camp, like in any other patriarchal society, men are the main decision makers at the family and societal levels but the experience of being a victim of sexual assault conflicts with dominant notions of masculinity. The risks of SGBV encountered by displaced persons living in the camp increases overtime because of the disruption of the family system, weak protection and coping strategies combined with loss of household income and other means of social support network. Kenya hosts one of the largest refugee camps in Africa with refugees from East, Central and the horn of Africa. Whereas the occurrence of SGBV in refugee camp in Kenya is documented by United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) and Kenya Government Department of Refugees Affairs (DRA) there is no official statistic on sexual and gender violence among male refugees in Kakuma. In Kakuma, sexual violence is ranked among the major gender-based forms of sexual violence and the major incident reported by women refugees in Kakuma settings. Yet very little is known and recorded about Congolese refugee men who may have experienced sexual and gender-based violence prior to their plight and who are the focus of this study.

## Methodology

The study adopted a mixed cross-sectional survey research design. The study population for this study included refugee male survivors of sexual violence within Kakuma refugee camp, Turkana West Constituency. purposive sampling was used to select male refugees who formed the sampling frame. Simple random sampling was used to select 382 male refugees and 6 key informants as the respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data. Ethical considerations were put in places such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, and proper handling of data was ensured

## Key findings

### Socio-demographic characteristics

#### *Characteristics of Respondents*

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents reveals that the majority are between the ages of 30 and 49 years (50.3%), with a significant portion being married (54.5%). Educational attainment varies, with most respondents having completed secondary education (36.6%). In terms of employment, the respondents are fairly evenly distributed across formal employment (26.3%), informal employment (23.7%), self-employment (24.4%), and unemployment (25.6%). The Social – Demographic Characteristics of the respondents are summarized in the table 1 below:

*Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents*

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n = 382)	Percent
Age	18-29 Years	93	24.3%
	30-49 Years	192	50.3%
	50-59 Years	77	20.2%
	60 and above	20	5.2%
	Total	382	100%
Marital Status	Married	208	54.5%
	Single	133	34.8%
	Separated	21	5.5%

	Divorced	12	3.1%
	Widowed	8	2.1%
	Total	382	100%
Education Level	None	57	14.9%
	Primary	113	29.6%
	Secondary	140	36.6%
	Tertiary	72	18.8%
	Total	382	100%
Occupation	Government Employee	0	0.0%
	NGO	136	35.6%
	Private Business	26	6.8%
	Unemployed	220	57.6%
	Total	382	100%

### The Types of SGBV that Congolese Male Refugees Face in Kakuma Refugee Camp

The first research question was: *what are the types of SGBV that Congolese male refugees face in Kakuma refugee camp?* The respondents asserted that they have experienced various forms of SGBV.

The respondents were required to indicate the types of sexual and gender-based violence that they encountered in the refugee camps. Figure 1 summarizes the results from the responses.

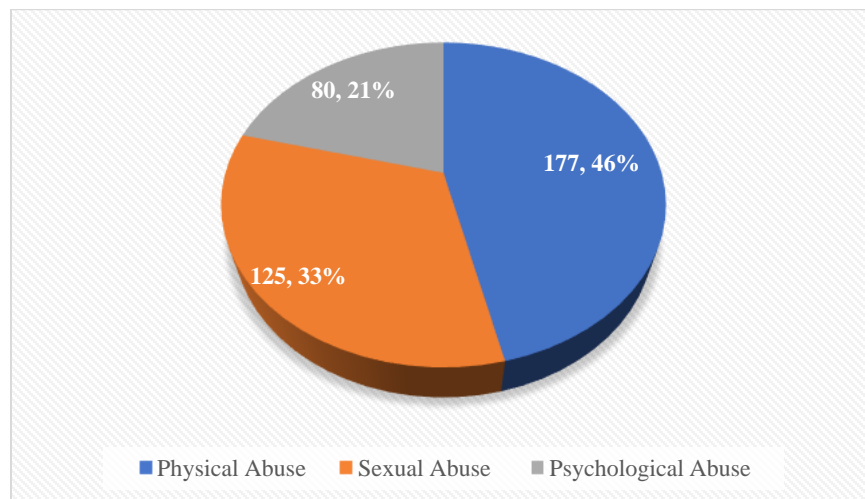


Figure 1: Type of SGBVs

As shown in Figure 4.1, physical abuse is the commonest SGBV that the entire sample of the surveyed Congolese male refugees in Kakuma Camp, Kenya face. The reason is that 46% of the SGBV related cases are physical abuse, followed by sexual abuse at 33%. Psychological abuse is the least common SGBV, as reported by the respondents. The findings that men encounter more physical abuse than other forms of SGBV align with previous assertions by Araujo et al. (2018), Meyer et al. (2019), Chynoweth et al. (2020), and Tan and Kuschminder (2022). Moreover, the other forms of SGBV, sexual and psychological abuse, can directly or indirectly contribute to physical abuse.

### Frequency Of Different Types of SGBVs Across Various Ages

Regarding the types of SGBVs frequency, physical abuse is the most common with a total of 144 cases reported by the respondents. Sexual abuse is also common with 120 incidences, while psychological abuse is the least prevalent with 65 cases. The findings concur with existing literature because the other forms of SGBVs usually involve physical assault (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2003).

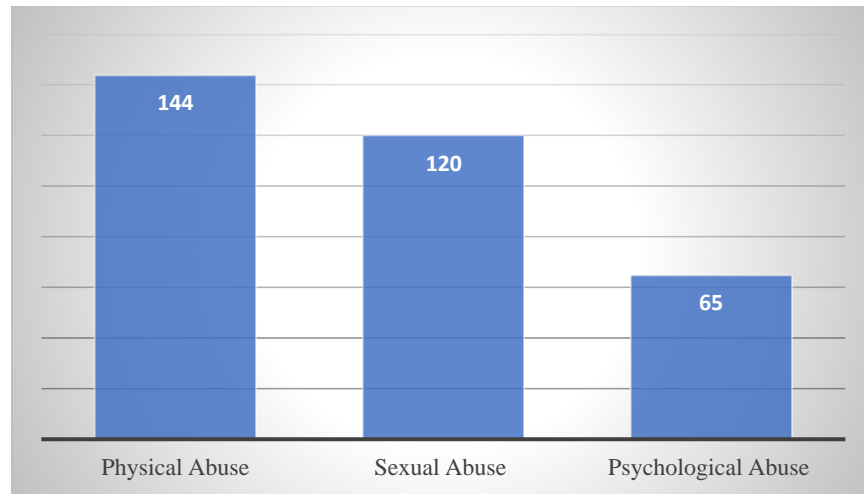


Figure 2: Types of abuses among male Congolese

### Frequency Of Different Types of SGBVs Across Various Ages

According to the findings, the 18-29-year-old male refugees are the most affected by physical abuse. About 94.6% of the respondents from this age group indicated that they are affected by this type of SGBV because their physical activity is the highest. Moreover, the group is more visible and significantly involved in confrontations because they mostly get themselves into highly risky situations. Only 9.4% of the male refugees aged 30-39 years are subjected to physical abuse. The implication is that most of these adults have created effective strategies of evading conflicts or may have been assigned roles within the refugee camps that make them avoid confrontations. However, the group aged 50-59 years seemed to report more cases of physical abuse, 27.3%, probably because of their diminishing physical strength and being targeted by molesters. Also, a significant percentage (85%) of the elderly who are 60 and above years old male refugees are physically abused. The possible reason could be their perceived or actual inability to protect themselves because of their reduced energy, brought about by aging.

As for sexual abuse, the elderly, 60 and above years old, are the most affected male refugees with 75% of the respondents reporting that they had been subjected to this particular SGBV. It is highly probable that the vulnerability of this group is the reason why the cases are highly prevalent amongst them. The second most affected category is the group of male refugees aged between 18 and 29 years with 72% of the respondents from this group facing related challenges, probably due to higher exposure and mobility within the refugee camps. Thirdly, the group of male refugees aged between 50 and 59 years is significantly affected with 20.8% of the respondents from this category facing related challenges. The reason for this is that individuals within this age bracket are fairly exposed to challenges. The least affected group is the 30-

49 years, in which case only 11.5% of the participants reported instances of sexual abuse. This could be attributed to the established self-protection mechanisms and reduced visibility within the refugee camps.

Psychological abuse is highest among the elderly, those aged more than 60 years of age. The reason is that about 90% of the individuals from this group being affected by this type of SGBV. Given that the elderly are highly likely to face significant mental issues, and when these are compounded with physical and sexual abuse, the psychological impact goes up. The group aged between 50-59 years of age falls second with 31.2% of incidences. This statistic can be attributed to the possible growing mental health challenges, supplemented with the targeted psychological torment that the individuals undergo. The least affected groups are the 18-29 and 30-49 age categories due to their ability to cope with mentally challenging situations. The quantitative findings concur with the results from interviews, which represent the qualitative aspect of the analysis. For instance, the dominant themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews include physical violence, sexual assault, and emotional and psychological abuse.

### **Theme 1: Physical Violence**

The theme of physical violence emerged prominently from the data, reflecting the severe and often brutal experiences of the research participants. Most participants confirmed that physical violence is rampant. Majority indicated that they have been physically abused. Physical violence was in form of beatings and assaults, physical injuries, as well as witnessing of violence to others.

#### ***Beatings and Assaults***

Battering and beating is the most common type of physical violence, which leads to aggravated bodily harm. Some of the interview participants recounted how they endured beatings and assaults. For instance, one noted as follows

*" A stick was used to dig a small hole in the soil then I was asked to have sex with it while beating me heavily. Then they took my mother and sisters with them and since that time I don 't know where they are now." (IP-3, a male refugee)*

This illustrates the extreme physical and psychological torture that some refugees endure, with violence extending to family members. Similarly, another participant reported:

*"I was beaten heavily by the soldiers while they were asking me to have sex with a stick buried in the soil." (IP-25, a Congolese male refugee)*

The experience of this participant shows how security personnel are often involved in the perpetration of violence, hence making the vulnerability of the refugees even worse.

#### ***Physical Injuries***

Often, due to violence, some of the participants reported that they suffered physical injuries, which had dire impacts on their present life. One participant in particular gave the following account.

*"Today I am jobless due to the physical injuries I sustained and currently I depend on handouts yet I used to work and could provide for my family." (IP-7, a Congolese male refugee)*



This statement highlights the long-term impact of physical violence on the refugees' economic stability and ability to support their families.

*"The beatings I received have left me with injuries that make it difficult for me to move around or work, and this has severely affected my ability to provide for my family." (IP-42, a Congolese male refugee)*

This quote emphasizes the debilitating physical consequences of violence, which hinder refugees' daily functioning and economic productivity.

### ***Witnessing Violence***

Apart from those who suffered the violence, there are those who witnessed it perpetrated on others, often with similar impacts on their wellbeing. For instance, one participant narrated as follows:

*"We had finished having supper when we had a sharp knock on our door before even opening it the gunshot did and in no time these men began undressing my wife, as her husband, I had to fight them back in defense and in the process, I was bitterly beaten, tied on our bed and was sodomized too." (IP-9, a Congolese male refugee)*

This account demonstrates the traumatic experiences of witnessing violence against loved ones and the physical assault that follows when attempting to protect them.

These quotes above from the participants highlight the physical violence faced by the refugees, often leading to severe injuries and long-term consequences that affect their livelihoods and mental health. The brutality of these acts, combined with the ongoing threat of violence, underscores the harsh reality of life in the refugee camp.

### **Theme 2: Sexual Assault**

There was a convergence of views among the participant that sexual assault against male refugees is a huge problem. Many participants shared stories concerning various forms of sexual assault that they endured. These include rape and sexual violence, coercion, forceful actions, and their psychological and physical impacts.

#### ***Rape and Sexual Violence***

Many male Congolese refugees have experienced the horrifying horrors of rape and sexual assault. These crimes cause severe psychological damage in addition to bodily harm (Dolan, 2014).

One participant recounted,

*"I was raped by several men. One by one, by one man after another, unable to remember their faces" (IP-1, a Congolese male refugee).*

This emphasizes the traumatizing effect of the severe and frequent sexual assaults that some migrants have to endure. The trauma is considerably harder to understand and recover from because the inability to recognize the attackers' faces exacerbates the sense of helplessness and terror.

Another participant shared,

*"They made me have sex with my own hands. Every day, they would beat me and force me to do it" (IP-18, a Congolese male refugee).*

This experience serves as an example of the severe and dehumanizing sexual assaults that are occasionally employed as a kind of torture. In intentional acts of dehumanization and humiliation, the use of items in sexual assault attempts to rob the victim of their humanity and dignity. The daily repetition of this agony is indicative of a trauma and abuse cycle that lasts a long time and leaves severe emotional and psychological damage (Barre, Boer & Guarnaccio 2023).

Besides, some men experienced sexual assault while trying to defend their family members from harassment. As one participant recounted,

*"I was sodomized too when I tried to protect my wife from being raped. They tied me and took turns" (IP-33, a Congolese male refugee).*

This emphasizes the horrific sexual violence that takes place in the context of attempting to defend family members as well as direct assaults. Failing to protect one's family can lead to additional emotional burdens and bizarre power relations, since defending loved ones might result in victimization (McCann & Pearlman, 2022). Because this type of assault combines personal violation with the failure to perform protective tasks that are expected of men, it exacerbates the trauma.

### ***Coercion and Forced Acts***

Many participants lamented that they have endured coercion and forced acts in relation to sex and rape. Those who survived these acts were subjected to threats and intimidation. One participant described the experience he endured:

*"They told me they would kill me if I reported the incident. The constant threats and intimidation make it difficult to feel safe" (IP-211, a Congolese male refugee).*

This statement shows how threats and compulsion silence victims and discourage them from seeking help. Terror from death and intimidation keeps victims silent and abused. Insecurity exacerbates trauma and makes rehabilitation harder.

Another participant explained,

*"I was forced to perform sexual acts on them. They threatened to harm my family if I refused" (IP-329, a Congolese male refugee).*

This quote shows how threats against loved ones coerce victims into cooperation. Family members as a bargaining chip puts the victim in an impossible scenario where compliance is the only option to protect their loved ones, adding to psychological anguish. Coercion that leaves victims feeling weak and guilty leaves deep psychological wounds.

### ***Psychological Impact of Sexual Assault***

The psychological effects of sexual assault are extensive and varied, affecting a broad spectrum of feelings and mental health issues in survivors. One participant articulated,



*"I developed feelings of intense fear of losing my life, powerlessness, feeling dishonored and emasculated as well as strong feelings of shame, guilt, helplessness, anger, and anxiety" (IP-4, a Congolese male refugee).*

Sexual violence has a tremendous psychological and emotional impact on victims. Survivors develop PTSD, sadness, and anxiety from the complicated mix of dread, powerlessness, and shame. Emasculation and disgrace are particularly devastating because they touch on strongly rooted societal masculine ideals (Cark et al, 2022).

Another participant noted,

*"Most survivors feel a lot of anger more than their female counterparts. Anger is more of a 'masculine' way to deal with trauma" (IP-8, a Congolese male refugee).*

This quote highlights gendered emotional responses to sexual abuse, with male survivors often coping with rage. The social expectation that men should show anger rather than vulnerability can prevent them from showing grief or anxiety, which can impede healing (Oosterhoff et al. 2004). This gendered trauma response reflects cultural conventions that limit men's emotional expressiveness, frequently to their cost.

### **Theme 3: Emotional and Psychological Abuse**

When asked about the emotional and psychological abuse, participants noted that they endure these kinds of abuse, which is manifested through coercion, threats, and emotional distress, often leaving the victims with deep psychological scars. Consider the following account by one participant:

*"I developed feelings of intense fear of losing my life, powerlessness, feeling dishonored and emasculated, as well as strong feelings of shame, guilt, helplessness, anger, and anxiety" (IP-16, a Congolese male refugee).*

Survivors carry a huge psychological weight. Fear, powerlessness, and deep-seated humiliation show how the abuse affected their mental health and emotional well-being.

Cultural standards have a big impact on how people react emotionally, and male survivors frequently use anger as a way to communicate their sorrow. As one participant noted,

*"Most survivors feel a lot of anger more than their female counterparts. Anger is more of a 'masculine' way to deal with trauma" (IP-10, a Congolese male refugee).*

This shows how social norms affect male trauma's emotional outlets. (Barre, Boer & Guarnaccio, 2023). Cultural standards affect how males process and express their suffering, as anger is expressed over other emotions.

Shame, guilt, and self-blame are prevalent among survivors, contributing to their isolation and reluctance to seek help.

*"The feelings of shame and confusion about their situation, guilt, and self-blame, and the subsequent fear of negative reactions and the resulting isolation in the community are typical symptoms of rape victims" (IP-5).*

Cultural stigmatization makes survivors feel ashamed and rejected by their relatives and communities, compounding these emotions. As another participant expressed,

*"The cultural norms and the stigmatization surrounding rape have left many of us humiliated and rejected by both our families and communities" (IP-2).*

These survivors' emotional and psychological anguish are exacerbated by the rejection and isolation they endure, which makes it difficult for them to get help and recover (Solangon & Patel, 2012, Clark et al, 2022).

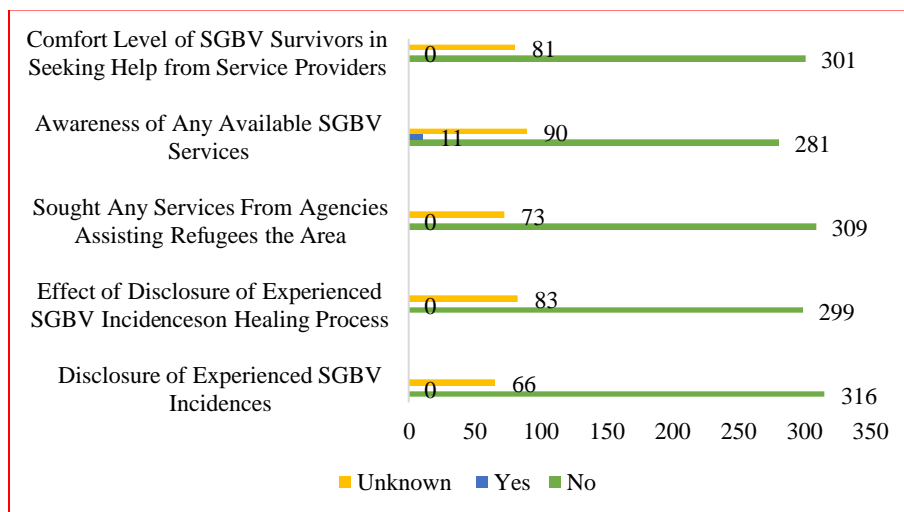
The ongoing psychological impact of abuse also affects personal relationships and self-esteem. One survivor lamented,

*"I always imagine the fact that my wife knows that I was also sexually abused; worst still is the fact that I can't perform very well sexually as I used to do since" (IP-13).*

This comment shows how survivors' intimate connections and masculine perceptions change over time. The failure to meet sexual expectations and their partner knowing about the abuse increase emotional pressure.

### Effect of Cultural Norms and Values on SGBV among Congolese Male Refugees

The second research question was: *In what ways do cultural norms and values influence SGBV among Congolese male refugees?* Therefore, the influence of cultural norms and values on SGBV among Congolese male refugees was analyzed statistically, and the results are presented in Figure 3.



*Figure 3: Effects of Cultural Norms*

As shown in Figure 4.10, the male refugees' awareness of available SGBV services within their area is critically low. The reason is that 281 individuals reported not being aware of such services, while only 11 individuals were aware of them. On the other hand, 90 individuals were unsure about the availability of SGBV services. It was also noted that there is a high level of discomfort among male refugee survivors of SGBV in seeking help from service providers. As shown by the data, 301 individuals are not comfortable seeking help. No respondents reported that they could be comfortable doing so. Furthermore, 81 individuals

are unsure about their comfort level in seeking help. Therefore, there could be a significant trust deficit, meaning that the current system is unsupportive, while the environment is unwelcoming for survivors seeking assistance. Overall, cultural norms exacerbate the challenges that male Congolese refugees face in Kakuma camp when they seek help after being subjected to SGBV. The reason is that disclosure of abuse is very low among the survivors because the support systems for survivors could be filled with loopholes. The lack of awareness and underutilization of services further complicate the issue (Moynihan, 2018).

The quantitative findings regarding the effect of cultural norms and values on SGBV among Congolese Male Refugees (Connell 2014 & 2018) align with the qualitative results from the interviews. For instance, two key themes emerged from the qualitative data: gender roles and expectations, and stigma and shame.

#### **Theme 4: Gender Roles and Expectations**

Gender norms and expectations strongly impact Congolese male refugees' SGBV experiences. Social norms often shape people's behavior and self-image, especially in patriarchal settings. One participant noted:

*"In our culture, men are expected to be strong and protect their families. Admitting to being a victim of sexual violence is seen as a sign of weakness and failure" (IP-91, a Congolese male refugee).*

This shows how males are pressured to play masculine stereotypes, making it hard for them to seek help or talk about their problems. Male survivors dread being seen as weak due to the expectation of strength and protection (King et al. 2021). This social norm silences men, increasing their suffering and preventing them from seeking help. This stigma encourages men to remain silent and not report sexual violence rather than face the consequences of stigmatization, fear of rejection, or disbelief by others (Solangon & Patel 2012).

Another participant shared:

*"Discussing sexuality is closed in my culture; it is seen as offensive to talk about it, especially men having sex with other men, if forceful or not, is a big taboo, so many survivors remain quiet and in denial" (IP-22).*

Cultural taboos of discussing sexuality separate SGBV survivors. Sitting in quiet and denial worsens their agony. Taboos make survivors feel humiliated and unable to communicate their pain, prolonging their agony and solitude. (Kahn et al, 2023). Male victims /survivors of SGBV may face stigma and fear due to concerns about their masculinity and sexuality, and may experience shame, around the idea that they "should have been able" to prevent what happened to them. Largely due to cultural stigma, misperceptions, and entrenched stereotypes around masculinity. (Bownes et al. 1991).

The pressure to conform to traditional gender roles can also lead to internalized stigmatization. As one interviewee stated:

*"The community prefers to ignore any issue that could be related to homosexuality for fear that you are going to encourage homosexuality" (IP-53).*

The silence and stigma surrounding male sexual violence is perpetuated by cultural standards. Fear of labeling or endorsing homosexuality isolates and marginalizes male survivors, preventing them from seeking assistance and intervention. (Connell 2014 & 2018; Kimmel 2000). Social denial and stigma silence victims and devalue their experiences, making it harder for them to seek help. As one participant remarked,

*"The community treats survivors of sexual violence with disdain and often blames them for their predicament, leading to further emotional and psychological distress" (IP-3).*

This comment shows how communal victim-blaming worsens survivors' trauma. Such beliefs reinforce the stigma of being a male sexual abuse victim and make survivors reluctant to talk about their experiences and get help.

### **Theme 5: Stigma and Shame**

Due to the existing cultural norms, many victims of gender-based violence are subjected to stigma and shame. Cultural norms that stigmatize victims and link sexual abuse to homosexuality further marginalize them (Clark, 2014).

One participant explained:

*"If the survivors confide in others, they often get blamed for what has happened to them or they are labeled as homosexuals, which is very painful for them" (IP-5).*

This shows how accusing and labeling burden survivors emotionally and psychologically. Survivors are further isolated and distressed by the stigma of being homosexual (Cohen,2015). Fear of naming prevents survivors from speaking up, hampering their ability to seek justice and support. This is further supported by the following quote from another participant:

*"Since the victim cannot be seen as a real man anymore, the only possibility is that this man is not a real man from the start but must be a homosexual. Thus, the community cannot accept that rape of men happens against their will and is not a choice" (IP-8).*

This shows how deeply rooted societal standards deny masculine victimhood, equating it with manhood loss. Refusing to recognize male rape as a crime reinforces detrimental stereotypes. This cultural denial invalidates survivors' stories and fosters silence and unresolved trauma (Kahn & Malik, 2023). The societal rejection and isolation experienced by survivors are evident in another account:

*"Due to the stigmatization, they have difficulties living in the society bearing their secrets, unable to talk to anyone about it. Consequently, they feel alone and isolated" (IP-1).*

This comment shows how stigma and shame may isolate survivors. They avoid seeking treatment and discussing their experiences out of fear of social rejection, worsening their isolation and helplessness (Van der Kolk,2019). The absence of community support and understanding allows survivors to struggle with their trauma alone, delaying their healing and reintegration.

### **Discussions**

The most common types of abuse among men refugees included; physical abuse (46%), sexual abuse (33%), and psychological abuse (21%). Younger males (18-29 years). This concurred with a study from Zambia where by a total number of 7920 cases that involved gender-based violence were reported to the police, in the fourth quarter of 2021 (Zambia Police,2022). The forms of violence consisted of physical violence cases representing (61.7%), 881 cases of sexual violence representing (17.8%), cases classified as economic violence representing (14.7%) and cases of emotional abuse representing (5.5%) (Zambia Police,

2022). From the findings the study has revealed that violence against men is equally a reality and is happening in every society to varying degrees. However, it is just unfortunate that this particular violence does not get as much attention as it should. Further, a good number of literatures have shown that violence against men has been steadily rising across Africa (Yagi, I., et al. 2022). The increase in the number of male experiencing GBV needs serious attention. Regardless of how small the number of men going through violence is, there is every need for this type of violence to bring concern in societies. Women who face gender-based violence are highly supported globally and are given meaningful attention they deserve which is a total opposite for men. For instance, the report by KPRRA on Ending Violence Against Women in Kenya has indicated that there are efforts by various organizations on providing provision to shelter battered women while this has not been extended to men (KNBS, 2022).

Moreover, the increasing number of men who are experiencing gender-based violence at the hands of their partners should be a call for concern (Mbandlwa, 2020). In the past few years, there has been a huge shift in Zambia when it comes to gender-based violence as women are now taking the lead role and finding themselves in the spotlight of numerous crimes which are causing physical and psychological damage to the men in society (USAID, 2018). To some this might seem like an awakening by women who have faced so much abuse in the past from men and finally know their rights and are now paying them back (Lubbungu, 2017; Muller & Shahrokh, 2017; Big-Alabo & Itelimo, 2022) , but as a matter of fact this is a criminal offence that needs to be taken seriously.

There were cultural norms and values such as cultural and traditional practices, gender inequalities and discrimination, work against men's rights to report the incidents of GBV against them. Culture oftentimes plays an important role in generating and perpetuating GBV, as well as other countless causes that are designed by sophisticated factors functioning at various levels of an individual's life (Taha-Thomure et al., 2022). Zambia in particular has one of the world's highest rates of intimate partner violence (CEDAW, 2021), the Kenyan government conceded that GBV is indeed an area of worry and that it requires immediate attention (CEDAW, 2021). According to Malik & Nadda (2019), gender-based violence takes many forms like domestic abuse which involves battering, spousal abuse, dating abuse, family violence and intimate partner violence. Other ways domestic violence is committed on men and women is through physical aggression or assault such as hitting, biting, kicking, slapping, shoving, throwing objects, battery, making threats and also through emotional abuse; sexual abuse; domineering or controlling; intimidation; stalking and economic deprivation.

Research conducted in Zambia on gender-based violence mainly brings out the reasons on why women are abused and what type of abuse they undergo (Mumba, 2020). Interventions and support for women are clearly put across while very little to nothing is done for men, even if men too deserve compassion (Kalamazoos, et al., 2022). Most cases of gender-based violence are generally not reported by victims because in most instances they choose to view the situation as a private matter or too minor to warrant police arrest (World Bank Group, 2022) .

Gender based violence among men has existed in our societies for a long time despite most of the research focusing on women as the only victims. This ordeal in recent times has somewhat been unclothed with the advancing of technology like the coming of various social online platforms and media houses (Kalimaposo et al., 2022). Female to male violence should be taken as serious as male to female violence is handled around the world. It has already been established that there is a high level of under reporting of GBV cases

among men compared to women (Mbandlwa, 2020; Yagi et al., 2022; Kalimaposo et al., 2022). Some of which include how society views men as strong, patriarchal expectations, African culture norms making it hard to report any physical, emotional and psychological abuse they face from their female partners (Mbandlwa, 2020).

## Conclusion

The three most common forms of abuse among the Congolese men include; physical abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse. Several factors, such as cultural and traditional practices, gender inequalities and discrimination, work against men's rights to report the incidents of GBV against them

## Recommendation

The study recommends that necessary interventions need to be implemented such as awareness creation, development of hotline and help desk for survivors to get help in order curb GBV against men. There is need to redesign programmes targeting men so that certain stereotypes can be uprooted.

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