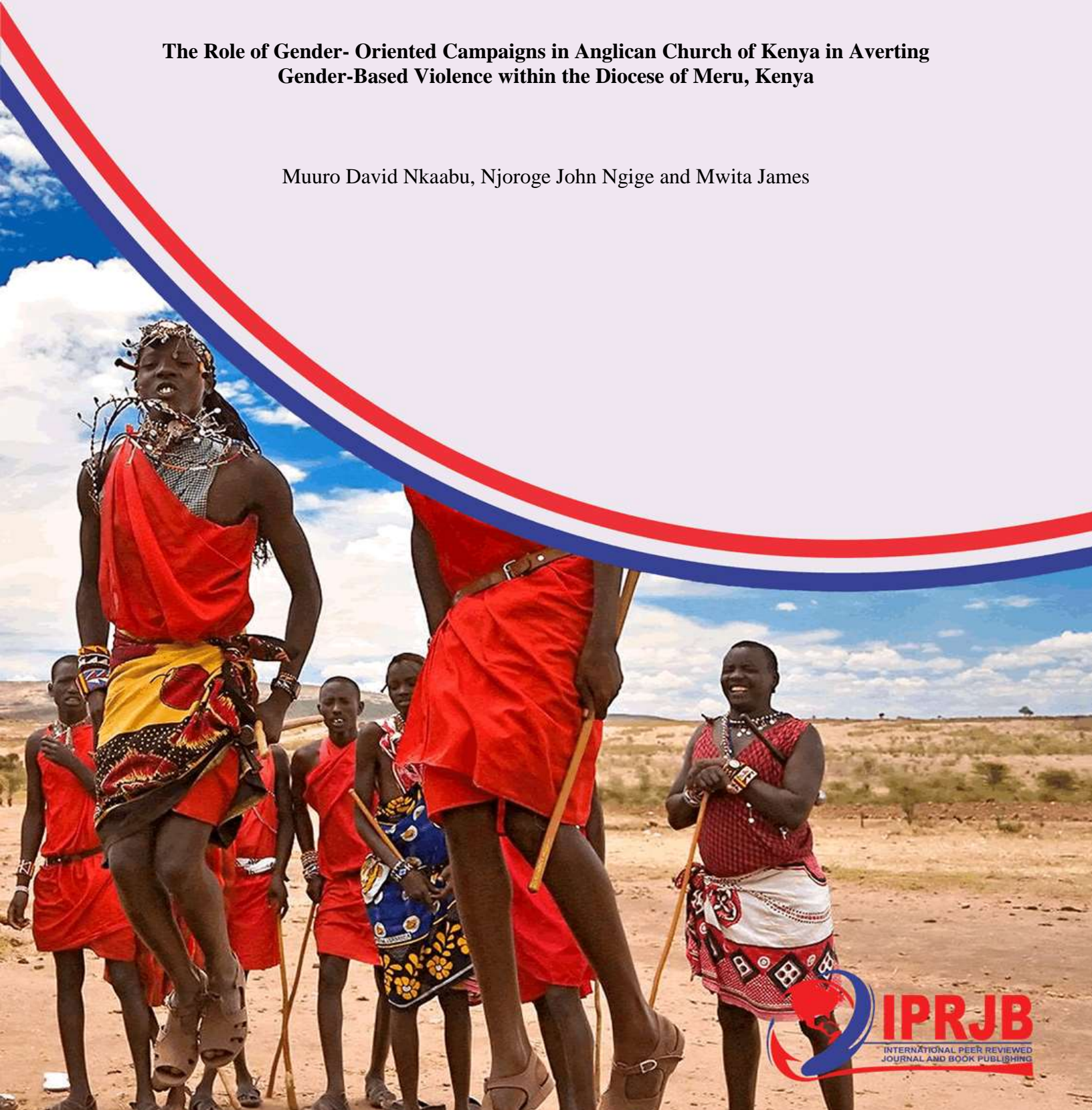





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**The Role of Gender- Oriented Campaigns in Anglican Church of Kenya in Averting  
Gender-Based Violence within the Diocese of Meru, Kenya**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global problem that affects individuals of all genders and ages. It occurs in every region of the world and in all types of societies, and has far-reaching and long-lasting impacts on individuals, families, and communities (Violence, 1999). According to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO), one in three African women may face physical or sexual abuse at some point in their life, and gender-based violence is rife in many countries. In Kenya, one in three women have experienced physical abuse, and one in four have experienced sexual assault, according to a 2019 report from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. In Meru region, GBV is among the highest in the nation in terms of its prevalence. The purpose of this study was to determine the role of gender-oriented campaigns in Anglican Church of Kenya in averting gender-based violence within the Diocese of Meru, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study utilized mixed-methods approach which were quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was collected through a survey of 200 people, including 20 church leaders, 20 men, and 160 women who experienced GBV. The qualitative data was collected through interviews with church leaders and survivors of GBV. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and presented through median, frequencies and percentage. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data while SPSS (Scientific package for the social sciences) was used to analyze quantitative data which was presented using tables and charts.

**Findings:** The findings of the study were that sensitization campaigns against GBV, collaboration, Legal Aid and Advocacy in partnership with legal professionals established a more supportive legal framework for survivors of gender-based violence freely or at a low-cost.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The recommendations of the study were on how the ACK can effectively prevent GBV in Meru Diocese.

**Keywords:** *Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), Gender, Violence.*

**JEL Codes of Classification:** *J12, J16, L78, K38*

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## INTRODUCTION

One in ten Kenyan women between the ages of 15 and 49 who have ever experienced physical violence have also been sexually assaulted, according to a 2014 study by the African Center for Population and Health Research (Wanjiru et al., 2013). The Anglican Church of Kenya, plays an important role in the community and is well-positioned to address the issue of GBV. However, studies have shown that despite the church's efforts to address GBV, the problem persists in many communities. In the Diocese of Meru specifically, the Anglican Church has been involved in GBV prevention and response efforts through various initiatives. The effects of GBV was far-reaching and had detrimental consequences on various aspects of society. In families, it disrupted relationships, caused trauma, and perpetuated cycles of violence from one generation to the next.

In the workplace, GBV reduced productivity and undermined the potential of individuals to contribute to the economy. This, in turn, hampered a nation's competitiveness and overall development. Moreover, GBV acted as a barrier to progress and social justice. It reinforced gender inequalities and restricted the full participation and empowerment of women in all spheres of life. It undermined efforts to achieve gender equality and obstructed the realization of human rights for all individuals, regardless of their gender. Addressing GBV was not only a matter of human rights but also a necessity for social, economic, and political development. It required comprehensive efforts at various levels, including legal frameworks, policies, and programs that aimed at preventing, responding to, and eliminating GBV. Given the influence of the church at the family levels also, its advocacy roles needed to be more effective, while at the movement it was not. These initiatives encompassed education and awareness-raising campaigns, provision of support services for survivors, engaging men and boys as allies challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes, and promoting gender equality in all spheres of life.

The church was in an excellent position to collaborate with the community to prevent gender-based violence by campaigning for law enforcement authorities, including the police, traditional leaders, local residents, and others, to adopt a policy of zero tolerance for all forms of violence, enforcing legislation that allowed women to inherit land and property, access to education, and health care. Despite the existence of national and county government policies addressing GBV, many severe cases of violence within families went unreported to the authorities. The exclusion of the church from efforts to address GBV created a critical gap in combating this issue effectively. Given that the majority of GBV occurred within families closely affiliated with the church. Therefore, it was necessary to examine the role of the Anglican Church of Kenya – Meru Diocese in averting GBV within its awareness-creation campaigns, pastoral programs, advocacy efforts, and conflict resolution mechanisms. By bridging the gap between the ideal and the reality on the ground, the church became a powerful ally in the fight against GBV, working alongside governmental institutions and other stakeholders and this created a safer and more equitable society.

According to a study by Mukanangana et al. (2014) GBV damaged women's reproductive health (R.H.) and violated their legal rights and R.H.-related regulations. According to the report, 95% of those surveyed had been subjected to physical abuse, 31% had been sexually assaulted by complete strangers, 92% had been victimized by intimate partners, and 65% had been coerced into marriage. This study contended that the prevailing culture of silence among STI sufferers is rooted on

societal, religious, economic, and political attitudes. Research on the causes, impacts, and mitigation methods of gender-based domestic violence in Kitui was done by Kaluyu in 2007. The findings indicated that one of the major contributing factors to domestic violence is alcohol intake. In addition to this, the report outlined the negative repercussions of gender-based violence on families, such as psychological stress, decreased family income, and ill health. The degree of violence and the degree of income, education, and alcohol usage were all significantly correlated. In other words, preventing sexually transmitted illnesses in women was aided by education, economic empowerment, and alcohol use reduction. In the Laini Saba slum in Kibra, Obwanda (2014) examined the elements that contribute to domestic abuse against women. This study discovered that violence against women was influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors. The survey also revealed that abused women did not turn to their families or lawyers for assistance, and that even when they did, police and legal representatives did not want to assist them. The Church asserts that there was a moral order in the universe that was based on the dignity of every individual, regardless of gender, who were created in God's image and from whom God has received the words of love and peace.

In Meru and Tharaka Nithi Counties, several cases were reported though in most cases men were silent in reporting due to fear of what the society would think of them. Musune (2015) reports in his research that “physical, emotional, and sexual violence against men went largely unspoken compared to what women experienced”. Musune (2015) found that women's acts of domestic violence against men included physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and psychological abuse. Further investigation indicated the causes of differences in female-to-male violence to include perceived male infidelity, infertility and failure to provide for the family, alcoholism, children from past marriages, and the predominance of spiteful guys. The church was in an excellent position to collaborate with the community to prevent gender-based violence from occurring in the first place. This could be accomplished by urging law enforcement authorities, including the police, traditional leaders, local residents, and others, to adopt a policy of zero tolerance for all forms of violence. Campaigns to change and enforce legislation that allowed women to inherit land and property, access to education, and health care, were frequently the root causes of gender-based violence in the ACK Diocese from Meru, were the responsibility of the Church. Njagi (2017) made an effort to ascertain how religious institutions could reduce gender-based violence in Kenya's Nairobi District. The survey discovered that Nairobi District was home to several instances of gender-based violence. Additionally, it was discovered that faith-based groups have enormous potential for helping those who have been traumatized by gender-based violence by campaigns of behavior change, allowing GN trainers to speak before meetings, inviting them to speak, and engaging the help of a reputable religious moral authority.

International and national legislation, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and domestic violence laws, played a crucial role in addressing GBV and promoting gender equality. However, despite progress, there were still significant gaps in eradicating GBV and ensuring a world free from violence and discrimination. Many survivors still faced barriers in accessing support services and justice. There was a research contextual gap on how the church was helping other government and non-governmental bodies in advocating against gender violence Cultural and social norms, as well as systemic inequalities, continued to perpetuate violence and hindered efforts to prevent and respond to GBV. Addressing

these challenges required sustained efforts at all levels, including policy changes, community engagement, education, and awareness-raising campaigns. To completely eradicate GBV, it was essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying factors contributing to violence, challenges discriminatory norms and attitudes, provides support to survivors, and promoted gender equality in all aspects of society. This required collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society organizations, religious institutions, and communities. The study was based on Conscientization Theory which advocates for rebuilding of the victim's life without being exploited and oppressed. This made the GBV victims to be able to organize themselves and fight for their rights and this related to the role played by the Anglican Church of Kenya in the Meru Diocese to avoid gender-based violence

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used qualitative research method and a descriptive research design. The target population for this study were members of the Anglican Church within the Diocese of Meru, who had either experienced or witnessed gender-based violence. The sample size was determined based on the principles of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data was collected using various instruments such as interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of patterns and themes in the data.

Descriptive design provided a comprehensive description of respondents' attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and feelings towards the church's efforts in preventing GBV. This approach enabled the study to explain occurrences before organizing, tabulating, and displaying the data gathered. The data gathered was organized into a digestible format and then combined into a model that was evaluated to interpret the part played by the Anglican Church of Kenya in the Diocese of Meru in avoiding GBV. This model provided insights into the church's prevention and response initiatives and identify areas where improvement was needed.

In this study, the target population was men and women who had been victims of gender-based violence in the Anglican Church of Kenya, which was under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Meru. The study also included clergy who had designated roles of leadership within the diocese. The study sampled twenty (20) church leaders, twenty (20) men, and one hundred and sixty (160) women, making a total of two hundred (200) respondents. Sampling both men and women in the study population was important because GBV affects both genders, and it was essential to understand their experiences and perspectives. The sample was drawn from both Meru and Tharaka Nithi Counties in Kenya, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Meru. The inclusion of victims of gender-based violence and church leaders in the study population provided insights into the church's response to GBV and the experiences of victims and also enabled the study to identify areas where improvement was needed in the church's prevention and response initiatives.

Due to the sensitive nature of gender based violence, the study employed convenience sampling, a non-random sampling technique. Participants were selected based on their availability and their interest in participating in the study. Convenience sampling was chosen because it was a straightforward method of sampling, allowing researchers to gather data easily and efficiently. By selecting participants who were readily available and willing to participate, the researcher collected

data in a timely manner, which was especially important when resources and time were limited. In this investigation, questionnaires and interview guides were employed to collect data. The use of these instruments was specifically tailored to the study's objectives and the target population. When collecting information from victims of gender-based abuse, the researcher used personal and nuanced exploration, interview guides so as to gather in-depth and rich information directly from those who had experienced gender-based violence. Interviews enabled victims to share their experiences, emotions, and perspectives more comprehensively. Surveys were chosen as the data collection instrument to gather information from clergy and other church leaders. The selection of this instrument was based on the understanding that clergy members were often trusted figures whom victims of gender-based violence sought for help and they implemented programs aimed at preventing and addressing gender-based violence within the church community.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data set focused on the participants' gender distribution. There were 32 men and 39 women among the 71 responses. This breakdown emphasized the representation of different genders within the Meru Anglican Church. Understanding gender dynamics was critical because they were vital in reducing gender-based violence. Analyzing men's and women's experiences, viewpoints, and positions within the church community provided insights into how gender-based violence was viewed, addressed, and averted. Legal Aid and Advocacy in partnership with legal professionals established a more supportive legal framework for survivors free or low-cost legal aid to survivors of gender-based violence, proving its commitment to assisting people who had suffered harm.

Sensitization and Training focused on creating awareness by educating church leaders, clergy, and community members about gender-based violence (GBV) and its consequences. Open community engagement with local communities through forums, town hall meetings, and outreach programs created opportunities for debate, sharing personal stories, and examining cultural norms perpetuating violence (Umubyeyi et al., 2016). Advocacy and policy engagement was evident on how the church pooled resources, skills, and experiences by forming alliances with other churches, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and community-based organizations. The gender-oriented activities of the Anglican Church of Kenya-Meru Diocese supported and reinforced the work of the government, county governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in preventing Gender-Based Violence. These initiatives provided an effective platform for raising awareness about the harmful effects of GBV on participants and communities. The most effective part of the church's efforts to prevent gender-based violence was the campaigns that were culturally sensitive and relevant by including leaders in community outreach and cooperating with local organizations through supporting gender-balanced leadership within the church. The Anglican Church of Kenya- Meru Diocese raised awareness of gender-based violence through various avenues, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Personal experiences, community dialogues, and media stories helped raise awareness and developed a communal resolve to prevent GBV.

Partnership with Women's Groups fostered collaborations that allowed these entities to exchange resources, expertise, and experiences, enhancing their aggregate effect. This was broadened by formation of alliances with women's organizations, while promoting a united front against gender-based violence and working toward gender equality. Collaboration with other religious Groups

facilitated interfaith communication and collaboration tackled gender-based violence. Encountering Cases of Gender-Based Violence, the church worked with experts in the sector, such as NGOs and GBV professionals, to create and execute effective instructional materials and tools. To address GBV, the Anglican Church of Kenya- Meru Diocese worked together by building coordinated responses to GBV cases involving different stakeholders, such as clergy, church leaders, members, local NGOs, law enforcement agencies, and healthcare practitioners, was critical. The church formed alliances with local organizations specializing in GBV prevention and response. These collaborations helped with information exchange, capacity-building training, and cooperative advocacy efforts. They also helped to establish and implement policies that addressed GBV at the systemic level. The church developed a network of informed participants who can spot symptoms of violence, offer support, and send survivors to appropriate agencies by training them with the knowledge and skills to address GBV effectively. The Anglican Church of Kenya- Meru Diocese addressed and prevented gender-based violence by implementing comprehensive awareness and education programs, providing appropriate pastoral care and support to survivors, and fostering collaborative efforts with external stakeholders.

On the actions Taken to Address Gender-Based Violence, some respondents emphasized the importance of the church advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment, challenging societal institutions that perpetuate violence, collaborating with local organizations and authorities, and educating community members about respectful relationships. By raising awareness, offering support services, advocating for gender equality, and partnering with local organizations and authorities.

Advocating for reforms in laws and regulations that safeguarded women's rights, supporting projects that strengthen women economically and socially, and fostering women's leadership within the church were all part of this. These activities helped to build a more inclusive and equitable society. The Anglican Church's collaboration with local groups and authorities was also emphasized as an important function. The church increased its response to gender-based violence by collaborating with government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations. These alliances helped survivors to access resources, expertise, support services, and chances for cooperative advocacy and community outreach projects. When the church and these organizations work together, they had a greater influence on preventing and addressing gender-based violence in the community. The church developed a sense of shared responsibility in combating GBV through community interactions, door-to-door campaigns, and collaborations with traditional leaders. The initiatives built a support network, challenged social norms that allowed violence, and fostered an atmosphere intolerant of GBV by incorporating the larger community. Advocacy, workshops, and collaborations with local stakeholders were prominent techniques in community mobilization initiatives to address the core causes of GBV. Alignment of ACK-Meru Diocese GBV Efforts with Government Policies allowed the church to benefit from its experience, resources, and networks. To address GBV, the government had legal frameworks and regulations in place, as well as specialized institutions and groups that sought to tackle the problem. Furthermore, adhering to government policies allowed the church to gain access to healthcare systems and services for GBV survivors, ensuring they received the required medical and psychological treatment.

Moreover, the government's policies frequently incorporated legal frameworks that the church used to advocate for survivors' rights and bring perpetrators accountable. By supporting these policies, the church collaborated with legal and justice institutions to promote awareness, give legal aid, and advocate for stronger legislation to combat GBV.

Collaboration between the church and other organizations working on gender-based violence was essential for comprehensive and long-term campaigns (DANIDA, 2017). Working with government agencies, county governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other community stakeholders, the church contributed its resources, networks, and skills to current activities. These collaborations promoted the exchange of information, experiences, and best practices. The church used its position to highlight the impact of gender-focused campaigns, support policy reforms, and advocated for the rights of women and girls through collaborative efforts. On legal aid and advocacy, *the ACK* in partnership with legal professionals, the Anglican Church of Kenya-Meru diocese provided free or low-cost legal aid to survivors of gender-based violence, proving its commitment to assisting people who had suffered harm (Mwende, 2022).

The Anglican Church of Kenya-Meru diocese's advocacy effort also tried to influence policy-making processes to establish a more supportive legal framework for survivors. The church contributed to developing and implementing laws and policies that prioritized the protection of victims and survivors by actively participating in discussions and collaborations with relevant stakeholders, including government bodies and civil society organizations (Mwende, 2022). Collaboration with relevant organizations was essential for rehabilitation program success. The church increased awareness about the extent and impact of gender-based violence in the community by evaluating and presenting the statistics.

These findings demonstrated the critical need for action and assisted in mobilizing stakeholders such as government authorities, legislators, and civil society organizations (Manual, 2021). The church strengthened its voice and raised the chance of policy change and adopting measures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence by employing research to support its advocacy efforts. Data from the research also aided the church's collaboration and relationships with other organizations and stakeholders.

The Anglican Church of Kenya-Meru diocese applied various methods when undertaking gender-oriented campaigns against gender-based violence. These methods included: Sensitization and Training that impacted societal norms, attitudes, and behaviors through education and awareness, hence reducing GBV cases and promoting gender equality.

On advocacy and Policy engagement, the church tapped into many organizations and institutions' distinct talents and resources. For example, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on GBV prevention and response frequently had specific knowledge and experience in delivering direct services to survivors (Strand & Wimpelmann, 2014). This relationship also enabled the church to broaden its reach and aid more survivors, as NGOs frequently had a huge network and presence in numerous communities. Government agencies played an important role in policy formation, law enforcement, and social service delivery (Strand & Wimpelmann, 2014).

GBV prevention campaigns focused on creating safe spaces, addressing root causes, empowering women and girls as well as engaging men and boys in tackling gender-based violence campaigns,



Awareness Campaigns were carried out through church events, workshops, and outreach programs, in which information on the negative repercussions of gender-based violence is disseminated, respectful relationships were promoted, and available support services were highlighted. Church leaders contributed to larger public awareness and change by leveraging their influence and platforms through educating people about many types of violence, such as intimate relationship abuse, sexual assault, and harassment. Collaboration with local organizations and gender-based violence experts improved the impact of awareness efforts.

Furthermore, awareness campaigns incorporated survivor testimonials, experiences, and messages of hope and perseverance. Additionally, awareness campaigns provided information on accessible support services such as hotlines, counseling centers, and shelters and this led to breaking of the silence and stigma that surrounded gender-based violence. Partnership with Women's Groups fostered collaborations between Anglican Church officials and local women's groups or organizations concerned with gender issues helped to boost efforts to address gender-based violence and allowed these entities to exchange resources, expertise, and experiences, enhancing their aggregate effect. They also established networks and tactics for advocacy, empowerment, and support services that enriched and strengthened the Anglican Church's work. Advocacy and Policy Engagement encouraged Anglican Church leaders to push for policies and legislation addressing gender-based violence and church leaders participated in advocacy by creating coalitions with other organizations and stakeholders striving to abolish gender-based violence. They effectively fought for laws and policies that protected victims, held abusers accountable, and promoted gender equality by utilizing their moral authority and influence. Making public declarations and promoting awareness through media channels were examples of advocacy actions. Church leaders educated their congregations and the wider community on the necessity of addressing gender-based violence and the need for legal and policy reforms through sermons, newsletters, and social media platforms. Anglican Church leaders influenced systemic change and developed a legal framework that supported gender equality, nonviolence, and justice for survivors of gender-based violence by pushing for policies and legislation.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

Awareness campaigns, incorporated survivor testimonials, experiences, and messages of hope and perseverance provided information on accessible support services such as hotlines, counseling centers, and shelters and this led to breaking of the silence and stigma that surrounded gender-based violence. Collaboration between the church and other organizations promoted gender equality while the Government agencies played an important role in policy formation, law enforcement, and social service delivery.

### **Recommendation**

This study recommends consideration of GBV as a public health issue, campaign policy and practice of keeping girls in school, sourcing for non-destructive substitutes for harmful traditions like female genital mutilation, encouraging women's full and equal participation in decision-making from the local councils to national legislatures. Recommended research on high-risk populations and normalizing systems of mental health and psychosocial support to GBV victims.

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