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Effects of lockdowns and quarantines on gender based violence in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

In the first quarter of 2020, as the world went into lockdown, cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) rose exponentially. In Kenya, there was a reported increase of 36% in GBV cases in 2020, indicating a correlation between the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and the surge in GBV incidents (Ministry of Gender and Social Services, 2020). Despite several accounts of this phenomenon, the perspectives of the victims have not received adequate attention. This study aimed to investigate the effects of COVID-19 lockdowns and quarantines on GBV in Kakamega Central Sub-County. The specific objectives were to examine how COVID-19 lockdowns and quarantines contributed to the rise in GBV from the victim's perspective. The study was guided by Routine Activity theory and adopted a mixed-method research design. Kakamega Central Sub-County in Kakamega County served as the research site. The sample size for this study was 270 GBV victims selected based on Taro Yamane's sample determination formula. The target sample size of key informants were 27. Quantitative data were analyzed using cross-tabulation and summary statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically using content analysis. The findings revealed that containment measures contributed to the increase in GBV, attributed to factors such as loss of employment, income, and difficulty in receiving social support. The study's recommendations emphasize the importance of enhancing resilience among vulnerable groups, allocating additional resources to GBV response teams. The study's conclusions will inform policy evaluation and refocusing efforts to counter gender-based violence in Kenya within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Lockdowns, Curfews, Quarantines, COVID-19, Gender Based Violence

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Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the term used to describe any form of violence or harm directed at individuals based on their gender, with a particular impact on women, men, and girls due to unequal power dynamics and societal norms (Ali & Rogers, 2023). GBV takes different forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence, along with psychological abuse and coercive control. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified GBV due to measures like lockdowns and social distancing. These actions created conditions conducive to GBV, trapping victims at home with their abusers, limiting access to support services and helplines, increasing stress and tensions, causing economic hardships, and disrupting social networks. Kenya, like many other nations, experienced a rise in GBV cases during the pandemic, emphasizing the critical need for comprehensive measures to address the issue and provide effective support to survivors.

Studies have shown that gender-based violence typically increases during pandemics due to the vulnerabilities victims find themselves in due to various risk factors such as loss of income, economic dependence, and breakdown of social structures (John et al., 2021). Therefore, COVID-19 as a pandemic is not an exception and may have played a primary role in the witnessed spike in GBV cases during the pandemic. However, amid all the victimization, stakeholders and scholars preoccupy themselves with matters to deal with the offender and probably intervention measures without considering the victim's voice and what they need. Victims are at the periphery and play a minimal role in justice in most instances.

COVID-19 is a disease that attacks the respiratory system and other vital body organs. COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through human contact (Miller & Blumstein, 2020). Since COVID-19 is highly contagious, limiting human contact is the best way to control the transmission. Some of the most effective containment measures that have been in use over the years include lockdowns, quarantines, curfews, border closures, and social distancing policies. Specifically, quarantines and lockdowns have been proven effective in curtailing the spread of contagious infections like COVID-19 (Mittal & Singh, 2020).

Therefore, to curb the spread of COVID-19, governments worldwide imposed lockdowns, quarantines, and other social distancing policies. Other social distancing policies included limiting public gatherings, closure of public places, and border closures. Specifically, the measures included decongesting the criminal justice system by closing courts from physical access, limiting in-person access to police stations, and limiting access to other services offered by the criminal justice system (Ahmed et al., 2021).

Countries worldwide imposed restrictive measures, most closing their borders and imposing total lockdowns, quarantines, and curfews. As the pandemic gathered momentum, scary trends of GBV emerged. Consequently, countries globally started reporting increased cases of GBV. Gender-based violence inflicts harm and violates an individual's human rights. It is characterized by gender inequality and abuse of power and control (UNHCR, 2020). The prevalence of Gender-based Violence during the COVID-19 pandemic period spiked worldwide. According to a UNDP (2020), there was a 30% increase in GBV cases in France and Cyprus, respectively, and a 33% and 25% increase in Singapore and Argentina. Additionally, in Kenya, there was a 36% increase in the reported cases of GBV in the first three months of lockdown and quarantines (Ministry of Public Service and Gender, 2021).

Problem Statement

Gender-based violence has been a serious problem in society for a long time; however, the drastic rise in reported cases of gender-based violence during COVID-19 pandemic warrants further investigation, especially from a victim's point of view. According to the UN country team (2020), Kenya recorded an increase of 775 % in GBV cases just two months into lockdown and quarantines. In Kakamega County, Lurambi, Shinyalu, Ikolomani, Khwisero, Matunga, and Lugari registered an increase in cases of GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic period (Kakamega County, 2021). The COVID-19 containment measures and other strains related to the pandemic were directly linked to the rising cases of GBV (Mittal & Singh, 2020). Whereas from existing data, there is an apparent correlation between GBV cases and government responses to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for further information from the victim's point of view. Specifically, there is a need to complement this knowledge with the victims' lived experience of GBV to understand the dynamics behind this escalation. There is a clear gap in the literature exploring

the victim's voice on the issue of the pandemic's contribution to the spike in GBV. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap and bring out victims' views on the effects of COVID-19 lockdowns and quarantines on their GBV experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effects of Lockdowns on gender-based violence

By the first quarter of 2020, three-quarters of the world was in lockdown as governments sought to control the transmission of COVID-19. Non-essential services were ordered to close, schools were not spared, social gatherings were banned, and the staff was asked to work from home. As a result, there was an increase in cases of gender-based violence globally attributed to the financial, social, and emotional strain caused by the limitation on mobility during the lockdown.

The lockdown was used for the first time in Europe to control the bubonic plague in the 14th century. The worldwide lockdown had a profound effect on the lives of people throughout the world.

Some of these unintended consequences were the loss of jobs and income, causing a lot of economic strain on families. The final quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2020 (ILO, 2020). This resulted from lockdowns in the economy, which suffered greatly. In Kenya, for example, in just three months of lockdowns, over 1.75 million people lost their jobs (Munda, 2020). Furthermore, according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics survey on the Impact of COVID-19 on the economy, 52.9 % of the respondents reported reduced incomes and earnings due to lockdowns (KNBS, 2020). Furthermore, up to 20% of women lost their incomes compared to 12% of men who lost their incomes due to COVID-19 lockdowns (UN Kenya, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns brought about many unprecedented challenges, including a surge in gender-based violence (GBV) incidents. GBV refers to any violence directed towards an individual based on their gender, including physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. The effects of the pandemic on GBV have been the subject of much research, with many studies highlighting the link between lockdowns and an increase in GBV incidents. One study in the United States found that domestic violence calls increased by 25-30% during the lockdowns (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2020). This finding is supported by European research, which reported a 20-30% increase in GBV cases during the pandemic (Yamin et al., 2020). This suggests that lockdowns created a situation of increased stress and tension within households, leading to a rise in GBV incidents.

The proximity between victims and perpetrators during lockdowns significantly contributes to the rise in GBV incidents (Mittal & Singh, 2020). Lockdowns forced individuals to spend extended periods close to one another, increasing tension and conflict. This is particularly relevant for women and children, who are often the primary victims of GBV. Furthermore, lockdowns reduced the opportunities for victims to seek help, as they could not leave their homes or access support services (WHO, 2020).

The lockdowns also included travel restrictions, closed borders, ordering people to stay at home, and limited human contact. For instance, in Kenya, the government went under the first partial lockdown on April 2020, restricting movements from four main infected areas: Nairobi, Mombasa, Kwale, and Kilifi counties. The main objective of lockdowns was to counter the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, it led to other unintended consequences. This was because lockdowns altered the citizens' socioeconomic lives and other vital aspects.

Another factor that contributed to the rise in GBV incidents was the economic strain caused by the pandemic. The job losses and reduced income associated with the pandemic led to increased stress and financial insecurity, escalating household conflicts. This was particularly relevant for women, who are often more vulnerable to economic hardship and less likely to have access to financial resources (Griffith, 2022). Despite the increase in GBV incidents during the pandemic, it is essential to note that most GBV incidents still went unreported. This was due to various barriers, including fear of retaliation, lack of access to support services, and stigma associated with reporting abuse. The pandemic likely exacerbated these barriers, further limiting victims' ability to seek help.

Therefore, it is clear that lockdowns to curb the transmission of COVID-19 led to socioeconomic breakdowns. Even though GBV cases were there before COVID-19, the lockdown impact seems to have exacerbated the already dire situation of GBV within society. As a result of lockdowns, many lost their livelihoods, leading to family stress and strains. Stress is the leading cause of aggression and frustration; therefore, most GBV cases during this period resulted from frustration caused by economic strain and stress due to the loss of livelihood due to lockdowns (Mahlangu et al., 2022). Victims reported being on the receiving end of their perpetrator's anger and lash. Studies show that GBV cases tend to occur when families or loved ones spend more time together (Mittal & Singh, 2020). In this case, lockdowns forced people to stay at home, thus creating unnecessary friction and tension within relationships. Also, lockdowns meant that victims of GBV had to persevere the abuses since there was nowhere to run since lockdown affected gender-based services such as shelters and support groups, which generally come in handy for GBV victims.

Effects of Quarantines on Gender-Based Violence

The effectiveness of quarantine in controlling the spread of contagious diseases such as COVID-19 is unquestionable. According to United States Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC), quarantine is the separation and restricting movements of people who have been exposed to contagious diseases to establish if they are sick (CDC, 2019). However, quarantine is known to cause unintended adverse psychological effects due to loneliness, isolation, and uncertainty (Singh, 2020). Also, studies showed that quarantine caused post-traumatic stress, anger, boredom, frustration, stigma, and confusion, affecting the victims' mental stability (Brooks et al., 2020). These psychological effects and stressors are attributed to the spike in GBV cases resulting from quarantine during COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, according to a KFF Health Tracking Poll survey of US adults, 53% reported undergoing stress; as a result, COVID-19 restrictive measures. Consequently, 12% reported increased abuse of substances and alcohol consumption (Hamel et al., 2020). Therefore, quarantine has a negative impact on a person's psychological status, thus making one vulnerable to GBV as a victim or perpetrator.

Markedly, quarantine is responsible for disruptive social effects, which largely contributes to the increase in GBV cases. When social structures are disrupted, it affects the relationships and well-being of individuals. This increases anxiety and fear; thus, most frustrated people tend to vent their stress on others, especially those close to them and the vulnerable group such as women, disabled men and children. It is important to note that most women, especially in the informal settlements or those working in the informal sector, lost their income during quarantine. This meant that they had to depend on their male counterparts for support, making them susceptible to GBV and even harder to leave their tormentors. Studies have singled out economic dependence as a factor that makes one vulnerable to GBV (Solorzano et al., 2020). One study conducted in the United States found that the number of domestic violence calls increased by 25-30% during the quarantine measures (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2020). This finding is supported by research in Europe, which reported a 20-30% increase in GBV cases during the pandemic (Yamin et al., 2020). This suggests that quarantines created a situation of increased stress and tension within households, leading to a rise in GBV incidents.

The close proximity between victims and perpetrators during quarantines is a significant factor contributing to the rise in GBV incidents. Quarantines force individuals to spend extended periods of time in close proximity to one another, which can lead to increased tension and conflict. This is particularly relevant for women and children, who are often the primary victims of GBV. Furthermore, quarantines reduced the opportunities for victims to seek help, as they are unable to leave their homes or access support services.

During the quarantines coupled with self-isolation and other restrictive measures in Kenya, gender based violence spiked in one and half months. Conspicuously, 52% of women girls reported being subjected to emotional violence, including verbal abuses and discrimination, and shockingly 57% were perpetrated by family members (Ngunjiri et al. 2020). These statistics indicate a gloomy picture of the impact of quarantines on gender-based violence. Also, the stigma associated with quarantine caused more stress since when a person was quarantined at the beginning of the pandemic, people concluded that that individual was sick (Lohiniva et al., 2021). Stigma pushed some to self-defense and on a mission to redeem themselves, which included

using violent means to reassert their power, thus contributing to the increase in cases of GBV (Mittal & Singh, 2020).

Although Mbunge (2020) says that much as a coin has two faces, beneficial initiatives to combat COVID-19 have bad effects. The danger of losing one's work, economic vulnerability, and psychological health problems due to loneliness and uncertainty are only a few negative repercussions. The quarantine paradox refers to this situation. Pandemics and epidemics have historically weakened governments' ability to defend themselves.

The effects of quarantines created a paradoxical social separation that encompasses difficulties like economic instability, mental health challenges, and social isolation. The influence of COVID-19 has been studied; however, no studies looked at these difficulties from the standpoint of gender, despite this dearth of study (Mittal & Singh, 2020). The quarantine enforced to cope with COVID-19 gave abusers more latitude, according to Capaso et al. (2021). According to many media outlets, domestic violence seems to be on the rise worldwide. Even while the general crime rate in Australia decreased by 5 percent, the incidence of domestic abuse climbed. Some domestic violence organizations in Australia expressed concern about using COVID-19 disinformation by offenders to control further and abuse domestic violence victims (Pfitzner et al., 2020). In addition, Usher et al. (2021) pointed out that quarantines restrict access to know sources of assistance. Abuse victims may be afraid to seek treatment for their injuries at a hospital for fear of contacting COVID-19 (Pfitzner et al., 2020).

Highlighting the dilemma of closure of institutions that handle cases of GBV, Pfitzner et al. (2020) argued that "with quarantine measures imposed and stress heightened, women and unemployed men were at increased risk of violence committed by their partners and family members, as essential support services were absent .

Theoretical Framework

Routine Activity Theory

Routine Activity Theory, advocated by Marcus Felson and Lawrence E. Cohen, derived their explanations of criminality from people's daily lifestyles and behaviors. The routine activity theory is a criminological theory that explains crime and deviance due to the convergence of three elements: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. In the case of gender-based violence (GBV), this theory explains the conditions that make it more likely for GBV to occur.

According to the routine activity theory, a motivated offender has the intention and desire to commit a crime. In the case of GBV, the motivated offender is typically a person who holds views and beliefs supporting violence against vulnerable victims such as women, children, vulnerable men and the elderly. These views and beliefs may result from socialization, cultural norms, or individual experiences.

According to the routine activity theory, a suitable target is a person or object that is vulnerable to the crime being committed. In the case of GBV, a suitable target is typically a woman, man or child perceived as weak, vulnerable, or submissive and who is exposed to GBV. This can include women, men or a child who is isolated, dependent on their abusers, or have limited access to support or resources. According to the routine activity theory, the absence of a capable guardian is the third element necessary for a crime to occur. In the case of GBV, a capable guardian can be thought of as someone who is able to prevent the crime from happening. This can include family members, friends, or members of the community who are aware of the situation and are able to intervene to protect the victim. Furthermore, the theory blames the routines and lifestyles of some people for making them susceptible to victimization (Sween & Reynolds, 2017). Therefore, any change in routine may expose some people to being victimized or experiencing GBV.

It is worth noting that COVID's 19 containment measures disrupted people's daily routine, thus creating opportunities for victimization and engaging in criminal activities. On suitable targets, they postulate that the vulnerability and accessibility of the marks to the perpetrators increase the chances of crime occurring. This explains why GBV cases involving women and children spiked during the COVID-19 period since women and children were at home close to the offenders. During the pandemic, most parents were reported to go out to look for an income to support their families, leaving their children on their own.

This meant that school-going children at home, due to school closures, we're susceptible to sexual abuse by their neighbors or even relatives.

Also, the limited presence of police in the community, limited accessibility to police stations, and closing courts to curtail the spread of the diseases are equivalent to the absence of a capable guardian in the community, thus exacerbating the plight of GBV victims. Therefore, according to routine activity theory, the spike in GBV cases during the pandemic was due to social and economic disruption caused by the containment measures and the absence of capable guardians in the communities due to the restrictive nature of the containment measures.

This theory explains how various COVID-19 containment measures, generated risk factors, which made victims vulnerable. Additionally, the interruptions COVID-19 containment measures had on the society, interfered with abilities of capable guardians and socioeconomic well beings of victims which led to the spike in GBV.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a mixed method research design since it was the most appropriate for this study. The study site for this study was Kakamega Central, a Sub County within Kakamega County, Kenya. Kakamega Central Sub-County is the second most populous Sub County in Kakamega, 188,212 (KNBS, 2019). The study's target population was 835 who were victims of GBV in Kakamega Central Sub-county, and were sourced from Kakamega County General Hospital rescue center. Also the rescue center staff working with GBV victims, police officers and chiefs were targeted in the study.

The study utilized purposive sampling technique to determine the participants who were accessed through Kakamega County General Hospital gender based violence rescue centre records. The researcher purposively selected only victims of gender-based violence and those directly involved in attending to the GBV victims' participated, and purposive sampling helped confirm that the participants meet the criteria. Additionally simple random sampling technique was used to determine the participants from the sample size.

The sample of 270 cases was extracted from a population of 835 cases reported at Kakamega County General Hospital gender based violence rescue center between January and September 2020 using Taro Yamane's sample determination formula. To ensure generalizability and unbiased selection, a random number generator was employed, and the Excel RAND function (=RAND()) was used to generate 270 unique random numbers, each corresponding to an individual in the sample. Starting from the smallest generated number to largest generated number, participants were sequentially selected to participate in the study. Ultimately, 255 participated in the study, with the final count reflecting those who actively participated due to factors such as non-responses. This systematic approach guaranteed that each individual in the population had an equal chance of being included in the study, contributing to the study's reliability and inclusivity.

The key informants were selected through purposive sampling. The study targeted 27 key informants, where 10 were from the rescue centers staff who comprised of; the Centre manager, Centre Counselor, Clinical officer and seven nurses who are stationed at the center. The study also targeted 12 police officers at the GBV desk at Kakamega Central Police Station, and 5 chiefs from the five locations in Kakamega Central.

The data collection procedure relied on a large extent on questionnaires and key informants interview schedules to collect primary data. On the other hand secondary data included, crime reports, victim surveys, GBV surveys and statistics obtained from police stations and other government agencies, peer-reviewed journals, victim surveys, and open media platforms such as the internet and print media using content analysis. Quantitative data, was analysed using cross-tabulation and summary statistics to draw inferences between different sets of data. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis, where large amounts of unstructured textual content collected were compressed to manageable data related to the research questions.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The section contains findings, their interpretation and discussions of findings in relation to the objectives of the study. The purpose of the study was to assess the effects of the COVID-19 lockdowns and quarantines on gender-based Violence in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kakamega County, Kenya. The study targeted 270 primary respondents being GBV victims at Kakamega County Referral Hospital rescue centre, 10 staff members working at the said rescue center, 12 Police officers at Kakamega Central Police Station GBV desk, and 5 Chiefs from Kakamega Central. Out of the targeted sample of 270 GBV victims 255 participated. On the Key informants, out of the targeted 10 staff members from the Rescue center, six responded once the saturation point had been reached. Similarly, out of the 12 police officer who were targeted, six of them provided their responses after reaching the saturation point. It is also worth noting that out of the five chiefs who were targeted, three of them responded once the saturation point had been reached. This gave the study a response rate of 91%.

1.1 Employment Status

Respondents were asked to state their employment status and findings presented in figure 1.0



Figure 1.0: Respondents' Employment Status

Source: Research data, 2023.

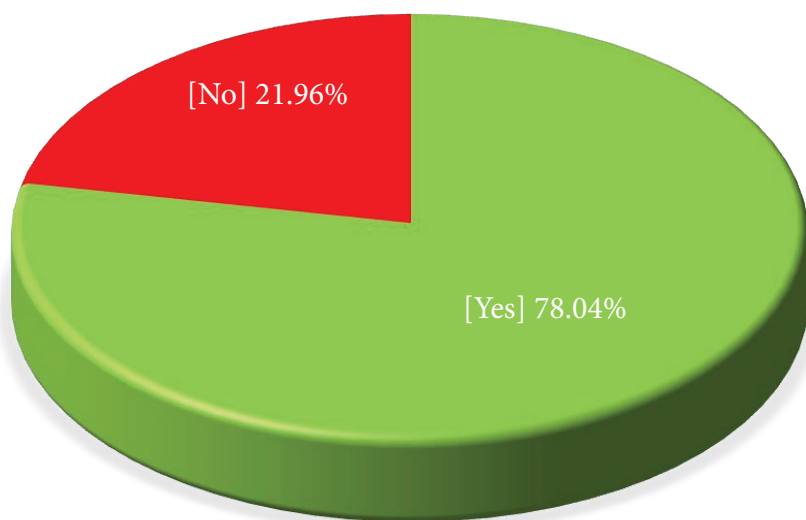
From the results in figure 1.0, it is evident that 89.02% (227) of the victims of GBV were unemployed, 9.02% (23) were in self-employment and 1.96% (5) were formally employed. This shows that majority of the victims of GBV were not in employment and depended on other people for sustenance. Such dependence on other people to meet basic needs placed individuals in a position of disadvantage and one may get abused and taken advantage of as found in the study by Bingöl and Yenilmez (2020). This is perhaps why many of the victims GBV are unemployed people. For example financial dependence is considered a significant risk factor for GBV, as it can lead to power imbalances and financial dependence within relationships (World Health Organization, 2018). A study by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2018) found that women who experience GBV are more likely to experience poverty and financial dependence, which can make it harder for them to escape abusive relationships (UNFPA, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic made this issue even more pronounced, with job losses and financial insecurity resulting in increased levels of dependence for many women. A study by Gesund (2021) found that women are 1.5 times more likely to lose

their jobs during economic downturns compared to men. In addition, many women who lost their jobs were unable to find new employment, leading to long-term financial insecurity. This financial stress can increase the risk of GBV, as it can lead to power imbalances and financial dependence within relationships.

In addition to job loss, self-employment has also been linked to increase in GBV during the pandemic. Small business owners, particularly women, were hard hit by the pandemic, with many losing their livelihoods. This financial stress can increase the risk of GBV, as it can lead to power imbalances and financial dependence within relationships (International Labour Organization, 2021). Working from home was linked to an increase in GBV during the pandemic. With many people now working from home due to the pandemic, some have found themselves in closer proximity to their abusive partners. This has made it harder for them to escape violent situations, leading to increased levels of GB (World Health Organization, 2020). In addition, the lack of social support networks and access to services, as well as increased stress and financial insecurity, can also contribute to GBV (World Health Organization, 2020). Studies have found that job loss and economic insecurity are significant risk factors for GBV. A study by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2021) found that women are 1.5 times more likely to lose their jobs during economic downturns compared to men. In addition, women are more likely to be employed in industries that have been heavily affected by the pandemic, such as retail and hospitality. This has resulted in significant job losses for women, leading to increased financial stress and a higher risk of GBV.

In addition to job loss, self-employment has also been linked to increase in GBV. Small business owners, particularly women, were hard hit by the pandemic, with many losing their livelihoods (Mashapure et al, 2021). This financial stress during the pandemic increased the risk of GBV, as it led to power imbalances and financial dependence within relationships.

Working from home was also linked to an increase in GBV. With many people working from home due to the pandemic, some found themselves in closer proximity to their abusive partners (Speed et al, 2020). This made it harder for them to escape violent situations, leading to increased levels of GBV. In addition, the lack of social support networks and access to services, as well as increased stress and financial insecurity, also contributed to GBV. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2021) estimated that the pandemic led to a global increase in GBV of between 15% and 25%. However, it is important to note that the true extent of the problem is likely to be much higher, as many cases of GBV went unreported.



1.2 Job Loss due to Lockdowns

Respondents were asked to state whether they lost their jobs due to lockdowns and findings presented in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Job Loss due to LockdownsSource: Research data, 2023.

From the results in figure 1.1, it is evident that 78.04% (199) of the respondents had lost their jobs due to lockdowns while 21.96% (56) of the respondents indicated that they did not lose their jobs due to

lockdowns. From the results, lockdowns resulted in job losses for majority of the victims of GBV. Job losses make people highly dependent on others for survival and sustenance. The most abused and violated people are those that are heavily dependent on others due to lack of employment (Usher et al, 2021). A study by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics found that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on employment in Kenya, with many people losing their jobs or experiencing reduced income (KNBS, 2020).

Globally, study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic could result in the loss of up to 47 million jobs globally (ILO, 2020). These studies highlight the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on employment and the economy. The increased financial stress and dependence resulting from job loss has been linked to an increase in GBV, making it crucial that governments and organizations take steps to address these issues and provide support to those at risk. The studies corroborates the findings of this research on increased job loss due to lockdowns.

One of the GBV victims who lost her job as a waitress in one of the hotels had this to say, *The pandemic turned my life upside down, and I never imagined I would end up in such a terrifying situation. You see, I used to work as a waitress in a bustling restaurant, serving people with a smile on my face. But when the COVID-19 containment measures hit, my job vanished overnight. The restaurant closed, and I was left without an income or any means to support myself (27/12/2022)*

One of the Key informants working in the rescue centre also had this to say on job losses due to lockdowns;

A large number of GBV victims who presented themselves at the rescue centre reported having lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic and having been forced by circumstances to fully depend on perpetrators of violence. Self-employment ventures were significantly affected by lockdowns as the government tried to contain the spread of COVID-

19. Most customers to small businesses owned by victims of GBV lost their purchasing power since they also lost employment (06/01/2023)

The above citations shows the devastating effects of COVID-19 containment measures and how it made people lose their jobs thus subjecting them to financial constraints and stress, which can make one like the victim above susceptible to GBV.

1.3 Income Reduction due to Lockdowns

To the question whether respondents experienced income reduction due to lockdowns, findings are presented in figure 1.2.

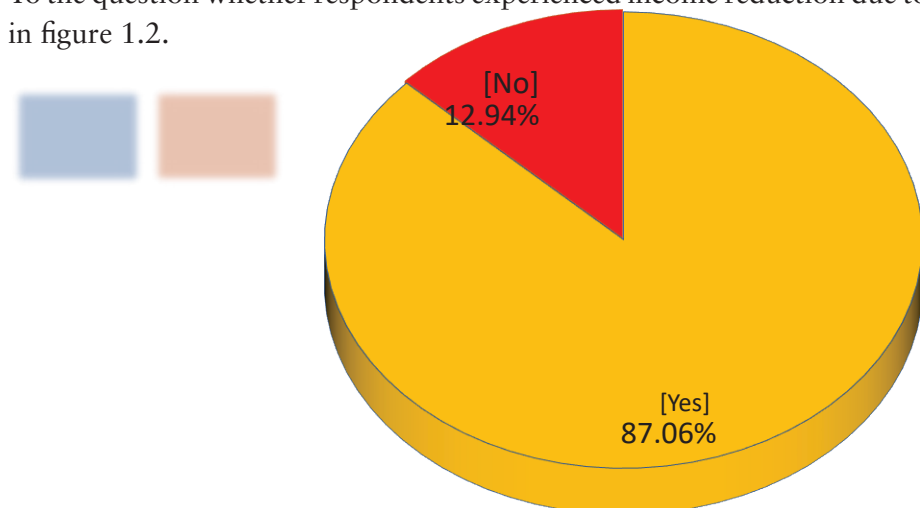


Figure 1.2: Reduced income due to Lockdowns

Source: Research data, 2023

Results in figure 1.2 show that 87.06% (222) of the respondents experienced reduced income due to lockdowns. The study also found that 12.95% (33) of the respondents did not experience income reduction due to lockdowns. With so many victims of GBV experiencing reduced earnings due to lockdowns can only imply that their dependency on other people (mostly spouses for the married) went up. From previous

studies such as the study by Solórzano, Gamez, and Corcho (2020), increased dependency on other people for support, upkeep and survival increases the likelihood of occurrence of GBV. Additionally, Murhula, Singh and Myende, (2021) found that people without a regular income are viewed as a burden by the perpetrators of GBV and subject them to violence as a way to get rid of them.

Similarly A survey conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2020) found that women who experienced job loss or reduced income due to the pandemic were more likely to experience GBV, particularly domestic violence. Another, study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020) found that the pandemic resulted in a significant increase in GBV globally, with women and children being the most vulnerable. The study highlighted the link between economic stress and GBV, with financialinsecurity and reduced incomes being key drivers of increased violence.

When asked how COVID-19 containment measures reduced her income, a second hand cloth hawker also aGBV victim said,

So, when the pandemic hit, my business took a nosedive. With all the restrictions and people staying home, hardly anyone came to the markets. It was tough to make any sales,and I was barely scraping by. I had to rely on my husband for financial support, and that'swhen things took a turn for the worse. He started throwing jibes at me, disrespecting me, and making me feel worthless because I was dependent on him. It was like he used my reduced income as an excuse to unleash his anger. The pandemic didn't just hit my wallet;it trapped me in an abusive relationship, where I felt powerless and trapped (04/01/2023).

The above revelations, explains the various effects COVID-19 containment measures had on businesses andincome of people. It led to financial dependence for some people just like the victim above, thus exposingthem to GBV. The financial dependence, had GBV victims trapped in abusive relationships, since after losing their income they had nowhere to depend financially.

1.4 Victimization caused by Quarantine

The study sought to establish from respondents whether victimization was caused by the quarantine and findings from this question are presented in figure 1.3.

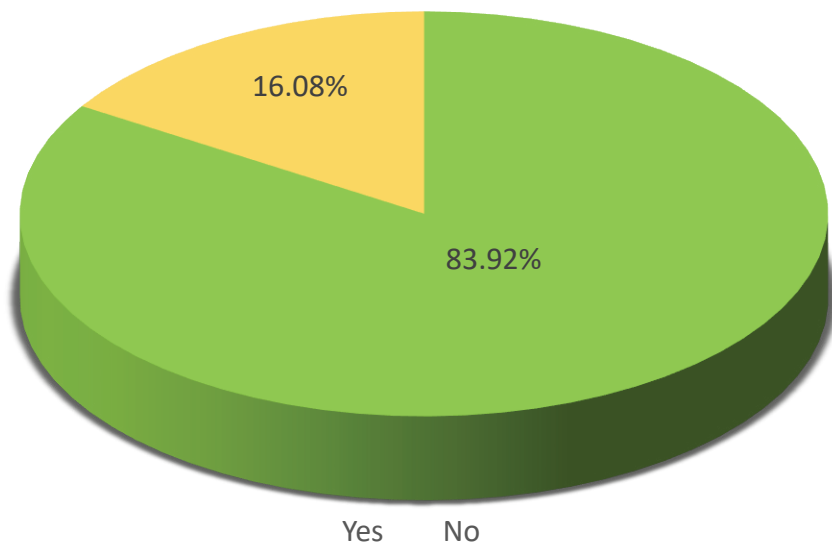


Figure 1.3: Quarantine Occasioned Victimization

Source: Research data, 2023.

Findings of the study reveal that 83.92% (214) of the respondents were of the view that quarantine contributed to their victimization. To this question, the study found that 16.08% (41) of the respondents indicated that their victimization was not tied to quarantine. The 214 respondents who indicated that their victimization was due to quarantine were asked to explain why they felt as such and findings revealed that

64.02% (137) connected their loss of jobs to increased dependency on spouses for a livelihood and that the increased dependency was the reason why they were subjected to GBV.

It was also revealed 22.9% (49) of the respondents that quarantine kept them close to their abusers and forced them to spend unusually longer spells of time together while 13.08% (28) opined that quarantine led to reduced income for the heads of their families and that the resultant financial pressure caused tension in their families that resulted in their victimization. When people are quarantined, they tend to have reduced earnings, particularly those who engage in manual jobs to earn a living. The resultant inability to effectively provide for their families, coupled with the need to assert their position as the heads of the families may push them into becoming violent as a defense mechanism (Donato, 2020). Another study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in gender-based violence (GBV) globally, with women and children being the most vulnerable. The study highlighted the link between economic stress and GBV, with financial insecurity and reduced incomes being key drivers of increased violence.

The study also noted that the pandemic has disrupted access to essential services, such as health and support services, for survivors of GBV, making it more difficult for them to escape abusive situations. Similarly a study by World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) found that stay-at-home measures during the pandemic led to increased isolation and heightened tensions within households, making women and children more vulnerable to abuse. The study also found that the disruption of support services and increased stigma associated with GBV made it more difficult for survivors to escape abusive situations and access support. In addition to the economic stressors associated with reduced incomes and job loss, quarantines and lockdowns also created new stressors and risks for individuals, particularly for those who are already experiencing abuse (Lausi et al, 2021). The confinement and isolation associated with quarantines can make it more difficult for survivors of GBV to escape abusive situations and access support services. Moreover, the disruption of social networks and support systems can exacerbate the challenges faced by survivors, making it more difficult for them to access help and support (Lausi et al, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted on the premise that COVID-19 Lockdowns and Quarantines had an effect on gender-based Violence in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kakamega County. The study reviewed both theoretical and empirical literature on COVID-19 containment measures and gender-based Violence. From the review of related literature, a conceptual framework was constructed to conceptualize the relationship between COVID-19 lockdowns and gender-based Violence in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kakamega County. Guided by the conceptual framework together with objectives of the study, the research used a questionnaire for primary respondents that were the victims of gender-based violence and an interview schedule for key informants (rescue centre staff, nurses, clinical officers, police officers, chiefs and counselling psychologist) to collect data. Research findings revealed that lockdowns and quarantines disrupted people's lives in terms of loss of employment, loss of income, difficulty in reporting gender-based violence cases and increase in gender-based violence cases. Based on the findings a conclusion is made that COVID-19 lockdowns and quarantines contributed to the spike in gender-based violence in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

Recommendations

Building upon the study's findings, it is recommended that policymakers prioritize strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacities of vulnerable groups to mitigate the impact of gender-based violence during pandemics. This involves allocating increased resources to agencies and GBV response teams, as well as formulating comprehensive policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by different victim groups. By integrating these policy measures, governments can better support victims and enhance their ability to cope with the adverse effects of GBV during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

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