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The Paradox of Love and Violence against Women in Families: A Loophole in the Agents of Socialization?

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The co-existence of love and violence against women in families has remained a predicament over a long time. Sometimes the situation is attributed to cultural beliefs and psycho-social traits of the perpetrators. Grounded in the anthropological discipline, the paper will endeavour to define the key concepts of love and violence, its manifestations, perpetrators, and mediating agencies. It will also suggest ways of eradicating violence. The paper is based on field data collected in Wakiso and Kampala districts of Uganda, literature, personal experiences and contemporary debates as presented in the media.

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INTRODUCTION

The co-existence of love and violence against women in families has remained a predicament over a long time. Sometimes the situation is attributed to cultural beliefs and psycho-social traits of the perpetrators. The common reactions to this occurrence include rationalizing, ignoring, counselling, and praying about it. It is common to hear people say that love is painful; violence among lovers is a sign of love, if one does not beat up his wife, he does not love her, between lovers you do not say a word, relatives are like gourds, they have to knock each other.... A violent action indicates that one is being human. The phenomenon thus increases albeit with disastrous results including secondary disability, frustrations, pathological behaviours and death. Evidence of violence against women dominates print, electronic and social media. In the process, these postings do not only manifest visual violence but also seem to teach new inspirations and tactics, thus handing over the vice to children. This paper will endeavour to define the key concepts of love and violence, its manifestations, perpetrators, and mediating agencies. It will also suggest ways of eradicating violence. The paper is based on field data collected in Wakiso and Kampala districts of Uganda, literature, personal experiences and contemporary debates as presented in the media.

CONCEPTUALIZING LOVE AND VIOLENCE IN RELATION TO WOMEN

In the contemporary world, love is an elusive concept to define. This is because the concept seems to have many usages, and one can say it is subjective. Love is often defined according to the interests of the one defining. Sometimes it connotes emotive feelings, at times it connotes altruistic gestures, and it also connotes strategic moves. The concept also becomes complicated because it is multi-disciplinary, different disciplines define it differently based on their objective of the analysis and how they want to use the knowledge derived from it. Putting all these endeavours to understand the concept of love into consideration, as a working definition, the paper will focus on the psychosocial

understanding based on anthropology as lived in African reality. This is because love as a means or an end is anthropocentric in character.

Quoting a theory of love by Hendrick and Hendrick, Michelele Paludi enumerates categories of love that individuals use in their interpersonal relationships. These include: 1. agape (spiritual, altruistic love), 2. Eros (passionate physical love based on physical appearances) 3. Ludus (playful love), 4. Pragma (pragmatic love), 5. Mania (unstable, highly emotional love) and 5. Storge (affectionate love that is based on similarity). Michele Paludi deduces all the above categorizations and remarks that love is the word used to label the sexual excitement of the young, the habituation of the middle-aged, and the mutual dependence of the old¹. In this, she seems to limit the concept to emotive reality. However, although these types of love are categorized, the lived reality is that love has no boundaries. The different categories often intersect in one way or the other. There is a strong connection such that one type may be the beginning, means, or the end of the other. Eros seems to be the driving power of other forms of love. Thus, at the same time, it is regulated by the other forms of love depending on religious and ethical-cultural norms. Thus, there is no need to underplay the power of Eros type of love in assessing the day-to-day living of human beings and how they relate with one another.

The interconnectivity of the forms of love gives us a critical reflection on how to define and understand love. In this regard, I can affirm that love is anthropologically grounded and regulated in a way that is for the good of society. The rightful type will always emerge where necessary. Taking African societies as the basis for analysis, knowing the power and significance of eros in promoting vibrant social structures, all the other forms of love are put to task. Thus, there will always be other stakeholders even in an intimate love relationship. These will include religious leaders, clan members, friends, age sets and parents, hence bringing all

¹Michele E. Paludi, *The Psychology of Love* (California: Preager, 2012), xix.

forms of love at play in an African reality.² While men and women are watched closely in this process, much emphasis is put on women. This is based on the significant reproductive roles women play in society. In such a way, women are more tasked with proving higher standards of competencies as prescribed by a given society, otherwise, society might be doomed. This is the essence of love towards women. They are life-giving and nurturing thus attracting all the forms of love on the first interaction.

Considering the above, as regards love towards women, society tends to be very critical in a way that it goes beyond sexual attraction and appearances to a very reflective issue. Love thus goes beyond emotional to a rational issue. It becomes a pre-occupation to scrutinize what would suit the community interest and thus becomes a commitment. Love then is a deliberate engagement with other people in a respectful and committed manner. It is on this note that according to community norms and regulations, eros love is evaluated in formal marriage which is authenticated by the payment of bride price. If decisions concerning love are taken impulsively, society will criticize them. In this way, women who find love are considered privileged because they have passed the test. This could be the basis on which women in love claim privileges and favours. Society prescribes expressions of love towards women. In an interview with some women in Wakiso and Kampala on what it feels or what they describe as love, they gave the responses in *Text Table 1* below.

Text Box

Being faithful to her and promoting true love, paying bride price, allowing her to inherit her husband's wealth, allowing them to access equal gender opportunities in education and job market, giving regular surprises e.g. on valentine's day you can buy a dress, flower, gifts, being available to them at all times i.e. time of success and times of failure, taking risks for her, involving her in decision making of family issues, working together, being romantic

and giving sexual satisfaction, loving her family members, protecting her against intrusion from her in-laws, ensuring that her in-laws love her, giving her presentable dresses, this should be accompanied by other things that make a woman beautiful, making hair, giving food, etc, staying with her especially if the man works in town, going to shopping, to church and other community gatherings together. When they keep doing everything together; because of love, there is a tendency of resembling each other. Listen to her (good communication), participate fully in the care of children, give her liberty to have a number of children she wants, be considerate to them, appreciate their efforts in the family. Providing education as well as basic necessities to children. No extramarital affairs, Love her children especially if she has had other children with other men, greeting, thanking, when women are not taken as machines, Offering psychological and material needs where possible

From the data above, we can sum up and get a definition that love goes beyond emotional attraction and goes beyond two individuals, but it integrates other aspects of the community; these include social, cultural, religious, and economic affairs. Love is a mediating factor that any community in need of sustainability should handle with care. From the responses in *textbox 1* above, we learn that love is not subjective. It is objective; this thus nullifies the popular exclusive limitation of the concept to sexual attraction especially out of marital commitment. It also nullifies love as a patronizing relationship or source of livelihood. This then would be self-gratification of one's pleasures and is neither divine nor community compliant as heard from the voices of the women in *text Box 1*. This agrees with how Nieli Langer describes love as a universal human emotion that may be expressed throughout the life cycle. Love is a word that requires commitment, care, responsibility, and respect. It involves enjoyment, trust, we-ness, which is a shared relationship and

² Tabitha Naisiko, *Ritual and Human Development: An Exploration of Experiences of the Sabiny of Eastern Uganda on Rites of Initiation to Adulthood*. (Saarbrücken, Lambert Academic Publishing 2016).

often a shared history.³ Fulfilment of these requirements goes beyond emotion and calls for rational decisions and procedures to enable proper accountability of the people involved.

The Reality of Violence against Women and its Perpetrators

While the above, is the ideal description of love, as society changes, the reality about love for women becomes different. Women tend to suffer different forms of violence at the hands of their loved ones. This then brings us to define the concept of violence. According to the Encarta dictionary, violence means; the use of physical force to injure somebody or damage something. It is a destructive force as revealed in its synonyms such as physical force, aggression, fighting, brutality, and cruelty⁴. In a group of sixty women that participated in the research, 92% confessed that they had suffered violence in their families. These were in the forms of physical violence (32%), followed by emotional violence (28%), sexual violence (25%), and the lowest being economic violence. Violence against women in families is performed by different people. The following responses were given by the women when asked the people who subjected them to violence with the highest being Husband(s) (25=42%), followed by Co-wife (18=30%), In-laws (12=20%), and the lowest being children (5=5%). The other responses given in line with the following categories were.

- Husbands; leave home claiming there is no money, yet come back drunk and when women ask, they end up getting beaten
- Children (and stepchildren) fight with the stepmother
- Co-wives fighting each other,
- Step mothers mistreat the children left home, especially the girls

- Family members especially after the death of the husband (there are problems of wife inheritance and grabbing of property)
- In-laws (fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters' in-law); in case of misunderstanding these people are more judgmental than the person who brought you to the home.

Among the above responses, emphasis and responsibility was put on the men as the major perpetrators of violence against women. Patrizia Romito reveals that the tactics for applying male violence are; politics of language, dehumanizing, blaming the victims, punishing the victims of rape/blaming battered wives/victims blaming themselves /blaming mothers/incestuous mothers.⁵ These suppress the women's confidence and ability to defend themselves and to devise strategies for self-development and sustenance. To affirm this, in a free listing tool, many signs and gestures of violence were enumerated in *Text Box 2* below.

Text Box 1

Arrogance, greed, absence from home, quietness/silence, in time of poverty, in time of giving birth because the love shifts from mother to child, beating, verbal abuse, denial of basic needs, over protection and control, denial of freedom of worship, denial of human rights, used as tools, abused, not given chance to power, insulted and mocked, dictated over, used as domestic workers, fighting, use of abusive words, use of force, subjecting one to psychological torture, use of toxic substance (drugs), discriminating her from other wives. a woman will feel bad when she is undermined in terms of a man avoiding her house and failing to give her a share of wealth, beating her always, when her sons are taken as inferior compared to those of her co-wives, when her husband beats her children without proper reason, over working them, physical assaults, verbal abuse, forcing them into sex, lack of/not educating them and instead of giving them

³Langer Nileli, "Yes, We do. Even at our Age". In: Michele E. Paludi, ed., *The Psychology of Love* (California, Preager, 2012) 3-14, p. 4.

⁴ Redmond, *Microsoft Encarta Dictionary*. (Microsoft Corporation, 2009).

⁵ Patrizia Romito A deafening silence Hidden violence against women and children (Bristol: The Policy Press., 2008) 165.

home chores, physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse is a sign of disrespect towards women, alcoholism, divorce, battering, widow inheritance, rape, shouting at her even at small issues that can be solved at the table, embarrassing her in front of the children, having sexual relations outside the marriage hence which will lead to polygamy, not being clear about family incomes. normally men hide their bank accounts, having family discussions outside the family without informing her, drunkenness, denying women chance to work and own property, being harsh to them, limiting their freedom of movement, giving them excessive work, disrespecting their ideas.

The above voices of women confirm what Patrizia Romito asserts because although 92% of women confessed that they were subjected to violence, the majority were still living with the same perpetrators of violence. At the same time, the responses in textbox 2, also indicate that violence hurts women's emotions, security, potentials, and reproductive roles. At the same time, as women describe the attributes of violence, they do not imply that violence necessarily means hate to them. Perhaps this could be the reason why women bear violent actions against them with the hope that behaviours will change and they enjoy their love. This can also be attributed to society and its agents of socialization which emphasize patience as a good response to violent actions.

It becomes complex to understand a situation where and how violence is connected to love. This is because, under normal circumstances, a lover should ensure peace and protect the loved one from pain related to violence. I may want to imagine that probably as a force; violent people may not mean evil but probably misdirect their force in dealing with issues. Beneath violence, there could be love, probably excessive to the extent that one may not know how to handle it so ends it in anger and over reaction. This may connect to the regular belief in local society that if a man does not beat up his wife, then he does not love her. The same feeling is among women to accept abuse with the false perception that they are being loved. Such people need mentoring on how to handle feelings/temperaments and commitments connected to love in a give and take form. These qualities are

a result of the process of socialization. The agents of socialization including family, school, church, media, and peers have a role to play in character formation.

Why and How Love turns Violent

Sharing this puzzle with friends on Facebook, thanks to the provision of the “what is on your mind”, in several responses, the comments were that many people take on love for egoistic reasons. Thus, in failure to get what they expected or after getting their goals they become violent. This applied to both men and women. In his reflection, Joseph Tsquaye argued that:

It would seem that this is the basic understanding of love to which all of us should aspire. What comes first is the interest of the beloved, not what we can get out of, or how we can use the beloved. There is some amount of violence and risk involved in this demonstration of love. If we are with the beloved in the deep waters, there is the possibility of being carried away by the river current or the undertow; even in the case of good swimmers. There is the possibility of getting burned up with the beloved in the blazing fire! Are we ready for the risk involved? Do you ever ask yourself: “Is the person, promising me love, ready to risk his or her life for me as God declares?” One might be interested in reading and practicing the hymn to love which St. Paul left us in 1 Corinthians 13: 1 – 13. “Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail”. (Vs. 4 – 6)

Joseph Tsquaye's reflection indicates that the problem of understanding love and violence is as ambiguous as the concept of love itself. It is not far from the prior understanding that love is not an emotive concept but a rational decision that ends up with commitments. He traces true love from the divine and essence of humanity being God himself. However, in an endeavour to perceive love as a commitment as I emphasize, there is a risk of failing to realize true love in a society where people fear commitment. Listening to men, it is common

nowadays to hear many of them claim that they cannot marry a woman with whom they have not stayed together and have at least two children. They use children as security whereby they will not lose all, in case the women were only interested in their property and can steal them. On the other hand in such situations, women are compelled to work hard to prove to be worthy legitimate wives. While there is insecurity to both men and women, and some have lost property and gotten heartbroken, many women have ended up in many forms of violence including sexual, economic, and physical violence. After hard work, some have lost the long-expected legitimate marriages to younger girls and thus, fear commitment in marriage, especially to young men who have not accumulated property.

This has made love elusive to understand and live. Moreover, love is a basic need in society today than ever before because it is the gist of relationships and community formation. Unfortunately, love has turned into an emotive and lucrative commodity and has ceased to play its roles and commitments. On a television show in Uganda called Bukedde TV, every Saturday at 9.30 pm there is a dating program where people present their intention of getting suitors. Here, nearly all men and women want a suitor who is financially stable, has property, and will take care of him/her in the financial struggles.⁶ Consequently, we encounter many forms and cases of violence with lasting negative consequences. Among them are; fear to commit oneself to marriage, fear to expose one's resources, and an increasing number of single parents.

The paradox of love and violence seems to be probably the unintentional result of the process of socialization as based on the patriarchal system of family leadership. Patriarchy itself has no problem, and could actually be a resource, especially to African women. However, the misinterpretations of this system combined with new developments in family systems have resulted in the abuse of women. With the influence of socio-economic changes and Western cultures, the agents of socialization seem to have deviated from the essence of love in their teaching and have ended up

sowing seeds of violence. This is manifested when the emphasis is on women's subordination as recipients and male dominance as providers without highlighting gender roles and responsibilities that promote harmonious living. Consequently, love in practice has become a deception and transactional where it is acted for the sake of survival and not lived as a commitment. Rectifying this situation calls for an examination of how the agents of socialization are mainstreaming gender relations to promote harmonious living in society. This is because these agents of socialization are responsible for character building and these include; the family, the school, the church, the media, and the peers.

Examining Agents of Socialization in Promoting the Paradox of Love and Violence

David Brinkerhoff and Lynn White define socialization as a continual process of learning. They argue that each time we encounter new experiences; we are challenged to make new interpretations of who we are and where we fit in society. They further point out that challenges are more evident when we make major role transitions⁷. Based on this, Cara Flanagan notes that these periods of transition tend to herald both intellectual and moral growth. Socialization deals with how individuals come to be who they are. This involves issues such as bonding, attachment, deprivation, separation, and privation, as well as enrichment in esteem, confidence, and negotiations against violence⁸. Agents of socialization streamline the process of formation of human character by prescribing roles, privileges, expectations, survival strategies, and manipulation dynamics to achieve one's interests. As described in text boxes 1 and 2, we learn that the attributes of love and manifests of violence are all anchored in acquiring or failure to acquire appropriate human character as streamlined by the agents of socialization. In other words, love is nurtured through communication, life skills, and the practices of the community. On the other hand, mismanagement of this process or failure to impart ideal qualities of personal management may lead to violence as enumerated in textbox 2. Below is a

⁶ Vision Group, *Bukedde TV, Abanoonya* (Every Saturday 9.30 pm).

⁷ David Brinkerhoff and Lynn White, *Essentials of Sociology* (New York: West Publishing Company 1989), 93

⁸ Cara Flanagan, *Early Socialisation: Sociability and Attachment*. (London: Taylor & Francis 2002), p.23

detailed contribution from each of the main agents of socialization.

The Family

Family is responsible for early socialization and is the most important agent of socialization. The initial warmth and nurturance we receive at home are essential to normal cognitive, emotional, and physical development. The family is the agent that develops our self-concept which has lasting consequences in the later stages of development and behaviour⁹. The family also determines the culture of the individual. Despite the respect of humanity, there is also innate respect and protection for the female members of the family that is: mothers, wives, daughters, and they are regarded vulnerable as compared to the male members. Many practices of socialization in African cultures reveal this through pseudo attachments in the names of marriage. For instance, among the Basoga, Baganda, Banyole, Basamia of Eastern Uganda, a grandmother is a wife to a grandson, the grandchildren born by the female members of the clan are the only ones entitled to perform rituals in their maternal families and it is the sisters that choose from among their brothers the heir to their father. All these are just examples to show the significance and power of the woman.

African cultures have been respectful to women; violence and subordination are a consequence of adoptions of foreign cultures, especially through formal education, production dynamics and economic forces. Foreign religions altered African gender relationships and pushed women into the background. This made women dependents and subordinate. According to Mercy Amba Oduyoye¹⁰, Ifi Amadiume¹¹, and Musa Dube¹², women always had forefront positions in managing wealth and playing significant roles in leadership. Mercy Oduyoye refers to contemporary women's struggles as issues for new women in new Africa¹³.

With the educational and religious divide that pushed women off the scene, it does appear that even the process of socialization became compromised and reduced women to survival at the mercy of men, their relatives, and male lineages. In this case, the post-colonial socialization of men ensures they are trained to be forceful and assertive. On the other hand, women are told to be responsible, subordinate, and secretive. As a consequence, this compromised the local languages as well. Taking an example of the Basoga of Eastern Uganda say *omwami kya'akoba* (what my husband says, is what I go with). The Batooro of Western Uganda says: *Omushija tayangwa* (you cannot deny a man anything...specifically sex). The Baganda of Central Uganda says: *Eby'omunju tebitotolwa* (you should never disclose the dirt in your house to the public) they also say: *emesse nebwegejja etya, esigala ya kappa* (however fat a rat grows, it still belongs to the cat) ...The sole task of a woman is to please a man. With such sayings, women are trained never to reveal the pain/evil in their households. They are trained to defend their husbands' weaknesses and evils to qualify as good wives. In extreme cases, they even have to mutilate and or decorate their bodies in order to be acceptable to their men. This has bred different forms of violence such as female genital mutilation, forced post-delivery sexual intercourse and psychological violence against women. At times children are witnesses to this and the vice thus continues. Families now also emphasize hard work, and subordination of women if are to stay married. Consequently, women are now suffering not only physical but economic violence as well, because they are being trained to take on both reproductive and productive roles as well. Moreover, men are not being trained to help in reproductive roles. A woman of the time is burdened thrice with reproductive, productive roles and the burden of stigma in case she fails in the first two.

⁹ Ibid. 23

¹⁰ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, (New York: Obis Books 1995), 6-11.

¹¹ Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters and Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in African Society* (London: Zed Books Ltd 1987), 13-111.

¹² Musa Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. (St. Louis Missouri: Charice Press 2000),31.

¹³ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, (New York: Obis Books 1995), 11.

Civil society Organizations (Alternative family?)

Civil society organizations are those organizations that occupy the space between the family and the state, especially in conditions of calamity such as natural disasters and wars. They help build the coping capacity of the family and the state. Under normal circumstances, these organizations are not meant to last beyond the problem. While the family and state should have permanent interventions based on their responsibilities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are supposed to be temporary. According to Deusdedit Nkurunziza, civil society comprises all organizations that occupy the immediate realm between the family and the state. These organizations include Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, professional organizations, Grassroots Support Organizations (GSOs), trade unions among others¹⁴. CSOs have for a long time played significant roles in human socialization, especially as regards child/youth upbringing. We notice that most NGOs prefer to help girl children and women. This could be still based on their multiplier impact of reproductive roles and vulnerability. The concern as regards violence against women is that NGOs do not empower women but rather give them handouts. On the other hand, NGOs omit to target men as beneficiaries and as a result, many men are left without appropriate help in physical needs, skill-building, and character formation. This gender divide creates tension between men and women, which may result in violence.

Further still, NGOs have become the immediate alternative family to most children through putting up orphanages where children from different cultural backgrounds are brought up together without specific cultural socialization. Despite goodwill, it is observed that the majority of children now lack an ideal character as far as gender relations are concerned. NGOs should be blamed for a reservation because they consider survival needs and continuity. They thus do not get preoccupied

with the mentoring aspect of the children on issues such as gender relations and related life skills. On this note, it would be ideal for NGOs to help or bring up children through their family members rather than institutionalizing them. This is because the gender relations children learn at an early age play significant roles in how they relate with the opposite sex. The process of socialization is what Ugandans term as being brought up as contrasted from growing up; an expression used when one fails to confirm expected values, norms, and regulations of gender relations.

School

According to David Brinkerhoff and Lynn White, schooling has become institutionalized as the natural habitat for children. The central function of schools is to impart specific skills and abilities necessary for functioning in a highly technological society¹⁵. However, schools ought to do more than this because they should also transmit society's central cultural values and ideologies. Schools thus are also a channel to impact ideal community values. Therefore, for education to be appropriate, it ought to be holistic and should be able to address the needs of the community at any given time and space. Opuda Asibo, thus appeals that schools should teach the head, the heart, and the hands.¹⁶In other words, after school, one ought to be wise, humane, and physically able in order to live productively in society. With reference to Uganda, we notice that concentration is centred on cognitive development at the expense of the other aspects. Parents do whatever possible to keep the children away from home so that they concentrate in school and get good grades to compete favourably in the future. Instead of promoting complementarity, this lack of proper training leads to competition among men and women. This often strains relationships and brings gender tensions that end in violence.

On the other hand, formal education has always been cited as an empowering strategy that can minimize violence against women through

¹⁴Deusdedit Nkurunziza, "The Role of Civil Society in Peace Building: The Case of Uganda" In *Developing A Culture of Peace and Human Rights in Africa* (Kampala: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung 2003), 24.

¹⁵David Brinkerhoff and Lynn White, *Essentials of Sociology* (New York: West Publishing Company 1989) 94.

¹⁶ Opuda Asibo, "Education and the Workforce: Matching Skills and Labour Needs". First Belgian Scholarship Alumni Event on Tuesday 6th December 2016 at Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala.

educating the girl's child. We notice that as women get more empowered through education, more men become scared and want to protect their positions through violence as a means of suppression. Moreover, formal education, a once male-dominated space did not do adequate empowerment of men to enable them to participate productively in current sources of livelihood. When they end up jobless, they most likely become violent in families observed by Christopher Cramer whose research results indicate that poverty and unemployment lead to violence¹⁷.

Media

Media through information and communicating technology is a historical achievement but also challenging innovation as far as human relations are concerned. The world is now linked with digital waves, radios, telephones, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and hardcopy publications than ever. We are now swimming in a sea of information regardless of whether one is interested in receiving it or not. Media has become a popular form of socialization, especially among the youth. Any needed information is just a click away. Unfortunately, this information is not disaggregated in terms of audience. Consequently, societies learn a lot from the media, and this includes not only productive but also destructive information, knowledge, and skills; including violence, pornography, theft. Women and girls become more vulnerable to all these trials thus become victims of sexual, economic, physical, religious, and social violence. Women are targets of media vices like a

Facebook party for rape, nude photos, display of sexual slavery, and battering.¹⁸

According to Patrizia Romito, many of the highest-grossing movies feature heroes or anti-heroes for whom violence is a way of life. On television, the viewing public's appetite for violence is stimulated by more and more programs that have power, control, or violence as a central theme¹⁹. Paula Lundburg and Shelly Marmion also note that television talk shows have encouraged verbal, emotional, and physical abuse for the pleasure of the viewing audience.²⁰ At the same time, local media in Uganda, televisions, and radios have regular popular programmes²¹ to teach hopeless subordination, sexual and economic exploitation for women but not teach the responsibility of men.

Peers

In English, the word peer means somebody who is equal to somebody else. Practically we refer to peer groups as being members of the same interest, social class, and age group. Peers have always meant a group of teenagers who go to the same school, club, church, and share common interests. They often grow up with this spirit of collegiality. David Brinkerhoff and Lynn White observe that peer group socialization has an important effect on the development and validation of self-concept²². This is because the judgments of one's peers are unclouded by love or duty, they are particularly important in helping people get an accurate picture of how they appear among others. They also add that peer groups are also often a mechanism of learning social roles and values that adults do not teach. This vacuum filled by peer group interaction

¹⁷ Christopher Cramer, *Unemployment and Participation In Violence* (London: World Bank Background Report 2010), 7.

¹⁸ Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), *Women's Rights and the Internet in Uganda Stakeholder Report Universal Periodic Review 26th Session – Uganda*. (Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) March 2016) 10. https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/research_report_on_tech_related_vaw_2018.pdf

¹⁹ Patrizia Romito, *A deafening silence Hidden violence against women and children* (Bristol: The Policy Press 2008) 28.

²⁰ Paula Lundburg and Shelly Marmion, *"Intimate" Violence against Women. When Spouses, Partners or Lovers Attack* (London: Praeger 2006), 15-30 p.28.

²¹ These programmes are called Senga (Paternal aunt) and kojja (maternal uncle). It is the role of the paternal aunt or maternal uncles to give sexuality education to the children. Traditionally, this has been in preparation for roles related to adulthood including marriage, upbringing, agriculture, health, and others. Unfortunately, the contemporary society has limited this to sex alone. All the efforts are to advise women on how to make themselves acceptable to men through sex, food, submissiveness and hardwork. However, they leave the roles of men not highlighted.

²² David Brinkerhoff and Lynn White, *Essentials of Sociology*. (New York. West Publishing Company 1989), 95.

often becomes problematic because it tends to take on what society disapproves of.

African traditional societies used to address this challenge through performing rituals at each stage of life cycle transition. After the ritual performance, peer groups (age-sets) were not left on their own. Each individual initiate could be assigned a mentor who continued journeying with him/her throughout other phases of life such as marriage and elderhood life. Currently, with the diminishing of these rituals and increase in information through ICT, there is a risk to perform social vices including violence against women. Due to lack of sufficient adult guidance, peers tend to form gangs; which initiate themselves into several unaccepted behaviours like alcoholism, robbery, sexual promiscuity. If youth are not initiated, they will initiate themselves in their way in their roles and ethic. At times abuse of women may not be because the abusers are violent. This could be to misguidance got from peers' behaviours, friends, and workmates. On the other hand, women too misguide themselves and provoke their abusers through peer pressures and advice.

The Church

The teachings of the church have mistakenly been used to challenge the potentials of women. Chauvinistic preachers often put emphasis on the subordination of women. Women being the majority among church goers, this impact gives lasting impact not only to them but the men as well. Subordination of women is implied but not categorically presented in several biblical verses including Genesis (2:18-20) which presents a woman as created from a man's rib, Ephesians (5:21-24) which urges women to submit to their husbands, Colossians (3:18) and 1 Timothy (2:9-15)²³. According to Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the teachings of the church fathers including St. Augustine of Hippo declared that a woman apart from a man is not made in the image of God whereas a man apart of a woman is. Further... Martin Luther declared that women were fit only to go to the

church, to work in the kitchen, and to bear children.²⁴ These teachings have been a basis for limiting women's participation in both church and society. On the contrary, although the bible also highlights the roles of men as accruing from their superiority, most preachers evade this emphasis on male responsibility and concentrate on preaching women's subordination. Many homilies concentrate on women being subordinate but not streamlining the role of men as illustrated in Ephesians 5:25-31. In these verses, the commitment, protective and provisional roles of men towards women are rarely emphasized by preachers as compared to how they emphasize subordination of women. These roles are also implied in the voices of women as recorded in text box 1.

In social struggles, most women activists accuse the church and its teaching of propagating violence. The church leaders are seen as unfair and fail to see the violence women suffer because of their teachings. This includes discrimination of unwedded women, refusal to grant a divorce to victims of violence, refusal of remarriages, and denial of full participation in church affairs. The church teachings and inflexibility are accused of subjecting women to all forms of violence including sexual, economic, and physical. For instance, in Uganda, the church is accused of putting constraints on the passing of the domestic relations bill (2003), which later got renamed as the Marriage and divorce bill (2009). Faced with the reality that the power to get official marriage lies in the hands of men, who at times are not ready to commit themselves to marriage, most couples in Uganda live in unlawful marriages.

Unfortunately, women in such unions do not have any legal claims or protection regardless of the years they have spent in the unions. Consequently, they are exposed to violence when relationships fail or after the death of their husbands. Considering this, one of the clauses in the proposed bill calls for recognition of couples who have cohabited for over five years as a legal marriage union²⁵. Basing itself on Christian doctrine, the church has impeded the

²³ All the verses have been got from the Africa Bible (2011) Pauline Publications. Nairobi.

²⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (New York: Obis Books 1999), 5.

²⁵ Khiddu Makubuya, Marriage and Divorce Bill (2009) An act to reform and consolidate the law relating to civil,

Christian, Hindu, Bahai and customary marriages; to provide for the types of recognized marriages, marital rights, and duties; recognition of cohabitation in relation to property rights; separation and divorce, and the consequences of separation and divorce; and for related matters (Kampala: Parliament of Uganda Bill No. 19), 9.

passing of this bill and at the same time remained passive towards establishing tangible solutions to this growing problem. On this note, it would be ideal for church leaders to engage in dialogue and become part of the struggles just as they have done in other problems in the country such as in fights against HIV/AIDs, wars, and promotion of democratic governance and peace.

The Continuing Struggles and Optimistic Way Forward

As the field data reveal, although there are challenges of violence, women cherish family and would prefer having it complete with men and children. Pope Francis too observes that the joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church... for all the many signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, “the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people, and this is an inspiration to the Church”²⁶. This remark is a call for continued struggle and also an indicator of success if concerted efforts are put in place. The question remains why women are subjected to violence. We examined the different agents of socialization which incite violence against women and compel women to bear violence. However, this only describes the process and the symptoms of violence but offers no lasting solutions to the problem.

We learnt that although most feminists and social activists accuse the African culture and the teachings of the church on violence against women, this is wrong because both teach love and respect for human dignity. However, as society becomes modern, the struggle for resources in all spheres of life becomes evident. Thus, in a bid for self-preservation by the dominant, the vulnerable groups including women tend to be pushed to the margins. Modernity has deprived patriarchy of its mandate to protect society and women. This has now created male chauvinism which disrespects women and sees

them as competitors who should be subjugated to means of reproduction and production.

Pope Francis remarks that love is experienced and nurtured in the daily life of couples and their children²⁷. Unfortunately, families which ought to be the nursery beds for growing and nurturing love have now become elusive and elastic social structures that need to be revisited and healed right from the foundations. Providentially, we still have vibrant family-making structures of churches in different religious affiliations. Taking Uganda as an example, there is a spiritual revival drive in all religions as expressed or seen in a series of overnight prayers, establishment of prayer centres, retreat centres often filled with multitudes of different categories of people all looking for God’s intervention to their various problems. Based on this, besides spiritual nourishments, the church through its various ministries including the Youth, Married Couples, Singles, Women’s and Men’s Guild ministries should also address people’s psychosocial needs and re-socialize people about the true concept of love. This will resolve the paradox of mixing it with violence. The other agents of socialization in which the church still has authority including the family, peers, media, and schools should be used as means to build stable families as love-giving structures to avoid violence, especially against women.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is absurd that love and violence against women tend to go hand in hand as presented in this paper. Moreover, by nature of the reproductive roles played by women, any mistreatment against them negatively affects the whole society. This is because women bind the families and play significant roles to men and children through caregiving. There is therefore a need to stop violence against women in families if societies are to realize sustainable peace and avoid

²⁶ Crux Staff, Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Lætitia* Of The Holy Father Francis To Bishops, Priests And Deacons Consecrated Persons Christian Married Couples And All The Lay Faithful On Love In The Family 2016)3, on: <https://cruxnow.com/church/2016/04/08/read-the-popes-letter-amoris-laetitia-or-on-love-in-the-family/>

²⁷ Crux Staff, Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Lætitia* Of The Holy Father Francis To Bishops, Priests And Deacons Consecrated Persons Christian Married Couples And All The Lay Faithful On Love In The Family 2016) 71, on: <https://cruxnow.com/church/2016/04/08/read-the-popes-letter-amoris-laetitia-or-on-love-in-the-family/>

all other forms of violence. Although the agents of socialization have unintentionally contributed to the paradox of love and violence against women, it is providential that the same agents can change focus and rectify the situation. The agents need to deconstruct the prejudices about women and men and should now consider the changes and needs of the society of the time to bring a new era of human character formation that promotes appropriate gender relations and peace in society. This, however, requires a strong will since the process has often favoured men and it is men in charge of policy development and implementation. It is unlikely that they will easily alter traditions, ideologies, and laws/policies that sabotage their comfort zone. It is thus important to engage men as change agents through the agents of socialization. These agents specifically the church should spearhead this campaign because it influences other agents of socialization such as the family, the school, peers, and media. Churches therefore through their varied ministries and programmes need to restore the dignity of women through their various institutions.

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