

# Exploring the Impact of Gender Based Violence on Girl Child Education in Rukungiri District of Uganda

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of gender-based violence on girlchild education in Rukungiri District of Uganda. Data, for the study, were collected using questionnaires and a sample of 50 respondents. The study found that primary school girls experience gender-based violence, which causes mental health problems, anxiety, increased diseases, impairment, isolation, and increased tolerance, trauma, hostile environment, stress, poor influence on girl child, and poor government policy. Based on these, the study calls for the government to monitor, control, and enforce laws favouring all human rights through headteachers and teachers to prepare its people and nation. More so, political, local leaders, civil servants like parish chiefs and sub-county chiefs, church leaders like priests, and well-wishers should also be involved in fighting gender-based violence because of their credibility in their communities and their involvement will boost community response. Given civil servants' effectiveness in fighting gender-based violence, especially probation and community development officers in central division, mobilisation and sanitization programmes should be expanded to the district and country at large.

**Keywords:** Developing countries, Gender based violence, Girl-child, Human rights, Torture

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most widespread human rights violations is gender-based violence[1, 2]. Gender-based violence includes any act that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, in public or private life[3]. Gender-based violence is built on power imbalances and structural inequity between men and women. Every continent, country, and culture has gender-based violence. It hurts families, impoverishes communities, and perpetuates inequality and violence[4]. However, women's household income includes all women over 18. Wages, salaries, unemployment insurance, disability payments, rental receipts, personal business, investment, and other normal income are income. Each household's income does not have to be tied to the head[5]. Household income is a popular income metric since households have similar economic circumstances. The fact that such measurements rarely consider household size may mislead any analysis. Variations in household income categories may make quintile comparisons difficult or impossible[6].

Gender-based violence is global. Home violence is the leading cause of injury and mortality for 16–44-year-old women in Europe[7]. According to former UN Secretary-General Opondo and Mutugi[8]

"violence against women knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth." It may be the worst human rights violation." He said it's "perhaps the most pervasive." Gender-based violence in households is a global social issue after children, specifically for women, and it often goes unpunished. It is accepted due to the culturally or religiously legitimised interaction between generations and sexes or played down as a minor offence that is never prosecuted[9]. National and international research agree that gender-based violence is a serious barrier to human well-being and safety. The 2007 Council of Europe transnational campaign called for national attention to eliminating violence against women [2]. Due to its ongoing importance, the UN Committee against Torture also addresses gender-specific violence in families. International church networks have historically led campaigns, information, and lobbying to raise public awareness of this issue. The number of nations banning gender-based violence rose from 45% to 89% between 2013 and 2016. Human rights violations are not sufficiently addressed in mainstream politics or budgeting, which is shocking[10]. Kimani[11] reported that "the right of a husband to beat or physically intimidate his wife" was "a deeply held conviction" in African interviews. Even societies with higher status

for women “condone or at least tolerate a certain amount of violence against women.” Such cultural norms subordinate women, relationships with wives and other men. Horn et al.[12] report that women are “undervalued, disrespected and prone to violence by their male counterparts” due to their inferior status. According to Muluken et al.[13], “the subservient status of women, particularly rural women, in many African countries is deeply rooted in tradition.” Developing countries, especially Africa, have high unemployment, food shortages, healthcare facility and resource limitations, and mortality rates[14]. The severity of gender inequality in health, life expectancy at birth, quality of life, workload, education, legal rights, and economic mobility seems to distinguish emerging countries from others[15]. Nevertheless, the 2012 Fifth Conference of the Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians in Cape Verde deemed gender-based violence a development priority for African women and society. The conference helped women parliamentarians and leaders acquire leadership skills to resist gender-based violence and promote gender equality in their nations[16].

In Uganda, most women live in rural areas and cultivate, raise children, and maintain property. The most exploited and least affluent members of households, they work hard for their families but are marginalised in resource allocation[17]. Because education is the key path to development, Ugandan students' academic achievement is a major priority (Baluku, 2013). Macro economists have stressed the importance of student academic performance on economic growth and development, the adaptation of new agricultural technologies, health, fertility,

income, and other outcomes in developing countries[18]. Gender-based violence affects victims, witnesses, family, coworkers, friends, and the community. Witnessing domestic abuse makes children victims and predisposes them to many social and physical issues[19]. Any age, sex, colour, culture, religion, education, employment, or marital status might be a victim. Women are mistreated more than men[20]. Domestic violence increases the risk of child abuse and neglect. Most youngsters in these homes know about violence. Despite not being physically damaged, a kid may have emotional and behavioural issues[21]. Good academic achievement in Rukungiri Municipality is linked to home, school, community, and time management. The academic performance of students differs by school. Due to school infrastructure, this variation exists[22]. Due to their desire for other women, some men marry many wives, neglecting their first wives and their children, resulting in a lack of basic needs for poor women and gender-based violence in homes since women will always ask their husbands for support. Because some of these men cannot provide for the family, they fight when asked to help. While the degree of domestic violence in Southern Division is unknown, it is obvious that many families experience wife beating. Some victims view it as typical and unproblematic. Many international and local studies have examined gender-based domestic abuse, but most of the researches have examined gender-based violence in relation to other factors, but none has examined how it affects female child education. This necessitated the present study that explores how gender-based violence affects female child education in Rukungiri District of Uganda

#### **Girl child experience on domestic violence**

Embilinyi et al. [23] conservatively estimate that 10–20% of American youngsters experience adult domestic abuse annually. Surveys of adults recalling childhood exposure and teens reporting current exposures informed her estimate. It is estimated that millions of children are subjected to violence each year, and national polls in our country and others reveal that the severity, frequency, and history of violence each child experiences vary substantially. Recent meta analyses that synthesise and average effects across studies show that children exposed to domestic violence have significantly more problems than those not exposed[24]. Studies using the child behaviour and similar measures have found that children exposed to domestic violence are more aggressive, antisocial, fearful, and internalised, and have lower social competence and academic performance[25]. According to social learning theory, children who are exposed to violence may learn to utilise it. Lacey et al.[26] studied 2,245 children and teenagers and found that recent home

violence was significantly associated with child community violence. Wolf[24] et al. demonstrate that children's exposure to adult domestic violence may excuse their own aggression. Spencer et al.[27] found that adolescents like boys incarcerated for violent crimes who had been exposed to family violence believed more than others that “acting aggressively enhances one's reputation self-image, behaving that aggression would enhance oneself image significantly predicted violent offending.” Silvern et al.[28] found that exposure to domestic violence as a child was associated with adult reports of depression, trauma-related symptoms, and low self-esteem in women and trauma-related symptoms alone in men. After accounting for the impact of childhood maltreatment, adults' report of childhood domestic violence still accounted for a major part of their problem as adults. Domestic violence exposure seemed unaffected by parental alcohol misuse and divorce. Edleson[29] observed that 123 adult women who were exposed to domestic abuse as

children exhibited more distress and lower social adjustment than 494 non-exposed women. Loss of safety and security is one of the most damaging effects of domestic abuse for children. Children become anxious and need continual reassurance due to the traumatic surroundings. Domestic violence victims' children may cling to their parents, siblings, and teachers. Outside the home, they may require continual reassurance that their parents and siblings are okay. They may frequently request that their instructor check on their siblings' safety at school[30]. Bed wetting and night mares, pre-school and kindergarteners cannot communicate their emotions or grasp the different causes of harsh and violent behaviour towards family members or oneself. Methods to manage Stress, anxiety, and anger can cause sleep disruptions, night mares, and belt wetting at night. Old children usually have the verbal and cognitive skills to express their feelings and emotions, but those who witness violence in their homes are likely to lack the ability to resolve conflicts respectfully because aggression and violence have been modelled as a way to handle disputes and the child has become desensitised to violence in general[29]. Domestically abusive children often withdraw and show severe shyness, not wanting to attend to school or be around friends and classmates. Although this can happen in both boys and girls, boys are more likely to act out and girls are more likely to withdraw socially. Between six and eleven years old, children start to identify with their same-sex parents, which synchronises with the violence around them, making girls victims and boys abusers. Domestic violence victims are mostly women and perpetrators are mostly men[31]. Women experience more intimate partner violence than men, according to the full report on the prevalence, incidence, and consequences of

#### **Response of girl child on gender-based violence**

Child abuse, youth violence, and domestic violence are linked. Domestic violence damages children and society. Family violence victims may have the best chance with community-based solutions. Early education on domestic abuse can break the cycle. The school's ideology, resources, and campus need determine how it addresses students' personal and psychological issues. To address these issues, all colleges and universities should create and execute confidential services across several policy areas[37]. Partnerships with the collage counselling and mental health centre, student health service, women's centre, learning centre, spiritual and religious organisations, and other associations expand programmes and improve academic performance for domestic violence victims[38]. Twelve-step and community support organisations help students. Outreach on and off campus helps schools educate society about personal and

violence against women based on the National violence against women survey, jointly sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice, and concern for disease 22.1% of women and 7.4% of men reported being physically abused by a husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend, girlfriend, or date[32]. As a coping technique, children with intellectual disabilities or trauma may regress to earlier stages of development. Domestically abused children often forget skills or have trouble focusing. They may appear smaller. Children who live with domestic violence face many hazards, including losing one or both parents. All these can cause negative outcomes for children and consistent data linking 3 kinds of childhood disorders to domestic violence[33]. Infants exposed to violence may have trouble attaching to their carers and may fail to thrive. The research has limitations and uncertainties because some children in such trials do not have elevated issue levels even under similar circumstances. The most traumatised youngsters have significantly altered intelligence. Child brain injury can cause mental retardation. Learning is hampered by neurological issues. In addition to structural central nervous system injury, the child's home environment affects ego development. In most abusive households, learning competency, initiative, and autonomy are not appreciated and may lead to parental physical assault[34]. Holt et al.[35] discuss most abused children's dread of failure. Violence hinders development because extreme experiences of powerlessness like this damage women's self-esteem and decrease their potential to be powerful members of a civil society that fights for their rights. Violence damages health, education, and work, causing poverty and food insecurity in impacted families[36].

psychological issues and programmes. School counsellors help students from elementary to postsecondary education. They support students and collaborate with others to foster their academic, career, personal, and social growth[39]. School counsellors assist students set realistic academic and career objectives by assessing abilities, interests, and personalities. Counsellors analyse and advise students using interviews, counselling sessions, interest and aptitude testing, and other methods. Career information and education centres are also run by them. Counsellors often help kids with academic, social, or other unique needs[40]. Elementary school counsellors observe children during classroom and play activities and discuss their strengths, problems, and special needs with teachers and parents. They work with teachers and administrators to ensure that the curriculum meets students' academic and development needs. School

counsellors at all levels help kids with social, behavioural, and personal issues. Preventive and developmental counselling gives kids life skills to solve problems before they get worse and improves kids' intellectual, social, and personal development. Counsellors offer alcohol and drug prevention and conflict resolution classes. They also investigate domestic abuse and other family issues that affect students[41]. Employment or career counsellors, often known as vocational counsellors, give career counselling outside of school. Career guidance is their main focus. Vocational counsellors assess clients' education, training, employment experience, interests, abilities, and personalities. To help clients choose careers, they may offer aptitude and accomplishment exams. They also help customers find and apply for jobs and improve their job-search abilities. Career counsellors also help with job loss, stress, and transitions[42].

Rehabilitation counsellors help disabled persons cope with psychological, social, and vocational issues. Their clients have disabilities caused by birth defects, sickness, accidents, or other factors. They assess strengths and weaknesses, provide personal and vocational counselling, and organise medical care, vocational training, and job placement. Rehabilitation counsellors interview disabled people and their families, review school and medical reports,

#### **Influence of gender-based violence on girl child education**

When one parent abuses the other, children witnessing gender-based violence suffer greatly, which affects the adult victims and their well-being and development. Domestic abuse affects 7–14 million US children, according to 2009 estimates. Children who encounter gender-based violence at home may blame themselves and live in fear. These kids are also victims. In gender-based violence homes, child maltreatment is 15 times more prevalent[47].

Gender-based violence, especially repeated episodes, puts children at risk for many problems now and in the future. These include sleeping, eating, and other fundamental physical functions; depression, aggressiveness, anxiety, and other emotional regulation issues; family and peer relationships; and attention, concentration, and school performance[48]. Researches also reveal that violent parents are more likely to physically abuse their children. A shocking fact is that domestic abuse is the leading cause of child death in the US. Children

and consult with doctors, psychologists, occupational therapists, and employers to assess their abilities. Rehabilitation counsellors work with clients to build employment skills and increase independence[43]. Mental health counsellors treat and promote mental health in individuals, families, and groups. They learn to treat depression, addiction, suicidal thoughts, stress, low self-esteem, and sorrow. Counsellors for alcohol, drugs, gambling, and food problems aid. Drug addicts receive counselling to identify addiction-related behaviours and issues[44]. Group counselling is more common than individual counselling. These counsellors generally work with family members affected by loved ones' additions. Counsellors also run addiction prevention programmes[45]. Perrin et al.[46] found that children from gender-based violence families have lower IQ scores, learning problems, grades, and morality than children from free domestic violence families. Many of these children are aggressive, oppositional, and have extreme fear, inability to trust others, difficulty relating to both peers and adults, generalised unhappiness, poor self-image, and a tendency to engage in juvenile delinquency. Domestic abuse has boosted school dropouts. Morality issues have caused students to drop out and become houseboys and housegirls, harming their growth.

who witness domestic abuse are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of interpersonal violence themselves. Even while familial violence is dangerous, some children are not as damaged later in life. Remember that children's responses depend on various elements in the kid, family, and environment[49]. Worldwide, men have more power and privilege than women. This gender disparity involves ingrained femininity and masculine constructs. Women and girls are expected to be passive and ignorant about sex, while males and boys are expected to be aggressive and violent. They contribute greatly to global gender violence. At the same time, gender inequality contributes to the universal reluctance to discuss sex and sexuality. This prevents teenagers from getting the information and assistance they need to grow towards safer, more egalitarian adult sexual relationships. This impacts academic performance[50].

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The researchers used descriptive research design to explain how gender-based violence affects female child education in Southern Division Rukungiri

### **Study Area**

Selected wards of Southern Division Rukungiri district in western Uganda were studied. Small-scale

Municipality. This allowed the researcher to view a cross-section of data from a valid sample of study region respondents in different categories.

crop growing, animal rearing, and poultry keeping are the main agricultural activities in Southern

Division. Crops include coffee Matooke, fruits, cassava, potatoes, and cattle, goats, and sheep.

#### Target Population

The population of the study involved local leaders, pupils, teachers, headteachers and parents. These people are believed to have useful information about the study.

**Sample Size**  
**Table 1: A summary of respondents' sample size**

Respondents	Sample size
Head teachers	05
Teachers	13
Parents	16
Local council leaders	05
Pupils	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

Parents and pupils was selected because they take a big portion in understanding the study under investigation, local leaders were selected because they are the ones who normally know family

different setting in their locality, teachers and head teachers will be selected because they are ones monitor pupils performance in school.

#### Sampling Technique

The study used simple random sampling to pick kids, allowing all intended population respondents to participate and reduce bias. More specifically, basic random sampling was used to enrol all targeted population parents in the study and prevent bias.

Since local leaders, teachers, and headteachers were technical respondents with specific expertise of the study, they were selected using purposive sampling to obtain additional and relevant information.

### RESULTS

**Table 2: Respondents' responses on girl child experience on domestic violence in selected Primary Schools**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Metal health problem	14	28
Anxiety	03	06
Increased diseases	07	14
Impairment	09	18
Isolation	05	10
Increased tolerance	12	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2020

Out of 50 respondents, 28% indicated they have seen girl children suffer from mental health difficulties related to poor cognitive and attitudinal problems, one of the most attributable to domestic violence. Due to lack of conflict resolution skills, limited problem-solving skills, acceptance of violent behaviours and attitudes, belief in rigid ways tend to increase mental illness, and 18% of respondents reported that girl children experience violence and isolation, which lowers their academic performance. In addition, 14% of respondents reported that children experiencing domestic violence have a

higher risk of heart disease, cancer, hypertension, and diabetes. This makes kids inferior and lowers their performance. 10% of respondents said they tolerate domestic abuse in children more. 06% of the total respondents said anxiety has led to domestic violence because children are always traumatised by whatever comes their way and this reduces their academic performance, 18% said impairment makes the child less function or not function, such as distortion, low self-esteem, depression, and school withdrawal.

**Table 3: Respondents' responses on girlchild gender-based violence in selected Primary Schools**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	07	14
Trauma	04	08
Hostile environment	09	18
Stress	15	30
Poor influence	11	22
Poor government policy	04	08
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field survey, 2020**

Table 3 shows that female children's responses to gender-based violence in selected primary schools varied. According to the study, 14% of respondents said that gender-based violence has become a real threat to girl children whose needs are not met, resulting in poor classroom performance. Additionally, 8% of respondents said that trauma is a source of gender-based violence, especially in families where girls can easily be abused. 18% of respondents highlighted environmental hostility, which lowers the academic performance of girl children. For example, a child who lives in a war-torn location may not perform as well as a settled

student. Also, 30% of the total respondents identified stress as one of the causes of gender-based violence, which is always experienced by girl children who have unresolved feelings, isolate themselves from their colleagues, and reduce their academic performance. Additionally, 22% of the total respondents noted that peer influence has resulted from gender-based violence, especially when girl children lose their parents. Finally, 8% of respondents reported bad government policies that fail to assign and implement children's rights and duties, see abuse, and take time to address it. This marginalises these youngsters.

**Table 4: Respondents' responses on the influence of gender-based violence on girl child education**

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Disability.	10	20
Family breakdown.	09	18
Witchcraft.	06	12
Enmity	05	10
Lack of enough food	02	04
Murder	08	16
Street children	10	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field survey, 2020**

Based on table 4, respondents in the study stated that disability 20% and street children 20% were substantial effects of gender-based violence on girl child education. Continuous spousal bashing causes major injuries and kid distribution, which lowers academic performance. Gender-based violence and family disintegration affect girl child education, according to 18% of respondents. As the wife tyres of abuse, the only option is to flee, often with the children, leaving them without schools or changing schools, which undermines their academic achievement. Witchcraft 12% and murder 16% are effects of gender-based violence on girl child

education, according to some respondents. When a guy abuses his wife like a slave, donkey, or property, a woman decides to use witchcraft with her children, putting a man in a bad situation. Thus, applying hazardous herbs to a man to humble him limits his output, preventing him from paying school fees for his children. Murder and witchcraft are severe gender-based violence issues. Enmity 10% was another gender-based violence issue cited. This happens when a man treats his wife like a donkey and treats her like property, love and respect decrease, causing psychological harm to their children.

## DISCUSSION

According to the study, respondents were asked if girl children experienced domestic violence in selected primary schools in Southern division. They

all gave different answers, but the biggest experience was mental health problems that damage their brains, anxiety because they will always live in fear, which

deprives them of concentration, and increased disease. The study found that poverty is a genuine threat to girl children because unmet needs impair classroom concentration and academic performance, and trauma from gender-based violence affects female children's failure especially if the child has lived in a home where she can easily be traumatised by any incident like beating, battering, or death. Additionally, the hostile atmosphere has decreased the child's academic ability[38, 49]. A child who lives in a war zone may not perform as well as a stable student.

According to the study, stressed girl children who are unresolute prefer to isolate themselves from their peers. Their academic performance suffers. When girl children lose parents, they always want to be with others, and when they aren't helped, their concentration decreases. Poor government policies on children's rights and duties are not allocated well

### CONCLUSION

The study found that girl children in selected primary schools have mental health issues, anxiety, increased diseases, disability, isolation, and increased tolerance due to gender-based violence. It is equally revealed by the study that factors responsible to gender-based violence were poverty, trauma, hostile

and implemented, and when abuse is witnessed, the government takes a long time to investigate, marginalising girl children. Disability and street children are major effects of gender-based violence on female child education due to domestic violence, according to the study. Gebrie et al.[51] stated that gender-based violence is a major factor that accelerates female child education failure. The strongest link between gender-based violence and a girl's right to be free from cruel or degrading treatment breaches this right most graphically. youngster beating causes major injuries to the body and makes a youngster academically unstable when a man breaches girl child rights. Respondents also blamed gender-based violence for family collapse. Some respondents cited witchcraft and murder as gender-based violence's impact on female child education[47, 52].

### Recommendations

Based on these, they is need to call on the government to monitor, control, and enforce laws favouring all human rights through headteachers and teachers to prepare its people and nation. More so, political, local leaders, civil servants like parish chiefs and sub-county chiefs, church leaders like priests, and well-wishers should also be involved in fighting gender-based violence because of their

environment, stress, bad influence, and poor government policy. Gender-based violence has also produced disability, family collapse, increased witchcraft, hatred, lack of food, murder, and street children, which have hampered female child academic performance and education

credibility in their communities and their involvement will boost community response. Given civil servants' effectiveness in fighting gender-based violence, especially probation and community development officers in central division, mobilisation and sanitization programmes should be expanded to the district and country at large.

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