

# Religious and Patriarchal Beliefs that Influence Christian Women to Persevere in Abusive Relationships: With Reference to Giriama People, Kenya

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## Abstract

This article examines how cultural beliefs and patriarchal practices during the early period of the spread of Christianity promoted intimate partner violence (IPV) against women in the church. The article begins by exploring some cultural and patriarchal beliefs that were practised by the Jews and Giriama people during the pre-evangelistic period that promoted IPV against women through religious and cultural practices to see violence as normal, thus choosing to persevere in violent relationships. New strategies for preventing IPV against women have been discussed. In this descriptive research, data were collected from 52 informants using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The study interviewed 30 women facing IPV individually. Abused women provided information in focus group discussions. Ten pastors were sampled in order to gather data on how cultural and patriarchal practices with the support of biased biblical interpretation of texts, promoted IPV against Christian women. Twelve questionnaires were administered to six gender officers, three probation officers and three social workers, and the findings were used to supplement data collected from the key informants. This study established that some Bible texts are interpreted and used by wife abusers and pastors offering counselling to the IPV victims to promote and justify IPV. It, therefore, recommended that the church should organise to re-read and re-learn these Bible texts with a view to interpreting them without being biased against women. The church should also re-examine all patriarchal passages in the Bible with a view to facilitating



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contextual and reasoned scrutiny of the male-controlled beliefs and practices that promote IPV against women. The article established that cultural beliefs and patriarchal practices promote IPV against women. Some pastors and wife abusers interpret some Bible verses to justify spousal abuse; however, if the problem of IPV is to be prevented, the church, the government, and other stakeholders involved in a war against IPV on women must embrace new strategies that are free from cultural and patriarchal beliefs and practices.

**Keywords:** intimate partner violence; culture; beliefs; patriarchy; gender

## Introduction

This article is centred on research that investigated the influence of Christian teachings and biblical texts on intimate partner violence (IPV) on protestant Christian women in Kilifi County, Kenya. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines IPV as the physical, sexual and emotional abuse and controlling conduct by an intimate partner (WHO 2001). In Kenya, IPV is a major social problem that happens in people's homes (Ondicho 2018; UNFPA 2006; UNIFEM 2012).

The first part of this article discusses religious and patriarchal beliefs and practices of the Jews and Giriama people in relation to Christian women persevering in violent relationships. It also examines the demographic data of the respondents before exploring how religious and patriarchal beliefs influence Christian women to persevere in abusive marriages. Lastly, it examines new strategies that can be applied by the church to prevent future occurrences of abuse against women. This research found that women persevere in violent marriages because they are taught to protect the integrity of the family and the church. Furthermore, fear of more violence, the influence of African cultural beliefs and practices and economic dependency on the man make it difficult for women to walk out of abusive marriages. Lastly, conservative gender roles and women being socialised to see abuse as normal do also influence women's perseverance.

## Methodology

The target population was women in IPV relationships. The sample size was 52 respondents, which included 30 women selected through the snow-ball sampling method, 10 pastors selected through random sampling, and 12 officers and social workers dealing with victims of IPV selected through purposive sampling.

Primary data sources were oral interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires, while secondary data included books, magazines, journals and newspapers, which were analysed considering their usefulness in the study. Christian women were interviewed individually to collect data on IPV. More information was gathered through focus group discussions. The sampled pastors were interviewed to collect information on how religious beliefs and patriarchal practices promote and justify IPV against Christian women, thus influencing them to stay in abusive marriages.

Information gathered from the questionnaires was used to supplement data collected from the key informants. The qualitative data were analysed from the interview guides and focus group discussions by use of descriptive statistics, where patterns or themes were identified and documented as individual voices in speech marks, including the date of collection in order to ensure the validity and accuracy of the information gathered.

## Jewish Religious and Patriarchal Beliefs and Practices in relation to the Abuse of Women

The writing of the Bible took place within the Jewish culture, which was patriarchal in nature. According to Ackerman (1997), over 98% of the 1 400 names that are mentioned in the Bible are men. According to this Jewish culture, which is illustrated by portions of scriptures in the Old Testament (OT), Adam was given the mandate by God to name all of creation, including women. According to the Jews, the one who named a thing or a person had authority over it (Robinson 2018).

The Jewish culture also regards a woman as the property of her father or husband (Kirk-Duggan 2012). This notion is illustrated well in Exodus 204:17 where the woman is recorded as one of the properties of the husband. Thus, women were seen as similar to any other property owned by men, such as animals (Collins 1986). When women were raped within the Jewish society, it was assumed that the property of the father had been violated, and more concern was given to the compensation that was to be paid to the owner of the property (woman or girl). The physical or emotional injury of the victim was of no concern. It would appear that raping a woman was not forbidden as long as one was able to pay compensation to the owner (father) (Jacobs 2012).

Laws on inheritance show that women were disadvantaged and treated as inferior to men. When a man died, his eldest son would inherit from him, and the daughter would inherit the father's property if there was no son (Robinson 2018). Matters of marriage patriarchy can be seen in play because after the husband had paid the dowry, it was assumed that he had acquired another property. He was referred to as lordship (Robinson 2018).

Women within the Jewish community stay in abusive relationships for a period of between 7–13 years (Gonchar2013). Cases of IPV within the Jewish community are kept secret because of various reasons, such as traditional family values, the belief that IPV does not exist, the entrenchment of patriarchal religious beliefs, and the stereotype that Jewish men are non-violent (Guthartz 2004).

According to the Jewish culture, there are separate laws for women and men. Married couples are not supposed to touch each other in public (Gonchav 2013). As they grow up, girls are taught that they are not as important as men (Gonchav 2013). The birth of a boy child is celebrated (Gonchav 2013). Thus, when women are abused by their husbands, the wife is more likely to remain silent and accept it as normal since she has been socialised to believe that men are superior to women.

The Jewish community sets the stage for wife abuse. Religion entrusts men with power, authority and greater responsibility (Gonchav 2013). The court system within the Jewish culture sets the stage for IPV against women to flourish. The process of divorcing an abusive husband is so complex that the woman can only get divorced if the husband allows it (Gonchav 2013). Before going to the secular courts to seek for divorce, she must persuade the husband to give her a “get” (Gonchav 2013). A “get” is the religious letter given by the husband to the wife to show that he has permitted her to go ahead and seek legal divorce (Gonchav 2013). Even if she gets a secular divorce without having been given the “get” by her husband, she is treated as an “Agunah” or outcast (Gonchav 2013). Men who wish to continue abusing their wives will simply refuse to give them the “get” (Gonchav 2013).

### Giriama Traditional Religious and Patriarchal beliefs as Agents of Wife Abuse

Kilifi County, one of the counties in Kenya, is said to have the highest number of reported cases of violence against women (Makhungu 2017). According to an article in the *Nation Newspaper*, entitled “Cabinet Secretary Raises Alarm over huge Cases of Gender-based Violence,” Kilifi County reported 800 cases of violence against women in 2015 (Kazungu and Okwany 2016). Kilifi Recovery Centre for Gender-based Violence reported 479 cases that year. Data from the National Crime Research Centre show that Kilifi County had the highest rape prevalence in the country (Kenya Police Service 2015). However, the majority of these women facing IPV opt to remain in their abusive relationships (Ondicho 2018).

The first reflection indicating abuse of women by their husbands appears during the payment of dowry. According to African culture, dowry payment signifies that the husband has “purchased” the woman and, as such, she loses her rights to the husband (Igbelina-Igbokwe 2013). This is followed by the woman dropping her name to adopt her husband’s name (Adeyemi 1998). Dowry payment among the Giriama, just like in most African societies, has a lot of significance. It is a sign of appreciation and friendship between the two families. Apart from animals that are given by the husband’s family to the girl’s parents, it also includes 24 Kadzamas (liquor for payment of dowry), which implies that the offspring brought forth by the couple will be blessed. By accepting the bride price, it means that the marriage is fully recognised and permanent (Philips and Morris 2011). Thus, women experiencing violence today find it hard to move out of their marriages since it would force the parents to pay back the dowry to the husband’s family.

Within a family set-up, the roles of both the wife and the husband are well defined. The wife is expected to bear children and engage in domestic duties, while the husband is responsible for economic activities; something that gives him an upper hand in providing for the family. The wife will automatically submit to the husband since he is providing for the family. Within a polygamous marriage, the women have to seek

permission from the husband before doing anything (Olajubu 1998). This exercise is still being practised today among the Giriama families; an act that influences women to remain in abusive relationships.

Gender norms and societal beliefs among the Giriama have existed since time immemorial. Like in other societies in Africa, the Giriama culture socialises women to see violence as normal. Cultural beliefs, traditions and patriarchal practices legitimise violence against women. Wife abuse is assumed to be ordinary and permissible (Fleishman 2003). In such a society, the woman grows up knowing that violence by men is a reflection of her failure in accomplishing her roles. She, therefore, feels that it is right for her to be abused and, in most cases, chooses to persevere in these violent relationships (Lundgren 1993; Lundgren et al. 2001).

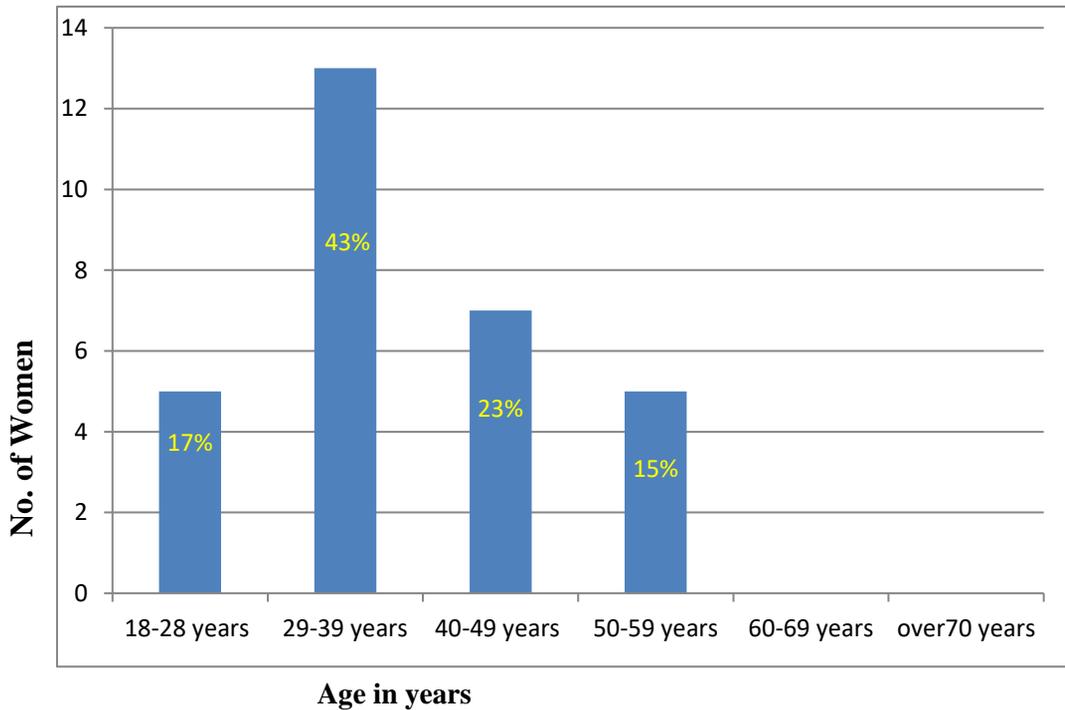
Among the Giriama community, the inequalities between men and women promote IPV against women. Men not only control the economic activities, but they are also the breadwinners, which gives them more leverage to abuse their wives (Jewkes 2002). Marital property is assumed to belong to the husband. In case the husband dies, the relatives of the husband over time take away the property of their “son,” thus leaving the wife at the mercy of the extended family members; in some cases, even making abusive demands on her. She is forced to persevere in any form of violence because of her children and in order to get financial help (WHO 2001).

In conclusion, IPV against women is fuelled by patriarchal practices that place more power, authority and economic resources in the hands of men. Any effort to confront IPV among Christians in Africa must take into account the patriarchal practices that have existed over the years and are oppressive to women. It is important to note that in order to end IPV, both men and women must be involved. Men should be brought to the realisation that some of the patriarchal practices, like wife inheritance, payment of Mallu (fines paid for having a love affair with a married woman) and forced teenage marriages (as in the case of the Giriama people) are not only violations against the rights of women, but also against human rights (Armstrong 1997).

## Results

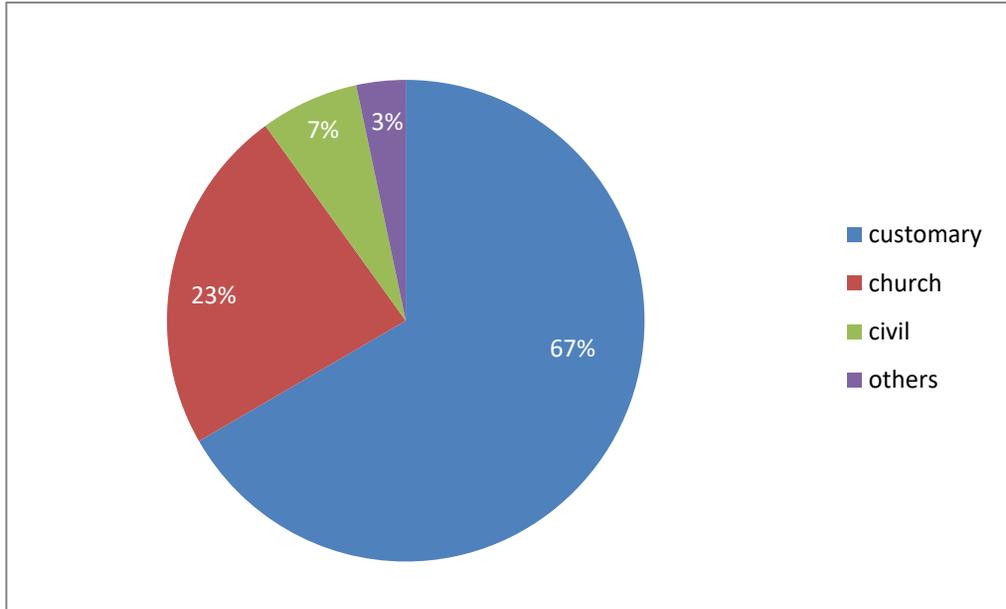
### Demographic Information of the Respondents

Findings on demographic information of the victims of IPV are discussed below.

**Age of the Participant****Figure 1:** Distribution of age of respondents

According to the current study, as shown in figure 3.1, 43% (13 out of 30) of the interviewed women were aged between 29–39 years, 23% (7 out of 30) were aged between 40–49 years, while 17% (5 out of 30) of the respondents were aged between 18–28 years. Another 17% (5 out of 30) of the respondents were in the age bracket of 50–59 years. There were no respondents aged above 60 years. The results of the respondents in this study showed that young women were likely to face IPV. These findings are in agreement with those of a study done by Le, Trans, Nguyen and Fisher (2013), which found that younger women are more likely to face IPV compared to older women. The current study shows that 43% (13 out of 30), i.e., the larger percentage, were in the age bracket of 29–39 years. These findings resonate with the results of a study done by Collins (2000), which showed that 82 % of women aged between 27–41 years had faced IPV from their spouses.

## Types of Marriages



**Figure 2:** Types of marriages

The findings of the current study show that 67% (20 out of 30) of the respondents had been married through customary procedures, while 33% (10 out of 30) of the respondents had been married through church weddings, civil marriages and other forms of marriages, such as “come we stay” or cohabiting. These findings agree with those of a study done by Diagle (2012) that shows how women who were married through church and civil weddings experience less violence compared to those married in customary marriages.

## Education Attainment Level

**Table 1:** Education attainment level of the respondents

Education level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
KCPE/ CPE	4	13
Vocational training	5	17
Secondary	1	3
College certificate	12	40
University	8	27
Total	30	100

Data from this current study showed that over 60% (20 out of 30) of respondents had acquired a college certificate, diploma or/and university degree. 16% (5 out of 30) of

respondents had primary and secondary school certificates. Findings from this study established that the more educated a woman was, the higher the chances of facing IPV, while those with low educational qualifications were less likely to experience IPV. These findings agree with those of past studies done by Schuler et al. (1996) and Vyas and Watts (2008), which observed that in marriages where the women had attained equal or more educational qualifications than the husband, there were higher chances of the woman being battered as a result of an inferiority complex. These findings resonate with the findings of past research studies done by Vonderhaar and Carmody (2014) and Estrellado and Loh (2013), whose results show that abused women with a low educational qualification are more likely to submit and remain in their marriages peacefully because the chances of securing a job were very minimal.

### **Factors that Influence Christian Women to Persevere in Abusive Relationships**

Despite IPV against women resulting in devastating effects on the victims, a substantial percentage of the victims choose to persist in their marriages. One wonders why women choose to endure abusive marriages. Abused women are stuck in violent relationships because of varied reasons ranging from social, emotional, and religious to economic. This study examined some of the traditional religious and patriarchal beliefs of the Giriama people that influence Christian women to persevere in abusive marriages.

#### **Protecting the Integrity of the Family and the Church**

Christian women facing IPV are influenced by the teachings they receive from the church about marriage. Christianity teaches that marriage is permanent, and once married, only death can separate the couple. Psychologically, they are determined to make the marriage work at all costs, including enduring violent acts.

Christian women experiencing IPV from their spouses are very careful with whom they share the information. They fear being accused of violence, judged or misunderstood by other members of their church. Some opt to remain silent for fear of being condemned once the information about violence leaks out to the family and church members (Giles, Curren, and Adamson 2004).

In the current study, one woman respondent told the researcher that despite what she was going through, she had chosen to keep quiet and hope for the better. This is what she had to say: (Responses are given verbatim.)

I have no problem sharing my problem with the pastor or women leaders in our church. However, I was so disappointed when I shared the problem that I was facing from my husband, who had started an extra-marital affair. The pastor told me I go and evaluate myself. He said I might be the one who caused my husband to start that illicit relationship. The women leaders whom I had been assigned to assist told me that from the way I was talking with them in a high tone, I'm yet to face more beatings. ... I never

went back to them; instead, I chose to die the soldier way. (Interview Mwanaharusi, 10:1:2021)

Another woman respondent reported the following during a study group discussion:

It is okay, you go for counselling, but personally, I can't shame my church and family by revealing this violence. I must at all times protect the image of the church. I know God will intervene and end this violence. (Interview Nanjala, 14:1:2021)

From the above excerpts, it seems true that women choose to persevere in abusive marriages because of the belief they have about protecting the image of the family and the church.

### **Economic Dependency on the Man**

Most of the women were forced to remain in abusive marriages because they depended on their husbands for the provision of basic needs. This is what one pastor reported:

Though, as a church, we try as much as we can to help abused women with financial problems, the truth is we can only help a limited number. Majority of the abused women are forced to remain in their marriages because it is the husband who is providing for basic needs such as food, shelter, education, clothing, among others. (Interview Pastor Makau, 1:2:2021)

These views were supported by one woman respondent during a study group discussion. She had this to convey:

I am really tired of being beaten by a person for nothing just because he is drunk. I sometimes want to leave, but I ask myself where am I going to take the five children? Who is going to provide for them? I have no alternative other than stay, knowing I will be beaten for nothing. Anyway, I thank him because though he beats us but he feeds us. Wait, I know my God, one day I will get employment and get to earn my own money. That will be the end of this marriage. (Interview Sarafina, 30:1:2021)

The above extracts show clearly that women persevere in abusive relationships because of economic dependency. Past studies by Ahmad et al. (2009) and Kubeka (2016) agree with the above findings. They observe that women being battered by their husbands fail to move out of those marriages because, financially, they are dependent on them. Bornstain (2006) states that where the woman is highly dependent on the husband, there are high chances of abuse, yet the women cannot easily move out of the marriage since they rely on their husbands for provision. Another study established that a wife who is more dependent on a violent husband has lower chances of seeking for help or moving out of the marriage (Taylor and Tipton 1999).

## **Conservative Gender Roles**

African culture has well-defined roles for each gender. While men are the bread winners, women are expected to bear children, bring them up and perform domestic duties. Abused women feel duty bound to remain in their marriages so as to take care of their husbands. To them, issues of violence are caused by the devil and one day, they will come to an end. This is what one woman respondent stated:

When I see these marks (she demonstrates her marks) and I know it's because of him beating me with a log, I feel bad and want to leave, but then I ask myself, this man used to be good, what happened? I realise it's the work of Satan. I tell myself I will not leave him to suffer here. Who will cook for him? I just decide to stay. (Interview Kerubo, 16:1:2021)

Another woman respondent commented:

Remember, now is planting season; when I go away, what is going to happen to my shambas? He can't do that work alone. I know my husband is hard working. I will not walk away and leave him alone with the children. There are goats, chicken and children to be looked after and planting to be done. I will remain other than leaving him to do all the work. It's not fair. (Interview Ngina, 8:1:2021)

From the above, we observe that gender roles can influence an abused woman to remain in her marriage. According to African culture, women are trained to be caretakers of their families (Brannon 2002). Past studies have shown that women felt it was their responsibility to maintain and keep the family united (Estrellado and Loh 2013). Another study states that women find psychological satisfaction when they are with their husbands and derive their joy from performing domestic duties and taking care of both the husband and children (Boonzaier 2008).

## **Considering Abuse as Normal**

As children grow and mature into men and women, they acquire the habits and character portrayed by their parents. These habits influence the way they treat their marriage partners. Most girls grow up seeing their mothers being abused by their fathers, yet their mothers persevered in those marriages. This is what a woman respondent re-counted:

When I compare what I am facing as abuse and what I saw my mother undergo, I say this is nothing. My dad went and married another woman and brought her in the same house built for my mother. My mother persevered, and later my father chased the intruder away. Now they are happily together. What I am facing is nothing. I will persevere like my mother. (Interview Bonareri, 23:1:2021)

A pastor who was counselling a woman who wanted to move out of her marriage reported the following:

She wanted to go away; I told her to persevere and pray. It is normal for a couple to experience violence when they have not stayed together for long. With time, things will be okay. I thank God, they got to learn each other's behaviour and today they are happily married. (Interview Pastor Sophia, 8:2:2021)

The above narrations depict that women, who had seen their mothers face abuse from their fathers, were encouraged by the sacrifice made by their mothers for them, and now they were willing to endure violence for the sake of their own children.

The perception of abuse as normal is supported by previous studies done by Baly (2010) and Taylor (2015), who state that culture and social upbringing do influence women to see abuse as normal. These cultural and social beliefs encourage women to be passive and accept blame and responsibility for the mistakes of their husbands.

The treatment abused women get from the Department of Children serves to portray violence as normal. When abusive husbands are reported to the Department of Children for neglecting their parental responsibility and being violent to their wives and children, the case does not go beyond reporting. The department seems to have accepted these abuses as normal, and the only thing they demand from the man is to provide for the family, ignoring the effects of the abuse on the mother (Jaffe, Crooks, and Bala 2009). With such a biased government department, women find themselves with no alternative but to persevere in abusive relationships.

### **Preserving Family Dignity**

Culturally, it is the duty of the woman to preserve the dignity of the man and their family. This is true in societies that are dominated by men and where women have less influence on financial matters and decision-making (Miller 2005). Women feel that it is their duty to protect the secrets of abuse. This is what a respondent informed this study:

Though it is true that he has been beating me, but as a woman, I have a duty to protect his image and that of the family. I will keep quiet and trust God for him to stop this violence. (Interview Sifuna, 27:1:2021)

A pastor participant had this to convey about family dignity:

When you see a woman coming out to report cases of IPV, just know that it is something that has been going on for some time. I have counselled many victims of IPV who tell me that if the husband had not started abusing her physically, she could have continued to cover [for] him by not letting the outside world know what was going on. (Interview Pastor Musa, 7:2:2021)

These extracts show that women will remain in abusive relationships with the aim of protecting the image of the husband and the family in general. The above findings are echoed by a study done by Baker, Cook, and Norris (2003), who argue that women who seek assistance for marital abuses are seen as disrespectful and unwise because they

can destroy the reputation of the family. Since most religions, including Christianity, advocate for peace, abused women are advised to be patient with their husbands, maintain silence and pray for the abuse to end (Kamaruddin 2009).

## Church Strategies to Prevent Future Occurrences of IPV

To effectively respond to the problem of IPV against women in our society, the church should not only mitigate IPV but also put in place strategies that will prevent spouses from abusing their wives. Some of these strategies are:

### **Breaking the Silence**

One reverend blamed the church for remaining silent when women continue being abused by men. This is what she had to say:

I have come to know that though we blame the perpetrators of violence, some of whom are our members, the problem may be us. I have quarrelled personally with my colleagues because it pains me as a mother to hear that a normal man putting on trousers can attempt to have sex with his wife two weeks after she was operated on while delivering, and the pastor of that church remains silent. I had to confront him and we disagreed. All I am trying to say is that the church (and by church, I mean pastors and leaders) must wake up and speak against IPV. It must be condemned. (Interview Rev. Mwangi, 2:2:2021)

A woman respondent informed this study that the church has contributed to fuelling IPV against women. She recounted:

I sometimes wish I was a pastor or had power. In our church, I can count one, two, three women who have reported the abuse to the church leadership and nothing has been done to date. Let me talk of my case; I reported my case to the pastor after I was physically abused by my former husband. What did the pastor do? Nothing with a capital N. He never called us for counselling. Now you feel so bitter because you feel like you are naked. Things become worse when you see the pastor and my husband laughing together. Anyway, I thank God he married another lady and I got a reason to leave him. (Interview Mongina, 7:1:2021)

The above confession shows that if the church can speak out and condemn IPV, it may have some impact or create fear in the abusers. This can go a long way in reducing, if not preventing cases of IPV. These findings are reiterated by Phiri (1996), who states that the church has acted both as a promoter and defender of IPV against women. Because of patriarchal beliefs that the church inherited from the Jewish and African cultures, men continue to play superior roles as they place women in subordinate positions (Phiri 1996). Though cases of IPV abuse are reported in the church, it tends to remain silent or in some cases, advises women to persevere, pray, submit and have faith that their husbands will change. If cases of IPV are to be prevented in our society, the church must come out and be a voice for many women who continue to be abused by

men, as they justify the abuse through patriarchal beliefs and practices that are oppressive to women (Phiri 1996).

While African culture encourages women to remain quiet about IPV cases because they are assumed to be private and family matters, African Women Theology encourages women to break the silence and speak out about the violence they experience. African women theologians have founded the Tarmer Campaign, an organisation that aims at breaking the silence about IPV cases within families, churches and society (Phiri 1996).

### **Use of Women's Bible**

There is a need for the church to embrace the Women's Bible, which was written in 1895 by Elizabeth Cady (Eisikovits, Winstok, and Fishman 2004). This is because it has examined patriarchal passages that have been used by the church and wife abusers to justify IPV. One pastor had this to say about the use of the Women's Bible:

If the church is willing to re-read the Bible with an objective of understanding and correcting Bible verses that are used to promote IPV against women, it should embrace the Women's Bible and work with African women theologians to liberate women from oppressive practices that have their origin in the Bible, especially the Old Testament. (Interview Pastor Makau, 1:2:2021)

Another male pastor respondent observed the following:

The truth of the matter is that church leadership should be in the fore-front of the liberation of women. This cannot be achieved without bringing men on board. The church should first accept that patriarchal passages that run across the Bible and also found within the African traditional society are oppressive to women and should be addressed if meaningful response to IPV against women is to be achieved. (Interview Pastor Musa, 7:2:2021)

The above excerpts show that if the church can embrace the Women's Bible and join hands with African women theologians in the war against IPV, much can be achieved. Oduyoye (1995) states that as women read the Bible in Africa, they should identify areas that are liberating from their cultural oppression and use them to initiate their emancipation (Oduyoye 1995). The church today should be ready to work with Bible scholars and African women theologians—by identifying Bible verses that encourage the liberation of women—and by bringing to an end any patriarchal practices that are oppressive to women and have their roots in the Bible.

If the church is serious about winning the war against the oppression of women, it should embrace the Women's Bible, which exposes passages that are used to justify IPV against women. African Women Theology calls upon the church to re-read Bible verses that support patriarchy with a view of giving them an unbiased interpretation (Dube 2021).

## Conclusion

This study established that women continue to experience violence because of religious, cultural and patriarchal beliefs and practices that existed among the Jews and the Giriama people during the pre-evangelisation period, and have been passed over to the current generations, including the church. Women continue to suffer from traditional practices such as genital mutilation, wife inheritance and wife cleansing. One of the major challenges in facing violence is that the majority are not aware that there are constitutional laws that protect them from these forms of abuse. This study found that if the problem of IPV is to be stopped, if not reduced, the church must break her silence over these abusive practices by working together with the government and condemning patriarchal practices that have been accepted and embraced by society and the church.

Despite the launching of the Women's Bible, which exposes biblical verses that support patriarchal practices that are oppressive and discriminative to women, the church is yet to embrace and allow the Women's Bible to be used by their congregates. This article encourages the church, especially its leadership, to allow the use of the Women's Bible in their congregation; an act that will help in re-reading and re-learning those verses that for a long time have been used to justify and promote IPV against women.

The beating of wives by their husbands was a practice that existed in societies in Europe and Africa before the spread of Christianity. It was assumed that men, being leaders in their families, were permitted to discipline their wives, including beating them. These practices have continued to exist in our societies and are worse among Christian men in our churches. Since marriage is built and anchored on love, there is a need for the church, government and other stakeholders to address the issue of IPV against women. The church should work with the government to enact tougher laws for wife abusers; an act that will stop, if not reduce cases of IPV among church-going women.

Inheritance and leadership roles in most societies have followed patriarchal lineage since the pre-evangelisation period. This practice has been passed on to today's generation. In our churches, most leadership roles have been occupied by men, while women are left to perform duties that are perceived to be inferior, such as teaching Sunday school children and hospitality. In most marriages, property is registered in the husband's name and the wife is expected to acquire her husband's name after dowry payment. This research recommends that the church should work with the government to enact new laws on inheritance, where the girl is given equal opportunities for inheritance with the boy-child. The church should encourage leadership positions in the church to be determined by one's qualifications and experience rather than gender.

Women facing violence from their husbands are encouraged by the church to persevere, pray, be more obedient and have faith that their spouses will be transformed and stop being violent by God's grace. Some of the verses that are used to influence these women to remain in abusive marriages are those that state that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) and marriage is permanent (Genesis 2:15). While those verses are found in the Bible,

this study found that many women and children have lost their lives in violent relationships. This study calls upon the church and other stakeholders to enact new laws that will allow for temporary separation of the couple where the lives of the mother and the children are in danger. This will not only stop cases of IPV among Christian women, but will also save their lives.

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