

Barriers to Effective Africa Inland Church-Based Interventions to Domestic Gender Based Violence in Baringo Central, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Domestic Gender-Based Violence (DGBV) remains a pervasive problem affecting families and communities in Baringo Central Region, Kenya, despite the presence and teachings of strong Christian institutions such as the Africa Inland Church (AIC). This study examined the barriers to effective AIC-based interventions in addressing DGBV in the region. Guided by the Triangular Theory of Love and Family Systems Theory, the research adopted a descriptive design with a target population of 1,500 respondents and a sample of 306, determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula. Data were collected through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, and analyzed using content, narrative, and thematic approaches, with findings presented via frequency tables, charts, and verbatim excerpts. The study highlights challenges limiting church-led interventions and suggests strategies for enhancing their effectiveness.

Keywords: Domestic Gender-Based Violence, Africa Inland Church, Pastoral Programs, Christian Families, Baringo Central Region

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Domestic Gender-Based Violence (DGBV) is a pervasive global problem that undermines the family as the foundational social unit and threatens human dignity (Musune, 2015). DGBV occurs not only in secular contexts but also within religious institutions, including Christian families and churches. The paradox is that while Christianity teaches that humans are created in God's image (Gen 1:27) and prohibits violence, many Christian households and church environments continue to experience acts of abuse, whether between intimate partners, parents and children, or other family members (Bonevac, 2010). Globally, 35% of women have experienced intimate partner violence, and men are also victims, although often underreported due to cultural taboos (World Bank, 2018; Manzanga, 2020). The failure to adequately confront and prevent DGBV within church settings has been attributed to both theological misinterpretation and a "culture of silence" that discourages disclosure and accountability (Tracy, 2007; Nason Clark & Clark Kroeger, 2001).

Despite the church's moral authority and doctrinal teaching against violence, intervention efforts remain limited. Studies across the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa highlight the prevalence of DGBV within Christian communities, yet faith institutions often lack structured programs, resources, and clear protocols to address it (Pepper & Powell, 2022; Mutata & Magasu, 2021; Chisale, 2020). In Kenya, though the government has established legal frameworks and rehabilitation centers for victims of DGBV, incidences remain high, including in Baringo County, which has one of the highest reported prevalence rates (National Crime Research Centre, 2020; KDHS, 2015). The Africa Inland Church (AIC), as the largest Christian denomination in the region, has the potential to play a transformative role in reducing DGBV; however, existing studies reveal gaps in addressing doctrinal misunderstandings, integrating multi-sectoral interventions, supporting male victims, and managing practical challenges in intervention implementation (Ronoh et al., 2024; Wanjiru et al., 2013; Nkaabu, 2023). These gaps underscore the need to investigate the barriers that hinder effective church-based intervention in mitigating DGBV among the AIC members in Baringo Central Region.

Statement of the Problem

Domestic Gender-Based Violence (DGBV) remains a pervasive problem affecting families and communities in Baringo Central Region, despite the presence of strong Christian institutions such as the Africa Inland Church (AIC). The church, which holds significant influence over its members' moral and social behavior, is strategically positioned to respond to DGBV. However, the extent to which its interventions are effective in mitigating and preventing DGBV is not well understood, leaving a gap in knowledge regarding the church's capacity to address this social challenge.

While the Africa Inland Church has established programs and initiatives aimed at promoting peace, harmony, and protection within households, there is limited empirical evidence on factors that may impede the effectiveness of these interventions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to enhancing the church's role in fostering safe and supportive family environments. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the barriers experienced by the AIC in its efforts to respond to domestic gender-based violence in Baringo Central Region, providing insights that could inform more effective and sustainable church-based interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The struggle against Domestic Gender-Based Violence (DGBV) within church settings is complex, shaped by hidden, unrecognized, and unreported acts of abuse. Suzor et al. (2019) highlight that many violent acts within Christian communities remain concealed due to fear of stigma, rejection, or retaliation, making it difficult for churches to identify and respond effectively. The challenge, therefore, lies not only in uncovering these hidden cases but also in managing reported incidents in ways that protect victims while holding perpetrators accountable. This underscores the necessity for churches to develop structures and networks that facilitate reporting, support, and timely interventions without compromising confidentiality or the well-being of victims.

Theological interpretations within churches can also present barriers to addressing DGBV. Pellauer (2011) and other scholars note that conservative readings of Scripture often reinforce hierarchical gender roles, emphasizing female submission and forgiveness at the expense of justice and accountability. Some church leaders perpetuate these interpretations, believing that adherence to prescribed gender roles will prevent violence, while others remain indecisive about challenging abusive behaviors, especially when they occur within the home. This theo-historical influence embeds harmful norms in Christian communities, shaping members' perceptions of acceptable behavior and limiting the church's capacity to intervene effectively.

Church membership attitudes further complicate responses to DGBV. Studies by Robertson and Marachver (2009) and Musune (2015) reveal that violence against women is more likely to be acknowledged and reported than violence against men, creating an uneven recognition of abuse. Male victims, constrained by cultural norms and societal disbelief, often remain silent, while the absence of church platforms to report and discuss abuse exacerbates the problem (George, 2007; Katy, 2009). Additionally, limited access to legal resources and inadequately trained pastoral staff reduce the church's ability to provide practical assistance, counseling, or referral services (Nason-Clark, 2000; Obeji et al., 2017). These structural limitations often lead to reliance on spiritual remedies, such as prayer or encouragement of submission, which do not address the cycle of abuse and may unintentionally reinforce it (Stotland, 2000).

Denial, silence, and resistance within church structures represent additional barriers to addressing DGBV. Valentine (2017) and Ushe (2015) argue that when church leaders and members avoid confronting abusive behavior or mislabel it as marital discord, victims are disempowered, and perpetrators are left unchecked. Such willful ignorance perpetuates the cycle of violence, compromising the church's mission to uphold justice and care for the vulnerable. Coupled with these internal challenges are entrenched cultural beliefs that influence both church policy and societal perceptions. Patriarchal norms, traditional practices such as polygamy and bride price, and the stigma associated with male victimhood all hinder reporting and intervention (Jewkes et al., 2015; Obeji et al., 2017; Bowman, 2003). These socio-cultural dynamics intersect with religious teachings to reinforce power imbalances and limit the church's effectiveness in addressing DGBV comprehensively.

In summary, the literature reveals that barriers to effective church-based interventions are multidimensional, involving theological misinterpretations, inadequate institutional capacity, gendered cultural norms, and societal stigma. The church's ability to respond to DGBV is constrained not only by what is visible but also by deeply embedded structural and cultural factors that shape behavior, reporting, and support. Addressing these barriers requires a critical rethinking of theological teachings, pastoral training, institutional policies, and community engagement to enable the church to play a more proactive and effective role in mitigating domestic gender-based violence.

METHODOLOGY

The study used two theories. The Triangular Theory of Love which helped to address barriers faced by the AIC in resolving DGBV by showing how deficits in intimacy, commitment, or passion contribute to conflict, guiding interventions to restore healthy relationship dynamics. And the Family Systems Theory which aided the study by revealing how entrenched family patterns and relational dynamics act as barriers, enabling the AIC to develop strategies that disrupt harmful cycles and involve all family members in resolving DGBV. The target population, sample size, and sampling tools are as presented in table 1.

Table 1: Target Population, Sample Size and Sampling methods

Target group	Target Population	Sampling procedure	Sample Size	Percentage
Church leaders	150	Purposive	45	14.7%
Victims of DGBV	700	Snowballing	140	45.8%
Family Members	600	Simple Random	100	32.7%
Government Officials	50	Purposive	21	6.9%
Total	1500		306	100%.

Source: Field Data, (2026)

Data were successfully collected from 292 respondents, yielding a response rate of 95.4%, while 14 sampled individuals did not participate. The study employed a combination of data collection methods to gain a well-rounded understanding of DGBV. Questionnaires were administered to church and family members to capture general patterns, attitudes, and perceptions in a quantifiable manner. In-depth interviews with church leaders and government officials provided nuanced insights, expert opinions, and context on institutional responses to DGBV. Focus Group Discussions with victims allowed for the exploration of personal experiences, common challenges, and collective perspectives. Data from these sources were triangulated to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Quantitative responses were analyzed using a Likert scale, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically and presented verbatim.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses the field findings on the barriers encountered by the Africa Inland Church (AIC) in its efforts to prevent and address domestic and gender-based violence (DGBV) in Baringo Central Region, highlighting factors that limit the effectiveness and reach of its outreach initiatives. Results from the questionnaire are illustrated in table 1.2.

Table 2: Barriers faced by Africa Inland Church in its efforts to address domestic gender-based violence in Baringo Central Region, Kenya

Item	D	SD	N	A	SA	Total
Misuse of scripture to justify abusive, dominating, or oppressive behavior	R-11%-11.2	88.2	66.1	1111.2	6263.3	98100%
The existence of harmful conservative theological traditions of the church	R-7%-7.1	1111.2	22.0	2020.4	5859.2	98100%

There is silence on the part of the church to openly speak against DGBV in her membership	R-8%-8.2	1010.2	22.0	1616.3	6263.3	98100%
Men fear and silent to disclose situations of DGBV	R-8%-8.2	11.0	77.1	1818.4	6465.3	98100%
There is limited access to legal services and other resources	R-9%-9.2	44.2	66.1	7272.5	77.1	98100%

Key: R – Respondents, %-Percentage

Source: Field Data, (2026)

Table 2 illustrates field results whereby on the barrier of the misuse of scripture to justify abusive, dominating, or oppressive behavior, the questionnaire findings reveal a pronounced concern among respondents. 73 (74.5%) who perceived that the church misuses Scripture in ways that legitimize or perpetuate DGBV. In support of these quantitative findings, a member in the FGDs informed:

We often organize joint programs, especially community-level prayer platforms, to address and pray over cases of violence, particularly DGBV. Some church members also participate in these efforts alongside local NGOs. However, a major challenge remains the limited level of preparedness within the local church community to effectively address DGBV (FGD 15).

In contrast, a minority of 19 (19.2%) believed that the church does not engage in such practices, while 6 (6.1%) remained undecided. These findings point to a significant theological and interpretive challenge within the church's engagement with gender and domestic violence issues.

The findings highlight that the misuse of Scripture plays a significant role in reinforcing patriarchal norms, legitimizing male dominance, and discouraging victims from challenging abusive behavior. This aligns with scholarly literature noting that selective scriptural interpretations in faith-based contexts have historically been used to justify coercion and limit women's autonomy (Nason-Clark et al., 2015; Jewkes et al., 2015).

The 19.2% of respondents who perceived that the church does not misuse Scripture suggest that some congregants either encounter more egalitarian interpretations or are less aware of how theological teachings can influence power dynamics and tolerance of DGBV. Similarly, the 6.1% who were undecided may reflect ambiguity in theological messaging, variations in pastoral teaching, or uncertainty about what constitutes misinterpretation. These findings highlight the interpretive diversity within the church and underscore the need for training clergy in gender-sensitive biblical hermeneutics.

The findings highlight that the perceived misuse of Scripture poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness of the AIC's anti-DGBV efforts in Baringo Central Region. Even with pastoral counseling, policies, and advocacy programs in place, harmful scriptural interpretations can reinforce norms that justify violence, discourage reporting, and undermine the credibility of the church's interventions. Addressing this barrier requires intentional theological reflection, pastoral training, and structured programs that promote gender-sensitive hermeneutics emphasizing justice, respect, and protection of the vulnerable. Integrating such theological education with counseling, advocacy, and community engagement would ensure that the church's moral and spiritual authority supports, rather than hinders, its mission to prevent and respond to domestic and gender-based violence.

On the existence of harmful conservative theological traditions of the AIC, the findings reveal a widespread perception of harmful conservative theological traditions within the AIC, with 80% of respondents affirming their existence, 18.3% disagreeing, and 2.2% undecided.

The Bible says that men are the head of the home and women are there to submit to their husbands. As church members we to follow the teachings of God on the family (KINF, 21)

The findings highlight that entrenched theological and cultural norms significantly shape attitudes, behaviors, and institutional responses to gender and domestic violence within the AIC. The predominance of affirmative responses suggests that conservative traditions—such as rigid gender hierarchies, male-dominated leadership, and teachings emphasizing female submission—may legitimize or tolerate DGBV by influencing beliefs about marital roles, obedience, and authority, often discouraging victims from seeking help. This aligns with analyses by Amegayibor (2021), Nason-Clark et al. (2015), and Jewkes et al. (2015), which emphasize that patriarchal interpretations of theology in faith-based contexts can sustain gender inequality and normalize domestic violence.

The 18.3% of respondents who disagreed likely reflect experiences in congregations with more progressive, egalitarian, or gender-sensitive theological practices, or where harmful traditions are less visible or contested. Similarly, the 2.2% who were undecided may indicate uncertainty about what constitutes a harmful tradition, variations in teaching across congregations, or limited exposure to alternative perspectives. These findings underscore the interpretive diversity within the AIC and the challenge of addressing systemic theological norms that perpetuate DGBV.

The perceived presence of harmful conservative theological traditions has significant implications for the effectiveness of the AIC's anti-DGBV initiatives. Even with pastoral counseling, advocacy programs, and community partnerships in place, these norms may undermine interventions by socializing congregants into patriarchal or submissive roles, discouraging reporting of abuse, and questioning the legitimacy of church-led prevention efforts.

Addressing this challenge requires theological education for clergy that emphasizes egalitarian, gender-just interpretations of Scripture, critical reflection on the social impact of church traditions, and structured congregational dialogue on gender and domestic violence. Integrating these measures with existing counseling, policy frameworks, and community engagement can transform harmful traditions into practices that promote respect, equity, and protection. The findings underscore that confronting and reforming deeply embedded conservative theological norms is essential for aligning the church's moral authority with its ethical responsibility to prevent and address DGBV, ensuring its spiritual influence fosters justice, empowerment, and the protection of vulnerable members.

On theme of silence, the findings reveal a strong perception that the AIC remains silent on DGBV within its membership, with 80% of respondents (78) believing the church avoids openly addressing internal cases. Participants in the FGDs informed:

Cases of DGBV within the church, especially when they involve individuals in leadership, are often concealed or ignored. Some of us who are spouses of pastors endure significant suffering at the hands of our husbands. Out of fear of potential repercussions and other adverse consequences, we choose to remain silent (FGD 29).

In contrast, 18.4% of respondents disagreed and 2% were neutral, indicating that the church's reluctance to publicly address DGBV is widely recognized as a significant barrier to effective prevention, reporting, and intervention. The predominance of affirmative responses suggests that institutional silence may inadvertently normalize violence, reinforce victims' fears of stigma or reprisal, and embolden perpetrators by signaling a lack of accountability. This aligns with Nason-Clark et al. (2015) and Chitando and Chirongoma (2019), who note that organizational silence within morally authoritative institutions undermines both the legitimacy and effectiveness of interventions against domestic violence.

The minority of respondents who disagreed with the postulate (18.4%) may reflect experiences in local congregations where church leaders actively speak out against abuse or implement internal measures to support victims. The very small proportion of neutral respondents (2.0%) suggests that most congregants have a clear perception of the church's public stance or lack thereof on internal DGBV cases. However, this indicates that the church's silence is not merely a perceived lapse but is experienced as a consistent institutional behavior by the majority of its members.

The AIC's perceived silence on DGBV has significant implications, as it can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of pastoral counseling, advocacy programs, community engagement, and policy initiatives. Even where such measures exist, the lack of public denunciation or visible leadership may reinforce cultural and theological norms that prioritize family privacy, reconciliation, or hierarchical authority over justice and survivor protection.

Addressing this barrier requires a proactive, multi-layered approach, including transparent communication, public condemnation of abuse, and clear reporting and accountability mechanisms. Integrating these actions with pastoral counseling, advocacy, and community partnerships can strengthen the church's moral authority, while theological and educational initiatives emphasizing the ethical imperative to speak against violence ensure that institutional silence does not perpetuate harm, fostering a safer and more accountable faith community.

On the postulate that men fear and are silent to disclose situations of DGBV, the findings reveal a strong perception that men fear and remain silent about DGBV, with 83.7% of respondents (82) supporting this view.

Many of us men also experience abuse from our spouses. However, as men, we often perceive it as shameful to report such abuse and therefore choose to suffer in silence. Nevertheless, we must admit that suppressed pain and frustration can, at times, erupt into acts of violence (FGD 53).

In contrast, 9.2% of respondents disagreed and 7.1% were undecided, highlighting a critical gendered dimension in the reporting and visibility of DGBV within the AIC. Social stigma, cultural expectations, and constructions of masculine identity contribute to men's reluctance to disclose abuse, as many fear ridicule, loss of respect, or social isolation. In traditional and faith-based settings, men are often socialized to project strength and control, which limits their access to pastoral counseling, advocacy, and other church support services. These findings align with Jewkes et al. (2015) and Flood (2018), who note that underreporting by male victims is a major barrier to addressing DGBV in community and faith-based contexts.

A small minority of respondents (9.2%) who disagreed may reflect men who feel safe to disclose abuse in certain congregations or who perceive church structures as providing adequate confidentiality and support, while the 7.1% undecided suggest uncertainty about male silence or its causes. Nonetheless, the overwhelming perception that men fear reporting abuse highlights a widely recognized challenge, indicating that church-based DGBV interventions must intentionally include men as potential victims and active participants in prevention efforts. Pastoral counseling, awareness campaigns, and community dialogue forums should explicitly engage men, address stigma, and provide safe, confidential channels for disclosure to avoid perpetuating cycles of silence.

Closely tied to male silence is the pervasive influence of stigma, which discourages survivors from reporting abuse due to shame, fear of gossip, family dishonor, or social marginalization. In faith-based contexts like the AIC, cultural norms often intersect with selective theological interpretations to reinforce silence and normalize abuse, reducing the effectiveness of pastoral, advocacy, or legal interventions. Although a small minority perceived stigma as less pronounced or were undecided (7.8%), the findings show that stigma remains a widespread barrier, emphasizing the need for context-specific strategies that address the cultural and institutional factors sustaining underreporting.

The implications of stigma and cultural expectations extend beyond individual reluctance, interacting with other barriers such as conservative theological traditions, institutional silence, and limited resources to weaken interventions. Addressing these challenges requires culturally sensitive church strategies integrating education, pastoral support, and community engagement. Awareness campaigns should normalize reporting, challenge harmful norms, and foster collective responsibility, while dialogue forums and empowerment programs support survivors. Incorporating anti-stigma messaging into pastoral teaching and counseling ensures both men and women understand their rights, recognize abusive behaviors, and feel supported in reporting, strengthening the church's overall response to DGBV in Baringo Central Region.

On the hindrance of limited access to AIC based legal services and other resources, the findings indicate that limited access to AIC-based legal services and related resources is a significant barrier, with 80.6% of respondents (79) reporting restricted access, 13.3% (13) seeing no challenge, and 6.1% (6) undecided.

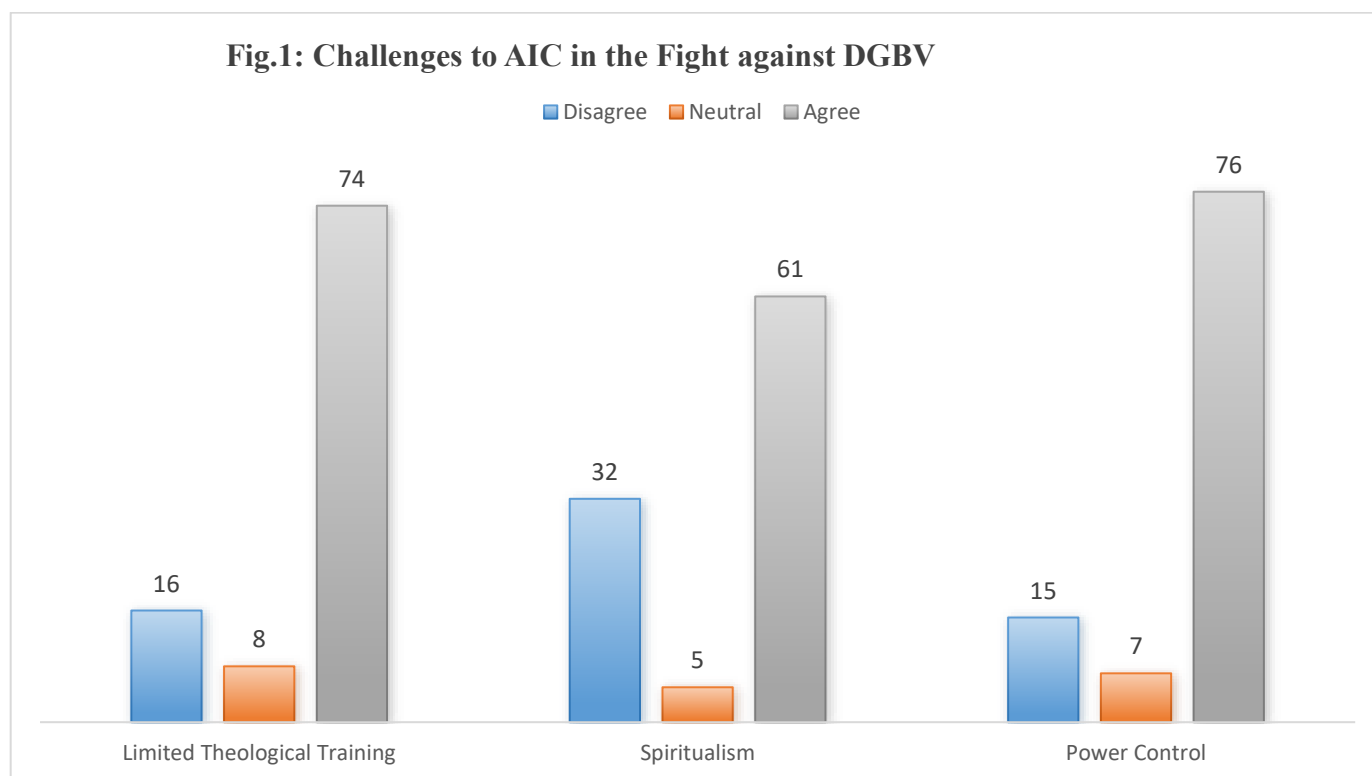
In the AIC, there are no internal legal mechanisms to address cases of DGBV. When such cases occur within the community, they are typically referred to government legal systems. Additionally, the church lacks adequately trained counselors to effectively handle these cases (KINF 35).

These findings highlight a structural barrier that limits the church's ability to provide comprehensive support to DGBV survivors and enforce accountability for perpetrators. Limited access to legal services within the AIC can impede survivor protection, weaken policy enforcement, and reduce the effectiveness of pastoral, counseling, and advocacy efforts, making it harder for survivors to report abuse, pursue justice, or understand their rights. This aligns with Heise (1998) and Jewkes et al. (2015), who emphasize that faith-based organizations must ensure accessible legal and structural resources to support victims and uphold justice.

The minority of respondents who disagreed (13.3%) may reflect experiences in congregations where legal or formal support mechanisms are more accessible, or where members perceive pastoral intervention as sufficient in addressing cases of abuse. Similarly, the neutral respondents (6.1%) suggest uncertainty about the availability or quality of legal services, which may reflect variability in local church capacities, lack of communication, or limited visibility of existing support systems.

This barrier is particularly significant when considered alongside the church's internal counseling programs, collaboration with community leaders, advocacy participation, and partnerships with external agencies. While these initiatives provide essential moral, emotional, and educational support, the lack of accessible legal mechanisms undermines enforcement, accountability, and the broader credibility of anti-DGBV efforts, as legal access is critical for protecting survivors and signaling the church's commitment to justice and institutional legitimacy.

Addressing this challenge requires establishing clear legal support structures, improving communication about available resources, partnering with legal aid organizations, and training clergy and staff in the legal and procedural aspects of DGBV cases. Integrating these measures with existing counseling, advocacy, and community programs would enable the church to provide a holistic response that combines moral guidance, emotional support, and enforceable protections, thereby strengthening its role in protecting survivors, holding perpetrators accountable, and upholding its moral and social responsibility in combating DGBV in Baringo Central Region.



Source: Field Data (2026)

Figure 1 highlights barriers faced by the AIC in addressing DGBV, with limited contextualized theological formation of church leaders identified as a major challenge. On the theme of limited theological training, a majority of respondents (75.5%, 74) acknowledged this issue, while 16.3% disagreed and 8.2% were neutral.

I am a pastor, but in my theological training, we were educated in a very traditional theology school that does not adequately reflect African cultural realities. It is often assumed that pastors are inherently capable of addressing conflicts and instances of violence. However, this form of training does not sufficiently equip pastors to handle challenges related to family life (KINF 4).

The findings indicate that gaps in contextualized, gender-sensitive theological training limit the AIC's ability to respond effectively to DGBV, as insufficiently trained clergy may inadvertently reinforce harmful traditions, misinterpret scripture, or provide inadequate pastoral guidance. The majority of respondents (75.5%) highlight the critical need for theological education that addresses the intersections of theology, gender, and violence, while the minority who disagreed (16.3%) or were neutral (8.2%) suggest variability across congregations or perceptions of existing training. These results align with Amegayibor (2021), Nason-Clark et al. (2015), and Chitando and Chirongoma (2019), emphasizing that gender-sensitive theological formation is essential for ethical and effective church leadership in addressing domestic and gender-based violence.

This barrier is particularly significant when viewed alongside other institutional challenges, such as misuse of scripture, conservative theological traditions, institutional silence, and cultural stigma. Even with pastoral counseling, advocacy programs, and partnerships in place, inadequately trained leaders may provide limited guidance, misinterpret teachings, or fail to intervene effectively, reducing the church's credibility and moral authority in addressing DGBV.

Addressing this challenge requires deliberate measures, including developing theological curricula that integrate gender-sensitive hermeneutics, contextually relevant pastoral care, and practical strategies for tackling DGBV. Continuous professional development, workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs can equip clergy with the knowledge and ethical frameworks needed to transform church teachings into effective tools for justice, protection, and gender equity in Baringo Central Region.

On the challenge of spiritualism leading to a misconception that family problems can be solved and resolved by prayer or by female submission, the quantitative data show that a majority of respondents, 61 (62.2%) acknowledged the existence of this challenge, while 32 (32.7%) disagreed, and 5 (5.1%) were neutral. Members from the FGDs claimed:

The power of prayer cannot be underestimated. Domestic and gender-based violence often arises when members of the community neglect their prayer life, leaving their relationships vulnerable to conflict. In times of family disputes, it is important to pray to God, who has the power to perform miracles and resolve even the most difficult challenges (FGD 55).

These findings suggest that certain theological and spiritual beliefs within the AIC, particularly the reliance on prayer or promotion of female submission to resolve family conflicts, may inadvertently perpetuate DGBV in Baringo Central Region. The predominance of affirmative responses highlights how narrowly interpreted spiritualism can reinforce harmful gender norms, discourage victims from seeking protective or legal interventions, and create a culture that tolerates abuse as divinely ordained. This aligns with Nason-Clark et al. (2015) and Jewkes et al. (2015), who note that spiritualized approaches without practical, gender-sensitive guidance can unintentionally sustain cycles of violence.

The minority of respondents who disagreed (32.7%) may reflect experiences of congregants in local contexts where spiritual guidance is complemented by pastoral counseling, practical problem-solving, or advocacy. Similarly, the neutral respondents (5.1%) suggest some uncertainty regarding the extent to which spiritualism influences responses to DGBV, which may indicate variability in teaching, leadership styles, or congregational culture.

This challenge is significant because spiritualized approaches that prioritize prayer or female submission can reinforce existing barriers of conservative theological traditions, misuse of scripture, cultural stigma, limited

theological formation, and congregational silence, thereby limiting the effectiveness of pastoral counseling, advocacy initiatives, and policy enforcement. By framing abuse as a primarily spiritual issue, these approaches may discourage survivors from seeking practical support or legal recourse and can normalize harmful behaviors within the church.

Addressing this barrier requires a holistic approach that integrates spiritual guidance with practical, gender-sensitive interventions. Church leaders should provide pastoral care that combines prayer with strategies for survivor protection, accountability for perpetrators, and access to legal, social, and counseling resources, while educational programs and workshops can reframe spiritual practices to promote justice, empowerment, and safety rather than tolerance of abuse.

On the theme of dynamics of power and control among church family members, quantitative data indicate that a substantial majority of respondents, 76 (78.0%), acknowledged the existence of power control dynamics as a major challenge, while only 15 (15.3%) disagreed and 7 (7.1%) remained neutral.

In the Kalenjin culture, women are generally not expected to confront their husbands, who are regarded as the heads of the family. And in the Holy Scriptures women are a weaker gender that is supposed to be protected by men. Tensions often arise when women seek greater decision-making power within marriage, a practice that is widely viewed as unacceptable, even within the church context (KINF 52).

These findings highlight that unequal power relations are a central factor sustaining DGBV within church households, as hierarchical structures based on gender, age, marital status, or ecclesiastical position can perpetuate abuse and limit the effectiveness of church interventions. Affirmative responses indicate that dominant individuals may enforce submission, silence dissent, or normalize violence, sometimes using religious teachings or doctrines to legitimize their authority. Such dynamics discourage victims from reporting abuse or seeking support, allowing violence to persist and undermining institutional efforts for prevention and redress, a pattern supported by previous studies (Jewkes et al., 2015; Flood, 2018; Amegayibor, 2021).

The minority of respondents who disagreed with the existence of power imbalances may reflect contexts where family and congregational relationships are more egalitarian, or where church leaders actively promote shared decision-making, mutual respect, and accountability. Neutral responses suggest variability in experiences, indicating that power dynamics are not uniformly experienced across all church families. Nonetheless, the overwhelming consensus highlights power control as a pervasive and structurally embedded challenge within the AIC.

Power imbalances are particularly consequential when considered alongside other barriers identified in the study, including conservative theological traditions, misuse of scripture, institutional silence, and cultural stigma surrounding DGBV. Such dynamics weaken the effectiveness of counseling programs, advocacy initiatives, and reporting mechanisms, while undermining the moral credibility of church leadership and reducing victims' trust in church-based interventions. In environments where authority is unquestioned and accountability is limited, survivors are less likely to disclose abuse or participate in prevention programs.

Closely linked to power control is the challenge of marital entitlement, particularly the use of marital authority to justify violent or coercive sexual demands. This practice obscures sexual abuse within marriage, discourages disclosure, and diminishes the perceived legitimacy of pastoral, legal, and advocacy interventions. Even where counseling and external partnerships exist, entrenched beliefs about marital rights interact with other barriers like conservative theology, misuse of scripture, and cultural norms to reinforce DGBV within the church community.

Addressing these challenges requires transformative strategies that reshape power relations, promote gender equality, and encourage shared authority in family and congregational life. Gender-sensitive theological education for clergy and congregants, integration of critical discussions of power, consent, and respect into pastoral guidance, and the development of clear policies condemning abuse are essential. Combined with awareness campaigns and survivor-centered support, these interventions can foster a culture of accountability,

dignity, and justice. Overall, confronting power control and marital entitlement is vital for strengthening the AIC's moral authority and practical effectiveness in preventing and responding to DGBV.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Africa Inland Church in Baringo Central Region faces significant challenges in addressing domestic and gender-based violence due to entrenched theological and institutional barriers, including the misuse of Scripture, conservative traditions, and limited gender-sensitive training for clergy, which collectively legitimize patriarchal authority and discourage reporting. Cultural and structural obstacles, such as institutional silence, spiritualized approaches emphasizing prayer or female submission, stigma, and limited access to legal and support resources, further hinder the church's ability to protect survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. Additionally, gendered dynamics, including male reluctance to disclose abuse, marital entitlement, and hierarchical power relations within families and congregations, underscore the need for inclusive, transformative, and contextually grounded interventions that align theological authority with justice, equality, and survivor protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the Africa Inland Church in Baringo Central Region adopt a comprehensive approach to address DGBV. First, strengthen gender-sensitive theological education and pastoral training to equip clergy with contextually relevant, equitable interpretations of Scripture, enabling them to challenge harmful traditions, patriarchal norms, and spiritualized approaches that hinder effective intervention. Second, enhance transparency, accountability, and access to support by publicly condemning abuse, establishing clear reporting mechanisms, expanding legal and counseling services, and integrating these with pastoral care to provide both moral guidance and practical protection for survivors. Third, actively address cultural norms, stigma, and power imbalances within congregations through awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and inclusive programs that recognize both men and women as affected, promote equitable relationships, and ensure interventions are contextually relevant, culturally sensitive, and effective in preventing and responding to DGBV.

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