

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF MEN AND BOYS IN PREVENTION OF GENDER
BASED VIOLENCE: THE CASE OF OMUGO SUBCOUNTY, TEREGO – UGANDA**

BY

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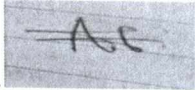

MARCH 2026

DECLARATION

I, **AKELLO TEDDY** hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation titled "*Examining the role of men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence: The Case of Omugo Subcounty, Terego – Uganda*" is my own work, carried out under the guidance of Dr. Amon Ashaba Mwiine from the Department of Women and Gender Studies, Institute of Gender and Development Studies, Makerere University and Dr. Ndaluka Thomas of the University of Dar es Salaam. To the best of my knowledge, this dissertation does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgment has been made. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree in any university or institution.

Akello Teddy

Date: 18th/3/2026

Signature ...  

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APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, friends, and mentors. Their unwavering support, encouragement, and their belief in me has been the cornerstone of this achievement.

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Amon Ashaba Mwiine and Dr. Thomas Ndaluka, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and expertise throughout this journey. Special thanks to my colleagues and friends who have offered moral support, shared ideas, and helped me overcome challenges. Lastly, I am forever grateful to my family for their unconditional love, patience, and encouragement, which made this accomplishment possible.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- FGM/C:** Female Genital Mutilation Cutting
- GBV:** Gender-Based Violence
- HIV:** Human Immune Virus
- NGOs:** Non-governmental Organizations
- SDGs:** Sustainable Development Goals
- SGBV:** Sexual and Gender Based Violence
- UDHS:** Uganda Demographic and Health Survey
- UN:** United Nations
- UNCF:** United Nations Children's Fund
- WHO:** World Health Organization

ABSTRACT

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a persistent challenge despite the implementation of multiple community-based interventions. This study examined male engagement strategies in GBV prevention in Omugo Subcounty, focusing on existing interventions, the involvement of men and boys, and the effectiveness of these approaches. Guided by Nego-Feminism and Hegemonic Masculinity theories, the study employed a qualitative research design involving key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Findings revealed that community-based interventions such as awareness campaigns, family mediation, and local by-laws have contributed to increased reporting and community sensitization. However, exclusive male-targeted programs remain limited. Interventions engaging men and boys through role model initiatives, peer education, and structured dialogue platforms were reported to foster behavioral change, promote shared household responsibility, and challenge harmful masculine norms. Nonetheless, entrenched patriarchal beliefs, limited outreach, and insufficient long-term monitoring constrain sustainability and scale.

The study concludes that effective GBV prevention requires gender-transformative approaches that actively engage men and boys while addressing structural and cultural barriers. Drawing directly from these findings, the study recommends scaling up exclusive male-focused programs, institutionalizing long-term monitoring mechanisms for role model initiatives, strengthening collaboration with clan and religious leaders to address normative resistance, and integrating gender-transformative life skills education into schools. These recommendations are grounded in the empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, emphasizing negotiated community engagement and the transformation of dominant masculinities as practical pathways toward sustainable GBV prevention.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by providing background information, outlining the research problem, stating the study objectives, defining its scope, justifying its importance, highlighting its significance, and presenting the theoretical framework. Finally, the chapter concludes with operational definitions of key terms.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a widespread human rights issue, especially affecting women and girls in rural areas like Omugo Subcounty, Terego District. While most interventions focus on women, there is increasing recognition that men and boys must be actively involved in prevention efforts. Their influence in patriarchal societies makes them key allies in challenging harmful gender norms and promoting positive change. This study explores how men and boys are engaged in GBV prevention in Omugo, assesses the effectiveness of such strategies, and identifies opportunities for improvement. The chapter sets the stage for the dissertation by outlining the background, problem statement, objectives, scope, significance, theoretical framework, and key terms. It highlights the need for inclusive, community-based approaches to ending GBV.

1.2 Background to the Study

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Gender Based Violence is defined as "any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females" (World Health Organization, 2002). This definition acknowledges the role of power imbalances and societal norms in perpetuating violence against individuals based on their gender.

According to Dlamini (2021), GBV refers to violence that is directed at an individual based on their sex or gender. This form of violence can be physical, emotional, mental, and sexual among many other determinants. Dlamini further emphasizes that GBV can originate from various sources, including the family, community, and state institutions. In some communities, GBV has been normalized to the extent that perpetrators are not legally held accountable, highlighting the systemic nature of the issue (Dlamini, 2021).

While these definitions establish GBV as a global and structural problem, they also signal an important analytical shift: violence is not merely an individual act but a reflection of socially constructed gender hierarchies. This understanding provides the foundation for examining how masculinities are formed, legitimized, and reproduced within specific cultural contexts. Therefore, analyzing GBV in Omugo Sub-county requires moving beyond descriptive prevalence rates to interrogate how local gender norms and power relations shape both perpetration and prevention.

Globally, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a significant challenge, with devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), GBV affects approximately one in three women globally, making it a pervasive public health concern (World Health Organization, 2021). While GBV affects individuals of all genders, women and girls are disproportionately impacted, experiencing higher rates of violence and its associated harms (United Nations, 2020).

The global discourse on engaging men and boys in GBV prevention has evolved significantly in recent years. Initiatives such as the UNWOMEN HeForShe campaign and the Men Engage Alliance have highlighted the importance of male involvement in challenging patriarchal norms and promoting gender equality (UN Women, 2020).

Research indicates that men and boys who adhere to traditional notions of masculinity are more likely to perpetrate violence against women and girls (Connell, 2012). Therefore, interventions that promote alternative, non-violent forms of masculinity can contribute to Gender Based Violence prevention (Flood, 2020).

Although global initiatives have emphasized male engagement as transformative, scholars caution that involving men without critical gender analysis may unintentionally reproduce male dominance. The effectiveness of male involvement depends on whether interventions challenge structural power inequalities or merely promote superficial participation. This debate is particularly relevant in rural and displacement-affected contexts such as Omugo, where gender roles are strongly embedded in socio-cultural and economic survival systems.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence of intimate partner violence ranges from 29% to 68%, with significant variations between countries (World Health Organization, 2021). In these communities, Gender Based Violence is deeply entrenched in cultural norms and practices, making it challenging

to address effectively (Jewkes *et al.*, 2015). However, initiatives such as the Sonke Gender Justice Network in South Africa have shown promising results in engaging men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention through community-based interventions and advocacy (Dworkin *et al.*, 2019).

In South Asia, approximately 37% of women report experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2021). In here, Gender Based Violence is often exacerbated by entrenched gender inequalities and socio-economic disparities (Kabeer, 2016). Efforts to engage men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention have been limited but are gaining momentum. For example, the "One Man Can" campaign in India has mobilized men and boys to challenge gender norms and promote non-violence (Dasgupta *et al.*, 2018).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, rates of intimate partner violence are alarmingly high, with 24% to 53% of women reporting abuse by a partner (World Health Organization, 2021). High rates of Gender Based Violence are linked to machismo culture and structural inequalities (Alvarez *et al.*, 2019). Machismo culture is a deeply ingrained belief system in Latin America and the Caribbean that emphasizes male dominance, control, and traditional gender roles, often portraying men as authoritative and women as submissive (Alvarez *et al.*, 2019).

This cultural norm perpetuates Gender-Based Violence (GBV) by justifying male aggression, discouraging women from reporting abuse, and reinforcing structural inequalities that limit women's autonomy and access to justice. However, grassroots organizations like Promundo have implemented successful interventions that engage men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention through education and community mobilization (Dunkle *et al.*, 2019).

From Africa perspectives, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 37% of women in Africa experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime, significantly higher than the global average of 30% (World Health Organization, 2021). Cultural practices such as early marriages remain prevalent in many African countries, further perpetuating Gender Based Violence (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020).

In Africa, Gender Based Violence manifests in diverse forms such as sexual violence including rape, economic violence, psychological, physical and early marriages, which is often exacerbated by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, gender inequalities, and socio-economic disparities.

Efforts to address Gender Based Violence in Africa have been hampered by various challenges, including weak legal frameworks, limited access to justice and support services, and cultural resistance to change (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013). Conflict and humanitarian crises further exacerbate vulnerabilities to violence, particularly for women and children, as seen in regions such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan (Kinyanda *et al.*, 2018).

From East African perspectives, Gender Based Violence is a pervasive issue deeply rooted in cultural norms, socio-economic disparities, and systemic inequalities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 45% of women in East Africa experience intimate partner violence during their lifetime, with rates varying across countries (World Health Organization, 2021). Additionally, Female genital Mutilation cutting FGM/C rates remain high in several East African countries, with an estimated 21% prevalence among women aged 15-49 (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020).

Efforts to address Gender Based Violence in East Africa face numerous challenges, including limited access to justice, inadequate support services, and cultural barriers to seeking help (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013). Despite efforts to address this issue, Gender Based Violence remains prevalent in the region, necessitating a comprehensive approach that includes the active involvement of men and boys. Engaging men and boys as allies in the fight against Gender Based Violence is crucial for fostering sustainable change and advancing gender equality in the region.

The regional patterns discussed above provide an important backdrop for understanding Uganda's situation. However, national-level statistics alone do not capture localized socio-cultural and displacement dynamics that shape gender relations differently across districts. Therefore, examining GBV within specific contexts such as West Nile becomes necessary. In Uganda, according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) 2016, 56% of ever-married women aged 15-49 experienced physical violence, while 22% experienced sexual violence (Uganda Bureau of Statistic, 2018).

According to the UDHS UBOS & ICF, (2018), GBV manifests in various ways such as physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence and economic violence. It was found that 45% of ever-married women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence since age 15, 3% of women report having experienced sexual violence, and 36% of ever-married women have experienced emotional violence by their spouse. GBV has significant consequences, including physical

injuries, psychological trauma, increased risk of sexually transmitted infections, and economic dependence (UBOS & ICF, 2018).

It also affects household stability, children's well-being, and overall community development. Uganda has implemented several strategies to combat GBV. These includes the Domestic Violence Act (2010), the Penal Code Act, and the Prohibition of FGM Act (2010). Male involvement has been integrated into GBV prevention efforts, particularly through initiatives promoting positive masculinity, community dialogues, and engagement of male champions. Programs such as the SASA approach (Start, Awareness, Support, Action) have demonstrated success in shifting social norms and reducing GBV incidences (Kyegombe et al., 2014). However, challenges remain, including resistance due to deeply rooted patriarchal structures and cultural beliefs.

Uganda's National Male Involvement Strategy was introduced to address the persistent challenge of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) by engaging men as allies in prevention and response efforts (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. (2017). Traditionally, GBV interventions primarily focused on supporting survivors (mostly women and girls), but there was growing recognition that engaging men who are often the perpetrators was essential for sustainable change. The strategy was designed to transform patriarchal norms that fuel GBV, encourage men to become role models and advocates for gender equality, Involve men in interventions such as community awareness, policy advocacy, and household decision-making, and ensure government ministries, NGOs, religious leaders, and cultural institutions work together.

While male involvement in GBV prevention is a positive step, its effectiveness has been mixed. Some successes include Increased male participation in community dialogues and awareness programs and greater recognition of men's roles in caregiving and household responsibilities. However, challenges persist, limited funding and weak enforcement mechanisms, deep-rooted cultural beliefs that normalize GBV, some feminists who see men as a threat and fear that this could reproduce and perpetuate male dominance and backlash from the women's organizations .

The theoretical grounding of this study draws on both hegemonic masculinity and Nego-feminism to analyze these tensions. Hegemonic masculinity explains how dominant ideals of manhood characterized by authority, control, and emotional suppression can normalize violence as a mechanism of maintaining power (Connell, 2012). However, this framework alone may not sufficiently account for culturally embedded negotiation practices within African societies. Nego-

feminism, which emphasizes negotiation, relational complementarity, and pragmatic engagement rather than confrontation, provides a culturally grounded lens for examining how gender relations can be transformed without alienating men.

A study by Garcia-Moreno et al. (2015) found that in sub-Saharan Africa, 45% of women have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. According to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) 2018, 56% of ever-married women aged 15–49 have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by a current or former partner. Additionally, 22% of women reported experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime. A study by Nakiryia (2022) noted that the prevalence of GBV in Uganda is strongly linked to cultural practices and social norms that condone or normalize violence against women.

Uganda has made significant strides in addressing Gender Based Violence through policy frameworks such as the Domestic Violence Act and the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2016). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like CARE International and International Rescue Committee play a pivotal role in implementing interventions to prevent and respond to Gender Based Violence, focusing on community-based approaches such as community mobilization and awareness campaigns, formation of community action groups and, safe spaces and support and gender transformative programming such as engaging men and boys, economic empowerment of women, education and skills building (CARE International, n.d.).

In West Nile, Gender Based Violence is a significant concern, aggravated by factors such as poverty, displacement, and limited access to services. The effects of armed conflict and displacement have further heightened vulnerabilities to Gender Based Violence in this region (Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). According to the Women's Refugee Commission (2019), nearly 70% of women and girls in displacement-affected areas of West Nile reported experiencing some form of GBV, including intimate partner violence, early and forced marriage, and sexual exploitation. CARE International has been actively involved in community-based initiatives to address Gender Based Violence in Omugo Sub- County, emphasizing the engagement of men and boys as key stakeholders in prevention efforts (CARE International, n.d.).

Omugo Sub-county in Terego District is located within the West Nile sub-region, an area significantly affected by cross-border displacement due to conflict in South Sudan. West Nile hosts

a substantial refugee population, making it one of the largest refugee-hosting regions in Uganda (Office of the Prime Minister, 2022; UNHCR, 2023). The influx of refugees has reshaped local socio-economic structures, livelihoods, and gender relations. Displacement often disrupts traditional male provider roles due to loss of land, employment, and social status, while humanitarian assistance mechanisms may increase women's access to resources and services.

Such shifts can destabilize established household power hierarchies, sometimes resulting in tensions that heighten the risk of intimate partner violence (Horn, 2010; International Rescue Committee, 2019). Furthermore, exposure to conflict-related trauma and economic precarity has been linked to increased stress, alcohol abuse, and domestic conflict within refugee and host communities (Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). These dynamics suggest that GBV in Omugo cannot be understood solely through national statistics but must be analyzed within its displacement-affected, post-conflict socio-cultural context, where gender roles are actively renegotiated under conditions of vulnerability.

Engaging men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention is increasingly recognized as essential for challenging harmful gender norms and promoting gender equality. Jewkes *et al.*, (2019) suggests that interventions targeting men and boys can lead to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors related to GBV. However, there remains a gap in empirical evidence and understanding of their roles, particularly in contexts like Omugo Sub- County. This study sought to address this gap by examining existing key interventions that have involved men for prevention of Gender Based Violence in the communities and effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender based violence.

This study contributes localized empirical evidence from Omugo Sub-county to broader global debates on engaging men and boys in GBV prevention. By situating international frameworks within a displacement-affected rural context, the study advances understanding of how gender-transformative approaches operate in post-conflict settings and supports progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 5.2.

1.3 Problem Statement

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive human rights violation and public health concern in Uganda, with severe consequences for individuals, families, and communities (Nalunga *et al.*, 2021). According to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018), a substantial proportion of women have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence. Despite national policy frameworks and legal reforms, GBV continues to persist across regions, including West Nile.

Omugo Sub-county in Terego District is characterized by high poverty levels, limited access to resources, and displacement-related vulnerabilities, factors that may exacerbate household tensions and gender inequalities (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018). While several studies in Uganda have examined GBV prevalence and evaluated gender-transformative initiatives at national and selected local levels (Peacock & Barker, 2014; Casey *et al.*, 2018), existing literature largely focuses on women as survivors or on male perpetration patterns. Limited empirical attention has been given to examining how men and boys, particularly within rural and displacement-affected communities such as West Nile, actively engage in GBV prevention at the community level.

Although Uganda has developed national strategies promoting male involvement in GBV prevention, there remains insufficient evidence on how these policies translate into practice in specific local contexts. It is unclear how men and boys in communities like Omugo interpret, negotiate, and operationalize their roles in prevention efforts, especially within socio-cultural systems where men traditionally dominate household and community decision-making.

Studies indicate that men constitute a significant proportion of GBV perpetrators, while some male survivors remain reluctant to report abuse due to stigma (Kasungu, 2023; Thulin *et al.*, 2022; Peretz & Vidmar, 2021; McCleary-Sills *et al.*, 2016). However, focusing solely on male perpetration provides an incomplete understanding of prevention dynamics. Given the structural power men hold within families and communities, there is a critical need to examine whether and how this influence can be redirected toward transforming harmful gender norms and preventing violence.

Therefore, this study addresses a contextual and empirical gap by examining the specific roles men and boys play in preventing GBV in Omugo Sub-county, Terego District. By moving beyond national policy discourse and generalized findings, the study generates localized evidence on male

engagement within a rural, displacement-affected setting, thereby informing contextually grounded interventions aimed at fostering a violence-free society.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 Main Objective

To examine the role of men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence in Omugo Subcounty.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To establish existing interventions for prevention of Gender Based Violence in the communities.
2. To explore interventions that have involved men in prevention of Gender Based Violence.
3. Examine the effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence

1.4.3 Research Questions

- i. What are the existing interventions for prevention of Gender Based Violence in the communities?
- ii. What are the interventions that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence?
- iii. How have strategies involving men and boys contributed to prevention of GBV in local communities of Omugo Sub-County?

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 Geographical Scope

The geographical scope of this study was limited to Omugo Subcounty, located within the broader context of Uganda. Omugo Subcounty is situated in the North, within the West Nile sub-region. It encompasses a specific geographical area with distinct cultural, social, and economic characteristics that may influence the dynamics of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and the roles of men and boys in its prevention (Oxfam International, 2015). The characteristics include cultural norms, close-knit communities where family and clan ties play a strong role in shaping individual behaviors for example in Lubara they believe in 'Arubba' here women who go and have sexual relationship will pay a cow and money to the elders and its only applicable to women not men and

portion of the population engaged in agriculture, which influences household incomes and financial stability.

1.5.2 Content Scope

The content scope of the study encompasses various aspects related to the role of men and boys in the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) within Omugo Subcounty. This included existing interventions aims at addressing Gender Based Violence, interventions that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence and effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence.

1.5.3 Time Scope

The time scope of the study span a defined period to ensure comprehensive data collection and analysis. The study was conducted over an estimated timeframe of six months. This timeframe included various stages of the research process, including data collection, data analysis, and report writing. By adhering to a specific time scope, the study aimed to provide timely insights into the role of men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention within Omugo Subcounty, Uganda.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a significant issue globally, affecting the lives of millions of individuals regardless of age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. In many societies, including Omugo Sub-County, Gender Based Violence perpetuates cycles of inequality, injustice, and suffering. While efforts to address Gender Based Violence have traditionally focused on empowering women and girls, recent research suggests that engaging men and boys is crucial for effective prevention and intervention strategies (Jewkes *et al.*, 2015).

The involvement of men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention is multifaceted. Firstly, men and boys often hold positions of power and influence within communities, making them key agents of change in challenging harmful gender norms and behaviors (Dworkin *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, by engaging men and boys in conversations about masculinity, power dynamics, and respectful relationships, interventions could promote empathy, accountability, and solidarity in combating Gender Based Violence (Fulu *et al.*, 2013).

However, while there is growing recognition of the importance of male involvement in Gender Based Violence prevention, there is still a lack of empirical evidence on effective strategies and

interventions, particularly within specific cultural contexts like Omugo Sub-County. Therefore, this study addressed this gap by examining the role of men and boys in preventing Gender Based Violence in Omugo Sub-County.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The investigation into the role of men and boys in preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Omugo Sub-County, holds several significant implications. Historically, Gender Based Violence prevention strategies have primarily focused on women and girls as victims and survivors. However, by shifting the focus to include men and boys as allies and agents of change, interventions can adopt a more comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing the root causes of Gender Based Violence. This study contributes to expanding the scope of Gender Based Violence prevention efforts to encompass the entire community.

The findings of this study could inform the development and implementation of evidence-based policies and programs aimed at Gender Based Violence prevention, both within Omugo Sub-County and in similar contexts globally. By identifying interventions, effective strategies and best practices, policymakers, non-governmental organizations(NGOs,) and practitioners could tailor interventions to meet the specific needs and cultural dynamics of the communities they serve.

Research on the role of men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention, particularly within specific cultural contexts like Omugo Sub-County, contributes to the broader body of knowledge on gender and violence. By generating new insights and sharing lessons learned, this study could contribute to advancing academic discourse and informing future research and practice in the field of Gender Based Violence prevention.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism theory, a strand of African feminism and R.W Connell theory of hegemonic masculinity in conceptualising the role of men and boys as well as feminist choice of engaging male participation in GBV prevention.

This study was grounded in Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism theory and R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, which together provide a complementary lens for understanding and conceptualising the role of men and boys in GBV prevention.

Nego-Feminism theory

Nego-Feminism was developed by Obioma Nnaemeka (2004). Nnaemeka, a Nigerian feminist scholar, offers a unique perspective that challenges conventional Western feminist frameworks and emphasizes the agency and self-assertion of African women (Nnaemeka, 2004) in negotiating patriarchy. It acknowledges that African societies function through deeply embedded communal and relational values, making collective engagement more effective than individual assertion. This theory justifies the need for inclusive, culturally sensitive approaches that engage men and boys as partners not adversaries in addressing GBV. It also legitimizes the feminist choice of involving men in GBV prevention strategies, especially in patriarchal contexts like Omugo Subcounty, where community cohesion and cooperation are central. According to Nnaemeka (2004:377-8), “First, *nego-feminism* is the feminism of ne-gotiation; second, *nego-feminism* stands for “no ego” feminism. In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here, negotiation has the double meaning of “give and take/exchange” and “cope with successfully/go around.” African feminism (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts”. In the context of this study, involvement of boys and men in prevention of pervasive forms of GBV was conceptualized as a practice/strategy by African feminists in negotiating patriarchy to realise violence-free communities.

Nego feminism was also conceptualized to reject the victim narrative often associated with Western feminism and instead focuses on empowering African women to define and shape their own identities and struggles. Nnaemeka's work primarily focuses on empowering African women, and the principles of Nego feminism can inform strategies for engaging men as allies in efforts to address Gender Based Violence (Oloruntoba, 2019). She argues that African women should be seen as active agents of change rather than passive recipients of aid or interventions.

By emphasizing agency, collaboration, and cultural relevance, Nego feminism provides a framework for engaging men as allies in efforts to address Gender Based Violence within the

African context. Nego-feminism does not articulate men's behaviours and practices. As such, this study draws on R.W. Connell's theory of Hegemonic masculinity to address this gap in conceptualisation of masculinities.

Hegemonic masculinity

The theory of hegemonic masculinity, as articulated in Connell's seminal work "Masculinities" (1995), exploring how societal norms construct an idealized form of masculinity that serves as the standard to which all men are expected to adhere. This hegemonic masculinity is characterized by traits such as dominance, aggression, and control, and it often perpetuates patterns of gender inequality and violence. However, Connell also acknowledges the existence of multiple masculinities, including marginalized and subordinate forms that deviate from the hegemonic ideal.

In the context of Gender Based Violence prevention, understanding the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity was crucial for examining how societal expectations and power structures influence men's attitudes and behaviors towards women and girls (Jewkes *et al.*, 2015). By interrogating how hegemonic masculinity intersects with other axes of identity such as class, race, and ethnicity, researchers can gain insights into the complex ways in which privilege and oppression intersect to shape experiences of violence and resistance. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity gives a theoretical framework that provides a robust analytical tool for studying the role of men and boys in preventing Gender Based Violence in Omugo Sub-County. The framework's focus on multiple forms of masculinity provides insights into different roles that men could play depending on forms of masculinities they embody. The diversity of masculinity equally contributes to possibilities of different and perhaps progressive forms of male behaviour which can contribute to non-violent behaviour amongst men, or enable them contribute to violence prevention in society. This framework facilitated an examination of the complex interplay between gender, and power offering valuable insights for developing contextually relevant and socially transformative interventions.

The two theories were used in a complementary manner. Nego-Feminism provides the normative and cultural foundation for why engaging men and boys is a legitimate and context-appropriate feminist strategy in African settings. Hegemonic masculinity theory, in turn, offers a critical analytical lens to examine the root causes and socialization patterns that sustain GBV among men

and boys. In combination, the theories allowed the study to both critique harmful gender norms and propose culturally grounded, cooperative strategies for transforming them.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Gender-based Violence (GBV): Gender-based violence refers to any harmful act perpetrated against an individual based on their gender, encompassing physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence (World Health Organization, 2022). In the context of this study, Gender Based Violence includes intimate partner violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), child marriage, and other forms of violence perpetrated against individuals based on their gender identity.

Men and Boys: For the purpose of this study, "men (age 18 years and above)" and "boys (age 13-17 years old)" refer to individuals who identify as male, regardless of age. This includes adult men as well as adolescent boys. In this study, I have used the age and sex parameters to define "men" and "boys" as a convenient starting point for data collection. I equally acknowledge that boyhood and manhood are social constructs based on society's expectations.

Prevention of Gender-based Violence: Prevention of gender-based violence involves proactive measures aimed at reducing the incidence and impact of violence perpetrated against individuals based on their gender (WHO, 2022). This includes interventions targeted at addressing root causes, changing social norms, promoting gender equality, and providing support services for survivors.

Role: The term "role" refers to the functions, responsibilities, and behaviors that men and boys undertake or are expected to undertake in the context of preventing Gender-Based Violence. This includes their involvement in awareness-raising, advocacy, support services, and community engagement activities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of existing literature on the subject of investigation, i.e., the role of men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention. It particularly highlights the gaps in existing body of knowledge, along the thematic areas informed by objectives of the study. These gaps informed research questions and the findings therefrom.

2.2 Existing interventions for prevention of Gender Based Violence in the communities

Educational programs play a crucial role in preventing Gender Based Violence by raising awareness, challenging harmful gender norms, and promoting healthy relationships. For example, a study by Jewkes *et al.* (2015) in South Africa evaluated the impact of a stepping stones program which is a gender-transformative intervention that targets young men and aims to reduce rates of intimate partner violence by addressing underlying gender norms and promoting healthier relationship dynamics. This program combines participatory learning techniques with gender-transformative approaches to challenge traditional notions of masculinity and power dynamics within relationships (Jewkes *et al.* 2008). However, while the findings suggest reductions in self-reported perpetration and improved attitudes toward gender equality, debates remain regarding the sustainability and scalability of such interventions. Some scholars argue that short-term attitude change does not always translate into long-term behavioral transformation, particularly in structurally unequal environments where poverty, unemployment, and entrenched patriarchy persist. The methodological reliance on self-reported behavioral change in quasi-experimental designs raises concerns about social desirability bias and over-reporting of positive outcomes.

The program focuses on building communication skills, empathy, and a deeper understanding of gender equality and respectful relationships (Jewkes *et al.* 2008). Results showed significant reductions in perpetration of intimate partner violence among participants. In their review of community-based interventions for preventing Gender-Based Violence, Ellsberg *et al.* (2015) identified several successful approaches, including community dialogues, advocacy campaigns, and empowerment programs for women. These studies demonstrate that educational and community-based interventions can reduce GBV, yet their effectiveness is context-dependent.

This highlights the importance of examining how similar interventions operate in specific settings like Omugo Sub-county, where displacement, poverty, and local cultural norms may mediate men and boys' engagement in GBV prevention. Such an inquiry is crucial to generate contextually grounded strategies that are both culturally sensitive and practically effective.

Policy reforms are essential for creating an enabling environment for Gender Based Violence prevention and response. For example, the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act in Uganda in 2010 provided a legal framework for addressing Gender Based Violence and improving access to justice and support services for survivors (Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2010).

The Domestic Violence Act (2010) defines gender-based violence as any act of violence, or the threat of violence, that occurs because of gender or gender-based power dynamics. It recognizes that GBV is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, which primarily affects women and girls, but can also affect men and boys. The Act acknowledges a range of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuses that individuals may face within intimate relationships or families.

The Act explicitly defines and addresses various forms of Gender-Based Violence, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and verbal abuse as forms of Gender Based Violence. The Domestic Violence Act outlines several mechanisms to prevent and respond to GBV. The Act allows for the issuance of protection orders to prevent further violence, including orders for the abuser to vacate the home or cease contact with the survivor.

The Act provides for survivors to seek legal action through courts to hold perpetrators accountable, ensuring that there are legal avenues for both criminal and civil cases, and it mandates the establishment of support services such as shelters, counseling, and health services for survivors of GBV, enabling them to recover physically and emotionally. While the Domestic Violence Act (2010) widely addresses various forms of Gender-Based Violence ranging from physical and sexual abuse to psychological and economic violence it does not clearly emphasize the involvement of men and boys in the prevention of GBV.

The Act primarily focuses on protection, redress mechanisms, and survivor support services. Although these are essential, the lack of a clear strategy for engaging men and boys as allies in prevention represents a notable omission. The Act emphasizes legal remedy and protection orders but lacks a strong framework for primary prevention, such as community education, behavior change communication, or the promotion of gender-equitable norms. There is no section dedicated to mobilizing men and boys as change agents in preventing GBV, despite evidence that their inclusion is key to addressing the root causes of violence. The Act also does not sufficiently address newer or less visible forms of violence such as cyber violence, which is increasingly affecting women and girls in Uganda.

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development developed the National Male Involvement Strategy for the prevention and response to Gender Based Violence in Uganda aimed at engaging men and boys to become change agents in their communities and workplaces (Ministry of Gender and Social Development, 2017). The National Male Involvement Strategy developed by the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (2017) outlines several key measures to engage men and boys in the prevention and response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). These measures focus on reshaping attitudes and behaviors, challenging harmful gender norms, and encouraging men's active participation in ending GBV.

The strategy emphasizes the importance of raising awareness among men and boys about the prevalence, causes, and consequences of GBV and encourages integrating GBV prevention and male involvement initiatives into school curricula and workplace training programs. By doing so, it targets young men and boys early, fostering positive attitudes toward gender equality and respect for women and girls. The strategy emphasizes that while Gender Based Violence has greater negative impact on women and girls, men and boys can also be and are sometimes victims of Gender Based Violence (Ministry of Gender and Social Development, 2017).

Ahikire and Mwiine (2012) looked at the connection between Gender Based Violence and Human Immune Virus and identified challenges such as lack of clarity on Human Immune Virus (HIV) and Gender Based Violence, limited resources, a lot of speaking with no action in Gender Based Violence and masculinity. They suggested among other strategies designing a structural framework to deal with the link between Human Immune Virus, Gender Based Violence and integration of the feminist and masculinity approach in Gender Based Violence /Human Immune

Virus program (Ahikire & Mwiine , 2012). The study raises debates about how gender-transformative interventions can address both structural inequalities and individual behaviors. For instance, while proposing a structural framework is valuable, it remains unclear how such frameworks translate into practical, community-level engagement of men as active participants in GBV prevention. While Ahikire and Mwiine (2012) contribute to understanding the theoretical and programmatic linkages between GBV and HIV, their findings highlight the broader research gap this study addresses: examining men's and boys' active participation in GBV prevention within context-specific and structurally constrained settings.

CARE Uganda power model is one of the models that works with men in prevention of Gender Based Violence targeting of men for gender transformation to promote the development equitable relation between men and men through applying three pronged approach. These three approaches include; working with men as partner to women such as husbands, brothers and fathers; working with men as change agent; working with men as client for example as victim of Gender Based Violence (CARE International, 2013).

The development and enforcement of such by-laws reflect an increasing community ownership of GBV prevention strategies, aligned with literature emphasizing the importance of locally-enforced norms in changing behavior (Heise, 2011; Abramsky et al., 2016). When community members are actively involved in rule-making and enforcement, the legitimacy and sustainability of GBV interventions are significantly enhanced (Michau et al., 2015).

Economic empowerment interventions, when coupled with gender-transformative programming, can reduce women's risk of experiencing GBV (Vyas & Watts, 2009; Gibbs et al., 2020). Economic resources provide women with not only financial independence but also the confidence to challenge oppressive norms and participate meaningfully in community dialogue and decision-making (Jewkes *et al.*, 2015).

According to Levto *et al.* (2014), engaging boys and men through sports and community-based programs can help dismantle stereotypes and foster healthier, more equitable relationships. Barker and Ricardo (2005) argue that men who model non-violent and equitable behavior have a ripple effect in reducing GBV across generations. Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, and Lippman (2013) stress that interventions aimed at reshaping masculinities have demonstrated success when men are actively engaged as allies in gender justice. While these studies provide valuable insights, debates

remain regarding the transferability and sustainability of such interventions. Many programs rely on short-term engagement or self-reported behavioral outcomes, which may overstate their impact and overlook broader structural constraints such as poverty, entrenched patriarchy, and post-conflict social dynamics. Much of the existing evidence is drawn from urban or middle-income contexts, leaving questions about applicability in rural, displacement-affected communities. These findings highlight that male engagement in GBV prevention is not inherently transformative; effectiveness depends on culturally sensitive adaptation, integration of local gender norms, and attention to structural inequalities.

According to Flood (2011), male engagement programs that promote gender-equitable attitudes often through group education and community mobilization have been effective in shifting harmful gender norms and reducing GBV.

2.3 Interventions that have involved men in prevention of Gender Based Violence

Educational programs play a key role in engaging men in Gender Based Violence prevention by fostering awareness, challenging harmful stereotypes, and promoting gender equality. Such programs have demonstrated efficacy in altering attitudes and behaviors related to Gender Based Violence (Fulu *et al.*, 2013). Community mobilization efforts are instrumental in facilitating men's involvement in Gender Based Violence prevention by fostering collective action and societal change. Successful community-based interventions, including community dialogues and men's groups, empower men to challenge traditional gender norms and actively participate in preventing Gender Based Violence (Barker *et al.*, 2010). While these initiatives demonstrate success in localized settings, methodological limitations including reliance on self-reported behavioral change and limited longitudinal follow-up highlight the need for caution when generalizing results.

Gender-transformative interventions in countries like South Africa have demonstrated promising outcomes in engaging men in Gender Based Violence prevention. These interventions challenge traditional gender norms and promote healthy masculinity, leading to reductions in Gender Based Violence perpetration among men (Dworkin *et al.*, 2013).

Community-based Gender Based Violence prevention programs in countries such as Tanzania have shown positive results in engaging men in Gender Based Violence prevention. These programs, comprising men's groups, educational workshops, and community mobilization activities, have increased awareness and fostered behavior change among men (Doyle *et al.*, 2014).

The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act in Uganda in 2010 provided a legal framework for engaging men in Gender Based Violence prevention and improving access to justice and support services for survivors (Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2010). The Act does not outline specific measures for engaging men and boys, it only sets the foundation for gender-transformative approaches to addressing domestic violence by recognizing the need for comprehensive strategies that involve all members of society, regardless of gender.

According to Pulerwitz *et al.* (2010), interventions that are context-specific and rooted in community spaces are more likely to attract consistent male participation and facilitate open dialogue about sensitive gender issues. Reaching men in these informal settings also ensures that the message of GBV prevention is not limited to formal workshops or clinics, but becomes embedded in daily community life.

2.4 Effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence.

A study by Casey *et al.* (2018) on effectiveness of a school-based intervention in the UK focused on promoting healthy masculinity and respectful relationships among adolescent boys showed significant improvements in attitudes towards Gender Based Violence and intentions to intervene in abusive situations.

A study by Jewkes *et al.* (2015) on the impact of a community mobilization intervention in South Africa, involving men's groups discussing gender norms and power dynamics indicated reductions in Gender Based Violence perpetration and increased community support for gender equality policy-level interventions play a crucial role in engaging men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention. Istanbul Convention is an international legal framework aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Council of Europe, 2011). The Istanbul Convention, formally known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, is a landmark international treaty aimed at preventing and addressing Gender-Based Violence. The convention was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on April 7, 2011, in Istanbul, Turkey. It's mandated to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, establishes comprehensive legal standards and measures to prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators, and

recognizes the role of gender stereotypes and cultural norms in perpetuating violence against women and calls for measures to challenge and change these attitudes (Council of Europe, 2011).

Maputo Protocol is a regional legal framework adopted by the African Union aimed at promoting women's rights and preventing Gender Based Violence. By promoting gender equality and protecting victims, the policy created an environment conducive to engaging men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention (African Union, 2003). The protocol does not specifically address male involvement in Gender-Based Violence prevention, it contains provisions that create a conducive environment for engaging men and boys in efforts to prevent and address Gender-Based Violence. The protocol calls for the elimination of harmful practices that affect women and girls, including violence perpetrated by men and boys (African Union, 2003).

Doyle *et al.* (2018) examined the impact of a community mobilization intervention in Rwanda that engaged men in discussions about gender roles and power dynamics. The study reported reductions in GBV perpetration and increased community support for gender equality, highlighting the potential of participatory, men-focused approaches. However, critical reflection suggests caution in interpreting these findings. The intervention relied primarily on self-reported measures of behavior change, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, and the short-term follow-up limits understanding of sustained impact. While the program successfully fostered community dialogue, debates remain regarding its adaptability to contexts with different socio-cultural and post-conflict dynamics. For instance, Rwanda's relatively centralized community structures may facilitate mobilization in ways that are less feasible in dispersed, displacement-affected settings like Omugo Sub-county in Terego District. While Doyle *et al.* (2018) demonstrate that engaging men in community discussions can reduce violence and promote gender equity, their study also highlights the broader methodological and contextual gaps that the present research seeks to address.

MenEngage Alliance (2020) found that men who undergo personal transformation through GBV prevention programs often face peer pressure to conform to dominant masculine norms. This includes the expectation to be emotionally stoic, assert dominance over women, and resist any behavior perceived as "weak" or "feminine." These social pressures serve as barriers to sustained change and pose a risk of relapse into harmful behaviors.

According to Kyomuhendo and McIntosh (2006), informal justice systems frequently reproduce patriarchal norms, marginalize the voices of women and gender-equitable men, and fail to hold perpetrators of violence accountable. This not only weakens the credibility of prevention efforts but can also discourage male allies from sustaining their engagement.

Dworkin, Fleming, and Colvin (2015) argue that programs failing to consider the gendered experiences and social pressures faced by men often miss the opportunity to cultivate male allies in the fight against GBV. Without concrete support, including training, psychosocial services, or peer networks, even well-intentioned men may revert to traditional gender roles or disengage from prevention initiatives. Critically, this observation raises debates about the design and sustainability of male engagement programs: while many interventions focus on changing attitudes, they often underemphasize the structural and psychosocial factors that shape men's behavior, such as community expectations, economic stress, or exposure to violence. Methodologically, the study's insights derive primarily from qualitative assessments, which provide rich contextual understanding but may lack generalizability to other rural or displacement-affected settings. These findings highlight the importance of designing GBV prevention interventions that not only educate men but also provide ongoing support systems to reinforce behavioral change.

According to UN Women (2015), attributing GBV to women's clothing shifts blame from the perpetrator to the victim, reinforcing victim-blaming attitudes and impeding justice. Similarly, Jewkes et al. (2015) note that GBV is not caused by what women wear, but by gendered power imbalances, socialization into male dominance, and the normalization of control and violence in relationships.

According to Levtoev et al. (2014), early engagement with boys during formative years helps to challenge rigid gender roles and cultivate empathy, non-violence, and equality. Educational programs in schools and youth groups have been shown to reduce acceptance of GBV and increase willingness to intervene in abusive situations.

Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015) argue that interventions focused on men and boys can transform attitudes and behaviors by promoting critical reflection on masculinity, power, and relationships. These approaches encourage men to reject violence, share power, and support gender-equitable norms. Programs such as "MenEngage" and "Program H" in Latin America have shown positive

results in reducing intimate partner violence and promoting respectful relationships through community-based education and peer-led discussions (Barker *et al.*, 2007).

According to Casey *et al.* (2018), storytelling can act as a catalyst for attitude change, especially when the narratives come from trusted peers. When men witness others modeling respectful, caring, and non-violent masculinities, they are more likely to reflect on their own practices and feel empowered to make changes. This peer influence is more effective when the storyteller shares relatable experiences and demonstrates the tangible benefits of positive behavior, such as improved family harmony and mutual respect.

According to UN Women (2013), one of the critical outcomes of successful GBV prevention programs is enhanced community responsiveness, whereby community members actively intervene or report GBV when it occurs. The normalization of reporting indicates that stigma against survivors is decreasing, and that there is greater community consensus that violence is unacceptable.

Ellsberg *et al.* (2015) emphasize that increased reporting does not necessarily mean GBV incidents are rising in many cases, it reflects greater trust in justice mechanisms and increased confidence among survivors that they will be supported if they come forward. Michau *et al.* (2015) emphasizes that multi-sectoral and community-based approaches, which include stakeholders from various levels health workers, police, educators, local councils, and religious leaders are among the most effective in preventing GBV. Such approaches build community ownership, enhance program legitimacy, and create an enabling environment for survivors to seek support without fear of stigma or reprisal.

2.5 Gap in the Literature

Many interventions lack rigorous evaluation studies to assess their effectiveness and long-term impact on Gender Based Violence prevention. The interventions that have not been evaluated includes; National Male Involvement Strategy for the prevention and response to Gender Based Violence in Uganda and CARE Uganda power model. Strategies involving men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention have shown promising results in promoting gender equality, challenging harmful gender norms, and reducing instances of violence. Educational programs, community mobilization efforts, and policy reforms play complementary roles in engaging men

and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention. Many studies focused on short-term outcomes, and there is a need for research to assess the long-term effectiveness of interventions involving men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention. To fill the gap, this study assessed the effectiveness of identified unevaluated interventions i.e. National Male Involvement Strategy for the prevention and response to Gender Based Violence in Uganda and CARE Uganda power model.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the research design, the study area, the study population, sample size estimation, sampling techniques, types of data, data sources, data collection, analysis and ethical considerations. The study used qualitative design that informed data collection techniques and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The study used a case study design by involving an in-depth examination of a single or small number of cases within a specific context (Yin, 2018). The case study approach enabled the researcher to explore GBV prevention efforts in-depth by closely examining community-level interventions, male participation patterns, and local perceptions within a real-life setting affected by displacement, poverty, and post-conflict dynamics. A case study design was appropriate because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the topic within its specific context, generating rich data that could inform practice, policy, and theory development. Omugo Subcounty represents a specific geographic and socio-cultural context within Uganda. A case study design allowed me to understand the unique contextual factors that shaped the roles and behaviors of men and boys in relation to Gender-Based Violence prevention in this particular setting.

3.3 Description of the Study Area

Justification for the study selection

In 2021, a Spotlight National Joint Steering Committee meeting was held in West Nile in response to a plea from Terego District through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Accordingly, the committee resolved to prioritize Terego in the implementation of Gender-Based Violence prevention and response programs under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative. This included the establishment of safe shelters for survivors, provision of psychosocial and legal support, training of district and sub-county GBV committees, and collaboration with key stakeholders such as UNFPA, UN Women, and local Civil Society Organizations to strengthen community-based protection systems (UN Spotlight Initiative Uganda, 2021). At the time, Terego was a newly formed district with limited resources and infrastructure to respond to high GBV cases having been carved out of Arua District in June 2021. Cases of GBV in the district had been on the rise just

like in other parts of Uganda due COVID-19 preventive measures that were enforced in 2020 and 2021 (Sportlight Initiative, 2021). It should be noted that there are no published GBV rates in Omugo subcounty, Terego district. However, according to SGBV report (2023) by Femme Forte Uganda, they reported 28% of sexual violence in Terego district and this was backed by the narrative from Sportlight Initiative (2021), which presented that the district has high cases of unreported GBV rates. These events motivated me to explore the phenomenon of GBV in this district. Selecting Omugo Subcounty, Terego, as the study area for examining the role of men and boys in GBV prevention was justified by its potentially high GBV rates, specific socio-cultural context, and the need for tailored interventions.

Location: Omugo Subcounty is located in the Arua District of Northern Uganda. It is situated in the West Nile region, bordered by South Sudan to the north and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to the west.

3.4 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, using a case study design to comprehensively assess the role of men and boys in the prevention of GBV in Omugo Subcounty. The decision to use a qualitative research approach in this study was driven by the need to explore the in-depth perspectives and experiences of men and boys in Omugo Subcounty regarding their role in preventing gender-based violence (GBV). Specifically, qualitative approaches allowed for a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and personal factors that influence behaviors, attitudes, and practices related to GBV prevention, which are often complex and context-specific. Gender-Based Violence is deeply rooted in social norms, cultural practices, and individual beliefs, all of which vary significantly across different communities. A qualitative approach allowed me to gain insight into social norms, cultural practices, including the local perceptions of masculinity, gender roles, and the impact of traditional beliefs on GBV. Qualitative approach was well-suited for understanding personal experiences and motivations behind individual actions.

3.5 Population of the Study

The population of Omugo Subcounty is estimated to 51,000 persons, 24,400 (47.8%) are Males and 26,600 (52.2%) (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014). The population comprised diverse ethnic groups, including the Lugbara, Kakwa, Madi, and Alur. The Lugbara were the largest ethnic group in Omugo Subcounty, followed by the Kakwa, Madi, and Alur. Each ethnic group has its own

distinct language, culture, and traditions, contributing to the rich diversity of the region. In terms of economic activities, Omugo Subcounty is predominantly rural, with agriculture being the main economic activity. Subsistence farming, including the cultivation of crops such as maize, millet, and cassava, is widespread among the local population. Additionally, small-scale trading and animal husbandry are common livelihood activities in the area.

The population of the study consisted of men and boys and women residing in Omugo Subcounty, Terego, Uganda. Given the focus on Gender Based Violence prevention, the study also included key stakeholders such as community leaders, local authorities, and representatives from relevant organizations working in the field of gender equality and Gender Based Violence prevention. The population of Omugo Subcounty is estimated to 55,000 persons, 47.8% are Males and 52.2% are females (UBOS, 2024). At the national level, the population comprises 22,495,030 males (49%) and 23,440,016 females (51%), indicating a slight female majority.

The study involved both Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), targeting individuals with varying experiences and roles in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention. All key informants were aged 18 years and above and included community leaders, religious leaders (Muslims and Christians), clan heads, educators, and representatives from local organizations engaged in GBV prevention interventions, particularly those focused on engaging men and boys. These individuals brought valuable insights based on their leadership positions and direct involvement in community-level initiatives. Key informants were representatives from local organizations that were involved in community development and GBV prevention, such as community development officer from Omugo Sub-county, Save the children Uganda, International Rescue Committee, CARE International, Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CERFORD) national NGO, and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in Angzi village. These participants were typically engaged in or oversee initiatives that support the fight against GBV and often work directly with community leaders and other stakeholders. Their involvement provided insights into organizational approaches to GBV prevention, especially strategies that engage men and boys.

The FGDs were conducted with four distinct groups: younger boys aged 13–17 years, middle-aged and older men aged 18 years and above, and girls aged 13–17 years. These groups were selected to gather a broad spectrum of views on male participation in GBV prevention across different age

groups and gender identities. In total, the study involved 11 participants: 5 females and 6 males, representing a balance that allowed for gendered perspectives on the issues. Culturally, the participants came from diverse ethnic backgrounds and held various cultural identities within the community, including traditional leadership roles such as clan heads.

3.6 Sample Size Determination

The study engaged a diverse group of participants selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience, and role in GBV prevention in Omugo Subcounty. Key informant interviews were conducted with individuals such as local leaders, community-based organization representatives, GBV focal persons, and cultural and religious leaders chosen for their strategic insight into GBV dynamics and male engagement within the community.

To complement these individual insights, five focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with distinct community subgroups. Two FGDs were held with older men (aged 18 and above) to explore their attitudes, experiences, and involvement in GBV prevention. One FGD involved younger boys (aged 13–17), providing an understanding of adolescent perspectives and early socialization around gender norms. Additionally, an FGD with adult women and another with adolescent girls (13–17 years) were conducted to capture the perspectives of those most affected by GBV, and to understand their views on male involvement in prevention. Participants in each FGD were identified with the help of local leaders, NGOs, and community structures, ensuring a balance of voices across age and gender categories.

The relatively small sample size is justified using qualitative sampling logic. The purposive selection prioritized information-rich cases, maximizing the depth and relevance of insights rather than aiming for statistical representativeness. Data collection continued until saturation was achieved, with no new themes emerging from additional interviews or discussions, and sufficient information power was obtained to answer the research questions effectively. This approach ensured that the sample, while limited in number, provided rich, contextualized, and comprehensive data on the roles of men and boys in GBV prevention in Omugo Subcounty.

Table 1: Showing Sample Size Distribution

Method of data collection	Target Group	Participants per group	Total Participants
Focus Group Discussion	Older men (18 years and above)	2 FGDs with 8 members each	16 Participants
Focus Group Discussion	Younger boys (13-17 years of age)	8 participants	8 participants (1 FGD)
Focus Group Discussion	Women	6 participants	6 participants (1 FGD)
Focused group discussion	Younger girls (13-17)	8 participants	8 participants (1 FGD)
Key Informant Interviews (KII)	Community leaders, local authorities, and representatives from relevant organizations	12 key informants	12 participants (KIIs)

3.7 Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling to select the villages as well as participants to speak to. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants for in-depth interviews. These key informants included community leaders, local authorities, and representatives from organizations working in the field of gender equality and GBV prevention. Purposive sampling was used because these individuals were believed to have the relevant knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights into the issues being studied. The study selected two villages within Omugo subcounty, and worked with households with eligible participants men, boys ,women and girls 13 years and above. The villages were selected because of a number of organizations, government programs, church organizations, moslem association of women and cultural leaders who have initiatives on preventing household conflicts including GBV.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

The study utilized a combination of data collection methods, including:

Key Informant Interviews

Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including community leaders and representatives from local organizations. The study targeted community leaders, local authorities, and representatives from relevant organizations working in the field of gender equality and Gender based violence prevention but also purposely chosen because of their location of operation as the key informants. The study targeted a range of community leaders who play an active role in local decision-making and community development. Specifically, these included elders, cultural leaders and youth leaders. In terms of local authorities, the study focused on Local Council (LC) leaders at various levels of governance within the subcounty. These included LC1, LC2 and LC3 Leaders. The study also included representatives from relevant organizations working in the field of gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention. By relevant, I mean organizations that were directly involved in GBV prevention and response and gender equality initiatives. These organizations included CARE International, World Vision, CEFORD, SAVE the children, IRC, Government agencies like Police, District Community development officer , office of the prime minsters(OPM) and Community-based organizations (CBOs). The interview was conducted at participant convenient places which was determined during data generation. Each interview took approximately between 35-50 minutes. The interviews were recorded and also notes taken. The interviews explored their perspectives on the role of men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention, existing interventions, male involvement in the interventions, and recommendations for improvement.

Focus Group Discussions were conducted with groups of men and boys to facilitate in-depth discussions on Gender Based Violence, masculinity, gender norms, and potential strategies for prevention. Focused group discussions(FGDs) allowed for the exploration of shared experiences, attitudes, and perceptions within the community. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with separate groups of men, boys, women, and girls from sampled households in villages across Omugo Subcounty. The groups were deliberately separated by age and gender to create safe, comfortable spaces that encouraged open and honest discussion. Women were separated from men because mixed-gender settings tend to suppress women's voices because

many women shy away from fully expressing themselves in the presence of men due to cultural norms and power dynamics. Boys were separated from older men to account for generational differences in perspectives and experiences related to masculinity, gender norms, and GBV. This separation helped the study to capture diverse age-specific insights and understand the varying influences shaping gender attitudes across generations.

FGDs were selected as a qualitative data collection method because they enable participants to express shared experiences, challenge each other's viewpoints, and collectively reflect on social norms in a culturally relevant context. This method was particularly effective for exploring sensitive and socially embedded topics such as GBV and masculinity, as it creates a space for dialogue among peers, promoting openness and richer insights. As Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) note, FGDs are ideal for generating data on group norms, meanings, and processes in ways that individual interviews may not capture. This makes them especially valuable for research involving community attitudes and behavior change around gender (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

3.9 Data Collection Tools

The key interview guide and Focused group discussion guide were developed to guide data collection. The tools were pre-tested and refined to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness.

3.10 Data Quality

To ensure the quality and reliability of the data, rigorous training was provided to the research team on ethical considerations, data collection procedures, and techniques for maintaining confidentiality and privacy. Additionally, data generation was supervised, and regular checks were conducted to monitor the consistency and completeness of the data.

3.11 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis through manual coding. Audio recordings of interviews were first transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word to facilitate systematic analysis. The analysis followed a rigorous, stepwise procedure to ensure transparency and validity.

Initially, open coding was conducted, where each transcript was read line-by-line, and meaningful segments were labeled with descriptive codes reflecting participants' words and concepts. Codes were then reviewed and compared across transcripts to identify recurring patterns and similarities.

Related codes were grouped into categories, which were iteratively refined to ensure they captured distinct aspects of the data.

Theme development involved clustering related categories into broader themes that aligned with the research objectives. Themes were named using participants' language whenever possible, complemented by theoretical constructs from gender and masculinity studies to enhance analytical depth. Each theme was critically examined for internal consistency and coherence across the dataset.

Themes were cross-checked against multiple transcripts to confirm consistency and representation of participants' experiences. Emerging codes and themes were discussed with colleagues familiar with GBV research to reduce bias and confirm interpretive credibility. The researcher maintained a reflective journal to document assumptions and decisions throughout the analysis process.

A detailed record of coding decisions, theme definitions, and supporting quotations was maintained to ensure transparency and replicability. A detailed narrative was compiled for each theme, illustrated with verbatim quotes, and interpreted within the broader context of the existing literature.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines and principles, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participants were provided with information about the study objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, and their consent were obtained before data collection. Confidentiality was ensured by assigning unique identifiers to participants, and all personal information were kept secured and accessible only to authorized personnel. Sensitive topics such as GBV, participants might share personal experiences, opinions, or information that could potentially put them at risk if disclosed. Ensuring confidentiality reassures participants that their information would not be shared with others without their consent, encouraging honest and open participation. Confidentiality helps to minimize the risk of stigma by keeping participants' identities and responses confidential, reducing the likelihood of negative repercussions for disclosing their experiences or perspectives. When participants feel assured of confidentiality, they are more likely to provide accurate and detailed information (Muehleman *et al.*, 1985). This enhances the quality and reliability of the data collected, leading to more

meaningful insights and conclusions from the research study. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were assigned during transcription and data analysis, and no real names or identifying information were recorded in the final report. This approach was essential in creating a safe environment where participants, particularly men and boys discussing sensitive issues related to Gender-Based Violence, felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives. As noted by Muehleman et al. (1985), assurance of confidentiality enhances the accuracy and honesty of responses, thereby improving the quality and reliability of qualitative data.

3.13 Study Limitations

Despite rigorous methods and data collection procedures, this study had some limitations. These include potential selection bias due to the sampling procedure, social desirability bias in self-reported data on sensitive topics such as Gender Based Violence, and the generalizability of findings limited to the specific context of Omugo Subcounty. One key limitation was potential selection bias, which might have arisen from the purposive sampling strategy used to select participants. While this approach ensured the inclusion of relevant individuals such as men, boys, girls and key stakeholders with knowledge of Gender-Based Violence prevention it might have excluded voices from less accessible or marginalized community members whose experiences might differ from those included in the sample. As such, the perspectives captured might not fully represent the broader population of Omugo Subcounty.

Another limitation was social desirability bias, especially in focus group discussions on sensitive issues such as gender norms and violence. Participants might have been inclined to provide responses that reflect socially acceptable views rather than their true beliefs or experiences. This could potentially affect the authenticity of the data and lead to an underreporting of harmful practices or attitudes.

The generalizability of the study findings was limited. Since the research was conducted exclusively in Omugo Subcounty, Terego District, the socio-cultural and contextual factors unique to this area might not be reflective of other regions in Uganda. Therefore, while the findings provide valuable insights into the role of men and boys in GBV prevention within this locality, caution should be exercised when applying these results to different settings or populations.

3.14 Reflexivity and Positionality

As the researcher, I acknowledged that my positionality including my identity, prior experiences, and perspectives could influence the way participants' responses were interpreted. Being familiar with the local cultural context of Omugo Subcounty and having prior exposure to gender and community development work may have facilitated trust and openness during interviews, but it also carried the potential for assumptive bias, particularly in interpreting men's and boys' engagement in GBV prevention.

To mitigate these influences, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the research process, documenting my assumptions, reactions, and decision-making at each stage of data collection and analysis. This practice allowed me to critically examine how my positionality shaped interactions with participants, choice of probes, coding decisions, and theme development. Additionally, peer debriefing sessions were conducted to provide external perspectives, ensuring that findings were grounded in participants' perspectives rather than the researcher's preconceptions.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION, DATA DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents a comprehensive exploration of interventions aimed at preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) within communities, with a particular focus on the role of men and boys in these initiatives. Guided by the study objectives, the analysis draws on rich, contextual data to provide insights into existing strategies, their implementation, and their effectiveness in fostering safer, more inclusive communities. Firstly, the study sought to establish existing interventions for the prevention of GBV in the communities, highlighting the diversity of approaches currently employed. Secondly, the study explored interventions that have actively involved men in GBV prevention efforts, recognizing the critical role that men and boys play in challenging harmful gender norms and promoting gender equality. Finally, the study examined the effectiveness of strategies involving men and boys in GBV prevention.

4.2 Existing Interventions for the Prevention of Gender Based Violence

This theme focuses on community members' understanding of the existing programs and initiatives for prevention of GBV in the district as well as the subcounty under study.

Community-Based Programs

Participants identified a range of community-based initiatives led by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local leaders, and community members aimed at preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV). These initiatives play critical roles in raising awareness, transforming harmful gender norms, and supporting survivors, demonstrating the importance of locally grounded, context-specific approaches.

A key intervention highlighted by participants was the Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP), implemented by CARE International and Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD). Participants emphasized its impact in building community resilience to GBV, particularly through empowerment of women and youth. As one older male participant noted:

"The Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP) by CARE and CEFORD has been instrumental in GBV prevention." (FGD, Older men).

WAYREP (April 2019 – March 2024), funded by the Austrian Development Agency and implemented in Arua, Gulu, and Rhino Camp/Omugo, targeted approximately 44,600 direct beneficiaries 75% women and girls aged 15–30 and over 250,000 indirect beneficiaries. The program combined socio-economic, psychosocial, and gender-transformative interventions to reduce GBV and empower participants (CARE & Partners, 2024; CARE Uganda, 2023). Evaluation results demonstrate that WAYREP achieved its objectives, with average weekly incomes increasing by 49.6%, self-reliance and confidence improving among young women, and reductions in reported GBV experiences from 28% to 20.7%, alongside increased rejection of intimate partner violence (from 71.6% to 77.1%) (CARE Evaluations, n.d.).

Interpreted through Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism, WAYREP illustrates a culturally sensitive, negotiated approach to gender justice. The program works within existing social structures through dialogue and collaboration rather than confrontation, fostering inclusive, contextually relevant strategies that empower women and youth while engaging the wider community (Nnaemeka, 2004). Simultaneously, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity highlights the importance of addressing dominant gender norms that perpetuate violence. WAYREP's engagement of men and community leaders in challenging patriarchal attitudes demonstrates practical disruption of hegemonic masculinity, promoting alternative, non-violent masculinities within the community (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

WAYREP exemplifies a successful, theory-informed community-based GBV prevention program. By integrating empowerment, participatory approaches, and engagement of both women and men, it addresses structural drivers of violence while promoting culturally negotiated transformations consistent with Nego-Feminism and challenging dominant masculine norms as described by hegemonic masculinity theory.

Community by-laws and Local Regulation

Community by-laws were cited as effective mechanisms in regulating behaviors that contribute to GBV, such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and night discos issues linked to domestic conflict and teenage pregnancies. A middle-aged male participant explained:

"By-laws have been developed on alcoholism and drug abuse to prevent GBV." (FGD, Middle-aged men)

In Arua District, for example, the Alcohol & Substance Abuse By-law was passed unanimously by the District Council during the 16 Days of Activism campaign (Uganda Radio Network, 2021). These regulations reflect increasing community ownership of GBV prevention strategies. Literature supports the role of locally enforced norms in changing behavior, emphasizing that active community involvement enhances legitimacy and sustainability of interventions (Heise, 2011; Abramsky et al., 2016; Michau et al., 2015).

Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP)

Participants highlighted the Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP), implemented by CARE International and CEFORD, as a critical intervention. WAYREP employed participatory approaches to empower women and youth, challenge discriminatory norms, and enhance access to services for GBV survivors (CARE, 2021; CARE & Partners, 2024). A participant noted:

"WAYREP by CARE and CEFORD has been instrumental in GBV prevention." (FGD, Older men)

The program targeted approximately 44,600 direct beneficiaries, with a focus on women and girls aged 15–30, and over 250,000 indirect beneficiaries. Evaluations indicate improvements in weekly income (+49.6%), confidence, self-reliance, and reduced experience of GBV (CARE Evaluations, n.d.).

Male Engagement and Economic Empowerment

WAYREP and other local interventions actively engaged men as allies, change agents, and partners, recognizing that sustainable GBV prevention requires challenging dominant masculine norms while promoting equitable gender relations. A local organization representative stated:

"We work with men as allies, clients, change agents, and partners. We also do economic empowerment to empower women and girls...Money gives women power to dialogue, to build self-esteem." (KI6, Local Organization Representative).

This approach aligns with global evidence that combining gender-transformative programming with economic empowerment reduces women's vulnerability to GBV by providing independence, confidence, and space for meaningful participation in community decision-making (Vyas & Watts, 2009; Gibbs et al., 2020; Jewkes et al., 2015).

From the lens of Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism, these interventions reflect a negotiated, culturally sensitive approach to gender justice, working within existing social structures to promote dialogue and empowerment rather than confrontation (Nnaemeka, 2004). Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory explains the importance of transforming dominant male norms that perpetuate violence (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). WAYREP's engagement of men and community leaders illustrates the disruption of hegemonic masculinity, promoting alternative, non-violent masculinities.

Community-based programs in Omugo Subcounty exemplify holistic GBV prevention strategies that combine legal frameworks, socio-economic empowerment, gender-transformative education, and male engagement. By integrating these approaches, interventions address structural and cultural drivers of violence, foster community ownership, and advance sustainable, contextually relevant gender justice. The evidence indicates that combining participatory, economic, and regulatory strategies strengthens resilience and reduces GBV, consistent with theoretical frameworks guiding the study.

Sensitization

Community sensitization, particularly through community outreaches and family counseling, emerged as a prominent grassroots strategy for preventing and responding to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Participants highlighted these activities as practical, community-owned mechanisms that foster social cohesion, promote gender equity, and provide psychosocial support to survivors and families.

Outreaches were conducted in village centers, markets, religious institutions, and during community gatherings to educate community members about the causes, consequences, and support mechanisms for GBV. Methods such as role-plays, testimonies, dialogues, and interactive discussions were used to disseminate knowledge on gender norms, rights, and non-violent conflict resolution. Evidence indicates that these participatory approaches effectively challenge harmful norms and increase awareness of GBV laws and services (MGLSD, 2016; ActionAid Uganda, 2021).

A community-based volunteer in Dukus Parish explained:

"I participated in counseling and mediating couples in my community...group-based counseling allows women to share experiences and receive collective support, while individual sessions address more severe cases." (FGD, Women, Counselor).

Family counseling addressed the root causes of intimate partner conflict, such as financial stress, substance abuse, and communication breakdowns, before they escalated into violence. These sessions provided psychosocial support, promoted peer-to-peer learning, and fostered collective reflection on gender norms. CARE International (2020) found similar community-based interventions in refugee-hosting areas of West Nile improved conflict resolution and reduced recurrent intimate partner violence.

Sensitization programs actively involved both men and women in dialogues and counseling, reflecting a negotiated and culturally rooted transformation consistent with Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism (Nnaemeka, 2004). By emphasizing collaboration, dialogue, and respect for community values, these programs foster shared responsibility for addressing GBV and empower survivors while engaging perpetrators and the broader community.

Connell's hegemonic masculinity framework helps interpret how sensitization initiatives target the cultural norms underlying GBV (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). These programs challenge dominant ideals of masculinity that legitimize male control and violence by promoting alternative masculinities centered on empathy, accountability, and non-violence. Women's leadership as counselors and mediators exemplifies Nego-Feminism's principle of agency within negotiation, modeling relational power-sharing and contesting patriarchal norms from within the community.

Sensitization activities in Omugo Subcounty demonstrate that community dialogues, family counseling, and mediation are effective, theory-informed strategies for GBV prevention. By combining psychosocial support, participatory education, and engagement of both men and women, these initiatives challenge harmful norms, promote gender-equitable behaviors, and strengthen community resilience.

Training men as role models

The study also established that some men were trained as role models to facilitate prevention of GBV. A participant described;

"We were trained as Role model men and trained other men and boys through Male Action Groups. The Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) program was also implemented by CARE Uganda in collaboration with local community organizations and leaders. The EMB program targets men and boys of various ages, including middle-aged men, youth (ages 13–17), and older men (18 years and above). The goal is to challenge and change harmful masculinity norms, promote gender equality, and prevent GBV." (FGD, Middle-aged man)

The participant's submission corresponds with documented CARE programming in West Nile region, Uganda. The Role Model Men and Boys (RMMB) initiative was launched by CARE Uganda in the West Nile region around 2010 under the broader EMB framework (CARE Uganda, 2019). The statement above reflects the proactive role participants had taken in addressing gender issues by participating in the engaging Men and Boys program. They not only received training but also extended their knowledge by educating other men and boys through Male Action Groups, demonstrating a commitment to changing attitudes and behaviors around gender roles and

responsibilities within their communities. The Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) program is implemented by CARE Uganda in collaboration with local community organizations and leaders. The program was part of a broader initiative aimed at gender transformation and violence prevention, with a focus on men and boys as critical agents of change in addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The EMB program operates within various regions, including Omugo Subcounty, Terego, where it has seen significant participation from local men and boys.

A middle-aged male participant in Omugo Subcounty shared his experience with the Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) programme:

“We were trained as Role Model Men and trained other men and boys through Male Action Groups. Since then, I’ve been helping to counsel couples, speak to men in churches and community gatherings, to stop violence in homes. Before, we thought it was normal to beat your wife, but now we understand it’s wrong. I have helped three families solve their issues without violence.” (FGD, Middle-aged man).

The Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) programme, implemented by CARE Uganda in partnership with community-based organizations, is part of CARE’s broader gender-transformative programming that recognizes men and boys as key actors in the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The initiative trains Role Model Men (RMM) who are respected figures in their communities and equips them with tools to challenge harmful gender norms, model positive behaviors, and lead community dialogue (CARE Uganda, 2019).

Omugo Subcounty in Terego District, EMB-trained men form Male Action Groups (MAGs), which carried out various GBV prevention activities such as community sensitizations in churches, markets, and schools; household visits and peer-to-peer mentorship for young men; conflict mediation and family counseling; encouraging equitable division of household roles and supporting women’s economic activities and opposing early marriage practices (CARE International, 2020; CARE Uganda, 2021).

Participants reported a noticeable decline in domestic violence in areas where Role Model Men are active. CARE notes that men who go through the EMB training often take on leadership roles

in local GBV reporting and referral mechanisms, and many also serve as male champions for campaigns against early marriage and substance abuse, two major drivers of GBV in refugee-hosting communities (CARE Uganda, 2019).

EMB program illustrates a culturally sensitive, negotiated approach to gender justice that emphasizes collaboration and community ownership (Nnaemeka, 2004). The program's reliance on respected community men as facilitators aligns with Nego-Feminism's focus on dialogic engagement and strategic negotiation within existing cultural frameworks. By training men to become Role Model Men who mentor others, the program fosters collective reflection and gradual transformation rather than imposing external values, respecting local norms while promoting equitable change.

The EMB initiative exemplifies Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism, which emphasizes culturally negotiated, dialogic engagement to achieve gender justice (Nnaemeka, 2004). By working with respected men within existing social structures, the program fosters incremental transformation through collaboration rather than confrontation. Simultaneously, Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory highlights the program's importance in challenging dominant masculine norms that legitimize violence and control (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). EMB-trained men model alternative masculinities centered on empathy, accountability, and non-violence, directly disrupting entrenched patriarchal norms.

Training men as Role Model Men through the EMB program demonstrates a theoretically grounded, culturally sensitive approach to GBV prevention. By empowering men to mentor peers, challenge harmful norms, and engage in household and community leadership, the initiative promotes sustainable behavioral change, strengthens collective responsibility, and reinforces both community ownership and gender-equitable practices.

4.3 Interventions that have actively involved men in GBV prevention efforts

In the section above, this study highlighted community initiatives around GBV prevention. In this section, the study particularly examines initiatives on GBV that particularly aimed to engage men and boys in prevention and response to GBV. This theme explores the various interventions that have been designed and implemented to promote the active involvement of men and boys in the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The aim of examining this theme was to identify

existing community-based and institutional strategies that successfully engage men in preventing GBV, and to understand how these interventions are perceived, utilized, and sustained within the community. Interventions that have actively involved men in GBV prevention efforts include community-enforced behavior change, shifting the social norms that make men privileged and holders of power, Role Model Men, Engaging Men and Boys Approach, and engaging men in accountable practice (EMAP) program.

Awareness of GBV Prevention Interventions Targeting Men and Boys

Participants exhibited varying levels of awareness regarding interventions specifically targeting men and boys. Participants acknowledged initiatives like Engaging Men and Boys Approach, and the engaging men in accountable practice (EMAP) program. These programs challenged harmful social norms and empowered men to act as allies in preventing GBV.

One key informant observed:

"Yes, there is EMAP interventions that specially target men as allies to women in prevention of GBV in our community." (KI4, Community Development Officer)

The Engaging Men in Accountable Practice (EMAP) program was developed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and is implemented in Uganda with support from UNFPA. EMAP is a structured, gender-transformative group education model designed to promote introspection, challenge harmful masculinities, and position men as allies in advancing gender equality. The model includes 16 facilitated sessions for men and parallel women's discussion groups to ensure accountability and community alignment (IRC GBV Responders' Network, n.d.; UNFPA Uganda, 2023). It is reported that EMAP has reached over 10,500 men, many of whom now serve as male champions against GBV in their communities (UNFPA Uganda, 2023). Despite EMAP's success, some participants expressed concern that most interventions in their communities were gender-integrated and lacked a specific focus on men and boys.

From a theoretical standpoint, the EMAP program reflects Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity, as it directly confronts the social construction of male dominance, control, and aggression which is a key traits that sustain GBV. By fostering critical reflection and creating safe spaces for men to question and reconstruct their masculine identities, EMAP encourages the

adoption of alternative, non-violent masculinities aligned with principles of equality and care. This directly addresses the systemic gender norms that underpin much of GBV in patriarchal settings like Omugo Subcounty.

In parallel, the emphasis on joint community engagement and the use of dialogue aligns with Nnaemeka's (2004) Nego-Feminism, which advocates for negotiation, collaboration, and community-rooted approaches to gender justice. EMAP's structure facilitating both men's and women's groups embodies the principle of relational feminism by ensuring that transformation is not imposed but negotiated within existing cultural frameworks, allowing both men and women to participate in shaping the process.

Despite EMAP's reported success, including its reach to over 10,500 men now serving as male champions against GBV (UNFPA Uganda, 2023), several participants raised concerns about the limited number of male-exclusive programs in their communities. One older male participant remarked:

"Most programs I see in the community target both men and women, but no exclusive program targeting men and boys." (FGD, Older Men FGD).

This sentiment is echoed in the National Male Involvement Strategy for GBV Prevention and Response in Uganda, which highlights that male-exclusive programs remain limited in scope and often overshadowed by integrated models (Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development [MoGLSD], 2017).

The EMAP program aligns with global best practices on gender-transformative programming, which emphasize engaging men not just as beneficiaries but as critical agents of change (World Health Organization, 2019). The structured EMAP approach fosters community-driven change through dialogue, critical reflection, and accountability mechanisms (IRC GBV Responders' Network, n.d.).

The finding suggest that while there is growing awareness and appreciation for interventions like EMAP, there is still a gap in personalized programming that meaningfully and exclusively engages men and boys. Addressing this gap requires a deliberate application of both Connell's theory, to

continue disrupting harmful masculinities, and Nego-Feminism, to ensure that efforts remain collaborative, locally grounded, and culturally relevant.

From a theoretical perspective, EMAP embodies Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity by confronting socially constructed male dominance, control, and aggression—core traits that sustain GBV. By creating safe spaces for men to critically reflect and reconstruct their masculine identities, EMAP encourages alternative, non-violent masculinities aligned with equality and care. Concurrently, the program's participatory structure reflects Nnaemeka's (2004) Nego-Feminism, emphasizing negotiation, collaboration, and community-rooted approaches. The parallel men's and women's sessions illustrate relational feminist principles, ensuring that change is negotiated within existing cultural frameworks rather than imposed externally.

Interpretively, the findings suggest that while awareness and appreciation for interventions like EMAP are growing, there is a clear gap in male-exclusive programming. This highlights the need for deliberate strategies that specifically target men and boys, combining theoretical insights from hegemonic masculinity to disrupt harmful norms, and Nego-Feminism to maintain culturally sensitive, collaborative engagement.

Awareness of GBV prevention interventions targeting men and boys exists, but most programs remain integrated rather than male-exclusive. Effective male engagement requires approaches that challenge entrenched masculinities while fostering negotiated, community-led transformation, ensuring that men are not only aware but empowered to act as sustainable agents of change.

Roles of Men and Boys in GBV Prevention

Participants emphasized various roles men and boys can play in preventing GBV, highlighting a need for empowerment and behavioral transformation. Men and boys were encouraged to challenge traditional gender norms by sharing household chores and advocating for positive behaviors.

One of the most frequently cited approaches was the promotion of shared domestic responsibilities, such as participating in household chores. This challenges patriarchal expectations that define domestic labor as a woman's duty, contributing to gender equality at the household level.

As one community leader stated, men have been trained to be *role models to others, share household chores, work together, and involve children in family meetings.*" (KI1, Community Leader). This reflects the principle of negotiation central to Nego-Feminism, where gender relations are improved not through opposition but through cooperation and shared responsibility. Encouraging men to engage in traditionally feminized roles like caregiving and household chores not only promotes equality but reinforces a feminist ethic grounded in relational transformation. Nnaemeka (2004) asserts that African feminisms must take into account the socio-cultural context and favor collaboration with men to foster meaningful change. This is clearly evident in how community-based approaches are structured.

This aligns with findings from Jewkes et al. (2015), who argue that equitable gender norms in intimate relationships are fundamental to preventing intimate partner violence. When men participate in caregiving and household roles, they model respectful and equitable behavior to children and other community members, promoting a culture of mutual respect.

A significant initiative highlighted was the formation of male action groups. A key informant noted that *"Men and boys form male action groups to create awareness on positive masculinity."* (KI6, Local Organization Representative). These efforts resonate with Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, which encourages men to move away from dominant forms of masculinity rooted in aggression, dominance, and emotional detachment. These groups function as platforms for critical dialogue, reflection, and peer accountability. They provide safe spaces for men and boys to question harmful gender norms and learn alternative, non-violent forms of masculinity. According to Flood (2011), male engagement programs that promote gender-equitable attitudes often through group education and community mobilization have been effective in shifting harmful gender norms and reducing GBV.

The concept of positive masculinity emerged as a central theme. Positive masculinity emphasizes attributes such as respect, emotional expression, care, and shared responsibility, rather than dominance and aggression. By promoting these values, male action groups contribute to long-term social norm change. Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, and Lippman (2013) stress that interventions aimed at reshaping masculinities have demonstrated success when men are actively engaged as allies in gender justice. Participants also emphasized the importance of men as role models in their families

and communities. Serving as role models is a powerful form of indirect intervention when men demonstrate respectful behaviors, others are likely to emulate them. This strategy is supported by Barker and Ricardo (2005), who argue that men who model non-violent and equitable behavior have a ripple effect in reducing GBV across generations.

The inclusion of structured activities such as sports, counseling, and life skills training was seen as critical to engaging men and boys meaningfully. A focus group participant noted *"Engaging men and boys in productive activities like sports and life skills will prevent GBV in the community."* (FGD, women). These activities not only provide an outlet for emotional and physical energy but also serve as channels for imparting critical life values, such as empathy, communication, and conflict resolution. According to Levtov et al. (2014), engaging boys and men through sports and community-based programs can help dismantle harmful masculine stereotypes and foster healthier, more equitable relationships.

Men and boys play multiple, interconnected roles in GBV prevention, including modeling positive behaviors, participating in household decision-making, forming peer groups, and engaging in structured activities. These strategies promote behavioral transformation, challenge hegemonic masculinity, and foster a culture of equity and non-violence, reflecting both Nego-Feminist and gender-transformative approaches.

Effectiveness of Existing Interventions

Several community-based and organizational programs have been recognized for their success in fostering male engagement in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention. These interventions were crucial in addressing the root causes of GBV by promoting gender-transformative approaches that challenge harmful norms and encourage positive male participation in families and communities.

Role Model Men:

One particularly successful initiative is the "Role Model Men and Boys" program. As a community development officer observed,

"Role Model Men works with households living in violence and reaches men in spaces where they can be easily found." (KI4, Community Development Officer).

The success of this initiative lies in its strategic and culturally embedded methodology: engaging men in socially familiar and accessible spaces such as boda-boda stages, markets, and football fields. This reflects the Nego-Feminist emphasis on negotiation and relationality, where rather than confronting men in adversarial settings, interventions meet them where they are physically, socially, and emotionally. By doing so, the program embraces the African feminist ethic of fostering change through collaboration, dialogue, and community engagement (Nnaemeka, 2004).

From a hegemonic masculinity lens (Connell, 1995), these informal spaces serve as critical sites for interrupting dominant masculine scripts that associate manhood with aggression, control, and silence on emotional matters. By initiating open conversations about GBV, positive masculinity, and respectful relationships, the program directly challenges these harmful norms and offers alternative masculine identities rooted in empathy, accountability, and care.

Engaging men in familiar environments has proven effective because it lowers barriers to participation and fosters trust. According to Pulerwitz et al. (2010), interventions that are context-specific and rooted in community spaces are more likely to attract consistent male participation and facilitate open dialogue about sensitive gender issues. Reaching men in these informal settings also ensures that the message of GBV prevention is not limited to formal workshops or clinics, but becomes embedded in daily community life.

The "Role Model Men and Boys" initiative also works with households experiencing violence, providing support and mediation aimed at reducing conflict and promoting peaceful cohabitation. This household-level approach is particularly impactful, as it provides tailored interventions to those most at risk while also involving the broader community in behavior change processes. Jewkes et al. (2015) argue that working directly with families, particularly those affected by violence, is essential for creating sustained change and preventing recurrence of abuse.

Another key success factor in this initiative is the use of peer influence and positive deviance, where men who exemplify non-violent, equitable behavior are highlighted as role models. These role models serve not only as educators but as living proof that alternative masculinities are possible and desirable. This aligns with the findings of Casey et al. (2013), who note that peer-led approaches significantly enhance the effectiveness of gender-transformative programs, as they foster relatable engagement and challenge dominant harmful norms through credible messengers.

The Role Model Men and Boys program exemplifies a contextually sensitive, theory-informed approach to GBV prevention. By combining household engagement, peer-led mentorship, and interventions in informal community spaces, it fosters behavioral transformation, challenges hegemonic masculinity, and operationalizes Nego-Feminist principles of negotiation, dialogue, and collaboration. This multi-level strategy demonstrates how culturally grounded male engagement can create sustainable change in gender norms and GBV prevention.

Community-enforced behavior change

Programs have empowered men and youth to address GBV cases directly, leading to community-wide behavior changes. This theme highlights how community members especially youth are increasingly taking active roles in promoting gender equity and holding individuals accountable for family neglect, which is a form of economic gender-based violence.

In Kubala village in Omugo Sub-county "The youths punished a man who refused to support his family, ensuring he gave daily money to his family." (FGD, women)

The above narrative highlights how community accountability programs have empowered men and youth to address GBV cases directly, resulting in positive behavior changes. For example, youths intervened to ensure a man supported his family financially by punishing him for refusing to do so. While such interventions can be seen as successful in catalyzing behavioral change, they also point to the gap in formal mechanisms for addressing economic abuse and GBV, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas. Literature supports the idea that informal justice systems play a critical role where formal structures are weak or inaccessible (Kyomuhendo & McIntosh, 2006; Merry, 2006). Through Nego-Feminism, such actions can be understood not simply as punitive but as forms of negotiated intervention. Rather than relying on legalistic or confrontational approaches, the community especially the youth mobilizes social norms and collective pressure to

redress injustices within the family unit. In this way, the intervention aligns with Nnaemeka's (2004) notion of "bargaining with patriarchy" where transformation occurs through relational, culturally grounded strategies rather than outright rebellion.

These community-driven interventions align with Nnaemeka's (2004) Nego-Feminism, which frames transformation as a negotiated, culturally rooted process rather than outright rebellion. Youth and community members leverage social norms and collective pressure to "bargain with patriarchy", fostering change within existing social and cultural structures. Rather than functioning solely as punitive measures, these actions reflect relational strategies aimed at restoring equity and accountability in households, illustrating the practical application of Nego-Feminist principles in GBV prevention.

Community-enforced behavior change exemplifies the agency of local actors, particularly youth, in addressing GBV and economic abuse. By combining informal accountability mechanisms with culturally sensitive negotiation, these initiatives provide effective, contextually grounded alternatives to formal justice systems, contributing to sustainable shifts in social norms and household behaviors.

Challenges to Male Involvement in GBV Prevention

Despite notable progress in promoting gender equality and involving men in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention, several deep-rooted challenges persist. These obstacles limit the effectiveness and sustainability of male engagement interventions, particularly in contexts where gender norms are rigid and resistant to change.

Cultural and Social Norms: Patriarchal attitudes and beliefs in male superiority hinder engagement. One of the most significant barriers was the persistence of patriarchal cultural and social norms, which reinforce male dominance and female subordination in family and community life.

During a focus group discussion with older men, one participant stated:

"Men generally feel they are head of the households and untouchable." (FGD, Older Men)

Above statement above notes that patriarchal attitudes and beliefs in male superiority, where men view themselves as the unquestioned heads of households, create barriers to engaging them in initiatives aimed at addressing GBV.

Patriarchal ideologies are deeply embedded in many African societies, where masculinity is often associated with control, authority, and emotional restraint. These beliefs can lead men to perceive GBV prevention efforts as a threat to their traditional roles and social power. According to Jewkes et al. (2015), such social norms legitimize male entitlement and the use of violence to assert dominance, making it challenging to engage men in conversations that promote gender equality and non-violence.

Barker and Ricardo (2005) argue that dominant constructions of masculinity especially those that define male identity in opposition to perceived femininity discourage men from participating in caregiving, emotional expression, and anti-violence activism. Men who attempt to embrace egalitarian roles may be ridiculed or ostracized by their peers, reinforcing a cycle of disengagement and silence around GBV issues.

Stigma and Resistance: Transformed men face jealousy and discrimination, while others resist advice or intervention. During a focus group discussion with older men, one participant noted that;

"Some men do not want to be advised; they think they are always right." (FGD, Older Men)

The statement above points out that transformed men often faced jealousy and discrimination, while others resist advice or intervention, believing they are always right. Men who choose to reject patriarchal norms and engage in positive masculinities such as promoting gender equality, participating in domestic chores, or advocating against GBV often face backlash from their peers and communities. They may be mocked, labeled as "less masculine," or accused of being controlled by women. According to Barker et al. (2011), these men often experience social stigma, jealousy, and discrimination, which discourages other men from following suit for fear of being socially excluded.

This phenomenon is also supported by research from the MenEngage Alliance (2020), which found that men who undergo personal transformation through GBV prevention programs often face peer pressure to conform to dominant masculine norms. This includes the expectation to be emotionally stoic, assert dominance over women, and resist any behavior perceived as "weak" or "feminine." These social pressures serve as barriers to sustained change and pose a risk of relapse into harmful behaviors.

Resistance to external advice or intervention is often rooted in deeply ingrained beliefs about male superiority and autonomy. Men may perceive being advised especially by women or younger men as a challenge to their authority. Flood (2011) explains that patriarchal systems often socialize men to believe that accepting advice or acknowledging wrongdoing is a sign of weakness, reinforcing resistance to behavior change even in the face of evidence and community pressure.

Structural Barriers: Inefficiency of local councils and lack of targeted interventions create additional obstacles. Structural barriers pose a significant challenge to the effective engagement of men in gender-based violence (GBV) prevention. These include inefficiencies within local governance structures, inadequate institutional support, and the absence of tailored interventions for male involvement.

One participant in a focus group discussion remarked:

"Injustice by some local councils and disciplinary committees is a challenge men face when involved in GBV prevention." (FGD, Middle-aged).

The above statement highlights that inefficiencies within local councils and a lack of targeted interventions present additional challenges for men involved in GBV prevention, with some facing injustice from local councils and disciplinary committees. When local councils and disciplinary bodies fail to provide fair, transparent, and gender-responsive support, they can alienate men who are otherwise willing to participate in transformative efforts.

Such ineffective justice and accountability mechanisms have been documented in many settings across Sub-Saharan Africa, where community-level governance structures often lack the training, resources, or mandate to support gender justice initiatives. According to Kyomuhendo and McIntosh (2006), informal justice systems frequently reproduce patriarchal norms, marginalize

the voices of women and gender-equitable men, and fail to hold perpetrators of violence accountable. This not only weakens the credibility of prevention efforts but can also discourage male allies from sustaining their engagement.

Lack of targeted, male-specific interventions within existing GBV prevention programming creates a vacuum that leaves men either feeling excluded or unsure of how to contribute constructively. As noted by Dworkin, Fleming, and Colvin (2015), programs that fail to consider the gendered experiences of men particularly the social pressures they face often lose an opportunity to build male allies in the fight against GBV. Without concrete support, such as training, psychosocial services, or peer networks for men, even those with good intentions may revert to traditional gender roles or disengage altogether.

“In the traditional society older men used to organize the men sessions in the evening camp firegathering to educate them on their roles, discuss challenges in the community and discipline them , but recent days this systems have broken down and culture has been taken over by events” (K12 Local leader).

Misconceptions about Gender Roles: Misunderstandings about modern gender roles and provocation through dress were cited as challenges. Misunderstandings about modern gender roles including assumptions about women's dress codes were rooted in deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that equate a woman's appearance or behavior with her morality and value. These misconceptions not only distorted the concept of gender equality but also serve to justify gender-based violence (GBV) in many communities. During discussions, participants cited the provocative dress of women as a factor that “provokes” men, reflecting a belief that women's clothing can invite or justify violence. This perception is a manifestation of rigid gender roles, where women are expected to conform to conservative, submissive, and modest appearances, while men are not held fully accountable for their reactions or actions.

“Men get tempted when girls dress indecently.” (FGD, Middle-aged Men)

The statement above points out that misconceptions about gender roles pose significant challenges in addressing GBV. He suggests that some men believe they are tempted by women's attire, particularly when girls dress in what they consider an "indecent" manner. This reflects a

misunderstanding of modern gender roles and places blame on women's dress code rather than addressing underlying attitudes and behaviors of men.

Scholars widely reject the idea that dress code causes GBV. According to UN Women (2015), attributing GBV to women's clothing shifts blame from the perpetrator to the victim, reinforcing victim-blaming attitudes and impeding justice. Similarly, Jewkes et al. (2015) note that GBV is not caused by what women wear, but by gendered power imbalances, socialization into male dominance, and the normalization of control and violence in relationships. Gender roles influence how society interprets clothing. In traditional contexts, respectable dress is often associated with female obedience and sexual modesty, key expectations of femininity. When women deviate from these norms by dressing in modern or revealing clothing, they are often labeled as immoral or asking for it (Bhana, 2013). This policing of female bodies upholds gender inequality and distracts from the accountability of male perpetrators. While misconceptions about gender roles and dress codes are frequently cited in communities, they do not cause GBV. Rather, they reflect harmful social norms that excuse male violence and restrict women's agency.

4.5 The effectiveness of strategies involving men and boys in GBV prevention

This theme focuses on the effectiveness of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention interventions involving men and boys. Key findings are presented below, elaborated with participant quotes to provide depth and context.

Effectiveness of Interventions Involving Men and Boys

Participants consistently highlighted that GBV prevention programs targeting men and boys were more effective than those excluding them. This is due to the role men play as key agents in perpetuating or challenging GBV. Participants consistently emphasized that GBV prevention programs targeting men and boys are more effective than those that exclude them. This finding stems from the recognition that men, as both potential perpetrators and allies, play a central role in either sustaining or dismantling harmful gender norms. As one local organization representative put it:

"Programs that target boys and men are more effective compared to those that do not. Men are perpetrators of GBV; it's traditions that privilege them. If we do not bring boys and men to understand, we cannot change this." (KI6, Local Organization Representative)

This insight aligns with Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity, which explains how dominant cultural norms legitimize male authority, often through the subordination of women and marginalization of alternative masculinities. Engaging men and boys in GBV prevention directly challenges this hegemony by creating opportunities for critical reflection and redefining masculinity in non-violent, gender-equitable terms. This approach reflects Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism, which emphasizes negotiation, collaboration, and shared responsibility in achieving gender justice. Rather than alienating men, Nego-Feminism advocates for their strategic inclusion in GBV prevention efforts. By incorporating men and boys into the transformation process, such interventions embody the core tenet of Nego-Feminism that social change must be grounded in dialogue and relational dynamics that respect community values. According to Flood (2011), men are often socialized into patriarchal cultures that legitimize male dominance and violence over women. However, they also hold the power to challenge these norms when appropriately engaged. GBV prevention strategies that involve men as partners are not only more inclusive but also disrupt the power hierarchies that enable violence.

Jewkes, Flood, and Lang (2015) argue that interventions focused on men and boys can transform attitudes and behaviors by promoting critical reflection on masculinity, power, and relationships. These approaches encourage men to reject violence, share power, and support gender-equitable norms. Programs such as "MenEngage" and "Program H" in Latin America have shown positive results in reducing intimate partner violence and promoting respectful relationships through community-based education and peer-led discussions (Barker *et al.*, 2007).

The study also found that programs targeting young boys early in life were particularly impactful in promoting long-term change. One informant noted:

"If we keep on the awareness, I am sure one day things will change, but more so targeting young boys." (KI6, Local Organization Representative)

Participants highlight that GBV prevention programs that focus on raising awareness, especially when targeting young boys at an early age, contributed to the gradual transformation of attitudes. The informant stresses that continued awareness efforts are key to bringing about lasting change, particularly by instilling new values and behaviors in young boys before harmful gender norms become ingrained. By starting early, these programs help reshape attitudes toward gender equality

and GBV prevention, offering hope for long-term cultural change. According to Levtov et al. (2014), early engagement with boys during formative years helps to challenge rigid gender roles and cultivate empathy, non-violence, and equality. Educational programs in schools and youth groups have been shown to reduce acceptance of GBV and increase willingness to intervene in abusive situations.

This insight aligns with Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity, which explains how dominant cultural norms legitimize male authority and perpetuate violence against women. Interventions that engage men and boys directly disrupt these power structures by fostering critical reflection and promoting non-violent, equitable masculinities. Complementing this perspective, Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism emphasizes negotiation, collaboration, and shared responsibility in achieving gender justice, advocating for the strategic inclusion of men to co-create sustainable change.

The findings suggest that male-focused interventions are not only more inclusive but also strategically positioned to transform entrenched power hierarchies, instill positive values in boys from an early age, and promote lasting cultural change in GBV prevention. Succinctly, programs that incorporate men and boys as active agents of change are more effective in reshaping attitudes, challenging harmful masculinities, and promoting gender equality.

Successful Strategies for Engaging Men and Boys

The study identified several successful approaches, including the Engaging Men and Boys Approach and engaging men in accountable practises (EMAP) These programs encourage behavioral changes, foster mutual respect, and challenge gender norms.

Behavioral Shifts in Domestic Roles: Participants provided examples of men actively engaging in traditionally "female" roles.

"Some men have started escorting their wives to antenatal visits, and boys are more supportive of their sisters. They no longer laugh at them when they soil themselves."

(KI4, Community Development Officer)

Participants shares positive examples of changing attitudes among men and boys, illustrating how some men have begun escorting their wives to antenatal visits, showing greater involvement in their partners' health and well-being. Additionally, boys were becoming more supportive of their

sisters, demonstrating increased empathy and respect. This shift was also reflected in how boys no longer mock their sisters when they are their monthly periods, such as when they are blood-stained. These examples suggest that ongoing education and awareness efforts are fostering more supportive, respectful relationships and breaking down harmful gender norms.

Participants shared encouraging examples of shifting gender norms and attitudes among men and boys in their communities. Notably, some men have begun accompanying their wives to antenatal care visits, showing increased involvement in maternal health and shared responsibility within relationships. Likewise, boys are becoming more supportive of their sisters, as evidenced by the declining instances of mockery during menstruation, even in cases where girls accidentally stain themselves.

These emerging behavioral changes reflect deeper transformations in masculinity, empathy, and respect, and are directly connected to the reduction of Gender-Based Violence. The literature affirms that positive changes in attitudes particularly those that challenge patriarchal control and promote caregiving and emotional support significantly contribute to reducing GBV. According to Jewkes et al. (2015), when men are socialized to care, empathize, and communicate rather than dominate or control, the risk of intimate partner violence and other forms of GBV declines substantially.

Testimonies as Motivation: Sharing success stories by role-model men proved to inspire others to adopt similar behaviors.

"When men tell their stories for example, I cook, wash, and plan finances with my wife, other men learn from these experiences." (KI3, Community Leader)

The above statement emphasizes the power of storytelling in changing behaviors and attitudes among men. When men openly share their experiences, such as cooking, washing, and planning finances with their wives, they serve as role models to other men. These shared stories not only normalize gender equality in domestic responsibilities but also provide practical examples for others to emulate. By hearing these positive accounts, men are encouraged to adopt more collaborative and supportive roles within their households, helping to break down traditional gender roles and fostering a culture of shared responsibility.

According to Casey *et al.* (2018), storytelling can act as a catalyst for attitude change, especially when the narratives come from trusted peers. When men witness others modeling respectful, caring, and non-violent masculinities, they are more likely to reflect on their own practices and feel empowered to make changes. This peer influence is more effective when the storyteller shares relatable experiences and demonstrates the tangible benefits of positive behavior, such as improved family harmony and mutual respect.

Community Role Models: Visible behavior modeling by respected individuals, such as community leaders, has reinforced positive masculinity.

"When other men see me with my family going to the market together, washing clothes it shows them they can also do the same." (KI2, Community Leader)

Above statement reflects on the influence of personal example in shifting societal attitudes. By being seen with his family, such as going to the market together, wash clothes, he demonstrates that men can actively participate in family life and share in everyday responsibilities. This visibility serves as a model for other men, showing them that they too can be equally involved in family activities, without conforming to traditional gender norms. The participant highlights how such actions can inspire other men to adopt similar behaviors, reinforcing the idea that shared responsibility in family life is both possible and valuable. Literature strongly supports this approach. According to Barker, Ricardo, and Nascimento (2010), male role models who actively demonstrate gender-equitable behaviors serve as powerful agents of change, particularly in settings where traditional norms are deeply entrenched. When community members observe influential men participating in tasks like childcare, cooking, or accompanying their families in public, it helps to normalize and legitimize these behaviors, making it more socially acceptable for other men to do the same. Casey *et al.* (2016) explain that change is more likely to occur when people are exposed to consistent and credible examples of the behaviors being promoted. Role modeling by community leaders, therefore, provides a form of "social proof" that counters harmful masculinity norms. This is especially effective in patriarchal societies, where masculine identity is closely linked with social status and respect.

Measuring Effectiveness of Interventions

Interventions' success was measured by increased reporting of GBV cases, community-level changes, and testimonies from participants.

Increased Reporting: The normalization of reporting GBV incidents indicated growing awareness and reduced tolerance for violence.

"Nowadays, you cannot beat your wife, and people will keep quiet. This shows interventions are effective." (KI2, Community Leader)

The statement above discusses how the effectiveness of GBV interventions was measured, noting several indicators of success such as increased reporting of GBV cases, visible community-level changes, and testimonies from participants. One key sign of progress was the growing normalization of reporting GBV incidents, signaling a shift toward greater awareness and a reduced tolerance for violence. The informant emphasizes that, unlike in the past, it is now unlikely for a man to beat his wife without others speaking out, suggesting that interventions have made a significant impact in changing community attitudes. This shift reflects an increased recognition of GBV as unacceptable and a more supportive environment for victims to come forward. According to UN Women (2013), one of the critical outcomes of successful GBV prevention programs is enhanced community responsiveness, whereby community members actively intervene or report GBV when it occurs. The normalization of reporting indicates that stigma against survivors is decreasing, and that there is greater community consensus that violence is unacceptable. Ellsberg *et al.* (2015) emphasize that increased reporting does not necessarily mean GBV incidents are rising in many cases, it reflects greater trust in justice mechanisms and increased confidence among survivors that they will be supported if they come forward. This aligns with findings from interventions globally, where sustained awareness-raising, male engagement, and improved institutional responses have helped break the culture of silence around GBV.

Stakeholder Involvement: The inclusion of multiple stakeholders, such as religious and community leaders, enhances program effectiveness.

"Involvement of different stakeholders, like religious and community leaders, has contributed to the success of interventions." (KI6, Local Organization Representative)

The above narrative highlights the critical role of stakeholder involvement in enhancing the effectiveness of GBV interventions. The inclusion of various community influencers, particularly religious and community leaders, was seen as a key factor in the success of these programs. These leaders often hold significant say over community attitudes and behaviors, making their active participation crucial for fostering acceptance and commitment to GBV prevention efforts. Their endorsement can lend credibility to the interventions and help reach broader audiences, creating a more supportive and unified approach to addressing GBV at the community level. According to UNFPA (2016), engaging traditional and religious leaders is key in communities where social change must navigate deeply rooted cultural and religious beliefs. These leaders serve as gatekeepers who can either obstruct or facilitate transformation, depending on their stance. When they are sensitized and involved in GBV prevention, they become powerful advocates for change, helping to shift attitudes and behaviors in line with human rights and gender equality principles. Michau et al. (2015) emphasizes that multi-sectoral and community-based approaches, which include stakeholders from various levels health workers, police, educators, local councils, and religious leaders are among the most effective in preventing GBV. Such approaches build community ownership, enhance program legitimacy, and create an enabling environment for survivors to seek support without fear of stigma or reprisal.

Factors for Success and Gaps in Current Interventions

Success factors included testimonies, role model men and engagement of households through dialogue and awareness sessions. The gaps in interventions identified by the participants were limited involvement of cultural leaders, who are pivotal in challenging entrenched norms, resistance from some religious circles, particularly concerning issues like family planning, and insufficient outreach to a wider population of men and boys.

"For us to break through, we need clan and cultural leaders. Religious rigidity is also an issue, with some not wanting to hear about family planning." (KI5, Local Organization Representative)

Participants stress the importance of engaging clan and cultural leaders in breaking through resistance to GBV prevention efforts. These leaders hold significant influence within their communities and can play a crucial role in shifting attitudes and promoting change. However, the informant also highlights a challenge posed by religious rigidity, where some religious leaders

were resistant to discussions about sensitive issues such as family planning. This resistance hinder progress, especially when cultural or religious beliefs conflict with initiatives aimed at improving gender equality or reproductive health. According to UN Women (2017), cultural leaders are instrumental in redefining harmful practices when they are actively involved in gender equality initiatives. Their endorsement can help shift deep-rooted patriarchal norms and legitimize gender-transformative messaging. participants pointed out insufficient outreach to a wider population of men and boys.

Many programs tend to engage only a small segment, often the more accessible or willing participants, leaving out harder-to-reach groups such as those in remote areas, or those entrenched in rigid gender norms. Literature affirms that scaling interventions is essential to achieving normative change at the population level (Jewkes et al., 2015). Without broader outreach, the impact of otherwise effective programs remains localized and limited in scope

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS, THE FURTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH, SUMMARY AND THE CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of this research explaining what stood out most, the recommendations, the conclusion and the further areas of research and the conclusion.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study highlights community-based interventions such as the Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP) and engaging men and boys (EMB) as effective in raising awareness and fostering behavior change.

Participants reported a notable reduction in GBV cases and increased collective responsibility due to sensitization, advocacy efforts and stakeholder collaboration.

Participants noted that some interventions neglected schools, where early education could foster lasting change. Limited resources and deeply rooted patriarchal norms hindered progress.

The findings revealed varying levels of awareness regarding interventions targeting men and boys, with initiatives like EMAP, and the Engaging Men and Boys Approach prominently recognized. However, participants emphasized the lack of exclusive programs targeting men and boys, suggesting an area for improvement.

Participants highlighted the importance of men and boys as role models and agents of change, advocating for behaviors such as shared household chores, community accountability, and engagement in productive activities like sports and skilling.

The findings illustrate several successes, including behavior change through Role Model Men and Boys initiatives and community accountability measures that encourage men to address GBV cases. The study highlights critical gaps, such as the underrepresentation of men in interventions and the need for male-specific programs.

The study reveals the effectiveness of interventions targeting men and boys, highlighting their role as pivotal agents in challenging GBV. Programs like the Engaging Men and Boys Approach (EMAP) and male role-modeling initiatives have facilitated behavioral changes and encouraged respect and equity within households and communities.

The findings reveal substantial barriers, including entrenched cultural norms, limited program reach, and knowledge gaps regarding legal protections. These obstacles hinder the full realization of intervention effectiveness.

Participants noted that increased reporting of GBV incidents and testimony-driven behavior change among men and boys were key indicators of intervention success.

5.3 Conclusion

Existing interventions that addressed Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

This study concludes that existing community-based interventions have made notable contributions to preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Omugo Subcounty.

Programs such as the Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP) and initiatives by CARE, CEFORD, and other NGOs have effectively raised awareness, reduced GBV cases, and fostered collective responsibility within communities. Interventions included sensitization campaigns, community dialogues, family counseling, and the establishment of by-laws addressing underlying drivers of GBV such as substance abuse and domestic conflict. These approaches demonstrate the value of locally grounded, culturally sensitive strategies in fostering awareness and resilience against GBV.

Interventions that have involved men

The study highlights the significant role of male-focused initiatives, including the Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) approach, the Engaging Men in Accountable Practice (EMAP) program, and the Role Model Men and Boys initiative. These programs actively engage men and boys as allies, educators, and community change agents, challenging harmful masculine norms, promoting shared responsibility, and fostering gender-equitable behaviors. Men trained as role models not

only participate in counseling, mediation, and peer education but also provide visible examples of positive masculinity, influencing broader social norms.

The effectiveness of strategies involving men and boys

Participants reported that male-inclusive interventions are more impactful than those that exclude men, leading to measurable behavioral change, improved household dynamics, and enhanced community accountability. Early engagement of boys was particularly emphasized as a strategy for long-term transformation, instilling gender-equitable values before harmful norms become entrenched. While these interventions show promise, challenges remain, including limited gender inclusivity in some programs, logistical constraints, resistance from entrenched patriarchal norms, and gaps in school-based and formal institutional engagement.

The study's theoretical analysis demonstrates that combining Nego-Feminism and Hegemonic Masculinity strengthens both understanding and practice. Nego-Feminism underscores the importance of negotiation, collaboration, and culturally rooted engagement, guiding programs to work with rather than against existing social structures. Hegemonic Masculinity provides a lens to identify dominant norms that perpetuate GBV and to design interventions that promote alternative, non-violent masculinities.

The findings affirm that sustainable GBV prevention requires multi-faceted, culturally embedded, and gender-transformative strategies. Effective interventions integrate men as proactive allies, address structural and relational drivers of violence, and balance behavioral change with the negotiation of identities and values that sustain inequities. Programs such as EMB, EMAP, and Role Model Men and Boys offer promising models but must continue evolving to be inclusive, intersectional, and adaptable to the diverse realities of men, boys, and the wider community.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

Policy-Level Recommendations (12–24 months)

The study revealed limited exclusive male-targeted programs and structural barriers rooted in patriarchal norms.

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, district local governments, and GBV policy units should review and revise GBV frameworks within 12–18 months to formally integrate male-exclusive and male-transformative programming into district-level action plans.

Subcounty authorities and probation officers should strengthen enforcement of existing GBV-related by-laws and expand legal education initiatives within 12 months, particularly targeting men and boys in high-risk communities.

District education offices should incorporate life-skills and gender-transformative curricula in schools within 18–24 months to promote early engagement of boys.

Programmatic Recommendations (6–24 months)

Findings showed that role model initiatives and male engagement programs were effective but limited in scale and sustainability.

NGOs and implementing partners should scale up exclusive male-targeted interventions within 6–12 months, particularly in patriarchal and high-prevalence areas.

Programs such as role model men initiatives should incorporate structured monitoring and long-term follow-up mechanisms (minimum 2-year tracking cycles) to assess sustainability of behavioral change.

Community-Level Recommendations (6–18 months)

Cultural and religious resistance emerged as a major barrier to intervention effectiveness.

Clan leaders, religious leaders, and cultural authorities should be formally engaged as GBV prevention allies through quarterly dialogue platforms facilitated by community development officers.

Local councils and community leaders should expand outreach to underrepresented male demographics (young men, informal workers, and marginalized groups) within 6–12 months.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Focus Group Discussion For Older Men

Focus Group Discussion Guide for Older Men (age >18 years) and women

Introduction

Dear participants, the purpose of this discussion is to gather insights and perspectives on existing interventions for the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in this community, particularly those involving men and boys. Your input will help me to understand the effectiveness of strategies that engage men and boys in GBV prevention efforts.

Section A: Existing interventions for prevention of Gender Based Violence

1. What do you understand by Gender Based Violence?
2. What are the examples of Gender Based Violence you have seen or see in the communities where you live?
3. What do you think are the causes of this Gender Based Violence in the communities?
4. What interventions or programs do you know of that are meant to prevent Gender-Based Violence in this community?
5. Personally, have you participated in any Gender Based Violence prevention initiatives or programs? If yes, could you describe your involvement in the initiatives or programs?
6. How effective do you think the existing interventions are in preventing Gender Based Violence in our community?

Section B: Interventions that have involved men in prevention of Gender Based Violence

7. Are you aware of any interventions specifically targeting men or boys in Gender Based Violence prevention?
8. In your own perspective, what roles do you think men and boys can play in preventing Gender Based Violence?

9. Have you ever participated in any programs or activities that involved men in Gender Based Violence prevention? If yes, what was your experience like?

10. What are some of the challenges you think men may face in getting involved in Gender Based Violence prevention efforts?

Section C: Effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence

11. In your own opinion, how effective are interventions that involve men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention compared to those that do not?

12. Can you provide examples of successful strategies or approaches that have effectively engaged men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention in this community?

13. What are some the key factors that contribute to the success or failure of interventions involving men and boys in GBV prevention in this community?

14. In what way do you think we can improve or enhance the involvement of men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention efforts?

15. What additional resources or support do you think are needed to strengthen Gender Based Violence prevention initiatives in the community?

16. Do you have any other suggestions regarding Gender Based Violence prevention efforts involving men and boys?

Appendix Two: Focus Group Discussion For Young Boys
Focus Group Discussion Guide for Young Boys (aged, 13-17 years)

Introduction

Dear participants, the purpose of this discussion is to gather insights and perspectives on existing interventions for the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in this community, particularly those involving men and boys. Your input as young boys between the age of 13-17 years old will help me to understand the effectiveness of strategies that engage men and boys in GBV prevention efforts.

Section A: Existing interventions for prevention of Gender Based Violence

1. What do you understand by Gender Based Violence?
2. What are the examples of Gender Based Violence you have seen or see in the communities where you live?
3. What do you think are the causes of this Gender Based Violence in the communities?
4. What interventions or programs do you know of that are meant to prevent Gender-Based Violence in this community?
5. Personally, have you participated in any Gender Based Violence prevention initiatives or programs? If yes, could you describe your involvement in the initiatives or programs?
6. How effective do you think the existing interventions are in preventing Gender Based Violence in our community?

Section B: Interventions that have involved men in prevention of Gender Based Violence

7. Are you aware of any interventions specifically targeting men or boys in Gender Based Violence prevention?
8. In your own perspective, what roles do you think men and boys can play in preventing Gender Based Violence?
9. Have you ever participated in any programs or activities that involved men in Gender Based Violence prevention? If yes, what was your experience like?

10. What are some of the challenges you think men may face in getting involved in Gender Based Violence prevention efforts?

Section C: Effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence

11. In your own opinion, how effective are interventions that involve men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention compared to those that do not?

12. Can you provide examples of successful strategies or approaches that have effectively engaged men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention in this community?

13. What are some the key factors that contribute to the success or failure of interventions involving men and boys in GBV prevention in this community?

14. In what way do you think we can improve or enhance the involvement of men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention efforts?

15. What additional resources or support do you think are needed to strengthen Gender Based Violence prevention initiatives in the community?

16. Do you have any other suggestions regarding Gender Based Violence prevention efforts involving men and boys?

Appendix Three: Key Informant Guide For Local Leaders

Key Informant Interview Guide: Community Leaders

Introduction

Dear Sir/Madam.

The purpose of this interview is to gather your insights and perspectives on existing interventions for the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the communities, particularly those involving men and boys. Your expertise and experience as a local leader will provide valuable insights for this study.

Section A: Existing interventions for prevention of Gender Based Violence

1. What do you understand by Gender Based Violence?
2. What are the examples of Gender Based Violence you have seen or see in your community?
3. What do you think are the causes of this Gender Based Violence in your community?
4. What interventions or programs do you know of that aim to prevent Gender-Based Violence in the community?
5. How are these interventions implemented, and what organizations or agencies are involved in their implementation?
6. From your perspective, what are the strengths and weaknesses of existing interventions for Gender Based Violence prevention in the community?

Section B: Interventions that have involved men in prevention of Gender Based Violence

7. Are you aware of any interventions specifically targeting men or boys to prevent Gender Based Violence?
8. Can you describe any initiatives or programs that have successfully involved men in Gender Based Violence prevention efforts?
9. What roles do you think men and boys can play in preventing Gender Based Violence, and how have these roles been incorporated into interventions?

Section C: Effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence

10. In your opinion, how effective are interventions that involve men and boys in GBV prevention compared to those that do not?
11. Can you provide examples of successful strategies or approaches that have effectively engaged men and boys in GBV prevention?
12. What are some challenges or barriers that interventions face when involving men and boys in GBV prevention efforts, and how can these be addressed?
13. How do you think community attitudes and perceptions towards GBV prevention efforts involving men and boys have evolved over time?
14. What are some key factors that contribute to the success or failure of interventions involving men and boys in GBV prevention?
15. From your perspective as a local leader, what resources or support are needed to strengthen GBV prevention initiatives in our community?

Appendix Four: Key Informant Guide For Local Organizations Representatives

Key Informant Interview Guide: Local organizations representatives

Introduction

Dear Sir/madam,

The purpose of this session is to gather insights and perspectives on existing interventions for the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the communities, particularly those involving men and boys. Your expertise and experience as a representative from a local organization will provide valuable insights for our study.

Section A: Existing interventions for prevention of Gender Based Violence

1. What do you understand by Gender Based Violence?
2. What are the examples of Gender Based Violence you have seen or sees in the communities?
3. What do you think are the causes of this Gender Based Violence in the communities?
4. What interventions or programs does your organization implement to prevent Gender-Based Violence?
5. How are these interventions designed and implemented, and what target populations do they serve?
6. What partnerships or collaborations does your organization have with other stakeholders or agencies in implementing Gender Based Violence prevention interventions?

Section B: Interventions that have involved men in prevention of Gender Based Violence

7. Are you aware of any interventions specifically targeting men or boys to prevent GBV that your organization has been involved in?
8. Can you describe any initiatives or programs that have successfully involved men in GBV prevention efforts?
9. How have men and boys been engaged in these interventions, and what roles have they played?

Section C: Effectiveness of strategies that have involved men and boys in prevention of Gender Based Violence

10. From your own perspective, how effective are interventions that involve men and boys in GBV prevention compared to those that do not?

11. Can you provide examples of successful strategies or approaches that have effectively engaged men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention?

12. What are some challenges or barriers that interventions face when involving men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention efforts, and how can these be addressed?

13. How does your organization measure the effectiveness of Gender Based Violence prevention interventions involving men and boys?

14. What are some key factors that contribute to the success or failure of interventions involving men and boys in Gender Based Violence prevention?

15. What are the main gaps or areas for improvement that you have identified in current Gender Based Violence prevention efforts involving men and boys?