

**PREDOMINANT CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OCCURS  
IN GULU DISTRICT**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## **DECLARATION**

I, Lawino Ruth, declare that this research proposal titled: “Predominant Circumstances under which Violence Against Women Occurs in Gulu District” is my original work and has not been presented for a degree or any award in any other University. Where other people’s works have been used, they have been properly acknowledged.

Sign:



Date: 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004

## **APPROVAL**

This is to certify that this research proposal titled, “Predominant Circumstances under which Violence Against Women occurs in Gulu District” was prepared under my supervision and is ready for submission.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Betty Enyipu Akurut', is positioned below the printed name of the supervisor.

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the prevalent circumstances under which violence against women takes place in the Gulu district. The study employed a descriptive design and a mixed approach by using questionnaires and interview guides to gather data from respondents. The data was analyzed using SPSS software to identify trends and patterns. The findings of the study revealed that cultural and socioeconomic factors, such as patriarchy, control over resources, and household income levels, are the principal drivers of violence against women in the district. These factors work in conjunction to perpetuate sexual, physical, and emotional violence against women. Despite the efforts of Local leaders to mitigate violence against women, they have made little progress due to their limited understanding of women's rights. The study concludes that to reduce violence against women, it is necessary to increase awareness among Local leaders and build their capacity to advocate for and implement policies that prevent violence against women. This will enable them to be more effective in addressing the issue and protecting the rights of women in the district

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS**

CEDAW	Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
ICCPR	International convention on civil and political rights
ICESCR	International convention on social, political, and cultural rights
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
UDHR	Universal declaration of human rights
UN	United Nations
VAW	Violence against women
WHO	World Health Organization

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world, rooted in gender inequality, discrimination, and harmful cultural and social norms (Green et al., 2020). It is also increasingly recognized as a public health issue that adversely affects the health of women. It is estimated that approximately 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced some form of violence which could be physical, emotional, or sexual (WHO, 2013). The prevalence and seriousness of VAW impacts make it a central theme in development discourse and practice. This study focuses on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs in Gulu District.

### **1.1 Background**

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as; “any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”. Violence is herein understood as acts that cause or have the potential to cause harm, and by introducing the term “gender-based”, it emphasizes its roots in the inequality or power relations that exist between men and women (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). Violence against women encompasses a multitude of abuses directed towards women by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence (WHO 2013). This takes different forms including; physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence (Green et al., 2020). Examples include murder, torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, rape, sexual slavery, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, forced prostitution, forced abortion, forced pregnancy, and forced sterilization among others.

Globally, Violence against women constitutes one of the most prevalent human rights abuses (McQuigg, 2018). It is estimated that over 570 million women are subject to gender-based violence annually (Cooper et al., 2020; WHO & HRP, 2019) Studies show that over 30 % of women worldwide have experienced physical, sexual, or other forms of violence, 7% of women world have experienced intimate partner violence, about 100- 140 women have undergone FGM

and more than 70% of women worldwide are married before the age of 18 years (Ellsberg et al., 2015). Moreover, there are permissive attitudes towards Violence against women and most cultures condone attitudes that normalize and justify violence against women (Black et al., 2019). Attempts to counter violence against women (VAW) by changing people's attitudes and behaviors towards women have yielded little impact (WHO & HRP, 2019). This is likely because the value judgments are deeply rooted and therefore slow to change (Ellsberg et al., 2015). This is evidenced by the persistence of violence against women despite efforts from governments and other development partners.

Fried (2019), observes that there has been a shift in the understanding and interventions to end violence against women in that what was once confined to whispers and silent suffering has gained prominence in the public sphere. The 1994 UN World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna helped to raise awareness and the political saliency of violence against women and connected women's advocacy groups to the larger human rights regimes. Accordingly, many countries have adopted policies aimed at combating violence against women. Even then, the actual reform has been uneven at best (Montoya, 2009). The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Convention on Social, political and cultural rights (ICESCR) and International convention on civil and political rights (ICCPR) (Montoya, 2009) among other international conventions to combat violence against women have been ratified by many states. However, the implementation or enforcement of these laws has remained largely ineffective. The fragmentation and incoherence in the government's work on violence against women evidenced by the lack of a plan of action has led to the ineffective implementation and or enforcement of the laws. In Europe, there has been a lack of oversight bodies such as a Commission on Violence against Women or an Observatory which has also hindered efforts to combat violence against women. This calls for the need to unpack the predominant circumstances under which violence occurs with the hope that once the predominant circumstances are identified, strategies can be designed to address them specifically, and a measurable reduction in the prevalence of violence may be recorded.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence of Violence Against Women remains even higher. This is due to the patriarchal nature of African societies which has created a power imbalance between men and women (Grose et al., 2021). Women are often in positions of reduced power, and it has become glaringly clear that, relegation of women is the norm and women have had to rebel in some way to achieve the status they have today. Empowering women may be viewed as a feminist endeavor; however, a disempowered woman is prone to become a victim of circumstances all her life. Violence against women in African society takes different forms including; physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse (Flood & Pease, 2009). It is manifest in early and forced marriages, beating, verbal abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, and damage to property among others. Violence against women compromises the safety, health, or well-being of women (Catherine et al., 2021).

UN member states' interventions to reduce violence against women have been guided by the international conventions and treaties of which they are a part and/or their National laws all of which criminalize violence against women (Alesina et al., 2021; Catherine et al., 2021). Consequently, member states have enacted laws and engaged in the enforcement of the laws and policies to protect women and girls against violence. Institutions have also been established to implement and or enforce these laws and policies at the regional and local/national levels. Even then, there is still the need to understand the causes of violence against women which many commentators hold that is embedded in the sociocultural and economic circumstances of the women.

In Uganda, the prevalence of Violence against women is still very high, despite it having been outlawed (Ogland et al., 2014). Women across the country face a cycle of violence that follows them through every stage of their lives, including the threat of early marriage as teenagers, beating inflicting bodily injuries, forced marriage, marital rape, defilement, sexual harassment, polygamy, widow inheritance, and lack of voice among others (Valentine et al., 2019). Furthermore, they are also faced with the likelihood of violence within their intimate relationships the possibility of their land and property being stolen if widowed and the threat of sexual assault hangs over women of all ages (Sengupta & Calo, 2016). This has been attributed to the highly gendered distribution of socioeconomic resources coupled with a dominant Patriarchal gender norm. Violence against women has been viewed as a response to the threat to

the masculinity of men (Green et al., 2020; Sengupta & Calo, 2016). When men feel that their masculinity is threatened, they tend to reinforce their masculinity through violent behaviors toward women (Green et al., 2020). Moreover, in most societies, some forms of violence are condoned and witnesses do not report (Grose et al., 2021). When violence against women is not effectively addressed or responded to, it has a grave impact on the well-being of the women, their families, and the community as a whole.

The government has adopted several regulatory frameworks to combat violence against women. These include; The 1995 Constitution, Penal Code Act, The Domestic Violence Act, the Trial on Indictment Act, The Succession Act, and Children's statutes which collectively criminalize early and forced marriage, defilement, forced prostitution, rape, indecent assault, and female genital mutilation, among other violations (Okello & Hovil, 2007). Despite numerous legislations to combat VAW, efforts to translate these policies into action have yielded little (Pima, 2004). There has been a distinct failure to implement constitutional provisions to protect women due to the lack of state capacity evidenced in the inaccessibility of Law enforcement institutions and lack of police presence (Turshen, 2000). Overall, the link between laws contained in the statutes and their effective implementation in society is very wanting as violence against women is not considered a crime in practice; cases are mediated or referred back to the family unit to be resolved at home as it is considered a private matter. This prevalence of violence against women has remained high since appropriate actions have not been taken to address the predominant circumstances under which they occur.

In Gulu in Northern Uganda, a region that is still recovering from the effect of the over two-decade Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency, the stake has been even higher for the women. The LRA insurgency led to the breakdown of social institutions which ensured societal stability (Okello & Hovil, 2007). This led to widespread incidences of violence against women arising from the shifting gender roles that resulted from the forced displacement of the people in the IDP (Lawoko et al., 2014). The masculinity and or dominant position of the men as the breadwinners and household heads were threatened by the loss of their livelihoods and the high level of poverty (Black et al., 2019). Most men have adopted negative coping mechanisms including alcoholism and substance abuse all of which have increased the risk of violence against women (Ehrenberg et al., 2014; Okello & Hovil, 2007). Despite interventions from the

government and other development partners to mitigate violence against women and girls, they continue to suffer from physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Understanding the root causes of violence would be a great starting point in finding sustainable solutions to address them. It is on this premise that the researcher would like to investigate the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs in Gulu District.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Violence against women has been outlawed in Uganda. Article 33:11 of the constitution of the Republic of Uganda accords women equality with men. It provides that laws, cultures, and customs that undermine the status, dignity, well-being, or interest of women are prohibited by the constitution (Lawoko et al., 2014). The National gender policy is a testament to the commitment of the government of Uganda to implement the contents of Article 4 of CEDAW which obliges states “to condemn violence against women, repeal any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations concerning its elimination (Ogland et al., 2014). Even then, the prevalence of violence against women has remained high”. Black et al., (2019), estimate that approximately 78% of women in Uganda have at least experienced one form of violence. In Northern Uganda, the situation is even worse due to the numerous other risk factors related to exposure to war including but not limited to the loss of loved ones, means of production, assets, and other investments (Sengupta & Calo, 2016). Due to violence, women experience physical, mental, and sexual reproductive health problems, a high prevalence of the birth of low-weight babies, unsupervised abortion, depression, alcoholism, and HIV infection (Kawuki et al., 2021). Despite interventions from the government and other development partners, through advocacy, legislation, and the implementation of programs aimed at combating violence against women, critics argue that they have largely addressed the symptoms rather than the root causes of this violence (Gardsbane et al., 2022; Kawuki et al., 2021; Richmond et al., 2023). There is, therefore, a need to unpack the predominant circumstances under which this violence occurs so that appropriate, sustainable, and scalable remedies can be devised and implemented. This study will therefore investigate the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs in Gulu District.

## **1.3 Research questions**

### **1.3.1 Action Research Questions**

1. How can we mitigate violence against women in Gulu District?

### **1.3.2 Central research questions**

1. What are the predominant circumstance under which violence against women occurs in Gulu District?

#### **1.3.4 Subsidiary Research Questions**

1. What is violence against women
2. What are the different forms of violence against women in Gulu District?
3. What are the cultural factors that cause violence against women in Gulu District?
4. What are the socioeconomic factors that cause violence against women in Gulu District?
5. What are the roles of local leaders in mitigating violence against women in Gulu District?
6. What should be done to make the local leaders more effective in their efforts to mitigate violence against women?

### **1.4 Scope of the study**

This will be three-fold i.e., the geographical scope, content, and time scope.

#### **1.4.1 Geographical scope**

The study covered Gulu City, Awach, and Palaro Sub-counties in Gulu District. This is because high incidences of violence against women have been reported in these sub-counties over a long period. To make matters worse, some government infrastructures which are essential in preventing and responding to violence against women in the district are not fully operational.

#### **1.4.2 Content scope**

The study will cover the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs. The forms of violence experienced by women, the roles of the local leaders in mitigating them, and the support needed to ensure the effectiveness of the justice duty bearers in responding to violence against women will also be explored. The content is interconnected in a way that, once the underlying causes of violence are determined, they will underscore which form of violence is more prevalent and by identifying the role of the local leaders, their confidence in the justice system to effectively handle such incidents will be strengthened and the community will rely more on the justice system for redress which will lead to the deterrence of perpetrators of violence against women.

### 1.4.3 Time scope

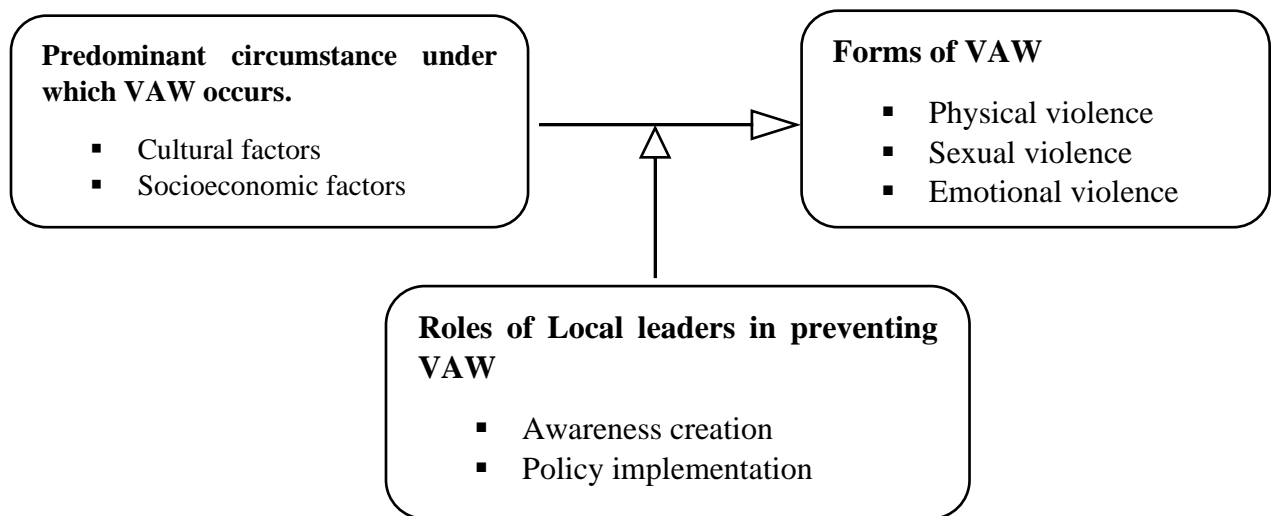
The study will cover a period of 3 years that is the period from 2020- 2023. This is because it was the period during which the prevalence of violence against women climaxed in the region. Additionally, the interventions of the government and other development partners were also reduced due to the lockdown measures taken to control the spread of Covid 19.

### 1.5 Significance of the study

The findings from the study will be of benefit to a wide range of stakeholders as discussed below; The study will increase knowledge on the predominant circumstance under which violence against women occurs. It will identify a common ground for the local leaders and the formal justice system in response to violence against women. This will help to shape the policies and interventions adopted by the government to combat violence against women. It will also be a point of reference for other scholars pursuing further studies on violence against women.

### 1.6 Conceptual framework

To understand the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs the study adopted the conceptual framework in Figure 1.



*Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between the predominant circumstances under which Violence Against Women occur*

**Adopted with modification from (Duran & Eraslan, 2019; Igbolekwu & Nwogu, 2021; Nadia et al., 2018)**

As shown in Figure 1, the predominant circumstance under which violence against women can be explained by cultural and socioeconomic factors. These are predicted to lead to various forms of violence i.e., Physical, psychological, and sexual violence. The role of the local leaders is believed to affect the relationship between the predominant factors under which violence against women occurs and the predominant circumstance under which violence occurs. These roles are explained to cover advocacy and policy implementation.

### **1.7 Operational Definitions**

**Predominant Circumstances:** the different factors which are responsible for the occurrence of violence against women. For this study, the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs have been categorized into sociocultural and economic factors.

**Violence against women:** act or threat that causes harm to the women be it physical, sexual, or psychological.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter covers the relevant literature on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs. It explores the theories that explain relationships between the study variables and various themes based on the conceptual framework and or study objectives i.e., the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs, forms of violence, and the roles of the local leaders in mitigating violence against women.

#### **2.1 Resource-Based Theory.**

The Resource Theory was developed by Goode in 1971 (Sunitha, 2016) and posits that the level of resources is a key indicator of violence against women (Basile et al., 2013). It argues that men commit violence against women to maintain their hegemonic status and control of resources such as money, land, and power (Atkinson et al., 2005; Sunitha, 2016). Kenny, Fotaki, and Scriver (2019), argue that social relationships in most communities assume force or threat of force. Therefore, power is a fundamental organizing concept in resource-based theory (Eswaran & Malhotra, 2011). Sunitha, (2016), asserts that to some extent all social systems rely on force or the threat of violence and that when all resources are exhausted to maintain or advance their interests, men will use violence. Violence is thus seen as a response to a threat to men's masculinity due to limited resources. According to this theory, when a man is unemployed and a woman earns more money, he feels that his masculinity is being questioned and out of frustration as well as to maintain his dominant position, he uses violence against women (Amegbor & Pascoe, 2021; Kersten, 2017). Therefore, this theory posits that violence against women is a consequence of the loss or absence of power. Walters, Basile, and Hall (2013), assert that in some cases, the more resources an individual has, the greater the threat of force, although it is less likely to result in force/violence. This shows that violence comes in many different forms, such as physical, mental, sexual, and economic violence.

To combat violence against women, the theory suggests that it is necessary not only to introduce legislative policies but also to address social values that make violence acceptable in some societies (Ibrahim, 2010). Therefore, social change is needed to combat the values and beliefs that legitimize violence against women by challenging many cultural norms. Considering that

violence is more prevalent in societies with fewer resources, there is a need for social change to create special programs or laws aimed at supporting prevention and helping communities and societies that are experiencing poverty. This theory also suggests that people seek the highest rewards while expending the least effort in social relationships (Kreager, Felson, Warner, & Wenger, 2013). Therefore, violence against women is used when the reward for taking control is worth the effort and potential legal consequences (Resko, 2010). Although there are anti-abuse laws, this does not always prevent abuse. This theory is relevant to this study because it highlights different forms of violence and their causes while suggesting ways to reduce them and grasping key concepts related to the study.

## **2.3 Predominant circumstance under which Violence against women occurs.**

### **2.3.1 Cultural factors**

Culture is an important component of our lives and cultural institutions are indispensable for protecting women and children, however, there are often widespread assertions that gender stereotypes are reinforced and legitimized by the traditional roles of men and women, due to conservative interpretations. Amegbor & Pascoe, (2021) & Muluneh et al., (2020) argue that In sub-Saharan Africa, culture does not empower women but instead sees them as best placed to raise a family, take care of the family, and reproduce, which has influenced the way women live. This implies that culture in most cases has been an obstacle to the enjoyment of rights of the women.

Amegbor and Rosenberg (2019) believe that patriarchy, which is the main cause of most households' power imbalance, not only causes violence against women but also hinders efforts to reduce violence against women. This is reflected in cultural definitions of appropriate gender roles, role expectations in relationships, beliefs in inherent male superiority, male-first values, and Family as a private space under complete male control (Okello and Hovil, 2007). Patriarchy which is a dominant feature of most families in Sub-Saharan Africa legitimizes men's domination and control over women, which they often exercise through violence.

When men continue to be violent towards women, they suffer in silence, because often when they report to the authorities, they are sent home to deal with these problems, as most believe that these matters are private and therefore should not be brought to the public (Ehrenberg et al., 2014). Studies also link violence against women to parental violence. Parents are the first role

models for children; therefore, children learn acceptable and unacceptable behaviors from them. In families where violence is the norm, the children are likely to be violent including towards women.

Alesina et al., (2021), argue that ancestral characteristics that pertain to marriage patterns and living arrangements are also responsible for violence against women. Alberto Alesina, and Benedetta Brioschi (2016), add that payment of the bride price for instance promotes violence against women. Payment of bride prices is blamed for the commodification of women in most societies. When men pay the bride price, they take the woman as their personal property. Women often lose their voices and are subjugated by the men. They are forced to submit to men and in some cases, they have been forced to endure pain in silence due to the fear of returning their bride price. Payment of the bride price is responsible for the normalization and justification of violence against women. It is now widely accepted that preventing intimate partner violence is possible and can be achieved through a greater understanding of the problem; its risk and protective factors; and effective evidence-informed primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. Too often this preventable form of violence is repetitive, occurring at multiple points across the lifespan. (Council, 2015)

### **2.3.2 Socioeconomic factors**

Globally, violence against women can be attributed to prevailing social and economic conditions of the societies for instance; crime, poverty, lack of capacity and resources for community leaders to respond to incidences of violence, inadequate support given to victims and survivors of violence, and, the costly, slow, and tedious process when pursuing justice through the formal justice system. Valentine et al., (2019), argue that the major risk factors associated with violence against women include; young age, low education, unemployment of partners, disparity between partners' education, marital discord, societal acceptance of VAW, child maltreatment, and Alcoholism. Aziz, (2018), adds that the education level of both the perpetrator and the victims affects the intervention of local leaders to mitigate violence against women.

A meta-analysis of perpetrator characteristics shows that younger, less educated, and less affluent men were more likely to abuse their partners than older and more educated men (Valentine et al., 2019). On the other hand, the younger and less educated female victims often suffer silently because of the lack of knowledge of the available legal frameworks and

institutions to run to for help (Turshen, 2000). Amegbor & Rosenberg (2019), holds that women's educational status is a predictor of violence against women. It adds that less educated women were more likely to experience emotional, psychological, and physical violence. The vulnerability of women in terms of unemployment, low educational level, and low-income levels predisposed them to violence since it entrenches the male dominant status over the women. The patrilineal nature of our societies means women do not have equal access as men to productive resources leaving them largely dependent on men (Amegbor & Rosenberg, 2019). The high level of poverty among women means they cannot afford the financial obligation involved in the pursuit of justice (Amegbor & Pascoe, 2021). As a consequence, many of them suffer in silence. The situation is further compounded by the fact that some forms of violence have been normalized and are condoned in most of our societies notably, early marriages, widow inheritance, and wife disciplining among others

## 2.4 Forms of Violence Against Women

### 2.4.1 Physical violence

Physical violence Includes the curse of torment and damage to the complainant's body. It incorporates beating, punching, kicking, gnawing, burning, damaging, or murdering, with or without weapons. 35% of ladies around the world have experienced either physical and/or sexual hint accomplice viciousness or non-partner sexual savagery (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). All-inclusive, 7% of ladies have been sexually ambushed by somebody other than an accomplice. Universally, as numerous as 38% of murders of ladies are committed by an insinuated accomplice (Saile et al., 2013). 200 million ladies have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting. This issue isn't as it was obliterating for survivors of savagery and their families but moreover involves noteworthy social and financial costs. In a few nations, savagery against ladies is assessed to have taken a toll nation up to 3.7% of their GDP, more than twofold what most governments spend on instruction. Disappointment to address this issue too involves a significant cost in the long term (Considers & Green, 2017). Various considerations have appeared that children developing viciousness are more likely to become survivors themselves or culprits of savagery in the future.

Diminishing savagery against ladies and young ladies requires a community-based, multi-pronged approach, and maintained engagement with different partners. The foremost compelling

activities address basic chance variables for savagery, counting social standards concerning sexual orientation parts and the adequacy of viciousness. The World Bank is committed to tending to gender-based savagery through speculation, investigation and learning, and collaboration with partners around the world (Madinah, 2020). Since 2003, the World Bank has locked in with nations and accomplices to back ventures and information items pointed at anticipating and tending to GBV. The Bank bolsters over \$300 million in advancement ventures pointed at tending to GBV in World Bank Bunch (WBG)-financed operations, both through standalone ventures and through the integration of GBV components in sector-specific ventures in ranges such as transport, instruction, social assurance, and constrained uprooting. Recognizing the noteworthiness of the challenge, tending to GBV in operations has been highlighted as a World Bank need.

#### **2.4.2 Sexual Violence**

Any act or conduct that abuses humiliates, degrades, or otherwise violates the sexual integrity of the complainant. Women's basic rights include freedom from harmless sex, and freedom from all forms of violence, coercion, or unwanted pregnancy (Agüero & Frisancho, 2022). Any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to a woman" is considered sexual violence against women by the United Nations and includes threats, coercion, or deprivation of liberty. Although men are also victims of sexual violence, women tend to face higher rates and more severe injuries, a phenomenon that has received widespread international attention since the twenty-first century.

The increasing release of sexual violence-related information has provided a clearer picture of the current state of violence against women. Some of the common and serious forms of violence that women face include sexual abuse, forced prostitution, selective abortion, and neglect of girls, with sexual violence being the most widespread form (Alesina et al., 2021). Perpetrators of violence include spouses, partners, parents, other family members, neighbors, and men in positions of power or control. Some women do not experience arbitrary sexual violence in their lifetimes, while others experience it repeatedly over years or even decades. Sexual violence is often the most humiliating type of gender-based violence that women are most likely to experience.

Sexual violence is far more prevalent in most societies than is usually suspected in daily life. Tolerance of sexual violence and coercion in specific social contexts makes women see it as normal and lessens condemnation (Sunitha, 2016). Yet the prevalence of sexual violence means that globally, millions of women are experiencing this trauma and its consequences. Numerous studies have been conducted around the world to assess the prevalence of sexual violence. Most focus on specific groups of women, such as schools, colleges, or university students, clients of specific medical services, or professional groups (Flood & Pease, 2009). However, no study has systematically measured the global prevalence of sexual violence against women.

### **2.4.3 Emotional Violence**

Psychological Violence means a pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards a victim such as repeated insults, ridicule or name-calling, repeated threats to cause emotional pain, the repeated exhibition of obsessive possession or jealousy to such an extent that it constitutes a serious invasion of the victim's privacy, liberty, integrity or security (Nadia et al., 2018). Emotional abuse is another form of domestic violence. Emotional abuse can happen to anyone at any time in their lives. Women, children, teens, and adults all experience emotional abuse. Emotional abuse can have devastating consequences on relationships and all the people involved. Just because there is no physical mark doesn't mean the abuse isn't real and isn't a problem or even a crime in some countries. "Emotional abuse is any kind of abuse that is emotional rather than physical (Madinah, 2021). It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased. Emotional abuse can take many forms. Three general patterns of abusive behavior include aggressing, denying, and minimizing.

Although there is no established definition for emotional abuse, emotional abuse can possess a definition beyond verbal and psychological abuse. Blaming, shaming, and name-calling are a few identifiers of verbal abuse that can affect a victim emotionally (Amegbor & Pascoe, 2021). The victim's self-worth and emotional well-being are altered and even diminished by the verbal abuse and the result is an emotionally abused victim. The victim may experience severe psychological effects. This would involve the tactics of brainwashing, which can fall under psychological abuse as well, but emotional abuse consists of the manipulation of the victim's emotions. The victim may feel their emotions are being affected by the abuser so much that the

victim may no longer recognize what their feelings are about the issue/s the abuser is trying to control. The result is the victim's self-confidence and independence are systematically taken away (Cooper et al., 2020). One definition of emotional abuse is: "any act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth." Emotional abuse is also known as psychological or "chronic verbal aggression" by researchers (Easteal et al., 2015). People who suffer from emotional abuse tend to have very low self-esteem, show personality changes (such as becoming withdrawn), and may even become depressed, anxious, or suicidal.

## **2.5 Local leaders through the government's prevention initiatives**

### **2.5.1 Advocacy**

A key objective of local government interventions is to promote legal and policy reform aimed at preventing and responding to violence against women. They advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies that protect women's rights and promote the enforcement of existing laws and policies that criminalize violence against women (Haque & Druce, 2020). They also engage in awareness campaigns covering a range of activities aimed at increasing knowledge about the causes and consequences of different types of violence against women and girls (VAWG). They have challenged attitudes, beliefs, and norms that condone VAWG; and educate people about relevant laws, policies, services, and rights (UN Women, 2021:1).

In Sub-Saharan Africa where the prevalence of VAWG remains high, response to it as a human rights violation is insufficient, the local government leaders and authorities have in their communication created awareness about violence against women and girls (Karamagi et al., 2006; Richmond et al., 2023). These have helped to heighten awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) as a violation of human rights that affects society (UN Women, 2021:3). Over the years, awareness campaigns have helped to rally support for and influence change in international and national legislative, and policy frameworks, as well as sustain vital gender-based violence prevention and response programming to support survivors. Activists and campaigners against VAWG continuously demonstrate courage, creativity, and innovation in getting their messages out. Often, they work at a range of different levels to ensure messages for positive change and ending violence against women and girls are heard (Teffo-Menziwa et al., 2010).

### **2.5.2 Policy Implementation**

If the dream of a non-violent nation is to become a reality, local leaders should be actively involved in the implementation of policies and enforcement of laws that protect women against violence. Local government can support law enforcement efforts to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of violence against women by providing resources and training (Montoya, 2009). They also fund and provide services such as hotlines, shelters, counseling, and legal services for survivors of violence and coordinate the response efforts of various agencies, including law enforcement, social services, and healthcare providers, to ensure a coordinated and effective response to violence against women. They have ensured better management of violent incidents, better coordination, and more effective law enforcement.

Uganda's national gender policy aims to promote a gender-sensitive and responsive police force. The Police Family Welfare Division is responsible for promoting the rights of women and children. They arbitrate violence against women and men in our society and bring those beyond their power to justice. You have joined the call to prevent violence against women (Amisi, 2019; Madinah, 2020). This can include establishing and strengthening referral pathways for survivors to access medical care, counseling, legal aid, and other support services. Local governments can also work to improve the capacity of service providers and frontline responders to respond to cases of violence effectively and sensitively. Local government interventions can also aim to strengthen community-based mechanisms for preventing and responding to violence against women (Catherine et al., 2021). This can involve working with community leaders and traditional structures to promote gender equality and positive social norms, and to establish community-led initiatives such as community watch groups, women's support groups, and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms(Lima, 2020).

### **2.6 Literature gaps**

The literature revealed that the predominant circumstances under which violence against women in most societies can be understood the cultural and socioeconomic factors. These factors are interwoven creating a web that is not only difficult to escape but also to break. Even then, most of these studies were not conducted in the context of a society that is still recovering from the effects of a civil insurgency.

The main forms of violence against women include physical, sexual, and emotional violence. These forms of violence reinforce each other causing women to suffer mostly in silence. Nonetheless, most of the studies focus more on the symptoms rather than the extent to which women have been affected by them.

The roles of the traditional leaders including advocacy, and enforcement of law especially those that promote the equality of women are not emphasized. However, limited studies have tried to establish its moderating effects on the relationship between the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs and the different forms of violence that women suffer.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter explains the methodology that will be used in operationalizing this study. It covers the Research design, approach, study population, sample size, sampling procedure, methods of data collection, research instruments construction, fieldwork procedures, data processing, and analysis of the study.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive research design because it provides an accurate and valid description and a summary of all the variables that are relevant to the research questions. The descriptive design was used to elaborate the characteristics of the study population and the study variables which include; the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs, the nature of violence that women in the Gulu District suffer, and the roles of the local religious leaders in mitigating violence against women. The design provided enough protection from biases and maximizes reliability.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods concurrently. This is for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding of findings on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs. Quantitative data was collected using the questionnaire on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs, forms of violence and the roles of local leaders in mitigating violence against women. Qualitative methods on the other hand was concerned with the opinions of the respondents on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occur. It was used to provide a description and further explanations of the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs and the main forms of violence against women. It dealt primarily with the verbal and derived meaning from the participant's perspective to ensure an in-depth understanding of the relations between the variables in the study. A blend of quantitative and qualitative techniques increased the quality of the research because the results from each

technique reinforced each other and ensured consistency and deeper insights into the study than a single method would provide.

### **3.3 Study population**

The study population comprised women, local leaders, religious leaders, district local government officials, and the police. The women were chosen to take part in the study because they have experienced violence and are uniquely placed as the authors of their stories. The local leaders, religious leaders, and district officials were selected because of their mandate as first responders to violence because of the reliance of the community on them.

#### **3.4.1 Sampling Techniques**

This study used non-probability sampling techniques. Snowball sampling techniques were used to select 40 women who have suffered violence. Using this method, one of the survivors was identified and she will help to identify the next respondents. This was repeated until sufficient information on the subject and object of inquiry was obtained. The police, local leaders, and district local leaders were selected using purposive sampling methods.

#### **3.4.2 Sample size**

Key informants were selected through purposive sampling methods. The researcher took into account the experiences and knowledge of the respondents. The study considered 1 probation and welfare officer, 2 local leaders (1 Religious and 1 cultural leader), and 1 community development officer. These were interviewed to provide qualitative data on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occur

The researcher used the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table in Appendix I to determine the sample size of participants for quantitative data. A total of 120 participants considered for this purpose in determining the sample size as shown in the table below;

**Table 1: Sample size**

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Participant Category	Population	Sample size	Sampling technique
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Women	120	92	Simple random sampling
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### **Source: Primary data**

#### **3.4.3 Data Sources**

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained through interviews and questionnaire survey. The survivors of violence against women, police, probation and welfare officers, community development officers, cultural leaders, local leaders, and religious leaders. Secondary data was obtained from the literature review. Existing literature from journal articles and reports on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs in reputable journals and organizations was reviewed.

#### **3.5 Data collection methods**

Primary data were collected using interviews and survey methods.

##### **3.5.1 Interviews**

The researcher used interview methods to collect primary data from the survivors of violence against women, police, probation and welfare officers, community development officers, police, and local leaders. They were administered face-to-face by research assistants who with permission from the respondents recorded the discussions which were later transcribed. This helped to minimize non-responses and most importantly it saves time and gives room for flexibility. Questions were rephrased as required to aid understanding and comprehension. During interviews, clarification was sought on different issues.

##### **3.5.2 Survey Methods**

A self-administered questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was based on a Likert scale with five levels of responses. This used to rate the opinion of the respondents on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs, and the major forms of violence that affect women Gulu District

### **3.6 Data collection instruments**

#### **3.6.1 questionnaire**

The questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire took the format of a Likert scale which was used to assess the extent to which the respondents agree or disagree with various statements of inquiry on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs. The questionnaires were used to collect data from the women. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions/statements of inquiry that attract the responses of agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

#### **3.6.2 Interview guide**

Interview guides were used to collect data from participants including police, local leaders, probation and welfare officers, community development officers, and religious leaders. The interview guide had open-ended questions to allow the researcher to explore the knowledge and experience of the respondents on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs and its main forms. The interview was used to collect qualitative data which was used to enrich the quantitative data collected using the questionnaire guide.

### **3.6 Data Measurement**

Quantitative data obtained using the questionnaire was measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in questionnaires (Kothari, 2006). Five (5) response categories were used ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. This is the interval of measurement that was used to determine the extent to which respondents agree to the statements of inquiry on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs.

### **3.10 Reliability and Validity of the Instruments**

#### **3.10.1 Reliability of the instrument**

Reliability means the dependability or trustworthiness of the measurement of the instruments used for data collection. It describes the ability of an instrument to collect the same data consistently under similar conditions or the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures (Kothari, 2006). Error variances are considered minimal when the data

collection tool is reliable and consequently reduces the effect of the error of measurement. For this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine whether the multiple Likert Scale used in the questionnaire is reliable. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of between 0.7 was accepted. To compute reliability, were entered into SPSS and the reliability results were presented in a table.

### **3.10.2 Validity of the instrument**

Validity measures the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure and therefore permits appropriate interpretations and scores (Sandelowski, 2000). It focused on the validity for whom or what. The researcher was keen on content validity which is concerned with the degree to which the test measures intended content areas. Item and sampling validity were both presented. The content validity was determined by the research supervisor's judgment. The researcher developed a content validity instrument that typically achieves the rational analysis of the instrument by raters (ideally 3 to 5) familiar with the construct of interests. Specifically, raters reviewed all the items for readability, clarity, and comprehensiveness and came to some level of agreement as to which items should be included in the final instrument. The researcher with the help of the supervisor uses the content validity index (CVI) which is a scale developed by computing the rating of the relevant items in the questionnaire by checking the clarity, and their meaningfulness in line with all the objectives. Upon computation, the instrument is considered valid if it scores a minimum value of 0.7 as recommended by (Tashakkori & Newman, 2010).

### **3:11 Data Analysis**

A data analysis plan developed before the field visit was used to compile, sort, and code data to ensure quality, accuracy, and completeness. This involved going through the questionnaires to check completeness and consistency. The quantitative data were fed into the computer and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v25.0) and statistical table percentages, mean standard deviation and frequencies were produced from the data. Interview questions were carefully studied and coded 1,2,3,4 etc. and Related answers were grouped into meaningful categories.

Descriptive statistics was used to describe the opinions of the respondents on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs. The Pearson correlation coefficient

was used to establish the relationship between the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs and the main form of violence they experience. Inferential statistic/regression analysis was used to examine the effect of the roles of the traditional leaders on the relationship between the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs and the main form of violence experienced by women in Gulu District. Finally, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data obtained through interviews were analyzed and emerging themes were summarized in a table, interpreted, and reported verbatim.

### **3.12 Ethical Considerations**

Before data collection, the research obtained approval from the university and an introductory letter which was used in the field. Informed consent was sought from the respondents. This was done by explaining the purpose of the research to them before signing a consent form. The researcher also assured the respondents of confidentiality, and anonymity and endeavor to protect him or her from any harm. Data was reported with honesty, objectivity, and integrity. There was no manufacture, falsification, or distortion of data. This study did not tolerate any type of discrimination against respondents, whether it is based on their gender, race, ethnicity, or other criteria unrelated to their competence and honesty.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the demographic information and the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs based on the study objectives and research questions.

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic of the respondents was captured and presented in the table below;

**Table 2: Demographic Information of the Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Valid	Male	13	14.4	14.4	14.4
	Female	77	85.6	85.6	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

<b>Age</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Valid	18 - 25 Years	15	16.7	16.7	16.7
	36 - 45 Years	28	31.1	31.1	47.8
	Above 55 Years	9	10.0	10.0	57.8
	26 - 35 Years	24	26.7	26.7	84.4
	46 - 55 Years	14	15.6	15.6	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

<b>Marital status</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Valid	Married	30	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Window(er)	18	20.0	20.0	53.3
	Single	18	20.0	20.0	73.3
	Separated/ divorced	24	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

An in-depth analysis of the data presented in Table 2 reveals that a significant majority of the respondents, i.e., 85.6%, were female, while the remaining 14.4% were male. The reason behind this overwhelming representation of women could be attributed to the fact that most of them had been subjected to violence. The study recognizes that in patriarchal societies, where men dominate the power structures, it is crucial to understand the perspectives of men as well. This comprehensive approach can help us gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances that lead to violence against women and the need to address them. Therefore, this study underlines the importance of considering the perspectives of both genders to develop a more holistic understanding of the issue at hand.

After conducting an in-depth analysis of the table displayed above, it was observed that 16.7% of the survey respondents belonged to the age group of 18-25 years, while 27% of them were from the age bracket of 26-35 years. Additionally, 31% of the respondents were aged between 36-45 years, whereas 15.6% were in the age group of 46-55 years. Finally, 9% of the survey participants were 55 years and above. The age group of 18 years and above was specifically chosen to ensure that the respondents had sufficient life experiences to provide accurate insights on the issue of violence against women. According to the data presented in the table, it can be observed that the respondents' marital status was diversified. Approximately one-third of the respondents, which corresponds to 33%, were married. A significant percentage of the respondents, which is about 27%, were separated or divorced. Meanwhile, 20% of the respondents were widowed, and only 10% were single.

## **4.2 Predominant Circumstances under which violence against women occurs**

### **4.2.1 Cultural factors**

To examine the cultural factors associated with violence against women, respondents rated and presented statements of inquiry in the table below;

**Table 3: Cultural factors that cause VAW**

Statement of Inquiry	Scale						
	SD	D	SD + D	N	A	SA	A +SA
<b>Cultural factors</b>							
a. Patriarchy systems are associated with violence against women	11.2%	7.9%	19.1%	6.7%	58.4%	15.7%	73.1%
b. Payment of bride price causes VAW	11.1%	6.7%	17.8%	2.2%	64.4%	15.6%	80.0%
c. Traditional gender roles cause VAW	13.3%	5.6%	18.9%	7.8%	57.8%	15.6%	73.4%
	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>75.8%</b>

**Source: Field Data**

Upon analyzing the data presented in the table above, it becomes evident that a significant proportion of the respondents (75.8%) share the belief that cultural factors play a major role in causing violence against women. Furthermore, a considerable number of respondents (74.1%) believe that the patriarchal system is associated with violence against women. Interestingly, an overwhelming majority of respondents (81%) identified the payment of dowry as a key factor contributing to violence against women. Lastly, the data also reveals that a majority of respondents (75.8%) agreed that traditional gender roles are responsible for perpetuating violence against women.

These findings were also supported by the qualitative data obtained from the interviews as evidenced in the voices below;

On whether Patriarchy should be blamed for violence against women in Gulu District, one of the interviewees said;

*“Male dominance in our societies deprives women of their rights to participate in important decision-making in our society”* Noted a 54 Religious leader.

On whether payment of bride price is responsible for violence against women in Gulu District, one of the interviewees said;

*“Payment of the bride price is responsible for the commodification of women. When men pay the bride price, they tend to take their women more like property”* Observed one of the widows

On whether traditional gender roles cause violence against women, one of the interviewees said; *“Traditional gender roles lead to gender inequalities as men are usually given leadership roles which gives them control over the factors of production and other assets while women are confined to the private spheres of society,”* noted a 49-year-old headteacher of a public primary school in Awach Sub-County.

This implies cultural factors are responsible for violence against women in the Gulu district and other societies.

#### 4.2.2 Socioeconomic Factors

To examine the socioeconomic factors associated with violence against women, respondents rated and presented statements of inquiry in the table below;

**Table 4: Socioeconomic factors that cause VAW**

Statement of Inquiry	Scale						
	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	A+SA
Socio-economic factors							
a. Levels of household income have an association with VAW	4.4%	10%	14.4%	8.9%	53.3%	23.3%	76.6%
b. Engaging men influences efforts to end violence against women.	2.2%	7.8%	10%	14.4%	46.7%	28.9%	75.6%
c. Educational Level of the household members is associated with VAW.	5.7%	6.8%	15.5%	15.9%	52.3%	19.3%	71.6%
d. Family size has a direct association with VAW.	6.7%	7.9%	14.6%	10.1%	60.7%	14.6%	75.3%
e. control over and ownership of assets is associated with VAW	3.4%	9.0%	12.4%	11.2%	55.1%	21.3%	76.4%
f. Social status influences women’s pursuit of justice.	2.2%	9.0%	11.2%	7.9%	56.2%	24.7%	80.9%
g. Employment status of the women is associated with VAW	4.4%	12.2%	16.6%	4.4%	60.0%	18.9%	78.9%
	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>21.1%</b>	<b>75.8%</b>

**Source: Field data**

The analysis of the survey results indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents, comprising 75.8% of the total, firmly believe that socioeconomic factors play a major role in causing violence against women. The study's findings reveal that the participants' perception of the issue is that household income level (76.6%) and the educational level of household members (71.6%) are directly associated with the prevalence of violence against women. The respondents also consider family size as a significant contributing factor to this issue, with a staggering 85% of them opining that it plays a role. Moreover, the study highlights that 76.6% of the participants perceive a direct correlation between control over assets and the occurrence of violence against women.

These findings were also supported by the findings from the interview evidenced by the sentiments below;

Asked whether the employment status of women causes violence against women, one of the respondents said;

*“Employed women tend to be big-headed thus causing conflicts in the home. Women need to know their positions and roles in the home just as men ought to do. Women should prioritize their responsibilities as wives the same way they prioritize their jobs”*  
Noted a 57-year-old widow.

*“Women who are employed tend to be big-headed, they lack respect for their husbands and in some cases, they neglect their duties towards them. They level their roles as wives to the housemaid. This angers men who sometimes express their disappointment through violence”* Noted one of the traditional leaders.

This implies that there is a consensus that the employment status of women is responsible for violence against women.

On whether engaging men would help in mitigating violence against women, one of the CDOs said;

*“Engaging men could be a transformative approach to addressing violence against women in our societies. Let's not only look at the men as perpetrators but also patterns who could support initiatives to reduce violence against women.”* Noted a CDO.

This implies that respondents agree that engaging men could help to reduce violence against women.

On whether household income levels also cause violence against women, one of the respondents refuted this claim as evidenced in his submission below;

*“It is not about the income levels, it is a moral issue. It is a question of the beliefs, the norms, and the values that the society upholds. Poor or rich you can avoid violence if we value the women and their rights thereof.”* Noted the probation and welfare officer.

This implies that most of the respondents believe that household income level has a direct relationship with violence against women.

### 4.3 Forms of Violence Against Women

#### 4.3.1 Physical Violence

To examine the occurrence of physical violence against women in the Gulu District, respondents rated statements of inquiry and the findings were presented in the table below;

**Table 5: Summary Statistics on the rating of occurrence of Physical violence**

Physical violence	Scale						
	SD	D	SD + D	N	A	SA	A + SA
<b>Statement of Inquiry</b>							
a. There are frequent occurrences of slapping women	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	8.0%	6.8%	33.0%	93.8%
b. Women are frequently beaten or physically assaulted by a partner	0.0%	3.5%	3.5%	3.3%	60.5%	32.6%	93.1%
c. There are many incidences of murder of women in this community.	2.3%	8.0%	10.3%	6.9%	59.8%	23.0%	82.8%
d. Incidences of punching women occur regularly in this community	2.3%	5.9%	8.2%	2.4%	52.9%	34.1%	87%
	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>88%</b>

**Source: Field data**

According to the data presented in the table above, a staggering 88% of the respondents agreed that physical violence against women is alarmingly prevalent in Gulu District. Out of these, an

overwhelming 89.8% of the respondents agreed that women are frequently slapped, while 80% agreed that women are frequently assaulted by their partners. Additionally, an alarming 87% of the respondents believed that women were punched. These statistics paint a grim picture of the realities faced by women in the district.

This was also supported by the interview findings as evidenced by the submissions of the interviewees below;

Asked whether physical violence was prevalent in the Gulu District, one of the respondents said;

*“We have witnessed women being slapped, kicked, and assaulted by their husbands”*  
Noted one of the CDOs

*“Physical violence against women is widespread in our community, some men get drunk and when they return home, they begin to make unnecessary demands from the women. When the women fail to fulfill them they end up beating them.”* Noted one of the Religious Leaders

This implies that physical violence against women is very prevalent in Gulu District.

#### 4.3.2 Sexual Violence

To examine the occurrence of sexual violence against women in the Gulu District, respondents rated statements of inquiry and the findings were presented in the table below

**Table 6: Summary Statistics of ratings on the occurrence of sexual Violence**

Sexual Violence Statement of Inquiry	Scale						
	SD	D	SD + D	N	A	SA	A +SA
a. Incidences of forced marriages are prevalent in this community	3.3%	23.3%	26.6	10 %	54.4%	8.9%	63.3%
b. Early child marriage is rampant in this society	3.3%	22.2%	25.5 %	10 %	52.2%	12.2%	64.4 %
c. Incidences of raping women are common in this community	1.1%	20.0%	21.1%	15.6%	46.7%	14.4%	61.1%
d. Incidences of defilement of young girls are common in this community	1.1%	23.3%	24.4%	14.4%	46.7%	14.4%	62.1%
e. Women in this community are often forced into prostitution	3.6%	13.1%	16.7%	8.3%	47.6%	27.4%	75%

## Source: Field Data

According to the data presented in the table, a large number of respondents have agreed that sexual violence is a widespread issue in Gulu district. Specifically, a significant majority of 63.3% of respondents have recognized that forced marriages are prevalent in the area, while 58% have acknowledged that early marriages are also common. Moreover, more than half of the respondents (55%) agreed that rape and defilement cases are not uncommon in Gulu District.

These findings were also supported by the interview findings as evidenced in the voices below;

Asked whether early marriages were rampant in this society, one of the interviewees said;

*“Incidences of child marriages are still rampant in the rural settings. In this community where there are high levels of poverty and dropout of girls from school, the girls are susceptible to challenges of early marriages”* Noted one of the CDOs

This implies that respondents believe child marriage is still very prevalent in Gulu District.

On whether defilement is common in this community, one of the interviewees said;

*“Although the cases are often not reported and prosecuted, many girls have been victims of defilement. Some of them have been exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and challenges of early and unwanted pregnancies. The number of child mothers has been on the increase due to this problem”* Noted one of the interviewees

On Whether rape is prevalent in the community, one of the respondents said;

*“Marital rape is particularly becoming very prevalent in these communities. Due to alcoholism among the men, sometimes they end up having sex forcefully with their wives”* Noted the probation and welfare officer.

This implies that marital rape is still common in many households in Gulu District.

On forced prostitution, one of the local leaders said;

*“In acholi culture prostitution is an abomination. We do not allow it and anyone who forces women into prostitution would be punished. Of course, some women are indulging in prostitution due to poverty but they were not forced”*

This implies that even though women in Gulu are not forced to engage in prostitution some of them have indulged in the practices due to poverty.

### 4.3.3 Emotional Violence

To examine the occurrence of physical violence against women in the Gulu District, respondents rated statements of inquiry and the findings were presented in the table below;

**Table 7: Summary Statistics on rating the occurrence of Emotional Violence**

Emotional Violence	Scale						
	SD	D	SD +D	N	A	SA	SA + A
Statement of Inquiry							
a. Insults against women are common in this community.	2.4%	4.7%	7.1%	5.9 %	65.9%	21.2%	87.1%
b. Women in this community are denied access to resources like land	1.2%	5.8%	7%	7.0%	68.6%	17.4%	86%
c. The views of women in this community are disrespected.	1.2%	6.0%	7.2%	8.3%	52.4%	32.1%	84.5 %
	<b>1.5</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>84.1%</b>

**Source: Field Data**

The analysis of the table below provides undeniable evidence that emotional violence is, in fact, rampant in Gulu District. A staggering 83.8% of the respondents agreed with this fact. Moreover, a crushing 87.1% of the respondents stated that insults against women were a common occurrence in this community, and 86% agreed that women were frequently denied vital resources such as land. Lastly, a disheartening 74.5% of the respondents agreed that women's views were often treated with disrespect.

These findings were also supported by findings from the interviews as evidenced in the voices below;

When asked whether insults against women were common in their community, one of the interviewees said;

*“ We are often abused and treated with a lot of disrespect by men. We suffer emotional distress as a result”* Noted a 47 Woman Councilor.

This implies that women are still disrespected leading to emotional distress.

On insults against women, the probation and welfare officer said;

*“Women suffer a lot of insults including body shaming and naming among others. this in itself is a form of emotional violence”* Noted one of the religious leaders.

This implies that there is a consensus that women in Gulu District are insulted by men leading to emotional distress.

## 2.4. Roles of the local leaders

### 2.4.1 Advocacy

To examine the roles of local leaders in mitigating violence against women in the Gulu District, through advocacy respondents rated statements of inquiry, and the findings were presented in the table below;

Table 8: Contributions of Local leaders through advocacy

Advocacy	Scale						
	SD	D	SD + D	N	A	SA	A + SA
a. Community leaders engage in awareness campaigns against VAW	1.1%	1.1%	2.2%	3.3%	51.8%	42.2%	94%
b. They influence cultural norms to ensure that they protect women against violence.	1.2%	3.6%	4.8%	7.1%	54.8%	33.3%	88.1%
c. They provide training on women’s rights.	6.0%	4.8%	10.8%	10.7%	45.2%	33.3%	78.5%
d. They call the government and other development partners to account.	2.4%	2.4%	6.8%	6.0%	58.3%	31.0%	89.3%
	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>87.5%</b>

**Source: Field data**

The data presented in the table above is compelling. It unequivocally shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents, precisely 87%, firmly believe that local leaders wield significant power in mitigating violence against women. Furthermore, a staggering 93.1% of the respondents confirmed that local community members actively campaign against violence against women, while 88.1% of them acknowledged that local leaders have an influential role in shaping the norms and culture that perpetuate violence against women. Additionally, an impressive 77.5% of respondents reported that local leaders have called upon the government

and other development partners to be accountable in fulfilling their obligation to protect women against violence.

These findings were also supported by the findings of the interview findings as evidenced in the voices below;

Asked whether Local leaders have engaged in advocacy against VAW, one of the interviewees said; *“Religious leaders have been advocates for women’s rights. They have been teaching men to love their wives and desist from violence.”*

This implies that local leaders have been instrumental in advocating for the rights of women.

On cultural norms and practices one of the religious leaders said;

*“The church has been very instrumental in shaping the beliefs and values of the people. They have taught against violence against women and because many people believe in the religious leaders, it has been one of the most powerful forces of change in our society”* Noted one of the religious leaders.

This implies that respondents believe that the traditional leaders have helped to influence cultural beliefs and norms.

On whether local leaders have called the government and other development partners to account for their obligations to protect and promote the rights of women, one of the traditional leaders said;

*“ We work closely with the government, we also ask them to sometimes tell us why they are failing to prosecute cases of violence against women. This to me is one of the ways we can ensure that the government is playing its roles”*

## 1.4.2 Policy Implementation

To examine the roles of local leaders in mitigating violence against women in the Gulu District, through policy implementation, respondents rated statements of inquiry, and the findings were presented in the table below;

Table 9: Contribution of Local Leaders through policy implementation

Policy Implementation Statement of Inquiry	Scale						
	SD	D	SD+D	N	A	SA	A + SA
a. Provide essential services such as counseling to survivors of VAW	1.2%	3.3%	3.4%	8.3%	46.4%	40.5%	86.9%
b. Provide safe places for survivors of VAW	2.3%	7.0%	9.3%	9.3%	45.3%	36.0%	81.3%
c. Coordinate responses of partners on VAW	1.2%	3.5%	4.7%	8.1%	55.8%	31.4%	87.2%
d. Strengthen the referral pathways for effective management of VAW	2.4%	4.7%	7.1%	16.5%	37.6%	38.8%	76.4%
e. Support the investigations of cases of VAW	1.2%	4.8%	6.0%	3.6%	53.6%	36.9%	90.5%
e. Support the prosecution of VAW	1.2%	1.2%	2.4%	8.2%	47.1%	42.4%	89.5%
	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>5.7 %</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>85.3%</b>

### Source: Field Data

The study's results offer a glimpse into the significant role that local leaders have played in preventing violence against women. A vast majority of the respondents, around 85.3%, recognized the efforts of local leaders in implementing policies that protect women from violence. The respondents also lauded the regional leaders' support in providing essential services, such as counseling, to victims of violence, with around 86.9% acknowledging this fact.

Furthermore, approximately 81.3% of the respondents confirmed that local leaders have created safe spaces for survivors of violence against women, which has helped in their recovery and rehabilitation. The study also found that local leaders have been instrumental in coordinating responses from partners, with around 87.2% of the respondents acknowledging this role.

Finally, local leaders' support in investigating cases of violence against women was also appreciated, with nearly 90% of the respondents agreeing that they have supported such

investigations. These findings paint a clear picture of local leaders' vital role in preventing violence against women by providing essential services, coordinating responses, and supporting the investigation of cases.

These findings were also supported by the interview findings as evidenced in the below;

Asked whether local leaders had played significant roles in preventing violence against women, one of the CDOs said;

*“Local leaders have been very instrumental in fighting violence against women. They have been very instrumental in promoting attitude change”*

On the coordination of partner response, one of the traditional leaders said;

*“We bring together different development partners to work together to address violence against women. We organize and participate in coordination meetings in which we agree on collective actions, share responsibilities, and account for our obligations”* Noted one of the traditional leaders.

This implies that local leaders have been involved in coordinating responses to violence against women in Gulu district.

On supporting the investigation and prosecution of cases of violence against women, one of the religious leaders said;

*“When we have information we give the police and other stakeholders to help them to bring such cases to a logical conclusion. We believe it is our responsibility to ensure that women who suffer violence are given justice.”* Noted one of the religious leaders,

This implies that local leaders have indeed been supporting the investigation and prosecution of cases of violence against women.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 5.0 Introduction

**This section covers the presentation of the key findings of the research below;**

#### 5.1 Predominant circumstances under which violence against women occur

Cultural practices particularly patriarchy and payment of bride price are believed to cause violence against women. Patriarchy for instance is said to be responsible for the subjugation of women by the men. In Acholi society, men are considered the household head and control all the assets and important decisions in the household. This is in line with Muluneh et al., (2020) which argues that most African cultures do not empower women but instead make them subject to men. Accordingly, women are controlled by men and are not allowed to voice their opinions even on matters that affect them directly. Consequently, they maltreat them and subject them to their violence. This is cognizant with Alberto Alesina, and Benedetta Brioschi (2016), who contend that payment of bride price promotes violence against women. When men pay the bride price they begin to feel a sense of ownership over the woman. Women are thereby looked at as commodities that are owned and controlled by men. The tradition of paying the bride price has seen women sacrifice their rights to their husbands and their marital families. They are often treated with disrespect and they tend to suffer abuse in silence due to fear of what society will say about them and or the return of the bride price should they walk away from the abusive relationship. Despite legislation against these, tradition still prevails in most of the Acholi society.

Socioeconomic factors such as household income levels also cause violence against women. This is in line with Amegbor & Pascoe, (2021) who argue that Violence against women is caused by poverty. Poverty is the beginning of most of the conflicts in the households, the inability of the man to fend for the needs of his family is often met with a lot of resentment which leads to conflict and violence against women and children. Furthermore, due to poverty, men often engage in substance use e.g., alcohol to forget their problems. Yet this has often further escalated violence against women and children. Additionally, the low educational level also promotes violence against women. This is in line with Amegbor & Rosenberg (2019), which hold that educational level is a predictor of violence against women. Violence tends to be more prevalent

in households whose members are less educated. Education is an important tool for enhancing knowledge including on rights of women and the dangers of VAW. That said, the more educated we are the more understanding of the rights of women and therefore prevention of violence against women. Moreover, violence against women is also caused by the employment status of the women. This is in line with Valentine et al., (2019), who argue that the major risk factors associated with violence against women include unemployment of women. When women are employed their jobs tend to take much of their time which prevents them from effectively handling their domestic/reproductive roles. This therefore leads to conflicts with the men. Furthermore, there is a tendency for women to become more empowered than men especially if they have better-paying jobs and or the man is not employed. This threatens the masculinity of the men in a way that they are unable to effectively carry out their roles of fending for the family needs as defined by culture. Therefore to defend their fading masculinity, some of them resort to violence.

## 5.2 Forms of violence against women in Gulu district.

Physical violence in the form of beating, punching, and kicking of women remains very prevalent in Gulu district. This is in agreement with Saile et al., (2013) who hold that physical violence is the most common form of violence perpetrated against women. Unfortunately, these forms of violence are condoned and accepted in most of the cultures. This has thus made it very difficult to address them. Cultural norms and beliefs that emphasize male dominance for instance payment of bride price and male control over resources have reinforced these practices in our societies.

Furthermore, sexual violence also remains prevalent. This is in agreement with Alesina et al., (2021), which contends that women suffer from various forms of sexual abuse including but not limited to rape, defilement, forced prostitution, and forced and early marriages among others. Despite efforts by the government and other development partners to combat violence against women, little progress has been made. This is because these practices are entrenched in the cultures. To mitigate sexual violence, efforts must be made to change the negative cultural norms that are said to be responsible for perpetuating violence against women. This includes the removal of the bride price and widow inheritance among others.

Emotional violence is also very common. This is because people have a limited understanding of this form of violence. This is in agreement with Amegbor & Pascoe, (2021) who suggest that women suffer from various forms of violence including; blaming, shaming, and name-calling are a few identifiers of verbal abuse that can affect a victim emotionally. Unfortunately, there is limited understanding of these forms of violence and consequently taken less seriously. There is therefore need to increase awareness of this form of violence to ensure that people understand them and thus promote and protect them.

### 5.3 Roles of the local leaders in mitigating violence against women

Local leaders have significantly contributed to mitigating violence against women through advocacy, they have influenced policies to promote and protect women against violence. This is in line with UN Women, (2021:1) which argues that local leaders including traditional and religious leaders have helped in shaping policies that promote and protect the rights of women. The traditional and religious leaders are very influential in their communities, their role in cultural and policy reforms is therefore integral in reducing violence against women since people tend to respect their opinion. Additionally, they have also helped in the implementation of policies that protect women against violence, this is in agreement with Catherine et al., (2021) which argues that Local leaders have significantly contributed to the implementation of policies and laws to prevent violence against women by supporting investigations and prosecution of these cases. By supporting the investigation and prosecution of cases of violence against women, they have not only helped these women to receive justice but also deter other individuals from perpetrating similar violence in the future.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The focus of this research study was to determine the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs in Gulu District. Based on the findings of the research survey, we can assert that certain significant factors are responsible for the occurrence of violence against women.

#### **5.1 Predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs**

##### **5.1.1 Socioeconomic factors**

The study has unequivocally concluded that socioeconomic factors play a significant role in causing violence against women. Men who have control over factors of production and assets use their power to entrench their dominance over women, subjecting them to suppression and violence. Women's employment, which often contradicts traditional gender roles, can create conflict with their husbands, leading to violent outbursts. Furthermore, households with low-income levels are at a higher risk of experiencing violence. It is crystal clear that household income, educational levels of household members, and men's control over assets and production contribute significantly to the violence against women.

##### **5.1.2 Cultural factors**

The patriarchal structure of Acholi society is a primary cause of violence against women. Men wield control over resources, power, and important decisions in both the family and community. Negative cultural norms perpetuated by patriarchy lead to high levels of inequality and the subjugation of women. This highlights the need to address deep-rooted societal structures that perpetuate gender-based violence. Traditional gender roles only serve to reinforce male dominance, confining women to the private domain while men maintain access to the public domain. We must acknowledge the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures and work towards dismantling them to create a more just and equitable society for all.

## **5.2 Major forms of Violence against women**

### **5.2.1 physical Violence**

The study explicitly establishes the fact that socioeconomic factors, especially men's control over productive assets and employment status, are the primary drivers of physical violence against women in Gulu District. Shockingly, women in the area are subjected to brutal forms of violence such as kicking, punching, and even murder, leading to severe physical injuries, stress, and depression. The study unambiguously attributes this high prevalence of violence against women to negative cultural norms such as patriarchy that perpetuate male dominance in society and widespread poverty in the Acholi sub-region. Notably, families with low incomes are disproportionately more exposed to violence than those with higher incomes.

### **5.2.2 Sexual Violence**

The study indicates that sexual violence is rampant in Gulu district, with rape, defilement, and early and forced marriages being prevalent. The payment of bride prices in the Acholi culture has led to the commodification of girls, who are viewed as a source of wealth, resulting in early marriages. Unfortunately, perpetrators of sexual violence against women often use their financial power to evade justice by negotiating settlements at the expense of the victims and survivors. It is crucial to take immediate and decisive action to address this issue and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

### **5.2.3 Emotional Violence**

This study also concludes that emotional violence is very rampant in Gulu District. Unfortunately, most p The findings of a recent study paint a distressing picture of the prevalence of emotional violence in Gulu District. Despite its rampant nature, emotional violence largely remains an unacknowledged issue, with limited attention paid to it. The study reveals that women in the Gulu district are particularly vulnerable to verbal abuse, which often takes the form of insults and disrespectful treatment, including disregard for their opinions. The implications of such emotional violence on the well-being and dignity of women in the district are quite concerning. People do not understand this form of violence and consequently, limited attention is paid to it. Women in the Gulu district suffer from insults and their opinions are disrespected.

## **5.3 Roles of the Local Leaders**

### **5.3.1 Advocacy**

This study has found that emotional violence is highly prevalent in Gulu District, but it is often not recognized or given enough attention. Women in the area are particularly vulnerable, with cultural and religious leaders playing a significant role in advocating for their rights. For example, religious figures have called on the government and development partners to address the issue of violence against women and to enact policies that challenge harmful cultural norms. Despite these efforts, however, little progress has been made in addressing the issue, and women in Gulu continue to face disrespect and mistreatment.

### **5.3.2 Implementation of policies against VAW**

Emotional violence is prevalent in Gulu District, especially against women. Cultural and religious leaders can play a significant role in advocating for women's rights. Religious leaders have called on the government and development partners to enact policies that challenge harmful cultural practices. However, despite these efforts, little progress has been made, and women in Gulu continue to suffer from disrespect and mistreatment. Urgent action is needed to address this issue and protect women's rights in the region.

## **5.4 Recommendation**

The predominant circumstance under which violence against women occurs is embedded in the cultural and socioeconomic factors that reinforce each other to normalize violence against women. Addressing violence against women therefore requires understanding these factors. Below are some recommendations drawn from the study;

There is a need for increased awareness of the rights of women and or the dangers of Violence against women. This should focus on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs, the forms of violence that women suffer, and the roles of the local leaders such as the religious and traditional leaders.

The capacity of the local leaders to address cases of violence against women should be strengthened. This should include enhancing their counseling skills, management of the safe space, and understanding the referral pathways.

Collaboration between stakeholders in addressing violence against women should be strengthened. The local leaders for instance should support the police and the judicial duty bearers in the process of investigating and prosecuting cases of violence against women.

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## Appendix I: Questionnaire

### PART A: Introductory Statement

Dear Respondent,

I am **Ruth Lawino**, a student at Uganda Christian University pursuing a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management. As part of the requirements for the completion of the master's Program, I am carrying out research on the topic **“A Study on the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs.”**

Participation in this research is voluntary with no direct benefits to you. You may choose to skip any questions you are not comfortable with or stop your participation at any time. The information you give is only to be used for academic purposes and your identity will always remain confidential.

This interview will take about an hour, and I kindly ask that you respond to the questions as honestly as possible.

Thank you!

**Ruth Lawino**

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tick as appropriate in the space provided.

#### 1. Gender

1. Male

2. Female

#### 2. Age

1. 18-25 years

4. 26-35 years

2. 36-45 years

5. 46-55 years

3. Above 55 years

#### 3. Marital status

Married

Single

Widow(er)

separated/divorced

#### 4. Education level

1. Primary

2. Secondary

3. Degree  
 4. Masters  
 5. Others (specify).....

**5. Religious affiliation**

1. Anglican                       2. Catholic   
 3. Moslem                       4. Pentecostal   
 5. Others (specify).....

**COLLECTING DATA ON THE VARIABLES**

Use the information to choose or tick as follows:

Strongly Disagree=SD, disagree =D, agree=A, Strongly Agree=SA

Statement of Inquiry	Scale				
<b>Predominant circumstances leading to VAW</b>					
<b>Cultural factors</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
d. patriarchy systems are associated with VAW					
e. payment of dowry is closely associated with VAW					
f. Traditional gender roles cause VAW					
g. Traditional gender roles are associated with VAW.					
<b>Socio-economic factors</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
h. Levels of household income have an association with VAW					
i. Engaging men influence efforts to end violence against women.					
j. Education level of the household members is associated with VAW.					
k. Family size has a direct association with VAW.					
l. control over and ownership of assets is associated with VAW					
m. Social status influences women’s pursuit of justice.					
n. Employment status of the women is associated with VAW					
<b>Forms of Violence Against Women</b>					
<b>Physical violence</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
e. When a woman is slapped					

f. Being beaten or physically assaulted by a partner					
g. There are few incidences of murder of women in this community.					
h. Incidences of punching women occur regularly in this community					
<b>Sexual Violence</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
f. Incidences of forced marriages are less prevalent in this community					
g. Early child marriage is reduced in this society					
h. Incidences of raping women are rare in this community					
i. Incidences of forced marriages are less prevalent in this community					
j. Incidences of defilement are rare in this community					
k. Women in this community are not forced into prostitution					
<b>Emotional Violence</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
d. Insults, emotional torture, threats, and stalking behavior					
e. When a woman is denied access to resources like land					
f. Denial of the authority to make decisions					
g. Women in this community are regularly insulted by men.					
h. Women in this community are regularly insulted by men.					
i. The views of women in this community are respected.					
<b>Roles of the Local Government</b>					
<b>Advocacy</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
f. Engage in awareness campaigns against Violence against women					
g. Influence cultural norms and policies to protect women against violence.					
h. Provide training on women's rights.					
i. Call the government and other development partners to account.					
<b>Policy implementation</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
f. Provide essential services such as counseling to survivors of VAW					
g. Provide safe places for survivors of VAW					

h. Coordinate responses of partners on VAW					
i. Strengthen the referral pathways for effective management of VAW					
j. Support the investigations of cases of VAW					
k. Support the prosecution of VAW					

## **Appendix II: Interview Guide**

I **Lawino Ruth** a student of Uganda Christian University pursuing a study leading to the award of Masters of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management. I am researching “predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs, in Gulu District. You have been chosen to participate in this research. The information provided will be purely for academic purposes and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. I request you to spare some of your valuable time to respond to these questions:

1. What is violence against women?
2. What is the predominant circumstance under which violence against women occurs in Gulu District?
3. What are the main forms of violence that are perpetuated against women in Gulu District?
4. What are the relationships between the predominant circumstances under which violence against women occurs and the major forms of violence in the Gulu District?
5. What roles has the local government played in mitigating violence against women?

**Thank you!**