An Investigation into the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Mission and Its Influence on Domestic Violence within Gusii Region, Kenya

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Abstract: *The study sought to investigate the Seventh-day Adventist (S.D.A.) church mission and its influence on domestic violence within Gusii region. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to establish the nature of domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region; to analyse the effects of domestic violence on the S.D.A church within Gusii region; and to assess the S.D.A church involvement in domestic violence within Gusii region. The findings were intended to broaden the scope of scholars' understanding of the un-detachable interlink between the S.D.A church mission and domestic violence. The conclusion arrived points that the S.D.A church within Gusii region was a major player in successfully mitigating domestic violence. The study was descriptive in nature and therefore employing qualitative approach which allowed the use of triangulation employing cross sectional survey research design, to ascertain the views of different types of people in relation to the study. The cross sectional research design deals with different types (group) of respondents. The study suited within the provisions of descriptive research design because the researcher collected data and reported the way things were given by respondents without manipulating any variables. The study employed purposeful sampling because it enabled the researcher to pick out the key subjects who had rich and relevant information needed in the study. Personal interviews, observation, and literature review were used as instruments for data collection.*

Keywords: *Church, Church Mission, Violence, Domestic violence, Abuse.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Seventh-day Adventist (S.D.A) church is an organised global religious institution within a formal structure. According to Hill (1973), the purpose of the S.D.A church is to practice religion. Her mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ concerning the kingdom of heaven besides being involved in ensuring a violence-free environment among its members and the entire society. The S.D.A church finds domestic violence to be an issue of major concern that needs to be addressed. In support of this claim, Nason-Clark (1996) and Ellison & Anderson (2001) affirm that domestic violence is prevalent in all racial, educational, geographic, religious and socioeconomic segments of society. Clark's opinion is that domestic violence involves men to women, men to children, women to children and sometimes women to men. Walker (1998) and Whipple (1987) account, "Frequently, the violence is a combination of economic control, social isolation, physical, sexual and psychological abuse that occurs in a cyclic and intensifying pattern that can ultimately result in horrific assaults with weapons or even death."

In these difficult situations, many people in Africa often turn to religion and religious institutions, for example, the S.D.A church to help them face the practical and emotional challenges of their contexts. On this level, Uzodike & Whetho (2008) hold that religion not only exists as a spiritual and emotional support structure, but

also provides hope for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. According to Durkheim (1995), religion provides the believer with a confidence and ability to resist or overcome hardship. Durkheim explains further that the individual believer believes in the existence of a moral power on which he/she depends and which brings the best out of him/her. As religion is a reflection of society, this moral power serves to socialize people into certain accepted behaviours, and to avoid certain forbidden actions. To Durkheim, there is no religion in which prohibitions do not exist and play an important part. One of the prohibitions in the S.D.A church is the issue of domestic violence. Consistent with Durkheim's theory, Pals (2006) theorizes that religion is of critical importance in upholding the value system, without which there will be a decline in moral order in society. Thus religion creates the framework for what is considered moral principles and behaviour within society, which in turn regulates social relationships, as the individual cannot exist without society.

In Kenya, the S.D.A church has not been left behind in offering various services in society. Gifford (2008) backs this view seeing the S.D.A church as an institution that has been at the forefront of service delivery in many African countries, particularly in Kenya, in the areas of health and education. In support of the above claim, Sabar-Friedman (1997) observes that the S.D.A church's ability to withstand challenging conditions and provide for psycho-social needs of people has proven to be so effective that it has created an understanding and expectation that all churches should and can do the same. Okuku (2002) observes that the S.D.A church can remain a zone of freedom when civil society is repressed by the state. Fortune & Enger (2005) are of the view that the S.D.A in Kenya and particularly, Gusii region has a major role in ensuring social justice including domestic violence. In addition, both writers view Christian teachings and affiliations to be providing a significant context for many victims and perpetrators as they address experiences of maltreatment. Bowker & Maurer (1987) and Bowker (1988) observe that S.D.A church leaders are typically one of the first, if not the first persons to be asked for advice on the issue of domestic violence. The study anticipated investigating the S.D.A church mission and its influence on domestic violence within Gusii region.

1.2 The Statement of the Problem

Gusii is a region that's highly Christianized whose residents are known to be peaceful, law-abiding and enterprising citizens. However their peacefulness is interrupted by domestic violence, a vice that has raised concerns not only to the S.D.A church, but also other stakeholders, for example, the government, non-governmental organisations, and faith-based organisations. In spite of the many initiatives by the above mentioned stakeholders in addressing the issue of domestic violence within the region, the problem is still highly prevalent. The S.D.A church finds itself in this situation and the community expects that religious values that are enshrined in her mission would contribute to minimising this problem and ensuring a peaceful society. Unfortunately, this is not the case. This gap raises the question on the relevance of the S.D.A church mission to such a situation. Hence, this apparently shortfall, intellectually illuminates and thought-provokes more probing into this reasoned inquiry.

1.3 Specific Objectives of the study

i. To establish the nature of domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region.
ii. To analyse the effects of domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region.
iii. To assess the S.D.A church involvement in domestic violence within Gusii region.

1.4 Theory and Methodology of the Study

The study was grounded in two main substantive theories: the social capital theory and the mission theory. Social capital theory deals with connections among individuals. In support of this view, Coleman (1988, 95) broadly refers social capital as those factors effectively functioning groups that include such things as interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity. In connection with the church, Leonard (2004) observes that the church is a key producer of bonding social capital, which is constructed in situations of trust and solidarity and creates tight bonds and supportive structures between members of the same group. For domestic violence-stricken areas like

Gusii region, Durkheim (1995) informs that the S.D.A church in the region socializes the members into certain accepted behaviours, and to avoid certain forbidden actions particularly domestic violence.

However, social capital theory has limitations in the sense that it may not always be used for positive ends. This view is supported by Ilan (2012) who points out that violence or criminal gang are effects of negative social capital that is encouraged through the strengthening of intra-group relationships. This limitation prompts the study to opt for another theory; the mission theory. The mission theory emphasizes the preaching of the gospel as the main goal of the church (Matthew 28:19) and harmony among intimate partners in the sense that in spite of challenges, the members of the family are encouraged to get rid of all bitterness, anger, shouting insults, and hateful feelings of any sort. Christian values such as kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness becomes the criteria for handling the problem of domestic violence in society (Ephesians 4:31-32).

The study was descriptive and thus used cross sectional survey approaches. The study suited within the provisions of descriptive research design because the researcher collected data and reported the way things were given by different types (group) of respondents without manipulating any variable. The study targeted the members of S.D.A church within Gusii region. According to Ogula (2005), population refers to any group of institutions, people or objects that have common characteristics. The target population for this study constituted of 56 pastors, and 260 church members who had experienced domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. Therefore, the target population was 316 in total, from which the researcher carried out the sampling to get the 28 pastors, and 130 church members who had experienced domestic violence that were involved in the study. The study employed purposive sampling because it enabled the researcher to pick out the key subjects who had rich and relevant information needed in the study. In a descriptive research, Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) recommend that a sample size of 10-50% is acceptable. The researcher applied the sampling error formula by Creswell (2011) to get a sample size of 158 respondents. These comprised of 28 pastors and 130 church members. This formed a sample size of 41.8% of the target population because the larger the sample, the better the representative of the mean and standard deviation of the target population. The study employed personal interviews, focus group discussions, observations and literature review as tools for data collection.

II.   Discussion of Results and Study Findings

2 The Nature of Domestic Violence in the S.D.A Church within Gusii region

Domestic violence is complex and varies from women to men and children. One of the explicit types of abuse the study discovered was domestic violence against women. Stith & Rosen (2004) are proponents of violence against women and provided their opinions to support the study, "Even though men may be victims of domestic violence, women are more likely to receive severe and at times, fatal physical injuries." According to the study, women in S.D.A church within Gusii region suffered more than men in relation to domestic violence because women were weak physically and therefore, lacking the ability to defend themselves during violence.

One of the victims of domestic violence, who did not hide her bitterness, expressed her sombreness during the study vis-à-vis the existence of stereotypical roles in the S.D.A church within Gusii region in which, women were seen as subordinate to men and constrained a woman's ability to exercise choices that would enable her to end the abuse. This view was supported by Dutton (2005) who argued that poverty which also determines where and how a person lives, was one of the contributing factors of domestic violence against women. In relation to the above argument, the study found out that financial insecurity was one of the major causes of domestic violence in the study region.

The study findings showed that there was disparity between men and women that might influence domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. Dutton backed the above point of view by stating, "The image created by the society which portrays a man to be viewed as being strong, educated, creative, and clever while a woman is accorded the opposite of all these traits is a reason for domestic violence."

The study observed that negative cultural beliefs in the region influenced domestic violence among its members. A research conducted by Watts & Zimmerman (2002) concurred with the above findings and revealed that the causes of domestic violence especially against women were deeply rooted in the way society has set cultural

beliefs, power relations, economic power imbalances, and the masculine idea of male dominance. However, the study challenged the concept of male dominance in the S.D.A church within Gusii region and saw it as an idea of the past in the sense that with postmodernist economy, men are likely to face the same challenges such as domestic violence.

A research report by Bagshaw and Donna (2000) linked a woman's dress and behaviour to rape. This placed the blame for rape on a woman as it viewed men as unable to control their sexuality. In relation to the above argument, the study surmised that if a woman was known as a party animal or a teased and wore provocative clothing, she was asking for attention, flattery, or just trying to fit in. The study acknowledged that domestic violence was prevalent and needed intervention without cultural justifications such as dressing style.

Apart from domestic violence against women, the study observed that there existed another form of domestic violence and this involved men as victims. This argument was supported by Bagshaw and Donna (2000) who perceived women as perpetrators and not victims. They state, "Violence by women against men does occur, but usually in public and with a different impact to that of violence by men against women." Complimenting on the above submission, Dempsey (2013) held that emotional abuse by a woman of a man existed and was a form of domestic violence within Gusii region. The study felt that it was inaccurate for the proponents of men perpetration to dominate over the issue of domestic violence oblivious to the female perpetration which the study perceived as being dysphoric. Cultural Perspectives (2000) show that in certain circumstances the community may see violence as justifiable and under the heading of self-defence or retaliation. Whether self-defence and retaliation by women perpetrators or not, the study took position that men in the S.D.A church within Gusii region suffered victimization of domestic violence by female partner and every time they reported the matter to authorities, they were treated with hubris, scepticism and disbelieved or were given little attention.

The study lamented that women perpetrators in the region used coercive means to hurt their male partners during domestic violence. Home Office (2013) supported this view by writing, "Domestic violence experienced by men encompasses the breadth of harms and abuse including exposure to coercive and controlling behaviour". A similar position was held by Johnson (1995) who referred this coercive behaviour as intimate terrorism whereby women perpetrator seek to dominate using force and emotional abuse. Dixon et al (2011) affirmed that many perpetrators of domestic violence were victims too. However, Hogan et al (2012) specifically noted that men within the study area were victims of domestic violence, experiencing control and coercion, and feeling unsafe within their relationships. In confirmation of the above claims, Storey & Strand (2012) acknowledged that the police had information and through the reporting of 'fear' observed by counsellors working with domestic violence against men.

The study revealed that men suffered as victims of domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. Research findings by Redner (2004) supported the study that women were always the perpetrators of male abuse. He surmised that there were many reasons why people assumed men were never victims and why women often ignored the possibility of males being abused. In conjunction with the above, Coker et al (2008) revealed the dystopic condition of men who were significantly more likely than women to be verbally abused by their partners. Redner (2004) pointed out that Gusii region had taken a long time to respond to the abuse of females and very little attention had been paid to the issue of domestic violence against men. This is because violence against women was so obvious but was ignored for a long time. In relation to the study, government policies, prevention and treatment services were seen to be gender-biased when came to the male victims within Gusii region.

A pastor in one of the S.D.A congregations within Gusii region who was also a victim of domestic abuse registered his frustrations in relation to the increased rate of the vice against men. According to Dixon et al (2011), "Whether or not there is also genuine concern for male victims, these types of men's rights claims overtly detract from a focus on men's responsibility for the vast bulk of violence against women, and much violence against children, especially child sexual abuse." They added that the logic seemed to be that if men were victims of domestic violence too, then women were perpetrators. Redner (2004) cogently argued in favour

of men victimization by negating that violence simply could not be a feminist issue, men as a social category were not implicated as oppressors, and gender inequities were not part of the problem of violence.

The most puzzling phenomenon the study found out was the issue of children perpetration of domestic violence. In relation this, Kernsmith & Kernsmith, (2009) record, "Female-perpetrated violence, particularly in younger age groups, is reported to have increased." Similarly, experiences in early childhood have a major impact on physical, cognitive, emotional and social development throughout the lifespan. This view was supported by Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) (2014) by claiming that during the early years of life, children learn from their immediate family and community environment how to interact with the world and how to relate to other people.

A similar observation was made by Carlson (1984) who stated, "Although the effects on children of domestic violence appear underexplored, risks to children are evident, acknowledging the range, duration and severity of abuse reported". In relation to this, the study found out that children in the S.D.A church within Gusii region suffered as victims of domestic violence and this was evidenced especially if the perpetrator withdrew from supporting the children. Supporting this view, McWhirter (1999) and Htun (2003) held that lacking the resources to obtain an annulment and get around the legal prohibitions against divorce, low income women faced major obstacles to escaping spousal abuse and when they were able to proceed with an informal dissolution of their marriage, they received no child support.

Commenting on how affected S.D.A parents within Gusii region might influence their children vis-à-vis domestic violence, WAVE (2013) noted, "Parental mental health difficulties and substance misuse adversely affect child health and social outcomes". In agreement with the above argument, Dixon et al (2009) categorically pointed out that women who abused their partners were reportedly more likely to abuse their children. Although there were minimal reports of abusing drugs by S.D.A children within Gusii region, the study concurred with other researchers about the fact that difficult experiences undergone by parents, as a result of domestic violence, affected the children in many different aspects of life.

During the study, most respondents concurred that the children who had experienced domestic violence had difficulties in their lives. This observation was backed by Resnicket al (1997), who recorded," Children who have witnessed domestic violence or have themselves been abused, exhibit health and behaviour problems, including problems with their weight, their eating and their sleep. They may have difficulty at school and find it hard to develop close and positive friendships." Furthermore, they may try to run away or even display suicidal tendencies. The study found out that the above mentioned tendencies existed in the S.D.A church in Gusii region and this dire situation needed acute intervention.

III.   Effects of Domestic Violence on the S.D.A Church within Gusii region

The study found out that domestic violence led to far-reaching physical and consequences some with fatal outcomes. This view was backed by Graham-Kevan (2007) who showed that among other visible forms of violence, physical injury was a part of the negative health impacts on victims of domestic violence in the study region. Additionally, assaults result in injuries ranging from bruises and fractures to chronic disabilities such as partial or total loss of hearing or vision, and burns may lead to disfigurement. In their report, Pence and Paymar (1993) demonstrated the magnitude of physical abuse as the use of any physical force against a partner intended to make them afraid or to hurt them. Some of the examples of such abuses as per the study findings, included: pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, punching, and kicking.

In connection with the above argument, Palmetto, et al. (2013), supported the study by informing that women had been found to equal or slightly exceed men in their use of physical violence towards intimate partners, but were however more at risk of injury. In light of the above, Dixon, et al. (2011) reported, "All women who seek medical care in hospital emergency rooms for violence-related injuries are injured by a current or former spouse or partner". Relevant to this narrative, it was acknowledged that the S.D.A church members within GUsii region were involved in domestic violence and therefore, consequently, affecting their physical health that was due to injuries incurred during the violence.

The study discovered that the medical complications resulting from domestic violence could range from haemorrhage and sterility to severe psychological trauma. This position was supported by Nowneski & Bowen (2012) who indicated that men more commonly experienced psychological domestic violence than women. Coker, et al. (2008) and Drijber, et al. (2013) observed that the above appeared particularly important given the significance of psychological abuse on mental health and given that this form of abuse appeared unlikely to be reported by men. Supporting this view, Paymar (2000) wrote that emotional abuse within the context of battering was a powerful psychological weapon designed to cause pain, depersonalize the victim, and increase power for the barterer. In this case, Ganley (1996) described emotional abuse as a tactic of control that consisted of a wide variety of verbal attacks against the victim's worth as an individual or role as a parent, family member, friend, co-worker, or community worker. The respondents of the study acknowledged the victims of domestic violence in the region who faced psychological challenges and needed intervention.

The study attested the impact of domestic violence on the victim's mental health to severe and fatal consequences. In support of the above, Dutton (1994) reported, "Victims of domestic violence have a high incidence of stress and stress-related illnesses such as post-traumatic stress syndrome, panic attacks, depression, sleeping and eating disturbances, elevated blood pressure, alcoholism, drug abuse, and low self-esteem". Moreover, Dutton observed that for some victims, fatally depressed and demeaned by their abuser, there seemed to be no escape from a violent relationship except suicide.

Apart from the psychological effects, the study found out the effects of domestic violence on the lifestyle behaviours of the S.D.A within Gusii region. Atkinson, et al. (2009) identified alcohol and drug misuse as a situational factor that contributed to domestic violence and increased their severity, rather than being a primary cause of such violence. In connection to the above argument, WHO (2014) summarised that the relationship between alcohol and domestic violence was mediated by social norms regarding gender, alcohol use, and violence. However, the study reported that the use of alcohol among the S.D.A victims of domestic violence within Gusii region was implicit and of a minimal scale.

The study unveiled that high level of domestic violence during pregnancy led to risk to the health of both the mother and the unborn foetus. This view was supported by Heise, et al. (1994) that, "Domestic violence can result in the death of the woman murdered by her intimate partner". The above source further revealed that sexual assaults and rape could lead to unwanted pregnancies, and the dangerous complications that followed from resorting to illegal abortions. Looking at the behaviour of victims within the context of S.D.A church within Gusii region, especially girls who had been sexually abused in their childhood, the study found out that they were more likely to engage in risky behaviour such as early sexual intercourse, and were at greater risk of unwanted and early pregnancies. The study considered the above issue as a very serious condition that needed rapt attention.

During the study, a church elder, who was experiencing domestic abuse, informed that the issue had an impact on the lifestyle of both victim and perpetrator. Supporting this view, WHO (2013) reported, "Strong associations between unhealthy alcohol use, drug use, increasing domestic violence perpetration and victimisation risks exist". Atkinson, et al. (2009) confirmed that such situations as the ones reported above, had been experienced to a great extent. Relevant to the above, the study admitted that domestic violence was a reality in the P.A.G church within Gusii region and a genuine matter that needed be addressed with utter diligence.

The study viewed cultural beliefs to be influencing domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. A research report by WHO (2013) supported the above claims by stating," Domestic violence is increased where violence and gender inequality are accepted." A similar view was held by Hatty (2000) who indicated that many societies, particularly, Gusii region were shaped by a patriarchal belief system under which hegemonic masculinity embracing hierarchy, aggression and heterosexuality was valued. In addition, Hatty asserted, "In modern industrialised nations men are generally considered capable of causing more harm to others than are women". Consequently, DeFrancisco & Palczewski (2014) presupposed that such beliefs might result in communities failing to recognise or acknowledge acts of domestic violence. Relevant to the above argument, the

situation in the S.D.A church within Gusii region was not an exemption. The study perceived these cultural aspects to be influencing behaviour change among the perpetrators and the victims of domestic violence within the study area.

Another lament by the study concerned the behaviour of men victims of domestic violence in the region. In support of this claim, Bradbury-Jones, et al. (2016), observed that men were said to express shame, embarrassment, disbelief and fears that they would not be believed. In the same manner, Stanley, et al. (2009), indicated that women too experience difficulty in disclosing domestic violence. According to ONS (2016), women were to be nearly twice as likely as men to tell someone in a professional position of their abuse. The study found out that domestic violence meddled in the self-esteem of the victims. For the case of the perpetrators, the study was of the view that cultures played a key role in protecting them and thus determining behaviour change and lifestyle.

IV.   The S.D.A Church Involvement in Domestic Violence within Gusii region

The study revealed that the S.D.A church had been proven highly effective in promoting social cohesion during times of violence in the region. Supporting this argument, Gifford (2004) indicates that the S.D.A church had provided spiritual answers to the issue of domestic violence where governments and international initiatives failed.

The study findings showed that the S.D.A church within Gusii region used Biblical texts to teach the victims and perpetrator alike as a framework for mitigating domestic violence. For example, the words of Jesus Christ, "Love one another" (John 15:12); "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31); "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up to her…" (Ephesians 5:25); "You are the salt and the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16); "Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37); "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down" (Proverbs 14:1); and "The gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word, stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). The study considered such teachings ideal contributions by the S.D.A church to dealing with the issue of domestic violence within the region and beyond.

According to the study, the S.D.A church within Gusii region was involved in offering guidance and counselling to both victim and perpetrator of domestic violence. In support of the above findings, Bowker (1988), Bowker & Maurer (1987) and Rotunda et al (2004), demonstrated how the S.D.A in the study region was trusted as an institution that offered counselling services to families experiencing domestic abuse. Complementing on the above, Shannon-Lewy & Dull (2005) highlighted that the S.D.A clergy had played an important role in the guidance of their parishioners in matters related to domestic violence.

The study appreciated the genuine effort made by the S.D.A clergy in dealing with the vice within the study region. In support of this, Weaver, et al. (2002), concurred that the S.D.A clergy within Gusii region were seen as honest, familiar, and understanding. Moreover, Bowker (1988) and Gross & Stith (1996) held that those with strong religious faith might view clergy as their ideal resource since the clergy understood their moral and spiritual beliefs.

Apart from the positive involvement, the study found out that some teachings and practices in the S.D.A church tended to undermine the efforts that were meant to solve the problem of domestic violence in the region. Rotunda, et al. (2004) and Grady (2000) supported the above argument by writing that Christian teachings and church leaders, particularly, within the S.D.A church in Gusii region had hindered efforts that sought to establish non-violence in relationships. A similar perspective was held by Brinkerhoff, et al. (1992) who acknowledged that the victims of domestic violence within Gusii region first turned to the S.D.A church for help, however, the same victims hold that the same church is where support was most lacking.

The study findings unveiled that the S.D.A church imposed some teachings on the victims of domestic violence with an aim of retaining them in abusive relationships. In support of this, Grady (2000) indicated that some religious traditions in the S.D.A church within Gusii region hold that even in the face of abuse, women must not separate from or divorce their partners. The study discovered that some individuals in the S.D.A church within

Gusii region used biblical references to legitimise the use of physical coercion as a strategy for getting women to submit to the authority of the men in their lives. Commenting on the same issue, Fortune & Enger (2005) confirmed that it was either by its silence or its instruction, that the S.D.A church had too often communicated to battered women that they should stay in abusive relationships, try to be better wives, and "forgive and forget". To perpetrators, they said, the church had communicated that their efforts to control their wives or girlfriends were justified because women are to be subject to men in all things (Ephesians 5:22-24). However, the study perceived the above argument to have failed to take into account the concept of inculturation which, according to Ter Haar (2009), interpreting theological issues relating to purported women subjugation or 'male chauvinism' must be understood from the cultural context.

The study indicated that the S.D.A church was silent in terms of wife abuse in the study area. Supporting of the above claim, Nason-Clark (2004) argued that the S.D.A church not only immobilized religious victims, but inadvertently encouraged the behaviour of the perpetrator. The study revealed that the above tendencies were rampant in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. Fortune & Enger (2005) recommended that through texts, traditions, teachings and doctrines, religious communities and institutions such as the S.D.A church should convey values and belief systems to their members in relation to dealing with cases of domestic abuse.

The study regretted that the S.D.A church within Gusii region preserved cultural biases and prejudices in issues of domestic violence. Marie & Poling (1987) supported the above point of view by stating, "Many of the church forefathers accepted female inferiority and women's sinfulness advocating as a consequence, the necessity of male rule, male laws and the advocacy of dominance as natural inherent nature of things." Consequently, due to its patriarchal nature, the S.D.A church was seen to be profoundly complicit in perpetuating teachings that legitimized violence against women and children within the study area.

The study discovered that early church doctrines contain texts that condone male violence against women existed in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. Supporting this view, Fortune & Enger (2005) state, "The right of chastisement was the enforcer of women's subordination in marriage". "There is the careful instruction to a husband to first reprimand the wife, and if still this does not work, then take up a stick and beat her soundly, for it is better to punish the body and correct the soul than to damage the soul and spare the body".

In order to minimize domestic violence, the study observed that the S.D.A church had put in place various strategies. One of the strategies that the study established was public awareness campaigns to be used throughout the region to break the silence that surrounded these forms of violence, to inform, to try to influence individuals' attitudes and social norms about its acceptability to address the problem. The study indicated that many had used a human rights framework. This point was supported by Londt (2004) who mentioned media awareness campaigns to be an effective primary prevention programmes for domestic violence. Additionally, increased provision of public information, improved staff training, knowledge and work protocols were advocated with these measures applicable to both genders.

Another strategy discovered by the study to end domestic violence is facilitation of educative programmes in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. In support of this view, Luker, et al. (2012) suggest, "Some educative programmes focus on increasing women's knowledge, self-protection skills, and awareness of available services for victims, while others seek also to address men's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour."

The study found out that training of the parents on how to handle the issue of domestic violence and visiting both the victim and perpetrator was effective in mitigating the vice. The strength of the relationship between a child's exposure to maltreatment and risk of involvement in domestic violence later in life is what Mercy & Sleet (2005) recommend that the prevention of child maltreatment could be an important component of the prevention of domestic violence. Olds et al. (1999), Oleg et al. (2005), and Farrington (2006) supported the above strategy by recommending home visits. They affirmed that strong evidence existed to support the effectiveness of home visits and parent training programmes in preventing child abuse. The study recommended pastoral visits and regular prayers for both victims and perpetrators in Gusii region and society as a whole.

A church elder, during the study mentioned that children learned much of domestic violence from the people around them and recommended positive parenting among the S.D.A church members in the region. In support of this opinion, Farrington (2006) argued, "Programs that seek to reduce children's aggressive behaviour and

promote the development of positive skills have been effective in thwarting the developmental trajectory of domestic violence."

The study found out that childhood interventions were an important tool to use in shaping the behaviour of children who had been exposed to domestic violence. Backing the above submission, Mercy, et al.(2002) commented that that early childhood interventions were important not only for securing the health and well-being of children, but for promoting healthy behaviour and social functioning including non-violent intimate partnerships and respectful, consensual sexual activity throughout the lifespan. In addition, key elements of this approach include teaching parents to model healthy relationships, to manage their children's behaviour positively and without harsh physical punishment, and fostering children's anger management, impulse control, problem-solving, conflict resolution and social skills.

One of the respondents who worked as a teacher in an S.D.A church sponsored school within Gusii region recommended school-based violence prevention programmes as another strategy for inhibiting domestic violence. This idea was supported by Carlson (1984) who proposed that school-based violence prevention programmes could be used to tackle a range of issues including child sexual abuse, bullying, dating violence, and sexual assault. In addition, "These interventions typically aim to build children's knowledge about child sexual abuse and their capacity to protect themselves". In relation to the above position, the study discovered key components that included educating children about different kinds of touch, self-esteem, secrets, and self-protection strategies such as shouting, insisting on being left alone, threatening to tell and telling a trusted adult.

The study informed that the S.D.A church within Gusii region was not immune to domestic violence and thus clergy were often sought for help on this issue. In support of the above, Levitt & Ware (2006) recommended that clergy needed to be adequately educated and trained to address domestic abuse within its context. However, the study realized that some clergy in the S.D.A church within Gusii region lacked skills in dealing with domestic violence. On this note, Shannon-Lewy & Dull (2005) concurred with the above by observing that some clergy were often unprepared or lacked sufficient training to help victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

Another critical strategy by the S.D.A church within Gusii region vis-à-vis eradicating domestic violence as revealed by one of the interviewees was the creation of an enabling environment. This view was supported by Londt (2004) who held that creation of a conducive, enabling and facilitative environment and effective communication skills can serve as a strategy in curbing domestic violence in society. In this case, Nason-Clark (1996) observed that the patriarchal nature, structure and socialisation of clergy in the S.D.A church within Gusii region contributed to an environment of silence and acceptance of domestic violence. Complementing on the above, Gengler & Lee (2001) denoted that since one's belief system influences how one behaved and made moral judgments, it was not surprising that religiously conservative clergy were more likely to adhere to patriarchal gender roles and be less proactive in responding to domestic violence.

Counselling training is what the study discovered to be producing greater effectiveness in relation to mitigating domestic violence in the S.D.A church within Gusii region. Lowe (1986) supported the study by pointing out that education and training made a difference in the counselling and referral practices of the S.D.A church. Those with more formal training or education in counselling were less likely to assign Bible reading, devotions, or prayer as responses to women and men who report domestic violence. Instead, they were more likely to use other professional approaches and to take their role as counsellors more seriously. Supporting this view is a report by Wood & McHugh (1994) which found out that clerics with specific training on spouse abuse were more apt to help victims secure help from community agencies and shelters.

The study observed that the S.D.A church within Gusii region needs to encourage the youth to get involved in church programs. This view was backed by Makepeace (1987) and Howard, et al. (2003) who believed that young people who had some religious involvement had been found to be less likely to be victims of domestic violence. A similar view was held by Ellison (1999) and Ellison & Anderson (2001) who suggested that attendance to church services was associated with fewer perpetrations of domestic violence by both men and women and also less victimization.

V.   Conclusion

Based on the information presented in the literature review, personal interviews and observations, it was evident that the S.D.A church within Gusii region played an important role in inhibiting or facilitating domestic violence. The study acknowledged the fact that domestic violence vis-à-vis the S.D.A church involvement was a complex subject full of ambiguities and contradictions. According to the study findings, the S.D.A church within the region was a constructive force that might reduce the risk of both perpetration and victimization. The study found out that conservative theological beliefs, for instance, condemning divorce, encouraging traditional gender roles, with husbands in charge of decision making in the home, have the potential, if misused or taken to an extreme, to cause domestic violence. The study revealed that such beliefs as the ones mentioned above could be misinterpreted as sanctioning men's violent acts and could also be a force that encourages women to remain in abusive relationships.

The S.D.A church in the study area played a key role in bringing about development. As a reliable institution, the church has a set of rules and principles that are meant to guide the believers to moral and ethical lives. The government finds it beneficial to involve church members in development plans because they are believed to be champions of peace, love and unity. According to the study, the S.D.A church preaches the gospel of love, forgiveness and reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The S.D.A church in the study area revealed the progress in sensitizing the public about the dangers of domestic violence. The study concluded that in spite of many challenges, the S.D.A church within the region could be trusted in teaching, training, and offering guidance and counselling to the perpetrator, the victim and the general public in matters of domestic violence.

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