

Why Do Women Stay in Abusive Relationships?

New Research on Domestic Violence in Kenya Answers the Common Question

HOUSTON, TX, USA, August 3, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Why do women stay in abusive relationships? That question is all too common.

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Kenyan women who suffer abuse from their male partners often end up staying in the marriage because of community pressures to maintain the family and marital unit...

*Jessica Penwell Barnett and
Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale*

A new study published in "[Social Problems](#)," a flagship journal in the field of sociology, offers new insight by demonstrating how Kenyan women who suffer abuse from their male partners often end up staying in the marriage because of community pressures to maintain the family and marital unit, which preserve the community's moral order.

By conducting focus groups and interviews with female survivors of partner violence in Kenya, Wright State University professor Jessica Penwell Barnett and University of Windsor associate dean of research Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale, shed light onto the dynamics of partner violence in Kenya as the

stigma surrounding spousal abuse shapes how survivors experience and move on from such occurrences. Survivors stated the importance of marriage within the community as an institution that guaranteed survival. Maintaining the family unit meant adhering to gender positions – such as the woman's place is in the home – which favored men and put the blame of abuse onto wives who were seen as violating their spousal positions. “Women were frequently reminded, especially by close friends and family members, that marital problems and violence were normal and should therefore remain a private matter for the couple.”

Victims also faced discrimination from a number of surprising sources including: community chiefs, the legal system, and police. Victims had nowhere to go after incidents of abuse and could not rely on these structures for support. Although hospitals and health care staffs were equipped to care for victims and collect evidence of spousal abuse, survivors tended to avoid these resources due to the stigma surrounding abuse, and the discrimination faced in other institutions that worked to prevent women from utilizing these resources.

This article offers new ways to think about how forces outside the individual and a marriage can shape experiences regarding spousal abuse.

For further information, please contact Kasey Henricks at khenricks@abfn.org. The article appears in the August 2016 issue of "Social Problems" and is entitled, "[Stigma as social control](#): Gender based violence stigma, life chances, and moral order in Kenya.”

"Social Problems" is the official publication of The Society for the Study of Social Problems and one of the most widely respected and read professional journals in the social sciences. This quarterly journal presents accessible, relevant, and innovative articles that uphold critical perspectives on contemporary social issues. For additional commentary, you can follow the journal on [Twitter](#) at [@socprobsjournal](#).

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Kasey Henricks
Social Problems
email us here
423-364-9251

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